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EVIDENCE FROM DEVOLVED GOVERNMENTS IN KENYA*



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## STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE DELIVERY: EVIDENCE FROM DEVOLVED GOVERNMENTS IN KENYA

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### Abstract

Strategic leadership is an important concept as it enables leaders to empower teams through envisioning, anticipating and creation of changes strategically. However, the key challenge in the African context, with regard to political leaders, is that when they assume their state offices, they fail to follow through the promises they made to the electorate. The main objective of the devolved governments is to bring improved services closer to the people. However, despite the Government of Kenya's endeavour to devolve funds to the grassroots, the economic welfare of the people is still poor. The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of strategic leadership on service delivery by County Governments in Kenya. The study was based on the upper echelon theory. This study used positivism research philosophy where quantitative approaches were utilized in a cross-sectional survey. The unit of analysis was the 47 Counties in Kenya. Six respondents were purposively selected from six key departments in the counties and thus the study had a sample size of 282. The study used primary data collected using questionnaires. Data analysis was through descriptive and inferential statistics. The study regression results showed that strategic leadership had a significant influence on service delivery. It was therefore recommended that County Governments must understand the county leadership has to be more strategic and train employees on innovations for better service delivery. The study recommended that the law enforcement agencies should enforce sanction on unethical leaders and employees to ensure more effective service delivery.

**Key words:** Strategic leadership, Service delivery, County governments.

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## 1. Introduction

The concept of strategic leadership is an important consideration in government organizations since it empowers the team leaders through envisioning, anticipating and creation of changes strategically. It is therefore necessary for organization leaders to think strategically when executing their roles for better service delivery. Aziz, Rahman, Alam and Said (2015) indicate that strategic leadership enables organizations to unleash the strength and potential of individuals and thus improve service delivery. This study thus suggested that the quest for satisfactory service delivery in public entities is interlinked with strategic leadership and faces varied challenges (Van Rooyen, 2008). The strategic leadership concept, therefore, emanates from the contention that good leaders are tied around strategies, good organizational structure in place and ethical practices in enhancing service delivery in public entities (Allio, 2015).

Some researchers (such as Bellé, 2013; Caillier, 2014 & Ljungholm 2014) have explored the strategic role of leadership, and investigated how to employ leadership paradigms and use leadership behaviour to improve organizational performance. Strategic leadership measurements are derived from Jansen, Vera and Crossan (2009) who suggested that strategic leadership encompasses idealized influence, vision development, inspirational-motivation and contingent reward. Visionary leadership is transformative and managerial in nature and thus ensuring that the vision, formulated strategies, mission and strategic objectives of the organization are achieved successfully as planned (Edersheim, 2010). David (2010) highlights the need for strategic leaders in organizations to appreciate the contextual uniqueness and thus come up with ways of advancing the organization's key mandate

in the face of scarce resources. Reward leadership enables efficient achievement of targets and objectives through and by linking performance of the job and values and also ensuring that employees access necessary and needed resources to do the assigned job. Further, visionary leadership is tasked to create the vision, make a communication, enable modelling of the vision, and eventually building the necessary commitment and support to achieve the vision.

The concept of service delivery is derived from the process of providing satisfactory services. The service delivery concept has been defined in many different ways. Bass (2007) referred to it as a bundle of customers or the things that offered or enhanced value or utility to such a customer. Further, Fox and Mayer (1995) describe service delivery as the undertaking of public activities meant to benefit and satisfy the needs of the citizenry. This is through utilization of resources geared towards a particular mandate of an organization to offer certain good or service in a given sector. This study argues that 'service delivery', as a variable, is widely used in developmental studies in the public sector. Service delivery in public entities is defined by political promises and commitments by the government agencies and other political players whose credibility is largely shaky (Keefer, 2004). It is therefore necessary to assess service delivery of county governments in Kenya based on performance measures, which are deemed to have direct effect on the operation and efficiency to the citizens who receive the services.

County governments constitute one of the two levels of government in Kenya. The other level is the National Government. Article 1(4) of the Constitution of Kenya spells out how the people exercise their diverse sovereign powers at both the national level and the county level. Article

6(1) divides the Kenyan territory into 47 counties whose boundaries are marked by the First Schedule. The national and county governments are clearly distinct though inter-dependent and are expected to maintain mutual relations based on consultation and cooperation (Government of Kenya, 2010; Kanyinga, 2016).

The quest for quality and satisfactory services by public entities remains a complex issue, which continues to preoccupy scholars and practitioners globally. Notwithstanding service delivery being a common subject in economics, politics and scholarly discourses, there are limited studies seeking and providing answers to what can or does influence services offered by public entities. While Van Rooyen (2008) and Packard (2009) identified strategic leadership, organization structure and ethical practices as being linked to service delivery, they failed to probe the nature of the linkages among these concepts. The study's focus on strategic leadership, organization structure and ethical practices and their influence on service delivery, is also in line with contentions by Scott and Enukwesi (2018), who held that there is need to continuously ascertain the nature of linkages among concepts affecting service delivery.

In the Kenya context, several attempts have been made at dealing with or rather reducing unnecessary government layers for service delivery to be effective to the populace. This is because devolvement of funds and governance to the locals is fundamental for both social and economic development of the country, improved wellbeing and also delivery of the operations of the government (Mkutu et al., 2014). Kenyans have had high hopes in devolution so that they could change the kind of governance they have to a government characterized by ethical practices, effectiveness, efficiency and responsiveness.

Despite the Government of Kenya's endeavour to devolve funds to the grassroots, the economic welfare of the people is still poor. This is mainly due to bureaucratic inefficiencies, weak or absence of ethics, unequal or uneven distribution of national resources and more so no or minimal community participation in development locally, among others (Murugu, 2014). It is noteworthy, that the study by Omari, Kaburi & Sewe (2013) on the challenges of devolution in Kenya was constrained by lack of adequate data as the County Governments had just been operationalized and did not have proper records which could be relied upon satisfactorily. In their case, D'Arcy and Cornell (2016) used the concepts of corporate governance and corruption in Kenya while addressing issues of ethical practices, and thus were unable to get a true picture of the phenomena in the County Governments.

The gaps to be addressed by this study are aptly captured by a UNECA Report (2005), which observed that despite enough evidence of poor services in Africa there are limited studies set in the unique African context seeking to offer insights into how to remedy the situation. This was also observed by Matshabaphala (2007) in his study on service delivery in South Africa, where limitations on the application of the strategic leadership concept in public entities was noted. The existing studies have also not explored the influence of strategic leadership on service delivery in the context of public sector entities. This is despite the trend where strategic leadership has been identified in extant literature as key for service delivery in public entities. This led to this study's primary contention to answering the research question: What is the influence of strategic leadership on service delivery in County Governments in Kenya?

## 2. Literature Review

## 2.1 Theoretical Foundation

The Upper Echelon Theory (UET) as developed by Hambrick and Mason (1984) views strategic organizational processes and outcomes as a product of managerial qualities of topmost managers. Hambrick and Mason's (1984) as well as Hambrick's (2007) arguments are a basis for this study, which also holds that styles (such as strategic leadership) and the characteristics of the top leadership (such as ethicality) shape the services offered by county governments. The central tenet of the Upper Echelon Theory is that organizations are a reflection of the skills, expertise and values of the senior leaders as they work at a strategic level (Carpenter & Reilly, 2006). This theory provides an outline, which expressly provides a method of establishing the role of strategic leaders and how they affect performance of an organization. The key proposition is that the performance of an organization and strategic decisions are affected in part by strategic leaders.

The Upper Echelon Theory critics hold that the theory overstates the influence of top leadership and especially in public agencies where there is no clear definition on who is the top leadership due to the conflict between elected and appointed leaders (Herman & Smith, 2015). Rost and Osterloh (2010) have also argued that upper echelon theory's proposition that top leaders make rational decisions has not been empirically tested and proven. This is especially prevalent among elected leaders who make irrational promises before elections and then implement different projects once elected. Upper Echelon Theory was thus deemed suitable in studying the link between strategic leadership and service delivery in the context of county governments in Kenya.

## 2.2 Strategic Leadership

Strategic leadership is defined as the interaction between leaders and their followers and how such leaders influence

the said followers in pursuing certain organizational goals through exchange and application of individuals' tacit and explicit knowledge in a certain thinking pattern to enhancing service delivery (Judge & Long, 2012). Strategic leaders are endowed with abilities and managerial acumen to build suitable organizational capacity for enhancing learning to cope with dynamic changes (Schoemaker & Krupp, 2015). The emphasis that strategic leaders are visionary by description requires the ability to strike a balance between short-term and long-term organization obligations (Rowe, 2001). Moreover, strategic leadership requires application of unique personality traits, skills and management styles, which in the context of the organisation.

Strategic leaders define key and crucial organizational strategic change moments, create appropriate strategies and translate such strategies into actions in operational terms for the change direction required (Mulcaster, 2008). This is important for any organization that is obligated to achieve the desired goals as far as key stakeholders' interests are taken into the equation. Strategic leadership measurements are derived from Jansen, Vera and Crossan (2009) who suggested that strategic leadership encompasses idealized influence, vision development, inspirational-motivation and contingent reward. Visionary leadership is transformative and managerial in nature and thus ensuring that the vision, formulated strategies, mission and strategic objectives of the organization are achieved successfully as planned (Edersheim, 2010).

David (2010) highlights the need for strategic leaders in organizations to appreciate the contextual uniqueness and thus come up with ways of advancing the organization's key mandate in the face of scarce resources. Reward leadership enables efficient achievement of targets

and objectives through and by linking performance of the job and values and also ensuring that employees access necessary and needed resources to do the assigned job. Further, visionary leadership is tasked to create the vision, make a communication, enable modelling of the vision, and eventually building the necessary commitment and support to achieve the vision. Moreover, Bellé (2013) notes that visionary leaders, on many occasions are more effective than transactional leaders, an argument that is, however, disputed by others (Caillier, 2014; Ljungholm, 2014). Besides, Ljungholm (2014) suggests that transactional and also visionary leadership qualities may be applied broadly including seeking rewards from external sources where there are insufficient resources. Transactional, visionary leaders also work well where situations seem ambiguous, and even complex as they are able to enhance followers' commitment through their knowledge base.

Ayee (1998) indicates that there are instances in which transactional leadership is the required leadership style, such as when the followers are not willing to adhere to the vision of the leader. Strategic leadership measurements in this study are therefore derived from Mutali (2017) who identified idealized influence, vision development, inspirational-motivation and contingent-reward as reliable indicators of strategic leadership. Visionary leadership is transformative and managerial in nature and thus ensures that the vision, formulated strategies mission and strategic objectives of the organization are achieved successfully as planned (Milner & Joyce, 2012).

### **2.3 Service Delivery**

The concept of service delivery is derived from the process of providing satisfactory services. The service delivery concept has been defined in many different ways. Bass (2007) referred to it as a bundle of

customers or the things that offered or enhanced value or utility to such a customer. Further, Fox and Mayer (1995) describe service delivery as the undertaking of public activities meant to benefit and satisfy the needs of the citizenry. This is through utilization of resources geared towards a particular mandate of an organization to offer certain good or service in a given sector.

Latif and Ismail (2010) provide an argument on how to measure service delivery in forms of benefits to stakeholders, impact on the intended objectives and performance of an organization and society at large. Gacenga et al. (2011) argue that measures of service delivery include: customer satisfaction, service quality, service availability, resource utilization, standardized services, improved processes and reduced costs. It is through this argument that the current study adopts these measurements with a view to determine the overall service delivery index within the surveyed organizations. This study argues that 'service delivery', as a variable, is widely used in developmental studies in the public sector. Service delivery in public entities is defined by political promises and commitments by the government agencies and other political players whose credibility is largely shaky (Keefer, 2004).

### **2.4 Strategic Leadership and Service Delivery in Public Organizations**

There are numerous studies which were reviewed in different contexts cutting across spheres of the developing and developed countries as far as strategic leadership and service delivery is concerned, with varying conclusions (Allio 2015; Schutte, Barkhuizen & Swanepoel 2014; Matshabaphala 2007; Masungu & Marangu, 2015). There are contentions that the impact of strategic leadership on service delivery is felt across the whole organization or the key departments, and extends the influence to external

organizational elements (Narayanan & Zane, 2009).

Allio (2015) argues that strategic leadership traits possessed by organizational leaders can lead to better service delivery in a well-managed combination of strategic leaders. Further, Schutte et al. (2014) argue that strategic leaders in public entities are faced with unique operating environment as they have to contend with conflicting political, legislative and public demands and expectations and, therefore, for quality service delivery to be realized they have to manage the context of the conflict in a well-balanced constructs including better ideas and vision focus.

Sila and Gichinga (2016) concluded that strategic leadership and service delivery relate significantly as the former plays a critical role in the effective service delivery. It was found that strategic leaders play a role of fostering service delivery through communication and strategic direction and thus the motivation by the study to test whether this would hold in county governments in Kenya. On the other hand, in South African organizations, Abashe (2016) found a positive but weak and insignificant relationship between strategic leadership and service delivery.

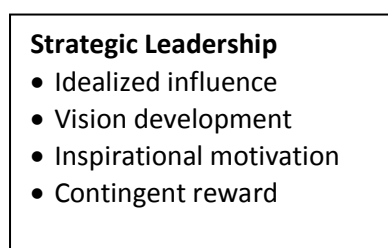
Abashe concluded that though strategic leaders develop the strategic vision, set goals and objectives of the organization; in some organizations the influence on service delivery may not be pronounced in the short term.

Edersheim (2010), studying leadership behaviour in successful organizations, also added his voice to the debate that the management challenge is manifested in the strategy implementation process concerning customers' satisfaction. Another study by Jooste and Fourie (2009), found that the poor service delivery is due to incapable strategic leaders who are viewed as key drivers to structural change that emphasise on service delivery. The study concluded that strategic leadership positively contributes to better service delivery in South African organizations.

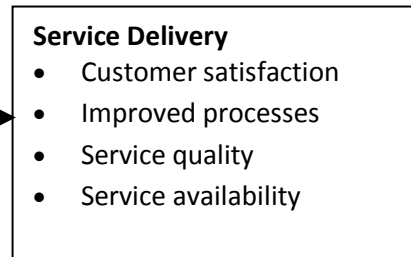
## 2.5 Conceptual Framework

According to Ravitch and Riggan (2012), a conceptual framework is a figure that illustrates the relationship among the study concepts and sub-variables. The conceptual framework that guided this study was formulated after a thorough theoretical and literature review. The framework is provided in Figure 1.

### Independent variable



### Dependent variable



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework on Strategic Leadership and Service**

### Delivery

In this study, strategic leadership is the dependent variable operationalized through idealized influence, vision development, inspirational motivation and

contingent reward. Strategic leaders are geared towards the vision of the organization to enable meeting the goals and objectives of the organization for enhanced service delivery (Morgeson, DeRue & Karam, 2010). Strategic leaders

can achieve this by developing vision, having multiple ideas, motivating the functional units and rewarding to facilitate innovation. The dependent variable in the study was service delivery. This was operationalized through customer satisfaction, improved processes, service quality and service availability. Latif Din and Ismail (2010) provide an argument on how to measure service delivery in forms of benefits to stakeholders, impact on the intended objectives and performance of an organization and society at large. Gacenga et al. (2011) argue that measures of service delivery include: customer satisfaction, service quality, service availability, resource utilization, standardized services, improved processes and reduced costs. This conceptual framework led to the hypothesis;

*H<sub>1</sub>: Strategic leadership has a significant influence on service delivery of county governments in Kenya.*

### **3. Methodology**

This study adopted a positivist philosophy because it was purely quantitative. The idea of positivism was considered appropriate in conducting this study because the collection and organization of data was systematic and methodical which ensured that the relationships are determined to facilitate informed decision-making. The research design applied in this study was a descriptive cross-sectional survey. The choice of the research design was informed by the type of analysis required, purpose of the study, knowledge stage and involvement of the researcher (Machuki, 2011). Normally, the quantitative approach is related to the deductive method of testing established theories (Oakshott, 2014). The research aimed at getting the required information within the period chosen using quantitative data, thus, having a strong snap shot of what is happening within the period.

The target population for the study was defined as the 47 Counties in Kenya as per

The Kenya Constitution (2010). The study purposively selected six departments which were common across all the counties and offered services that were similar in all the counties. These were: Education, Health Services, Public Works, Economic Planning, Natural Resources and Agriculture. Chief Officers were selected to participate in the study. The study targeted 282 respondents but the questionnaires collected and found usable were 272. The filled questionnaires were aggregated as per the county governments. The questionnaire was administered using the 'drop and pick up later' method. Reliability and validity of the instruments was tested using Cronbach alpha. Data was analysed at two levels – descriptive statistics level and inferential statistics level. Descriptive analysis was through standard deviations, mean scores and frequency distributions. Inferential analysis was through simple linear regression to test the hypotheses.

### **4. Analysis and Findings**

The study targeted 282 respondents and 272 respondents filled and returned the questionnaires forming a 96.45% response rate, which was considered adequate for analysis. Studies such as Mkalama (2014) and Munyoki (2014) had similar response rates. On education level, 43.8% of the respondents had a Bachelor's degree and a similar percentage had Master's degree. This suggested that the study's respondents were highly educated. The results support previous empirical research that showed that higher levels of education are associated with enhanced service delivery (Kariuki, Awino & Ogutu, 2012). The results, thus, indicate that the respondents had the ability to make informed decisions that could influence service delivery.

The study determined the influence of strategic leadership on service delivery. Strategic leadership measurements were captured along the five dimensions of idealized influence, vision development,



inspirational motivation and contingent reward. To capture the data on the various strategic leadership dimensions, descriptive statements derived from literature were presented to the respondents on a 5-point Likert scale. The test generated the mean scores and standard deviations. The results for strategic leadership manifestation in the counties were arranged in line with the

four components of strategic leadership: idealized influence, vision development, inspirational motivation and contingent reward. Further, responses from participants in the same county were aggregated as the unit of analysis was 47 county governments. The findings are as indicated in Table 1.

**Table 1: Strategic Leadership Constructs**

Variable manifestations	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Idealized influence	47	3.954	.747
Vision development	47	3.967	.801
Inspirational motivation	47	3.952	.818
Contingent reward	47	3.989	.788
Average Mean score	<b>47</b>	<b>3.965</b>	<b>0.834</b>

The results in Table 1 show that contingent rewards had the highest overall mean score of 3.989 and standard deviation of 0.788. This was followed by vision development (Mean = 3.967, SD = 0.801). Further, idealized influence had an overall mean of 3.954 and standard deviation of 0.747. Lastly was inspirational motivation (mean = 3.952, standard deviation = 0.818). These results indicate that contingent rewards to employees is the most influential factor in wooing employees for appropriate service delivery in the county government of Kenya. Issuing of contingent rewards aid in motivation, clarifying expectations for employees and inspiring employees to make progress towards fulfilment of goals in the organization.

The development of the vision by strategic leaders was also found out to strongly influence service delivery (Mean = 3.967, SD = 0.801). For the triumph of any leadership structure in a firm, it is necessary that the organization's vision is communicated well and adequately

through appropriate channels. An organization's vision is necessary in projecting the direction for the company's level of achievement for the next five to ten years. Therefore, strategic leaders are mandated to set the company's vision, and give clear communication and guidance to ensure the employees are much aware of what is expected of them to ensure that the vision is reached.

The study further established that county leadership demonstrates good knowledge as they execute their roles, which aided in giving direction to employees. When leaders are well-equipped and aware of their duties, employees are able to believe in them and, therefore, they are admired respected as well as followed. Setting a good example by a strategic leader is important towards achievement and implementation of the organization's goals. It further outlined importance of training offered to employees and its impact to performance of employees on service delivery. Professional development through training is critical as it encourages

employees with different backgrounds and levels of experience to share information.

Inspirational motivation had the lowest overall mean score of 3.952 and standard deviation of 0.818 which portrays that leaders in the county government did not indicate the aspect of inspirational motivation to a great extent. A strategic leader who portrays a high level of inspirational motivation is a leader who sets high standards, motivates achievement of higher level of performances as well as gives a clear communication of visions and goals. It is crucial for the strategic leadership team to build an atmosphere of trust with the employees, which can be done by defining the organizational values to determine conduct on how to relate and behave with each other. It will be expected that a strategic leader acts out the very

same conduct that he or she outlines to the employees or subordinates.

Service delivery was the dependent variable. Gacenga et al. (2011) held that measures of service delivery include customer satisfaction, service quality, service availability, resource utilization, standardized services, improved processes and reduced costs. It is through this argument that the study integrated these measurements with a view of determining the overall service delivery index within the surveyed organizations on a 5-point Likert scale where respondents rated the level of service delivery. Responses from respondents in the same country were aggregated and averaged. The results were presented on Table 2.

**Table 2: Service Delivery Attributes**

<b>Variable manifestations</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Health facilities infrastructure and equipment's.	47	3.5441	.79079
Drugs provision.	47	3.5772	.86304
Health workers welfare.	47	3.4816	.90265
Ambulance services.	47	3.5662	.78925
Early childhood education.	47	3.8893	.79040
Polytechnics building and maintenance.	47	3.7528	.84423
Libraries building and maintenance	47	3.4706	1.10978
Lands survey and mapping.	47	3.8199	.87645
Sports facilities building and maintenance.	47	3.9631	.86720
Roads building and maintenance.	47	3.8419	.86379
Water access, quality and availability.	47	3.7868	.86257
Waste management.	47	3.9044	.92138
Markets building and maintenance.	47	3.9446	.83482
Agricultural extension services.	47	4.1697	.87290
Street lighting.	47	4.0404	.88145
Firefighting and disaster management.	47	4.0000	.92525

Bus parks building and maintenance.	47	4.0846	.82635
<b>Average mean score</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>3.814</b>	<b>.8930</b>

The average mean score for service delivery was 3.814 with a standard deviation of 0.8930. This is high agreement depicting enhanced service delivery in the county governments in Kenya. All the service delivery measures recorded means above 3.0, with high level of rating among the responses on the statement measure of Agricultural extension services as shown by the mean of 4.1697. This means that service delivery to citizens by county governments was above averagely met. The statements that depicted low variations in responses are the measure of early childhood education and bus parks building and maintenance respectively. Traditionally, many services in Kenya had their ancestry in the national delivery system at the centre. Over time the government adopted devolution through the provision of services by the County Governments. This expansion has broadened the scope for public service.

These include subsidies to ensure availability of services at reasonable price as well as application of licensing and regulatory arrangements that are designed to impact the market for particular services. Although county governments were introduced to enable equal distribution of resources in the country, the study established that this has not been fully implemented. Therefore, the national government needs to audit its procedures and ensure that adopting of county governments facilitate equal distribution of resources.

County governments have made key efforts in ensuring services reach the

corners of the country as it is outlined and emphasized in the constitution. The evidence shows that services such as putting up and maintaining health infrastructure as well as buying new medical equipment were being felt in the counties. Early Childhood Education was another service where the efforts by County Governments were being felt according to the study findings. Other decentralized services are thus reaping key benefits to the nation like sports through building of stadiums and improved bus parks which facilitate movement of people.

This study confirms that devolution through County Governments has enabled access to facilities, urbanized some rural areas and also provided agricultural extension serves. These have enabled farmers in rural areas to access urban markets and get better prices for their products. Improved infrastructural facilities such as transport have enabled farmers to transport their produce in time to avoid losses by the produce going bad. Other benefits are expansion of bus parks building and maintenance, street lighting, fire fighting and disaster management services, sports facilities building and maintenance, markets building and maintenance, waste management and early childhood education.

The study then determined the influence of strategic leadership on service delivery. The results were as presented on Table 3.

**Table 3: Effect of Strategic Leadership and Service Delivery**

<b>Model Summary</b>						
Model		R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
Strategic leadership		.515	.265	.249	1.04999	
a. Predictors: (Constant) Strategic leadership						
<b>ANOVA<sup>a</sup></b>						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Strategic leadership	Regression	17.878	1	17.878	16.217	.000 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	49.611	45	1.102		
	Total	67.489	46			
a. Dependent Variable: Service delivery						
b. Predictors: (Constant) Strategic leadership						
<b>Combined coefficients</b>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)		1.321	.339		3.893	.000
Strategic leadership		.764	.190	.515	4.027	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Service delivery						

Source: Researcher's field data (2018)

The results indicate that there is a moderate association between strategic leadership and service delivery ( $R = 0.515$ ). The coefficient of determination  $R^2 = 0.265$  implies that strategic leadership explains 26.5% of the variation in service delivery. The other variables in the county governments explain the remaining 73.5%. This result is an indicator of the strong influence of strategic leadership on service delivery. The analysis from the model had

an F value of 16.217 with p-value  $< 0.05$ , while the results of the beta coefficient showed that a unit increase in strategic leadership will cause a 0.764 increase in service delivery ( $B = 0.764$ ,  $t = 4.027$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This finding implies that strategic leadership is a good predictor of service delivery in County Governments of

Kenya. The foregoing results were sufficient to accept the first hypothesis that

strategic leadership has a significant influence on service delivery.

## 5. Discussion

The results provide evidence that strategic leadership strengthens and enhances service delivery which relates to the findings by Covin, Green and Slevin (2006). Moreover, Allio (2015) argues that strategic leadership traits possessed by organizational leaders can lead to better service delivery in a well-managed combination of strategic leaders. According to Masungu and Marangu (2015), the advantage and success of an organization in service delivery depends on strategic leaders who are involved in

directing and mobilization of employees to achieving both present and future desires of that particular organization as far as service delivery is concerned. It is therefore expected that organizations put in place the right strategic leaders are put in place in an organization.

As noted by Schutte et al. (2014) strategic leaders in public entities must be faced with unique operating environment as they have to contend with conflicting political, legislative and public demands and expectations and therefore for quality service delivery to be realized, they have to manage the context of the conflict in a well-balanced construct including better ideas and vision focus. Strategic leaders, therefore, have the responsibility of setting the right structure depending on how they intend to distribute information towards achieving key results. Service delivery is deemed crucial in the organization and also helps to steer the right decisions that are generated within the framework of the right structures. According to Okibo and Shikanda (2011), the relevant leadership behaviour is crucial to improve creation of awareness in organizations. It is important for leaders to shape the behaviours of their followers, including ethics, so that they

can practice in the quest to provide services to the public to enhance transparency. It is therefore expected that the right strategic leaders are put in place in an organization, for any service delivery to be realized (Schutte, Barkhuizen & Swanepoel 2014).

Abashe (2016) further established a positive but weak relationship between strategic leadership and service delivery. Strategic leadership and service delivery relate significantly as the former plays a critical role in the effective delivery of services. It was found out that strategic leaders play a role of fostering service delivery through communication and also through strategic direction. The findings, therefore, reflect that for County Governments in Kenya to continuously improve on service delivery, their respective strategic leaders are to be evaluated and realigned to their key objectives. This is in line with the significant results that strategic leadership was found to play towards fostering service delivery in County Governments.

## 6. Implication and Recommendations

Arising from the results and findings, the study makes several recommendations to different stakeholders. The study proposes that County Governments should embrace professionalism through having strategic leaders in place as a tactical factor to enhance service delivery by setting a clear vision and mission as well as setting goals and good plans that enable them to have a framework through which they can achieve their mandate. The County Governments should further consider adopting leadership strategies and offering training to their employees on how to become leaders so as to encourage thinking and efficiency in operations, which would significantly improve the delivery of services to the public. This should be embraced through providing responsiveness to innovativeness and rewarding innovative ideas as well as

enhancing the staff treatment and being staff cantered.

Additionally, the county leadership needs to consider adopting strategic leadership strategies on knowledge management. This should be done through capacity building and offering training to the employees on how to become leaders so as to encourage accountability and efficiency in operations and hence promoting service delivery. This should be embraced through providing responsiveness to innovation and rewarding new ideas as well as improving how the staff is generally treated at work. County government leadership needs to foster sustainability of innovation through investing in research and learning. This can be done by equipping public servants and staff with problem-solving skills as well as knowledge of the challenges faced by citizens and expose them to innovative public service solutions. This innovation will also facilitate solving of public service challenges.

The study further recommended that leadership among county governments should among other things consider strategic plans, which will guide the process of strategy implementation. The structures underlined among the counties should be enhanced to match the changing trends. The County Governments should also initiate measures to streamline communication between and among management and employees, and also among employees themselves to enhance service delivery. For the smooth implementation of strategy, the county should enhance the process of making decisions through putting in place the best structure. Employee involvement is also encouraged during the process of implementing the strategy among the county governments in Kenya. The leadership should further find a way of exploring the potential of the employees in question to deliver better services. The

county leadership must further ensure that employees have necessary skills and also required knowledge for the assigned tasks towards service delivery.

This study supported the contributions by the Upper Echelon Theory on issues related to strategic leadership and service delivery. The findings of this study demonstrated that the variables considered are important in a developing country and that it helps in identifying theories unique to county governments and enhances how conceptualization of the variables are important in building further on these variables. The study has demonstrated that County Governments do operate in a situation where service delivery is expected by citizens and therefore need to apply various leadership paradigms.

Lastly, strategic leadership manifests itself differently in the County Governments in Kenya. Some dimensions are significant while others are not on the different indicators of service delivery. It is therefore prudent that County Governments understand the service delivery dimension in order to carry out frequent analysis and develop strategic leadership concepts relevant to their counties. The results of this study should help practitioners in County Governments to make long term decisions to address the constraints that could possibly lead to low service delivery along their respective functional departments as a results of leadership aspects.

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