Lack of Political Will: A Barrier to Public Service Delivery in South Africa and a High Cost for Citizens

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Abstract
After 29 years of democracy, South Africa's public sector is in critical condition; the capacity of the public sector to meet people's needs has been called into question. This is due to poor public service delivery and frequent service delivery protests in South Africa. Citizens have taken to the streets to express their dissatisfaction with a government that no longer serves them effectively. Political office bearers' lack of political will has harmed and nearly crippled the public sector's ability to provide sustainable public service. The involvement of those in positions of government leadership in corruption, a lack of public accountability, and poor consequence management in the public sector all point to a lack of political will. The lack of commitment shown by politicians in the leadership roles has raised the question of whether South Africans can rely on the government. The poor and vulnerable citizens are most affected by the lack of political accountability in the public sector because they rely more on the government. The country's reliance on the public sector is caused by a lack of job opportunities. The country's current challenges, such as load shedding, corruption, and public debt, are also putting the public sector on its knees. This paper seeks to examine the impact of a lack of political will on public service delivery and the costs borne by citizens. This paper is timely, as the South African public sector is nearly paralyzed by a lack of political will after 29 years of democracy. To richly address the objectives of this paper, a qualitative research method was used in conjunction with a review of literature.

Keywords: Citizens, Democracy, Government, Political Will, Protests

Introduction

The response of South Africa's government to citizens' needs is moving in a different direction for the worse. The government and political office bearers have been implicated in many questionable situations, indicating a lack of political will to promote the government that is responsive to the needs of the citizens. The South African public sector had witnessed many services delivery protests and the government has not

done much to mitigate such situations. The South African government is characterised by lack of consequence management, corruption, bias rule of law, lack of public accountability, cadre deployment, fights for political power and poor service delivery, all this happens at the expense of the citizens. The government mandate is to cater for the needs of the citizen, it currently seems that those leading the government are more concerned about their needs over their needs than the needs of the citizens. The level of self-enrichment in the public sector by public servants supports this statement.

One typically example is the state capture, where the political office bearers, entrusted with political power, were the beneficiaries of the state capture in South Africa. Eskom, the struggling power utility, has been exempted from disclosure of irregular and fruitless expenditure, which is setting the wrong precedent in government and indicates the lack of political will to promote sustainable public service delivery for the benefit of the citizens. The larger governing context influences the delivery of fundamental services in all countries. Improvements in service delivery results may be attainable through processes of political change and transformation. If the outcomes are positive, political will must exist; if the outcomes are negative, political will must be missing (Harris and Wild, 2013). The South African government's response to residents' hardships has been characterized by denial, a lack of political will, and inadequate policy and program implementation (Karim et al.,2009).

The citizens are facing many challenges when it comes to the provision of services, they have responded to these challenges by making demonstrations in the streets and by not voting for leading political party in 2021 local government election as the party lost many municipalities it was leading. Acting Public Protector Advocate Kholeka Gcaleka contends that "there is a lack of political will in South Africa to pursue governance reforms, which is felt by citizens as inadequate service delivery continues to worsen" (SABC,2022). Ukeje et al.,2019 concur that service delivery approaches, and procedures have been revised with the goal of improving performance and productivity in Africa's public sector. One of the primary issues confronting public service is the existence of too many policies that lack political will to be implemented. This has, in part, rendered these changes incapable of accomplishing their intended goals. According to Reddy (2016) the politicization of local government has created a challenge of people being deployed to strategic positions who lack skills and experience, which has hampered service delivery. This can be attributed to a lack of political and managerial will in the government to take firm and decisive action.

Xaba (2021) concur that the delivery of public services is negatively impacted by the ANC government's lack of political will to implement consequence management where it is necessary. According to the study findings of Oleribe et al.,2009, the African government encompasses leadership and management issues such as a lack of political will, and these factors hinder the proper implementation of vital government policies that attempt to benefit citizens. In support Bhengu and Maphumulo (2019) alluded that poor management and leadership, as well as a lack of vision and an ambiguous ideology, South Africa's public healthcare delivery system has completely failed, with outcomes worse than those of some lower-income countries. Citizens in South Africa have expressed their dissatisfaction with the government's failure to provide critical services, and as a result, service delivery protests have become the standard in South Africa. These challenges are caused by the government's lack of political will to act and recognize that they are here to serve the public, not the other way around. Political will is essential in governance because it encourages political office holders to develop and implement policies to address issues and challenges faced by citizens.

Methodology

In achieving the objective of this study, the qualitative method has been used to collect data. The study relied on the secondary sources of information, meaning that the study has used the information that is already existing or published. To be specific, relevant published reports and scholarly articles on political will and service delivery were reviewed through document analysis. The document analysis of published reports and scholarly articles was beneficial to this study, by aiding the researchers to find an in-depth understanding of how the lack of political will is a bearing cost to sustainable public service delivery in the Republic of South Africa.

Conceptual Framework

For a variety of reasons, the concept of political will is difficult to grasp. For starters, it incorporates intangible phenomena like as aim and motivation. It is difficult to judge accurately or objectively, and it is easily manipulated and misrepresented. Second, it can exist on both an individual and a social level. Individuals can understand political will as a personal characteristic that reflects their values, objectives, and ambitions. Further complexity is introduced by aggregating beyond the individual. Third, while political will can be communicated verbally or in writing (speeches, manifestos, legal instruments, etc.), it can only be demonstrated via action (CMI,2010). According to Phahlane (2021), political will can be described as a mixture of three factors: opinion, intensity, and salience. Political will is an actor's willingness to devote energy in the pursuit of political goals, and it is regarded as a prerequisite for engaging in political behavior (Treadway et al.,2005). According to Phahlane (2021), political will is "the commitment of political leaders and bureaucrats to undertake activities to attain a set of objectives and to endure the costs of those efforts over time".

According to Phahlane (2021), no political will is connected to an issue if it is not related to public affairs, has been politicized, and is salient to voters or leaders when making decisions. Political will is the political machine's spirit, the driving force behind political action. Building political will required the development of reliable indicators of the severity of the problem, the ongoing and proactive nurturing of national-level policymakers, the development of practical policy solutions, and the planning of attention-grabbing concentrating events. In this way, a long-standing but hidden disaster received significant attention (Shiffman,2008). Democratic governance is one of the best tools for fostering political will. Democracy enhances transparency and downward accountability systems, well-protected socioeconomic and political rights, and genuine public decision-making authority outside of the electoral process (Abdulai,2009). According CMI (2010) political will can be divided into the following components indicated in Table 1.

Table: 1

Indicators of South African Public Service Delivery: Lack of Political Will Subcategories

Components	Definition
1.Government initiative	This component addresses the motivation behind a particular policy or program selection. When the impetus for change comes entirely from outside sources, political will is called into question. To talk seriously about political will, country decision-makers must show some initiative.
2. Choice of policy/programme based on technically sound, balanced consideration and analysis of options, anticipated outcomes, and cost/benefits	When the government develops and implements policies and acts based on their own assessments of the expected advantages, alternatives and options, and costs to be incurred, one can talk honestly of independently derived preferences and willingness to act.

3. Mobilisation of stakeholders	This component addresses how government actors consult with, interact with, and mobilize stakeholders.
4. Public commitment and allocation of resources	To the extent that government decision-makers publish their policy preferences publicly and allocate resources to pursue those announced policy and program goals, these acts contribute to a favourable appraisal of political will.
5. Learning and adaptation	Political will is displayed when country actors establish a method for tracking policy/program progress and actively manage reform implementation by responding to changing circumstances. Learning can also apply to country policymakers who are watching. Policies, procedures, and programs from other countries are selectively adopted for their own purposes.

Source: Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI), 2020

Results and Discussions

Worsening State of Corruption in South Africa

South Africa has been greylisted by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) for failing to fully comply with international standards for the prevention of money laundering, terrorist funding, and proliferation financing (Investec, 2023). By the end of 2019, SA has an averaged GDP growth of 2.65% since 1994. While this looks to be a favourable trend, it is less so on a per capita basis, given the significant population expansion throughout this period (from 40 to 58 million). SA has also endured significant political and economic failures. Investor confidence in South Africa is low, corruption scandals involving government and government personnel are common, and the regulatory and legislative landscape fluctuates with hesitation and ambiguity. These difficulties have contributed to SA losing investor confidence, causing investors to look elsewhere in Africa (De Villiers et al.,2020). Although corruption is a global phenomenon, the amount of significant ongoing wrongdoing at state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and government ministries has revealed that corruption is widespread in South Africa (Van Niekerk et al.,2022).

The Phahlane (2021) study findings found that, despite a slew of legislative tools and institutions, even an institutional anticorruption framework is failing due to a lack of political will to combat corruption. The findings found that South Africa has made no progress in combating corruption. Political will has been identified as the missing link in most corrupt countries throughout the world, a garment that South Africa suits nicely. In comparison to other developing countries, South Africa's court is regarded as one of the most resourceful and efficient, particularly in Africa. Yet, the system is failing to aid in the fight against corruption in the country because no high-profile cases have been utilized to set the tone. There is still a high level of trust in the judiciary, although there have been charges that it is corrupt and has failed to

prosecute persons who have engaged in corrupt acts, particularly politicians (Maduku and Osehi, 2018). Corruption has been noted as a routine occurrence in all three branches of government in South Africa.

There are techniques available to detect corruption, abuse of power, and ensure accountability, but they are not adequately implemented. Although there has been significant progress in some areas, the issue of corruption remains at the forefront of growth and will take more effort to eradicate in order to improve the quality of people's lives (Masuku and JIli,2019). State resources are continually wasted as a result of corruption, rather than being put to beneficial use. Procurement expenses are inflated, while services or items obtained are of poor quality or are not delivered at all. The squandering of public resources that results discourages willing compliance with tax legislation. Ultimately, corruption contaminates the fabric of social connections among all South Africans by weakening mutual respect and trust, as well as dignity associated with national pride (Bruce,2019). The government must design methods to combat corruption in all spheres of government, which has a negative influence on the delivery of public services (Xolani et al.,2022).

State Capture in South Africa
The 2015 Report on State Capture by the former Public Protector Thuli Madonsela detailed how former President Jacob Zuma and other top South African government officials institutionalized corruption with the help of the Gupta family and other dishonest high government employees. The erosion of constitutional oversight institutions like the Public Protector, the Auditor-General, the National Prosecuting Authority, and the Public Service Commission as well as allegations of corporate capture of the state and corruption, including theft from state-owned enterprises (SOEs) like Transnet and Eskom, had a negative effect on public confidence (Van Niekerk et al.,2022). State capture is the most extreme kind of governmental corruption. South Africa has a history of state capture, having been swallowed by former President Jacob Zuma and the Gupta family. They have held the nation hostage in order to suit their own personal interests, and South Africa's democracy has never been attacked on this magnitude of severity before. The state capture development in South Africa has important ramifications for the consolidation of democracy since corruption systematically erodes the progress achieved to democratize (Bester and Dobovšek,2021).

The Zuma government was not just corrupt, but also committed a serious economic crime known as State capture. An economic crime that has caused and will continue to cause major social and economic problems in South Africa over the first half of the twenty-first century. If social justice is the most important goal in the world today, then the perpetrators of state capture ought to face the full force of the legal system (Klug,2019). Several experts contend that the notion of state capture has long been part of the national party's affairs but has been hidden since South Africa is not yet viewed as a failed state. This was largely due to the African National Congress (ANC) maintaining complete administrative authority, some degree of peace, and consistent public goods. Yet, the nation was disintegrating both domestically and outside. Exports and commodity prices fell, while the GDP shrank by 1.2% in the first quarter of 2016. The unemployment rate was 26.7%, and political influence was seen as a method of extracting financial advantages from the state (Madonsela,2019).

The Guptas were not alone in capturing the state. Angelo Agrizzi's testimony, as former COO of facilities management business Bosasa, shocked the nation in early 2019 with his story of bribery and influence peddling among government workers, NPA officials, and politicians. These includes monthly payments of R50,000 to former environment minister Nomvula Mokonyane. Agrizzi's testimony was heightened by his use of racist epithets in tapes in which he addressed his wrongdoings (February ,2019). South Africa's governmental tenders are concentrated in the hands of the ruling party's personnel. The municipal government provides essential funds to political players, allowing them to retain the votes of their supporters. Since 2012, businesses related to the presidential family and its associates have profited from the president's misuse of power, effectively stealing millions of dollars in tax income. The president's unscrupulous allies were involved in the change of Cabinet members and the re-staffing of law enforcement. Further evidence of corruption emerged when South Africa's ruling party favoured an expensive and foolish energy policy (Bester and Dobovšek,2021).

Lack of Consequence Management
The South African governance system is currently running under the shadow of poor consequence management, particularly, for the officials that have found guilty or unethical in performing their duties. It is becoming a normal trend that officials who misused or stole the state money are not being persecuted or hold accountable for such practises. This issue highly affects the local government, particularly the municipalities. The lack of consequence management undermines the provisions of the Constitution and other governmental financial Acts of South Africa, particularly, the Municipal Finance Management Act and Public Finance Management Act.   Besides the violation of these legislative frameworks, the ordinary citizens of South Africa become the primary victims of this financial loss, as they are waiting for the effective service delivery. The lack of consequence management give rise to mismanagement of state funds and corruption hence government officials know that they will not be prosecuted or hold accountable for their wrong practices (Bergeron, 2015). In every financial year, there are billions of rands that are being lost in government because of irregular expenditure and corruption by the in-charge officials.

According to the currently Auditor-General (AG) of South Africa, Tsakani Maluleke the issue of mismanagement of state funds continues in South African. The AG believes that there are few measures in place to compact mismanagement of funds in South Africa. Local government is the most sphere with mismanagement of funds incidents and reports. In the 2021-2022 financial year, around R119,07 billion was lost in the local government because of mismanagement practices such as irregular expenditure, fruitless expenditure, and corruption (AG, 2021). This is the huge amount of which should have been used to change the lives of many citizens within the municipal jurisdiction areas and this value have increased compared to the last audit which was R110.18-billion. The most shocking part in this financial loss, is the lack of consequence management. Municipalities that have been convicted with mismanagement of funds by the AG some do not investigate and recover the loss. According to AG, this indicates that local governments do not take enough action to recoup, deduct, approve, or justify the expense. In the 2020-2021 financial years, and overall, 51% of municipalities did not investigate irregular spending, 42% did not investigate unauthorized spending, and 41% did not look into wasteful and ineffective spending. These numbers prove the lack of consequence management in the South African governance system, which is exacerbated by lack of ethical leadership, cadre deployment and poor accountability.

Cadre Deployment
Since the freedom era, the South African governance system has been criticized. This is due to the existence and adoption of cadre deployment more especially in local government (Matyana and Mthethwa,2022; Mlambo et.,2022; Zulu et al.,2022). According to these scholars' cadre deployment promotes poor service delivery as it is associated with various managerial issues such the appointment of incompetent staff to take care of the service delivery. One can define cadre deployment as the process of which the leading party of the government appoints and employ individuals who are the party loyalists or belong to the same party. Cadre deployment discourages openness and trustworthy governance as it associated with poor accountability. The existence of cadre deployment motivates employees to avoid accountability hence they may cover each other due to comradeship relationships.

Cadre deployment does not only affect the openness in the government operations or practices but goes further and affect the effective and efficient service provision for the communities (Magagula et.,2022). The ANC government has been in power and leading the state since 1994, even though some of the provinces and municipalities have been won by other governments or other political parties such as Democratic Alliance, Inkatha Freedom Party etc. The ANC government has adopted the cadre deployment policy as their strategy to deliver services to the people. The aim of this policy is to ensure that ANC government employs or places personnel that is loyal to the party for the available positions more especially the senior ones (Mlambo et.,2022). This is also supported by Jankielsohn and Mollentze (2021), that cadre deployment simply gives the ANC government an easy chance to employ frequent factional supporters of the party. This is done through the existence of party ministers, MECs and municipal mayors who then tend to abuse their power and appoint heads of departments, senior officials and other officials who are the

loyalists to the party. Cadre deployments tend to promote favouritism in the appointment of officials and undermines the importance of separation of powers between government administration and politics (Kaizer, 2022).

Cadre deployment further results to the mismanagement of funds (Amusan,2020), as it encourages lack of proper financial management evaluation and lack of accountability. The cadre deployment model has been detrimental to governance and service delivery. This is due to the ANC's cadre deployment programme, which has filled crucial positions in local governments with inexperienced political office bearers who are more concerned with personal interests than public service performance (Thusi and Selepe, 2023). The government must acknowledge that public service delivery is vital in South Africa, a growing country where most inhabitants rely on the government. The government must employ skilled and experience employees to increase the efficiency of public service delivery, as the efficiency of the public sector is based on the efficiency of public personnel (Thusi and Chauke, 2023). Civil servants must be taught and developed to be effective and efficient in their tasks. They must always carry out tasks in a confident and effective manner, emphasising community service and boosting professionalism and wellbeing (Mlambo et al.,2022).

Lack of ethical Leadership
Effective leadership plays an integral part in enhancing service delivery. It is the fundamental path that all government officials must use or follow when they are delivering services to the people, particularly, in managing the state funds. This include both political and administrative officials. Effective leadership is one of the basic principles of public administration enshrined in Chapter 10, section 195 of the South African Constitution which serve as the backbone of effective service delivery in the republic. According to this section (195), "high standards of professionalism must be maintained and promoted in the public sector". Saha et al., (2020) state that effective leadership plays a crucial role in ensuring that organisations, not limited to government, achieve their objectives effectively. This assertion is also supported by Zaim et al., (2021), that the future of an organisation lies within its effective leadership. Ethical leadership is all about how government politicians and officials take effective and efficient decisions to respond to people's needs. In other words, they should clearly understand what moral right is or wrong. This goes further to the consideration of their conduct, behaviour, honesty, integrity, and openness when they are managing state funds.

The issue of unethical leadership in South Africa has been concerning in the recent years. Government officials both politicians and administrators has been confronted with couple of unethical leadership scandals. The lack of ethical leadership in South Africa has resulted to corruption in many state departments and municipalities (Asamoah and Yeboah-Assiamah, 2019), and there is a growing trend that service delivery continues to run under huge trust deficit due to senior government leaders who fail to be ethical in performing their duties. Government leaders are failing to be effectively accountable for their actions (Fagbadebo, 2019), and these practices reduce the citizens trust in government while also violates principles of good governance. According to Mbandlwa el., (2020), the South African leaders are causing a lot of unethical actions in service delivery including the favouritism in the provision of goods and services. People who are not connected with the leaders tend to receive services at a low pace or not receive them at all, in other words, government leaders tend to prioritise service delivery to citizens which are loyalists to them and discriminate others.

According to Woermann (2012:90), there are three main challenges that continue to give rise to unethical leadership in South Africa. Firstly, most of the government practices are still responding to the damage of the apartheid system, meaning, the public is still depending on government services to improve their welfare and due to this dependency, government leaders see the opportunity to get rich through government budgets and finances. Secondly, socio-economic issues such as poverty, high rates of unemployment, systematic and structural inequalities in the society makes it difficult to ensure ethical leadership. Thirdly, government systems to fight unethical leadership are not decisive enough to hold guilty employees accountable due to cadre deployment. The ruling part tend to protect leaders who are guilty

based on their loyalty to the party. Reddy (2016) indicates that regardless of the unethical conduct, but it must be combated to ensure effective and equal distribution of services to the citizens. This is very important hence unethical leadership affect the citizens welfare. Therefore, the South Africa government has established some mechanisms to assist to improve ethical leadership in service delivery. These include the establishment of the Public Service Commission, Batho Pele principles, National School of Government but however, the ethical leadership has not yet achieved.

The bearing cost to citizens – Poor Public Service Delivery
Good political will plays a crucial role to ensure that service delivery is improved and enhanced for the ordinary citizens. According to Masuku and Jili (2019) service delivery is one of the key methods to fight poverty, so it is very important to ensure that there is a good political will in service delivery. Poor service delivery brings some catastrophic impacts to the citizens and several scholars have indicated these impacts. Managa (2012), indicate that poor service delivery in South Africa continue to give rise to several socio-economic issues which existed as result of apartheid system. These include the widening gap between poor and rich people, high unemployment rates and the increase in the poverty levels. Managa further indicates that poor service delivery give rice to crime practices within the society.

   Masuku and Jili (2019) indicate that poor service delivery result to violent protects by the community members more especially at local government level. This assertion is also supported by Masiya et al., (2019), that the South African community continue to become impatience and violent due leaders that are not prioritising the community needs. This impatience is also caused by the unfulfilled promises by the political leaders. Lack of political will also increases the cost of living for the citizens (Hossain, 2021), given some factors. Firstly, government sometimes is forced to increase tax, so to cover the financial loss and ensure that there is enough money for service delivery. The increase of taxes automatically results to an inflation increase which then affect everyone in the state more specially the poor people. Secondly, the increase of international loans hence government may face financial deficit to finance service delivery, and these loans should be paid back with interests from the lender. This is not good hence such interests should have been used to finance some other aspects of service delivery for the citizens. Finally, the lack of political will also limits the opportunities for development and growth hence most of the available opportunities are being corrupted and at some points only benefit connected people (Mbandlwa el., 2020). This means, the ones that are not connected are continuing to live under hardship situations.

Conclusion
In conclusion, this study has evaluated the effect of lack of political will in service delivery within South Africa. Good political will in service delivery plays a crucial role to ensure better provision of services to the people and to ensure better development in the state. It also provides transformation opportunities for both communities and individual citizens. Furthermore, the political will of the state must maintain and align with ethical leadership prescribed requirements. This is important to ensure that government responds to people's needs effectively and combat different issues facing the society such as poor service delivery, poverty, high inflation rates, stubborn rising unemployment etc. The study has discovered that there are several challenges that are affecting good political will in South Africa which are not yet addressed, these include the existence of cadre deployment, worsen corruption, lack of consequence management. Government do try to address these issues given some measures that are in place such as the existence of Public Service Commission, but however they are still existing and rising due to lack of political will that is exacerbating these challenges. Therefore, it is clear and recommended that the South African political leaders must change their behaviour when they are performing the state duties, particularly, for service delivery.

Research implications
The findings of this research suggest the following:
   I.   The government in South Africa must promote ethical leadership as it can enhance political will which is essential for effective policy making and implementation.

II.   The current cadre deployment approach has caused problems in public service delivery; hence the cadres are usually individuals without skills and competencies to get the work done, and this has had a negative impact on public service delivery. The African National Congress as the leading party in South African political space and establishers of cadre deployment policy, they need to review this approach, it must be based on skills and expertise rather than political connections and profiles.

III. The government needs to ensure consequence management is executed in all spheres of the government as per Auditor General Reports and findings, and the government can ensure this by establishing a committee which will be responsible for ensuring consequence management is executed.

IV.   The government needs to review the current systems and policies that speak to countering corruption in the public sector and device new tactics to deal with corruption hence it is erupting in the presence of current implemented systems and policies.

V.   The Zondo Commission has revealed many individuals who have benefited from state capture, the government must hold these individual accountable to restore political will and accountability in the country and demonstrate that those who are found in the wrong side of law are held accountable irrespective of their political position, power, and connections.

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