

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT (KM) AS A VIABLE SOLUTION TO PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

The object of research: The study revolves around KM and service delivery. It ascertains whether KM is a plausible solution to public service delivery challenges. Although the paper is aimed at governments worldwide, it is focusing on South Africa.

Investigated problem: While the public service in South Africa has been significantly transformed since apartheid's end in 1994, the government is now under enormous pressure to deliver and save the public service from further collapse. Recent years have seen an increase in service delivery demonstrations and marches. Many believe the public service delivery mechanisms introduced to circumvent public service delivery challenges have been ineffective.

The main scientific results: Despite knowing what must be done, officials have trouble putting their plans, strategies, and policies into action. This is even though service delivery mechanisms were implemented to help them improve service delivery. In fact, only half of the respondents (50.7 %, $n=33$) were aware of service delivery mechanisms, though 95.4 % ($n=62$) concurred that KM is a viable solution to improve service delivery. **Area of practical use of the research results:** Very little research has been conducted on KM as a potential solution to South Africa's service delivery problems. As a result, this research provides new insights into improving public sector service delivery using KM. Overall, the findings will benefit KM and Public Administration practitioners.

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1. Introduction

1.1. The object of research

KM's role in public service delivery challenges needs to be examined and new insights are needed to determine if KM is a plausible solution to public service delivery challenges i.e., if KM addresses the public officials' lack of implementation skills by closing their 'knowing' and 'doing' gap, improving service delivery.

Although the paper is intended for governments throughout the world, the South African government is the case study. Consequently, the following research questions will be addressed:

- 1) How effective are the South African government's current service delivery frameworks and mechanisms?
- 2) How suitable is KM as a service delivery option for improving public service delivery in South Africa?

1.2. Problem description

While the significant transformation of the South African public service following the end of apartheid in 1994 was a considerable accomplishment, the South African government is now under intense pressure to deliver and save the public service from further decline [1]. In his State of the Nation Address, South Africa's President, Cyril Ramaphosa, promised that his administration would strive relentlessly to remedy this problem resulting from weak governance because of public officials' lack of implementation skills. "Address this and you address most of South Africa's problems," he said [2, 3].

When the new government of South Africa took office in 1994, there was a unique mandate to promote the transformation of the public service as well as provide all citizens of the country

with adequate services. However, the public service was not citizen-focused at the time and the government needed to be reformed and transformed [4]. To achieve this, the South African government produced a substantial body of enabling legislation known as the Regulatory Framework. Several management functions support this framework, including strategic planning, human resources planning, service improvement planning, financial planning, performance management, compensation management, and so on, which are all intended to transform the South African government from a hierarchical, rule-bound structure to a dynamic, results-oriented one [5].

A guiding framework called the Service Delivery Improvement Plan (SDIP) is linked to this. The SDIP is designed to provide quality services to all South Africans. It is used to identify areas that need improvement within the government, and its main aim is to reduce the space between public officials 'knowing' and 'doing'. Public officials are good at developing plans, programmes, and strategies but not so adept at putting them into action [5].

Overall, while the public service in South Africa has been significantly transformed since apartheid's end in 1994, the government is now under enormous pressure to deliver and save the public service from further collapse. Recent years have seen an increase in service delivery demonstrations and marches. Many believe the service delivery mechanisms introduced to circumvent service delivery challenges have been ineffective [2, 3, 6–8].

1. 3. Suggested solution to the problem

The suggested solution to the research problem is to determine if KM is a plausible solution to public service delivery challenges. In our view, KM addresses public officials' lack of implementation skills by closing their 'knowing' and 'doing' gap, improving service delivery.

2. Literature review

2. 1. Service delivery in South Africa

Before examining why and how the South African government is responsible for providing services to all South Africans, let's first describe service delivery. Providing essential services, such as housing, water, electricity, education, medical, safety, infrastructure, and so forth, is what public sector service delivery must do. When, what, how, and where a service is delivered to South Africans, as well as whether it is fair, is the basic definition and foundation of service delivery. Providing products and services to all South Africans is another way to understand service delivery. Since South Africans pay taxes, they feel entitled to such services which they expect must be rapid, accessible, high-quality, and inexpensive. Due to this, the South African government strives to meet this standard, but at most times fails [9, 10]. Living up to this ideal is not easy and not always possible. For example, the provision and continual maintenance of such basic and essential services have been inconsistent and uneven at times, substantially inconveniencing people and endangering them [9, 11, 12].

In South Africa, most people lack access to safe drinking water. In South Africa, 14 % of the population lives in informal settlements. There is increasing demand for electricity, but Eskom cannot meet that demand consistently, resulting in energy and demand management methods known as load shedding [13]. Most of the country's 278 municipalities face financial difficulty, 14 % cannot provide basic services, 37 % have adopted budgets they cannot repay, and 57 cannot account for their 2020 spending [14].

These are just a few severe issues South Africa faces regarding service delivery. As a result of the government's failure to address service delivery, demonstrations seeking better, and more services have skyrocketed in recent years [15]. South Africa has come to be associated with the term "service delivery protest" [16–18].

2. 2. Service delivery mechanisms

According to President Cyril Ramaphosa, most, if not all South Africa's service delivery problems stem from weak governance due to a lack of implementation skills [2, 3, 6]. Consequently, the most difficult challenge in the South African government is getting its employees to move beyond just 'knowing' but to 'doing.' In reality, public officials responsible for service delivery are good at developing plans, programmes, and strategies to address service delivery but are not

adept at putting them into action [5, 19, 20]. This difficulty resulted due to a lack of mentorship and coaching. For example, experienced individuals left the country when the South African government rightfully transitioned from the National Party government in 1994, which had dominated the country since 1948 and had championed the apartheid system for most of its history. This was known as the ‘brain drain’ [21].

Service delivery improvement plans (SDIP) were developed to resolve this issue. These plans supported the already-established Batho Pele Initiative, Public Service Charters, and Service Standards that the new government had already rolled out. These plans aimed to ensure all citizens of the country were provided with adequate services, not just a select few. This included being served without discrimination [5].

When considered collectively, the researcher refers to the four service delivery aspects as service delivery mechanisms [22]. These mechanisms are discussed below.

2. 3. Service delivery improvement plans

The South African government discovered that getting public officials from ‘knowing’ to ‘doing’ was one of the most difficult challenges [5, 19], meaning that public officials lacked implementation skills. To address this, SDIPs were developed [5]. The SDIP seeks to enhance the government’s service delivery standards as well as the way the government provides services [5].

It must be noted that SDIPs are not ‘add-ons’ to a strategic planning process but a component of the comprehensive planning process that aims to embed the ethos and ideals expressed in Batho Pele’s eight principles [5]. Today, both the National and Provincial Government departments of South Africa are required to define and implement SDIPs per the Public Service Regulations of 2001 [5]. How SDIPs must be implemented in government departments is depicted in Fig. 1 below [23].

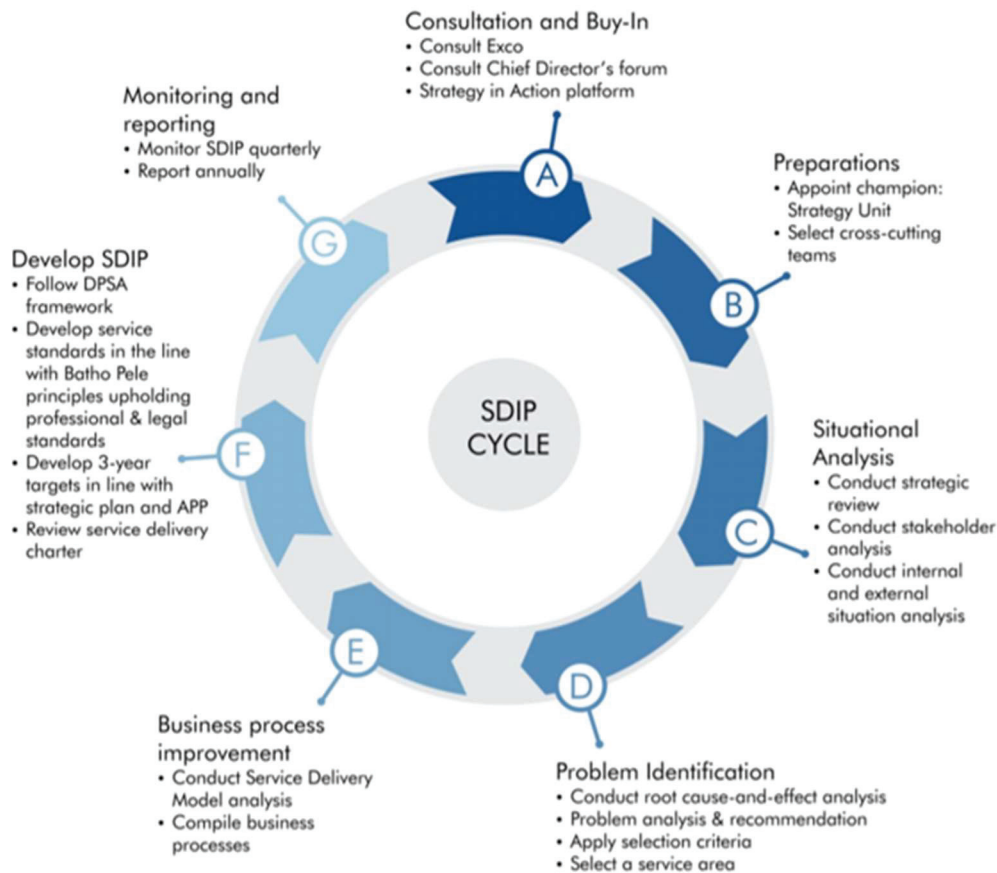


Fig. 1. Service delivery improvement plan framework
Source: Statistics South Africa (2018:4) [23]

2. 4. Batho Pele Initiative

The Batho Pele initiative was initiated by the Mandela administration on October 1, 1997, with the release of the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (Batho Pele) 1997. Batho Pele is a strategy that was established to encourage public officials to become more service and citizen-centric, as well as to continue to strive for service delivery excellence and improvement. Batho Pele Initiative is a simple, transparent mechanism that allows people to keep elected officials accountable for their services [5]. Batho Pele means “People First” in Sotho-Tswana and refers to eight principles: consultation, standards, redress, access, courtesy, information, openness, and transparency, as well as value for money. To attain these values, every government department in South Africa must adhere to them [24]:

- consultation – citizens should be consulted on the extent and quality of public service they will get and should be given a choice of services wherever possible;
- standards – citizens should be informed about the extent and quality of public services that they will receive so that they are aware of what to expect;
- access – citizens must have fair access to the services to which they are entitled;
- courtesy – citizens should be managed with respect and courtesy;
- information – citizens should be provided with complete and correct information about the public services to which they are entitled;
- openness and transparency – citizens should be informed of how national and provincial departments operate, as well as how much they cost and who is in charge;
- redress – citizens should be given an apology, a complete explanation, and a quick and successful solution if the promised level of service is not met. they must also receive a compassionate and constructive response when they file complaints;
- value for money – public services should be delivered economically and productively to provide people with the greatest possible value for money.

According to the DPSA, Batho Pele is not a strategy in the sense that there are strategic, organizational, implementation and human resource plans but rather an outlook that will help transform government [5]. Consequently, Batho Pele is not a yearly compliance exercise but the government’s single most important transformation campaign that must be incorporated into all management processes and distributed to the front lines of government delivery [5].

Although Batho Pele has since become a well-known brand name representing the goal of transforming government, its execution has been disappointing, according to the DPSA [5]. Hence, the Batho Pele Revitalization Strategy was developed in 2001 and circulated to the government departments for implementation.

The Batho Pele Revitalization Strategy’s primary goal is to install Batho Pele culture in government employees while also improving the delivery of public services to the public, unlike the initial Batho Pele initiative [5].

2. 5. Public service charter

Public service charters have become a standard tool in many countries’ Public Administration reform toolkits in recent years. Although the reasons for adopting public service charters differ by country, the central idea of all is nonetheless to improve the responsiveness and transparency of public services by defining the delivery requirements that users of the services may expect [25].

Public service charters are defined as a social contract and a commitment between the government, public employees, and the public. It is a written and signed contract based on a social partnership and spells out the duties and obligations of all parties involved in improving the delivery of government services. It is a declaration of intent and a promise that allows service recipients to recognize what they should expect from the government and serves as the foundation for interaction between the government, people, and civil society [26].

South Africa’s Public Service Charter was created in South Africa in 2013 to promote and improve the delivery of public services i.e., to transform the South African government. The service charter imposes service standards, and public officials are expected to meet and surpass them. According to the Public Service Charter [26], public officials must provide timely services to the public in an unbiased and impartial way, and they must not engage in any transaction that interferes

with their official duties, among other things. It also urges public officials to show integrity, competency, excellence, honesty, and impartiality and to act against bribery and corruption, nepotism, maladministration, and other actions that might damage or adversely affect the public interest [26].

2. 6. Service standards

The introduction of service standards assists the South African government in evaluating how well they accomplish their transformation agenda [22]. A service standard is a type of indicator, a metric, signal, or benchmark that shows the present state or the level of accomplishment and tells us how far we have progressed [27]. Overall, without service standards, for the South African government to determine if its transformational efforts are successful and consistent would be difficult [22]. Today service standards are used to assess how well government departments provide services [27]. Hence, service standards are critical because they clarify what citizens should expect and remind the government of its responsibilities [22].

The challenge of delivering quality service remains despite these mechanisms. In South Africa, service delivery protests are more frequent than ever. In the last decade, protesters have increasingly demanded better services. The term “service delivery protest” has become synonymous with South Africa [28, 29].

Based on Wiig’s, cited by Ondari-Okemwa and Smith’s interpretation of KM, the South African government may be able to provide a better level of service through KM [11, 30].

2. 7. Current issues with existing service delivery mechanisms

The South African government has made significant and positive strides in improving the lives of the people in South Africa, but they still face substantial challenges in terms of service delivery [31]. A presentation by the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) to the Portfolio Committee on 18 February 2015 explained why the existing service delivery mechanisms i.e., SDIPs, Service Charters, and Service Standards, cannot combat government departments’ poor performance. As per DPSA, these service delivery mechanisms are submitted and completed by departments for monitoring and evaluation purposes are done for compliance purposes and are of poor quality. It is often completed without considering how it will impact and improve service delivery.

The service delivery mechanism, particularly SDIPs, is not aligned with the department’s strategic and operational plans. The reason is it was established that departments are finding it very difficult, challenging, and tedious to develop their SDIPs when they are still trying to understand and get to grips with their mandate and operations [32]. These service delivery mechanisms are supposed to be the department’s strategic tools to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery and reduce the space between public officials’ knowing and doing. Yet, its location and alignment with the planning and budget cycle of government remain a severe challenge.

Moreover, the service delivery mechanism particularly the SDIPs are developed in such a way by one person and in some areas, meaning that it is not an all-inclusive approach. This then compromises ownership, buy-in, monitoring and reporting, implementation, as well as overall progress made [31]. According to Thomassen et al., the service delivery mechanisms i.e., service charters and standards, will have little or no impact on improving service delivery if it is poorly implemented [33].

2. 8. Knowledge management (KM)

To characterize KM, Tom Davenport invented the phrase “capture, distribute, and use knowledge” in 1994 [34]. It was not until years later that Gartner developed the concept of KM that is still widely used today: “KM is a collection of methodologies that involve identifying, capturing, evaluating, retrieving and sharing all of an enterprise’s information assets” [35]. Papers, processes, plans, databases, and uncaptured employee experiences and expertise is examples of information assets. There is no commonly recognized definition of KM due to its broad and complicated nature [35–37]. The importance of delivering the proper knowledge to the right person at the right time cannot be overstated. Aside from that, it is crucial to realize that KM is not just about accumulating knowledge. KM aims to meet organizational goals by delivering value to an organiza-

tion [38]. In stark contrast to all other business fads of the late 20th Century, KM has demonstrated a remarkable capacity for longevity and expansion [35].

There has been increasing recognition that KM has a critical role to play in the success of the private sector [39–43]. President Kim Yong Kim of the World Bank stated in a speech that the foundation of successful service delivery is the tacit knowledge of implementers, referring to KM as the bold action to address global service delivery challenges [44].

In today's knowledge-based economy, organizations' competitiveness is determined by their employees' knowledge and skill, as opposed to conventional production qualities [45]. Hence, the value of knowledge exceeds that of labour, property, and financial wealth. When done right, KM has the potential to make the employee, team, and organization more efficient and give it a competitive advantage over its competitors [45], namely:

- employee: KM helps employees do their jobs well. It helps them make good decisions, solve problems, foster a feeling of community inside the organization and keep current on procedures and technology. It also encourages employees to improve their work techniques and gives opportunities for employees to participate more effectively;
- team: KM promotes peer mentoring, more effective networking and collaboration, a code of ethics, common language development; and
- organization: KM helps to drive strategic direction, solve problems rapidly, communicate best practices, enhance knowledge contained in goods and services, generate ideas, raise innovation possibilities, establish a competitive advantage, and build memory for the organization.

2. 9. Impact of KM on service delivery

According to Reddy, “service delivery” is a common term for describing the provision of critical public necessities, such as housing, water and sanitation, land, electricity, and infrastructure, as well as the provision of fundamental public infrastructure [46]. Therefore, the government's ability to provide services to its constituents is essential to maintaining good relations with them. Citizens believe that because they pay taxes [9], they have a right to fast, accessible, excellent quality, and affordable services wrapped in friendly treatment from their government [12]. As a result, the government strives to live up to this ideal [11]. But, living up to this ideal is not always the case. The supply and continuous upkeep of these essential services in South Africa have shown to be inconsistent at times, significantly inconveniencing and threatening people. Consequently, in recent years, there has been a rise in service delivery protests or marches demanding better service delivery [46].

It is argued by Wiig, as quoted by Ondari-Okemwa and Smith, that KM can assist countries, such as South Africa, in providing better service delivery [11, 30] as follows:

- it reduces time, money, and resource wastage within the public sector by enabling informed decision-making [11, 35];
- aids citizens in effectively engaging in public decision-making;
- improves the intellectual competitiveness of society;
- develops a competitive knowledge-based workforce.

Some scholars, such as those mentioned below, believe that KM would improve service delivery, namely:

- increases the ability of organizations to operate smarter [30];
- allows businesses to “do more with less” [30];
- addresses the lack of skills [12];
- encourages individuals to improve and innovate [12];
- allows organizations to operate more quickly and efficiently [36];
- prevents duplication [47];
- does away with mistakes or malpractice [47];
- improves work methods and procedures [47];
- reduces reliance on consultants [47].

As Zamir and Paprika point out, KM directly influences service delivery in several ways [48, 49]. These include employee learning and agility, job performance, process effectiveness, and process efficiency. KM also influences the development of knowledge-based solutions

that offer value [48, 49]. Additionally, Heck and Rogger argue that KM is beneficial to the government in both the short- and long-term when it is appropriately implemented [11, 50]:

- improves efficiency, transparency, and service delivery;
- improves information flow;
- tasks are divided more fairly and equally;
- better organized internal business operations;
- operational efficiency through technology;
- improved skills.

3. Materials and methods

A basic literature review on service delivery and KM was conducted to understand the topic at hand thoroughly. The author used the Research Onion of Saunders et al. to construct the research methodology [51]. The aim was to guarantee that when the research objective was addressed, it was judged valid, credible, and factually accurate [52, 53].

Using the several layers of the Saunders Research Onion, the author chose the following:

- research philosophy. Interpretivism was selected because this paper relates to the social reality in which we exist, which consists of various interpretations, meanings, and realities [51];
- approach to theory development. This paper was premised on the notion that little is known about how KM can reduce the space between ‘knowing’ to ‘doing’ and, in turn, improve service delivery in South Africa. As a result, to develop new theories and insights while also addressing the lack of empirical research in this area, the author employed inductive reasoning [51];
- methodological choice. The author used a mixed-method approach incorporating quantitative and qualitative components. A survey questionnaire was used for quantitative purposes and a personal Internet-based interview for qualitative purposes [54, 55];
- research strategy. The scope of this paper was exploratory and descriptive [51];
- time horizon. This paper was cross-sectional as the research population was not monitored over time, which was appropriate because cross-sectional studies frequently employ the survey strategy to gather data [51];
- sampling. The total research population of 221 public officials representing their respective departments at the South African government National KM Forum and who are responsible for implementing KM in their departments was whittled down to 139 officials who served as the sample population [56–60].
- data collection. The author collected primary data through a survey questionnaire and a personal Internet-based interview. The secondary data were obtained through a literature review. The questionnaire included Likert scale-style closed-ended questions and open-ended questions. It was created using Microsoft Forms and distributed to the national government and provincial public officials via the Microsoft Office 365 online platform [61]. Morton et al. state that not every sampled person who receives the questionnaire will complete it [62]. As a result, the survey questionnaire was distributed to all 221 public officials (research population). This was done to increase the response rate and address the quality and validity questions. A personal one-on-one Internet-based interview was conducted between the author and the respondent. The interview schedule served as a guide for gathering information from the interviewee. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. For quantitative purposes, respondents were asked to complete an online survey questionnaire. The quantitative survey questionnaire was created using Microsoft Forms. The target population was sent an email with a link to the online questionnaire to collect the data. The data were collected in real-time in Microsoft Excel, i.e., when respondents finished the online survey questionnaire, their data was immediately recorded in a Microsoft Excel file in the Microsoft Office 365 online cloud, accessible by the author;
- data analysis. The collected data were uploaded to ‘DATAtab,’ a browser-based statistical analysis application, for analysis and processing. The qualitative data gathered through Internet-based personal interviews were individually analyzed, as it required distinct analytic tools and procedures. Here induction data analysis (induction reasoning) was applied, which is the ideal qualitative method of content analysis for this paper.

3. Result

This paper aimed to explore and identify if KM is a sustainable solution that will reduce the space between 'knowing' to 'doing' and improve service delivery in South Africa. The issue was explored through a review of the literature and the results of an interview and questionnaire completed by public officials doing KM practitioner work in the South African government. The quantitative data was analyzed using DATAtab and the results are as follows:

3. 1. Demographic data

Of the questionnaire respondents who participated in the survey, 63.1 % ($n=41$) were female, while 39.9 % ($n=24$) were male. Of the respondents, 69.2 % ($n=45$) were between the ages of 41 and 60.

The data shows a broad range of experience i.e., 73.8 % ($n=48$) who took the survey each have a total work experience of 15 years and more (Fig. 2).

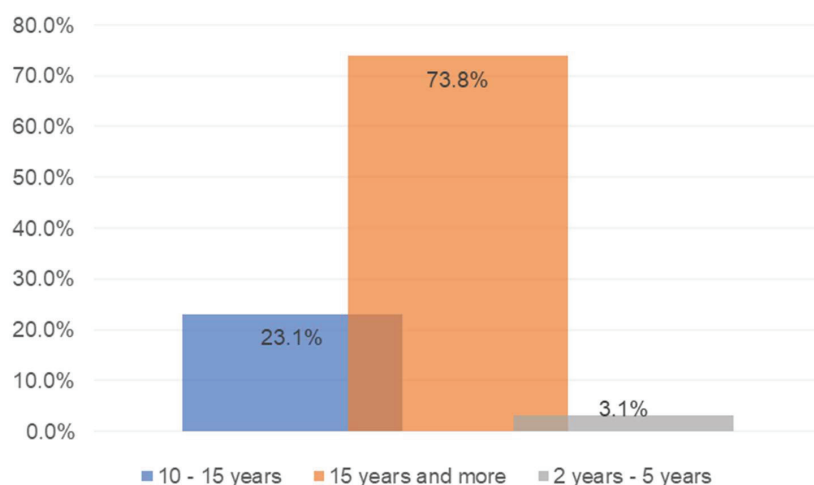


Fig. 2. Total work experience ($n=65$)

About 58.5 % ($n=38$) of the public officials who participated in the survey were from the provincial government, while 41.5 % ($n=27$) were from the national government.

According to the results, public officials responsible for implementing KM in their respective departments have varying employment levels. Less than half (43.1 %) of the respondents were Deputy Directors, whereas 30.8 % ($n=20$) were Directors and up. The remaining value (26.2 %) was from junior management and lower-level staff (Fig. 3). Consequently, these officials have varying perspectives on how to implement KM.

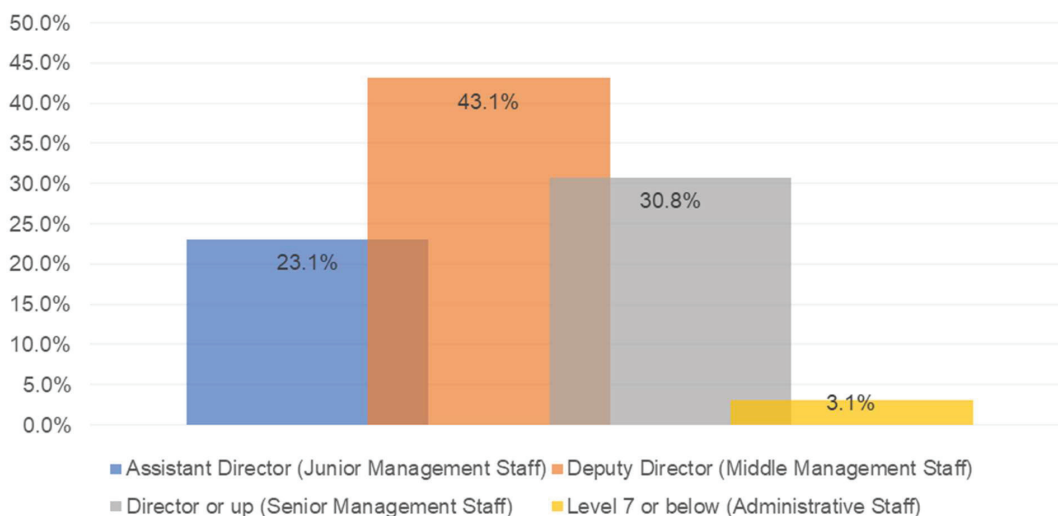


Fig. 3. Employment level ($n=65$)

3. 2. The effectiveness of current service delivery frameworks and mechanisms

The Service Delivery frameworks are an extensive corpus of enabling laws such as Acts, Regulations, White Papers, and bargaining council judgments, among others. Everything, however, centres around the nine ideals listed in section 195 of Chapter 10 of the South African Constitution, 1996. According to the literature review, public officials know what to do, they have brilliant strategies, plans and policies but cannot implement them. In response, the government has developed four fundamental service delivery mechanisms to help public employees transition from “knowing” to “doing.” These mechanisms were meant to help public officials successfully implement their strategies, plans and policies. The Service Delivery Mechanisms are the Batho Pele Revitalization Strategy, Service Delivery Improvement Plans, the Public Service Charter, and Service Standards. The challenge, though, was that only half of the respondents (50.7 %, $n=33$) knew that these service delivery frameworks and mechanisms exist to assist them in successfully driving service delivery in their respective departments (**Fig. 4**).

Furthermore, only 30.8 % ($n=20$) of respondents indicated neutrality. Adding to this statistic with those that agreed, the figure goes up to 49.2 % ($n=32$) of respondents. Additionally, according to **Fig. 5**, only 42.2 % ($n=27$) of respondents confirmed that service delivery regulatory frameworks and mechanisms are regularly measured in their department to determine impact.

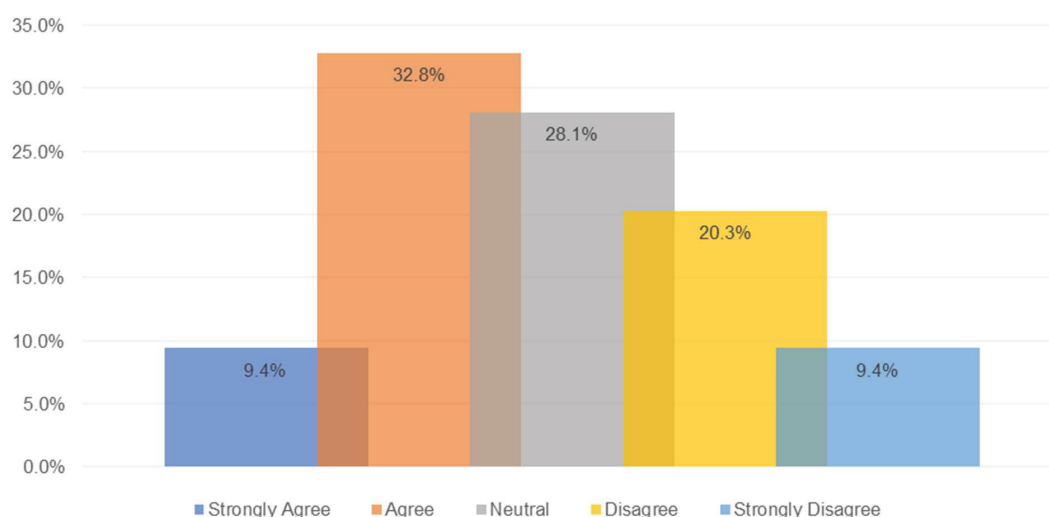


Fig. 4. The use of service delivery frameworks and mechanisms are regularly measured in my department to determine the impact ($n=65$)

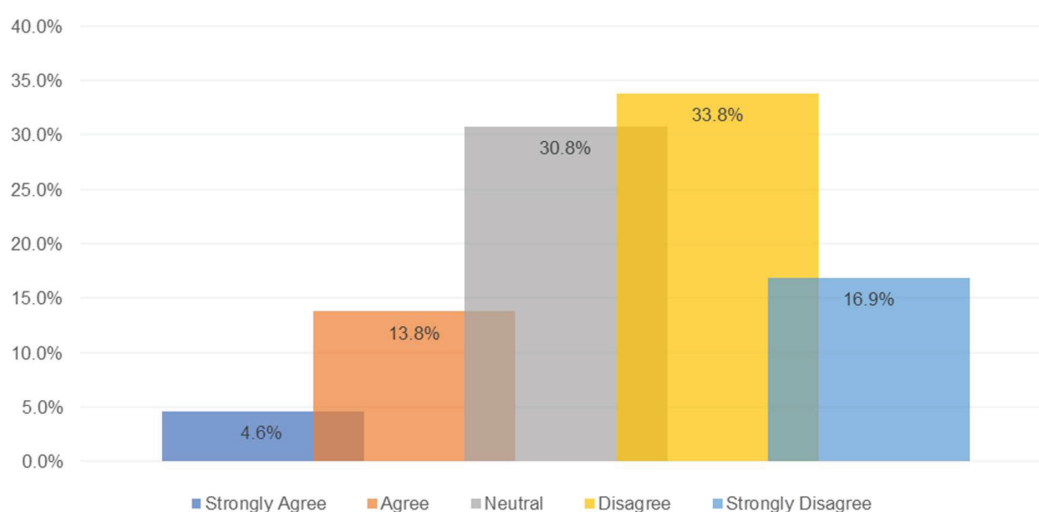


Fig. 5. Never exposed to, introduced to, or provided with government’s service delivery regulatory frameworks and mechanisms ($n=65$)

This supports the statement that public officials are not sure what their government's service delivery frameworks and mechanisms are. Either you know or do not know. This finding is supported by similar sentiments expressed by the interviewee during the qualitative Internet-based personal interview:

"No, they do not. Because they do not understand this. One person I spoke with yesterday said public service managers are not readers. People are confined to achieving targets and do not want to look at smart ways to enable them to achieve targets better."

3. 3. KM is a tool that can improve service delivery in South Africa.

Even though the dramatic transformation of the South African public service has been one of the most remarkable achievements since the end of apartheid in 1994, today the South African government is under tremendous pressure to deliver and salvage a failing public service. According to the literature review, South Africa's problems come from the government's inability to provide good services. This is because of poor mismanagement, governance, and capability. The significance of finding sustainable solutions to improve service delivery in South Africa was underscored by this and other issues discussed in the literature. An overwhelming majority (95.4 %, $n=62$) of respondents support the premise that KM is a sustainable solution to improving service delivery in South Africa (Fig. 6).

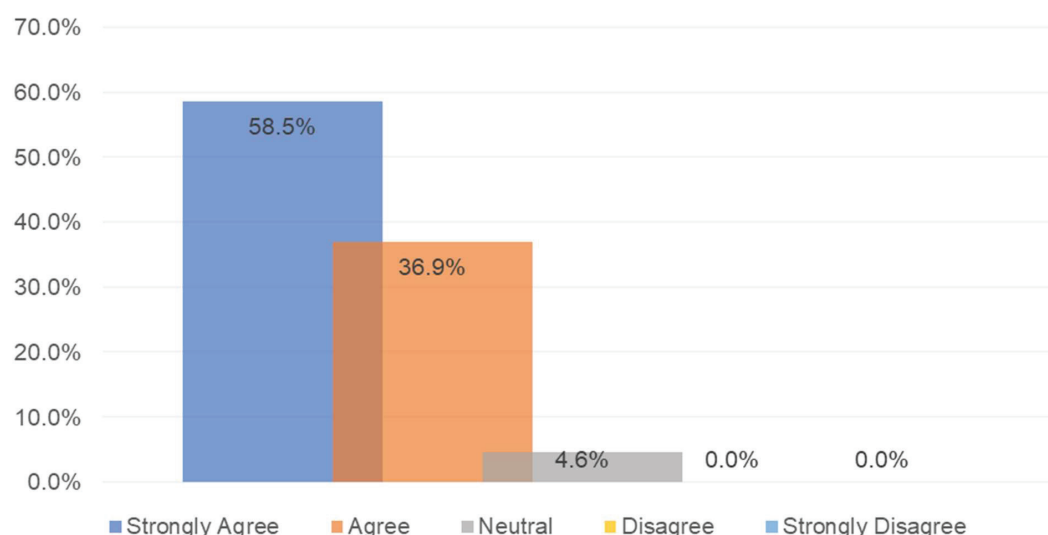


Fig. 6. KM is a sustainable solution that can improve service delivery ($n=65$)

The interviewee shared similar sentiments during the qualitative internet-based personal interview:

"KM assists with providing factual and evidence-based knowledge that is needed to bridge the gap between the one who is providing a service and the one who is receiving a service... Most leaders do not understand the link between KM and the NDP goals... KM will be able to give the correct information. We can develop guides and tools to capacitate the department and provide excellent services if we are well-capacitated. The policy papers we develop will provide the correct context and content to inform the government's plans and everything else. Then the governments' strategies will provide value. KM will enable us to also at the same time develop tools that will support the government's strategies... To shorten the timeframe and to be able to do well-informed projects."

Limitations. Municipalities, Provincial Legislatures and State-owned enterprises (SOEs) were excluded from this study

Prospects for further research. Very little research has been undertaken on KM as a potential service delivery solution in South Africa. Therefore, additional research is required, and the study could be broadened to include other government departments.

4. Conclusion

According to the preceding analysis, public officials know what needs to be done, have brilliant strategies, plans and policies but struggle to implement them. To address this, service delivery mechanisms were established but have failed to deliver. The Service Delivery Mechanisms are the Batho Pele Revitalization Strategy, Service Delivery Improvement Plans, the Public Service Charter, and Service Standards. They aim to help South Africa fulfill section 195 of Chapter 10 of the 1996 Constitution. According to the findings, only fifty percent of respondents ($n=33$) were aware of these service delivery systems. The results also indicate that departments only use service delivery mechanisms to enforce compliance and that these mechanisms are of poor quality, with little thought given to how this could improve service delivery. However, findings are that KM is a viable solution to South Africa's service delivery challenges i.e., both the respondents (95.4 %, $n=62$) and the literature indicates that KM is a sustainable option that can expedite the improvement of service delivery in South Africa. What KM does is address the enormous service delivery challenge South Africa has, which is the lack of implementation skills of its public officials. Research revealed that KM, when done correctly, has the potential to reduce this space between 'knowing' and 'doing,' an issue plaguing the South African government. As a result of President Ramaphosa's desire to save a failing public service and the service delivery mechanism's ineffective efforts to improve service delivery, KM has been proven to be a possible sustainable solution that will reduce the gap between public officials' knowledge and their actions, thereby improving service delivery in South Africa. As a result, this research provides new insights into improving public sector service delivery using KM. Overall, the findings will benefit KM and Public Administration practitioners.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in relation to this paper, as well as the published research results, including the financial aspects of conducting the research, obtaining, and using its results, as well as any non-financial personal relationships.

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