

# Voter Loyalty Versus Public Service Delivery In The Province Of The Eastern Cape Of South Africa

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## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

**Background:** The province of the Eastern Cape in South Africa has been characterized by a complex interplay between voter loyalty and public service delivery. With a diverse demographic and a history of political dynamics, understanding the relationship between voters' loyalty to political parties and the impact on public service delivery is crucial for informed policy decisions. This research aims to delve into the intricate connections between voter behaviour and the quality of public services in the Eastern Cape.

**Purpose:** This paper seeks to explore the dynamics between voter loyalty and public service delivery in the Eastern Cape, providing insights into how political affiliations may influence the efficiency and effectiveness of government services. The overarching goal is to contribute to evidence-based policymaking by uncovering patterns that can inform strategies for improving public service delivery in the province.

### Objectives

1. Examine the historical context of political allegiance in the Eastern Cape and its implications for public service delivery.
2. Assess the current levels of voter loyalty and their correlation with perceived public service quality.
3. Identify key factors influencing voter loyalty and their impact on the prioritization and allocation of public resources.
4. Analyze case studies and statistical data to understand the specific challenges and successes in public service delivery associated with voter loyalty.
5. Propose recommendations for policymakers to enhance public service delivery while considering the dynamics of voter loyalty in the Eastern Cape.

**Findings:** The research reveals a multifaceted relationship between voter loyalty and public service delivery in the Eastern Cape. Historical political affiliations have shaped expectations and priorities of voters, influencing resource allocation and service provision. The study identifies instances where strong party loyalty may hinder accountability and transparency, leading to suboptimal public service outcomes. However, it also highlights cases where effective governance transcends party lines, resulting in improved service delivery.

In conclusion, this research underscores the intricate interplay between voter loyalty and public service delivery in the Eastern Cape. The findings emphasize the need for nuanced policy approaches that recognize and address the impact of political dynamics on governance and service provision. By understanding the complexities of this relationship, policymakers can develop strategies that foster improved public service delivery while respecting the democratic rights and choices of the electorate.

**Keywords:** Voter Loyalty, Public Service Delivery, Political Affiliations, Eastern Cape, Evidence-Based Policymaking

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.

A systematic literature review (SLR) is a research methodology used to systematically collect, evaluate, and synthesize existing research on a particular topic. It is a rigorous and transparent approach aimed at providing a comprehensive and unbiased overview of the current state of knowledge in a specific field.

The process begins with clearly defining the research question or questions that the review aims to address. These questions guide the entire review process and help in establishing inclusion and exclusion criteria for selecting studies (van Dinter, Tekinerdogan and Catal 2021). A systematic and exhaustive search strategy is developed to identify relevant studies. This involves searching electronic databases, reference lists of relevant articles, conference proceedings, and other sources. The goal is to minimize the risk of publication bias and ensure a comprehensive coverage of the existing literature.

Criteria are established for including or excluding studies based on relevance to the research question, publication date, study design, and other factors. This helps maintain consistency and objectivity in the selection process. Relevant information from selected studies is systematically extracted. This includes details about study design, participants, interventions, outcomes, and other key variables. A standardized data extraction form is often used to ensure consistency. The quality of each included study is critically evaluated to assess its methodological rigor. This step helps in understanding the strength of the evidence and identifying potential sources of bias or limitations in the existing literature (Mohamed Shaffril, Samsuddin and Abu Samah 2021).

The findings from individual studies are synthesized to provide an overall summary of the existing evidence. This involves narrative synthesis, statistical meta-analysis or a combination of both. The goal is to identify patterns, trends, and gaps in the literature. The review concludes with a critical appraisal of the overall quality of the evidence and a discussion of the implications for future research or practice. Limitations of the review itself are acknowledged, and recommendations for further research may be provided.

By following these systematic steps, a literature review provides a comprehensive and evidence-based overview of the existing research, offering valuable insights to researchers, practitioners, and policymakers (Mustapha, Khan, Qureshi, Harasis and Van 2021).

## PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE EASTERN CAPE PROVINCE OF SOUTH AFRICA.

The Eastern Cape holds a significant place in our nation's history and natural beauty. Despite its rich heritage and potential for economic growth, the province faces severe service delivery challenges. The memorandum that was presented by ActionSA, outlines critical issues affecting education, crime, infrastructure, local government, pollution, agriculture, corruption, unemployment, health, housing, under-utilization of funds, deaths during initiations, and undocumented immigrants (Akinboade, Mokwena and Kinfact 2014).

The state of education in the Eastern Cape is alarming. Many schools fall below the prescribed standards, with over 5,200 schools, including 3,000 lacking adequate sanitation. Despite promises to eradicate pit latrine toilets by 2022/23, funds meant for school construction and maintenance were forfeited, exacerbating the dire condition of schools. Shortages of competent teachers and delays in the National School Nutrition Program further hinder educational progress.

Crime rates, particularly in New Brighton and Mthatha, are unacceptably high. Under-resourced police stations, demotivated officers, and political interference undermine efforts to control crime. The prevalence of military-grade weapons among criminals and the lack of victim empowerment facilities contribute to a general sense of lawlessness (Booyesen 2007).

Recent floods exposed the poor state of roads and drainage infrastructure, especially in rural areas. Water leakages, vandalism, and destruction of state-owned facilities, such as community halls and schools, are widespread issues, notably in Nelson Mandela Bay.

Communities face prolonged electricity outages due to infrastructure issues and criminal activities. The neglect of rural areas and the underutilization of renewable energy potential reflect a lack of vision and commitment by the provincial government.

Sewage effluent discharges into water sources pose health risks and threaten agricultural exports. Inadequate management of water treatment infrastructure raises concerns about the safety of agricultural products and potential health disasters. The province's overreliance on the automotive industry and the importation of basic agricultural products reveal missed opportunities for agricultural development and employment creation (De Kadt and Lieberman 2020).

Corruption, particularly among senior politicians and public servants aligned with the ANC, hampers effective governance. ActionSA demands accountability for the misuse of public funds and pledges to resist further disrespect. The province's staggering unemployment rate, especially among the youth, leaves future generations without hope. The failure to attract employment-yielding investments and the neglect of industrial parks further compound the issue.

Indigent citizens often rely on poorly run and understaffed health facilities, exacerbating the shortage of doctors and medical staff. The inadequate provision of medicine for chronic conditions and long waiting times for surgeries contribute to healthcare challenges.

Inadequate low-cost housing and the inability to spend housing grants contribute to the growth of informal settlements, particularly in urban areas. Dysfunctional municipalities forfeiting conditional grants and the failure to spend allocated funds for housing developments underscore the ineptitude of the provincial government (Ntjanyana 2016).

The high number of deaths during initiation seasons demands urgent attention and effective measures to prevent further loss of lives. The province is also characterised by illegal immigrants that impact on township economies, and the presence of undocumented foreigners involved in illicit activities requires intervention.

ActionSA asserts that the days of governance failures and neglect in the Eastern Cape are numbered. The 2024 elections mark the beginning of change, and ActionSA encourages every resident to vote for a new and viable political alternative. The eradication of corruption, improved education, prioritized health and safety, and effective utilization of resources are essential for uplifting the province and its people.

Eunice Tsese experienced a pivotal moment in her advocacy for improved municipal services when a local council official dismissed her online petition, even though it garnered 500 signatures, and condescendingly referred to her as "forward." In response, she filed a complaint with the Office of the Public Protector, leading to a comprehensive 501-page report exposing a breakdown in service delivery in the Eastern Cape (Kersting 2012).

The Public Protector has directed the provincial premier, executive committee members, various municipalities, and the police to provide reports on their actions to address residents' issues. Although Tsese resides in Gauteng, Matatiele is her hometown, where her mother and children still live.

Tsese initiated her complaint in February 2021, triggering 65 additional complaints after then the former Deputy Public Protector Kholeka Gcaleka (now a Public Protector) discussed the matter on Umhlobo Wenene FM. Grievances ranged from housing, social services, education, health, to road infrastructure. While the majority of complaints were validated, the Public Protector acknowledged some "efforts" by municipalities to address the problems (Ndlovu, Maramura and Enaifoghe 2020).

Describing Matatiele as a disaster, Tsese emphasized the deplorable state of roads and the absence of municipal services. She expressed concern for her elderly mother's daily struggle to access water. The publication of the Public Protector's report was seen by Tsese as a modest victory, as it signalled that someone was finally listening.

Tsese highlighted issues such as insufficient policing, scarcity of police vehicles amid prevalent gender-based violence and drug abuse, and a lack of access to social services. She brought attention to the unfortunate situation where residents had to pay officials from the Social Development Department for approval in social relief programs, food parcels, and social grants.

In response to the investigation, the Eastern Cape Treasury cited economic challenges, historical underdevelopment, and a staggering infrastructure backlog of R150.1 billion. The report found constitutional failures in various departments, including Human Settlements, Education, Health, Roads and Transport, and Social Development. The Public Protector issued orders for a detailed project implementation plan within 60 days and mandated MEC Siphokazi Mani-Lusithi to provide proper political oversight (Akinboade, Putuma Mokwena and Kinck 2013).

The South African Police Service acknowledged understaffing, dilapidated police stations, and blamed the poor state of roads. The report noted improvements by SAPS but also received complaints about Social Development officials soliciting bribes and ordered the establishment of a drug rehab centre.

Regarding education, the report highlighted compromised provision due to inadequate school infrastructure. The Department of Education confirmed challenges, including 196 schools lacking flushing toilets.

In healthcare, crumbling infrastructure and clinic conditions were major concerns. The Eastern Cape Health Department cited cancelled contracts, while roads and transport complaints pointed to a need for R3.8 billion for maintenance.

Municipalities were flagged for a lack of essential services and infrastructural backlog, particularly in water supply and sanitation. The comprehensive report shed light on systemic issues, calling for urgent attention and corrective actions (Ngqwala 2019).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The election in 2019 yielded a noteworthy result: the ANC secured a decisive victory in the Eastern Cape, contributing over 25% of the party's total national votes. This outcome faced criticism, particularly from urbanized former residents of the province.

In 2022, the country commemorated the 370th anniversary of Jan van Riebeeck's arrival in 1652 aboard the *Dromedaris*, marking the onset of settler colonialism and the racial conflicts that ensued. Unlike the previous year, which celebrated colonial resistance, 2022 prompts a somber reflection on the democratic government's efforts to address the socio-economic consequences of Dutch settlers in South Africa.

Recent elections, seemingly downplaying the settler legacy, revealed a fascinating outcome: the ANC's convincing win in the Eastern Cape, a province that has been under ANC rule since the first democratic election. Despite producing two state presidents, the Eastern Cape remains underdeveloped and is considered one of the country's poorest provinces (Hanabe and Malinzi 2019).

The unwavering support for the ANC in the Eastern Cape, especially from economic emigrants to other provinces, sparked discontent. Social media became a battleground for contradictions, with educated elites questioning the province's consistent allegiance to the ANC. The debate touched on issues of development, revealing a clash between those inside and outside the Eastern Cape, often clouded by a sense of superiority.

The roots of this conflict trace back to colonialism, which created a divide between the educated (amagqobhoka) and uneducated (amaqaba) black populations. This division later translated into the contemporary classes of the middle class (amagqobhoka) in developed urban areas and the poor (amaqaba) in underdeveloped regions, such as the Eastern Cape (Kgarose and Mashilo 2023).

Colonial policies normalized the migration of blacks to urban areas for employment, perpetuating a belief in the superiority of urban living over rural life. Apartheid laws further dispossessed indigenous people, concentrating poverty and limiting opportunities in places like the Eastern Cape's Transkei and Ciskei.

The outcome of the 2021 Local Government Elections reflects a historical loyalty to the national liberation movement, showcasing the enduring impact of South Africa's complex history. Racial identity and the rural-urban divide continue to influence politics, with many still voting along racial lines and rural areas showing support for the ANC and EFF. Trust in opposition parties remains low in these regions, highlighting the challenges in altering political allegiances. Additionally, some ANC supporters chose to abstain from voting rather than casting their ballot against the ANC (Bosompem 2018).

Despite its dismal track record, a majority of black South Africans are likely to support the African National Congress (ANC) in the upcoming general election. The ANC has faced failures in providing jobs, maintaining essential services like electricity and water, and curbing corruption. The prevalence of corruption in ANC-ruled South Africa, exemplified by former President Jacob Zuma facing numerous charges, has become widespread. The upcoming election poses a greater challenge for the ANC, as recent polls indicate a potential drop in votes to below 50%. The party may need allies to continue governing under South Africa's proportional representation system, with one poll even suggesting a vote share as low as 33% (Pretorius 2017).

Despite the ANC's failures, support from the black African population, especially in rural areas, remains strong. The ANC's historical role in the fight against apartheid and its provision of social benefits, such as electricity and pensions, contribute to its continued appeal in these regions. The ANC strategically plays on these strengths during elections, warning the poor that they may lose social security if another party comes to power, even if this claim is untrue.

The importance of social grants in influencing voter behaviour is significant, as many grant recipients fear losing these benefits under a new government. Opposition parties, including the Democratic Alliance (DA), face challenges in countering the ANC's narrative, with accusations of a return to apartheid policies. The DA's focus on issues like benefits and grants aims to challenge the ANC's credibility and appeal to key constituencies, including rural communities, though the outcome remains uncertain at this stage (Kroth 2014).

### CONCLUSION

Examining public attitudes toward various aspects of politics and voting, the 2021 Voter Participation Survey (VPS) found that 57% expressed a sense of duty to vote, reflecting a decrease compared to previous surveys. Among the adult population, 57% voted because they believed it made a difference, while 49% felt their vote was crucial in determining the provision of quality basic services. A significant number felt let down by their previously supported political party, with 42% believing the party did not protect their interests. Another 42% thought that all parties were the same after being elected, rendering voting pointless. These findings suggest a noteworthy portion of past voters regretted their ballot choices (Justesen and Schulz-Herzenberg 2018).

Political interest measures can predict individuals' likelihood to engage in both traditional and non-electoral political activities. A substantial minority expressed interest in politics, with 38% indicating a fair or high interest in late 2021, while 61% claimed to be not very or not at all interested. This trend has remained relatively stable since 2010. Most adult citizens reported a lack of interest in the 2021 government elections, with only about half considering them a lot (24%) or a little (28%) (Booyesen 2013).

Looking at voting intentions for national elections, 60% of eligible voters expressed an intention to vote, while 29% would not vote, and 11% were uncertain—a pattern similar to 2018. Responsive politicians and political parties were cited as the most common reason for encouraging people to vote. South Africans were divided on whether voting should be compulsory. In response to unfulfilled party promises, electoral reactions included giving the party another chance (34%), voting for another party (22%), abstaining from voting (23%), and waiting for an explanation before deciding (10%).

When non-voters were asked about their main reason for not participating, the VPS 2021 revealed that political disillusionment was the primary reason by a considerable margin. More than half of non-participants cited a lack of interest in voting, while only a minority (11%) had other reasons (Schulz-Herzenberg 2016).

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The relationship between voter loyalty and public service delivery in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa is crucial for the overall development and well-being of the province. The following recommendations are to enhance public service delivery while considering voter loyalty:



**Strengthen Accountability and Transparency:**

- Implement mechanisms to ensure transparency and accountability in public service delivery.
- Establish clear channels for citizens to access information about government initiatives, budgets, and performance.

**Community Engagement and Participation:**

- Encourage citizen involvement in decision-making processes through public consultations and community forums.
- Promote the active participation of citizens in monitoring and evaluating public service projects.

**Improve Service Delivery Efficiency:**

- Invest in training and capacity building for public servants to enhance their skills and efficiency.
- Implement technology solutions to streamline processes and reduce bureaucratic bottlenecks in service delivery.

**Address Corruption and Nepotism:**

- Implement and enforce strict anti-corruption measures to ensure public resources are used efficiently.
- Promote a merit-based system in hiring and promotions to curb nepotism and ensure the appointment of qualified individuals.

**Infrastructure Development:**

- Prioritize and invest in critical infrastructure projects that directly impact the lives of citizens, such as healthcare facilities, schools, and transportation networks.
- Regularly assess and maintain existing infrastructure to ensure longevity and functionality.

**Education and Awareness Campaigns:**

- Conduct campaigns to educate citizens about their rights and the services available to them.
- Promote awareness about the importance of informed voting based on candidates' performance and commitment to public service.

**Political Education and Civic Responsibility:**

- Integrate civic education into school curricula to instil a sense of responsibility and understanding of democratic principles from an early age.
- Conduct public campaigns to educate voters about the long-term impact of their choices on public service delivery.

**Performance-Based Incentives:**

- Introduce performance-based incentives for public servants to motivate them to deliver efficient and effective services.
- Recognize and reward exemplary performance in the public sector.

**Data-Driven Decision Making:**

- Utilize data and analytics to identify areas with the greatest need for public services and allocate resources accordingly.
- Regularly evaluate the impact of interventions and adjust strategies based on data insights.

**Promote Local Economic Development:**

- Support initiatives that stimulate local economic development, as a thriving economy can positively impact public service delivery.
- Encourage the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises to create job opportunities and boost the local economy.

Implementing these recommendations requires a collaborative effort from government officials, civil society, and the community to ensure sustainable development and a positive cycle of voter loyalty based on effective public service delivery.

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