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LIP SERVICED DECENTRALIZED GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH AFRICAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT: CONSTRAINTS AND PROSPECTS FOR SERVICE DELIVERY PLANNING

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Abstract

The dawn of democracy in South Africa ignited hope among the non-white population for effective service delivery and the end of separate development, a legacy of colonial administration. However, thirty years later, South Africa faces significant challenges, including service delivery backlogs, corruption, inadequate capacity, and poor monetary management, which hinder effective service delivery planning. The decentralization of governance aimed to address these issues by shifting responsibilities to local governments, yet this process has been largely ineffective due to the lack of genuine citizen participation, superficial integrated development planning, and insufficient local government capacity. Despite South Africa's elevated level of decentralization, governance remains fragmented, with overlapping districts, unclear mandates, incomplete coordination, and contradictory implementation. This has perpetuated service delivery challenges, particularly affecting impoverished and unemployed populations. The paper argues that the superficial nature of decentralized governance has contributed to slow service delivery and planning in rural areas. It concludes that the ineffective decentralization has led to deteriorating service infrastructure, inadequate service provision, and worsening poverty. Consequently, after thirty years into democracy, the situation for many, especially in rural regions, remains precarious.

Keywords: Lip Serviced Decentralization, Governance, Local Government, Service Delivery Planning, Theory of Planned Behavior

1. Introduction

Many impoverished areas are persistently becoming an arena of protests over service delivery provision. Thirty years since democracy incepted in South Africa, the gap between rural and urban areas in terms of service delivery provision continue to get rooted whereas poverty, unemployment and inequality remain a cultural norm painting impoverished settlements. Fransman (2024) opines that the issue of poor service delivery happens because of uninformed development policy legislations, lack of citizen participation, and poor integration between development policies as well as government and citizenry. To harness the situation, local government as a sphere of government closest to the people, was established and constitutionally mandated to provide basic services to its constituencies (Monama and Mokoelé, 2023). However, many of South African Black population residing in rural areas are still without proper and sustainable provision of basic services such as water, roads, health, proper education, and sanitation (Ngcamu, 2019; Monama and Mokoelé, 2023). In some areas, people continue to use pit latrine and bucket toilets, which are not collected frequently. South African local governments have struggled for decades since the dawn of democracy to deliver services to the people and have not accomplished this mandate (Breakfast *et al.* 2019; Fransman, 2024). This has fueled service delivery in South Africa because of communities' frustration with their lack of not being properly serviced (Breakfast *et al.* 2019).

Ngcamu (2019) posits that local governments struggle to provide services because of poor governance and leadership, corruption, and a lack of capacity to undertake their developmental mandate. Thus, South African local governments have been confronted with raising challenges, which continue to impede service delivery in communities (Mamokhere, 2019; Barbier and Tengeh 2022). Barbier and Tengeh (2022) argue that the occurrence of poor service delivery on local governments' inability to quickly adapt to changing circumstances. South Africa continues to struggle with a paucity of basic services that impact millions of disadvantaged people, despite being one of the most decentralized countries in the world in terms of governance.

The establishment of a decentralized governance system in South Africa occurred after 1994, to shape service delivery planning (Chilenga-Butao, 2020). The adoption of decentralization was to promote good governance and democratization as well as to ensure effective service delivery to communities. However, the promise of decentralization has had conflicting results for the provision of public services (Chilenga-Butao, 2020). It is argued that decentralization causes challenges that lead to poor service delivery because the decentralized governance system favors elites and those with political influence (Pierskalla and Sacks 2017; Gwiriri and Bennett 2020). The endorsement of decentralization, especially at the local level is very sound in theory and on paper but there have been some inconsistencies in terms of implementation in South Africa. In this regard, proclaiming accountability, transparency, and productive efficiency in public service delivery is unimaginative and impractical within local municipalities.

Kgobe (2020) adds that local governments have become a site where poor governance, maladministration and corruption are becoming decentralized, all which can be attributed to political patronage. In South African local government offices, lip serviced decentralization about the delivery of services has thus been a focal point. Nevertheless, this has been tarnished by unethical acts (Kgobe, 2020). Due to unethical practices, planning for efficient service delivery provision has been made more difficult and constrained. It is argued that decentralization has a lot of potential, but whether it improves service delivery planning depends on the institutional frameworks that guide its implementation (Azfar *et al.* 2018). Kgobe (2020) further opines that there is a significant gap between policy formulation and implementation. While Matlhoahela (2022) believes that citizen participation, or lack thereof, in municipal government remains a concern. Various local governments are still striving to involve citizens in the integrated development planning (IDP) process. This is evident in the fact that there has been little progress in terms of community involvement in the development of the IDP. This undercut the motion behind decentralization and resorted to lip service in the delivery of services to the people.

The current study is conducted in the light of this context. There has been little research into lip serviced decentralization for governance and service delivery planning from the context of impoverished areas. This paper seeks to examine the implications of lip serviced decentralization

of governance within South African local government through assessing the constraints and prospects for service delivery planning. The content of this paper contains an introduction, which provides a synopsis of the phenomenon. It further inculcates the theoretical underpinnings anchored on Theory of Planned Behavior as well as legal frameworks followed by empirical lenses harvested from the existing literature. Moreover, the study provides a succinct discussion of results through generalized remarks in conclusion.

2. Theoretical framework: theory of planned behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior is a behavioral theory developed by Ajzen in 1985 to predict and explain human behavior based on beliefs and attitudes (Ajzen, 1991). This theory asserts that an individual's choice to engage in certain behaviors, such as unethical practices, is influenced by their intention to do so (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen, 2020). The central philosophy of the Theory of Planned Behavior is that an individual's behavioral intentions are determined by three distinct factors, including their attitude toward behavior, their perception of behavioral control, and subjective norms. Thus, a tenet of this theory is that behavioral intention is the most proximal determinant of human behavior. According to Ajzen (1991), "behavioral intentions" are aspects of motivation that show how much people are eager to engage in a particular activity. As a result, the more strongly one feels a desire to engage in a behavior, the more likely one is to engage in it. This paper uses the Theory of Planned Behavior to explain the behavioral standards that underlie the intention to ensure decentralization of governance in local government in service delivery planning. According to Bersoff (1999), an "unethical action" is any action that deviates from what is right or appropriate for a person, a profession, or an industry. In South Africa, the responsibility for providing services to society has been delegated to local governments, which are overseen by state officials. (Mbandlwa and Mishu, 2020).

Yousaf *et al.* (2016) suggested that administrative ethical practices have always been recognized in democratic governments as a crucial tool for determining good governance and a vital factor to be incorporated in developing citizen trust and their participation in governmental decision-making for the realization of efficient service delivery. However, unethical behavioral practices have had a significant impact on citizens' democratic participation in decision making towards service delivery planning. Conforming to the premise of the Theory of Planned Behavior, such behavioral actions are not accidental, but rather planned (Ajzen, 2020). According to Mokoele (2020), human behavior that is intentionally planned and conducted in an unethical manner gives rise to corruption that endangers any democracy, poor governance within anti-corruption institutions. The notion of decentralization at local government has been curtailed by lack of participatory service delivery planning, corruption, political patronage, and lack of political will (Mokoele, 2020). In this context, unethical behavior, particularly corruption and patronage, entails a breakdown in cooperation in which few individuals collude to the detriment of all. Such unethical practices spawned maladministration and other immoral actions within South African local governments, which resulted in lip service and/or inadequate service delivery planning. Thus, engaging in unethical behavior is not an accident but a deliberate action. The application of the Theory of Planned Behavior to the context of "lip serviced decentralized governance in South African local government" helps in understanding the aspects influencing office bearers' behaviors and intentions towards service delivery planning. The theory highlights the importance of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control in shaping how office bearers engage with and support decentralized governance initiatives aimed at improving service delivery outcomes.

3. South African legislative frameworks

The Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act (2005), the Local Government: Municipal System Act (2000), the White Paper on Local Government: Municipal Structured Act (1998) and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) where promulgated to ensure that decisions are decentralized to the lower echelon of government (Chilenga-Butao, 2020). The democratic decentralization of powers aimed at giving local governments the capability to

manage a wide range of responsibilities including service delivery and local economic development (Chilenga-Butao, 2020). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) is a supreme law that aimed at promoting the cooperating and collaborative governance (national, provincial, and local). The Constitution makes provision for decentralization, described as 'interventionism' between different spheres of government in South Africa. The intervention allows the national government to take over the management of a province or its ministries, as well as the management of a municipality by a provincial government (Ledger and Rampedi, 2019; Chilenga-Butao, 2020).

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) outlines the roles of local government and how they relate to other areas of government, placing special emphasis on cooperation across the three spheres of government through the cooperative governance principle (Chilenga-Butao, 2020). According to Section 153 of the Constitution, municipalities are obligated to organize and manage their administrative, finance, and planning practices in a way that takes priority of the community's fundamental needs (Mokgopo, 2017). This promotes social and economic development and engages in regional and national development initiatives (Mokgopo, 2017). The Constitution sets out the key issues that pertain to decentralized government, including the distinctive nature of local government, the necessity of intergovernmental cooperation, the right of a municipality to oversee local government affairs of its community, powers and functions of municipalities, and funding of municipalities (Chilenga-Butao, 2020; Waeterloos, 2020).

The White Paper on Local Government (1998) aims to outline a structure and agenda that would fundamentally alter the current local government system (Republic of South Africa, 1998). It recommends strategies for municipalities to adopt integrated planning and budgeting for development, performance management, and collaboration with local partners and citizens (Republic of South Africa, 1998). The White Paper suggested significant reforms to local government institutions to give development local government effect (Republic of South Africa, 1998). As a result, spatial integration and modes of development that are socially inclusive were necessary to eradicate the legacy of apartheid. Thus, to establish a comprehensive framework for economic and social development across the city, a robust metropolitan government was also necessary. (Mokgopo, 2017). The White Paper describes local government after 1994 as developmental, incorporating integrated development planning. Municipalities must therefore coordinate all development operations within their respective zones of control (Republic of South Africa, 1998; Mokgopo, 2017). Citizens must actively participate in development projects in their communities, in accordance with the developmental local government. In this regard, decentralization aims to increase the opportunity for citizens to take part in local decision-making processes.

Local government: Municipal System Act (no. 32 of 2000) provides a framework for municipal operations, including policies for service delivery and development planning, personnel matters, and performance management systems. According to Masilo (2022), the Municipal System Act provides constitutional provisions for local government that mandate municipalities to exercise legislative and executive functions at the municipal level. The act requires the municipal council to ensure that all members, including those in disadvantaged positions, have equitable access to the services to which they have a right (Masilo, 2022). The act encourages the local government to develop an Integrated Development Plan (IDP), which is inherently participatory and bottom-up approach. The act declares that the municipality has the authority to enact laws and perform administrative duties in the areas under its purview, and that the entire process of guiding municipalities must be in accordance with Section 41 of the Constitution (Kgoete, 2022). Municipalities must establish a culture of municipal governance in accordance with the Municipal Systems Act that combines formal representative democracy with participatory governance (Ndebele and Lavhelani 2017; Kgoete, 2022).

The Intergovernmental Relations Frameworks Act (no. 13 of 2005) establishes the framework for national, provincial, and local governments to foster and improve interstate relations (Atkinson, 2019). It also lays out the procedures and methods for handling intergovernmental disagreements and addresses related issues. According to Atkinson (2019), the Act mandates that state organs consult with one another when necessary and emphasizes

the significance of intergovernmental cooperation in addressing issues such as poverty, underdevelopment, stigmatization of people and communities, and other discriminatory and apartheid-era legacies. The Intergovernmental Relations Frameworks Act of 2005 enhances collaboration between the district and its local municipalities so that the needs of local municipalities are better understood and addressed (Magagula *et al.* 2019). Additionally, this Act makes it necessary to create district intergovernmental forums that promote and develop dialogue between a district and its local municipalities. These forums are responsible for ensuring that each domain fulfils its obligations in accordance with the Constitution while also promoting friendly relationships within local government (Magagula *et al.* 2019).

4. Decentralized governance system

The current popularity of decentralized governance systems in research and policy circles has made the concept “slippery,” which meaning that it may convey different things to different people (Kamara *et al.* 2017; Merrell, 2022). A decentralized governance system is a type of governance that distributes power over a legislative body rather than concentrating power in the hands of a few people (Merrell, 2022). Therefore, decentralized government refers to governmental body that spread authority among various structures. This means that all the stakeholders are required to participate in the governance system of the municipality. The purpose of a decentralized governance system is to give citizens more control over their own lives by involving them more actively in the government decision-making process (Merrell, 2022; Nyikadzino and Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2022). Decentralized local governance encourages participatory development methods and the creation of policies suited to local need (Kamara *et al.* 2017). According to Naaikuur (2021), decentralizing the tasks involved in delivering services is a widespread tendency worldwide, particularly in local government systems (Naaikuur, 2021). Decentralization is a management and organizational philosophy that shifts authority for decision making from central (at the highest level) to the middle or lower levels (Plaček, *et al.* 2020).

Numerous countries have embraced a decentralized governance system in the belief that it can assist drive economic growth and eliminate poverty, both of which are aims that central government initiatives have failed to fulfill government (Chilenga-Butao, 2020). Some countries regard this system as a method to promote civil society and deepen democracy. Thus, decentralization is regarded as a solution for addressing a wide range of problems (Gumede, *et al.* 2019; Bloem *et al.* 2021). The United States Federal Government is an illustration of a decentralized government. The regional governments and the federal government of the 50 States in Washington share authority. Chilenga-Butao (2020) opines that local governments in South Africa make a good reflection of decentralized governance. However, in practice most citizens do not participate in the affairs of the municipality. Despite the decentralization philosophy in South Africa, it remains in policy and theory. Arguably, theories on the actuality of democratic decentralization hold that recentralization is the imposition of national authority that has not succeeded in enhancing the capability and empowerment of local government (Chilenga-Butao, 2020). Therefore, local governments in South Africa adopted a decentralized governance system as a means of resolving and mediating local level challenges, improving service delivery, reducing social tensions, and allowing effective political stability (Pierskalla and Sacks, 2017).

5. Decentralization and service delivery planning in local government

Studies reveal that decentralization is being pursued in over 80% of developing countries worldwide (Faguet *et al.* 2021). Local government in South Africa adopted the decentralization system as the central mechanism of decision-making processes in service delivery planning (Danielle and Masilela, 2020). The system of decentralization has been inaugurated to promote effective service delivery planning, after the failure of the centralized apartheid regime (Faguet *et al.* 2021). Local governments in South Africa have been entrusted with the obligation of the delivery of services since they are near society (Mbandlwa and Mishi, 2020). Thus, local governments are crucial to the development of communities and the provision of essential services (Sarkar *et al.* 2022). Yet, local governments have been heavily criticized for inadequate

service delivery, particularly in South Africa (Breakfast *et al.* 2019). Nonetheless, local governments are envisaged to be more responsive to the needs of their communities as decentralization unfolds. Local governments have become essential players of ensuring service delivery, eradicating poverty, and advancing human development (Sarkar *et al.* 2022).

The success and efficacy of service delivery planning are influenced by a complex system of interconnections, resources, and competence since it is a multi-variable process. Thus, a major issue to consider is the close integration of governance approaches and sectoral initiatives, as well as the interrelation of interventions that enhance state capabilities and those to empower citizens (Breakfast *et al.* 2019). However, efficient service delivery planning cannot be looked at in isolation, but rather as part of a much bigger governance structure incorporating horizontal and vertical interactions (Osborne *et al.* 2016). According to Osborne *et al.* (2016), the intergovernmental governance system is not designed to enhance the constitutional aspirations of decentralization. Hence, local governments do not have the authority to exercise greater individuality and autonomy (Osborne *et al.* 2016; Barbier and Tengeh, 2022). It raises concerns that local government's effective service delivery planning obligations are strenuous and financially challenging and will remain so if local municipalities rely on or controlled by other spheres of government in meeting their constitutional mandate, particularly in terms of intergovernmental fiscal transfers (Shimengah, 2018; Kalonda and Govender, 2021).

6. Challenges affecting service delivery planning in South African local government

The dilemma in "service delivery" affecting municipalities is a result of underestimating the difficulties and real investments required for the transformation and capacitation of local government. Therefore, one could argue that the makers of legislative and policy frameworks for local government appeared to be using simplistic approaches in service delivery planning. Hence, the demand for service delivery within South African communities is currently a major conundrum. The general lack of capacities, patronage, and the political conditioning within local governments in terms of service delivery planning impact the effective implementation of policies (Kosec and Wantchekon 2020; Ojugbele *et al.* 2022; Pareek and Sole, 2022). Inadequate service delivery planning is mostly due to local government's inability to exercise accountability, manage public finances, and uphold proper accounting practices (Reddy, 2016; Pareek and Sole 2022). Since decentralized government was established, local governments in South Africa have been given many responsibilities to ensure that services are provided to communities, but they have been allocated insufficient resources to fulfil this obligation. According to Nkoana *et al.* (2024), the politicized system in local government has hindered service delivery since there is insufficient political and managerial will, and public servants are held accountable by their superiors rather than the local populace who, in the end, get poor service. The politicized system is easily subverted by political prejudice, which leads to the hiring of individuals who do not meet the requirements for the position and interferes with the efficient and effective operation of local government (Reddy, 2016; Nkoana *et al.* 2024). The absorption of unqualified and unskilled cadres into government positions has resulted in inappropriate and inadequate service delivery planning (Pareek and Sole, 2022).

Changwony and Paterson (2019) opine that decentralization has exacerbated corruption in local government because of weaker accountability and transparency practices. Corruption is at the heart of the issues that contribute to service delivery failures in most local municipalities (Ndevu and Muller 2017). As a result, poor governance and corruption are to blame for inadequate service delivery planning in local governments (Ndevu and Muller 2017; Changwony and Paterson, 2019). Shimengah (2018) blamed the growing corruption that weakens the provision of services to communities at the local level to the government's incapacity to be transparent and accountable. The growing dissatisfaction brought on by inadequate service delivery planning has led South African citizens to utilize protest as a means of communicating their demands for service delivery. The protests, commonly referred to as a "rebellion of the poor" have been attributed due to variety of issues, including unemployment, housing, water and sanitation, electricity, municipal corruption, health, and crime (Wasserman *et al.* 2018). Ngcamu (2019) contends that unethical practices make it difficult for people to obtain services without bribing

corrupt government officials, which has a negative impact on local government's service delivery planning. Helplessly, most needy people in South Africa have endured a prolonged wait for low-cost housing under the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) initiative since 1994, watching foreigners occupying RDP houses intended for South Africans due to corrupt and unethical officials (Wasserman *et al.* 2018; Ngcamu, 2019).

7. Strategies for enhancing the effectiveness of decentralized governance in service delivery planning

Inadequate service delivery planning in South African local government remains a major challenge, significantly impacting the lives of local communities, particularly previously disadvantaged groups. In local municipalities, decentralized governance could not be a panacea for all problems related to service delivery planning, especially if poorly planned and implemented. Critical actions are needed in planning to cure these illnesses, which resulted to poor service delivery planning in South African local governments. Ojugbele *et al.* (2022) outline that more attention to the political nature of translating policy into practices is required. A critical evaluation of the policy framework as well as new methods of supervision, public scrutiny and input appear to be required to address issues with service delivery planning (Ojugbele *et al.* 2022; Pareek and Sole 2022). It is also necessary to enhance several constitutional strategies, such as the Auditor-General and the Public Protector, particularly at the municipal level, to encourage efficiency. It is asserted that preventing unethical practices, such as corruption, helps to increase municipal revenues, which in turn contributes to better service delivery.

The minimization of the challenges and constraints of decentralized governance in service delivery planning will require new thinking that will incorporate public and private institutions, business sectors, general citizens, and international intervention. Ile and Boadu (2018) argue that a comprehensive constitutional and legal framework are necessary to clarify local government's authority and obligations regarding service delivery planning. However, the central government must be prepared to cede control and recognize the importance of sub-national government in providing services (Ile & Boadu, 2018). Sufficient and competent professional personnel are also needed at a local government to strengthen its capacity and enhance efficiency and effectiveness of services delivery planning. Where there is a shortage of skilled and experienced personnel, opportunities for training, retraining, and further education must be provided to impart professional and technical skills that would improve the efficacy and efficiency of service delivery at local municipalities.

The fiscal relationship between the national, provincial and local governments must be clearly outlined based on equality, fairness, and justice in terms of resource sharing because appropriate financial resources are also a crucial requirement at a local government (Park and Hassan, 2018). According to Manaf, Mohamed, and Harvey (2022), decentralization must be accompanied with accountability and transparency; otherwise, there will not be any misuse of power. This would promote service delivery planning efficiency and aid in the fight against corruption (Kgobe and Mamokhere, 2021; Asamoah, 2022; Manaf *et al.* 2022). Additionally, it is crucial for national and local level governments to interact with one another to avoid friction and conflict between the various sectors of government (Kaiser, Tapscott & Navarro, 2018).

8. Discussion

To achieve the objective of this paper, plethora of literature have been reviewed about the complexities and challenges faced by South African local governments in fulfilling their promises of effective service delivery planning through decentralized governance, while also offering insights into potential pathways for improvement. Despite thirty (30) years into democracy in South Africa as well as the establishment of decentralized system in the process of development planning, service delivery provision continues to be a challenge, especially in impoverished areas. Fransman (2024) opined that the issue of poor service delivery planning happens because of uninformed development policy legislations, lack of citizen participation, and poor integration

between development policies as well as government and citizenry. Local government as a sphere of government closest to the people, has been established and constitutionally mandated to provide basic services to its constituencies (Monama and Mokoale, 2023). However, many of South African Black population residing in rural areas are still without proper and sustainable provision of basic services such as water, roads, health, proper education, and sanitation (Ngcamu, 2019). The findings revealed that the promise of decentralization has had conflicting results for the provision of public services. Thus, decentralization causes challenges that lead to poor service delivery because the decentralized governance system favors elites and those with political influence (Pierskalla and Sacks 2017; Gwiriri and Bennett 2020). The endorsement of decentralization, especially at the local level is very sound in theory and on paper but there have been inconsistencies in terms of implementation in South Africa.

The Theory of Planned Behavior provided an explanation of the behavioral standards that underlie the intention to ensure decentralization of governance in local government in service delivery planning. The solicitation of the Theory of Planned Behavior from the context of “lip serviced decentralized governance in South African local government” provided a holistic understanding of the aspects influencing office bearers’ behaviors and intentions towards service delivery planning. It also emphasized the role of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control in defining how office bearers interact with and support decentralized governance initiatives aimed at enhancing service delivery outcomes. This helped to examine how effectively municipal bearers may change their behavior and attitude to harness effective service delivery planning in a decentralized governance and mitigate lip service decentralization. South Africans’ legislative frameworks provided a solid foundation for decentralized governance and service delivery planning at the local level, addressing constraints such as capacity limitations and governance issues remains crucial. The Constitution of South Africa (1996), among other legal frameworks, particularly Sections 151 to 156, provides for local government as a distinct sphere of government with its own powers and functions. It mandates that local government must be developmental, provide democratic and accountable government, ensure delivery of services to communities, and promote social and economic development. The findings showed that despite the proclamations in legal frameworks enhancing decentralized governance, poor service delivery and lip serviced decentralization are still persistent in the process of development planning. Matlhoahela (2022) believed that citizen participation, or lack thereof, in municipal government remains a concern. Thus, various local governments are still striving to involve citizens in the integrated development planning (IDP) process. This is evident in the fact that there has been little progress in terms of community involvement in the development of the IDP. This undercut the motion behind decentralization and resorted to lip service in the delivery of services to the people.

It was also found that since the establishment of decentralized government, local governments in South Africa have been given significant responsibilities to ensure that services are provided to communities. However, they have been allocated insufficient resources to fulfill this obligation. According to Reddy (2016), the politicized system in local government has hindered service delivery since there is insufficient political and managerial will, and public servants are held accountable by their superiors rather than the local populace who, in the end, get poor service. The politicized system is easily subverted by political prejudice, which leads to the hiring of individuals who do not meet the requirements for the position and interferes with the efficient and effective operation of local government (Reddy, 2016). The absorption of unqualified and unskilled cadres into government positions has resulted in inappropriate and inadequate service delivery planning (Pareek and Sole, 2022). Whilst Changwony and Paterson (2019) opined that decentralization has exacerbated corruption in local government because of weaker accountability and transparency practices. Corruption is at the heart of the issues that contribute to service delivery failures in most local governments. As a result, poor governance and corruption are to blame for inadequate service delivery planning in local governments. However, Ile and Boadu (2018) suggested effective mitigation strategies that involve establishing clear constitutional and legal frameworks for defining the authority and responsibilities of local governments in service delivery planning. Conversely, the central government must be prepared to cede control and recognize the importance of sub-national government in providing services

(Ile and Boadu, 2018). Sufficient and competent professional personnel are also needed at a local government to strengthen its capacity and enhance efficiency and effectiveness of services delivery planning. Where there is a shortage of skilled and experienced personnel, opportunities for training, retraining, and further education must be provided to impart professional and technical skills that would improve the efficacy and efficiency of service delivery at local municipalities.

9. Conclusion

The paper concludes that a plethora of issues resulting from lip serviced decentralized governance is rooted in unethical practices discovered at local government. Albeit many local governments in South Africa seen as being dysfunctional and incapable of accomplishing their obligations of effective service delivery planning, the model of planning is decentralized in nature. Understanding the behavioral control and attitudes of office bearers towards service delivery planning from a context of the Theory of Planned Behavior could be a critical framework to mitigate constraints, enhance prospects for effective planning, and promote genuine participatory governance practices that prioritize community needs and improve service delivery outcomes. The paper concludes that the lip serviced decentralized governance system has contributed to the sluggish service delivery provision and planning in rural South Africa. Furthermore, the paper concludes that the proliferation of lip serviced decentralization of governance in local municipality to decaying service infrastructure, lack of service delivery provision and deepening poverty. Thirty (30) years into the new democratic dispensation, the plight of most people in rural areas remains tenuous. In this regard, the congruency between community preferences and public policies as advocated by the model of decentralized governance does not seem to be happening. It is time for South Africa government, particularly at that local level as they structured to be a close interface between the state and society, to have a dialogue and produce a new thinking to foster more decentralized governance to realize effective and efficient service delivery planning. This paper recommends a thorough understanding of the complexity and dynamics of decentralization in South African local government to obtain the desired results. The capacity of local government for effective service delivery planning needs to be strengthened.

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