

ASSESSING THE ROLE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN SERVICE DELIVERY: THE CASE OF EKURHULENI METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

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ABSTRACT

Local governments play an important role in the development of the livelihoods of local communities in South Africa. Local governments are responsible for the provision and delivery of basic services such as running water, proper sanitation, clean energy, waste removal, and decent housing. Public participation (PP) is arguably an essential element of local democracy through which local communities can contribute to improved service delivery. The current study focused on assessing the role of PP in service delivery in the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality. This was done by adopting a descriptive research design. Data on the factors affecting PP were collected from four different community groups (i.e., citizens, businesses, municipal managers, and ward committee members), using questionnaires and interviews. The results showed that information about PP is obtained via radio, television, newspapers, and mobile phones. Generally the initiatives relating to the 'Batho Pele' principles are acceptable in the Ekurhuleni community. Furthermore, concerning the quality of the services delivered by the municipality, the findings established that citizens agree that the municipality is aware of the service quality offered in the EMM. Although some citizens agree with the quality of the service delivery, some of them believe that the process still lacks consistency.

OPSOMMING

Plaaslike regerings speel 'n belangrike rol in die ontwikkeling van die lewensbestaan van plaaslike gemeenskappe in Suid-Afrika. Plaaslike regerings is verantwoordelik vir die verskaffing en lewering van basiese dienste soos lopende water, behoorlike sanitasie, skoon energie, afvalverwydering en ordentlike behuising. Openbare deelname (PP) is waarskynlik 'n noodsaaklike element van plaaslike demokrasie waardeur plaaslike gemeenskappe kan bydra tot verbeterde dienslewering. Die huidige studie het gefokus op die assessering van die rol van PP in dienslewering in die Ekurhuleni Metropolitaanse Munisipaliteit. Dit is gedoen deur 'n beskrywende navorsingsontwerp aan te neem. Data oor die faktore wat PP beïnvloed, is ingesamel van vier verskillende gemeenskapsgroepe (d.w.s. burgers, besighede, munisipale bestuurders en wykskomiteeëde), met behulp van vraelyste en onderhoude. Die resultate het getoon dat inligting oor PP verkry word via radio, televisie, koerante en selfone. Oor die algemeen is die inisiatiewe wat aan die 'Batho Pele'-beginsels voldoen, aanvaarbaar in die Ekurhuleni-gemeenskap. Verder, met betrekking tot die kwaliteit van die dienste wat deur die munisipaliteit gelewer word, het die bevindinge vasgestel dat burgers saamstem dat die munisipaliteit bewus is van die diensgehalte wat in die EMM aangebied word. Alhoewel sommige landsburgers saamstem met die gehalte van die dienslewering, meen sommige van hulle dat die proses steeds nie konsekwent is nie.

1. INTRODUCTION

The service delivery and governance issues debate takes centre stage in various disciplines, since the quality of the services being delivered is influenced by governance at all levels [27] [28]. Local governments throughout the world have been facing many difficulties in providing basic services to the communities that they have a mandate to serve [12]. Generally, the basic public services that local governments are mandated to deliver on a daily basis are clean water and sanitation, refuse collection, reliable energy, roads, housing, educational and recreational institutions, and healthcare facilities [12]. In South Africa, the three spheres of government (national, provincial, and local) co-operate to execute their mandates, powers, and functions, based on the principle of strong intergovernmental relations. Service delivery occurs at the local government level, which is closest to communities [36]. The national and provincial governments primarily initiate and formulate policies, while local government is charged with their operationalisation and transformation into tangible service delivery.

Service delivery in developing countries such as South Africa has been constrained by various problems brought about by socio-economic and political factors. Although three decades have elapsed since South Africa became a democracy [3] [4], the country is still experiencing inefficient services, huge service delivery backlogs, and violent protests that often lead to the destruction of property [22]. The main reasons for such protests seem to be the exclusion of local communities from or their insufficient participation in the integrated development planning process, resulting in dissatisfaction with the entire service delivery process [19] [31] [32]. Furthermore, policy issues (such as a local government's implementation of a policy without adequate knowledge about that policy) have also been an obstacle that constrains the ability to deliver quality service. The lack of awareness of a policy's content compromises a proper policy implementation process [13] [18]. In addition, at the micro-structural level people often do not have the required experience and capacity to implement policies to enable better service delivery; and ineffective feedback mechanisms and a lack of effective monitoring and evaluation systems affect policy implementation [27]. Feedback communication breakdown results in the creation of an implementation gap between the design and implementation processes.

To deal with such service delivery problems, research studies have proposed the participation of local communities in ensuring quality service delivery. The South African government has also come up with strategies and policy instruments such as the reconstruction and development programme (RDP), integrated development plans (IDPs), and the provincial growth and development strategy (PGDS) to redress the injustices of the past and effect inclusive development [9] [10] [46]. Furthermore, it has introduced a public participation (PP) national policy framework, which gives vitally important guidelines for effective PP in the local government affairs [27].

Participation works better when all key stakeholder groups are satisfied with the degree to which they are engaged and can attach a value to it [38] [26] [46]. Therefore, while the key stakeholder groups may want to be actively involved in the decision-making process, and perhaps also be involved in policy implementation, others may be happy only with being informed or consulted. Service delivery studies in South Africa have revealed that there are huge disparities between high- and low-income communities in respect of the level of municipal services. For example, [8] reported that both income and multidimensional poverty and inequality vary significantly across municipalities in South Africa. Their study established that areas that are historically characterised by low economic and welfare outcomes still experience significantly higher poverty and deprivation levels than others. In addition, it is important to note that the level of community participation in areas that are underserved is very low. Among other things, inequality has also resulted into the informal settlements problem and extensive residential areas that have made affordable and effective service delivery problematic. In this regard, this study aimed to investigate the critical role of local community participation in improving the quality of service delivery.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Description of the study area

The current study was undertaken in the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality (EMM), which falls under the East Rand region of Gauteng, South Africa. The EMM, which was established in the year 2000, is ranked as the fourth-largest municipality in South Africa. It is found in the east of Johannesburg and south of the City of Tshwane. The EMM is an amalgamation of nine municipalities: Alberton, Benoni, Boksburg, Brakpan, Germiston, Kempton Park, Edenvale, Nigel, and Springs. Those municipalities were administered

independently until the year 2000, when they were joined to form the EMM, which is highly fragmented both socially and economically. The EMM is a Category A municipality that covers a total of 190 147 ha [42] and has an estimated population of 3.1 million (EMM Research Department, April 2015). The major services provided by the municipality to the community include running water, electricity, sewage and sanitation, and solid waste collection.

Industries in the EMM have an important role in manufacturing, although the area has undergone industrial restructuring and experienced a decline in mining activities. The EMM economy contributes about a quarter of Gauteng’s economy, which in turn contributes over a third of the national gross domestic product. Many of the factories that produce goods and commodities are located in Ekurhuleni, which is also referred to as ‘Africa’s workshop’. Since some towns that were reserved for black South Africans in the apartheid era are on the periphery, the metropolitan area faces a challenge in integrating these areas into the historic nodes and in improving their economic opportunities. The municipality also faces various other problems, which include poor road network linkages, urban decay in business districts, serious service backlogs - especially in previously disadvantaged areas - poor land use management strategies, and the impacts of previous mining activities [42]. Figure 1 below shows the areas of the EMM where the study was conducted.

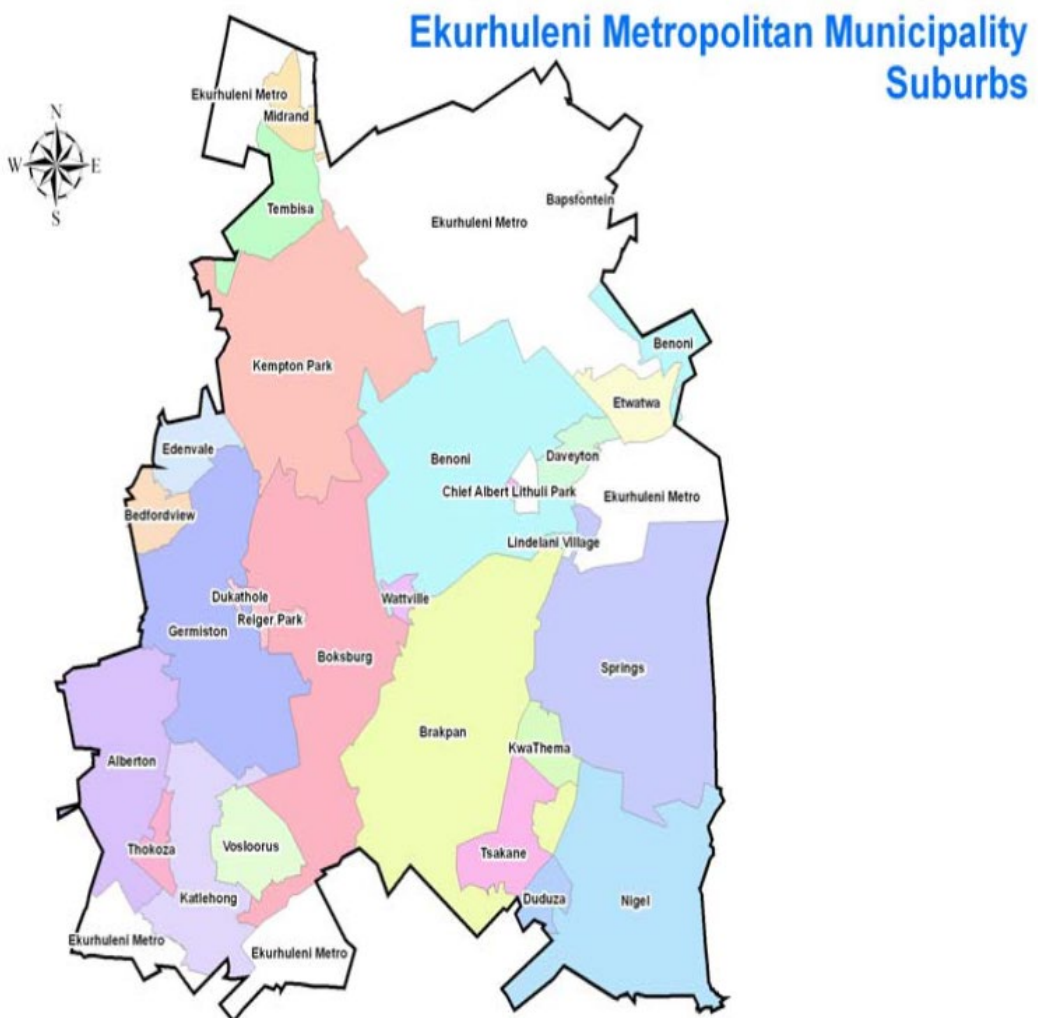


Figure 1: Study area map showing the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality

2.2. Research paradigm and design

A positivist research paradigm and survey design were used in this study. Although positivism is commonly used in social sciences research, the way in which it is applied in natural sciences research is different: there, mainly deductive reasoning using mostly empirical quantitative methods and, in general, pursuing regularities is applied [43]. Positivism underpins scientific experiments and survey design. There is a difference between research designs for the social sciences and those for the natural sciences, even assuming a specific positivist position. Although all of the versions and types of positivism are favourable to scientific approaches, they are different when you consider the application of positivism in research. Positivism was disqualified as an appropriate methodology in the social sciences many years ago. Even though all versions of positivism use the same main principles (e.g., the logic of inquiry, the study aim of phenomenon explanation and estimation, empirical observations, the use of inductive reasoning to formulate propositions/hypotheses that can be judged/tested to see whether they are true, the recognition that science is different from common sense and that science should be logically judged and should be value-free), they are not the same when you consider how they interpret positivism. For example, according to the logical positivist philosophy, we derive information using logic and mathematics, sensory experience reports exclusively provide all authoritative knowledge, and this derived knowledge is the only truth; but the philosophy of analytic positivism emphasises an approach that has been clearly and precisely defined with particular weights, based on argumentation and evidence, unambiguity, and attention to detail.

This study also used a descriptive research design to collect data, considering the current status of the phenomenon to be studied - to examine the role played by community participation in ensuring quality service delivery. The research designs provided a wide range of methods, including correlation and regression modelling, that which were used to explain the relationship between community participation and service delivery. With descriptive research, we can answer the questions about 'who', 'what', 'where', 'when', and 'how'; but we cannot answer the question about 'why' [5]. In addition, the design has the ability to deal with everything that is measurable or countable. This type of research deals with quantitative ideas of a study's variables. It is accurate and can be very useful; however, it cannot investigate causal relationships between variables. We use the descriptive research to observe, document, and describe phenomena; but we cannot readily explain a phenomenon as an objective value [24]. Depending on the issues being investigated, this kind of research can be more abstract.

2.3. Target population

The population that was studied comprised all stakeholders in the EMM. Specifically, the most relevant departments for this study were water and sanitation, electricity, waste collection, and housing. The units of analysis to be studied can be a specific case or social life. One can use more than one unit of analysis [14]. To identify the unit of analysis for a study, one has to consider developing a concept, measuring a variable empirically, or undertaking concept observation and data analysis. The unit of analysis is regarded as the main entity used in data analysis. This study used two types of unit of analysis, namely primary and secondary. Specifically, the primary unit of analysis was at the level of the participation mechanism (i.e., the local or municipal government). Four secondary units of analysis were used. These corresponded to the four different respondent groups: citizens, ward committee members [44], senior managers, and business people. Service delivery should include equity and efficiency, among other things, given that efficient, effective, economical, and equitable public service are the prerequisites of sustainable public service [30].

2.4. Sample size selection and determination

EMM has a population of about 3.4 million people, with an average growth rate of 2.47% per annum; it represents 6% of the country's population [23]. The municipality was divided into 20 non-overlapping customer care centres. For this study, the online sample calculator [7] was used to estimate the minimum sample sizes for the different stakeholder or respondent groups, using a 99% confidence interval and a maximum standard error of 0.05 (for citizens) or 0.01 (for the other respondent groups). For the citizens, a minimum sample size of 665 for a target population of 2.5 million respondents was suggested; however, the researcher used a sample size of 1 000 citizens to cater for the possible withdrawal of respondents and for missing data. For the ward committee members, with a total population of 1 010 potential respondents, a minimum sample size of 401 respondents was recommended. However, the researcher used a sample size of 400 respondents. For senior managers, with a total number of 836, a minimum sample size of 428 respondents was recommended, but a sample size of 400 respondents was actually used. From a total

population of 1 431 small businesses (i.e., small-, micro-, and medium-sized enterprises [SMMEs]) in Ekurhuleni according to the EMM records, a minimum sample size of 299 respondents was recommended, but the researcher decided to use a sample size of 300 respondents.

2.5. Sampling procedures

Sampling is a process that is used to select a portion of the target population to represent it [36]. A sampling design is defined as the blueprint explaining the way in which sampling is supposed to be done. A sampling procedure gives all the descriptions that are necessary to ensure that a representative sample is obtained, managed, reported, and analysed in order to achieve the study's objectives and the requirements of the researcher [36]. For this study, the stratified sampling method was applied, considering the geographical locations of the wards in the various communities. This ensured that all of the stakeholder groups were well represented in the sample.

2.6. Research instruments

2.6.1. Questionnaires

Survey questionnaires were used for this study because they enable the researcher to compare and analyse responses from community members who gave their views on the issues that were investigated [21]. The questionnaire's design was based on various constructs and, because these were latent variables, they were operationalised using questions on a measurement scale. The questionnaire was piloted to validate it. In addition, the questionnaire was checked by an expert in the field who logically checked and rechecked the questions against the study's objectives. Feedback from the pilot survey respondents was also incorporated into the data collection instrument. The customer care areas (CCAs) of the EMM were used to undertake the survey; they are aimed at assisting walk-in customers (or citizens) with various demands such as paying bills, opening new accounts, and sorting out municipal-related problems. Therefore, these areas were used as the basis for undertaking the survey in order to obtain the opinions of citizens about their satisfaction with local government service delivery. For each area, the systematic sampling technique was applied, in which the first respondent to fill in the questionnaire was allocated a number from 1 to 10 inclusive, using the R statistical package.

2.6.2. Interviews

Interview guides were constructed to collect qualitative data through interviews. A management expert scrutinised and validated the instrument. The semi-structured interviews helped the researcher to collect relevant data from the key stakeholders in service delivery in the EMM. The semi-structured questions helped the researcher to obtain specific data by posing questions that left room to probe for more detailed ideas and perceptions about the issues that were being investigated. In general, in-depth interviews help a researcher to obtain insights into people's contexts and lives [39], which helps to gain access to their world and their perceptions. The participants were asked to comment on service delivery issues. For example, they were requested to comment on the various responsibilities that local communities were taking on in the service delivery process. The researcher booked appointments with the relevant municipality officials for the interviews. In the event that an official was out of office, the researcher used a telephonic interview.

2.7. Data analysis and presentation

After the data collection, the exercise of interpreting the research findings to derive the meanings of the results began. This involved both qualitative and quantitative data, which were differently analysed and presented. The descriptive data analysis involved summarising the data to identify trends and patterns using frequency distributions, measures of central tendency (e.g., sample mean and standard deviations), as well as graphical representations of the data (e.g., histograms and pie charts). AMOS 23.0 (in the SPSS 23.0 computer software) [34] [43] was also employed. The software is user-friendly; one can quickly specify, view, and graphically modify a fitted model using simple drawing tools. The qualitative data analysis helped to explain the relationships among the key variables.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Demographic composition of respondents

In the sample of 899 there were slightly more females than males, with a ratio of 1.04:1; 51% of the sample were females and 49% were males. These statistics mirror the gender ratio in the EMM. In general, women participate more than men in service delivery issues, since they are more directly involved in daily chores such as fetching water for household use and refuse removal. In addition, women mostly do disposal and secure reliable energy sources for cooking. Concerning respondents' age categories, Figure 2 indicates that most of the respondents (53.5%) came from the 19 to 35 years age group (i.e., the youngest age group), followed by the 36 to 45 year age group (24.5%). The majority of the black African respondents also came from the 19 to 35 year age group (55.2%). Surprisingly, 20.5% of the white respondents came from the 65+ year age group. Figure 3 illustrates this more clearly.

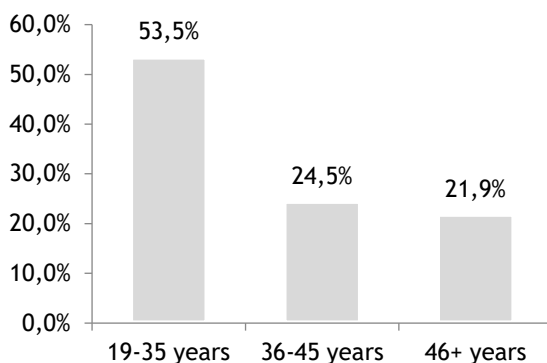


Figure 2: Age categories of respondents

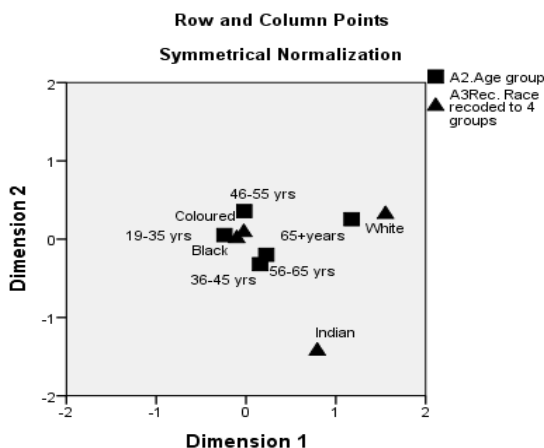


Figure 3: A boxplot correspondence analysis of A3 versus A4

According to Statistics South Africa, the general race composition of the EMM is such that black Africans 78.7%, Whites 14.4%, Coloureds 4.1% and Indian 2.8% constitute the Ekurhuleni population respectively. Because of apartheid, most black Africans still reside on the periphery of the EMM. Normally these areas are underserved as far as service delivery is concerned, the major reason being that the EMM still has difficulty integrating the areas into the historic nodes and improving their economic opportunities. Figure 4 shows the race distribution. The majority of the respondents were black Africans (86%).

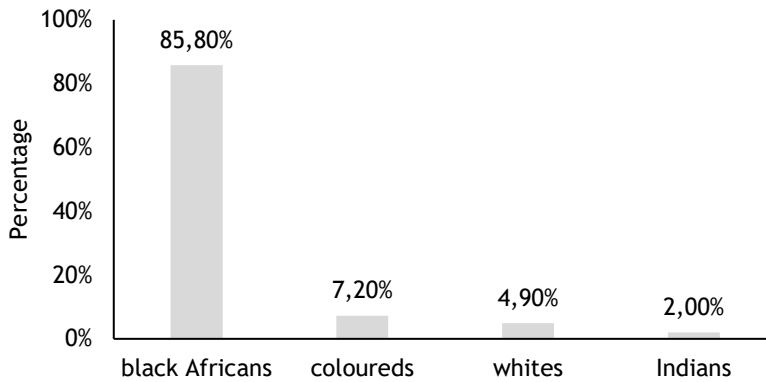


Figure 4: Race composition for the respondents

According to [40], 77.4% of the people in the EMM live in formal dwellings; the current study yielded 70.4%, which is almost the same. The percentage of those (mostly black Africans) who live in informal dwellings such as shacks was 16.1%. To try to correct the housing problems facing the majority of black communities, the post-apartheid government established the socio-economic development strategy, which replaced the residual apartheid model of welfare that exploited and discriminated against the black majority [16].

Table 1: Types of dwelling in Ekurhuleni

| | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------|-----------|------------|
| House | 633 | 70.4 |
| Flat | 49 | 5.5 |
| Townhouse | 36 | 4.0 |
| Informal dwelling (shack) | 145 | 16.1 |
| Other | 35 | 3.9 |
| Total | 899 | 100.0 |

3.2. Public participation knowledge

Government introduced the Batho Pele ('People first') principles (i.e., consultation, service standards, access, courtesy, information, openness and transparency, redress, and value for money) to create a better life for all and to motivate the right attitude and good governance [12]. This is a 'tool' that is nested in strategies [6] that are intended to increase PP and service delivery [11] [27] [28]. Therefore, if citizens knew and understood the importance of the Batho Pele principles, they would also understand the dynamics of PP in service delivery. The findings of the current study show that 50% of the citizen respondents had a good knowledge of the Batho Pele principles, 33% had an average knowledge, while only 17% (Figure 5) had little knowledge of the importance and applications of the Batho Pele principles in service delivery. The results also indicated that the majority of the people who had little knowledge of the Batho Pele principles were the coloured and white respondents. The black respondents were mostly in the category of people who had a good knowledge of the Batho Pele principles, as shown in the biplot below.

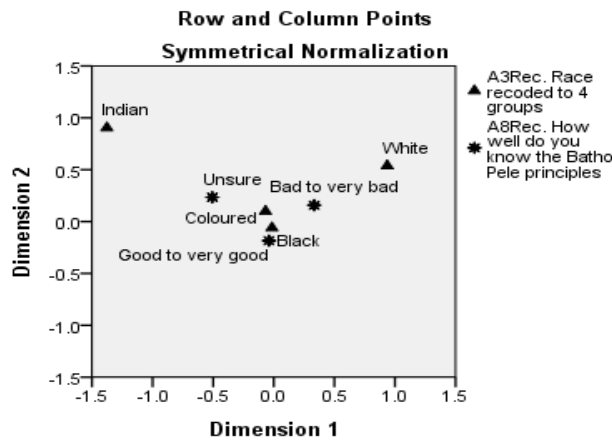


Figure 5: A biplot correspondence analysis of A8 versus A4

The race-based differences in the knowledge of Batho Pele reflected the previously disadvantaged groups in society who were not included in development.

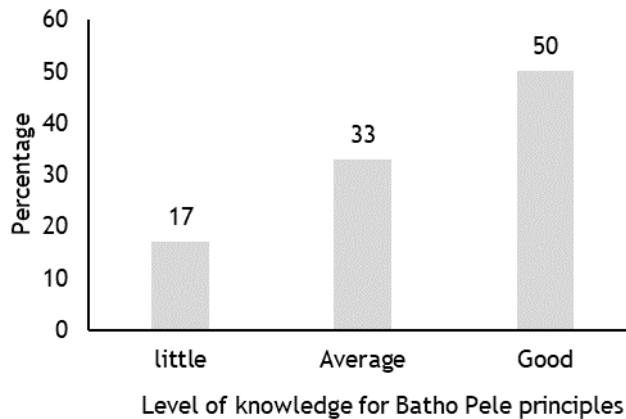


Figure 6: Level of knowledge of Batho Pele principles

Figure 6 indicates that respondents from the municipal managers group revealed that the adoption and implementation of the Batho Pele principles (i.e., consultation, service standards, access, courtesy, information, openness and transparency, redress, and value for money) had enhanced professional and customer-orientated service in the municipality. It was also established that these constructs feature in any framework or model that is intended to keep the complexities involved in service delivery issues to a minimum (Figure 6). The knowledge of the importance of PP that was demonstrated by the respondents would be crucial in creating a platform for the public to participate in local government forums such as the integrated development programme and in other strategic decisions relating to the provision of municipal services (Table 2). Generally, initiatives using the Batho Pele principles have been enthusiastically welcomed and received in the Ekurhuleni community. Despite the successful application of the principles, a study by [1] claims that the principles could not yield the desired results owing to their slow implementation.

Table 2: Frequency of knowledge of the Batho Pele principles by groups in the sample

| | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|----------------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Bad to very bad | 293 | 32.6 | 32.6 | 32.6 |
| Neither bad nor good | 156 | 17.4 | 17.4 | 50.0 |
| Good to very good | 449 | 49.9 | 50.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 898 | 99.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | 1 | 0.1 | | |
| Total | 899 | 100.0 | | |

3.3. Communication media and service delivery

Effective service delivery requires effective communication channels. The results of the current study show that information about PP in service delivery is disseminated via radio, television, newspapers, and mobile phones. Statistics from the study showed that 40% of the respondents received service delivery communications by radio, while 28% received them by television, 18% in newspapers, and 14% on their mobile phones. Generally, radio is the most frequently used communication medium in the Ekurhuleni community. Radio is the most viable means of communication mainly because of its wide coverage and its availability on many devices such as car radios and mobile phones. The major communications about service delivery that were reported in the study included calls for public meetings to discuss issues such as the state of service delivery in the EMM, public and stakeholder consultations about major development projects, and arrangements for service delivery protests.

Policy communication and improved service delivery ultimately contribute to building community, prosperity, and local economic development [33]. With regard to the types of communication that are received through the forms of media discussed above, the current study revealed that each media platform has its own main issues that it targets. For example, policy formulation announcements are made on the radio, while the debates about and proceedings of policies are broadcast on television. Notices about service delivery changes or delays are normally communicated in the local newspaper (Table 3). The media platforms that are mentioned above and that are used to communicate service delivery issues in EMM are the official communication platforms. However, media have gained widespread acceptance in most spheres of government worldwide, as they provide an opportunity for speedy two-way communication between government and the electorate and reduce the bureaucratic red tape that is usually associated with mainstream communication by governments.

Table 3: Frequency table of ‘yes’ and ‘no’ groups about regarding communication through newspapers

| | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|---------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Yes | 421 | 46.8 | 65.4 | 65.4 |
| No | 223 | 24.8 | 34.6 | 100.0 |
| Total | 644 | 71.6 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | 255 | 28.4 | | |
| Total | 899 | 100.0 | | |

The major languages used in service delivery communications are English, sePedi, isiZulu, seSotho, and isiXhosa. All of the reported findings from the current study about language show that English is the most frequently used language, with 40.9% of the respondents confirming that they receive service delivery communications in English. The widespread use of English could be attributed to its use as the first official language in South Africa, and so is understood by the majority of the citizens. However, the results from the current study revealed that local communities prefer to receive important communications in home languages that they understand. Although they understand English, the respondents explained that they prefer communications that are in local languages such as sePedi, isiZulu, and seSotho (Table 4). The use

of translators, especially on important issues such as policy documents, is disliked, since it leads to the loss of some important detail in the process.

Table 4: Communication in official languages

| | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|--------------|------------|--------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| No answer | 330 | 36.7 | 36.7 | 36.7 |
| Afrikaans | 8 | 0.9 | 0.9 | 37.6 |
| English | 403 | 44.8 | 44.8 | 82.4 |
| isiNdebele | 3 | 0.3 | 0.2 | 82.8 |
| sePedi | 23 | 2.6 | 2.6 | 85.3 |
| seSotho | 13 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 86.8 |
| siSwati | 2 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 87.0 |
| xiTsonga | 8 | 0.9 | 0.9 | 87.9 |
| seTswana | 5 | 0.6 | 0.6 | 88.4 |
| tshiVenda | 5 | 0.6 | 0.6 | 89.0 |
| isiXhosa | 14 | 1.6 | 1.6 | 90.5 |
| isiZulu | 85 | 9.5 | 9.5 | 100.0 |
| Total | 899 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

3.4. Perceptions of public participation

The current study also evaluated the citizens' perceptions of the overall performance and participation of the public in service delivery [2]. The evaluation of how the general public views the quality of service they are receiving forms the foundation of ensuring maximum participation of local communities in service delivery. The null hypothesis was that the mean score of perception would be 4, using a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), using a one-sample t-test. In Table 5, the first column shows the questions that were posed to the respondents about PP. Columns 2 to 7 show their corresponding frequencies and percentages (in brackets); column 8 shows the mean scores; column 9 shows the standard deviation (Std dev.); column 10 shows the median; column 11 shows the t-value and its probability (p) in brackets; and column 12 shows the conclusion - that is, it indicates whether the null hypothesis was rejected or accepted.

The results reveal that most respondents agreed that regular meetings were being held with local communities about the state of service delivery in the municipality. The majority of the respondents (44.3%) fell into the 'agree' category (scores 5-7). The respondents confirmed that they do participate in major decisions about service delivery. Although there is an indication that community members do participate in service delivery issues, community problems related to service delivery arise as usual. The general perception on the way in which community problems are handled is that the majority of the respondents believe that community problems are not taken seriously when they arise. The public (51%) confirmed that the responsible authorities do not act swiftly in responding to issues that affect the quality of service delivery. For example, reports of inconsistent refuse collection take months to be resolved. In some cases, the municipal departments will only react after the outbreak of diseases, such as cholera, that are caused by poor sanitation; 49% of the respondents believe that the public is not well informed about the projects that are earmarked for their regions. The research has shown that most developmental projects come to them as a surprise; in most cases they become aware of the projects only when they are in the implementation stage, when they can make hardly any input. Concerning feedback and progress reports on service delivery in EMM, the respondents feel that there are too few mechanisms and communication channels that promote regular feedback to the public.

Concerning the inclusion of the public in budgeting and planning, 54% of the respondents reported that they feel that the municipality is not adequately involving the public in participating in service delivery budgeting and planning. It seems that most local communities are only involved once the municipal officials have drawn up the budget, but that they do not participate in the decision-making right from the beginning

of the budgeting process, as they should. Exclusion or inadequate participation can easily lead to the poor implementation of policies and project plans because a gap is created between the planning and implementation processes. PP in the budgeting process is a prerequisite for quality service delivery.

It also seems that, at the local level, the committee members do not communicate people's inputs into the budgeting process. On the other hand, the EMM managers revealed that it is very difficult to involve all the citizens in all the budgeting stages, since budgeting issues involve accounting and financial skills and experience that the public may not possess. Concerning service delivery implementation, the findings from the current study revealed that 50% of the respondents believe that there is still a need to ensure that the municipality works together with the public in implementing the agreed service delivery mandates within the expected timelines. Regarding gender issues, the general perception is that men and women are included equally in the decision-making processes for service delivery. The findings from the current research also confirmed that the contributions that women's groups make help the participatory and service delivery process; thereby emphasizing the need for equal gender representation in service delivery processes.

Table 5: Public participation mean scores

| Public participation | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Disagree somewhat | Undecided | Agree somewhat | Agree | Strongly agree | Mean | Std dev. | Median | T(p) | Reject/ Accept |
|--|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|------|----------|--------|-----------------|----------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 1. Meetings are held regularly with the public/ communities? | 181 (20.1) | 133 (14.8) | 62 (6.9) | 124 (13.8) | 129 (14.4) | 216 (24.0) | 54 (6.0) | 3.8 | 2.0 | 4 | -2.6 (.005) | Reject (Disagree) |
| 2. Community problems are taken seriously by the municipality? | 170 (18.9) | 182 (20.2) | 101 (11.2) | 106 (11.8) | 138 (15.4) | 143 (15.9) | 57 (6.3) | 3.6 | 2.0 | 3 | -6.6 (.000) | Reject (Disagree) |
| 3. Municipality and the public work together in budgeting to enhance service delivery? | 189 (21.0) | 196 (21.8) | 101 (11.2) | 139 (15.5) | 107 (11.9) | 138 (15.4) | 29 (3.2) | 3.3 | 1.9 | 3 | -10.6 (.000) | Reject (Disagree) |
| 4. Municipality and the public work together in planning process for service delivery? | 174 (19.3) | 187 (20.8) | 98 (10.9) | 136 (15.1) | 116 (12.9) | 148 (16.5) | 40 (4.5) | 3.5 | 1.9 | 3 | -8.1 (.000) | Reject (Disagree) |
| 5. Municipality and the public work together in implementation of service delivery? | 179 (19.9) | 176 (19.6) | 95 (10.6) | 151 (16.8) | 115 (12.8) | 143 (15.9) | 40 (4.5) | 3.5 | 1.9 | 3 | -8.2 (.000) | Reject (Disagree) |
| 6. Communities are informed about projects earmarked for their regions. | 193 (21.5) | 150 (16.7) | 94 (10.5) | 115 (12.8) | 117 (12.9) | 170 (18.9) | 60 (6.7) | 3.6 | 2.0 | 4 | -5.6 (.000) | Reject (Disagree) |
| 7. Communities are involved in the budgeting process for municipal service delivery? | 225 (25.0) | 208 (23.1) | 82 (9.1) | 115 (12.8) | 88 (9.8) | 138 (15.4) | 43 (4.8) | 3.2 | 2.0 | 3 | -11.6 (.000) | Reject (Disagree) |
| 8. Are you regularly consulted on matters that affect you? | 212 (23.6) | 187 (20.8) | 78 (6.7) | 90 (10.0) | 122 (13.6) | 166 (18.5) | 44 (4.9) | 3.4 | 2.0 | 3 | -8.3 (.000) | Reject (Disagree) |
| 9. Feedback is given to communities regularly? | 221 (24.6) | 195 (21.7) | 89 (9.9) | 86 (9.6) | 117 (13.0) | 140 (15.6) | 51 (5.7) | 3.3 | 2.0 | 3 | -9.9 (.000) | Reject (Disagree) |

3.5. Accountability and transparency in service delivery

Transparency and accountability are key elements in effective service delivery [33] [41]. According to the Social Development Note No. 75, transparency and accountability create sustainable and representative government, and help public institutions to meet the expectations of the population. The involvement of the public in the service delivery process in South Africa has yielded positive results. The current study has revealed that 40% of the citizens agree that the municipality is well aware of the cost of the services being provided. The pricing and rates are consistent, although 39% of the respondents revealed that there were some grey areas concerning the costs of service delivery. About 21% of the respondent are not sure if the costs of service delivery and the type of services rendered are worth it. Furthermore, concerning the quality of service delivered by the municipality, 42% of the respondents agree that the municipality is clear about the quality of services it offers in the EMM. Although some citizens agree with the quality of the service delivery, some believe that the process of quality is compromised somehow, since there is a lack of consistency. On the other hand, the results showed that the citizens are very aware of the services that they should receive.

Good service delivery requires responsible local government authorities who take responsibility for any failures in service delivery [33]. The findings of the current study revealed that the EMM does accept responsibility for service delivery failures. The respondents reported that the failures are caused by corruption, poor financial and economic planning, and inconsistent PP policies. Those problems have caused massive backlogs, a poor skills base, and persistent service delivery protests that are often characterised by violence. In most cases, the municipality shifts the blame for its failures to the contractors it has appointed. However, the municipal managers argue that the socio-economic problems created by apartheid are a huge challenge for the current government. Therefore, the managers note that integrated development planning is seen to be the most appropriate strategy for the country to apply. The findings from the current study concur with those of previous studies [33] [41], that accountability and transparency in service delivery allow civil society and government to interact in a way that acknowledges the limitations that each sector faces while recognising that collaboration is necessary for effective and sustainable development.

3.6. The influence of power struggles on PP

The politicisation of the process of service delivery in South Africa has shaped and influenced the levels of PP in the whole service delivery process. Politicisation involves the interference of government leaders in the administration of certain public institutions on the directive of a political party to which they directly or indirectly belong. The current study has established that political interference influences appointments to positions at the Ekurhuleni Municipality. Furthermore, political party interference influences PP negatively. About 53% of the respondents agreed that party politics negatively affect service delivery. For example, the selection of ward committees in local communities is normally biased towards the preferences of the ward councillor and the political party they serve. As a result, in most cases the ward committees that are supposed to improve the participation of the public in service delivery end up serving the interests of their political party. Owing to such political influence, the municipality ends up having poorly skilled employees who were not hired on the basis of their competency.

4. FINDINGS

The findings from the current study revealed that power struggles affect municipal service delivery negatively. South Africa has had several violent demonstrations over the lack of service delivery, among other reasons, especially in the historically disadvantaged communities, and the lack of 'the power to be heard'. It is also probable that these demonstrations are mostly about political power and a sense of entitlement, of unrealistic expectations on the part of these communities, or empty promises made by politicians. The current study indicates that there is a high level of uncertainty, tending towards partial agreement, about whether there is a healthy relationship between local governments and the communities. In addition, it was established that, in areas where political parties influence the selection of ward committees, there are no healthy relationships between the local government and the ward committees. The interviews with the EMM's managers indicated that, for PP to yield better results in improving service delivery, the PP process should be de-politicised. Generally, the de-politicisation of public administration helps to reform local governments where political interference is prevalent [35]. Figure 6 shows a histogram and a boxplot for the effect of power struggles on effective municipal service delivery.

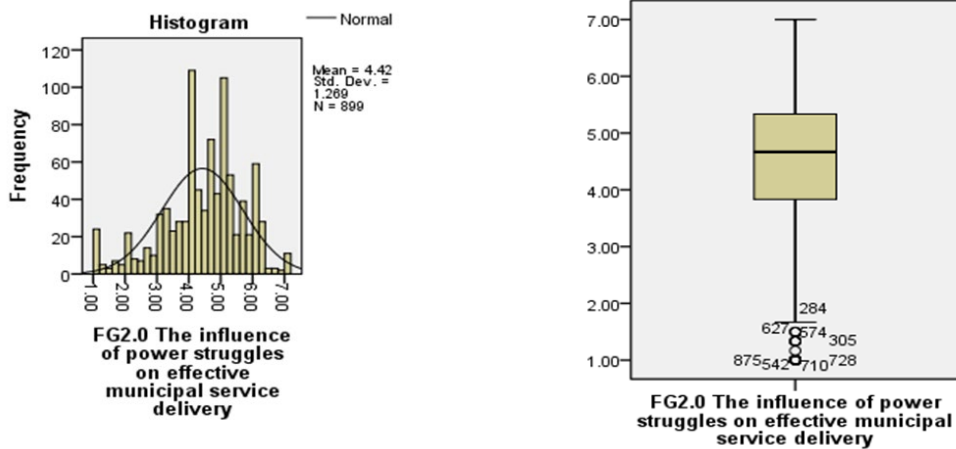


Figure 7: Histogram and boxplot for the effect of power struggles on effective municipal service delivery

The results from the current study concurred with those of [17], who noted that some local authorities in Uganda are made up of equal numbers of councillors from different political parties, but that they collapse when policy-makers fail to agree on development priorities and budgets. Similarly, [15] reported that some municipalities in South Africa, such as uMhlathuze, are being investigated for nepotism in the recruitment of personnel who do not have the appropriate qualifications and experience.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK

The study assessed the role of PP in improving the quality of service delivery. The study used EMM in Gauteng Province as a case study. The study established that service delivery in the EMM still suffers from huge backlogs and a poor resource base, created by the apartheid system. The knowledge of the importance of PP that was demonstrated by the respondents would be crucial in creating a platform for the public to participate in local government forums under the integrated development programme and in other strategic decisions relating to the provision of municipal services. The respondents who were more involved in managing local municipalities had the most positive perceptions about the role of PP in effective service delivery. On the other hand, the respondents from the citizens group expressed their dissatisfaction with the influence of political parties on service delivery. It could be concluded that government could increase the quality of service delivery by increasing PP and effective communication, transparency and accountability, and gender representation. In addition, government could reduce the factors that impede PP at the local government level by minimising power struggles. The disturbing tension between facilitation and power struggles should be managed by creating a new environment that would positively remove these key contradictions. Collaborative efforts should also be made to emphasise what is important, and to strive towards this goal rather than the tendency of competing against one another for personal or party gains.

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