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# Service Delivery in Urban Local Authorities: A Literature Review Paper

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** This paper provides a literature review of both qualitative and quantitative research on service delivery in urban local authorities as portrayed in literature and offers more insight into the concept thereby developing and facilitating an improved understanding of service delivery and proffering strategies for improving service delivery in urban local authorities. **Research design, data and methodology:** The study adopted a desktop research methodology. Empirical and theoretical research and articles which are relevant to service delivery in urban local authorities are reviewed and analysed. Only secondary information gathered through those articles and research is used to analyse and build literature review on service delivery in urban local authorities. **Results:** a literature review of both qualitative and quantitative research on service delivery in urban local authorities as portrayed in literature proffering strategies for improving service delivery in urban local authorities. **Conclusions:** It is evident that service delivery is an area which needs more attention, especially in developing countries. The service delivery environment is also changing rapidly, calling for strategies to match such changes. This paper facilitates an improved understanding of service delivery, proffering strategies for improving service delivery in urban local authorities. These strategies are essential in improving service delivery challenges.

**Keywords:** Service Concept, Service Delivery, Urban Councils, Residents

**JEL Classification Code:** M31, M37, C12, C21

## 1. Introduction

It is the statutory duty of urban councils to provide services such as road construction and maintenance, primary health care, water supply, and waste management (Marumahoko, 2020). The process of making these services

available to urban dwellers is called service delivery (Marumahoko, 2020). Local governments have the responsibility to ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner, promoting social and economic development and promoting a safe and healthy environment for their residents (Mabizela & Matsiliza,

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2020). Whatever the challenges, municipalities must deliver these services, a mandate which is essential to improving the quality of life for all citizens, since the services provided by municipalities have a direct impact on the living standards of the people in the community (Smit & Govender, 2015).

The study aims to develop literature on service delivery in urban local authorities to present the status of service delivery in urban local authorities globally. The development of literature also enhances an understanding of the service delivery concept in urban local authorities and mapping ways of improving service delivery. As a result, the study can propose a new research direction and knowledge that is aimed at improving the quality-of-service delivery in urban local authorities.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Service Concept in Urban Local Authorities

The service concept in urban local authorities defines the aspect of service design and helps mediate between customer needs and an organisation's strategic intent (Goldstein; et al., 2002). Rao (2005) defines services as intangible activities which are carried out by either machines or persons or both to create value perceptions among customers. Stauss (2005) on the other hand posits that services are specialized skills and knowledge which are exchanged for money in economic transactions. Services are specialized skills and knowledge which are exchanged for money in economic transactions (Makudza, 2022). Edvardsson and Olsson (1996) define the service concept as the comprehensive description of what should be done for the customer and how this is to be achieved. Goldstein et al. (2002) define the service concept as an organisation's business proposal. Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, (OECD) (2010), categorises services as private, public and collective or joint services. However, this paper focuses on public services which Humphreys (1998), defines as those services which are largely or completely paid for through taxes. According to Wollmann (2016), the term public service is used to refer to water supply, sewage treatment, waste management, public transport and energy provision.

In the case of urban local authorities, taxes include rates, also called property taxes for commercial and industrial properties and medium and low-density residential properties as well as supplementary charges in the case of high-density residential houses (Poperwi, 2018). It should, however, be noted that in the case of public services, urban local authority service delivery is not driven by the motive of making profit although, this does not imply that local authorities should make losses in their operations (Poperwi,

2018). They can make surplus funds but their main function is to supply services to the citizens largely on a cost-recovery basis (Poperwi, 2018). The quality of services results in the perception and assessment of value by the customer since services are intangible (Masiya et al., 2019). OECD (2010), alluded that municipal services can be outsourced from private organisations and also from voluntary participation by the community, thereby highlighting the importance of community involvement in municipal service provision. According to Poperwi (2018), where public services are provided by private firms, the role of local government is to provide funds and or regulate the behaviour and conduct of the service provider.

### 2.2. Service Delivery Concept in Urban Local Authorities

Service delivery has been broadly defined as any interaction that exists with the public administration during which citizens look for data, handle their affairs or pay taxes (Vilfan et al., 2018). Service delivery refers to the extent to which the services provided by the listed sectors meet or exceed the expectation of the beneficiaries who are the general public (Makudza, 2022; Shittu, 2020). Avis,(2016) argues that the provision of sufficient, affordable and quality basic services is considered a core function of urban governments. The delivery of services, such as water, sanitation, waste management and housing, correlates closely with the health and well-being of urban residents (Avis, 2016). Service delivery in this paper refers to municipal service delivery in urban local authorities. In fact the phrase, 'municipal service delivery' or service delivery is used concerning the actual provision of basic services which citizens rely on (Avis, 2016). Such services include clean water, sanitation facilities, municipal roads and transport infrastructure, housing infrastructure, refuse removal, street lighting, municipal health care, and education (Shittu, 2020). This echoes the definitions of urban local authority service delivery suggested by various authors including Vilfan et al. (2018) and Avis, (2016).

Urban local authority service delivery can either be private sector services or public sector services (Tasara et al., 2021). From a private sector perspective, urban local authority service delivery is the actual delivery of a service and or a product to a customer (Chen et al., 2020), whereas public sector urban local authority service delivery is the provision of public activities, benefits or satisfactions to the citizens (Batley & Mcloughlin, 2015; Rasul & Rogger, 2018). Public service delivery also invariably involves the provision of services or products by the government to the citizens as mandated by acts of parliament (Mcloughlin, 2015). Therefore, urban local authority service delivery can either be in the form of physical goods or services. Service

delivery can also be internal or external, depending on whether the beneficiaries of the respective services are internal or external stakeholders (Makudza, 2021). Internal service delivery occurs when goods and services are delivered to internal stakeholders, whereas external service delivery is when goods and services are delivered to external stakeholders (Schoute et al., 2018; Yu et al., 2019). Internal service delivery is a prerequisite for the achievement of external service delivery (Schoute et al., 2018; Yu et al., 2019). According to Grönroos (1982), services are non-stoppable interactions that involve both customers and service providers. These services may be considered superior intangible services but do require tangible resources and any valuable instruments that will facilitate the process of solving problems for customers (Grönroos, 1982). Schoute et al. (2018) argue that service organisations can gain a successful competitive edge over competitors through good service quality. Central and local governments are service organisations of factories (Schoute et al., 2018).

### 2.3. Service Delivery Theories in Urban Local Authorities

Several theories such as the theory of service quality and role theory (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2018), the theory of human services delivery (Reader, 2017), and the efficiency services theory (Majekodunmi, 2012), to name but a few major ones, attempt to explain service delivery in urban local authorities. These theories are the ones discussed in existing leading service marketing literature hence, in this paper; they are referred to as bona fide service delivery theories.

#### 2.3.1. Theory of Service Quality

The theory of service quality is based on product quality and customer satisfaction literature (Brady & Cronin, 2001). Service quality measurement is one of the significant measurement tools for firms to understand consumers' needs and wants by analyzing the experience of consumers and customers' satisfaction with the services provided (Ghotbabadi et al., 2015). From the 1980s to recent years the dominance in the market has changed from the product to services and the marketing strategies turn to customer base and relationships that are the keys for service industries which are dominant in the market today. Increasing service industry dominance in the market and variety of services raise the necessity of service quality to attain customer satisfaction in customer relationship-based marketing today (Ghotbabadi et al., 2015). Service quality can help service providers to find their weaknesses and advantages at the same time with customers' needs and desires (Ghotbabadi, et.al, 2015). Figure 1 shows the service quality theory based on the variance between perceived services and expected service.

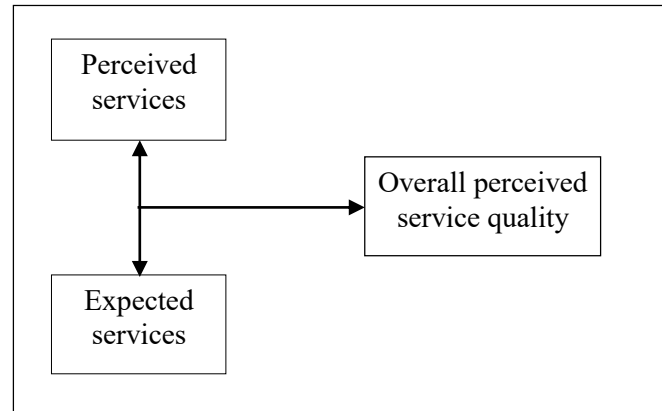


Figure 1: The Service Quality Theory

In line with Figure 1, service quality can be perceptually measured by considering the difference between perceived service quality and expected quality. Makudza (2021) notes that service quality exists when perceived service quality outweighs expected service. If expected service perception outweighs perceived services, then a customer will be dissatisfied. This theory is based on the confirmation paradigm where consumer perception is used to measure the overall perceived service quality.

Service quality literature is based on product quality literature (Brady & Cronin, 2001) but scientists introduced and developed numerous other models of service quality that are specifically for the service industry. Although there is no general agreement on one particular model for measuring service quality, many of them are useful for industries and businesses in service categories (Ghotbabadi, et.al., 2015). Urban council service provision therefore is mainly guided by the quality of services provided.

#### 2.3.2. Role Theory

Role theory argues that individuals' behaviour is based on how their roles evolve and are defined (Matta et al., 2015). Roles are generated by normative expectations and are related to identifiable social positions in organisational contexts (Qian et al., 2018). The most fundamental concept of role theory is the role and therefore roles can be defined broadly as a set of behavioural expectations placed on individuals based on their position in a social structure (Aaron et al., 2022). Table 1 presents the key attributes of the role theory.

Table 1: Key Attributes of the Role Theory

Role attributes
Roles evolve
Roles are defined
Roles are generated by normative expectations
Roles are related to identifiable social positions in organizational contexts

Roles are based on behavioral expectations
Roles are influenced by social structures
Role ambiguity dissatisfaction of individuals
Role ambiguity increases ineffective performance

Note: Based on Qian et al. (2018)

The concept of role ambiguity arises when duties and roles are not clearly defined enough for the individual performing the role (Qian et al., 2018). The role theory suggests that role ambiguity will increase an individual's dissatisfaction with his or her role resulting in ineffective performance and this points out the importance of having well-defined roles and responsibilities within organizations (Aaron et al., 2022). Qian et al. (2018), argue that supervisors who have goal-focused leadership abilities are skilled in aligning individual roles with organisational goals and defining role responsibilities. The role theory therefore is mainly focused on specific roles that individuals play in the provision of services in urban local authorities.

### 2.3.3. Efficiency Theory

The advocates of efficiency services believe that the crux of this theory is that the main purpose of local government is to provide services to the local people (Majekodunmi, 2012). The efficiency services theory also states that a small population enables the efficient provision of basic social services (Majekodunmi, 2012). It also allows for flexibility in decision-making and implementation. In addition, the theory stipulates that local government exist to articulate and aggregate the interests and aspirations of the people for better and more efficient services (Khalil & Adelabu, 2012). The theory argues that what is central and important to the people is the knowledge and articulation of the problem confronting the people and finding appropriate solutions to the problems (Khalil & Adelabu, 2012).

The theory further argues that since the officials of the local government councils have the necessary knowledge of the areas, they are in a better position to understand the needs of the people and provide efficient services for their welfare (Majekodunmi, 2012). The proximity of the local government to the grassroots makes it especially suited to provide certain functions far more efficiently and in a more cost-effective manner than the much more remote government at the higher level (Majekodunmi, 2012).

Such functions should be allocated to the local governments with powers, resources and the necessary autonomy to handle them. This then is not a mere decentralization of central governmental authority, for if it is, it will require a degree of routine supervision by the central or state government that will not be conducive and efficient service delivery (Khalil & Adelabu, 2012). According to the efficiency theory, local government has the mandate to provide efficient services to the residents.

### 2.3.4. Theory of Human Services Delivery

The theory of human service delivery entails an understanding of how people work within systems to deliver services (Thompson, 2000). People are a resource unlike any other in that their value and availability can be difficult to quantify (Reader, 2017). The term 'human service' is variously referred to as 'public service', 'social service' and 'community services' in the literature (Alam & Robb, 2009). The judgement of services is partly by subjective criteria, so understanding the quality that is provided by any service system can be a challenge. Theorists attempt to understand how to build the best system for the best services (Thompson, 2000). Many theorists of human service delivery stress the importance of an internal ideology for an organisation. To motivate the people delivering services, and to provide them with broad guidelines, it is necessary to communicate a greater mission. By having a broader vision before them, people will be better able to process a diversity of challenges and justify their work (Reader, 2017). Internal ideologies tend to work best by being aspirational (Reader, 2017). The theory addresses the people aspect of service delivery.

## 3. Methods

The study adopted a desktop research methodology. Empirical and theoretical research and articles which are relevant to service delivery in urban local authorities are reviewed and analysed. Only secondary information gathered through those articles and research is used to analyse and build literature review on service delivery in urban local authorities. Through an analysis of previous results, it is easier to outline most of the solved issues on service delivery and identify areas of future research. To gain a fair understanding of service delivery, there is a need to have an appreciation of the service concept.

## 4. Results

Several studies were carried out globally on service delivery giving an overview of the general state of service delivery globally. The textual data set for the study is limited to the studies from 2007 to 2023, thus giving a cross-analysis of empirical evidence for 16 years.

### 4.1. Global Public Service Delivery

Cities are faced with serious challenges in service delivery in both developed and developing countries and this is attributed to the rapid growth of populations (Slack, 2007; OECD, 2010). This view is supported by Khalid

(2010) who remarked that local authorities in Malaysia have continued to experience increased pressure to improve service delivery. Seventy per cent of the population in Malaysia lives in urban areas and this placed an ever-increasing demand for waste management services (Johari et al., 2014). The Malaysian government privatized the management of solid waste and awarded contracts to four firms in an endeavor to improve the quality of solid waste management services in the country (Badgie et al., 2012). About 70 per cent of the waste generated in Malaysia was collected through curbside and communal centers (Johari et al., 2014). Water problems in Malaysia were not linked to scarcity but to the issue of governance as the country experiences plenty of rainfall and has many water resources (Chan, 2009).

Canada is also another country with municipal servicing challenges and this is mainly caused by the rapid growth of its urban areas (Spicer & Found, 2016). By instituting municipal systems that respect both local autonomy and regional interests, provinces could provide an environment conducive to inter-municipal cooperation (Spicer & Found, 2016). The municipalities that comprise Canada's city regions are best placed to meet regional municipal service challenges. Municipal service delivery challenges are rampant in metropolitan areas. Some local decision-makers ardently adhere to antiquated institutional thinking, believing that encompassing centralization is the best means to streamline service delivery and improve service efficiency (Spicer & Found, 2016). Service delivery challenges will, nevertheless, remain an issue to be solved unless some mechanisms are put in place to address the service delivery challenges by the responsible authorities. Unlocking the full potential of Canadian metropolitan areas will require local leaders to act innovatively, cooperatively and free of intrusive and unnecessary provincial authority (Spicer & Found, 2016). Many developing countries face service delivery challenges (Mangai, 2017). In many of these countries, this has resulted in public protests (Ngcamu, 2019; Morudu, 2017). For instance, in the past decade South Africa has experienced service delivery protests characterized by increased violence and several researchers argue that these protests can be attributed to organisational failure to provide satisfactory basic services (Peyper, 2016; Akinboade, 2012; Nkomo, 2017); while others hold that citizen satisfaction is also an expectation of the government's performance (Mangai, 2016).

In the City of Nairobi in Kenya, Andole, (2016) points out that increasing urbanization, rural-urban migration and natural population growth have caused an increase in solid waste generation that has not been accompanied by an equivalent increase in capacity to handle the waste. This is causing municipal solid waste management-related challenges such as illegal dumping of refuse (Andole, 2016).

Consequently, the importance of assessing and planning strategically cannot be overemphasized. South Africa features a dual economy with a developed economy in major metropolitan areas coexisting with an underdeveloped economy in townships, informal settlements and poor rural areas (Fernando, 2019). Such a dualistic nature of the economy can potentially lead to both market and government failures in service delivery. In South Africa government failures in service delivery are more visible at local levels and the quest for service delivery is long overdue (Fernando, 2019). However, underprivileged service delivery has been a major problem in many municipalities, partly because of corruption, political patronage and skills deficits (Nkomo, 2017). According to the Constitution of South Africa, section 152, local government has the mandate to deliver municipal services making it a local sphere which is closest to the people (Nkomo, 2017). Nonetheless, poor service delivery in many municipalities is retarding racial and class integration and equality in South Africa (Nkomo, 2017).

The provision of quality service by municipalities in South Africa is given effect by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996). As such, all municipalities have made the delivery of quality service an important agenda in their functioning. Within the South African context, it is the responsibility of the local government sphere that is municipalities, to provide water, dispose of refuse, and other municipal services (Ndevu & Muller, 2018). However, from a closer look at and analysis of current incidents of service delivery protests, it is prudent to concur with Portfolio (2008) that as far as citizens are concerned, municipalities are not delivering services to expectations.

According to Ndevu and Muller (2018), poor service delivery by municipalities results in protests by citizens resulting in challenges such as devoting precious time to deal with the protests, demotivation for those employees involved in service provision, and in some cases property is destroyed and fatalities. The so-called service delivery protests that have swept through South African cities and towns have not only been to protest about inadequate delivery by the local government of sanitation, water, electricity and houses but have also been concerned about the lack of democracy and unaccountability of elected officials (Phutiagae, 2014; Koma, 2014).

Great differences exist amongst municipalities across South Africa. To gain insight into which municipalities are performing well and which are performing poorly, one needs to read reports of the Auditor General (AG) and the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR); (AG 2014/15; SAIRR, 2016) (Ndevu & Muller, 2018). The AG's financial report for 2014 to 2015 indicates that provinces with the highest proportion of municipalities with clean

audit opinions were the Western Cape (73%), Gauteng (33%) and KwaZulu-Natal (30%). The AG further stated that audit outcomes of municipalities in the Eastern Cape, Free State and Mpumalanga are starting to show signs of improvement from many years of poor audit outcomes, particularly the audit outcomes on solid waste which were reported at municipalities with the Joe Gqabi district in the Eastern Cape and Thabo Mofutsanyane District Municipality in the Free State (Ndevu & Muller, 2018). The AG further pointed out to the leadership in these municipalities to re-emphasize the benefits of good governance at all municipalities as a key mechanism to create a fertile environment for appropriate service delivery and to back this up with decisive action in setting the appropriate tone at the top, investing in the right skills and competencies for key positions and further continuing good record-keeping practices in all municipalities (Ndevu & Muller, 2018).

According to Humphreys; (1998), poor service delivery that is rampant in many towns globally is even worse, particularly in Africa and other developing countries. Humphreys argues that the delivery of services has a direct and immediate effect on the quality of the lives of the people in a given community. The challenge of poor service delivery limits investment opportunities to any given area thereby minimizing employment opportunities for the respective residents. Worldwide, improving service delivery is a serious challenge (Besley & Ghatak, 2007). The causes of poor service delivery in local authorities and the strategies that can be applied to address such challenges have been formally investigated by several researchers. Although the Rwandese Association of Local Government Authorities, (RALGA), in 2010 reported on the factors affecting service delivery in local governments, it did not empirically examine the strategies that can be adopted to improve service delivery in local authorities in Rwanda (Makanyeza et al., 2013). A study which was carried out in Nairobi, Kenya, recommended the following strategies as a way of improving service delivery challenges; increasing citizen participation in the affairs of the local authority and partnership with the community in service delivery, prompt response to service user complaints, offering quality service and ensuring that service users pay their bills on time, strategic public service planning, sound human resource policy that includes capacity building and employee motivation, managing change, dealing with corruption and improving accountability, segregation of duties between councilors and management of the local authorities, partnering with other players and outsourcing services (Makanyeza et al., 2013) The study recommended further studies of that nature to be carried out on several local authorities in the world especially in developing countries to validate the findings.

Zimbabwean local authorities are falling short of being financially viable, efficient and effective councils which is a necessity for the capability to provide quality and affordable services to their ratepayers (Mudyadzo & Nzwatu, 2018). There has been uneven development, widespread corruption and erratic patterns in service provision, serious service delivery challenges and collapsed infrastructure (Dangaiso et al., 2023). There is an endless list of shortcomings which attempt to explain why urban councils are defaulting in their duty as credible service providers (Mudyadzo & Nzwatu, 2018). In recent years, typhoid and cholera outbreaks have also amplified the challenges in councils and their failure to combat diseases in a bid to ensure the 'health for all' policy as one of the major components of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) now succeeded by the Sustainable Development Goals (Dziva & Kabonga, 2021). In 2013, local government in Zimbabwe, was constitutionalized, a position that elevated its status in governance (Government of Zimbabwe, 2013). The new Constitution of Zimbabwe recognized a three-tier system of governance. In this regard, it recognized national government, provincial and metropolitan councils and local government; it broke down local authorities into urban councils and rural district councils (Marumahoko et al., 2020).

The term service consumer is normally used to refer to those consumers who pay for and derive benefits from the provision of a service. They are also known as service users. The service consumers or users include city dwellers, factories, businesses, nongovernmental organisations and government agencies (Marumahoko et al., 2020). These consumers need various services from urban local authorities and the services are paid either directly or indirectly by way of taxes. To ensure sustainability, consumers pay for the services every month (Marumahoko et al., 2020). Local authorities are responsible for ensuring that services are delivered to urban communities (Marumahoko et al., 2020). Leaders in the public sector therefore are obligated to provide services to the public (Mudyadzo & Nzwatu, 2018). The delivery of service by the government is not simply aimed at enjoyment by the citizens; rather it is also about protecting the rights of citizens (Gaitho & Awino, 2018). It is therefore critical that the delivery of service to the public is evaluated against set performance targets which impact the lives of the citizens (Gaitho & Awino, 2018). Service delivery challenges, therefore, are prevalent in most urban local authorities globally.

#### **4.2. Service Delivery, Service Quality, and Consumer or Stakeholder Satisfaction in Urban Local Authorities**

This section analyses the notions of service delivery, service quality, and consumer or stakeholder satisfaction. These concepts are fundamental to setting the foundation for the empirical study.

#### **4.2.1. Service Delivery and Service Quality in Urban Local Authorities**

Service delivery cannot be discussed in isolation from service quality and according to Wirtz, and Lovelock, (2021), service quality is defined as the process whereby the customer carries out a comparative analysis of the entire service being provided. This definition of service quality is similar to the definition of service delivery given by Shittu (2020). Service delivery refers to the extent to which the services provided by the listed sectors meet or exceed the expectations of the beneficiaries who are the general public (Shittu, 2020). Consequently, the concepts of service delivery and service quality have similar meanings except that in some cycles the former is more associated with the public sector and the latter with the private sector respectively yet they can be applied to both sectors (Dangaiso et al., 2023). Service marketing experts agree that service quality is a proxy variable of customer satisfaction (Zeithaml et al., 2018).

Given Shittu's definition above, the argument that service quality is a component of customer satisfaction can also be extended to the related concept of service delivery. For customers to be satisfied with services, service delivery and service quality management has to take into account several factors including employees and managerial decisions. A good administration that focuses on well-trained staff, valuable programme offerings and its influence on customers, are also components of quality dimensions (Zeithaml et al., 2018). Top management deems it necessary to invest time, energy required training and resources to keep their staff sensitive and customer-centric (Khan & Fash, 2014).

In today's global competitive environment, the service industry plays an increasingly important role in the economy of many countries, therefore, delivering quality service is considered as an essential strategy for success and survival (Zeithaml et al., 2018). Effectiveness and efficiency in the way services are delivered to the citizens are critical issues when it comes to the improvement of service delivery. Currently, cities are faced with many urgent challenges which have made it necessary to introduce new and improved service delivery systems to solve those problems. (World Bank, 2009), states that the current cities are faced with many urgent challenges which have necessitated the implementation of new intelligent service delivery systems to tackle those problems. Lebodi (2021), argues that the use of public values, institutions, and service markets in contracting can improve service delivery. Stakeholder

preferences and democratic processes determine the values to be prioritized in service delivery (Lebodi, 2021). Furthermore, public law and organisational arrangements determine the contracting tools available for balancing competing values; and the characteristics of service markets influence which contracting tools and vendors are best suited to achieve stakeholder values (Masiya et al., 2019). The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) states that the public sector plays a crucial role in national development (Makanyeza et al., 2013).

Given that the needs of citizens are very dynamic, for governments to remain viable, efficient and effective in services provision there is a need to embrace strategies that can enhance improved productivity and the quality of services delivered (Engida & Bardill, 2013). Makanyeza et al. (2013) outline the following as strategies to improve service delivery; increasing the participation of citizens in the affairs of the local authority, sound human resources policy, partnerships with the community in service delivery, flexible response to service user complaints, value for money and ensuring that service users pay their bills on time, dealing with corruption and improving accountability, strategic public service planning, capacity building and employee motivation, managing change, segregation of duties between councilors and officials, partnering other players and outsourcing services. Hofstetter et al. (2020), propose the need to set up regulatory institutions at lower levels of government, whose main thrust would be to enhance capacities. Hofstetter et al. (2020), further suggest the importance of having stipulated roles and responsibilities of the institutions which are responsible for regulatory policy and strengthening institutional capacities for regulatory quality, resources, training, and capacity building. Urban governments' main purpose is therefore to provide sufficient, affordable and quality basic services to citizens (Avis, 2016). Delivery of services such as water, sanitation, waste management and housing, correlates closely with the health and well-being of urban residents (Avis, 2016).

However, in many developing countries, delivery is constrained by challenges of coordination, governance, finance and capacity, which are exacerbated by the pace and scale of urbanization (Avis, 2016). Governments at all levels play important roles in service delivery, regulating, facilitating and collaborating with other stakeholders and institutions (Avis, 2016). National governments set the policy framework, transferring resources to local governments for implementation. The primary responsibility for the provision of basic services usually rests with the city or municipal government, even if the delivery of services is outsourced to the private sector or NGOs (Mangai et al., 2019). Urban governance for basic services covers the full range of arrangements through

which governments and other stakeholders work together to install, deliver and manage services (Mangai et al., 2019). Governments have to be more responsive to society's needs and demands. Putting citizens at the heart of public institutions provides a twofold benefit. It makes public administrations more responsive and increases citizens' satisfaction and trust in government (Vilfan et al., 2018). Service delivery which is citizen-centric means that policy makers better understand the needs of the citizens and the key drivers of satisfaction for citizens (OECD, 2019). When it comes to the designing and delivering of services, public administrations should not only rely on their expertise and insights but should involve public service users who should express their needs and expectations (Vilfan et al., 2018). Service delivery quality issues are therefore of great importance in urban local authorities as they reflect how responsive the government is to its service recipients.

#### **4.2.2. Consumer or Stakeholder Satisfaction in Urban Local Authorities**

After experiencing the service, customers tend to evaluate the service performance they have experienced and compare it with their prior expectations. Satisfaction is a judgment that follows a series of consumer product or service interactions. Most customer satisfaction studies are based on the expectancy-disconfirmation model of satisfaction (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2021). In this model, Wirtz and Lovelock (2021), further claim that confirmation or disconfirmation of pre-consumption expectations is the essential determinant of satisfaction. According to Wirtz, and Zeithaml (2018), measures of customer satisfaction include expectations, performance and loyalty. Oliver (2010) discussed four perspectives relating to consumer, organisation, industry and society in his extensive study on satisfaction. In any case, Oliver's argument above appears to echo a stakeholder-driven perspective on service delivery and satisfaction. This approach seems to gel with Wirtz and Lovelock (2016, 2018) and Zeithaml, et al. (2018) call for the involvement of stakeholders in service process (re)design, a critical element of service quality and productivity. In particular, Wirtz and Lovelock (2018) argue that stakeholders such as customers, frontline employees, support staff, and information technology teams should be involved in examining service blueprints during service process design if services are to be improved. Stakeholders cannot be involved in service blueprinting if their satisfaction with service delivery is not an essential component of service management. Municipalities are public organisations hence they have a variety of stakeholder groups (Mukucha et al., 2022). Engdaw (2020), states that satisfaction or the lack of satisfaction is an inevitable outcome of the consumption of services concerning the consumer's perspective. In this regard, prior

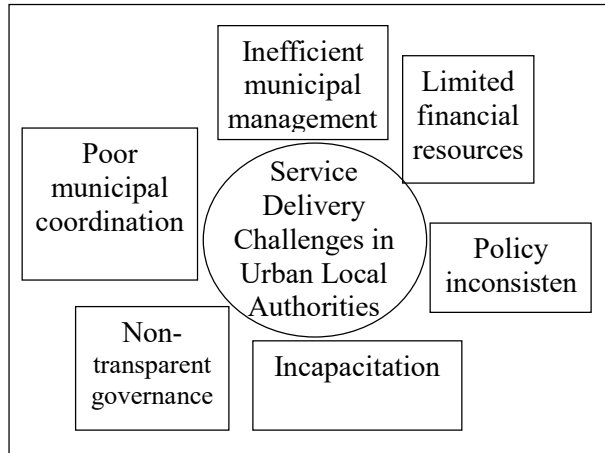
expectations have a strong and consistent influence on future expectations (Hjortskov, 2018).

Public management research incorporates these ideas on (dis)satisfaction in mechanisms of participation in decision-making and mechanisms that guarantee equal treatment and ethical behavior (Gaitho & Awino, 2018). It is expected that when citizens are not included in decision-making, they will be less satisfied with the government (Ahmed & Koech, 2019; Kekezi et al., 2019). In contrast, the desire for fair treatment will motivate citizens to favour the government's role in providing public services rather than promoting alternative methods (Ahmed & Koech, 2019; Kekezi et al., 2019). Customers in the public service are internal customers and these workers all need each other, in an interdependent system of internal public service. External customers on the other hand are the customers who are the object of the mission of public service organisations, the other parties with an interest in the organization (Vilfan et al., 2018). Public service providers are a type of multiservice organisation, offering an array of services to citizens who are the customers (Gendel-Guterman & Billig, 2019). As a result, the overall perceived citizen satisfaction with public services is more complex to evaluate than a single service (Engdaw, 2020). Thus, citizens can utilize different combinations of general and subjective modes of experience assessment including feelings and opinions about services which are objective and evaluations of judgment (Kekezi et al., 2019).

#### **4.3. Service Delivery Challenges in Urban Local Authorities**

Currently, cities are faced with many urgent challenges which have made it necessary to introduce new and improved service delivery systems to solve those problems. (World Bank, 2009), states that the current cities are faced with many urgent challenges which have necessitated the implementation of new intelligent service delivery systems to tackle those problems. Mangai, (2017), argues that the use of public values, institutions, and service markets in contracting can improve service delivery. Stakeholder preferences and democratic processes determine the values to be prioritized in service delivery (Masuku & Jili, 2019). Furthermore, public law and organisational arrangements determine the contracting tools available for balancing competing values; and the characteristics of service markets influence which contracting tools and vendors are best suited to achieve stakeholder values (Masuku & Jili, 2019). Figure 2 summarizes the service delivery challenges in local authorities.





**Figure 2:** Service Delivery Challenges in Urban Local Authorities

However, in many developing countries, delivery is constrained by challenges of coordination, governance, finance and capacity, which are worsened by the rate and scale of urbanization (Avis, 2016). Governments at all levels play important roles in service delivery, regulating, facilitating and collaborating with other stakeholders and institutions (Vilfan et al., 2018). National governments, however, set the policy framework, transferring resources to local governments for implementation (Masuku & Jili, 2019). The primary responsibility for the provision of basic services usually rests with the city or municipal government, even if the delivery of services is outsourced to the private sector or NGOs (Avis, 2016). Urban governance for basic services covers the full range of arrangements through which governments and other stakeholders work together to install, deliver, and manage services (Avis, 2016).

#### 4.4. Strategies to Improve Service Delivery in Urban Local Authorities

The needs of citizens are very dynamic and as a result for governments to remain viable, efficient and effective in services provision there is a need to embrace strategies that can enhance improved productivity and the quality of services delivered by urban local authorities. Makanyeza et al. (2015), outline several strategies that can be adopted by African governments to enhance public sector performance. Strategies that touch on the main requirements for improving the public sector in general and service delivery, in particular, are based on the concept of a government that is run in partnership with all stakeholders, and one that focuses on promoting the advancement of the private sector and citizens through a well-managed policy and regulatory environment (Makanyeza et al., 2015). Strategies to improve service delivery include increasing citizen

participation in the affairs of the local authority and partnerships with the community in delivering services, prompt responses to service user complaints, provision of value-for-money services and ensuring that service users pay their bills on time, dealing with corruption and improving accountability, strategic public service planning, capacity building and employee motivation, managing change, segregation of duties between councilors and officials, partnering other players and outsourcing services (Masiya et al., 2019).

Mangai, (2017) proposes the need to set up regulatory institutions at lower levels of government, whose main thrust would be to enhance capacities. Mangai (2017), further suggests the importance of having stipulated roles and responsibilities for the institutions which are responsible for regulatory policy and strengthening institutional capacities for regulatory quality, resources, training, and capacity building. Urban governments' main purpose is therefore to provide sufficient, affordable and quality basic services to citizens (Avis, 2016). Delivery of services such as water, sanitation, waste management and housing, correlates closely with the health and well-being of urban residents (Avis, 2016). Governments have to be more responsive to society's needs and demands. Placing citizens at the heart of public institutions provides a twofold benefit (Vilfan et al., 2018). It makes public administrations more responsive and increases citizens' satisfaction and trust in government (Vilfan et al., 2018). Service delivery which is citizen-centric means that policy makers better understand the needs of the citizens and the key drivers of satisfaction for citizens (OECD, 2013). When it comes to the designing and delivering of services, public administrations should not only rely on their expertise and insights but should involve public service users who should express their needs and expectations (Vilfan et al., 2018).

#### 5. Conclusion

Service delivery is an area which needs more attention, especially in developing countries. The service delivery environment is also changing rapidly, calling for strategies to match such changes. Several service delivery definitions have been put across by several researchers but this paper mainly focused on municipal service delivery which involves the provision of basic services that residents rely on and also the interaction of residents with their respective governments (Avis, 2016; Makanyeza et al., 2013). The concept of service delivery is not removed from the concept of service quality (Zeithaml, et al., 2018). Although more prominent in developing countries, various service delivery challenges are rampant globally (Avis, 2016). A variety of strategies have been proposed by several researchers but

still, the provision of quality public services remains a challenge and calls for further studies taking note of the prevalent turbulent environment. This paper provides a literature review of both qualitative and quantitative research on service delivery in urban local authorities as portrayed in literature and offers more insight into the concept thereby developing and facilitating an improved understanding of service delivery and proffering strategies for improving service delivery in urban local authorities. If adopted, these strategies can go a long way in minimizing service delivery challenges prevalent in urban local authorities.

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