Examining the relationship between basic service delivery provision and dissatisfaction with the performance of local government in Gauteng (South Africa)

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Abstract:

Since the dawn of democracy in 1994, South Africa has witnessed a massive rollout of service delivery provisions, particularly in areas that were underserved during the apartheid era. Despite that, recent times have seen a growing number of protests staged against local governments across the country due to poor provisions of basic services.

In this study, we hypothesise that inadequate (or lack of) government-provided services lead to protests that demonstrate citizens' dissatisfaction with government performance. We tested our hypothesis by employing the 2017 GCRO[1] Quality of Life survey data to examine the spatial patterns and identify plausible significant explanatory variables (i.e. covariates) of the levels of dissatisfaction with the performance of the local government in Gauteng province (South Africa). With a sample size of 24889 interviews, the 2017 GCRO QoL survey contains data and variables about the standard of living and socio-economic status of residents in Gauteng, their perception of local government performance, and their attitudes towards service delivery provisions. The analysis was conducted based on data aggregated at the ward level (i.e. 529 wards in total). A total of 34 variables were hypothesised as covariates of the percentage of respondents who are dissatisfied with the performance of local government in Gauteng (i.e. in each of the 529 wards).

Variable	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect
MnStOServ	-34,43	-7,19	-41,62
CntryWD	0,24	0,05	0,29
White	-0,06	-0,01	-0,08
MnAccSatis	-58,44	-12,20	-70,64
MnAccSer	23,76	4,96	28,71
Unemployed	0,13	0,03	0,16
NoBathPele	0,14	0,03	0,17
CP_Politic	0,16	0,03	0,19

Table 1. Spatial lag model results (the variables are explained in the text)

The results reveal spatial clustering patterns exhibited by the levels of dissatisfaction with the performance of local government across Gauteng. Overall, the innermost wards of Gauteng province have low levels of dissatisfaction with the performance of local government while peripheral wards of metropolitan municipalities and most wards in local municipalities display high levels of dissatisfaction (see Figure 1).

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[1] GCRO: Gauteng City-Region Observatory (www.gcro.ac.za)

A bidirectional stepwise regression analysis with a significant level of 0.001 as the selection criterion was performed in order to obtain a parsimonious model. Even though this exercise reduced the number of covariates from 34 to eight, the estimated model was misspecified. The results of the Lagrange Multiplier tests confirmed the spatial lag model as suitable for determining the relationship between each of the eight statistically significant covariates and the dependent variable (i.e. percentage of dissatisfaction with the performance of the local government in Gauteng - LocGov). As illustrated in Table 1, three of the significant covariates (i.e. Average score satisfaction with access to basic services - MnAccSatis[2], Average score satisfaction with access to other government services - MnStOServ[3], and percentage of White respondents - White), have a negative relationship with the dependent variable (LocGov). This suggests that when any of these three variables increases, the levels of dissatisfaction with the performance of local government in Gauteng decreases. The remaining five significant variables (i.e. Percentage of respondents who agree that the country is going in the wrong direction - CntryWD, Average score access to services index - MnAccSer[4] (these services are the same as the ones mentioned in footnote 2), percentage of respondents that are unemployed - Unemployed, Percentage of individuals that agree that government officials do not follow the batho pele principles[5] - NoBathPele, and Percentage of respondents that agree that politics are a waste of time - CP_Politic), have a positive relationship with the dependent variable (LocGov). The spatial lag model had a pseudo coefficient of determination value equal to 0.78.

Policymakers in local government can make use of the results obtained from this research to identify priorities when addressing issues related to service delivery in Gauteng's communities. The unexpected positive relationship between the 'Average score access to services index - MnAccSer' covariate and 'dissatisfaction with local government performance' may suggest that access to basic services does not necessarily translate into satisfaction with the provided services. Future work could explore this observed disjuncture.
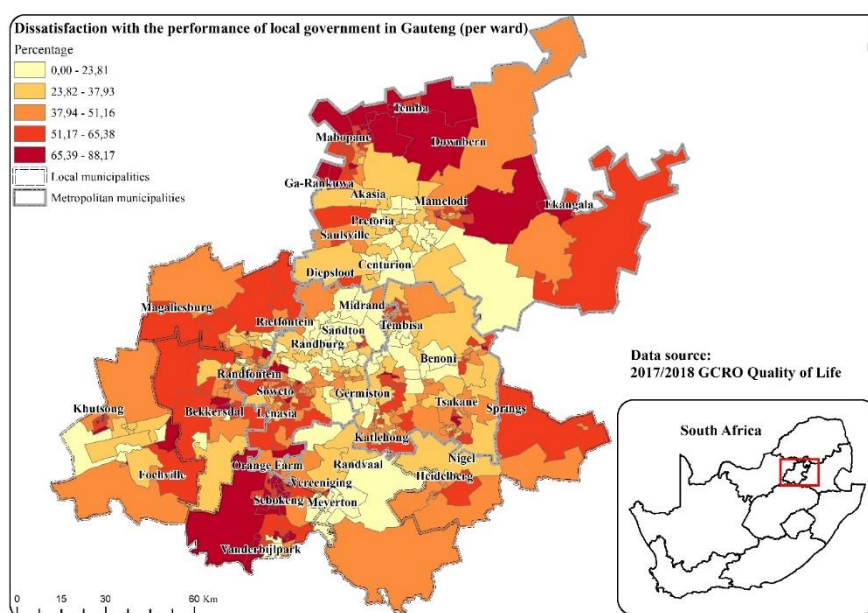

Figure 1. Percentage of respondents dissatisfied with the performance of local government in Gauteng province (South Africa) – The map provides the labels (names) of selected neighbourhoods in Gauteng province.

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[2] These 'basic' services include access to a flush toilet with sewerage, access to electricity, access to waste removal and access to piped water in the dwelling.

[3] These 'other government' services include satisfaction with the cost of municipal services, billing services, roads, street lights, schools, health services, drainage systems, libraries, emergency services (EMS), metro police, government initiatives, and parks.

[4] These services include access to a flush toilet with sewerage, access to electricity, access to waste removal and access to piped water in the dwelling.

[5] Batho Pele principles: Principles that the South African government has adopted of putting citizens first.