



Citizens' Perception of Government Low-Cost Housing Provision: Duduza Community within Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality

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Abstract: In 1994, the government adopted a Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) to redress the past and ensure that citizens have access to secure and affordable housing. This study analyses citizens' perceptions of government-provided low-cost housing (RDP houses) in South Africa, a key initiative under the RDP aimed at addressing historical injustices stemming from the apartheid era. Since its launch in 1994, the RDP has successfully built over three million houses, benefiting millions of economically disadvantaged citizens. However, challenges such as financing issues, poor house quality, and allocation criteria persist, especially in municipalities like Ekurhuleni, where an influx of people from various regions has exacerbated these problems. The study highlights housing as a constitutional mandate and a vital tool for reducing poverty and inequality. It employs a quantitative research methodology to analyse citizens' perceptions of government low-cost housing provision. The Duduza community within the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality serves as the sample frame, with fifty (N=50) community members selected through a probability sampling technique. Data are collected via semi-structured questionnaires and analysed thematically using descriptive data analysis methods. Microsoft Excel is used to process the findings. Despite the ambitious goals of the RDP housing programme, the findings reveal that its credibility is undermined by governance issues and a lack of public trust. The study emphasises the need for improved transparency, effective planning, and greater citizen engagement to enhance the quality and distribution of RDP houses. It concludes by exploring

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strategies to accelerate house allocation and reduce construction costs, ultimately aiming to foster a sense of dignity and belonging within communities like Duduza. The findings underscore the necessity of a renewed commitment to equitable housing delivery, which is fundamental to building a democratic and non-racial South Africa.

Keywords: Low-Cost Housing; RDP; Service delivery; Apartheid regime; Governance

1. Introduction and Background

Governments worldwide have the responsibility to protect, serve, and provide essential goods and services to their citizens, thereby ensuring sustainable and efficient delivery service (Sekwat & Tacaura, 2024). Matloga, Mahole and Nekhavhambe (2024) state that Section 152(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, mandates all municipalities to promote public and community involvement in local governance and to ensure the sustainable provision of basic services to communities. Similarly, Mamokhere (2025) and Ragolane et al. (2025) concur that each South African municipality must provide equal access to essential services, including housing, water and sanitation, electricity, and waste removal. Globally, South Africa and Brazil have shown interest in reducing inequalities through their policies. For example, Brazil launched a social housing program in 2009 to fight poverty, while South Africa adopted the RDP in 1994 (Becker, 2014). However, this ideal is often challenged by conflicts, misunderstandings, unclear regulations and policies, corruption, mismanagement, and financial constraints, all of which can hinder the delivery of necessary services. A primary goal of governments is to provide adequate housing, especially for people earning below a certain income level. These housing programs, often called public or social housing, aim to reduce income and housing inequalities and ensure affordable living options for all citizens (Greyling, 2010; Sekwat & Tacaura, 2024). Despite not fully fulfilling the constitutional mandate of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, South Africa ranks among the governments striving to improve citizens' lives through housing initiatives, which are protected as a constitutional right to access adequate housing (Ragolane & Malatji, 2024). The Reconstruction and Development Programme was established as a broad socio-economic policy framework to mobilise resources and communities to overcome apartheid's legacy and build a democratic, inclusive future. Since 1994, the RDP has successfully facilitated the construction of over three million low-cost houses, benefiting millions of South Africans. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of the RDP housing program is still

challenged by issues such as governance problems, concerns over house quality, and criticism of allocation processes (BBC, 2019).

City of Ekurhuleni (2020) stated that in the early years of the program at Duduza, the housing offered consisted of small two-roomed units, which were inadequate for larger families and often lacked quality. Since then, the houses have undergone various developments and modifications, resulting in multiple design iterations. However, this evolution has brought forth additional challenges, especially as the influx of people seeking housing has increased. The most significant challenges hindering the provision of these homes include budget constraints, a growing population, issues with land acquisition, the sale of RDP houses by officials and private stakeholders, and the limited number of units planned for construction as outlined in the municipality's Integrated Development Plan (IDP). The authors of this study argue that these challenges are particularly critical in areas like the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, where a growing population further strains resources and increases the existing inequalities. Understanding citizens' perceptions of government provision of low-cost housing is vital for improving accountability, transparency, and the overall effectiveness of housing strategies. This study focuses on the Duduza community within Ekurhuleni, aiming to explore these perceptions to inform future policy reforms and foster a sense of dignity and belonging among residents.

1.1. Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the study is to analyse citizens' perceptions of government provision on low-cost housing in the Duduza community, which is part of the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality. This study is further guided by the following objectives:

- To determine the nature and quality of the low-cost housing in the Duduza community.
- To assess the criteria used to qualify for low-cost housing at the Duduza Community.
- To identify the factors contributing to the failure of the provision of low-cost housing in the Duduza Community.
- To propose strategies to accelerate the provision of low-cost housing at the Duduza community.

2. Literature Review

The Reconstruction and Development Programme is a socio-economic policy framework aimed at eradicating apartheid and building a democratic, non-racial, and non-sexist future in South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 1994, p. 4). The apartheid era was characterised by colonial oppression, poverty, and apathy towards the Black South African majority. Whites dominated every sphere of the economy, while blacks were at the periphery. Labour policies discouraged skill growth among black South Africans (Manomano, 2013). The national policy did not serve the majority of the people of South Africa at heart but instead exploited and deprived them of basic needs and services such as education, health, and shelter. Over half of the population in South Africa experiences a shortage of housing, living in degrading shacks and ghettos (Nicholas, Rautenbach & Maistry, 2010, p. 85). Manomano (2013) stated that the Reconstruction and Development Programme was implemented by the African National Congress (ANC) government led by Nelson Mandela in 1994. The main aim was to address the immense socioeconomic problems caused by the struggle against its predecessors under the Apartheid regime, specifically addressing poverty and massive shortfalls in social services, including proper housing. The programme aimed to start a process of rebuilding, transformation, redistribution, and growth to end the previous oppressive apartheid policies (Manomano, 2013).

2.1. Nature and Quality of Low-Cost Housing

Benetti and Carvalho (2021) indicated that low-cost housing means that low-income populations, excluded from the logic of the formal market and the protection of the state, are obliged to resort to irregular land occupation and the informal urban land market. Shackleton et al. (2014) stated that low-cost housing in South Africa is characterised by a mix of formal and informal housing options, often located on the urban periphery, and is largely driven by the government's RDP houses. While the government has built millions of low-cost homes, informal settlements continue to grow, highlighting the gap between housing supply and demand. Furthermore, challenges remain in terms of quality, location, and access to services in these developments. Benetti et al. (2021) stated that low-cost housing, while providing shelter, often faces challenges in terms of quality and access to essential services, leading to difficult living conditions. The nature of low-cost housing varies, ranging from informal settlements lacking basic amenities to government-built projects

facing issues like poor workmanship and location disconnected from communities. Sustainable and quality low-cost housing requires a multi-faceted approach focusing on design, construction, and community engagement (Benetti et al. 2021). However, Charlton and Kihato (2006, p. 254) indicated that the post-1994 housing programme has been highly significant in numerous ways. Housing delivery has been important in demonstrating the distribution of a tangible asset to the poor, and in this sense, it can be argued to have played a key role in establishing a degree of legitimacy among low-income households. In addition, “it is contended that the government housing programme is one of the few government interventions which places a physical asset directly in the hands of households living in conditions of poverty” (Charlton & Kihato, 2006, p. 254). The first low-cost housing projects were generally a two-room brick work structure with corrugated iron roof sheeting and were not desirable for larger families. However, over the years, the design of RDP houses has developed and improved significantly. It now consists of a five-room brickwork structure with either corrugated iron roof sheeting or clay roof tiles, painted walls, running clean water, a bathroom with a bathtub and toilet, and a zinc for dish washing. Lights and electricity are supplied, and a solar geyser for hot water is an option (Greyling, 2010).

The government has made significant efforts to provide low-cost houses since 1994, but the quality of these houses remains a significant issue. The poor configuration of housing plans contributes to the low quality of these houses, as they often cannot survive heavy rains and storms. The former Mayor of Ekurhuleni, Mzwandile Masina, expressed concern about the quality of RDP houses after over 300 structures were damaged due to heavy rains. Additionally, most RDP houses are built on the outskirts of cities, which are not suitable for large development projects due to the quality and position of the land. These locations also create problems for the poor regarding commuting to work, schools, medical facilities, and shops (Lindeque, 2017). Manomano et al. (2016) argue that many South Africans have access to low-cost housing from the government, but persistent housing problems continue to be a major issue among the poor and needy. Factors contributing to these problems include corruption, mismanagement, small housing plans, substandard building materials, and inappropriate building sites. The lack of public participation in housing projects, urbanisation, unemployment, and renting and selling houses by beneficiaries are also major contributing factors. The building materials used in these houses are of poor quality, resulting in issues such as crumbling roofs, walls, doors, floors, and windows (Lindeque, 2017).

2.2. The Criteria Used to Qualify for Low-Cost Housing in South Africa

The post-apartheid era of segregation has embarked on a housing program to replace informal settlements with low-cost housing for unemployed individuals or families who collectively earn less than R3500 per month (Greyling, 2010). South African citizens are the only individuals eligible for housing assistance. They must comply with certain requirements, and only then can their names be placed on a waiting list where they could wait years for anything to happen (Royston, 2003, p. 234). However, many poor South Africans have been on waiting lists to receive RDP housing for a long period, even more than 10 years. Although most of them meet the requirements to receive houses, it is a slow process. In terms of section 9(1) of the National Housing Act 1997, municipalities, as part of the process of the integrated development planning, must take all practical and necessary steps to ensure that the inhabitants of their area of jurisdiction have access to adequate housing. This is accomplished by setting housing delivery goals and identifying suitable land for housing development. Planning, facilitating, instigating, and managing housing development form part of access to adequate housing (Newcastle Municipality, 2005, p. 1). Municipalities are accountable for identifying land suitable for housing development and for making applications for housing subsidies (Burgoyne, 2008, p. 32). Burgoyne (2008, p. 33) stated that once a housing subsidy application has been captured on the Housing Subsidy Scheme (HSS), the application is submitted through three electronic searches that are performed overnight. Firstly, the application is compared to the population to ensure the validity of the applicants' and spouses' identity numbers and that the applicant and/or spouse is not deceased. Secondly, the application is compared to the National Housing Subsidy Database (NHSDB) to ensure that neither the applicant nor his or her spouse has previously been assisted by the government. Lastly, the application is comparable to the Registrar of Deeds to ensure that neither the applicant nor his or her spouse has previously owned a property (Office of the Auditor-General, 2006, p. 7). Beneficiaries who have been assisted are not removed from the database. Instead, they are placed on a different schedule for record purposes. People may apply continuously to be recorded on the interim database, and when successful, confirmation of the application certificate will be issued (Housing Allocations Policy, 2005, p. 2). Greyling (2010) indicates that there are requirements to qualify for an RDP house. To qualify for an RDP house, the applicant must be unemployed or earn no more than R3,500 per household. They must provide a certified copy of their ID document, a certified copy of their spouse's ID document, and a copy of their death certificate if they are a widow or widower. The applicant and their spouse must be S.A.

citizens with legal ID documents, provide proof of income when employed, and provide certified copies of their dependents' birth certificates or ID documents. An affidavit is required for extended family members (Greyling, 2010).

2.3. Factors Contributing to the Failure of the Provision of Low-Cost Housing

According to Marutlulle (2021), the RDP in South Africa faces significant challenges in its implementation, including slow delivery, inadequate infrastructure, poor construction quality, and social issues related to housing location and access to services. Greyling (2010) stated that the system for providing RDP housing is not always fair or effective, with some individuals renting out properties and reapplying for housing, sometimes successfully obtaining another house. The government aims to establish a fair system, but workers in housing provision may accept bribes from desperate individuals, exacerbated by corruption. Urbanisation also impacts on the availability of housing, as new migrants flock to areas with approved units, driven by hopes of securing homes. The factors contributing to the failure of the provision of low-cost housing are discussed below:

- *Corruption and Poor Governance*

According to Manomano (2013, p. 31), corruption is prevalent in South Africa's housing projects, exacerbated by the arrest of government officials in 2010 for benefiting from subsidies for housing beneficiaries. Dodgy contracts between contractors and government officials have jeopardised 20 housing projects, costing the country two billion. The issue of corruption and poor governance in RDP housing projects has led to community challenges and service delivery protests. The government needs to take responsibility for poor service delivery and address the crisis. The RDP housing project raises socio-economic questions about the government's loyalty to its citizens. Some administrators are corrupt and discriminate against needy people, with desperate people bribing administrators to secure houses. Poor administration and corruption have downplayed the objectives of RDP houses, leading to illegal occupation and conflict between rightful owners and illegal occupants. Maluleke et al. (2019, p. 144) indicate that "the government department and municipalities are experiencing high levels of corruption in supply chain management and beneficiary management. The high levels of corruption in the department and human settlements sector are evident in the number of incomplete housing projects, poor workmanship/defective houses, payments where there was failure to build houses, inflated costs, fronting and fraudulent claims/invoices, and

misallocation of low-income houses. These illegal practices impact negatively on service delivery and the government's commitment to provide adequate access to sustainable human settlements and improved quality of life".

- *Lack of Public Participation*

One of the key principles of the RDP emphasises the importance of a people-driven programme, highlighting the significance of involving the community, particularly when adopting a bottom-up approach. This sentiment is echoed in housing initiatives, as outlined in the National Housing Code (2009). Unfortunately, citizen participation in the RDP tends to occur primarily at later stages, resulting in minimal engagement and limited avenues for stakeholders to voice their needs and expectations (Manomano et al., 2016, p. 114). Given the rise of research on this issue, it's evident that the involvement of beneficiaries and other stakeholders remains problematic and is often overlooked in project implementation. The lack of public participation fosters a passive engagement, leading to a top-down management approach in executing these projects (Matloga et al., 2024). This disconnect has sparked widespread frustration and, in many parts of Gauteng, has contributed to endemic violence, as beneficiaries express their dissatisfaction with the government's failure to meet their housing needs. Kolanda and Govender (2021) stated that common factors that contributed to poor municipal service delivery are a lack of public participation, poor leadership, insufficient human resources, financial difficulties, corruption, and ineffective strategic management.

- *Lack of institutional resources, such as Financial Constraints*

Kgobe and Mamokhere (2023) indicate that financial constraints and maladministration are key factors contributing to the problems faced by the South African local government in providing affordable service delivery, such as water, electricity, and housing. Chauke et al. (2024) indicate that the government relies on taxes and levies to raise money, but inadequacy and mismanagement of financial resources create problems for the government and the people. Key variables influencing housing delivery include local government-level financial constraints, capacity constraints, and insufficient resource allocation. Burgoyn (2008) South Africa invested R27.6 billion in housing between 1994 and 2004, delivering over 1.6 million houses, affecting 6.5 million people. However, the urban housing backlog increased from 1.5 million in 1994 to 2.4 million in 2004, indicating that the government must spend more on housing as people migrate from rural to urban areas for better opportunities and living standards. The number of houses to be built

depends on the available financial resources of the government, and the number of approved units is dependent on the resources available, which should also be approved by provincial housing departments. The beneficiaries are only identified once financial support is made available for an approved housing project. The lack of private sector support for housing projects negatively impacts the degree of delivery and the scale of the quality of delivery, leading to an increasing number of people living in inadequate housing conditions without access to basic services or facilities (Burgoyne, 2008).

- *Unlawful Invasion of the Land*

According to Greyling (2010), the unlawful invasion of land, both state and private, is a constitutional duty of the government. Private landowners have the right to request government intervention in large-scale invasions. The Unlawful Occupation of Land Act, 1998, enforces this duty. The Department of Housing used administers this legislation. However, the government faces financial and logistical challenges in finding suitable land for housing projects. The Department of Housing also faces difficulties in finding suitable sites due to land availability and resources. Additionally, there is often a lack of synergy between traditional leaders and municipal elected officials regarding land issues, which are often overlooked in rural areas. This highlights the need for better coordination between the government and land administration. Strydom and Viljoen (2014, p. 1207) opined that the unlawful occupation of inner-city buildings in South Africa has led to several legal disputes between vulnerable occupiers and individual landowners that highlight the conflict between individuals' constitutional right not to be evicted arbitrarily and property owners' constitutional right not to be deprived of property arbitrarily. The cause of this tension is a shortage of affordable housing options for low-income households in the inner cities, a fact which shows that the state is struggling to give effect to its housing obligation embodied in section 26(1) and (2) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996.

3. Research Design and Methodology

This study employed quantitative research methodology, along with a descriptive research design. It was conducted in the Duduza community, located within the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality in Gauteng Province, South Africa. The target population consisted of individuals commonly referred to as community members in the Duduza area. The term “population” is generally defined as the total number of 218

individuals residing in a specific country, city, district, or area. It can also refer to a particular social, cultural, socioeconomic, ethnic, or racial subgroup within that context (Shamoo & Resnik, 2009). More specifically, in research, the population is identified as the group from which a complete set of individuals or units is selected for the study (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013).

In this study, the sample comprised fifty (N=50) community members from the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality. A probability sampling technique was utilised to select participants from the Duduza community for the questionnaires. According to William (2006, p. 20), sampling is defined as the process of selecting units (such as individuals or organisations) from a population of interest, allowing researchers to generalise their findings back to the broader population based on the study of the sample. For data collection, the researchers employed semi-structured questionnaires, gathering information from various areas within Duduza until saturation was achieved. The data collected served analytical purposes and facilitated statistical interpretations to generalise the study's findings. The empirical data were analysed using descriptive analytical methods, with the results presented through graphs, pie charts, and tables. Microsoft Excel was used to generate the findings. The next sections present the results and discussion of the study.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the results and discussion. The results are presented in a descriptive approach using pie charts, graphs, and tables.

4.1. Demographic Information of Respondents

Demographic information of the respondents is significant in research. It gives a clear picture of the type of participants involved in the study. That also helps in determining the reasons for a variety of responses, which are influenced by demographic factors (Mamabolo, 2013). In establishing the demographic information of respondents in this regard, the study investigated the following demographic information: gender, age group, marital status, level of education, number of dependents, and occupation. The findings regarding demographic details are demonstrated as follows:

Table 1. Demographic Information of the Participants

Gender Group	Male Female	32% 68%
Age Group	18-35 Years 36-50 Years 51-65 Years 66 Years and Above	22% 34% 30% 14%
Level of Education	Primary Secondary Matric Tertiary None	22% 30% 24% 6% 18%
Occupational Status	Employed Self-Employed Unemployed Pensioner	22% 10% 46% 22%
Marital Status	Single Married Divorced Widowed Cohabiting	54% 24% 2% 16% 4%
Number of Dependents	1-2 3-4 5-More None	26% 30% 36% 8%
Total	---	100%

Source: Compiled by the authors

The South African government inherited gender inequalities and imbalances from the apartheid regime. Therefore, researchers need to seek to understand the gender profile of low-cost housing beneficiaries. This section aims to gather the gender profile of respondents from the Duduza community. Table 1 of the study reveals a notable gender imbalance in participation, with females comprising 68% and males 32%. This trend is largely due to the demographic characteristics of RDP beneficiaries, as many are women, and a significant number of households in the Duduza community are headed by women, often as a result of widowhood. The lower participation of males may stem from the belief that they are able to afford and build their own homes, along with potential cultural reluctance to engage in research. These findings suggest that policies addressing housing should prioritise the specific needs of women, especially those leading households. The age group is also 220

significant, as the researchers intended to investigate the trend of age at which the government allocates low-cost housing in the Duduza community. The results presented in Table 1 above reveal that the majority (34%) of respondents fall within the age group of 36-50, while 30% are aged between 51-65. Youth and young adults (those under 36) comprise 22% of the respondents, and senior citizens aged 66 and older account for 14% of the responses, excluding those within the 51-65 age bracket. From this data, it can be ascertained that most low-cost housing beneficiaries are middle-aged adults and senior citizens, rather than youth. This trend may be attributed to the fact that many of these housing applications were submitted long ago, resulting in a larger percentage of elderly beneficiaries. Consequently, the youth may face delays in receiving RDP houses due to the lengthy application process. The study also assessed the educational levels of the participants. The findings from this assessment indicate that the majority of respondents, 30%, had secondary education, followed by 24% who had matric. Additionally, 22% of respondents have only primary education, while 18% lack any form of formal education. A mere 6% of the entire targeted population holds tertiary qualifications. The findings suggest that the low levels of formal education among the population may hinder their ability to effectively access and benefit from RDP and low-cost housing allocations. One of the key requirements for applying and qualifying for an RDP house is that a family must have a combined monthly income of R3500 or less, according to Greyling (2010). This highlights the importance of collecting data regarding respondents' occupations to assess their eligibility to apply for an RDP house. South Africa is among the many countries facing a high unemployment rate globally. In the first quarter of 2025, South Africa's official unemployment rate rose to 32.9%. This is a one percentage point increase from the previous quarter, according to Statistics South Africa (2025). It is not surprising that a significant proportion of RDP housing beneficiaries are unemployed, with 46% of them falling into this category, followed by pensioners at 22%. Only 22% of respondents are employed, while a mere 10% are self-employed. The data presented above regarding the educational levels of RDP beneficiaries supports this trend. The elevated unemployment rates may be attributed to the fact that many beneficiaries lack formal education, and a considerable percentage are pensioners. These figures underscore the critical importance of RDP projects, as many individuals rely on these initiatives due to their unemployment and limited education. The current economic climate makes it exceedingly challenging for them to secure employment without formal education (StatsSA, 2025). When applying for low-cost housing, it is essential to submit documentation indicating marital status to prevent couples from reapplying.

The researcher is tasked with gathering data regarding marital status. As illustrated in Table 1, the majority of participants (54%) are single, while 24% are married. Additionally, 2% are divorced, 16% are widowed, and 4% are in cohabiting relationships. The implications of these findings are significant for housing policy and programme development. The high percentage of single individuals applying for low-cost housing (54%) suggests a need for targeted support and resources tailored to the needs of single-person households. Furthermore, the relatively low percentages of married (24%) and divorced (2%) individuals indicate that policies may need to consider the unique challenges faced by single applicants compared to those in partnerships. Lastly, the number of dependents in families provides researchers with valuable insights into how financial resources are allocated to sustain these households, particularly since many of these families are unemployed. As illustrated in Table 1 above, 36% of respondents report having more than five dependents, followed by 30% who have three to four dependents. Only 26% of participants have one to two dependents, while a mere 8% do not have any dependents. This data reflects the cultural context of “Black” South African communities, where extended family living arrangements are common, such as children residing with their grandparents while parents seek employment opportunities elsewhere. Additionally, this trend may be influenced by the high rate of teenage pregnancies among the youth.

4.2. Presentation of Results and Discussion from the Questionnaire

4.2.1. Quality of Low-Cost Housing at Duduza Community

In this section, the low-cost housing beneficiaries at Duduza Community were asked to provide an analysis of the overall quality of the RDP houses. The findings of this analysis are presented below in Figure 1:

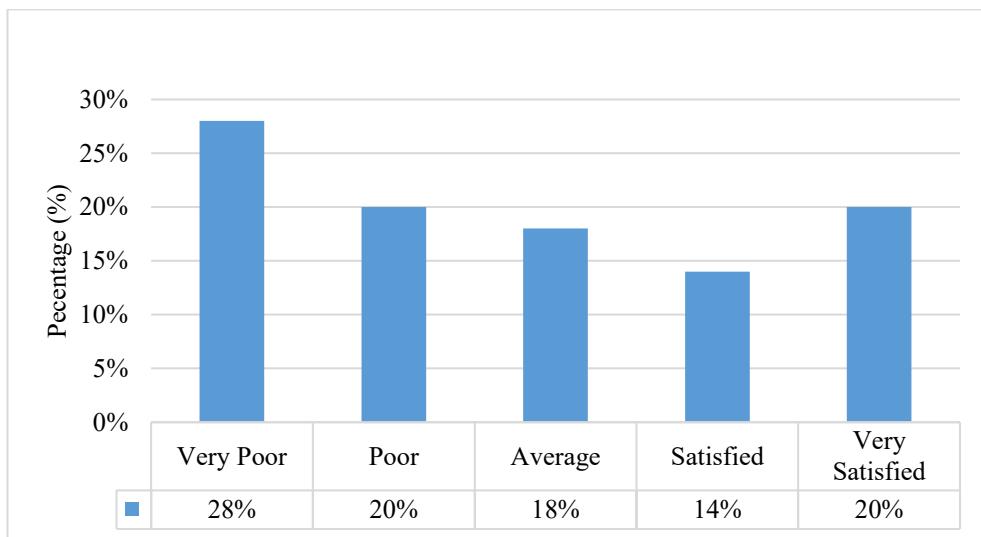


Figure 1. Quality of Low-Cost Housing

Source: Compiled by the authors

Figure 1 above illustrates the responses from the Duduza community regarding the structural quality of the RDP houses. A significant majority of respondents (34%) rated the quality of the houses as very poor. In contrast, 26% considered the quality to be average, and 18% rated it as poor. Meanwhile, only 12% of participants expressed satisfaction with the quality of their homes, while a small group (10%) reported being happy and highly satisfied with the overall quality of the RDP houses. The relatively small percentages of participants who reported being satisfied (12%) and highly satisfied (10%) can be explained by the fact that these houses are still new, contributing to their overall satisfaction with quality. National Treasury (2003) indicates that South Africa's housing programme has resulted in the delivery of housing to the poor at a rate that is unprecedented in global terms. In the 10 years of democracy, 1,6 million new housing units have been built for households earning less than R3,500 per month. Greyling (2010) stated that government data indicate that between 1994/95 and 2014/15, a total of 2,930,485 houses or housing units were delivered. The high percentage of respondents who rated the houses as very poor may be attributed to the fact that many of these structures were constructed during the project's early days, which were under considerable pressure to address the injustices of the previous regime. In this study of Mbatha (2019), it implies that many RDP houses appear beautiful initially, but they tend to crack and deteriorate over time. Adanlawo and Chaka (2024) indicate that there is poor service delivery in

South African municipalities caused by poor governance, cadre deployment, and lack of strategic planning. The Gauteng Department of Human Settlements has established Standard Specifications for low-cost housing (RDP) 2014/2015 to ensure safety and quality in RDP houses. These include SABS-approved building materials, compliance with National Building Regulations and the Building Standards Act, prioritising uncertainty in construction, requiring Engineer's certificates for raft foundation inspections, and wall plate inspections on unplastered walls. However, these requirements are often ignored by the contractors who use low-quality materials and are not held accountable by the municipalities.

4.2.2. The Size of Low-Cost Housing at the Duduza Community

The Gauteng Department of Human Settlements Standard Specifications for low-cost housing (RDP) 2014/2015 outline the unit's design specifications. These include a 40 square meter unit with a bathroom, two bedrooms, lockable doors for privacy, an open plan kitchen with a sink unit, and two external doors. These specifications are a standard guide for contractors to follow when building and delivering houses to beneficiaries. This section intends to assess the RDP beneficiaries' perception of the size of the low-cost housing at the Duduza community. The houses need to be built in a way that satisfies the needs of the beneficiaries with the limited resources of municipalities. The results for this section are presented below in Figure 2:

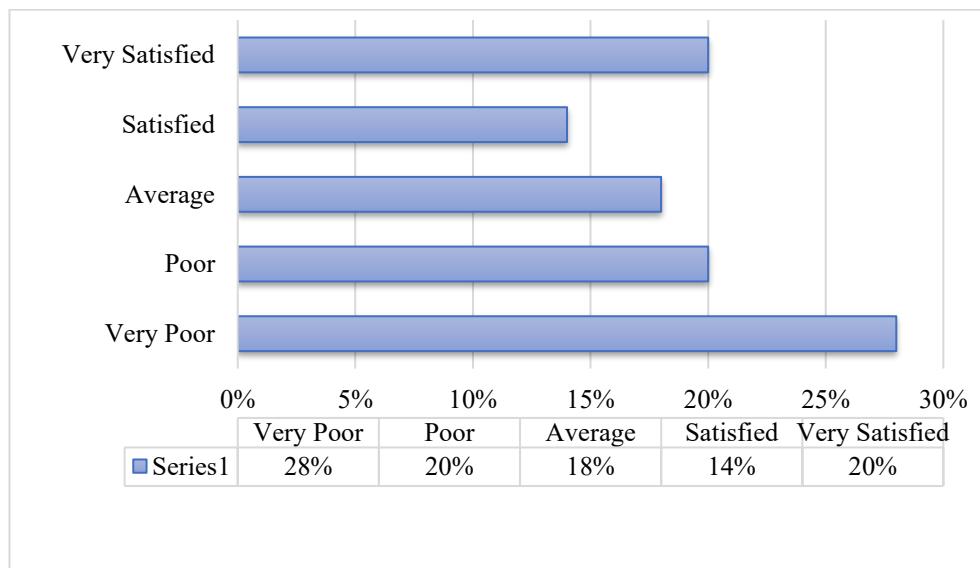


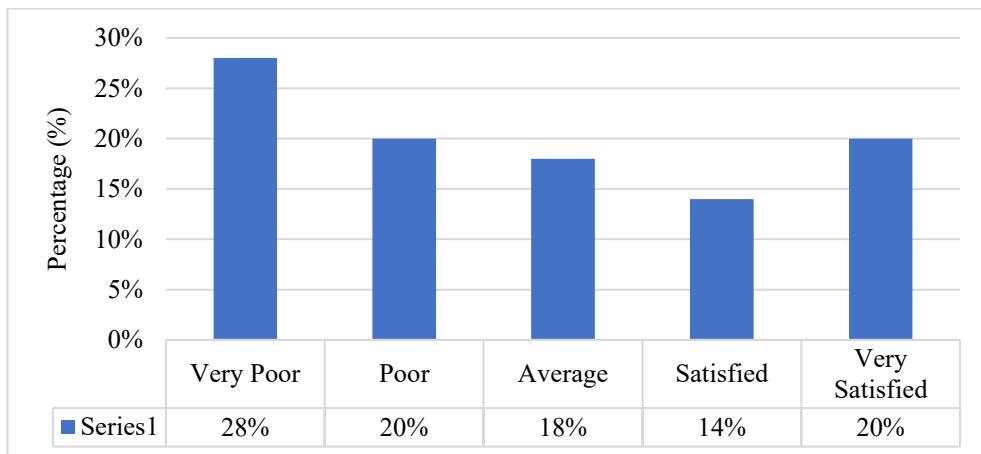
Figure 2. Size of the low-cost house

Source: Compiled by the Authors

Figure 2 illustrates that a significant portion of respondents, with 40%, perceive the size of the houses as very poor, expressing total dissatisfaction. This is closely followed by 32% of participants who also view the size as poor. In contrast, 14% of respondents find the size acceptable, while 6% report being satisfied. Moreover, 8% of participants are highly satisfied and content with the dimensions of the RDP houses. Notably, those who express high satisfaction with the structural size tend to be individuals without dependents, as they live alone and face no issues regarding space. Conversely, a notable 72% of respondents believe that the size of RDP houses is inadequate for their needs and those of their families. To address the challenges posed by living in smaller homes, some families with limited resources have opted to extend their houses to better accommodate everyone. These findings align with recent studies on service delivery satisfaction in the City of Johannesburg. Ndagurwa, Miles-Timotheus and Hamann (2024) found that a majority of respondents from various regions within Johannesburg express dissatisfaction with the level of service delivery provided by the municipality. Concerns were raised regarding the municipality's handling of corruption. The findings suggest that the municipality is struggling to hold corrupt contractors accountable for the provision of substandard housing.

4.2.3. Location

The placement of RDP houses in proximity to essential facilities, including hospitals, clinics, schools, police stations, and recreational areas, is a crucial factor to consider. RDP beneficiaries need to be situated in areas that provide these fundamental services, enhancing their convenience and quality of life. The perceptions of beneficiaries regarding their living environments are illustrated in Figure 3 below:

**Figure 3. Location**

Source: Compiled by the Authors

In terms of Figure 3, 32% of respondents in Duduza report being highly satisfied with their housing locations due to proximity to essential facilities such as clinics, schools, recreational centres, and shopping areas, while an additional 18% express satisfaction. This indicates that the government is effectively addressing residents' needs by placing them near vital services. However, 12% of respondents are dissatisfied with their locations, and another 22% rated their areas poorly, highlighting a significant portion of the population affected by distance from key amenities. This suggests a need for further development and improvement of infrastructure in less accessible areas. Scholars such as Benetti et al. (2021) highlight the challenges faced by low-cost housing, including poor quality and access to essential services, leading to difficult living conditions. These housing types range from informal settlements lacking basic amenities to government-built projects with poor workmanship and disconnected locations. Sustainable and quality low-cost housing requires a multi-faceted approach focusing on design, construction, and community engagement. Poor housing plans and location (e.g., wetland) contribute to low quality, as they often cannot survive heavy rains and storms. The former Mayor of Ekurhuleni, Mzwandile Masina, expressed concern about the quality of RDP houses after over 300 structures were damaged. Most RDP houses are built on the outskirts of cities, making them unsuitable for large development projects (Lindeque, 2017).

4.2.4. Waiting Period for One to Get an RDP House

In South Africa, government departments and municipalities operate under the framework of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. The Constitution enshrines the provision of service delivery, mandating municipalities to be responsive to the needs of their communities (RSA, 1996). This section aims to evaluate the extent to which the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality addresses community needs, particularly regarding the provision of shelter for the Duduza community. The study examines the duration that citizens must wait to receive low-cost housing. The findings are presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Waiting Period

Waiting Period	Participants' Responses in Percentage
1-2 Years	12%
3-4 Years	18%
More than 5 Years	70%
Total	100%

Source: Compiled by the Authors

Table 2 above indicates that 70% of respondents waited more than five years to receive their RDP housing after applying. Additionally, 18% reported waiting between three to four years, while 12% experienced waiting times ranging from one to two years for their homes. These findings highlight a significant lack of government responsiveness in service delivery. A study by Mamokhere, Netshidzivhani and Musitha (2021) suggests that the rising tide of service delivery protests in South Africa is driven by several factors, including inequality, unfulfilled political promises, and unequal access to services. Ncamphalala and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2025) further argue that these protests are exacerbated by the failure of councillors and political office-bearers to respond effectively, often due to limited or unclear communication channels and the provision of substandard services. They also emphasise a lack of institutional capacity and development, which undermines the quality of service delivery in South African municipalities. It is evident that these findings reveal shortcomings in the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality's adherence to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. According to Section 195(1)(d) of the legislation, services must be delivered impartially, equitably, and without bias. Furthermore, paragraph (e) stipulates that the needs of the people should be addressed, and public participation in policymaking should be encouraged. Therefore, the researcher needs to understand the typical timeline for government response and delivery of RDP houses to beneficiaries.

4.2.5. Beneficiaries' Satisfaction with Low-Cost Housing

In South Africa, the delivery of essential services such as water, sanitation, electricity, and housing has faced criticism for its low standards and, in some instances, deficiencies. This segment aims to provide the researchers with a clearer understanding of whether beneficiaries are satisfied with the RDP houses they received from the government. The findings are presented below in Figure 4:

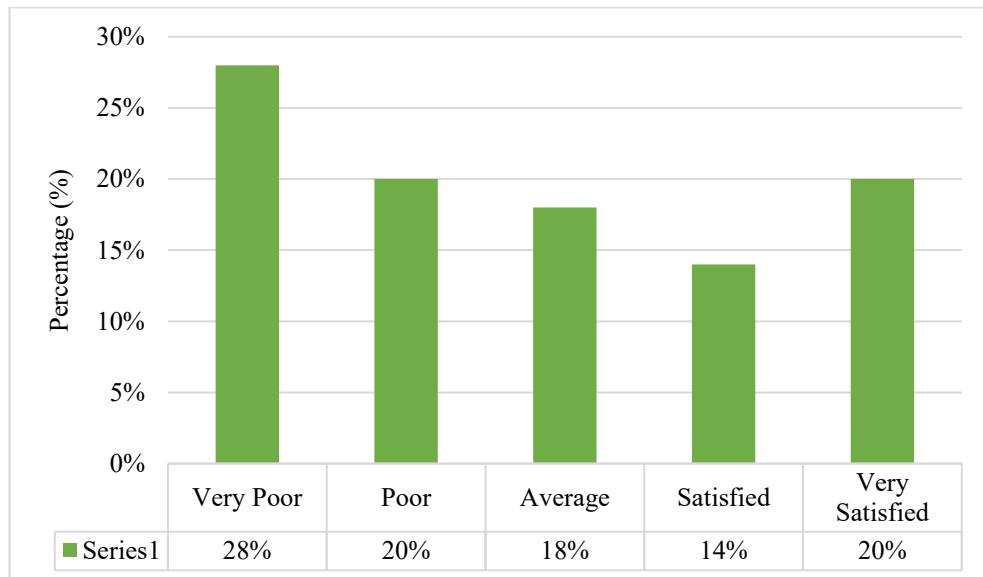


Figure 4. Citizens' Satisfaction with Low-Cost Housing

Source: Compiled by the Authors

Figure 4 above illustrates that 20% of the respondents express high satisfaction with their RDP houses, while 14% report being satisfied, and 18% indicate an average level of satisfaction. Conversely, 20% rate their satisfaction as poor, with the majority, 28%, indicating they are highly unsatisfied with their RDP homes. The respondents who report satisfaction and high satisfaction predominantly reside in the newly designed RDP houses, which feature essential amenities such as reliable running water, geysers, concrete tile roofing, ceilings, division of rooms, and electrical installations completed by qualified registered electricians. These findings highlight significant dissatisfaction among RDP house residents, suggesting a need for improvements in design and amenities. The positive feedback for newly designed homes indicates that upgraded features can enhance resident satisfaction. Addressing the concerns of the highly unsatisfied majority may be crucial for future housing

projects and policies. Ncamphalala et al. (2025) noted an important level of dissatisfaction reflected in the number of service delivery protests from the communities, with 193 recorded in 2022, of which 27% originated from Gauteng Province. The authors suggest that this trend underscores the ongoing issue of inadequate service standards, which in turn fuels these protests. Protests have long been a common occurrence in the province, highlighting the need for strategic measures to enhance service delivery standards. Additionally, Maluleke et al. (2019) further assert that service delivery protests have become increasingly prevalent in South Africa in recent years. Residents are taking to the streets to voice their concerns regarding the subpar services in their communities, hoping to be heard and to see their issues addressed. Communities are particularly vocal about matters such as access to electricity, housing, water and sanitation, health care, and social security.

5. Recommendations to Accelerate the Provision of Low-Cost Housing at the Duduza Community

This study aims to evaluate citizens' perceptions regarding government expenditure on RDP houses, focusing on quality, financial aspects, and the factors contributing to its shortcomings. The research utilises selected communities within the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality as a case study. This section proposes strategies to expedite the provision of low-cost housing in the Duduza community. The following recommendations are provided:

- *Cost Reduction Strategy*

The effective and efficient use of limited government resources is very important. The government needs to cut unnecessary costs and expenditures that can be easily avoided. Such costs include the hiring of private firms as consultants, engineers, electricians, and bricklayers. The government must have its people who will carry out these tasks and save a lot of money, which can be used to further develop the local communities. The government can also hire sixty per cent (60%) of the local people when embarking on RDP projects. The hiring of local people serves as a tool to ensure that the local people are empowered, and they take direct initiative in their development, thus ensuring that the final products are of high quality and satisfactory to the beneficiaries. Citizens react well to developmental projects if they feel included and in charge of their development, which creates a sense of ownership among them. Local government must be run by individuals who are skilled, knowledgeable, experienced, effective, and efficient. When local government is run

by individuals who are skilled and experienced, the efficient and effective use of limited government resources will be achieved, and the costs of building RDP houses will be reduced because the people who are involved are skilled and knowledgeable about what they are doing. The local government must also take measures to ensure that those who are unskilled and inexperienced are allowed to undergo training and development to acquire the relevant skills and knowledge needed for the smooth running of local government and also ensure that there are efficiency and effectiveness.

- *Quality Building Materials*

The findings from this study revealed that some of the beneficiaries are not happy with the quality of the houses due to the substandard building material, cracks, leaking pipes and taps, and the relatively small size of the houses. It is therefore recommended that the government enforce stronger and harsher measures for non-compliance by contractors. The government needs to ensure that the developers follow all the prescribed requirements, and failure to adhere to those requirements could result in tender withdrawal.

- *Quality Assurance*

Firstly, the government needs to prescribe measures that require contractors to develop a quality management system to ensure that the RDP houses are of a quality and safe for occupation. Secondly, the government needs to enforce the usage of SABS-approved building materials by contractors. Contractors who fail to comply with the usage of SABS-approved building materials should be fined by the government and required to pay back the money, because inferior building materials will cause the government to incur unnecessary expenses. Lastly, every contractor that plans to work with the government in building RDP houses must have a SABS certificate.

- *Skilled Workforce*

The quality of RDP houses depends largely on the building material used and the people building them. Therefore, it is important that the people who are involved in building RDP houses are skilled and experienced to ensure quality and cost reduction. The government needs to ensure that the people employed by the contractors are skilled and capable of building quality houses. It is also the contractors' responsibility to ensure that their workforce is skilled and experienced by providing training, workshops, and skilled development initiatives.

- *Speed Up RDP Houses Allocation*

The challenge of people having to wait for more than a decade before they could receive or be allocated an RDP house needs to change. The longer waiting periods are also a cause of the rapid increase in corruption that occurs in RDP house allocations. It is recommended that the government fast-track the construction and delivery of RDP houses to avoid corrupt activities. If the waiting period is shorter, corruption will be minimised and possibly eradicated. The government must have specific timeframes for the allocation of RDP houses to the beneficiaries.

- *Batho Pele Principles*

Local government needs to adhere to the *Batho Pele* (hereafter referred to people first) principles. The principles are aimed at providing a local government that is responsive and accountable to the people through the consultation process, service standards, access, courtesy, information, openness and transparency, redress, and value for money. The adherence to the Batho Pele principles by local government will provide the beneficiaries with access to information regarding the quality of the houses they will be receiving and how those houses will be allocated.

- *Consequences Management for Non-Compliance by Contractors*

The government needs to develop and employ a consequences management system. The system will be used to punish those who do not comply with the set requirements or the violation of those requirements. Contractors who fail to comply with or violate the requirements set by the government in building quality RDP houses should be punished using the consequences management system. The punishment should be imprisonment and paying back the money to the government. These harsh measures by the government will make and force contractors to build quality RDP houses and use specified SABS-approved building materials.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study underscores the critical role of low-cost housing in addressing historical injustices and promoting social equity in South Africa. While the RDP initiative has made significant strides since its inception in 1994, challenges remain, particularly concerning the quality, transparency, and governance of housing delivery. The findings from the Duduza community highlight the urgent need for improved citizen engagement and trust in government processes. To enhance the efficacy of housing provision, strategies must be developed to streamline allocation

processes and reduce construction costs. By recommitting to equitable housing delivery, the government can not only fulfil its constitutional mandate but also foster a sense of dignity and belonging among disadvantaged communities. Ultimately, addressing these issues is essential for building a more democratic, non-racial, and inclusive society. The journey toward sustainable housing solutions must be continuous, with a focus on collaboration and accountability among all stakeholders involved. In this study, the limitation is noticed through the selection of the research methodology and study area. The study has adopted quantitative research methods to understand perceptions of citizens in the Duduza community about the provision of low-cost housing. The study was conducted at Duduza community as part of the honour project by the first author and cannot be generalised to other areas. The future studies will focus on qualitative research methodology and will be further combined into a mixed methodology. The study contributes to knowledge production in the fields of human settlement and public administration.

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