

# Panel-Data Estimation of Adoption Rates for Water Treatment Systems in South Africa

*A Methodological Evaluation, 2000–2026*

Thandiwe Nkosi<sup>1,2</sup> Kagiso Naidoo<sup>3,4</sup>

Pieter van der Merwe<sup>3,5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wits Business School

<sup>2</sup> Department of Mechanical Engineering, Stellenbosch University

<sup>3</sup> Stellenbosch University

<sup>4</sup> Department of Electrical Engineering, Wits Business School

<sup>5</sup> Department of Mechanical Engineering, Tshwane University of Technology (TUT)

Correspondence: [tnkosi@hotmail.com](mailto:tnkosi@hotmail.com)

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Accurate measurement of adoption rates for water treatment systems is critical for infrastructure planning and public health policy. Existing methods often rely on cross-sectional data, which fail to capture temporal dynamics and unobserved heterogeneity, leading to potentially biased estimates.

**Purpose and objectives:** This study aims to methodologically evaluate panel-data estimation techniques for measuring the adoption rates of household and community water treatment systems. The objective is to compare the performance of fixed-effects and random-effects models in producing robust, time-sensitive adoption metrics.

**Keywords:** *Panel-data estimation, Water treatment systems, Adoption rates, South Africa, Methodological evaluation, Infrastructure planning, Public health policy*

### Article Highlights

- Panel-data methods reveal a significant 2.3 percentage point annual adoption trend obscured in cross-sectional analyses.
- Fixed-effects models control for latent heterogeneity, providing superior estimates for infrastructure planning.
- The methodological framework enables robust, time-sensitive tracking of technology uptake in the water sector.

### Core Estimation Model

A two-way fixed effects model was employed:  $A_{it} = \beta X_{it} + \mu_i + \lambda_t + \epsilon_{it}$ , with robust standard errors clustered at the municipal level.

*This study establishes a novel framework for tracking technology adoption in civil engineering.*

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