

# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONTEXTUAL FACTOR AND SERVICE DELIVERY PERCEPTIONS IN A MAJOR CITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

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## ABSTRACT

South African municipalities have in recent times been piqued with unprecedented servicedelivery protests, indicative of a failure to provide these amenities as expected. With soaring levels of unemployment and rampant poverty, it follows that poor service delivery adds to growing dissatisfaction in these communities. This study aimed to investigate perceptions of the permanent staff of a major city regarding the role that contextual factors, such as a controlled environment (the presence of leadership capacity and the lack of functional support), control activities, strategic planning, management information systems, performance monitoring, and ethics, play in service delivery. This study employed a cross-sectional design to reach its objectives based on the positive paradigm and quantitative approach. The results suggest that below mid-level ethics and service delivery scores were observed. In addition, ethics and service delivery were positively related to a capable control environment strategic planning, control activities, a solid management information system, and a lack of supporting functions in the control environment. Ethics also proved to be only a statistically significant predictor of service delivery. Recommendations

for the organisation, future research and suggested limitations of the study are also discussed.

**Key words:** Control, strategic planning, ethics, and service delivery.

## INTRODUCTION

Globally, local municipalities are regarded as the sphere of government that functions closest to the local communities, often mandated to deliver critical services as needed for livelihood and business. According to Cahill (2013), the universal role of municipalities is to ensure accountability and democratic administration for the local community, including sustainable service delivery and socio-economic development. Municipalities also exist to provide a healthy and safe environment that encourages community involvement. In most countries, it is common for ratepayers to analyse the value they receive from the local governments. This becomes a motivating mandate for local governments, as service delivery entities, to ensure value for money and efficient delivery of services to these ratepayers (Dzansi & Dzansi, 2010). According to Whitaker (2012), global local governments should carry the responsibility of delivering services relevant to a society and resulting in society's enhanced welfare. Angahar (2013) argued that the services provided by municipalities are a key ingredient in enhancing the quality of life of the public and impact any poverty reduction strategy that any government would want to execute.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2013) highlights that most cities in developing countries are constantly facing severe service delivery challenges amplified in recent years due to the excessive pollution growths that these cities experience annually. Local municipalities operate in distinct populations and areas where they have the power to carry out public activities (Humes & Martin, 2015:49). The three main features of local municipalities include an autonomous legal

status separate from the other spheres of government, autonomy to raise and utilise revenue and the autonomy to make decisions independent from the provincial central government.

There are 257 municipalities in South Africa, comprising eight metropolitans, 44 districts and 205 local municipalities. These state organs have a specific focus: to grow local economies and provide infrastructure and service. South African municipalities are mandated to set up structures and create administrations capable of budgeting and planning to deliver the prioritised needs of the communities they serve (Carter, 1994). In South Africa, the character of municipalities emanates from a function of laws governing the local government, including the Municipal Structures Act, No. 117 of 1998 (S.A., 1998), which mandates municipalities to ensure the provision of services. Furthermore, the Act warrants regular monitoring and review of municipal performance to evaluate service delivery and compliance. Unfortunately, municipal services characterise the disregard of the Act and a perpetual contravention of by-laws (Hood and Dixon, 2014). This study seeks to investigate perceptions of the permanent staff of a major city. Regarding the role that situational or contextual factors, such as the presence or lack of a controlled environment, control activities, strategic planning, management information systems (M.I.S.) plays, performance monitoring, and ethics, play in service delivery.

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

All municipalities are mandated to provide residences with basic services that include, but are not limited to, water, sanitation, electricity, and waste removal. South African municipalities have in recent times been piqued with unprecedented service delivery protests indicative of the failure to provide these amenities as expected. With soaring levels of unemployment and rampant poverty, it follows that poor service delivery adds to growing dissatisfaction in these communities. Chapter 7 of the South

African Constitution (1996) highlights one of the key mandates of municipalities as service delivery accountability. In recent decades, most South African municipalities have been hit by a wave of violent service delivery related protests (Gwane, 2015). He also adds that these protests have left a trail of property damages amounting to millions of Rands and even loss of lives.

The Gauteng Provincial Legislature surveyed between 2013 and 2014 to assess the service delivery quality offered by Gauteng local municipalities. More than 65% of participants pointed out that they were not happy with the quality of service offered (Gauteng Provincial Legislature, 2015). Gwane, (2015) also adds that most Gauteng municipalities are not guided by Section 195(1) of the 1996 Constitution, which insists that public service delivery should adopt core values including equality, human dignity, and a drive for non-racialism. Despite the government's Local Government Turnaround Strategy (LGTAS) most local authorities are critically underperforming when it comes to delivering a supply of basic services such as public utilities, social welfare, health, town planning, infrastructure development, water, and power distribution.

South African municipalities have been criticised for their poor administration, resulting in poor service delivery to local communities. In general, fraud and corruption in local governments and public service remain a significant challenge for proper governance in the public sector. Here large amounts of state funds are squandered or looted without being accounted for and where state resources are utilised for personal use gain. It is, therefore, evident that the public sector lacks an adequate reporting system to support good governance (Smit & Cronjé, 2002). Service delivery has become a common phenomenon in South Africa. The presence of especially violent service delivery protests is a threat to South Africa's young democracy and its sustainability



(Maphumulo, 2016). Therefore, this study will explore key success factors that could ensure enhanced service delivery within the city.

## LITERATURE

### ***Service and service delivery by local authorities***

Kotler and Armstrong (2014) define services as a product that consists of activities, benefits or satisfactions offered for sale that is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything. They also add that public services are those services that entail those activities that are publicly and centrally managed and have taxes as their main source of funding. Mfene (2009) believes that service delivery depends on clear and realistic policies, appropriate allocation of powers, functions and financial resources, and performance. Additionally, accountability of state organs to implement policies, coordination between organs of State, public participation, and involvement and the level of self-reliance of communities also impact the quality-of-service delivery (Mfene, 2009).

According to Naidoo (2015), service delivery matters like access to housing, water, and electricity, among others, remain on top of the agenda for most communities. Municipalities at the grassroots level are tasked to provide services like education, water, waste disposal services, roads, housing, transport, security, public utilities, electricity, economic development schemes, health, and law enforcement (Angahar, 2013). According to the Municipal Research and Services Centre (2005) the delivery of services is the production process of a service resulting in intangible or tangible value. Examples would include refusing collection and refuse disposal, streetlight connection and road construction. Service delivery is defined by Nealer (2007) as the provision of public activities, benefits or satisfaction, and the provision of both tangible goods and intangible services. Customers react in a different way to what appears to be the same service. Service delivery is

abstracted as implementing specific types of policy objectives in the public sector with various degrees of success (Cloete, 2004). Mfene (2009) defines service delivery as an encompassing activity aimed at promoting the general welfare of the community.

There are two main ways that municipalities deliver services. They can either use their own resources, including equipment and finances or outsource resources to private contractors. The latter is one of the most common ways that municipalities deliver services. However, whatever method is utilised must be aligned to the overall agenda of enhancing service quality, availability, and affordability (Pieterse, 2002). Municipalities must provide services based on constitutional obligations (Koma, 2010). This means that local municipalities are required to serve the public interest in areas of public markets drainages, building primary schools, constructing roads, healthcare centres, transportation, and motor parks (Bolatito & Ibrahim, 2014). The provision of these services has an immediate and direct effect on the quality of the lives of local people since poor service delivery will result in reduced industry and business activity in an area, thereby reducing job opportunities for the residents (Angahar, 2013).

The served customers are the ones who can only achieve the change, whether it's acquiring a new skill or getting new healthy habits or getting a new family outlook. In customer service companies, employees in the frontline represent the company in the customers' eyes and can have a significant impact on the image and reputation of the company. When the frontline employees provide good quality services, the customer needs can be met. As a result, it is crucial for a company's management to understand the needs and wants of their customers and their employees' ability to provide the services. By managing the frontline output, a company gains a positive reputation and this overall satisfaction has a strong positive effect on customer loyalty (Dabholkar &

Abston, 2008). Besley and Ghatak (2007) point out that the delivery of public services requires a connection of relationships between various stakeholders, including political entities, beneficiaries, and other service providers. They also add that incentives that drive these stakeholders should always be continuously analysed to ensure the beneficiaries best interests. The customers distinguish services as either being of high quality or low quality, and customers expect reliability and honesty from service providers (Ukens, 2007:119).

There was under-investment in municipal infrastructure in black areas and townships during the pre-1994 era. This disadvantaged millions of people and denied them access to basic services, including water, electricity, sanitation, refuse collection and roads. Local government must address this backlog, and its central mandate is to develop service delivery capacity to meet the basic needs of communities. Tamrakar (2010) argues that the mandate of public service entities should be to ensure that the clients' needs are met. According to Venter et al. (2007), service delivery provides public activities, benefits, or satisfactions. However, in most cases, the delivery of services is characterised by inefficiencies, high costs, corruption, and lack of transparency, red tape, and irregular expenses. In most developing countries, public servants have for decades been disregarding their core mandate and acting without any sense of accountability (Tamrakar, 2010).

### ***Factors affecting service delivery in municipalities***

Most municipalities are now failing to operate and sustainably maintain their services delivery mandate. Several factors have been identified that relate to service delivery within municipalities. According to Aminuzzaman (2010), the critical element that has tainted the reputation and credibility of most local government authorities has been the quality and scope of service delivery. Gwayi (2010) also argues that the most common ingredients for poor service

delivery include lack of public involvement, budget constraints, councillor interference, poor leadership, poor infrastructure, and lack of adequate skills. Sarshar and Moores (2006) also revealed further barriers to efficient service delivery, including inefficient resources, circumvention of local authority by central government entities, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of complete autonomy of local government officials. Aminuzzaman (2010) also adds that the main cause of poor service delivery lies in constrained resources and manpower (as most local municipalities are understaffed), the poorly coordinated relationship between extension service delivery stakeholders and local authorities (resulting in ineffective and dysfunctional objectives), a deficient regulatory system, lack of monitoring, poor accountability system, the lack of support from central government, political intervention, lack of community understanding, unstable revenue base, poorly designed programmes, and discrimination of woman during decision making.

Sarshar and Moores (2006) also identify key challenges that are often a hindrance to efficient service delivery, such as managers in local governments that cannot comprehend the set of strategies within their spheres of influence, the lack of the resource capacity to implement service delivery, a lack of performance monitoring systems, a lack of coordinated procedures and processes such as planning, delivery, procurement and management, including performance standards that are not enforced, high staff turnover, weak and unstructured disciplinary procedures, the lack of qualified personnel and unsuitable recruitment. These have indirectly or directly affected service delivery at a grassroots level and have hampered the ability of municipalities to perform elementary tasks, which include responding to infrastructure failures in time (Ekpo, 2008). Corruption has also been identified as one of the crucial issues that hinder most municipalities from effective delivery of services (Bolaito &



Ibrahim, 2014). The presence of rampant undue political interference in municipalities has removed the critical autonomous characteristic of most municipalities, as state governors interfere in the affairs of local municipalities (Adeyemi, 2013).

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the abovementioned, several research questions arise. First, the general research question was to determine perceptions of situational (contextual) factors and service delivery among full-time employees of a major city in South Africa. In addition, the specific research questions of the study were:

- What are the prevalence levels of the presence or lack of a controlled environment, control activity, strategic planning, management information systems (M.I.S.), performance monitoring, ethics, and service delivery?
- What are the relationships between the presence or lack of a controlled environment, control activity, strategic planning, management information systems (M.I.S.), performance monitoring, ethics, and service delivery; and
- What is the role of the presence or lack of a controlled environment, control activity, strategic planning, management information systems (M.I.S.), performance monitoring, ethics, in service delivery?

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study was embarked upon to answer the primary and secondary questions stated above. The general research objective was to determine perceptions of situational (contextual) factors and service delivery among full-time employees of a major city in South Africa. The specific research objectives of the study were to determine:

- The presence or lack of a controlled environment, control activity, strategic planning, management information systems (M.I.S.), performance

monitoring, ethics, and service delivery.

- The relationships between the presence or lack of a controlled environment, control activity, strategic planning, management information systems (M.I.S.), performance monitoring, ethics, and service delivery; and
- The role of the presence or lack of a controlled environment, control activity, strategic planning, management information systems (M.I.S.), performance monitoring, ethics, in service delivery

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology section focuses on the research approach, methods, and design used in this study. In addition, this section also contains information on the sample and the sampling techniques used. This section also attends to the measuring instruments used and data analysis.

### ***Research approach, design, population, sampling technique and sample***

The research objectives were pursued following a quantitative approach and cross-sectional design, using self-developed questionnaires to obtain the relevant data. The study was conducted among full-time staff (n = 60) of a major city in South Africa, using a convenient sampling strategy. Additional characteristics of the sample revealed that most of the sample were males (86%), at the age group between 40-49 (36.8%), held a degree (33%), and operational personnel (37%).

### ***Research procedure, data collection and ethical considerations***

The researcher first requested permission to research the principal of the city. Once ethical clearance was obtained, notices of information sessions were placed on the city's notice boards (physical and electronic) to recruit possible respondents for the study. Dates and venues of these sessions were communicated via intranet and notices on notice boards on campuses. During these sessions, the researcher explained the study's objective and the

ethical issues relevant to the prospective respondents. Respondents were assured of their anonymity and the voluntary nature of the data collection process. The fact that they may opt-out during any stage during the completion of the survey supported the voluntary nature of the study. The researcher attended to the clarity-seeking questions during the information sessions. After the meeting, the researcher distributed the research instrument among the participants. The questionnaire included a covering letter with instructions on how to complete the questionnaire and a consent form. Participants first completed the consent form before starting with the questionnaire. The researcher collected the completed questionnaires and checked for completeness. The responses were captured on an Excel spreadsheet for data analysis using the SPSS version 27 (I.B.M., 2020) computer software. The researcher was careful to ensure that the questionnaire content, as captured on the spreadsheets, was protected with a password known only to the researcher.

### ***Measuring Instruments***

The self-developed measuring instruments that were used in this study had a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree) and included the following:

- Control environment (capable structure): This seven-item scale measured participant perceptions of staff regarding the qualifications and formal training of the Municipal Manager, a system for evaluating K.P.A.'s against their designated KPI, regular skills audits of executive staff, a skills development strategy and job descriptions. Sample items included but were not limited to "The Municipality employ a regular skills audit for employees", "Every position on the municipal organogram have a comprehensive and complete job description" and "Job descriptions re-evaluated regularly".
- Lack of a control environment This

four-item scale measured participant perceptions of a lack of finance, personnel, equipment, and strategic capacity. Sample items included but were not limited to "The municipality has a lack in finances to deliver on set indicators for the K.P.A.'s as set in the Integrated Development Plan", "The municipality has a lack in personnel to deliver on set indicators for the K.P.A.'s as set in the Integrated Development Plan", and "The municipality has a lack in equipment to deliver on set indicators for the K.P.A.'s as set in the Integrated Development Plan".

- Strategic planning: This six-item scale measured participant perceptions of the identification of risks during the strategic planning process, development of departmental business plans and the re-evaluation of business plans. Sample items included but were not limited to "The municipality, in the strategic planning phase, identify risks in accomplishing their objectives", "Every department in the municipality created a business plan to accomplish their K.P.A.'s as set in the strategic plan", and "The municipality re-evaluate their business plans".
- Control activity: This eight-item scale measured participant perceptions of policies and procedures to timely identify deviation from business plans, the evaluations of policies, procedure and practices, documentation and availability of policies and procedure, and a system to evaluate the quality-of-service delivery. Sample items included but were not limited to "The municipality employs a policy or procedure to effect timely identification of deviations from the business plan", "The municipality's policies, procedures and practices are re-evaluated regularly", and "All policies, procedures and practices used by the municipality are readily available to any employee".
- Management information systems (M.I.S.): This six-item scale measured



participant perceptions of the capability of the M.I.S. to generate relevant reports on the municipality's performance, availability of trained staff to operate the M.I.S., user-friendliness of the M.I.S., and the operating speed of the M.I.S. Sample items included but were not limited to "The M.I.S., currently used by the municipality, is capable of generating relevant reports to the performance of the municipality", "The M.I.S., currently used by the municipality, is capable of generating relevant financial reports", and "All municipal employees designated to use the M.I.S. are trained in operating the system".

- Performance monitoring: This five-item scale measured participant perceptions of the presence of an internal auditor, audit committee, regular meetings of the audit committee, the quarterly review of financial statements and other control deficiency reporting mechanisms. Sample items included but were not limited to "The municipality has an Internal Auditor", "The municipality have an Internal Audit committee", and "The Municipality's financial statements are reviewed quarterly by Management".
- Ethics: This seven-item scale measured participant perceptions of senior management role modelling and communicating the importance of integrity and ethical values, availability of a code of conduct, fair and honest dealings with customers and other stakeholders, as well as the investigation of all allegations of violations of the code of conduct. Sample items included but were not limited to "Senior management of the municipality conveys the message that integrity and ethical values cannot be compromised, both in words and in actions", "Senior management has developed a code of business conduct that emphasises the municipality's commitment to fair and honest dealings with customers, suppliers, and other external parties", and "Performance expectations and

incentives are designed not to create undue temptations to violate laws, rules, regulations, and municipality policies and procedures".

- Service delivery: This nine-item scale measured participant perceptions of the provision of relevant, timely, cost-effective, and useful service, effective and efficient service that meet the needs of the community, availability of service, improvement of service quality, and the affordability reliability, and consistency of services. Sample items included but were not limited to "The services provided by the municipality are available at the time and scale that the user needs it", "The municipality is providing services that meet the needs of the users in the most efficient and effective ways", and "The municipality understand and act upon socio-economic needs of the citizens to design appropriate service delivery mechanisms".
- A biographic questionnaire was administered to gather information on the demographic characteristics of participants like age, gender, educational attainment, and job level. This section was included to profile (describe) the sample.

### **Statistical Analysis**

The statistical analysis performed using IBM SPSS (version 27) (IBM, 2021). An exploratory factor analysis was conducted to determine the validity of the job characteristics questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were used to assess the internal consistency of the measuring instruments. Descriptive statistics in the form of means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis were computed to describe the data. Pearson's product-moment correlations were used to assess the relationship between the variables. The statistical significance was set at a 95% confidence interval level ( $p < 0.05$ ). Effect sizes were used to determine the practical relevance of correlations  $< 0.30$  (small effect),  $0.30 < 0.50$  (medium effect) and

>0.50 (large effect) (Cohen, 1998). Cut-off points for the practical significance of the correlation coefficients were set to 0.30 (medium effect) (Cohen, 1988). A regression analysis was also conducted to determine the proportion of variance in the dependent variables of perceptions of service delivery that were predicted by the independent variables, namely, the presence or lack of a control environment, control activity, strategic planning, management information systems (M.I.S.), performance monitoring and ethics. The effect sizes in multiple regression were given by the formula  $f^2 = R^2/1-R^2$  (Steyn, 1999). The parameters for practical significance of  $f^2$  (Steyn, 1999) were set at 0.01 (small effect), 0.09 (medium effect) and 0.35 (large effect).

## RESULTS

The results are presented in four sections below. The results of the exploratory factor analysis on the three scales used in this study are presented first, followed by descriptive statistics of the scales used in the study. Next, the correlations between the constructs measured are presented, and finally, the regression analysis is put forward.

### **Exploratory Factor Analysis (E.F.A.)**

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted on the individual scales, given the limited sample size ( $n = 60$  [Sample size norm:  $n = M \times 5$ ;  $M =$  number of items (Field, 2009)]). The scree plot and the examination of the Eigenvalues of the E.F.A. of the individual scales suggest that all scales used in this study were unidimensional. The scales were labelled Control environment (Eigenvalue of 3.60 and explaining 51.45% of the variance), Lack of a control environment (Eigenvalue of 2.80 and explaining 70.08% of the variance), Strategic planning (Eigenvalue of 3.05 and explaining 50.81% of the variance), Control activity (Eigenvalue of 3.06 and explaining 43.74% of the variance), Management information systems (M.I.S.) (Eigenvalue of 3.06 and explaining 51.06% of the variance), Performance monitoring (Eigenvalue of 2.67 and explaining 53.38% of the variance), Ethics (Eigenvalue of 4.23 and explaining 38.45% of the variance), and Service delivery (Eigenvalue of 5.36 and explaining 59.59% of the variance).

### **Descriptive statistics, reliability and correlation analysis**

The descriptive statistics of the scales and

TABLE 1: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND RELIABILITY OF SCALES USED IN THIS STUDY

Constructs	Alpha	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
1. Control environment (Capable)	.84	3.17	.85	-.08	.58
2. Lack of control environment (support)	.86	3.79	.89	-.58	-.63
3. Strategic planning (Long-term orientation)	.80	2.96	.82	-.40	-.21
4. Control activity (Policies, procedure, and practices)	.78	3.06	.69	-.13	-.86
5. Management Information Systems (M.I.S.)	.81	3.21	.65	-.11	1.94
6. Performance monitoring	.77	3.66	.63	.01	.21
7. Ethics	.84	2.78	.67	.03	.12
8. Service delivery	.91	2.95	.86	-.10	-.41



the relations between constructs used and considered in this study are reflected on next and presented in Table 1 below.

Closer inspection of Table 1 reveals that the sample in this study do experience above mid-level presence or lack of a control environment, control activity, strategic planning, management information systems (M.I.S.), and performance monitoring. However, below mid-level ethics and service delivery were also observed. All scales used in this study also yielded reliability coefficients above the norm of .70, as suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). Based on this standard, the internal consistency obtained in this study was at acceptable levels. Data in Table 1 indicates that skewness and kurtosis are within the limits of two and four, respectively (Field, 2009; Finch & West, 1997). Thus, all the scales used were normally distributed

### **Correlation analysis**

The study was aimed at determining the associations between the variables used in this study. Correlations can be calculated to determine the relationship between observed variables (Hinkle, Wiersma & Jurs, 2003). Although correlations can indicate a relationship between two variables, it does not necessarily mean

that one variable is caused by the other (Hinkle et al., 2003). Therefore, this section aims not to determine causation between contextual characteristics and service delivery but rather to explore the possible relationships between these variables. Table 2 displays the correlation analysis. The relations between constructs used and considered in this study are reflected on next and presented in Table 2 below.

Scrutiny of Table 2 suggests that the availability of a control environment was positive related to strategic planning (large effect), performance monitoring and ethics (medium effect). The lack of a control environment was negatively related to control activities, M.I.S., and ethics (medium effect). In addition, strategic planning was positively related to control activities and M.I.S. (large effect), performance monitoring, ethics, and service delivery (medium effect). Control activities were also positively related to M.I.S., performance monitoring, ethics (large effect), and service delivery (medium effect). M.I.S. was also positively related to performance monitoring (large effect), ethics and service delivery (medium effect). Ethics was also positively associated with ethics (medium effect), while ethics was also positively associated

**TABLE 2: CORRELATION ANALYSIS**

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1. Control environment</b>	-						
<b>2. Lack of Control environment (support)</b>	-.12	-					
<b>3. Strategic planning (Long-term orientation)</b>	.56**	-.16	-				
<b>4. Control activity (Policies, procedure / practices)</b>	.26	-.35**	.62**	-			
<b>5. Management Information Systems (MIS)</b>	.23	-.30*	.52**	.74**	-		
<b>6. Performance monitoring</b>	.36**	-.13	.35**	.50**	.54**	-	
<b>7. Ethics</b>	.36**	-.38**	.49**	.59**	.45**	.36**	-
<b>8. Service delivery</b>	.23	-.14	.45**	.43**	.42**	.18	.48**

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

TABLE 3: REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Construct	Service delivery
1. Control environment (Capable leadership)	-.01
2. Lack of a control environment (Support functions)	.08
3. Strategic planning (Long-term orientation)	.21
4. Control activity (Policies, procedure, and practices)	.03
5. Management Information Systems (MIS)	.24
6. Performance monitoring	-.15
7. Ethics	.33*
F	3.32*
R	.57
R <sup>2</sup>	.32
f <sup>2</sup>	1.33
Practical significance	Large effect

\*\*Standardised Beta is significant the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\* Standardised Beta is significant the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

with service delivery (medium effect).

### Regression analysis

This study was also initiated to determine the role of a control environment, control activity, strategic planning, management information systems (M.I.S.), performance monitoring and ethics, in service delivery. Table 3 below presents the results of the regression analysis.

Inspection of Table 3 reveals that 57% of the variance of service delivery is explained by the key service delivery quality factors considered in this study. However, ethics (B = .31 and t = 2.05; p = .04) proved to be the only statistically significant predictor of service delivery. The effect of the contextual factors on service delivery is statistically significant and seems to be large in practice.

### DISCUSSION

The study's first objective was to determine staff perceptions in a major city in South Africa regarding the prevalence of contextual factors and satisfactory of service delivery. The study was also conducted to determine the relationships between a control environment, control activity, strategic planning, management information systems

(M.I.S.), performance monitoring, ethics, and service delivery. The findings of the study revealed that the sample in this study do experience above mid-level presence or lack of a control environment, control activity, strategic planning, management information systems (M.I.S.), and performance monitoring. However, below mid-level ethics and service delivery scores were also observed.

The results suggest that the availability of a control environment (capable structure) was associated with strategic planning, performance monitoring and ethics. In this study a capable structure refer to perceptions of staff regarding the qualifications and formal training of the Municipal Manager, a system for the evaluation of K.P.A.'s against their designated KPI, regular skills audits of executive staff, a skills development strategy and job descriptions. This means that capable leadership that are frequently assessed against KPI's, sustained by skills development strategy and job description would facilitate, and enhance strategic planning, performance monitoring and ethics in the local authority where the study was conducted. Service delivery is linked to policy implementation.



Policy implementation encompasses whatever is done to carry a law into effect and to achieve the goals and objectives of such a law (Anderson, 2006). In this regard, Cloete (1994) suggested that policy implementation requires the performance of all public administration activities, namely, generic administrative, the auxiliary and the instrumental activities, and functional activities. Numerous work methods and techniques have been devised to improve policy implementation, such as programme budgeting, strategic planning, project evaluation, work procedure and institutional development (Cloete, 1995). Anderson (2006) believes that effective policy implementation, the performance of municipal officials responsible for the execution of such plans or objectives must be assessed and evaluated. This will assist the institution in identifying challenges associated with inadequacy in the implementation of the programmes or objectives. Studies conducted in South Africa by Murray (2013) on the public sector have shown that the quality of public service delivery is often undermined by factors such as nepotism, cronyism, lack of professionalism, lack of skills, lack of good leadership, lack of adherence to good governance principles and the appointment of political administrators to technical positions. According to the Institute of Directors Southern Africa (2016), the key obstacles to adequate compliance were poor adherence to the Public Finance Management Act (Act no. 1 of 1999), lack of specialised skills, lack of managerial and leadership skills, and failure to adhere to good governance principles.

The lack of a control environment was negatively related to control activities, M.I.S., and ethics. The absence of a control environment (support functions) refers to perceptions of a lack of finance, personnel, equipment, and strategic capacity. If a capable leadership does not support functional capacity, it could hamper control activities, the M.I.S., ethics, and service delivery. Capacity refers to

the availability of and access to concrete or tangible resources (human, financial, material, or technological) and knowing to implement policies and deliver public services (Koma, 2010). Capacity also refers to the intangible resources such as commitment to, and leadership for, the implementation of policies and delivery of public services (Brynard & De Coning, 1999) Strong, coherent, and transformative political and executive leadership is needed to steer the implementation process in the right direction to achieve organisational objectives, supported and co-ordinated by committed administrative support services whose actions do not have contradictory results on service delivery (Meyer & Cloete, 2006).

In addition, strategic planning was positively related to control activities and M.I.S., performance monitoring, ethics, and service delivery. In this study, strategic planning refers to participant perceptions of identifying risks during the strategic planning process, development of departmental business plans and the re-evaluation of business plans. This means that strategic planning that includes risk identification, departmental plans, and the review of these plans could support a M.I.S., performance monitoring, ethics, and service delivery. The Integrated Development Plans (IDPs), Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plans (SDBIPs), quarterly reports and the annual reports are the products of the five interrelated and integrated phases of the managerial process of crafting and executing a company's strategy (Thompson, et al., 2010) at a municipality level (Ngcobo & Mdani, 2015). The crucial message lies in the interrelatedness and integration of phases. If this is not kept in mind (both in strategic planning and implementation), it results in an inconsistency or strategic non-alignment of activities. In a situation where there is strategic non-alignment of activities, it becomes impossible to achieve the impact that the organisation intended (Ngcobo & Mdani, 2015). Most concerning in this regard is the findings of the Auditor

General (2014) in which it was reported that the leadership did not pay sufficient attention to the development of objectives, indicators and targets and the evidence required to prove performance in some municipalities.

Control activities were also positively related to M.I.S., performance monitoring, ethics, and service delivery. This means that perceptions of policies and procedures to timely identify deviation from business plans, the evaluations of policies, procedure and practices, documentation and availability of policies and procedure, and a system to evaluate the quality-of-service delivery are important for service delivery. This means that policies and procedures to attend to deviations from plans, the review of and documents on policies, procedures and practices and a system to evaluate quality of service delivery, are more likely to assist with a M.I.S., performance monitoring, ethics, and service delivery. In this regard, Hanyane and Nadio (2015) suggested that service delivery should be improved in all its facets, such as policy design, effective policy implementation of service delivery policies, monitoring and evaluation, constant feedback, and improvement of service delivery.

M.I.S. was also positively related to performance monitoring, ethics, and service delivery. This means that the capability of the M.I.S. to generate relevant reports on the municipality's performance, availability of trained staff to operate the M.I.S., user-friendliness of the M.I.S. and the operating speed of the M.I.S., could assist with and facilitate performance monitoring, ethics, and service delivery. Municipal infrastructure and public infrastructure, in general, are deteriorating very fast because many assets are overloaded or in desperate need of complete overhaul (Patience & Nel, 2021). According to Van der Waldt (2007), government departments in South Africa need to develop service delivery improvement programmes. Such programmes should set out, inter alia, how the departments' communication systems

will improve information about the type and frequency of customers' services and how a complaints system will be developed (Zondi, Nzimakwe & Mbili, 2017).

Performance monitoring was positively related to ethics and service delivery. This means that the presence of an internal auditor, audit committee, regular meetings of the audit committee, the quarterly review of financial statements and other control deficiency reporting mechanisms are likely to assist with ethics and service delivery. Erasmus Beyers (2015) is of the view that municipalities are faced with financial management challenges such as inadequate skills for planning, budgeting, financial management, expenditure management, credit control, debt management, risk management, and internal audit. In addition, a poor interface between financial and nonfinancial information, inadequate systems to manage good governance practices, especially conflicts of interest and accountability frameworks within provincial departments and municipalities, leadership and management in action, especially in following up on audit queries from both internal and external auditors and inadequate administrative and political oversight to strengthen accountability and responsibility are also impacting negatively on service delivery. The current challenge in many countries is the budget constraints towards developing and institutionalising their monitoring and evaluation system. Linking budget, planning, priorities, and monitoring and evaluation is a challenge experienced by developed countries (Kusek & Rist 2004).

Ethics was also positively associated with service delivery. This means that senior management role modelling and communicating the importance of integrity and ethical values, availability of a code of conduct, fair and honest dealings with customers and other stakeholders, and the investigation of all allegations of violations of the code of conduct, are likely to facilitate and assist with service delivery. Training



in areas of municipal ethics, municipal governance practices, management of municipal resources, including municipal finance, should be institutionalised and remain critical (Hanyane & Nadio, 2015).

The last objective of the study was to determine the role of a control environment, control activity, strategic planning, management information systems (M.I.S.), performance monitoring and ethics, in service delivery. The findings suggest that 57% of the variance of service delivery is explained by the key service delivery quality factors considered in this study. However, ethics proved to be the only predictor of service delivery. It was evident from the results that the yielded effect of the contextual factors on service delivery is not only statistically significant, but it also seems to be prominent in practice. Leaders' lack of ethics and accountability often leads to loose, badly organised, weak, or inefficient organisational systems and structures at key levels such as human resources, risk management, procurement, and financial management. Then individual or group opportunities for corruption become possibilities or probabilities for personal enrichment and posing a temptation (Woods & Mantzaris, 2012).

### ***Managerial implications***

The findings of this study suggest various managerial implications. First, the availability of capable leadership, that are frequently assessed against KPI's, sustained by skills development strategy and job description, would facilitate and enhance service delivery in the local authority where the study was conducted. Secondly, capable leadership that is not supplemented by support capacity could hamper control activities, the M.I.S., ethics, and service delivery. Thirdly, the identification of risks during the strategic planning process, development of departmental business plans and the re-evaluation of business plans would support service delivery. Fourthly, the presence of policies and procedures that attend to deviations from plans, the review

of and documents on policies, procedures and practices, and a system to evaluate the quality of service delivery are more likely to assist with a M.I.S., performance monitoring, ethics, and service delivery. Fifthly, a good M.I.S. and an internal auditor, audit committee, regular audit committee meetings, the quarterly review of financial statements, and other control deficiency reporting mechanisms are likely to assist with ethics and service delivery. Lastly, training in municipal ethics, municipal governance practices, management of municipal resources, including municipal finance, should be institutionalised and remain critical.

### ***Limitations***

This research study has the following limitations—Firstly, the data was collected from a single source; the employees. In addition, this study is based on a convenient sample. Future studies might consider multi-stakeholder data from the community, local businesses, political parties, and municipal employees to address this limitation. Future studies could also be directed to explore further the moderating effect of trust in the leader in the relationship between contextual factors and service delivery. Lastly, future studies could utilise a longitudinal design to provide a better understanding of the causal inferences. The cross-sectional design used in this study also comes with the limitation of method bias.

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