Accountability, inclusivity, effectiveness, and leaving no one behind: An exploration of effective governance principles in ensuring clean water and sanitation in South African municipalities

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ABSTRACT
This study aims to shed light on the continued difficulties municipalities in South Africa are having in achieving SDG 6 and also explore the impacts of effective governance principles on ensuring sustainable development. To explore this, the study adopted a qualitative research methodology in a form of a conceptual research design to gather secondary data. The secondary data covering SDG 6 challenges and effective governance principles were reviewed and synthesized. Different databases were used to review data from July through October 2022, such as Google Scholar, Google, Sabinet, Scopus, and other online platforms. Different keywords were used to guide and search the existing relevant literature. Secondary data was analyzed using a critical discourse analysis approach. Because of South Africa's lax governance standards, the theoretical findings of this study demonstrate that there are growing concerns about achieving SDG 6 in the near future. However, it can be agreed that progress toward effective governance has been encouraged and promoted, but the challenges remain. Therefore, the study recommends effective and inclusive governance because, without it, South Africa will not achieve its socio-economic goals, like SDG 6. South Africa should put in place structures that support constitutionalism, accountability, democracy, and good governance if it is to meet its development objectives. It is important to overcome lax governance, which is characterized by mismanagement, fraud, bribery, corruption, and a lack of accountability, transparency, and public participation. Again, South Africa should have an efficient government that works to fulfil the localized SDGs and responds to community desires and aspirations enshrined in the Municipal Systems Act (Act 32 of 2000).

Introduction
The Sustainable Development Goals (hereafter SDGs), according to Zindi & Shava (2022:1), were formed or endorsed by the United Nations in 2016. They aim to eradicate poverty, eliminate inequality and injustice, battle climate change, etc. within predetermined periods. The SDGs’ indicators were the Millennium Development Goals (hereafter MDGs), which were adopted in 1990 and set 25-year global development objectives for member nations. The percentage of persons without ongoing access to safe drinking water and minimal sanitary facilities (SDG 6) must be divided by governments around the world, including South Africa, in accordance with one of the MDGs. One indicator used to track development is the construction of an updated sanitary facility and minimal sanitary facilities (SDG 6) must be divided by governments around the world, including South Africa, in accordance with one of the MDGs. One indicator used to track development is the construction of an updated sanitary facility and minimal sanitary facilities (SDG 6) must be divided by governments around the world, including South Africa, in accordance with one of the MDGs. One indicator used to track development is the construction of an updated sanitary facility and minimal sanitary facilities (SDG 6) must be divided by governments around the world, including South Africa, in accordance with one of the MDGs.

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Africa, putting millions of people in peril. For instance, the government in South Africa and Malawi has started providing its residents with access to clean water and sanitary facilities by constructing tanks and dams to produce enough water for several settlements (Yanow & Good, 2020). This demonstrates how committed many African nations are to achieving the SDGs, especially SDG 6. Similarly, South Africa metros, districts, and local municipalities confront many obstacles when it comes to providing access to clean water and sanitary facilities before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. There were delays in the supply and distribution of water tankers to different towns during COVID-19 (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2020). Similar to this, Maobe (2021:181) asserts that COVID-19 has unquestionably revealed problems with service delivery that communities are currently having prior and post. At the start of the national lockdown in South Africa, the media highlighted some of the provinces and areas that were still having troubles in getting access to a steady supply of clean water. Zindi et al. (2022) indicate that this was adequately demonstrated when several locals complained that they couldn't afford to stay in their homes while having to use vehicles, donkey carts, and wheelbarrows to obtain water in other nearby locations. Additionally, Yanow & Good (2020) cited in Zindi et al. (2022), indicates that the attainment of SDGs has been endangered by the COVID-19 epidemic internationally, which has adversely harmed people's lives in different unprecedented ways.

The SDG 6 of the Sustainable Development Goals (hereafter SDGs) requires all countries to provide their people with clean drinking water and sanitary facilities, according to Zindi & Shava (2022). The SDGs must be customised to the goals of each nation even though they are not legally enforceable. However, every country must achieve the SDGs. For instance, Chapter 7 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 makes provision for local government that is linked to this goal 6. Municipalities are required by the abovementioned Constitution, White Paper on Local Government, 1998, Municipal Systems of 2000 and Municipal Structures Act of 1998 to offer all residents services sustainably. However, the COVID-19 epidemic, nature and other governance problems make it difficult to accomplish this goal, especially in developing nations like South Africa which is striving to provide people with access to safe drinking water and sanitary facilities (Zindi & Shava, 2022; Maobe, 2022). Having said that, the author of this study contends that there are other difficulties connected to a lack of clean drinking water and sanitation and that these difficulties go beyond the "natural obstacle" or scarcity that was mentioned in the study by Mamokhere, Kgobe, and Chauke (2022). Poor management practices and local government governance are linked to some or most of the problems. According to Bishoge (2021); Pichdara, Monin, Marong, Sivumy & Saren, (2022), "overuse of water service; increasing demand as the population grows; water pollution; poor management; unethical leadership; lack of infrastructure; lack of competent staffing; and changes in weather patterns due to global warming are key stressors that affect the availability of freshwater throughout the world". Budgetary restrictions, which have caused some projects to go behind schedule and others to be left unfinished, are a "significant issue," according to the Department of Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation in the Limpopo province of South Africa (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2020). It identified the lack of maintenance of the infrastructure as a key challenge, despite municipalities being given a maintenance budget. The political environment is challenging on the ground, and it noted challenges with traditional leaders, councillors, and communities. The Department of Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation further noted the difficulty in retaining experienced engineers. The current system is not ideal for smaller municipalities as they cannot afford to retain professionally qualified engineers. Instead, they rely on outsourcing because their staff responsible for water purification and distribution are less qualified and older, and there is no retrenchment policy" (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2020).

There are growing concerns in South Africa in terms of the provision of clean water and sanitation. Others contend that the difficulty of delivering clean water service is due to bad management and unethical behaviour in local government, contrary to the opinions of academics and civil society practitioners. South Africa would have a difficult time attaining SDG 6 and the other SDGs. It is crucial to promote and put into practice excellent governance practices in South Africa. All South African municipalities should employ moral and capable leaders to achieve sustainable development and governance. It is clear that many South African municipalities are led by corrupt and unethical people with no integrity, competence, and sound policy-making as shown in the media, and this can delay the realization of SDG 6 in South Africa (Aranha, 2017). Mamokhere et al. (2021); Maobe (2022) has indicated that many communities in Limpopo province, South Africa, still struggle with access to clean water due to poor management or mismanagement of funds for water projects. This study aims to shed light on SDG 6 governance challenges in South African municipalities and also explores the impacts of effective governance principles in ensuring SDG 6. The research question to be answered in this study is: does sustainable development require effective governance?

To explore the aim of this conceptual study, the author outlined the following sections: the literature review, the theoretical framework, empirical literature review and the research methodology; and conclude by providing recommendations based on the theoretical findings. The next section below outlines the problem statement.

**Literature Review**

This section provides an overview of the theoretical framework and empirical literature review related to SDG 6 and effective governance in South African perspective.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study is grounded in the human rights-based approach that was produced by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group in 2003 (Zindi et al., 2022). However, Human Rights and Development have been central and indivisible pillars of the International
Community of Nations since its inception in 1945 with the adoption of the Charter of the United Nations. This historic event gave birth to a normative era in which the international community, inspired by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, produced an outstanding of international norms and standards for a life of dignity and well-being for all (UN Sustainable Development Group, 2016).

A human rights-based approach is a theory that aims to support better and more sustainable development outcomes by analyzing and addressing the inequalities, discriminatory practices and unjust power relations which are often at the heart of development problems. Further, the human rights-based approach is a theoretical framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights. It seeks to analyze inequalities which lie at the heart of development problems and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress and often result in groups of people being left behind (UN Sustainable Development Group, 2003). Furthermore, this theory is employed to look into obligations, disparities, and weaknesses, as well as to address prejudiced actions and unequal power relations, which hinder and obstruct human rights in particular (Fredman, 2008). Plans, strategies, and programs under the human rights-based approach are in accordance with the requirements set forth by international law and are connected to a system of rights (Englund & Francis, 2004). The human rights-based approach contends that to provide water and sanitation to the less fortunate individuals, the government must play a crucial part. According to the Republic of South Africa's 1996 Constitution, citizens have a fundamental right to obtain municipal essential services like water, toilets, refuse collection, housing, healthcare, and education.

The above is emphasized and encouraged developing countries to prioritize water projects to ensure that citizens have access (WHO, 2020). Thus, the theory implies that the human right to access SDG 6 should be available to all South African citizens. Everyone is guaranteed the right to obtain clean water under Section 27(1)(b) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, and the government is required to adopt reasonable legislative and other measures to gradually realize this right within its resources. Through related rights outlined in the Bill of Rights, such as the rights to a healthy environment, health, and dignity, the Constitution indirectly recognizes the right to sanitation. Everyone has the right to water under Section 3 of the Water Services Act 108 of 1997, which incorporates Section 27 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. Zindi et al. (2022) additionally indicate that as part of its constitutional and legislative role, the South African Human Rights Commission has worked extensively on the right to water and sanitation. Based on the Commission's systematic and extensive work carried out in fulfillment of its mandate on these rights since 2010, the Commission released a report in 2014 titled The Right to Access Sufficient Water and Decent Sanitation in South Africa. In a resolution approved in 2016, the Human Rights Council voiced its concern about the detrimental effects that a lack of access to water, sanitation, and hygiene has on health and mortality.

The Human Rights Council has also acknowledged the difficulties women and girls experience in accessing water and sanitation, particularly while they are menstruating.

Lastly, the human rights-based approach advocates for actors to play a variety of roles to respect, protect, and ensure the rights of the poor, previously disadvantaged, and vulnerable people and seeks to ensure the upliftment of human rights while promoting empowerment through various developmental projects (United Nations, 2015; Smiley, 2016; United Nations, 2018; Zindi et al., 2022). The human rights-based approach is seen as a means to reach the most disadvantaged and defenseless individuals by ensuring the provision of basic services such as water, sanitation, refuse collection, electricity and health services. Through active participation, it enables the opinions of the people to be taken into account in such communities, resulting in the provision of a thorough knowledge of the current problems and their causes and effects (Gauri & Daniel, 2008; Gauri, 2011). Because the human rights-based approach ensures that water supply projects in South African municipalities are carried out with consideration for human rights as enshrined in the human rights-based approach and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996. Thus, this theory which other scholars refer to as its conceptual approach has been relevant in this study based on its elements, aims and grounds. The implementation of the theory has been complimented by the provision of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996.

Empirical Literature Review

This section provides an overview of the relationship between governance, effective governance and sustainable development. The section further outlines the SDG in South African perspectives, challenges confronting South African municipality and effective governance principles to promote and maintain sustainable development;

Governance, Effective Governance and Sustainable Development

The scholarly literature on governance, effective (good) governance and governance for sustainable development has expanded quickly. On the other hand, aside from the fact that everyone acknowledges its importance, there are differences in the conceptualization of the topic itself as well as in the theoretical formulations and policy recommendations that are made, and no one can claim to have invented the definition of the term “governance.” Traditionally, the term “governance” refers to the act or process of governing. Modern theories have enlarged the implications, focusing on a wide range of tools created to direct the behaviour of both individual actors and groups of players (Loorbach, 2007; Adger & Jordan, 2009). To handle a country’s affairs at all levels, the United Nations Development Program (1997) defined governance as “the exercise of economic, political, and administrative power”. It includes institutions, procedures, and mechanisms for citizens and groups to express their concerns, assert their legal rights, and
engage in activities that promote the rule of law, responsiveness, consensus-building, equity, effectiveness, and efficiency as well as accountability and strategic vision. The term "governance" has also been used to refer to the process of creating regional sustainable development policies, as stated by Berger (2003), or to the rule of law, as stated by Sachiko & Durwood (2005). Transparency, public involvement, accountability, effectiveness, and coherence are listed as essential components for a comprehensive knowledge of governance by the European Commission (2001).

While the World Bank (1992) defined governance as "how authority is exercised in the administration of a country's social and economic resources for development". Similar to this, the Kaufmann, Kraay, & Mastruzzi (2006) study presents a set of aggregate governance indicators based on: access to voice and accountability; absence of political instability and violence; minimal government effectiveness; existing regulatory burden; the rule of law; and precise and evident efforts to eradicate bribery, fraud and corruption in the provision of SDG 6 in South Africa. There is universal agreement that promoting effective or good governance is essential as the cornerstone of development, regardless of method and interpretation. Strengthening the structures, procedures, and methods that provide meaningful citizen engagement in the formulation of a sustainable development agenda is a challenge that all societies need to address.

Diversity can only be realized through the democratic process, which enables everyone to have their opinions heard and conflicts between interests to be settled amicably (Wijkman, 1998). Good governance is also predicated on the belief that a system that gives the people control over their destiny is more likely to invest in the people by allocating public funds to infrastructure for clean water, adequate sanitation, and basic healthcare. Without any investments, the water issue and poverty cannot be solved, and sustainable development can never be achieved. One of the pillars of successful administration is upholding the rule of law to bring stability and predictability to social, political, and economic issues. Aside from calls for accountability in public affairs, initiatives to advance openness and transparency, decentralization, and a bigger role for civil society (Mamokhere, Musitha & Netshidzivhani, 2021).

There are many ways in which the concept of sustainable development has been questioned. The concept of sustainable development may be relatively new, but according to Gaghman (2020:174), it has been around since the dawn of civilization. This is because the production and consumption systems that were in place at the time this idea first emerged harmed the earth's finite resources as well as its biological and cultural diversity. The penalty of ignoring the environment and using resources irrationally is quite significant for both the present generation and future generations. Accordingly, sustainable development is defined by UNESCO (2015) as "development that meets the demands of the present generation without compromising the potential of future generations to meet their own needs". Sustainable development is described by Gaghman (2020:175) as "meeting the basic requirements of people today without destroying the possibilities of future generations to achieve the same." However, different people's definitions of sustainable development will vary.

Comprehending SDG 6 in the South African Perspective

According to Matona (2019:17), South Africa has embraced the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda since the Heads of State and Government adopted them in September 2015. South Africa was instrumental in leading the process and negotiating the acceptance of the SDGs both worldwide and on the African continent. Additionally, Ms Graca Machel, the former first lady of South Africa, served on the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons, and Pali Lehohla, the former statistician general of South Africa, led the African team under the auspices of the African Union in developing the metrics for the African Common Position. As one of the nine nations’ leading the SDGs' domestication and implementation, South Africa is regarded as one of the movers of the SDGs. StatSA (2017a) states that the National Development Plan (hereafter NDP) recognizes that water and sanitation services are cross-cutting issues and necessary enablers for addressing poverty, unemployment, inequality and economic growth. As such, the water agenda macro planning for economic-infrastructure-socio-environmental balance needs to be entrenched in the planning phases of all 28 government departments. The linkage between water provision and economic upliftment within the different sectors must also be clearly understood as a means of increasing the country's Gross Domestic Product (hereafter GDP) performance. Matona (2019) and StatSA (2017), further imply that the alignment of the NDP to SDG 6 is demonstrated through what the NDP envisages by 2030. For instance, the NDP implies the following about SDG 6:

i. "All main urban and industrial centres need to have a reliable water supply to meet their needs while increasing efficient agricultural water use will support productive rural communities”.

ii. “Strategic Water Source Areas (hereafter SWSA) to be protected to prevent excessive extraction and pollution. The SWSA can be described as the country’s most important water source as it supplies the highest volume of water to the county’s demand”.

The implementation of the NDP is guided by the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. For instance, in South Africa, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, places a duty on the national government, in cooperation with other spheres of government, to make sure that the limited water resources are used to improve the quality of life for the people of South Africa. The Bill of Rights further provides for the right of every citizen to a healthy life, access to food and water, and to have the environment protected (RSA, 1996). In South Africa, "the provision of safely managed drinking water services has improved from (77%) in 2015 to (80%) in 2017. However, rural and urban statistics indicate that only (67%) of the rural population had access to safely managed water services in 2017, while (87%) of the urban population received safe water services. This indicates
that there are water service provision disparities between rural and urban areas (StatSA, 2017a; StatSA, 2017b; Matona, 2019). However, some scholars, such as Zindi et al. (2022) and Mabeba (2022), indicate that the provision of clean drinking water is still a challenge in rural areas. They argue that the COVID-19 pandemic is evident that many municipalities are still unable to achieve the constitutional mandate. Mabeba (2022) clearly stated that the "Covid-19 Lockdown in South Africa is a reminder that some communities are still brawling to have access to clean and constant water supply". Based on the argument, the author further shares the same sentiment that indeed water supply in rural areas in South Africa is still a concern. Corruption is the root of most of the challenges in Africa and South Africa. Many countries, particularly African countries, appear to have more corruption in procurement than elsewhere. These findings are similar to those of the study, conducted by Mamabolo in 2013, where she argued that Municipal Service Partnerships (MSPs) are seen as a channel for corruption and cronyism instead of a mechanism for improving service delivery. Through observation and public knowledge, many tenders or bids for borehole systems in Limpopo province are still incomplete due to corrupt awarding. There is no accountability for the incomplete boreholes that are not even providing water service (Mantzaris, 2014, cited in Mamokhere, Mabeba, & Kgobe, 2022:65). Mothetha, Nkuna & Mem (2013) suggest that the discrepancies exist because rural municipalities often lack the capacity, infrastructure, skills, and ethical and effective leaders required to support water service provision. For instance, "the 2017 indication above shows that 70% of the national population had access to basic sanitation services as compared to 67% in 2015. Progress in the reduction of sanitation backlogs is being hampered by infrastructure-related challenges, such as lack of infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, and ageing infrastructure as a result of poor operation and maintenance, besides the utilization of sanitation infrastructure beyond the design capacity" (Matona, 2019:18).

So it may be claimed that South Africa has adopted the SDGs' implementation by localizing them through the NDP. The promotion of effective governance principles for achieving the SDGs is currently inadequate and needs to be strengthened. Municipalities in South Africa shall employ moral, upright, and ethical leadership that upholds a high degree of professional ethics. The following section describes the governance challenges South African municipalities face as SDG 6 implementers.

Effective Governance Challenges in Realizing SDG 6

Numerous factors prevent South Africa from achieving SDG 6. Below are some of the governance challenges confronting South African municipalities in realizing SDG 6;

Lack of Public Participation in Municipal Affairs and Proper Communication

In many South African municipalities, Rameli (2021:717), indicates that public participation in development planning is a failure. This has led to difficulties in making balanced development decisions due to the lack of feedback on the wants and needs of the citizens regarding development in their area. The absence of public participation in strategic planning and financial governance is some of the problems. Thus, the absence of public involvement, as shown by numerous studies, including those by Fourie & van der Waldt (2021), Mamokhere & Meyer (2022), and Sibanda & Lues (2021), suggests that there is a persistent lack of community involvement in the municipal strategic planning known as an integrated development plan and that this affects the prioritization of the provision of services like the supply of constant water service. Rameli (2021:715) also shows the significance of public participation as one of the effective governance principles and constitutional basic principles governing public administration in South Africa. He indicated that "participation is a great opportunity for society to play a part in shaping and influencing the objective and direction of future developments. Public participation is required in every stage of development planning to ensure the effectiveness of the system. As a result, it is critical for information about publicity and public participation to reach a targeted group via an accessible broadcasting method that is compatible with today."

In terms of achieving goals such as SDG 6 and others, public participation involves the entire development process, which requires the public to participate directly to determine the direction of desired development (Samah, 2002; Rameli, 2021). Newport & Jawahar (2003) argue that an effective development plan cannot be carried out without the participation of the target group. Lack of communication with the municipality or municipal officials is seen as a major challenge which causes disparities in the delivery of services such as SDG 6. Thus, this discourages proper community participation in local government affairs, particularly, the formulation and management of the IDP. The municipality needs to ensure open communication with its constituents (Neshkova & Kalesnikaitė, 2019).

Lack of Accountable Governance and Corruption in Water and Sanitation Projects

Another challenge that impacts negatively the realization of SDG 6 is the lack of accountability of public officials and politicians tasked with the responsibility of ensuring the delivery of basic services such as water, electricity, refuse removal, and roads. Through observation, the authors of this study argue that there are many unfinished or incomplete water projects, especially in Limpopo Province, without holding responsible service providers and authorities accountable. For instance, Limpopo's Lepelle Northern Water "wasted R9 million in incomplete water boreholes and the official escaped in Mashamothane village after an investigative report found that the water board paid for work that was not done," according to City Press (2020). Corruption and mismanagement in water boards and municipalities are to blame for Limpopo province's water shortages. Van Zyl (2019), indicates that the problems in municipalities are continuing, and, to make matters worse, no culture seems to exist where individuals are held responsible for transgressing laws. Municipalities are also using consultants, at a huge cost to taxpayers, to try and get their books in order retrospectively, instead of implementing regular controls. These were some of the discoveries made by the late Auditor-General (hereafter AG), Kimi Makwetu, in his consolidated general report on the local government audit outcomes. Van Zyl (2019), stated that "the AG was very critical of the role of leadership in the municipalities and their reluctance to address deficiencies in the internal
control mechanisms. He pointed out that municipalities are not adhering to legislation, are not preventing unauthorized expenditures, and are not complying with supply chain management prescriptions. Thus, it is evident that the deteriorating accountability for financial and performance management is not being addressed, as there are no consequences for those who fail to comply with legislation”. According to Zindi et al. (2022), a lack of accountability in water provision programs for underprivileged communities is detrimental to achieving SDG 6. Christopher (2015) identifies the lack of transparency and accountability measures in various South African municipalities as triggering inequalities and distracting municipal efforts from providing clean water and sanitation to the communities in need. Sibanda & Luces (2021) lament the lack of accountability measures in municipalities that affect the effective delivery of goods and services to satisfy human needs. For instance, in South Africa, Sibanda & Luces (2021) denounce rampant corruption in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, which may adversely affect the provision of clean water and sanitation to communities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The absence of strong control systems and institutional cultures for accountability triggers service delivery backlogs and deters the attainment of SDG 6 amidst the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Corruption in Water and Sanitation Projects

There are growing concerns, especially about corporate governance. There is unethical conduct by the leadership, corruption, and mismanagement of funds (Mamokhere, 2020a; Mamokhere, 2020b). The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many countries to undermine their governance protocols, especially in the procurement of essential services. Many tenders have been awarded without following due policies and procedures (Mamokhere, Mabebe & Kgobe, 2022). Corruption is one of the major reasons for efficient service delivery in South Africa. The scourge impedes the delivery of services to the citizens, especially in the local sphere of government. Managa (2012) and Mamokhere (2020a) indicate that the municipalities are continuing to loot funds meant to change their lives. Consequently, they continue to live in unpleasant conditions due to the lack of municipal services. This frustration highlighted by the citizens corresponds with Managa (2012); Masters & Graycar (2016) and Aranha (2017) that corruption is the principal reason most South African municipalities fail to adequately serve their constituents.

COVID-19 Pandemic Effect on Access to Clean Water and Sanitation

Phakeng (2022), also highlights how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted sustainable development goals. Phakeng (2022) has emphasized how the COVID-19 pandemic has an impact on institutional and international collaboration in South Africa. “The COVID-19 pandemic has set us back as a community, country, and continent, and it is going to take collaboration on multiple levels to get back on track with the United Nations' sustainable development goals”. Phakeng (2022), indicates that collaboration has been affected and further promotes the idea that countries across the globe and municipalities should work together to overcome dire pandemics such as climate change, poverty, and lack of access to clean drinking water. The importance and challenges of collaboration were also noted in the study by Mamokhere, Mabebe & Kgobe (2022), who attempted to comprehend "the contemporary challenges municipalities face in effectively implementing municipal service partnerships". In their arguments, it was found that when the "national lockdown" was put in place by the state president, Cyril Ramaphosa, on the 26th of March 2020, many South African municipalities were and still are pushed to look for assistance from their partners in the private sector to help with addressing the challenges, imposed by the pandemic, especially, service delivery backlogs. Municipalities are entering into service contracts with the private sector for the provision of basic services that are deemed essential in terms of the national lockdown regulations. In curbing the spread of the virus in their communities, municipalities extended their efforts by commonly cooperating with private partners. For instance, most municipalities went to the extent of collaborating with private partners and other government agencies like Rand Water for the provision of water and water tanks at different schools and communities across the provinces”. Similarly, the Parliamentary Monitoring Group (2020) indicate that South African municipalities faced several challenges when distributing clean water and sanitation during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. There were delays in the supply and distribution of tankers to various municipalities. The reason for this delay was the building of platforms needed to mount the tankers. For instance, the municipalities faced difficulties in accessing cement and bricks in mounting and fixing the tanks in position, as hardware shops were closed during the national lockdown. All supplies from hardware stores had dried up. However, to resolve this challenge, the South African government declared hardware stores as essential services selling essential goods. The opening of hardware stores was expected to allow the roll-out of water tanks to continue (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2020).

Shortage of Qualified Staffing and Inadequate Institutional Resource Capacity

A lack of skilled and adequate staff in most municipalities has left numerous communities without (or with less) service provision (Managa, 2012). Furthermore, skills scarcity in local government is a primary reason government fails to manage the challenges associated with South African constituents. The government should manage the situation effectively and efficiently as mandated by section 195 of the South African Constitution, (1996). The lack of adequate institutional capacity in local government has resulted in many projects failing because the staff fail to strategise and plan due to the lack of skills (Zwikael, 2017). Other factors, such as political interference, corruption, uncommitted staff, and improper supervision, are among several reasons why municipal projects fail. Consequently, an increase in poor service delivery (Damoah & Kumi, 2018: 06). The failure of a municipality to manage and strategise the implementation of projects may have devastating results on the lives of citizens including future development (Damoah & Kumi, 2018). Municipalities should, therefore, address institutional capacity. It can be safely argued that indeed the shortage of qualified or professional staff in South African municipalities hinders the realization of SDG 6. Municipalities rely on outsourcing, which is expensive. Cloete et al. (2016:1), Skills development in South African municipalities is in a potential crisis. The research
finding by Cloete et al. (2016) suggests that there are incompetent or unskilled personnel in municipalities who cause poor service delivery. Lastly, Zwikael (2017) indicate that unskilled municipal worker, including the council, result in poor decision-making. Legislation which demands ward councillors to have a certain tertiary qualification(s) in local government is lacking.

Failure to Collect Revenue to Finance SDG 6

Some municipalities in South Africa can generate revenue on their own thus they are not largely dependent on equity share handouts from the national and provincial governments. Bunk, Forquilha, Klawonw, Krull, Sennewald, Steinhilber, von Boeselager, and von Schiller (2017) claim that although locally collected revenue is far smaller than national revenue, it may still have an impact on residents’ lives. The municipal expenses for operations and capital expenditures could be met by the income collected. Municipalities must raise the funds necessary to continue providing services to the residents of their area. Asset management, meter readings, credit and data collecting, user fees, and tariff management could all be used to raise these municipal funds. The maximum capacity of a municipality to collect unpaid taxes may be compromised for a variety of reasons, including the use of inefficient and ineffective procedures by a political party-controlled municipality and the community's limited access to learning about the municipality's poor financial management (Bunk et al., 2017). According to Jacobs (2019), municipalities are unable to generate the maximum amount of revenue because of some factors, including the citizens' inability to pay for municipal services, a lack of required skills among municipal revenue collectors, a lack of accountability in revenue collection, including credit and debt collection, poor customer care service, and a municipality's failure to bill users for specific services. Zindi et al. (2022) opine that SDG 6, which calls for access to clean water to improve community sanitation, may not be achieved if South African municipalities continue to face water insecurity challenges. Poor revenue collection further exacerbates the problems with water security by resulting in insufficient funding for water supply projects.

Different Effective Governance Principles for Ensuring Sustainable Development

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2019) concludes that the municipalities and private sectors play a significant role in the achievement of all SDGs in order to address the aforementioned difficulties. However, due to lax governance principles, changes are required for municipalities to achieve the SDGs. The Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) of the United Nations has developed several key effective governance principles to ensure effective governance for sustainable development, according to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2019); IASIA (2022); and Bouckaert, Chawdhry, Fraser-Moleketi, Meuleman & Pizani (2018). Those principles aim to address the challenges in a practical manner. According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2019), "the essential purpose of such voluntary principles is to provide interested countries with practical, expert guidance in a wide range of governance challenges associated with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2019); IASIA (2022); & Bouckaert et al. (2018), indicate that "the need for effectiveness has been emphasized, namely competence, sound policymaking, and collaboration. Another critical focus area is accountability, with integrity, transparency, and independent oversight being the critical elements. The focus on inclusiveness underscores the notion of leaving no one behind through non-discrimination; participation; subsidiarity, and intergenerational equity, which are imperative for the sustainability of future generations". The United Nations team of experts has developed 11 principles to guide the achievement of SDGs to assist countries around the world in developing and building strong public institutions for the realization of sustainable development goals such as water and sanitation, which is goal 6. The practical application of the endorsed 11 principles of effective governance and related strategies to all public institutions can strengthen local, provincial, and national governance abilities to achieve the 2030 Agenda and other international agreements. Different effective governance principles are discussed below in an attempt to respond to the problem statement question of concern, gap and adding to existing knowledge. Hereunder, different effective governance principles for ensuring sustainable development are unfolded;

Accountability

Accountability is the first effective governance principle this study identified. According to this study, municipalities particularly in South Africa should employ accountable public leaders who exhibit moral integrity, honesty, and openness. Three components make up accountability: integrity, transparency, and independent oversight. Accountability, according to Ubisi (2018) referenced in Kgoe et al. (2021-3), is taking ownership of your acts, accepting the consequences, and growing as a result of them. Accountability as a constitutional mandate is one of the mechanisms that promote effective governance globally for sustainable development. Equally, the Council of Europe (2022) implies that accountability has to do with "all decision-makers, collective and individual, taking responsibility for their decisions. Their decisions are reported on, explained, and can be sanctioned. There are effective remedies against maladministration and against actions of local authorities which infringe civil rights". Lastly, Makanyenza, Kwandai, & Ikobe (2013:4), indicate that accountability in the provision of public services pertains to the political, bureaucratic, and commercial sectors. It refers to the process of placing certain people in a position to make decisions as well as the system of punishment and reward consequent on the acts made by officials. From the South African perspective, (Munzhedzi, 2016) opined that public accountability is a constitutional prerequisite in all three spheres of government. The prerequisite is mandated by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, which is the supreme law of the country. Realizing sustainable service delivery in South African municipalities as enshrined by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 and SDGs can be achieved only if good governance is implemented and promoted in public institutions. Roy (2016:209), implies that "good governance ensures and promotes participation
of all the actors in society in achieving equity, transparency, greater accountability, pluralism, and the vibrating rule of law with a true democratic spirit, which may only curb corruption, violence, and poverty, etc. effectively.” Thus, below are some of the principles which serve to address accountability in relation to the achievement of SDGs:

Integrity, transparency and independent oversight

Being truthful and showing a firm and unshakable commitment to high moral and ethical standards are practices of integrity. Banerjee (2020) defines integrity in ethics as being truthful, accurate, or honest in one's actions. Government servants must therefore perform their official obligations honestly, fairly, and in a way that is compatible with the soundness of moral principles in order to serve the public good. This relates to the promotion of anti-corruption laws, regulations, and organizations, as well as codes of conduct for government servants, open bidding for public contracts, the outlawing of bribery and influence-peddling, conflict-of-interest guidelines, whistle-blower protection, and the provision of adequate compensation and fair pay scales for government servants (Bouckaert et al., 2018; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019). It can be argued that King Codes like King Code IV also promote the role of ethical and effective leadership with integrity. Hence, today’s leaders must deliver seamless strategy and operational excellence. This leadership role encompasses: providing direction to organizations through strategy; giving effect to that strategy through the development of appropriate policies; providing oversight over management’s implementation of the strategy and demonstrating accountability and transparency through disclosure. The discharge of these duties and the adoption of the King IV code, provide an organization with the necessary building blocks for a sound foundation of good governance. Transparency is a vital principle in the public sector. Thus, it should also be promoted and implemented in line with the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa to realize SDG 6. The term “transparency,” according to Alma'arif & Wargadinata (2022:23), refers to the practice of guaranteeing people’s freedom to obtain information about policies, right from formulation to evaluation. Transparency is also related to the government’s efforts to enhance active community participation in the public policy process, including development planning (Da Cruz et al., 2016; Alma'arif et al. 2022). Also, Chiayamwaka (2007) outlines transparency as an act of ensuring that information is available that can be used to measure the authorities' performance and to guard against any possible misuse of power. Transparency in democratic governance can also mean honesty and openness. Equally, Bouckaert et al. (2018) and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2019), indicate that to ensure accountability and enable public scrutiny, institutions are to be open and candid in the execution of their functions and promote access to information, subject only to the specific and limited exceptions as are provided by law. Examples are proactive disclosure of information, budget transparency, open government data, registries of beneficial ownership, and lobbying registries. From a South African perspective, transparency has to be promoted as stated by many pieces of legislation. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, provides a chapter on the values and principles of public administration. This chapter demands that there should be transparency in all the services that are provided by the state organs. This paves the way for decisions to be taken which should be informed by rules and regulations. As per chapter two of the Bill of Rights, the information should be made available to anyone who wants to access it. This includes the concept of consultation, which forms the basis of governance (Mamokhere, 2020b). The last principle that addresses accountability is independent oversight. To maintain trust in government, oversight agencies must act solely on professional grounds, separate from and unaffected by others (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019). Commonly used strategies include the promotion of the independence of regulatory agencies such as the Auditor-General and Corruption Watch. These institutions are often regarded as mechanisms that ensure accountability, as indicated by Kgobe et al. (2021) in their conceptual study. Kgobe et al. (2021) indicate that the Chapter 9 institutions such as the Auditor-General are tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that the government is accountable for its financial decisions.

Effectiveness

Effectiveness mostly refers to management effectiveness, according to Gaghman (2020:179). It has two main definitions: minimal administrative costs and logical administrative structure, scientifically planned administrative procedures, and adaptable administrative activities. The effectiveness of administration will increase as good governance levels rise. The democratic norms and tenets enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, ought to guide public administration in South Africa. A public administrator must use government resources effectively, efficiently, and economically in accordance with section 195(1) (b) (Mamokhere, Musitha, & Netshezedzivhani, 2021:5). Municipalities must provide services like clean water and sanitary facilities effectively if they are to achieve sustainable development. Thus, According to Roy (2016:9), sustainable governance can be used as a powerful tool to address global challenges because a sizable portion of the world's population continues to struggle with access to basic needs like food, clothing, shelter, water, health care, and sanitation along with terrible environmental degradation. Following are a few principles that help with effectiveness with respect to achieving the SDGs:

Competence, Sound Policy-Making and Collaboration

South African municipalities face a backlog in service delivery as a result of inadequate human resource policy and a shortage of qualified workers. As a result, the government should make sure that only competent and skilled people with legitimate professional credentials are deployed. Bouckaert et al. (2018) suggest that the government should employ people who can carry out their jobs effectively and efficiently. They further indicated that institutions should have sufficient expertise, resources, and tools to deal adequately with the mandates under their authority. Commonly used strategies include the promotion of a professional public sector workforce, strategic human resources management, leadership development and training of civil servants, performance management,
results-based management, financial management and control, efficient and fair revenue administration, and investment in e-government. The Council of Europe (2022), implies that "the professional skills of those who deliver governance should be continuously maintained and strengthened to improve their output and impact. Public officials should be motivated to continuously improve their performance so that they can achieve SDG 6. Practical methods and procedures ought to be created and used to transform skills into capacity and to produce better SDGs". Also, sound policy-making ought to be promoted and implemented effectively. For South African municipalities to achieve their intended results, their public policies must be rational and clear with one another and founded on true or well-established grounds, in full accordance with fact, reason and good sense. This regards strategic planning and foresight, regulatory impact analysis, promotion of coherent policymaking, strengthening national statistical systems, monitoring and evaluation systems, science-policy interfaces, risk management frameworks, and data sharing (Bouckaert et al., 2018; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019). To promote effectiveness in municipalities, it is advisable to enter into collaboration either with communities, non-government organizations, or business groups. Thus, the last principle that addresses effectiveness is collaboration. Lai (2011) and Alma'arif et al. (2022), see collaboration as mutually beneficial cooperation in coordination to solve common problems.

In other words, collaboration is the mutual engagement of participants in a coordinated effort to solve a problem together. "Collaborative interactions are characterized by shared goals, asymmetry of structure, and a high degree of negotiation, interaction, and interdependence". Similarly, according to O'Donnell (2012:12), collaboration is defined as "an intentional, collective approach to address public problems or issues through building shared knowledge, designing innovative solutions, and forging consequential change. When used strategically, collaboration has a positive impact: stakeholders committed to policy or program change, and individuals and organizations' capacity to work effectively together". For South African municipalities to address socio-economic challenges such as poverty, inequality, unemployment, and lack of clean water and sanitation facilities, the government should strengthen the municipal service partnership in a collaborative approach. Local government is confronted with a high level of complexity and has many challenges that must be addressed. The need for collaborative planning and practice is important to support the required standard of performance (GGLN, 2017:11). Currently, the public sector engages in partnerships to strike a balance between conformance and performance, to overcome the challenges they are faced with and to enhance their capacity and ability to improve service delivery (Bayne, Schepis & Purchase, 2017). Tauté (2021:1), indicates that by involving the government, the private sector, or the voluntary sector, a collaborative partnership can place the government in a position to strategically deliver services by leveraging the stakeholder's core competencies and resources to address the failure of government and optimize the creation of social value. The reliance on the expertise of public officials and external stakeholders places a collaborative partnership in a unique position to improve the quality of services by actively selecting and managing stakeholders’ interdependencies and differences. Also, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2019) states that to address problems of common interest, institutions in all spheres of government and all sectors ought to work together and cooperatively with non-governmental actors towards the same goal, purpose, and effect. While Mamokhere & Meyer (2022) indicate in South African municipalities, collaboration can be promoted through public participation during development planning. Municipalities in South Africa are encouraged to foster active public participation in municipal affairs in terms of the Municipal Systems Act, Municipal Structures Act and Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Furthermore, to reduce service delivery backlogs, South African municipalities must be innovative by collaborating with private sectors, as demonstrated by the municipal service partnership in the White Paper on Local Government, 1998. Last but not least, O'Donnell (2012) makes it abundantly evident that the notion of strategic collaboration is one of effective governance and provides participating actors with a means of achieving their goals (SDG 6) and objectives in creative and cost-effective ways. In South African local government, collaborative partnerships can enhance service delivery, especially SDG 6 (Tauté, 2021).

**Inclusivity**

Five principles, which are listed in the section below, address inclusivity. Allegretti (2022) defines inclusivity as the quality of absorbing many different types of people and treating them all equally. Giving those who may otherwise be excluded or marginalized, including people with physical or mental disabilities or members of other minority groups, equal access to opportunities and resources is a practice or a policy. This implies that there should be no discrimination. That the public should be consulted to understand their needs, wants, and goals, and that no one should be left behind when the municipalities provide essential services, such as SDG 6. The provision of water and sanitation facilities should be based on discrimination of race, age, gender, or disability. The principles that address inclusiveness in detail are outlined below;

**Leaving no one behind, Non-discrimination, Participation, Subsidiarity and Intergenerational equity**

The Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development both heavily emphasize the idea of "leaving no one behind". All UN Member States and governments from around the world have pledged to work toward achieving the SDGs under the slogan "Leave no one behind." "Leave no one behind" is fundamentally about promoting the SDGs inequality agenda for inclusive development, aiding marginalized and vulnerable groups that are shut out of social opportunities, emphasizing income and wealth distribution, addressing issues related to extreme inequality, and helping the underprivileged (IASIA, 2022). One could argue that the COVID-19 pandemic's worldwide socioeconomic effects make the idea of "leaving no one behind" more important than ever. Gains gained in reducing inequality and poverty during the epidemic were lost, and the gap between the rich and the poor widened. It is widely agreed that the pandemic has worsened food insecurity and poverty since its onset in December 2019, decreased
access to clean water and healthcare, unevenly distributed vaccines, caused job losses, and disrupted education (Mamokhere, Musitha & Netshidzivhani, 2021).

To ensure that "no one is left behind," inhabitants should have access to government services, support, and information, according to IASIA (2022) and the United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs (2021). Governments must ensure they are inclusive and responsive to citizen expectations by focusing on policies and making decisions that leave no one behind. Governments must engage with their citizens and embrace inclusivity and accountability while working with limited resources. Sustainable and equitable development is not possible if certain social groups are disadvantaged, or excluded, and their poor well-being is maintained. To ensure that the SDGs are achieved, states must refocus their attention on sustainable development while fighting corruption. This may be done through multi-level and excellent governance as well as the idea of subsidiarity. It is crucial to make sure that marginalized populations are included in public governance, particularly in planning, decision-making, service delivery, and sustainable development, and are given the power and respect necessary to participate on an equal footing. In the end, "leaving no one behind" calls for political and managerial will, as well as public servants who are determined to address inequities while concentrating on the needs and expectations of the public in a challenging and complicated environment (Brown, 2022). Public participation should be promoted and strengthened in South African municipalities as enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. The United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs (2021), directly states that "To have an effective state, all significant political groups should be actively involved in matters that directly affect them and have a chance to influence policy. Free and fair elections; a regulatory process of public consultation; multi-stakeholder forums; participatory budgeting; and community-driven development are examples of commonly used strategies." This participation, according to Alma'arif & Wargadinata (2022:22), often comes in issues that relate to communication of development, politics, and governance issues between the government and the community. In other words, participation is seen as community involvement or taking part in organizational activities. In order to guarantee that citizens have their desired needs, public participation is therefore a crucial governance component (Mamokhere & Meyer, 2022). However, Hansson, Belkacem, & Ekenberg (2015) posit that the "absence of public participation in the public policy process, generates public distrust in the government” and ultimately will delay SDG 6 achievement if not prioritized. Intergenerational equity should also be implemented and promoted. To promote prosperity and quality of life for all, institutions should construct administrative acts that balance the short-term needs of today's generation with the longer-term needs of future generations (Bouckaert et al. 2018). In the end, governments across the world should play a key role in ensuring that the most vulnerable groups and countries get the support they need to achieve SDG 6.

Research and Methodology

The study adopted a conceptual research design, which is characterized by the extensive review of secondary data or documents. In other words, conceptual research is a type of qualitative research. Jaakkola (2020) cited in Mamokhere, Mabeba & Kgobe (2022:61) sees conceptual research as a methodology wherein research is conducted by observing and analyzing already present information on a given topic. It is related to abstract concepts or ideas. Philosophers have long used conceptual research to develop new theories or interpret existing theories in a different light. The conceptual research framework constitutes a researcher's combination of previous research and associated work and explains the occurring phenomenon. It systematically explains the actions needed in the course of the research study based on the knowledge obtained from other ongoing research and other researchers' point of view on the subject matter. Equally, Regoniel (2015) and Mamokhere, Mabeba & Kgobe (2022:61), opine that a conceptual framework represents the researcher's synthesis of the literature on how to explain a phenomenon. It maps out the actions required in the course of the study, given his previous knowledge of other researchers' points of view and his observations on the subject of research. In other words, the conceptual framework is the researcher's understanding of how the particular variables in his study connect. Thus, it identifies the variables required in the research investigation. It is the researcher's "map" in pursuing the investigation. As McGaghie, Bordage & Shea (2001) put it: The conceptual framework "sets the stage" to present the particular research question that drives the investigation being reported based on the problem statement. The problem statement of a thesis gives the context and the issues that caused the researcher to conduct the study. Conceptual research doesn't involve practical experimentation but instead relies on the researcher analyzing available information on a given topic.

The researcher adopted this design because conceptual papers ultimately create new knowledge by building on carefully selected sources of information combined according to a set of norms. In the case of conceptual papers, arguments are not derived from data in the traditional sense but involve the assimilation and combination of evidence in the form of previously developed concepts and theories (Hirschheim, 2008; Mamokhere, Mabeba & Kgobe, 2022). In that sense, conceptual papers are not without empirical insights but rather build on theories and concepts that are developed and tested through empirical research.

Below are some of the important steps that the researcher followed when conceptualizing and conducting this study. The model below was followed;
Once again, the article adopted the conceptual research design, thereby reviewing existing literature. Methodologically, the article begins where the researchers collectively conceptualize the title of the study. The researchers selected a topic within their field of expertise. Given the researcher's field of study, the researchers have adopted a topic under public administration and development studies. According to Figure 1 above, the researcher collected data through a review of existing literature. The data for this article was generated from peer-reviewed journal articles, books, government legislation, and internet sources as outlined by Sundani & Mamokhere (2021:143). The data collection focused on the effective governance principles, sustainable development goal 6 and challenges confronting South African municipalities in the administration of SDG 6. The data was also collected from different databases and sources such as Google Scholar, Google, J-Gate, Scopus, and university libraries using the keyword and themes of this study from July to October 2022. Jaakkola (2020) indicates that “the materials used should be preferably scientific journals, research papers published by well-known scientists, and similar materials”. Therefore, the researchers of this study extensively reviewed secondary data to validate the argument of this article. The next section outlines how the data was analyzed.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research is defined as the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, observation notes, or other non-textual materials that the researcher accumulates to increase the understanding of the phenomenon (Wong, 2008; Mamokhere, Mabeba & Kgobe, 2022:62). The process of analysing qualitative data predominantly involves coding or categorising the data. It involves making sense of huge amounts of data by reducing the volume of raw information, followed by identifying significant patterns, and finally drawing meaning from data and subsequently building a logical chain of evidence (Patton, 2002). Sundani et al. (2021:143) indicate that analysing qualitative data entails reading a large number of transcripts looking for similarities or differences, and subsequently finding themes and developing categories. In this regard, the article adopted the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach to analyse conceptualised documents or secondary data. Mullet (2018) concur that the CDA is a qualitative analytical approach for critically describing, interpreting, and explaining how discourses construct, maintain, and legitimise social inequalities. The CDA approach is mostly used in qualitative research as opposed to quantitative, which focuses on statistics. The existing literature covering clean water and sanitation (SDG 6) challenges and effective governance principles were explored, and other emerging variables were reviewed and synthesised. In other words, the secondary data was carefully consulted from different sources such as journal articles, books, government legislation, and internet sources.

Summary Findings from Literature Review

It has been discovered that the most significant challenges that municipalities face are related to corporate governance practices. Political interference and political manipulation, corruption and a lack of accountability and transparency, inadequate citizen participation, poor human resource policies, failure to manage change, failure to collect own revenue, lack of employee capacity, poor planning, and poor monitoring and evaluation are the major causes of poor service delivery (e.g., water and sanitation). A lack of public participation, ineffective collaboration or partnership, a lack of accountability, mismanagement, and corruption are discovered. Lastly, it is found that the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted municipal operations by forcing municipal officials to award tenders without following procurement policies and procedures. It is further noted that a shortage of skilled personnel harms service delivery, such as SDG 6. Therefore, it is clear that to achieve SDG 6 amidst the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa, municipalities must maintain and promote an effective governance system. Maintaining and promoting effective governance principles and employing ethical leadership is vital because this will guarantee that funds meant to provide clean water projects are utilized for the intended purpose without any unnecessary deviations and also attract investors. Therefore, different effective governance principles have been uncovered, such as accountability, inclusivity, and effectiveness, which are important for achieving sustainable development.
Conclusions

Societies in South Africa are still looking for sustainable development options. The importance of effective governance as a tool for achieving sustainable development and as a component that must be included in sustainable development goals has long been acknowledged. Given the challenges, South African municipalities confront in providing consistent and equitable water and sanitation services, supporting transparent, responsible, and effective governance in municipalities is necessary. Those put in positions of power should encourage responsiveness, openness, accountability, and effectiveness. Effective, responsive, and accountable state institutions including municipalities can be implemented and promoted by improving municipal capacity (e.g., the quality of public administration) or the ability of municipalities to form and implement policy across the whole of their jurisdiction, which is an essential prerequisite for sustainable development through decentralizing government.

Openness and transparency should be fostered by ensuring that the public has access to information. More openness and transparency in all institutions are necessary to achieve sustainable development. With more focus on informed citizens and the private sector, they are better able to engage in developing policies. Transparency in government behaviour sends strong signals to citizens and investors, and evidence shows that the more information a government releases, the greater the investment and subsequent effect on growth. There is a wealth of evidence that corruption in South Africa is a major hindrance to sustainable development, with a disproportionate impact on the poor and marginalized populations. Corruption harms clean water and sanitation provision, health and education outcomes, equity, the rule of law, and foreign investment. Anti-corruption organizations such as Corruption Watch should play a critical and uncompromised role in addressing the mismanagement of public funds and other unethical conduct. Public participation should be regarded as the cornerstone of democracy, and it must be encouraged by ensuring that local communities are consulted and can voice their concerns in strategic development planning, policy, and decision-making. Thus, this study recommends good and inclusive governance because, without it, South Africa will not achieve its social and economic targets. South Africa must establish mechanisms that promote constitutionalism, accountability, democracy, and good governance if South Africa is to achieve its development goals, such as SDG 6. Weak governance, which is characterized by corruption, bribery, mismanagement, and lack of public involvement, transparency, and accountability, should be eliminated. South Africa should have sound governance that is responsive to community needs and fights toward the achievement of the localized SDGs. Lastly, effective governance principles are required to achieve sustainable development in South Africa. Good and inclusive governance is imperative for South Africa’s future. Progress on good governance has been encouraging, even though the challenges remain at the forefront. The study concludes that accountability, openness, fighting corruption, public participation, and a supportive legal environment are the essential components of a successful government. Where necessary, South Africa should implement institutional changes that will fundamentally alter its governance framework and usher in a new group of rulers or a new administration that will place a high priority on the SDGs.

Acknowledgements

I hereby acknowledge that this is my own work and has not been published or is under review anywhere. I am the sole author of this study. I have contributed in the areas of conceptualization, methodology, original draft preparation, writing, and project administration. No funding has been received from any funding agency. Acknowledgements

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, J.M; methodology, J.M; validation, J.M; formal analysis, J.M; investigation, J.M; resources, J.M; writing—original draft preparation, J.M; writing—review and editing, J.M; supervision, J.M; project administration, J.M.

Funding: There was no particular grant received for this research from any funding source in the public, commercial, or non-profit sectors.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent statement was not relevant to this study because this is a conceptual study which doesn't involve any human and animal participants. The study purely relied on secondary data.

Ethical Consideration: This is a conceptual study which relied extensively on secondary data. Thus, no human or animal participants were sampled in this study.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to restrictions.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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