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ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper was to evaluate the effect of leadership on service delivery in county governments in North Rift, Kenya. The study made use of a mixed methods design where correlation and regression analysis were used. The data was collected using questionnaires and analysed using SPSS. The study revealed that leadership has a moderate positive correlation with service delivery. From the findings, leadership was found to contribute 35.4% to service delivery. Regression analysis revealed that leadership has a statistically significant effect on service delivery. The study recommended that there is need to improve capacity building of leaders in county governments so as to improve service delivery. The selection process of choosing leaders in county governments should be enhanced so as to get best leaders to lead service delivery initiative in the county governments.

Key Words: Leadership, Strategy implementation, Service delivery.

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INTRODUCTION

All around the world local governments are seeking better ways of achieving local economic development and improving the lives of their citizens. This is as a result of increased democratic reforms with transformations taking place in the global economy. These changes have brought about challenges, opportunities and responsibility to the local governments to work together to improve the livelihoods of their citizens, (United Nations, 2005).

Among the countries which have successfully implemented devolution include Britain, Germany, United States of America and Australia. In Africa, South Africa, Nigeria and Ethiopia have successfully implemented the devolved system of government, (World Bank, 2012).

The second objective of devolution is to give power of self-governance to the people and therefore ensure that participation of the people in exercising the powers of the state in making decisions about them. (RoK, 2010). This indicates that the key objective of creating county governments is service delivery to citizens. However, this is a big challenge as majority of the citizens being dissatisfied with the performance of the counties

Though previous studies had attempted to address issues related to this study the researcher notes that the there are gaps in literature that needed to be addressed.

Merwe, Van Graan and Ukpere (2013) carried out a study on leadership challenges in the police service. The study focused on leadership challenges experienced in the police service of South Africa. The study observed that there is a relationship between leadership and performance. Though the study dealt with leadership, it deferred from the current study in variables. Gaitho (2017) in a study on leadership qualities and service delivery focused on qualities of leadership, accountability and ethics and their relationship to service delivery. The study revealed that for better service delivery, the organization must ensure high level of accountability and ethics are maintained. The study

differed from the current study in design and variables adopted. The findings of these studies contradicted Onserio (2018) who found that leadership had no significant effect on performance in the organization. Habba, Modding, Bima and Bijang (2017) in a study on leadership, organizational culture, job satisfaction and performance also found that leadership had no significant effect on performance. A review of literature indicated that county governments experience service delivery challenges. This study is carried out in an attempt to fill the existing gap in literature.

Statement of the Problem

According to Wheelen and Hunger (2008), organizations which engage in strategic plans outperform those that do not. This view was supported by Katsioloudes (2002) that better performance is experienced in organizations that engage in strategic management than those that use unplanned, opportunistic and adaptive approach.

According to Transparency International (2016), Kenyans were dissatisfied with the services provided by their leaders that majority of them were unlikely to reelect them. Majority of the residents rated service delivery as average or poor. This was a serious indictment of the leadership in the counties.

Though previous studies had attempted to address issues related to this study the researcher noted that the there were gaps in literature that needed to be addressed. Merwe, Van Graan and Ukpere (2013) carried out a study on leadership challenges in the police service. The study focused on leadership challenges experienced in the police service of South Africa. The study observed that there is a relationship between leadership and performance. Gaitho (2017) in a study on leadership qualities and service delivery focused on qualities of leadership, accountability and ethics and their relationship to service delivery. The findings of these studies contradicted Onserio

(2018) who found that leadership had no significant effect on performance in the organization. Habba, Modding, Bima and Bijang (2017) in a study on leadership, organizational culture, job satisfaction and performance also found that leadership had no significant effect on performance. This study therefore sought to analyze the effect of leadership on service delivery in county governments in North Rift, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Path Goal Theory

Path Goal theory deals the way leaders motivate their followers to achieve organizational goals. This theory was developed by Robert J. House in 1971 and revised by House and Mitchell in 1974 (Cote, 2017). The theory postulates that followers consciously consider courses of action and assess the likelihood that each course of action will yield desirable and undesirable outcomes, the followers then act in a manner which they consider to maximize the achievement of what is positive and minimize what is negative (Knight, Gary and Hanges, 2004).

According to this theory, there are three assumptions about human behavior: that subordinates behave in a self-serving manner: that human beings become uncomfortable and experience stress when in ambiguous situations: and that the reduction of ambiguity in the work place would increase the satisfaction of workers and consequently increase productivity (Ani, Oliver, Okpala, Dyages and Akese, 2017). In agreeing with this argument, Malik, Hassan and Aziz (2014), postulate that the way leaders conduct themselves can influence their followers leading to changes in attitude, behaviour and motivation (Malik *et al*, 2014).

According to Cote (2017) this theory makes two propositions: that the leader's behaviour is seen as acceptable by the individual workers and the leader is a source of satisfaction now or in the future. Secondly, the leader's behaviour will motivate the individual workers to the extent that such

behaviour will satisfy the worker's needs on performance and such behaviour which accommodates the individual's environment to support and reward effective performance. Therefore, leaders should conduct themselves in a manner that support their followers and contribute towards reduction of their followers' deficiencies if they are to become efficient. The way the leaders treat their employees affect their job satisfaction and motivation and this will consequently affect the performance of the employees.

Leadership should aspire to increase the payoffs that the employees receive in order to increase their motivation (Cote, 2017). This theory is suitable for the study because the quality of service delivered to the citizens is largely dependent on the level of motivation of the county government employees. The theory further assert that the motivation can be boosted by the leaders ensuring that the goals are easier to achieve through coaching and direction, removing obstacles in attainment of goals and making work more satisfying.

The quality of training provided to the county government employees is essential in ensuring that they know what is expected of them and improves personal satisfaction that is derived from the job. With improved clarity of roles comes improved service delivery to the citizens. The quality of service delivery is also dependent on the supervision provided by the county government leadership. Leaders should be able to exercise their reward power to achieve the desired results. In situations where the leadership is not assertive, the productivity will be affected. The leader should minimize role ambiguity by ensuring that the employees knows what will result whether a reward or a punishment when they attain or fail to attain the expected goals (Ani *et al*, 2017). The leader should consistently deliver the reward or punishment as per the outcomes. The leader should make the outcomes are associated with the desired goals by ensuring that the employees understand the behaviours and strategies that will lead to the

achievement of the goals. Ani *et al* (2017) posits that leaders clarify how the workers should perform their tasks by modelling the appropriate behaviour.

Critics however argue that the Path Goal theory is so complex and incorporates so many different aspects of leadership to the extent that interpreting the theory can be confusing (Northhouse, 2016). The critics argue that the theory makes predictions about which of the four leadership styles is appropriate for tasks of different structure, for goals with different levels of clarity, for followers with different abilities and for organizations with different degrees of authority. Another criticism of Path Goal theory is that it has received only partial support from many empirical research studies that have been conducted to test its validity (Northhouse, 2016). They argue that some researchers have supported the prediction that directiveness of the leader is positively related to workers satisfaction when task are not clear but there other researchers who have failed to confirm this relationship. While agreeing with this criticism Evans (1996) assert that the claims of Path Goal theory remain tentative since research findings have failed to provide full and consistent picture of the basic assumptions. Another criticism is that the theory fails to adequately explain the relationship between leadership and worker motivation. Although the theory incorporates tenets of expectancy theory it does not go far enough to explain how leadership is related to these tenets.

This theory is relevant to the study as provides a good basis to understand the relationship between leadership and service delivery. According to Jermier (1996), path goal theory provides the groundwork for understanding situations where the leader's behaviour will motivate subordinates performance and job satisfaction. The key features of path goal theory of leadership emphasize the responsibility of the leader towards the workers' attainment of goals. Using these key features, service delivery can be improved in county governments if the leaders remove the obstacles on the path of employee goal attainment, if they

consistently deliver reward and punishment depending on the outcomes and if they would ensure clarity of roles of their subordinates.

Leadership and Service Delivery

Good and transformative leadership is necessary for the implementation of the strategic plan. According to Rajasekar (2014) the responsibility of a leader include coordination of activities, streamlining of processes, motivating of employees, ensuring commitment to the strategy and aligning of the organizational structure to the strategy. The leaders are also responsible for ensuring that the strategy is effectively communicated. Transformational leadership in an organization is expected to clarify organizational goals and hence increase the congruence and the organizational goals (Paarlberg and Lavigna, 2010). This is expected to have a positive effect on the motivation of the employees and higher performance. Transactional leadership on the other hand is expected to have a positive disciplining effect on performance.

Mwenje (2016) assert that the value of the leaders drives them to act fairly towards their followers which results in an atmosphere of mutual trust, transparency and shared objectives. This view is supported by Zhu *et al* (2005) when they observed that visionary leadership will result in high levels of cohesion in the organization, trust, motivation and therefore better performance. It is important to understand the effect of leadership on performance in the organization because leadership is considered a key factor in achieving a firm's objectives. According to Rowe (2001), effective leadership is a source of management development and sustained competitive advantage for performance improvement of the organization.

The politicians in the county government being public managers represent the county government and also the whole society for whom the public service are targeted at. Demeter and Tapardel (2013) highlight the importance of politicians in leadership when they argued that politicians make unique contribution by promoting projects,

generating resources and setting direction while mobilizing citizens to make things move.

According to Demeter and Tapardel (2013), there are different styles of leadership depending on the structure of the organization. The differences in both style and organizational structure will result in different effects considering that the managers are faced with different situations and constraints in different organizations. Lee and Chuang (2009) believe that good leaders inspire subordinates' potential to enhance efficiency and also meet their requirements in the process of achieving organizational objectives. It therefore means that the execution of the strategy is dependent on the leadership capability in the organization.

According to Kihara et al (2016) the leadership wrangles between the executive and the legislative arms of the county governments have negatively affected strategy implementation in the counties. The supremacy wars between the national assembly and the senate have also led to a delay in strategy implementation in the counties due to delay in disbursement of funds to the county governments. The leadership should be aware of its responsibilities and their effects on strategy implementation. Mthembu (2012) posit that leadership of the organization should be in the fore front in pursuit of service delivery initiatives of the organization. The commitment of the leader in ensuring that the employees deliver quality service will affect how effective the services will be delivered. In his study on the role of leadership in implementing service delivery found out that people centered was a key factor successful leadership. The study used a case study design and the data was collected using interview schedules. The sample size was 15 respondents. The data was analyzed by qualitative analysis.

Maina (2016) asserts that leadership elements such as interpersonal traits, change consciousness and operational mind set have a significant effect on service delivery in the organization. The study used descriptive correlational design with a sample size of 90 respondents obtained by stratified random

sampling. The data was collected using questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis.

Twanga (2016) assert that leadership styles affect service delivery in an organization. There are different leadership styles adopted by leaders in organizations such as democratic leadership, authoritative and laissez-faire leadership. The styles adopted by the leaders affect the morale and motivation of the members of the organization. Employees who are lead by democratic leaders are more motivated and their clients are likely to report high levels of satisfaction compared to employees lead by autocratic and laissez-faire leaders. The study used a case study design with a sample size of 46 respondents who were selected by purposive sampling. The data was collected by using questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented in tables and percentages.

Kosgei (2015) in a study on effect of leadership development strategies on service delivery at KNH found out that, leadership strategies contributes to effective service delivery in the organization. The studies observed that leadership strategies transformed the organization's leadership and hence influence the services being delivered. The study used a descriptive survey design. The sample size was 60 respondents which were obtained using stratified random sampling. Both primary and secondary data was collected using questionnaires and documentary review respectively. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented in form of charts, tables and percentages.

Mwangi (2015) conducted a study on strategic plan implementation and service delivery at National Hospital Insurance Fund (NHIF). The study adopted a case study design and data was collected through face to face interviews. The data was analyzed using content analysis and presented in pros form. The study concluded that leadership played a significant role in service delivery in the organization. It also concluded that resource allocation affected the ability and pace of strategic plans implementation. Abass, Munga and Were (2017) conducted a study

on the relationship between strategy implementation and performance in county governments in Kenya. This study adopted a case study approach where they studied Wajir County. The study made use of a sample size of 83 respondents consisting of County executive officers, chief officers, directors, administrators and other county officials. The data was collected using questionnaires and was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Regression analysis model was used to explain the relationship between the variables. The study concluded that there was a significant relationship between

organizational structure, leadership styles, organizational culture and performance in organizations.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a mixed methods survey design where correlation and regression analysis was used. The study targeted county government staff involved in strategy implementation and service delivery from North Rift, Kenya. A sample of 180 employees was obtained using stratified sampling. The data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedule.

RESULTS

Table 1: Correlations between leadership and service delivery

		Leadership	Service Delivery
Leadership	Pearson Correlation	1	.595**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	156	156
Service Delivery	Pearson Correlation	.595**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	156	156

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field data (2019)

The results in table 1 indicated that the Pearson's correlation coefficient r of +0.595. This indicated that there is a moderate positive relationship between leadership and service delivery. This indicated that an improvement in leadership has a positive effect on service delivery within the county government. The findings were contrary to the null H_{01} that stated that leadership has no significant effect on service delivery in county government. We therefore rejected the null hypothesis.

This was supported by Maina (2016) who asserted that leadership had a significant effect on service delivery in the organization. This also agreed with the findings of Twanga (2016) that leadership styles influences the delivery of services with the organization. The motivation of staff in the organization is dependent of the leadership style adopted by the leaders.

Leadership and Service Delivery

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.595 ^a	.354	.349	.54512

a. Predictors: (Constant), Leadership

Source: Field data (2019)

Table 3: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	25.034	1	25.034	84.244	.000 ^b
	Residual	45.762	154	.297		
	Total	70.796	155			

a. Dependent Variable: Service Delivery

Source: Field data (2019)

Table 4: Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.228	.274		4.473	.000
	Leadership	.648	.071	.595	9.178	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Service Delivery

Source: Field data (2019)

The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) results in the table 3 above showed a significance of 0.00 which was less than $\alpha = 0.05$. Therefore indicating that leadership has a significant effect on service delivery. This implied that we should reject the null hypothesis that stated that leadership has no significant effect on service delivery in county governments in Kenya.

The results of regression analysis in table 4 indicated that the model fitted well with the data. The regression model for leadership was represented:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_2 X_2 + \varepsilon$$

Where Y - Service Delivery

X_2 - Leadership

β_0 - Constant

β_2 - Coefficient

ε - Error term

The results indicated that the constant, $\beta_0 = 1.228$ while the coefficient of leadership, $\beta_2 = 0.648$. This means the fitted model would be: Service delivery = $1.228 + 0.648 X_2$. This meant that for every unit increase in leadership there is a positive increase in service delivery. The constant value of 1.228 indicated that if leadership was non-existent then service delivery would still show a positive value. This implied that there were other variable that affect service delivery. The correlation R square value of 0.354 indicated that leadership contributed

35.4 % of service delivery in county governments in Kenya. This underlined the importance of leadership in service delivery in county governments.

These findings were supported by Kosgei (2015) in a study on the effect of leadership development strategies on service delivery who found that leadership strategies affect service delivery. The study observed that leadership strategies improved service delivery. The county government initiatives to improve leadership such as capacity building, motivation strategies and performance management practices contribute to improved service delivery. Twanga (2016) in a study on leadership styles and service delivery agrees with the findings that leadership has a significant effect on service delivery. However, Onserio (2018) in a study on strategy implementation and organizational performance contradicts the findings and asserts that leadership has no effect on performance in the organization.

CONCLUSION

These study findings revealed that leadership has a positive relationship with service delivery in county governments in Kenya. The study concluded that leadership has a significant effect on service delivery in county governments. The findings revealed that leadership explains 35 % of service delivery. Hence it is a major determinant of service

delivery in county governments. The findings concurred with the findings of Kosgei (2015) that leadership influence the service delivered in the

organization. The study also concurred with Abass *et al.* (2017) that leadership has a significant effect on performance in the organization.

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