

An Assessment of Electricity Service Delivery Management and its Impact on Customer Experience in Lekwa Local Municipality, Standerton

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DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.64287/jmp.2026.2.16>

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ABSTRACT

The South African Constitution mandates local municipalities to ensure service delivery to satisfy residents basic needs. Service quality in Lekwa local municipality (LLM) is perceived to be poor, so there has been an increase in service delivery protests. Therefore, an understanding of the factors affecting service delivery is of importance to a municipality in its geographic region to ensure that it meets customers basic needs.

The study aimed to identify the factors affecting service delivery by the municipality to the community. This assisted in making recommendations on how the municipality may improve the current quality of the services it offers. The study followed a descriptive research design approach. A questionnaire was utilised to gather the required data for the empirical portion, and 230 residents of LLM formed the population of this study. The data collected was analysed using the SPSS programme version 27 and excel programme. The findings reveal that the factors which contributed to poor service delivery in LLM are lack of community involvement, cost of electricity, poor infrastructure, inaccurate billing and ineffective strategic management. The study recommends that LLM pays attention to strengthening revenue collection policies, promote community participation, implement monitoring and evaluation tools such as SERVQUAL-based citizen feedback forms, address infrastructure and billing issues and enhance equity and inclusivity.

Keywords: *Service delivery; Municipality services; SERVQUAL, Poor infrastructure, Inaccurate billing, Community participation*

1. Introduction

Municipalities in South Africa (SA) have been entrusted to finance and provide basic services such as health, education, telecommunications, safe water and sanitation to enhance development. Section 57, in Chapter 7, of the constitution of SA explains the duties of local government to be: to ensure democratic and accountable governance, to provide basic services, and to promote social and economic development. Local government has the power to make and enforce laws as defined by section 156 of the Constitution. Section 157 of the constitution of SA further states that local government have a legal duty to deliver municipal services (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA), 1996:74). The most important local government duties include providing basic services such as: water and sanitation, electricity, refuse removal, municipal health services, municipal public transport and municipal roads. Local government must give priority to basic needs of the community by providing basic services and ensure that each member of the community has access to at least a minimum level of basic service as referred to in Section 139 (5) of the Constitution and section 73 (1) of the Municipal Systems Act (MSA) (Government Gazette, 2000:68).

The biggest challenge has been improving public service delivery, which is the most important element of poverty reduction. It is imperative that accountability is strengthened to ensure effective and efficient service delivery that is free from conflicts, protests and riots. According to Mamokhere and Kgobe (2024:53), poor service delivery compels local communities to engage in protest action to vent their frustrations and dissatisfaction with the quality and accessibility of basic services. Post-apartheid SA has continued to face difficulties in the delivery of basic municipal services. Masuku and Jili (2019), states that the SA government and municipality stakeholders should adopt an integrated approach to public service delivery which will ensure effective and efficient service delivery. Municipalities have been experimenting with new forms of community engagement, recognising that a sense of engagement is critical to effective service delivery and democratic management (Government Gazette, 2000:30).

According to Stats SA (2022) LLM has a population of 119 669. It is estimated that it will experience medium growth pressures up to 2030, and thus it will experience pressure on infrastructure, service delivery and economic/employment opportunities (Lekwa Local Municipality, 2020:4). A study

by Chili et al. (2023) states that there is a lack of accountability and engagement between the public sector, the commercial sector and society. Thus, it contributes to widespread unhappiness with the quality of services provided by the municipality. In an article by Khashane and Pilusa (2024), it is mentioned that as the municipality is struggling to deliver services to the community, the residents have also been non-compliant when it comes to paying municipality rates, this has led to significant revenue losses, impairing the ability of municipalities to maintain and enhance service infrastructure. According to the consolidated general report on local government audit outcomes (MFMA, 2020:16), municipalities are having difficulties with managing and allocating the budget, some of the limitations that are hindering progress are; capital budgets that are not fully utilized, poorly constructed proposal for capital funds, no application for national capital funds, capital budgets not harmonized, poor procurement and management of consultants, lack of proper maintenance of existing infrastructure and attrition of capable senior technical staff. The scientific significance of this study lies in its contribution to the growing body of knowledge on electricity service delivery

management and customer experience. By empirically examining the relationship between service management practices and customer experience through a quantitative survey. The study provides evidence that extends existing literature within local municipalities. The findings contribute to a better understanding of the factors influencing customer satisfaction and service quality and may serve as a foundation for future research on service delivery management, customer experience and public service performance in South African local municipalities. Despite extensive research on electricity service provision, there remains limited empirical evidence on how electricity service delivery management influences customer experience, particularly from the perspective of customers. Furthermore, few studies have employed quantitative survey data to examine this relationship within the study area. This study addresses these gaps by providing empirical evidence on the relationship between service delivery management practices and customer experience, thereby informing strategies to improve service quality and customer satisfaction.

The study's findings may reveal the factors affecting service delivery and the recommendations to improve service delivery within local municipalities. This knowledge will be useful for local municipalities to make informed decisions to optimise energy consumption. By identifying the factors successfully, this will enhance community trust and stakeholder engagement, support policy formulation, enhance efficient use of resources and improve planning and decision-making.

The aim of the study is to determine the customers' perceptions of the quality of

electricity services delivered by LLM and it seeks to address the following objectives:

- To identify the factors affecting service delivery by the LLM to the community.
- To investigate the impact of service delivery by the municipality on customers perceptions regarding electricity services.
- To make recommendations to improve customer satisfaction in the municipality.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

In 1997, the South African government presented the Batho Pele Principles, meaning 'People first' in English. This was aimed at promoting the notion of putting people first. It was also focused on presenting a context for altering public service provision. In theory, the Batho Pele principles were meant to help create a simple, transparent and interactive relationship between the public and the people who were meant to serve them, allowing customers to hold public servants liable and accountable for the level of service they deliver (Department of social

Development, 2020). The concept was also meant to get public services to be more service user orientated. The Batho Pele principles were the first indication that customer service was going to be at the forefront of service delivery and a measure of the level and quality of service provided to the public. According to the White Paper on Local Government (SA, 1998), it is stated that local government must assist in the "developmental role". Developmental municipalities are those that can provide

households with infrastructure and services, such as water, sanitation, roads, refuse collection, electricity and stormwater drainage (Ngumbela, 2023). This demands that municipalities should do their best to influence social development by offering services cost-effectively and affordably for the destitute in their communities.

Service delivery indicates the states responsibility to meet citizens needs for critical amenities such as housing, electricity, water, sanitation, and other necessary resources for human survival. In 2002, SA signed the millennium declaration reaffirming its commitment to eradicate poverty (General Assembly Resolution, 2002). The declaration adopted by the United Nations (UN) general assembly is a consolidation of eight interconnected development goals named Millenium Development Goals (MDGs). The SA government aims to deliver basic municipal services to all South Africans (South African Government, 2025). Municipal services should impact the economy by growing the quality of life in an area, positively influencing the productivity of the residents in return (Bureau for Economic research, 2021). Over 75% of Gross Domestic Products (GDP) are derived from services in developed countries, while developing

countries have about 50% of contribution from services (The Global Economy, 2023). The services sector is the predominant employer and basis of revenue in first world economies. While in SA, GDP growth in the fourth quarter (October – December 2024) is led by agriculture, finance and trade on the supply side of the economy (Stats SA, 2024). Customers recognise services through the lens of either superior or inferior quality and respond accordingly to the same service.

2.2. State of Service Delivery in the Public Sector

Some citizens believe that the public services such as housing, water, electricity, health and other services are basic rights and hence the resistance in the imbursement of such services. In an article by Khashane et al. (2024) it is mentioned that the culture of non-payment has been a persistent issue, significantly affecting the quality and sustainability of service delivery by local municipalities. They further state that poverty and inaccurate billing causes non-compliance regarding paying municipal rates. Ledger (2020) further alludes that local municipalities also consistently fail to meet prescribed governance standards, particularly in respect of financial management and supply chain management, resulting in

resources being not spent in accordance with national development priorities. There seems to be an increasing perception that the quality of services is declining. Failure of municipalities to deliver basic services not only causes immense hardship for the residents of municipalities but can have a detrimental impact on social and economic development (Kalonda and Govender, 2021).

The mandate for local government is also succinctly contained in the preamble to the *Local government: Municipal Structures Act, 1998* (Act 117 of 1998) as:

“A vision of democratic and developmental local government in which municipalities fulfil their constitutional obligations to ensure sustainable, effective and efficient municipal services, promote social and economic development, encourage a safe and healthy environment by working with communities in creating environments and human settlements in which all our people can lead uplifted and dignified lives.”

The quality of service provided by the municipalities to citizens highlights the

difference between their success and insufficiencies. Local municipalities play a vital role in developing the community and ensuring that basic services such as water and electricity are rendered (Government gazette, 2000). During apartheid times, that is before 1994, race was the determining factor in the delivery of basic services in SA, with African people provided with substandard and discriminatory services, or nothing at all (World Bank, 2022). During this era, the black population became passive recipients of infrastructure and maintenance was not a priority. As a result, in the townships, service delivery was substandard compared to the former white suburbs (World Bank, 2022). The emergence of the democratic government in 1994 brought with it the expectations of reasonable and impartial provision of basic services and a wish for freedom and dignity across the racial, socio-economic and geographic divide. The new government recognised access to basic quality services as a basic human right and introduced the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) to redress the delivery of basic services (The Reconstruction and Development Programme, 1994). The RDP is a policy document of the African National Congress (ANC) that outlines the targets for national

development under the ANC government. The policy's four primary objectives were to ensure that the government would 1) provide basic needs such as housing and electricity to the South African people; 2) develop the country's human resources; 3) build the economy; and 4) water and sanitation.

Human rights, as it relates to access to basic services as stated in the RDP, were transformed into a national obligation, which is enshrined in the Constitution of SA (Act 108 of 1996). According to section 27 (1) of the Constitution, "everyone has the right to have access to sufficient food and water" and it further puts the responsibility on the state to take reasonable measures to ensure a progressive realisation of these rights (South Africa, 1996). The constitution promises all citizens that they have the right to access sufficient and reasonably priced basic services to meet basic household needs; it further states that "basic services should be delivered equitably, affordably, effectively, efficiently and sustainably" (South Africa, 1996). According to a study conducted by Kgomo (2021), numerous interconnected variables, obstructing the effectiveness of delivery exists within the public service. Labor and monetary limitations, the deficiency of technical skills, the dearth of

synergy, unproductive intergovernmental relations (IGR), futile policy enactment, and the absence of effective monitoring and evaluation systems were identified as the most significant. Municipalities should resolve the workforce capacity limitations that have hindered progress. According to the consolidated general report on local government audit outcomes (MFMA, 2020:16), municipalities are having difficulties with managing and allocating the budget, some of the limitations that are hindering progress are; capital budgets that are not fully utilized, poorly constructed proposal for capital funds, no application for national capital funds, capital budgets not harmonized, poor procurement and management of consultants, lack of proper maintenance of existing infrastructure and attrition of capable senior technical staff.

2.3. Determinants of Municipal Service Delivery

In a study conducted by Kalonda et al. (2021:8), it is stated that poor service delivery is caused by factors such as lack of transparency, lack of accountability, lack of community involvement, poor leadership, poor implementation of legal framework that already exists, poor governance (dysfunctional governance systems) and poor financial management systems. This results

in diverting resources meant for public services to the personal interests of municipal officials. Local authorities play a vital role in being an effective and responsive driver of the local demands and should work towards improving the living conditions of the community.

Khashane et al. (2024), argue that poor/lack of service delivery is caused by non-compliance/non-payment of municipal services by the community. They further alluded in their study that by understanding the root causes and implications of non-payment, municipalities can develop effective strategies to enhance compliance and improve service delivery as well as financial stability

2.3.1. Poor leadership

Leadership in municipalities offers a forum to ensure that policies of transition are successfully enforced as mandated by modernisation and transformation (Kalonda et al., 2021:8). In a study conducted by Thusi and Selepe (2023:690), they agree that lack of accountability and consequence management has had a negative impact on good governance in local municipalities, putting the provision of basic services at risk. The government must promote accountability and openness, which would

promote good governance and improve the state of the community. They believe that the solution to poor leadership in local municipalities includes Talent management; this strategy supports public service professionalism that is; by implementing policies and practices to continuously provide qualified and competent individuals to meet the demands of the community.

2.3.2. Poor implementation of the legal framework

Non-compliance with local legislative and regulatory structures has led to service delivery deficiencies. The legal framework already exists; however, municipalities fail to adopt good governance practices (Kalonda et al., 2021). According to the Nelson Mandela Bay LED strategy (2019), the attention is primarily on policies and tactics adopted at the municipal level. Local municipalities are responsible for enforcing regulations established by other levels of government. This strategy aims to achieve economic growth, infrastructure development, public safety, environmental sustainability and community engagement (Nelson Mandela Bay, 2019).

2.3.3. *Poor financial management systems*

Local municipalities are failing to render basic services efficiently due to lack of effective budget management. Flawed budgeting processes characterised by lack of transparency and misallocation of funds results in inadequate resource allocation for basic services (Mamokhere, 2024). Failure to address these flaws affects service delivery and the socioeconomic developments of residents.

2.3.4. *Lack of community involvement*

Lack of proper consultation by the municipalities makes it difficult for the municipalities to accept challenges faced by the residents. Not involving the community can result in poorly informed decisions that do not align with the actual requirements of the community (Mbandlwa, Dorasamy, 2020). It is mentioned on the SERO report 2022 that the Notified Maximum Demand (NMD) remains a challenge within the municipality, which means that once the 55MVA maximum has been exceeded during

any period, Eskom will impose penalties. The major challenges within the municipality are, distribution losses, illegal connections, meter bridging, breakdowns, service interruptions and limited capacity with the increased electricity demand. The 2025/2026 LLM IDP report states that the situational analysis within the municipality is inadequate bulk infrastructure, ageing infrastructure, fragmented human settlements, ESKOM debt and uncoordinated developments. The intervention to solve this current problem within the municipality is to upgrade electricity bulk lines for all the substations, upgrade NMD and the formalisation of informal settlements. Figure 2.1. shows the electricity service delivery levels in local municipalities where 92.4% of the households, that is; 34 504 out of 37 334 households used above the minimum energy level in the year 2020/2021 and 8.5% households (3 190 out of 37 334 households) used below the minimum service level (SERO Report, 2022).

Figure 2.1. Electricity service delivery levels in LLM

Electricity Service Delivery Levels					
Description	Ref	Households			
		2017/2018 Actual No.	2018/2019 Actual No.	2019/2020 Actual No.	2020/2021 Actual No.
Energy: (above minimum level) Electricity (>= min.service level)		30,125	33,991	34,004	34,144
Electricity - prepaid (min.service level)		—	—	—	—
Minimum Service Level and Above sub-total		30,125	33,991	34,004	34,504
Minimum Service Level and Above Percentage		91,7%	91,0%	91,1%	92,4%
Energy: (below minimum level) Electricity (< min.service level)		2,732	3,343	3,330	3,190
Electricity - prepaid (< min. service level)		—	—	—	—
Other energy sources		—	—	—	—
Below Minimum Service Level sub-total		2,732	3,343	3,330	3,190
Below Minimum Service Level Percentage		8,3%	9,0%	8,9%	8,5%
Total number of households	#REF!	32,857	37,334	37,334	37,334
T 3.3.3					

Total Use of Electricity		
	Rand Value	Unaccounted electricity losses
2018/2019	111, 837, 480	38%
2019/2020	122 300 429	38%
2020/2021	124,403,915	No percentage information provided in annual AFs

Source SERO report 2022

2.4. Implications for Municipal Service Delivery

The municipality can enhance service delivery through data optimisation, such as improving available information, understanding the community base, enhancing internal capacity and offering proactive multi-channel support (Schoeman, Chakwizira, 2023). The municipality should ensure performance monitoring and management that will strengthen the principles and ethical standards of public services, and it should also improve its

communication strategy and involve the community in decision-making processes. Service quality is about providing something intangible (service) in a way that pleases the consumer and that preferably gives some value to that consumer. Parasuraman is the founder of the SERVQUAL model, which is used in several public service environments to assess quality of service provision in terms of what consumers expect and what they receive (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Berry, 1988).

2.4.1. Enhance active participation of communities

An integrated approach is important as it promotes cooperative governance. Ward committee meetings and local forums can be used for consultation, community-based planning and decision making (Mkhatshwa, Khumalo, 2020). The residents should be informed on the level of quality of services they will receive so that they are aware of what to expect as enacted in the Batho Pele principles.

2.4.2. Evaluations of the needs and priorities of the customers

- For local municipalities to improve service delivery, they should evaluate customer's needs, priorities and decisions.
- Continuously improve service delivery mechanisms to meet the changing needs and demands of the citizens.
- Provide relevant, timely, cost-effective and useful services that are beneficial to the people and effectively use performance management approaches, tools and methods to evaluate the services delivered (Mbandlwa et al., 2020).

In a study by Ndevu (2019), it is suggested that social media should be utilized to enhance community participation and freedom of speech needs and demands of the customers. Recruiting skilled people and carrying out property valuations more frequently to generate revenues. A proposed integrated value-based framework as identified by Ndevu (2019) can be used to improve service delivery in local municipalities. However, when implementing this framework, the challenges faced by municipalities should be considered. The value-based integrated framework focuses on contextual setting, core values, structures, leadership and management and service delivery. In implementing service delivery, it is important for local municipalities to have core values; this will assist in decision-making processes. Core values include accountability, transparency, professionalism, ethics and leadership (Marumahoko, 2020). Mamokhere (2024) asserts that transparency includes making municipality meetings open to the public and creating a platform for residents to review local budgets for service delivery. Krah, Mertes (2020) agree that providing information to the residents about what their municipality is up to is important for

purposes of holding public officials accountable in fighting corruption.

The Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) has designed a generic service delivery model toolkit (2015), that all departments that serve the interest of the public should practice and adhere to when delivering services. The service delivery model stipulated by DPSA is a toolkit used to annually assist and support management in determining the most suitable operating model to meet mandated and overall service expectations. Local municipalities can use this model as a guide to improve delivery of services to the community. The services provided by the municipality should first be defined, the method of delivery should be analyzed, risk and constraints should be identified, and the planned service delivery model can be achieved (DPSA, 2022).

To conclude, local municipalities are facing many challenges, ranging from poor service delivery mainly due to inadequate leadership ethics, flawed budgeting skills gap, lack of transparency and accountability, lack of community involvement and poor implementation of recruitment policies. These issues have an impact on the ability of leaders to achieve municipal service delivery

objectives, resulting in riots, and lack of trust in governance structures and misallocation of funds/resources. To improve municipal service delivery there is a need to foster a culture of ethical leadership transparency and accountability. Additionally, where there is an effectively functioning public participation system in place for customers to express their needs and for these needs and concerns to be heard by the municipality, the customers will be less frustrated with service delivery shortfalls. The municipality should consider reforms in budgeting processes and municipal services should align with the actual needs of the public.

3. Research Design and Methodology

A quantitative research approach was utilised to investigate the overall factors affecting service delivery in local municipalities. A quantitative research strategy aims to test theory, this can be achieved by questioning previous research and established theories, then postulating a hypothesis and collecting and analysing data to see if the findings confirm or disprove those theories (Maksimovic et al., 2023). The study relayed largely on primary data like the use of a questionnaire.

3.1. *Research Approach and Study Design*

The research approach that was chosen for this study was the positivism approach. The positivism approach emphasises objectives, observable facts and relies heavily on quantitative data. Vu (2021) states that the positivism approach produces quantitative data on social patterns and trends, which can be used to explain society. The primary goal of positivism inquiry is to generate explanatory associations or casual relationships that ultimately lead to prediction and control of the phenomena in question (Park, Konge and Artino, 2020).

Maksimovic and Evtimov (2023) believe that positivism follows Hume's radical conception that knowledge does not exist outside of what we can observe, therefore, what we claim to know is based on the unity of our observation. The positivism approach has been criticised for excluding various sources of understanding of the world, including those arising from human experience, thinking and interpretation as unsuitable for scientific research. Positivism assumes that they can produce scientific explanations about the occurrence of events, using quantitative approaches of collecting and analysing data through experiments and observations.

The chosen design for this study is the descriptive research. A descriptive research plunge into depths of data collection with survey research (Jain, 2023). It aims to accurately describe a population, situation and phenomenon (Ghanad, 2023). The approach of a descriptive design collects a large amount of data for detailed analysis and the obtained data can lead to important recommendations in practice, it involves the collection of questionnaire and systematic data that can be used to analyse statistical problem. Ghanad (2023) further states that a descriptive approach involves quantitative data that can be collected in numerical form. Ansari, Rahim, Bhoje and Bhosale (2023:1133) mentioned that the descriptive research design helps to answer questions about what, when, where and how about a research problem, rather than why. They also believe that with this type of research design, the researcher does not control or apply any changes, instead the variables are only seen, observed and measured. The advantage of the descriptive research design is that, the amount of data gathered can be used for future references and it gives an overview of study which is helpful to determine variables used for the study (Pawar, 2020:52). Ansari et al., (2023) also state that the descriptive

design is quick and cheap to conduct and form basis for decision-making.

3.2. Study Population and Sampling Strategy

A sample size of 300 participants was initially targeted for this study to ensure adequate representation of the study population and sufficient statistical power for data analysis. However, only 230 participants completed and returned the questionnaires, resulting in a response rate of approximately 77%. Despite the lower than anticipated number of responses, the achieved sample size was considered adequate for the planned quantitative analysis and provided sufficient data to address the study objectives. The decision was made to target only respondents who were 20 years and older. The decision was based on the need to ensure that respondents are people who can relate to the delivery of service. The sampling technique used in this study was the simple random technique of probability sampling as this will accurately represent the population and will increase the reliability of the findings and decrease bias. Noor, Tajik and Golzar (2022) mentions the simple random sampling technique as one of the techniques of probability sampling whereby every member of the population has an equal chance of

being selected. Simple random sampling is often utilised in surveys and quantitative research design. This type of sampling method is the representation of the entire population, it makes sure that every person in a population has an equal probability of being chosen as a response and randomisation helps to offset the confounding effects of known and unknown factors (Noor et al., 2022). However, Horton (2025) also argues that this sampling method may make it difficult to get every member to participate and there is a high chance of sample error.

3.3. Data Collection Instrument

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data for this study as it has a high possibility of anonymity and privacy to encourage high volume of respondents on sensitive matters, the questionnaire makes it easy for respondents to express their views freely without fear of victimisation, the questionnaire enables the researcher to collect data from a large and diverse sample, which enhances the generalisability of the findings and lastly, the structured nature of the questionnaire makes data analysis relatively straightforward, allowing the researcher to quickly identify patterns and trends (Kuphanga, 2024). To ensure that the questionnaire used for this study is reliable,

Cronbachs alpha test was employed and to test for validity, a pilot study was done to ensure that the questions are clear and random sampling as well as defining the variables precisely. Cronbach's alpha, ranging from 0-1 measures the internal consistency or reliability of a scale, indicating how well items within a scale measure the same construct. Values of 0.6 and above are generally considered acceptable, with high values suggesting reliability (Frost, 2025). There were several limitations that were observed during the research such as, (1) the findings were not generalized beyond the setting of the study, (2) not everyone who is a target wanted to participate in the study, (3) the study assumes that the views expressed by the participants were objective, (4) language barriers and literacy was observed and (5) accessing resources from the municipality was also not possible, (6) the research is limited to customer experience with services provided only by the public sector, (7) there was also a geographical limitation. The questionnaires were self-administered, using the paper and pencil technique whereby residents filled out a physical questionnaire. The targeted number of responses was 300, however, only 243 participants were willing to participate of which 13 of the participants did not return the

questionnaires, and thus only 230 took part in the study. To test for validity, a pilot study was done to ensure that the questions are clear and random sampling as well as defining the variables precisely.

3.4. Data Analysis

Data were analysed using the descriptive analysis which helps to detect potential errors. Frequency tables were used to present the percentages and counts for all categorical variable such as age, income, gender, level of education and status of employment. The descriptive statistics analysis was used, as the focus is on understanding the characteristics of the data set. The advantage of the descriptive statistics is that it provides a simple overview and understanding of the data, prior to a more detailed analysis (TEJ, 2024). Data was captured on the spreadsheet to ensure that the SPSS package version 27 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) could be properly used to analyze the data. Tests such as the Mann-Whitney U test, Kruskal-Wallis H test, Dunn's Post hoc Test and the Fischer-Freeman Halton Exact Tests were used to analyse and explain the data.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

To ensure that ethical values were not compromised in this study, respondents

completed the questionnaire voluntarily and based upon informed consent. To achieve this, the questionnaire had a covering letter explaining the intention of the study, disclosing the institution behind the study and guaranteeing the concealment of the participants as well as confidentiality. In protection of the rights of the participants the following measures were adhered to: 1) Ethical clearance for this study was attained from Regent Business School research committee (Ethical clearance number: RBSHREC2025/322), 2) A consent form was handed over to participants to read and sign to ensure that the participants agreed to participate without coercion, 3) No personal material identifying the participant, including name and surname of the participant was collected to ensure that no harm befalls the participant, 4) LLM was requested to approve the research project and a letter of authorization was obtained prior to data collection.

4. Research Findings and Discussions

4.1. Results

To ensure the internal consistency and overall quality of the measurement instrument, reliability and validity assessments were conducted. Reliability refers to the extent to which the instrument yields consistent results

across items measuring the same construct while validity refers to the degree to which the instrument measures what it is intended to measure (Mariel et al., 2020). Cronbach's Alpha was computed for each of the two composite variables aligned with the study objectives. The values obtained are as follows:

All alpha values exceed the widely accepted threshold of 0.70, indicating acceptable to excellent internal consistency across all dimensions of the questionnaire. Additionally, inter-item correlations and item-total statistics were assessed.

All alpha values exceeded the generally accepted minimum threshold of 0.70, indicating good internal consistency. This suggests that the questionnaire items under each objective reliably measured the same underlying construct. Moreover, a pilot study was conducted with 25 residents of LLM prior to full-scale data collection. Respondents provided feedback on the questions' clarity, relevance, and structure. Their feedback confirmed that the instrument was easy to understand and applicable to their experiences.

The high reliability coefficients and the rigorous validation process affirm that the study's findings are robust, trustworthy, and

suitable for informing municipal performance improvements. The results are presented per research objective.

Objective 1: Factors affecting service delivery

The Mann-Whitney U test was used to assess whether residents from formal townships and suburbs differed in their perceptions across the 2 study objectives. Statistically significant differences were found across the objectives ($p < .01$), suggesting that area of residence significantly influences residents' experiences and perceptions regarding municipal electricity service delivery.

Suburban residents reported greater agreement with statements about effective

electricity supply, maintenance, skilled staffing, and infrastructure management ($U = 3990.5$, $Z = -3.373$, $p = .001$). This suggests that township residents experience more frequent interruptions, perceive poorer infrastructure, and feel the municipality is less responsive to electricity-related issues.

4.1.1. Factors Affecting Service Delivery by the LLM to the Community

Table 4.1. showing Responses distribution of Objective 1 (Factors affecting service delivery by LLM to the community) Objective 1: Factors affecting service delivery by the municipality to the community		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	% Agreement
1.1. The municipality supplies electricity regularly to the community and without constant interruptions.	Count	56	94	27	32	1	
	%	26.7	44.8	12.9	15.2	0.5	15.7
	Count	1	19	16	85	89	

1.2. Scheduled and unscheduled power outages significantly affect electricity service delivery.	%	0.5	9.0	7.6	40.5	42.4	82.9
1.3. The municipality has skilled personnel to effectively maintain and repair electricity infrastructure.	Count	5	27	65	106	7	
	%	2.4	12.9	31.0	50.5	3.3	53.8
1.4. The municipality responds promptly to electricity supply issues and power failures.	Count	13	56	36	99	6	
	%	6.2	26.7	17.1	47.1	2.9	50.0
1.5. The municipality effectively manages financial and operational resources to provide reliable electricity services.	Count	7	60	86	54	3	
	%	3.3	28.6	41.0	25.7	1.4	27.1
1.6. The municipality has sufficient and well-maintained infrastructure to ensure consistent electricity supply.	Count	6	84	63	55	2	
	%	2.9	40.0	30.0	26.2	1.0	27.2
1.7. In the last 3 months, the municipality has supplied electricity without any interruptions.	Count	37	120	27	25	1	
	%	17.6	57.1	12.9	11.9	0.5	12.4

71.5% of the respondents reported dissatisfaction with the regularity of supply. This suggests that interruption of electricity service is a widely experienced and concerning issue among residents. 82.9% of the respondents view power outages, whether scheduled or not as a major barrier to effective electricity service delivery in the municipality. The results show an unfair distribution for effective management of financial and operational resources, which implies low confidence in how the

municipality handles its financial and operational responsibilities from the respondents. A much larger 40.0% disagreed that the municipality has sufficient and well-maintained infrastructure to ensure consistent electricity supply. These results reflect concerns about the adequacy and condition of electricity infrastructure, suggesting that aging or poorly maintained systems may be contributing to frequent disruptions. Overall, it is evident that community satisfaction with electricity service delivery is low,

particularly concerning consistency of supply, infrastructure, and financial management. While there is moderate approval of technical staff competence and response to service issues, these are overshadowed by the widespread impact of frequent power outages and unreliable service over the past three months.

4.1.2. Recommendations to Improve Customer satisfaction in the Municipality

Suburb residents were significantly more likely to agree that recent improvements had occurred and that communication about electricity services had been effective ($U = 2567.5$, $Z = -6.674$, $p < .001$). Township residents, in contrast, did not perceive much improvement, nor did they feel adequately informed through communication efforts. These findings agree with the statement by

the World Bank (2022) that race is still a determining factor in the delivery of basic services as most African people are from the townships. Service delivery is still substandard in the townships compared to the suburbs.

To assess the internal consistency of the scale items related to Objective 3 (Recommendations to improve customer satisfaction in the municipality), a Cronbach's Alpha reliability test was conducted. The results indicate a high level of internal reliability, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.774 indicating high internal consistency. Hence, suggesting that all items used to measure this objective form a reliable scale.

Table 4.2. for Responses distribution for objective

3: Recommendations to improve customer satisfaction in the municipality

Recommendations to improve customer satisfaction in the municipality		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	% Agreement
4.1. The municipality effectively communicates with the community	Count	15	52	41	99	3	
	%	7.1	24.8	19.5	47.1	1.4	48.5

during load reduction/loadshedding and electricity interruptions							
4.2. In the last 6 months, the municipality has published or distributed pamphlets about services they provide.	Count	11	57	70	72		
	%	5.2	27.1	33.3	34.3		34.3
4.3. In the last 2-3 months, the municipality has improved with regards to the provision of electricity	Count	21	90	54	45		
	%	10.0	42.9	25.7	21.4		21.4

These findings suggest that while nearly half of the respondents recognize the municipality's communication efforts, there is still a sizable portion of the population who feel inadequately informed during electricity supply disruptions. The results also show that there is somewhat limited visibility of public outreach and informational efforts by LLM. Perceptions of improvement in electricity service provision remain low as indicated by responses to having seen improvements in services in the last 3 months. Over half of the respondents, that is, 52.9% disagreed that the municipality has improved with regards to the provision of electricity suggesting that most residents have not experienced noticeable improvements in service delivery during the last quarter enforcing the negative views from the other objective. Overall, there is some evidence of the municipality attempting to improve its communication and

service delivery, but public perception remains mainly negative. There is a need for further improvement in communication and service delivery itself.

To assess the relationships among the key dimensions of electricity service provision evaluated in this study, composite scores were calculated for each of the objectives. These scores were created by computing the mean of the responses to the Likert-scale items under each objective. A moderate positive correlation was observed between service delivery factors and recommendations to improve customer satisfaction ($\rho = 0.381$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that respondents who perceive better service delivery are also more likely to recognize or support the importance of further strategic improvements, such as improved communication or educational outreach.

Perceptions of improvement in electricity service provision remain low as indicated by responses to having seen improvements in the last 3 months. A moderate negative correlation was also found between perceptions of service and recommendation of improvement, suggesting that more negative perceptions of service impact may reduce optimism about municipal communication or improvement efforts.

4.2. Discussion

With the contributions from the study as the backdrop, customers perception has been analyzed with respect to the quality of LLM delivery of electricity services to its customers. Customer based data is utilized in this study to offer definite perceptions of service based on the measuring instrument used for this study. The findings show that customers are dissatisfied by the overall service provided by LLM and there is no improvement with regard to electricity services from previous years and previous experiences. The findings show that the factors affecting service delivery are; poor electricity supply, scheduled/unscheduled power outages, ineffective management of financial and operational resources, insufficient infrastructure and service interruptions. These findings are consistent

with the literature review in Chapter 2. For instance, Kalonda et al. (2021) found that poor implementation of legal frameworks and weak governance structures in municipalities result in diverting public resources and poor service outcomes. Likewise, Mamokhere et al. (2024) emphasised the link between poor leadership and recurring service delivery protests, highlighting the urgent need for accountability and competent leadership in local municipalities.

The findings also show that poor service delivery affects the running of households and/or businesses, customers expectation of future service delivery, customers perception on the reliability and efficiency of LLM as well as the integrity of the customers with regard to service delivery. Furthermore, the 2022 SERO Report noted that LLM suffers from high distribution losses, limited capacity to meet electricity demand, and penalties imposed by Eskom due to exceeding its NMD. These systemic inefficiencies align with the residents' feedback and confirm the technical and structural constraints undermining consistent service delivery.

The lack of effective communication between the municipality and its residents is

another recurring theme. This finding supports the argument by Mbandlwa et al. (2020) that the exclusion of communities in decision-making processes diminishes transparency and leads to poor alignment between service delivery outputs and community needs.

The Batho Pele principles also emphasise transparency, consultation, and responsiveness in public service delivery (Department of Social Development, 2020). The low rating of LLM's community engagement practices indicates non-adherence to these principles, further explaining the disconnect between municipal planning and citizen expectations. The data strongly indicates that electricity service delivery challenges in LLM are multifaceted, involving leadership, infrastructure, finance, and citizen relations. These systemic issues reflect broader trends in South African municipalities, as identified by Chilli et al. (2023), who argue that administrative inefficiencies and citizen disengagement contribute directly to service delivery failures. Therefore, addressing service delivery at LLM requires a holistic strategy that prioritises leadership reform, infrastructure investment, public participation, and stronger financial controls.

Any efforts to improve the customer experience must consider these root causes as a prerequisite for long-term service sustainability.

4.3. Limitations

A number of limitations were observed during the research, these are, 1) the research was based on respondents by LLM, therefore the findings cannot be generalized beyond the setting of the study; 2) the respondents complained that there were repetitions on the questionnaire, this may have distorted their interpretation of cost, billing, tariffs and value-for-money statements; 3) even though the confidentiality of respondents was explained and guaranteed, some respondents were skeptical that their concerns would be discussed with the officials of the municipality, this may have affected the way in which respondents answered some of the questions.

4.4. Implications of the Results for Research

The findings of this study have significant implications for municipal governance, public service management, policy implementation and community development. The prevalence of poor service delivery suggests that existing systems and

management practices are insufficient to meet the needs and expectations of the customers. The findings suggests that governments should strengthen support, monitoring, and compliance mechanisms to ensure municipalities adhere to legislative and service delivery standards. According to Schoeman (2023), municipalities can improve public satisfaction by optimizing data usage, enhancing communication, and building internal capacity. These measures not only improve transparency but also increase responsiveness to citizen concerns. SERVQUAL also emphasizes the importance of aligning service delivery with customer expectations across dimensions like reliability, responsiveness, and assurance. Mbandlwa et al. (2020) believe that not involving the community can result in poorly informed decisions that do not align with the actual requirements of the community.

5. Recommendations and

Conclusion

5.1. Recommendations

The study recommends that the municipality should; 1) Implement a customer-centered service delivery model. Municipalities should adopt a customer centered approach that prioritizes responsiveness, transparency and timely resolution of customer concerns.

Ramya et al. (2019) suggest that improving service quality through continuous evaluation and feedback can bridge the gaps between expected and received service. In LLM, this would involve soliciting ongoing feedback from residents and acting on that feedback transparently. The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on municipal service delivery by providing empirical evidence on the factors influencing service delivery performance. The findings provide a foundation for future research on innovative governance approaches, public participation strategies, and sustainable interventions that can improve municipal service delivery and enhance the quality of life of communities.

Service standards should be monitored regularly using customer satisfaction indicators to ensure continuous improvement. 2) Strengthen employee capacity through continuous training. Personnel responsible for customer service and service delivery should receive regular

training in customer relationship management, communication skills, complaint handling, and service excellence. Building staff capacity is likely to improve the quality and consistency of customer interactions. 3) Promote predictive maintenance and infrastructure modernization, such as investing in predictive maintenance technologies, smart grid solutions and infrastructure upgrades should be prioritized to minimize service interruptions, improve system reliability and enhance the overall customer experience. 4) Adopt data-driven performance management systems. Municipalities should establish key performance indicators that monitor service delivery outcomes, including response times, complaint resolution rates, outage restoration times and customer satisfaction levels. The study also suggests that the municipality should adhere to the Batho Principles, that is, the customers should be made aware of how national, provincial and local governments are ran and how much they cost. Customers

should also be informed about the services provided and about the municipality processes to follow to address their electricity query. A client liaison officer needs to be appointed to ensure constant communication with updates on customer queries.

5.2. Conclusion

This study suggests the importance of measuring customer perception and experience so that management can develop strategies to improve service delivery. Management can use the obtained results to institute remedial processes, which would ensure improved performance and service quality. By implication, managers should focus their attention on the areas where the service quality has been rated lower by customers. To conclude, it is of paramount importance for all stakeholders to ensure that service quality standards such as those set out in the Batho Pele Principles are taken into consideration when delivering services to the public.

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