

Improving Municipal Service Delivery: A Case Study of a Metropolitan Municipality in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

Municipal service delivery is a challenge facing many municipalities in South Africa, and this is reflected in the many service delivery protests which plagued the country recently. It is therefore essential to understand how to improve municipal service delivery, to determine what interventions are necessary, and to understand the underlying issues behind the problem. This paper reports the results of a study conducted among a convenience sample of managers and employees from the Revenue, Customer Contact Center (RCCC) of a major metropolitan municipality in South Africa, to address the problem. The findings reveal that empowering leadership is strongly correlated with employee work effort, performance and improved service delivery, in a significant way. On the practitioners' side, the important mediating role of employee work effort and employee performance in the "empowering leadership – improved service delivery" relationship in South Africa's public sector are highlighted.

Keywords: leadership; employee performance; municipal service delivery

JEL: H79.

INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction:

Poor, insufficient or a complete lack of service delivery remains an important challenge in South Africa, and there have been many service delivery protests in municipal areas, including the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality (CJMM), which are a cause for concern (Mathibane, 2010). The aforementioned scenario calls for strong leadership to take responsibility for service delivery as required by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Peitser, et. al., 2008). The task of leadership at all organizational levels seems to be getting more and more difficult. Latham (2014: 11) commented that "perhaps too much credit is given to leaders for organizational success and failure, but also conceded that there is consensus amongst academics and practitioners that it is important to give credit to leaders and that it does make a difference." The aforementioned also

found that recent knowledge about leadership "comprises narrow definitions of leader efficiency and effectiveness which are detached from their framework, thus making the application in practice difficult," (Latham (2014: 11). Drawing from the above, Winston and Patterson (2006: 7) defined a leader as "an individual who chooses, provides, trains and influences followers who have mixed gifts, abilities and skills". The leader changes the focuses of followers to support the organization's mission and objectives freely and eagerly using spiritual, emotional, and physical energy in a focused and coordinated manner. The aforementioned researchers further state that "the leader influences followers by humbly communicating the vision clearly which results into changing followers' beliefs and values so that they can comprehend and construe the future into present-time action steps", (Winston and Patterson (2006: 7).

Limited research has been conducted (in the municipal service area) to examine mechanisms that link leadership and team performance (Srivastava, Bartol and Locke, 2006: 1239), and the aforementioned researchers

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showed that empowering leadership was positively linked to team efficiency and effectiveness, which, in turn, were both positively related to performance. Srivastava, et al., (2006: 1240) also stated that several scholars reviewed empowerment as an aspect of the relational or power sharing view.

In light of the above, this paper draws on the leadership theory to examine the relationships between leadership and employee performance, effort, and service delivery at the Revenue & Customer Relationship Management (R&RCM) division at the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality (CJMM), one of the largest municipalities in South Africa. The following research question guided the study on which this paper was written, namely, what is the relationship between empowering leadership and employee work, employee performance, and service delivery?

2. Literature Review:

The main challenge for creating empowering workplaces might exist in the role of effective leadership, since managers create the conditions for employees' work by determining the quality of support, information, and resources in work areas. (Wong and Laschinger, 2012: 948) assert that "when employees notice that their leaders are authentic, open and honest, involving them in decision-making, they (employees) respond positively to their work, reporting increased performance, trust and commitment to management." "Leadership is multidimensional and contains transactional, transformational and laissez-faire behaviors which include the absence of leadership," (Price and Weiss, 2013: 266). "Transformational leadership is more positively associated with the effectiveness of the organization and the satisfaction of the customer," (Avolio and Yammarino, 2013: 12). The aforementioned researchers further argue that leaders should "in-principle," first display transformational behavior, thereafter contingent reward leadership, then management-by-exception, then management-by-passive

and maybe laissez-faire leadership thereafter" Avolio and Yammarino, (2013: 11).

Mc Lean (2013: 15-16) argues that "leadership styles have considerable effects on follower satisfaction, and the transformational leadership competency is alleged to be a more effective leadership style than transactional leadership." The leader "offers a purpose that surpasses short-term goals and concentrates on higher order fundamental needs," (MacGregor Burns, 2012: 20). Transformational leadership has "shown encouraging and positive effects on followers' motivation, commitment, satisfaction, efficiency, performance and other outcomes and can be applied to many domains including municipal environments", (Price and Weiss, 2013: 266). Thus, managers and leaders who exhibit transformational leadership behavior can make a positive contribution and impact on individual's outcomes, such as perceived competence, emotional responses, intrinsic motivation and team cohesion, goals and objectives.

There are various studies proposing that transformational leadership is totally suitable and required in government settings. For example, Paarlberg and Lavigna, (2010) promote the benefits of pro-social incentives and how it affects employee behavior in the public sector. Paarlberg and Lavigna, (2010) in McLean, (2013: 13) stated that "employees in the public sector are more receptive to transformational leadership behaviors, as municipal employees are characteristically motivated to adhere to a set of values and to assist to improve the lives of others." In comparison, transactional leadership models have self-interest at their basis, which is not like the psychological model of most municipal employees.

Studies of transformational leadership have shown improvements in total organizational performance. Trottier, Van Wart and Wang (2008) used data from a 2002 study of more than 100,000 federal government employees in the U.S. in order to determine the apparent importance of transformational as opposed to transactional leadership capabilities. The study revealed that government managers are largely more capable and

competent than transactional leaders, especially in the area of individual consideration, and government managers are weakest in inspirational motivation. Generally, government organizations that hire managers who are also credible leaders are perceived to be more successful, more adaptive and more effective (McLean, 2013: 19). Avolio and Yammarino, (2013: 27) concluded that “transformational leaders are linked to organizational success, efficiency and effectiveness, customer satisfaction and improved performance”.

In summary, transformational leadership theory briefly discussed above highlights the leader-follower relationship, making it relevant to the study of employee performance in the R&CRM department. Effort is understood to be one of most important notions in the motivation theory and is defined as “the quantity or costs of energy put into a behavior series of behaviors,” (Iqbal, 2013: 5-6). It is expected that work effort will positively influence job satisfaction and thus, performance. Another variable was included in this study, namely tenure or the number of years in employment, since it is assumed that a long tenure would imply that employees are satisfied with inter-alia, their work organization, their jobs, the leadership and leadership style, which satisfaction may be demonstrated in their work effort and performance, which ultimately will impact service delivery levels. The aforementioned was empirically explored in this study. From the brief literature reviewed, the following (Table 1)

relationships are proposed with respect to the various research variables.

In order to examine the proposed relationships reflected in Table 1, the empirical study on which this paper is written, was conducted in the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality’s CJMMs) Revenue & Customer Relations Management (R-CRM) department. The methodology is preceded by a brief explanation of the research context so as to provide the rationale for exploring the aforementioned relationships in the research setting chosen.

3. Research Context:

Figure 1 illustrates the dependence between billing and customer queries, and highlights the processes that impact on the resolution of customer queries and ultimately on service delivery. The value chain includes uploading of meter readings, generation and issuing of statements and invoices, tracking of payments, credit management and credit control support and processes, finalization of accounts, refunds and reporting tools. The system is linked with various integrated systems to cater for the recording of customer queries and credit management actions. It is also dependent on data from the Municipal Owned Entities (MOE’s) to read and upload meter readings for accurate billing.

Table (1)

Summary of Research Propositions

Proposition Number	Proposition Statement
P1	Empowering leadership is associated with employee performance at the CJMM
P2	Employee work effort is associated employee performance at the CJMM
P3	No of years in employment is associated with employee performance at the CJMM
P4	No of years in employment is associated with employee work effort at the CJMM
P5	No of years in employment is associated with service delivery at the CJMM

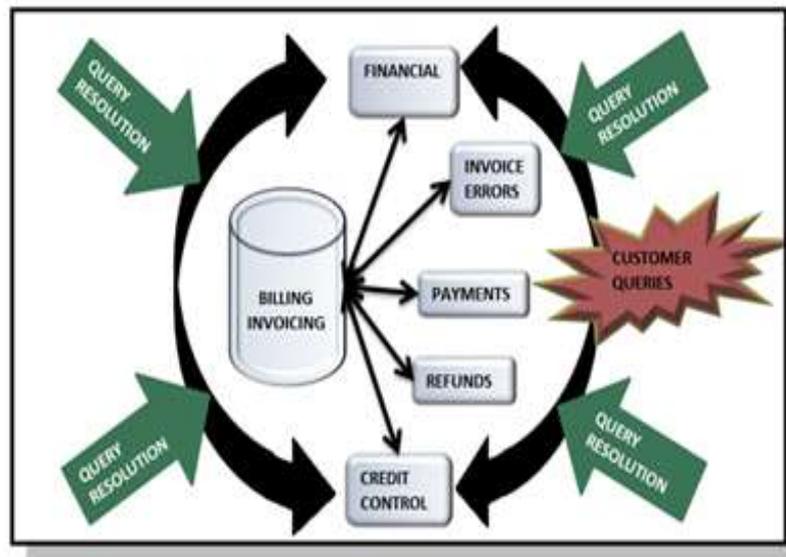


Figure 1: The Customer Query Resolution Chain

Source: Van Wyk, R. (2013)

The most critical factor within the value chain of the CJMM is that a cohesive and a holistic approach is required within the R&CRM department to ensure that all areas are addressed to eliminate departments working in silo's, initiating their own projects and processes overlooking concerns which impact on service delivery to manage or eliminate challenges hampering service excellence. These departments within the R&CRM are the final components to provide the customer with accurate bills, timeous feedback and superior service. Failure of these conditions result in increasing debtors, qualified audit reports, poor systems, poor performance, poor long-term planning, huge service deliver backlogs and queries, increasing salary bills, unfunded mandates, government debt, concerns about sustainability, and greater demands and expectations by all stakeholders (COJ - Business Planning Department, 2012). It is also evident from the Figure 1 that for effective municipal service delivery, the CJMM needs strong transformational leaders and a cadre of fully empowered, motivated, and high performing staff. Thus, the choice of the Revenue-Contact Customer Center at the CJMM as

the research context to answer the research question seems appropriate.

4. Research Methodology:

A quantitative research approach was selected which enabled the use of correlation analysis. Convenience sampling was used, whereby employees in the Revenue Department that were easily accessible, were selected, ensuring that a diversity of employees in different units were included in the sample (Saunders et al., 2007: 213). At the time of the study, the Revenue Department employed 1889 staff, and a sample of 200 (almost 10%) employees was targeted.

4.1 Research Instruments:

In order to effectively measure transformational leadership, the Multi-factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) developed by Bass (2008) was used, since "it will assist with identifying how managers measure up in their own eyes and in the eyes of those with whom they work," (Price and Weiss, 2013: 268). The research questions included aspects such as ideal influence, inspiring motivation, logical stimulation, contingent reward,

management-by-exception active, and management-by-exception, passive behaviors and behaviors such as avoiding decisions or being absent when needed. The final questionnaire comprised four sections, each of which will be described below.

Section one comprised 15 questions on empowering leadership which were on a scale of 1-5. The respondents were requested to choose ‘5’ if they ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘1’ if they ‘disagreed’ with the statement. These questions/statements were based on research done by Zhang and Bartol (2010: 107-128). Section two comprised 10 questions on employee performance which required the respondents to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement, also on a 5-point scale. These questions were developed by the researchers, based on the literature reviewed. In section three,

respondents were requested to choose on a scale from 1-5 how wrong or right each of 10 statements were regarding their opinion of work effort. These questions were formulated, based on the work done by Morris (2009: 350). In section four, respondents were asked to rate 10 statements pertaining to service delivery on a scale comprising (5) excellent, good, average, poor and non-existing (1). These questions were also self-generated, based on the literature.

4.2 Reliability and Validity:

The Cronbach’s alpha and exploratory factor analysis procedures were conducted to determine the reliability and validity of the research instruments. The outcome of this procedure which is reflected in Table 2 do confirm that both reliability and validity were assured (Chin (1998).

Table (1)

Reliability and Validity Statistics

Research Construct		Cronbach’s α value	Factor Loading
Empoweirng Leadership	EL1	0.999	0.999
	EL2		0.999
	EL3		0.999
	EL4		0.998
	EL5		0.998
	EL6		0.999
	EL7		0.998
	EL8		0.998
	EL9		0.999
	EL10		0.999
Employee Work Effort	EWE1	0.999	0.999
	EWE2		0.998
	EWE3		0.998
	EWE4		0.999
	EWE5		0.997
	EWE6		0.999
	EWE7		0.999
	EWE8		0.998
	EWE9		0.999
	EWE10		0.998
Employee Performance	EP1	0.999	0.999
	EP2		0.999

	EP3		0.999		
	EP4		0.999		
	EP5		0.999		
	EP6		0.997		
	EP7		0.999		
	EP8		0.999		
	EP9		0.998		
	EP10		0.998		
	Service Delivery		ISD1	0.999	0.999
			ISD2		0.998
ISD3		0.998			
ISD4		0.999			
ISD5		0.998			
ISD6		0.999			
ISD7		0.999			
ISD8		0.999			
ISD9		0.999			
ISD10		0.999			

Table (3)

Gender and the Ability to Meet Deadlines

		Ability to meet deadlines					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
Gender	Male	17	21	3	0	1	42
	Female	19	30	2	1	2	54
Total		36	51	5	1	3	96

4.3 Data Analysis:

Pearson’s correlation analysis technique was used to examine the relationships between the variables in this study (Bordens and Abbott, 1991: 341). Pearson’s r2 measures the amount of variance between two variables, and signifies the degree to which the variability in the dependent variable can be explained by the variability of the independent variable (Malgady and Krebs, 1986: 110). Cross-tabulation, also known as contingency table analysis was conducted on the categorical or nominal scale data. Being two dimensional, the cross-tabulation table records the number (frequency) of the respondents

that have a specific characteristic as described in the cells of the table. The Chi-Square statistics is primarily used for testing the statistical significance of the cross-tabulation table and test whether or not the variables are independent (Williams, 2015).

5. Findings:

Table 3 which represents a cross tabulation between gender and their ability to meet deadlines, shows that, more females are able to meet deadlines in the R-CCC at the CJMM than their male counterparts.

From the Table 4, it is evident that females require more incentives than their male counterparts.

Table 4
Gender and Need for Incentives

		Require Incentives					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
Gender	Male	20	6	7	5	4	42
	Female	20	14	4	13	3	54
Total		40	20	11	18	7	96

The relationship between empowering leadership and employee performance, employee effort and service delivery was assessed by conducting Pearson’s correlation analysis. The results reflected in Table 5 can be interpreted as “employees perform better when they are empowered by their leaders.” This is deduced from the fact that the Sig (2-tailed) value was 0.45, which is less than the accepted probability value (p) which must always be less than 0.05, to determine its significance level.

Table (5)
Empowering Leaders and Employee Performance

Correlations			
		EL	EP
EL	Pearson Correlation	1	.205*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.045
	N	96	96
EP	Pearson Correlation	.205*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.045	
	N	96	96

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

It is evident from Table 6 that there is a positive relationship between work effort and service delivery ($r = .207, n = 96, p = .043 < .05$).

Further analysis entailed examining the relationship between the number of years in the organization and performance, and the results are captured in Table 7.

Table (6)
Work Effort and Service Delivery

Correlations			
		ISD	EWE
ISD	Pearson Correlation	1	.207*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.043
	N	96	96
EWE	Pearson Correlation	.207*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.043	
	N	96	96

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

Table (7)
No of Years in the Organization and Performance

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig.(2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.256E2 ^a	96	.023
Likelihood Ratio	91.652	96	.607
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.444	1	.230
N of Valid Cases	96		

a. 125 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .02.

It is evident from the chi-square test results reflected in Table 7 that a significant association existed between the number of years that the employees were at the organization, and their performance. This may imply that the longer the employees remained in an organization, the more experienced they become, and are able to perform better. The p value (.023) was also less than 0.05, which further confirms that there was a relationship between the two variables.

Further analysis entailed exploring the association between the number of years the employees were in the organization and their work effort, and the outcome is captured in Table 8 below. The chi-square test for independence also indicated a significant association between “years in the organization and work effort,” such that, the longer employees stay in an organization, the more effort they put into their work performance.

Table (8)
No of Years in the Organization and Work Effort

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.256E2 ^a	96	.023
Likelihood Ratio	91.652	96	.607
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.444	1	.230
N of Valid Cases	96		
a. 125 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .02.			

Table (9)
No of Years in the Organization and Service Delivery

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.265E2 ^a	112	.164
Likelihood Ratio	106.966	112	.617
Linear-by-Linear Association	.286	1	.593
N of Valid Cases	96		
a. 145 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .02.			

Table (10)
Decisions on Research Propositions

Proposition Number	Proposition Statement	Decision
P1	Empowering leadership is associated with employee work effort at the CJMM	Supported
P2	Empowering leadership is associated with employee performance at the CJMM	Supported
P3	No of years in employment is associated with employee performance at the CJMM	Supported
P4	No of years in employment is associated with employee work effort at the CJMM	Supported
P5	No of years in employment is associated with service delivery at the CJMM	Not Supported

Table 9 reflects the results of the correlation analysis to determine the relationship between the number of years the employees were in the organization, and service delivery.

It is evident from Table 9 that the chi-square test for independence indicated no significant association between ‘years in the organization’ and ‘service delivery’, which implies that tenure in a post or

institution does not automatically equate to better performance, which eventually would extrapolate to better service delivery. This conclusion has been arrived at since the p value (.164) was greater than the acceptable probability value of 0.05.

Table 10 provides a summary of the decisions on the research propositions based on the findings reported above.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The findings do confirm that empowering leadership is associated with employee performance. Improvements in service delivery (at the CJMM) are thus a natural consequence of using empowering leadership management tools. The aforementioned is line with the views of some researchers, inter-alia, Ahearne, Mathieu and Rapp, (2005), who focused on the effect of empowering leadership on employee performance and confirmed a close link between these factors. Furthermore, this study supported the research proposition that work effort is associated with service delivery. The literature (Ching (2012); Zhang and Bartol (2010) does not only confirm that empowering leadership has a positive effect on work effort, but further substantiates the fact that empowering leadership has a

positive impact on employee motivation and performance. Furthermore, the aforementioned researchers highlight the fact that employee work effort and performance are interrelated elements which both affect performance in the organization and are driven by empowering leadership and motivation.

Managers will need to be champions and change agents, inspiring employees towards adaptability to ensure success. Managers must also create and construct cooperative and non-dysfunctional relationships with executive levels such as Group Heads, Municipal Councils and Chief Administrative Officers. This creates awareness that managers must be cognizant of methods to motivate and inspire employees to improve their performance in the CJMM by establishing factors that affect their performances which will be investigated in this research.

1.A limitation of this study was that due to the small sample size, the findings cannot be generalized to all municipalities in SA or every division within a municipality, which by implication is what future studies could consider. Furthermore, inferential statistical analysis should be conducted using data on a larger sample of municipal employees to determine the direct, indirect, and mediated relationships among the research variables.

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تطوير الخدمات المحلية المقدّمة في جنوب إفريقيا (حالة دراسة)

بترونيلا سميت وكريشنا جوفيندر*

ملخص

تواجه عملية تقديم الخدمات المحلية الكثير من التحديات في جنوب إفريقيا وينعكس ذلك بوضوح من خلال المظاهرات التي اجتاحت البلاد في الآونة الأخيرة. حيث أصبح من الضروري فهم الطريقة المثلى لتطوير هذه العملية من أجل إجراء التدخل اللازم وفهم المشكلات التي تحول دون ذلك.

الكلمات الدالة: القيادة، أداء الموظفين، تقديم الخدمات المحلية.

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