

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF DETERMINANTS OF THE QUALITY OF MUNICIPAL SERVICE DELIVERY IN EKURHULENI

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Abstract: The City of Ekurhuleni is a major metropolitan municipality that provides essential municipal services 3, 178, 470 residents and ratepayers. The purpose of research was to determine the level of satisfaction of people who live and work in the City of Ekurhuleni with the quality of municipal services they are provided with routinely. The survey was conducted by gathering household-level information from 544 residents of Ekurhuleni. The level of satisfaction of respondents with the quality of municipal services was measured by using a matrix of indicators developed by Das, Das and Barman (2021:885-913) for conducting a similar assessment. A composite index developed by D’Inverno and De Witte (2020:1129-1141) was used as a benchmark for measuring the level of services rendered to people who live in the City. The main result of the survey was that 63.05% of people who took part in the survey expressed satisfaction with the quality of services that were rendered to people living in the City. The results showed that 36.95% of people in the survey were not happy with the quality of services rendered to people who live in the City. The survey revealed that satisfaction with services was influenced by the ability of employees of the City to resolve service-related queries promptly, a lengthy duration of residence in Ekurhuleni (11 years or longer), and being provided with accurate financial statements.

Keywords: Ekurhuleni, Quality of municipal services, Factor analysis, Ordered logit analysis

Introduction and background to study

South Africa has 8 metropolitan municipalities. These are Buffalo City or East London, the City of Cape Town, the City of Ekurhuleni or the East Rand, the City of eThekweni or Durban, the City of Johannesburg, the City of Mangaung or Bloemfontein, and the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality or Gqeberha. A report published by the South African Auditor-General (2022) shows that audit reports were conducted for 257 South African municipalities for the financial year 2020/2021, and that only 16% of these municipalities were issued with clean audit reports. The City of Ekurhuleni was granted a clean audit report for the financial year 2020/2021. This shows that the City of Ekurhuleni has performed relatively well in the financial year in comparison with municipalities that were unable to obtain clean audit reports.

Ekurhuleni is a vibrant metropolitan municipality with a Gross Domestic Product of 1.42 trillion Rand. The City is a major contributor to the economy of Gauteng Province. According to Statistics South Africa (2019), the population of Ekurhuleni is equal to 3, 178, 470 people. The City of Ekurhuleni has a total area of 1, 975 square km and a population density of 1, 600 people per square km. Black South Africans make up about 78.7% of the population. The corresponding figures for white South Africans are about 15.8%. The figure for coloured South Africans is about 2.7%. The figure for Asians is about 2.1%. Zulu is spoken by about 28.8% of the population. English is spoken by about 12% of the population. Afrikaans is spoken by about 11.9% of the population. Northern Sotho is spoken by about 11.4% of the population. A report published by the City of Ekurhuleni (2020) shows that the GDP per capita of Ekurhuleni is R421, 245.

Majam and Munzhedzi (2021:109-131) have shown that the City of Ekurhuleni is exposed to a massive influx of migrant communities who come to the City seeking jobs, livelihoods and enhanced municipal services. The authors

have shown that the population of the City of Ekurhuleni has increased significantly since the early 1990s although municipal infrastructure has not increased accordingly at the same time. As a result, the City lacks the capacity for rendering efficient municipal services to the whole population living in the City.

The study conducted in the City of Ekurhuleni by Van Schalkwyk, Dorrington, Seatlhodi, Velasquez, Feizzadeh and Johnson (2021:1-10) indicates that the significant influx of migrants into the City of Ekurhuleni has resulted in a loss of capacity to render satisfactory health services to all people living in the City due to lack of suitably trained health professionals, clinics and medicines. Nhamo, Rwizi, Mpandeli, Botai, Magidi, Tazvinga and Mabhaudhi (2021) have shown that the quality and efficiency of municipal services in Ekurhuleni has been lowered due to failure to upgrade municipal infrastructure, lack of specialised skills, lack of financial resources, and lack of good leadership. The authors have shown that poor municipal services are a result of failure to implement plans of action effectively within budget and time, over-spending budgets, and the employment of people with inadequate skills. The study conducted by Rogerson (2018:123-129) shows that the City of Ekurhuleni needs to enhance its quality and efficiency of municipal services in order to be able to attract tourists and foreign direct investors from the rest of the world. Pietersen (2021:488-506) has shown that failure to provide satisfactory municipal services in urban centres is attributed to inability to adhere to good governance principles. The author has shown that inability to uphold the rule of law at municipal level often stifles sustained growth and development. The study conducted by Pieterse (2021:1-15) shows that there is a dire need for enhancing the quality of municipal services in Ekurhuleni by way of adhering to the basic principles of good leadership, accountability, and transparency. Benit-Gbaffou (2018:2149-2167) has pointed out that failure to implement municipal bylaws and inability to adhere to the basic principles of good leadership at municipal level has resulted in damage to municipal infrastructure.

Methods and materials of study

A questionnaire was used for gathering data from 544 respondents of study on a total of 71 indicators of municipal service quality. The level of satisfaction of respondents with the quality of municipal services was measured by using a matrix of indicators developed by Das, Das and Barman (2021:885-913) for conducting a similar assessment. A composite index developed by D’Inverno and De Witte (2020:1129-1141) was used as a benchmark for measuring the level of municipal services provided to households.

Results of data analyses

Table 1 shows that 63.05% of respondents of the survey were happy with the quality of municipal services rendered to them. The table shows that 36.95% of respondents were not happy with the quality of municipal services rendered to them. The percentage of male respondents was 66.91%. The percentage of female respondents was 33.09%. Black respondents accounted for 54.04%. White respondents accounted for 18.57%. Coloured respondents accounted for 11.76%.

Table 1: Satisfaction with the quality of municipal services (n=544)

Variable of study	Percentage
Satisfaction with the quality of municipal services	Yes: 343 (63.05%) No: 201 (36.95%)
Gender of respondents	Male: 364 (66.91%) Female: 180 (33.09%)
Age category of respondents in years	20 to 30 years: 67 (12.32%) 31 to 40 years: 114 (20.96%) 41 to 50 years: 178 (32.72%) 51 to 60 years: 153 (28.13%) 61 years or more: 32 (5.88%)

Race of respondents	Black: 294 (54.04%) White: 101 (18.57%) Coloured: 64 (11.76%) Asian: 85 (15.63%) Asian: 85 (15.63%)
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Table 2 shows percentages obtained from the assessment of the quality of municipal service delivery based on 13 indicators of municipal service delivery defined by D’Inverno and De Witte (2020:1129-1141) for the assessment of the level of satisfaction of customers with the quality of municipal services provided to them by municipal employees. The level of satisfaction of respondents was measured by using a 5-point ordinal scale (Bell, 2022). Level 1 of the scale represents the strongest level of agreement to the statement. Level 5 of the scale represents the weakest level of agreement to the statement.

The results displayed in Table 2 show that people who live in the various parts of the City of Ekurhuleni would like the City to enforce municipal bylaws with enough commitment so that municipal bylaws are complied with by all people who live and work in the City. The table also indicates that there is a need for promoting awareness about duties and responsibilities of people who live and work in the City.

Table 2: Assessment of the quality of municipal service delivery (n=544)

Measure for recovering municipal service fees that are owed to City of Ekurhuleni	SD	D	NS	A	SA
Negotiate repayment arrangements for an affordable amount with individual account holder	17.65%	6.80%	57.72%	24.82%	3.49%
Disconnect services completely	7.17%	6.80%	57.72%	24.82%	3.49%
Explain constantly why is it important to pay municipal services promptly	1.10%	7.54%	11.21%	55.70%	24.45%
Keep regular contact by means of writing official legal letters	12.87%	12.13%	38.24%	34.38%	2.39%
Write off all debts and start a new bill	16.18%	10.29%	33.82%	36.21%	3.49%
Talk to people and find out what the problem is	18.93%	25.18%	38.24%	10.29%	7.35%
Every dwelling unit in Ekurhuleni must pay the same amount for a municipal service	18.38%	17.65%	47.06%	13.79%	3.13%
Impose heavy penalties for late or non-payment	14.34%	24.82%	43.20%	10.66%	6.99%
Punish non payers who have a source of steady income	17.65%	17.83%	42.46%	17.83%	4.23%
Be lenient with dwelling units who do not have a steady source of income	7.17%	6.80%	57.72%	24.82%	3.49%
Provide an incentive to dwelling units who owe money	2.21%	7.54%	10.29%	55.88%	24.08%
Refer non-payers to court	19.30%	24.63%	37.68%	13.60%	4.78%
Make sure that residents receive correct municipal bills	19.30%	24.26%	37.13%	14.52%	4.78%

The sample size of study is quite large (n=544). This large sample size of study allows the use of crosstab analysis in which the strength of association among pairs of variables is tested (Beh and Lombardo, 2021) empirically. Table 3 shows 11 significant two-by-two associations that were obtained from crosstab tests. All 11 factors shown in Table 3 have significant associations with the ability of municipal workers to render satisfactory services to people who live and work in the City of Ekurhuleni.

Table 3: Results obtained from crosstab tests (n=544)

Factors that are associated with satisfaction with services rendered to people who live and work in the City of Ekurhuleni	Chi-square value	P-value
Ability to resolve problems promptly	56.9656	0.0000
Duration of residence in Ekurhuleni	55.4996	0.0000
Accuracy of municipal statements	54.5013	0.0000
Perceived quality of electricity services	51.2201	0.0000
Perceived quality of water services	48.1150	0.0000
Perceived quality of sanitation services	46.7358	0.0000
Perceived quality of waste management services	44.7899	0.0000
Perception of affording to pay	43.9089	0.0000
Belief that payment must be made by customers	39.0296	0.0000
Ability to make prompt payment	36.3856	0.0000
Provision of incentives for prompt payment	34.9302	0.0000

The results shown in Table 3 above indicate that the ability of employees of the City of Ekurhuleni to provide satisfactory municipal services to residents and ratepayers is significantly associated with 11 socioeconomic variables. In a decreasing order of strength, these 11 variables of are the following:

1. Ability to resolve problems promptly
2. Duration of residence in Ekurhuleni
3. Accuracy of municipal statements
4. Perceived quality of electricity services
5. Perceived quality of water services
6. Perceived quality of sanitation services
7. Perceived quality of waste management services
8. Perception of affording to pay
9. Belief that payment must be made by customers
10. Ability to make prompt payment
11. Provision of incentives for prompt payment

The results indicate the need for enhancing the current level of technical skills that are essential for providing satisfactory municipal services to residents and ratepayers in the City of Ekurhuleni. The results also show that it is necessary to monitor and evaluate the performance of municipal employees whose duty is to render routine municipal services to residents and ratepayers. These findings are consistent with findings reported by Khale (2015) and Worku (2017) based on studies conducted in the City of Tshwane.

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