The relationship between employee motivation and service quality: Case study of a selected municipality in the Western Cape province, South Africa

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Background: In South Africa, municipal service delivery is characterised by a low level of motivation amongst employees, poor service quality and a high level of citizen dissatisfaction, often resulting in violent protests.

Aim: The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between municipal employees' motivation and quality of services delivered.

Setting: The study was conducted at a selected municipality in the Western Cape province, which is unnamed for ethical reasons.

Methods: In this quantitative study, two main hypotheses were advanced to examine the relationship between employee motivation and service quality, and six hypotheses tested the relationship between leadership, job satisfaction, career growth, organisational culture, physical work environment, work group teams and service quality. The sample consisted of 121 employees selected from a target population of 219 using simple random sampling technique. A five-point Likert-scale survey questionnaire was administered. Data were captured on an Excel sheet and analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. The analysis was done descriptively and correlationally.

Results: Whilst analysis of descriptive statistics showed low mean scores for motivation and five of its six constructs, indicating low motivation amongst municipal employees, correlational analysis confirmed the six hypotheses for the constructs, with different degrees of positive correlation between them and service quality. This means motivated employees are highly likely to deliver high-quality services.

Conclusion: A transformational leadership style, job rotation and enlargement, provision of training, career growth and development opportunities, change in organisational culture, improved work environment and enhanced teamwork could assist in addressing the employee motivation–service quality conundrum.

Keywords: customer satisfaction; employee motivation; municipality; service quality; South Africa.

Introduction and background

Research indicates that it is vital for customers to be consistently satisfied if organisations are to be successful (Deng et al. 2017). Customer satisfaction is essential for service-oriented public-sector entities, such as municipalities that must ensure citizens receive quality services that meet or exceed their expectations (Twala 2014). Consequently, municipalities are mandated to use available resources to deliver quality services. Employees in service-oriented municipalities frequently interact with customers, during which they represent both the municipalities and services provided (Jerry 2014). Fogli (2015) indicated that satisfied customers and motivated employees are important to municipalities in meeting their obligations. Given the critical role of employees in meeting the expectations of the public during service experience, it is essential for municipalities to implement practices and strategies that ensure employees are motivated and satisfied in order to deliver quality service. Luddy (2015) identified inefficiency and ineffectiveness as major problems affecting the ability of the South African public sector to offer high-quality services. Challenges associated with many South African municipalities include poor governance, poor monitoring and accountability, lack of proper financial management, high backlogs and high turnover rates amongst officials occupying critical positions (Pretorius & Schurink 2017). Inability to provide basic municipal services effectively and efficiently to the satisfaction of

citizens characterises many municipalities. Consequently, municipalities have received significant media attention because of poor or lack of service delivery to citizens (Shaidi 2018). Employee motivation is central to the delivery of quality services and problematic in municipalities across South Africa. Despite the centrality of service delivery to the lives of citizens, the quality of services delivered, in most cases, is below expectations.

This article was motivated by general dissatisfaction frequently expressed by South Africans about service delivery at municipalities. It examines the correlation between motivation and service quality using a sample of employees in a municipality in the Western Cape province, South Africa. The municipality ranks low in terms of general access to basic services and quality of services rendered (Municipal IQ 2017). According to a study by Pretorius and Schurink (2017), the municipality experiences high backlogs and misuse and mismanagement of state funds. For these reasons, citizens seeking services express their dissatisfaction through protests. The rate at which service delivery protests take place in the municipality's jurisdiction is a reflection of the dissatisfaction with services rendered to citizens. Violent protest activities remain a concern in this and other municipalities and have had adverse impact on socio-economic activities, such as schooling, work and safety of citizens (Twala 2014).

A lack of suitably qualified personnel and increased rates of labour turnover, particularly amongst those in critical positions, affects the municipality's capacity to deliver quality services. There has been an unprecedented increase in the number of qualified employees leaving the municipality, which has affected the viability of its operations (Statistics South Africa 2017). Burnout has been associated with most employees of the municipality tasked with performing the work of those who have resigned. Shaidi (2018) argued that when qualified personnel leave for employment in the private sector, government resorts to employing new graduates with little experience, which hinders service quality, leads to a lack of trust from customers and results in increased protests by citizens.

The problems highlighted have negatively affected most citizens' confidence in the municipality, which experiences challenges in delivering high-quality services and meeting citizens' expectations. In addition, the municipality is incapable of keeping its experienced and skilled staff. The high labour turnover rate can be attributed to demotivation amongst employees. Employee motivation is a challenge, evident in unprecedented labour turnover. Employees, especially those occupying critical positions, are leaving the municipality for other organisations, which has affected service delivery arising from delays in service provision. Despite advances in service delivery, progress in delivering services and quality of services delivered do not meet citizens' expectations in most cases. Consequently, the municipality has received significant media attention

regarding poor or lack of service delivery (Shaidi 2018). Problems associated with the municipality include poor governance, monitoring and accountability, lack of proper financial management, high backlogs and high turnover rates in critical positions (Pretorius & Schurink 2017). Overall, inability to provide basic services effectively and efficiently is one of the problems characterising this municipality.

Objectives, research questions and hypotheses
Objectives

The objectives of this empirical study were, firstly, to determine employee motivation levels at the selected municipality; secondly, to examine the relationship between employee motivation and service quality at the municipality; and, thirdly, to provide recommendations to address employee motivation and service quality based on the results.

Research questions

Based on the research objectives, three questions were posed: what is the level of motivation amongst employees at the selected municipality? What is the relationship between employee motivation and service quality at the municipality? What recommendations can be provided to address employee motivation and improved service quality?

Hypotheses

To examine the correlation between employee motivation (independent variable) and service quality (dependent variable) and also between its six constructs and service quality, eight hypotheses were advanced based on the research questions:

H_0: There is no significant positive relationship between employee motivation and service quality.

H_1: There is a significant positive relationship between employee motivation and service quality.

H_2: There is a significant positive relationship between leadership and service quality.

H_3: There is a significant positive relationship between job satisfaction and service quality.

H_4: There is a significant positive relationship between career growth and service quality.

H_5: There is a significant positive relationship between organisational culture and service quality.

H_6: There is a significant positive relationship between physical work environment and service quality.

H_7: There is a significant positive relationship between work group teams and service quality.

Conceptual literature review
Employee motivation

Motivation is a goal-directed behaviour that influences people to behave in a certain way. Mullin (2007) referred to

motivation as forces within a person that affect their direction, intensity and persistence of voluntary behaviour. Employee motivation is the level of energy, commitment and creativity that a worker applies in performing his or her job. In today's increasingly competitive business environment, finding ways to motivate employees has become a pressing concern for many managers. It is a challenge in South African municipalities, evident in high labour turnover amongst officials occupying critical positions and poor service delivery. According to Robbins (2011), motivation is associated with factors of great importance that drive organisational success and efficiency. Research has indicated that a lack of motivation is associated with behaviours such as absenteeism, increased labour turnover, decreased performance and low productivity (Robbins 2011).

Employee motivation is a management process undertaken to encourage employees to work better through providing them with motives to fulfil their unfulfilled needs for the benefit of an organisation (Renard 2015). Sharma and Mani (2014) described employee motivation as the emotional practice that leads to stimulation, direction and determination of positive behaviour in the workplace. Similarly, Ganta (2014) defined employee motivation as the force that drives, compels or energises employees to behave in a positive way. According to Ganta (2014:222), the drive or compelling force that stimulates employees to do their work comes from within and is referred to as intrinsic motivation or from the external environment, often referred to as extrinsic motivation. Dobre (2013) viewed intrinsic motivation as motivation that arises from within the employee. This is the motivation that arises from personal fulfilment derived from doing a certain task (Ednie & Stibor 2017). Extrinsic motivation is the satisfaction that arises from factors exterior to an employee (Ednie & Stibor 2017).

Motivation amongst employees is influenced by numerous factors, categorised as intrinsic and extrinsic (Dessler 2016). An organisation's environment, its culture, equity comparisons and incentive structures are some of the common factors that determine employee motivation (Armstrong 2012). Abdullah (2014) observes that employee motivation is a product of interaction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors. Factors described by Abdullah (2014:148) as motivational are as follows: career progression and advancement opportunities, autonomy and control in executing one's work, training opportunities, salaries, leadership styles and relationships between supervisors and employees. This indicates management could use a variety of intrinsic and extrinsic factors at its disposal to create and sustain an environment that drives employees to go the extra mile. Employee motivation entails the employee's response to various job-related factors that arouse and direct a persistent positive attitude and positive behaviour. These factors include leadership or management, job satisfaction, organisational culture, career growth and development, physical work environment and work groups

and teams, and constitute the constructs that determine employee motivation.

Service quality

A service is defined as an activity between two parties where one party offers an activity that is intangible and does not result in the party owning anything (El Saghie 2015:56). Saghier and Nathan (2016) viewed services as a process rather than a product. A service is an intangible economic activity or process where there is an interaction between the consumer and the person providing the service. Saghier and Nathan (2016:4) defined a service as an interaction process between a customer and a service provider where employees in an organisation are always the sellers and represent the service being delivered. A service is not received by a customer. Rather, the customer participates in the service performance activity or process (Palmer 2011). This differentiates a service from a product as customers are not present when a product is produced, but are available when a service is being produced and performed. A service is sold first, then produced and consumed simultaneously (Chidambaram & Ramachandran 2016). A service is diverse as it is produced frequently by employees for different customers; hence, it is not always a similar performance. It is always a challenge to offer consistent service quality as there is no consistent supply of a service. Furthermore, a service cannot be performed in a way that is consistent with what is planned, promoted and promised originally. Service provision is not standardised. As such, it differs across customers and clients. The emphasis is on an employee being able to replicate or surpass the promised, planned and promoted service.

Service quality is thus described as a category of attitude demonstrating a long-run, complete assessment of services received (Lau et al. 2015). It is defined by Saghier and Nathan (2016) as a discrepancy between the quality of the service rendered by an organisation and the service performance expected by customers. This entails a variance amongst the normative service expectations of customers and customers' views of the service performance. Conceptually, service quality is a judgement or attitude of a customer towards the excellence or superiority of a service rendered (Kheng et al. 2014). Therefore, service quality is all about customer perceptions of the service interaction process. This is further indicated in Awan, Bukari and Iqbal's (2015) definition of service quality as a customer's evaluation of the superiority of the interaction experience.

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2011), service quality consists of service characteristics or dimensions revealed in the capability to fulfil specified and implied needs. There are three characteristics or dimensions of service quality, namely, image, functional and technical (Palmer 2011). Technical quality is regarded as an important aspect when evaluating the quality of a service and is related to the quality of what is received by customers from the interaction process (Kotler & Armstrong 2011). Functional quality entails how the service

is delivered and the image aspect is a build-up of the technical and functional aspects (Palmer 2011). Other researchers view service quality as an interaction, outcome and physical environment quality (Awan et al. 2015). Outcome quality is an evaluation centred on the results, whilst interaction quality entails an assessment of the processes involved (Saghier & Nathan 2016). Physical environment quality is dependent on the environment or place where the service is being rendered (Awan et al. 2015). Saghier and Nathan (2016) described service quality as a consumer's perception of a service component, which is an important determinant of customer satisfaction. However, Palmer (2011) identified reliability, assurance, responsiveness, tangibles and empathy as the important dimensions used by consumers to evaluate the quality of a service.

Empirical literature review

Various studies investigating employee motivation and service quality have been published (Malhotra & Mukherjee 2014; Samuel & Chipunza 2015; Schlesinger & Zornitsky 2015). Sher et al. (2015:43) reported that management that takes steps to ensure employees are motivated reaps the benefits of increased productivity and quality service provision. Similarly, Kalim, Syed and Muhammad (2014) reported that when employees are recognised, respected and appreciated, their motivation increases, resulting in increased retention and quality service delivery. Furthermore, it is reported that when employees are motivated, they are likely going to reciprocate by putting extra effort and providing better services (Yoon & Suh 2012).

According to Khodov (2015) and Oh and Yoon (2015), when employees are motivated at work, their commitment, engagement and involvement will be dedicated to meeting customer satisfaction by delivering high-quality services. Samuel and Chipunza (2015) further suggested that motivated employees are loyal, eager and capable of delivering quality services. When employees are motivated in an organisation, they are devoted to achieving organisational objectives and strive to deliver high-quality services (Burke & Fiksenbaum 2016; Xu & Goedegebuure 2014). Wansoo (2015) found evidence that when employees are motivated, they deliver quality services. Mosahab, Mahamad and Ramayait (2013) also reported that the quality of services rendered is affected by the level of satisfaction and motivation of employees as satisfied employees have an obligation to serve consumers well.

Employee motivation has a significant effect on perceived service quality. Service delivery entails interaction between consumers and employees (Yee, Yeung & Cheng 2017). When employees are motivated, they are loyal and engaged and deliver quality services; however, when they are demotivated, the quality of services might be low. Kiragu (2015) reported that the level of employee motivation can help determine whether employees can do things correctly by the first time and be helpful to clients. This means that when employees are motivated, they are ready to help and contribute towards good service delivery, impacting the quality of services provided.

Service marketing studies also indicate that service quality and employee satisfaction are closely related constructs or variables (Nagar & Rajan 2015; Oliver 2016; Singh & Sirdeshmukh 2017). Zeithaml, Bitner and Grander (2016) stated that employee motivation is a key factor in predicting service quality. When employees are motivated, they are committed to quality and continuously improve and develop (Matzler, Fuchs & Schubert 2015), resulting in commitment to delivering quality services. The interactive nature of the service performance puts employees in a significant role towards the delivery and their level of motivation determines the quality of the interaction (Zeithaml & Bitner 2013). When employees are satisfied and motivated, they are committed to the interaction process, resulting in a positive assessment of the service performance process.

Studies by Eskildsen and Dahlgaard (2016) and Yoon and Suh (2012) showed that motivated employees are highly satisfied, have a positive attitude towards work and remain engaged. In other words, they work more effectively and efficiently. A study by Reichheld and Sasser (2018) suggested that the greater the level of employee motivation and satisfaction, the more the likelihood of customer satisfaction as employees are likely to offer good-quality services. It is evident that employee motivation is a predictor of quality service delivery, which, in turn, leads to customer satisfaction. This is further supported by Schmit and Allscheid (2017), who reported that motivated employees are committed and engage in quality and better service delivery.

A significant association between employee motivation and customer-perceived service quality was found to exist amongst frontline bank employees and customers (Yoon, Beatty & Suh 2014). A study that empirically examined employee motivation in Hong Kong service shops found that employee motivation is significantly and positively linked to service quality and customer satisfaction. Similarly, Burke et al. (2015) reported that it is challenging for employees to develop consistent service performance, but their level of motivation can impact the level of service performance rendered to customers. In this study, motivated frontline managers were reported to perform a service effectively and efficiently.

A study by Tabaku and Cerri (2016) found a positive association between the quality of service, employee motivation and customer satisfaction and loyalty. Employee motivation was found to mediate the behaviour of employees during the service process and when they are motivated, better quality services are delivered (Tabaku & Cerri 2016). Service-oriented organisations are reported to be placing more emphasis on motivating their employees as motivation is reported to build employee loyalty and increase and improve service delivery (Loveman 2017). This means that when employees are motivated they are engaged

and committed and motivated in delivering high-quality services to customers. This is further supported by Judge et al. (2017), who reported that motivated employees are willing to improve their performance and offer quality services.

Motivated employees are reported to be creative, energetic and cooperative and have an inner drive towards satisfying customers through the delivery of high-quality services (Carman 2014). Furthermore, Loveman (2017) and Silvestro and Cross (2016) reported that motivated employees are committed and loyal employees who are willing to and capable of delivering high-quality services. To support these studies, Schneider and Bowen (2015) further reported that organisations put effort into motivating employees to go a long way in satisfying their customers as high-quality services are offered by motivated employees. The behaviour of employees was found to impact customers' perceptions of service quality, whilst demotivation was likely to result in poor service interaction and customers having a negative assessment of the quality of service.

Schmit and Allscheid (2017) reported that employees unsuited for a particular job find it difficult to deliver quality services, whilst having the right and motivated employees enhances the likelihood of quality service delivery and organisational success. Babakus et al. (2018) further reported that if an organisation is committed to delivering quality services, it is important to understand employees' demands, wishes and needs and make an effort to meet or satisfy them. According to Babakus et al. (2018), employee motivation improves productivity, increases employee loyalty, reduces turnover intentions and enhances employees' creativity and commitment to satisfying customers. According to the authors, when employees are motivated they feel that they are at the right place and commit to quality service delivery to satisfy customers.

In a study that attempted to observe the influence of employee motivation in service organisations, Gröunroos (2011) reported that when employees are motivated they respond to customers' needs quickly and directly. According to Michel and Nicholas (2017), the more employees are motivated, the more they are willing to help customers, which has an effect on customers' perceived service quality. Kiragu (2015) further acknowledged that employees are more willing to respond to customer dissatisfaction during service recovery and willing to help employees recover without the intervention of supervisors and superiors. This goes a long way in stimulating a positive perceived service quality by customers as employees will be willing to respond to customer needs and queries as quickly as possible.

Ariani (2015) stated that in service-oriented organisations, motivated and empowered employees are enthusiastic part-time marketers who treat clients more enthusiastically. Furthermore, Tabaku and Cerri (2016) indicated that empowered and motivated employees are valuable sources of new ideas who can share their ideas with

management and help deliver quality services. It is reported that employees who are at the direct point of contact with customers understand customers' needs and have insight into customers' problems. Consequently, when they are empowered and motivated they can share their ideas towards addressing customers' problems and contribute towards quality service delivery and customer satisfaction. Mohammad and Alhamadani (2016) reported that motivated and empowered employees are important in creating good word-of-mouth messages and increase customer retention. This results in customers trusting them, which is critical when customers evaluate service quality.

Theoretical framework

Motivation and service quality is underpinned by two theories: social exchange theory (SET) and Herzberg's two-factor theory, which is briefly outlined below.

Social exchange theory

Social exchange theory is a useful paradigm that helps understand workplace behaviour (Cropanzano & Mitchell 2015). The SET entails a succession of exchanges that create obligations. The parties to the social exchange abide by the exchange rules that result in more trust, loyalty and mutual commitments (Schyns & Schilling 2014). Social exchange commences when an organisational factor, usually management, supervisor or co-worker, treats an employee or fellow employee positively or negatively (Lewis 2014). In response to the action initiated by the first party, the second party may decide to reciprocate with a positive or negative behaviour (Cropanzano & Rupp 2018).

According to SET, providing favourable working conditions, supervisor support, challenging work and having the autonomy and responsibility to do one's work are regarded as positive initiating actions. Bad leadership and supervision, bullying and harassment of subordinates and fellow employees are regarded as negative initiating factors (Tepper et al. 2015). Therefore, based on SET, employee motivation should have a positive impact on employees, resulting in high-quality services, whilst demotivation should result in the delivery of poor services by employees.

Herzberg's two-factor theory

Herzberg's two-factor theory (1959) distinguishes important factors that could make a job pleasing for employees through motivation by classifying these factors into two categories, namely, intrinsic variables and extrinsic variables (Tan & Waheed 2016). According to Sandhya and Kumar (2014), intrinsic motivation is internal motivation that arises from factors associated with performing one's work, whilst extrinsic motivation is external motivation arising from factors external to the job. Intrinsic motivational factors include career growth and advancement opportunities, challenging work and autonomy and responsibility when

performing work (Malik et al. 2014), whilst extrinsic motivational variables include, but are not limited to, remuneration and relationships that exist between co-workers and supervisors (Kantor 2016).

For employees to be motivated, intrinsic and extrinsic factors must be present (Robbins 2011). Samuel and Chipunza (2015) reported that one important way to increase employee motivation is through combining extrinsic and intrinsic factors in the compensation and reward system. Regarding the study from which this article emanates, when municipal employees are provided with intrinsic factors, such as satisfying jobs and career growth, they are potentially motivated. Availability of extrinsic factors such as good leadership, a positive organisational culture, good physical working environment and positive and supportive work groups and teams would potentially result in employees not being demotivated. Existence of intrinsic and extrinsic factors results in fulfilled and motivated employees committed to staying and contributing towards achieving organisational goals by offering high-quality services.

Research design and methods

This study used a quantitative methodology. Data were collected using a structured three-part questionnaire, consisting of demographic and biographical information section and 25-item five-point Likert-type scale for employee motivation and service quality, respectively. It was fully completed in English and returned by a representative sample of 121 out of 139 employees from a target population of 216 potential participants from a municipality in the Western Cape province, South Africa, selected using simple random sampling technique. The response rate was 87%, which, for the purpose of generalising the results to all employees of the municipality, is high and satisfactory. Data were captured in Excel sheets and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. The analysis involved descriptive and correlation analysis, and linear regression, with the results presented graphically.

The questionnaire

Questionnaire items were developed in line with the literature and divided into three sections. Section A elicited employees' biographical and occupational information covering age, education level and gender. Of the 121 participants who completed and returned the questionnaire, 79 were men (65%) and 42 (35%) were women. In all 41 of them (33.9%) were between 41 and 50 years of age, 27 (22.3%) were 61 years and above; 23 (19%) were between 31 and 40 years of age, 19 (15.7%) were between 51 and 60 years, 9 (7.4%) were between 21 and 30 years and 2 (1.7%) were less than 21 years old. Regarding their highest educational qualifications, 39 (32.2%) had a Trade Test; 28 (23.1%) had a degree, 22 (18.2%) had a matriculation certificate; 19 (15.7%) had below matriculation certificate and 13 (10.7%) had a certificate. With regard to duration of employment, 53 participants (43.8%) had been working for the municipality

for 6–10 years; 34 (28.1%) for more than 10 years; 23 (19%) between 1 and 5 years and 11 (9.1%) for less than a year. Finally, regarding job status, 114 participants (94%) were permanently employed and 7 (6%) were temporarily employed.

Section B measured employee motivation using a five-point Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 = 'totally disagree' to 5 = 'totally agree', adopted from a study by Yee et al. (2017), who reported an internal consistency reliability of 0.857 for the motivation measurement. Participants were requested to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statements provided and also to indicate the extent to which they are motivated by leadership, job satisfaction, organisational culture, career growth, physical work environment, work groups and teams. The last section measured service quality, where participants were requested to indicate the level to which they agree or disagree with the statements provided, ranging from dependability, trust, recovery factor, personal attention to empathy.

Section C measured service quality using questions adopted from the service employee questionnaire of the study by Yee et al. (2017). The alpha coefficient for the 25-item measure was 0.829 (Yee et al. 2017). Also, on a five-point Likert-type scale that ranges from 1 = 'totally disagree' to 5 = 'totally agree', participants were requested to indicate their level of agreement with the statements provided. Dependability, trust, recovery factor, personal attention and empathy were used to measure service quality delivery by the employees.

Data capture, coding and analysis

Data were captured on Microsoft Excel and SPSS version 23 was used for analysis. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were used to analyse and interpret the data. Descriptive means (M) and standard deviations (s.d.) were used to describe the results. For inferential statistics, Pearson's correlational analysis was the preferred analytical technique as it examines the relationship between the two study variables. Finally, simple linear regression model fit was used to examine whether employee motivation traits exert a positive effect on service quality.

Validity and reliability of the study

Validity is the extent to which a study accurately assesses what it intends to assess (Cooper & Schindler 2013). It was ensured by adapting an existing questionnaire used by Kiragu (2015) and Tabaku and Cerri (2016) in similar studies that focused on employee motivation and service quality. Furthermore, a pilot study was conducted, which enabled examination of questionnaire items for appropriateness, resulting in items being adjusted, thereby ensuring that they measured what they were expected to measure. The data collection instrument was carefully structured with relevance to the objectives of the study and its content was

linked with the literature on the topic to ensure that it assessed what it was intended to do.

Reliability is the extent to which the results of a study are stable when conducted over time under the same conditions (Bryman & Bell 2011). For reliability, the Cronbach's alpha test was performed on the data collected, with a resulting coefficient of 0.952, which indicated that the instrument was a reliable measure of service quality. Employee motivation had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.894, validating the instrument as a reliable measure of employee motivation. The Cronbach's coefficients for the study variables' dimensions or constructs ranged from 0.674 to 0.933, suggesting the variables and their constructs had high reliability coefficients. Conclusively, the instrument used to measure the variables was reliable.

Analysis and results of descriptive statistics of study variables

Analysis of the mean outcomes of the study variables and each construct was conducted to establish the level of employee motivation and service quality in the municipality. As shown in Table 1, results of descriptive statistics showed that motivation (independent variable) had a mean score of 2.4095 and s.d. of 0.60292, whilst those of service quality (dependent variable) were 2.3096 and 0.79661, respectively. The mean and s.d. scores for the six employee motivation constructs were as follows: leadership, 2.2538 and 0.65183; job satisfaction, 2.5817 and 0.61794; career growth, 2.0387 and 0.93782; organisational culture, 2.3767 and 0.93743; physical work environment, 2.3223 and 0.74939 and work group teams, 2.9367 and 0.64612, respectively. For these constructs, instrument statements were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = 'not at all' to 5 = 'to a very large extent'. The overall employee motivation mean of 2.4095 and s.d. of 0.60292 suggest that employees are motivated to a little extent. Of the six motivational constructs, only work group teams had a relatively high mean (2.9367), suggesting that employees are, to some extent, motivated in this respect. With regard to leadership, job satisfaction, career growth,

TABLE 1: Descriptive statistics of study variables.

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Motivation	116	1.33	3.93	2.4095	0.60292
Leadership	119	1.00	3.60	2.2538	0.65183
Job satisfaction	120	1.20	4.20	2.5817	0.61794
Career growth	119	1.00	4.40	2.0387	0.93782
Dependability	116	1.00	4.60	2.6345	0.79006
Trust	118	1.24	5.00	2.2763	1.01305
Service quality	115	1.00	4.40	2.3096	0.79661
Organisational culture	120	1.00	4.80	2.3767	0.93743
Physical work environment	121	1.80	4.60	2.3223	0.74939
Work group teams	120	1.00	4.60	2.9367	0.64612
Recovery	121	1.00	5.00	2.2975	1.15790
Personal attention	121	1.00	4.60	2.1289	0.73976
Empathy	120	1.00	4.40	2.1550	0.78450
Valid N (listwise)	113	-	-	-	-

organisational culture and work environment, employees perceive that they are motivated to a little extent.

For service quality constructs, results for the mean and s.d. were as follows: dependability, 2.6345 and 0.79006; trust, 2.2763 and 1.01305; recovery factor, 2.2975 and 1.15790; personal attention, 2.1289 and 0.73976; and empathy, 2.1550 and 0.78450, respectively. Again, a five-point scale ranging from 1 = 'not at all' to 5 = 'to a very large extent' was used. Overall, service quality had a mean of 2.3096 and s.d. of 0.79661, indicating that most employees were of the opinion that quality service was delivered to a small extent (minimally). Of the service quality constructs, only dependability had a relatively high mean (2.6345, s.d. 0.79006), suggesting employees, to some extent, are dependable when it comes to service delivery. With regard to trust, recovery, personal attention and empathy, the results suggest employees perceive they are, to a little extent, delivering quality services to customers.

The overall low mean score of 2.4095 for employee motivation indicates that participants are, to a little extent, motivated. Leadership, job satisfaction, organisational culture, career growth, physical work environment and work groups and teams are dimensions believed to stimulate employee motivation that were measured. Relatively low mean scores were recorded on leadership (2.2538), job satisfaction (2.5817), career growth (2.0387), organisational culture (2.3767) and physical work environment (2.3223), which indicate that employees are little motivated by leadership as they are not involved in decision-making and leadership does not communicate with them. Rewards are not offered fairly, resulting in little employee motivation. The low mean score for job satisfaction (2.5817) shows that employees have little intrinsic motivation. When employees perform repetitive work that has little challenge, it increases boredom and a lack of autonomy further results in demotivation.

Opportunities to advance employees' careers are scarce, as indicated by the low mean (2.0387) for career growth. Lack of opportunities to train and develop employees to occupy higher-level positions is demotivating. Promotions are difficult to come by and when an opportunity arises, whoever gets the position is offered based on other grounds, not merit and performance. This contributes to employees having low levels of motivation. It also results from poor organisational culture and the physical work environment, which is not free from hazards, threats and intimidation, which demotivate employees as they are continuously exposed to an unsafe and unfriendly work environment. A mean score of 2.9367 on work group teams indicates that the only dimension that somehow stimulates employee motivation is team spirit, which enables employees to give each other emotional support and cooperate with one another.

With a mean score of 2.3096, quality of service delivery in the municipality is low. The municipality's employees are not dependable, which is evident in a low mean for

dependability (2.6345). The results indicate that services are not delivered in time and employees do not respond timely to customers, resulting in poor service delivery. A mean score of 2.2763 indicates that trust in employees is low when it comes to service delivery. Unprofessionalism and a lack of demonstrating high-quality skills result in customers doubting the service delivery encounter, hence the low level of trust. Recovery factor also had a low mean (2.2975), which indicates the quality of service delivery is minimal.

Employees take time to respond to customers' complaints and delay in offering services, which affects the quality of services rendered. Personal attention with a mean score of 2.1289 indicates that employees do not offer it when providing services, hence poor service delivery. Customers need to be treated with respect and dignity, but a low mean score of 2.1550 for empathy shows that employees lack empathy when they engage with customers during the service delivery process. Failure to show concern for customers and their problems results in customers perceiving the service delivery experience as poor.

It was found that the independent variable (employee motivation) had a positive effect on service quality. It can, thus, be concluded that when employees are motivated they deliver good-quality services. Consequently, it is important for municipal leadership to motivate employees continuously in order to ensure service quality. The more municipal employees are motivated, the more they will deliver quality services. This implies that the leadership style needs to change from transactional to transformational to enhance employee motivation. Transformational leadership empowers and involves employees, which can increase motivation and, in turn, increase service quality. Leadership has a duty to undergo development courses and attend workshops that focus on developing them to become transformational leaders who engage employees when making decisions, which will have a positive impact on employee motivation and service quality.

Ethical considerations

Ethics clearance was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Business and Management Sciences, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, in a letter signed by the Chairperson, dated 21 August 2018, reference number: 2018FBREC563. Permission to collect data was also obtained from the selected municipality, which cannot be mentioned for ethical reasons.

Results of correlational analysis

Spearman's rho correlation test was conducted to determine the strength of association, that is, relationship between employee motivation (independent variable) and service quality (dependent variable), the two main variables.

Spearman's rho correlation (r) and significant probabilities for association indicated employee motivation had a high

significant positive correlation with service quality ($r = 0.860$; $p \leq 0.0000$), validating the positive hypothesis. Thus, at 5% significance level, the null hypothesis was rejected; essentially, then, it may be concluded that employee motivation has a statistically significant positive correlation with or effect on service quality, which means the more employees are motivated, the higher the quality of services they deliver. The practical implication is that when employee motivation increases, the municipality's service quality also increases. This finding is consistent with the literature. Burke and Fiksenbaum (2016) found that the more employees are motivated, the more they commit to organisational goals and endeavour to deliver quality services to achieve such goals. Similarly, a study by Wansoo (2015) found a positive association between employee motivation and service quality. Specifically, it was found that the quality of services rendered by an employee was affected by the level of satisfaction and motivation. A positive association between employee motivation and service quality indicates that high-quality services are rendered when employee motivation is high.

Spearman's rho test on correlation between service quality and employee motivation constructs

Spearman's rho correlations (r) and significance probabilities of the relationship between the six motivation constructs (leadership, job satisfaction, career growth, organisational culture and physical work environment and work group teams) and service quality were tested. All these dimensions were found, to different degrees, to positively correlate with service quality.

A high positive significant association was found to exist between the constructs of leadership and job satisfaction and service quality. Leadership had a high positive significant correlation ($r = 0.821$; $p \leq 0.0000$), whilst job satisfaction had a higher positive correlation ($r = 0.842$; $p \leq 0.0000$) with service quality. A high significant positive relationship was found between career growth and service quality ($r = 0.833$; $p \leq 0.0000$). Organisational culture had a high significant positive relationship with service quality ($r = 0.839$; $p \leq 0.0000$). Furthermore, a moderate positive correlation was found between physical work environment and service quality ($r = 0.618$; $p \leq 0.0000$), whilst work group teams had a low positive significant correlation with service quality ($r = 0.479$; $p \leq 0.0000$).

Discussion

Leadership had a significant and positive relationship with service quality ($r = 0.821$; $p \leq 0.0000$), indicating that when employees are motivated by leadership, they deliver quality services. The more employees are involved in decision-making and the more leadership communicates and listens to them, the more they are motivated. When the employer is concerned about the welfare of employees, the latter are more motivated. The positive association

between leadership and service quality shows that for quality service delivery to increase there is a need for effective leadership, which is consistent with the findings in the literature. Schlesinger and Zornitsky (2015) found that when employees perceive they are respected and involved in an organisation, they commit themselves to delivering quality services. The results show that the more the municipality leadership treats employees with respect as human beings, the more employees are motivated and deliver quality services.

Job satisfaction was also found to influence service quality positively ($r = 0.842$; $p \leq 0.0000$). This finding suggests that the more workers are satisfied with their jobs, the more they are motivated and the more they deliver quality services. Providing employees interesting and challenging work that involves a variety of skills increases their level of satisfaction and, in turn, leads to delivery of quality service. A study by Kiragu (2015) concurred with the findings of this study that job satisfaction levels influence the quality of service delivery in organisations. A service marketing study by Nagar and Rajan (2015) also found that service quality and job satisfaction are related constructs and job satisfaction predicts service quality. Furthermore, Schmit and Allscheid (2017) found that satisfied employees are committed employees who deliver better-quality service. This shows that, with respect to the municipality, the higher the level of job satisfaction, the more employees are inclined to deliver high-quality services.

Correlation analysis suggests that career growth predicts service quality. A positive and highly significant relationship was found between career growth and service quality ($r = 0.833$; $p \leq 0.0000$). This result shows that the greater employees' career growth opportunities open within the municipality, the higher the level of service quality. The study indicates that the clearer the path of growth to higher-level positions, the more employees are trained and developed to occupy higher-level occupations and the more promotions are awarded based on merit, the greater service quality is enhanced. This is supported by several researchers (Carman 2014; Tabaku & Cerri 2016; Yoon et al. 2014) who reported that providing employees with growth and advancement opportunities increases employee motivation and service quality delivery. The results of this study and the literature indicate that promoting the growth and development of employees in an organisation improves satisfaction and motivation, which can predict quality service delivery.

Organisational culture was found to have a highly significant and positive association with service quality ($r = 0.839$; $p \leq 0.0000$), which suggests that when an organisation has established beliefs and values that are shared and agreed to by all members, motivation increases. The more employees of the municipality perceive that it thrives in delivering quality services, the higher the level of motivation and the better the quality of services delivered. When employees perceive an organisation as professional and value quality

service delivery, their motivation increases, which can, in turn, contribute to delivery of quality services. This result is supported by Kiragu (2015), who reported that organisational culture predicts employee motivation and the quality of service delivery. Kiragu's study found that the more employees see a culture where customers are valued and the organisation continuously strives to improve its services, employee motivation increases and quality service delivery is achieved.

A significant positive association was found between physical work environment and service quality ($r = 0.618$; $p \leq 0.0000$), an indication that when municipal employees are motivated by their physical work environment, service quality increases. Physical work environment was found to be a predictor of quality service delivery as working in a safe environment increases motivation. The less employees are exposed to hazardous work environment free from intimidation and threats and the more an organisation has well-established processes of solving conflicts, the more employees are motivated, which, in turn, results in improved service delivery. Studies by Kiragu (2015), Silvestro and Cross (2016) and Schneider and Bowen (2015) supported the results of this empirical study. In Kiragu's (2015) study, which involved employees of funeral homes in Nairobi, having a safe work environment was found to stimulate employee motivation and increase the quality of service delivery. Similarly, in Schneider and Bowen's (2015) study, banking employees reported that a positive physical work environment improves motivation and enhances quality service delivery. These results indicate that having a positive work environment motivates employees, which, in turn, leads to commitment to delivering quality services.

Work groups and teams had a significant positive association with service quality ($r = 0.479$; $p \leq 0.0000$), which shows that when employees cooperate and work together in performing their jobs they are more motivated, leading to increased level of service delivery. The more employees support each other and share ideas when working, the more they are satisfied in the workplace and the more enhanced delivery of quality service. The empirical study results are supported by the results of a study by Tabaku and Cerri (2016), who found that working in teams results in employees understanding one another, cooperating, sharing information, supporting and complementing each other's weaknesses, which increases motivation and improves delivery of services. Therefore, for quality service delivery to be achieved, the study provides evidence that employees must be able to work together in groups and teams.

Motivation and service quality constructs

Spearman's rho correlations were performed between employee motivation and the five service quality constructs, namely, dependability, trust, recovery factor, personal attention and empathy. It was found that motivation had a significant positive effect on all the constructs. Employee motivation had a high significant positive relationship with

dependability ($r = 0.839$; $p \leq 0.0000$). This finding shows that the more municipal employees are motivated, the more they are dependable. With increased motivation, employees are able to deliver services in time, commit to their work and are responsive in carrying out their work without lapses in service delivery. The results also found a high significant positive association between employee motivation and trust ($r = 0.875$; $p \leq 0.0000$), which shows that when municipal employees are motivated, they are more credible and can be trusted by customers. On the contrary, when employees are less motivated, they are likely to behave unprofessionally in their work and fail to keep promises, resulting in a lack of trust. With motivation, employees can ensure quality services are delivered efficiently and effectively, resulting in customers trusting them.

A high significant positive correlation was found between motivation and recovery factor ($r = 0.829$; $p \leq 0.0000$), indicating that the more employees are motivated, the more they are quick to notice service problems and offer solutions. This means motivated employees do not waste time when it comes to help customers. However, employee motivation was found to have a moderate positive correlation with personal attention ($r = 0.601$; $p \leq 0.0000$), suggesting that when employees are motivated, they are able to personalise the service delivery encounter, listen to and identify with customers by creating good customer relations. Finally, employee motivation was found to have a positive correlation with empathy ($r = 0.666$; $p \leq 0.0000$), suggesting that when employees are motivated, they are concerned about customers' feelings, cautious when they talk to customers, show concern and are willing to go the extra mile to help, resulting in improved service delivery.

Hypothesis testing using simple linear regression model

Linear regression analysis also indicated a positive correlation between employee motivation and service quality. The linear regression model indicated that motivation explains a significant amount of the variance in service quality ($R^2 = 0.783$, R^2 adjusted = 0.781), which leads to the conclusion that as the Durbin–Watson ($d = 2.247$) is between the two critical values of $1.5 < d < 2.5$, there is no first-order linear auto-correlation in the linear regression data.

The unstandardised parameter estimates of the resultant model, the constant term ($\beta0 = -0.527$; $t = -3.594$; $p \leq 0.0001$) and the main effect of employee motivation trait ($\beta1 = 1.173$; $t = 20.001$; $p \leq 0.0001$) are statistically significant. As the $\beta1$ coefficient is positive and significant, there is sufficient evidence at 5% level of significance to conclude that employee motivation exerts a positive effect on service quality.

Conclusion

Although the results of this study cannot be generalised to all the municipalities in the Western Cape province, they overwhelmingly point to the salience of employee motivation in delivering high-quality services. The descriptive analysis suggests that employee motivation in the municipality is low, indicated by low motivation scores for motivation itself and five of its six constructs: leadership, job satisfaction, organisational culture, career growth and development and physical work environment. Work groups and teams is the only construct with a moderate score, indicating it is high.

Although to different degrees, all dimensions of employee motivation positively correlate with service quality, which is supported by the literature. Thus, it can be concluded that motivated municipal employees are likely to deliver high-quality services.

From the results, it may be concluded that all dimensions of employee motivation have a positive effect on service quality constructs, which leads to the overall conclusion that employee motivation positively correlates with service quality, a fact supported by the literature.

Recommendations

The descriptive analysis suggests that municipal leadership motivates employees only to a little extent, an issue that needs to be addressed. Thus, the results and conclusions have managerial implications. In this light, key recommendations that could assist the municipality to address the motivation–service quality conundrum are made.

Leadership is the key to addressing organisational challenges. Although intrinsic motivation is said to be more crucial than extrinsic motivation, leadership can be instrumental in fostering both. In this respect, transformational leadership style works best. Transformational leaders involve employees in decision-making and provide support in all possible ways in order to foster employee motivation, which, in turn, improves job satisfaction and leads to delivery of quality services. It is recommended that managers undergo leadership development courses and focus on developing transformational leadership.

Municipal leaders need to conduct frequent surveys to ascertain employees' expectations on key issues, including their current jobs and work environment, in order to address demotivating factors that hamper delivery of high-quality public services.

To address the challenge of low job satisfaction, it is also recommended that job rotation and job enlargement initiatives are implemented to introduce variety and employees' use of multiple skills. This will bring about intrinsic motivation resulting from employees performing repetitive work. Increasing employees' roles by adding variety and challenging tasks to their jobs will enhance performance and increase intrinsic motivation.

Provision of career growth and development opportunities to employees, institution of succession planning, continuous

training, coaching and mentoring to get employees prepared for higher positions and anchoring of the reward and promotion system solely on performance and merit are essential.

Management needs to relook at the organisational culture and take decisive steps to ensure that it is open and friendly and that the physical work environment is safe and free from hazards, threats and intimidation as these demotivate employees.

With a relatively high team spirit manifested in good social and work relations amongst employees and their co-workers and superiors fostering emotional support and cooperation and, thereby, enhancing motivation, it is recommended that the municipality should capitalise on team-building initiatives.

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