



**Analysing Public Employment Programmes as an Intervention Strategy Towards the
Creation of Employment Opportunities: The Case of Expanded Public Works
Programme (EPWP) in Thandukukhanya Township, Mkhondo Local Municipality**

Dissertation

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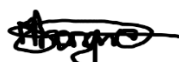
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DECLARATION

I Nomcebo Shongwe, declare that the research titled: Analysing Public Employment Programmes as an Intervention Strategy Towards the Creation of Employment Opportunities: The Case of Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in Thandukukhanya Township, Mkhondo Local Municipality, Mpumalanga Province, is my work and that the references have appropriately acknowledged all the sources that have been used to conduct the study.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this study primarily to my father, Sipho Shongwe, who has invested his time in my academic pursuits since Grade R. I also dedicate the study to the following people:

- My mother, Zodwa Shongwe
- My loving brother, Bongmusa Shongwe
- My dear friend Sandile Nhuvunga

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- I would like to acknowledge all the participants in the study, including the facilitators, EPWP workers, and community members. I offer my sincere thanks for their contribution; the study could not have been done without them.

ACRONYMS OF THE STUDY

AgriSETA: Agricultural Sector Education and Training Authority

AU: African Union Agenda

CBPWP: Community-based Public Works Programmes

CCC: Civilian Conservation Corps

CWPs: Community Works Programmes

DEFF: Department of Environment, Forestry, and Fisheries

DPW: Department of Public Works

DPWI: Department of Public Works and Infrastructure

DSD: Department of Social Development

DTI: Department of Trade and Industry

EPWP: Expanded Public Works Programme

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization

FTEs: Full-Time Equivalents

IDP: Integrated Development Plan

ILO: International Labour Organization

MGNREGA: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

NPC: National Planning Commission

NRC: Norwegian Refugee Council

NSDS: National Skill Development Strategy

NYDA: National Youth Development Agency

PEPs: Public Employment Programmes

PSNP: Productive Safety Net Programme

QCTO: Quality Council for Trades and Occupations

RDP: Reconstruction and Development Programme

SAPES: South Africa's Presidential Employment Stimulus

SEDA: Small Enterprise Development Agency

SETA: Sector of Education Training Authority

SMMEs: Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises

TZCLD: Territoire Zéro Chômeur de Longue Durée

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

WPA: Works Progress Administration

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ABSTRACT

Unemployment remains one of the most persistent social challenges globally, with consequences that extend beyond financial deprivation to include broader socio-economic vulnerabilities. Various public employment programmes have been implemented as interventions to mitigate long-term unemployment and extreme poverty. These programmes are widely regarded as significant mechanisms for expanding access to short-term employment opportunities among disadvantaged communities. However, their effectiveness in generating sustainable employment remains contested. This study aimed to provide an in-depth analysis of the Public Employment Programmes as an intervention strategy towards the creation of employment opportunities using the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in Thandukukhanya Township, within the Mkhondo Local Municipality, as a case study. The Rational Choice Theory was applied as the underpinning theoretical framework for this qualitative study. The participants were selected through convenience sampling for EPWP participants and community members, while purposive sampling was employed to identify key informants. The total sample comprised 35 participants, including 15 EPWP employees, 4 EPWP officials, and 16 community members who had resided in Thandukukhanya for more than five years. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed using thematic analysis.

The findings reveal that while the EPWP plays a significant role in providing short-term income relief and temporary employment, its capacity to facilitate long-term employability is severely constrained by limited skills development, weak post-programme pathways, and the exclusion of communities from decision-making processes. The key contribution of this study lies in demonstrating how structural and implementation limitations at the local level undermine the transformative potential of PEPs, thereby challenging assumptions about their developmental impact. The study recommends that the EPWP form partnerships with local businesses and NGOs to provide opportunities for mentorship, apprenticeships and job placement. The study also recommends that EPWP officials involve community members in the planning and programme implementation stage. Additionally, the government needs to consider employing double-blessed policies where they can promote economic growth and economic development of the beneficiaries while improving infrastructure and service delivery.

Keywords: Public Employment Programmes, Expanded Public Works Programme, employment opportunities, Skills development

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction and Background

This study sought to analyse the Public Employment Programmes (EPWP) as an intervention strategy towards the sustainable generation of employment opportunities. It reviewed the influence the EPWP has in relation to the generation of employment opportunities in Thandukukhanya Township. Unemployment persists as a significant issue of concern in many parts of the world, further escalates various development issues. Unemployment remains high and has become a one of the key problems for South Africa, as the country struggles to generate adequate employment opportunities (Dunga & Maloma, 2024). According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) reports released by the Statistics South Africa (2024) reported that the national unemployment rate reached 32.9% in the first quarter of 2024, reflecting a sustained increase an increase of 0,8 of a percentage point in Q1:2024 compared to Q4 in 2023 (Maluleke, 2024). The unemployment rate continues to undermine the development agenda and social stability of the country. Addressing this issue through the creation of employment opportunities is essential in advancing socio-economic development, granting individuals financial stability, a sense of direction, and the opportunity to improve their quality of life (Salimova & Sagadeeva, 2023).

The government of South Africa introduced the Public Works Programmes (PEPs), as part of a broader strategy to stimulate employment creation, reduce poverty and enhance livelihoods. Amongst the initiatives, the EPWP is one of the key contributors to government policy priorities in terms of creation of employment, health, rural development, and food security (Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, 2022). The programme provides a significant approach for labour absorption and livelihood generation for households. However, the document further outlines the barriers to the implementation of the programme which include unfavourable economic realities shaping the policy, lack of uniformity in the application of EPWP prescripts and compliance and inability to create sustainable employment opportunities. Questions remain about the sustainability, effectiveness and development impact of the EPWP concerning meaningful and lasting employment opportunities.

In many developing countries, unemployment continues to be a prominent issue, which exacerbates poverty rates and inequality (Heintz, 2015). Sekwati and Dagume (2023) identify

South Africa as a developing country experiencing exceptionally high unemployment rates. Public employment has surfaced as an intervention to address this challenge by fostering local economic growth and employment generation (Pradana, Prabawati, & Meirinawati, 2018). Various programmes aimed at addressing the issue of unemployment have been implemented and these programmes involved participating in economic and social activities such as; community-supported projects, agricultural and food security, environmental conservation and rehabilitation activities, early childhood development and care services, as well as public facility maintenance. They encompass a range of initiatives, including skill enhancement, vocational education, support for small businesses, and infrastructure development (Novoszath, 2018). The existing PEPs worldwide share a common objective, which is to provide residents with essential skills and resources, improve their ability to find employment, stimulate local economic growth, and ultimately reduce the rate of unemployment (Cseh-Papp, Wiwczaroski, & Risko, 2018).

In the South African context, the government has introduced several PEPs such as Community-Based Public Works Programme (CBPWP), Community Works Programme (CWP), Expanded Public Works Programmes (EPWP), National Youth Service (NYS) and Presidential Employment Stimulus (PES). These PEPs are government-funded initiatives designed to generate employment opportunities through productive activities requiring significant labour (Nzimakwe, 2008; Gehrke & Renate, 2015). While the prime objective of these programmes is to increase employment opportunities and improve service delivery for the local people, Hlatshwayo (2017) argues that the employment of these workers can still be considered precarious, given the lack job security, low wages and these jobs do not cover benefits such as medical aid or pension funds.

The ability of EPWP to create sustainable employment opportunities is still a debatable topic, and there is no assurance that these initiatives have positively impacted the labour market. Various studies have been conducted in relation to the EPWP however, there is still a lack of information about how well the programme contributes to creating sustainable employment opportunities for its target market. Studies by the following others authors; Mohapi (2016), McCutcheon (2018) and Maphanga & Mazenda (2019) focused on the effectiveness of the EPWP in achieving its environmental and poverty alleviation goals. The EPWP has gained a poor reputation for not meeting its intended targets in terms of sustainable job creation, skills development, and meaningful poverty alleviation, as Mtapuri (2014) notes that many of the employment opportunities created were short-term and low-skilled, with

limited prospects for post-programme labour market absorption, thereby constraining the programme's ability to achieve its broader developmental objectives. According to Mkhwanazi (2019), there is a need for research studies that question the effectiveness of the EPWP and suggest how the programmes may be further developed to become sustainable and reach its targets. Therefore, this study explored the various facets of EPWP and their influence on creating sustainable employment opportunities in Thandukukhanya Township in Gert Sibande district, Mpumalanga Province.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Unemployment remains a persistent global challenge, affecting both developed and developing economies. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the global unemployment rate stood at 5.1% in 2023, with over 208 million people unemployed worldwide (ILO, 2023). While developed nations experience fluctuating employment rates due to economic cycles, the situation is more severe in developing regions. Africa has been significantly affected with unemployment rates exceeding 8% in some regions, and youth unemployment reaching over 60% in certain countries (Dekker & Hollander, 2017). In attempting to address the issue of unemployment, the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063 emphasises on inclusive growth and job creation, while the African Youth Charter (2006) seeks to enhance youth employment opportunities. Additionally, the African Development Bank's Jobs for Youth in Africa Strategy have been established to foster skills development and entrepreneurship. However, despite these interventions, unemployment rates in Africa remain high, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where job growth fails to keep pace with population expansion (Adegboye & Ighodaro, 2020).

South Africa faces one of the highest unemployment rates globally, with the national average of 32.9% in the first quarter of 2024, while youth unemployment exceeds 60% (Stats SA, 2024). High unemployment levels have contributed to increased poverty, crime, social unrest, and economic stagnation, highlighting the urgency of effective employment policies (Kyriakidou, Zalaf, Christophorou, Ruiz-Garcia, & Valanides, 2021). In response, The South African government introduced the EPWP in 2004 in an attempt to address the unemployment. The aim of EPWP was to offer temporary employment and skills development through labour intensive projects in various sectors including infrastructure, environment, social and economic sectors. (Sibanda, 2023). In addition, the Community Works Programme (CWP) in 2007, was established to offer part-time employment opportunities to unemployed individuals, particularly in marginalised communities. The Youth Employment Service (YES) initiative in

2018 was introduced to facilitate private-sector job placements for young people. South Africa's Presidential Employment Stimulus was established in 2020 to alleviate the economic effects of COVID-19. Despite all these various efforts to address the complex issue of rapidly increasing unemployment rates globally, including in South Africa, the challenge continues, leading to economic stagnation (Jahed & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2023).

Research studies conducted by Sibanda (2023) and Jahed and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2023) have examined the EPWP's policy frameworks, governance, funding mechanisms, and immediate employment outcomes. While scholars, McCutcheon (2018) and Maphanga and Mazenda (2019) have focused on the effectiveness of the EPWP in attaining environmental and poverty alleviation goals. These studies undoubtedly provide valuable insights into the operational aspects of the EPWP, however, there remains a critical empirical and geographical gap which reveal limited evidence on whether the programme enhances long-term employability and sustainable job creation for its beneficiaries. Therefore, this study aimed to address the research gap by analysing the EPWP as an intervention strategy towards employment creation in Thandukukhanya Township. The core problem therefore, lies in establishing whether the programme as implemented in Thandukukhanya Township effectively contributes to the creation of sustainable job opportunities or whether it serves as a temporary measure that is without any long-term development outcomes. Gaining insight on the nature, effectiveness and limitations of the programme is essential for assessing its role as an intervention strategy for future policy improvements. One of the research objectives is to provide evidence-based recommendations on how to enhance PEPs for sustainable job creation and socio-economic development.

1.3 Research Questions

The main research question is: "How effective are EPWP as an intervention strategy for creating employment opportunities in Thandukukhanya Township?"

- 1.3.1 What indicators are used to assess the effectiveness of EPWP in generating employment opportunities in Thandukukhanya Township?
- 1.3.2 How does the EPWP generate employment opportunities in Thandukukhanya Township?
- 1.3.3 What are community members' perceptions regarding the outcome of this programme in Thandukukhanya Township, specifically its impact on employment generation?

1.3.4 What recommendations can be made to enhance the effectiveness of EPWP in generating employment opportunities in Thandukukhanya Township?

1.4 Aims and Objectives

The aim of this study was to analyse EPWP as an intervention strategy towards the creation of employment opportunities in Thandukukhanya Township.

1.4.1 To identify the indicators used to assess the effectiveness of EPWP towards employment opportunities in Thandukukhanya Township .

1.4.2 To evaluate how the EPWP generates employment opportunities in Thandukukhanya Township.

1.4.3 To analyse the perceptions of the community members regarding the EPWP for employment generation in Thandukukhanya Township .

1.4.4 To recommend measures to improve the effectiveness of EPWP in generating employment opportunities in Thandukukhanya Township.

1.5 Definition of Terms

- **Public Employment Programmes (PEPs):** Initiatives organised by the government or public sector that provide temporary employment opportunities to alleviate unemployment and improve infrastructure or community services (Philips, 2023)
- **Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP):** A South African government initiative aimed at reducing unemployment and poverty by providing short-term work and training to unemployed individuals through public sector projects focused on infrastructure, environment, and social services (Oguntona, Akinradewo, Kgoetyane, Ogunbayo, & Aigbavboa, 2023)
- **Employment opportunities:** Jobs or work positions available to individuals seeking employment. These opportunities can be created or facilitated by various initiatives, including PEPs (Kapur, 2024).

1.6 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is based on the potential to provide comprehensive insights into the effectiveness of EPWP as an intervention strategy for addressing unemployment in Thandukukhanya Township. Although various programmes such as the EPWP have been

introduced to mitigate these issues, their long-term effectiveness remains inadequately understood.

This study aims to address the knowledge gap regarding the actual contribution of EPWP to employment creation within Thandukukhanya Township. Understanding this impact is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, it can provide a localised evaluation of PEPs, which can help tailor more effective strategies to the specific needs and conditions of the township. Secondly, by identifying the indicators used to assess the effectiveness of EPWP, this study can contribute to the establishment of robust assessment frameworks applicable in analogous settings throughout South Africa and other regions encountering comparable obstacles.

Furthermore, the study's exploration of community members' perceptions has the potential to provide an understanding of how these initiatives are perceived by their target population. These insights are crucial for policymakers and urban planners to identify and improve potential deficiencies in these programs and enhance the community's trust and involvement. The community's perceptions can also reveal unintended consequences or benefits of the programmes, thus enriching the overall understanding of their impact.

The research questions posed in this study are fundamental in evaluating the programmes' success. The findings will not only highlight the current state of EPWP in Thandukukhanya Township but, they can also provide actionable recommendations to enhance these programmes. This could lead to more sustainable and impactful employment opportunities, subsequently aiding in the reduction of unemployment and the socio-economic development of the township.

Moreover, this study holds broader implications for policy formulation and implementation. The insights gained can guide the South African government and other relevant parties in refining public employment strategies and make them more effective and aligned with community requirements. By exploring the effectiveness, challenges, and community perceptions of EPWP, this research can contribute to shaping comprehensive and efficient employment policies that offer short-term assistance and promote sustained economic stability and advancement.

1.7 Research Design and Methodology

The study is a qualitative study. The interpretivism paradigm, which emphasised capturing the multiple realities and varied experiences of participants regarding the influence of public

employment programs on job creation in Thandukukhanya Township, was adopted. Unlike positivist or pragmatic approaches, interpretivism is particularly suited to this study as it seeks to understand how individuals interpret the effectiveness of employment programmes within their specific social and economic contexts. An exploratory research design was employed to gain new insights and in-depth information from participants. Although exploratory research could be time-consuming and challenging in finding suitable participants, it was cost-effective. It promoted extensive interaction between the researcher and participants, enhancing the quality of the collected data.

A qualitative approach was employed because it is flexible and focuses on non-numerical data, allowing participants to share their views and experiences. This approach was appropriate for exploring the impact of PEPs on employment generation in Thandukukhanya Township, facilitating semi-structured interviews that provided an opportunity for participants to express their perceptions and insights. The target population included EPWP officials, EPWP participants, and non-participants from the community, providing a broad range of perspectives on the programmes' impact.

Non-probability sampling methods were utilised to select participants, specifically purposive and convenience sampling. Purposive sampling was employed to recruit EPWP facilitators and employees based on predefined criteria relevant to the study, while convenience sampling was used to select community members based on accessibility and availability. A total of 35 participants were selected, including 15 EPWP participants, 4 officials, and 16 community members aged 18 to 45. This sample size was chosen to provide in-depth insights rather than to generalise the results.

The primary data collection process involved semi-structured interviews, a method that combined predetermined questions with the flexibility to explore deeper topics based on participant responses. The interviews were recorded with participants' consent to ensure accurate information. Three sets of semi-structured interviews targeted EPWP officials, participants, and non-participants, allowing for a comprehensive data collection on their experiences and perceptions. The collected data was analysed by use of thematic analysis, a process involving familiarisation of the data, generation of initial codes, themes searching, reviewing and themes refining, themes definitions, and analysis writing up. This method aligned with the study's objectives to understand the effectiveness of EPWP in generating employment opportunities and to capture community perceptions.

1.8 Structure of the study

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

The first chapter delves into the introductory aspects and background of the research, offering readers a clear preview of the subsequent chapters. It outlines the problem statement and the study's aims and objectives. Moreover, this section introduces the proposed research design and methodology.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This chapter covers the literature review to establish existing information about PEPs and employment opportunities. Furthermore, it elucidates the theoretical framework that serves as the foundation for the study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter elaborates on the research design and methodology, explaining all the processes used and attempted to answer the research problem. Furthermore, it discusses the quality assurance measures taken to ensure the credibility and validity of the collected data and an in-depth discussion of the ethical considerations undertaken.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Presentation

This chapter meticulously analyses, interprets, and presents the data obtained from the study participants. It encompasses the raw data presentation, detailed analysis, and interpretation of the data.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter presents the study's conclusion about the research problem and objectives. Additionally, it provides recommendations and suggestions for future research.

1.9 Summary of the chapter

Chapter 1 provides an introduction and background of this study, including an exposition of the problem statement. It has also delineated the research questions and objectives of this study. The chapter presents definitions of the principal concepts and highlights a brief methodology employed in the study. Chapter 2 will present the review of literature and theoretical framework underpinning the study.

Chapter 2

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature related to EPWP and its effectiveness as an intervention strategy towards employment creation. The review of related literature provides an overview of existing knowledge and provides justification for this new study on EPWP. It therefore synthesises and evaluates literature of other scholars relevant to the research questions, and interrogates underlying assumptions, methodologies and findings, highlighting inconsistencies or contradictions in existing literature and situates this study within these scholarly debates. The search for related literature was conducted using various search engines and sources drawn from books, e-books, peer reviewed journals, conference proceedings, reports and relevant municipal documents. The chapter begins by conceptualising PEPs and outlining their evolution and significance in addressing unemployment globally and within the South African context. It further examines the different types of PEPs, their impact on employment generation, and the key indicators used to assess their effectiveness. The chapter also explores public perceptions, as well as the challenges and limitations associated with the implementation of PEPs. This review of literature provided the context and theoretical framework for this study, and guided the researcher to place the research findings of the study within the broader body of knowledge and supported the discussion of results.

2.2 Conceptualization of the Public Employment Programmes (PEPs)

This section conceptualises the public works programmes to bring clarity and ensure a shared understanding of the concepts and to prevent misinterpretation.

2.2.1 PEPs

Public Employment Programmes (PEPs) have undergone considerable transformation over time, adapting to the evolving socio-economic needs of different countries. According to Dladla (2023), these initiatives were initially conceptualised as Public Works Programmes, with a primary focus on infrastructure development. However, as their scope expanded to include social, environmental, and economic interventions, the terminology shifted from “works” to “employment” to reflect the broader range of activities undertaken (Mubangizi & Dladla, 2024).

PEPs are widely recognised as a key policy instrument for addressing unemployment, particularly in developing and low-income countries where formal employment opportunities

remain limited (Mubangizi & Dladla, 2024). While these programmes provide short-term employment and income support, their effectiveness in promoting sustainable employment remains debated. Some studies suggest that PEPs contribute to skills development and improved service delivery, while others argue that their impact is often limited to temporary relief without significantly improving long-term labour market outcomes.

Shai (2021) defines public employment as work that delivers services for the benefit of others, particularly within the care economy, where workers are compensated for their labour. This broader conceptualisation highlights the expansion of PEPs beyond traditional infrastructure projects to include sectors such as social welfare, healthcare, and environmental management. However, this expansion also raises questions about the quality, sustainability, and long-term value of employment created through such programmes.

PEPs can be broadly classified into institutionalised programmes and Employment Guarantee Schemes. Institutionalised programmes, such as the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in South Africa, integrate job creation with service delivery objectives. In contrast, Employment Guarantee Schemes, such as India's Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), provide a legal entitlement to work for unemployed individuals (Lal et al., 2010). While Employment Guarantee Schemes offer stronger protection against unemployment through rights-based approaches, institutionalised programmes often lack enforceable guarantees, which may limit their effectiveness in addressing structural unemployment.

Although these programmes aim to address immediate employment needs and contribute to poverty alleviation, their long-term impact remains context-dependent. Factors such as programme design, institutional capacity, and alignment with labour market demands play a critical role in determining outcomes. This suggests that while PEPs are valuable tools for social protection and economic inclusion, their ability to generate sustainable employment requires careful integration with broader economic and development strategies.

2.2.2 The Expanded Public Works Programme

The EPWP in South Africa is a large-scale public employment initiative, launched in 2004 its main aim was to mitigate unemployment and poverty through the provision of temporary job opportunities and skills development. The design of the programme was shaped by innovations from other local PEPs and by insights gleaned from prior national employment schemes (McCord & Paul, 2019). Unlike traditional public works programmes that primarily focused

on infrastructure development, the EPWP has expanded employment opportunities into various sectors, including social services, environmental conservation, and economic sector. This expansion in scope facilitates the creation of employment across diverse domains, thereby fostering a more inclusive strategy for poverty alleviation. The EPWP is organised into four principal sectors: social, economic, environmental and cultural, and infrastructure. Each sector is instrumental in delivering services while concurrently generating employment and enhancing the skill sets of participants (McCord & Paul, 2019).

Khawula (2019) defined the EPWP as: A comprehensive programme implemented by governmental and private sector stakeholders to provide a significant number of unemployed individuals with productive labour activities. The primary objective of the programme is to provide short-term employment, While also providing participants with on-the-job training designed to improve their skills and long-term employability prospects. Through this initiative, beneficiaries acquire practical work experience, thereby enhancing their capacity to transition into sustainable employment or entrepreneurial ventures. Mkhathshwa-Ngwenya (2016) further highlights that the EPWP was conceived with three fundamental objectives as; to provide employment opportunities, to offer skills training, and to function as a conduit for participants to enter the formal labour market. By integrating work opportunities with skills development, the EPWP plays a vital role in diminishing unemployment rates while promoting economic inclusion. Additionally, the programme supports broader socio-economic goals by enhancing public infrastructure, improving service delivery, and advocating for environmental sustainability. Through strategic collaborations with municipalities, state-owned enterprises, and private organisations, the EPWP continues to develop as an essential instrument for economic advancement and poverty alleviation within the South African context.

2.3 Historical Context of Public Employment Programme (PEPs)

PEPs are programmes that have been used during periods of crisis, including drought, economic downturn, war and food insecurity, as well as, unemployment, to offer support to the poor and unemployed populations (Sibanda, 2023). These programmes have been instrumental in mitigating the adverse effects of unemployment and promoting economic stability. During economic crises and periods of high unemployment rates, countries worldwide implemented public employment as part of their response strategies (Ishker & Youssef, 2022). One of the earliest notable programmes of this nature is, the New Deal in the United States during the Great Depression of the 1930s, it included initiatives such as, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) provided millions of jobs and helped in

building infrastructure ranging from roads and bridges to public buildings and art projects (Kregel, 2018). Various scholars such as Walker & Brechin (2010) and Fishback (2018), attest that the New Deal was a public employment programme that was introduced as a response to the Great Depression of the 1930s and it created extensive range of public works and established a series of regulations, government insurance, and poverty reduction programmes that remain in place to this day.

In developing countries, some PEPs played a significant role in addressing socio-economic issues such as the high unemployment rate. For instance, India's Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act of 2005 (MGNREGA), created 100 days of wage employment to rural households (Koyoncu, Yoruk, & Gurel, 2023). The aim of this act was to alleviate poverty and create employment opportunities to improve the livelihood of rural people in India (Patwardhan & Tasciotti, 2023). Similarly, in 2005, Ethiopia initiated a productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) as an intervention to address issues of poverty and create employment opportunities (Kassa, 2018). In the context of South Africa, the evolution of PEPs is closely linked to the nation's socio-political and economic transformations and implications of historical injustices. The aim of these PEPs was to address the persistent issues of inequality, poverty, and unemployment in the country. The post-apartheid government recognised the need to address the high unemployment rates and socio-economic inequalities (Oguntona, et al., 2023). There are various programmes that were introduced by the government as a response to economic crises, such as the high unemployment rates. These public employments include the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in 2005, Community Works Programmes (CWP) in 2010 and South Africa's Presidential Employment Stimulus (SAPES) in 2020. These programmes are community based, their scope of work is to generate employment opportunities (Gehrke & Renate, 2015). In South Africa, the effectiveness of these programmes is still questionable. Ishker and Youssef (2022) argue that in low- and middle-income countries, there is some evidence that PEPs involve a substantial number of people despite limited budgets; however, there are concerns about the effectiveness of the programmes.

2.4 Types of PEPs

PEPs are a subset of community development initiatives designed to tackle unemployment while fostering economic growth by providing needy individuals with immediate employment relief and skills training (Sakketa & Von Braun, 2019). These programmes aim to offer immediate employment relief while equipping participants with the skills necessary for

sustainable future employment. The primary objectives of PEPs are to reduce unemployment rates, provide income support to vulnerable populations and develop public infrastructure and services. Various public employment laws are in place globally.

2.4.1 PEPs: Global Perspective

PEPs are development initiatives supported by governmental funding designed to provide temporary employment opportunities, frequently in public works projects such as infrastructure development, environmental conservation, and community services (Liu & Gao, 2021). A study by Lieuw-Kie-Song, Puerto, and Tsukamoto (2016) reviewed various Public Employment Programmes (PEPs) implemented globally to assess their effectiveness in addressing youth unemployment, enhancing employability, and contributing to inclusive economic development, with particular attention to programme design, targeting mechanisms, and labour market outcomes.

France's Zero Long-Term Unemployment Areas project, based on principles that everyone can work, and the state can fund ongoing employment, provided indefinite contracts at minimum wage (Ayala, 2023). The Zero Long-Term Unemployed Territory, also known as “*Territoire Zéro Chômeur de Longue Durée* (TZCLD)”, was introduced in 2011 with the aim of achieving its goals by 2026 (Reysz, 2024). The programme was based on three beliefs as, firstly, there are no people who are unsuitable for employment; secondly, there is no lack of jobs as there is an abundance of useful and diverse jobs to be filled; lastly, there is no shortage of money as permanent unemployment costs more than job creation (Sclavi, 2024). The TZCLD has been able to increase the employability and social inclusion of individuals who are far from the labour market and have been unemployed for a long period of time (Retsin, 2023). However, just like any initiative, the programme encountered limitations such as difficulties in assessing their longer-term professional integration, and beneficiaries do not always occupy jobs that align with their qualifications (Reysz, 2024).

In 1992, the Government of Nepal enacted the Social Welfare Act for the first time, aiming to provide livelihoods for vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals within communities. This legislation was designed to support groups that were unable to independently sustain themselves (Dladla, 2023). A variety of social protection programmes were established by the Nepalese government to assist disabled people, women, senior citizens, and Dalits. These programmes include Rural Community Infrastructure Works (1996) and Karmali Employment Programme (2006). These programmes encompass food assistance, cash transfer programmes,

and public employment initiatives, all are essential in helping these vulnerable groups maintain a sustainable standard of living (Acharya, 2022). Assessments these programmes reveal high levels of success in their implementation in job creation, asset creation, poverty alleviation, and food security and the infrastructure were improved through these programmes (World Bank, 2015). Despite the progress of the programmes, challenges such as, structural exclusion and the need for improved policy implementation and administrative capacity remain unresolved (Drucza, 2016).

The Peruvian government launched the Workfare Programme, also called; Construyendo Perú. The goal of this programme was to give unemployed and poor people, especially household heads, long-term support. According to the ILO, 2016 guidelines, the programme aimed to accomplish its goals by providing temporary work through state-funded public investment projects. Participants also received skills training to improve their employability in the future and encourage sustainability. Construyendo Perú's primary goals, according to a study by Escudero (2018) assessing its efficacy, were to create temporary jobs for the poor and jobless in the community, raise their standard of living and future employment prospects, and build or renovate public and community infrastructure. By improving their prospects of finding work in the future, enabling them to actively engage in the labour market, and helping to upgrade public and community infrastructure, the programme had a positive impact on participants (Dladla, 2023).

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), passed by the Indian Parliament in 2005, was renamed the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in October 2009. This policy was introduced to address unemployment and poverty, particularly in rural areas (Dladla, 2023). MGNREGA, which focuses mostly on infrastructure development and natural resource management, ensures rural households 100 days of employment annually. These programmes are in line with international initiatives to use public employment to promote social development and economic recovery. As stated by Talbot, Langa, & Ortiz, (2019), the programme provided manual and unskilled labour for a variety of community-selected projects in collaboration with local authorities, employing over 57 million adults by 2015. MGNREGA has been criticised even though it has resulted in notable advancements. Kadia (2022) identified several irregularities in its implementation, including issues related to job card distribution, delays in wage payments, and non-compliance with agreed-upon project selection processes. Additionally, Sodhi (2024) highlighted a lack of

awareness about the program at the community level, particularly among individuals seeking work opportunities near their residences.

2.4.2 PEPs in Africa

PEPs in Africa have emerged as vital strategies for job creation and poverty alleviation, particularly in sub-Saharan countries. These programmes not only provide immediate employment opportunities but also contribute to long-term economic development by creating assets and enhancing social participation (Sakketa & Von Braun, 2019). Although Escudero (2018) focuses on Latin America, the findings provide useful comparative insights for African contexts as he asserts that the implementation of these programmes in Latin America has not achieved the same magnitude as those implemented in Africa and Asia. Notable PEPs include but not limited to Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP); Cash for work Programme in Somalia.

Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) integrates public employment with food and cash transfers to support food-insecure households. Ethiopia, located in the north-eastern region of Africa, west of Somalia, is an agriculturally dependent country, with approximately 80% of its population residing in rural areas. Similar to India's Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), the PSNP is a community-driven initiative where development agents collaborate with local communities on selected projects (Dladla, 2023). Launched in 2003 through a partnership between the Ethiopian government and development stakeholders, the PSNP aimed to address food insecurity, poverty, and unemployment by enhancing food availability and stability within the country (Talbot et al., 2019). According to Dladla (2023), the programme has played a significant role in reducing food insecurity by providing social and financial benefits to both participants and the wider community. Additionally, it has empowered rural women by enabling them to form groups and organisations that promote women's economic development. Talbot et al. (2019) further highlights that the programme has improved participants' income levels, enabling them to accumulate assets through savings and investments activities, which has contributed to broader economic growth.

Another notable PEPs in Africa is Cash for work Programme in Somalia. In 2011 Somalia experienced a severe famine due to the drought that had occurred. According to Austen (2015), over 3.1 million people were affected by drought, with 2.8 million residing in South Central Somalia. In collaboration with the Government of Somalia, international aid agencies and

donor organisations implemented the Cash for Work (CFW) Programme, along with other interventions, to support the country's recovery and development efforts (Dladla, 2023). The programme's primary goals were to preserve communities and families by empowering rural households, helping the most vulnerable communities, boosting the local economy, offering employment opportunities and income support, preventing the depletion of household assets, and eventually reducing and eliminating migration. Community members and households were employed through the programme to carry out various community development activities. The Cash for Work program in Somalia has effectively provided dual benefits by offering financial support to vulnerable communities while simultaneously enhancing local assets (Fang, Tran, Oranga, Kopper, & Kang, 2024; Hauser & Mugonya, 2024). This programme has been instrumental in promoting sustainable agricultural practices and mitigating food insecurity (Andrée, Ballamingie, Piazza, & Jarosiewicz, 2017).

2.4.3 PEPs in South Africa

In South Africa, the PEPs have a long history of existence dating from the 1890s (Friedman & Bhengu, 2008). In the 1930s PEPs continued with the mandate of eradicating poverty that was experienced by white people in the country (Cowlin, 2018). The government of the time implemented Public Works Programme to correct and address poverty within the white population. The Public Works Programme was put into action, it included building of dams, railroads, and other infrastructure projects. The Public Works Programme as a government intervention was able to contribute to the rise in employment and poverty reduction among white people in the country by providing them with opportunities to earn income through the projects it implemented (Cowlin, 2018).

In the Post-apartheid era, the government launched the National Public Works Programme (NPWP) as an intervention to address the historical injustices brought by the apartheid legacy. The programme aimed to address the challenges of unemployment by creating jobs and improving the infrastructure by offering services, particularly in regions that were neglected by the apartheid government (Tshishonga & Matsiliza, 2021). However, the programme had it challenges which included the incapacity to expand its impact to serve more unemployed people, administrative and implementation issues, a lack of funding, and maintenances issues (Thwala, 2008; Wong, 2017).

Later, the Community Based Public Works Programme (CBPWP) was introduced as a means of addressing poverty and unemployment. The Community Based Public Works Programme

(CBPWP) lasted from 1994 until approximately 2003. Additionally, R250 million from the RDP fund was given as a grant to support the CBPWP until the end of 1996; however, there was no assurance that funding would continue after this time frame, which ran from 1996 to 2001 (Zuma, 2016). Early weaknesses, such as, a lack of monitoring and evaluation, a failure to demonstrate community-led projects, and cost inefficiencies arose and leading the government to realigning the programme and increase commitment to the programme (Mubangizi & Dladla, 2024 Odhiambo, Johannes, & Fabian, 2015). The CBPWP was employing a smaller unemployed population, clearly making very little contribution towards the reduction of unemployment (Mubangizi & Dladla, 2024). The Community Based Public Works Programme (CBPWP) was focused mainly towards the development of infrastructure using labour from local communities. The contribution of the programme lead to suggestions that the programme should be expanded beyond infrastructure, which sparked creative thinking about PWPs and led to the addition of the word "Expanded" to allow for goods and services that the government would provide to the community in a labour-intensive manner. This resolution then gave rise to the EPWP in its current form as a Public Employment Programme in South Africa (Dladla, 2023).

Drawing from these principles and the given Community Based Public Works Programme (CBPWP), President Thabo Mbeki formally announced the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) during his State of the Nation Address in February 2003. The programme was approved by Cabinet in November 2003 and replaced the Community Based Public Works Programme (CBPWP). The introduction of the EPWP came because of an expansion of an already established programme, the National Public Works Programme (NPWP). The EPWP was a strategy for unemployment and poverty alleviation (Mfusi & Govender, 2015). According to Moeti (2014), EPWP prioritised training beneficiaries by creating employment opportunities, and serving as a springboard for trainees entering the workforce. However, compared to the overall unemployment rate, the EPWP's planned employment creation is minimal, and its workers cannot find employment outside the programme, and have to depend on the other EPWP opportunities (Melody & Zonyana, 2017; Dladla 2023). It is therefore expected that the EPWP will remain operating until these medium-to-long term programmes successfully reduce unemployment.

EPWP was criticised for projects that were too labour intensive, and state driven rather than community driven. In response to the criticism of EPWP, in 2008 the Community Works Programme was launched as a pilot project (Langa, 2015). The Community Works Programme

was introduced as a response to high levels of poverty and structural unemployment compounded by gross inequity which renders South Africa the most unequal society in the world (Philip, 2013; Hlongo, 2023). The Community Works Programme showed potential in improving socio-economic livelihoods for participants, providing them with skills and an income that could lead to long-term benefits (Andersson & Alexander, 2016). Notwithstanding its potential, the CWP, like other PEPs, faces difficulties expanding successful pilot projects to the national level and creating long-lasting relationships between the government and communities (Odhiambo, et al., 2015). The uniqueness of the CWP lies in its sustained continuity, the provision of predictable regular income, and its implementation through non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Shumba, 2017). The Community Works Programme differs from other PEPs; due to the strength it carries for community participation and community development.

In 2020, several countries adopted some combination of economic lockdown and risk-adjusted strategies to mitigate the COVID-19 health, social and economic risks. The pandemic resulted in significant negative impacts on employment, causing unemployment rates to rise to figures which were last observed in the mid-1990s (Altman, 2022). The President announced phase 1 of the Presidential Employment Stimulus as part of the country's Economic Recovery and Reconstruction Plan (Mosala, 2022). The aim was to expand public employment through innovative partnerships and investments in public goods, strengthen job-creating sectors with sustainable reforms, and support private sector recovery to enhance long-term employment opportunities (Shai, 2021). South Africa's Presidential Employment Stimulus created 770,000 jobs to address the economic impacts of COVID-19 (Ayala, 2023). The employment stimulus has enabled the most rapid expansion of public employment in South Africa's history, by supporting programmes that could scale up within a matter of months to provide work for those who need it (The Presidency, 2022). In his state of the nation address, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa made the following statement:

“We needed the Employment Stimulus as part of our response to the pandemic and we still need it now, not as an alternative to market-based recovery, but as a contribution to it. The bottom line is that through the Stimulus, we have unlocked energy, commitment, creativity, innovation and opportunities. In the process, we are building a society that works. That is indeed our challenge and our goal.” (Presidential Employment Stimulus, 2024)

2.5 The impact of PEPs on employment generation.

PEPs are meticulously designed to address unemployment by establishing temporary employment opportunities and providing financial assistance to participants. These programmes frequently target vulnerable populations, including economically disadvantaged individuals, youth, and marginalised communities, with the aim of enhancing their employability and alleviating the socio-economic impacts of joblessness. Researchers such as Suarez, Cueto, & Mayor, (2014) and Elezaj, Gjipall, & Ademaj, (2019) have critically assessed the outcomes and effectiveness of PEPs within diverse contexts, underscoring their significance in enhancing participants' skills and professional experience. More recent studies, including those conducted by McCord and Paul (2019) and Lieuw-Kie-Song et al., (2016), reaffirm these conclusions, illustrating that the well-structured PEPs can function as a bridge to formal employment by equipping participants with relevant industry skills. Bhatt, Yadav, & Khan, (2024), in their research, have discovered that vocational training incorporated within PEPs produces remarkable results, with trained individuals attaining a 70% employment rate in contrast to 50% for untrained counterparts. However, the extent of success is different, based on the design of the programme, its implementation, and its alignment with the needs of the local labour market.

PEPs concentrate on a variety of sectors to generate employment opportunities, with primary sectors encompassing infrastructure development, environmental stewardship, and social services. These programmes are important as they contribute to economic recovery, especially during periods of crisis, as evidenced during the COVID-19 pandemic, when governments globally instituted public employment initiatives to mitigate job losses (Shai, 2021; Lee, Schmidt-Klau, & Verick, 2020). Furthermore, they play an essential role in community development by enhancing public infrastructure such as, roads, educational institutions, sanitation facilities, and promoting broader socio-economic advantages (Sakketa & Von Braun, 2019). Research conducted by Gehrke & Hartwig (2018) indicates that PEPs are particularly effective in regions plagued by high structural unemployment, where viable employment alternatives are scarce. However, critics argue that in the absence of strong exiting strategies, these programmes risk becoming a mere short-term relief measure rather than serving as a bridge for sustainable employment (McCord & Paul, 2019).

The effectiveness of PEPs is dependent upon factors such as, adequate planning, sufficient funding, and resilient implementation frameworks that ensure both immediate and enduring benefits (Subbarao, Del Ninno, Andrews, & Rodríguez-Alas, 2012). The sustainability of these

initiatives frequently relies on their capacity to transition participants into permanent employment or entrepreneurship. Evidence from recent investigations suggests that the integration of PEPs with skills development, private sector partnerships, and entrepreneurship support enhance their impact (Alba & Stucki, 2019; Kumar, 2024). However, challenges such as, mismanagement, insufficient monitoring, and a lack of post-programme support continue to hinder their success (Kissi, Mohammed, & Owusu-Diatuo 2018; Bagga, Holmlund, Khan, Mani, Mvukiyehe, & Premand, 2024). Therefore, it is important for governments and policymakers to embrace a multi-dimensional approach that includes rigorous evaluation frameworks, targeted skills training, and sector-specific job creation strategies to maximise the effectiveness of PEPs in addressing unemployment and promoting economic resilience (Gehrke & Hartwig, 2015 & Philip, 2023).

2.6 Indicators Used to Assess Effectiveness of PEPs.

Several key indicators are commonly employed to assess the effectiveness of employment. (Vrbka & Lutan, 2019). These standard measures include employment rates, job retention, wage levels, and skill development (Barnow & Smith, 2015). The employment rate is an indicator used to assess the effectiveness of PEPs and measure the percentage of the labour force employed. In contrast, the unemployment rate reflects the percentage actively seeking employment but currently jobless (Agarwal, Alok, Chopra, & Tantri, 2021). Another crucial metric is the job placement rate, which indicates the proportion of participants who secure employment upon their completion (Chen, Pini, & Sergei, 2023). Additionally, the duration of employment assesses the length of time participants remain in their jobs post-placement, and wage levels compare average earnings before and after participation. Skill development is evaluated by the number of participants completing training and the specific tasks acquired within the programme (Simone, 2014). The job retention rate measures the percentage of participants who maintain employment for a designated period after placement. Lastly, the economic impact is assessed by examining contributions to local or national economic growth, including increased consumer spending and reduced dependency on social welfare.

2.7 Public Perceptions Around PEPs.

The community's perception of PEPs largely hinges on the programmes' effectiveness in addressing critical socio-economic issues such as, unemployment, poverty, and inequality. These programmes are widely recognised for their intended role in creating job opportunities, with the expectation of improving participants' livelihoods and fostering broader socio-economic development. However, perceptions among community members can vary

significantly based on individual experiences, the duration of employment provided, and the tangible outcomes achieved through these initiatives.

According to Dladla and Mubangizi (2024), in their study on participants' perceptions of the EPWP's contribution to sustainable livelihoods, PEPs can offer a "win-win" solution by not only creating job opportunities but also simultaneously generating valuable assets and delivering essential services to communities. Despite these benefits, there remain scepticism in some areas regarding the sustainability of the employment provided and the adequacy of skills development for long-term economic empowerment (Langa, 2022). For many, the short-term nature of public works employment can limit its perceived value, as the transition to permanent job opportunities or significant income growth is not always evident (Langa, et al., 2019).

Moreover, the community's expectations often extend beyond mere job creation to include improved social cohesion, better access to resources, and the empowerment of marginalised groups. Research has indicated that the CWP has a significant positive potential to promote social cohesion and strengthen relationships within communities, which in turn contributes to the prevention or mitigation of violence incidents and recidivism (Langa, Masuku, Bruce, & Van de Merwe, 2016). When these broader goals are not visibly met, participants and community members may express dissatisfaction, viewing the programmes as falling short of their potential. The lack of visible impact of the programmes resulted into community members portraying a negative attitudes towards the programmes, for instance some community members view CWP as programme for losers and people who have given up on life or stopped dreaming as there is no room for growth in these programme but a short term employment relief (Langa, 2022). These perceptions are crucial for policymakers and programme designers to adapt public employment initiatives to better meet the expectations and needs of the communities they aim to serve.

2.8 Challenges and limitations of PEPs.

Despite the potential of PEPs in addressing socio-economic issues, they often face several challenges that can limit their effectiveness (Hesselman, De wolf, & Toebes, 2016). These challenges include the temporary nature of the jobs provided, administrative inefficiencies, political interference, gender issues, and funding issues (Mazenda, Matjane, Simawu, & Lubinga, 2022).

2.8.1 Programme Funding

One of the critical challenges faced by PEPs is securing adequate and sustainable funding. According to Schwarzer, Kämmerer-Rütten, Schleyer-Lindenmann, & Wang, (2016). The majority of PEPs in Africa are funded by donor organisations, in contrast to areas such as, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean where government funding is more common. The reliance on external funding presents significant limitations, as donor contributions are often unpredictable and subject to fluctuations based on geopolitical or economic circumstances (Makuwira, 2017; Von Braun & Kofol, 2017). It should be noted that international aid organisations and donor groups supported the country and carried out the CFW Programme in collaboration with the Somalian Government. The FAO, NRC, and USAID were important organisations that provided support for the programme. While this support was crucial for the programme's operation, the dependency on donor funding restricted the programme's ability to achieve long-term sustainability (Von Braun & Kofol, 2017). The dependency on external donations makes it difficult for PEPs in many African countries to operate independently or build capacity for local financial management. Moreover, during tough economic times or political turmoil, donors often withdraw their funding, further exacerbating the financial vulnerability of these programmes (Beegle, Coudouel, & Monsalve, 2018).

The funding constraints faced by PEPs are not unique to Africa. Ortiz (2017) highlighted that in El Salvador, the country's PEPs relied on external donations, and volunteers often faced significant logistical challenges due to insufficient financial support. For instance, they struggled to cover travel expenses and food costs when carrying out activities in remote areas. A similar situation occurred in Somalia, during the civil war in 2009 food aid agencies withdrew their support from the country between 2009 and 2010, leaving many programmes without crucial funding. In South Africa, the effectiveness of the EPWP has been questioned due to similar financial difficulties. Mazenda et al. (2022) observed that chronic underfunding has hindered the ability of the EPWP to maintain its projects and provide adequate stipends to beneficiaries. Terziev and Arabska (2015) highlight that without sufficient resources and effective management PEPs are unlikely to achieve their intended outcomes. These challenges underline the need for more sustainable funding models and enhanced financial management to ensure the long-term success and independence of PEPs, particularly in developing nations.

2.8.2 Gender Inequality issues

Gender inequality remains a significant challenge in the implementation of PEPs worldwide, with various studies highlighting disparities in participation and access to opportunities. One of the concerns is the continuous gender imbalance in PEPs, where women often face barriers to entry and unequal treatment in employment opportunities (Lieuw-Kie-Song, et al., 2016). Women continue to be underrepresented in many existing PEPs, with their participation remaining lower than that of males. Mataboge (2017) noted that in the Indian Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), some women experienced discrimination when performing jobs that were considered too masculine, for example, working on construction sites, and were discouraged from participating in the programme by their partners and family members (Amoah & Mensah, 2023). Similarly, the Kenyan Kazi Kwa Vijana programme primarily employed more of males than women, as its projects required physical strength and were structured in ways that did not accommodate women (Talbot, 2017). This lack of gender-inclusive project design has contributed to the exclusion of women from many PEPs, exacerbating gender disparities in employment and income generation.

Additionally, the failure to integrate gender perspectives into programme planning further exacerbates inequality. For instance, the JRE programme in Colombia did include gender perspective as the entrepreneurship programme was associated to areas that catered for men and females were not encouraged to participate (Ortiz, 2017). In contrast, South Africa's PEPs reflect an opposite trend, where men are underrepresented due to social stigmas associated with participation. Brankovic (2017) reports that PEP participation in South Africa comprises of 75% females and 25 % males, largely because many projects within the programmes, such as community-based work, seems to cater for females more than males. The stigmatisation of men participating in Community Work Programmes (CWPs) further deters their involvement, as such, roles are often associated with caregiving and social services, which are traditionally considered feminine (Amoah & Mensah, 2023). These gendered employment patterns shows that while some programmes discourage male participation, others disproportionately exclude women, highlighting the necessity for gender-sensitive policy frameworks in PEPs. Ensuring balanced and inclusive participation in PEPs requires targeted interventions, such as restructuring project types to accommodate both genders, addressing cultural biases, and implementing policies that promote gender equity in employment.

2.8.3 The Nature of Temporary Jobs

Cardone, Tumpel, & Huber, (2021) argue that the temporary employment offered by PEPs does not lead to long-term financial stability for participants, particularly in countries where job opportunities are already scarce. The end of the contract often results in participants being left without stable employment once their contracts end, thus perpetuating the cycle of poverty and unemployment. As noted by Zuma (2016), one of the identified issues within the Community-Based Public Works Programme (CBPWP) is that the income earned through short-term employment is often fully consumed rather than saved or invested. This leads to fewer sustained benefits or livelihood improvements for participants that could break the cycle of poverty. While PEPs, like CBPWP, have succeeded in creating temporary jobs, these positions are often short-term and fail to provide the lasting economic stability needed to reduce unemployment significantly (Mogomotsi, Mogomotsi, & Badimo, 2018). Participants in these programmes often find themselves without the means to secure permanent employment, which limits the broader goal of addressing structural unemployment (Mogomotsi, et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the temporary nature of employment in PEPs hinders participants from developing the skills necessary to compete in the broader labour market. As Mncina (2019) observed in the case of the Greece Kinofelis programme, beneficiaries can only participate for a limited period, ranging from five to eight months, after that they must leave the programme. This limited duration fails to provide them with enough time to gain significant skills or experience that would improve their employability for the long-term employment opportunities. In many cases, despite the skills training offered, the short-term nature of employment under PEPs limits the depth and breadth of skill development, which is essential for securing more sustainable, permanent employment (Mubangizi & Dladla, 2024). These constraints highlight the necessity for PEPs to not only focus on providing temporary jobs but also create pathways for long-term employment and skill development that will improve participants' ability to compete in the labour market. Without addressing these issues, PEPs risk failing to significantly reduce unemployment or improve the socio-economic status of participants in the long run.

2.8.4 Administrative inefficiencies

The administration of PEPs is frequently plagued by corruption, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and delays in payments, which further undermine their effectiveness and intended goals. Bouzid (2016) highlights that such administrative inefficiencies can significantly impede the success of PEPs, making it difficult to achieve their objectives. A prime example of this is seen

in the Indian Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), where authorities diverted project funds for personal gain (Basu, Natarajan, & Sen, 2020 Basu, Raj, & Sen, 2024). Additionally, corrupt practices involved inflating expenses for unfinished work and claiming previously completed public projects as new. Mataboge (2017) emphasises how such practices not only waste valuable resources but also reduce the impact of PEPs on the communities they are meant to serve. Furthermore, Dladla (2023) argues that implementation of PEPs requires strong political and administrative leadership as well as proper political involvement, with proper guidance based on laws and policies that ensures transparency and accountability. The absence of these key elements in many PEPs often results in delays and inefficiencies, limiting the programmes' overall success.

In some cases, administrative inefficiencies are compounded by poor planning and inadequate community involvement in PEPs. Talbot (2017) observes that the Kenyan Kazi Kwa Vijana programme lacked effective planning, and community participation and it was a top-down approach that excluded local community members from the decision-making process. This approach led to ineffective implementation and a lack of ownership among the beneficiaries. In South Africa, Talbot and Langa (2017) note that the major issue in PEPs is the absence of a clear exit strategy, and facilitators often tend to renew contractors for a long time. Thus, compromising the intended temporary nature of the programme, and it may also limit the participation by other community members who may wish to take part in the programme, perpetuating the cycle of unemployment. Additionally, the persistently high unemployment rate in South Africa dampens the potential positive effects of the EPWP on job creation (Matsiliza, 2018). The government's dependence on PEPs as a strategy for reducing unemployment brings concerns about their sustainability and efficiency in tackling the underlying causes of joblessness. According to Sibanda (2023), a shift in approach is necessary, with a transition from project-based training to one that is more responsive to the labour market. This change could ensure that PEPs not only provide temporary employment but also equip participants with marketable skills that enhance their long-term employability.

2.9 Expanded Public Works Programme

2.9.1 The History of Expanded Public Works Programme

In 1993, a pre-investment study was carried out by the government through the National Economic Forum on the National Employment Creation Programme, which utilised labour-intensive methods. Following this, the Public Works Programmes (PWP) were renamed to National Public Works Programme (NPWP) to ensure compatibility with the Reconstruction

and Development Programme (RDP) aimed at infrastructure development (Mogagabe, 2016). President Thabo Mbeki announced the EPWP in February 2003 and it commenced in 2004 (Mkhatshwa-Ngwenya, 2016). It was introduced as an expansion of the National Public Works Programme (NPWP). The EPWP is defined as a nationwide programme designed to absorb a significant numbers of unemployed individuals into productive work opportunities while, providing training to improve their income-earning capacity. The objective of this programme had a two-fold motive which involved creation of short-term employment and poverty eradication (Mkhatshwa-Ngwenya, 2016). As a result, the programme included creating temporary work opportunities for unemployed people while offering them a chance to gain skills that will make them employable in future (Khawula, 2019).

The first phase of the EPWP lasted from 2004 to 2009, it was seen as an intervention that will move people to the first economy, and it managed to achieve its target of creating one million job opportunities (Nkuna, 2018). Building upon this, the second phase was planned thereafter for the period of 2009 to 2014 as a continuation of the programme. This second phase expanded the programme's scope and focused on creating jobs, shifting from predominantly training approach as opposed to phase 1 where emphasis was on training people for employability and fostering entrepreneurship. At the end of this Phase 2, 4 071 292 work opportunities had been created out of the targeted 4500 million and 1 147 699 of the 2 million Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs) were created nationally in the EPWP (Seshoka, 2020). At the end of phase 2 the government realised the impact of the EPWP. The third phase was planned for the period 2014 to 2019 and the objective of the third phase was to create work opportunities and income support for the poor and unemployed people through the labour-intensive delivery of public and community assets and services that contributes to development (Nkuna, 2018). The target was to create 6 million jobs by 2020 (Maphanga & Mazenda, 2019). To this date the EPWP is implemented across all the spheres of government, and it is implemented in four sectors namely, infrastructure; Social; Environment and Culture and Non-state sectors (Mkhondo IDP, 2024: Nkuna, 2018).

2.9.2 The Role of Expanded Public Works Programme

The Expanded Public Works Programme in South Africa has been central to the government's strategy to address high unemployment and socio-economic inequality. The programme focuses on critical areas such as, infrastructure, environmental management, social services, and the non-state sector, aiming to maximise job creation while contributing to the country's development needs (Nkuna, 2018). EPWP plays a significant role in providing employment

opportunities and skills development while addressing poverty issues and improving infrastructure for the participants.

2.9.2.1 Skills development

The EPWP was specifically established as a skills transfer initiative aimed at supporting employment generation and the upliftment of marginalised communities (Madlala & Matshediso, 2019). Its primary objective is to empower individuals by equipping them with practical skills that enhance their employability and prepare them for long-term, sustainable employment. According to Mohapi (2016), the EPWP is strategically structured to ensure that participants not only contribute to the advancement of community development but also experience development through the acquisition of skills. This approach is grounded in the belief that, upon completion of the programme, beneficiaries will have acquired skills and competencies that will improve their capacity to secure employment. The International Labour Organization (2012), as cited by Matiso (2015), asserts that each beneficiary of the EPWP is required to undergo a minimum of two days of training for every 22 days of labour performed, thereby guaranteeing continuous skills development. This training is designed to provide participants with relevant skills and competencies that elevate their marketability within the labour market, aligning with the overall objective of the EPWP to mitigate unemployment and poverty.

A significant component of the EPWP's strategy is the enterprise development approach, which focuses on supporting emerging enterprises, including cooperatives, to generate additional employment opportunities and foster economic resilience within local communities. As emphasised by Dladla and Mutambara (2018), this model is intended to support small businesses by facilitating access to markets, developmental finance, and essential business support services. This framework also includes training and skills development focused on business management, thereby enabling small enterprises to prosper in competitive environments. Moreover, Mukhathi (2015) state that the EPWP's intentional emphasis that skills development constitutes an essential strategy in assisting participants in attaining meaningful and sustainable employment. The integration of skills development with business support interventions creates a holistic approach to empowerment, ensuring that individuals and communities are not only trained but, are also equipped with the tools and resources necessary for effective participation in the economy (Moore, 2015; Dladla & Mutambara, 2018). The EPWP through the integration of both individual and enterprise-level advancement,

aspires to establish a sustainable trajectory for participants to transition from temporary, low-skill employment to more permanent, skilled positions within the broader labour market.

2.9.2.2 Employment Opportunities and Poverty Alleviation

The EPWP constitutes a vital element of South Africa's strategy aimed at poverty reduction through the alleviation of unemployment, particularly focusing on individuals lacking formal skills or possessing semi-skilled capabilities (Mukhathi, 2015). Since its introduction in 2004, the EPWP has been meticulously designed to provide temporary employment opportunities through labour-intensive initiatives within the public sector (Nzimakwe, 2008; Gehrke & Renate, 2015). Targeted at securing employment for a minimum of one million unemployed citizens of South Africa, the primary aim of the EPWP has been to mitigate poverty by providing a means of subsistence for those facing challenges in accessing regular employment (Department of Public Works, 2004). More (2018) highlighted that the South African government has elected the EPWP as a model in the national models to address unemployment and poverty issues, a strategic approach believed to resonate with global norms. Nonetheless, despite these ambitious objectives, the outcomes of the programme continue to present unmeasurable difficulties, with criticism indicating that the programme has not yet made a significant contribution to sustainable long-term employment or poverty alleviation.

While the EPWP has indeed achieved a notable number of job opportunities, its efficacy in creating sustainable, long-term employability remains a subject of considerable debate. Hlatshwayo (2017) argue that the employment generated by the EPWP is frequently characterised by persistent insecurity, offering low wages and limited job security, with participants not eligible for essential benefits such as medical aid and pension fund, due to the nature of contract participant are employed under. This precarious nature of employment raises critical concerns regarding the programme's authentic impact on reducing unemployment and alleviating poverty. In a similar vein, Ishker and Youssef (2022) assert that although PEPs in low- and middle-income nations, including South Africa, employ a large number of individuals, their overall effectiveness is compromised by constrained financial resources and the temporary nature of the employment opportunities. Gehrke and Hartwig (2015) further argued that the secondary impacts of the EPWP, such as, the creation of long-term employment opportunities post-participation and the long-term benefits derived from acquired skills and training, are minimal. These factors highlight the inherent challenges associated with leveraging the EPWP as a long-term strategy for unemployment and poverty alleviation,

emphasising the need for strategic changes, underlining the need for permanent employment initiatives to realise sustainable development outcomes.

2.9.4 Sectors within Expanded Public Works Programme

EPWP is made up of four main sectors: Infrastructure, Economic, Social, and Environmental and Culture, each playing a distinct role in public service delivery and employment creation. These sectors are led by various government departments and supported by non-governmental organisations and private sector stakeholders, to ensure effective implementation across different regions.

2.9.4.1 Infrastructure sector

The Infrastructure Sector constitutes of an essential pillar of the EPWP, fulfilling an important role in the creation of employment opportunities and the advancement of socio-economic development (National Department of Public Works, 2015). Administered by the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) (2022), this sector primarily focused on labour-intensive construction initiatives aimed at generating job opportunities while simultaneously enhancing public infrastructure. The sector prioritise labour-intensive activities by ensuring that a considerable portion of the project's expenditure is directed to wages, provide temporary employment to skilled, as well as unemployed individuals and provide intermediate skills (Sakketa & Von Braun, 2019; Digidowiseiso, Fitasari, & Nastiyawati, 2023). This strategy not only mitigates unemployment but also provides participants with valuable skills in construction, maintenance, and project management, enhancing their employability beyond the duration of the programme (Ebekozi, Aigbavboa, Samsurijan, Radin-Firdaus, Ayo-Odifiri, & Amadi, 2024). Moreover, infrastructure development within the EPWP encompasses initiatives such as, road maintenance, water and sanitation facilities, public buildings, and rural bridges, all of which significantly contribute to enhancing the quality of life within underdeveloped communities (Sindelo, 2019).

A notable characteristic of the Infrastructure Sector is its dual impact not only generating employment but also concurrently providing essential services and improving infrastructure to local communities (Sindelo, 2019). Through this initiative, the sector effectively addresses both pressing socio-economic challenges and long-term developmental objectives by strengthening the country's infrastructure foundation. The integration of training and skills development into these projects ensures that participants acquire practical experience and industry-relevant skills, increasing their chances of obtaining permanent employment within the construction

sector or even establishing their own small enterprises (Dladla & Mutambara, 2018; Dladla & Mutambara, 2022; Oguntona, et al., 2023). Furthermore, collaborations with municipalities, state-owned enterprises, and the private sector enhance the efficacy of the sector by fostering sustainable infrastructure projects that continue to benefit communities well beyond the end of EPWP participation. By associating job creation with infrastructure development, the EPWP Infrastructure Sector not only offers immediate employment relief but also contributes to economic growth, social development, and improved service delivery across South Africa.

2.9.4.2 Social Sector

The social sector assumes a pivotal function in the generation of employment opportunities by providing indispensable social services such as, Early Childhood Development (ECD) and Home Community-Based Care (HCBC), which facilitate participants in earning an income while simultaneously addressing urgent societal concerns (Mkhatshwa-Ngwenya, 2016). These services not only create employment prospects for individuals, with a particular emphasis on women and youth, but also enhance the overall well-being of communities by ensuring access to high-quality care and education (Ahmed, Devercelli, Glinskaya, Nasir, & Rawlings, 2023). The proliferation of such services is essential in mitigating socio-economic challenges, particularly in marginalised and rural regions where formal employment opportunities are limited. Involving unemployed individuals in meaningful employment, the social sector cultivates skill development, work experience, and economic engagement, which are critical in disrupting cycles of poverty and unemployment (Mohapi, 2016; Du Toit, De Witte, Rothmann, & Van den Broeck, 2018). Furthermore, these services foster social cohesion and community development by strengthening care and support systems for vulnerable populations, including children, the elderly, and individuals living with disabilities (Redko, 2024).

As the leading department responsible for coordinating social sector employment initiatives, the Department of Social Development (DSD) ensures that sector-wide activities are in alignment with the national development objectives to improve service delivery while generating positive social and economic outcomes (Dladla, 2023). The social sector within the framework of the EPWP is designed around two fundamental strategies which involve the creation of economic opportunities and the investment in human capital. This is achieved through a variety of training programs that equip participants with relevant skills, enhancing their employability chances beyond the duration of the programme (Mohapi, 2016). These training initiatives enhance participants' skills and competencies in areas such as, caregiving,

early childhood education, and health support, which prepares them for further employment or entrepreneurial ventures within the social services sector (Weaver, 2016). Moreover, by integrating social assistance with employment initiatives, the sector empowers individuals to maintain their livelihoods while simultaneously addressing significant service gaps within communities (Kajiita & Kang'ethe, 2023). The combined focus on the creation of economic opportunities and investment in human capital underscores the sector's contribution to poverty alleviation and enduring socio-economic transformation.

2.9.4.3 Environment and Culture Sector

The Environment and Culture sector of the EPWP is committed to generating employment opportunities that facilitate environmental conservation, promote sustainable resource management, and safeguard cultural heritage (Dladla, 2023). By tackling environmental challenges whilst simultaneously cultivating economic opportunities, this sector assumes a pivotal role in reconciling ecological sustainability with social and economic advancement (Baur, 2020; Dladla & Mutambara, 2022). The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment (DFFE) acts as the principal coordinator of this sector, ensuring the effective execution of programmes aimed at enhancing environmental management, biodiversity conservation, and climate change adaptation. These initiatives hold particular importance in rural and peri-urban regions, where environmental degradation, unemployment, and poverty constitute urgent issues. Through the EPWP, unemployed individuals are engaged in substantial work that not only provides financial compensation but also enriches their skills and understanding of environmental sustainability, thereby preparing them for subsequent employment in green industries (Sindelo, 2019).

Mokgehle (2022) emphasises that the environmental sector aims to create a sustainable model that generates both medium- and long-term job opportunities, while creating a lasting social impact. This is achieved through a variety of programmes that focus on land rehabilitation, waste management, sustainable agriculture, eco-tourism, cultural and creative industries, and coastal management. Programmes such as, Working for Water, Working on Fire, and Working for Wetlands help to protect ecosystems while giving thousands of people jobs and training (Buch & Dixon, 2009; Giordano, Blignaut, & Marais, 2012). Furthermore, the sector promotes entrepreneurship by supporting small businesses involved in recycling, eco-tourism, and cultural heritage initiatives. Investments in public parks, heritage sites, and protected areas not only enhance community well-being but also contribute to economic growth by attracting

tourists and promoting environmental awareness (Glen, Fourie, & Moche, 2019). By integrating job creation with sustainability efforts, the Environment and Culture sector of the EPWP plays a pivotal role in promoting resilience, reducing environmental risks, and fostering inclusive economic development across South Africa.

2.9.4.4 Economic Sector

The Economic Sector of the EPWP constitutes an essential element in the promotion of entrepreneurship, enterprise development, and job creation, with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) serving as its primary coordinator. This sector is dedicated to promoting entrepreneurial and cooperative income-generating activities, with a particular emphasis on small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs) recognised as a key contributor to economic growth and employment generation (Mkhatshwa-Ngwenya, 2016). By effectively utilising government procurement and spending on goods and services, the sector actively facilitates the advancement of SMMEs, cooperatives, and informal businesses, granting them access to markets and opportunities for sustainable expansion (Dladla, 2023). These interventions are of especially significance in addressing unemployment and poverty by empowering individuals to establish and manage their own enterprises, thereby promoting self-reliance and economic inclusion (Dladla & Mutambara, 2022). Additionally, the sector plays a critical role in stimulating local economies, particularly in townships and rural regions, where economic activity is frequently limited, and employment opportunities are scarce.

In addition to facilitating access to markets and procurement opportunities, the Economic Sector of the EPWP also places a strong emphasis on skills development through learnerships, business incubation, and mentorship programmes which are meticulously designed to equip participants with essential entrepreneurial skills (Mokgehele, 2022). These initiatives provide aspiring entrepreneurs with critical knowledge in business management, financial literacy, marketing strategies, and adherence to compliance with regulatory requirements, enabling them to navigate the complexities associated with managing a business successfully (Dladla & Mutambara, 2022). Business incubation programmes further enhance the sustainability of emerging enterprises by providing structured support, networking opportunities, and access to funding (Gangiah, 2024). Through these efforts, the sector not only contributes to immediate job creation but also fosters long-term economic resilience by nurturing a new generation of entrepreneurs capable of driving innovation and inclusive economic advancement (Dladla & Mutambara, 2022). By integrating skills training, enterprise support, and market linkages, the

Economic Sector of the EPWP plays a crucial role in transforming South Africa's economic landscape and promoting socio-economic development.

2.9.5 Expanded Public Works Programme Legislation and Policy Framework

The EPWP is supported by a legislative and policy environment that includes the Constitution of South Africa, various White Papers and Acts, National Policies and Frameworks, and International Conventions (DPWI, 2022). The aim of the EPWP policy positions is to focus the Programme within the current socio-economic climate of South Africa and internationally, building on lessons learned and enabling EPWP to advance in addressing job creation and poverty alleviation for communities.

2.9.5.1 The Constitution of South Africa

The chapter 2, section 27 (c) of the constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 states that every citizen of the country has the right to food, social security, housing and education including assistance when they are unable to provide for themselves. The EPWP was introduced to create job opportunities that will provide the beneficiaries with income and work-based training. Section 41 of the South African constitution states that all spheres of government must work with one another by coordinating their actions and legislation, as well as, adhering to agreed procedures and avoiding legal proceedings against one another (Khawula, 2019). Mfusi & Govender (2015) highlighted that the government consulted this framework when they adopted the EPWP as a national programme encompassing all the partnerships created between the spheres of government, public-private partnership and state-owned enterprises.

2.9.5.2 White Paper and Acts

These policy documents and laws provide the legal and strategic framework for the implementation of EPWP. The White Paper on Reconstruction and Development (1994), aims to address the socio-economic of post-apartheid. The White Paper on Reconstruction and Development (1994) is a policy framework for integrated and coherent socio-economic progress, seeking to address socio-economic disparities resulting from apartheid through a process of redistribution, reconstruction, and restructuring. The economy has historically been based on systematically enforced racial division in every aspect of life, with rural areas separated into underdeveloped Bantustans and well-developed, white-owned commercial farming areas; towns and cities separated into white-owned suburbs and black-owned townships lacking basic infrastructure; and segregation in employment, health, education, and

welfare left lasting effects of economic inefficiency and inequality (White Paper On Reconstruction And Development (1994). The EPWP became a key government initiative, which contributes to government policy priorities in terms of decent work and sustainable livelihoods, education, health, rural development, food security and land reform, and the fight against crime and corruption (Khawula, 2019). The White Paper for Public Works Towards the 21st Century (1997) emphasises the importance of creating employment opportunities, particularly for disadvantaged groups, through PEPs with initiatives designed to address unemployment, which is a significant contributor to poverty and inequality (DPW, 2018). The white paper laid a foundation for the creation of EPWP as a means to reduce unemployment as it aims to create employment opportunities to address the socio-economic challenges.

The White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disability 2015 advocates for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in employment initiatives. The act promotes and supports the empowerment of Persons with Disabilities within the EPWP (Mkhondo IDP, 2024). The Code of Good Practice for Employment and Conditions of Work for the EPWP, 2011, was designed to furnish good practice guidelines for all stakeholders engaged in the EPWP concerning working conditions, remuneration and rates, disciplinary procedures, and grievance mechanisms, whilst also promoting a unified set of good practices and minimum standards in employment procedures across the various EPWP sub-programmes within the Republic of South Africa (ILO, 2019). The Code of Good Practice stipulates that all employers participating in the EPWP are mandated to adhere to relevant legislations, including the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997; the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995; and the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 (Chapters 1 and 2), among others. Furthermore, the code indicates that it must be aligned with the ministerial determination for the Expanded Work Programme established in accordance with Section 50 (1) of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (Code of Good Practice for EPWP, 2011). The code encourages good practices with good faith and trust between the employers and employees within the EPWP.

The Skills Development Act, No. 97 of 1998, addresses enduring societal challenges such as, the shortage of skills, unemployment, and inequality. The primary objective of this Act is to enhance the core competencies of the citizens of South Africa in order to increase investment in education and training within the labor market (Moganedi & Sithole, 2020). The Act advocates for the cultivation of skills and trades within the framework of the programme (Mkhatshwa-Ngwenya, 2016). Skills training is considered a vital element of the EPWP. The EPWP are urged to establish definitive training programmes that aim to create connections with

training institutions and opportunities to facilitate workers' access to further training, with a preference for SETA accredited training, as well as to identify potential career opportunities available for individuals exiting the programme. These training initiatives will equip the beneficiaries of the EPWP with marketable skills while enhancing their employability prospects following their completion of the programme.

2.9.5.3 National Policies and Frameworks

The National Development Plan is a long-term macro-economic policy set to run until 2030. Its objective is to create 11 million jobs, eliminate poverty and reduce inequality from 0.69 Gini Coefficient to 0.6 by 2030 (Mosala, 2022). The national Development Plan advocates that in order to mitigate the severe impacts of poverty on millions of South Africans in the short term, it is important to expand public employment initiatives as the availability of jobs within both the formal and informal sectors (NPC, 2012). EPWP aims to create employment opportunities that will allow participants to earn an income and improve their standard of living, this aligns to the National Development Plan's objective of reducing unemployment and inequality.

The South Africa Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP, 2020) which advocated for infrastructure development, energy security, industrialisation, and employment stimulus (RSA, 2020). In response to the high rates of unemployment, the plan and the 6th administration have collaborated with PEPs such as, Presidential Employment Stimulus, EPWP, and Community Work Programme (CWP) (Mudiriza, & De Lannoy, 2021). According to Mosala (2022), one of the reasons for unemployment was due to inadequate skills in South Africa. Due to this, the ERRP therefore prioritised skills development and advocated for a mass public employment intervention. For instance, as part of mass public employment intervention, AgriSETA with Department of Public Works and Infrastructure through the EPWP Branch in 2020 made a call to train 400 apprentices in various trades across all provinces (DPWI, 2020).

2.9.5.4 International Conventions

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, is an international human rights convention that was adopted in 2006 to assist in protecting the rights of the people with disabilities against discriminations (Mason and Munn-Rivard 2021). The UN Convention state that people with disabilities possess the same rights as everyone else and provide a guide on how countries can protect these rights. According to Europe Commission (2021) only half of persons with disabilities are employed compared to 3 in 4 persons without disabilities and

52% of persons with disabilities feel discriminated against. The EPWP is tasked to set a target which included people with disabilities, and they aimed to achieve a proposed target of 2% people with disabilities. The UN convention informs the protection of the rights of people with disabilities in the EPWP.

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, signed in 1995 and rectified in 2015 permits individuals or groups of individuals to make complaints to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR or Committee), if they have exhausted domestic remedies and believe a member state has failed to observe its obligations under the Covenant (Langford, Porter, Brown, & Rossi, 2016). On 12th January 2015, South Africa became the 163rd State Party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Right to Education, 2023). The South African Human Rights Commission officially accepted the decision by the government to rectify the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (RSA, 2015). The United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights promotes access to decent work and living wages which inform the EPWP's aim to create employment opportunities that will enable beneficiaries to earn stipends to take care of their basic needs.

2.10 Theoretical Framework

While alternative theoretical perspectives such as Social Capital Theory and Institutional Theory offer valuable insights into the role of social networks and institutional structures, this study adopts Rational Choice Theory as its primary analytical framework. This is because Rational Choice Theory provides a useful lens for understanding how individuals make decisions based on perceived costs and benefits, particularly in relation to participation in the EPWP. However, the study recognises that no single theoretical framework is without limitations, and therefore Rational Choice Theory was applied with caution while acknowledging its limitations. RTC is a framework used in social sciences, economics, and political science to understand and explain human decision-making. This theory asserts that individuals are rational agents who make decisions that maximise their utility or satisfaction, given their preferences and the constraints they face (Burns & Roszkowska, 2016). The fundamental elements of Rational Choice Theory encompass the pursuit of utility maximisation, preferences, constraints, and cost-benefit analysis (Robertua & Damayanti, 2022). RTC is concerned, with finding the best means to achieve the desired programmes; in a decision-making situation, and acts on considering a limited set of alternatives, ascribes consequences to them, prioritises these consequences according to their importance and value,

and makes an optimal choice among available alternatives (Burns & Roszkowska, 2016). The Rational Choice Theory provides a powerful framework for analysing various human behaviours and societal phenomena, from voting behaviours and market interactions to crime and social norms (Diekmann, 2022).

Utility Maximization posits that individuals strive to maximize their personal utility or satisfaction from their choices (Huang, Gan, & Yu, 2022). This utility can be in the form of pleasure, happiness, wealth, or other desired programmes. The second component of rational choice is preferences. People have preferences over different programmes, which are assumed to be transitive and complete, enabling them to rank programmes and make consistent choices based on these rankings (Oliva & Zahn, 2021). Another component is constraints, which means rational actors operate within constraints, such as, limited resources, which includes but not limited to time, money or external factors like social norms, laws. These constraints shape the available choices and influence decision-making (Zhao, Wang, Zhang, & Zhao, 2021). Rational choice also encompasses cost-benefit analysis, which suggests that individuals weigh the costs and benefits of different options before making a decision (Chong & Mullinix, 2022). They choose the option that provides the most significant benefit for the least cost. Methodological Individualism within Rational Choice Theory focuses on individual decision-making rather than collective behaviour, proposing that collective programmes emerge from aggregating individual choices. While the Rational Choice Theory provides fundamental aspects for analysing decision making, it has been criticised by many scholars for neglecting cultural influence on utility maximisation (Chai, 2018) and it assumes that individuals act rationally and with full information neglecting the influence of emotions and social dimensions on decision making (Adanali, 2017).

The Rational Choice Theory was applied to analyse the influence of PEPs like the EPWP in Thandukukhanya Township. This theory clarified how individuals make decisions regarding participation in these programmes. It assisted the research in identifying the factors influencing individuals' decisions to participate in these programmes. The theory further assisted in explaining, apart from other available programmes in the township, what influences their participation in this particular programme. It also provided an explanation of the influence behind the costs and benefits of their choices. This involves exploring whether individuals view participating in EPWP as more advantageous than other available employment or income-generating options in Thandukukhanya Township. The Rational theory assisted in investigating what factors affect individuals' decisions to participate in EPWP. For example, any hurdles that

discourage participation. The theory assumes that individuals operate as rational actors with the capacity to make choices that maximise their utility. However, this assumption is often limited in contexts characterised by structural unemployment, poverty, and limited economic opportunities. The theory assisted in providing clarity on the long-term consequences of participants' decisions by investigating whether individuals perceive EPWP as a steppingstone to more stable employment or as a short-term solution to immediate financial needs, to understand their expectations regarding the duration of employment and programmes they will be involvement in during their term with the EPWP. While the Rational Choice Theory simply helped in explaining why individuals choose to participate in PEPs such as the EPWP in Thandukukhanya Township its applicability in Thandukukhanya was subjected to few limitations as individuals may participate in the programme not because they represent the most optimal choice, but because they constitute one of the few available opportunities.

2.11 Summary of the chapter

This chapter provided a comprehensive review of the literature on PEPs, exploring their historical context, types, effectiveness, and challenges, with a particular focus on South Africa's EPWP. While PEPs have proven to be effective in certain contexts, significant challenges such as temporary nature of the jobs, persistent unemployment and poverty remains.. The Rational Choice Theory has been applied as the theoretical framework to explain individual decision to participate in the programmes. The following chapter will cover the methodology that was applied to conduct the study.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented a critical summary of existing research on the EPWP and its effectiveness in creating employment opportunities with the aim of identifying the gap in knowledge and justifying the significance of this study. Chapter 3 presents the research process that was adopted to conduct this study. The study used a qualitative research methodology, and it was underpinned by an interpretivist paradigm to understand the different views of participants and facilitators regarding the influence of EPWP towards employment opportunities in Thandukukhanya Township. In addition, the chapter covers the purpose and reasons for the methodology that was chosen for the study. Therefore, the chapter discusses the research methods, sampling, data collection procedures, measures taken to ensure the quality of data collected and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research paradigm

This study adopted the interpretivist paradigm. The choice was based on the belief that a study requires a paradigm to provide a foundational overarching framework that guides an entire study by defining the philosophical basis, informing the research question and the methodology for data collection and analysis. Shakespeare (2022) confirm that research is conducted within the framework of a particular paradigm which is defined as a basic belief used to understand and study the world's reality through research. It was essential in this study to use interpretivism as it helped in shaping the research questions by serving as an approach that guided the researcher throughout the study. It assisted in the methodology, understanding the perspectives and recognising beliefs, values and biases held by the researcher and those of the population the researcher studied. In essence, paradigms serve as fundamental frameworks that underpin research endeavours and shape the researchers' perspectives and the way they investigate the world.

The study conducted within the framework of the interpretivist paradigm, was based on the belief that individuals experience multiple realities, even in similar situations. This paradigm was essential in understanding the diverse perspectives, meaning and deeply held views and interpretations about the EPWP and its contribution to employment in the study area of the population under study. The paradigm was chosen based on the assumption that reality should be interpreted through the meanings that participants hold as correct. The paradigm maintain

that human beings are always engaged in the process of making sense of their environment. It emphasised that the realities of the people participating in EPWP could differ significantly from those not participating and even among participants in different programmes. By adopting the interpretivist paradigm, the researcher aimed to gather comprehensive insights into the varied experiences and perspectives of the study participants regarding the influence of public employment on job creation in Thandukukhanya Township.

3.3 Research design

The research design for this qualitative study helped to ensure that the methods used in the study aligns with the research objectives. It guides a study by defining the overall plan for data collection and analysis. Babbie, Mouton, Payze, Vorster, Boshoff and Prozesky (2009) define the research design as a plan or blueprint of how the researcher intends to conduct the research. Its focus is on the research logic and the type of evidence required to address the research problem. Various research designs can be used in qualitative study; however, this study adopted an exploratory research design. Exploratory research is a design used to study research that has not been studied previously (George, 2021). Other scholars argue that the exploratory design can be time-consuming because it seeks new insights, in-depth information, and the right people to share the required insight (Roberts, Roche, & Sainani, 2023; Soufan, 2023). The study employed an exploratory research design, particularly suitable for examining the relatively understudied phenomenon of public programmes and their impact in employment creation. Despite the potentially time-consuming nature of exploratory research, it was cost-effective and facilitated a high degree of interaction between the researcher and the participants. This interaction encouraged participants to share their experiences and perceptions, providing a realistic understanding that could not be achieved through numerical data alone. The exploratory design was chosen to capture the in-depth insights necessary for understanding the participants' attitudes, intentions, and motivations related to PEPs.

3.4 Research Approach

Every study follows a particular research approach that gives the researcher a direction to follow throughout the study. Out of the three broad research approaches, namely, the qualitative, quantitative and mixed-method approaches, a qualitative research approach was chosen for this study. This decision was based on the purpose, strategies of conducting the enquiry and methods used for collecting and analysing the data including the criteria for measuring and controlling the research quality. The required data was non-numerical and the

focus of the study was to understand the opinions or experiences of individuals involved in EPWP and those that are not participating in the programme. Accordingly, George (2023) confirms that the qualitative approach is used when the researcher requires answers about the complex nature of phenomenon with the aim of gaining more insight from the participants. The decision to use the qualitative research approach was guided by the necessity to investigate the topic extensively, in order to acquire and collect extensive data. The qualitative approach is usually used in humanities and social sciences studies (Bhandari, 2020). The researcher carried out semi-structured interviews with the participants of the study in order to understand their perceptions in relation to the EPWP as an intervention strategy to generate opportunities for employment. This approach was particularly appropriate for the study as it granted data collection flexibility, primarily through semi-structured interviews. The qualitative approach prioritised the voices and perceptions of the participants, enabling them to share their views on the impact of PEPs on job creation in Thandukukhanya Township. The researcher was able to prioritise the voices and views of the participants through the semi-structured interviews with the qualitative research approach. This approach enhanced the participants' confidence and provided a platform for them to elaborate on their responses, contributing actively to the study.

3.5 Research Methodology

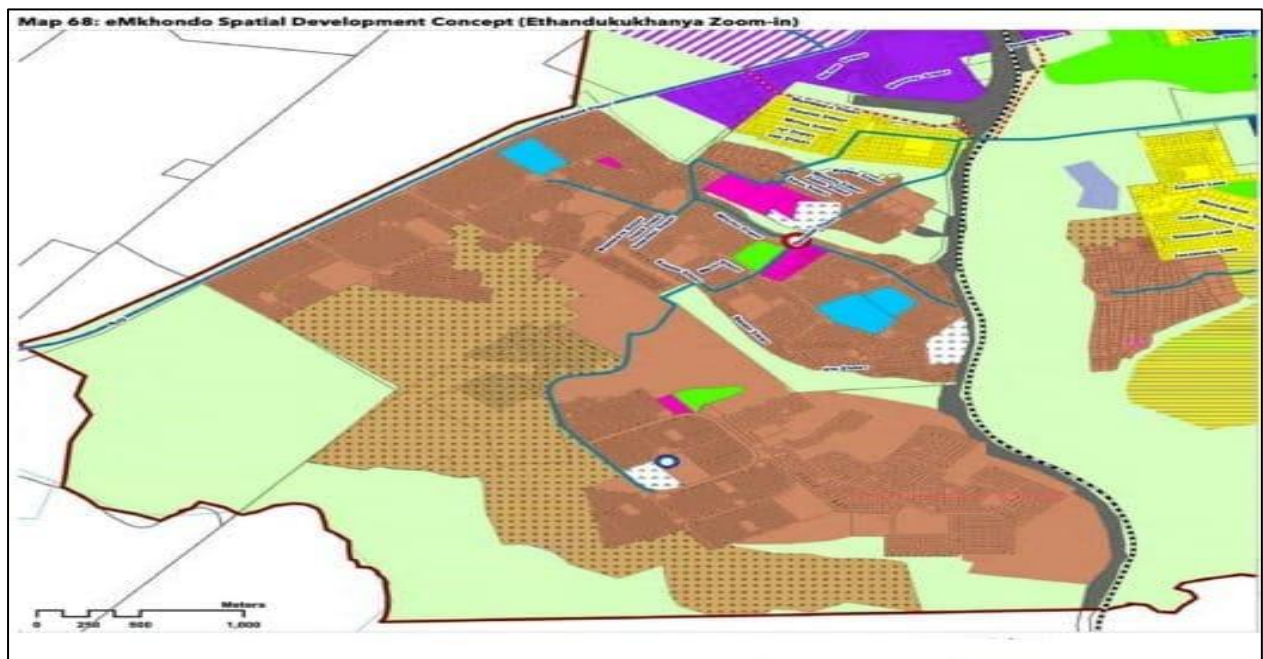
This section covers the research methodology, the methods used in collecting data. Included in this section is the study's target population, the sampling methods utilised for participant selection, the processes and procedures employed for data collection from participants, and the strategies adopted for data analysis.

3.5.1 Description of the study area

Thandukukhanya Township, is a township situated on the outskirts of Mkhondo Municipality in Mpumalanga province, it is situated nearer mines and other businesses mainly forestry and farms. However, economically it depends on the Mkhondo District Municipality and the surrounding forests. The Thandukukhanya Township consists of 4 wards as, Ward 10, Ward 12, Ward 13, and Ward 16. The Mkhondo District Municipality population increased from 171,982 in 2011 to 255,411 people in 2022 (Mkhondo IDP, 2024). According to the 2016 Community Survey (CS) of Stats SA, one of the challenges facing the Mkhondo District Municipality as perceived by households in the area involves inadequate employment issues which drive poverty rates in the area (Cogta, 2020). The official unemployment rate is approximately

37.7%, which declined from 32.2% in 2019. (Mkhondo IDP, 2024). Thandukukhanya Township has four (4) High schools and four (4) primary schools. In November 2013, the Mkhondo Local Municipality approved the extension of the EPWP Phase 3 marking a further 5 years (2014/15-2018/19). The extension of the EPWP had better focused delivery strategies and specific objectives for project implementation, employment creation and skills development. (Mkhondo IDP, 2024). The following figure shows the map of Thandukukhanya township.

Figure 1: Mkhondo Map



Source: Mkhondo IDP (2024)

The municipality communicated its targets and budget allocation for creating employment opportunities through the EPWP. The Mkhondo Local Municipality took an active role in the EPWP implementation through programmes such as, Phezukomkhono / Siyathuthuka, Community Works Programme (CWP), Mpumalanga Regional Training Trust (MRTT), Integrated Grants (IG). The Mkhondo District/Local Municipality implemented these projects in different sectors and infrastructural projects within the Project Management Unit (PMU) of the Municipality. However, it remains unclear whether these targets have been met, particularly in Thandukukhanya Township. Hence the study analysed the contribution of the EPWP to employment generation within Thandukukhanya Township.

3.5.2 Target population

The target population can be described as a group of individuals that the researcher wants to study and gather data from in order to understand a particular problem (Barnsbee & Nghiem, 2018). McCombes (2023) describes the target population as the population from which the study inform will be taken and conclusions drawn. Willie (2024) argued that the target population sets a clear direction on the scope and object of the research and data types. The study aimed to analyse the influence of public employment as an intervention strategy for employment generation. The target population included employees of the EPWP from different departments as well as, officials overseeing these programmes in different municipality departments. The participants were considered an appropriate target population because they were directly involved in these programmes and deeply understood the phenomena being studied. Additionally, non-participant community members were included in the target population to provide insights based on their observations of the PEPs and their impact on employment generation in Thandukukhanya Township. The total number of participants in this study was 35 and they were able to respond the research question of the study.

3.5.3 Sampling Methods and Procedures

The study used the non-probability sampling method to select the participants for this qualitative study. Specifically, purposive and convenience sampling techniques were used. Purposive sampling is a qualitative sampling method that involves selecting participants that meet predefined criteria of the research (Denieffe, 2020). Convenience sampling is the technique that draws participants from a source that is conveniently accessible to the researcher (Andrade, 2021). The Purposive sampling was employed to select facilitators and employees on predefined criteria relevant to the study. These participants were chosen intentionally due to their direct involvement with the research topic, which enabled them to provide valuable information for addressing the research questions and objectives. Therefore, the researcher selected four EPWP officials as they are directly involved in the programme, and they are involved in the planning and implementation of the programme, so their views and perceptions may be valuable regarding the phenomenon that is being analysed in this study. Convenience sampling was utilised to recruit community members from Thandukukhanya Township. This method was adopted due to its practicality, allowing the researcher to gather data from participants who were readily accessible. Given the large population of Thandukukhanya Township, the convenience sampling was instrumental in reaching participants located in different parts of the township. Therefore, the researcher identified 15 EPWP employees from

different departments within the municipality based on their accessibility. The researcher also identified 16 community member who fitted in the research target group of residents who reside in Thandukukhanya Township for 5 years or above. The sample size consisted of 35 participants in total, as the point of saturation was reached due to participants providing similar responses, no new information was provided. Therefore, the sampling procedure adopted by the researcher was appropriate for this study. Table 3.1 below provides the size of the sample and the roles and responsibilities for each category of chosen participants.

Table 1:Participants and roles and responsibilities

Participants	Number	Role
EPWP officials	4	They are responsible for managing, facilitating and implementing the programmes. They provided insights into the objectives, strategies, and operational challenges of the EPWP.
EPWP Participants	15	They provided first-hand accounts of their experiences, challenges, and benefits received from the programme.
Non-participants	16	They are a comparison group that offered insights into the community's perception regarding the EPWP and their impact on the social and local economy of Thandukukhanya Township. The aim of including this group was to get information from community member who were not involved in any way with EPWP. Sourcing their views and perspective had a potential to respond to the social stigmas surrounding the programme.
Total	35	

Source: Researcher (2024)

3.5.4 Data sources and collection method

The study utilised semi-structured interviews to gather primary data. Semi-structured interviews are a qualitative data collection method that incorporates predetermined questions with the flexibility to explore deeper topics identified in participants' responses (Junnier, 2024). Semi-structured interviews are not rigid but flexible. They allow the researcher to ask follow-

up questions or request the study participants to elaborate further on their responses (Abualsaud, 2019). Three semi-structured interview guides were utilized for data collection. The interview guides were translated into isiZulu (see Annexures D, F, and H) to ensure that participants are able to express themselves fully without limitations. The use of the participant indigenous language was to combat language barriers that may lead to misinterpretations of responses and result in inaccuracies in data, the semi-structured interviews were conducted in isiZulu. Permission to record the conversations was sought from each participant before the recorded interviews started to ensure the accuracy and valid data capture of the collected information. The flexible nature of semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to ask follow-up questions and request further elaboration on participants' responses. Three different semi-structured interviews were conducted with EPWP officials, EPWP participants, and community members who were non-participants. These interviews were conducted face-to-face and the duration ranged between 45 – 50 Minutes. This enabled the researcher to facilitate conversations with participants, probing for clarity and further details as needed. The study participants were given an opportunity to share their perceptions and experiences concerning the influence of the EPWP on employment creation in Thandukukhanya Township.

3.5.5 Data analysis.

The study employed thematic analysis to analyse the qualitative data collected. Thematic analysis is a good analysis method to adopt in research where a researcher is studying people's views, opinions, knowledge, experiences, or any data that is in words (Cernasev & Axon, 2023). Thematic analysis is a process of analysing data through identification of patterns and themes in qualitative data (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Thematic analysis was chosen as the type of qualitative analysis which involved examination and interpretation of people's views, opinions, knowledge and experiences. Through this method, patterns and themes within the data were identified in order to inform the objectives of the study. The research objectives included identifying indicators used to assess the effectiveness of the EPWP in generating employment opportunities, analysing the extent to which these programmes created such opportunities, and understanding community perceptions of the programmes' impact on employment in Thandukukhanya Township. To achieve these objectives, the researcher applied the six phases of thematic analysis by Braun and Clark who described thematic analysis as an accessible and flexible qualitative data analysis method which requires less theoretical and technological knowledge than other methodologies (Roldugin, 2023).

3.5.5.1 Familiarisation

Transcribing interviews accurately is crucial in qualitative research and legal contexts, as it ensures the integrity of the data collected (Kogen, 2024). The process involves comparing transcripts against recorded audio to verify their accuracy. The researcher initially transcribed the data collected using the recording device. Following the data transcription, the researcher repeatedly reviewed the data to ensure familiarity while noting initial ideas and patterns drawn. The goal was to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data set.

3.5.5.2 Generating initial Codes

The researcher began identifying the sets of the data that proved to be meaningful and relevant for answering the research questions. The coding was done manually where the researcher was highlighting the codes which allowed the researcher to capture important aspects in the data. Coding manually does not compromise the quality of either the analysis or the overall dissertation (Mkhwanazi, 2019). The researcher successfully carried out the coding without the use technical systems such as NVivo.

3.5.5.3 Generating Themes

Generating themes helps the researcher to sort, classify and categorise each section of data and arrange the themes that represents the respondents' key concerns (Maiga, 2017). The researcher reviewed the codes to identify general patterns and themes with similar codes gathered under relevant themes. This process helped the researcher to develop themes that contributed to answering the research questions.

3.5.5.4 Reviewing Themes

The researcher refined the themes by checking if they align with the matched codes. This step was necessary to ensure that the themes developed were coherent and different from each other hence all the themes developed by the researcher were found to be relevant and able to respond to the research questions. Coherence is ensured by reviewing themes during thematic analysis and maintaining alignment with the research questions and theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2024).

3.5.5.5 Defining and naming themes

The researcher clearly defined the themes that were developed. They were named and described according to how they were contributing into the data analysis. Researcher ensured that the themes created aligns and interconnected. It is important to ensure that that the themes are

unique but connects as it helps in clarifying findings and make it easier for the reader to grasp implications of the research (Anderson, Lees, & Avery, 2015; Purssell & Gould, 2021).

3.5.5.6 Write up

The steps assisted the researcher in identifying similarities, differences, and relationships interrelationship among the participant's views. Therefore, researcher began the final phase of thematic analysis which is writing up. The final analysis was reported in the research report with supporting evidence that included use of verbatim quotes from the participants.

3.5.6 Data control measures and management

Data quality control is essential for any research to ensure valid and accurate results (Olivares & Lopes, 2012). The study focused on maintaining trustworthiness, which referred to the extent to which the findings authentically reflected the participants' personal experiences of the phenomenon under investigation without any alterations or researcher' biasness. Several strategies were employed to achieve this, which included credibility, transferability, confirmability and reliability.

3.5.6.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the extent in which that data is data analysis is authentic and trustworthy (Nataraj & Bishnoi, 2018). According to Bavli (2021), data manipulation to produce desired results that result in inaccurate or misleading conclusions undermines the trust in research, especially in contexts where decisions may be based on flawed data. In order to maintain credibility, the researcher presented the study's data without altering any of the participant responses, accurately reported their answers without passing judgment, and directly quoted the participants' responses.

3.5.6.2 Transferability

Another crucial element of ensuring trustworthiness in a qualitative data is making sure that findings are transferable. This entails determining whether the results apply to a comparable situation. In order to attain transferability, most qualitative researchers give readers detailed information about the study's participants or context so that they can assess whether the findings apply to their own circumstances or experiences (Drisko, 2025; Ling, 2024). Transferability was ensured through comprehensive descriptions of participants' setting and responses, allowing others to evaluate the applicability of the findings to other contexts.

However, the researcher provided limited information about the participants directly due ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

3.5.6.3 Confirmability

Confirmability is one criteria used to assess trustworthiness in qualitative research, which guarantees neutrality in research findings, ensuring that they represent the participants' views rather than the researchers' biases (Kyngäs, Kääriäinen, & Elo, 2020). To produce quality results, it is important that the researcher applies trustworthiness. Confirmability was maintained by ensuring the findings reflected the participants' responses rather than the researcher's perspectives or interests. Accurate information was gathered from participants based on their realities concerning the influence of PEPs on employment creation and was analysed without any personal influences.

3.5.6.4 Reliability

Reliability refers to the degree to which the methods used for gathering data will yield accurate and consistent results (Storey, Baskerville, & Kaul, 2024). According to Hardwicke & Wagenmakers (2023), maintaining reliability enhances transparency in research, and minimises the likelihood of researcher biasness. Triangulation, which included the cross-verification of information from multiple sources, was used during data collection to improve the credibility of the data. The responses of the EPWP officials were verified against the responses of the EPWP employees and members of the community to ensure the consistency of results over comparable circumstances. These strategies collectively ensured that the data collected was both reliable and accurate.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The researcher acknowledged that qualitative research that involves the use of human participants necessitates protecting them to ensure they share honest responses during data collection. Laryeafio and Ogbewe (2023) confirm that the researcher who carries out research where people are involved, must ensure the protection of all participants by following specific ethical considerations. Ethical considerations considers that research with human participants' present unique complex, legal, social and political questions. This study took into account ethical principles that govern research. Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, (2016) also affirmed that the accuracy of information gathered through interviews largely depends on the participants' truthful responses, which is ensured by clearly outlining the ethical considerations that the

researcher must consider. The study adhered to strict ethical considerations, given the involvement of human participants. Ethical guidelines were followed to protect participants and ensure they could provide honest responses during data collection. This was crucial for maintaining the accuracy of the information gathered.

The ethical considerations included ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. The researcher protected participants by not revealing their names or identifying information, such as addresses. The researcher also prioritised participants' safety, ensuring they were not exposed to any harm during their participation in the study. Deception was avoided as the researcher clearly explained the study's purpose, emphasising that participation was solely for academic purposes, with no personal benefit. A consent form was provided to prove their agreement. The consent form was translated into IsiZulu to facilitate participants' understanding of the study's aim and to ensure they agreed to participate with a full understanding of the study (see Annexure B). The informed consent of those taking part is a standard practice in which participants' base their voluntary participation in research with full awareness of the possible risk involved. Adequate information and assurance was provided by the researcher to ensure that potential participants understand the implications of participation and make a fully informed, voluntary decision on whether to participate or not without any form of coercion or pressure. The participants were allowed to participate voluntarily, and they were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without being forced to continue. The research respected the rights and privileges of participants, ensuring their freedom to express themselves and to opt out at any data collection stage.

Before data collection commenced, it was ensured that the study is compliant with all relevant ethical principles, laws, and guidelines, and was submitted for ethical review to the University of Mpumalanga Mbombela campus's research ethics committee. The committee granted the ethical clearance certificate indicating that the study complied with all applicable ethics guidelines (see Annexure J). Permission to conduct the study in Thandukukhanya Township was requested from the Mkhondo Local Municipality, and data collection began only after an ethical clearance certificate and permission letter were granted (see Annexure K). The interview guides were translated into IsiZulu to conduct the semi-structured interviews with the participants in IsiZulu which allowed the participants to fully express themselves without any barriers noting that language barrier may lead to misinterpretations of questions and responses which may impact the validity and reliability of the data (See annexure D, F, and H). Conducting the research in IsiZulu created a sense of

respect and cultural sensitivity fostering trust between the researcher and participants. The researcher was able to preserve the original meaning of the participants' responses which ensured the credibility in the data collected.

The researcher took full responsibility for data analysis and reporting of findings and ensured that the data was not altered or falsified. The reporting was conducted in a truthful and accurate manner. The sources were acknowledged, and the analysis and interpretation were carefully checked, with any necessary corrections made to maintain the accuracy of the research report and all associated outcomes. Additionally, the researcher acknowledged the ethical obligation to the scientific community regarding the analysis of data and the reporting of results. All results were reported (positive and negative), and all limitations were admitted.

3.7 Limitations

One primary limitation was the limited time available for data collection due to the late issuing of the ethics clearance certificate by the ethics committee. The study had a initial sample of 40 participants, however, the sample ended up being 35 as the point of saturation was reached. Another limitation was accessing the participants as they were working in different spaces and programmes, however, we were able to reach them regardless of where they were.

3.8 Summary of the chapter

This chapter provided a comprehensive overview of the research approach, design, and the methodology used for the study. It covered sampling procedure, data collection methods and data control measures. The chapter also described how the thematic analysis was used to analyse data and how ethical principles during the data collection process were followed by the researcher. The following chapter will cover the presentation and analysis of the data.

Chapter 4

Data analysis and presentation

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored the research methodology that was employed by the study to explore PEPs as an intervention strategy towards the creation of employment opportunities. This chapter presents a detailed analysis and interpretation of the findings from this study, which examined the role of PEPs as an intervention strategy for creating employment opportunities, with a focus on the EPWP in Thandukukhanya Township. The study adopted a qualitative approach and conducted interviews to gather data when analysing the EPWP as a strategy to create employment opportunities in Thandukukhanya Township. The study aimed to assess indicators of programme effectiveness, evaluate the EPWP's contribution to employment creation, explore community perceptions, and identify measures to improve the programme's impact. In addition, the information obtained from the participants was analysed and presented with a rationale to answer the research questions. The chapter begins with an overview of the demographic characteristics of participants, followed by presenting thematic analysis of the qualitative data, organised into key themes to facilitate a clearer presentation and interpretation of the results.

4.2 Demographic characteristics of the Participants

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the participants and outline their relevance to the study. Understanding participants' backgrounds is essential for interpreting their perspectives and experiences. These demographic variables: Age, Gender, Educational Background, Duration of involvement in the programme as well as, residence duration provide a context that strengthens the interpretation of findings and highlights the diversity of responses.

4.2.1 Gender Distribution

The study was not meant to conduct a gender appraisal but included the variable because gender dynamic plays a critical role in influencing people's labour market experiences, including access to opportunities, types of work assigned, and benefits within the workplace. Women are more vulnerable to poverty, have restricted access to employment opportunities and are at-times are poor because of socially assigned domestic roles. Collecting the gender data from key informants, EPWP workers, and community members is essential for understanding the

role that gender dynamics play in the planning, implementation, inclusivity, and contribution of the EPWP. The perspective of the males and females regarding the programme may differ, so including gender as one of the demographic variables strengthens the study's capacity to gather more insights from the lens of inclusion and equality. Women were in the majority (58%) in the study when compared to participation of men. This signified that the EPWP has a greater potential of promoting gender equality and empowering women in terms of access to employment and income.

4.2.3 Age Distribution

The age distribution of participants in the EPWP is a significant indicator that helps assess the impact, targeting the effectiveness and long-term benefits of the EPWP. If the age distribution shows a high percentage of young participants, it suggests the EPWP is playing a critical role in addressing youth unemployment. For community members, age can shape perceptions of the programme's effectiveness based on various age group experiences and socio-economic context. Therefore, collecting the age data supports the evaluation of whether the EPWP is equitably serving different age groups.

4.2.4 Educational Background

Educational attainment plays a role in determining individuals' employability, skills, and transition from school to employment. From the perspective of Rational Choice Theory which underpin this study, individuals make decisions to participate in programmes such as the EPWP by weighing the potential benefits such as, attaining skills, income generation, and improved future employability against the opportunity costs of remaining unemployed or seeking alternative options that may have not been available at the time. In this regard, the educational background of participants directly influences both their expectations of the programme and the extent to which they can capitalise on the opportunities it provides. Collecting data on the highest qualifications of the EPWP workers assisted in determining the alignment between their educational background and the nature of work and training provided by the EPWP. The analysis of the qualification data has the potential to provide an understanding of whether the programme assists in bridging the gap between education and work experience that prepares individuals for future employment prospects. This data aims to provide insights into programme's inclusivity and capacity to support various individuals with different educational backgrounds.

4.3 Demographic information

Table 1: Demographic data of the Participants

Key Informants: EPWP Officials				
Officials	Gender	Years in the Programmes		
Official 1	Female	7 years		
Official 2	Female	3 years		
Official 3	Male	3 years		
Official 4	Male	6 years		
EPWP Participants				
Participants	Gender	Age	Qualifications	Duration in the Programme
Participant 1	Female	29	Farming Management N6	2 Years
Participant 2	Female	23	Matric	2 Years
Participant 3	Female	24	Matric	18 months
Participant 4	Female	24	Matric	9 months
Participant 5	Female	25	N6 management assistant	6 months
Participant 6	Male	27	Matric	1 year, 5 months
Participant 7	Female	30	Grade 10	4 years
Participant 8	Male	26	Civil and building construction	3 years
Participant 9	Male	28	Plumbing	1 year
Participant 10	Male	36	Fitting and turning	3 years
Participant 11	Female	24	Matric	2 years
Participant 12	Female	26	Safety in society (Vocational)	2 Years
Participant 13	Female	30	Matric	About a year
Participant 14	Female	27	Matric	1,5 years
Participant 15	Female	25	Matric	2,5 years
Non-Participants (Community Members)				
Non-Participants	Gender	Age	Years living in Thandukukhanya	
Member 1	Female	28	20 years	
Member 2	Female	38	37 years	
Member 3	Male	32	30 years	
Member 4	Female	41	40 years	
Member 5	Female	25	20 years	
Member 6	Male	29	29 years	

Member 7	Female	25	20 years
Member 8	Female	30	30 years
Member 9	Female	27	27 years
Member 10	Male	23	23 years
Member 11	Male	26	26 years
Member 12	Male	26	20 years
Member 13	Male	29	29 years
Member 14	Male	30	15 years
Member 15	Male	28	28 years
Member 16	Male	22	22 years

Source: Researcher (2024)

The following subsections discuss key demographic features emerging from the data.

4.3.1 Gender Distribution

The consideration of gender is crucial in the development and implementation of employment opportunities, particularly within the public sector. Organisations are encouraged to create equitable environment by adopting initiatives that promote gender equity within the workplace (Du, 2024). In the study, the sample showed a higher representation of women among EPWP participants. This findings revealed a high level of female participation in the programme. The non-participants, who are community members, had a more mixed gender profile. While the EPWP officials reflected a balanced representation.

The predominance of women involved in the EPWP reflects the national trends where women are more likely to engage with the government employment interventions. Women, as a previously disadvantaged group, government departments are mandated to prioritise their advancement (Espí, Francis & Valodia, 2019). This predominance of female participants reflects that the EPWP's focus on empowering women as a key target group (Mudau, 2021), indicating that the programme is ensuring women's access to employment in Thandukukhanya Township.

4.3.2 Age Distribution across participants

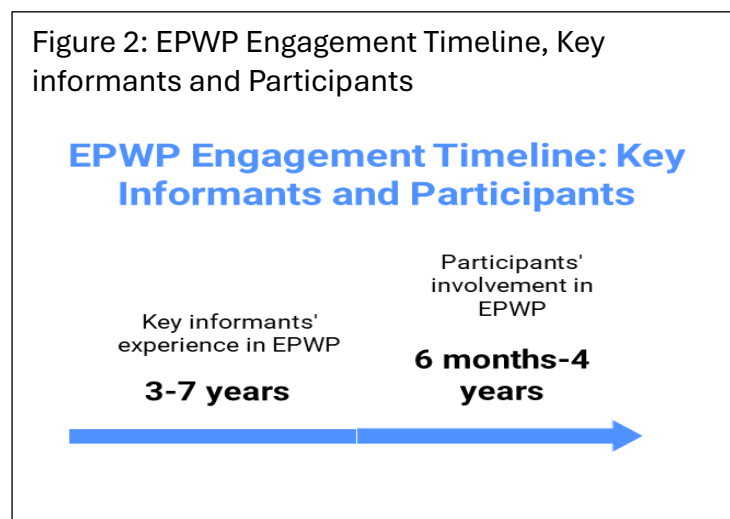
According to South Africa's National Youth Commission Act (1996) and National Youth Policy (NYP) 2020 – 2030, youth is defined as individuals aged from 14 to 35 years (Government of the Republic of South Africa, 1997; Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2020). Considering the high youth unemployment rate across the country (StatsSA, 2024), the EPWP seeks to offer short-term employment opportunities to young individuals while simultaneously equipping them with skills that enhance their future

employability through targeted training interventions. The data demonstrate that the EPWP participants are predominantly individuals who fall into the category of youth. The findings confirm that the EPWP effectively targets the youth demographic, consistent with its national policy mandate and with evidence that the programme is largely dominated by young participants (Madlala & Matshediso, 2019).

4.3.3 Educational Background

The findings of the study revealed that participants across the programme have some educational background. Among the 15 EPWP workers, who were participants had at least a National Senior Certificate, with several holding vocational or N6 qualifications in areas such as, farming management, management assistance, plumbing, and construction. One participant had only completed Grade 10, reflecting a range of educational backgrounds. This variation of education levels suggests that the EPWP accommodates individuals in varying levels of education, aligning with its mandate to offer short-term employment and skills development for unskilled and semi-skilled individuals who are often excluded from formal employment (Ntsonge, 2023).

4.3.4 Participating Years in the Programme



Source: Researcher, 2025

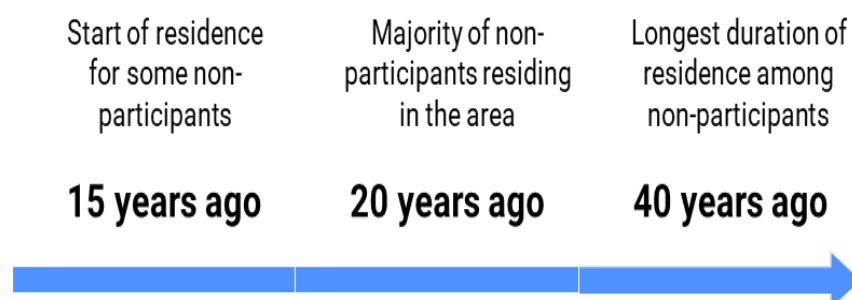
To assess the extent of exposure to the EPWP, the study explored the duration of involvement among both key informants, who are the officials of the EPWP and programme participants. Key informants who were more engaged in administrative or supervisory roles reported that they have been participating in the programme for periods ranging between 3 to 7 years. This variation in experience reflects a diversity of institutional knowledge and exposure to

programme operations, which in turn enriches the depth of their insights into implementation dynamics. Among the general EPWP participants, the duration of involvement ranged from 6 months to 4 years, indicating that many individuals had relatively short-term exposure in the programme. This suggests that recent recruitment has occurred, while earlier cohorts have completed their tenure and exited the programme. This a pattern aligns with the National Economic Development and Labour Council (2022), which stated that the EPWP 's core design is as a short-term employment intervention, intended to provide temporary income support and skills development rather than permanent job placement (National Economic Development and Labour Council, 2022). The ongoing cycle of entry and exit reflects the programme’s effort to extend benefits to a broader pool of unemployed individuals over time.

4.3.5 Years living in Thandukukhanya Township

The question on the duration of participants in the EPWP was considered important because of its potential in the provision of lived experiences, perceptions and challenges concerning the participation in the programme. For EPWP workers and officials, duration reflects experience and familiarity with the programme’s operations and changes over time. Those with longer involvement are more likely to offer informed observations on programme strengths and limitations. Similarly, long-term residents may have observed the programme’s effects on the community’s employment trends over a longer period of time. Therefore, collecting duration-related data from the three groups enhances the depth of the study in analysing the EPWP as an intervention strategy towards employment creation.

Figure 3:Duration of Residency for Non Participants



Source: Researcher, 2025

The study investigated the duration of the residency among non-participating community members to understand their familiarity and potential indirect exposure to the EPWP. The non-participants had lived in Thandukukhanya Township for periods ranging from 15 to 40 years, with the majority reporting more than two decades of residence. This suggests that the

community members have a long-term awareness of the EPWP's local presence, implementation trends and its impact over many years. Moreover, prolonged residence in Thandukukhanya Township positions these individuals as key observers of the township's socio-economic challenges. Their sustained exposure to both the persistent structural issues and episodic interventions, such as the EPWP, contributes valuable contextual insight into community-level dynamics. Local knowledge is very important because this knowledge is deeply rooted in residents' familiarity with the Township's economic performance and have the potential to positively influence the planning of development programmes such as EPWP or similar programmes. This notion aligns with the study of Kumar (2017) that local knowledge, developed through long-term exposure to an area, plays a crucial role in coping with local crises. Non-participants' responses may be shaped by their long-term experiences and have the potential to provide insight that may be valuable for planning and implementation of the EPWP based on their long-term observations.

4.4 Indicators used to assess the effectiveness of EPWP

The effectiveness of PEPs such as the EPWP is assessed by various indicators that reflect the programme's long-term impact. According to Barnow and Smith (2015), the indicating measures of the effectiveness of PEPs encompass employment rates, financial stability and wage levels, job retention and skills development. These metrics offer insights into how well such programmes mitigate unemployment and contribute to economic development. However, Ntsonge (2023) cautions that the lack of appropriate indicators to measure the outcomes of the programme could hinder the effectiveness of the programme. This study identified and examined the indicators used to assess the effectiveness of the EPWP in creating employment opportunities within Thandukukhanya Township. In accordance with the study's objective outline in Chapter 1, the analysis focused on determining how these indicators reflect the programme's capacity to create meaningful and sustainable employment. The findings revealed that several indicators are used to assess the EPWP's effectiveness, including the number of people employed, the duration of employment, the financial stability of the participants, skills development and career progression as well as the community's feedback towards the programme. Official 1 highlighted the key internal indicators:

"We look at the number of people employed temporarily and the duration of employment, but this doesn't measure sustainable job creation. We also consider community feedback on the work's impact, like improved road conditions or cleanliness."

The number of people employed counts for the number of beneficiaries recruited under the EPWP projects, although they do not fully capture the sustainability value of the intervention, but they indicate the programme's effectiveness in addressing issues of unemployment. The duration of employment among the EPWP participants is measured by the length of the temporary contracts that are given to the participants. The duration of employment among EPWP participants is determined by the length of their temporary contracts. This measure provides insight into the short-term impact of the programme by indicating the time beneficiaries have to gain practical work exposure before they return to the labour market. The community feedback also serves as a measure that considers satisfaction with the outcomes of the programme and their perceived contribution to the community's well-being. Overall, the EPWP aims to provide short-term employment opportunities while simultaneously improving the livelihoods of beneficiaries and promoting local socio-economic development. As Mkhathswa-Ngwenya (2016) observes, the EPWP's employment creation function serves a dual purpose: to eradicate poverty through temporary job opportunities and to improve public infrastructure using labour-intensive methods. Viewed through Rational Choice Theory, these indicators shape how individuals evaluate whether participation in the EPWP is a rational decision. The indicators do not only measure the programme's performance but also influence participant decision-making as participants consider the stipend, contract duration, expected skill gains, and community reputation of the programme when weighing the benefits of joining against the opportunity costs of unemployment or informal work. The following sections discuss the indicators used to assess the EPWP effectiveness in creating employment opportunities in greater depth:

4.4.1 Financial stability of participants

The EPWP provides short-term employment opportunities aimed at improving the livelihoods of participants. Participants experience temporary financial relief that enables them to meet immediate needs and, in some instances, marginally improve their living standards through the stipend they receive from the programme. This demonstrates that the programme has a positive but short-lived impact on the beneficiaries' financial well-being. However, the value of the stipend received remains inadequate to sustain their livelihoods beyond the duration of the employment. Participants overwhelmingly indicated that the income received is insufficient to ensure long-term financial stability, thereby limiting the programme's effectiveness. Participant 13 explained:

“It’s something small, not enough to cover all my expenses, but it is better than receiving nothing or depending on the R350 SASSA grant.”

This sentiment was echoed by other participants who also described the stipend as barely sufficient for basic sustenance. For example, Participant 4 reinforced this view, stating that:

“My finances are still tight. I can manage to buy food, but anything more than that is a stretch. I don’t feel financially stable at all, just a little better than before.”

Many participants viewed the EPWP as a temporary fix that offers short-term financial relief, allowing them to cover basic needs. They also expressed their frustrations over the stipend that limits them to cover only the basics, such as, food, electricity and some participants noting additional strain when they need to travel from their homes to the offices in town to report and clock in. This requirement contrasts with the EPWP’s Code of Good Practice, which promotes locally based labour to minimise transport costs and ensure that expenditure remains within local communities. Despite these concerns, some participants reported being able to invest in their education or family needs. As participant 9 noted:

“The money helps because I am able to pay for my studies... I am able to cover a few expenses for my basic needs and support my family with a little.”

This finding aligns with Dladla (2023), who also found some participants pay for their education using the stipend received from the programme, they register for their studies, and some save for registrations to further their education. While the EPWP offer short-term relief rather than long-term impact on participants’ financial stability, beneficiaries still appreciate and value the income they receive. When viewing these findings through the lens of the Rational Choice Theory, participants’ decisions to join the EPWP is influenced by their assessment that the short-term income even though it is limited outweighs remaining unemployed. However, the insufficient long-term financial gains that were mentioned, highlight the constraints of the decision to participate in the programme, revealing that as much as participants are receiving income they ultimately view their involvement as a temporary coping mechanism rather than a sustainable pathway to economic security. These perspectives align with Oguntona et al. (2023), who found that while participants value the income earned through EPWP, they perceive limited long-term financial stability benefits. Similarly, Maphanga and Mazenda (2019) stated that although the EPWP provides temporary stipends that contribute to improved food security, it fails to ensure long-term financial stability for participants. The programme's limitations in providing long-term financial stability for

participants undermines its effectiveness as a sustainable poverty alleviation and employment generation strategy. As Zulu, Nyawo, & Mashau, (2017) note, PEPs such as the EPWP provides immediate income relief, thereby limiting participants' financial stability and employment prospects beyond their period of participation. This limitation raises important questions about the suitability of financial stability as a primary indicator of the programme's impact, especially given participants recurring concerns about the insufficiency of the stipends received. To enhance its developmental impact, EPWP must move beyond temporary income support and aim to provide participants with skills that promote sustained livelihoods even after the completion of the programme.

4.4.2 Employment opportunities

The key mandate of EPWP is to provide short-term contracts for unemployed individuals, aiming to alleviate poverty and enhance skills that can equip individuals for the next employment (Mashabela, 2016). The study revealed that one of the key indicators used by the officials to assess the effectiveness of the EPWP is the number of people employed through the temporary contracts provided by the programme. Officials highlighted that they assess the programme's effectiveness based on the number of temporary jobs created, with comparatively less emphasis placed on the sustainability or long-term of these employment opportunities. As Official 3 noted:

"We monitor the number of people hired... These helps measure impact of the programme, but they don't necessarily reflect sustainable job creation it just short-term impact."

Similarly, another official confirmed that the rate of employment opportunities created is used as the indicator to measure the efficacy of the EPWP. Official 4 noted that:

"We measure the success of the programme by the number of people employed on a short-term... which helps us understand the programme's impact on local needs."

Viewed through Rational Choice Theory, participants' decisions to accept short-term EPWP reflect a rational assessment that employment opportunities presented by the programme even though they are temporary they outweigh the opportunity costs of remaining unemployed. This finding aligns with Kelobang and Boon's (2018) argued that employment creation remains the primary indicator to evaluate the programme's effectiveness as it reflects the total number of jobs generated. Similarly, Mogagabe (2016) contends that the total number of employment

opportunities created within the EPWP serves as the programme's effectiveness. Since creating job opportunities is one of the central goals of EPWP, it makes perfect sense to use the employment generation rate as a metric to assess the programme's efficacy. A greater number of people employed indicates that the programme is helping to reduce unemployment levels. However, the reliance on short-term job creation over long-term employability has significant limitations. While the creation of short-term employment provides immediate economic relief, it does not necessarily translate into sustained long-term employability outcomes or long-term poverty reduction. As a result, if participants return to unemployment upon project completion, the programme's contribution to addressing structural unemployment challenges remains limited.

4.4.3 Skills development and Training

Skills development is one of the crucial aspects of EPWP as it does not only enhance the employability of participants but also prepares them for future job opportunities (Dyanty, 2019; Cuthbert, 2023). Ideally, the programme should equip participants with market-related and transferable skills that will enhance their employability beyond the temporary scope of the EPWP. According to Barnow and Smith (2015) skills development and training are one of the key indicators that assess the effectiveness of PEPs. The skills attained by participants in the programme reflect the programme's effectiveness in achieving one of its core objectives. The findings of the study indicate that officials' recognise training interventions as one of the main indicators used to assess the effectiveness of the programme. These interventions are designed to equip participants with practical skills intended to enhance their employability and promote sustainable livelihoods beyond the duration of the programme. Official 4 commented:

"We look at the number of trainings we provide and how it impacts our beneficiaries because the aim is to give them skills that will help them to look for other employment opportunities. So, should they respond well to the training, we have indeed made a small but significant contribution to their skill development."

Similarly, official 1 also noted:

"We do surveys after a certain training just to understand whether the workshop or training they attended was educational or if they have learnt something that will be useful in future."

Despite these efforts, the study's findings also demonstrate that training initiatives provided in this programme are limited in the scope and largely insufficient for participants to secure long-

term employment. Participants and officials raised concerns about the limited depth and practical utility of these trainings. As official 4 acknowledged:

“... We offer basic training in safety and do entrepreneurship skills by providing training workshops. However, I feel that this is not enough to empower them beyond their current roles.”

Similarly, Participant 3 mentioned that:

“We have been invited to a few training programmes there by the town hall. I liked learning this, but honestly, it doesn't seem like something I can use to find another job when the contract ends here.”

From a Rational Choice Theory perspective, participants' willingness to engage in limited or basic training reflects a calculation that even minimal skill acquisition may offer some future advantage compared to gaining no skills at all. However, because the training lacks market relevance the expected long-term benefits do not materialise to meaning participants' rational choices are constrained by the limited options. These findings illustrate that training extends beyond a functional activity but also serves as a key performance indicator used to measure the EPWP's effectiveness in promoting employability. Both officials and participants acknowledged that the training is limited in depth and alignment with labour market needs, reducing its usefulness for career progression. This echoes Mabusela (2019) argument that while EPWP include skills development as a stated objective, the execution often lacks depth and alignment with labour market demands. The skill training provided within the expanded PEPs makes no contribution towards the career progression of the participants (Kakul, 2016). The programme implementers fail to provide participants with the skills that will enable them to participate in the labour market after their participation in the programme.

4.5 Structural and Resource Constraints Undermining Programme Effectiveness

Various challenges were noted regarding the failure to provide relevant training for the beneficiaries. Officials discussed that structural challenges, such as limited funding, hinder the delivery of quality training. For instance, Official 2 noted that:

“The biggest issue is a lack of resources. The budget is tight, so we can't invest in better equipment or training... Better funding and extended training periods would make a huge difference.”

This observation illustrates how resource scarcity directly restricts the depth and quality of training delivery. The challenge of underfunding not only affects the provision of training but also the broader functionality of the programme, including monitoring, evaluation, and participant support. These challenges are echoed by Mazenda et al. (2022), who argued that EPWP struggles due to chronic underfunding, which makes it difficult for programme to make a visible impact on their beneficiaries. Additionally, Terziev and Arabska (2015) further affirm that a lack of sufficient resources hinders PEPs from achieving their intended outcomes. It is apparent that while the officials in the EPWP in Thandukukhanya Township have established indicators designed to direct and assess the performance and effectiveness of the programme within the community, such efforts are undermined by persistent structural and financial barriers. The lack of adequate resources constrains the programme's ability to translate training and skill development efforts into tangible employment outcomes. Addressing these systemic funding and capacity challenges are thus essential for enhancing the EPWP's effectiveness in generating employment opportunities and achieving its intended socio-economic objectives.

From the perspective of Rational Choice Theory, resource and structural constraints shape the incentives and choices available to both programme implementers and participants. Officials, constrained by limited budgets, make decisions aimed at maximising outputs within restricted means often prioritising short-term or basic training rather than investing in long-term or specialised skills development. This reflects a rational response to limited institutional resources and competing programme demands. Conversely, participants are aware that the programme offers minimal training and limited long-term value express frustration and adjust their expectations accordingly. Many participants rationally choose to join the programme despite its limitations because it provides short-term income, even though it does not significantly enhance future employment prospects. The structural constraints therefore narrow the set of realistic choices available to beneficiaries and weaken the programme's ability to influence long-term decision-making around employment and skill investment.

4.6 Employment Opportunities Generated through the EPWP

The EPWP was designed to provide temporary employment for unskilled and semi-skilled individuals through labour-intensive public sector projects (Nzimakwe, 2008). Scholars such as Sibanda and Thebe (2022) argue that EPWP have created numerous job opportunities, especially for youth and women, thereby contributing to skills development and enhancing their employability prospects. However, field data from Thandukukhanya Township indicate that while EPWP provide short-term employment opportunities, it offers limited opportunities

for long-term employability. The study found that the programme offers limited short-term employment, while there is a high demand for employment. Absorption of participants into permanent positions was raised; however, it was mentioned that there are possibilities of absorption within the hosting departments' remains very low, which makes an insignificant contribution to unemployment reduction.

4.6.1 Short-term Employment Opportunities

While the EPWP has made notable strides in addressing employment opportunities, its temporary nature raises concerns about its capacity to achieve sustainable poverty reduction. Participants are typically employed on contracts ranging from a few months to three years. These roles offer modest stipends and temporary engagement in public works projects such as, road maintenance, waste collection, and gardening services. Participants acknowledged that the programme only offers them short-term relief; however, when the programme ends, they return to their state of unemployment. This cyclical pattern underscores the limited long-term impact of the programme on employment sustainability and poverty alleviation. Participant 11 expressed:

"I know it's temporary, but honestly, I don't know what's next for me when this ends that is a sad part about this contract it is not guaranteed that you will get absorbed. The focus is on the temporary relief then after you just have to use what you got to get more of what you want and look for other opportunities."

Correspondingly, the officials also noted that the programme only offers the participants short-term employment opportunities; participants are employed for a few years, however when their contracts end, the majority of them return to being unemployed. Official 3 noted that:

"Unfortunately, the programme doesn't create many permanent jobs. Most people come and go, and when their contracts end, they often go back to job-hunting."

Similarly, community members confirmed that the employment generated by the programme is only for a short time, with limited influence on permanent or long-term employment. Community member 5 noted that:

“The EPWP are good in the sense that they provide temporary jobs, but once those contracts end, people are left in the same position as before. It’s not making a big difference for their future.”

This aligns with Maphanga and Mazenda (2019), who argue that the EPWP tends to trap the participants in the cycle of poverty due to its temporary nature and lack of long-term job security. The EPWP’s nature of providing temporary employment opportunities seems to be in vain, as it does not meet the participants’ employment needs, such as permanent or long-term employment opportunities after the participants’ contracts have ended. This aligns with the findings of Khawula (2019), whose study revealed that participants noted that the programme helps to reduce unemployment, but the problem is that the projects are only limited to short durations. Additionally, Mubangizi and Dladla (2024) noted ongoing challenges faced by the EPWP in achieving youth employment targets, given the rising youth unemployment rates in South Africa. Participants’ decision to participate in the EPWP reflects their rational evaluation of immediate income against the cost of being unemployed. Using the lens of the Rational Choice Theory, according to the participants even though the programme does not guarantee permanent work the short-term opportunity provided, outweighs the opportunity cost of being unemployed. The recurrence of unemployment after the contracts expire shows that the participants’ rational decisions are influenced by limited options, reinforcing how limited choice affects labour-market behaviour. Collectively, these findings underscore the structural limitations of the programme in fostering long-term employability and meaningful poverty reduction.

4.6.2 The Limited Absorption and Long-Term Employability

The EPWP is designed to generate temporary employment opportunities through initiatives that emphasise infrastructure development, environmental stewardship, social services, and the non-governmental sector, to optimise job creation while, simultaneously addressing the developmental requirements of the nation (Mtapuri, 2014). While EPWP projects are meant to be transitional pathways, very few participants successfully secure permanent employment post-contract. During the programme, some participants get absorbed and become permanent employees within the hosting departments; however, concerns about scarce opportunities were raised, noting that there are limited chances that participants may get absorbed.

Official 3 shared:

“Most participants return to unemployment when the contract ends, but some end up being absorbed and become employed permanently.”

Correspondingly, one of the officials started as a participant in the programme and then later got absorbed into the department as a permanent employee. As much as people returned to being unemployed post-programme, some officials were absorbed within the hosting departments; however, not everyone was absorbed due to limited vacant positions. Official 2, who was once an EPWP participant, acknowledged this limitation:

“Once the contract is over, participants often go back to searching for work or relying on small, odd jobs. Some get absorbed just like I did, but honestly, there isn’t enough long-term employment coming out of these projects.”

Concerns were raised regarding the lack of transparency in the absorption process. A recurring sentiment was that those with political ties or family connections within the municipality were more likely to be absorbed. Community members expressed their concerns about the unclear absorption process, claiming that personal connections and nepotism play a role in the selection process. Community Member 11 noted that:

“No one I know has used the programme to get a real job. Only those who have relatives there in the municipality get employed, they just work for a few months, then they are inside offices enjoying air-conditioning, while people who have been working as EPWP for longer than them become unemployed because their contracts have ended and with what? Nothing, no certificate of certain skills or training gained, so it’s more of a temporary fix that doesn’t build anything solid.”

This view is corroborated by Dladla (2023), who also discovered that even though the DPWI introduced the EPWP Recruitment Guidelines in 2017 intending to provide guidance on hiring employees for EPWP projects, these guidelines were violated, recruitment procedures were weakened, and in reality, they were being transformed into a political game in which council members and those with political connections were given preference for EPWP employment opportunities. It is difficult for the programme to have a lasting effect on creating jobs for Thandukukhanya Township when such approaches are used. Consequently, while some participants are absorbed, the process lacks consistency and accountability, limiting the programme's potential to contribute meaningfully to long-term employment outcomes. According to the Rational Choice Theory individuals weigh the costs and benefits of different options prior to decision-making. They choose the option that provides the most significant

benefit for the lowest cost. The participants' decisions to participate in the programme is shaped by the expected benefits such as absorption and long-term employability opportunity that may emerge from the programme. However, the presence of nepotism and unfair selection procedures restricts participants' ability to maximise long-term benefits, illustrating how unequal access to opportunities shapes and constrains rational decision-making within the programme. These shortcomings reduce community trust and restrict the programme's developmental impact, leaving participants with temporary relief rather than sustainable livelihood prospects.

4.7 Community Perceptions on the Impact of EPWP on Employment Opportunities

Active community participation in decision-making processes, particularly regarding development initiatives such as public employment, is essential for ensuring that community members' needs are adequately addressed (Rijal, 2023). In the context of Thandukukhanya Township, community members expressed a combination of scepticism and frustration regarding the EPWP. Key concerns included the lack of long-term employment opportunities and exclusion from the programme's decision-making processes. While some community members acknowledged the programme's role in providing temporary employment, there were mixed opinions about the impact of the EPWP on employment and its inequalities in broader socio-economic inequalities. These perspectives are invaluable in assessing how the EPWP is perceived at the grassroots level, offering insights into its social legitimacy and the effectiveness of its impact on local communities.

4.7.1 Perceived lack of long-term opportunities

Many community members viewed the EPWP as a short-term intervention that fails to address the structural drivers of unemployment in the area. While the financial relief offered by the programme was appreciated, community members questioned its sustainability and overall developmental contribution. Community members lack the motivation to participate in the programme as they view it as a temporary fix rather than a sustainable solution to their developmental needs, such as addressing the high level of unemployment rate. Community member 11 noted that:

"It's good for short-term income. People appreciate the chance to earn, but it doesn't solve their long-term problems. Once their contract is over, they're back to searching for work."

Similarly, Community Member 1 also noted that:

“People work for a while, then they’re right back to unemployment. It’s not solving anything.”

These responses point to a deeper dissatisfaction with the programme’s capacity to enable social mobility. Viewed from the Rational Choice Theory perspective, the community’s dissatisfaction reflects their rational evaluation of the programme’s limited long-term benefits. Their reluctance to participate is therefore a rational response to the programme’s inability to offer sustainable economic advancement. These findings align with Langa (2022) who also identified that the lack of visible impact of the programmes resulted in community members portraying a negative attitude towards the programmes. For instance, some community members viewed initiatives such as EPWP as a programme for losers and people who have given up in life or stopped dreaming as there is no room for growth in these programmes but only short-term employment relief (Langa, 2022). Empirical evidence from prior studies supports this concern.

Ralarala, Graham, and Mthembu, (2022) argues that PEPs in South Africa often fail to address the root causes of unemployment, such as skills training and lack of relevant experience. For instance, Moyo (2013), reported that 94% of the participants who participated in the Modimola EPWP project were unemployed ever since their contracts ended. Despite receiving the theoretical training in areas such as mixed farming and life skills training, i.e. management of personal finances, skills on running one’s affairs, participants were able to secure employment in either private or sectors. On the other hand, Hlatshwayo (2017) contends that such programmes rarely prioritise formation of skills that would better prepare participants for the labour market or for meaningful economic participation.

Despite the short-term relief provided by EPWP, the programme is perceived as incapable of imparting the beneficiaries with skills that prepare them to participate in the labour market. In this light, the EPWP’s failure to translate participation into sustainable employment reflects a disconnect between its stated developmental objectives and its actual implementation on the ground.

4.7.2 Community exclusion from the programme planning and decision making

Another recurring concern voiced by community members was their exclusion from the planning, design, and implementation stages of EPWP projects. Community members felt that

the top-down nature of programme delivery limited opportunities for genuine participation, thus undermining the responsiveness and relevance of these initiatives. This exclusion not only slowed local involvement and empowerment, but it also raised concerns or questions about the programme's effectiveness in addressing the community needs. Community Member 4 remarked:

"Our opinions don't seem to matter much to these comrades, they only do what they feel like doing, regardless of what we need. When new projects are planned, we don't get asked about what would benefit us most. It feels like everything is decided without us."

Similarly, other non-participants also noted that their opinions are never taken into consideration when planning and implementing the EPWP. For instance, non-participant 6 shared similar sentiments that there is a lack of consultation and research into local needs:

"I don't feel like our input is genuinely considered. We're told what projects will happen, but there's no real consultation. It feels like decisions are made for us rather than with us, I have never seen a researcher or community development worker doing research trying to understand our needs so they can come up with solutions to our needs it is always a matter of them telling us what to do. The only time we see them in our door steps is when they are campaigning making promises that they will never fulfil once they are in these positions."

These perceptions contrast with the findings of Mashabela (2016) who argued that the programme offers opportunities for community members to participate in decision-making and express their opinions which strengthens their sense of control. However, in Thandukukhanya Township, community participation was excluded in the planning and implementation stages of the programme, which contributed to a negative perception among the participants. According to Chowdhoree, Dawes, and Sloan, (2020), community participation in development initiatives enhances legitimacy, ensures that interventions reflect local priorities, and fosters long-term commitment to programme outcomes. The absence of participatory mechanisms in EPWP can lead to negative perception among beneficiaries, misaligned programme goals, and ultimately, reduced impact. The exclusion of community input results in projects that may not fully address local needs or overlook valuable community insights that could be most impactful (Bredow, 2015). Kaiser (2020) argued that bottom-up development

approaches seem to be more effective than top-down development approaches as they ensure people's participation and right to choose. In the context of the EPWP in Thandukukhanya Township, the lack of participatory engagement has fostered a sense of marginalisation and powerlessness. From a Rational Choice Theory perspective, the lack of community participation reduces the perceived benefits of engaging with EPWP processes. When individuals feel that their input carries no weight, the 'cost' of participation (time, effort, emotional investment) outweighs the perceived benefits. This rational evaluation leads to disengagement, scepticism, and reduced trust in the programme. Therefore, community involvement can enhance the EPWP's impact on the community.

4.8 Recommendations to Enhance the Effectiveness of EPWP

The perceptions of beneficiaries and community members play a crucial role in shaping and enhancing programmes to benefit all stakeholders involved and yield long-term impact (Shek, Leung, Ma, and Wu, 2017). The participants stressed the need for a programme to be enhanced to make a long-term impact in the community. Furthermore, the participants noted that the programme should focus more on skills development, strengthen career pathways and provide holistic post-programme support through strategic partnerships. The recommendations proposed by community members reflect a shared vision of a programme that transcends short-term employment and contributes meaningfully to livelihood development.

4.8.1 Focus on Skills Development

Vocational training emerged as a key recommendation from the participants in the EPWP. Many expressed a strong desire for training opportunities that would equip them with market skills and certificates to enhance their employability after their participation in the programme. This reflects a need for EPWP to provide training that not only addresses immediate job requirement but also ensures that participants are better equipped to compete in the labour market once their temporary employment ends. Community Member 13 noted that:

"They must invest in real training that builds job-ready skills just like other municipalities and listen to the community's needs more closely so that they will know exactly what we need."

In addition, the officials echoed similar sentiments by emphasising the importance of restructuring the skills delivery mechanism that will offer more training that will enable participants to be employable in other organisations. Official 2 stated that:

“I think we need to create skills-training opportunities that are more meaningful and focus on long-term growth. Training participants in trades like carpentry or plumbing would be beneficial. We also need better collaboration with companies that can offer permanent jobs to skilled participants. We are currently reviewing our programme and working on it to better serve our community.”

These recommendations align with De Lannoy, Graham, Patel, and Leibbrandt, (2018), who noted that linking PEPs with technical and vocational training enhances the participants’ employability. Participants noted that there is a need to be equipped with skills that will be valuable for them when competing in the labour market post-programme. This demonstrates that participants’ choices and expectations are shaped by rational attempts to improve their future employment prospects within the constraints of the programme. Mukhathi (2015) similarly noted that the EPWP is the approach to ensure that beneficiaries are equipped with skills through their participation in the programme to increase their chances of securing future employment. Equipping the participants with relevant skills and experience to compete in the labour market will increase the impact of the EPWP in the community. Madlala and Matshediso (2019) further support this view, indicating that providing training for the beneficiaries assists the programme in achieving its intended objective of transferring skills to support the employability of the beneficiaries. From a Rational Choice Theory perspective, participants’ strong demand for meaningful and market-relevant training reflects a rational evaluation of costs and benefits. The existing training offers limited long-term value, as such, participants perceive the “benefits” of participation as low relative to the “costs,” such as time spent in training that does not improve employability. Their recommendations for accredited, industry-aligned skills indicate their preference for options that maximise long-term economic returns. Strengthening skills development has broader implications which includes shifting the EPWP from a short-term relief mechanism to a more sustainable pathway into employment. This will further enhance the programme’s credibility and ensure that public investment contributes to long-term economic participation rather than temporary income support.

4.8.2 Demand for Strategic Partnerships and Sustainable Employment Pathways.

Partnerships are crucial for the success of EPWP in linking temporary work with longer-term economic opportunities (Dladla & Mutambara, 2018). The PEPs have become a popular strategy for addressing ineffective and expensive service delivery. Public-private partnerships, in particular, can reduce coordination costs and extend the impact of public initiatives by combining design, financing, and implementation elements (Trebilcock & Rosenstock, 2015).

Participants in the study noted that there is a need for stronger strategic partnerships and sustainable employment pathways to ensure the long-term impact of the EPWP in society. As official 4 explained:

“We should partner with local businesses and training colleges. This way, participants could gain real skills and have better chances of finding permanent employment.”

Similarly, Community Member 16 also noted that:

“The programmes need to be more about long-term skill-building. It would help if they could partner with certain training institutions like TVET or local businesses so that people can learn skills and maybe find permanent work afterwards. Right now, the skills learned in the programmes aren’t sufficient.”

The partnership established between the PEPs, local businesses, and training institutions could help align the skills training offered within the programme with industry demands, thereby address the gap between temporary employment and sustainable employment opportunities (Chenoy, 2017). Using the lenses of Rational Choice Theory, participants’ calls for stronger partnerships reflect their rational pursuit of opportunities that maximise long-term employment outcomes. Their preference for partnerships with businesses, training institutions, and employers shows a rational desire to access networks that can increase their future job prospects. In addition to such partnerships, participants expressed a strong consensus for the need for post-programme support to facilitate the transition from temporary to stable employment. The absence of structured job placement and the lack of ongoing support from the officials after the completion of the programme were identified as a significant challenge. Participants expressed a need for structured post-programme support to ease the transition from EPWP contracts to stable employment. Participant 12 highlighted this need:

“We need guidance on what to do after our contracts end, they must support us as our trainers by connecting us with potential employers so we can get permanent employment, and they must check on us to get where we are, and they can support us in navigating the labour market.”

Participants’ recommendations represent strategic choices aimed at reducing uncertainty and improving the potential return on their participation in the programme. This observation is consistent with Du Toit et al. (2018), who similarly argue that robust transition support

mechanisms, such as, career counselling and mentorship, are significant in addressing unemployment in contexts of South Africa's townships. Through the integration of strategic collaborations with private employers and comprehensive post-programme support, the EPWP could move closer to achieving its goal of sustainable employment generation. Furthermore, Sibanda (2021) suggests that there is a need to revisit the policies supporting the programme and try to encompass policies such as the Keynesian Model and the Neoliberalism approach to solve the country's unemployment challenge. Sibanda argues that relying solely on either market-driven or government-led policies is inadequate. This approach would ensure that both market-driven strategies and state-support work together to deliver meaningful and lasting employment solutions.

4.9 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter presented and discussed the findings of the study, which explored the EPWP as an intervention strategy for the creation of employment opportunities in Thandukukhanya Township. The chapter began by illustrating an overview of participants' demographic characteristics, which were subsequently followed by themes such as, short-term employment, limited training opportunities, and the need for stronger institutional partnerships were explored in depth. The analysis that revealed the perspectives of participants and stakeholders about the contribution of the EPWP to employment prospects was guided by the study's objectives. Through this approach, the chapter highlighted participants lived experiences, perspectives, and insights regarding the programme enrolment, skills development, job preparedness, and post-programme challenges. These findings demonstrated the discrepancy between the participants' long-term employment objectives and the short-term nature of the EPWP. In connection with the research objectives, the findings showed that while the EPWP offers temporary work opportunities, it does not adequately support skills transfer, job preparedness, or progression into sustainable employment. Furthermore, actionable recommendations for enhancing the EPWP's contribution to sustainable employment pathways was highlighted which raised the need for strengthening training components and improving linkages with local industries. Throughout the chapter Rational Choice Theory assisted in explaining why participants prioritise interventions that increase long-term returns on their involvement in the programme. The following chapter will cover the summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study.

Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter provided a comprehensive analysis and interpretation of the empirical findings of this study, which examined the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) as an employment creation strategy, with specific reference to Thandukukhanya Township. This chapter synthesises the key research findings relating to Public Employment Programmes (PEPs), particularly the EPWP, as mechanisms for addressing unemployment in the study area. It presents the conclusions drawn from the empirical evidence in relation to the theoretical framework that underpinned the study. In addition, the chapter proposes practical recommendations to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of the EPWP, identifying areas for future research to address the gaps and challenges highlighted by the study.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

5.2.1 Research Aim

The aim of this study was to analyse the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) as an intervention strategy for creating employment opportunities in Thandukukhanya Township. The study was conducted in Thandukukhanya Township and involved a total of 35 participants who shared their perspectives on the influence and effectiveness of the EPWP in promoting employment generation within the community. The participants comprised EPWP officials, EPWP employees, and community members, thereby enabling the study to capture diverse and contextually grounded viewpoints.

Purposive and convenience sampling methods were employed to select participants. Purposive sampling was used to identify EPWP officials and employees due to their direct involvement in the programme and their relevance to the research objectives. Convenience sampling was utilised to recruit community members residing in the study area, based on their accessibility and willingness to participate. This approach facilitated the collection of rich qualitative data while ensuring practical feasibility. Throughout the research process, ethical considerations were strictly adhered to safeguard participants' rights, confidentiality, and well-being, and to ensure the integrity of the data collected.

To successfully achieve the research aim in-depth face-to-face interviews were conducted and the findings were derived from the primary data collected on the contribution of Public Employment Programmes (PEPs), particularly the EPWP, to employment creation in Thandukukhanya Township. Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the qualitative data, enabling the identification of key patterns and themes emerging from participants' narratives. The findings reveal that the EPWP plays a crucial role in providing temporary income and alleviating immediate unemployment through short-term employment opportunities. However, the programme's limited emphasis on skills development, inadequate community participation, and inability to facilitate long-term employment significantly constrain its transformative and sustainable impact. Addressing these challenges through enhanced skills training, strengthened partnerships with key stakeholders, and more inclusive planning and implementation processes could substantially improve the effectiveness of the EPWP and better align it with its objective of sustainable employment creation in South African townships.

5.2.2 Research Objectives

The objectives were to identify the indicators used to assess the effectiveness of EPWP towards employment opportunities, to evaluate the extent to which the EPWP generates employment opportunities, to analyse the perceptions of community members regarding the EPWP for employment generation, and to recommend measures to improve the effectiveness of EPWP in generating employment opportunities in Thandukukhanya. Presented below is a summary of the findings based on the objectives of this study.

5.2.2.1 Different indicators used to assess the effectiveness of EPWP towards employment opportunities

Various indicators to measure the effectiveness of the programme were mentioned. The study found that EPWP officials assess the effectiveness of the programme in generating employment opportunities for the people of Thandukukhanya Township using several indicators which included but not limited to the financial stability of participants, number of people employed, the duration of employment, and community feedback towards the programme. These indicators play a role that assist employers in assessing the progress and effectiveness of the programme towards achieving its intended goal and reaching its targets. The programme provides participants with stipends that allow them to cover their basic needs. The stipends allocated to the participants are anticipated to enhance their living conditions. Participants of the Expanded Public Works noted that through the stipends they are able to

cover basic needs, some indicating that they allocate the funds towards their educational pursuits and their children's tuition fees. The participant's ability to cover basic needs through provided stipends signifies a measure of success within the programme, as its objective is to offer temporary financial assistance by means of temporary employment opportunities. The study also revealed that participants expressed concerns about the amount of stipend they received. Although some participants use the money to invest in improving their future opportunities, it is also recognised that the funding is not sufficient to cover large costs, so they are limited to meeting their basic needs, and any further expenditure is a heavy burden.

The second indicator observed was the employment opportunities created by the programme. The success of the EPWP can be measured by the employment rate generated through the temporary contracts it provides. Although the programme is not designed to offer long-term employment, monitoring the number of participants and the completion of projects helps to assess its impact on the community. A higher or increasing number of participants suggests that more individuals are gaining access to work opportunities, indicating the programme's effectiveness in generating employment, even if for only on a short-term basis but there are intentions to provide experience and skills that can enhance participants employability post programme. However, the duration of employment was highlighted as a barrier to the programme's effectiveness, as its temporary nature does not equip participants with the necessary skills needed to navigate the labour market once their contracts end. This further contradicts the aim of the programme as an intervention strategy to provide the participants with experience and skills that might make them employable in future. The short-term nature of the jobs, coupled with the limited experience, training intervention, and skills provided by the programme, are inadequate for securing long-term employment opportunities. The inclusion of all relevant indicators is crucial for effectively monitoring the programme, as they help in identify areas of underperformance, enabling improvements to achieve the desired targets. Another indicator mentioned was the community's feedback towards the programme. The positive feedback regarding the programme towards infrastructure development and the livelihood of the beneficiaries indicates that the programme is effective in achieving its intended goals. The officials put indicators into place to monitor their impact in contributing towards employment creation and skills development of the beneficiaries. However, challenges such as, insufficient resources and constrained funding, hinder their capacity to achieve the programme's intended objective. These findings align with the Rational Choice Theory which assisted in understanding the decisions behind the beneficiaries' participation in the

programme. Both officials and beneficiaries engage in rational decision-making within the constraints of the EPWP. The officials use indicators to monitor effectiveness regardless of being constrained by financial and resource limitations. The use of various indicators such as, employment rates, financial stability, and community feedback aligns with the Rational Choice Theory's emphasis on rational institutional decision-making. Programme officials' decisions in employing these indicators to assess the effectiveness of EPWP initiatives, ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently.

5.2.2.2 The extent to which the EPWP generates employment opportunities

The EPWP is designed to create temporary employment opportunities through initiatives focused on infrastructure development, environmental management, social services, and the non-governmental sector. Its primary aim is to maximise job creation while addressing the developmental needs of the country. The study found that the EPWP primarily provides short-term employment with limited prospects for long-term job sustainability. The findings revealed that, upon the end of contracts, participants often revert to unemployment and face challenges in securing new jobs due to insufficient experience to compete in the labour market. While the EPWP seems to be making a contribution to employment creation, its focus on providing temporary job opportunities appears to short fall on meeting participants' employment needs, particularly in terms of securing permanent or long-term employment after their contracts end. Furthermore, it has been observed that the EPWP struggles to meet its employment targets, especially in the issue of rising unemployment rates in Thandukukhanya Township. The study further revealed that while some participants are absorbed into the hosting departments, the availability of vacant positions is limited, preventing widespread absorption. Additionally, the process of absorption is often influenced by nepotism, political influence and corruption, undermining the programme's ability to impact those who are genuinely in need of employment opportunities. Participants reported that securing permanent employment within the municipality often requires being related to someone in a senior position or being affiliated with the ruling political party. Without such connections, the chances of being absorbed are limited. These challenges hinder the programme's ability to equitably benefit the participants, and they compromise the effectiveness of the EPWP in addressing unemployment within Thandukukhanya Township.

The choice of the Rational Choice Theory assisted in understanding the decisions of participants to apply to the programme. The beneficiaries applied for the programme because a rational opportunity for temporary employment, receiving a stipend and skills development

was presented. Nonetheless, the temporary nature of the employment provided seems to be a cost-benefit crisis for the beneficiaries. This assumption aligns with Rational Choice Theory because the beneficiaries made decisions based on the best available options at a given time even if it is for the short-term benefit. The theory's assumptions on utility maximisation state that people act in a way that will serve their self-interest whether happiness, financial or social further assisted in explaining the influence behind some officials and political leaders for prioritising personal and connections in the selection process. They act to maximise their utility to fulfil their self-interest. Therefore, participants and officials within the EPWP engage in rational decision-making based on available opportunities and constraints. Participants assess the immediate financial benefits of temporary employment against the long-term challenge of job insecurity while officials make rational choices that align with their institutional or personal interests, even when such decisions compromise fairness and transparency.

5.2.2.3 The perceptions of the community members regarding the EPWPs for employment generation

With reference to the third objective, the study highlighted significant community perceptions regarding the EPWP particularly in relation to its effectiveness in addressing unemployment and its inclusion of community voices in programme planning and decision-making. A concern raised by community members was the lack of long-term opportunities for the EPWP. Many participants viewed the programme as a temporary fix rather than a sustainable solution to unemployment. Community members expressed frustration over the limited ability of the programme to address their developmental needs, such as securing stable employment and reducing the high unemployment rate. The lack of focus on skills development and training leads to participants often struggling to transition to permanent employment or entrepreneurship after completing their contracts. As a result, many community members return to unemployment, perpetuating the cycle of poverty and dependency, this is a critical gap that undermines the intended impact of the EPWP.

Another significant finding was the exclusion of community members from the planning and decision-making processes of the EPWP. Participants consistently expressed dissatisfaction with the top-down approach used in implementing the EPWP. Many felt that their voices were ignored, and decisions were made without considering their actual needs or priorities. This lack of consultation and engagement undermines the programme's effectiveness. Community members are the primary beneficiaries of these initiatives, and their insights are invaluable in ensuring that projects align with their needs and aspirations. The absence of genuine

consultation not only limits the programme's potential impact but also erodes trust between the community and programme implementers. Additionally, fostering greater community involvement could help identify innovative solutions and strengthen the programme's capacity to address actual local challenges.

Consulting with the community members in the development that concerns them plays a significant role in structuring the programme to cater for all beneficiaries. Community members shared insights on ways to improve the programme. A need to restructure the programme's training to align with the labour demand and equip beneficiaries with relevant skills for future employment opportunities. The demand for partnering with different stakeholders, and private-public sector partnerships to ensure the long-term impact of the EPWP was noted as a way to enhance the programmes' impact in the community. This recommendation aligns with Rational Choice Theory because participants' recognise that without transferable skills, their ability to compete in the job market remains limited. Rational decision-making dictates that individuals seek to maximise their future employability, and when existing training structures fail to provide relevant skills, they advocate for alternative solutions.

5.2.2.4 Measures recommended to improve the effectiveness of EPWP in generating employment opportunities

In line with the objective on the effectiveness of EPWP concerning employment creation, the findings noted the need for significant improvements in the EPWP to better address the employment needs of participants and create lasting impacts. The focus on skills development, the establishment of strategic partnerships, and the provision of post-programme support are all critical areas for enhancing the programme's effectiveness. Community members acknowledge the potential of the EPWP in addressing the unemployment challenges. The study found that EPWP has the potential to be more than just a short-term employment solution. The absence of job placement services and follow-up support made it difficult for many participants to navigate the labour market and secure long-term employment. Without sufficient follow-up or career development services, participants are left to navigate the labour market on their own, often facing the same challenges that led them to the programme in the first place. Participants and officials alike also highlighted the need for collaborations with local businesses, training institutions, and other stakeholders. These partnerships could provide participants with hands-on experience, better training opportunities, and access to sustainable employment pathways by linking the programme's training efforts with market demands, which could make a

significant difference in improving the employment prospects of participants. It was noted that the failure to integrate skills development into the programme limits its ability to make a lasting impact on participants' lives. By incorporating these recommendations, such as, expanding training opportunities, forging stronger partnerships with local businesses and training institutions, and providing robust post-programme support, the EPWP can transition from being a temporary fix to a sustainable long-term employment generator. This approach would not only improve the programme's impact but also contribute significantly to addressing the unemployment challenges faced by communities across South Africa. From the Rational Choice Theory perspective, incorporating the suggested recommendations has the potential to improve the programme's impact in the community and provide various opportunities for participants to maximise their utility by making consistent choices based on the rankings of their preferences while minimising cost-benefit such as risks before making their decisions.

5.3 Conclusion

This study has provided critical insights into the effectiveness of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) as a Public Employment Programme (PEP) aimed at addressing unemployment in Thandukukhanya Township. Through an analysis of the perspectives of EPWP participants, officials, and community members, the research illuminated the programme's achievements, limitations, and potential areas for improvement. The findings were interpreted within the framework of Rational Choice Theory, which provided a useful lens for understanding the effectiveness of the programme as a strategy for employment creation, community participation patterns, decision-making processes, and the outcomes associated with it.

The study established that the EPWP plays a meaningful role in alleviating immediate unemployment by providing short-term income and temporary employment opportunities. Participants acknowledged the financial relief offered through stipends, which enabled them to meet basic household needs and, in some cases, support educational expenses. However, the temporary nature of employment and the limited emphasis on structured skills development substantially undermine the programme's capacity to promote sustainable employment. As a result, many participants struggle to secure stable employment or entrepreneurial opportunities upon completion of their contracts, often returning to unemployment and thereby perpetuating cycles of poverty and economic vulnerability.

A further significant limitation identified by the study is the exclusion of community members from the planning and decision-making processes of the EPWP. Participants expressed dissatisfaction with the programme's operational processes, noting that decisions are largely made through a top-down approach that inadequately reflects community priorities and local labour market realities. This disconnect contributes to frustration among beneficiaries and limits the programme's responsiveness to the actual needs of the community. Moreover, concerns relating to nepotism and corruption in recruitment and absorption processes were highlighted as critical challenges, as they undermine transparency, equity, and the credibility of the programme.

The findings also underscore the importance of integrating comprehensive skills development and fostering strategic partnerships with local businesses, training institutions, and other relevant stakeholders. Such partnerships could enhance the relevance of training interventions, align them with labour market demands, and create pathways to sustainable employment beyond the duration of the programme. Additionally, the absence of post-programme support emerged as a major barrier to long-term employment outcomes, pointing to the need for job placement services, career guidance, and mentorship to assist participants in transitioning into the labour market.

Rational Choice Theory proved instrumental in explaining why individuals in Thandukukhanya Township opt to participate in the EPWP. The theory elucidates how participants weigh the immediate financial benefits of stipends against the programme's limited long-term prospects. The findings indicate that participation is primarily driven by the need to address short-term economic hardship rather than the expectation of securing stable employment. By highlighting the cost-benefit calculations and constraints faced by participants, such as limited access to education, skills training, and alternative employment opportunities, the theoretical framework helped to identify critical gaps in the design and implementation of the EPWP. While Rational Choice Theory provides a useful framework for understanding how individuals make decisions based on perceived costs and benefits, its applicability within the context of Thandukukhanya Township is subject to few limitations. In Thandukukhanya Township, employment decisions are not solely determined by rational calculations of costs and benefits, but are significantly constrained by external structural factors such as high unemployment rates, limited access to formal job markets, and socio-economic inequalities. In addition, the theory tends to overlook the role of social, cultural, and emotional factors in shaping individual behaviour. In the context of Thandukukhanya, factors such as

social networks, community expectations, and survival strategies play a significant role in influencing participation in public employment programmes. These realities suggest that decision-making is not purely rational but embedded within broader social and economic conditions. Therefore, while RTC provided a useful lens for analysing individual participation in the EPWP, it is important to recognise its limitations in capturing the complexity of decision-making in contexts of structural disadvantage. This study acknowledged these limitations and applied the theory with caution, complementing it with an understanding of the broader socio-economic environment within which participants operate.

In conclusion, while the EPWP demonstrates considerable potential as an intervention strategy for addressing unemployment in township contexts such as Thandukukhanya, its impact remains constrained by structural and operational shortcomings. To realise its full potential, the programme must evolve beyond a short-term employment mechanism and adopt a more developmental orientation that prioritises sustainable employment outcomes. Strengthening skills training, enhancing stakeholder partnerships, promoting inclusive community participation, and providing robust post-programme support are essential steps towards improving the effectiveness of the EPWP. Such reforms would not only enhance the contribution of PEPs to employment creation but also play a vital role in addressing persistent unemployment and poverty in Thandukukhanya Township.

5.4 Recommendations

5.4.1 Recommendations for EPWP Officials

To enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of the EPWP, the following recommendations are proposed:

- **Strengthen strategic partnerships**
EPWP officials should establish partnerships with local businesses, NGOs, universities, TVET colleges, and SETAs to facilitate mentorship, apprenticeships, and job placement opportunities.
- **Align training with labour market needs**
Collaborations with training institutions should be used to map and deliver skills programmes that are aligned with industry demand and compliant with QCTO and National Skills Development Strategy frameworks.
- **Improve monitoring and evaluation systems**

Investment in advanced technological systems is required to track beneficiary participation, programme implementation, and overall impact across municipalities.

- **Enhance community participation**

EPWP officials should institutionalise regular community engagement platforms, such as dialogues and meetings, to ensure that community members are actively involved in planning, implementation, and evaluation processes.

- **Promote participatory programme design**

Community members should be included throughout the programme lifecycle to ensure that interventions are responsive to local needs and to strengthen community ownership.

- **Develop structured exit strategies**

Officials should create clear exit pathways by linking beneficiaries to further training, employment opportunities, and private sector networks.

- **Establish post-programme support systems:**

A follow-up framework should be implemented to track beneficiaries after exiting the programme and provide continued support through mentorship, career guidance, and job search assistance.

5.4.2 Recommendations for EPWP Participants

To maximise the benefits of participation in the EPWP, the following actions are recommended:

- **Build professional networks**

Participants should actively engage with local businesses and stakeholders to create networks that may support future employment or entrepreneurial opportunities.

- **Pursue additional skills development**

Participants should take initiative in accessing supplementary learning opportunities, including online courses, workshops, and training programmes to enhance their employability.

- **Adopt financial planning practices**

Beneficiaries should manage their earnings strategically by budgeting, saving, and where possible, investing to sustain themselves beyond the duration of the programme.

5.4.3 Recommendations for Government (EPWP)

To strengthen the overall impact of the EPWP at a policy and implementation level, the following recommendations are proposed:

- **Adopt integrated (“double-blessed”) policy approaches**

Government should implement policies that simultaneously promote economic growth, beneficiary development, and improved service delivery.

- **Strengthen institutional capacity**

All EPWP officials should be adequately trained and capacitated to ensure effective and consistent programme implementation.

- **Ensure adequate and sustainable funding**

Government must improve budget allocations to support programme activities, including timely payment of stipends and expanded funding for training initiatives.

- **Review wage structures**

The minimum wage for EPWP participants should be reassessed in relation to the cost of living to ensure that it adequately meets basic needs.

- **Enforce policy compliance**

Strict adherence to ministerial determinations and programme guidelines must be ensured across all implementing sectors.

- **Minimise political interference**

Safeguards should be implemented to ensure that political involvement does not compromise fairness and transparency in participant selection.

- **Encourage innovation in implementation**

Government departments should be encouraged to adopt innovative approaches to expand programme reach and improve outcomes beyond existing policy targets.

5.5 Areas of Further Research

To better understand the implications of this study’s results and contribute to the body of knowledge various studies can be conducted. Further research can be undertaken to explore the role of community engagement in enhancing the relevance of PEPs. The studies can explore how community members’ participation can enhance the programme’s positive impact on the community. Future research could also explore the factors discouraging eligible community members from participating in the programme to identify ways to enhance inclusivity and accessibility. Future studies can also explore the community’s perceptions around the role of political influence on the PEPs.

A tracer study of former employees who once participated in the programme is also crucial, to determine how the skills and benefits gained from EPWP have influenced their labour market

participation as well as their livelihood. An impact study can be conducted using quantitative methodological approach to measure the impact that the EPWP has on the livelihoods of the beneficiaries during and after they had completed their participation in the programme. Additionally, a comparative analysis of PEPs in South Africa to compare the EPWP with similar initiatives in other South African provinces or internationally can be conducted to identify best practices and innovative approaches.

5.6 Summary of the chapter

This chapter covered the summary of the findings of this study, conclusions as well as recommendations. The aim of the study was mentioned, and objectives were outlined in line with the findings. Recommendations were made for the EPWP for the officials, the government which is the Department of Public Works Programme and EPWP beneficiaries. This chapter lastly, entailed recommendations for areas of further research to contribute to the body of existing knowledge in the research area.

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Annexures

Annexure A: Consent Form: English Version

CONSENT FORM

A Consent Form for Participation in the Study

Iagree to participate in a research project conducted by, who is doing his/her master degree in Development Studies at the University of Mpumalanga.

This participation form serves as permission that I am giving to the researcher regarding my full participation in this research.

The participation form also acknowledges the following aspects:

1. I have adequate information about the research topic, and I understand the study.
2. I understand that my participation is based on voluntary participation. Therefore, the role that I will play in the study has been clearly outlined to me and I understand the role.
3. I am fully aware that since my participation is voluntary there is no force used on me to participate in the study. I can withdraw at any stage of the researcher when I no longer feel comfortable sharing any information.
4. I understand that during the data collection process, the researcher will take written notes and use a tape recorder to record our conversation for the purpose of the study. I give the researcher full permission to take written notes and I am aware that I can choose to not be recorded by the researcher.
5. I am aware that my anonymity, privacy and confidentiality will be respected in this study. Therefore, the researcher will only share information that I have fully agreed upon for the need of the study.

.....

Participants signature

.....

Researcher signature

.....

Date

.....

Date

Annexure B: Consent Form: Zulu Version

IFOMU LEMVUME YOKUHLANGANYELA OCWANINGWENI

Mina..... Ngiyavuma ukubamba iqhaza kuphrojekthi yocwaningo olwenziwe ngu, owenza izifundo zeDevelopment Studies eNyuvesi yaseMpumalanga.

Leli fomu lokubamba iqhaza lisebenza njengemvume engiyinikeza umcwaningi mayelana nokuhlanganyela kwami ngokugcwele kulolu cwaningo.

Ifomu lokubamba iqhaza liphinde livume izici ezilandelayo:

1. Nginolwazi olwanele mayelana nesihloko socwaningo, futhi ngiyaluqonda ucwaningo.
2. Ngiyaqonda ukuthi ukubamba kwami iqhaza kusekelwe ekubambeni iqhaza ngokuzithandela. Ngakho-ke, indima engizoyidlala ocwaningweni ibekwe ngokucacile kimina futhi ngiyayiqonda.
3. Ngazi kahle ukuthi njengoba ukubamba kwami iqhaza kungokokuzithandela futhi akukho mandla asetshenziswa kimi ukuba ngibambe iqhaza ocwaningweni. Ngingakwazi ukuhoxa kunoma yisiphi isigaba somcwaningi lapho ngingasakhululekile ukwabelana nganoma yiluphi ulwazi.
4. Ngiyaqonda ukuthi ngesikhathi sokuqoqwa kwedatha, umcwaningi uzobhala amanothi futhi asebenzise irekhoda ukuze aqophe ingxoxo yethu ngenhloso yocwaningo. Nginikeza umcwaningi imvume egcwele yokuthatha amanothi abhaliwe futhi ngiyazi ukuthi ngingakhetha ukungarekhodwa umcwaningi.
5. Ngiyazi ukuthi ukungaziwa kwami, ubumfihlo kanye nokugcinwa kuyimfihlo kuzohlolishwa kulolu cwaningo. Ngakho-ke, umcwaningi uzokwabelana kuphela ngolwazi engivumelene ngalo ngokugcwele ngesidingo socwaningo.

.....

Isiginesha yabahlanganyeli

.....

Isiginesha yomcwaningi

.....

Usuku

.....

Usuku

Annexure C: Interview guide for the participants employed in PEP (English Version).

1. How old are you?
2. What is your gender identity?
3. What is your highest level of education completed?
4. How long have you been employed in the EPWP?
5. What specific department and what tasks are you involved in?
6. Can you describe your working experience within the programme?
7. How would you describe your financial stability since joining the EPWP?
8. Have you received any training or skills development opportunities through the EPWP, If so please describe?
9. Do you see the EPWP as a temporary solution to your financial needs, or as a steppingstone to more stable employment?
10. Do you have any long-term career goals or aspirations beyond the EPWP?

Annexure D: Interview guide for the participants employed in PEP Zulu version.

1. Ingabe uneminyaka emingakhi?
2. Ubuchaza kanjani ubulili bakho?
3. Engabe ufunde waze wafinyelela kuliphi izinga lemfundo?
4. Unesikhathi esingakanani uqashwe ohlelweni lwe-EPWP?
5. Yimuphi umnyango osebenza ngaphansi kwawo futhi yimiphi imisebenzi obandakanyeka kuyo?
6. Sicela usichazele ngolwazi lwakho phakathi kwezinhlelo?
7. Ungasichaza kanjani isimo sakho sezimali kusukela waqhashwa kulelohlelo lwemisebenzi yomphakathi?
8. Ingabe zikhona izinhlelo namathuba okuqeqeshwa kwezamakhono oke wazithola kulolohlelo, uma kunjalo sichazele kabanzi ngazo?
9. Ingabe ubona i-EPWP njengesixazululo sesikhashana sezidingo zakho zezimali, noma njengesinyathelo esiholela ekutholeni umsebenzi ozinzile?
10. Ingabe unazo izinhloso zomsebenzi wesikhathi eside noma izifiso ngale kwezinhlelo ze-EPWP?

Annexure E: Interview guide for the officials of the PEP English Version.

1. How long have you been involved as a facilitator of the EPWP?
2. What specific projects or initiatives are typically undertaken as part of these programme?
3. Can you describe the process of selecting participants for the programmes?
4. Have there been any training or capacity-building initiatives for participants? If so, please elaborate.
5. From your perspective to what extent do the programme generate employment opportunities in Thandukukhanya?
6. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of the EPWP in creating employment opportunities?
7. What are some of the main challenges encountered in facilitating the EPWP in Thandukukhanya township?
8. How do you think the programmes could be improved to better address the employment needs of the community?
9. How do you facilitate the exit process of participants from the programmes when the time has reached?
10. What are other support services required to ensure a proper implementation of the EPWP?

Annexure F: Interview guide for the officials of the PEPs Zulu Version.

1. Unesikhathi esingakanani ubambe iqhaza njengomhleliwokuhlela izinhlelweni ze-EPWP?
2. Yimaphi amaprojekthi athile noma imizamo eyenziwa njengengxenywe yalezi zinhlelo?
3. Sicela usichazele kabanzi ngenqubo yokukhetha abahlanganyeli bezinhlelo?
4. Ingabe kube khona izinhlelo zokuqeqesha noma zokuthuthukisa amakhono kwababambe iqhaza? Uma kunjalo, sicela ucacise.
5. Ngokubona kwakho lezi zinhlelo ezihlonziwe zikhiqiza kangakanani amathuba emisebenzi eThandukukhanya?
6. Yiziphi izinkomba ezisetshenziswayo ukuhlola ukusebenza kahle kwezinhlelo ekudaleni amathuba emisebenzi?
7. Yiziphi izinselelo ezinkulu okuhlangatshezwane nazo ekuqhubeni izinhlelo ze-EPWP elokishini laseThandukukhanya?
8. Ucabanga ukuthi lezi zinhlelo zingathuthukiswa kanjani ukuze kubhekwane kangcono nezidingo zokuqashwa komphakathi?
9. Uyenza kanjani inqubo yokunqamula inkontileka yabahlanganyeli uma isikhathi sesifikile?
10. Yiziphi ezinye izinsiza zokweseka ezidingekayo ukuze kuqinisekise ukuqaliswa ngendlela efanele kwalezi zinhlelo zeEPWP.

Annexure G: Interview guide for the community members in Thandukukhanya English Version.

1. How long have you been a resident of Thandukukhanya Township?
2. What are the current PEP aimed at enhancing employment opportunities in Thandukukhanya that you are aware of?
3. How familiar are you with the EPWP in Thandukukhanya Township?
4. From your perspective, in what ways do you believe the programme have positively or negatively impacted the community's employment situation?
5. Do you think the community's input is adequately considered in the planning and implementation of these programmes?
6. How do you think the programme could be improved to better address the employment needs of the community?
7. How would you like to see the EPWP evolve to better serve the needs of the community?
8. From your perspective, looking around the community and the people who were once participants of the programmes, do you think these programmes pave the way for formal employment opportunities in future, please elaborate why?
9. In your opinion, what are the key priorities or areas needs to be improved in the EPWP for the future?

Annexure H: Interview guide for the community members in Thandukukhanya, Zulu translated version.

1. Unesikhathi esingakanani uyisakhamuzi saselokishini iThandukukhanya?
2. Yiziphi izinhlelo zamanje zokuqashwa komphakathi okuhloswe ngazo ukuthuthukisa amathuba emisebenzi eThandukukhanya ozaziyo?
3. Uzazi kangakanani izinhlelo ze-EPWP elokishini laseThandukukhanya?
4. Ngokubona kwakho, yiziphi izindlela okholelwa ukuthi lezi zinhlelo zibe nomthelela omuhle noma omubi esimweni sokuqashwa komphakathi?
5. Ngabe ucabanga ukuthi igalelo lomphakathi liyacatshangelwa ngokwanele ekuhleleni kwalezi zinhlelo?
6. Ucabanga ukuthi lezi zinhlelo zisiza kanjani ekuthuthukiseni intuthuko yomphakathi?
7. Ungathanda ukubona lezi zinhlelo zithuthukiswa kanjani ukuze zisize kangcono izidingo zomphakathi?
8. Ngokubona kwakho, uma ubheka umphakathi kanye nabantu abake baba yingxenye yezinhlelo, ucabanga ukuthi lezi zinhlelo ziyayivula indlela yamathuba omsebenzi ahlelekile ekusasa, ngicela ucacise ukuthi kungani?
9. Ngokubona kwakho, yiziphi izinto ezibalulekile noma izindawo okudingeka zithuthukiswe ezinhlelweni ze-EPWP esikhathini esizayo?

Annexure I: Letter Requesting Permission to conduct the study

LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION

University of Mpumalanga

Private Bag X11283

Mbombela

1200

29 May 2023

Mkhondo local municipality

PO Box 23

Mkhondo

2380

Dear Sir/Madam

I am a student registered for master's degree in development studies at the University of Mpumalanga. I hereby request permission to conduct research in Thandukukhanya Township situated within Mkhondo Local Municipality. The research is mainly for my academic growth and personal development.

The proposed title of my research is analyzing public employment programmes as an intervention strategy towards creation of employment opportunities: The case of Expanded public works programmes (EPWPs Thandukukhanya Township, Mkhondo local municipality. With this letter, I have attached the data collection instruments that I will use to collect data from the participants of the study.

Should you wish to obtain more information or have questions related to the study, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor. Our contact details are as follows:

Name of Researcher: Nomcebo Gugulethu Shongwe

Contact no.: 0764527427

Email: 220219877@ump.ac.za

Supervisor: Prof. Thandeka Sabela

Telephone no.: 0130020254

Email: Thandeka.sabela@ump.ac.za

I hope my request will be in order to meet your set requirements.

Yours Faithfully

NG SHONGWE

Annexure J: Research ethic committee clearance certificate



UNIVERSITY OF
MPUMALANGA

Ref: UMP/Shongwe/09/2024

Date: 10 September 2024

Nomcebo Gugulethu Shongwe (220219877)
School of Development Studies
Faculty of Economics, Development and Business Sciences
University of Mpumalanga

RE: APPROVAL FOR ETHICAL CLEARANCE FOR THE STUDY:

Analyzing Public Employment Programmes as an intervention strategy towards creation of Job Opportunities: The case of Expanded Public Works Programmes (EPWPs) in Thandukukhanya Township, Mkhondo Local Municipality

Reference is made to the above heading.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (Faculty of Economics, Development and Business Sciences) UMP, approved the ethical clearance of the above-mentioned study.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e., Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach, and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/ modification prior to its implementation.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be stored securely in the school/division for a period of 5 years.

The Ethical Clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter, Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Kanayo'.

Prof. Ogujiuba Kanayo
Chairperson: FREC,
Faculty of Economics, Development and Business Sciences
University of Mpumalanga

Annexure K: Permission letter to conduct the study in Thandukukhanya Township



MKHONDO
LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

+27 17 004 0197 33 Mark & De Vries Streets, eMkhondo PO Box 23 eMkhondo 2380 www.mkhondo.gov.za
X @Mkhondolmcp1 Mkhondo Local Municipality @Mkhondo_LM info@mkhondo.gov.za

OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL MANAGER

Inquiries: H Vilakazi

Ext: 3050

Ms. Nomcebo Shongwe (220219877)
Stand No. 1038
eThandukukhanya
Piet Retief
2380

Date: 06 September

ATTENTION: Ms. N Shongwe (220219877)
PER EMAIL: nomceboshongwe01050@gmail.com

Dear Madam

**RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT MKHONDO LOCAL MUNICIPALITY
CONTRACTS**

1. The above matter bears references.
2. I am pleased to inform you that permission has been granted to research:
"Analyzing the influence of public employment programmes towards the creation of employment opportunities: the case of expanded public works programme in eThandukukhanya Township".
3. We wish you all the best in your study.

Yours Sincerely,


D.P Msibi
ACTING MUNICIPAL MANAGER

Annexure L: Plagiarism and Similarity Report

FINAL_NG SHONGWE MDEV DISSERTATION_Final
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Annexure M: The editing certificate



ACADEMIC EDITOR

Cynthia Rakale: Academic Editor
084 429 5670 | rakale.cynthiacn33@gmail.com

ACADEMIC EDITING CERTIFICATE

Name: Cynthia CN Rakale: Academic Editor

Address: 30 Tom Lawrence Street
1241
White River

I certify that I am a qualified Academic Editor and provide the following services:

Editing:

- The Table of Contents
- Copy and stylist
- Structural and
- Reference list

I provided the abovementioned editing services to:

Name: Nomcebo Gugulethu Shongwe

Student No.: 220219877

Institution: University of Mpumalanga

Dissertation: **Analysing Public Employment Programmes as an intervention strategy towards the creation of employment opportunities: The case of Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in Thandukukhanya Township, Mkhondo local municipality**

Date completed: 26 December 2025

Signed:

Date: 26/12/2025

Cynthia CN Rakale

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