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**AN ANALYSIS OF THE FACILITATING AND CONSTRAINING  
FACTORS AFFECTING QUALITY SERVICE DELIVERY IN A SELECTED  
NAMIBIAN PARASTATAL**

**Abstract:**

The main objective of this research was to explore the facilitating and constraining factors affecting the quality service delivery of a selected Namibian parastatal. A Job characteristics inventory and SERVQUAL was administered among employees and customers of the selected parastatal (N=128). The results show that on average the constraining factors in this study include high workloads, emotional demands relating to the work environment, job insecurity and poor compensation. Enabling factors included a high level of colleague support, followed by supervisor support, access to information and performance management. The customers were less satisfied with the responsiveness and reliability of the service. High workload significantly reduced the reliability and responsiveness relating to service quality. Colleague support enhanced the responsiveness of service quality. Recommendations are made.

**Keywords:**

Government, Job Demands, Job Resources, Performance, Service Quality

**JEL Classification:** J24

## Introduction

State owned enterprises (SOEs) play an important role in the service delivery, procurement, infrastructure development and employment in Namibia (Ncube & Maunganidze, 2014). According to Links and Haimbodi (2011) the performance of SOEs can be regarded as an important indicator when evaluating the overall wellbeing of a country's economy. Providing exceptional service quality and a high rate of customer satisfaction in a turbulent and competitive business environment is a challenge for modern service organisations (Moletsane, de Klerk, & Bevan-Dye, 2014; Shahin & Samea, 2010). Public sector institutions are under growing pressure to deliver quality services as customer needs and anticipations of governmental services are evolving (Ramseook-Munhurum, Lukea-Bhiwajee, & Naidoo, 2010).

The main objective of this research was to explore the facilitating and constraining factors affecting the quality service delivery of a selected Namibian parastatal. More specifically this study aimed at addressing the following research questions:

- What is the current perceived level of quality service delivery in the selected Namibia parastatal?
- What are the facilitating factors affecting quality service delivery in a selected Namibian parastatal?
- What are the constraining factors affecting quality service delivery in a selected Namibian parastatal?
- What are the effects of facilitating factors on quality service delivery in a selected Namibian parastatal?
- What are the effects of constraining factors on quality service delivery in a selected Namibia parastatal?

Currently there is a national outcry in Namibia on the appalling service delivery as well as dismal performance of parastatals despite high government funding (Scholastika, Schutte & Barkhuizen, 2017). Parastatals in Namibia have failed to rise to the occasion in quality service delivery as most customers feel short changed by these state owned enterprises. The customers have high expectations of effective and efficient quality service delivery from the parastatals but the expectations have not being fulfilled (Odarro, 2012).

Although the Namibian government has set up a standalone ministry for state owned enterprises the benefits are yet to be realised as most of these parastatals appear to be worsening in their poor service delivery and financial performance (Mubwandarikwa, 2014). The poor service delivery has led customers to search for alternative service providers but are left trapped in these parastatals as they are at most times the sole service providers in the country. Consequently the need exists to explore the reasons

why parastatals are still performing poorly despite being funded by the government (see Weylandt, 2016).

## **Literature Review**

### **Parastatals in Namibia**

Parastatals also known as State Owned Enterprises (SOE's) are founded on particular Acts of Parliament. A parastatal is a lawful entity established by a government to embark on commercial undertakings on behalf of the government (Hishitongo, 2011). Parastatals are created beyond the Central Government and are involved in commercial, economic, service oriented and social activities requiring a large degree of autonomy and freedom from bureaucratic interference (Ncube, & Maunganidze, 2014). The Parliament and line ministries are subject to the scrutiny of the parastatal businesses. In the Namibian context parastatals apply to the arrays of commercial companies, institutions, state owned media, regulatory authorities, banks and others (Links & Haimbodi, 2011).

The parastatals are tasked to deliver quality service to all Namibian citizens and to drive the economic growth. The public has a great expectation of quality service delivery, but the expectations have fallen short (Kangueehi, 2007). Masawi (2012) maintains that the poor performance of parastatals is a result of wrong appointments which in turn compromises the effective execution of well-crafted corporate government policies. In an effort to overcome poor financial performance, the Namibian government adopted a new hybrid centralised governance model, which classifies public enterprises as commercial, non-commercial and financial (Mare, 2016). Mare (2016) further states that Namibia's adoption of a centralised model for its commercial public enterprises can help to overcome many of the problems that affect the parastatals and offer a chance to profoundly rethink the sector.

### **Service Delivery**

According to Ojodeh and Kamure (2014) service delivery is a concept that refers to the fulfilment of organisational goals and objectives to satisfy the needs of customers, employees and investors. Service delivery in the public sector is complicated as it is concerned with multifaceted aspects such as fulfilling expressed needs, unstated needs and distributing resources to maintain public infrastructure (Shifotoka, 2014). The drive of government policies to meet the Millennium Development Goals has increased the attention on the provision of quality services (Odaro, 2012). Odaro (2012) further stated that the provisioning of services in Africa remains far behind those of other developing countries and are substantially more expensive than elsewhere.

According to Phiri and Mcwabe (2013) there is a general negative perception among the customers of parastatals on its ability to perform to the expected standards. Poor service delivery in parastatals can be regarded as a result of poor management, non-accountability and generally non-transparent practices, with political interference being an ever present reality (Links & Haimbodi, 2011). In a similar vein Hamwaanyena (2013) maintain that poor service delivery is a result of corruption, maladministration, the appointment of unqualified people, the saturation of the board of directors and a lack of transparency.

### **Service Quality**

A great deal of research has been devoted towards the topic of service quality and its assessment over the past two decades (Al-Sayyed, Suifan & Alawneh, 2015). Service quality is defined as either the total evaluation of services by customers or the extent to which services meets a customer's need or expectations (Auka, Bosire & Matarn, 2013; Saghier & Nathan, 2013). Researchers maintain that a high level of service quality can result in increased profits, cost savings, corporate image, customer retention rate, attracts new customers, increases output, reduces employee turnover and improves staff morale (Kinando & Njogu, 2012; Hinson, Mohammed & Mensah, 2006; Munusamy, Chelliah & Mun, 2010). Parastatals with good service quality can therefore improve its market share and profitability.

To date the most commonly known dimensions of service quality emanate from the research of Parasuraman and colleagues (Al-Sayyed *et al*, 2015). The five aspects of service quality comprises of Tangibility (Appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication material), Reliability (The ability to deliver the promised service dependably and accurately), Responsiveness (Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service), Assurance (knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence) and Empathy (Caring, individualised, attention provided by the organisation to its customers). The measurement of service quality enables organisations to enhance their services to meet the diverse needs of customers (Cudjoe, Anim & George, 2015; Nejad, Firoozbakht & Taghipoor, 2014). State owned enterprises need to explore ways to assure that their products together with their services create a competitive advantage (Zvavahera & Ndoda, 2014). Parastatals thus have the obligation to comprehend their customers' desires in order to meet or exceed these needs (Al Khattab & Alderhayyat, 2011).

### **Facilitating and constraining factors affecting quality service delivery in the Parastatals**

For purposes of this research we define facilitating factors as the physical, psycho-social and organisational job resources that are required by both the individual and the organisation to reduce job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Some of the most

prominent job resources identified by studies in the government context include management and colleague support, opportunities for growth and development, compensation and job involvement (Asiwe, Hill & Jorgensen, 2015). Constraining factors in this research refer to the physical, psycho-social and organisational job demands that require sustained physical and psychological effort from individuals and eventually can have an adverse impact on their well-being (Demerouti, Nachreiner, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2001). Examples of job demands or constraining factors typically include high workloads, emotional demands, job insecurity and poor infrastructure (Roodt, 2013). The interplay between job demands and job resources has an immediate effect on the motivation and performance of individuals (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Boyd, Bakker, Winefield, Gillespie & Stough, 2011) and the sustainability of government institutions (Corin, 2016).

Gadafi (2015) highlighted several factors attributing to service delivery challenges in Africa such as poor infrastructures, corruption, lack of finances, the challenge of getting the right service provider, poor communication with communities, financial mismanagement and noncompliance with financial legislation and finally the availability and shortage of the required skills.

Some research showed that the availability of a total rewards strategy can enhance the service delivery of employees in government institutions. Nthebe et al. (2016) found that rewards such as sufficient compensation, benefits, work-life balance, opportunities for training and development and a well-executed performance management system enhanced the service performance of school principals. A study by Strauss (2012) among teachers in a public rural school showed that opportunities for growth and development enhanced the quality of service delivery by teachers.

Researchers identified talent management practices as important contributors to service delivery and performance. Barkhuizen, Schutte and Smit (2015) found that adequate levels of staffing significantly enhanced the reliability and empathy dimensions of service quality of support staff in a public higher education institution. In this study a lack of talent retention strategies significantly reduced support staff members ability to deliver services on time (responsiveness) and reduced the quality of the physical service environment for effective service delivery (tangible). A study by Chiloane and Barkhuizen (2017) showed that strategic talent management, compensation, performance management, talent retention practices, talent development and talent attraction practices were positively related to the assurance and reliability of quality service delivery of employees in a local government institution.

## Research Method

A quantitative research approach was used for this study because it emphasises objectivity and uses systematic procedures to measure human behaviour by using formal structured instruments when collecting data from respondents (Brink, 2007). This approach was used to provide hard objective facts about factors that contribute to poor quality of service delivery in a selected parastatal. Quantitative research is concerned with the consistent measurement of a phenomenon over time and by different researchers, usually by means of a measurement device (Cresswell, 2009). A non-experimental cross-sectional survey research strategy of inquiry was utilised in this study based on the need for exploratory research on factors that contribute to the poor quality of service delivery in a selected Namibian parastatal. Cross-sectional research is ideally suited to the descriptive and predictive functions associated with correlation research and to assess the interrelationships between the variables in the research (Field, 2009).

## Sampling

The population of the study comprised of employees and customers of a selected Namibian parastatal. In this study a total of 135 questionnaires were distributed and 128 completed questionnaires were returned for statistical analysis. Most of the employees participating in this study were male (56,9%), aged between 30 and 39 years old (37,5%) and in possession of a Bachelor's Degree (44,4%). The participants were primarily employed as operational staff (51,4%), had between 11 and 20 years of work experience (43,1%) and employed between 0 to 5 years in their current job (44,4%). Most of the participants had no chances of promotions during the last five years (44,4%) and working for more than 40 hours per week (56,9%). A total of 58 customers also participated in the study. Most of the customers were individual customers (43,1%), male (60,3%) and aged between 30-39 years old (34,48%).

## Measuring instruments

The Job Characteristics Scale (JCS) (Barkhuizen, 2005) was used to measure the sources of facilitating and constraining factors in this study. The JCS questionnaire consisted of 48 items. The questions were rated on a four – point scale ranging from 1 (never) to 4 (always). The dimensions of the JCS questionnaire focus on the pace and amount of work, the mental load, the emotional load, work variety, opportunities to learn, work independence, relationship with colleagues, the participants' relationship with their immediate supervisor, the ambiguities of the participants' work, the information, communication, participation, contact possibilities, remuneration and finally their career possibilities. The questionnaire has been validated in the South African context (Barkhuizen, Rothmann, & Tytherleigh, 2008).

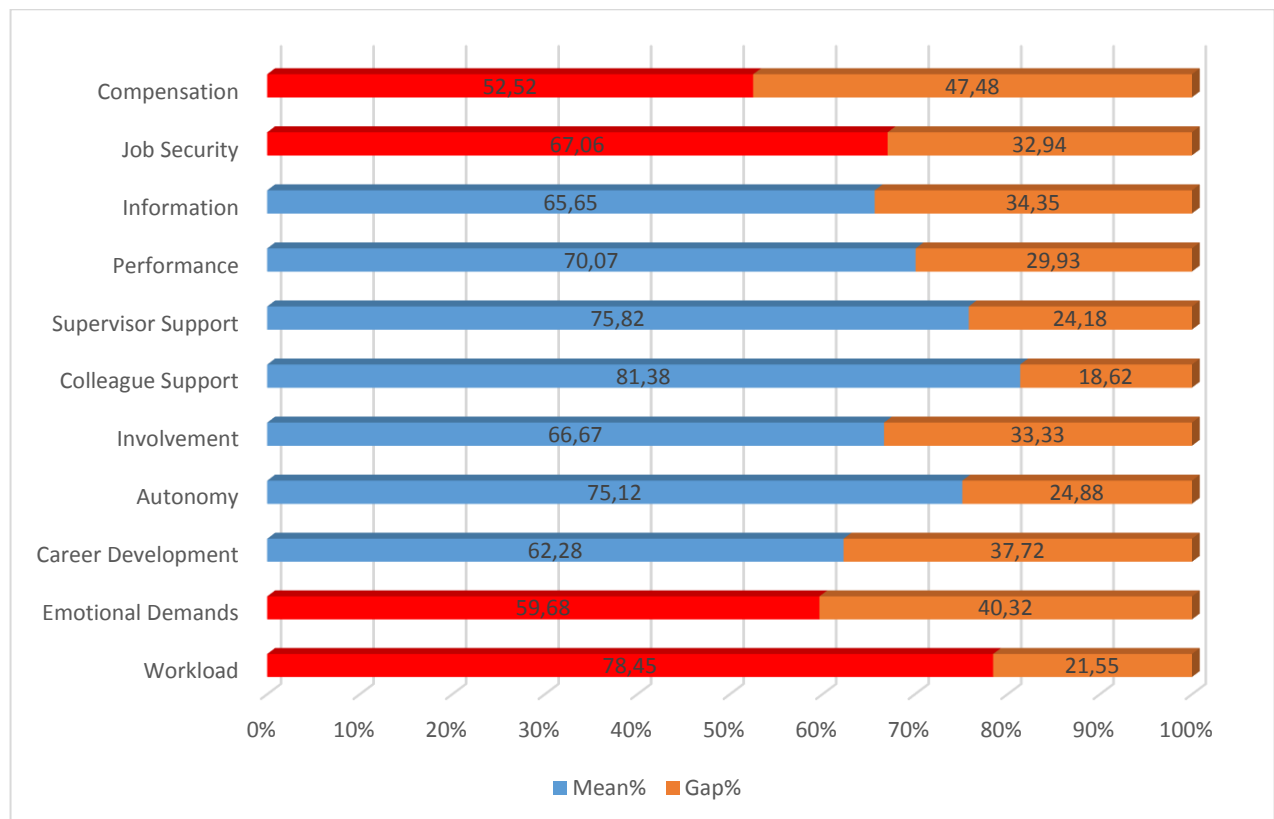
An adapted version of SERVQUAL scale was used to measure the service quality orientation of the respondents (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). The questionnaire consists of 22 items and measures five dimensions, namely, reliability, tangibles, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Responses are captured on a five-point likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The questionnaire has been validated in the South African context (Barkhuizen & Goosen, 2009).

## Results

The mean scores of the job characteristics scale are reported in Table 1 and Figure 1 below. The results show that on average the constraining factors in this study include high workloads, emotional demands relating to the work environment, a sense of job insecurity and poor compensation. Almost 80% of the participants in this sample indicated high workloads, while more than 60% of the participants experienced a high level of emotional demands relating to their jobs. Almost 70% of the participants experienced a high level of job insecurity whereas almost half of the sample indicated their dissatisfaction with compensation. Enabling factors included a high level of colleague support, followed by supervisor support, access to information and performance management. More than 70% of the respondents in the sample indicated their satisfaction with these factors in their organisation.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the Job Characteristics scale**

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Workload</b>	4,707	0,8684
<b>Emotional Demands</b>	3,5810	1,10903
<b>Career Development</b>	3,7371	1,02959
<b>Autonomy</b>	4,5071	1,13090
<b>Involvement</b>	4,0000	1,09834
<b>Colleague Support</b>	4,8826	0,83304
<b>Supervisor Support</b>	4,5493	1,12569
<b>Performance</b>	4,2042	1,02400
<b>Information</b>	3,9390	1,32295
<b>Job Security</b>	4,0235	1,32056
<b>Compensation</b>	3,1514	1,09502

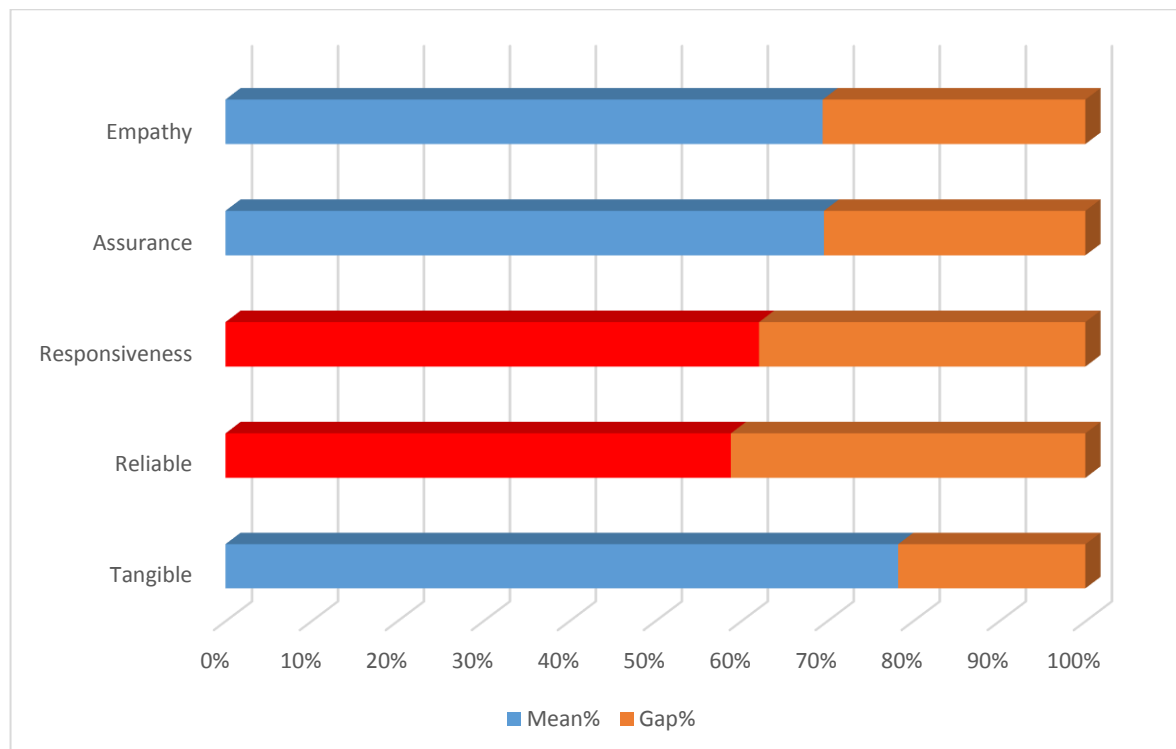
**Figure 1: Graphic presentation of the results of the Job Characteristics Scale**

The results of the descriptive statistics of service quality are presented in Table 2 below. The results show that almost 80% of the customers were satisfied with the physical service infrastructure (Tangible) of the organisation. The participants were less satisfied with the responsiveness and reliability of the service.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of the SERVQUAL**

	Mean	SD
Tangible	4,6954	0,94752
Reliable	3,5276	1,24742
Responsiveness	3,7241	1,08487
Assurance	4,1767	1,06480
Empathy	4,1681	1,03490



**Figure 2: Descriptive Statistics of the SERVQUAL**

The results of the correlation analyses between job characteristics and service quality are reported in Table 3 below.

**Table 3: Correlation analyses between Job Characteristics and Service Quality**

	Tangible	Reliable	Responsiveness	Assurance	Empathy
<b>Workload</b>	-0,035	<b>-.360**</b>	<b>-.267*</b>	-0,070	-0,073
<b>Emotional Demands</b>	0,029	-0,157	-0,090	0,028	-0,105
<b>Career Development</b>	-0,086	-0,071	-0,043	-0,094	0,010
<b>Autonomy</b>	-0,021	0,065	0,107	0,066	0,101
<b>Involvement</b>	-0,162	-0,114	-0,002	-0,112	-0,020
<b>Colleague Support</b>	0,074	0,101	<b>.281*</b>	0,229	0,188
<b>Supervisor Support</b>	0,129	0,010	0,147	0,084	0,126
<b>Performance</b>	0,077	0,019	0,088	0,118	0,235
<b>Information</b>	0,044	-0,092	0,016	0,010	0,112

<b>Job Security</b>	-0,057	-0,104	-0,020	-0,110	-0,123
<b>Compensation</b>	-0,215	-0,096	0,022	-0,135	-0,168

\* Statistically significant:  $p \leq 0,01$

+ Practically significant correlation (medium effect):  $r \geq 0,30$

++ Practically significant correlation (large effect):  $r \geq 0,50$

The results in Table 3 show that workload is significant negatively related to the Reliable (medium effect) and Responsiveness dimensions of service quality. Colleague support was significant positively related to responsiveness of service quality.

## Discussion

The main objective of this research was to determine the facilitating and constraining factors affecting quality service delivery in a selected Namibian parastatal. The results showed that most of the customers were satisfied with the physical infrastructure of the service infrastructure. The participants in this study were less satisfied with the Reliability and Responsiveness of the quality of service delivery. The results of the study continue to point out the poor levels of service delivery in public sector organisations (Links & Haimbodi, 2011; Phiri & Mcwabe, 2013).

The results of the study further showed that the main constraining factors in this study were high workloads, emotional demands relating to the work environment, job insecurity and poor compensation. The results showed that the high workloads in this study significantly reduced the employee's ability to deliver reliable and responsive services. More than half of the participants this study indicated that they are working more than the expected working hour per work week. In line with Barkhuizen et al. (2015) it is important for government departments to have a sufficient number of staff that are able to deliver the services required from customers. The perceived poor compensation of government officials in this study is another area of concern. Nthebe et al. (2016) found that adequate compensation is a necessity to motivate staff members to deliver good services.

In this study factors such as colleague support, supervisor support, and access to information and performance management were identified as enabling factors to enhance quality service delivery. The results confirm previous studies which highlighted the above factors as potential resources in the workplace (Barkhuizen et al. 2015; Smit, 2013). Consistent with other research management support is a crucial factor in enabling a talent management culture which in turn enhances the service performance of employees (Chiloane & Barkhuizen, 2017). Likewise an effective performance system also makes a positive contribution towards employees' willingness to deliver

quality service (see Nthebe et al, 2016). Support from colleagues significantly enhanced the responsiveness of individuals to deliver quality service. In this context teamwork plays an important role in enhancing the performance of the individual and the organisation (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008).

This research makes important theoretical and practice contributions. From a theoretical point of view this research expands on the limited empirical knowledge regarding the factors that enhance and constrain the effective service delivery of Namibia parastatals. From a practical point of view this research highlighted the importance of having an adequate staff complement that can reduce the workload of staff members and at the same time enhance the quality service delivery. More effort should be put into creating a teamwork environment as it seems to have a positive influence on the response time of service delivery. Furthermore management should also consider implementing a total rewards system that to provide more meaningful recognition for performing employees.

This research had some limitations. A cross-sectional research design was followed which gathered the perceptions of participants at one point in time. Longitudinal studies can be applied to test for constraining and facilitating factors over a longer period of time. This will assist parastatals to be proactive and eliminate potential pitfalls that can hinder effective service delivery. This sample only included employees and customers from a selected parastatal. Future research can benefit from obtaining a large sample of participants from various Namibian parastatals to address the national problem of poor service delivery more effectively. This study relied on surveys as the primary method of data gathering. Future studies can use a mixed research approach to present a more in-depth analyses of the real problems behind the constraining factors in this study.

In conclusion, this research highlights the need for the continuous improvement of quality service delivery in parastatals. Management of parastatals are encouraged to take note of these results so that corrective actions can be taken. The results of this study also calls for the continuation of larger scale studies and intervention research that can aid in the improvement of service delivery and customer satisfaction.

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