

Multidisciplinary Community Development: A Substantive Theory for Community Partnerships processes

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Abstract

This paper presents the key findings of a more extensive qualitative study that focused on the complexities of professionalising community development in South Africa. By drawing on multiple case studies and data sources, the paper offers a substantive theory of collaborative multidisciplinary community development. Multidisciplinary collaborative partnership theory posits that coordinated multidisciplinary teams, working at the community level, provide necessary cross-discipline expertise. Furthermore, facilitating the community's participation as a key stakeholder creates the conditions for authentic community development. A total of seventy-four participants, including social workers, service users of community development projects, community development workers (CDWs) located at the local municipalities, and community development practitioners (CDPs) from the provincial and national Department of Social Development were interviewed. This study was implemented using the constructivist grounded theory inductive data analysis process, which encompasses six stages: (1) negotiating community entry, community mobilisation, and the social contract (2) collaborative household and community profiling. (3) community dialogue, identification of problems and community priorities, (4) community-based planning, (5) implementation and collaboration, and (6) monitoring and evaluation underpinned by enabling a sustainable environment. The findings revealed that practitioners in the community development field are working in isolation. Thus, there is a need for a substantive theory that informs the multidisciplinary community development process of collaboration and partnership at the community level.

Keywords: Community development, collaboration, development partnerships, multidisciplinary approaches



Introduction

Community development in South Africa requires a multidisciplinary perspective due to the country's history of social, political, and economic challenges. The South African government adopted a social developmental approach to welfare after 1994 (Patel, 2015). The developmental approach promotes social and economic development at the community level (Ditlhake, 2015). The approach aims to build a society that upholds the welfare rights of all South Africans regardless of gender, race, culture, language, religion, class, disability, geographical location, or sexual orientation (White Paper, Ministry of Welfare and Population Development, 1997). The enactment of the White Paper for Social Welfare (Republic of South Africa 1997) and the amendment of the Social Work Act (110 of 1978), which became the Social Service Professions Act (110 of 1978), made provision for the establishment of other social service professions such as community development. These professions included community development, probation services, and youth and child-care services as interdisciplinary professions in the social service sector. Community development was recognised as a fundamental approach in the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997) and the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) (Republic of South Africa, 2005). Embedded in these policy frameworks are the developmental approach, partnership, and community participation in community development efforts at a community level (Mubangizi, 2008; Mubangizi 2010).

Realising the developmental goals depends on how well the multidisciplinary collaborative efforts function at the community level with communities as the key stakeholders. Despite policy imperatives and recommendations, working in isolation remains a challenge to multidisciplinary community development. In addition, there is little evidence of interprofessional collaboration to promote the development agenda at the community level. Earlier studies of community development in South Africa focused primarily on public-private partnerships (Grossman, 2012) and participatory development (Davids, 2005). Earlier studies employed desktop research to examine the issues and processes related to the evolution of the professionalisation of community development. Little attention was paid to the complex dynamics of multidisciplinary community development practice or the role of collaborative partnerships in community development. Furthermore, issues such as the duplication or fragmentation of services and working in isolation were not sufficiently engaged.

This research adopted a multiple case study design in response to the knowledge gap outlined above to determine how a practice model can be inductively theorised from



the data. This paper highlights significant findings from the qualitative study. It provides a substantive theory that informs multidisciplinary, collaborative partnerships in community development and foregrounds the role of communities as key stakeholders for collaborative development partnerships. On this basis, implications and recommendations for community development policy and practice are proposed.

Multidisciplinary Community-driven Development

The multidisciplinary collaboration and partnership efforts are essential to the ideas of community and development. Multidisciplinary is defined by Capilouto (2000:21) as: ‘professionals from various disciplines share what they are doing’ with regard to the community development intervention and empowerment. Chapelhow, Crouch, Fisher, Walsh (2005:124) go further by stating that multidisciplinary working ‘brings cross-discipline expertise in a coordinated and collaborative way. In the health sector, there are ample research studies documenting models of multidisciplinary teams working for the effective delivery of patient care. However, in the community development sector, there is a dearth of studies examining how the social workers, CDPs, CDWs, and the community as the key stakeholders in multidisciplinary teams work together to address community needs and challenges. Promoting the agenda for multidisciplinary community development at the community level requires diverse expertise of multidisciplinary professionals that share a geographical and a relational connection. Due to the multidisciplinary nature and approach to community development, the increasingly complex nature of social problems, community development intervention requires a multiprofessional approach to the planning, coordinated and collaboration efforts at the community level. As Ditlhake (2021) states the challenge of multidisciplinary teamwork in community development sector is primarily due to the silo approach, fragmentation in service delivery, and lack of interdisciplinary professional relationships. Therefore, the silo approach, limited partnership and collaborative effort at the community level hamper interdisciplinary teamworking and the developmental community development process. The range of social problems in communities are often complex, challenging and cannot be addressed by one professional group. When the value of interdisciplinary working at a community level becomes an obstacle, and professional working relationships are compromised. The benefits of the multidisciplinary team lie in the capacity to apply a range of discipline-specific strategies, the sum total of which cannot be delivered by a single practitioner (Ansari and Phillips, 1998; Atwal and Caldwell, 2005; Holmes, 2009; Zwarenstein, Goldman and Reeves, 2009). Research in this field indicates challenges



of stakeholders for building partnerships in social development (Lombard and Du preeze, 2004) and a dearth of collaborative partnership models for multidisciplinary community development (Ditlhake, 2021, Mubangizi, 2007; Gray & Mubangizi 2010). Therefore, a multidisciplinary approach and teamworking are required to fully meet the developmental imperatives and the community needs.

Sensitising Concepts and Conceptual Framework

The study followed Charmarz's (2014) constructivist grounded theory data analysis process. Following the inductive nature of constructivist grounded theory data analysis, Blaikie (2000) argues that research concerned with theory generation might require sensitising concepts rather than hypotheses. Sensitising concepts were used to deepen perception and to provide starting points for building analysis. As Blaikie (2000) argues that research concerned with theory generation might require sensitising concepts rather than hypotheses. Charmaz (2014:259) on the other hand, refers to sensitising concepts as background ideas that inform the overall research problem and, offer ways of seeing, organising, and understanding experience embedded in our disciplinary emphases and perspectival proclivities. The sensitizing concepts included in my study formed the conceptual framework. A conceptual framework links various concepts and serves as a basis for the formulation of theory (Seibold, 2002). The concepts were reviewed in the literature on community development, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary, collaboration and partnership. Community development processes have been talked about and written for over many decades (Weyers, 2011). Various authors conceptualise community development by differentiating between community and development (Ditlhake and Maphosa, 2021; Swanepoel and De beer, 2012). However, although scholars have long recognised the importance of many forms of process models within the professional group in community development, relatively few have articulated the multidisciplinary complexities and collaborative partnership using constructivist grounded theory inductive data analysis, particularly in the community development sector with resource-limited communities as key stakeholders and multi-disciplines.

Methodology

Case study research is an inquiry of a single or collective case to uncover the complexity of the phenomenon under study (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2012). This study adopted an explanatory qualitative research approach and a multiple qualitative case study participants based on their ability to provide needed information (Yin, 2009). The



participants were selected because they were well informed regarding the subject under investigation. Participants from institutions involved in community development were interviewed, to answer the research question on how a practice model can be inductively theorised from the data? This research question is answered in cross-case multiple case studies underpinning the study. The unit of analysis, the process of study, and the outcome or the product are all the essential defining features of the case study research design (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). The case study unit of analysis drawn in this study entails practitioners in the field of community development (Table 1) in non-governmental organisations (NGO), higher education institutions (HEIs), the government (i.e., Department of Social Development (DSD), and the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA). The sampling used includes purposive sampling and theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling means seeking pertinent data to develop an emerging theory. Theoretical sampling aims to elaborate and refine the categories constituting a theory in line with constructivist grounded theory data analysis (Charmaz, 2014). Interviews and document analysis were the data collection methods. Social workers, community development workers, and community development practitioners participated in this study. The criterion for inclusion in the purposive sample was practitioners with experience of more than three years in the community development field. The interviews were the primary data source, and the documents reviewed corroborated the interview findings to enhance credibility by the use of data triangulation encompassing two different kinds of data sources. All the interviews were audio-recorded to allow for attentive and active listening by the researcher. The pseudonyms are used to provide anonymity to adhere to the ethical clearance granted to the researcher documents used were public records (Yin, 2012). The relevant documents used in this study included A Toolkit for Community Development Practitioners in South Africa (Department of Social Development, 2009) and the Community Development Workers Program (2004), The White Paper for Social Welfare (1997), and the report on The Inaugural Summit for the Professionalisation of Community Development (Department of Social Development, 2011); the national report on Skills Audit for Community Development Practitioners (2010); Community Development Practice Policy framework (Department of Social Development, 2014) and the Integrated Development Plan (IDP), (Republic of South Africa, 2005). Triangulation of data collection informed by context and emergent data was adopted to advance the cases' development and understanding (Stake, 1995).



Findings

The profile of the participants interviewed is summarised in Table 1. A total of seventy-four participants from institutions involved in community development (6 service users, 7 managers, 9 CDWs, 12 senior officials, 4 social workers, 20 CDPs, and 12 lecturers of community development) in the community development sector were interviewed for this study. COGTA is the employer of the CDWs and they are based at various wards at the municipality level in various levels. DPSA coordinates the Community Development Workers Programme (CDWP) at the national level. COGTA is the employer of the CDPs and the community development workers programme is coordinated nationally by the Department of Public Service and Administration. The CDPs are employed by DSD and are based at the Sustainable Livelihood Unit in various provinces. The participants' ages ranged from 30 to 60 years. Stake (1995) and Yin (2012) affirm that a case can either be a person, certain event, a particular programme, time period, critical incident, or a community. A case in this study was an individual from organisations and institutions of government. The cases were drawn from organisations and government institutions as identified in the methodology section. The main defining feature of the participants reveals the vast length of work experience, the diverse multidisciplinary nature, and a wide range of professionals in this field.



Table 1. Profile of participants

Participant	Age	Gender	Number of participants	pseudonym	Organisation/Institution
Service users of community development projects	20-26	F	6	P1-P6	NGO
Managers at NGOs	35-60	M=2 F=1	3	P7-P9	NGO
Community development workers from Non-overnmental Organisations (NGOs)	30-50+	F	4	P10-P13	NGO
Officials from Community Development Steering Committee and Task Team	40-50+	F	3	P14-P15	Community Development Steering Committee and Task Team and HEI
Social workers	35-40	F	2	P16-P17	NGO
Social workers	30-35	F	2	P18-P19	DSD
Lecturers (Social work)	35-50+	M=4 F=8	12	P20-P31	HEIs
CDWs	35-50+	F	5	P32-P36	Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA)
Senior officials	40=50+	M=2 F=1	3	P37-39	COGTA
Senior officials	40-50+	M=2 F=4	6	P40-P45	Department of Social Development (DSD) National
CDPs	30-45	F=16 M=4	20	P46-P65	DSD Provincial
CDPs managers	40-50+	F=2 M=2	4	P66-P69	DSD Provincial
CDPs Supervisors	40-50+	F=3 M=1	4	P70-P74	DSD Provincial



As per the inclusion criteria identified above all participants were primarily selected because they were well informed regarding the phenomenon under investigation. The qualifications of the participants range from an NQF level 4 diploma to a Doctor of Philosophy. The qualifications of the participants indicate a lack of uniformity in the qualifications of the practitioners in the community development sector.

Table 2. Average (Mean) based on working experience versus qualification

Qualifications	Average	Number
BA	9,11	36
Diploma	10,17	6
Honours	11,40	5
MA	12,00	8
Matric	7,50	10
PhD	8,00	9
Total	9,32	74

Qualifications of the practitioners ranged from a lack of matric certificate to a Doctor of Philosophy degree. The social worker's qualifications ranged from an honours to PhD. Most of the participants with a PhD qualification are employed at HEIs. Many of the community development practitioners (CDP) have a three-year degree in community development. However, a limited number of the Community Development Workers (CDW) have a bachelor's degree and master's degree, with some participants without matric. See Table 3 on cross-case descriptions of qualifications. Practitioners lack minimum qualifications at the honours level, with most qualifications from cognate disciplines and not community development. The average working experience and qualifications raise a lack of uniformity, equity, redress, and fairness for the evolving community development profession.



Table 3. Cross case descriptions of qualifications

						Total
		Case 1 COGTA	Case 2 NGO	Case 3 DSD	Case 4 HEI	
Qualifications	Matric	5	6	0	0	11
	Diploma	0	2	4	0	6
	Honours	0	1	4	0	5
	BA	3	5	25	3	36
	MA	1	1	2	4	8
	PhD	0	0	2	7	9
		9	15	7	4	74

Inductive Data Analysis Process

The data analysis process followed Charmaz's (2014) constructivist grounded theory inductive analysis to identify and explain latent participants' perspectives across multiple cases. Constructivism assumes that individuals construct the meaning of experiences and events, and therefore people construct the realities in which they participate (Charmaz, 2006; Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). Inductive analysis means that the patterns, themes, and categories of analysis come from the data; they emerge from the data rather than being imposed before data collection and analysis (Glasser and Strauss, 1967). Data analysis followed the two-phase process of analysing case studies outlined by Charmaz (2014). The phases include initial coding and focused selective coding data analysis. The analysis of each case followed by a cross-case analysis of the four cases answered the study's research question. In this regard, data collection, analysis, and theory are in a reciprocal relationship. The coding process involves carefully reading the data and analysing the transcribed interview data by line, sentence, paragraph segments, and field notes to decide what codes fit the concepts suggested by the data. The initial and selective codes developed were constantly compared to identify similarities, differences, and general patterns. Inductive codes

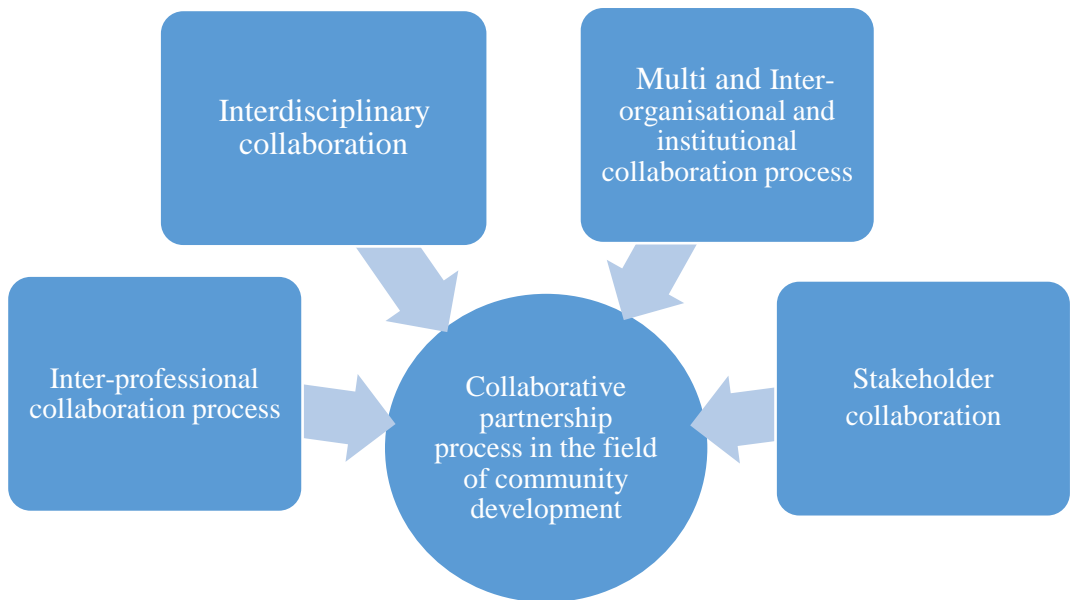
were developed from reading the data and noting issues of importance raised by participants. Searching for inductive codes allows the data to speak for itself. It is central to qualitative data analysis and reflects the principle of grounded theory (Glasser and Strauss, 1967). The developed theoretical categories were then compared against large batches of data to identify variations within and between categories. Several developed theoretical categories echoed the aims and objectives of the broader study to provide theory development. However, only a few theoretical categories related to this paper's purpose, such as developmental community development, community participation, multidisciplinary field, and collaborative partnership, were identified. Theoretical saturation was reached and stopped at the point of saturation when data failed to uncover new ideas on the developing theory (Charmaz, 2014). Theoretical categories identified above generated a substantive theory. These theoretical categories are conceptual frameworks as illustrated below and informed emergent themes and a substantive theory generated in the study indicated below in figure 1, became the major findings of the study practice model inductively theorised from the data.

Relationship of the Theoretical Category and Theory

Theoretical categories link various concepts and serve as an impetus for formulating theory (Charmaz, 2014; Seibold, 2002). Concepts developed during inductive analysis fit the criteria of emergent concepts (Charmaraz, 2014). The key theoretical category is the collaborative partnership process in community development. The main theoretical categories developed are the interprofessional collaboration process, interdisciplinary collaboration, inter-organizational and institutional collaboration process, and stakeholders. These theoretical categories were strictly emergent and thus do not reflect any a priori selection on my part. Figure 1 below illustrates the theoretical categories developed in this study. The collaborative partnership process in the field of community development is the emergent theme developed from the combined theoretical categories as a result of my becoming staying close with the evidence provided by the data. The theoretical categories provided an analytical framework, guided analysis of data, and the developed substantive theory. Below is a brief examination of the relationship of the theoretical categories in relation to the emergent theme of the collaborative partnership process in the field of community development grounded in data.



Figure 1. Theoretical Categories and emergent theme



The Emergent Theme of the Collaborative Partnership Process in the Field of Community Development

The study's findings indicate that participants view community development as a multidisciplinary field and a lack of collaborative partnership processes in the field of community development. The multidisciplinary community development includes professionals from different disciplines working at the community level and in particular settings such as wards at the local municipalities, schools, local clinics, and at the community level. As revealed in the participants' narrative extracts: "Community development is not what social workers do only, other professions such as nurses, teachers, and other different professions are using the notion of community development to promote social development. I see it as an approach to social work and social welfare" (P1, P2, P16, P3, P70). Thus, multidisciplinary working can take many forms and includes inter-professional, multi-professional, inter-agency, and multiagency (Sellman and Snelling, 2010). These reflections emerged strongly from the findings, as summed up in the following comment below, "I see it as a generalist

practice model. Community development is multidisciplinary. "(P20, P26, P35, P55, P60, P63, P68). Community development workers, social workers, and community development practitioners are working at the community level, and there are challenges of interprofessional working relationships. As most of the participants indicated, "We have not worked out how to work together. There is no professional relationship. There is no professional relationship, but there is a personal relationship with the stakeholders, for example, health workers, NGOs, Government departments, ward committees, and councillors" (P6, P18, P54, P69). The participants' responses indicate that a lack of formalised multidisciplinary partnerships, and collaboration with stakeholders at the community level, impedes inter-professional, multi-professional, interagency and multiagency collaboration. Multi-agency denotes the involvement of a range of services and professionals to provide authentic developmental community development. All the participants stated that there is a lack of collaborative efforts, and models for multidisciplinary working at the community level. These reflections frequently emerged from the findings as revealed from the participants narrative extracts: "The key issue is a lack of stakeholders collaboration in government departments, COGTA, and DSD are working in silos." (P3, P8, P30, P60, P7). Other participants remarked, " There is no imperative to coordinate. We have not worked out how to work together" (P1, P33, P28, P33, P66).

Explicit in the above findings is the lack of an inclusive and integrated approach due to the silo approach and interdisciplinary collaboration. Furthermore, the literature confirms that there are challenges to partnerships in the community development and social development sector in South Africa (Ditlhake, 2021). For example, participants emphasised: *"There is no memorandum of understanding or partnership relationship with the stakeholders"*(P42,P43,P38,P39,P33,P68).

The need for collaborative partnership efforts in the community development field is worth noting for building collaborative partnerships processes in participants excerpts. The findings relating to lack of partnership are also consistent with previous research on the challenges for building partnerships in social development (Tshabalala and Lombard, 2009). This challenge persists despite the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997) and the draft Community Development Practice Policy Framework of community development (2014) recognising the need for collaboration and partnership in Community Development. Literature confirms that the purpose of the collaboration is to create a shared vision and joint strategies to address concerns that go beyond the purview of any particular party (Chrislip and Larson, 1994:5).



Partnerships denote a more mutually interdependent nature in the relationship among the actors than one would expect to find in joint initiatives under contractual, principal-agent, or governing-governed relationships (Fiszbein and Lowden, 1999:4).

Substantive Theory of Multidisciplinary Collaboration and Partnership Processes at a Community Level

In this study, the substantive area of inquiry was the multidisciplinary collaboration partnership processes, whereas the conceptual area of inquiry was interprofessional collaboration process, interdisciplinary collaboration, inter-organisational and institutional collaboration process, and stakeholders. As Glaser and Strauss (1967) observed, most studies generating substantive theory will ultimately generate and improve formal theory. A substantive theory of multidisciplinary collaboration and partnership processes at a community level is theorised in the evidence provided by the data. The coding process ended at the point of theoretical saturation when additional data failed to uncover any new ideas about the developing theory (Charmaz 2014). The theory developed posits that community development is multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary collaborative partnership processes of development that require the collaboration of various stakeholders in organisations and institutions with the community as a key stakeholder in development processes. Existing models of multidisciplinary collaboration in this country often include common elements and characteristics of the inclusive education system and forms of private-public partnerships, health programs, and nursing education (Davids, 2005; Grossman, 2012; Rakhudu, Davhana- Maselesele and Useh, 2017; Treadwell and Havenga, 2013; Waggie and Laattoe, 2014). However, in the community development field, many existing process models do not specify the procedures and the contributions required from each partner in a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary collaborative partnership process with the community as the key stakeholders. The proposed substantive theory aims to fill this gap (Ditlhake, 2021). These reflections frequently emerged from the findings, as summarised in the narrative extracts: *“The sector is too broad. The vital issue is collaboration with all stakeholders. There is a need for a community development-based model with everyone involved (P5, P8, P17, P19, P29, P53, P60, P71).* The challenge of partnerships and collaborative efforts for multidiscipline is perceived to be related to working in isolation and lack of policy framework as revealed *“We are working in silos. we need everyone. One cannot be the referee and the player at the same time. There is no clear community development framework (P1, P21, P37, P68).* These findings highlight the need for a partnership model with all stakeholders and thus concur with the Community Development Practice Policy Framework (CDPF)



(Department of Social Development, 2014). They are also consistent with the previous studies on partnership challenges in the social development sector (Lombard and Du Preez, 2004).

The use of constructivist grounded theory in the studies of community development to generate theory that is grounded in data from a methodological perspective are limited. However, empirical evidence exists on partnerships challenges in the social development sector (Tshabalala and Lombard, 2009). The work of these researchers concurs with the findings of this study. However, there are limited studies that investigated multidisciplinary partnership challenges with the CDPs, social workers, and CDWs in the community development field. Glaser and Strauss (1967:32) explained that comparative analysis generates two basic kinds of theory: 'substantive' and 'formal'. The substantive theory developed in this study was grounded in data as revealed from the narrative extracts above and the preceding analysis below. The researcher used the constant comparative iterative process, to identify the underlying pattern in participants' views, as stated mainly in their words. Including reviewing lines, sentences, and paragraphs segments of the transcribed interviews to identify codes that fit the theoretical categories suggested by the data. The codes were constantly compared during the initial and focused coding to identify their relationships, differences, and patterns. The substantive theory developed is as the result of becoming intimate with the data and were evident in the participants narrative extract: "Ya, that's why fragmentations, silos approach because we've got social workers CDPs CDWs...working with the very same people doing the same thing. *A problem is the sequencing of the way we work? We talk about six steps community-based planning, organising, profiling community and households...monitoring of services is bad. Implementation is difficult because of the lack of the partner model*"(P3,P7, P8, P17, P19, P22, P29,P35, P39, 45, P53, P67, P72). In this regard, the substantive theory developed consists of the six stages. The stages developed from data are (1) negotiating community entry, community mobilisation, and the social contract (2) collaborative household and community profiling. (3) community dialogue, identification of problems and community priorities, (4) community-based planning, (5) implementation and collaboration, and (6) monitoring and evaluation underpinned by enabling a sustainable environment. These six stages of the substantive theory of the multidisciplinary collaborative partnership processes may overlap and as illustrated in Figure 2 below.





Figure 2: Substantive Theory

The underlying theory posits that community participation and multidisciplinary teams bring cross-discipline expertise to communities in a coordinated and collaborative way to promote developmental community development with the community as a the key role player. Hence, developmental community development embodies the social change process to improve and empower the community to address social, political,

economic (Patel, 2015) and inclusively to improve social development in collaboration with stakeholders. Hence a sustained community participation from communities is the vital goal of collaborative partnerships in community development. In the same vein, Ansari and Phillips (1998) note that collaboration leverages different perspectives and skills and can encourage innovation and increased productivity in executing tasks. The purpose of collaborative partnerships in community development is achievable when there is a real commitment from all the partners involved at the community level. Thus, the potential for collaborative efforts can be harnessed when having a clear understanding of what collaborative partnership involves. Chrislip and Larson (1994) concur that an actual partnership displays full, mutual support for each role player's identity, wellbeing and all aspects of the work.

Stage one: Negotiating community entry, community mobilisation, and the social contract

At the initial stage, the stakeholders from the community development sector, including government, private sector, and social service professions, enter the community to negotiate entry with the gatekeepers, which include the catalysts in communities, local councillors, ward-based community development practitioners, and leaders of the community. Collaborative leadership in communities varies depending on whether the area is rural, city-based, or a township. Leadership in this instance is both formal and informal. A community development worker (CDW) acting as a catalyst from within the community plays a crucial role in the first step needed to mobilise community members, introduce stakeholders, create interest, linkages, and support, and identify appropriate community partners initiating action. The findings indicated that the CDWs are well connected, recognised, and known in the community. Encouraging community participation from various stakeholders is imperative to promote inclusive dialogue among community members and commitment to community development. Once the core partners are in place, there can be flexibility in the skills of additional multidisciplinary partners according to community needs. Community collaboration and community participation are imperative at this stage. Community participation is indicative of a bottom-up approach to local development. At this stage, community members are also engaged, identified, and brought together to find common ground, as voiced in the following narrative extract: *“The shopping list for service delivery does not work.... A community must be afforded space in processes with the integrity of local people. Community is driven development by outside agents' risk of creating dependency disempowerment. Citizens imply a social contract, even in Batho Pele”* (P3, P14, P25, P31, P63). The importance of bottom-up decision-making



instead of a top-down approach was emphasised as vital to community-driven development and must be well-versed and should be able to express its views, aspirations, and interests in consultation and the decision-making process.

Stage two: Collaborative household and community profiling

The second step includes conducting a needs assessment, including resources available in communities, identifying everyday needs and potential partners for collaboration. Another noticeable gap is revealed in community profiling. Participants views are captured as follows: *There is no coordination in community profiling. CDWs and CDPs are doing their own community profiling" (P4, P15, P30, P40)*. According to the participants: *We profile for the sake of profiling and after profiling we give food parcels. It raises expectations and dependency (P7, P19, P38, P59)*. For some participants, a constant duplication of profiling was emphasised: *The same communities are asked the same questions for more than 20 years. Profiling has reached crisis" (P1, P9, P18, P28)*. The lack of policy environment and the framework for collaborative partnership process were also identified as a gap by participants: *there is no clear community development framework" (P2, P11, P26, P52)*. Explicit in the above findings is the duplication and fragmentation in households and community profiling. To avoid profiling, stakeholders need to collaborate, plan and conduct joint profiling. At this stage, to avoid tensions, the roles and responsibilities with regard to profiling need to be clarified. Community development workers linking stakeholders from the ward play a pivotal role in enabling a collaborative planning process. As catalysts, they are needed to identify suitable community partners and initiate action in the community. They are enablers in promoting discussions among community members and generating interest in communities. The substantive theory emphasises the importance of the shared responsibilities and expertise in community profiling, with clearly articulated governance structures at community level and well-defined roles and accountability parameters to ensure transparency and common purpose, meanings, and understandings to be further engendered. The record of the community profiling developed need to inform all the stakeholders working in the community. The benefits, challenges, expertise, resources to be shared, and the protocols for ethical practice need to be discussed and agreed on at this stage.

Stage three: Community dialogue, identification of needs and community priorities

To ensure community participation, people need opportunities to engage in a dialogue. Inclusive dialogue requires the involvement of all partners, and a shared



community agenda is a crucial feature within the dialogue and a vital role in bottom-up community development. At this stage, interprofessional collaboration and sharing of ideas, knowledge, and understanding enable the community to thrive and evolve. Community dialogue requires the involvement of all partners or community groups. The CDW's catalyst role and linking role needed to identify appropriate community partners and to initiate action in the community or municipality wards are imperative to spark action without taking over the community's agenda. The most important support of the CDW will come from the community itself. Hence, the CDW and community relationship is vital for community development practice from a community development perspective. As stated, the employment requirement for CDWs is that they must come from the same community. "CDWs are ward-based...they should bring stakeholders on board to the community.... CDW's role is the expert organiser at the community level" (P1, P9, P17, P33).

Lack of clarity of the role of stakeholders is a weakness, which in turn limits the capacity of the practitioners to implement authentic community development. As revealed from the narrative extracts, *CDWs and CDPs do not talk to each other. There is no imperative to coordinate. There is role confusion. CDWs must concentrate on the ward level and engage stakeholders. The CDPs must concentrate on communities.* " (P1, P18, P39, P48). Hence this can only be done through dialogue by allowing needs, priorities, and action to emerge based on the shared agenda of the community. Central at this stage is community participation. This stage entails the identification of community members. All the community members are brought together to find common ground through social dialogue on matters that affect them. As stated, "*Engagement must be what the community needs. People are citizens but not service recipients.* " (P4, P16, P22, P40, P58). Community collaboration includes all the representatives from individuals, groups, professionals, organisations, and institutions at the community level. Examples of the multidisciplinary stakeholders at the community level include street committees, religious organisations, educational institutions, youth clubs, sports clubs, schools, and social service institutions. The key stakeholders and role players are brought together around the negotiation table of the community for constructive social dialogue. Participation, openness, co-construction, respect and willingness to listen to different perspectives can be defined in terms of dialogue in collaborative partnership. Community needs, strengths, assets, skills, and indigenous knowledge are identified and prioritised through community dialogue and collaboration.



Stage four: Community based planning

Collaborative partnership's purpose at this stage focuses on community-based planning in addressing what matters to the community. It requires changing conditions in which people live based on shared community agenda. Community action groups are essential in developing action plans from the identified needs and priorities. Another noticeable gap is the failure of the CDPs to conduct community-based planning. As shown from the narrative extracts, *"We never conducted community development to the level of community-based planning. It is a document collecting dust at the supervisor's office. Planning should start with what the community can do."* (P28, P37, P44, P55). These findings reflect the challenge of the top-down approach and lack of community participation or community-led development planning. The bottom-up approach emphasises self-directed community empowerment and people perceived as citizens rather than recipients of services. When communities are treated as service recipients, dependency and disempowerment occur. At this stage, the informal and formal leadership roles are clarified, and appropriate stakeholder identification is in the form of individuals, community-based groups, organisations, and institutions. Before putting plans, roles, responsibilities into action, the scope of the practice of the partners needs to be clarified to define who does what. In this regard, community-based planning refers to actions plans that allow community participation and their voices by bringing diverse multidisciplinary stakeholders together to develop collective action strategies to achieve development initiatives. The key tasks central at this stage include diverse stakeholders shared purpose, planning process, and development of strategies for sustaining collective action. Decisions about the action plan need to consider resource requirements, method, process, and the planned change's tangible outcome. At this stage, partnership agreements are formed and managed.

Stage five: Implementation and collaborative action

This stage is about working together and putting plans into action. An action plan is identified based on the community profiling results. The advantages of this include the unnecessary duplication of community profiling and anarchy may be overt, and people at the community level do as they see fit. Communities develop their agenda in collaboration with the stakeholders involved, leading to establishing and implementing their agenda according to local needs. Another weakness that emerged was the implementation of the top-down government community development programmes. As revealed from the narrative extracts, *"We cannot afford to have one size fits all project.. we need self-directed communities to respect the integrity of the*



process and community participation” (P6, P12, P19, P25, P36, P59). Some participants reported that when adequate bottom-up approach is lacking, projects are bound to be unsuccessful: “Community-driven by an outside agents' risk of creating dependency. If we do not take the time to empower people, projects will fail (P6, P13, P25, P43). Here, resource requirements and allocations are executed, activities are accurately specified, and the implementation method includes the action plans' desired outcomes. In working together, the stakeholders put plans into action, taking in to account a memorandum of understanding, about agreed-upon roles, responsibilities and the scope of practice. This stage includes defining the partnership relationship with communities regarding what they share or offer. Accountability issues for organisations are discussed, including what they can share in tangible and intangible resources. Collaborative partnership relationships require community members' involvement and active participation in implementing community development initiatives on matters that affect them.

Stage six: Monitoring and evaluation - enabling sustainable environment

The final stage is monitoring and evaluation efforts, including sustainable collaboration. The most important aspect of this phase is ensuring that the action plans established and implemented projects will continue after a shared activity ends. The findings have shown that role confusion, role conflict, and duplication of monitoring and evaluation between the CDPs and service providers not contracted in the region was a challenge and mitigated against multidisciplinary team functioning. As stated, *“We find the service provider doing monitoring and evaluation which is what we are doing. Duplication of service is the reason why we have conflict and role confusion” (P1, P16, P35, P49).* An essential factor is whether individual professionals feel valued for the unique expertise and commitment to communities. As stated, *“The challenge with the CDPs is that we end up not knowing what we need to do” (P24, P30, P45, P51, P61).* At this stage, successful monitoring and evaluation efforts determine multidisciplinary collaborative efforts established with active involvement and participation of the community-based groups, accomplishments, and the impact of the development efforts. Community development operates on the premise that social change is a process, and community sustainability can be enhanced gradually in a self-reliant action-oriented way. The social benefits of community collaboration include trust-building, community empowerment, a sense of shared purpose among community members as citizens, and collective action to promote living standards. The monitoring and evaluation embedded within the principle of the bottom-up approach, based on respect and equality, encourage community participation, which in turn



enhances inclusivity of a collaborative process and mutual responsibility for creating, planning, executing, and evaluating the planned collective action and change. In this instance, monitoring and evaluation tools and framework are developed and integrated within the implementation action plan to mitigate challenges identified earlier and remedial action instituted timeously to address them, including reviewing the action plan to enhance its success prospects.

Discussion

The study has drawn attention to some critical underlying challenges and complexities of multidisciplinary community development and has generated a collaborative community development theory. A substantive theory developed in the study adds to the existing knowledge of community development. It informs an integrated multidisciplinary collaborative community intervention process among various stakeholders at the community level. The effective facilitation of multidisciplinary community development, with communities as key stakeholders at the community level, is the main component of developmental community-driven development and collaborative partnership. Active community participation is the vital goal of the collaborative partnership efforts to community empowerment and social change. Lombard and Du Preez (2004:242) aptly express the need for keeping a focus on the poor in the social development sector, embedded within a negotiated framework that allows relationship building, fairness, just and an acknowledgment of partners' strengths. The overwhelming and escalating social problems at the community level require the coordinated efforts of all stakeholders involved to promote community development. Stakeholders are called social actors and are "all those people who have an interest in the project, either as direct beneficiaries or as those who are responsible for funding and implementing the project" (Cracknell, 2000:317). Multidisciplinary community development practice or facilitation is a complex and contested issue that is challenging for social workers, community development workers, community development practitioners, and other social service practitioners concerned (Ditlhake, 2021). However, research shows that it positively impacts successful interdisciplinary working, improving teamwork and interprofessional practice when conducted well (Atwal and Caldwell, 2005; Zwarenstein et al., 2009). The implications for community development policy and practice are explicit. Sustainable community development requires a complementary integrated developmental approach rooted in social policy as part of the inclusive, representative collaboration process to attain a shared vision and goal.



Nevertheless, the developmental approach to community development has never been clearly understood, nor has it adequately informed intervention at the community level. An important factor would be creating a positive atmosphere to ensure that professionals feel valued for their unique expertise and commitment to collaborative social development partnerships. In this study, participants stated that the silo approach, fragmentation in service delivery, duplication, lack of coordinated efforts and professional relationships and a lack of partnership model as the key challenge in community development practice. The findings of this study concur with prior studies that highlight the challenging nature of partnerships in social development when interdisciplinary team collaboration is less effective (Lombard and Du Preez, 2004;). The social workers, community development workers, and community development practitioners participating in this study considered the importance of multidisciplinary working for yielding community-driven development. The local agenda and community-driven needs inform community development. Collaborative partnerships based on the community shared agenda engenders bottom-up people-centred community development. Collaborative partnerships can offer opportunities to share interprofessional knowledge and skills from various professionals, including enhancing professional relationships, role clarification, cooperation, and leveraging partnership initiatives.

Conclusion and recommendations

This study sought to develop a substantive theory of multidisciplinary collaboration and partnership processes in community development theorised inductively from data, using constructivist grounded theory analysis process. A vital part of the process of substantive theory generation was the development of the theoretical categories and emergent themes that fit the data. As Chamarz (2014) states, theories are aimed at explaining a phenomenon. The relationships between theoretical categories gave way to the emergent themes and a substantive theory that can be utilised in the community development field. If the emergent theory developed in this study contributes to problem-solving of the silos approach and fragmentation and social change in communities, then the substantive theory developed in this study will truly be valuable to forging a theoretical base for community development practice. The study findings revealed that the complexities and challenges in the community development sector are linked to the multidisciplinary nature of the community development practice context. Other challenges include a lack of coordinated efforts, communication challenges, duplication of services, role confusion, and role conflict resulting from a lack of professional working and interprofessional relationships. The



substantive theory developed addresses a gap identified in the findings of the study. As encapsulated in the substantive theory of collaborative partnership processes at a community level theorised from data, the researcher concludes that while multidisciplinary working in community development is complex and challenging, social service professions and agents of change at the community level are well situated to meet the collaborative partnership challenges, and requires multidisciplinary teams commitment and efforts to making it work. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made. The study's findings suggest that collaborative partnership efforts have the potential for increasing interprofessional working relationships, coordination, integrated approach, and the environment for authentic community-driven development. Ongoing research should evaluate multidisciplinary community development intervention and collaborative partnership efforts to address the challenge of working in isolation at the community level. Interventions to improve multidisciplinary team working at the community level may be the next significant advance in improving developmental community-driven development. Research in collaborative partnership efforts will inform evidence-based practice and foster innovative approaches in the multidisciplinary field of community development.

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