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Barriers to Effective Supply Chain Management Service Quality: The Case of a Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality

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Abstract

Effective supply chain management (SCM) is essential for municipalities to provide quality services to residents, foster economic development, and improve the overall quality of life. However, municipal managers encounter various challenges in maintaining effective SCM service quality, especially in emerging markets such as South Africa. These obstacles can result in inefficiencies, intensified costs, and decreased service quality, ultimately impacting the well-being of residents.

This study intends to investigate the barriers to effective SCM service quality in the Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality, located in the North-West Province of South Africa. Specifically, this study seeks to identify the key barriers faced by municipal managers in ensuring effective SCM service quality and to provide recommendations for addressing these challenges.

The study is grounded in contingency theory, which emphasizes the importance of adapting management approaches to suit specific contexts and challenges. This study utilised a qualitative research method, employing semi-structured interviews to gather data from selected participants. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 30 municipal managers selected using purposive sampling, and data analysis was conducted using Atlas. ti software.

The study reveals that several factors hinder effective SCM service quality in municipalities. These factors include inadequate funding, inadequate monitoring and evaluation systems, limited human resources and skills, unclear roles and responsibilities, irregular budget allocation and infrastructure maintenance, uncompetitive salaries for skilled workers, ineffective employee training, inadequate internal audit control, ineffective policy compliance, shortages of skill workers, unreliable service providers, and maintenance issues with machinery and equipment.

This study provides valuable insights into the barriers to effective SCM service quality in municipalities, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to address these barriers. The findings have implications for management, policy, and practice and suggest avenues for further research. By addressing these challenges, municipalities can improve SCM service quality, enhance resident satisfaction, and promote economic growth and development.

Keywords: Supply Chain Management; Municipal SCM Service Delivery; Barriers; Municipality Managers

1. Introduction /background

Governments worldwide struggle to deliver essential services efficiently, and South Africa is no exception (Chili *et al.*, 2023). Despite efforts to improve service delivery, municipalities in South Africa continue to face significant barriers. This study aims to investigate the barriers hindering effective supply chain management (SCM) service quality in the Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality, located in the North-West Province of South Africa. The South African government is responsible for delivering essential public services, which encompass healthcare, education, water supply, transportation, and social welfare programs.

The South African government must provide vital public services, including healthcare, education, water, transportation, and social welfare programs, to its residents (Enaifoghe *et al.*, 2024). However, issues have arisen in successfully providing these services, resulting in a rise in protests against service delivery (Morudu, 2017). The Ngaka Modiri Molema District municipality, which covers 28,114 km² with five local municipalities, is a rural area with potential in agriculture and mining (Cogta, 2020). Despite its potential, about 67.66% of the population lives in poverty (Oduniyi & Tekana, 2020).

Local municipalities in South Africa, including Ngaka Modiri Molema District municipality, face significant barriers in delivering municipal services (Enwereji & Uwizeyimana, 2020; Enaifoghe, 2022). These barriers greatly affect the area's socioeconomic environment. Effectively using municipal services is crucial for meeting the population's basic needs, encouraging economic activities, and ensuring environmental sustainability. This study seeks to identify the barriers hindering efficient SCM service quality in the Ngaka Modiri Molema District municipality and provide insights into possible solutions to improve service delivery. This study seeks to enhance our understanding of SCM in municipalities, provide recommendations for improving service delivery, and inform policy decisions.

All governments around the world grapple with how best to provide critical services in an effective manner, including South Africa (Chili *et al.*, 2023). Although much has been done to enhance service delivery, South African local government still faces considerable challenges. The purpose of this study is to examine the impediments for fast and good quality of supply chain management (SCM) service in Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality within North West Province, South Africa. It is the largest entity running hospitals, clinics and schools and providing public services with the exception of the security services and government housing which are also the domain of province and local governments.

2. Problem statement

South Africa's SCM in the public sector, particularly in local governments, is criticised for operational inefficiency, inadequate service delivery, and policy adherence. Even after attempting to enhance SCM service delivery, barriers associated with disregarding SCM procurement legislation in the public sector in South Africa continue to result in negative service delivery outcomes. (Auditor-General of South Africa, 2020-2021). Local municipalities in South Africa are also faced with diabolical challenges such as diversionary spending, inadequate internal control monitoring, and favoritism, which prevent the institutional accountability mechanisms. (Enwereji & Potgieter, 2020). The involvement of politics in local bureaucracy, along with ambiguous definitions, contributes to the challenges that struggling local municipalities encounter in service delivery and governance. Municipalities in South Africa face service delivery barriers and challenges, including unfinished projects due to unspent funds (Ngobese, 2017). Residents in Mafikeng, North-West, experience poor road conditions, inadequate stormwater management, and rubbish accumulation, negatively impacting their daily lives (The United Democratic Movement, 2020).

The Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality, which is classified as a rural area, faces considerable challenges regarding basic service delivery backlogs and necessitates substantial enhancements in governance practices. The government's efforts to improve service delivery are hindered by a breakdown in communication between the councils and the citizens, issues of corruption, and a decline in municipal capacity. Ineffective SCM poses a significant obstacle to the Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality's ability to provide quality services to its community. Various factors, including logistical inefficiencies, skills gaps, and bureaucratic red tape, contribute

to this challenge. This paper seeks to investigate the fundamental barriers to effective SCM and analyse their effects on service quality within the municipality. The goal is to identify actionable solutions to overcome these challenges.

• **Research questions**

1. What are the barriers hindering efficient SCM service quality in the Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality in the North-West Province?
2. What are the possible solutions to improve municipality service quality in the province?

3. The significance of this paper

The significance of this paper lies in its potential to improve SCM service quality in the Ngaka Modiri Molema District municipality, North-West Province, and beyond. By identifying the barriers that hinder effective SCM service quality, the study aims to provide valuable insights and recommendations for government officials, municipality management, and committees involved in local governance.

The findings of this study could have far-reaching implications, particularly in addressing the challenges faced by rural municipalities like Ngaka Modiri Molema, where poverty levels are high (67.66% of the population lives in poverty). By improving SCM service quality, the municipalities can better deliver essential services, such as infrastructure development, roads, water, electricity, and waste management, which are critical for the well-being of residents.

Moreover, the study's focus on the North-West Province can provide a framework for addressing similar barriers in other provinces, ultimately contributing to improved service delivery and governance across South Africa.

4. Literature review

The literature review examines SCM, outlines the responsibilities of municipal authority, identifies barriers encountered by district municipalities, and analyses factors that may hinder local municipalities from effectively delivering services. Additionally, it addresses the challenges faced by local municipalities in South Africa in providing efficient public services and explores the contingency theory of leadership.

4.1 Understanding SCM

According to Min *et al.* (2023), SCM refers to the coordinated management of a system that provides essential products and services. This process encompasses the transportation of raw materials and finished goods to customers, facilitated through physical distribution, information exchange, and financial transactions. Mukhamedjanova (2020) posits that SCM comprises a system that includes processes and entities. The three key entities in SCM are as follows: producer, supplies, and customer (Hugos, 2024). Sibanda *et al.* (2020) explain that SCM is a systematic approach that oversees the movement of information, resources, goods, and services from suppliers to warehouses and ultimately to consumers. Ellram and Murfield (2019) describe SCM as a system designed to optimize production by aligning the objectives and efforts of stakeholders. Its primary aim is facilitating a smooth and cost-effective flow of goods and services. Therefore, organisations, including municipalities, should function collaboratively as part of a supply chain rather than as individual units to achieve economies of scale.

The South African government implemented SCM as a procurement system for government operations. The goal of this initiative is to reform government procurement to better meet the needs of citizens. SCM serves as a financial management function and is essential for effective service delivery. It is through supply chain processes that infrastructure projects are acquired and executed. However, SCM functions as a financial management role, necessitating the accounting officer to adhere to standard financial management practices (AGSA, 2023). Mathu and Phetla (2018) affirm that SCM involves the collaboration among various stakeholders through specific processes, functions, and activities to ensure the effective delivery of products to the end customer. This is in line with Roy (2017), who confirms that effective and efficient SCM necessitates skilled and competent personnel as well as established processes. These individuals must possess the expertise to successfully operate an SCM system, while the processes should be designed to meet the needs

of the end customer. In the context of SCM, organisations, including municipalities, officials are accountable for implementing the government's objectives. The processes in this setting should focus on efficient SCM systems that prioritize public needs through the delivery of high-quality services. Therefore, SCM is acknowledged as a key mechanism for overseeing state procurement activities in South Africa. According to Ngxesha *et al.* (2024), SCM serves as a vital tool that enables effective policy implementation within government frameworks.

4.2 Functions and duties of municipal authority

Functions and duties of municipal authorities. In South Africa, municipal authorities are tasked with delivering essential services, such as developing infrastructure, maintaining roads, supplying water, providing electricity, and managing waste (Rogerson, 2020). However, these authorities encounter various obstacles, including corruption, insufficient internal controls, nepotism, politicization, and poor public communication, all of which impede effective governance and service delivery (Reddy, 2016; Moji *et al.*, 2022; Magagula *et al.*, 2022).

Effective local government is critical in promoting socio-economic equality and advancing community well-being (Mabizela & Matsiliza, 2020). Local governments have a twin responsibility: delivering goods and services while involving citizens in recognizing community needs and crafting solutions. In the North-West Province of South Africa, district municipalities are crucial in managing infrastructure development, including roads, water, electricity, and waste management services, to ensure they are in line with national policies and legislative frameworks, such as the Water Services Act 108 of 1997 (Haigh *et al.*, 2010).

This decentralized method aims to enhance the efficiency of local service delivery and underscores the significance of strong environmental laws and institutional structures for effective municipal governance.

4.3 Municipal service delivery

Municipalities are essential in supplying critical services to local communities, covering areas like education, water, waste disposal, roads, housing, transport, security, and public services (Angahar, 2013). These services are critical for maintaining a functioning society and ensuring the well-being of residents. Van der Waldt (2016) defines municipal service as the services that municipalities provide to support their communities and citizens, delivering these services both internally and externally. Effective municipal service delivery requires equity, accessibility, and sustainability (Craythorne, 2006, quoted in van der Waldt, 2016). Municipalities must ensure accurate and consistent services to their local communities. This involves delivering services that ensure the responsible, economical, efficient, and effective use of resources. It aims to enhance quality standards over time, ensuring financial and environmental sustainability while undergoing regular evaluations for upgrades and improvements.

The Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) (2009) indicates that municipalities face challenges in fulfilling service delivery expectations and engaging communities in resource utilisation. The report reveals that national and provincial governments have not adequately supported municipalities and local communities in expanding their programs and empowering them to understand government operations.

The National CoGTA is vital in lowering obstacles within local government and fostering collaboration between different government levels to enhance service delivery (Department of Cooperative Governance, 2018). To successfully address the service requirements of citizens, local government officials must adjust their operational, financial, and human resource planning (Enwereji & Uwizeyimana, 2021; McDaid, 2018). This requires a deep understanding of the community's needs and the ability to develop and implement effective solutions.

Despite efforts to improve service delivery, municipalities in South Africa continue to face significant barriers, including inadequate basic services, protests, and a lack of satisfactory service delivery (Piper & Chanza, 2006; Raophala, 2013; Nene, 2016; Allan & Heese, 2019). The South African government has made efforts to address these challenges, but significant gaps remain in accessing basic services.

For instance, residents in Mafikeng protest against inadequate service delivery, reportedly leading to police firing rubber bullets at them (UDM, 2020). Similarly, service delivery protests have

occurred in various regions, including Vuwani, Bolobedu, Merafong, Ficksburg, Khayelitsha, and Diepsloot Township, due to poor basic services (Raophala, 2013).

Therefore, it is essential to address the barriers to successful supply chain management (SCM) service quality in local municipalities, ensuring responsiveness to client needs and satisfaction (Engdaw, 2020). By identifying and addressing these barriers, municipalities can improve service delivery, enhance resident satisfaction, and promote economic growth and development.

4.4 Barriers to effective municipal supply chain management services

South African municipalities face several barriers to effective supply chain management (SCM) of service quality, which impede the efficient procurement of goods and services. The barriers are as follows:

- **Noncompliance with supply chain management policy and regulations**

Disregarding company policies and regulations can jeopardize business operations, emphasizing the need for stringent government action against widespread noncompliance. Managing compliance obligations is a complex and time-consuming task. Institutions, particularly municipal governments, must prioritize adherence to regulations to avoid facing numerous barriers (Sibanda, 2017). Noncompliance with supply chain management (SCM) policies stems from inadequate skills and a weak regulatory culture, hindering effective SCM execution (Sharma, 2018). Moreover, unethical practices, such as accepting rewards for favors, are prevalent among municipal employees, highlighting the importance of compliance with SCM policies and regulations to improve service quality (Rahayu, Yudi, & Rahayu, 2020). Specifically, procurement processes are often marred by noncompliance, including improper bidding, incorrect preference points usage, and procurement threshold applications (Rahayu *et al.*, 2020).

- **Risk management and SCM irregularities**

Inconsistencies in SCM and risk management. Inadequate risk mitigation techniques and weak internal controls are major causes of SCM issues (Uddin & Akhter, 2019). Lack of knowledge about SCM and its critical link to socioeconomic development, human capital development, and sustainable quality service is frequently a major barrier to its successful application in the public sector (Rahayu *et al.*, 2020). Uncertainty creates risk, which can take many different forms in supply chain management (SCM). These include non-targeted risks like demand and COVID-19, and targeted risks like fraud, conflicts of interest, and non-compliance (Taufik, 2019). Supply chains can be significantly impacted by disruptions, underscoring the necessity of flexibility and efficient risk management. Additionally, ineffective internal controls, ineffective culture, and a lack of IT are examples of inefficiencies in municipal administrations.

- **Human resource problem**

While strategic Human Resource Management (HRM) practices are not the sole determinant of a company's success or failure, they can play a crucial role. HRM encompasses various tasks, including HR planning, recruitment, employee training, compensation management, and employee relations (Raut *et al.*, 2020). Implementing effective HRM practices, such as clear policies and procedures, improves organizational efficiency, boosts employee engagement, and enhances work quality (Gbolahan, 2012; Khan & Abdullah, 2019). Municipalities that implement HRM practices can expect improvements in performance metrics such as revenue, competitiveness, and market share (Obeidat, 2020). Ultimately, organizational performance is closely tied to employee performance, as human capital plays a vital role in driving business success.

- **Monitoring and evaluation of SCM**

Ongoing monitoring is crucial to ensure SCM practices adhere to established processes and identify areas for improvement in procurement operations. Inadequate monitoring and evaluation are closely linked to a weak control environment, which can lead to inadequate risk management and hinder the effective implementation of SCM policies (Tönnissen & Teuteberg, 2022). This study found that the metropolitan municipality often failed to comply with SCM norms, contributing to recurring unclean

audit findings. A key contributing factor was the inability to retrieve documents promptly during the audit process. The Auditor-General (2020) highlighted weak controls, inadequate monitoring, and insufficient support for SCM in the municipality, enabling opportunistic behavior and allowing financial mismanagement and SCM malpractices to go undetected.

- **Ethics and conflict of interest**

Municipal internal control systems often lack ethics and professionalism, undermining fair and transparent supply chain management (SCM) processes, and enabling fraud and non-compliance (Ambe, 2016a). The absence of consultation with senior officials intensifies these issues for Chief Financial Officers (CFOs) (Sibanda *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, unethical and unprofessional internal control systems hinder the detection and prevention of fraud, supplier non-performance, and SCM policy non-compliance (Eposi, 2018). Nepotism and corruption in tender processes, as reported in Gauteng province, contravene National Treasury guidelines (Odeku, 2018). Conflict of interest poses a significant threat to public sector integrity, emphasizing the need for preventive measures, including declarations of conflict of interest, as outlined in the Code of Ethics for public officials.

4.5 Challenges faced by local municipalities in South Africa in delivering effective public services

Local municipalities in South Africa encounter numerous obstacles in delivering effective public services. Key challenges involve failure to adhere to supply chain management (SCM) policies and regulations, resulting in inefficient procurement (Sibanda, 2017). Weak internal controls and risk mitigation strategies exacerbate SCM shortcomings, enabling fraud, corruption, and irregularities (Uddin & Akhter, 2019). Effective human resource management practices, such as recruitment, training, and development, are crucial for service delivery, but municipalities often struggle to attract and retain skilled personnel (Raut *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, inadequate monitoring and evaluation systems lead to poor SCM practices, resulting in inefficient resource utilization, poor-quality goods and services, and delayed delivery (Tönnissen & Teuteberg, 2022).

The challenges faced by local municipalities in South Africa can significantly compromise service delivery, resulting in poor-quality services, delayed delivery, increased costs, inefficient resource utilization, lack of accountability and transparency, poor governance, and corruption. To overcome these challenges, it is crucial to strengthen governance and accountability, enhance supply chain management practices, invest in human resource development, improve financial management practices, establish performance monitoring systems, address capacity and skills shortages, and maintain infrastructure (Androniceanu, 2021; Auditor-General of South Africa, 2020; Centobelli *et al.*, 2021).

The scarcity of machinery and equipment can compromise the quality of municipal services (General Household Survey, 2019). Effective supply chain management is vital for fostering economic development and ensuring accurate financial reporting (Sakalasooriya, 2021). However, municipalities often face challenges in managing their supply chains, resulting in inefficient resource utilization and poor-quality goods and services. Furthermore, unresponsiveness from municipal officials can lead to delays and inefficiencies in service delivery, exacerbating the challenges faced by municipalities (Munzhedzi & Phago, 2020). Good governance is essential for effective service delivery, and poor governance can lead to accountability and transparency issues (Mugarura, 2019). Accountability is essential for holding municipal officials responsible for their actions and decisions (Mabizela & Matsiliza, 2020). Financial management is essential for effective service delivery, and poor financial management can lead to inefficiencies and corruption (Meyer & Venter, 2014).

A well-functioning performance monitoring system is essential for ensuring municipalities deliver high-quality services (Sarshar & Moores, 2006). The absence of such systems can result in inconsistent service quality and hinder the efficient integration of systems. Moreover, capacity and skills shortages can significantly impact municipal spending and service delivery (Mahabir, 2014). Poorly maintained infrastructure can also compromise municipal operations and output (Simpson *et al.*, 2019). Additionally, the increased workload on existing staff due to shortages can lead to errors, inefficiencies, and diminished individual and organizational performance (Eposi, 2021).

In conclusion, local municipalities in South Africa face numerous difficulties in providing efficient public services. To tackle these difficulties, a comprehensive strategy is necessary, focusing on enhancing governance and accountability, enhancing supply chain management practices, investing in human resource development, improving financial management practices, developing and implementing performance monitoring systems, addressing capacity and skills shortages, and maintaining infrastructure.

4.6 The contingency theory of leadership

The contingency leadership theory suggests that managers need to consider both internal and external environmental factors to make decisions towards a unified objective. Csaszar and Ostler (2020) point out that contingency theory advocates for various methods to address problems, encouraging organizations to examine the external environment to identify suitable strategies for problem resolution. As a result, municipalities in South Africa should strategically enhance service quality through a contingency framework, which includes efficient communication with residents to pinpoint challenges and devise solutions. Eposi (2021) states that the contingency theory leadership model, featuring directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented behaviors, serves as a crucial framework for municipal leaders aiming to optimize goal attainment and boost performance. According to Shu (2015), it is essential to integrate task-oriented and situation-controlling management styles, along with staff involvement, to achieve effective work outcomes. This integration fosters skill development, technical support, socio-economic assistance, and collaboration among stakeholders. Therefore, municipalities need to maintain ongoing engagement with residents to comprehend and tackle issues that impact service quality while formulating viable solutions to improve the overall service experience.

5. Research methodology

This qualitative research aimed to uncover the barriers that impede effective SCM service quality within the Ngaka Modiri Molema District municipality, located in North-West Province, as well as to offer insights into possible improvement solutions.

- **Data collection method**

Semi-structured interviews were employed to gather qualitative insights from municipal managers across the five local municipalities. This approach allowed for in-depth exploration of respondents' experiences and perceptions regarding the barriers affecting SCM service quality.

- **Sampling strategy and participant selection**

Purposive sampling was used to select 30 municipal managers with relevant expertise. Although only 24 participated, the 80% response rate exceeded the recommended 70% threshold (Serame, 2011). Participants were conveniently selected based on availability, proximity, and knowledge.

- **Data analysis technique**

Qualitative data underwent a process of open coding, which included transcription, categorization, and identifying themes.

- **Ensuring validity and reliability**

The assurance of validity and reliability of the qualitative methodology and sampling approach of the study facilitated the gathering of rich, detailed, and pertinent data. The high level of response and involvement of informed participants further strengthened the credibility and trustworthiness of the results.

- **Ethics considerations**

This paper followed ethical research guidelines, safeguarding the rights and dignity of participants by ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation, and minimal risk. The study obtained approval from the [University/Institution] Research Ethics Committee, confirming adherence to national and international ethical standards.

Table 1.1: Confidential names replaced by unique codes. The study successfully gathered sufficient data from qualified participants to draw valid and reliable conclusions on SCM service delivery.

Table 1.1: sampling for departmental senior managers and municipal managers.

Code	Participant	Target participants	Total responses	Roles
MIA 1 AM	Managers internal audit	five	five	Give unbiased confirmation that an organisation's internal control, governance, and risk management procedures are working well.
MHR	Managers Human resource	four	three	In charge of making sure those department staff members are knowledgeable in their fields.
MM	Managers Marketing	four	three	Accountable for meeting customer demands and desires.
MO	Managers Operational	five	five	Ultimately, in charge of overseeing the production of goods and services.
MCF	Managers Chief financial	four	four	Responsible and accountable for all the income and expenditure of the municipality.
MSC	Managers Supply chain	four	three	Assist in organising and overseeing all aspects of sourcing and procurement.
MM	Managers municipal	five	two	Keeping track of the entire operations of the municipality.
Total		30	24	

Following a thorough explanation of the research methodology, the discussion proceeds to present and analyse the findings, providing an in-depth examination of the results and their implications.

5.1 Presentation and discussion on the findings

The main objective of this article was to explore the barriers faced in delivering efficient supply chain management services within the Ngaka Modiri Molema District municipality of the North-West Province and to propose practical recommendations for enhancing the quality of municipal services. This section presents and interprets data collected from the selected respondents. The conclusions drawn from the empirical data show how several themes developed from the data. The primary sub-theme that was employed throughout the interviews is used to group and display the emergent themes. The first theme is the obstacles managers face in providing effective SCM services. Four sub-themes were created and are thought to be suitable for furthering the category's findings. The second theme was related to possible solutions to the identified barriers hindering

efficient service delivery by managers. One sub-theme was developed and is considered suitable for furthering the discoveries in the theme.

Table 1: Thematic analysis of the findings

Themes	Sub-themes
Theme 1: Barriers hindering efficient SCM service delivery with North-West Province's managers in the Ngaka Modiri Molema District municipality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate SCM policies and procedures • Lack of skilled and trained personnel • Insufficient budget, resources, and poorly maintained infrastructure • Municipalities' access to service equipment
Theme 2: Possible solutions to the identified barriers hindering efficient service delivery in the North-West Province's Ngaka Modiri Molema District municipality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing inadequate SCM procedures and policies • Addressing the lack of skilled trained personnel • Addressing insufficient budget, resources, and poorly maintained infrastructure • Addressing municipalities' access to service equipment

The table above presents the main ideas and sub-themes that came out of the research question. The following section provides an in-depth analysis and explanation of each sub-theme, offering a detailed insight into the findings.

Theme 1: Barriers hindering efficient SCM service delivery with North-West Province managers in the Ngaka Modiri Molema District municipality

The following section provides an in-depth explanation of each sub-theme, offering a detailed insight into the findings.

• Inadequate SCM policies and procedures

Investigating the extent to which existing policies and procedures hinder or support efficient SCM service delivery. The study's findings reveal that inadequate Supply Chain Management (SCM) policies and procedures are a pervasive issue in local municipalities, significantly hindering efficient and effective supply chain operations. Specifically, the research shows that most local municipalities lack robust SCM policies and procedures, which can be attributed to corrupt individuals within the municipality who resist updates to SCM policies, fearing exposure (Enaifoghe, 2022). This lack of effective SCM policies and procedures is further exacerbated by the absence of internal audit control systems, making it challenging for municipalities to investigate and address cases of fraud, corruption, and irregular expenditure (Eposi, 2021). The findings of this study underscore the importance of developing, implementing, and enforcing robust SCM policies and procedures to guarantee openness, accountability, and value for money in municipal procurement processes. Notably, participants had the following to say:

'Officials know gaps in SCM policies, and without regular updating as required by the law, they manipulate such gaps for their gain.' (MSC)

'Policies and procedures are not implemented effectively in our municipality.' (M1A).

- **Lack of skilled and trained personnel**

Examining the impact of insufficient skills and training on SCM service delivery, including the role of capacity development and construction initiatives. The result of this investigation shows that managers and officials in the municipality lack the effective training and skills necessary to deliver high-quality services to their communities. This inadequacy in training and skills hinders the ability of managers and officials to effectively manage supply chain operations, leading to inefficiencies and ineffectiveness in service delivery. This result aligns with Kumar et al. (2020), which revealed that SCM in public sector organisations is hindered by skill and training gaps. The study of Mugo (2022) also confirms that inadequate training and skills are major challenges facing municipal managers in South Africa. thus, a need for training and development programs for municipal employers.

Furthermore, the study reveals that limited training materials and inadequate funding for employee development programs exacerbate the problem. The lack of access to relevant training materials and insufficient funding for training programs means that managers and officials lack supply chain management expertise. This limitation undermines the quality of services delivered to communities. This finding is supported by Enaifoghe (2022), who affirms that limited training materials and funding are major challenges facing municipal employers in Nigeria. This is also aligned with Mugo's (2022) study, which revealed that limited training materials and funding can hinder the effectiveness of training programs for municipal workers.

Moreover, the research shows that managers sometimes appoint individuals without the necessary skills in SCM operations. This appointment of unskilled personnel compromises the effectiveness of service delivery, as they lack the necessary expertise to manage supply chain operations efficiently and effectively. The finding affirms that Bakker et al. (2020) revealed that the appointment of unskilled personnel can lead to inefficiencies and ineffectiveness in supply chain operations. Notably, participants had the following to say:

"Sometimes the problem it's them (management). Sometimes, you, as a manager, maybe you are pure academic, and they give you a directorate like procurement. It must be somebody who is in that field. You cannot take, for example, you can't take somebody who is in the field of economics and engineering get that person to lead JCT. " (MIA)

"There is a skills shortage in the first place, so we 're just sitting with people who don't have the relevant qualifications in SCM." (MHR)

- **Insufficient budget, resources, and maintained infrastructure**

Investigating the impact of limited financial resources and infrastructure on SCM service delivery, including the role of budget allocation and resource optimization. This study investigated the employee selection process in municipalities, revealing that municipal managers face significant human resource challenges. Semi-structured interviews revealed that a majority of municipalities are deficient in critical MHR skills, including technical knowledge, interpersonal abilities, strategic thinking, problem-solving capabilities, decision-making expertise, ethical and professional behavior, communication proficiency, adaptability, time management skills, and understanding of employment laws and regulations. This lack of skills undermines the quality of services provided by municipalities, reinforcing Khan and Abdullah's (2019) assertion that MHR policies and practices are crucial for boosting organizational efficiency, employee engagement, and work quality. Moreover, the research indicated that managers who possess strong HRM capabilities perform their duties effectively, while those with limited skills face challenges due to their lack of experience, supporting Katou's (2008) assertion that HRM practices greatly enhance firm performance, leading to improved revenue, advantages, competitiveness, and market position. Moreover, municipal managers reported a lack of maintained infrastructure in their municipalities, primarily due to financial constraints.

This finding corresponds with the findings of Simpson et al. (2019), which indicate that municipalities face a range of barriers in securing funding for infrastructure upkeep. The research shows that neglected infrastructure adversely affects the delivery of municipal services, resulting in public dissatisfaction. Significant concerns include: - Insufficient maintenance of municipal buildings and public facilities - Prolonged delays in completing service delivery initiatives - Frequent instances of illegal connections (such as electricity and water) - Limited personnel and

financial resources for infrastructure repairs and expansions. This observation is corroborated by Hans (2020), who stresses the critical importance of infrastructure in fostering economic growth and alleviating poverty, while also pointing out that issues like inadequate investment and subpar quality call for innovative funding strategies.

Overall, the study underscores the need for municipalities to prioritize infrastructure maintenance and develop a strategic HR system to support organizational goals and effective service delivery.

- **Municipalities' access to service equipment.**

Municipal managers unanimously agreed that inadequate access to quality equipment hinders effective service quality from being delivered to their local communities. The study revealed that insufficient and outdated machinery and equipment compromise the delivery of basic municipal services, aligning with Mokoena's (2017) finding that resource shortages lead to delayed service delivery. This lack of resources is a significant barrier to good governance and service quality in local government, as insufficient resources hinder effective municipal operation and compromise the delivery of expected services.

Furthermore, the study found that some managers acknowledged a lack of technological skills, which empirical findings show hinders their daily tasks. In contrast, skilled managers perform their responsibilities effectively. This finding concurs with Mudzusi *et al.* (2024) observation that many South African municipalities lack essential machinery for municipal services. The following direct quotes align with the aforementioned.

"The limited machinery and equipment hinder effective municipal service quality." (MHR)

MSC comments that "better technology, well-skilled staff, and better training facilities are what we need in our municipality to reach our objective."

"When it comes to technology, I understand so fast, which helps make my work easy to do." (MIA)

Theme 2: Possible solutions to the identified barriers hindering efficient service delivery in the Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality, located in the North-West Province.

This section advises on the possible solutions hindering efficient service delivery in municipalities possible solutions to barriers hindering efficient service delivery in connection with research question one above:

- **Addressing inadequate SCM policies and procedures**

1. Develop and implement effective SCM policies and procedures: Municipality management must ensure effective collaboration with relevant stakeholders to develop and implement comprehensive SCM policies and procedures that align with national and provincial regulations.
2. Provide training and capacity-building programs: Municipality management should offer regular training and capacity-building programs for SCM personnel to enhance their skills and knowledge.
3. Establish a procurement committee: Establish a procurement committee to oversee and ensure compliance with SCM policies and procedures.

- **Addressing the lack of skilled and trained personnel**

1. Develop a skills development plan: Municipality management should develop a skills development plan to identify training needs and provide relevant training and development opportunities for personnel.
2. Recruit and appoint skilled personnel: Municipality management should recruit and appoint skilled personnel to fill critical vacancies and enhance the municipality's capacity.
3. Provide mentorship and coaching programs: Municipality management should provide mentorship and coaching programs to support the development of junior personnel.

- **Addressing insufficient budget, resources, and poorly maintained infrastructure**

1. Develop a comprehensive budget and resource plan: Municipality management should develop a comprehensive budget and resource plan to ensure adequate allocation of resources for service delivery.
2. Prioritize infrastructure maintenance: Municipality management should prioritize infrastructure maintenance and allocate sufficient resources to ensure that the infrastructure is well-maintained and functional.

3. Explore alternative funding models: The management of the municipality should look into alternative funding sources, such as public-private partnerships, to supplement the municipality's budget.

• **Addressing municipalities' access to service equipment**

1. Municipality management should develop a comprehensive asset management strategy to guarantee the proper maintenance and upkeep of service equipment.
 2. Procure new equipment and vehicles: Procure new equipment and vehicles to replace outdated and dysfunctional ones.
 3. Establish a maintenance and repair program: Establish a maintenance and repair program to ensure that equipment is regularly maintained and repaired.
- By implementing these solutions, the Ngaka Modiri Molema District municipality can address the identified barriers and improve its service delivery capacity.

6. Recommendations

To enhance the Ngaka Modiri Molema District municipality's service delivery, several recommendations have been made. Firstly, the municipality should develop and implement effective SCM policies and procedures, provide training and capacity-building programs for SCM personnel, and establish a procurement committee. Secondly, the municipality should develop a skills development plan, recruit and appoint skilled personnel, and provide mentorship and coaching programs to support junior personnel. Thirdly, the municipality should develop a comprehensive budget and resource plan, prioritize infrastructure maintenance, and explore alternative funding models. Fourthly, by applying the Contingency Theory of Leadership, municipal leaders can adapt their leadership style to suit the specific challenges and context, thereby developing effective strategies to address the municipality's challenges. Lastly, the municipality should develop a comprehensive asset management plan, procure new equipment and vehicles, and establish a maintenance and repair program to ensure that service equipment is well-maintained and functional.

7. Limitations of the study.

This paper explores the barriers that impede effective SCM service quality in the Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality located in the North-West Province and suggests potential solutions for enhancing service quality. While the research focuses solely on this area, it provides recommendations that could benefit the enhancement of service quality in other municipalities across South Africa. Future studies should encompass additional provinces and perform in-depth investigations into municipal service quality nationwide.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, the research underscores the importance of tackling the barriers that obstruct efficient service delivery in the Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality. The results emphasize the necessity for robust SCM policies and procedures, skilled and trained personnel, adequate budgets and resources, properly maintained infrastructure, and access to high-quality service equipment. By implementing the recommended solutions, the municipality can overcome these barriers, improve its service delivery capacity, and ultimately enhance the quality of life for its citizens.

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