



Stakeholder management strategies and service delivery in county governments in Kenya

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Abstract

The study looked at Kenyan county governments' stakeholder management strategies and service delivery. The stakeholder level of influence was the strategy for managing stakeholders. A descriptive survey study approach using structured and semi-structured questionnaires was used to gather primary data. Nine county governments in Kenya were chosen purposively for the study's sample size. Two hundred and nineteen (219) respondents were picked using a simple random sampling procedure, and their responses were compiled. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistical methods, and the statistical link between the major variables of the study was examined using regression and correlation analysis. The results of the study revealed that there was a positive statistically significant relationship between stakeholder level of influence and service delivery as supported by a beta coefficient of 0.509 and $p=0.000<0.05$. The study recommends that the various interests of stakeholders be integrated and harmonised to help achieve a common goal of quality service delivery. The stakeholder level of influence should be taken seriously since most of the stakeholders, if not involved in project implementation, may influence other stakeholders to withdraw their support from the provision of essential services, which may derail service delivery at county governments.

Keywords: County government, level of Influence, service delivery, stakeholder

Introduction

According to Francisco de Oliveira *et al.* (2019) ^[9], stakeholder management strategies (SMS) methodically identify, assess, and organize activities to interact with and influence stakeholders. It is a crucial management strategy for enhancing how well a firm provides services. Because of this, stakeholder management strategies aid in promoting, supporting, contributing, and instilling best practices while keeping an eye on diverse stakeholders within a business (Karimi, 2017) ^[13].

Effective stakeholder management strategies seek to achieve various corporate goals, according to the literature that is currently available. Stakeholder management strategies are helpful for corporate finance success, according to Pedrini and Ferri (2019) ^[25].

Oppong *et al.* (2017) ^[23] discovered a similar relationship between stakeholder management strategies and business sustainability. These findings shed light on the applicability of stakeholder management strategies to managers and researchers. Stakeholder management strategies are therefore a constant process necessary for all organizational structures in all operations.

While several African countries have struggled to meet their implementation goals, frequently because of stakeholder positions in project delivery, developed countries have adopted stakeholder management strategies as soft management skills and, as a result, developed appropriate service delivery approaches (Musau, 2018) ^[20]. Even though social growth in the economy depends on development programs, institutional and managerial skills for better project delivery have not yet been adopted in emerging nations.

Kenyan county governments are made up of a number of stakeholders who complement and disagree with one another at the same time. They work to identify and assess their stakeholders' identities, the stakes they claim, the

difficulties or advantages they present to stakeholders, and the duties owed by county governments to those stakeholders. A county government must effectively understand and manage stakeholder relationships due to the large number of stakeholders it must interact with. This study will investigate how stakeholder level of influence strategy affects how county governments provide services in this situation.

Statement of the problem

The establishment of regional stakeholders in Kenya has advanced significantly thanks to county governments. The involvement of numerous stakeholders in decision-making helps County Governments adopt a variety of planning projects while reducing stakeholder opposition (Ipsos, 2019) ^[11].

On the other hand, this is not demonstrated in the facilities offered. Despite the tremendous potential provided by devolved governance, Tanui (2015) bemoaned the fact that many county governments still fall woefully short of the voters' expectations. Over 55% of people, according to Transparency International (2019) ^[30], were dissatisfied with the way the County government of Kenya delivered services. Numerous county governments struggle to provide basic services, and this problem is characterized by massive financial misappropriation, uneven resource distribution, and nepotism in job promotions, which leads to ongoing demonstrations and strikes across the nation.

According to research (Ipsos, 2019) ^[11], 36% of the individuals polled said corruption had worsened at the county level, which had a negative impact on the standard of service delivery. County governments are required to deliver top-notch services to avoid undermining public confidence. Nevertheless, most citizens (49%) said that the county's success in running its administration had increased. The current study evaluates stakeholder management

strategies as a source of various socioeconomic outcomes, including significant service delivery outcomes.

Although there has been a notable improvement in stakeholder management strategies in county governments' decision-making processes, previous studies (Lewis, 2017; Wagana, 2017; Nayak & Samanta, 2014; Wambua, 2014; Nyaga & Nzulwa, 2017) ^[16, 32, 21, 33, 22] found that there haven't been any comparable changes in the delivery of public services. However, there has been some preliminary evidence to support this. In light of the conflicting results, the study seeks to examine the influence of stakeholder level of influence on the delivery of services by Kenya's county governments.

Research objectives and hypotheses of the study

The overall goal of the study was to investigate how Kenyan county governments' service delivery is impacted by their use of stakeholder management strategies. The precise goal was to determine how stakeholder level of influence strategy affected service delivery in Kenyan county governments. The null hypothesis was investigated in order to achieve the aforementioned goal.

H₀₂: Stakeholder level of influence strategy has no significant influence on service delivery in county governments in Kenya.

Theoretical framework

The Stewardship theory formed the basis of this study

1. Theory of stewardship

Donaldson and Davis (1989) proposed stewardship theory as a normative alternative to agency theory (Subramanian, 2018). It promotes servant leadership that is unselfish. Stewardship theory, which challenges the potential alignment between principals and agents, is a leadership theory (Martin & Butler, 2017) ^[18]. It depicts a psychological contract or close partnership with agents operating in a community-focused manner, leading to responsible moral conduct against the firms of its owners.

Stakeholders should put aside their interests and focus on providing high-quality services while implementing stakeholder management strategies. County executives and lawmakers should consider it a calling to serve the people in accordance with the law. As a result, they ought to start initiatives that serve the needs of the local populace.

Accordingly, executives who are firmly committed to upholding organizational standards and who identify with their organizations are somewhat more likely to achieve organizational goals (Schillemans & Bjurstrm, 2020) ^[26]. Contrary to the agency view, stakeholders are seen as being predominantly integrated into the communities in which they are present (Chrisman, 2019) ^[4].

Transparency, accountability, and integrity standards should be embraced by all parties involved in managing county resources (Keay, 2017) ^[14]. This idea holds that county representatives and officials support devolution and act in the best interests of the county rather than their own. When you consistently hear the opinions of the individuals who are under your jurisdiction at work, that is one indication that you are a steward leader (Dumay *et al.* 2019) ^[6].

A genuine stewardship leader still takes delight in the results of the services they provide. In county

administrations, the executive should always take into account the interests of all parties involved without letting self-interest take precedence. Analysis of the stakeholder level of influence objective of the study is informed by stewardship theory. Stakeholders should manage the interests of all parties involved by putting aside their own aspirations in order to produce high-quality services.

According to Makhoulf (2017) ^[17], devoted public servants should work to improve the nation because they are also citizens of it. Furthermore, he contended that you needed the assistance of other public employees to do such a duty. Executives should always endeavor to comprehend the interests of various stakeholders.

Empirical literature review

The empirical literature is an organised review of earlier research results pertaining to the goals of the current investigation. A practical literature review is a direct search of written works, such as journals and textbooks that investigates the hypotheses and gives pragmatic findings related to the topic, according to earlier research by Zikmund *et al.* (2010) ^[34]. Analysis of the stakeholder level of influence approach served as the study variable.

1. Analyses of stakeholder's level of influence and service delivery

In their 2017 study, Kyereboah and Biekpe examined the difficulties in managing partners and how they affect project management. The investigation showed that operational activities depended heavily on the duties and interests of the primary stakeholders. Stakeholder management strategies, on the other hand, were typically institutionalized and exhibited through ad hoc and transparent behaviour.

According to reports, the following problems affect how organizations function: conflicting objectives, poor involvement, hazardous competition, little interest, anti-stakeholder management strategies, hierarchical positions, values, and practices, as well as a lack of knowledge and respect. The present Stakeholder level of influences study will make it possible to put into action a successful strategy to recognize and uphold stakeholder preferences and relationships while enhancing corporate reputation and competitive advantage.

Esteve *et al.* (2011) ^[7] looked into epidemiologic evidence of Sports Clubs' Board of Directors' influence on stakeholder management strategies. The study looked empirically at how stakeholders' interests might affect the money that non-profit sports groups raise. Similar to this, Inha's (2015) research aimed to shed light on how a non-profit network agency interacts with its stakeholders. The empirical paradigm recognized stakeholder preferences as the fundamental component of stakeholder analysis. The study's conclusion suggested that a non-profit network organization's members' shared interests contribute greatly to the organization's larger goals.

Based on stakeholder theory, Hawrysz and Maj (2017) ^[10] investigated whether Polish stock exchange enterprises recognize their stakeholder interests and the crucial impact of such identification on the company. Organizations that take into account the interests of their members are more transparent than those that only provide non-financial information (Ayuso *et al.*, 2014) ^[1]. On the other hand, businesses that fail to take into account the interests of their stakeholders are less likely to provide operational non-

financial information. It was deemed appropriate to assess each stakeholder's interests and even identify their priorities in order to decide the best level of cooperation with stakeholders in light of the evaluation of the relevant literature and the results of their study.

Florea and Florea (2013) ^[8] noted in a study report that businesses and corporations are a part of the social, economic, and environmental environments. Business strategies in this regard have an impact on a variety of participants, including individuals, companies, organizations, and associations. Other objectives of the various stakeholder associations relate to revenue, dividends, and wages, a company must therefore coordinate the needs of all of its stakeholders. When some stakeholder groups' interests conflict with those of other stakeholder groups, a stakeholder dispute results.

Parent and Deephouse (2007) ^[24] looked at France, whereas Boesso and Kumar (2009) looked at Italy and America to determine the criteria for key stakeholders in public organizations. Both types of research found that stakeholders are most interested in power. The second factor is the ability of the stakeholders to control the success of the business. The researchers discovered that little interest has not been devoted to the stakeholder organization. While the current study seeks to ascertain the impact of stakeholder management strategies on providing Kenyan county government services, both studies were conducted in developed countries.

Research by Siriwardhane and Taylor (2014) ^[28] in Australia and Vazquez-Brust *et al.* (2010) ^[31] in Argentina has demonstrated that stakeholder interest and credibility are preferred over stakeholder strength. Imagine eliminating the influence of cultural differences. network organization's members' shared interests contribute greatly to the organization's larger goals.

The conclusion that members are usually divided according to their values follows from this. Organizations now give stakeholders priority over those who were formerly viewed as secondary. However, compared to circumstances that existed 5-7seven years before, scientists conducting business-related studies came to different conclusions.

The challenges of balancing stakeholder-based impact on service quality in standards regulatory agencies were examined by Cheruiyot & Mugambi (2016) ^[3]. The main goals of the study were to ascertain Stakeholder Individuality or Representation in service delivery in Standard Regulatory Agencies and establish the influence of Resource Operands on service delivery in Traditional Regulatory Agencies. The provision of services by the Kenyan county government will be the focus of the current study. The literature analysis on stakeholder management strategies' function in service delivery exemplifies stakeholder management strategies' role in making sure that services are distributed to the public successfully and effectively.

Researchers that have studied stakeholder management

strategies have noted the importance and causation of the many aspects of these strategies, but they have not yet made apparent how these strategies impact service delivery. They have had negative effects on public service delivery, particularly in Kenyan county governments. They do not know which stakeholder management strategies apply to the county government at a certain time or when services are provided.

Research methodology

The study was conducted using a survey-based descriptive research design. A research design like this tries to shed information on the conditions and methods of situational occurrences. The aim of descriptive survey research, according to Mugenda and Mugenda (2012) ^[19], is to observe, document, and evaluate the data in order to draw firm conclusions. The forty-seven (47) county governments of Kenya served as the analysis unit for the study's data. The observational unit comprised governors, county executive committee members, and county assembly members. Taro Yamane's 1967 formula was used to generate 219 respondents for the survey. According to Mugenda & Mugenda (2012) ^[19] and Serekan (2009), the appropriate sample size should range from 10% to 30%. Nine counties were selected using the deliberate sampling strategy. This represented 20% of county governments in Kenya, which is regarded as a good sample size. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics for the study's conclusions. The assumptions of different analytical models were verified against the acquired data, and the most suitable model was then adapted.

Empirical findings

1. Descriptive statistics

The findings of descriptive statistics for stakeholder's level of influence were analyzed based on a Likert scale where 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2= Disagree (D), 3= Neutral (N), 4= Agree (A), 5= Strongly Agree (SA), and Standard Deviation=SDV. The respondents were asked whether analysis of stakeholders' level of influence improves service delivery.

Table 1: Stakeholder level of influence improves service delivery

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	166	94.3
No	8	4.5
I Don't Know	2	1.1
Total	176	100.0

From the findings, as shown in Table 4.10 majority of the respondents, 166 (94.3%), agreed that analysis of stakeholders' level of influence improves service delivery. Other respondents 8(4.5%) disagreed while the rest 2(1.1%) do not know.

Table 2: Stakeholder level of influence

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SDV
Regular and proper utilization of resources as per stakeholder interests progressively helps improve service delivery	0.06%	0.06%	10.8%	58.5%	29.5%	4.16	0.674
We always satisfy the needs, interests, and objectives of our stakeholders	2.3%	4.5%	12.5%	53.4%	27.3%	3.99	0.888
We consistently resolve and minimize conflict and	2.8%	10.2%	19.9%	43.2%	23.9%	3.75	1.023

controversy between diverse stakeholder interests							
Taking into consideration the ethical consequences of decisions that County government employees make progressively improves service delivery	6.3%	5.7%	12.5%	47.5%	28.4%	3.86	1.109
We always consider the interests of all our stakeholders in project implementation	4%	8%	17%	45.5%	25.5%	3.81	1.035
We maximize mutual benefits and minimize the negative impacts of projects on stakeholders	4.5%	5.1%	14.8%	47.2%	28.4%	3.90	01.020
There's timely disbursement of funds to the county government departments	2.3%	7.4%	12.5%	52.3%	25.6%	3.91	0.937
We facilitate projects/programs to move forward in a timely and effective manner	4%	5.1%	10.2%	49.4%	31.3%	3.99	0.991
Issues of major public concern are addressed with urgency	1.7%	2.3%	10.8%	62.5%	22.7%	4.02	0.763
Average						3.94	0.938

From the study findings based on Stakeholders' level of Influence on the Likert scale statements as shown in Table 4.10 above, the majority of the respondents 58.5% (M=4.16, SD=0.674) agreed to the statement that regular and proper utilization of resources as per stakeholder interests progressively helps improve service delivery. Other responses were as follows; 29.5% strongly agreed, 10.8% remained neutral, 0.06% disagreed, and 0.06% strongly disagreed with the statement.

The second item shows that the majority of the respondents, 53.4% (M=3.99, SD=0.888), agreed with the statement that always they satisfy the needs, interests, and objectives of our stakeholders. Other responses were as follows; 27.3% strongly agreed, 12.3% remained neutral, 4.5% disagreed, and 2.3% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Item three shows that the majority of the respondents 43.2% (M=3.75, SD=1.023) agreed to the statement that consistently they resolve and minimize conflict and controversy between diverse stakeholder interests. Other responses were as follows; 23.9% strongly agreed, 19.9% neutral, 10.2% disagreed and 2.8% strongly disagreed.

The fourth item shows that the majority of the respondents, 47.8% (M=3.86, SD=1.109), agreed with the statement that taking into consideration the ethical consequences of decisions that County government employees make, progressively improves service delivery. Other responses were as follows; 28.4% strongly agreed, 12.5% remained neutral, 6.3% strongly disagreed, and 5.7% disagreed with the statement.

The fifth item indicates that the majority of the respondents, 45.5% (M=3.81, SD=1.035), agreed that always they consider the interests of all stakeholders in project implementation. Other responses were as follows; 25.5% strongly agreed, 17% remained neutral, 8% disagreed, and 4% strongly disagreed with the statement.

The sixth item indicates that the majority of the respondents, 47.2% (M=3.9, SD=1.02), agreed with the statement that they maximize mutual benefits and minimize the negative impacts of projects for stakeholders. Other responses were as follows; 28.4% strongly agreed, 14.8% remained neutral, 5.1% disagreed, and lastly, 4.5% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Item seven shows that the majority of the respondents, 52.3% (M=3.91, SD=0.937), agreed with the statement that there is timely disbursement of funds to the county government departments. Other responses were as follows; 25.6% strongly agreed, 12.5% remained neutral, 7.4% disagreed, and 2.3% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Item eight indicates that most of the respondents, 49.4% (M=3.99, SD=0.991), agreed to the statement that they facilitate projects/programs to move forward in a timely and effective manner. Other responses were as follows; 31.3% strongly agreed, 10.2% remained neutral, 5.1% disagreed, and 4% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Item nine shows that the majority of the respondents, 62.5% (M=4.02, SD=0.763), agreed with the statement that major public concern issues are urgently addressed. Other responses were as follows; 22.7% strongly agreed, 10.8% remained neutral, 2.3% disagreed, and 1.7% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Regression analyses

1. Regression analysis on stakeholder's level of influence and service delivery

Regression analysis was run to determine the statistical significance relationship between stakeholder level of influence and service delivery (dependent variable). The study hypothesized that;

Ho4: Stakeholder level of influence strategy has no significant influence on service delivery in county governments in Kenya.

The linear regression model was fitted as;

$$SD = \beta_0 + \beta_2 X_4 + \epsilon$$

Where SD is service delivery, β coefficients, X_4 Stakeholder level of influence and ϵ error term.

Table 3: Model summary (stakeholder's level of influence and service delivery)

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate
1	.553 ^a	.306	.302	.42297

a. Predictors: (Constant), Sal

b. Dependent variable: SD

The findings in Table 2 revealed that stakeholder level of influence had a correlation coefficient R= 0.553 implying that the stakeholder level of influence strategy had a positive statistical linear relationship with service delivery in Kenyan counties. The results also indicated that the stakeholder level of influence had an R² of 0.306, which implies that 30.6% variations in service delivery in Kenyan counties can be explained by the stakeholder level of influence. However, the model failed to explain 69.4% variations in service delivery. This implies that the remaining 79.3% could be explained by other stakeholder management strategies that were not included in the model.

Table 4: ANOVA statistics (stakeholder's level of influence and service delivery)

Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	13.730	1	13.730	76.746	.000 ^b
	Residual	31.129	174	.179		
	Total	44.859	175			

a. Dependent variable: SD
 b. Predictors: (Constant), SLI

The findings on the ANOVA statistics as shown in Table 3 indicates that stakeholder level of influence when regressed with service delivery yielded an (F (176) = 76.746, p=0.00

<0.05). The results imply that the fitted model summary was statistically significant. The findings reveal that the stakeholder level of influence was statistically significant in explaining service delivery in Kenyan counties. Therefore, at p <0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis (Ho₄) will be rejected and the alternative hypothesis (Ha₄) which states, “There is a statistically significant relationship between stakeholder level of influence and service delivery in Kenyan counties” will be accepted. Thus, there is a positive statistically significant relationship between stakeholder level of influence and service delivery in Kenyan counties.

Table 5: Regression coefficients (stakeholder's level of influence and service delivery)

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity statistics	
		B	Std. error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	2.029	.241		8.422	.000		
	SAI	.509	.058	.553	8.760	.000	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent variable: SD

From the regression coefficients shown in Table 4 above, the findings revealed a positive statistically significant relationship between stakeholder level of influence and service delivery as supported by a beta coefficient of .509 and a p=0.000<0.05. The results imply that a unit increase in stakeholder level of influence and other factors held constant will increase service delivery in Kenyan counties by 0.509 units. Further in support of the findings, $t_{cal} = 8.760 > t_{critical} = 1.96$ at a 95 per cent confidence level the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

The linear regression fitted equation is
 $SD = 2.029 + 0.509X_5 + 0.058$ -----i

Conclusion and recommendations

The study discovered a statistically significant association between service delivery in Kenyan counties and the stakeholder level of influence strategy. The results of the study rejected the null hypothesis and validated the alternative hypothesis. The study concludes that service delivery is enhanced by stakeholder levels of influence. The study further recommends that the various interests of stakeholders be integrated and harmonised to help achieve a common goal of quality service delivery. The stakeholder level of influence should be taken seriously since most of the stakeholders, if not involved in project implementation, may influence other stakeholders to withdraw their support from the provision of essential services, which may derail service delivery at county governments. This is because stakeholders such as customers, citizens and communities greatly influence the quality of service delivery in county governments in Kenya.

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