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ABSTRACT

The changing global business environment has also dramatically transformed the way public sector organizations operate. Consequently, new opportunities have emerged following elimination of old constraints. Central to devolved functions in County Governments delivery is the level of expectation of citizens. Citizens expectations transcend economic status, methods of service delivery, funding methods and geographical boundaries. The objective of this study was to investigate the influence of customer care System on service delivery in County Governments in Kenya. The study was anchored on the administrative management theory of Henri Fayol. This study adopted mix method referred to as concurred-explanatory design. A sample of 431 respondents was selected by first clustering them into respective counties, stratified into departments from which purposive sampling was done to select respondents with the required information for the study. Data was collected using questionnaires that were structured according to the 5 Likert scale. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics with results displayed using figures and tables. Inferential statistics namely correlation and Chi-Square were used to test the validity of the study hypothesis at 5 % levels of significance. The Karl Pearson Correlation coefficients was found to be $r(398) = 0.584$, $p\text{-value}=0.000$. The Pearson Chi-Square was $\chi^2(16, N=398) = 129.78$, $p=0.000 < 0.05$. This revealed that there is a strong positive influence of customer care System on service delivery that is significant at 5% levels of significant. Customer service systems in the county governments should be established so as to enhance personal relationships, reduce misunderstanding and conflicts, strengthen cooperation, reduce time taken to respond to customers' requests and foster understanding.

Key Words: Devolved system of Governance, Customer Care System, Service Delivery.

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INTRODUCTION

In today's highly competitive and constantly changing market place, it is inevitable for governments to give up obsolete ways of doing business and adjust to changes in service delivery their environment (Mlay, Zlotnikova and Watundu 2013). In the world of competition, 'change' is the key word. In organizations where changes are going on at alarming speed, it is needed to switch over from rigid, heretical business style to quick, responding and flexible process. Business Process Reengineering (BPR) is the fundamental rethinking and radical redesign of business processes to achieve dramatic improvement in critical contemporary measures of performance such as cost, service, quality and speed. BPR is boon to those organizations which are young and slow for effective improvement.

Asgarkhani and Patterson (2012), did a study on Customer Care System and Business Process Reengineering through Application of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in Pattaya (Thailand). According to Kamau (2006), customer service involves answering the phones, channeling potential buyers to sales people, answering questions, handling complaints, documenting complaints, calming agitated customers, compensating them, follow up on issues, remedies and offering before and after sales support. In all these areas, ICT if well applied would be of great value to NCWSC in influencing customer service. Wambugu (2010), ICT facilitates the introduction of new delivery channels ATMs, Mobile Banking and the like thereby reducing congestion in banking halls. These too would find ready use in the provision of better services to customers of water companies.

ICT is also shaping the way products meet buyer needs. Wambugu (2010) sought to determine the impact of ICT on commercial banks and found out that it was a crucial tool in service delivery and one which has reduced congestion in banking halls to a great extent. ICT facilitates the introduction of new

delivery channels in the form of ATMs, Mobile Banking, Electronic Cash Transfers and the like. The researcher concludes that the efficiency brought about by ICT in banks can be realised in any other areas of easy access to customers and staff records, data on assets of the organisation as well as in the front office operations.

Maitho (2017) studied the extent of ICT adoption in public procurement in Kenya and its impact on Customer Care System. The study further sought to establish the relationship between the level of ICT adoption and the quality of service delivery in Customer care System and found out that due to the adoption of ICT, the procurement staffs services are timely, more ethical, and that there is enhanced client satisfaction and a reduction on transaction costs.

Ougo (2010) studied ICT as a strategic orientation for service delivery in the Office of the Vice President and Ministry of Home affairs and found out that majority of the respondents believe that the use of ICT has improved service delivery in the ministry and that service delivery to the internal customers is much better now than it was during the days of the manual processes.

Lelei (2007) carried out a study on ICT as a strategic tool in Micro Finance Institutions in Kenya. The study sought to establish the extent to which ICT is used as a strategic tool in MFIs in order to compete effectively and survive in a dynamic and turbulent environment. From the study, it was established that in a majority of the studied organisations, technology has re-written business rules and transformed a standalone environment into entities. The researcher found out that IT in MFIs enabled the businesses to address and accommodate global customers, vendors, suppliers, and local customers on a common ground. In this way, access to customers is simplified and service delivery hastened.

In concurrence, Mugambi (2006) established that the quality of services is considered to be a critical success factor for contemporary service companies and gives reliability as one of the most important characteristics of quality. Assessment of quality is made during the service delivery process. During this process, customers use five principal dimensions namely reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles to judge service quality.

Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons (2011) say that technology can play diverse roles and to varying extents in service delivery. The authors give five different modes of service encounter described as A to E. In mode A, the services are offered free of technology and there is direct encounter between the service provider and the customer as is the case with hair dressing services. In mode B, the services are technology assisted and only the service provider has access to the technology to facilitate the service as is the case with an X-Ray operation. Mode C is technologically facilitated and both the customer and the service provider have the same technology. In all these three modes, both the customer and the service provider need to be in the same location. However in mode D, the service is technologically mediated and the customer and the service provider do not need to be in the same locality. There is no face to face contact between the two parties. In mode E, the service is technologically generated and the human service provider is replaced by technology as is the case with ATM services. Wambugu (2010) established ICT has helped commercial banks in Kenya to introduce new delivery channels in the form of ATMs, Mobile Banking and Electronic Cash Transfers. Maitho (2017) found that the adoption of ICT in the procurement process by government ministries has led to the timely delivery of services, enhanced use of ethical standards, enhanced client satisfaction and a more reliable supply of goods.

The study was anchored on the stakeholder theory which is a theory of organizational management and

business ethics that addresses morals and values in managing an organization. It was originally detailed by Ian Mitroff in his book "Stakeholders of the Organizational Mind, published in 1983 in San Francisco. The stakeholder theory holds that in an organizational set up, interests of all stakeholders should be reconciled and managed in a manner that brings about optimal firm service delivery, it has been established that in a counties set up such interest can be difficult to reconcile as the stakeholders are diverse in nature and possess very divergent interests (Heath, 2004). The public choice theory on the other hand seems to be in conflict with the view that stakeholder interests can be reconciled as it clearly views political interests as possessing supreme influence to the detriment of good performance (Liang et al, (2012). In this study, County Chief Officers are as good as wardens of the principals who will always act in the best interest of the public (Liang et al, (2012). The managers should act in the best interest of the counties but not rather on that of their own, or worse even in the interest of powerful politicians. This indicates that factors affecting and influencing devolved service delivery are diverse and no single theory has been conclusively found to best explain predict and them. There is thus a clear case of a gap and conundrum in literature and subsequently in policy in explaining devolved service delivery.

The county governments are now in charge of overseeing some functions such as the provision of health care, pre-primary education, and maintenance of local roads which were previously the responsibility of Kenya's national government. In turn, these county governments receive a share of national revenue. Several scholars have examined the concept of BPR both at international and local context. Sarang (2012) examined the Implementation of BPR in the Retail Banking Sector in India. Nzewi, (2015) researched on BPR of courier service organizations in Nigeria and Odede (2013) on implementation of BPR in Kenya Revenue Authority.

They found that, BPR initiatives resulted to turnaround time, cost reduction, improved customer service, improved technology and revenue growth. The objective of this study was to investigate the influence of customer care System on service delivery in County Governments in Kenya.

METHODOLOGY

This study used mix method referred to as concurred-explanatory design (Saunders et al., 2016) to assess the effects of business process reengineering on service delivery in County Governments, Kenya. Research design is the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). The location of this study was in the 47 counties in Kenya (Commission for the Implementation of the Constitution, 2017). The targeted population was all the executives of the

county government of Kenya, who consist of Governors, Deputy Governors, County Secretaries, County Executive Committee Members, chief officers, HR director, Finance director, Procurement director ICT director and public service director who total to 1086. A sample of 431 respondents was selected by first clustering them into respective counties, stratified into departments from which purposive sampling was done to select respondents with the required information for the study. Data was collected using questionnaires that were structured according to the 5 Likert scale. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics with results displayed using figures and tables. Inferential statistics namely correlation and Chi-Square were used to test the validity of the study hypothesis at 5 % levels of significance (Zikmund, Babin, Carr and Griffin, 2010).

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Table 1: Customer Care System on Service Delivery

Statement	Not All	Little Extent	Moderate Extent	Great Extent	Very Great Extent
There is Created Wide network for Customer service policies and procedures to ensure that counties treat citizens as best as they can.	20.3	26.4	26.4	20.3	6.5
There is Interpersonal Communication in exchange of information, needs and meaning through customer care System.	13.5	35.2	24.8	17.4	9.1
Customer care System has improved personal relationships, reduce misunderstanding and conflicts, strengthen cooperation, and foster understanding.	15.3	28.4	25.8	16.6	14
Customer care Systems have Reduced time taken in retrieval and processing of data systems.	19.7	20.7	27.4	18.3	13.9

As indicated in Table 1, the researcher found out that a wide network for customer service policies and procedures was moderately created to ensure that counties treat citizens as best as they can according to majority of the respondents (26.4%). This relates to Lelei (2007) whose research found out that enhancing

customer care by embracing IT enables organizations to address and accommodate global customers, vendors, suppliers, and local customers on a common ground. In this way, access to customers is simplified and service delivery hastened making the

organizations compete effectively and survive in a dynamic and turbulent environment.

Majority (35.2%) of the county employees who participated in the study stated that there is only a little extent of interpersonal communication in exchange of information, needs and meaning through customer care System. This what similar the customer service that Kamau (2006) considers to entail answering the phones, channeling potential buyers to sales people, answering questions, handling complaints, documenting complaints, calming agitated customers, compensating them, follow up on issues, remedies and offering before and after sales support.

Customer care system was noted by the majority of respondents (28.4%) to have registered little extent of improvement in personal relationships, reduction of misunderstanding and conflicts, strengthening cooperation and fostering understanding. This is supposed to be implemented by the county

governments as suggested by Mugambi (2006). He established that the quality of services is considered to be a critical success factor for contemporary service companies and gives reliability as one of the most important characteristics of quality. He further postulated that customers service process is assessed using five principal dimensions of service quality namely reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles to judge service quality.

Only a moderate reduction of time taken in retrieval and processing of data systems through the customer care systems as pointed out by majority of the respondents (27.4%). This relates to the findings from a study conducted in Botswana by Ramokate (2010) that showed that records retrieval in the RMU was not consistent, with most response showing that records retrieval could take ten minutes up to two days or more. Ramokate (2010) noted that the length of records retrieval was likely to hamper productivity and the land board's ability to make decisions on time.

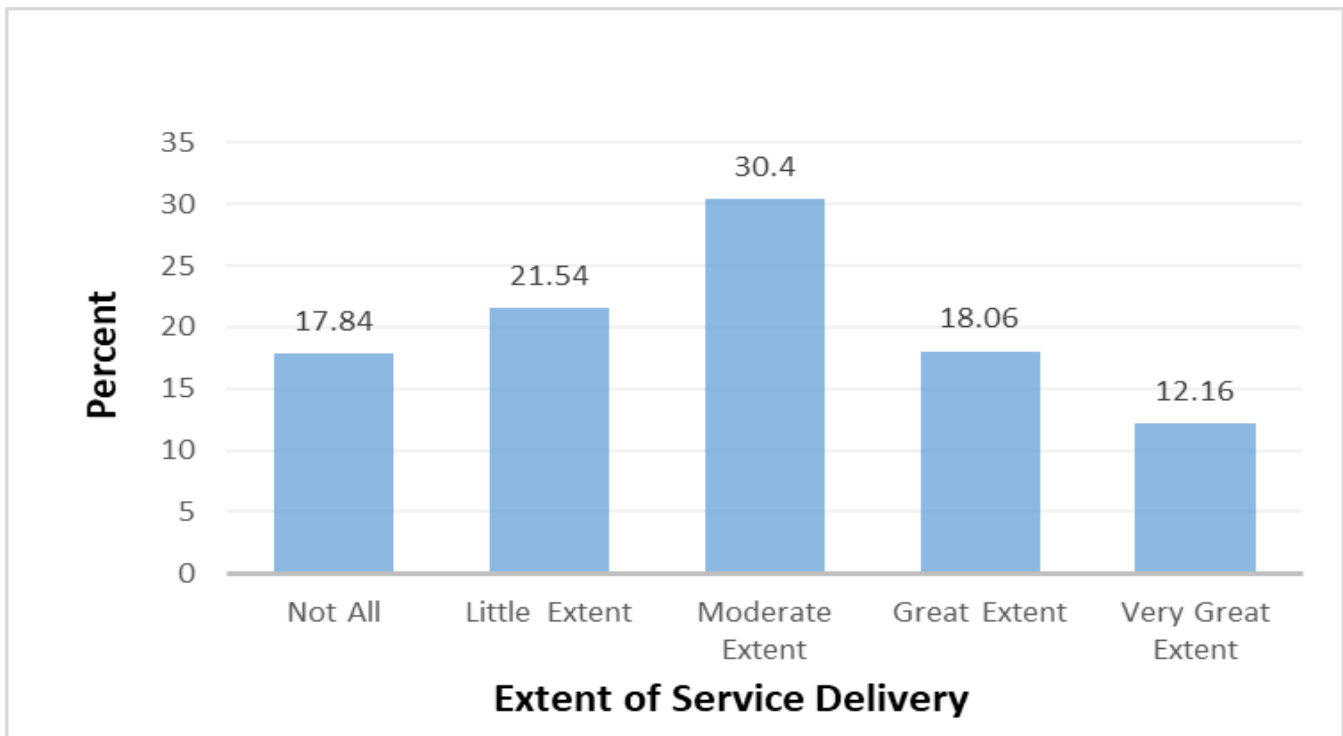


Figure 1: Extent of Service Delivery

According to the majority (30.4 %) of the respondents, service delivery in the county governments is done at moderate extent. This relates to Ronald (2002) who postulates that devolution has been successful in other parts of the world, India, US, Sweden, UK, Uganda, Nigeria, and South Africa. He considers devolution to be a means of transforming the society aims at mobilization of resources for Nation building as it allows experimentation and innovation and has better response to citizen preferences, promotes political participation and sub-national control enhances policy-making legitimacy.

Finally, the researcher sought to establish the influence of customer care System on service delivery. He was guided by the null hypothesis 'There is no significant influence of customer care System on service delivery in County Governments in Kenya.' and the alternative 'There is a significant influence of customer care System on service delivery in County Governments in Kenya.' The Karl Pearson Correlation coefficients was found to be $r(398) = 0.584$, $p\text{-value} = 0.000$. The Pearson Chi-Square was $\chi^2(16, N=398) = 129.78$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$. This informed the rejection of null hypothesis therefore accepting the

alternative hypothesis. This facilitates the conclusion that there a strong positive influence of customer care System on service delivery that is significant at 5% levels of significant. This agrees with Mugambi (2006) who established that the quality of services is considered to be a critical success factor for contemporary service companies and gives reliability as one of the most important characteristics of quality. Assessment of quality is made during the service delivery process. During this process, customers use five principal dimensions namely reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles to judge service quality.

Customer service systems in the county governments should be established so as to enhance personal relationships, reduce misunderstanding and conflicts, strengthen cooperation, reduce time taken to respond to customers' requests and foster understanding. Adequate policy reviews and formulation should be conducted in the county government to ensure that operations of the county officials are focused to rendering quality services to the citizens.

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