

**Municipal Demarcation: An Exploration of Ethnic Conflict and
Violence in the 2015 Malamulele and 2016 Vuwani Protests**

Thesis in partial fulfilment of the degree of Master of Arts

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KEYWORDS

- Amalgamation
- Apartheid
- Colonialism
- Conflict
- Demarcation
- Democracy
- Development
- Dysfunctionality
- Ethnicity
- Government
- Municipal Boundary
- Non-viability
- Public Participation
- Reconciliation
- Service delivery
- Sustainability
- Tribalism
- Violence

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- ANC- African National Congress
- BLF – Black First Land First
- CoGTA - Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
- DA – Democratic Alliance
- EFF - Economic Freedom Fighters
- HC- High Court
- HSRC - Human Sciences Research Council
- IEC- Independent Electoral Commission
- MDB- Municipal Demarcation Board
- MDTT: Malamulele Demarcation Task Team
- PAC- Pan Africanist Congress
- SA- South Africa
- SABC - South African Broadcasting Corporation
- SADTU – South African Democratic Teachers Union
- SAHRC- South African Human Rights Commission

ABSTRACT

In 2015, communities in Malamulele, located in the Vhembe District of Limpopo Province, South Africa, protested against the Thulamela Local Government Municipality, citing inadequate service delivery and favouritism toward Venda-speaking areas. The protesters demanded the establishment of a new municipality for Tsonga-speaking residents, disrupting daily life through road blockades and shutdowns of schools, transportation, and commercial activities. In response, the government demarcated the Thulamela Municipality and created the Collins Chabane Local Government Municipality, which included Vuwani and other Venda-speaking communities. However, this inclusion sparked violent protests in Vuwani in 2016, fueled by claims of insufficient consultation and a desire to remain within the Makhado Local Government Municipality. This study utilised qualitative research methods, specifically semi-structured interviews, to capture the experiences and perspectives of participants from Vuwani and Malamulele. It applied conflict and territory theories to analyse the underlying issues. The findings reveal that colonial policies of divide and rule, along with apartheid-era Bantustan policies, significantly influenced these protests. The study underscores the importance of public participation in community matters, highlighting the unequal provision of services among different groups and emphasising the need for reconciliation. The protests were deeply rooted in the legacy of colonial and apartheid histories and cannot be understood in isolation from these historical contexts and their enduring impacts. This research addresses a gap in the academic literature by exploring the ethnic dynamics and sequence of events in the 2015 Malamulele and 2016 Vuwani protests. It provides insights into the decisions of the government, Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB), and community stakeholders that fueled these conflicts, contributing to a broader understanding of post-1994 ethnic violence and conflict in South Africa.

DECLARATION

I declare that *Municipal Demarcation: An Exploration of Ethnic Conflict and Violence in the 2015 Malamulele and 2016 Vuwani Protests* is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Full name: **Matimu Shivambu**

Date: **20 May 2024**

Signed: **Matimu Shivambu**

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DEDICATION

I want to dedicate this Masters Thesis to my late niece, Xihluke Melba Shivambu, affectionately known at home as *Vazaya*, who passed away in May 2023, a week before I presented my thesis proposal to my department. I also dedicate this Masters Thesis to my late uncle, Solomon Chauke, famously known in the community and family as *Majekuza*, who passed away in September 2023 while I was busy with Coursework and my Ethics Application. May your souls continue to rest in peace; I will always love and remember you.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Scholarly exploration of the 2015 Malamulele and 2016 Vuwani protests has been limited, with only a handful of scholars (e.g., Kanyane et al. (2017,2021), Sinthumule (2021), Rasila (2017), Mavhungu (2012), Musitha (2012,2020), Kgatle (2018), Ncube (2016), Mathebula (2015,2018 & 2019), Netswera & Nealer (2020), Baloyi (2018), and Khowa (2022) directly engaged with and wrote about these two events and issues around municipal demarcation. News reports by media houses such as *Sowetan*, *Business Day*, *City Press*, *The Star*, and the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) have contributed to understanding these protests. However, there remains a gap in the scholarly literature regarding a comprehensive analysis and interpretation of these protests' underlying causes, dynamics, and implications within the broader context of municipal demarcation tensions and ethnic politics in South Africa. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the violent nature and ethnic tensions underlying these protests and analysing the intricate dynamics of municipal demarcation disputes, tensions, and ethnic politics. By focusing on the complexities of these issues, the study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the underlying causes and implications of the Malamulele and Vuwani protests within the broader socio-political context of post-apartheid South Africa.

The dawn of democracy in 1994 marked a significant transition for South African local government municipalities. During this period, 1994-1999, comprehensive transformation policies were implemented to rectify past injustices and tackle inequality. Additionally, the dawn of democracy signalled the end of Bantustans or apartheid homelands, with communities reintegrated into the democratic framework through the re-determination or demarcation of municipal boundaries. Nxumalo and Whittal (2013) write that enacting the 1998 Demarcation Act empowered the government, specifically the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB), to redefine territories. However, this decision faced resistance, objections, and challenges from traditional leaders and communities, leading to disputes arising from the first redrawn municipalities (Netswera & Nealer,2020:1). As noted by Nxumalo and Whittal (2013), Traditional leaders often object decisions made by the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) because they are not consulted, leading to the perception that the government has

granted the board excessive powers in territorial demarcation. Historically, traditional leaders held greater authority and responsibility in demarcating territories on behalf of the people. However, with the advent of democracy and the establishment of the board, this authority appears to have been diminished (Rugege,2003:182–183).

The protests in Malamulele and Vuwani in 2015 and 2016 emerged as manifestations of the discontent resulting from the decisions of the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB). This thesis focuses on the conflict and ethnic dimensions characterising these protests, particularly the tensions between the Vatsonga and VhaVenda communities. Additionally, it aims to investigate the impact of ethnic politics on municipal demarcation since 1994 and analyse the consequences of ethnic divisions in the post-1994 era. By addressing these issues, both the communities of Malamulele and Vuwani, as well as the academic community, will better understand the intricacies involved in the protests and the process of boundary redrawing. This knowledge will contribute to a deeper comprehension of the underlying dynamics.

1.2 Problem Statement

The study addresses the limited scholarly attention on the 2015 Malamulele and 2016 Vuwani protests, which unfolded amidst grievances regarding municipal governance, service delivery, and ethnic favouritism. These protests highlight underlying tensions stemming from historical decisions and contemporary socio-economic disparities, underscoring the challenges in reconciling diverse ethnic interests within the post-apartheid municipal demarcation and governance structures.

1.3 Study Objectives

The primary objectives of this research are to examine:

1. Analyse the frequent conflicts, tensions and disputes associated with the demarcation process.
2. Assess the ramifications of ethnic fragmentation on local governance from 1994 onward.
3. Examine the legacy of apartheid and the ongoing challenges of reconciliation and equitable service provision post-1994.

1.4 Research Questions

- 1) In what ways have ethnic divisions affected the demarcation of municipalities post-1994?
- 2) In what ways can the government / Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) successfully or best demarcate land/Municipality where two or more ethnic groups are involved?
- 3) How has the legacy of apartheid influenced current challenges in reconciliation and the equitable provision of services in affected communities?

1.5 Background of the 2015 Malamulele & 2016 Vuwani Protests

Malamulele 2015 Protest

Malamulele is a town in the Limpopo province of South Africa, predominantly inhabited by Tsonga-speaking people with a small proportion of Venda residents and positioned approximately 46 kilometres from the Punda Maria gate of the Kruger National. Geographically, Malamulele lies between Giyani, the former capital of Gazankulu, and Thohoyandou, the former capital of Venda, to the east and west, both of which were former Bantustans. The town is situated approximately 189.8 kilometres away from Polokwane, the capital city of the Limpopo province. Malamulele encompasses approximately more than 100 villages within its vicinity.

The residents and communities in Malamulele in Limpopo expressed dissatisfaction with the Thulamela local government Municipality in 2015 and called for municipal demarcation. Residents claimed that Thulamela Local Government Municipality had failed to provide essential services to their communities (Netswera & Nealer, 2020:2). These services included proper roads, infrastructure, water, and electricity. Amongst other things, the residents of Malamulele communities claimed that the Thulamela Municipality only provided services in areas where Venda-speaking people reside (Mathebula & Chauke: 2019). This assertion was grounded in the observation that Venda-speaking communities had access to good service delivery, such as water from the Nandoni dam, electricity, improved infrastructure, and more excellent economic prospects. Additionally, Nkuna and Shai (2018) argue that the perception of preferential treatment towards TshiVenda-speaking communities should be contextualised within the historical significance of Thohoyandou, the former capital of the Venda Republic, during apartheid. Thohoyandou was used to uphold ethnic segregation and further the

interests of the Venda people during South Africa's apartheid regime. As a result, the Thulamela Municipality appears to continue with the same policy after 1994, seemingly forgetting that they serve a democratic, integrated, and diverse population that includes the Vatsonga people. The protest in Malamulele exacerbated tensions between Venda and Tsonga people.

Following the above, Muller (2013) maintains that communities expect their places of residence to be of a particular living standard. This means service delivery standards should be similar across communities. The residents of Malamulele alleged that Venda-speaking communities received better services, and their standard of service delivery was different (Ntlemo-Sowetan News: 2015). Furthermore, they claimed that the Thulamela Municipality only employs TshiVenda-speaking people in their municipal offices. Emanating from this, the Malamulele communities initiated a protest demanding the demarcation of Thulamela Municipality. They proposed a new Municipality to accommodate and deliver service to Vatsonga-speaking people and communities under Malamulele. The protest employed a total shutdown strategy. This meant that schools, transportation, and all commercial activities were non-operational different (Ntlemo-Sowetan News: 2015). Roads were blocked, and people's movements were restricted.

At first, the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) dismissed the request for Malamulele to establish its Municipality, fuelling residents' frustration. The residents established a Malamulele Demarcation Task Team (MDTT) to address this, with Dr Isaah Ndambi serving as a spokesperson. In an interview with SA FM, Dr Ndambi warned that the protests would escalate if the government failed to respond adequately. The Malamulele Demarcation Task Team (MDTT) asserted that Malamulele residents advocated for their Municipality primarily because the area's population exceeded that of other municipalities. Kanyane et al. (2017) point out that the protests in Malamulele have not only exacerbated ethnic tensions between Vatsonga and VhaVenda but have also caused rifts among local traditional leaders. Malamulele residents have accused the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) of neglecting and undermining their demands.

More than 100 schools were affected by the protests, as they employed a strategy of total shutdown and prevented learners from attending classes. The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) and the education alliance The South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) voiced concerns over school closures, urging protesters to respect children's

education rights. The SAHRC confirmed an investigation into the lack of service delivery in Malamulele, citing it as a violation of socio-economic rights.

Isaac Nukeri, the Secretary General of the Malamulele Demarcation Task Team (MDTT), challenged the commission to visit Malamulele to witness the community's challenges first-hand. Mugwena Maluleke, speaking on behalf of the education alliance SADTU, emphasised that the protests compromised the educational opportunities of Malamulele learners. The then Deputy Minister in the Presidency, Buti Manamela, strongly condemned the school closures, stating that denying young people their right to education is unacceptable (Seedat: 2015). The presidency's office stressed that grievances should not interfere with children's education, underlining the importance of prioritising youth education over short-term community demands (Seedat: 2015).

In response to the significant impact of the Malamulele protest in 2015, the government intervened on the 19th of January 2015 through a collaboration between the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) and Minister of Cooperative Governance, the late Pravin Gordhan. Following this intervention, an announcement was made regarding the demarcation of a new Municipality, named after the late Minister of Public Service and Administration Collins Chabane, effectively removing Malamulele from the Thulamela Municipality. Nkuna & Shai (2018:436) note that this new Municipality encompassed almost 50 TshiVenda-speaking communities, including Vuwani.

The call for the demarcation of Thulamela Local Government Municipality was met with resistance. Demarcating the Municipality meant that Vuwani and other areas of Venda-speaking people closer to Malamulele had to be part of the newly established Municipality. This resulted in violence and ethnic conflict between Vatsonga and VhaVenda. The violence came in the form of looting the shops, blocking of roads, closure of schools and shops, disruptions of essential services and damaging property. Vatsonga and VhaVenda started seeing each other as enemies. Baloyi (2018) highlights that when their area, Malamulele, was violently protesting to have its own Municipality, it was alleged that Vatsonga could not shop in Thohoyandou, an area of VhaVenda people. The inability to speak Venda fluently was a criterion used to turn Vatsonga people crossing to Thohoyandou to do some shopping (SABC et al., the 06th of February 2015). While Khowa (2022) argues that the goal of land demarcation and municipal territories is to make sure that they are meaningful, functional, and accessible to the concerns of their residents, this was not the case in these Limpopo

communities. Thomas and Ron (2007: 682) draw attention to underlying factors that may create the general conditions for violence in border conflicts, such as socio-economic factors and weak governance structures; without a doubt, these factors were evident in Malamulele 2015 and subsequently Vuwani in 2016. Narsiah (2019) highlights the case of Matatiele in the Eastern Cape Province as a typical example of municipal demarcation disputes that occurred post-1994. This case illustrates that municipal demarcation issues are often contentious, leading to tensions, court battles, and even violence. The complexities involved in such disputes reveal the deep-seated challenges within the governance framework in South Africa, particularly regarding representation and resource allocation among different communities.

Vuwani 2016 Protest

Vuwani, situated within the Vhembe District Municipality in South Africa's Limpopo province, is characterised by a diverse population comprising primarily Venda-speaking, Tsonga, and Pedi ethnic groups. Geographically, the area is approximately 35 kilometres from Malamulele. Kgatla (2018:253) points out that residents of Vuwani and neighbouring areas, previously under the Makhado Municipality's jurisdiction, voiced their frustration and discontent regarding the decision to incorporate them into the new Collins Chabane Municipality. The residents expressed resentment over the lack of consultation in the process.

Following this, the residents of Vuwani pursued legal action by bringing their case to the Polokwane High Court to contest the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), the late Pravin Gordhan, and the Municipal Demarcation Board's decision, advocating for their continued inclusion in the Makhado Local Government Municipality. Despite their legal efforts, the Polokwane High Court dismissed their application on the 26th of April 2016. Kanyane, Adonis, and Rule (2021) underscore that before May 2016, Vuwani had experienced minimal violent protests and destruction of public property. However, this changed dramatically when the Limpopo High Court dismissed an application by the Masia Tribal Council and other traditional councils challenging the decision of the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) to incorporate Vuwani which was under Makhado Local Government Municipality and parts of the Thulamela Local Government Municipality into a single new Municipality named after the late Minister of Public Service and Administration Collins Chabane. The applicants contended that the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) did not follow proper procedures and adequately consult with affected communities

(Kanyane et al.,2021:103). However, the court ruled in favour of the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB), stating that it had adhered to its mandate and legal provisions regarding community consultation.

The violent and disruptive protests in Vuwani commenced two days after the High Court (HC) ruling in Polokwane. Kgatla (2018) highlights that the protests in Vuwani also implemented a strategy of total shutdown, disrupting commercial activities, transportation services, and schooling activities. Among the Venda communities slated for inclusion in the new Municipality and surrounding Vuwani were Masia, Mashau, Vyeboom, Tshino, Havana, Tshimbupfe, Ramukhuba, Tshikonela, Masakona, Mulenzhe, Piet Boy, and Khakhanwa (Cogta,2016:4). Traditional leaders and communities vehemently rejected this decision, leading to widespread dissent and unrest in the region. It is contended that the Vuwani protests represented one of the most severe attacks on public property since the advent of democracy in South Africa. Kanyane, Adonis, and Rule (2021) write that the prevailing narrative among the protesters was that public assets such as schools symbolise crucial government infrastructure at the local level, and therefore, targeting and destroying them was deemed a legitimate strategy to ensure that community demands were heard and addressed promptly. The deliberate targeting of property can be viewed as a manifestation and expression of their deep-seated frustrations and anger.

Kanyane, Adonis, and Rule (2021) assert that community members articulated a belief that if residents' grievances in Malamulele and other areas of the country were attended to after resorting to violent protests, a similar approach could yield results for them. Essentially, the precedent set by the Malamulele protests catalysed the actions taken in Vuwani. Consequently, residents of Vuwani perceived it to be in their best interest to emulate the strategies employed by the Malamulele communities.

Kanyane's (2017) study "We Didn't Ask for a Municipality" - Unintended Consequences of Municipal Boundary Re-determination: Vuwani, at a Glance, writes that during this tumultuous period, teachers and learners faced significant psychological trauma, meaning those residing near the schools witnessed them engulfed in flames and were subjected to intimidation and threats if they chose not to participate in the protests. The estimated property damage amounted to over 175 million Rand, thrusting Vuwani into the national spotlight. At the time, the Chairperson of the Demarcation Board (MDB) emphasised the imperative of resisting situations where the Board's decisions could be unduly influenced by frustration and

threats from specific interest groups, thereby jeopardising its mandate. Furthermore, the Chairperson underscored the Board's responsibility to adhere to its mandate and uphold stringent criteria in its decision-making processes.

The protests erupted in March 2016, coinciding with the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) opening voter registration for the upcoming local government elections scheduled for August of the same year (Kanyane:2017:3). Residents of Vuwani and neighbouring communities opposed the merger of Vuwani, then part of Makhado Local Government Municipality, with sections of Thulamela Local Government Municipality, portions of Musina Local Government Municipality, and segments of Mutale Local Government Municipality to establish a new Municipality (Business Day News: 2018).

Communities near Vuwani took to the streets to reject the idea of demarcation and being a part of the new proposed Municipality (Mukhwevho -Soweten Live News: 2016). Following the court's decision, unrest escalated in Vuwani, leading to arson, looting, and disruptions to education services. Kanayane's (2017) study reveals that the prevailing narrative during the Vuwani protests centred on the demarcation dispute and ethnic tensions, particularly the resistance to being part of a Municipality led by the Tsonga community. Kgatle (2018) points out that the violence ensued, resulting in the torching of more than 20 schools and the vandalism of buildings and property. Primary and secondary school teaching and learning were negatively impacted; consequently, grade 12 learners performed exceptionally poorly (Kgatle,2018:253). A report compiled by the Human Sciences and Research Council (HSRC) presented at the 9th International Conference on Public Administration and Management, 26 and 27 October 2016, Pretoria, South Africa, identifies several unspoken fears that have motivated the protests in Vuwani. Among these concerns is the apprehension that the efficiency of service delivery in the old Municipality might be compromised with the proposed changes. There is also a deep-seated fear that tribalism and identity could influence the allocation of services in the new Municipality, adding complexity to the situation. Additionally, there is a palpable unease among current councillors as they stand to lose their seats in the old Municipality. However, Nxumalo and Whittal (2013) argue that municipal disputes cannot be understood in isolation. In other words, a combination of historical and modern causes explains these demonstrations reasonably.

According to Makgoba (2006), the local government has experienced significant policy changes since 1994 that have resulted in the ongoing eradication of all municipalities with

ethnic inequalities, followed by the demarcation process. This new approach allows every community to receive equal services regardless of race or ethnicity (Makgoba, 2006). Additionally, Managa (2012) highlights that South Africa was prosperous in achieving democracy after apartheid but expresses worry about issues that persist, such as inequality, poverty, and joblessness. Regardless of the significant policy shift from apartheid, the Thulamela Local Municipality was still dismissive, eager to hold power, irrespective of the complaints that Vatsonga were raising. Demarcation concerns are now substantially worse in democratic South Africa due to this (Narsiah and Maharaj, 1999: 51). Netswera & Nealer (2020:1) highlight that the primary causes of violent protests stem from the government's neglect to engage communities in demarcation decisions that have a direct impact on them. Residents' opposition to demarcation proposals is fueled by perceived shortcomings such as inadequate transparency in the demarcation process and insufficient communication between the government, MDB, and communities.

Municipal and territorial disputes appear to have been influenced by the creation of Bantustans by the apartheid regime. With the reorganisation and division of former Bantustan provinces/towns into democratic South Africa in 1993–1994, the issue of eradicating Bantustan boundaries to create a cohesive geographical area for all South Africans arose by adopting regional and municipal demarcation. Ramutsindela (1998: 291) highlights that those concerns with municipal demarcations were evident when the newly drawn borders were ready to take effect following the 1994 elections, and some objections or complaints were made. The government aimed to desegregate the country and encourage people to perceive themselves as South Africans with diverse groups rather than as members of a particular race or ethnic group (Ramutsindela, 2007: 49).

The background section provides a comprehensive overview of the 2015 Malamulele and 2016 Vuwani protests, which emerged from dissatisfaction with municipal demarcation decisions in Vhembe District, Limpopo, South Africa. Residents of Malamulele expressed grievances regarding inadequate service delivery, alleging preferential treatment towards Venda-speaking communities. The historical context of Thohoyandou, the former capital of the Venda Republic during apartheid, further contextualises these tensions, suggesting a continuation of ethnic biases in post-apartheid governance. The protests escalated ethnic tensions between the Vatsonga and VhaVenda communities, exacerbating divisions among local traditional leaders.

Moreover, this section details the demands of Malamulele residents for their Municipality, citing disparities in service provision and economic opportunities. The protests utilised a total shutdown strategy, impacting schools and commercial activities. Despite initial dismissals by the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB), the protests persisted, reflecting deep-seated frustrations with governance and representation.

The subsequent intervention by the government led to the demarcation of a new Municipality, Collins Chabane, encompassing TshiVenda-speaking communities, including Vuwani. However, dissatisfaction persisted among Vuwani residents, leading to legal challenges and further protests. The Vuwani protests erupted in response to the High Court's rejection of an application by the Masia Tribal Council and others opposing the merger of Vuwani with surrounding areas under a new Municipality. The protests underscored broader governance, transparency, and community consultation issues in municipal demarcation decisions.

The section also highlights the broader socio-economic and historical factors contributing to municipal disputes in South Africa, including the legacy of apartheid-era Bantustans and ongoing challenges of inequality and poverty. It emphasises the need for inclusive and transparent decision-making processes to address community grievances and promote social cohesion in a demarcation process. This section outlines the need for a deeper examination of the protests' causes, ethnic dynamics, violence, and implications in subsequent chapters, positioning the study within the broader context of South Africa's post-apartheid governance challenges.

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 1: Introduction

The first chapter introduced the research topic and explained why studying the protests in Malamulele and Vuwani is essential. It outlined what the research aims to achieve, such as understanding the background of the protests and answering specific questions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review - The Municipal Demarcation Complexities: The Case of Vuwani and Malamulele

In this chapter, an examination is conducted of the available literature on municipal demarcation. The review encompasses African literature focusing on violence, ethnic politics, conflict in Africa, Theoretical Considerations, the historical context of territorial disputes in

South Africa, and the implications of municipal demarcation. Additionally, the chapter explores the influence of ethnic politics and tribalism on local governance.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

This chapter explains how the research was conducted. It describes the methods used to collect data, such as interviews and document analysis. The chapter also discusses how participants were chosen and ethical considerations that were considered.

Chapter 4: Findings, Discussions, and Limitations of the Study

The chapter provides an overview of the primary research findings and their discussion in light of existing literature on service delivery, public participation, tribalism, and the legacy of apartheid. Additionally, the chapter examines the limitations encountered during the study.

Chapter 5: Summary of Chapters and Conclusion

The concluding chapter summarises the key discussions and discoveries presented throughout the thesis. It consolidates the main points discussed in each chapter and explores their broader implications in relation to the research questions. Furthermore, the chapter identifies potential areas for future research to expand on the findings further and contribute to the field.

1.7 Conclusion

The chapter offers a comprehensive review of the 2015 Malamulele and 2016 Vuwani protests, emphasising their importance and the necessity for in-depth exploration. It presents the problem statement, study objectives, and research questions, establishing the context for the subsequent chapters. Furthermore, the introduction provides a succinct overview of the protests' background, laying the groundwork for comprehending the intricate dynamics surrounding tensions arising from municipal demarcation in South Africa.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

THE MUNICIPAL DEMARCATION COMPLEXITIES: THE CASE OF MALAMULELE AND VUWANI

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will draw heavily from the scholarly writings of Mamdani (1996, 1998, 2001, 2002), Mafeje (1971), Nyongo (2023), Nnoli (1996, 2006), Daley (2006), and Ake (1993), who have extensively studied African ethnicity, violence, and conflict. It is important to note that the discourse surrounding municipal demarcation tensions in South Africa, particularly in the aftermath of the protests in Malamulele and Vuwani, has received limited scholarly exploration. However, there is existing literature by authors such as Kanyane et al. (2017, 2021), Sinthumule (2021), Rasila (2017), Mavhungu (2012), Musitha (2012, 2020), Kgatle (2018), Ncube (2016), Netswera & Nealer (2020), Mathebula (2015, 2018, 2019), Baloyi (2018), and Khowa (2022) that provides a conceptual framework for understanding the complexities of municipal demarcation issues. The protests in Malamulele in 2015 and Vuwani in 2016 are examples of the challenges arising from municipal demarcation tensions and disputes in South Africa post-1994. These protests were characterised by ethnic tensions, with instances of tribalism and acts of violence, including property damage, shop looting, and arson. By examining these events, one will gain insights into the underlying factors contributing to the conflicts and the specific dynamics of ethnic tensions within municipal demarcation disputes. In conjunction with the existing literature on municipal demarcation, the scholarly works of Mamdani, Mafeje, Nyongo, Nnoli, Daley, and Ake provide a solid foundation for comprehending the complexities surrounding these tensions and protests.

2.2 African Literature on Ethnicity, Violence and Conflict

This section will critically examine the literature on African ethnicity, conflict, and violence. It aims to explore the underlying issues on the continent that contribute to ethnic politics, violence, and conflict. The analysis will primarily draw upon the works of Claude Ake, Archie Mafeje, Mahmood Mamdani, Okwudiba Nnoli, and other scholars who have extensively written on ethnic politics, conflict, and violence.

Ake's (1993) article titled "What is the Problem of Ethnicity in Africa?" focuses on the dynamics of ethnicity in the African continent. Ake (1993) emphasises the significant role played by colonialism in distorting and manipulating ethnicity and ethnic groups in Africa. Before colonialism, ethnic groups coexisted peacefully, sharing common values, norms, principles, and identities. However, the colonial powers destroyed the cultural and traditional structures that united people and replaced them with their agenda. Ake (1993) also highlights that historical influences and material factors shape the current state of ethnicity in Africa. As a result, ethnicity has been seen as a problem, leading to political instability, development challenges, and conflict in Africa. Ake's (1993) analysis provides an understanding that ethnic conflict, violence, division, and politics in Africa were purposefully manufactured by the colonial regime to advance their agenda, including the promotion of capitalism. Ake (1993) points out that capitalism and ethnicity are intertwined and cannot be separated. The article also suggests that ethnic groups in Africa previously coexisted harmoniously but lost their common understanding due to the manipulation of their identities. As influenced by materialism, the current state of ethnicity in Africa reflects the struggle for limited resources and self-preservation. Ake (1993) argues that before the arrival of colonial powers, African people shared values and lived together peacefully, implying that they also shared resources and ways of survival. Thus, conflict and violence were deliberately created to divide people further. Additionally, Ake (1993) notes that the problem with ethnicity in Africa is that it is predominantly viewed in line with boundaries. This perspective is problematic because ethnic groups often consider each other in isolation, forgetting the shared cultural values that previously united them. The notion of ethnicity in conjunction with boundaries continues the colonial experience and contributes to conflict. It also perpetuates the othering of ethnic groups in Africa. Ake (1993) contends that there is no inherent problem with ethnicity in Africa but rather a misrepresentation of it, which unfortunately leads to violence, conflict, and political instability.

While Mamdani (1996) discusses the colonial regime's rule over indigenous people in Africa, particularly in South Africa, the author highlights the adoption of indirect rule by the colonial government, which involved exerting direct control and imposing their agenda on indigenous people through local and traditional leaders. This allowed the colonial government to perpetuate its rule and implement policies that included the segregation of ethnic groups. Mamdani (1996) emphasises that during this period, ethnicity was manipulated and enforced through indirect rule, leading to the formation of ethnic boundaries and the emergence of

tribalism as a means of resistance against the authorities. Mamdani's (1996) work provides an essential understanding of how the colonial regime deliberately orchestrated the division of ethnic groups in Africa. Local and traditional leaders were used as instruments to divide indigenous people along ethnic lines, reinforcing the colonial agenda. This historical manipulation of ethnicity has had lasting effects as it continues to shape contemporary issues. Mamdani (1996) suggests that the legacy of colonialism plays a significant role in the challenges faced today, such as the difficulty in reaching consensus among different ethnic groups and traditional leaders on matters that should benefit the entire population. The allocation of resources and political rights often becomes a contentious issue centred around ethnic identities. Moreover, In Mamdani's (1998) writing, it is argued that the boundaries and borders in Africa are artificial constructs. These borders were not created by Africans themselves but were imposed by external powers to divide people. Therefore, when examining the challenges associated with these borders and boundaries, it is crucial to understand their nature and origins. Mamdani (1998) expresses concern that Africa's current state of affairs reinforces these borders even through the concept of citizenship. This can be observed in countries like Congo and Rwanda, where citizenship perpetuates the divisions and distinctions created by these artificial borders.

Following the above, Mamdani's (2002) work extends to his analysis in "African States, Citizenship, and War: A Case Study". Here, he emphasises the intersectionality between present-day developments and the historical legacy of apartheid. Mamdani (2002) examines the politics of citizenship in Rwanda, highlighting how colonial powers determined who should be considered indigenous people. The author points out that the Banyamasisi group, among others, was denied indigenous status and citizenship because of their historical presence in Congo. This decision had far-reaching consequences, influencing the allocation of resources and political rights and eventually contributing to conflict and violence in Rwanda. Mamdani's (2002) work underscores the manipulation of ethnicity by colonial powers to divide the people of Rwanda and exert control over them. The author also highlights that the Hutu and Tutsi groups shared cultural values and historical coexistence in Rwanda. However, the influence of colonial powers and their definition of citizenship tragically contributed to the genocide that unfolded in Rwanda. Mamdani (2002) works to provide a comprehensive understanding of African colonial powers' historical manipulation of ethnicity and its lasting impact. The deliberate division of ethnic groups and the consequences of these actions continue to shape social, political, and cultural dynamics in

African societies, as seen in the case of Rwanda.

On the other hand, Archie Mafeje's article "The Ideology of Tribalism" (1971) critically examines the concept of tribalism in Africa, questioning its nature, implications, and origins. Mafeje (1971) challenges the prevailing notion that tribalism is an inherent and defining characteristic of the African continent. Mafeje (1971) suggests that it may be an unsubstantiated perception perpetuated by those who write about Africa. According to Mafeje (1971), the understanding and interpretation of African history and narratives would be different if Africans told them. By highlighting the agency of African voices, Mafeje (1971) implies that alternative concepts and narratives could emerge, leading to a revised understanding of tribalism and other related phenomena. Additionally, Mafeje (1971) argues that the colonial regime largely shaped the ideology of tribalism. European colonisers imposed their interpretations and classifications onto African societies, categorising them as tribal. This colonial perspective influenced European scholars studying Africa and their African counterparts, perpetuating specific modes of thought and continued use of the concept of tribalism. Mafeje (1971) further suggests that if tribalism is considered a peculiar African ideology, its origins can be traced back to Europe rather than being an inherent African construct. This view challenges the notion that tribalism is an organic product of African societies and highlights its external imposition. Mafeje's (1971) article questions the validity of tribalism as a defining feature of Africa. He argues that the concept may be a product of colonial ideology and calls for reconsidering African history and narratives from an African perspective. By doing so, Mafeje (1971) aims to challenge and transcend the distorted understanding of tribalism and its impact on African societies.

Nnoli's work titled *Ethnicity and Development in Nigeria* (1996) explores ethnicity's role in Africa, focusing on Nigeria. The author emphasises the connection between ethnic politics and development, suggesting that ethnicity influences the developmental trajectory of a country and the factors behind it. Nnoli's (1996) work seeks to shed light on the hostility and tensions perpetuated by ethnic politics, explaining these dynamics. According to Nnoli (1996), ethnicity is significant because it drives people to mobilise along ethnic lines to pursue resources. Therefore, the study of ethnicity cannot be isolated from other factors. Nnoli (1996) outlines several critical aspects of ethnicity: it exists within a political society composed of diverse ethnic groups, it involves a shared consciousness of being part of one group concerning other interacting ethnic groups, and it is characterised by exclusiveness,

prejudice, discrimination, and hostility. These elements, as defined by Nnoli (1996), form the basis of ethnicity. When examining violence and conflict in the context of ethnicity, it becomes evident that these conflicts arise from the contestation of political interests among different ethnic groups. Ethnic groups may harbour jealousy toward one another and engage in discrimination, ultimately creating a hostile environment as they vie for dominance. Despite these definitions, Nnoli (1996) argues that the primary cause of ethnic conflict is the fight for land or territory. This fight for a sense of belonging and ownership of boundaries has been a significant source of conflict and violence in Nigeria since around 1979, as noted by Nnoli (1996). This assertion also highlights the contentious issue of territorial ownership and the associated resources, as evidenced by ongoing protests in South Africa. Nnoli's (1996) work explores the relationship between ethnicity and development in Nigeria. Moreover, Nnoli (2006), in his book *National Security in Africa: A Radical Perspective*, highlights the detrimental impact of intra-state conflicts influenced by ethnic conflicts on national security. The author emphasises that numerous lives have been lost due to ethnic violence and conflict. Nnoli (2006) argues that the Westphalia system, imposed by colonial regimes, is responsible for the chaotic nature of these ethnic conflicts and violence. This system, based on defined territories and other elements, was exploited by political leaders for their political gains. As a result, Nnoli (2006) suggests that good governance is necessary to prevent ethnic groups from being pitted against one another. The author identifies key characteristics of ethnicity and emphasises the role of ethnic politics in shaping societal dynamics. The fight for land and resources emerges as a significant cause of ethnic conflict, contributing to tensions and violence between ethnic groups.

According to Okolo (1980) and Nnoli (1996), the topic of ethnic violence and conflict in Africa specifically focuses on Nigeria. Okolo (1980) argues and agrees with Nnoli (1996) that the root cause of the conflict and violence in Nigeria is the disparity between social classes. Additionally, Okolo (1980) emphasises that although the notion of ethnicity may have the potential to transform African lives, it often leads to violence, conflict, poverty, and hindered development. Okolo (1980) further contends that colonialism played a role in encouraging and perpetuating ethnic differentiation. The scholar suggests that addressing these issues would require a revolutionary and progressive government. Okolo (1980) also affirms that these conflicts primarily arise from competition between ethnic groups for resources intentionally created by the colonial regime.

In Mamdani's (2001) work titled "Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identities: Overcoming the Political Legacy of Colonialism," the author argues that the genuine wrongdoing of colonialism was the expropriation of indigenous peoples. Furthermore, Mamdani (2001) contends that colonialism committed an even more significant crime by politicising indigeneity. Initially, this politicisation took the form of a settler libel against the native population, perpetuating negative narratives about indigenous peoples. Subsequently, indigenous individuals began asserting their identities in response to this libel. This assertion reflects the profound impact of colonialism in Africa, extending beyond land expropriation to the creation of new ethnic identities that caused divisions and eventually became politically charged, leading to violence and conflict. Mamdani (2001) emphasises that the politicisation of indigenous Africans marginalised them, and over time, indigenous individuals reclaimed their identities within the framework of the colonial project. Mamdani (2001) contends that some responsibility lies with the post-colonial government, as it needed to effectively advocate for a broader, more inclusive societal framework beyond external notions of race and ethnicity. This work highlights how the colonial regime divided and categorised African people into ethnic groups, resulting in subsequent problems. This means that following the end of colonial rule in Africa, it was the state's responsibility to promote reconciliation and integration among ethnic groups. However, this reconciliation did not occur in many African countries as expected. Consequently, the legacy of ethnic division, violence, and conflict inherited from the colonial era persisted, impacting people's lives. This ongoing struggle was driven by competition for scarce resources, territorial control, and political power. It reinforces that understanding current political violence and conflicts requires considering historical factors and contexts.

In Daley's (2006) study titled "Ethnicity and Political Violence in Africa: A Challenge to the Burundi State," the author sheds light on the factors contributing to violence and conflict in Africa, particularly in Burundi. The work emphasises the significance of ethnicity in understanding these conflicts. Daley aligns with Mamdani (2001) in asserting that the creation of political identities by colonial powers in Africa laid the foundation for division and competition among ethnic groups. Daley (2006) references explicitly the case of Burundi, highlighting its similarities to Rwanda, where ethnicity was manipulated to serve the interests of specific groups. The work suggests that violence between ethnic groups in Africa is not an inherent or natural occurrence but rather a deliberate design to benefit certain privileged classes of people. Daley's (2006) work contributes to understanding violence and conflict in

Africa, particularly in Burundi. It underscores the role of ethnicity and the manipulation of political identities by colonial powers, revealing that the violence between ethnic groups is a result of deliberate design rather than a natural outcome.

Anyang Nyongo and Kurugu (2023) discuss the problematic nature of the concept of tribe, highlighting its historical use as a tool for dividing and oppressing African people and denying them political participation. Their article “Tribe and Tribalism in Kenya’s Politics” analyses the 2017 general elections in Kenya, where tribal and ethnic factors dominated. Nyongo and Kurugu (2023) argue that the continued use of the term "tribe" is problematic as it reinforces a divisive construct. They also emphasise that the goal of post-independence was to overcome tribal identities and form a unified nation, but the Kenyan elections showcased the opposite. However, they acknowledge that tribal politics will persist when people are politically excluded based on tribal lines despite efforts to build the nation. Drawing a comparison, Nyongo and Kurugu (2023) highlight the efforts made by former President Julius Nyerere in Tanzania to address ethnic and tribal politics, aiming to reduce political and economic competition along tribal lines and build a united nation. In the case of Kenya, Nyongo and Kurugu (2023) argue that tribal politics have hindered the creation of a politically cohesive and united country, as political formations are organised along tribal lines. They also point out that Kenya's political system is based on tribalism, with particular tribes controlling state resources, leading to exclusion and violent conflicts. Nyongo and Kurugu (2023) share similar sentiments with other scholars, linking the origins of ethnic politics in Kenya to the colonial era when ethnic and political identities were formed. They highlight the toxic relationship between the government and society in Kenya's context.

The readings discussed above offer a cohesive perspective and provide a conceptual framework that aligns with my study. Scholars such as Ake, Mamdani, Mafeje, Nnoli, Daley, and Nyongo shed light on the case of Malamulele and Vuwani, which exemplifies violent ethnic conflict and protests that exhibit similar patterns and dynamics. These protests were characterised by ethnic conflict, where ethnicity was utilised to dismiss the idea of collaborative governance. In 2015, Tsonga people in Malamulele expressed their frustration with being led by Venda leaders in Thulamela Local Government Municipality, alleging that services were primarily directed toward Venda-speaking communities. Conversely, during the 2016 Vuwani protests, Venda individuals voiced their resistance to being governed by Tsonga leaders and relocated to the newly established Collins Chabane Government Municipality in

Malamulele. Central to both protests were the allocation of resources and economic opportunities, which fueled ethnic animosity and conflict. The works of the aforementioned scholars help elucidate the dynamics of ethnicity, conflict, and violence that characterised these protests. Historically, Venda and Tsonga communities coexisted peacefully, sharing inter-tribal marriages, cultural principles, and communal spaces. However, the emergence of colonialism and apartheid disrupted these relationships through policies of division and the establishment of Bantustans. Since 1994, these two ethnic groups have struggled to reconcile, as evidenced by the ethnic conflicts, violence, and acts of tribalism that have marked the protests. This illustrates how colonialism and apartheid significantly manipulated ethnicity to their advantage, fracturing and dividing the Tsonga and Venda communities. The lingering effects of these historical injustices continue to impact local governance, as Vatsonga alleges from Malamulele that services and job opportunities have been disproportionately allocated to Venda-speaking areas. The tribal sentiments expressed during the protests resonate with the arguments made by these scholars regarding the causes of violence and ethnic conflict across the African continent. Within the writings of these scholars, I position my study and the subsequent sections, drawing insights from their analyses of similar phenomena. By examining the Malamulele and Vuwani cases through their theoretical lenses, my aim is to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying factors and complexities that contribute to such conflicts, ethnic tensions, and protests in municipal demarcation in South Africa post-1994. The following section will explore violence and conflict through a theoretical framework.

2.3 Theoretical Considerations

This section will examine the Malamulele and Vuwani protests from perspectives of Conflict theory and Territory theory. The intention is to provide a contextual understanding of the issues in Malamulele and Vuwani within a broader theoretical framework that explores the factors contributing to conflict and territorial boundaries. The analysis aims to offer a concise yet comprehensive theoretical examination of the underlying factors that have contributed to the outbreak of violence in these regions. By applying conflict theory and territorial theory, one can better understand the root causes and dynamics behind the protests. This theoretical analysis will shed light on the complex interplay of social, political, and territorial factors that have shaped the conflict, providing valuable insights into the nature of the issues.

The first theory to be applied is Conflict Theory, which is particularly relevant to this study as it explains the causes of conflict between individuals or different groups, as Simon (2016) outlined. In the case of the Malamulele 2015 and Vuwani 2016 protests, the central conflict revolved around ethnic tensions between the Vatsonga and VhaVenda people. Conflict Theory, founded by Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, and Karl Marx, offers substantial insights into the causes of conflict that remain relevant today. While the context may have evolved, the underlying factors that lead to conflict remain consistent. Simon (2016) writes that Conflict Theory comprehensively analyses conflicts' causes, structures, dynamics, actors, and outcomes. By applying these factors to the Malamulele and Vuwani protests, one can theoretically understand the factors that contributed to the conflict.

The conflict in Malamulele arose from a struggle for government services and benefits within the Thulamela Local Government Municipality, including water, electricity, jobs, economic opportunities, and tenders. The Vatsonga people claimed they were not benefiting from these services and resources, alleging that only the Venda people were receiving preferential treatment. The Venda people held positions of power, controlling municipal services, appointments, and tenders, which they utilised to consolidate their power and benefit their tribe while excluding the Vatsonga. In response to this exclusion and inequality, the Vatsonga protested, demanding better services and the establishment of their Municipality in Malamulele. Therefore, the central issue in the Malamulele and Vuwani situation was the unequal distribution of scarce resources and power. It is worth noting that the specific resources and opportunities that cause conflicts may vary in each case study. Still, they generally revolve around class, status, and power, as outlined by Weber. Regarding Conflict Theory, power is a crucial aspect of society. While conflicting parties are typically divided into the capitalist class and the working class in theoretical terms, this study can be framed as the dominant class and the excluded. In this case, the Venda people represented the dominant class due to their access to political and economic power. At the same time, the Vatsonga were excluded as they fought for inclusion and a share of limited resources.

The second theory to be applied is territory theory, as presented in Margaret Moore's (2015) book *A Political Theory of Territory*. This theory explains how territorial rights revolve around political interests and self-determination. Applying Moore's (2015) analysis to the Malamulele and Vuwani situation, it becomes clear that conflict and violence manifested in political interests and self-determination. The people of Malamulele sought political power

by creating a new Municipality that would provide services to their communities and enable self-determination by becoming independent from the Thulamela Local Government Municipality. On the other hand, the people of Vuwani desired self-determination, but they were still determining whether the newly established Municipality would serve their political interests. Thus, this theory highlights the significance of political interests and self-determination in any territorial dispute, as evident in the Malamulele and Vuwani protests. Additionally, In trying to theorise the 2015 Malamulele and 2016 Vuwani protests, this study will refer to a body of literature that is in line with the themes which were prevalent in both protests, which, amongst others, are tribalism, violence and ethnic conflict. In so doing, this study relies on Mahmood Mamdani's notion of "historicising geography" (Mamdani 2001). In his study of the Hutu and the Tutsi of Rwanda, Mamdani (2001) critically assesses how, in the postcolonial state, colonially produced identities are reinforced and reproduced as if they were natural constructs. In postcolonial African states, political identities tend to be accompanied by violence and conflicts.

This section analysed and contextualised the Malamulele and Vuwani protests using conflict and territorial theories. These theories suggest that conflicts between groups are often motivated by power dynamics, self-interest, ownership, and the distribution of resources. The following section will explore the historical origins of land disputes, boundaries, and tensions in South Africa.

2.4 Brief History of the Origins of Territorial Disputes in South Africa

To fully comprehend the intricate dynamics and political complexities surrounding municipal demarcation in South Africa, an analysis of the transition from apartheid-era local governance systems to democratic dispensation is imperative (Kanyane et al:2017). The contemporary territorial disputes and internal boundaries in South Africa, as observed by scholars such as Kanyane, are deeply rooted in the legacies of colonialism and apartheid. As noted by Ntsebeza and Hall (2007), during these periods, land was forcefully taken from indigenous people, and territorial divisions were established to uphold racial segregation and maintain white dominance. Dlamini (2013:3) also writes that the implementation of segregationist policies was aimed at separating ethnic groups from white areas, perpetuating racial purity, and exclusionary economic and political systems that favoured the white population. Ncube and Monnakgotla (2016:76) highlight that between 1948 and 1994, during the apartheid era, the South African government decentralised and demarcated jurisdictions, including the

municipal system, along racial lines. Ncube and Monnakgotla (2016:76) further assert that this racially oriented and decentralised governance system consisted of two main categories: White Local Authorities and Black Local Authorities. Legislative measures were enacted to reinforce white dominance, suppress black communities, deny them opportunities, and enforce territorial control.

The Land Acts of 1913 and 1936 hold significant infamy in South African history, having facilitated the dispossession and displacement of black communities. This land dispossession has played a pivotal role in shaping the current land and municipal boundary tensions and disputes in South Africa. Compared to other African regions, South Africa experienced some of the most extensive land dispossession by British and Dutch settlers. Moyo (2003) supports this notion, affirming that significant land expropriation occurred primarily during the colonial period. Weideman (2004) emphasises the prolonged persistence of these land dispossessions. Dlamini (2013:3) notes that following the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910, oppressive government legislation emerged to hinder the development of the African farming population. The Land Act of 1913 aimed to prevent Africans from acquiring land outside the Bantustans designated for them. Consequently, these designated areas became the only permissible regions for African habitation under this Act (Weideman: 2004). Boule and Julyan (1987) argue that the primary objective of the Natives Land Act of 1913 was to segregate and suppress the African population. Their analysis suggests that the Act sought to ensure a lasting separation between African and White communities within the country, further entrenching racial and ethnic divisions and inequalities.

The seizure of land by white settlers and the creation of Bantustans, facilitated by promoting the Bantu-Self Government Act of 1959 in the 1960s, played a crucial role in formalising tribal divisions and perpetuating organised tribalism, as observed by Baloyi (2015). Bantustans in South Africa emerged because of the discriminatory policies implemented by the apartheid government, as highlighted by Mbeki (1964). Mbeki (1964) argues that the authoritarian regime sought to perpetuate systemic disparities by segregating and marginalising black communities. These designated "Bantustans" served as tangible manifestations of segregation, forcing black individuals to reside in underprivileged areas with limited employment opportunities. Prime Minister Verwoerd, as noted by Mbeki (1964), furthered the notion in the 1960s during the apartheid era that black individuals had no rightful claim to the land. These actions created a legacy of ethnic tensions and competition

over limited resources among black communities. Kgatla (2013) concurs with Baloyi (2015), emphasising that forced removals of black populations exacerbated competition for remaining land and resources. This struggle continues to be relevant today, as evidenced and championed by movements like the Pan African Congress (PAC), Black First Land First (BLF) and Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF).

Pre-colonial Africa was organised along tribal, linguistic, and cultural lines, as noted by Lonsdale (2014). However, colonial interventions, such as the creation of Bantustans in South Africa, exacerbated existing divisions, tribalism, and animosities among various ethnic groups. For instance, the colonial administration exploited the tensions between the Zulus and Xhosas to maintain control and perpetuate conflict for their own benefit. Despite the significant historical contributions to post-apartheid territorial disputes, scholarly literature reveals notable gaps. These include insufficient exploration of the long-term impacts of colonial policies on contemporary territorial conflicts, limited analysis of tribalism's role in shaping post-apartheid governance structures, and a lack of comprehensive studies on the dynamics of ethnic tensions within local governance systems. Addressing these gaps is crucial for a nuanced understanding of the complexities surrounding contemporary territorial disputes and demarcation challenges in South Africa. The Malamulele and Vuwani demarcation disputes illustrate how historical decisions, such as the creation of Bantustans by the apartheid regime, enforced and perpetuated divide-and-rule policies. After 1994, the ANC government aimed to reintegrate previously segregated homelands and ethnic groups into single provinces, towns, villages, and municipalities to improve basic services and living conditions as part of the reconciliation process. However, these efforts appear to have faltered as the Vatsonga and VhaVenda communities have grown increasingly distant from each other. The fractured relationship poses challenges for peaceful coexistence, mainly when resource allocation and economic opportunities are at stake. The cases of Malamulele in 2015 and Vuwani in 2016 serve as classic examples of territorial disputes facilitated by apartheid-era decisions, manifesting during the demarcation process and resulting in resentment and ethnic conflict that characterised the protests.

2.5 Impact of the Municipal Demarcation Process

Ncube and Vacu (2014) assert that the municipal demarcation process has resulted in challenges of financially inviable and unsustainable municipalities, contrary to the intended goal of enhancing financial and fiscal performance as proposed by COGTA. Consequently,

municipalities formed through amalgamation and demarcation often find themselves in debt and need help to provide essential services to residents. This echoes the concerns some communities in Vuwani voiced, expressing doubt about the new Collins Chabane Municipality's financial viability to support all communities (Kanyane, Adonis & Rule, 2021:109). This sentiment demonstrates their awareness that demarcation does not consistently achieve its intended purpose. Conversely, Buthelezi and Dollery (2004) view the demarcation process positively, arguing that it dismantles hierarchical government structures, allowing local authorities to assert their autonomy. The capacity of local government municipalities to deliver services and stand independently is deemed beneficial despite challenges highlighted by Ncube and Vacu (2014).

The impact of the demarcation process post-1994 is evident in recent events, notably the protests in Malamulele and Vuwani. These incidents underscore the highly contentious nature of the demarcation process, which has become increasingly politicised (Letlape, 2022:2). The lingering legacy of apartheid-era decisions, particularly the creation of Bantustans and entrenched tribalism, continues to influence and disrupt demarcation efforts. Mathoho (2015) laments that despite attempts by the government, through the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB), to rectify apartheid-era injustices, criticism and challenges persist. The Board grapples with the complex task of restructuring municipalities to distribute limited resources equitably, yet public dissatisfaction and concerns persist despite adherence to legal protocols.

Khumalo (2011) highlights the impact of demarcation by pointing to disputes arising from the initial redrawn municipal boundaries. Commonly, rural communities are split into two municipalities, a move often met with resistance. Traditional leaders' involvement and authority during demarcation processes have been scrutinised. George and Binza (2011) argue that traditional authorities, as custodians of rural land, have been significantly affected by the powers delegated to the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB). Nxumalo and Whittal (2013) observe a need for clarity regarding traditional leaders' rights and responsibilities compared to municipalities, resulting in land and service provision conflicts. Rugege (2003, 182–183) articulates that traditional leaders perceive a gradual erosion of their powers and functions and a decline in their legitimacy. This sentiment reflects the challenges traditional leadership structures face in adapting to changing societal and governmental dynamics, threatening their traditional roles and authority.

Nxumalo and Whittal (2013) contend that the demarcation process tends to be one-sided, with the government making unilateral decisions regarding rural communities through the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB). This assertion aligns with complaints from residents of Vuwani, who felt excluded from decision-making processes. In the democratic era, traditional leaders who have traditionally overseen land management and territorial demarcation have experienced a diminishment in their authority. This was evident in the Vuwani protests, where their legal challenge to contest the decision of the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB), which unequivocally stated that Vuwani and other communities should be included in the new Collins Chabane Municipality, was rejected by the Polokwane High Court.

Moreover, Nxumalo and Whittal (2013) highlight the need for more accountability of the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) for the problems arising from its decisions. Communities like Vuwani argue that they did not request a change in the Municipality and were content with the services provided by their previous Municipality, Makhado, as noted by Kanyane et al. (2017). As alleged by the people of Vuwani, the unilateral decision to move them to Malamulele Collins Chabane Local Government Municipality was perceived as unfair and irrational, reflecting a lack of accountability from the Municipal Demarcation Board. The demarcation process often excludes marginalised communities due to poverty and limited education, as Nxumalo and Whittal (2013) noted. Dube, Mnguni, and Tschudin (2021:243) further contend that the absence of public participation and marginalisation of the people in municipal matters often lead to protests. Establishing avenues for robust community participation is essential, as some protests stem from unresolved grievances between community members and local government authorities. Mpehle (2012:214) emphasises the importance of effective communication with communities and their involvement in decision-making processes, particularly on matters directly or indirectly affecting them. In the case of Vuwani, protests intensified due to a communication breakdown, with communities alleging inadequate consultation. The 2016 Vuwani protest is a classic reminder that inadequate community engagement can lead to violent and disruptive demonstrations. Hall and Midgley (1986:177) critically evaluate public participation, noting that it often attracts primarily Western-educated, middle-class activists, which may not align with the expectations of the broader citizenry. They argue that differing levels of education affect how individuals engage with public participation practices, highlighting the need for the government to address educational gaps to ensure inclusivity. This issue is particularly

relevant in Vuwani, where a High Court ruling confirmed that the Municipal Demarcation Board followed proper consultation procedures. However, limited education among some community members may have hindered their understanding of these processes. Therefore, it is crucial for the government to implement strategies that enhance comprehension and engagement, allowing diverse perspectives to be considered in decision-making. This approach can bridge gaps between community members and promote more inclusive governance.

Moreover, Nxumalo and Whittal (2013) believe that involving traditional leaders in the process may improve participation and representation. In Vuwani, distrust towards traditional leaders, perceived as influenced by the government due to their salaries and state allocations' privileges, led to their loss of public trust. The disillusionment of the people of Vuwani was evident in their boycott of the 2016 local government elections. Due to their lack of confidence in the government and a sense of abandonment, some communities rejected the electoral process. This rejection was demonstrated by gathering community members to play soccer instead of participating in voting on election day (Rasila and Musitha, 2017:1). Sun Tzu's (2005:4) work emphasises the importance of benevolence, faithfulness, and justice in leadership. The lack of trust and respect for leaders in Vuwani indicates a failure to uphold these principles. Breakfast et al. (2020) highlight that service delivery protests frequently escalate into violence, especially during election periods. This trend was evident in Vuwani, where protests coincided with local government elections, leading the community to boycott the elections. Breakfast et al. (2020) write that election times present a strategic opportunity for citizens to apply pressure, as political parties leading different spheres of government are focused on campaigning and more likely to respond to community concerns. When residents feel their issues are overlooked and services are inadequate, they often resort to protests to voice their dissatisfaction. In Vuwani, the community capitalised on this period to oppose the Municipal Demarcation Board's decision to relocate them to the new Malamulele Collins Chabane Municipality.

Kgatle (2018:253) reveals that during the Vuwani protest against the municipal demarcation decision to grant the communities of Malamulele their separate Municipality from Thulamela, government infrastructure investments worth millions were destroyed, particularly schools. This led to a detrimental impact on the future of learners in Vuwani, with over 20 schools being torched and damaged in the process. Moreover, crucial government

services were halted as a result of the protests. Additionally, Kgatle (2018:255) emphasises that the most significant casualties in the Vuwani calamity were, unfortunately, the children's education. The aftermath of the protests, including the destruction of schools and the disruption of educational activities, underscores the depth of community dissatisfaction and the need for meaningful engagement in the demarcation process.

Lastly, it is worth noting that the cases of Malamulele and Vuwani are not isolated incidents in South Africa's history of municipal demarcation disputes and grievances, which often stem from issues of community development as highlighted by Tyabazayo (2013), for instance, in the Moretele and Madibeng Municipalities, residents sought boundary revisions to improve access to fresh water, highlighting the practical needs driving such disputes. Similarly, the Bushbuckridge communities contested their incorporation into Limpopo Province, desiring to be part of Mpumalanga due to stronger economic ties and development prospects. In Bushbuckridge, residents argued that their area belonged geographically to Mpumalanga and believed that this shift would enhance their quality of life. However, Tyabazayo (2013) argue that political motivations also played a role, with some local leaders accused of self-interest in supporting the incorporation into Limpopo. This trend of boundary disputes reveals a broader pattern where local identity, access to resources, and perceived development opportunities fuel tensions.

This section examined the negative impact of the demarcation process. The next section will focus on the ethnic politics surrounding the protests and how they influence local governance.

2.6 Ethnic Conflict, Tribal Politics and Its Influence on Governance: Malamulele and Vuwani

This section discusses how ethnic politics revolves around domination, access to economic opportunities, and power, ultimately shaping governance and determining who gains the most benefits, as noted by Ake (1993). This was evident when the collapse of colonialism resulted in inter-ethnic violence in several African nations, including Rwanda, Burundi, Sudan, Kenya, Mozambique, and Angola (Lesasuiyan, 2017). Ilorah (2009:695) points out that the unequal treatment of individuals based on ethnicity is prevalent among political leaders in numerous African nations. This discriminatory practice, as Martinussen (1997:329–30) contends, not only hinders development but also exacerbates issues of income inequality.

Ethnic tensions were notably prominent during the Malamulele and Vuwani protests, characterised by prevailing tribal sentiments and violence. According to a study “We Didn’t Ask for Municipality” – Unintended Consequences of Municipal Boundary Re-determination: Vuwani at a Glance, by Kanyane et al. (2017), respondents from the VhaVenda community in the Vuwani area expressed sentiments such as, 'We never requested for the Municipality, and why should vaTsonga lead us?' (*A rongo vhuya ra humbela masipala. Khee vha tshi toda u ri ita vhalanda vha vaTsonga?*). These expressions highlight the intense ethnic tensions and the prevalence of tribal-oriented politics evident during the protests. Despite the cultural, commercial, and social overlap between the Vatsonga and VhaVenda communities, the protests revealed deep-seated ethnic divisions. Ilorah (2009:698) emphasises that ethnic bias often arises from close personal connections between individuals holding leadership positions, public officials, and specific interest groups within a country, typically belonging to the same ethnic background. Similar to personalised relationships, ethnic bias exhibits characteristics of corruption and favouritism, ultimately hindering development, as noted by Nyongo and Kurungu (2023). This phenomenon was observable during the Vuwani protest, where Venda individuals resisted being governed by Tsonga individuals. These sentiments reflect favouritism and ethnic affiliations within certain leadership positions, including public office.

While the Malamulele protests primarily centred on demands for improved services and municipal demarcation, the Vuwani protests displayed a more pronounced tribal orientation. Rasila and Musitha (2017:4) point out that following the announcement by the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB), Venda-speaking community members in Vuwani vehemently rejected the prospect of being governed by Vatsonga, emphasising their refusal to be led by another ethnic group without their consent. Observing the protest, Mathebula (2018:265) argues that the decision by the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) was met with one of the most violent demarcation demonstrations ever witnessed in democratic South Africa. In light of the resistance and violent protest in Vuwani, Musitha, and Mafukata (2020:11) uncovered that in their efforts to quell the resistance, the police arrested numerous individuals and detained them at Malamulele and Thohoyandou police stations.

Ilorah (2009:697) further explains that leaders often manipulate members of their ethnic group by instilling the belief that reforms threaten their political and economic power, leading them to perceive their community as relatively prosperous. Consequently, reforms are

portrayed as potentially reversing rather than enhancing prosperity. This manipulation effectively fosters broader divisions within diverse ethnic groups, particularly if members of the leaders' ethnic group perceive job competition from other ethnic groups (Martinussen, 1997:327). This dynamic was observable during the Vuwani protest, where the Pro-Makhado group and traditional leaders conveyed to the communities that the demarcation board's decision posed a threat to the economic opportunities of the Venda people. Furthermore, they suggested that the Tsonga administration in the new Municipality would not extend services to Venda communities. Therefore, the division and tribal sentiments primarily stemmed from the influence of Venda leaders on the communities.

Interestingly, Musitha (2016) found that tribalism and service provision were not the sole motivations behind Malamulele's demand for a separate Municipality but dissatisfaction with governance. Despite the coexistence and intermarriage between Vatsonga and VhaVenda, pursuing power and economic opportunities disrupted their otherwise harmonious relationship, as some community members stated during the protest. The protests even made school learners reluctant to be led by individuals from other ethnic groups, specifically Vatsonga. During the Malamulele protests, proficiency in the Venda language became a criterion used to turn back people who were crossing to Thohoyandou to do some shopping when their area, Malamulele, was violently in protest to have its Municipality, highlighting the divisive nature of ethnic identity (Baloyi, 2018:1). This perpetuation of ethnic divides echoes the enduring effects of apartheid-era policies aimed at fuelling ethnic rivalries. Mamdani (1996) also contends that colonial powers deliberately strengthened ethnic divisions to maintain their divide-and-rule strategies.

As highlighted by Mamdani (1996), before the arrival of colonialists in Africa, colonial subjects, or African people, were governed using a method known as indirect rule. This approach involved using tribal leadership rather than directly imposing European laws on the indigenous population. The colonial regime recognised that delegating enforcement to indigenous leaders would be a more strategic and effective means of maintaining control rather than risking rebellion and disorder by enforcing the laws themselves. Consequently, they organised or grouped the indigenous population into 'tribes'. Each 'tribe' was assigned a leader or chief from among the local people, typically an educated individual or a product of colonial influence, tasked with ensuring compliance with colonial laws and objectives. A significant consequence of this indirect rule was the perpetuation of tribalism and division

among tribes (Mafeje:1971). They were systematically separated through apartheid legislation. Even in the case of South Africa, the colonists implemented similar strategies, which were later formalised during the apartheid era through the formation of Bantustans. For instance, the Venda and Tsonga people were separated from one another systematically by homelands, namely Venda and Gazankulu. It was during this period that resentment, conflict, and tensions grew. Therefore, the manifestation of violence and conflict can be argued to be a result and manifestation of the resentment that was engineered by the apartheid regime. The instances of tribal sentiments observed during the Malamulele and Vuwani protests underscore the lasting repercussions of apartheid-era policies that enforced the segregation of tribes into homelands through oppressive and discriminatory legislation. Interestingly, despite this historical division, the two groups, namely the Tsonga and Venda, coexist and are characterised by intermarriages. This notion is further supported by insights from Kanyane et al. (2017) fieldwork interviews during the Vuwani protest, where a Venda individual expressed, "*Ri dzula rothe nga mulalo fhedzi hu si musi ri tshi lwela maanda a u vhusa*" (We live together in peace but not when we have to fight for power). This sentiment implies that while they peacefully cohabit when not in competition for resources or power, tensions arise when such competition emerges. The tribal sentiments expressed by some Venda people in Vuwani suggest that the protest may not have solely stemmed from the decision of the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB). Instead, granting a Municipality to Tsonga communities and the prospect of being led by Vatsonga may have been central factors fuelling the unrest. Seife (2022:26) describes ethnic identity-based politics as the most politicised method of seeking political office in Africa. This assertion is further evidenced by the protests in Malamulele, where regardless of the legitimacy of the grounds raised by the residents, the ethnic card was employed as a technique by the protesters to demand their Municipality, while in Vuwani, it was used to reject the relocation to a Tsonga led and administered municipality.

Baloyi (2016) underscores the urgent need for unity and reconciliation across racial and ethnic lines to counter the divisive legacies of apartheid. Tribalism, exacerbated by colonial education, impedes national reconciliation efforts and development initiatives (Ashimolowo: 2007). Memela (2017:14) identifies the erosion of Ubuntu, a philosophy promoting communal harmony, as a casualty of tribalism evident in the Malamulele and Vuwani protests. Despite efforts by the ANC government to address tribalism through compensation and reconciliation measures, the persistence of ethnic politics poses a significant obstacle to

national cohesion (Hampton, 2014). Dlanjwa (2015) highlights the exploitation of ethnic politics within the ANC, which is evident in tribal lobbying during party conferences, underscoring the dangers of divisive politics in hindering national development and unity.

In essence, the Malamulele and Vuwani protests epitomise the enduring influence of ethnic politics in post-apartheid South Africa, hindering efforts toward reconciliation, unity, and development. Addressing tribalism and ethnic conflict remains imperative for fostering a united and inclusive society. According to Dlanjwa (2015:5), tribalism remains pervasive across various government departments, where tribal affiliations often influence resource allocation and opportunities. Despite years of democracy, South Africa continues to grapple with tribalism, which risks fuelling civil unrest and potentially leading to genocide, as argued by Baloyi (2018:4). Looking at Rwanda as an example, the genocide was the culmination of long-standing ethnic conflicts and tensions between the Tutsi and Hutu populations. Similarly, in the case of the Venda and Tsonga people in Malamulele and Vuwani, tribal remarks and tensions among them have a significant potential to escalate into massive conflict, where property damage is not the only consequence but also the loss of lives.

Rikhotso (2016:12) contends that tribalism, stemming from the injustices of apartheid and colonialism, hampers the country's unity and reconciliation efforts, emphasising its detrimental impact akin to racism. Baloyi (2016) points to the enduring division within South Africa, illustrated by protests like those in Vuwani and Malamulele, highlighting the inability of groups sharing a common heritage to reach a consensus on matters beneficial to them. During the Malamulele and Vuwani protests, public services were severely disrupted due to the total shutdown enforced by protesters. Additionally, there were instances of property destruction, including government property. This illustrates that ethnic politics can quickly escalate into massive violence that disrupts governance and public services. Such events underscore the persistence of selfish and discriminatory tribal sentiments entrenched by apartheid.

Ethnic-oriented politics often escalate into violent competition for resources among communities, as noted by Shivambu (2015), who asserts the ANC government's obligation to address and dismantle all forms of discrimination, including tribal divisions fostered by the homeland system. Despite efforts to promote linguistic equality by adopting 11 official languages, tribalism emerges as a formidable obstacle hindering South Africa's unity and

reconciliation. Following the above, Seife (2022:35) argues that the ANC-led government has been grappling with the issue of tribalism, which has manifested in various ways. One notable instance was during the ANC 52nd National Conference in Polokwane in December 2007, where ethnic considerations played a significant role. Contrary to ANC tradition, ethnicity emerged as a prominent factor, particularly in support of Jacob Zuma among delegates from KwaZulu-Natal, where individuals of Zulu or Ndebele origin were predominant (Southall, 2009:320). A similar trend was observed during the 55th Nasrec ANC Conference, where President Ramaphosa faced competition from Zweli Mkhize of KZN. Delegates from KZN expressed reluctance to be led by a Venda man, referring to Ramaphosa. His speech was disrupted by the KZN ANC grouping, and even during the KZN ANC provincial conference, Ramaphosa received a different level of respect than previous Zulu presidents like Zuma. These manifestations of tribalism have detrimental effects on governance, fostering perceptions of favouritism and ethnic affiliation or ties with public office.

Goez (2015:5) emphasises tribalism as a significant impediment to democracy, citing challenges in service delivery within municipalities like Thulamela, where former Venda areas receive preferential treatment over Tsonga communities. Dlanjwa (2015) concurs, highlighting how tribal politics undermine development and thwart reconciliation and reconstruction efforts across many African nations. These observations underscore how protests in Malamulele and Vuwani reflect broader national issues hindering development and unity.

2.7 Conclusion

The discussions in this literature review chapter offer profound insights into the complex interplay of municipal demarcation tensions, disputes, ethnic politics, and governance in post-apartheid South Africa, particularly evident in the 2015 Malamulele and 2016 Vuwani protests. Through a thorough analysis of scholarly works, historical backgrounds, and contemporary manifestations, several critical themes and observations have come to light, illuminating the intricate nature of municipal restructuring and governance in the country. The protests in Malamulele and Vuwani serve as solid examples of the challenges arising from Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) decisions post-1994, especially in areas characterised by ethnic diversity and historical apartheid arrangements such as Bantustans.

These protests, marked by ethnic conflicts, violence, and socio-political unrest, underscore the lasting impact of apartheid and colonialism on South Africa's societal fabric, as noted by Ake, Nnoli, Mamdani and Mafeje.

The historical roots of territorial disputes, stemming from the enforced implementation of segregation policies by colonial and apartheid authorities, continue to reverberate in contemporary demarcation disputes. The legacy of Bantustan, racially and tribal structured governance systems has left a profound imprint on land ownership, political representation, and social cohesion, perpetuating tensions and conflicts in post-apartheid South Africa. Since the dawn of democracy in 1994, South Africa has pursued municipal demarcation as a means of fostering non-racial democratic governance systems and improving service delivery while ensuring financial stability. However, this process has encountered numerous challenges, including community resistance, political opposition, and governance issues, resulting in socio-economic disparities, service delivery challenges, violent unrest, and municipal financial dependency. Amid efforts to make rural municipalities self-sufficient and less reliant on external transfers through amalgamation, the impact of municipal demarcation decisions on communities and governance structures has been profound, reshaping political landscapes and exacerbating existing tensions. Ethnic politics, characterised by competing tribal interests and divisions, have further complicated the demarcation process, hampering efforts towards reconciliation and unity. The manifestation of tribalism in the Malamulele and Vuwani protests is particularly disheartening, given the shared cultural principles, intermarriages, and communal spaces between the affected tribes. However, it is evident that failure to engage or allow community participation in the demarcation process adequately often leads to violence and resistance. While the involvement of traditional leaders in public hearings on behalf of their communities is a step forward, more is needed as genuine consultation.

The chapter highlighted the unintended consequences of Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) decisions, which triggered violence in Malamulele and Vuwani communities, resulting in disruptions to learners' education, businesses, transport, and public services. It is crucial to acknowledge that dissenting voices should not be underestimated, as they have the potential to detrimentally affect communities, as seen in the plight of learners caught amid the MDB-Vuwani conundrum.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview and outlines the methodological approach used in the research of this thesis. It details the process from participant recruitment to data analysis, ensuring transparency and clarity throughout the research. The chapter begins by discussing the rationale behind the selected research design and data collection methods, emphasising their relevance to the study's goals. It then describes the techniques employed, including semi-structured interviews, thematic analysis, and content/document analysis. It explains their effectiveness in capturing the diverse perspectives and experiences of the communities impacted by the Malamulele and Vuwani protests. Ethical considerations related to participant consent, confidentiality, and researcher integrity are also addressed, highlighting a commitment to maintaining ethical standards throughout the research. Furthermore, the chapter outlines the steps taken to enhance the reliability and validity of the findings while acknowledging potential limitations and challenges faced during the research process. This chapter establishes a solid foundation for a rigorous and methodologically sound investigation of the protest phenomena, ensuring that the research outcomes are credible, robust, and actionable.

3.2 Research Design

For my thesis research, I opted for qualitative research methods (structured interview questions), recognising their significance in comprehensively gathering the perspectives and experiences of community members affected by the 2015 Malamulele and 2016 Vuwani protests. Creswell (2016:39) emphasises that qualitative research is conducted when there is a need to explore a problem or issue in depth. In the context of the Malamulele and Vuwani protests, underlying issues require exploration, making qualitative research the most suitable approach. This method allowed me to focus on the complexities of the protests, understand the underlying dynamics, and explore the perspectives and experiences of the individuals involved. As Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey (2020) described, qualitative research involves open-ended communication to collect and analyse qualitative data. It aims to delve into people's thoughts, feelings, opinions, and the underlying reasons for their emotions regarding a specific event. This approach is instrumental in compiling comprehensive and in-depth insights on a particular subject matter. In my study, qualitative research was employed to

capture and examine the experiences of the residents of Malamulele and Vuwani in response to the protests that occurred in 2015 and 2016, respectively. As Mason (2017) highlighted, qualitative methods offer several advantages, including the ability to delve deeper into participants' experiences. Therefore, the objective was to gain a nuanced understanding of the dynamics of ethnic conflict and violence evident in the protests, as well as the manifestation of tribalism and disregard for government processes.

By employing qualitative research methods, I aimed to explore the multifaceted dimensions of the protests, focusing on the underlying causes, community perceptions, and the broader socio-political context surrounding these events. This approach facilitated a thorough examination of the lived experiences of individuals affected by the protests, allowing for rich, detailed insights into their perspectives and interactions with the prevailing social and political dynamics.

3.3 Advantages of Qualitative Research Design

Scholars such as Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) and Creswell (2016) contend that qualitative research offers distinct advantages, notably in its ability to effectively manage and simplify data while preserving its inherent complexity and contextual richness. This approach ensures that the essence of the data remains intact and well-presented without sacrificing its intricacies. Furthermore, qualitative research is characterised by its humanistic and radical nature, which aligns with the essence of the issues under scrutiny, such as the demand for a Municipality by the people of Malamulele and Vuwani people rejection of the Municipal Demarcation Board's (MDB) decision to relocate them from Makhado to Malamulele. Creswell (2016:40) underscores the advantage of qualitative research in empowering individuals to share their narratives and voices while mitigating power imbalances between researchers and participants. In the case of the Malamulele and Vuwani protests, understanding the experiences and perspectives of the people is crucial for grasping the complexities of these events. Moreover, Creswell (2016:40) highlights that qualitative research is conducted to comprehensively grasp the contexts or environments in which participants address specific problems or issues. This implies that people's statements cannot be divorced from the contexts in which they are made, whether in their home, family, or workplace. This approach proves ideal for exploring the underlying ethnic conflict and violence inherent in these protests. What distinguishes this research design is its capacity to provide nuanced insights and explanations of events and phenomena that cannot be fully

grasped through quantitative measures alone. Additionally, qualitative research acknowledges the individuality of each participant, recognising that diverse perspectives exist within communities like Malamulele and Vuwani. Therefore, this approach was chosen to ensure that all unique perspectives and experiences are captured comprehensively, irrespective of ethnic background or other factors.

3.4 Data Collection

Semi-structured Interviews

Data collection for this study primarily involved conducting semi-structured interviews with participants from the communities of Malamulele and Vuwani. Semi-structured interviews offered flexibility while ensuring critical topics relevant to the research objectives are covered (Schmidt: 2004). This method allowed for rich, nuanced responses from participants, facilitating a deeper understanding of the issues.

To cater to the diverse preferences of participants and prioritise their safety and comfort, interviews were conducted over the phone. As the Rhodes Ethics Committee indicated, this decision was made in response to the research's sensitive nature and potential risks. In response to these concerns, precautionary measures were implemented, necessitating all participants who agreed to participate in the study to be contacted for interviews via telephone calls. Participants were provided with consent forms, an ethical approval letter, and Interview questions in advance to ensure they were familiar with the study's scope and objectives and the potential benefits and ethical standards upheld by Rhodes University. The consent forms, interview questions, and ethics approval letters were sent to the participants through WhatsApp. Upon receipt, the participants completed and signed the consent forms, which were also returned via WhatsApp. Subsequently, the signed consent forms were saved and securely stored on my Google Drive for documentation and reference purposes. This precautionary measure encouraged open sharing and ensured that participants felt comfortable expressing their views without fear of repercussion.

The interviews were recorded after obtaining consent from the participants. This approach was adopted to ensure that no information shared by the participants was overlooked during data interpretation and analysis. As emphasised by De Vos (2011), if feasible and with participants' permission, recording interviews using tape or video provides a more comprehensive record compared to relying solely on notes taken during the interview

process. During the interviews, participants were assured anonymity, and pseudonyms were assigned to safeguard their identities. While note-taking during interviews is valuable, the likelihood of researchers missing out on specific details is significantly reduced when interviews are recorded. De Vos (2011:358) highlights the advantages of audio recordings in qualitative research, emphasising that they enable researchers to revisit interviews and gain a fresh perspective on the interview data. This capability underscores the importance of recording interviews as it enhances the comprehensiveness and accuracy of data collection. Moreover, Creswell (2016:135) emphasises that recording interviews allows the researcher to capture participants' responses and facilitates note-taking during the interview. Additionally, it aids in organising thoughts regarding various aspects of the interview process, including the introduction, conclusion, and expressions of gratitude towards the respondents. This highlights the significance of recording interviews and taking notes for comprehensive data collection and organisation.

When participants expressed confusion or provided exciting insights, follow-up questions were asked to clarify or explore further. The context was provided when necessary to ensure participants fully understood the questions. Additionally, efforts were made to simplify the interview questions and clarify the research objectives to facilitate meaningful dialogue and enhance the validity and reliability of the findings. The goal of conducting semi-structured interviews was to maximise the number of interviews conducted. Initially, my ethics application stated a desire to conduct more than 20 - 25 interviews, but I also acknowledged that the final number would depend on participants' willingness. However, during the data collection phase, it became evident that individuals were hesitant and fearful to participate due to the sensitive nature of the protests. Consequently, I conducted seven interviews evenly distributed between three participants from Malamulele and four from Vuwani. Creswell (2006:126) affirms that the composition of participants in a study may evolve, necessitating researchers to remain adaptable. Nevertheless, Creswell (2006:126) underscores the importance of planning as much as possible for the sampling strategy despite the potential for changes during the study. Most importantly, the dynamic and collaborative nature of the semi-structured interviews enriched the research findings by allowing for an in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives and experiences.

3.5 Sampling

For this study, purposive sampling was employed to select research participants. Purposive sampling involves deliberately selecting individuals with specific characteristics or experiences relevant to the research objectives (Babbie, 2008:204). In essence, purposive sampling deliberately selects a particular group of individuals who can offer valuable insights into the research problem being investigated. Creswell (2005) emphasises that this approach is utilised to gather diverse perspectives on the issue, process, or the researcher aims to elucidate. In this case, participants were chosen based on their residency in Malamulele and Vuwani, the areas where the protests under investigation took place. Miles and Huberman (1994) highlight that the rationale behind purposive sampling was to ensure that participants had first-hand experience or direct involvement in the studied events. By targeting individuals residing in Malamulele and Vuwani, where the protests occurred, the study aimed to capture insights and perspectives from those directly impacted by the protests. This approach was deemed essential for understanding the dynamics and implications of the protests within the affected communities.

Age served as a crucial criterion for determining eligibility for participation in the study. It was explicitly stated that all participants must be above 18. According to South African law, this criterion was established to ensure that participants possessed the legal capacity to provide informed consent for their involvement in the study. Additionally, the requirement recognised that individuals aged 18 and above certainly held mature perspectives and experiences, contributing to the depth of insights gathered.

Location and place of residence were also crucial factors considered when selecting participants for the study. The primary objective was to engage individuals from Malamulele and Vuwani who had first-hand experience with the protests. Residents of these areas were deemed to have a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics under investigation, making their insights, perspectives, and experiences invaluable. Their proximity to the events and issues examined was deemed essential for capturing the contextual nuances and complexities of the study.

Furthermore, the study extended its focus to include individuals who did not directly participate in the protests but were affected by them due to their residency in Malamulele and Vuwani. This criterion aimed to involve community members who experienced the adverse

consequences of the protests, regardless of their direct involvement. Their experiences and insights were essential for providing a balanced perspective to the study.

It is worth acknowledging that cultural and ethnic backgrounds played a significant role in ensuring diversity among participants, resulting in a balanced range of perspectives. The involvement of individuals from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds enriched the discussions and contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand. Given the study's emphasis on ethnic tensions and affiliations, it was essential to include participants reflecting the rich diversity present in Malamulele and Vuwani, particularly among the Vatsonga and VhaVenda communities. The research aimed to understand how each ethnic representative experienced the events and processes under investigation. Finally, participants were contacted telephonically to facilitate communication and ensure their comfort and safety during the research process.

Purposive sampling allowed for the selection of participants who could provide diverse and representative perspectives on the issues under investigation. By targeting individuals with specific characteristics related to their residency in Malamulele and Vuwani, the study aimed to ensure the inclusion of a range of views and experiences relevant to the research topic. Purposive sampling was chosen as the most suitable approach for this study due to its ability to selectively target participants with the requisite knowledge and experiences to contribute meaningfully to the research objectives. Focusing on individuals residing in the areas directly affected by the protests, the study aimed to gather rich and insightful data that could inform a deeper understanding of the events under investigation.

3.6 Content Analysis

The research predominantly employs content analysis and qualitative methods to comprehensively present the participants' interpretations, experiences, and perspectives regarding the ethnic conflict and violence evident in the Malamulele 2015 and Vuwani 2016 protests. Content analysis, as described by Prasad (2008: 2), is an approach utilised in qualitative research that enables the researcher to examine and comprehend various forms of information, such as social media posts, news reports, sequences of images, or interview transcripts. This approach was selected to offer a nuanced understanding of the protests, particularly given the dearth of empirical studies on both incidents.

Moreover, the importance of content analysis lies in its ability to study and interpret how the media reported on the protests, the images associated with the protests, and the discussions surrounding the protests on social media platforms. Through content analysis, researchers can examine various forms of media representation to gain insights into public perceptions, attitudes, and narratives surrounding the protests. By analysing news reports, articles, and broadcasts related to the protests, researchers can identify dominant themes, framing techniques, and biases in media coverage, shedding light on how the protests were portrayed to the public. Additionally, content analysis allows researchers to analyse images and visual representations associated with the protests, providing valuable insights into the symbolic and visual aspects of the events. Furthermore, by studying social media discussions, researchers can explore how individuals and communities engaged with and reacted to the protests online, uncovering patterns of discourse, sentiment, and mobilisation on digital platforms. Above all, content analysis is a powerful methodological tool for understanding the multifaceted nature of media representation and public discourse surrounding the protests, enriching our understanding of the social, political, and cultural dynamics at play.

3.7 Document Analysis

It is crucial to note that the study relied on media reports, government documents, legislation, and articles due to the limited scholarly literature on both protests, as indicated above. Document analysis serves as a method of data collection aimed at unpacking how legislation, particularly apartheid-era legislation, was applied and its impact on contemporary governance politics, as observed in Malamulele and Vuwani. In addition to document analysis, the research also focuses on the legislation governing the municipal demarcation process. The documents and legislations to be comprehensively analysed include the Bantu Authorities Act (1951), the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act (1959), the Group Areas Act (1950) and the Municipal Demarcation Act 27 of 1998. The aim is to analyse these documents and relevant literature to examine their impact on the two protests in Malamulele and Vuwani. This approach seeks to understand how the legal framework surrounding municipal demarcation influenced the dynamics of the protests and shaped community responses. By delving into the legislation governing the demarcation process, the study aims to uncover any discrepancies, ambiguities, or inequalities inherent in the legal framework that may have contributed to tensions and conflicts in the affected communities.

Furthermore, by juxtaposing these legal provisions with empirical data from the protests and insights from existing literature, the research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the role of legislation in shaping the outcomes of the protests and their implications for governance and community relations. Most importantly, by examining these documents, the study seeks to understand the government and demarcation processes followed by the demarcation board, shedding light on their implications for the protests and the communities involved. Overall, this methodological approach enriches the research findings by contextualising the protests within the broader legal and regulatory framework governing municipal governance and demarcation in South Africa. By examining these documents, the study seeks to understand the government and demarcation processes followed by the demarcation board, shedding light on their implications for the protests and the communities involved. This methodological approach enriches the research findings by providing insights into the historical, political, and legislative contexts underlying the protests, contributing to a more comprehensive analysis of the events under investigation.

3.8 Data Analysis

This section outlines the procedures to analyse the collected data, focusing on how interviews were recorded, transcribed, coded, and analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clark (2016:6), is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data, providing rich detail and interpretation of various aspects of the research topic. It is considered one of the most fundamental qualitative analysis methods due to its flexibility and ability to reflect and unravel the complexities of reality.

Thematic analysis was chosen for this study because it identifies important patterns or themes within the data that relate to the research questions. Following Braun and Clark's (2006:15) guidelines, the first step was familiarising myself with the collected data through transcription. This involved meticulously listening to recorded interviews and transcribing them verbatim, ensuring the accuracy and completeness of the data.

Subsequently, codes were generated using different colours to highlight specific aspects of the data. These codes were then classified into themes, reviewed, and named to capture the essence of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006:18). During this process, careful attention was paid to recurring patterns, significant statements, and outliers within the data, ensuring a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the participants' perspectives and experiences.

The thematic analysis report will be presented in Chapter 4, which focuses on data analysis. Through this analysis, common themes emerged related to tribalism, lack of consultation, public participation, service delivery, violence, and apartheid, among others. These themes were explored in depth to uncover the underlying dynamics of the protests in Malamulele and Vuwani, shedding light on the factors contributing to community grievances and social unrest. By employing thematic analysis, this study aimed to provide insights into the multifaceted nature of the protests and their implications for governance and social cohesion in South Africa. The findings from this analysis will contribute to a deeper understanding of the underlying issues and inform potential future strategies for addressing similar challenges.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The study was undertaken after the approval of the researcher's proposal by the Rhodes University Humanities Faculty Higher Degree Committee. Before commencing the research, the researcher obtained ethical clearance from the Rhodes University Ethics Committee. Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process, particularly concerning informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and minimising potential harm to participants. Ensuring informed consent was the cornerstone of ethical practice, as highlighted by De Vos (1998). Participants were provided comprehensive information about the research objectives and potential benefits, allowing them to make voluntary and informed decisions without coercion. They were assured anonymity and informed of their right to decline participation without repercussions. Participants were also assured of their unequivocal right to withdraw from the research project at any juncture and for any reason they deemed fit.

Only seven interviews were conducted due to participants' reluctance and the inherent risks associated with the study. Participants were interviewed telephonically to ensure their safety and comfort, allowing them to participate from a location of their choice. Before each interview, participants were explicitly asked for consent, reaffirming the importance of informed participation. Additionally, participants received ethical approval documentation from Rhodes University, including consent forms and questionnaires, beforehand to familiarise themselves with the study's details.

Confidentiality was rigorously upheld to protect participants' identities and the confidentiality of their responses. Participants were assured that their identities would remain anonymous

and that their responses would not be used against or shared with anyone else. This approach fostered a sense of trust and comfort during the interviews, enabling participants to express themselves freely. Pseudonyms were assigned to participants to safeguard their identities further.

The research adhered to strict ethical standards, guided by advice from the Rhodes University Ethics Committee, particularly considering the study's high-risk nature concerning violence and ethnic tensions. These ethical considerations were paramount in ensuring the integrity, safety, and well-being of all participants involved in the research process. As the researcher, I am committed to safeguarding the integrity and confidentiality of the data collected from participants. There will be no fabrication or falsification of any data. The data will be securely stored on Google Drive, with access restricted to only my supervisor and me. This measure is implemented to prevent any reputational damage to the participants and to maintain the confidentiality of their contributions to the research.

3.10 Reliability and Validity

Several measures were implemented throughout the study to ensure the reliability and validity of the research findings. Validity pertains to the suitability of the conclusions drawn from an assessment based on empirical evidence related to the meaning of scores. In other words, validity involves determining whether the inferences made about the results accurately reflect the intended aspects being measured (Messick: 1989). On the other hand, reliability refers to the extent to which a test is unaffected by measurement errors. The reliability of a test is compromised when there are frequent measurement errors, leading to less consistent and dependable results (Neuman:2003). Firstly, efforts were made to contact individuals with first-hand experience of the events under investigation. This ensured that the data collected reflected authentic perspectives and experiences related to the 2015 Malamulele and 2016 Vuwani protests. Secondly, the study aimed to balance participant representation by including individuals from Malamulele and Vuwani. This approach helped to capture diverse viewpoints and ensure a comprehensive understanding of the protests' dynamics. Thirdly, the research was open to all individuals aged 18 and above, without discrimination based on gender, religion, race, ethnic background, or sexual orientation. This inclusive approach fostered a diverse participant pool, enhancing the study's credibility and ensuring a wide range of perspectives were considered.

Thirdly, the study extended its scope to examine other cases of demarcation disputes and relevant legislation beyond the Malamulele and Vuwani protests. By doing so, the research findings were anchored in broader contextual factors, providing a solid foundation for interpretation and analysis.

These measures were implemented to enhance the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study, thereby strengthening the reliability and validity of the research findings.

3.11 Limitations

One notable limitation of the research methodology was the challenge of recruiting participants, as many individuals were reluctant to participate in the study. This reluctance affected the sample size, limiting the number of interviews that could be conducted. Despite efforts to reach out to potential participants, there was a notable hesitation in engaging due to the topic's sensitive nature. Theofanidis and Fountouki (2018:156) point out that it is important to acknowledge potential weaknesses in any study, as these weaknesses are often beyond the researcher's control. They are typically related to the chosen research design, limitations of the statistical model, funding constraints, or other external factors. Recognising these limitations allows for a more nuanced interpretation of the study's findings and encourages further research to address these constraints in future studies.

Secondly, conducting interviews via telephone presented logistical challenges, including network issues and the impact of load shedding on communication reliability. These factors sometimes necessitated rescheduling of interviews, leading to delays in data collection and potentially influencing the depth of insights gathered from participants. Moreover, the reliance on telephonic interviews may have introduced biases or limitations regarding rapport-building and non-verbal communication cues compared to face-to-face interactions. This could have impacted the richness and depth of the data collected, potentially affecting the comprehensiveness of the study's findings. Simon and Goes (2013) assert that every study has inherent limitations, regardless of how well conducted and articulated it may be.

While efforts were made to mitigate these limitations, such challenges underscore the need for future research to explore alternative data collection methods or strategies to overcome participant reluctance and logistical constraints, thereby enhancing the robustness and validity of the research outcomes.

3.12 Conclusion

The methodology employed in this research, including semi-structured interviews, thematic analysis, and mixed theoretical approach, was well-suited for investigating the complex dynamics of the 2015 Malamulele and 2016 Vuwani protests. Despite challenges such as participant recruitment difficulties and logistical constraints, rigorous ethical considerations were upheld to ensure the integrity and validity of the study. By engaging directly with affected communities and employing robust data analysis techniques, the research aimed to provide valuable insights into the underlying causes and implications of municipal demarcation disputes and ethnic tensions in South Africa. The methodology effectively addressed the research objectives and comprehensively explored the protest.

CHAPTER 4

DEMARCATIION PROCESS OVERVIEW IN SOUTH AFRICA SINCE 1994: FINDINGS, DISCUSSIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

4.1 Introduction

In this section, I will present, discuss, and analyse the data and themes that have emerged from the interviews conducted with the participants. However, before delving into the analysis, it is crucial to provide a concise overview of the demarcation process in South Africa since 1994. This overview and contextual background will serve as a foundation for understanding the subsequent sections on findings and discussions. The analysis will primarily focus on key themes such as service delivery, public participation, tribalism, and apartheid. These themes have emerged as significant factors during the interviews and will be thoroughly examined to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data. To support the analysis and discussions, I will incorporate direct quotes from the raw data, complemented by relevant literature and the limitations of this study, which will also be discussed in this section.

4.2 The Municipal Demarcation Process in South Africa Since 1994

According to Khowa (2022:2), the dawn of democracy in 1994 marked the establishment of the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) and enacting the Municipal Demarcation Act No. 108 of 1996. As outlined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, the MDB operates as an independent entity tasked with re-demarcating municipal and provincial boundaries in South Africa while adhering to principles of good governance. The Municipal Demarcation Act No. 108 of 1996 further delineates the roles of the MDB in alignment with Chapter Seven of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa No. 108 of 1996. Kanyane, Adonis & Rule (2021:102) describe the responsibilities and functions of Municipal Demarcation as follows: (i) Determination of municipal boundaries, (ii) delimitation of municipal wards, (iii) assessment of municipal capacity, and (iv) provision of advice to stakeholders. Moreover, Paddison (2004) highlights the importance of considering three factors to ensure a geographically just system of boundary restructuring: (i) Meeting local

preferences and needs, (ii) ensuring fairness, transparency, and accessibility of the process, and (iii) ensuring that neither local nor central political elites determine the outcome.

Ncube and Monnakgotla (2016:78) also assert that The Local Government Demarcation Act (No. 27 of 1998) served as the principal policy tool for dismantling locally segregated local government systems and initiating the concluding stage of the local government transformation process. The Local Government Municipal Demarcation Act of 1998 established an independent Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) and outlined new procedures for demarcating municipal boundaries (Mathebula: 2018:258). The Act empowered the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) to consider municipal demarcation or re-demarcation, primarily to establish or redefine municipalities capable of fulfilling constitutional obligations. The Board's mandate involves determining municipal boundaries and wards every five years, which may entail minor technical adjustments or significant changes, such as creating new municipalities or amalgamating existing ones.

Netswera (2022:17) writes that despite the explicit demarcation legislation and the establishment of the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB), the South African government has faced resistance in the municipal demarcation process since transitioning to democracy. This resistance primarily originates from affected communities and occasionally from opposition political movements, traditional leaders, and community leaders. Netswera (2022:17) also observes that this resistance stems from the significant impact of this process on citizens' access to public services and the delivery of services in their communities. Scholars like Matemba (2000) and Hornby (2004) note that the first post-apartheid demarcations occurred in preparation for the inaugural non-racial democratic local government elections in 1995. Dube (2021) also affirms that the demarcation process was a transformational measure aimed at merging poorer, predominantly black municipalities with wealthier, primarily white ones to achieve redistribution and equity. These initial demarcations encountered disapproval from members of affluent districts who resisted integration with surrounding impoverished areas. Mokgopo (2020:109-110) further confirms that the municipal demarcation process is a crucial transformation vehicle to rectify apartheid injustices. This transformation has also been evident in other spheres of government, highlighting its broader significance in addressing historical inequalities.

Similarly, objections arose when Vatsonga communities rejected incorporation into the Venda-dominated Thulamela Local Government Municipality in 2000. Nonetheless, they

were incorporated. This historical backdrop underscores the motivations behind the 2015 Malamulele protest. Mavungu (2012:62) cites violent protests in cross-boundary areas like Khutsong, Matatiele, and Moutse as additional examples of demarcation disputes. It is crucial to recognise that no unified local government system existed under apartheid. The 1994 democratic elections prompted a reassessment of boundaries, including municipal demarcation (Netswera,2022:22). The aim was to establish a non-racial democratic local government system and integrate homelands and former white areas into unified but distinct local government municipalities, as noted by De Visser (2009:8). The process required drafting new local government legislation and repealing apartheid-era policies.

Demarcation aims to rectify past injustices and inequalities inflicted by apartheid, particularly in public service delivery, as highlighted by Griggs (1998). The process intends to promote rural-urban integration and facilitate economic and social development. However, traditional communal land and rural villages were often divided by municipal boundaries, leading to disputes and resistance from traditional leaders, as revealed by Nxumalo and Whittal (2013:326). Kanyane et al. (2017:213) suggest that traditional leaders need help adapting to modernity, raising concerns that they may become obsolete if not effectively integrated into the state and society. This statement underscores traditional leaders' challenge in exercising their authority in the democratic era, where constitutional supremacy supersedes their traditional powers. Consequently, the traditional leaders' inability to function as before democracy leads to confusion regarding their role and influence in contemporary governance structures.

Additionally, many South African municipalities, particularly in rural areas, struggle with unemployment, weak infrastructure, and poor public services, as noted by Ncube & Monnakgotla (2016). The Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) has proposed amalgamating municipalities to enhance their self-reliance and functionality. Dube (2021:498) also points out that financial sustainability is crucial, as many municipalities rely heavily on grants to fulfil their constitutional obligations. COGTA's proposal addresses this dependency and improves financial viability through demarcation and amalgamation. The emphasis on financial viability and enhancing service delivery underscores that municipal demarcation in South Africa since 1994 has been conducted to serve the greater public good, as noted by various scholars.

Despite community resistance, the 2016 amalgamation of municipalities was partly motivated by enhancing financial sustainability. Kanyane, Adonis & Rule (2021:109) also note that government proposals emphasise that financial viability is crucial for self-reliance and reducing dependency on grants is essential for municipalities' long-term stability. This means that the decision of the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) to grant Malamulele its Municipality stemmed from the recognition that Thulamela Municipality lacked the financial viability to serve many communities adequately. Therefore, the establishment of Collins Chabane Municipality aimed to enhance service delivery. Moreover, the rationale behind demarcation practices suggests that the decisions of the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) are not intended to spite anyone but rather to improve living conditions. Despite challenges from various communities, COGTA's initiatives seek to address dysfunctionality and enhance financial sustainability through demarcation and amalgamation. This section has outlined how the demarcation process works and the underlying rationale behind it. The subsequent section will focus on the implications and consequences of this process.

4.3 Findings

In this section, the findings from the interviews will be summarised, acknowledging the richness and complexity of the data. Due to the depth of the information gathered, it is impractical to present each participant's responses verbatim. Instead, a general overview of the common themes and perspectives expressed by the participants will be provided for each question. Where there are variations or divergent views among participants, these will be highlighted. It is important to note that the raw findings, including direct quotes from participants, will be utilised in the subsequent section, where the data will be analysed and correlated with existing literature.

1. How did you personally perceive the protests that happened in Malamulele and Vuwani, and how did they impact your community?

The participants from Malamulele perceived the protests as primarily driven by service delivery issues. They believed that the Thulamela Municipality focused its services predominantly on Venda-speaking areas, neglecting their own communities. They attributed this disparity to tribalism, corruption, and favouritism, suggesting that job and economic opportunities were disproportionately allocated to Venda-speaking individuals. The protest aimed to pressure the government to establish a separate Municipality for Malamulele. The

participants also acknowledged the tribal remarks made during the protests. On the other hand, the participants from Vuwani viewed the protest as a response to the decision to include them in the newly formed Collins Chabane Municipality in Malamulele. They rejected this decision by the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB), claiming they needed to be consulted and expressing their unwillingness to be governed by Vatsonga leaders. Both groups of participants highlighted the negative impact of the protests on their communities, including disruptions to schooling, commercial activities, roadblocks, closed shops, and the interruption of municipal services. However, the participants from Malamulele perceived the Vuwani protest as being driven by tribal motivations.

2. Can you share your own beliefs about the causes of the conflicts during the protests, and how did these beliefs influence your involvement or perspective?

The participants from Malamulele expressed that the conflict stemmed from a lack of essential services such as water, electricity, development, jobs, and economic opportunities. They specifically highlighted the role of tribalism, alleging that the Thulamela Municipality utilised tribal divisions to deny them access to these opportunities and services. On the other hand, the participants from Vuwani stated that the conflict arose due to insufficient consultation and being moved from a Municipality providing services to them. They expressed uncertainty about whether the new Municipality could offer the same level of services and expressed concern about the implications of this transition.

3. What were the main factors that you think fuelled tensions and conflicts during the protests, and how did this affect your daily life?

Participants from Malamulele attributed the tensions and conflicts during the protests to tribal origin and grievances regarding service delivery, particularly noting damage to shops owned by Venda people. Conversely, participants from Vuwani highlighted the lack of government response and consultation as key factors fuelling tensions. Additionally, they mentioned that the presence of police exacerbated the situation. Both groups of participants mentioned disruptions to daily life, including lack of transportation, roadblocks, school closures, and shop shutdowns, as significant impacts of the protests. Furthermore, one participant from Vuwani expressed frustration over being unable to pursue their desired career in medicine due to disruptions caused by the protests. In contrast, another participant mentioned economic hardship resulting from the forced closure of their shop, impacting their ability to provide for their family. Additionally, a participant residing between Malamulele and Vuwani described

the inconvenience of taking a longer route to work due to blocked roads, incurring additional costs.

4. In your view, how have historical events and divisions in the community continued to shape the way people interact and the decisions made by local leaders?

All participants unanimously highlighted apartheid's significant role in fostering division and tribalism between Tsonga and Venda people, attributing it to the creation of Bantustans. They viewed the manifestations of division and conflict during both protests as legacies of apartheid-era decisions, particularly emphasising the success of apartheid's divide-and-rule tactics. While some participants from Malamulele expressed scepticism about possibly repairing relations between Vatsonga and VhaVenda, others from Malamulele and Vuwani advocated for unity, viewing the division as artificial and imposed by apartheid policies. They emphasised the need for embracing each other as one people and rejecting the hate and division perpetuated by apartheid. Furthermore, participants from both areas believed that local leaders were influenced by ethnic considerations in decision-making, with those from Malamulele citing disparities in job opportunities, services, and tenders favouring Venda people. At the same time, those from Vuwani expressed concerns about Tsonga leaders neglecting their communities' needs.

5. Have you noticed how people's ethnic backgrounds influence local government representation and leadership roles in your community? How do you think it affects decision-making?

The participants from Malamulele expressed concerns about job opportunities being predominantly allocated to Venda-speaking individuals, creating a perception of one-sidedness and favouritism. They also pointed out that strategic and senior positions in the Municipality were often given to Venda people. One participant from Malamulele mentioned that this situation fostered a culture of political and cadre deployment, where individuals may be appointed based on political affiliation rather than qualifications. In Vuwani, the participants had differing views regarding the ethnic composition of leadership positions. Some participants suggested that a balanced representation of Tsonga and Venda individuals, with a 50/50 distribution, would be ideal. They viewed this to avoid bias or favouritism. However, one participant from Vuwani raised concerns about nepotism and patronage, emphasising that it raises ethical concerns. It is important to note that some participants from Malamulele mentioned that the media has exaggerated the issue, as there are public

engagement processes in the government where decisions are made. They believed that it is challenging to influence these decisions. However, another participant from Vuwani highlighted that the situation perpetuates nepotism and patronage, which is an ethical concern.

6. What do you think about efforts made by the government to address ethnic divisions and promote understanding in Malamulele and Vuwani? Have you personally witnessed any of these efforts?

Participants from Malamulele expressed divergent views regarding the relationship between the two ethnic groups. While some acknowledged ongoing efforts towards reconciliation, others believed the divide between the groups was irreparable, beyond the government's capacity to mend. However, those who perceived efforts for reconciliation noted initiatives by the Collins Chabane Municipality, such as hosting events in Vuwani and providing services there. They also highlighted instances of free transportation from Vuwani to Malamulele for residents to attend local government public hearings, demonstrating collaborative efforts to address community concerns. Similarly, participants from Vuwani also acknowledged government and municipal efforts, indicating visible attempts by the Collins Chabane Municipality to bridge divides and foster cooperation between the communities.

7. How have your personal experiences with ethnic conflicts and the demarcation process affected the way you view governance and your own identity?

Participants from Malamulele expressed the view that the demarcation protests had positive outcomes, notably in improving service provision. However, concerns were raised about the government's need for more consultation, highlighting the importance of engaging with communities to address grievances. One participant specifically mentioned perceived coercion in accepting the government's decision among residents of Vuwani. Participants emphasised the need for unity between the Venda and Tsonga people, advocating for a collaborative approach to governance. Conversely, participants from Vuwani highlighted the absence of physical conflict between the Venda and Tsonga people during the protests as indicative of their shared identity. They suggested that public hearings and engagement with both Venda and Tsonga leaders could have facilitated a more inclusive decision-making process regarding municipal boundaries.

8. Regarding the protests in Malamulele and Vuwani, what were the main concerns expressed by you and your community members, and do you think these concerns led to any changes in local governance?

Participants from Malamulele raised concerns about the lack of service delivery, nepotism, corruption, and tribalism within the Thulamela Municipality. They reported that Malamulele as a town had experienced development issues, including the closure of schools, businesses, and government offices. Conversely, participants from Vuwani expressed grievances about the inflammatory language used during the protests, which exacerbated tribalism and violence. They felt communities relocated to Collins Chabane without their consent and proper consultation. Additionally, participants from Vuwani noted that the presence of Makhado Municipality offices in Vuwani had provided good services, leading to concerns about the potential closure of these offices if services were relocated to Malamulele. Both groups of participants highlighted the negative impact of the protests, including school closures, property damage, business shutdowns, and roadblocks. However, participants from Malamulele viewed the protests as a catalyst for positive change, citing improved service provision, job creation, youth employment, town development, and high rankings for municipal performance. In contrast, participants from Vuwani believed that the protests had not achieved their objectives and had resulted in significant damage to schools, government offices, shops, and banks, with some establishments never being rebuilt.

9. What do you believe the government or MDB should do to successfully demarcate areas with multiple ethnic groups living together?

Both participants from Malamulele and Vuwani expressed a shared belief in the importance of public participation. They emphasised that the government should actively listen to and consult with the affected communities. They highlighted the need for open dialogue, where the government listens to the concerns and desires of the people and provides them with comprehensive information. The participants emphasised the importance of collaboration and working together to address the issues. Additionally, the participants stressed the significance of job creation and ensuring that the provision of services is not negatively affected. They advocated for generating employment opportunities within the communities and ensuring that essential services are delivered effectively.

10. Based on your experiences and beliefs, what suggestions or recommendations can you offer to promote better governance, reconciliation, and development in diverse tribal communities like Malamulele and Vuwani?

The participants unanimously expressed several key ideas, including the importance of treating all individuals with equality, prioritising youth employment, avoiding divisions and promoting unity, striving for equitable opportunities for each tribe, conducting consultations and public hearings to engage the community, fostering unity among traditional leaders, aligning actions with community preferences, encouraging the involvement of the national government for observation and support, ensuring the provision of essential services, addressing unemployment, promoting transparent information sharing, and emphasising the need for on-site observations by the government rather than relying solely on reports.

4.4. Discussions

This section discusses and analyses the themes that emerged from the interviews with the participants, which include service delivery, public participation, tribalism, and apartheid. Relevant quotes from the data will be extracted and explained in conjunction with empirical research. The empirical research will help clarify the data and the themes that arose during the interviews.

Theme 1: Service Delivery

One of the themes that emerged from interviews with participants in Malamulele and Vuwani was service delivery. The people of Malamulele believed that their protest was justified because they advocated for better service provision. On the other hand, residents of Vuwani felt that the newly established Collins Chabane Municipality in Malamulele would need to serve them adequately. Since Makhado Municipality was closer, they would have to travel longer distances and incur expenses to access certain services. This section explores the dynamics of the service delivery protests in Malamulele and Vuwani in line with existing literature. It will shed light on the causes of violent protests in South Africa and provide a contextual framework for understanding the protests in Malamulele and Vuwani in 2015 and 2016.

Netswera and Kgalane (2014:262) emphasise the significance of understanding the historical links and genesis of protests in South Africa. While this background does not justify violence, it provides valuable insight into the entrenched nature of local government service delivery

protests over the years. It also highlights that the transition to a new democratic dispensation alone may not have been enough to overcome the deeply ingrained societal culture of expressing anger and frustration towards local governments. According to Xolani, Jili, Mkhize, and Mlambo (2022), the democratic era in South Africa brought hope to the majority of South Africans who had experienced marginalisation during the years of apartheid. The advent of democracy in South Africa was accompanied by high expectations, particularly in terms of improved services and living conditions for historically marginalised black communities. According to Mashamaite (2014:231), service delivery protests in municipalities nationwide have reached an unprecedented level since the dawn of democracy.

During the interviews, Participant 5 shared their perspective on the causes of the protests in Malamulele and Vuwani

“We embarked on strike, people of Malamulele embarked on strike because there was no service delivery in terms of tar roads, electricity and everything, yah so yah so even people of Vuwani embarked on their own strike but people of Vuwani didn’t want to be under mmh Malamulele municipality so they want to have their own municipalities”.

The view expressed by Participant 5 suggests that the people of Malamulele saw their protest as justified and necessary due to a lack of services from the Thulamela local government municipality. In contrast, the residents of Vuwani opposed being governed by the Vatsonga in Malamulele, potentially due to elements of tribalism or because they were more comfortable with the services provided by the Makhado local government municipality. This discomfort contributed to their objections regarding the proposed move to Malamulele. These sentiments contributed significantly to the service delivery protests in both Malamulele and Vuwani. This assertion by Participant 5 shows that community members expect the government to provide basic services equitably across all communities. Therefore, the protests were a long-overdue solution aimed at pushing the government to recognise its responsibility to deliver services to all communities.

While the advent of democracy was initially met with great enthusiasm, as indicated by other scholars, this sentiment has been short-lived and replaced by a lack of confidence and despair due to the government's inability to deliver quality services, especially to historically disadvantaged individuals, as promised in 1994. Mashamaite (2014:231) further explains that

the despair and lack of confidence in the government stem from the expectation that the African National Congress-led government would alleviate poverty and improve the quality of life for most black South Africans. Alexander (2010) highlights that service delivery protests have become a prevalent trend across South Africa since 2004. Protests have become a means to voice concerns and express frustration with the government's provision of inadequate services. Managa (2012:1) agrees that the poor allocation of services, accompanied by protests, has placed local government municipalities under the spotlight. Reddy (2016:2) describes service delivery in the context of local government as the provision of municipal goods, benefits, activities, and satisfaction that are considered public and enhance the quality of life for residents. Based on this description, it is evident that protests, including the ones in Malamulele in 2015 and Vuwani in 2016, emerged because the municipal goods and benefits intended to improve the lives of the communities were not being provided, thus prompting the decision to protest and this was confirmed by participant 2.

“So, the Malamulele protest was a game changer to the community whereas something very important because, ehh, now you can see the development around Malamulele”.

This view expressed by Participant 2 suggests that the Malamulele protest was a necessary catalyst that significantly impacted the community, marking a turning point in their development and service delivery. It brought about notable crucial and beneficial changes, as evidenced by the visible development in and around Malamulele. It is also very important to contextualise the term game changer expressed by Participant 2. The term "game changer" in the context of the Malamulele protest refers to an event which significantly altered the existing situation. In the realm of social movements or protests, a game changer often represents a pivotal moment that leads to substantial shifts in public opinion, policy, or community development. For instance, the Malamulele protest acted as a game changer by mobilising community members to demand better service delivery and governance. This protest not only highlighted the inadequacies of local government but also galvanised residents to take collective action. As a result, it prompted the national government and the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) officials to respond to their needs, leading to visible improvements in infrastructure and services.

Alexander (2010:25) also acknowledges that service delivery protests in South Africa can be traced back to the apartheid era. Sithole and Mathonsi (2015:6) argue that since the transition

to democracy, the government, led by the African National Congress (ANC), has faced challenges in meeting the needs of citizens, as evidenced by consistent service delivery protests throughout the country. These protests persist despite implementing progressive policies and legislation to serve the population, as Ngubane (2005) and Pretorioise and Schueink (2007) outlined. For example, The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was a key policy measure introduced by the African National Congress (ANC) in 1994 in South Africa. It aimed to address historical injustices and improve the living conditions of historically marginalised communities by providing essential services and infrastructure (Ndasna and Mxunyelwa, 2022:1). According to Williams (2006:200), an emphasis was placed on nation-building and improving the standards of living and quality of life for all South Africans in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). This, in turn, highlighted the growing importance of local government concerning development planning at the grassroots level. The RDP recognised the significance of empowering local communities and involving them in decision-making to achieve inclusive and sustainable development outcomes. The majority of black South Africans expected enhanced services to address the enduring legacy of apartheid, particularly in municipal services such as water, electricity, and roads. Therefore, the failure to deliver services effectively to communities is seen as a failure by a democratic government to meet the needs and expectations of the people. Participant 6 had this to say about the service delivery protest in Malamulele.

“It was an issue of people of Malamulele fighting for their own municipality on the basis that they are not getting services from Thulamela. They are not getting services from Makhado. So, their biggest concern was not the matter of protest, but it was on the fact that they weren't getting services. But also remember that in South Africa, we have a very strong culture of protest. The government that we have now in South Africa, it is a result of protest. Anything that we own in South Africa, it originates from protest. So, I would simply say that protest was informed by the fact that many people in South Africa, when they want to raise their own issues, they go through a protest. And people of Malamulele felt the need that it's time that they get enough service. And I'm telling you, there was no service in Malamulele. And this is my own opinion, because now that we've got the Municipality, we have achieved a lot. There are so many roads in Malamulele. There are many tunnels. There's electricity. I mean, many households have been electrified. As we are speaking now, when you go around Malamulele town, you've got market stalls, more than one. So, the protest was very clear.”

The participant emphasises that the Malamulele protest was about more than just tribal tensions or a simple expression of dissent; it was a focused demand for essential municipal services. While some may view protests through a lens of tribal conflict, this perspective shifts the narrative to one of community unity in seeking accountability from the local government. The residents were not merely protesting for the sake of protest but were driven by a legitimate grievance regarding inadequate service delivery from the Thulamela Local Government Municipality. This distinction highlights that the protest was a strategic response to systemic neglect, aiming to secure rights and resources rather than an expression of tribal animosity. Ultimately, the participant contends that the protest was a crucial step toward securing meaningful improvements in their community. This reinforces the notion that civic engagement can bridge tribal divisions, similar to other significant protests in the past that resulted in tangible changes. Such collective action highlights the potential for communities to unite in pursuit of common goals, regardless of ethnic differences.

Nengwekhulu (2019) argues that service delivery is associated with the urgent provision of various services to citizens. Pithouse (2017) emphasises that the protests are not solely driven by economic benefits but also by the material benefits of social inclusion. This implies that demonstrations like the ones witnessed in Malamulele in 2015 and Vuwani in 2016 aimed at achieving not only economic but also social inclusion and improved living conditions. Sithole and Mathonsi (2015:5) posit that service delivery protests are closely linked to community governance, with communities resorting to protests as a response to poor service delivery. Booysen (2007:21) also highlights that service delivery protests usually occur because people struggle to make their voices heard by those in power, and community protests serve as a statement urging leaders to address their concerns. When asked about concerns expressed by community members during the Malamulele 2015 protest, participant 5 said:

“it was just poor service delivery and uhm, even the issue of Jobs, Jobs that were given to the Venda only”.

Participant 5's statement highlights frustrations over poor service delivery and perceived favouritism in job allocation, specifically toward the Venda community. These issues contributed to feelings of injustice and disenfranchisement among residents, fueling grievances that led to the protests. The combination of inadequate services and inequitable employment opportunities underscores the community's demand for accountability and

change. According to Khambule, Nomdo, and Siswana (2019:53), when the African National Congress (ANC) led government emerged, they positioned themselves as saviours. They promised free housing, jobs, education, and sanitation. However, it became evident that these promises were not achievable quickly (Khambule et al., 2019:54). The failure to deliver on these promises has been a critical factor driving mass community protests at national and local levels. The protests, such as those in Malamulele in 2015, can be seen as a way of holding the government accountable for its commitments. It can be argued that the ANC was ill-prepared to govern a complex country like South Africa, as indicated by the protests related to service delivery. Mamokhere (2019:373) concurs with other scholars that these protests respond to unfulfilled promises. Mamokhere also provides an example of service delivery protests in the Great Tzaneen Municipality, where the reasons behind the protests were similar to those in Malamulele. This demonstrates that service delivery protests are not isolated incidents but are part of a broader governance issue and the unfulfilled promises made by the government. On the other hand, Manala (2010:529) argues that communities should always be prepared to hold leaders accountable. This perspective highlights that accountability and service delivery cannot be understood in isolation. In other words, communities are responsible for ensuring leaders fulfil their promises and deliver services effectively.

Goebel (2011) argues that mass protests in various communities, particularly among the poor, are not solely centred around the slow delivery of services such as water, roads, and electricity. Instead, they expose corruption issues, limited economic opportunities, elite capture of wealth, and political exclusion of people experiencing poverty. This is despite the ANC-led government's efforts to improve services in black communities and transform municipal services through the demarcation of municipalities. Botes (2018:244) asserts that government unresponsiveness, nepotism, poverty, and lack of employment often lead to mass community protests. In the case of Malamulele, for example, the protests were driven by the perceived unresponsiveness of the Thulamela Local Government Municipality in providing quality services to the community and addressing their concerns promptly. Scholars such as Alexander and Pfaffe (2014:1) argue that community protests should be seen as expressing discontent among poor communities toward the government, and this was highlighted by Participant 5.

“What I am trying to say is that there was a poor service delivery, people were not happy of how Thulamela Municipal, Do things”.

The statement by Participant 5 underscores a widespread dissatisfaction with the Thulamela Municipality's approach to service delivery. The participant sentiment suggests that the residents of Malamulele perceived a significant gap between their needs and the municipality's responses, leading to frustration and unhappiness. This sentiment reflects a broader concern that essential services such as water, electricity, and infrastructure were not being provided effectively. Consequently, this lack of adequate service delivery contributed to a growing sense of discontent within the communities of Malamulele, motivating residents to voice their grievances through protests. Most importantly, the statement highlights the critical importance of responsive governance in addressing community needs.

Following the above, Alexander (2014) categorises protests into peaceful, disruptive, and violent, with violent protests involving property damage. Botes (2018:244) maintains that mass community protests turn violent when peaceful avenues for addressing concerns with the government have been exhausted. In the case of Malamulele, the community had been raising concerns since before 2013, as claimed by community leaders and media reports during the protests. Therefore, the 2015 protest occurred after many years of engagement with the government and the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB). While violent protests cannot be justified, it can be argued that the people of Vuwani also resorted to violent protests after exhausting peaceful means, such as the Polokwane High Court. According to Hugh (2008:6), violent protests in the local government sphere indicate broader governance issues that can potentially escalate into a revolution. The frustration of unfulfilled promises regarding service provision primarily drives these protests. Furthermore, Hugh (2008:7) explains that some argue that violent protests are often a reaction to the presence of police, as was witnessed in the 2015 protests in Malamulele, where property damage and road blockades occurred following the visibility of police officials. However, historical traditions suggest that people may subconsciously recognise the effectiveness of violence in achieving specific objectives, particularly in exerting pressure on the apartheid government. This sentiment was echoed by Participant 5, who noted that South Africa has a history of protests that have led to tangible changes and compelled the government to respond to citizens' needs. Consequently, the residents of Malamulele and Vuwani may have subconsciously concluded that violent protests such as shutting down transportation, halting commercial activities, and

closing schools and essential government services would effectively pressure the government and the Municipal Demarcation Board to address their concerns.

Therefore, violence is sometimes recklessly employed as a means to attract government attention and ensure that community voices are heard. Mamokhere (2023:61) supports the notion that service delivery protests in South Africa can effectively pressure government officials to respond to community demands for improved services. These protests often garner increased media attention, highlighting the issues at stake and generating public pressure for action. In the cases of the Malamulele protests in 2015 and Vuwani in 2016, media coverage brought these issues to the national spotlight, particularly since the protests impacted various sectors, including education, health, and the economy. Notably, the radicalism and resistance demonstrated by the people of Malamulele and Vuwani played a significant role in capturing the government's attention. Furthermore, the criminal acts associated with these protests added urgency to the situation, as damage to government infrastructure, which cost millions to repair, pressed authorities to respond more swiftly to the community's needs.

By bringing attention to the grievances and frustrations of the community, service delivery protests can contribute to pushing for meaningful change and accountability from the government. Mpehle (2012:214) highlights that the government introduced policies promoting equity and fairness. However, if these policies are not adequately implemented, monitored, and evaluated, they may not yield the desired results. It emphasises the importance of doing things correctly to ensure effective governance. Nengwekhulu (2009:344) adds that for the public service to perform optimally, there needs to be neutrality in the employment and placement of public servants, particularly in higher positions within public institutions. This observation is relevant to the case of Malamulele, where protesters indicated that jobs and services were disproportionately given to the Venda tribe, implying a lack of neutrality. Interview with Participant 5 also pointed out that personnel placement in public offices was one-sided. These instances highlight how service delivery protests are often a response to governance issues and the allocation of resources.

Participant 5

“The issue of Jobs, Jobs that were given to the Vendas only”

Participant 5 emphasises a perception of favouritism in employment practices, specifically that jobs are predominantly awarded to individuals from the Venda communities. This belief exacerbates ethnic tensions, conflict, and grievances within the broader community, fostering feelings of exclusion and unfairness among those who feel marginalised. The inequitable allocation of jobs intensifies dissatisfaction, as residents view it as a clear indicator of systemic bias in local governance. Consequently, these frustrations regarding employment practices significantly fueled the protests, as community members rallied against both economic inequality and inadequate service delivery. In his research, Botes (2018:244) outlines six reasons South Africa experiences community protests: lack of political trust, political accountability, poor services, economic hardships, the desire for development, and lack of consultation. Furthermore, Xolani et al. (2022:134) agree with other scholars that the causes of service delivery protests in South Africa are multifaceted but often revolve around accountability, transparency, and a lack of dedication from leaders to provide services to impoverished communities. Managa (2012:2) suggests that service delivery protests are to occur and escalate in areas characterised by poverty and unemployment. This aligns with the situation in Malamulele, where the people demanded to be separated from Thulamela, as poverty and unemployment were significant factors contributing to their dissatisfaction.

According to Breakfast and Nomarwayi (2019:110), dissatisfaction with governance performance is common worldwide. Therefore, municipal service delivery protests in South Africa are not unusual but a manifestation of people's discontent with government services. Breakfast and Nomarwayi (2019:110) argue that the Arab Spring is a classic example of this phenomenon. The protests in countries such as Egypt and Tunisia aimed to voice concerns about socioeconomic conditions, including unemployment and poverty. The performance of municipalities in terms of service provision has not been impressive despite local governments being granted authority to manage and distribute resources and services. Xolani et al. (2022:134) highlight that while services in urban areas have improved, there remains a significant backlog in rural areas, and the resolution of these issues is progressing slowly. Unfortunately, worse-case scenarios are being overlooked, such as the neglect experienced by the people of Malamulele at the hands of the Thulamela Local Government Municipality. Analysing the protests in Malamulele in 2015 and Vuwani in 2016 reveals these six reasons. The people of Malamulele sought to hold the Thulamela Municipality accountable, demanded development in their area, faced economic hardships, and experienced inadequate service provision. In contrast, the people of Vuwani primarily protested against the lack of public

consultation and political accountability in the decision to establish the Collins Chabane Local Government Municipality, which they believed would negatively impact their access to services. Xolani et al. (2022) emphasise that rural areas in South Africa have received limited attention since 1994, resulting in significant challenges for the residents who need help to make ends meet. The protests in Malamulele in 2015 highlight the negative impact of isolating and neglecting rural communities on service delivery. Consequently, a significant disparity exists in services between urban and rural areas. Xolani et al. (2022:133) argue that this disparity is particularly evident in the provision of services.

According to Breakfast, Nomarwayi, and Bradshaw (2020:14857), service delivery protests manifest a dysfunctional relationship between people, communities, and local leaders. This same argument can be applied to the protests in Malamulele and Vuwani, which signify a breakdown in the relationship between local communities, leaders, and the Municipality. Breakfast et al. (2020) also note that these service delivery protests often escalate into violence, particularly during election periods. This was evident in Vuwani, where protests occurred during local government elections, and the community boycotted the elections. Breakfast et al. (2020) suggest that election periods provide an opportune time for leveraging pressure, as political parties are preoccupied with campaigning and are more likely to address the concerns raised. When people feel that their problems are ignored and services are lacking, they often use the election period to express their discontent. Consequently, their concerns are vocalised through street protests, demanding improved service delivery (Gumede and Dekenk, 2015:3). In the case of Vuwani, the community utilised this period to reject the decision made by the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) to relocate them to the new Malamulele Collins Chabane Municipality.

Participant 4 said the following about how the decisions of Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) contributed to the protest.

“If they are falling under Thulamela then they are not getting service delivery that they want whilst us based in Vuwani we were getting service delivery from Makhado. Now, if you say you move us to Malamulele, remember in Vuwani there are offices there, municipality offices, police stations and whatever, which is closer to the surrounding area like everyone is able to access it, now if you say we move you to Makhado it means that we are closing those offices and people have to travel far to report whatever they want to report, if they want services err,

municipal servers, they have to go to Malamulele. I think it was unfair err... it was unfair because like people are thinking for themselves only without including other communities around or hearing the perspective of what other people are thinking, who are in those communities.”

Participant 4's statement critiques the decisions made by the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) regarding municipal boundaries and service delivery. They express concern that being placed under Thulamela would diminish access to essential services, as residents of Vuwani had been receiving better services from Makhado. The participant highlights the practical implications of the proposed boundary changes, noting that relocating them to Malamulele would close local municipal offices and police stations, forcing residents to travel longer distances for essential services. This inconvenience underscores a perceived lack of consideration for the needs and perspectives of the affected communities. Ultimately, the participant views the MDB's decisions as unfair, reflecting a broader frustration with governance that fails to account for the realities of local residents.

Corruption has been consistently identified as a critical factor contributing to service delivery protests, as highlighted by various scholars, including Booysen (2007:23). During interviews with participant 7, corruption within the Thulamela Local Government Municipality was cited as a significant issue affecting resource allocation and service delivery in the community. Consequently, corruption within local government municipalities perpetuates and amplifies the occurrence of mass community protests. Xolani et al. (2022:133) argue that corruption leading to service delivery protests in local government often stems from tender politics and conflicts. They further state that the negative consequences of corrupt tender practices in local government include impeding service delivery, compromising the timely provision of services, and affecting overall municipal management. Ngcamu (2019:2) also asserts that favouritism and corruption are underlying causes of the protests witnessed in South Africa, a sentiment supported by Alexander (2010:37), who highlights corruption, cadre deployment, and poor financial management as explanations for mass community protests.

Participant 7

“I also believe there were people that were influencing this, people that were actually, in my understanding and view, were the beneficiaries either of tenders at the time. There were

people that were actually influencing the people around to be able to cause all the things that were happening. It was actually a sponsored strike in my understanding and view, so these are the people that have always stayed together.”

Participant 7 suggests that influential individuals played a role in instigating and influencing the events of the protest. According to the participant, these individuals were beneficiaries of tenders or had vested interests in the situation. They used their influence to manipulate and mobilise the people in the community to participate in the protest. One participant provided an example of employment opportunities predominantly given to members of a specific tribe, namely the Venda tribe. This indicates that Malamulele has remained underdeveloped under the leadership of the Thulamela Municipality, as services and resources were allocated based on favouritism. In my literature review, I also cited allegations made by the people of Malamulele that services were disproportionately directed to areas near Thohoyandou, where the majority spoke the Venda language. Thus, existing literature on service delivery protests confirms that favouritism can lead to such protests. Participant 2 indicated that favouritism fueled the conflict and tension during the Malamulele protest.

“you see, I’m mentioning this because ehh, I didn’t wanna mention the part of the jobs you see, the Municipality jobs are only got by people from Venda ehh, this and that ehh, is going together but these things, they build up to the frustrations that these people are looking down on us, they don’t give us enough service, they don’t render ehh (stuttering), the services that we need. Even if they do the basic things, some of the things, you know, the Municipality, sometimes they give out bursaries”.

Participant 2 highlights how perceived favouritism in job allocation, particularly favouring individuals from the Venda community, exacerbated frustrations during the Malamulele protest. This sense of exclusion creates a belief that the local government is neglecting their service delivery responsibilities and looking down on those from other communities. The participant notes that even minimal services are insufficient, further intensifying feelings of resentment. Additionally, mentioning bursaries indicates that while the municipality may offer some support, it often falls short of addressing broader systemic issues. Ngcamu (2019:7) explains these elements as closely related to nepotism, whereby municipal officials allegedly employ friends and family members without the necessary qualifications, resulting in poor financial management and service allocation.

To summarise, service delivery protests in South Africa, including the ones in Malamulele and Vuwani, are rooted in the expectations of improved services and living conditions following the transition to democracy. The protests highlight the government's failures in meeting the needs and expectations of historically marginalised communities, particularly in terms of municipal services. Various factors drive these protests, including poor service delivery, corruption, limited economic opportunities, political exclusion, lack of consultation, and the desire for development. While violent protests cannot be justified, they often occur due to grievances not adequately addressed peacefully. Understanding the underlying causes of service delivery protests can help inform policy and decision-making processes to address the concerns of communities and improve service provision in South Africa.

Theme 2: Public Participation

This section will explore the theme of public participation, which emerged through interviews with participants from Vuwani. It will further examine its historical, contextual, and theoretical foundations within municipal demarcation in South Africa. This section will use public engagement, involvement, and participation interchangeably. These terms all refer to the active and meaningful inclusion of the public in decision-making processes, policy development, and governance.

Public participation in the demarcation of municipal boundaries remains a highly contentious issue, often resulting in outbreaks of violent protests (Tong, 2019:2). The Vuwani protests in 2016 exemplify this, as communities strongly opposed the decision of the Municipal Demarcation Board to include them in the newly established Collins Chabane Municipality in Malamulele. The lack of community involvement in the decision-making process was identified as a primary cause of the violent protests in the Vuwani 2016 protest. Despite the Municipal Demarcation Board's (MDB) stated goals of improving service delivery, municipal function viability and governance, the residents of Vuwani felt marginalised and ignored, leading them to protest in the streets, expressing their discontent and rejection of the decision of the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) and this was pointed out by participant 3.

“I have forgotten, but I know, the protest was all about us falling under the Municipality at Malamulele, yeah, and then people didn’t want that. they wanted to fall under; I think Makhado”.

Participant 3's statement indicates that the primary motivation behind the protest was a desire for a different administrative structure, specifically a preference to be governed by the Makhado Local Government Municipality rather than the Collins Chabane Local Government Municipality in Malamulele. This reflects the community's fear of the unknown and the perception that their needs would not be met under the new municipality, highlighting a lack of trust and representation. The wish not to change municipality or governance underscores the importance of local autonomy and the belief that a more familiar municipality could better address their concerns. The Participant 3 sentiment illustrates how administrative boundaries can significantly impact community satisfaction and engagement in local governance. Similar protests have occurred in other areas, including Merafong and Matatiele, highlighting a systemic issue with public participation in demarcation processes. Failing to address this and employing public participation effectively could undermine constitutional democracy and the rule of law, as demonstrated in the 2017 Constitutional Court case of Matatiele Municipality v. President of the Republic of South Africa, where the court stressed the importance of involving communities and the people in municipal boundaries processes.

Understanding the historical context of apartheid in South Africa is crucial for comprehending the significance of public participation and other themes that have emerged from the interviews. The dark history of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa deeply impacted black communities, resulting in marginalisation, suppression, and the denial of political power and participation. To fully grasp the importance and relevance of these practices concerning the Vuwani 2016 protests, it is essential to trace their origins and understand why they were adopted by the African National Congress (ANC)-led government. The colonial and apartheid era in South Africa, marked by European colonisation and the establishment of racially discriminatory policies, laid the foundation for apartheid. Under apartheid, which officially began in 1948, the white minority government enforced a system of strict racial segregation and oppression (Mhlauli et al.,2015:205). Black communities were subjected to forced removals, restricted access to resources and opportunities, and a denial of fundamental human rights. Political power was concentrated in the hands of the white

minority, while black communities were systematically excluded from meaningful participation in decision-making processes. According to Kanyane and Koma (2006:4), transforming South Africa was significant; legislation and policy development played a crucial role from 1993 to 2000. During this time, public participation became integral to the process, allowing the country's citizens to actively contribute to shaping legislation. This period, spanning from 1994 to 1999, marked the first decade of democratic government in South Africa, during which public participation played a vital role in ensuring that the voices and perspectives of the people were heard and considered in developing legislation and policies (Kanyane and Koma, 2006:4). As a liberation movement, the African National Congress (ANC) fought against apartheid and championed democracy, equality, and inclusion. Throughout its struggle against apartheid and after occupying the Union Building in 1994, the ANC emphasised the importance and adoption of public participation as a means to rectify historical injustices and ensure that all citizens have a voice in shaping the future of South Africa. Moreover, Masango (2009: 122) also share the sentiment that when the ANC came to power with the advent of democracy in 1994, it sought to dismantle the oppressive structures of apartheid and establish a democratic system that prioritised public participation and representation.

The apartheid regime intentionally restricted the participation of the black population in policy-making and implementation (Davids et al., 2021:48). In other words, apartheid purposefully suppressed citizen voices in policy decisions and service delivery matters. Munzhedzi (2016:1) states that community participation has become synonymous with legitimate governance in post-apartheid South Africa. The ANC-led government aimed to address this issue by implementing inclusive policies, strategies and mechanisms that would enable unrestricted public participation in the policy process. In this context, public participation became a cornerstone of the post-apartheid government's approach to governance and decision-making. It was seen as a mechanism to empower historically marginalised communities, rectify past injustices, and foster inclusive and responsive governance (Mathebula, 2016:190). Recognising the need to include the voices and perspectives of all South Africans, especially those previously excluded, the ANC-led government implemented policies and mechanisms to promote public participation across various spheres, including the demarcation of municipal boundaries.

Therefore, understanding the historical legacy of apartheid and the ANC's commitment to public participation provides a crucial backdrop for comprehending the significance of public engagement in the Vuwani 2016 protests and its broader relevance in South Africa. It underscores the importance of redressing historical injustices, empowering marginalised communities, and building a democratic society founded on inclusivity and citizen involvement (Yu & Kanyane, 2021: 413). The apartheid era was characterised by racial segregation and exclusion. The regime systematically denied opportunities for black South Africans to participate in governance and decision-making processes. Public participation post-1994 serves as a political vehicle through which the government seeks input from the public, affected individuals, organisations, and entities before making decisions that affect them. This practice facilitates two-way communication, collaboration, and problem-solving to achieve representative and acceptable outcomes for the government and affected communities. Additionally, Mathebula (2016:192) writes that public participation empowers individuals and communities to engage with the government on issues affecting their lives actively. Yu & Kanyane (2021: 413) write that the advent of democracy in 1994 marked a significant shift, ushering in a new era of representative and participatory governance in South Africa. This transition addressed the legacy of apartheid exclusion by granting citizens the power to elect their leaders and participate in decision-making processes.

Following from above, Section 195(e) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) emphasises the principle of public administration that “People’s needs must be responded to, and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy-making”. This constitutional provision reaffirms the commitment to respecting and valuing the voices of the people. It underscores the importance of government responsiveness to address the population's needs and actively promote public participation in policy-making. Sebola (2016:56) writes that decisions made by the government without involving public engagement may be deemed unconstitutional and potentially illegal since they do not align with the principles of the Constitution. The constitutional democracy established in the post-apartheid era underscores the importance of participatory democracy, advocating for citizen involvement in decision-making across various domains, including lawmaking and governance. This constitutional framework emphasises the significance of public participation in strengthening democracy and its institutions, ensuring that individuals have a voice in matters that impact their lives and communities (Phago, 2008: 251). Ndebele and Lavhelani (2017:343) also concur with the constitutional provisions that emphasise

community involvement and promote social and economic development. They argue that local government has a developmental mandate, which necessitates prioritising the community's basic needs, adopting a development-oriented approach, being responsive to people's needs, and actively encouraging community participation in policymaking.

During the interviews, Participant 6 highlighted the conflicting perspectives within the Vuwani community regarding the proposed municipal changes.

” the people of Vuwani came with a contrary concern of saying they dont want to form part of this municipality. They rather remain in Thulamela, in Makhado. Unfortunately, there were some other people who were also willing to relocate to Collins Chabane. And due to so many people, the majority agreeing on the issue of Collins Chabane, they came here and worked here, and I mean, all went well. So, concerns will always be concerns, they will be there. People have got rights; they have their own rights in the constitution. So, they've got freedom of expression, so they can express themselves.”

Participant 6's statement reveals the complexities of community dynamics in Vuwani, where conflicting opinions about municipal boundaries emerged. The acknowledgment of constitutional rights, particularly the freedom of expression, underscores the importance of allowing all voices to be heard in the decision-making process. While the majority's preference for Collins Chabane prevailed, the concerns of those wishing to remain under Makhado highlight the need for inclusive dialogue. This tension between majority rule and minority rights is critical in democratic governance, emphasising that effective public participation must respect and address the diverse needs of the community. Participant 6's statement strongly suggests that fostering an environment where all residents can express their views is essential for achieving equitable and sustainable governance, especially regarding demarcation processes.

According to Managa (2012:3), public participation is one of the challenges that impact the functioning of local government. This statement by Managa (2012) confirms the significance of this practice. It can be interpreted to suggest that violent protests and conflicts between the government and the people arise when this principle is undermined. The participants from Vuwani revealed that they felt the government ignored their voices and that they were not allowed to participate in the process. This highlights the importance of ensuring meaningful

public engagement to avoid such grievances and foster a sense of inclusivity and ownership in decision-making processes. The participants further revealed that the protest expressed dissatisfaction and frustration due to their exclusion from local decision-making processes and the perceived lack of accountability by municipal officials and local leaders representing them in government forums (Managa, 2012:3-4). This indicates that public participation establishes a mutually beneficial relationship between the people and the government and holds government leaders accountable for their decisions. According to the people of Vuwani, the lack of public involvement and contribution to important decisions made by the municipal board made them feel disconnected from their communities. This lack of ownership led to the emergence of violent protests in 2016. Kanyane et al. (2020:7) also affirmed that a crucial factor at the core of the crisis in Vuwani is the matter of consultation or public participation in the demarcation process.

Participant 4 had this to say about the need for more community involvement.

“Now, if you say you move us to Malamulele, remember in Vuwani there are offices there, Municipality offices, police stations and whatever, which is closer to the surrounding area like everyone is able to access it, now if you say we move you to Makhado it means that we are closing those offices and people have to travel far to report whatever they want to report, if they want services err, municipal services, they have to go to Malamulele. I think it was unfair err... it was unfair because like people are thinking for themselves only without including other communities around or hearing the perspective of what other people are thinking, who are in those communities”.

The participant underscores the critical need for inclusive decision-making when it comes to community governance and administrative changes. Participant 4 highlighted that moving residents, Vuwani, who were under Makhado Local Government Municipality, to Collin Chabane Local Government Municipality in Malamulele would disrupt access to essential services, such as municipal offices and police stations, which are currently nearby. This change would require residents to travel farther for services, creating significant inconvenience and potentially undermining their ability to engage with local governance. By deeming the decision "unfair," the participant points to a lack of consideration for all affected communities' diverse needs and perspectives. This sentiment stresses that effective

governance should involve listening to and incorporating the viewpoints of various stakeholders to ensure equitable outcomes for everyone involved.

Public participation instils a sense of ownership in communities regarding projects and decisions that affect them. The absence of public input in decision-making made the residents of Vuwani feel excluded and undermined, resulting in their frustration and resorting to protests to express their grievances. Shai (2017:361) provides an example of another case where communities, specifically in Oaks Village, rejected a decision made by the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB). In this instance, the people and communities contested that the MDB displayed a bias towards the ANC-led government and did not adequately consider public participation when determining ward boundaries that affected Oaks and Willows villages. These sentiments mirror the concerns expressed by the people of Vuwani, who also believe that the MDB showed bias, failed to consult with the community, and made decisions to appease the people of Malamulele at the expense of the wishes and interests of the Vuwani communities.

In light of the view that the people of Vuwani were not consulted, participant 5 during the interview had this to say:

"Let first indicate what happened, remember there was, is it called consultation. Before the Government decided to give the these two ethnic groups own Municipality, There was a consultation that took place at Thohoyandou, there some Venda speaking people who were not interested in Malamulele having it own Municipality, So what I mean is that seemly the conflict is there and will continue to be there and I don't know until when, So as I said earlier that the relationship between this two ethnic groups, it won't end now, so it will continue, So according to my observation. Yes we are living next to one another ,The conflict is there it will always be there, The problem will not be solved, And I think we are going to live with this until then, it won't won't be solved now, there is a deep problem between this two, and not only the People of Malamulele, As long as you speak Xitsonga whether you are from Malamulele or you are from Bungeni, the problem were are talking about now is not only experienced by the people of Malamulele, You go to Giyani they experience the same problem, You go to Elim, Elim is Hlanganani, they also experience the same problem".

Participant 5's statement highlights the deep-seated ethnic tensions between the Venda and Tsonga communities, suggesting that the claim of inadequate consultation regarding the establishment of a municipality in Malamulele is misleading. Participant 5's statement highlights that there were consultations held in Thohoyandou, where some Venda speakers opposed granting Malamulele its own municipality, indicating that the conflict is rooted in historical grievances and competition for resources and political power. This perspective suggests that the Venda community's reluctance to support Malamulele's municipal independence stems from fears of losing economic opportunities and influence, particularly given their dominant positions in local governance and employment. Furthermore, Participant 5 implies that the ongoing tensions are not isolated to Vuwani but are part of a broader pattern affecting other areas, such as Giyani and Elim, where similar issues persist. This acknowledgement of widespread ethnic conflict reinforces the notion that the struggle for recognition and resources among different groups is a significant barrier to resolving these disputes. The statement emphasises the need for a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play, highlighting how historical and socio-economic factors continue to shape relationships between these communities, even affecting and compromising government practices such as public participation.

Sebola (2017:27) emphasises that a meaningful and robust public participation practice acknowledges the people as the central participants in public policy decision-making. The events that unfolded in Vuwani and the allegations made by the communities do not align with this ideal and meaningful expression of public participation, as highlighted by Sebola (2017). According to Sebola (2017:28-29), the principle of public participation is closely linked to information communication. Meaningful public participation can only occur when there is a continuous flow of information to the public, facilitating interaction between the government, local leaders, and the communities or people. In the case of Vuwani, the residents complained about the government's lack of communication.

When asked about what the government could have done better in Vuwani or could do better in future demarcation processes, participant 4 said the following:

“err, the first thing that the government must do is to sit down with the communities and... come with a strategy of communicating with them what is it that they want to see, what changes do they want”.

Participant 4 emphasises the critical importance of open communication and community engagement in governance. They suggest that the government should actively involve communities in discussions about their needs and desired changes. By prioritising such dialogue, the government can foster a sense of ownership among residents, ensuring that their perspectives are valued and considered in decision-making processes. This approach promotes transparency and collaboration, which can lead to more effective and inclusive outcomes, particularly in future demarcation processes. participant 4 suggests that engaging with communities enhances trust in government and ensures that policies, decisions and changes reflect the genuine needs and aspirations of the people they serve. Rasila and Musitha (2017:2) support this claim by stating that the Pro-Makhado group, which consisted of community leaders and traditional leaders, reported minimal communication from the government. The only direct correspondence they received was a request from the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) urging the community to allow school attendance during a complete shutdown of educational, commercial, and social activities. This further reinforces the notion that there needed to be more effective communication between the government and the community, which hindered meaningful public participation in decision-making processes. According to Kanyane (2014:104), one of the underlying causes of violent service delivery protests is the breakdown of communication between municipalities and the communities. In light of this, it becomes crucial to suggest implementing public participation or community engagement initiatives. Sebola (2017) emphasises the importance of effectively communicating the public participation process to the participants. This highlights the idea that the government has a responsibility to provide people with complete information and communicate in a clear and accessible manner, enabling them to contribute meaningfully (Yu & Kanyane, 2021: 413).

Scholar Priscoli (1995) argues that although it may be challenging to encourage participation, this should not be used as an excuse to exclude communities and individuals from having the opportunity to participate in matters that impact their communities. In other words, difficulties in obtaining participation should not justify denying people their right to be involved in decision-making processes that affect them. Providing people with the opportunity to participate in policy-making and decision-making processes is crucial due to their democratic rights, interests, and needs being acknowledged within the broader government system. De Villiers (2001:4) states that public participation can have different interpretations for various individuals and organisations. However, at its core, it revolves

around the idea that people should have a voice in decision-making processes. The case of Vuwani reveals that the government has often applied the concept of public participation in a self-serving manner. Specifically, it should involve public hearings and allowing individuals to make submissions within a reasonable timeframe (Sebola, 2016:67).

Participant 7 emphasises that public participation should be integral to the demarcation process. *“Because their process (MDB) is to do the consultation and to also do the public participation”*.

The statement indicates that the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) has established procedures for consultation and public participation. This implies that, in their decision-making processes, the MDB must actively seek public input and involve community members. By doing so, the MDB aims to ensure that the processes are inclusive and reflect the interests and perspectives of the communities affected by any changes. This approach is essential for fostering transparency, accountability, and trust in governance, as it allows residents to have a voice in matters that directly impact their lives and local environments. Participant 7 assertion reveals that effective public participation can enhance the legitimacy of the MDB's decisions and contribute to more equitable outcomes for all stakeholders involved. Nnadozie (2013:99) also agrees that there is a pressing need to enhance and sustain community involvement through various platforms. These platforms include *izimbizo* (gatherings), ward committees, youth meetings, women's assemblies, and similar avenues. These scholars argue that by utilising such platforms, governments can actively engage with communities and promote meaningful participation. In the context of Vuwani, the residents say they should have been given the opportunity or proper notice to make submissions, indicating a need for meaningful public participation.

Following the above, Mathekga and Buccus (2016:12) argue that public participation necessitates a cooperative approach and a strong partnership between local government and the people they serve. This implies that local government should provide effective leadership and work closely with the communities. When applying this assertion to the Vuwani protest, it becomes evident that there was a lack of cooperation and partnership between the people and the government. The grievances expressed by the residents of Vuwani indicate a breakdown in the relationship between the community and the government, suggesting a failure to provide strong leadership and foster a collaborative approach to public

participation. Dube et al. (2021:245) highlight a potential issue with public involvement: the government often invites people to participate in forums where the rules of engagement and outcomes are predetermined. This practice undermines the true purpose of public participation and compromises its effectiveness. When the parameters and outcomes are predetermined, it can create a perception that the government is simply involving the public without genuinely considering their input or allowing for meaningful influence on decision-making processes. This challenges the authenticity and integrity of public participation, as it may be seen as a tokenistic gesture rather than a genuine effort to include diverse perspectives and incorporate public input. Participant 5 emphasised the importance of meaningful public participation.

“they must listen to what people are saying because, remember, they are saying that this is a government for the people, and since it is the government for the people, they must listen to what people are saying on the ground, so they must not do as they like”.

This statement emphasises the necessity for the government and MDB to actively listen to community voices, reinforcing the principle that it is a government "for the people." It highlights the expectation that decision-makers should incorporate the perspectives and concerns of citizens into their processes rather than acting unilaterally. By prioritising input from the ground level, the government And MDB can ensure that its actions align with the needs and desires of the community it serves. This approach fosters accountability and strengthens democratic governance, as it acknowledges that effective leadership relies on understanding and responding to the realities faced by the populace. The statement by Participant 5 advocates for a more participatory governance model where citizen engagement is central to key decision-making that concerns people and communities in general. Hall and Midgley (1986:177) present a critical perspective on public participation, arguing that it often attracts primarily Western-educated, middle-class activists, which may not reflect the broader citizenry's expectations. They suggest that varying levels of education can significantly impact how individuals perceive and engage with public participation practices. This discrepancy highlights the need for the government to address educational gaps, ensuring that all community members, especially those who may struggle to understand the conventions and methodologies of public participation, are included in the process. This issue was particularly relevant in Vuwani, as indicated by the High Court ruling in Polokwane, which confirmed that the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) had followed the necessary

procedures for consulting with affected communities. The court's decision underscores that the limited education among some community members may have hindered their ability to comprehend the processes involved fully. As a result, it becomes essential for the government to implement strategies that enhance understanding and engagement, ensuring that diverse perspectives are considered and respected in decision-making processes. This approach can help bridge the gap between different community members and foster more inclusive and effective governance.

Based on the discussions above, it is evident that involving and consulting with communities before making decisions is crucial for effective local government. The Vuwani protest and the subsequent property damage, costing millions of dollars, highlight the unfortunate consequences that can arise when public participation is not fully implemented. It becomes clear that public participation must be understood in collaboration with accountability. The government and the people must be accountable for it to be truly effective. The interview participants strongly suggested that the community should have been involved in decision-making. This underscores the idea that the government is responsible for providing complete information to the public within a reasonable timeframe to enable meaningful participation. The themes of community participation and accountability are closely interconnected. Looking at the Malamulele and Vuwani situation, it is evident that when people's will is undermined or disregarded, it leads to violent service delivery protests.

Theme 3: Tribalism

This section aims to analyse the theme of tribalism that emerged during the interviews with participants, specifically concerning the people of Malamulele and Vuwani. According to the participants, tribalism played a significant role in their grievances. The people of Malamulele cited tribalism as a reason for the lack of service delivery by the Thulamela Municipality. At the same time, the residents of Vuwani and neighbouring areas expressed their resistance to being included in the new Municipality of Collins Chabane due to their reluctance to be led by Vatsonga. This section will build upon the literature review conducted in Chapter 2, which has already addressed the topic of tribalism. By connecting the literature with the insights provided by the interview participants, this analysis seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how tribalism manifests in the context of local governance and its impact on service delivery.

Makhado and Tshisikhawe (2021:132) argue that tribalism in South Africa can be traced back to the formalisation of apartheid in 1948. The apartheid regime deliberately perpetuated divisions among ethnic groups, including tribalism, to foster animosity and selfishness. Legislative frameworks, such as the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951, further entrenched tribalism by segregating different ethnic groups into designated homelands. This historical context illuminates the roots of tribalism and its enduring impact. During the Malamulele and Vuwani protests, tribalism emerged as a prominent theme, reflecting the deep-seated divisions and tensions within the communities. Baloyi (2018:3) also argued that the tensions between the Tsonga and Venda communities over the dispute regarding the Malamulele-Vuwani Municipality were indeed driven by tribal considerations. This suggests that the conflict and disagreements between these two ethnic groups were rooted in their respective tribal identities. The participant's statements align with the literature, highlighting the role of tribalism in shaping their perceptions and actions.

Participant 5

“Uhm, Actually, the Apartheid government made a big mistake; remember that people were taken from different places if you are a Venda-speaking person, uhm to Giyani and one from Giyani to Thoyondou, because remember that Thohoyandou is a place for Vendas so it created a lot of problems because no it made the relationship to be very sour between these two tribes or these nations. So you know, the apartheid government made a very big Mistake, yah so and like, uhm, as I said, the relationship will no longer be good. Their decision was very, very bad. It created a lot of hatred, a lot of things; there is no interaction. Even if they interact, you will find that some are pretending, So the decisions was very, very bad. And remember, it didn't only happen to the Tsonga and the Vendas. It also happened between the Xhosas and the Zulus, So one can say that the apartheid government made a very big mistake. So it created a lot of problems as you can see even now and then yuh, it won't be solved anytime soon, and actually it will continue, Yuh.”

Participant 5 articulates the belief that the apartheid government's forced relocations significantly disrupted relationships between the Tsonga and Venda communities. They argue that moving people from their native areas created long-lasting tensions and animosity, resulting in a souring of relations that persists to this day. The participant reflects on the deep-seated hatred and lack of genuine interaction between the groups, suggesting that any apparent interactions are often marked by pretence rather than true reconciliation.

Furthermore, they extend this critique to other ethnic groups, noting similar divisions created between the Xhosas and Zulus. In essence, Participant 5 emphasises that the apartheid legacy has left enduring problems that are unlikely to be resolved in the near future, highlighting the long-term social impacts of such divisive policies.

According to Masuku and Mlambo (2023:125), tribalism is a destructive force that tears apart black African societies. The authors argue that the colonial and apartheid regimes successfully implemented a “divide and rule” strategy, leading to division, incapacity, and violence. Mamdani (1996) also shares this perspective, stating that before colonialism, African tribes and ethnic groups peacefully coexisted. However, the colonial strategy of divide and rule perpetuated ethnic divisions, hatred, and tribalism. Seife (2022:30) agrees with other scholars by highlighting that colonialism has significantly affected African society in two distinct ways. Firstly, it impeded the ongoing accumulation of wealth and ownership among Africans. Colonial powers often exploited African resources and hindered the economic development of indigenous populations, resulting in limited opportunities for wealth creation and ownership. Secondly, Mamdani (1996) noted that colonialism fostered rivalry and division within ethnic and tribal communities. By implementing divisive policies and strategies, colonial powers exacerbated existing ethnic and tribal tensions, leading to conflicts and a weakened sense of unity among African communities, as evidenced in the Malamulele and Vuwani protests. These effects continue to impact African societies to this day. Participant 7 had the following to say about divide and rule.

" You see now is a, of course, wherever there will be apartheid and segregation, the process of apartheid, of divide and rule, had worked very bad among the people because over time. People that lived together, like the Xitsonga-speaking people as well as the Venda-speaking people, they began to grow apart. Unlike in the beginning where these people, they lived from backyard to backyard, they didn't have a problem."

Participant 7's statement echoes the impact of divide and rule, particularly in the context of apartheid. They acknowledge that apartheid and the divide-and-rule strategy negatively affected communities like the Tsonga-speaking people and the Venda-speaking people, causing them to grow apart. This suggests an awareness that the division was not natural but was imposed by the apartheid regime. In the cases of Malamulele and Vuwani, it is unfortunate to witness tribalism between the Vatsonga and VhaVenda communities, considering their history of peaceful coexistence. These two groups shared cultural norms,

principles, and even inter-tribe marriages. Participant 3 said the following when asked why Venda and Tsonga people call each other each name.

“Uh no, I don't know because according to me, I feel like we should be one; I Mean us Venda and Tsonga should be one people.”

Participant 3 expresses a desire for unity, believing that the Venda and Tsonga people should be considered as one. This supports the idea that the apartheid regime intentionally created division and tribalism to serve their interests. As argued by Masuku & Mlambo (2023:126), it was evident when I analysed the tribalism manifestation in the Malamulele 2015 and Vuwani 2106 protests that Apartheid had a significant impact on the current tribal and ethnic divisions observed in South Africa. Its segregation policies were explicitly designed to promote tribal exceptionalism and create a sense of superiority among certain tribes, ultimately leading to one tribe feeling superior to others; by implementing racial segregation laws and restricting interactions between different ethnic groups, apartheid aimed to maintain divisions and reinforce tribal hierarchies. These policies fostered deep-seated animosity and tribalism within society.

The participants from Vuwani expressed their opposition to the decision made by the municipal demarcation board, as they wanted to be independent of Vatsonga leadership. Participant 3 said the following.

“the protest was all about us falling under the Municipality at Malamulele, yeah, and then people didn't want that; they wanted to fall under, I think, Makhado.”

Participant 3's statement suggests that the protest in Vuwani was not solely motivated by the decision made by the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) but instead by underlying tribalism and a sense of undermining one another. Despite the stated objective and rationale behind the decision made by the Municipal Demarcation Board, which aimed to improve service delivery, municipal financial viability, and governance, the participants' sentiments indicate that tribal dynamics played a significant role in shaping their opposition. As Masuku and Mlabo (2013:128) noted, division and "othering" between the Vatsonga and Venda communities have reached a toxic level where they cannot recognise what could benefit them equally. The animosity and deep-seated tensions between the two groups have hindered their ability to find common ground and work towards shared interests. This toxic dynamic perpetuates a cycle of conflict and prevents exploring mutually beneficial solutions. This highlights the complex interplay between governance decisions, tribal identities, and

community perceptions, underscoring the need to address tribalism and promote inclusive governance to overcome such divisions.

Participant 5 expressed their perspective on the Venda-speaking people from Vuwani who opposed joining the newly established Municipality.

“Actually myas Indicated earlier. my belief is that uhm is all about undermining ehh one language group to say I so, uhm, and I don’t think this problem can be solved now between these two, can I call them nations or ethnic groups, the relationship is not good, and I don’t think it will be good in anytime soon yeah The relationship is not good and it won't be good anytime soon, According to my perspective is all about undermining one ethnic group and the n yah so I don’t think they will be any relationship, I think it will continue, so even now you can even see when you go to Thoyondou uhmm if they hear you speak Xitsonga they will look at you in another way that’s the indication that they are not interested in interacting with you or they don’t want to hear any language expect Tshi-Venda this are some of the thing that are happening. So yes, this is a serious conflict between the two nations.”

Participant 5 articulates a perspective that views the opposition of Venda-speaking people from Vuwani to joining the newly established municipality as rooted in ethnic tensions, particularly the undermining of one language group by another. They express scepticism about the potential for improving relations between the Tsonga and Venda communities in the near future, emphasising that the existing discord is serious and entrenched. The participant highlights instances of language-based discrimination, noting that Tsonga speakers often face negative perceptions when interacting within predominantly Venda spaces, such as Thohoyandou. This exclusionary attitude reflects a broader pattern of division, where preference for Tshi-Venda over Xitsonga fosters animosity and hinders meaningful interaction. Participant 5's insights underscore the deep divisions that characterise the relationship between these two ethnic groups, framing the conflict as a significant and ongoing challenge that is unlikely to be resolved anytime soon. According to Masuku and Mlambo (2023:126), ethnic intolerance among black South Africans has led to the consolidation of self-hate, and this was seen in the Malamulele 2015 and Vuwani 2016 protests. In this context, ethnic groups or tribes strive for superiority and recognition, engaging in ideological competition. Masuku and Mlambo (2023:126) add that they often view other groups' thoughts and cultural practices as insignificant and, therefore, unnecessary. This observation highlights the responsibility of the ANC-led government to

address historical injustices, including tribalism, which was strategically engineered by the apartheid regime.

According to Ilorah (2009:697), ethnic and tribal conflicts leading to violence often arise in situations where manipulation is present. In the case of the Vuwani 2016 protest, it appears that local leaders, including the Pro-Makhado group, manipulated their ethnic group by instilling the belief that proposed reforms posed a threat to their political and economic power. They convinced their community that they already had a relatively prosperous existence and that the reforms would reverse rather than enhance that prosperity. The leaders misled the Vuwani communities into believing that the newly established Municipality, under the administration of the Vatsonga, would not extend necessary services to their communities. This manipulation played a significant role in mobilising and misleading the community's opposition to the reforms. Martinussen (1997:327) also writes that manipulative actions effectively create divisions within ethnically diverse groups, particularly when individuals belonging to the ruling ethnic group perceive competition for jobs from other ethnic groups. This manipulation fosters a sense of division and discord within ethnic communities as leaders exploit ethnic differences to maintain power or secure advantages for their group. The perception of job competition further intensifies tensions, increasing divisions within these ethnic groups.

Participant 4 expressed their viewpoint, suggesting they believed they would not receive adequate services if relocated to Malamulele in the newly established Municipality

“Now, if you say you move us to Malamulele, remember in Vuwani, there are offices there, Municipality offices, police stations, and whatever, which is closer to the surrounding area like everyone can access it, now if you say we move you to Makhado it means that we are closing those offices and people have to travel far to report whatever they want to report if they want services err, municipal services, they have to go to Malamulele. I think it was unfair, err... it was unfair because like people are thinking for themselves only without including other communities around or hearing the perspective of what other people are thinking, who are in those communities”.

Participant 4's statement reflects a significant concern about the potential impacts of relocating to Malamulele, particularly regarding access to essential services. They emphasise that the existing municipal offices and police stations in Vuwani are vital for community accessibility, suggesting that moving to a new municipality could create barriers to obtaining

necessary services. This statement by Participant 4 highlights the practical implications of administrative changes and the importance of geographic proximity to local governance resources. The participant's use of "unfair" underscores their frustration with the decision-making process, which they perceive as lacking inclusivity. They argue that the decision-makers are prioritising their own interests without adequately considering the perspectives of all affected communities. This sentiment points to a broader issue of representation in governance, where the voices of those who will bear the consequences of such decisions are not fully acknowledged. Moreover, Ilorah (2009:697) argues that ethnic bias often stems from personal relationships between public officials in leadership positions and specific interest groups within the same country, typically from the same ethnic group. In the case of the Vuwani protests and the sentiment expressed by the Venḁa people against being led by the Vatsonga, it can be seen as a manifestation of ethnic bias similar to personalised ties. Ethnic bias shares characteristics with corruption and favouritism, and it hinders development. In this context, those already benefiting from Makhado Municipality tenders were apprehensive that the same favourable conditions would not continue in Malamulele.

Participant 7 cited this concern during the interviews.

"I still believe they had ehh I still believe it was a sponsored riots and the strike by people who were actually beneficiaries. If we did not have maybe the tender processes that are still going on and people were benefiting out of something and they realised, oh, this whole issue, when they demarcate it this way, this will probably take bread from us".

Participant 7 expresses scepticism about the authenticity of the protests, suggesting that they may have been "sponsored riots" driven by individuals who stood to lose from the demarcation changes. This perspective implies that some participants in the protests were motivated by self-interest rather than genuine community concerns. The mention of "tender processes" indicates that economic factors, mainly related to contracts and financial benefits, played a significant role in shaping the motivations behind the unrest. Participant 7 argues that the potential loss of economic opportunities symbolised by "taking bread" from people could have spurred these individuals to mobilise against the changes. This viewpoint reflects a complex interplay between economic interests and social movements, suggesting that protests may not always emerge from grassroots grievances but can also be influenced by those with vested interests in maintaining the status quo. This statement further raises questions about the motivations behind public protests and highlights the need to analyse the

underlying factors that drive community actions carefully. Applying Ilorah's (2009:697) description of "ethnic bias and personalised ties", " Participant 7 utterances suggest that these individuals realised that the demarcation of the area in a particular way would threaten their benefits and livelihood, leading them to instigate the unrest. The implication is that these individuals were motivated by self-interest and the potential loss of their privileges rather than genuine concerns for the community. As cited in my literature review chapter, Baloyi (2018) asserts that tribalism is a major obstacle to democracy, particularly evident in challenges related to service delivery within municipalities such as Thulamela. Similarly, Dlanjwa (2015) agrees with this perspective, emphasising how tribal politics hinder development and impede efforts towards reconciliation and reconstruction in various African countries. The presence of tribalism undermines the principles of democracy and poses significant barriers to achieving inclusive and sustainable development.

Participant 4 suggested a potential solution.

"yea, I think, err...if we have the chiefs in Malamulele and the chiefs in Venda, if they can come together and be one, I think if they can be one, then it is simple for the community to come together as well."

Participant 4 suggests that unity among local chiefs in Malamulele and Venda could facilitate greater community cohesion. By advocating for collaboration between these traditional leaders, they highlight traditional leadership councils' vital role in fostering positive relationships, peace-making, unifying community members, and community building. This unity could create a more inclusive environment for dialogue, making it easier for the broader community to come together. The participant's perspective emphasises that effective communication among leaders can promote harmony and understanding between different ethnic groups. The assertion by Participant 4 underscores the potential for traditional governance to help resolve conflicts and create shared goals within the community. If traditional leadership councils can overcome tribal divisions and work together, it would set an example for the community. By promoting unity and cooperation among the traditional leaders, the community is more inclined to unite. This proposal by Participant 4 highlights the importance of leadership and its potential influence in addressing tribalism and fostering a sense of unity and belonging in the community.

Lastly, tribalism persists as a divisive force within societies even after the colonial era, as demonstrated by the protests in Malamulele and Vuwani. The acknowledgement of the role

of apartheid by participants reaffirms the need for the South African government to address tribalism. Tribalism impacts local governance and undermines social cohesion and the ubuntu principle, emphasising interconnectedness and humanity. Addressing tribalism is crucial for fostering inclusive governance, strengthening social bonds, and upholding the values of unity and shared humanity in South Africa.

Theme 4: Apartheid

The interviews with the participants from Malamulele and Vuwani revealed a recurring theme of apartheid. The participants unanimously agreed that the ethnic divisions, tribalism, and resentment between the Vatsonga and VhaVenda communities observed during the Malamulele 2015 and Vuwani 2016 protests were a direct consequence of the intentional separation of ethnic groups by the apartheid government. The issue of tribalism, previously discussed in Chapter 2, will be incorporated with the participants' viewpoints to provide a comprehensive understanding of the theme of tribalism, which emerged during the interviews.

Apartheid was officially established in South Africa in 1948, accompanied by a series of oppressive and discriminatory legislative measures (Mhlauli et al., 2015:205). These laws aimed to consolidate white power, marginalise black individuals from the mainstream economy, minimise their political power, subject them to exploitative labour conditions, and enforce segregation. The focus of this section is to analyse the lasting detrimental impact of specific apartheid-era legislation on black communities in post-apartheid South Africa, as seen in the 2015 Malamulele and 2016 Vuwani protests. The legislative instruments under scrutiny are the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951, the Population Registration Act of 1950, the Promotion of Bantu Self Government Act of 1959, and the Group Areas Act of 1950. These laws played pivotal roles in advancing the apartheid agenda. The legislation of apartheid is closely associated with Mamdani's (1996) viewpoint that the legacy of colonialism has had a substantial impact on the contemporary challenges faced, including the difficulty in achieving consensus among diverse ethnic groups. Mamdani's (1996) perspective emphasises that the colonial era introduced systems of governance and social structures that perpetuated divisions and hierarchies based on race and ethnicity. These divisions and power imbalances continue to influence societal dynamics, making it challenging to foster unity and consensus among different ethnic groups. The apartheid legislation in South Africa can be seen as a

manifestation of these historical influences, as it institutionalised racial segregation and discrimination, exacerbating the challenges of achieving consensus and social cohesion.

The Bantu Act of 1951 introduced the concept of homelands and Bantustans, which divided different ethnic groups based on their culture and language. In the context of this research, the Vatsonga were grouped into the Gazankulu homeland, while the Venda people were assigned to the Venda semi-independent homeland. The primary objective behind the creation of these homelands was to segregate ethnic groups further and strengthen the apartheid system. The enduring legacy of this apartheid legislation can be connected to Ake's (1993) argument that historical influences and material factors shape the present state of ethnic politics in Africa. Applying this act to the Malamulele and Vuwani protests demonstrates how the separation imposed by the homeland's system fostered a culture of selfishness, ethnic division, and intolerance among the Vatsonga and VhaVenda communities. This was evident in the protests, where insults and expressions of unwillingness to be governed by the other group were common. Participant 1 highlighted the unity between the Venda and Tsonga people before the implementation of apartheid. However, the participant acknowledged that the apartheid system and the establishment of homelands had a significant impact on the division between the Vatsonga and VhaVenda communities.

Participant 1

"Venda and Tsonga speaking people were same people".

"Tsonga must go or live with Tsonga's and Venda the same thing." Translated from Xitsonga.

Participant 1 emphasises the shared identity and history between Venda and Tsonga-speaking people, highlighting their long-standing coexistence characterised by peaceful neighbourhoods and intermarriages. This legacy of cooperation stands in stark contrast to the divisive narratives propagated by the apartheid government, which sought to enforce separation by suggesting that "Tsonga must go or live with Tsonga's and Venda the same thing." Such discriminatory messaging has had a detrimental effect on social cohesion, fracturing relationships that were historically marked by unity and mutual support. Recognising this deep-rooted connection can provide a foundation for reconciliation and rebuilding social cohesion in the present, challenging the notion that these communities are inherently opposed. Kanyane et al. (2017:17) confirmed that the apartheid policies created a sense of rivalry and competition for limited resources, evident during the Malamulele 2015 and Vuwani 2016 protests. The communities began to view each other as rivals rather than

recognising their shared heritage and common interests. Simon (2016) and Ake (1993) highlight that conflicts between diverse groups often arise due to competition and the fight for limited resources. This perspective acknowledges that scarcity of resources, whether land, water, economic opportunities, or political power, can fuel tensions and conflicts among different ethnic or social groups.

As highlighted by Abel (2019:921), the Group Areas Act of 1950 was a pivotal piece of legislation that solidified the apartheid government's segregation policies. This act facilitated the forced removal of primarily black people from their ancestral lands (Abel,2019:921). As a result, social cohesion and networks were disrupted. Communities where the Venda people and Tsonga people previously lived together saw their arrangements destabilised. This meant that different cultures and ethnic groups could no longer interact and socialise as they had before. According to Nyongo and Kurugu (2023), tribalism, characterised by a divisive nature, can catalyse conflict and violence. Tribalism emphasises a solid allegiance to one's own ethnic or cultural group, often leading to divisions and animosity between different groups within a society. The consequences of such divisions can escalate tensions and contribute to conflicts and acts of violence. The Malamulele and Vuwani protests indicate that the unity between these two ethnic groups had been disturbed for some time. For instance, the people of Vuwani opposed being governed by the Vatsonga. In contrast, the people of Malamulele claimed that the Thulamela Municipality neglected their communities and prioritised services for the Venda communities. Participant 2 shared their perspective on the tension between the Venda and Tsonga people, recounting an incident during the 2015 Malamulele protest.

Participant 2

"But the tension it was a tribal thing cause you remember the building that torched ehh, next to the taxi rank? It was said that it was owned by a Venda guy, so they didn't want anything (Tsongas) to do with the Venda people."

This statement by Participant 2 highlights the underlying ethnic tensions that can escalate into conflict, specifically referencing an incident where a building owned by a Venda individual was torched near the taxi rank during the 2015 Malamulele protest. The act of destruction reflects a deep-seated animosity, suggesting that the Tsonga community rejected any association with the Venda people. This incident serves as an illustration of how tribal identities fueled hostility and violence, exacerbating divisions between Tsonga-speaking and

Venda-speaking communities. Such actions not only signify individual grievances but also reveal broader societal fractures that can undermine social cohesion, making it important to address these tensions to foster understanding and collaboration between the groups. Moreover, this account illustrates how the historical legacy of apartheid, including the Group Areas Act, contributed to the fragmentation and animosity between the Venda and Tsonga communities. The forced removals and segregation policies further eroded social cohesion, leading to the tensions and grievances witnessed in the Malamulele and Vuwani protests.

Moreover, the statement by Participant 2 underscores how the underlying tribalism and resentment between the two ethnic groups became more pronounced during the protests. The initial issues of service delivery and opposition to the municipal decision were overshadowed by personal animosity and tribal divisions. This indicates that the protests went beyond their original objectives and became entangled in deeper-rooted tensions between the Venda and Tsonga communities. Mafeje (1971) presents an alternative perspective by suggesting that tribalism, often viewed as an intrinsic African ideology, has its roots in Europe rather than being an inherent construct of African societies. This point challenges the notion that tribalism is an organic product of African cultures and highlights its external imposition. Accordingly, one could argue that tribalism, which frequently manifested between different ethnic groups in South Africa, was deliberately created by the apartheid regime. The purpose behind this creation was to divide people, thus enabling the system of oppression and advancing the agenda of "divide and rule." This argument posits that tribalism in South Africa was a strategic tool employed by the apartheid regime to maintain control and perpetuate its discriminatory policies.

The Promotion of Bantu Self Government Act of 1959 played a significant role in perpetuating ethnic division and fostering a sense of selfishness. This legislation aimed to promote separate development by designating specific territories for different ethnic groups while preserving their respective cultures. As a result, even after the end of apartheid, the Venda and Tsonga communities continued to view each other as threats to the development of their territories or communities (Kanyane et al., 2017:21). Nnoli (1996) contends that the central driver of ethnic conflict often lies in the struggle for land or territory. The case of Vuwani serves as a pertinent illustration of this view. The people of Vuwani expressed their reluctance to be included in the new Collins Chabane Municipality in Malamulele, fearing that they would lose the services previously provided by the Makhado Municipality. They also voiced concerns that the new Municipality would not extend services to their

communities. In essence, the people of Vuwani perceived the establishment of the new Municipality as a threat to their development. Similarly, participants 3 and 7 confirmed that the provision of services in Malamulele was perceived to be based on tribal lines, resulting in the town being less developed compared to Thohoyandou, the municipal headquarters of the Thulamela Municipality.

Participant 3

" The protest was about falling under the Municipality in Malamulele, yeah, and then people didn't want that".

Participant 7

" The process of Apartheid of divide and rule had worked very amongst the people over time" People that love together like Xitsonga speaking people as well as Venda speaking people, they begun to grow apart. Unlike on the beginning, where these people they loved from backyard to backyard, they didn't have a problem".

Participant 5

"Uhm, Actually, the Apartheid government made a big mistake. Remember that people were taken from different places if you are a Venda-speaking person, uhm to Giyani and one from Giyani to Thoyondou because remember that Thohoyandou is a place for Vendas, so it created a lot of problems because no it made the relationship to be very sour between this two tribes or these nations. So you know, the apartheid government made a very big Mistake, yah so and like, uhm, as I said, the relationship will no longer be good. Their decision was very, very bad. It created a lot of hatred, a lot of things, there is no interaction. Even if they interact, you will find that some are pretending, So the decisions was very, very bad and remember, it didn't only happen to the Tsonga and the Vendas. It also happened between the Xhosas and the Zulus, So one can say that the apartheid government made a very big mistake. So it created a lot of problems, as you can see even now, and then yuh, it won't be solved anytime soon, and actually it will continue, Yuh."

Participant 7 highlights the long-term effects of the apartheid strategy of "divide and rule," which successfully drove a wedge between communities that once lived harmoniously, such as the Tsonga and Venda-speaking people. They note that these groups, who previously enjoyed close relationships, have grown apart over time due to the systemic divisions imposed by apartheid policies. Similarly, Participant 5 reflects on the significant disruptions

caused by the apartheid government, describing how forced relocations fractured relationships between tribes. They assert that such actions created lasting animosity and a lack of genuine interaction, leading to a superficial coexistence marked by pretence rather than proper understanding. Both participants emphasise the deep-seated consequences of apartheid, arguing that the resulting ethnic tensions not only affected the Tsonga and Venda communities but also extended to other groups, such as the Xhosas and Zulus. Ultimately, they express a bleak outlook on the possibility of resolving these issues, indicating that the legacy of division will likely persist. These statements further and comprehensively emphasise the underlying divisions and growing apart between the Venda and Tsonga communities. As noted by Mhlauli et al. (2015:205), the divide-and-rule tactics employed during apartheid played a role in creating distance and animosity between these communities, eroding the sense of unity and shared identity that had previously existed. The perception of unequal distribution of resources and services based on tribal lines further reinforces this division and hampers the overall development of the affected areas.

Lastly, sentiments by all the participants highlight that the lasting effects of apartheid continue to hinder the development, social unity, Ubuntu, and reconciliation among African communities, particularly in regions like Vuwani and Malamulele. Despite sharing commonalities such as inter-tribal marriages, development and governance issues have become complex and divisive, as each group perceives the other as a threat and competitor. Efforts by the local leaders, traditional councils, and ANC-led government should be directed towards fostering understanding, dialogue, and shared objectives among diverse communities. By highlighting shared interests and the mutual benefits of collaboration, it is possible to overcome the legacy of apartheid and cultivate a sense of unity and collective progress within African communities, even in areas like Malamulele and Vuwani, where diverse ethnic groups reside.

4.5 Limitations of the Study

Simon and Goes (2013) argue that every study has inherent limitations, irrespective of its quality and clarity. As a researcher, it is crucial to identify and acknowledge these limitations. In my research, I have identified several limitations that warrant acknowledgement, outlined below.

- Firstly, existing scholarly literature specifically focused on the Malamulele and Vuwani protests is scarce. This limited availability of previous research on the topic constrained the study's depth and breadth of analysis. Only a few scholars have directly engaged with these protests, which further restricted the available information for the study.
- Another significant limitation was encountered during the recruitment of participants. Many individuals hesitated to participate in the study due to the topic's sensitive nature. This reluctance impacted the sample size and, consequently, the number of interviews that could be conducted. Despite attempts to engage potential participants, the challenges in recruitment affected the study's overall representativeness and may have influenced the findings.
- The use of telephone interviews introduced logistical challenges. Network issues and power outages (load shedding) occasionally disrupted communication, resulting in rescheduling interviews and potentially affecting the data collection process. Additionally, conducting interviews over the telephone may have limited rapport-building and non-verbal communication cues compared to face-to-face interactions, potentially impacting the depth and richness of the data collected.
- It is also worth noting that the study was classified as high risk by the Rhodes University Ethics Committee, which may have imposed additional constraints or requirements that influenced the research process.
- Acknowledging these limitations is essential for understanding the potential impact on the study's findings and the generalizability of the results. Future research in this area could address these limitations by seeking to expand the available literature, employing diverse recruitment strategies, and considering alternative data collection methods to mitigate the challenges associated with telephone interviews.

4.6 Conclusion

Based on the analysis and data presented above, it is evident that several factors contributed to the protests in Malamulele in 2015 and Vuwani in 2016. Participants highlighted the historical ethnic divisions between Vatsonga and VhaVenda, which were exacerbated by the apartheid era. Apartheid policies enforced oppression, segregation, and discrimination, leading to deep-rooted divisions between these two ethnic groups. The discussions also revealed that the Malamulele protests primarily arose from grievances related to service

delivery. In contrast, the Vuwani protests were driven by the lack of government and Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) consultation regarding their relocation to the newly established Collins Chabane Municipality in Malamulele. One significant theme that emerged from the discussions was the presence of tribalism, which continues to divide the Vatsonga and VhaVenda communities. This tribalism hampers their ability to reach consensus on issues that would benefit them equally and perpetuates unhealthy competition for limited resources. The analysis sheds light on the underlying causes of violent community protests and underscores the importance of community involvement in decision-making processes that affect them. The absence of government consultation, as highlighted by the participants from Vuwani, is a particularly noteworthy aspect. The findings emphasise that community protests often arise due to perceived neglect or mistreatment by leaders or government institutions. Meaningful public participation requires transparent information-sharing and robust public hearings to foster trust and inclusivity. Furthermore, the enduring legacy of apartheid continues to perpetuate ethnic divisions and resentment among black communities in South Africa. It is, therefore, essential for the African National Congress-led government to take up the responsibility of promoting a spirit of ubuntu, social cohesion, collective development, and reconciliation within black communities. These efforts are crucial to enhance the effectiveness of local government processes and address the underlying issues that contribute to community unrest.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a concise summary of each chapter, highlighting their respective focus and discussions in relation to the research questions. This chapter will also discuss the contribution made by the research to the existing body of knowledge, emphasising its relevance and significance in the field of Political Studies in South Africa. It aims to give a comprehensive overview of the research journey and the key findings in each chapter. By summarising the main points and themes addressed, this chapter serves as a valuable reference for understanding the research scope and the overall thesis.

5.2 Summary of Chapters

Chapter 1

The first chapter introduced the research topic, emphasising the need to examine it. The chapter included a problem statement highlighting the limited scholarly exploration in this area. The study objectives and research questions were outlined, including assessing ethnic influence on local governance, the enduring impact of historical ethnic divisions on society, and lessons learned in post-Apartheid South Africa. Furthermore, the chapter provided a comprehensive background on the 2015 protests in Malamulele and the 2016 protests in Vuwani. It discussed the raised issues, underlying causes, and the structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2

Chapter two focused on the literature review, establishing a foundation for understanding the protests in Malamulele and Vuwani. Scholars such as Mamdani (1996), Ake (1993), Nnoli (1996), Nyongo and Kurugu (2023), and Mafeje (1971) were referenced to gain insight into ethnic violence and conflict across the African continent. The chapter applied theories such as Conflict and Territory to explain and interpret the violence and conflict observed during the protests. It also delved into the historical background of land and territorial disputes in South Africa. The impact of the demarcation process was discussed, as well as the influence of ethnic conflict and tribal politics on governance and service provision in the Venda and Tsonga communities.

Chapter 3

Chapter three outlined the research methods employed to collect data. The qualitative research design was chosen to capture the experiences and perspectives of the participants effectively. Methods such as interviews, document analysis, and content analysis were used for data collection. The sampling approach was purposive to ensure that participants from Malamulele and Vuwani were included, providing a balanced view. Thematic analysis was employed during data analysis to explore emerging themes. Given the study's classification as high risk by the Rhodes University Ethics Committee, ethical considerations were fully observed. Limitations were also acknowledged in this chapter.

Chapter 4

Chapter four aimed to present the research findings and discuss the emergent themes. The participants' responses were grouped, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of themes such as public participation, service delivery, tribalism, and apartheid. Direct quotes from participants were included to support the discussion of each theme. Relevant literature was used to provide further context and understanding. The chapter also acknowledged the limitations encountered during the research process.

Chapter 5

Chapter five summarises all the preceding chapters, including the contribution of the research to existing knowledge in the field of political studies in South Africa. The implications of the research findings, as well as its limitations, are discussed. Additionally, the conclusion reinforces the research's strength, relevance, and importance while acknowledging opportunities for future research.

5. 3 Contribution to Existing Knowledge

My research addresses a significant gap in academic writing concerning the 2015 Malamulele and 2016 Vuwani protests. The existing literature has failed to fully uncover the ethnic dynamics of these protests, making it challenging to understand their significance. By filling this gap, my study contributes to existing knowledge, particularly the works of scholars such as Kanyane, Khowa, Nealers, Rasila, Mavhungu, and Netswera. These scholars have written about municipal demarcation processes and the protests, exploring the reasons behind them, tensions, and disputes arising from different communities. Kanyane et al. (2017), Khowa

(2020) (2022), Kgatle (2018), Nealer and Netswera (2020), Rasila (2017), Mavhungu (2012), and Musitha and Mafukata (2020) collectively assert that demarcation is typically implemented to benefit the population. It is considered a measure to enhance service delivery, address dysfunctional municipalities, and ensure the financial sustainability of each Municipality. However, none of these scholars have thoroughly examined the elements of ethnic conflict and violence present in the 2015 Malamulele and 2016 Vuwani protests. In contrast, my study specifically addresses and uncovers the factors and reasons that led to these protests. Furthermore, no scholar has simultaneously addressed and written about both the Malamulele and Vuwani protests. Therefore, my study contributes to understanding why these two protests cannot be studied in isolation. It also sheds light on the sequence of events, starting with the Malamulele protest in 2015 and followed by the Vuwani protest in 2016. Moreover, my research contributes to understanding the decisions made by the government, Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB), and communities that fuelled these protests.

It is also worth noting that the scholars (e.g., Kanyane et al (2017,2021), Sinthumule (2021), Rasila (2017), Mavhungu (2012), Musitha (2012,2020), Kgatle (2018), Ncube (2016), Mathebula (2015,2018 & 2019), Netswera & Nealer (2020), Baloyi (2018), and Khowa (2020, 2022), who have written about these protests lack firsthand experience of the protests and the issues raised during them. Their research methodology, so far as participants are concerned, primarily focuses on traditional councils, community leaders, government employees, and teachers, overlooking the perspectives of ordinary people from different affected communities. In contrast, when the first protest occurred in 2015 in Malamulele, I experienced its impact as a grade 12 learner. This firsthand experience allowed me to witness the effects of the protests on schools, government service provision, and particularly the lack of service delivery from the Thulamela Local Government Municipality. My study included a diverse group of participants to ensure balanced views. I did not solely focus on those with decision-making powers during the protests but also included members of affected communities who suffered the consequences of decisions made by those in power. The fact that my study was deemed high-risk by the Rhodes University Ethics Committee demonstrates its depth and sensitivity, as it went beyond the ordinary issues surrounding the protests. Additionally, when reviewing the academic works of others who have engaged with these two protests, none mention their studies being considered high-risk, indicating that their focus was primarily on governance issues rather than the political and historical factors that

shaped the protests. This statement is not a prerequisite for a high-quality study, but it highlights the uniqueness of my research and its relevance to significant issues.

5.4 Contributions to Political Studies in South Africa

My study contributes to the broader understanding of municipal demarcation complexities in the field of Political Studies in South Africa. While prior research conducted by Kanyane et al. (2017), Kanyane et al. (2021), and Khowa (2020) and (2022) primarily focuses on Public Administration, Sociology, Education, Governance, and Economic Management, my study integrates these aspects and offers a perspective grounded in the field of Political Studies. It uncovers how the legacy of colonialism and apartheid, including divide-and-rule policies, the creation of Bantustans, and the deliberate erasure of traditional social structures and values like Ubuntu, have shaped the protest's ethnic violence and conflict. Nyongo and Kurugu (2023) contend that the persistent usage of the term "tribe" is problematic as it reinforces a divisive construct. They underline that the objective of post-independence was to surpass tribal identities and establish a united nation. This interpretation by Nyongo and Kurugu (2023) sheds light on the enduring divisiveness of the Bantustans, extending beyond the apartheid era. It suggests that even in situations where both tribes could benefit, reaching a consensus becomes challenging due to a tendency to prioritise tribal interests. Like Mamdani's (1996) observation, colonial regimes' divide-and-rule policies had a lasting impact on African societies, extending beyond the colonial period.

By tracing the historical political origins of violence and ethnicity prevalent in the Malamulele and Vuwani protests, my research draws on the works of scholars such as Mamdani (1996), Ake (1993), Mafeje (1971), Nyongo (2023), and Nnoli (1996). These scholars' works provide vital insights into understanding issues of ethnic violence and conflict in post-1994 South Africa and how they impact the demarcation process from a Political Studies perspective. Mamdani (1996), Ake (1993), Mafeje (1971), Nyongo (2023), and Nnoli (1996) concur in distinct ways on the notion that the colonial regime manipulated ethnic identities by organising ethnic groups along tribal lines. This manipulation ultimately bred resentment and intolerance among these groups. Moreover, Musitha and Mafukate (2020:2) also confirmed that the persistence of tribalism and ethnicity in Africa has remained prevalent since the era of colonialism, as evidenced by its manifestation during the Malamulele and Vuwani protest study and the references to these scholars aim to provide a solid perspective and explanation that ethnic politics and violence in South Africa cannot be

understood in isolation from history but must be examined within the broader context of Political Studies.

In addition to the impacts of apartheid policies and colonialism, scholars like Mashamaite (2014) argue that the despair and lack of confidence in the government stem from the expectation that the African National Congress-led government would alleviate poverty and enhance the quality of life for most black South Africans. Alexander (2010) notes that service delivery protests have become increasingly common in South Africa since 2004, serving as a means for citizens to voice their frustrations regarding inadequate government services. Managa (2012:1) concurs, stating that poor service allocation has drawn attention to local government municipalities. Reddy (2016:2) defines service delivery in local government as the provision of municipal goods and services that enhance residents' quality of life. This context reveals that protests, including those in Malamulele in 2015 and Vuwani in 2016, arose from unmet expectations for these essential services, as confirmed by participants. Nengwekhulu (2019) emphasises that service delivery involves the urgent provision of services to citizens, while Pithouse (2017) highlights that protests are driven not only by economic concerns but also by the desire for social inclusion. This suggests that the demonstrations in Malamulele and Vuwani aimed to achieve both economic and social improvements. Sithole and Mathonsi (2015) argue that service delivery protests are closely linked to community governance, with residents resorting to protests in response to poor service. Booysen (2007:21) notes that such protests often occur when people struggle to make their voices heard by those in power, serving as an urgent call for leaders to address community concerns. Participants in the Malamulele 2015 protest highlighted issues related to job opportunities and the allocation of services, indicating that the Venda communities were prioritised over those in Malamulele. In Vuwani, the key finding was that residents felt excluded from the decision-making process regarding their relocation from Vuwani under the Makhado Municipality to the new Collins Chabane Municipality in Malamulele. Public participation in municipal boundary/demarcation remains contentious and frequently leads to violent protests (Tong, 2019). The Vuwani protests of 2016 exemplified this, as strong opposition arose against the Municipal Demarcation Board's decision to include them in the new municipality. The lack of community involvement was identified as a major factor contributing to the violence during the protests. Although the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) aimed to improve service delivery and governance, residents felt marginalised, prompting them to protest vocally against the decision. Managa (2012) highlights public

participation as a crucial challenge affecting local government functionality, suggesting that neglecting this principle can lead to violent protests and conflicts between the government and citizens. Breakfast and Nomarwayi (2019) further note that dissatisfaction with governance is a global issue, indicating that service delivery protests in South Africa reflect widespread discontent with government performance.

In light of my thesis contributions to Political Studies in South Africa, it is crucial to contextualise protests within the frameworks of public participation and service delivery. These protests should not be viewed in isolation; instead, they reflect deeper systemic issues such as historical injustices, unmet expectations, and a lack of meaningful engagement in governance processes. Understanding the interplay of these factors is essential for developing effective strategies to address community grievances and enhance governance outcomes. The findings from this research highlight the various elements that contributed to the violence and ethnic tensions observed during the Malamulele and Vuwani protests in 2015 and 2016. This underscores the necessity for a comprehensive approach to tackling the challenges of public participation and service delivery in South Africa. By integrating these insights into the broader body of knowledge, this thesis aims to inform future research and policy-making, ultimately contributing to the ongoing discourse on the dysfunctionality of local governance and service delivery protests that are sometimes characterised by ethnic conflict and violence in the country.

5.5 Implications of the Research and Limitations

The implications of this research are significant. This study will assist both the academic community and the public understand the complexities of the demarcation process, ethnic violence, and conflict in South Africa post-1994. The study provides a comprehensive explanation of the evolution and manipulation of ethnicity by those in power, particularly the colonial and apartheid regimes, which allocated government services and opportunities based on tribal affiliation. Ilorah (2009:695) highlights the widespread unequal treatment based on ethnicity among political leaders in various African countries. As Martinussen (1997:329–30) argues, this discriminatory and unequal treatment practice not only impedes development but also exacerbates issues of income inequality. It highlights how this biased and one-sided ethnic affiliation affects broader governance operations and, unfortunately, service provision. For instance, during the Malamulele protests, proficiency in the Venda language was utilised as a criterion to deny entry to individuals attempting to cross into Thohoyandou for shopping

purposes when Malamulele was engulfed in violent protests demanding a separate Municipality. This incident underscores the divisive nature of ethnic identity (Baloyi, 2018:1). The study will ensure that future research and policy decisions focus on reconciling ethnic groups because it becomes evident from the Malamulele and Vuwani protests that the legacy of apartheid played a significant role in fuelling the conflict. This will help people and communities understand their role in the protests and how it affects everyone, not just members of their tribes.

Theofanidis and Fountouki (2018:156) emphasise the significance of acknowledging potential weaknesses in any study, as these limitations often go beyond the researcher's control. The limitations of this study were previously recognised in the data analysis chapter. However, it is essential to highlight that many scholars who have conducted research on municipal demarcation in South Africa and examined the Malamulele and Vuwani protests have employed both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Considering this, one could argue that utilising a mixed methods approach might have expanded the research scope and potentially led to different conclusions. Nevertheless, qualitative methods were more suitable for this study, given the primary aim of uncovering the experiences and perspectives of the affected community members of Malamulele and Vuwani.

5. 6 Conclusion

The study thoroughly examined the municipal demarcation of the 2015 Malamulele and 2016 Vuwani protests, focusing on ethnic conflict and violence. It drew on the works of scholars such as Mafeje, Mamdani, Ake, Nnoli, and Nyongo to highlight the historical factors that contributed to the division of tribes and the competition for resources. The study also incorporated the insights of scholars like Kanyane, Sithumule, Rasila, Nealer, Netswera, Baloyi, Musitha, Khowa, and Mavhungu, who shed light on the contentious nature of the demarcation process in South Africa and the associated tensions and disputes. Applying the conflict and territory theory to the literature review, data analysis, and discussions of the research findings reveal that competition for limited resources and territorial ownership are the primary drivers of conflict and violence among social groups. These theoretical perspectives are supported by scholars like Ake, Nyongo, Nnoli, and Mamdani, who assert that the competition for resources, along with exclusion and discrimination of ethnic groups by others, as well as territorial disputes, form the core of ethnic violence and conflict in Africa. It is evident from these theoretical considerations and scholarly writings that violence

and conflict cannot be understood in isolation from other factors, such as historical contexts and the impact of colonial occupation in Africa. The research findings revealed that poor government consultation and service delivery along tribal lines significantly fueled the protests. Participants acknowledged the historical unity of the Tsonga and Venda people and expressed a need for reconciliation measures, equality in service delivery, and community consultation in matters affecting them. The study also highlighted the lingering effects of the colonial legacy and the fragmentation of local government due to ethnic politics and conflicts influenced by the colonial and apartheid regimes.

The dominant themes that emerged from the study, including public participation, service delivery, tribalism, and apartheid, provided a comprehensive understanding of the causes and implications of the 2015 Malamulele and 2016 Vuwani protests. The study demonstrated that these themes were interrelated and influenced by historical factors. Participants confirmed that the separation of the Tsonga and Venda people into homelands by the apartheid regime contributed to the resentment between the two groups. The participants' agreement with this statement validates the notion that the tribalistic remarks witnessed during the 2015 Malamulele and 2016 Vuwani protests were not a natural occurrence but rather heavily influenced by the historical arrangement imposed by the Apartheid Regime. This suggests that even after the end of apartheid in 1994, the Venda and Tsonga people have yet to reconcile with the separation enforced upon them forcefully. Ironically, despite this division, the Vatsonga and VhaVenda communities continue to share cultural principles, engage in inter-tribe marriages, coexist in educational institutions, and participate in religious spaces. The lack of unity among traditional leaders also played a role in exacerbating the protests. Another significant finding was that the participants in the study expressed the belief that if traditional leaders from both tribes had been united, the protests could have been avoided. The lack of government consultation and community involvement was also identified as contributing factors to the protests. Additionally, the study emphasised the importance of government consultation and public participation in fostering reconciliation and addressing community concerns. In analysing the literature on public participation and service delivery, the study highlighted the importance of understanding, communication, and community involvement in preventing violence and protests. Given South Africa's history and the post-apartheid context, the study revealed that public participation and equal service provision cannot be underestimated.

Lastly, the study contributed to a deeper understanding of the events surrounding the Malamulele and Vuwani protests and their connection to ethnic conflict and violence. It underscored the significance of historical factors, government consultation, and public participation in addressing tribal divisions and promoting equal service delivery. The findings have implications for policymaking and underscore the importance of reconciliation efforts to foster unity and understanding among different ethnic groups in post-apartheid South Africa.

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GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

- **Amalgamation:** The process of merging different entities or groups, often used in the context of municipalities, to create larger administrative units.
- **Apartheid:** A historical system of institutionalised racial segregation and discrimination in South Africa, which enforced unequal treatment and rights based on race.
- **Bantustans:** Areas designated by the apartheid regime as homelands for specific ethnic groups, often resulting in forced removals and social fragmentation.
- **Beneficiaries:** Individuals or groups that receive benefits or services from government programs or policies, often central to discussions of equity and service delivery.
- **Colonialism:** The practice of acquiring and maintaining control over a territory and its people, often leading to exploitation and cultural suppression.
- **Community Consultation:** Engagement with community members to gather input and feedback on decisions affecting their lives, crucial for effective governance.
- **Community Needs:** The requirements and expectations of a community, which should guide service delivery and governance practices.
- **Conflict:** A struggle or disagreement between groups, often arising from competing interests, values, or identities.
- **Corruption:** The abuse of power for personal gain, often leading to the misallocation of resources and undermining public trust in institutions.
- **Demarcation:** The process of establishing the boundaries of political or administrative regions, such as municipalities, which can influence governance and resource allocation.
- **Democracy:** A system of government in which power is vested in the people, who exercise it directly or through elected representatives, emphasising participation in decision-making processes.
- **Development:** The process of improving the economic, social, and political conditions of a community or country, often associated with increasing access to services and opportunities.
- **Discrimination:** Unfair treatment of individuals or groups based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.

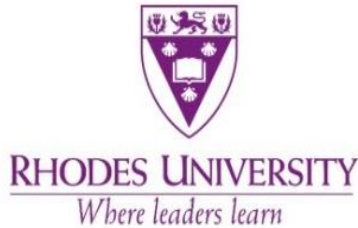
- **Divide and Rule:** A strategy used to maintain control by fostering divisions among groups, often seen in colonial and apartheid governance.
- **Dysfunctionality:** The failure of institutions or systems to operate effectively, often resulting in inadequate service delivery and governance challenges.
- **Elections:** The formal process through which citizens vote to choose their representatives in government.
- **Ethnic Conflict:** Disputes or violence arising from ethnic differences, often exacerbated by historical grievances and competition for resources.
- **Ethnic Violence:** Physical violence directed against individuals or groups based on their ethnic identity, frequently occurring in contexts of political or social tension.
- **Ethnicity:** A social construct that categorises people based on shared cultural, linguistic, or ancestral traits, often influencing group identity and social dynamics.
- **Experiences:** The lived realities and perceptions of individuals, particularly in relation to social and political contexts.
- **Favouritism:** Preferential treatment given to one group over others, often leading to perceptions of inequality and injustice.
- **Governance:** The processes and structures through which organisations or societies are directed and controlled, including decision-making and policy implementation.
- **Government:** The governing body of a nation, state, or community responsible for making and enforcing laws and policies.
- **Historical Injustices:** Past wrongs or inequalities that have long-term effects on communities, often requiring redress and reconciliation.
- **Legacy of Apartheid:** The enduring social, economic, and political impacts of the apartheid system, including inequalities and divisions within South African society.
- **Legacy of Colonialism:** The long-lasting effects of colonial rule, including cultural disruptions and power imbalances that continue to influence contemporary society.
- **Limitations:** Constraints or challenges encountered during the research process that may affect the findings or conclusions.
- **Marginalised Communities:** Groups that are socially, economically, or politically disadvantaged, often excluded from decision-making processes.
- **Municipal Boundary:** The defined geographical limits of a municipality, affecting governance, service delivery, and community identity.

- **Municipal Demarcation Board:** The body responsible for determining municipal boundaries in South Africa, playing a crucial role in local governance.
- **Municipal Demarcation:** The process of defining the boundaries and governance structures of municipalities, which can significantly impact local governance.
- **Municipality:** A specific administrative region with local government authority responsible for providing services and governance to its residents.
- **Non-viability:** A condition in which an entity, such as a municipality, is unable to sustain itself or meet the needs of its population.
- **Participants:** Individuals involved in the research or protests whose insights and experiences contribute to understanding the issues at hand.
- **Participatory Democracy:** A model of democracy that emphasises the active involvement of citizens in decision-making processes and governance.
- **Policies:** Formal guidelines or courses of action adopted by governments or organisations to address specific issues.
- **Protest:** A public demonstration expressing dissent or advocating for change, often in response to perceived injustices or inadequate services.
- **Public Participation:** The involvement of citizens in decision-making processes, particularly in governance and policy development, essential for democratic practices.
- **Qualitative:** Research that focuses on understanding the meanings and experiences of participants, often through interviews or observations.
- **Reconciliation:** The process of restoring relationships and addressing past injustices, particularly in post-conflict societies.
- **Service Delivery:** The provision of public services to communities, such as water, education, and healthcare, which is a central concern in governance.
- **Sustainability:** The ability to maintain or support communities and environments over the long term, balancing economic, social, and environmental needs.
- **Territorial Disputes:** Conflicts arising from disagreements over the boundaries or governance of specific geographical areas.
- **Thematic Analysis:** A qualitative research method used to identify and analyse patterns or themes within data.
- **Theoretical Considerations:** The frameworks and theories used to analyse and interpret research findings.

- **Traditional Leadership:** A form of governance involving leaders recognised by their communities, often based on cultural and historical precedence, playing a significant role in local governance.
- **Tribal Council:** A traditional governance structure representing a specific ethnic group, often involved in local decision-making.
- **Tribal Politics:** Political dynamics influenced by tribal affiliations and loyalties, often complicating governance and decision-making processes.
- **Tribalism:** Strong loyalty to one's tribe or ethnic group, which can lead to division and conflict, particularly in politically charged environments.
- **Tshivenda:** The language spoken by the Venda people, which is an integral part of their cultural identity.
- **Unequal Treatment:** Disparities in how different groups or individuals are treated, often leading to social tension and conflict.
- **Vatsonga:** A Tsonga-speaking ethnic group in South Africa, primarily located in Limpopo Province.
- **VhaVenda:** A Venda-speaking ethnic group in South Africa, also primarily found in Limpopo Province.
- **Violence:** The use of physical force to harm others, often seen in protest contexts as a means of expressing frustration or demanding change.
- **Xitsonga:** The language spoken by the Tsonga people, representing their cultural identity.

APPENDIXES

Appendix 1: Ethical Approval



Rhodes University Human Research Ethics Committee
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28 November 2023

Matimu SHIVAMBU

Email: g17s3524@campus.ru.ac.za g17s3524@campus.ru.ac.za

Review Reference: 2023-7525-8231

Dear Matimu SHIVAMBU

Title: Municipal Demarcation: An Exploration of Ethnic Conflict and Violence in the 2015 Malamulele and 2016 Vuwani Protests

Researcher: Matimu SHIVAMBU

Supervisor(s): Dr Bongani Nyoka

This letter confirms that the above research proposal has been reviewed and **APPROVED** by the Rhodes University Human Research Ethics Committee (RU-HREC). Your Approval number is: 2023-7525-8231

Approval has been granted for 1 year. An annual progress report will be required in order to renew approval for an additional period. You will receive an email notifying you when the annual report is due.

Please ensure that the ethical standards committee is notified should any substantive change(s) be made, for whatever reason, during the research process. This includes changes in investigators. Please also ensure that a brief report is submitted to the ethics committee on the completion of the research. The purpose of this report is to indicate whether the research was conducted successfully, if any aspects could not be completed, or if any problems arose that the ethical standards committee should be aware of. If a thesis or dissertation arising from this research is submitted to the library's electronic theses and dissertations (ETD) repository, please notify the committee of the date of submission and/or any reference or cataloguing number allocated.

Sincerely,

Dr Janet Hayward

Chair: Rhodes University Human Research Ethics Committee, RU-HREC

cc: Ethics Coordinator

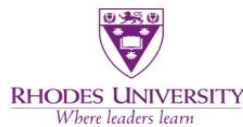
Appendix 2: Structured Research Questions

Municipal Demarcation: An Exploration of Ethnic Conflict and Violence in the 2015 Malamulele and 2016 Vuwani Protests

Semi-Structured Interviews Questions

1. How did you personally perceive the protests that happened in Malamulele and Vuwani, and how did they impact your community?
2. Can you share your own beliefs about the causes of the conflicts during the protests, and how did these beliefs influence your involvement or perspective?
3. What were the main factors that you think fuelled tensions and conflicts during the protests, and how did this affect your daily life?
4. In your view, how have historical events and divisions in the community continued to shape the way people interact and the decisions made by local leaders?
5. Have you noticed how people's ethnic backgrounds influence local government representation and leadership roles in your community? How do you think it affects decision-making?
6. What do you think about efforts made by the government to address ethnic divisions and promote understanding in Malamulele and Vuwani? Have you personally witnessed any of these efforts?
7. How have your personal experiences with ethnic conflicts and the demarcation process affected the way you view governance and your own identity?
8. Regarding the protests in Malamulele and Vuwani, what were the main concerns expressed by you and your community members, and do you think these concerns led to any changes in local governance?
9. What do you believe the government or MDB should do to successfully demarcate areas with multiple ethnic groups living together?
10. Based on your experiences and beliefs, what suggestions or recommendations can you offer to promote better governance, reconciliation, and development in diverse tribal communities like Malamulele and Vuwani?

Appendix 3: Participant Consent Form



PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION (To be signed by research participant/s)

Project Title: **Title: Municipal Demarcation: An Exploration of Ethnic Conflict and Violence in the 2015 Malamulele and 2016 Vuwani Protests**

Matimu Shivambu from the Department of **Political and International Studies**, Rhodes University has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to understand the effects of tribal affiliations on the demarcation of municipalities post-1994 and to explore ways in which tribal distinctions have impacted governance practices. By participating, one will contribute to the broader understanding of these complex issues and help inform policies and practices in local governance
2. Rhodes University has given ethical clearance to this research project (2023-7525-8112) and I have seen/may request to see the clearance certificate by contacting the Ethics Coordinator (ethics-committee@ru.ac.za)
3. By participating in this research project, one will be contributing towards contribute to a deeper understanding of the 2015 Malamulele and 2016 Vuwani protests, shedding light on the lived experiences and beliefs of those directly or indirectly affected. This knowledge has the potential to empower communities, inform policymaking, and promote inclusivity in multi-ethnic areas. Additionally, one's insights will enrich academic knowledge in the field, serving as a valuable resource for future research and scholarship. Overall, one's participation will help bring about positive change and improved coexistence in these communities.
4. I will participate in the project by (One's role in this research project will involve participating in semi-structured interviews, where they will share their personal experiences and beliefs related to the 2015 Malamulele and 2016 Vuwani protests. One's candid insights are pivotal in providing first-hand perspectives on these events, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the protests and their consequences).
5. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.

Rhodes University, Research Office, Ethical Review
Ethics Coordinator: ethics-committee@ru.ac.za
t: +27 (0) 46 603 7727 f: +27 (0) 86 616 7707
Room 204, Main Admin Building, Drostdy Road, Grahamstown, 6139

6. I will not be compensated for participating in the research, but my out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed. **(There will be no compensation provided for one's involvement).**
7. The following risks are associated with my participation: **While participation may involve discussing sensitive topics, we will ensure a respectful and supportive environment. One's input will significantly contribute to advancing knowledge in this area of research**
8. The Researcher intends to publish the research results in the form of **(Intend to disseminate the research findings through academic publications in peer-reviewed journals, conference presentations, and potentially as part of a thesis or dissertation. These publications will serve to contribute to the body of knowledge in the field and provide valuable insights into the 2015 Malamulele and 2016 Vuwani protests, their consequences, and the broader issues of governance and ethnic tensions in post-apartheid South Africa. The intention is to share the research outcomes with the academic community, policymakers, and the wider public to foster understanding, dialogue, and informed decision-making.)** However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained and my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conducting of the research, ***unless I indicate to the contrary/recognize that as a public figure my identity will inevitably be/become known, in which case I agree to accept the loss of anonymity.***
9. In terms of the Protection of Personal Information Act (No. 4 of 2013) it remains my right to request the Researcher to provide me with a detailed explanation of exactly how confidentiality and anonymity of the data I provide will be achieved. I may also request to know exactly how my personal information will be stored securely, for how long it will be stored.
10. If any data collected from me for this research project is to be used by the Researcher for any further study, I am to be informed in writing and my written consent requested again. I need not give consent for the new research if it is incompatible with the initial purpose of the present study (POPIA, s15(3)). Equally, I can simply reject the request. In such cases, a formal request needs to be made to me by the researcher via the Ethics Coordinator (ethics-committee@ru.ac.za).
11. In terms of the POPI Act, I possess the right to receive feedback about this research. This will take the form of **(Feedback will be provided in the form of a summary of the research findings and, if applicable, theses or academic publications. However, participants may choose not to receive this feedback if they so wish, and their preferences will be respected. The intention is to ensure transparency and knowledge-sharing with those who have contributed to the study.)** unless ***I elect not to receive this feedback.***



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12. Any further questions that I might have regarding the nature of the research and/or my participation in it will be answered by **(Matimu Shivambu g17s3524@campus.ru.ac.za)**
13. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record by the Researcher.
14. I **agree/disagree** (delete inapplicable) to the Researcher's use of voice recording of my comments and opinions during interviews, the purpose of which is to ensure the accurate recording of my views/responses. Furthermore, I have the right to request a copy of the interview transcriptions to confirm that my opinions are accurately recorded

I,, have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask, and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.

.....
Participants signature **Witness** **Date**