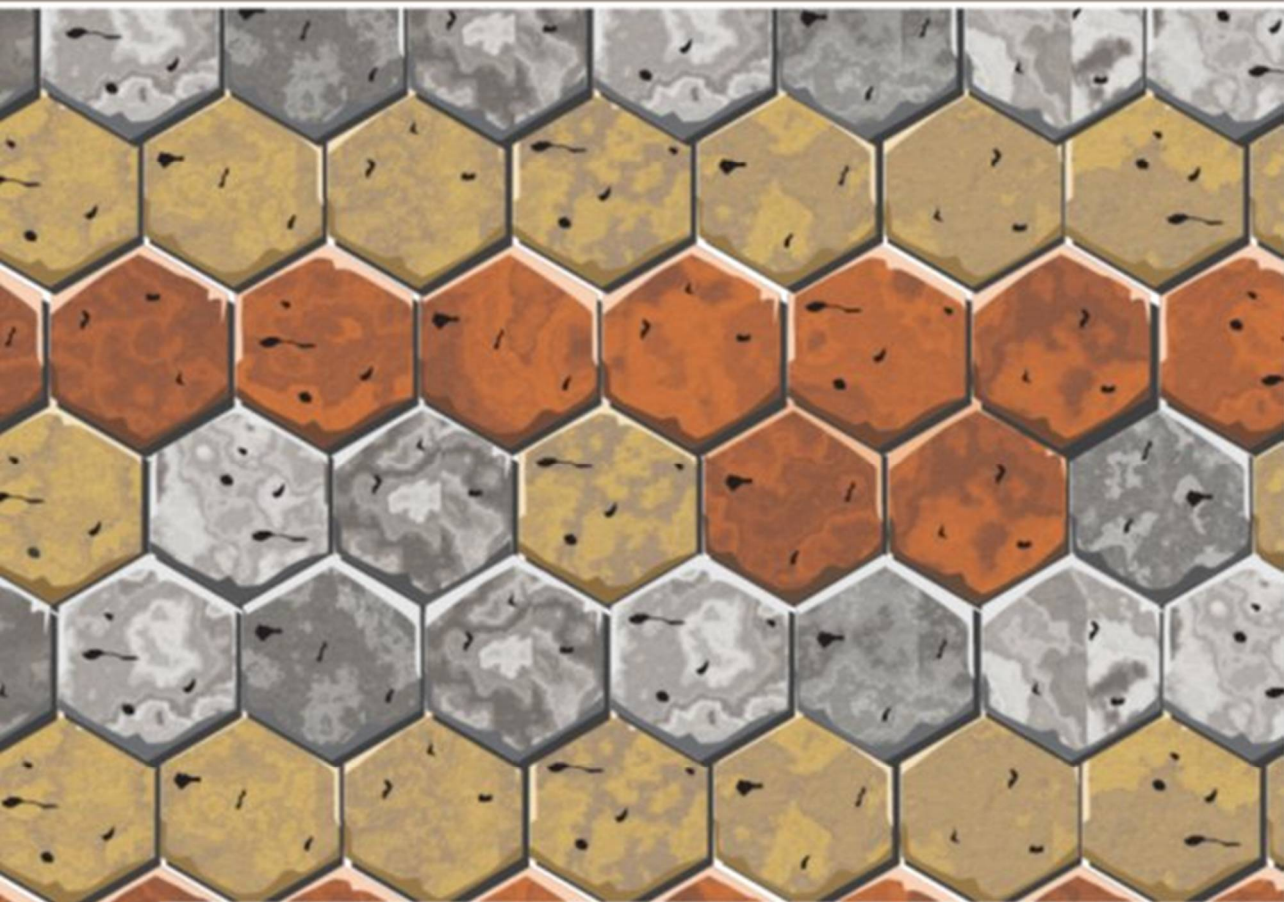


Peer-reviewed academic journal

Innovative Issues and Approaches in
Social Sciences



IIASS VOLUME 17 (2024)

Innovative Issues and Approaches in Social Sciences

IIASS is a double blind peer review academic journal published 3 times yearly (January, May, September) covering different social sciences: political science, sociology, economy, public administration, law, management, communication science, psychology and education.

IIASS has started as a Sldip – Slovenian Association for Innovative Political Science journal and is being published by ERUDIO Center for Higher Education.

| 2

Typeset

This journal was typeset in 11 pt. Arial, Italic, Bold, and Bold Italic; the headlines were typeset in 14 pt. Arial, Bold

Abstracting and Indexing services

COBISS, International Political Science Abstracts, CSA Worldwide Political Science Abstracts, CSA Sociological Abstracts, PAIS International, DOAJ, Google scholar.

Publication Data:

ERUDIO Education Center

Innovative issues and approaches in social sciences, 2024,
vol. 17

ISSN 1855-0541

Additional information: www.iiass.com

THE EFFECT OF A COALITION GOVERNMENT ON SERVICE DELIVERY IN SOUTH AFRICAN MUNICIPALITIES

Xolani Thusi¹, Nduduzo C. Ndebele²

Abstract

The South African local government sphere has faced many challenges of a failed coalition between leading political parties. This is not a desirable situation in South Africa; hence, more citizens depend on local government for civic services, as the local government is the closest sphere to the local communities. The failure of the formed coalition for the quest to govern local municipalities in South Africa undermines the urgency of effective and sustainable public service delivery throughout the country. The South African local government has witnessed many services delivery protests due to poor public service delivery, erupting political parties' coalition is the last thing needed in this field. The eruption of coalition between the political parties symbolises the battle for dirty political games that does not have the interest of the public in the agenda of these political parties. Politicians are voted into power by the public with the hope that they will put the public needs as priority. Unfortunately, politicians are more concerned about staying in power and are willing to do whatever it takes to maintain power, even if it negatively affects public service provision. The article aims to analyse the advantages and disadvantages of coalition government in service delivery and to determine what coalition government holds for the future of South African public services. The qualitative method will be adopted, using secondary sources and literature to meet the objectives of this paper.

Keywords: Citizens, Coalition, Local Government, Political parties, Service Delivery

¹ Xolani Thusi, Phd in public Administration, is a Senior Lecturer at University of Limpopo (School of Economics and Management). Contact address: xolanithusi@ul.ac.za

² Nduduzo Comfort Ndebele, PhD in Public Policy, is a Senior Lecturer at the University of KwazuluNatal (School of Management, IT and Governance). Contact address: ndebelen@ukzn.ac.za

Introduction

Lately, there is no undisputed winner in South African local government elections; coalitions are unavoidable since voters impose them on politicians (Ndou,2022). Hanabe & Malinzi (2019) indicated that coalitions are an old part of South African municipal politics. This is fostered by the 1996 Constitution's incorporated freedom of organisation, which has led in several individuals creating political parties that contest elections, as well as by the applicable electoral system. In recent years, several tiny political parties have utilised coalitions as an essential and helpful instrument to expand influence and voice in local councils to get access to municipal resources. The maturation of democracy in South Africa led to unprecedented situations in the 2016 municipal elections, which provided political parties, including independent community leaders, with a chance to examine coalition possibilities across municipalities. Although South Africa had 97 coalitions prior to 2016, little research has been done on the performance of coalitions at the local level (Pietersen,2021).

Municipalities in South Africa play a critical role in driving the national government's development goals and establishing a democratic culture within municipalities. Nevertheless, the country's local government system is beset by a variety of issues. The local government elections in August 2016 altered the political landscape in South Africa, enabling coalitions and forcing councils to co-govern municipalities (Mpangalasene, 2020). South Africa held its sixth round of local government elections since 1995 in August 2016. The fact that the 2016 local government election acted as a watershed point for the incumbent party's dwindling electoral support, the African National Congress, is key to the outcome (ANC). The ANC's loss of significant electoral fortunes has benefited opposition parties, notably the Democratic Alliance (DA) and Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), as well as minor parties such as the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC). This turbulent environment provides an opportunity for political parties to canvass one another in order to form coalitions of co-governing municipalities (Mokgosi, Shai & Ogunnubi, 2017).Bradshaw & Breakfast concur that the 2016 South African local government elections, in particular, demonstrated the degree to which dominating party politics, with clear majorities in political councils, may soon be a thing of the past in South Africa, suggesting the beginning of a probable coalition in the local government. The establishment and operation of coalition

governments in the national, provincial, and municipal domains of government are not specifically governed by the South African constitution. Additionally, such regulatory requirements are not included in the regular law. However, the constitution establishes a hybrid form of parliamentary government, which is applicable at the levels of national, provincial, and - with minor variations - local government. The decision to adopt this system has significant implications for the formation and operation of coalition governments (Dodd, 2015). A coalition or minority government is vulnerable because it is subject to the whims of elected officials and political party leaders, as well as, to a lesser extent, the ambition and even greed of individual elected officials, under the current constitutional and legal framework governing the establishment and operation of government in South Africa's national, provincial, and local spheres (De Vos, 2021). These "convenience marriages," which occur when there are no outright winners or winners with no controlling stakes, present several obstacles in the normal operation of communities. Local government continues to be an important domain of governance in the quest for development. The condition of this branch of government has a significant impact on the efficacy and efficiency of service delivery (Khumalo & Netswera, 2020).

Methodology

A review of the literature was conducted using a qualitative research approach to address the paper's research problem. This method enabled the collection of important data for this study. This strategy was used to acquire a more comprehensive understanding of the coalition government issue and its positive and negative effects on the local government of South Africa. The purpose of this essay is to investigate the origins of how South African municipal government might gain from coalition and how it is severely harmed by the "marriage of inconvenience" of coalition governance. This study will establish what the future holds for South Africa after analysing the benefits and drawbacks of coalition governance, as coalition government is unavoidable. This article's publication coincides with the formation of a coalition of political parties in South Africa in pursuit of power.

Conceptual Framework

Coalitions are agreements reached by two or more parties to support a specific programme or agenda. A coalition government is one in which power is divided between two or more parties, depending on the distribution among them of ministerial posts, while a coalition refers to the aforementioned. Coalition governance is widely recognised in established democracies such as Germany, Sweden, Israel, and Italy, where coalition governments have governed for lengthy periods of time (Duvenhage, 2022). A political coalition is a transitory alliance of political groups formed to pursue a shared goal or participate in a joint activity. Furthermore, this temporal combination of groups and individuals exists to pursue certain goals to obtain more influence and authority over the activities of a specific municipality that controls budgets and municipal plans (Hanabe & Malinzi, 2019). In general, a coalition government is a type of administration in which many political parties collaborate to reach consensus decisions, primarily to create a government or to conceptualize certain public policies (Mpangalasane, 2020). Coalition governments are more common in multiparty democracies when political parties actively compete with one another for power. In the political spectrum, you may find several different political parties. Coalition politics is the norm when one party fails to win a majority in a national, provincial, or local election (Duvenhage, 2022). According to Labuschagne (2018), a coalition group of opposed political players is drawn together by a common danger or by leveraging collective forces. They form a coalition to achieve their goals because they may not be able to achieve such goals if they work alone. Coalition parties must choose between enjoying the perks of office and preserving their party's unique identity. Allying with an election opponent exposes parties to, or even increases the likelihood of, a backlash from their followers (Ndou, 2022). Coalition government or coalition governance is a relatively recent notion on the African continent, particularly in South Africa. Post-1994 coalition administrations are exceedingly rare. However, in the case of local government, coalition governance only emerged firmly and rose to the top of the municipal agenda following the 2016 and 2021 local government elections. It has recently been a significant subject in South Africa's continuing dialogue on local governance, adding to the well-documented local government issues (van der Waldt, 2022). Coalition governance, as argued for by Masipa (2016), can be seen as a chance to steer South Africa away from the one-party dominance of the African National Congress (ANC) and towards the multiparty governance

that emerged after the 2016 local government election and encouraged governance accountability in different municipalities. Coalition governance, as interpreted by Gumede (2021), is a sign of citizenship maturity on the part of South African voters who have moved away from emotionally associating with a particular political party in favor of voting with their minds to influence better governance and the improvement of service delivery in their communities.

The Advantages of Coalition Government in South Africa

The coalition administration in South Africa is seen as a chance for nation building and social cohesion, with the goal of eradicating the apartheid legacy of racial and socioeconomic division. South African coalition government exemplifies a mature nation building endeavour in which political parties adopt a unified ethos for democratic governance and citizenry representation (Makole et al.,2022). In locations with "hung" municipalities and legislatures, where no one party has earned a majority or if there are several competing political parties, coalitions can help to establish political stability and governability. The creation of a coalition might be justified as being necessary from a political standpoint if no political party wins most seats in a particular election (Ndou,2022). To fulfil the aspirations of local citizens, coalition-led municipalities will need to become more citizen-centric. In the long run, coalition-led municipalities will improve local governance by making it more effective, efficient, and transparent, boosting citizen happiness and restoring public trust in government, among other consequences. Coalitions in South African politics, at the national, provincial, or municipal levels, are a recent development that is here to stay, now and in the future (Kariuki et al.,2022). Voting on a wide range of subjects, such as enacting bylaws, rates, and taxes, approving budgets, and raising loans, tends to reflect a more inclusive tone when it comes to coalitions. Coalition administrations, it is widely agreed, convey a favourable message to voters that political parties are rivals rather than adversaries. This divide is especially significant in a country like South Africa, where people have experienced major conflict and political intolerance (Nzimakwe, 2022). Coalitions in South Africa provide an opportunity for political parties to operate by consensus and improve openness and accountability in the local government arena, which is riddled with corruption and poor service delivery (Khambule,2022). Since the first democratic elections in 1994, the political atmosphere has steadily shifted in response to rising dissatisfaction among residents.

Coalition politics has become inescapable in South Africa, necessitating flexibility and freshly established rules. This can improve service delivery if parties lose support because of poor service delivery performance (Duvenhage,2022). According to Wissink & Reddy (2022), coalition government can be beneficial to the South African government by incorporating the following.

For the arrangement to be termed a coalition government, it must be in everyone's best interest. The coalition's constituents must reap some advantage or "political rewards" from their participation in a minority government arrangement to become a majority administration.

Coalitions require a shared interest or a goal as a foundation. All coalition partnerships, however, must be based on an underlying respect and comprehension for the other group or persons involved. Each participant must adhere to the concept of mutual respect, consider the stance of the other participant or party, and be open to negotiation in the event of a conflict or disagreement.

Policy options, in particular judgements on how plans, programmes, and actions impact service delivery, particularly how resources are allocated towards these plans, programmes, and activities, must be amenable to compromise in the event of disagreements.

Given the above, it is essential that the coalition's members feel like equal partners, notwithstanding any differences in membership, resources, or aims. If a coalition is going to be important, all parties involved must be treated fairly and with consideration when making decisions and sharing the spoils.

Making it customary or fundamental that coalitions cannot exist unless all parties sign formal documents outlining their responsibilities and obligations. This paper is an integral part of coalitions and must be properly drafted and released.

The disadvantage of the coalition government is South Africa

South Africa's coalition administration has a poor track record of performance. However, the increase in coalition administrations, particularly in local government since the 2021 municipal elections, underscores the need for increased collaboration and power sharing to promote effective and efficient government for South African residents (Brand,2022). Coalition governments are not ingrained in South African political culture and their introduction may provide special obstacles at first, as well as local instability, if partners cannot

collaborate efficiently (Knowles,2021). Coalition governments are not uncommon in South Africa. However, forming and governing such coalition governments has not been straightforward. Following the 2016 local government elections, two coalition administrations of metropolitan municipalities formed and then disbanded before their term of office expired. Johannesburg is in Gauteng, and Nelson Mandela Bay is in the eastern Cape. This breakdown has had major consequences for service delivery in many councils (Mutereko,2022). There is a strong belief in South Africa that party politics and the coalition government that results at the local level tend to stifle the voice of the people and, more crucially, undermine municipal service delivery due to their unstable administration. It is clear from previous national trends and developments that coalition governance has ultimately led to unstable municipalities and impaired service delivery (Kariuki,2022). It cannot be disputed that South Africa's coalition governance practises have, up to this point, been unsteady and frequently come to an end before the council's tenure had officially expired. A municipality's ability to approve and implement policies and the resulting bylaws, to make senior and executive appointments on time, or simply to pass a budget may be hampered by instability in local coalition governance, which might jeopardise service delivery (Beukes & De Visser, 2021). Due to party politics that take precedence over the electorate's mandate to those voted into power in South Africa, the coalition government model tends to hinder strong leadership, effective governance, and qualitative sustainable service delivery. The fact that party politics and coalition governance undermine the voice of voters and are likely to make service delivery even more difficult is also highlighted by Hanabe and Malinzi (2019). The ability of a coalition-governed municipality to fulfil on its service delivery mandate is dependent on the council's ability to agree on policies and other major municipal problems. Agreements on crucial issues may be difficult to reach without a well-articulated working understanding among coalition parties. As a result, service delivery and economic growth can be jeopardized (Dladla, 2018). Coalition forms in South Africa have largely been acts of political expediency or marriages of convenience, rather than an effort to create a forum for collaborative input from numerous parties that comprise the governing body to improve municipal financial performance (Masiya,2022). In the South African climate, coalition governments create contentious political spaces that can jeopardize service delivery if coalition partners disagree on commitments to the municipal budget (Khambule,2022). The South African political

parties' coalition is doomed to fail due to top-down factors. Different political ideas and mistrust make it harder to establish common ground and concessions. Even when such concessions are achieved and common ground is formed, there remains a difficulty with the dichotomy between rules-in-form and the actuality of rules-in-use, which exacerbates the traditional principal and agent dilemma. Because coalition agreements are shrouded in secrecy, they are difficult to comprehend and implement (Mutereko,2022). Politics, specifically the desire for power, resources, and patronage, rather than focusing on the things that keep them together and carry out the will of the electorate, namely improved local government, and service delivery, has been the challenge with local coalition governance in South Africa to this point (De Vos, 2021). Ideological and policy parity did not ensure the sustainability of these nascent coalitions, and their instability harmed governance. The absence of practical methods that could have been implemented more aggressively also harmed the efficacy of these coalitions (Knowles,2021).

How does coalition government impact effective and sustainable public service delivery in South Africa?

Coalition politics appears to be here to stay for the foreseeable future, despite a poor track record in South Africa. Conflicts between political parties running coalition governments are prevalent in South Africa's local government, and this has had a severe influence on long-term service delivery (Bradshaw,2019). Masiya (2022) highlights that in practise, coalition governments are unstable and frequently dissolve before the conclusion of the council term. This insecurity has a detrimental influence on municipal operations. Local coalitions may jeopardise the local administration's capacity to offer services. It may find it difficult to approve legislation or budgets, since most of its time is spent disputing. The failure of the coalition partners to reach an agreement on the makeup of the mayoral committee, as well as the council's inability to assure full participation of smaller parties, jeopardised its operation. Smaller political parties have claimed that the coalition led by the Democratic Alliance (DA) is harassing those with less representation. The Democratic Alliance was accused of serving its core voters primarily, which included a lack of service delivery in less wealthy regions. It implies that coalition partners' decision-making was not entirely inclusive, resulting in instability as the DA disappointed its coalition partners (Kariuki et al., 2022). South Africa's coalition government makes it harder for people to have their voices heard and makes it harder for municipalities to

provide services because of their unstable government. So, the coalition government in South Africa right now leads to shaky municipalities, making it difficult to get services to people (Habane and Malinzi, 2019). Furthermore, in South Africa, the coalition government model tends to hinder strong leadership, effective governance, and meaningful long-term service delivery due to party politics that takes precedence over the electorate's mandate to those elected to power (Kariuki et al., 2022). According to Khambule (2022), opposition parties in eThekweni wanted to take advantage of this opportunity, indicating fissures in the coalition administration. The basic issue that arises from the eThekweni Metropolitan Council is the absence of formal coalitions that bind coalition parties to vote on all issues together. Because of this unwillingness to unite, coalition parties differ on critical issues that jeopardize the municipality's functions.

Prospects: What Coalition government holds for the South African public sector?

When considering coalition politics in South Africa, it should be obvious that changes must be made to the style and substance of party politics in the nation to operate effectively. The discipline of conflict resolution has much to teach politicians about transitioning from destructive politics to more constructive and stable politics in an era of coalitions (Bradshaw, 2019). The findings of Cilliers' (2022) study indicated that numerous political possibilities for South Africa's future will further escalate the coalition in government as ANC support decreases after years of being a dominant force in politics. The most probable outcome is that Cyril Ramaphosa will be re-elected as president of the ruling African National Party (ANC) in December 2022, despite the party's persistent tensions. The ANC receives 48% in 2024 but must form a governing coalition. South Africa's economy will expand slowly. A convincing victory for Ramaphosa's side might open more fast growth, whilst success for the so-called radical economic transformation movement could have unanticipated beneficial consequences. There are strong signs that a single ruling or majority party will not receive a majority vote soon. With the recent national and local government elections in 2016 and 2021, it has become obvious that this period has brought an age of coalition democracy and governance. This additional dimension has also brought with it several new problems and opportunities. However, in the early stages of this new dynamic in South African politics and government, there have been additional obstacles in

guaranteeing effective governance. Wissink & Reddy,2022). Citizens who pay rates have a right to expect that the new coalition-led municipalities will address the issues that have plagued them over the years and then move towards providing high-quality basic services, ultimately promoting good governance, to address the issues of municipal leadership and poor service delivery. According to research by the Social Research Foundation, respondents backed their party's decision to form a coalition when it was required. It suggests that coalitions are the way of the future and that parties must learn how to contribute positively to them (Kariuki et al.,2022).

Discussion

The South African political leaders with respect to all parties have forgotten the major reason they were elected to office, which is to serve the public and ensure that the provision of essential services is kept as a sustainable level. The South African parties have failed citizens even in the event where the municipality was being led by one party. The growth and introduction of coalition government gave little hope that the political parties in coalition will lead South African municipalities to greatness, but that has not been the case. Coalition government has added to the challenges that existed in local government rather than minimizing them. The political parties fight their own battles while in coalition and the marriage of inconvenience usually does not last, and this has negatively affected service delivery in the local government sphere. Local government is a crucial sphere in South Africa, as more citizens rely on the government to provide basic services. The local government sphere has witnessed many services delivery protests that stem from poor service delivery caused by political battles between coalition governments, corruption, cadre deployment, lack of skills and ever growing irregular, fruitless, and wasteful expenditure. The political parties in South Africa no longer serve the needs of the public or promote them. It all about fighting to stay in power to milk the government revenues through licks which are caused by corruption in the local government through irregularities in the tendering systems. An accountable coalition government can change the future of the public sector of South Africa for the better. The parties in coalition should prioritise the interests of the citizens over hunger for power and self-enrichment desires that have consumed political office bearers in South Africa.

Conclusions

Citizens have a huge role to play in voting for political parties that will prioritise public service delivery. Citizens should vote out the political parties that do not respond or respond to the needs of the public. The political parties will not change from their corrupt ways until citizens exercise their voting power. The former president of the African National Congress (ANC) once made the remark that the ANC will lead the South African government until the day the Lord Jesus Christ returns. These remarks were uttered by politicians who realise that citizens do not recognise that they have the power to take away power from politicians who are only interested in serving their own interests. The coalition government will not provide answers or solutions to the embattled public sector of South Africa. The day citizens will exercise their democratic power, the right to vote, and associate with political party of choice is the day we shall witness a real new dawn in South Africa.

References

- Beukes, J., & De Visser, J. (2021). A framework for coalitions in local government.
- Bradshaw, G., & Breakfast, N. (2019). Mediating coalition politics at the local government level in South Africa, 2016-2019. *Journal of Gender, Information and Development in Africa (JGIDA)*, 8(Special Issue 2), 113-129.
- Cilliers, J. (2022). The ANC and South Africa.
- De Vos, P. (2021). The constitutional-legal dimensions of coalition politics and government in South Africa. *Marriages of Inconvenience: The Politics of Coalitions in South Africa*, 235-266.
- Dladla, K. F. (2018). The impact of the legal framework for local government on building and sustaining coalitions in municipal councils.
- Duvenhage, A. (2022) The Role of Political Parties in Coalition Building at the Local Government Level. *COALITION BUILDING AND MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA*, 185.
- Gumede, W. (2021). Delivering democratic developmental state cities in South Africa. *African Journal of Public Affairs*, 12(1), 1-27.
- Hanabe, L. D., & Malinzi, U. (2019). Party coalition as a model to govern municipalities in South Africa. *Journal of Public Administration*, 54(1), 41-51.
- Kariuki, P., Reddy, P., & Wissink, H (2022). Local Government Coalitions in South Africa in a Changing and Redefined Political

Milieu and Context. COALITION BUILDING AND MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

- Khambule, I. (2022). Merits and Constraints of Coalition-Led Councils in South Africa: An Overview of Selected Municipalities. COALITION BUILDING AND MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA, 163.
- Khumalo, P., & Netswera, M. M. (2020). The complex nature of coalitions in the local sphere of government in South Africa. *African Journal of Democracy and Governance*, 7(3-4), 173-192.
- Knowles, K. D. (2021). An analysis of emerging governing coalitions at the local level in South Africa with a specific focus on Johannesburg and Nelson Mandela Bay (Doctoral dissertation, University of the Free State).
- Labuschagne, P. (2018). South Africa, coalition and form of government: semi-presidentialism a tertium genus?. *Southern Journal for Contemporary History*, 43(2), 96-116.
- Pietersen, J. M. (2021). Assessment of Coalition Governments (2016-2021) in Metropolitan Cities of Gauteng Province Using the Theory of Democracy. *Journal of Public Administration*, 56(3), 488-506.
- Masipa, T. S. (2017). The rise of multi-partyism in South Africa's political spectrum: the age of coalition and multi-party governance. *International Conference on Public Administration and Development Alternatives (IPADA)*.
- Masiya, T. (2022). Financial Control and Accountability in Coalition-Led Municipal Councils in South Africa. COALITION BUILDING AND MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA, 111.
- Mokgosi, K., Shai, K., & Ogunnubi, O. (2017). Local government coalition in Gauteng Province of South Africa: challenges and opportunities. *Ubuntu: Journal of Conflict and Social Transformation*, 6(1), 37-57.
- Mpangalasane, C. (2020). The impact of coalition government on service delivery: City of Tshwane metropolitan (Doctoral dissertation, North-West University (South Africa)).
- Mutereko, S. (2022). "School of Management IT and Governance, University KwaZulu-Natal." COALITION BUILDING AND MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA: 85.
- Ndou, L. L. (2022). An analysis of a coalition government: a new path in administration and governance at local government level in South Africa (Doctoral dissertation, North-West University (South Africa)).