Electronic government's role in combating corruption in South Africa's local governments

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Abstract

Corruption in public service framework has remained an incurable disease and is causing the delivery of inadequate services that ignite social service delivery protests. It has made social service protests to become a norm in South Africa's local government and their effects on social order and security, as well as economic growth have been given less academic attention. The study found that corruption in the form of bribery and nepotism is the leading corruption arrangements. Corruption practices were found to be prevalent because of poor effectiveness of leadership ethics, and the use of middle-persons during the delivery of basic services. The study found that the use of electonic government techniques presents potential opportuntinites in removing the use of middle-persons that entrecnh corruption in the public service framework. Electronic government system used in public service framework would enhance openness and transparency, accountability and responsiveness thus minismise cases of corruption practices and arrnagments. Electronic government was found to promote inclusivity and greater citizen participation. The study used qualitative research methodology, with secondary data sources from secondary sources.

Keywords: E-government; Public Services; Corruption; Local Governments; South Africa

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1. Introduction

The role of electronic government (e-government) platforms in combating corruption in public sector has not been acknowledged and understood in South Africa's local governments. For this reason, South Africa's local governments has been witnessed rampant corruption posing immense threats to economic growth and development thus hindering the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) vision 2030. The SDGs intends to promote the standard of public service by diminishing poverty, inequality, environmental protection as well as ensuring that all citizens have equal access to service delivery and enjoying peace and prosperity by 2030. However, these cannot happen while the monster in place is still unresolved. Corruption in the South Africa's local government has taken over and distracted the day-to-day local government functions to deliver an effective and efficient service delivery to the citizens. It has impacted on the service delivery in various ways such as bribery which includes the public officials accepting monetary resources in exchange of public resources, embezzlement of public funds, nepotism, tenderism, and cronyism and lobbying. The municipal leadership takes the blame for the corruption arrangements in the local government.

Hence this paper seeks to examine the role of e-Government in fighting corruption during service delivery in South Africa's local governments. The paper argued that e-Government is as an effective tool to overcome the corruption and its arrangements in public service delivery framework. This paper uses a qualitative approach where the secondary data was collected and analysed. A systematic review was used to analyse the secondary data and discourse analysis was used to analyse collected data from the literature review. Out of all the available types of systematic reviews, the paper adopted qualitative methodology. The paper is structured as follows. While the first section is an introduction, the second section is a research methodology. The third section is literature review. The fourth section is a discussion of the findings. The last section consists of concluding remarks of the paper.

2. Research methodology

The paper has made the use of narrative review. Narrative overview approach to research is known as an unsystematic narrative review, is a comprehensive narrative synthese of previously published information (Oxman, Cook and Guyatt, 1994). The use of the narrative review helped to condense each documents read to achieve findings that reasonated with the aim of the paper. The use of narrative review in this paper allowed the researcher to critique and examine the existing literature to understand the effects of corruption when delivering basic services. It enabled one to understand the role of e-government in reducing corruption cases and arrangement within the public service framework and deliver quality services to the citizens. Sukhera (2022) argued that that narrative reviews are useful for researchers whose aim is to explore topics that are under-researched. Greenhalgh, Thorne and Malterud (2018) argued that narrative reviews enable researchers to review complex topics that require detailed, nuanced description and interpretation.

Corruption in service delivery is an under-research topic, the narrative review helped to achieve news insights on its consequences and the benefits of using e-government framework to minimise corruption cases. Therefore, this paper used a narrative literature review to explore the role of e-government in combating corruption during service delivery in South Africa's local governments. Relevant literature, including academic articles, government reports, and case studies, was reviewed to synthesize insights and identify patterns. The

focus was on understanding how e-government tools have been implemented to address governance challenges, particularly corruption, and how these insights contribute to broader discussions on public sector transparency and accountability.

3. Literature review

The literature review in this paper discusses the service delivery, Corruption, its characteristics, and its effects on service delivery. It also discusses the corruption in South Africa's local governments, role of local governments in service delivery and E-government role in the South Africa's local government service delivery.

3.1. Service delivery

According to Campbell (2014), service delivery in the South African local governments is commonly known as the distribution of basic resources by the government to the citizens. These are basic resources which citizens rely on for their survival such as water, health, sanitation infrastructure, housing, electricity and land. Cambridge Dictionary (2023) has defined service delivery as the way a service is provided to the customers. In addition to this, Mbecke (2014:265) claimed that service delivery in South Africa is referred to as a "buzzword" that symbolizes the "Batho Pele principles which is putting the people first. To ignite public service delivery, the government is required to deliver the basic goods and services to the citizens while promoting citizens participation.

As means of facilitating service delivery in South Africa, the Batho Pele principles were developed to improve the relations between the government and citizens. However, the political dichotomy (Demir, 2007:02) which results to hidden fighting and clashes between the politicians and administrative management had impacted negatively on the local government service delivery by the by the municipalities. It seems to be an accepted condition in the South Africa local government service delivery that politics are the norm and it cannot change. The local government is the closest sphere to the citizens that has the responsibility to ensure a smooth running of service delivery to the citizens, but this seems to be a challenge because of political-administrative dichotomy (Reddy, 2016; Booysen, 2012; Ndudula, 2013).

This is the responsibility of the local government municipalities to ensure that citizens are all the time getting delivered these basic needs in order to sustain their lives. In the case of the South Africa local government this is supported by pieces of legislations and other documents such as Batho Pele principles as standards documents that guides the local government municipalities when delivering these basic needs. However, the service delivery in the reality of the South Africa local governments is not effective and efficiently due to politics which has taken over the local municipalities' role of delivering these services to the citizens. The involvement of politics in the local government service delivery has negatively affected the local government function and has led to corruption arrangements in the service delivery.

3.2. Corruption, its characteristics, and its effects on service delivery

Corruption is defined in various ways in literature by various authors. According to Legal Dictionary (2016), the term "corrupt" is used when describing something that relates to "tainted", "decayed", or "putrid". It is also

used to describe an individual who is "debased in character", "lacking in character", or "dishonest". However, on the other hand "corruption" nowadays refers to an unethical or unacceptable or dishonest behaviour by an individual who is vested with authority or power. Silal et al., (2023:01) added that the existing literature on corruption view it as a significant factor that hinders on the country's socio-economic development. Corruption destructs the smooth running of the day-to-day government functions and impacts on the service delivery to the citizens resulting in incompetencies which includes irregular expenditure and diverging the public funds (Silal et al., 2023:01). Corruption can be defined in various ways depending on the arrangement of it. It can be seen as abusive action of the public office for private benefit by the individuals in power (Manyaka and Nkuna, 2014:1573). In the local government point of view, corruption refers to the municipal officials diverging from the required standard of performance to benefit their selves instead of serving the public which they are hired to do.

Noted by the above authors, corruption in the South Africa's local governments is shown by acts of dishonesty. This is the dishonesty from the local government municipality officials who are vested with the authority to perform the functions of delivering the basic services to the citizens. The municipal officials in this case are lying to the citizens, meaning they are not fulfilling the promises of delivering the basic services to the citizens. Their actions as municipal officials, therefore, diverge from the local government's purpose which is to deliver the basic service to the local citizens. This means the government budget in improving the local economy is utilized for personal benefits instead of improving the local communities. However, this is unacceptable on the side of the citizens. Citizens become bitter towards the local government municipalities and embark themselves on the service delivery riots. Citizens embark on the service delivery riots because they feel that their right to basic service delivery is being violated. They feel that the service to which they are entitled is not delivered as they should be, and this leads to public service delivery protests which are brutal, vandalizing the local government infrastructure and leading to deaths.

The characteristics of corruption in the South Africa's local government is commonly in a form of bribery, abuse of power, embezzlement of funds as well as procurement and employment irregularities. Bribery which mostly characterizes the corruption arrangements is estimated at 28% followed by procurement irregularities estimated at 24 % (Accram, 2021). According to Manyaka and Nkuna (2014:1572) argue that unsurprisingly, corruption now as a recurrent theme is characterized by the actions of political leaders in the local communities who uses corruption as a campaigning tool in the South Africa's national and provincial to local government elections. This led to the citizens being more aware of the corruption instances in the public sector especially in the local government where the characteristic of corruption is visible.

The effects of corruption on service delivery in the South Africa local government are in various ways. The literature reveals that it undermines and weakens citizens trust towards the government (Zhang and Kim 2017), limits economic growth (World Economic Forum, 2018; Afonso, A., and de Sá Fortes Leitão Rodrigues 2021), hinders investments (Kelly et al., 2022), as well as creating political instability in a country (Shumetie and Watabaji, 2019). The corruption activities in South Africa have engulfed all the three spheres of government, and destabilized the effectiveness of the legislative, executive branch, and judicial system, in order to solve the societal problems. This means corruption needs urgent attention as it does not only affect the local government but also the national government. However, Ramaphosa (2022) emphasized that it is necessary for the government to regain citizens' trust, and that requires an action against corruption activities.

Therefore, noted from the above authors on corruption, this paper finds E-government as the most effective tool in controlling the unacceptable behaviour of government officials.

Seemingly, as noted from various sources of information, corruption has reached a maximum in the local government level. It is characterized by increasing arrangements of bribery, embezzlement of funds, abuse of power by the local government municipalities as well as procurement of irregularities in a form of tenders which are given to the relatives or friends of the municipal officials and employment irregularities. All these affects the public service delivery in the South Africa's local government because it takes away investment opportunities from overseas countries, it also impacts negatively on the economic growth of the country as well as on the local economy. Hence this paper proposes the E-government as an effective tool in addressing the corruption occurrences in the South Africa's local municipalities. E-government is seen as an effective tool in this paper because it enhances citizen participation in all forms of service delivery. Through E-government involvement in the local government municipalities' service delivery, citizens would be able to monitor the activities of the municipality officials. Through E-government, citizens would be able to monitor the local government budget.

3.3. Corruption in South Africa's local governments

Corruption in South Africa's local governments, according to Accram (2021) cited the Corruption Watch annual report on corruption trends for 2020, it has been found that most of the corruption arrangements are made by the municipal managers as from 2012 to 2020. This has been evidenced from the increase of 50% of corruption arrangements in provinces such as Eastern Cape, Kwa-Zulu Natal, Free State as well as the Western Cape. Accram (2021) further reported that 16% of the 33 000 cases of corruption are mostly taking place in the municipal managers office, local government police, metro police as well as in housing departments in the local sphere of government. This is evidenced from the community members who are aware of these corruption incidences by their leaders. However, instead of local level municipalities being more corrupt, metropolitan municipalities are the most corrupt institutions with lead of City of Johannesburg with 700 corruption reports, City of Ekurhuleni with 354 reported corruption arrangements, City of Tshwane with 325, as well as eThekwini 166 and the City of Cape Town with 125 corruption reports.

South Africa's local government is faced with plenty of challenges which result from corruption arrangements. One of the biggest challenges that is affecting the South Africa local government is the poor effectiveness of leadership ethics. However, the South Africa government has tried efforts to develop the local government through economic development efforts regardless of the existing challenges. The South Africa local government public service delivery is faced by various challenges which consists of mal-administration and corruption arrangements. Also, the apartheid government has contributed to the poor local government service delivery which caused the democratic government to struggle to improve the local government service delivery (Mbandlwa 2020:1642 cited Sebola 2015:09).

According to the South Africa Constitution of 1996, the country is founded on the democratic principles, fundamental human rights and social justice, but this is invisible in the South Africa local government. It is invisible because corruption arrangements have dominated the public sector and it has become a threat to realizing the constitutional dream. Like other countries, corruption arrangements in South Africa are not only

in local government but also in the private sector undermining democracy and human rights as well as limiting the public trust towards the government. Corruption weakens the local government mandate to deliver proper service delivery to the citizens because the funds which are meant for service delivery are diverted to the personal pockets, and this leads to poverty, injustice, inequality, and unfairness (Mubangizi 2020:01).

However, although there is corruption in the South Africa's local governments, there is a role of local government in the public service delivery. As mentioned by Thapa (2020:06) the roles of local government can be executive, legislative and judicial. The executive role of local government is the one that focuses on executing or implementing the plans and policies. The legislative role is the one that focuses on making laws and policies for the local government, for example the by-laws. Also, the legislative role which focuses on ensuring that local citizens have equal access to justice. Thapa (2020:06-07) also mentions that local government role can be political, developmental and administrative. The political role focuses on strengthening local democracy. And the developmental role ensures that local people are benefiting through economical and non-economical, promoting social harmony, improving socio-economic status for local citizens, and ensures citizens involvement in local activities. Lastly, the administrative role of local government focuses on identifying and mobilizing the financial and non-financial resources effectively and efficiently to fulfil the needs and expectations of the citizens.

Taking from the above literature on the level of corruption in local government and the role of local government in the public service delivery, one can say corruption has taken over in the local government sphere. Noted from the above it is not a recent trend, but it is rooted in the apartheid government, and it is not only in the public sector but also in the private sector. Also, it is not only in the local municipalities but in the metropolitan municipalities, and bribery has been found to be the dominant form of corruption arrangements in the local government. Hence this paper introduces the involvement of ICT tools in the local government service delivery in order to involve the citizens in the matters of the local government. Corruption arrangements in the local government has been found to be a threat to the constitutional rights. Indeed, it is a threat to the constitutional rights because it undermines and threatens the public service delivery to which the citizens are entitled to. However, the local government has a role to play in reducing corruption, but its role seems to be invisible. Therefore, the involvement of the E-government would be able to reflect a clear role of the local government and allow the citizens to monitor the functions of the local government during service delivery.

3.4. Origins of e-government

The interest in the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) was developed in the field of public administration as early as the 1950's (Scholl 2014:02). In addition to this, the growth of the ICTS has ignited the use of online or digital platforms to acquire services that better society. Furthermore, Scholl (2014:01) has combined "electronic" and "government" terms to label the electronic government. This was largely deepened on the use of the internet and web since the 1990s. This use brought about key concepts such as "electronic commerce of e-commerce", "electronic business or e-business" as well as "electronic democracy of e-democracy". Scholl (2014:1) argued that electronic terms were intended to indicate modern, novel, and the future oriented undertakings which operate using ICTs.

3.5. E-government conceptualized

The term "e-government" is defined by Solinthone and Rumyantseva (2016:02) as referring to the utilisation of information and communication technologies (ICTs) by the South African municipalities to allow the free flow of public service information and to get rid of the physical-based and traditional paper-based systems. In local government, e-government refers to the involvement of technology in the public services to improve public services to benefit the citizens, businesses, and other relevant stakeholders. Additionally, Kettani and Moulin (2014:45) noted that e-government as the local government procedure of shifting from how governments operate, communicate public service information, and provide services to both internal and external clients. Kettani and Moulin (2014:46) further noted that, e-government transforms local government system of service delivery from paper-based dealings to digital-based as well as promoting transparency during service delivery.

Conceptualising e-government, one can say that it includes the use of digital technologies in the process of delivering basic services to the citizens. This means that e-government in its operations involves the use of digital technologies such as ICTs, the use of gadgets such as mobile phones and computers etc. In the case of South Africa's local municipalities, there has been slow use of digital technologies which makes difficult for the use of e-government in service delivery. As e-government system promotes transparency, the slow use of digital technologies has intensified corruption cases in local municipalities (Niyitunga, 2024). Nkasha and Niyitunga (2025) stated that there is a slow pace in local municipalities to shift from a paper-based system to an online platform when communicating and delivering the services to citizens. The use of e-government in public services to enhance transparency and promote the delivery of adequate services depends on the awareness on technological skills for both municipal officials and citizens (Niyitunga, 2024).

3.6. E-government in South Africa's local governments

In this paper, e-government has been conceptualised as the use of ICTs to enhance transparency, promote free flow of information and transform public service framework by digitizing every process of service delivery. This means that e-government promtes the shift from old model of physical contact which is known as traditional paper- based system to a digitised system. However, it has been conceptualised that e-government depends on the use of ICTs to boost and improve service delivery process in local municipalities. Rarhoui (2024) argued that e-government involves the use of ICTs such as Wide Area Networks, the Internet, and mobile computing by the government agencies.

These are digital technologies that have the potentials to transform relations between service providers and receivers, transform businesses, and numerous arms of government used in service delivery (Rarhoui, 2024). E-government thus means a system that aims at digitalising existing paper-based system used in delivering basic services to the citizens. It leads to the new ways of leadership, new system of strategic decisions, new ways of transactions, and as well as new ways of information sharing (Solinthone and Rumyantseva 2016:01). Since the growth of digital technologies, world governments have been urged to adopt e-government during service delivery. Alshehri and Drew (2010:79) have argued that numerous countries have made e-government system an effective tool in saving time, reducing costs of services and services improvement and time saving.

In the South Africa's local government, e-government is commonly known as electronic government, which is a systematic process or procedure of digitally connecting the local government and citizens. This means that every citizen can have access to local government information and other non-government information and services anytime. So, each people can access information and services offered by the local municipalities every time and everywhere. Theoretically, e-government is a well-suited and consistent factor when discussing corruption as the determining factor in the public service and is seen as an effective tool of reducing corruption in the public service as compared to the traditional anti-corruption methods.

Although some scholars (Basyal et al., 2018; Sheryazdanova and Butterfield, 2017) view e-government as not having extensive power in reducing corruption. It may be seen as a new channel that brings new opportunities for corruption during public service delivery. This means that the gap between the e-government users, who are the government officials in this case, and the citizens could result in more corrupt behaviour or even more aggressive citizens. This gap on the understanding and use of e-government between the government officials and the citizens is seen as source of corruption and failure of e-government. Nevertheless, on a theoretical perspective, e-government is an indication of the use of ICTs to address corruption during the public service delivery (Rustiarini, 2019:269).

Butana and Niyitunga (2024) stated that the role of e-government in service delivery is crucial because it promotes and strengthens transparency and openness. Transparency is a key pillar in local municipalities because it it promotes issues of trust, honesty, openness, and accountability between service providers and receivers. It has been noted that transparency in the delivery of public service gives open venues for municipal officilas gather information and share it with citizens (Butana and Niyitunga, 2024:560). Transparency as one of the features of e-government, creates a platform for citizens to hold their municipal officials accountable (Maropo, 2014:58). One can see the e-government system enhances the possibilities of achieving transparency needed in the delivery of adequate services. Butana and Niyitunga (2024) stated that the use of e-government promotes transparency which in turn improve the delivery of adequate services (Butana and Niyitunga, 2024:560).

Noted from the above, e-government has the potential to allow the citizens to access the local government information from anywhere in South Africa. This means there would be no reason for physical contact between the local government municipalities and the citizens because all the services will be delivered through an online platform. In the local government, e-government implementation can save time for travelling to the municipal offices for service delivery inquiries, it also costless to both the municipality and the citizens. e-government in the local government can improve the relations between the municipality and the citizens. E-government can address the corruption arrangements during service delivery in the local government because all the relevant stakeholders does have access to view the service delivery transactions.

4. Discussion of the findings

First finding showed that there is political-administration dichotomy, the politics have dominated the local government administration. According to the findings in Bradshaw and Breakfast (2019:124-125), the South Africa local government has been experiencing a dominance of party politics since the apartheid era of the National Party, and in the dawn of democracy the African National Congress has been the one party governing with its own constituency. This shows clear that there has been a ruling of one political party (ANC) in the

legislative councils since the dawn of democracy in South Africa which had little recognition and compromise. However, since the 2016 local government elections in South Africa the clear dominance of ANC had decreased, and this has given many citizens a hope that soon the dominance of one party in the local government will be a thing of the past.

In agreement with the above finding, de Visser (2010:86) argues that South Africa's local government is really struggling with the interface between politicians and municipal officials which appears to be the order of the day in local government. However, this challenge of domination of politics in the municipal administration is blamed from the lack of separation of powers between the executive and legislative authority at the local level. The South Africa's local government should therefore be aware of the inappropriate leadership which resulted from this lack of separation of powers between the executive and legislative powers. De Visser (2010:87) further argues that the role of local government in South Africa is constitutionalized and the provincial government is mandated with supervision duty of the local municipalities although its supervision duty seems to be invisible, and municipal councils are democratically elected to represent the citizens. However, as noted the South Africa's local government seem to be dominated by the ANC which has a control over a huge number of municipalities.

This paper has found that politics in the local government has taken over the administrative duties of the municipality. Based on the literature, this is a challenge that is rooted from the apartheid government where the National Party was dominating the local government affairs. This remained a challenge even in the dawn of democracy in the South Africa's local government because of the ANC that is controlling a large share of local government municipalities in South Africa, and it has little recognition for the local citizens. Also, the lack of separation of powers between the legislative and executive authorities contributes to more of a challenge in the South Africa's local government. Therefore, involvement of the E-government system in the local government matters would be a remedy to ensure a clear role of the politicians as citizen representatives and municipal officials as service delivery agents.

Second finding showed bribery has been found to be the leading corruption arrangement in the South Africa's local government as largely in metro police officers. The findings in Mabeba (2021:164) cited Raophala (2013) reveal that corruption in the South Africa's local government recently became a predictable concern for the local citizens, scholars, opposition parties and even the ruling party (ANC). This is resulted from the recurring reports of corruption arrangements by the media space regarding the South Africa's local government municipalities. The corruption arrangements which are referred to as unethical behavior affect and distort the meaning of service delivery (water, housing, electricity and waste removal) to the citizens.

Corruption has become a torturing issue in the South Africa's local government. As further argued, Mabeba (2021:165) bribery related arrangements become visible whereby the municipal officials are selling the public resources in order to fulfil personal welfare. Bribes are being collected by the municipal officials from prospective service providers, whom they called tenderprenuers, to get tenders and favors. della Porta and Vannucci (2012) and Mabeba (2021:165) disagreed with the bribery term and argues that corruption arrangements take place in a form of nepotism, favoritism, clientelism, maladministration, fraud and vote-buying. As a result of these activities, the ability of the South Africa's local government to deliver service delivery in an effective and efficient manner becomes weakened. However, local or ordinary citizens have also partaken in the corruption practices in the local governments. This has complicated the delivery of adequate and quality services to the citizens thus triggering social protests.

Noted from the above finding corruption arrangements in the South Africa's local government affects service delivery in many ways. This is resulted from the government employed officials who acts unethical by accepting bribes from the local citizens. For example, the metropolitan police are employed to ensure that traffic policing and local bylaws are implemented effectively and liaise with the South African Police Service to maintain public order prevent all forms of crime by the South Africa's residents as well as foreigners in South Africa. However, instead of doing that, the Metro police officers are accepting monetary bribes from the offenders. As s witnessed by the researcher, this is common in public transport drivers who drive without license knowingly that they will bribe the Metro police in a form of "cold drink". Also, the municipal officials are the perpetrators of bribery by accepting bribes from service providers in exchange of public tenders. Citizens also should not be left behind because they are the ones pushing the government employees to accept bribes from the citizens.

The third finding showed that one of the biggest challenges that is affecting the South Africa's local government is the poor effectiveness of leadership ethics. Leadership ethics is defined by Ciulla et al. (2017: xxi-xxii) as the study of ethical challenges which characterize and are inherent to the procedure and method, practice and result of leading and following. It is referred to as the study that relates to ethical issues when performing effective leadership, the moral leadership between the leaders and followers, as well as issues relating to personal or psychological problems of being an ethical leader or a follower. Leadership ethics intends to gain an understanding of good and bad leaders as well as good or bad followers. Leadership ethics examines success and failure as well as the struggles facing the weak individuals who are leading, or desire to lead, or follow. Ciulla et al. (2017: xxi) further argues that leaders have relations with followers and are recognized by the followers either by choice or institutional design and their relations have real consequences which affects the wellbeing of others. Also, as a leader, it is necessary to bear responsibility, duty and care for the followers.

Noted from the above findings, effective leadership ethics requires leaders who takes responsibility for followers. This therefore would make local municipal managers and councilors or ward councilors are the true reflection of the leaders at local government level who must always show the effectiveness of leadership ethics. Therefore, municipal councilors and ward councilors are the leaders by choice because they are voted for and elected through citizens choice, but municipal mangers are the institutional design leaders who are employed through their qualifications, and who must always represent the citizens and practice leadership ethics when performing the duties. However, in the case of South Africa's local government this is contradictory because this paper has found that the municipal managers are the main perpetrators of corruption arrangements in the local government. Also, the municipal councilors and ward councilors, who should be representing their citizens in their wards, are involved in corruption arrangements for personal benefits. This clearly shows a lack of effective leadership ethics in the South Africa's local government, thus e-government involvement can be an effective tool to address this problem, because their actions will be closely monitored by the citizens.

The fourth finding showed that the use of e-Government techniques enhances transparency, accountability and responsiveness thus addressing corruption and preventing its future occurrences in public services. Halachmi and Greiling (2013), governmental transparency can be increased through the extensive utilization of information and communications technology and e-government during the public service and corruption is likely to be addressed. Governmental transparency, may in turn, invite citizen participation, likely to adopt e-

governance, as well as facilitating the e-democracy. Nevertheless, ahead of a certain point, even though there is more government openness in the public service, this may be dysfunctional if it limits operational capacity.

Additionally, African Union Development Agency (2022), states that e-government procedures involvement during service delivery can reduce corruption occurrences, replace the in-effective paper-based filing systems, and reduce the cost of government spending on public services. In the long run, the e-government procedures and processes are cost-effective as well as environmentally friendly. When transparency and reorganization is realized during service delivery, this alternatively increases citizen participation. As argued by Mensah (2020), e-government as the utilization of ICT tools in the government public service administration to ensure improvement of access and delivery to the public services, it fosters transparency and improves interaction between the government and its citizens. According to Zou et al. (2023:02), e-government can promote accountability and responsiveness in the South Africa's local governments during service delivery through the development of new opportunities for government transformation and universal governance and ensures that public service delivery information is delivered to relevant stakeholders with greater quality as well as improving the relationships in-between social actors.

The paper argued that e-government is an effective tool improve the local government service delivery and addressing corruption. It makes public services accessible to every citizen, provided the citizen has access to internet connections. The local government officials need to establish robust infrastructure for the internet to enable more citizens to connect to it and request for services. The paper showed that e-Government promotes regard transparency, accountability and responsiveness that enhances the possibility to provide quality and standardised services to citizens.

Taking from the above finding, e-Government can promote transparency, accountability and responsiveness during service delivery in the South Africa's local government while addressing the corruption arrangements as well as preventing its future occurrences. This means e-government in the South Africa's local government service delivery involves the utilization of ICT tools which brings the citizens and the local government as well as relevant stakeholders together to find solutions to the service delivery challenges at the local level. It promotes accountability because it allows the local government municipalities, through an online platform, to reflect its functions to the citizens. Through the online platform in delivering the public services, the local government can be responsive to the citizens needs because citizens are inquiries are received and attended to immediately.

Fifth finding showed that e-government enables the citizens to gather information about various government departments and promotes inclusiveness. This means local citizens through the involvement of e-government in the public services can be able to collect public service information about different government departments. E-government is a system that always makes the information available and accessible to the citizens at low-cost and. Thus, easily accessibility of the public service information can give the local citizens to make choices about their preferred services. Also, e-government can promote citizens inclusiveness during service delivery. However, according to the Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington (MRSC) (2023) inclusiveness in the local government is in various ways which consists of fundamentals such as combating criticism, assisting citizens to thrive by promoting civility, welcoming and rejoicing diversity.

It limits all forms of violence, promoting citizens participation in local government activities, sponsoring harmless and reasonably priced housing, citizens awareness of human rights commissions (MRSC, 2023). It also gives citizens awareness of opportunities and limitations and striving towards a more sustainable

community for all citizens (MRSC, 2023). One can thus affirm that e-government used in service delivery framework enables service providers and receivers to gather information about various service. It also promotes inclusiveness that enahnces the possibility of delivering quality services. Niyitunga (2021) agreed that the application of e-government in the delivery of public services is crucial because it binds service receivers and providers together to understand the available services. Niyitunga (2024) further argued that using e-government in service delivery frameworks smoothens the way in which the services are rendered to the citizens.

Sixth finding showed that e-government ensures greater citizen participation at various government levels, and enables municipal officials work with citizens in service delivery. According to da Anunciação, Garcia and Fonseca (2020:161) argued greater citizen participation is possible because e-government makes the provision of the public services, not only to be cheaper, but to be more effective because of leverage on the power of internet. Also, e-government affords and offers the public services to support citizen involvement because it makes the public services to be more accessible to the citizens even outside government buildings. Again, da Anunciação, et al. (2020:163) mentions some benefits that support citizens involvement in consultation and in public service decision making processes. The benefits of e-government are, firstly, limited corruption and increased transparency. This is resulted from the stronger institutional capacity provided by the e-government as well as enablement of the government services to become more easily accessible. This ensures limited occurrences of corruption and increased citizen involvement in decision making. Secondly, e-government promotes government customer relations using ICT tools to customize and personalize the public services. Thirdly, limiting the digital divide through provision of citizens access to new technologies and proving computer literacy educational programmes. Lastly integrated public services can be provided by the government.

Tedejo-Romero et al., (2022:01) support the above finding that government is more and more relying on ICTs tools by means of engaging with citizens. Through the ICTs tools and internet use, the local governments in South Africa got the opportunity to advance its initiatives for citizens involvement in decision making processes and allows the citizens to influence the local government policies. E-government is seen as a powerful tool for dissemination of public information and for the usage of local government interactive communication with its citizens with the intention of sharing values and opinions between the actors involved in the public policy participatory processes with municipalities. Both citizens and local government play a role in enhancing municipal transparency and stimulating local democracy through launching a new space for political interaction and participation. Therefore, noted from da Anunciação, et al. (2020:163) and Tedejo-Romero et al. (2022:01) on the above views, e-government remains the best tool in local municipalities because it promotes greater citizen participation and decision making. It also offers citizens an opportunity to influence decisions that concerns public services.

The sixth finding showed that e-government used in service delivery boosts citizen empowerment, improves management, and strengthens governance for public services. Empowerment, according to Perkins (2010:207), refers to a deliberate continuous process focused in the local community which involves mutual respect, serious reflection, caring and collective involvement, by means of providing greater access to as well as control of resources for the citizens who have limited share of valued environment, a procedure where the citizens have control over their lives, gain serious understanding of their environment, and democratic involvement in their community matters. This is not an individual process, but a collective one. Additionally,

Muridzi (2019: ii) claimed that through the utilization of ICTs tools in the local government public service delivery.

E-government can improve information and service delivery, improves citizen empowerment by ensuring their participation in the public service decision-making process, ensuring the local government accountability as well as being transparent and effective towards the public. Ntulo and Onike (2015:05) agreed with the above that e-government is considered as great in simplifying the process of accumulation of public services information for government, citizens and businesses. E-government enables the citizens gather information about various government departments and allow the citizens to be involved in the government decision making processes.

Indeed, e-government involvement in the local government service delivery boosts citizens empowerment, improves the local government administration management and governance. Involving technology can help reduce the corruption arrangements by the municipal officials in the South Africa's local government. The involvement of technological processes in the local government service delivery can raise mutual respect and trust between the municipality and the citizens because they will both monitor each other's actions.

5. Conclusion

Corruption and its arrangements in the delivery of public services in South Africa's local government present major setbacks towards delivering services that would promote the possibility of achieving sustainable development. The paper found that corruption practices have become intractable and are causing the delivery of inadequate services that have ignited the prevalence of service delivery protests. The prevalence of rampant corruption in South Africa's local municipality have become a norm, and triggered social protests thus posing threats to social order and security. These protests do also threaten economic growth as well as sustainable development. The paper recommends that South African national government needs to establish robust internet infrastructure and as well as establishing centres for ICTs trainings. These trainings would equip both municipal officials and citizens ICTs skills needed to deliver and/or request services. Both national, provincial and local governments should make e-government a compulsory in all service delivery endeavours to promote transparency, accountability and responsiveness needed to reduce corruption and preventing its future occurrences in public services. There should special allocation of funds that facilitate the use of e-government in local municipalities. National government should encourage citizens and its officials to take advantage of the benefits presented by e-Government when applied to public service delivery. Therefore, e-government could serve as an effective tool in reducing corruption during service delivery in South Africa. It is not only an effective tool in South Africa, but worldwide public services.

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