



Effects of Functional Strategies on Service Delivery in Meru County Government, Kenya

Olivia Gakii Murithi^{1*}, Dr Robert Obuba²

¹*Master of Education, Mount Kenya University*

²*Lecturer of School of Education, Mount Kenya University*

**Corresponding author email: sgatho40@gmail.com*

Abstract

The Meru County government had devised functional strategies; however, their execution had been lacking, resulting in unsatisfactory service delivery. Moreover, funds in Meru County had been redirected to unauthorized expenditures, with the government unable to provide documentation for a spending amounting to Sh209 million in the 2021/2022 fiscal year. Challenges faced by the County government extended to limited financial resources and instances of fund misappropriation. The study aimed to explore the effects of functional strategies on service delivery in Meru County Government. The theoretical foundation of the study incorporated ideas from Strategic Fit Theory. To carry out the research, an explanatory research design was employed. Both primary and secondary data was utilized, with primary data collected through the use of semi-structured questionnaires. A pilot test was carried out in the Embu County government to reveal the reliability and validity of the research instrument. Qualitative data analysis employed thematic analysis, presenting the results in a narrative format. For quantitative data, both descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized. Descriptive statistics encompassed frequency distribution, mean (indicating central tendency), standard deviation (measuring dispersion), and percentages. Inferential statistics involved Pearson correlation analysis and multivariate regression analysis. The study found that Functional strategies account for 83.0% of the performance in Meru County Government. The study recommends that county governments should develop policies to ensure effective control of county activities and enhance staff supervision across various departments.

Keywords: Functional, strategies, performance, service, strategic fit.

1. Introduction

Service delivery referred to the contact between organizations and customers in which the organization was expected to provide a service, such as assistance, support, product, information or a job, and the customer either loses or gains value as a consequence (Adewole, Reid, Oni, & Adebawale, 2022). Regarding public services, service delivery was the distribution of essential resources and public services including water, power, sanitary facilities, agricultural extension services, health services, business registration services, security and education among others (Council on Foreign Relations, 2022). To enable governments to enhance service delivery to their citizens, they developed various policies, strategies, plans and interventions aimed at improving service delivery. According to Massey and Johnston (2018), implementation of these plans, strategies, interventions and policies lied at the heart of improvement of service delivery. Citizens all over the world were increasingly demanding better services from their governments and the clamor for governments to become more accountable and provide value for money was increasing. In the United States (US), there was a requirement for federal agencies to prioritize service delivery to people in all of their work.

According to Mitchell (2018), the United States federal government made a total of 36 pledges to improve the customer experience across 17 different federal departments. These commitments was all aimed at improving the lives of individuals and the delivery of public services. There was a high degree of citizen satisfaction with the delivery of public services throughout Europe, which was equivalent to the level of satisfaction in the United States. However, the levels in Europe were higher compared to levels of citizen satisfaction with service delivery in Central Asia (Bryer, 2021).

Notwithstanding the negative social and economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent global economic crisis, since 2006, satisfaction with public service delivery has increased in most nations in Europe and

Central Asia (Bryer, 2021). Nonetheless, in comparison to Western European nations, the degree of satisfaction with the delivery of public services in Eastern European and Central Asian nations remains lower (Fiszbein, Ringold, & Rogers, 2019). There were three crucial factors that could explain why satisfaction with public service delivery was lower in transition nations than in their western counterparts. These included more undeveloped systems for grievance resolution, relatively higher reported use of public services in Eastern European and Central Asian nations, and greater reported incidence of unofficial payments.

In China, government process re-engineering (GPR) and internal departmental reforms in India aimed to solve issues with the delivery of government services. GPR was fundamentally about enhancing citizen access to public services and the advantages that follow (Ke, Wang, Salmon, & Tang, 2021). Measures of service delivery focus on reliability, access and effectiveness with which the government was able to provide the various services from health to provision of information to its citizenry. In India, a persistent, cross-government service delivery procedure was established and it was tailored to the life events that matter most to individuals in health, education and sustainability indicators (Frantz & Jain, 2017).

The provision of services by the national government and municipalities in South Africa was unreliable, which posed a significant danger to some groups and causes significant disruptions. As a consequence of this, there have been an increased number of demonstrations or protests about service delivery, with the goal of achieving higher service delivery (Council on Foreign Relations, 2022). Besides, Ihemeje (2018), observed that to effectively provide public service to the population, local government in Nigeria played a crucial role. However, more than 70% of Nigeria's population was not satisfied with service delivery by governments including health facilities, electricity, water supply, roads and schools. This has resulted to various reforms and initiatives to enhance service delivery including use of technology, and enhancing accountability and governance. In Ethiopia, due to people's discontent with the quality-of-service delivery and a growing agreement that it was the primary source of all-around problems in the public sector, the Ethiopian government started conducting reform in service delivery in 2010 (Moti, 2021). The need to reimagine public service served as the primary justification for civil service reform in Ethiopia and the government was keen to assess and influence the elements impacting service delivery quality.

In Kenya, Kerubo and Muturi (2019) observed that devolution was intended to enhance how citizens get services from the government. The authors however observed that service delivery was still relatively subpar notwithstanding the devolution of functions to the Counties. Moreover, Mutuma, Stephen, and Makau (2022), indicated that even though there has been sufficient public participation across Counties in Kenya, the performance of devolved governments was still minimal, as was service delivery. This was indicated by poor reliability, quality and efficiency of the services provided to the citizens. Besides, a citizen-driven service delivery study was conducted by Ochieng (2023) with a focus on the public's view of selected County Governments' performance in certain service delivery sectors in order to objectively analyze public perception of service delivery. The study determined that measures of service delivery that citizens considered were political (participatory democracy), economic (ease of doing business), environmental trends (environmental sustainability) and social (human development indicators, such as access to education, health, and the reduction of poverty).

Service delivery was when an organization offered a service, such as support, a product, information, or a job, and as a result, the recipient either loses or receives value (Sharma, 2002). Besides, service delivery was defined by Naidu (2021) as the relationship between a service provider and a client in which the client relied on the supplier of services to meet certain demands. In relation to public organizations, the provision of basic resources and public services, such as electricity, water and sanitary facilities, health services, agricultural extension services, business registration services, security, and education, among others, was known as service delivery (Bryer, 2021). To assess the service delivery of various public organizations, various measures have been applied. There was no consensus on the measures to adopt for the various services provided by public organizations and thus organizations use various and diverse measures.

The usage of the service quality (SERVQUAL) model was something that Sharma (2002) recommends for. SERVQUAL was an all-encompassing statistic that was based on five fundamental aspects of customer service. This comprised tangibles, which included the outward look of the facility, the personnel, and the materials used for communication. The capacity of your attraction to provide the experience that the consumer had paid for in a way that was both accurate and dependable was referred to as reliability. The readiness of your firm to assist consumers and offer replies in a timely manner was referred to as responsiveness. Assurance referred to the capacity of your team to reassure consumers and communicate confidence in each and every facet of the guest experience offered. Empathy was the desire of each and every consumer to get the kind of loving and individualized attention.

Naidu (2021) supported the SERVQUAL model which assesses the governments' service delivery capability through reliability, assurance, tangibility, responsiveness and empathy. Additionally, Bryson (2015) indicated that service delivery could be measured by the dependability, accessibility, and efficiency with which the government was able to supply its citizens with a range of services. Public organizations developed objective measures such as the number of days it took to register a business, increase in food production, homes that could access piped water, and number of people served in a hospital to track service delivery.

Follow-up surveys and post-service ratings generally speaking, these surveys allowed visitors more time to consider their experience than the post-visit ratings above, which was given right away following a visit. Multiple questions might be included in the follow-up survey to elicit more thorough answers. As a follow-up email, the company might

ask your visitors to complete a SERVQUAL survey rating various aspects of your customer service. Businesses got a more comprehensive understanding of visitors' opinions on the attraction as a whole by using these surveys.

The era of new public management and human relations brought to the fore the importance of citizens in measuring service delivery. Comite (2018) advocated that to measure service delivery, citizens must be involved in coming up with the measures and in the actual measurement. This viewpoint was supported by Massey and Johnston (2018) that post-service or periodic ratings by citizens who receive government services was one of the most effective service delivery measures. This method involved asking citizens to rate the public services as soon as it was provided or at certain pre-planned intervals. The citizen rating measure of service delivery was indicated as an objective measure that assesses public perception of service delivery (Bryer, 2021). This was objective since the public was the recipients of the services. This study used the post-service measure of service delivery where citizens were asked to indicate their perception of County Governments' performance in certain service delivery areas such as access to health, roads, ease of doing business, corruption, and security. Immediately following their visit, guests was asked to rate their experience, and this metric was calculated. Since the memories were still fresh in their thoughts, it's a great method to gain a raw view of how visitors was feeling after their stay. A digital kiosk or customer experience app was set up to let them rate their experience on a scale of one to five.

In 2010, the Meru County government was established following the partition of Kenya into forty-seven (47) Counties by Article 6(1&2) of the 2010 Constitution of Kenya. Its operations was governed by various legislations, including the Cities and Urban Areas Act, The Devolved Governments Act, and several other Acts. The primary role of the Meru County was to deliver a range of services to residents within its jurisdiction, taking over responsibilities previously handled by the now-defunct Municipal Council and those transferred from the national government (Meru County Government, 2021).

The overarching vision of Meru County was to position itself as a preferred destination for investment, employment, and residence. The mission of the Meru County government was centered on providing accessible, affordable, and sustainable services, fostering community engagement, and establishing a secure environment conducive to economic, political, and social development. This mission was to be achieved through the dedication and motivation of a committed team. Meru County was structured into three main arms: the County Public Service Board, the Executive, and the Legislative Arm, each playing a distinct role in the governance and administration of the county (Meru County Government, 2023). The administration of Meru County has been putting into action a number of different strategies, some of which included the Meru County integrated development plan, 2018-2022, the Meru County Assembly strategic plan, and the Meru County HIV & AIDS Strategic Plan, amongst others. According to Kimani (2018), however, only forty-five percent of the strategies that were adopted by the Meru County government were really put into action. The poor implementation rate was linked to the organizational structure, organizational capabilities, organizational culture, and leadership qualities of the organization. When it came to the projected allocation of 335 billion Kenyan shillings in the new budget for the fiscal year 2022/2023, Meru County was among the most significant beneficiaries. As a result of the law, Meru was awarded a portion of the 9.89 billion shillings. Inadequate financial management and execution of Meru County operations was both indicators of the fact that the county was unable to absorb the resources that have been provided. According to the Budget Review and Outlook Paper from 2023, Meru County accomplished 14.6% of its development expenditures, which was much lower than the requirement of 30%. This indicated that the county's service delivery was subpar.

It had been determined that the implementation of strategies within the Meru County administration, which included the County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs), had been subpar during the last five years, with the percentage of implementation falling at 45 percent. It had been stated by Njogu (2021) that the execution of CIDPs was characterized by insufficient financial resources, the abuse of resources, poor communication, and a lack of support from the executive. Meru County depended on money that was provided by the government and achieved very little in terms of revenue mobilization, according to the financial report that was submitted by the controller of the budget for the fiscal years 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 (Controller of Budget, 2019).

In addition, the income that was collected in Meru County has been redirected to make use of additional expenditures in addition to those that were permitted. There was also a lack of completion of projects due to the fact that the counties was not fulfilling the criteria of thirty percent for development expenditures. The County administration of Meru was unable to offer paperwork to substantiate the spending of up to Sh209 million for the fiscal year 2021/2022, according to Ntoiti and Makau (2022), who also made this observation. The report on Kenya County Governance Status that was published by Transparency International Kenya (2016) said that there were inadequate financial resources, that the release of funding from the government was delayed, that there was misappropriation and corruption of funds, and that there was poor execution of programs. According to the findings of Njogu (2021), there was a significant number of loopholes in the process of tax collecting in county governments. Because of this, it was essential to do research on the ways in which the drivers of strategy implementation influence the service delivery of the Meru County government.

In addition, Kagumu (2018) studied the variables impacting strategy implementation in Murang'a County, Ochola (2016) looked into the variables affecting strategy implementation in Mombasa County's public health facilities, and Kamande and Orwa (2015) studied the variables impacting strategy implementation in Kiambu County's Ministry of Lands in Kenya. These study designs could not be used to establish connections; for example, Kagumu (2018) employed a cross-sectional survey design whereas Ochola (2016) and Kamande and Orwa (2015) utilized descriptive

designs. Furthermore, the results could not be applied to Meru County from these studies because of variations in tactics, income sources, and revenue distribution compared to Murang'a, Kiambu, and Mombasa. Moreover, the research failed to demonstrate how the factors influencing the execution of strategies impact the provision of services by county governments. It was for this reason that the Meru County Government's service delivery and the factors that influenced its plan execution was the foci of this research.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Literature

The concept of strategic fit originates from Venkatraman's work in 1989, as cited in Haghshenas and Davidson (2017). This theory asserts that there was no one-size-fits-all approach to strategic management; instead, it emphasizes that strategic management should be tailored to the specific context of a business. Mfene (2021) argues that the application of management practices should be influenced by factors such as the type of business, its context, and its organizational culture. According to this theory, the effectiveness of a strategy depended on aligning both internal and external aspects of the business environment.

Strategic fit was the degree to which an organization aligns its capabilities and resources with opportunities found in the external environment. The firm must have the actual resources and capabilities required to implement and support the plan because strategy was used to match. A company's present strategic position as well as prospects like mergers and acquisitions and organizational division divestitures could be assessed through the active usage of strategic fit. In essence, this theory suggests that in the realm of integrated development plans, counties should align their external and internal environments, including their mission, vision, organizational structure, leadership styles, resources, and capabilities to enhance their performance (Nengwekhulu, 2019). Additionally, it views development planning as an ongoing and intricate process that requires continuous improvement to ensure continuity. The choice to use this theory in the research was due to its focus on emergent strategic planning processes, making it suitable for analyzing integrated development plans in dynamic and challenging environments, such as the county government.

Because it allows firms to incorporate information from environmental scanning into their vision and purpose statements, strategic fit was essential to the development and implementation of strategy. As so, it guarantees consistency between these claims and the data obtained from environmental studies. According to De Araújo (2015), strategic fit entails making strategic decisions on the integration and coordination of strategies to provide better performance and service, going beyond just guaranteeing a competitive advantage for the company.

The availability and applicability of staff abilities and resources throughout the strategy planning process was also highly valued aspects of the notion of strategic fit. The planning process encountered challenges due to the scarcity of these resources and their compatibility with strategic objectives. Furthermore, the theory emphasizes how crucial it was to have resources available while putting a plan into action, keeping in mind both external and internal variables that had an impact on the process. The degree of leadership support that was available for a strategy's effective implementation was determined by these criteria.

Strategic fit provides a framework through which various strategies could be aligned to impact on service delivery. According to Shankar and Shepherd (2019), this process involved managing all elements related to the strategic planning process to achieve the intended goals. It was integral to the strategic planning process as it ensured that adopted strategies was harmonious with the organization and its environment, ultimately leading to improved performance and service delivery. According to Cruz and Haugan (2019), the theory suggests that sustainable competitive advantage for an organization stems from its organizational and human resources, rather than from physical, technical, or financial resources, because these was difficult to replicate. The core concept of the Resource-Based View (RBV) revolves around how an organization's systems and distinctive characteristics could contribute to long-lasting competitive advantage. This implies that, to maintain competitiveness, resources must be valuable, rare, unique, and hard for other firms to imitate.

2.2. Functional Strategies and Service Delivery

The authors Hambrick and Cannella (1989) asserted that a strategy was nothing more than a dream if it was not properly implemented. It was possible for a number of different conditions to have an effect on the process by which strategic intentions was converted into organizational action. Contrary to strategy formulation, strategy execution has historically been seen as more of a craft than a science, and the field's history has been described as eclectic and fragmented. However, organizational performance was described as the capacity of an organization to obtain and allocate its limited resources and assets as quickly as feasible in order to meet its operational goals. Organizational performance, according to Daft (2010), is the capacity of an organization to use its resources—information, people, and raw materials—in an effective and efficient manner. On the other hand, depending on the company, one could have a very different viewpoint of the performance of the organization.

A research was carried out by Andrews, Boyne, and Walker (2011) to investigate the connection between the performance of public services and the execution of strategies in the jurisdiction of the United Kingdom. According to the findings, in order for public organizations to achieve higher levels of performance, they needed to find a way to

align their strategy orientation with the manner in which they execute their strategies. The link between municipal performance and strategy was the subject of study that Langereis (2015) carried out in the Netherlands. According to the findings of the research, the strategic orientations that was used by Dutch towns was undeniably an existing phenomenon.

According to the findings, the organizational efficiency of towns was influenced by a variety of factors, including economic capital, social-cultural capital, and ecological capital together. An investigation of the relationship between strategic management and company performance in the Nigerian banking industry in Africa was carried out by Aremu and Oyinloye (2014). Based on the findings of the research, it was determined that strategic management does have an effect on organisations' overall performance. A research was carried out by Winfred (2016) in Zimbabwe to investigate the impact that organizational culture and the execution of strategy have on the performance of commercial banks established in that country. It had been shown via the outcomes of this research that the implementation of culture and strategy had a favorable and statistically significant influence on the performance of commercial banks.

Functional-level strategy pertained to how a specific functional department approached the pursuit of corporate and business unit goals and strategies with a focus on optimizing resource efficiency. Functional strategies typically dealt with the practical aspects of operations within an organization's functional domains, encompassing areas like marketing, production, human resources, research and development, and finance (Adelekan & Majekodunmi, 2021). Every functional department within the organization had its own set of operational and strategic objectives, and functional-level strategy aided each department in achieving these objectives through a deliberate and synchronized approach.

Orwa, Akuku, Kimutai, and Onyango (2022) conducted a study with the purpose of evaluating the impact of functional strategies on the competitiveness of sugar companies in western Kenya. The research was focused on examining the impact of finance strategies and production strategies on the competitiveness of the sugar business in Western Kenya. The study used a cross-sectional study design, using samples obtained from various sectors within the sugar sector. The study focused on a target population of 98 senior workers from sugar factories located in the western area of Kenya. Data collection was conducted by a census utilizing a questionnaire. The data was subjected to analysis utilizing both inferential and descriptive statistics via the use of SPSS version 25. The research results revealed that there were substantial relationships between the functional strategies and competitiveness. The study used competitiveness as the dependent variable whereas this study had service delivery as the dependent variable.

Organizations encounter several challenges when executing their strategies, with the primary issue being a shortage of financial resources (Kumar & Kumar, 2018). According to Kumar and Kumar (2018), the obstacles in strategy implementation encompassed a lack of comprehension regarding the process, limited financial means, and a tendency to disregard external environmental factors. As a result, they recommended that management should concentrate on ensuring sufficient allocation of funds, providing training to managers in strategy implementation, and staying mindful of external factors that could impact the execution (Khayota, 2015). In both manufacturing and service sectors, service quality, customer value, and satisfaction rank among the most critical factors in competitive dynamics (Pasha & Poister, 2017). These factors now held significant importance in contemporary service industries due to intensified competition for clientele (Osah & Khene, 2018).

Makokha, Njenga, and Kamau (2018) conducted a research with the intention of determining the influence that functional strategic planning has on the delivery of services within the county administration of Nairobi City, Kenya. The sample for this research consisted of a total of 130 individuals, which included a member of the county executive committee, two directors, the chief officer, a finance officer, an accountant, an economist, a supply chain officer, and two office administrators. As of January 2018, these persons were chosen from among the thirteen ministries that was part of the County Government of Nairobi. For the most part, the SPSS program was used in order to do the analysis and interpretation of the data. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized. Based on the findings of the study, it was determined that the implementation of functional strategic management practices had a significant influence on the efficiency of service delivery. This research was conducted in a county that was considered to be urban, and it was possible that its conclusions cannot be generalized to a rural county such as Tharaka Nithi. The impact that functional level strategy played in supporting the achievement of organizational goals was evaluated in a research that was conducted in Nigeria by Agwu and Onwuegbuzie (2017).

By drawing upon existing literature and theoretical models, four hypotheses were formulated and then examined using a survey conducted among the key business units of certain financial organizations in Lagos. The results of the study indicated a significant correlation between functional level strategies and customer happiness. Additionally, it was revealed that the proper execution of functional strategies played a crucial role in the expansion of the organization. This study was undertaken in Nigeria and was focused on private financial institutions not on a public entity.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. The Materials

In this study, an explanatory research design was adopted, which specifically focused on identifying the relationships between elements and understanding the causes behind these associations. The emphasis of explanatory

research design lied in structuring the study's objectives to reveal the causal connections between the elements or variables under investigation.

Tashakkori et al., (2020) highlighted that explanatory research design was instrumental for a researcher to evaluate the impact of changing dynamics on different processes or established norms. This approach was also valuable in the assessment and analysis of specific issues or problems, providing explanations for the existing associations between variables or elements being investigated. The current study opted for an explanatory research design because its goal was to ascertain the influence of independent variable (functional strategies) on the dependent variable (Service delivery).

In this research, the unit of analysis was the Meru County Government. Notably, Meru County Government received one of the highest allocations in the financial year 2022/2023. It was determined that the target population consisted of 161 individuals who are employed in ten departments of the Meru County Government. These departments include the departments of water, sanitation, and environmental energy; agriculture, livestock, and fisheries; devolution, administration, and public service; social services, youth, and education; department of urban planning, urban renewal, lands, housing, and building services; information communication and technology & e-government; roads and transport; and trade and industrialization. The identified target population consisted of 161 employees actively engaged in various roles across these ten departments within Meru County Government

Table 1: Target population

| Departments | Target Population |
|---|-------------------|
| Agriculture, Fisheries and Livestock Development | 11 |
| Devolution, Public Service and Administration | 12 |
| Education, Youth and Social Services | 16 |
| Environment, Energy, Water and sanitation | 18 |
| Finance and Economic Planning | 18 |
| Health Services | 17 |
| Lands, Urban planning, Urban renewal, Housing and Building Services | 22 |
| Information Communication Technology & e- Government | 21 |
| Roads and Transport | 17 |
| Trade and Industrialization | 9 |
| Total | 161 |

3.2. Methods

Data analysis involved applying statistical methods to cleanse, transform, and model research data, aiming to extract valuable information for inference or decision-making, as suggested by Russell (2013). Quantitative data was produced by the closed-ended questions and qualitative data by the open-ended ones. The outcomes of the thematic analysis of qualitative data, which concentrated on finding and recording patterns in the dataset, was given in the form of a narrative. The quantitative data analysis process began with data preparation, which included instrument verification. Next, data editing, coding, entering, and cleaning was performed, as well as diagnostic testing. To evaluate all of the quantitative data, SPSS version 27 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) was used. The quantitative data analysis made use of both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, in accordance with Bhattacharjee (2012), was used to describe responses related to the indicators of the dependent, independent, and demographic information. This included frequency distribution, mean, standard deviation, and percentages.

To investigate the effects of independent factors on the dependent variable, inferential statistics were used, namely Pearson correlation analysis and multivariate regression analysis. Whereas regression analysis showed how strongly independent factors were correlated with the dependent variable, correlation analysis evaluated the connection between independent variables and the dependent variable.

The regression model was as follows;

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$$

Whereby;

- Y = service delivery of Meru County Government
- X_1 = functional strategies
- ε = Error Term
- β_0 = Constant Term
- β_1 = Beta Coefficient

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Response Rate

The study targeted a sample of 114 employees from various departments within the Meru County government. Out of the 114 questionnaires distributed, 91 were fully completed and returned, yielding a response rate of 79.82%. According to Kothari (2009), a response rate above 50% is considered adequate for data analysis and reporting, while a rate exceeding 70% is considered excellent. Thus, the response rate achieved in this study was sufficient for drawing conclusions and making recommendations.

4.2. Functional Strategies and County Government Service Delivery

The third specific objective of the study was to examine the effects of functional strategies on the service delivery of Meru County Government, Kenya. The respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement on various statements relating to functional strategies and the service delivery of the county government of Meru. The results were depicted in Table 2.

Table 2: Aspects of functional strategies

| Statement | N | Min | Max | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--|----|-----|-----|------|----------------|
| The services offered are cost effective | 91 | 1 | 5 | 3.68 | 1.041 |
| The county observes high quality standards in service delivery | 91 | 1 | 5 | 3.78 | 0.845 |
| There is proper feedback mechanism employed by the county government | 91 | 1 | 5 | 3.12 | 0.901 |
| There is flexibility in changing from one service to another as need may dictate | 91 | 1 | 5 | 3.01 | 0.860 |
| The county uses pricing strategy to improve service delivery | 91 | 1 | 5 | 3.63 | 0.904 |
| The county's distribution networks influence its service delivery | 91 | 1 | 5 | 2.18 | 0.781 |
| The county recruits qualified candidates | 91 | 1 | 5 | 3.57 | 0.935 |
| Rewards offered by the county government lead to efficiency | 91 | 1 | 5 | 2.35 | 0.922 |
| The county government conducts extensive training for efficiency | 91 | 1 | 5 | 3.69 | 0.956 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 91 | | | | |
| Average Mean and Standard Deviation | | | | 3.23 | 0.905 |

Source: Researcher (2024)

The results in Table 2, indicate that the average mean and standard deviation for functional strategies indicators were (M = 3.23, SD =0.905). This suggests that functional strategies moderately impact organizational service delivery. These findings align with Bosire's (2018) research, which identified a positive correlation between operational strategies and organizational performance. Likewise, Odhiambo (2015) found a positive relationship between marketing strategy and performance, supporting the findings of this study. In contrast, Kanji (2017) identified a positive correlation between finance strategy and performance, which differs from the results of the current study.

From the results, the respondents agreed that the services offered by the county government are cost effective (M=3.68 SD=1.041); the participants also agreed that county recruits qualified candidates (M=3.57 SD=0.935); The county government conducts extensive training for efficiency (M=3.69 SD=0.956) and also that the county observes high quality standards in service delivery (M=3.78 SD=0.845). These findings align with a study by Ardjouman and Asma (2015), which argues that implementing effective functional strategies in an organization will eventually lead to improved performance, including higher sales volumes, increased profits, and greater market share.

In addition, the participants also agreed that county uses pricing strategy to improve service delivery (M=3.63 SD=0.904). The respondents were neutral on the statements indicating that the county government is flexible in changing from one service to another as need may dictate (M=3.01 SD=0.860). Additionally, respondents were neutral about whether the county government uses email to enhance communication. They also expressed neutrality regarding the statement that the county government employs a proper feedback mechanism (M=3.12, SD=0.901). The respondents also disagreed with the statement indicating that the county's distribution networks influence its service delivery (M=2.18 SD=0.781) and that rewards offered by the county government lead to efficiency (M=2.35 SD=0.922).

The respondents were asked to share their perspectives on how functional strategies impact the service delivery of the Meru County Government. From the findings, respondents indicated that employee commitment is influenced by

rewards and the provision of necessary knowledge. Additionally, they noted that effective communication channels between senior and junior staff enhance service delivery by promoting democracy and involvement within the organization. Respondents also highlighted that proper communication aids in achieving company goals. Although the success of the county government heavily depends on effective communication, the research concluded that organizational success relies on both the pattern and method of communication, with the effectiveness of the communication channel being critical. These insights are supported by Iloafu (2016), who found that proper communication aids in achieving company goals. Furthermore, the findings align with Meitisaria, Hanafi, and Wahab (2018), who discovered that an effective flow of communication improves organizational productivity.

4.3. Correlation Results of Study Variables

In this study, Pearson correlation analysis was used to evaluate the relationship between the dependent variable (service delivery of Meru County Government) and the independent variables (top management support, organizational structure, functional strategies, and resource allocation). Pearson correlation coefficients range from 0 to 1, with positive coefficients indicating a direct relationship and negative coefficients indicating an inverse relationship. The findings are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3: Correlations

| | | Functional Strategies | Service Delivery |
|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| Functional Strategies | Pearson Correlation | 1 | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | |
| | N | 91 | |
| Service Delivery | Pearson Correlation | 0.801** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.000 | |
| | N | 91 | 91 |

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

The results show that functional strategies have a very strong and positive relationship with the service delivery of the county governments ($r=0.801$, $p=0.000$). This association is significant because the p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05. These findings support Ardjouman and Asma (2015), who argue that implementing effective functional strategies in organizations leads to improved performance in terms of sales volumes, profits, and market share.

4.4. Regression Analysis

Multivariate regression analysis was employed to determine the relationship between the dependent variable (service delivery of Meru County Government) and the independent variable (functional strategies).

Table 4: Model summary

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|--------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 0.887 ^a | 0.835 | 0.821 | 0.2363 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), functional strategies

The R-squared value was utilized to demonstrate the extent to which the independent variable (functional strategies) could explain the variation in the dependent variable (service delivery of Meru County Government). The R-squared value was 0.830, indicating that 83.0% of the variation in service delivery could be accounted for by the independent variables.

Table 5: Analysis of variance

| Model | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------|------------|----------------|----|-------------|--------|--------------------|
| 1 | Regression | 7.611 | 4 | 1.903 | 63.778 | 0.000 ^b |
| | Residual | 210.213 | 87 | 2.444 | | |
| | Total | 217.824 | 91 | | | |

a. Dependent Variable: service delivery

b. Predictors: (Constant), functional strategies

The ANOVA was utilized to evaluate if the model appropriately fit the data. As shown in Table 5, the calculated F value of 63.778 exceeded the critical F value of 2.4859. Additionally, the p-value (0.000) was below the significance level (0.05), indicating that the model is suitable for explaining the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variable. Therefore, the model was a good fit for the data.

Table 6: Regression coefficients

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | | t | Sig. |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|------------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Standardized Coefficients | | Beta | | |
| | B | Std. Error | | | |
| 1 (Constant) | 0.315 | 0.920 | | 6.287 | 0.009 |
| Functional strategies | 0.089 | 0.127 | 0.015 | 0.140 | 0.009 |

a. Dependent Variable: Service Delivery

Source: Researcher (2024)

The regression equation was;

$$Y = 0.315 + 0.089X_1$$

The analysis showed that functional strategies have a positive and significant impact on the service delivery of Meru County Government ($\beta_1=0.089$, $p=0.009$). The relationship is significant since the p-value (0.009) is less than 0.05, indicating that functional strategies play a crucial role in enhancing service delivery.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that functional strategies significantly influence service delivery among county governments, suggesting that improving these strategies would enhance service delivery within the Meru County government. Specifically, the establishment of cost-effective services, recruitment of qualified candidates, and extensive training were identified as factors that enhance service delivery.

This study found that the county government distribution networks does not influence its service delivery and that rewards offered by the county government does not lead to efficiency. The study recommends that all the departments in the County government of Meru should ensure that there is well formulated distribution network and provide a more appealing reward system to enhance service delivery.

References

- Adelekan, A. S., & Majekodunmi, A. S. (2021). Value generation in small enterprises and firm-level strategy: A case study in Nigeria.
- Adewole, D. A. (2022). A look at the factors that affect National Health Insurance Scheme enrollees' satisfaction with service delivery. *Journal of Patient Experience*, 9.
- Andrews, R., Boyne, G. A., & Walker, R. M. (2011). An analysis of the data about the relationship between publicness and organizational success.
- Ardjouman, D., & Asma, B. (2015). Marketing management strategies affecting performance of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Cote d'Ivoire. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 6(4).
- Aremu, M. A., & Oyinloye, O. O. (2014). How strategic management in the banking sector of Nigeria affects company performance.
- Arya, S., & Kumar, A. (2023). Evaluation of stormwater management approaches and challenges in urban flood control. *Urban Climate*, 51, 101643.
- Bosire, D., & Owour, D. E. (2018). Effects of operation strategies on organizational performance in the automotive industry in Kenya: a case study of Scania East Africa Limited. *Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management*, 5(2), 5-18.
- Bryer, T. A. (2021). *Handbook of Management and Public Administration Theories*. Cheltenham: Edward Edgar Publishing.
- Comite, U. (2018). *Public Management and Administration*. London, UK: Intech Open.
- Cruz, A. M., & Haugan, G. L. (2019). Determinants of maintenance performance: A resource-based view and agency theory approach. *Journal of Engineering and Technology Management*, 51, 33-47.
- Fiszbein, A., Ringold, D., & Rogers, F. H. (2019). Making services work: benchmarking, evaluations, and indicators of public service delivery governance and quality in the human development sectors. *Journal of Human Development*, 51(1), 34-47. <https://doi.org/10.1596/1813-9450-5690>

- Frantz, T. L., & Jain, A. K. (2017). Connecting organisational culture and CEO leadership style in the Indian setting.
- Goromonzi, W. O. (2016). Zimbabwe's commercial bank performance, organizational culture, and strategy execution. *International Review of Management and Marketing*, 6(2), 307-316.
- Hambrick, D. C., & Cannella Jr, A. A. (1989). Strategy implementation as substance and selling. *Academy of management perspectives*, 3(4), 278-285. <https://journals.aom.org/doi/abs/10.5465/ame.1989.427740?journalCode=amp>
- Ihemeje, G. (2018). Evaluation of Local Government Service Delivery for Policy Direction: A Case of Nigeria's Fourth Republic. *Evaluation*, 8(6).
- Kagumu, J. G. (2018). *Determinants of implementation of strategic plans by county governments in Kenya* (Doctoral dissertation, JKUAT-COHRED).
- Kamande, J. W., & Orwa, B. H. (2015). Determinants of strategy Implementation in the Ministry of Lands, Thika, Kiambu County Kenya. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 3(12), 297-312.
- Kanji, J. M. (2017). *Effect of Working Capital on Financial Performance of Service Firms Listed at the Nairobi Securities Exchange* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nairobi).
- Kerubo, R., & Muturi, W. (2019). County governments in Kenya and the factors impacting their service quality. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Information Technology*, 5(5), 231–253.
- Kimani, J. (2021). Impact of Transformative Leadership Styles on Organizational Outcomes. Literature Review with a Critical Eye. *International Journal of Leadership and Governance*, 1(1), 36-46.
- Langereis, M. (2015). *How the plans of Dutch municipalities relate to their actual results* (Master's thesis, University of Twente). <http://essay.utwente.nl/68926/>
- Massey, A., & Johnston, K. (Eds.). (2018). *The Global Guide to Public Administration and Governance*. Cheltenham: Edward Edgar Publishing.
- Meitisari, N., Hanafi, A., & Wahab, Z. (2018). Analysis on the Effects of Organizational Communication Climate and Career Development toward Employee Performance with Job Satisfaction. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 8(8), 444-449.
- Mitchell, D. (2018). An example of the gap between theory and reality in public administration was the strategic implementation. *Public Administration Quarterly*, 42(1), 59–89.
- Moti, D. (2021). Factors Impacting Yeka Sub-City, Addis Ababa's Service Delivery Quality.
- Mutuma, K., Stephen, N., & Makau, M. (2022). Comprehending the Execution of Strategy: Advancements in Meru County Government's Performance in Kenya.
- Naidu, L. (2021). *Service quality of administrative staff for student satisfaction a KZN University of Technology* (Doctoral dissertation).
- Nenngekhuulu, N. (2019). *Financial analysis of the Recapitalisation and Development Programme in South Africa*. University of Pretoria (South Africa).
- Njogu, D., & Nteere, K. (2021). Effect of domestic tax reforms on tax compliance among micro and small enterprises in Nairobi county, Kenya. *International Journal of Business Management and Processes (ISSN 2616-3209)*, 5(4), 67-80.
- Ntoiti, J., Odalo, S. K., & Mariko, B. J. (2022). *Effects of Government Regulations on Financial Performance*. AJPO Journals USA LLC.
- Obwegeser, N., De Araújo Burcharth, A. L., & Carugati, A. (2015). The value of IT: Explaining the strategic role of information systems for fast growing SMEs.
- Ochola, A. (2016). *Determinants of strategy implementation in the public health facilities in Mombasa County, Kenya* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nairobi).

- Odhiambo, O. J., Kibera, F., & Musyoka, R. (2015). The influence of organizational culture and marketing capabilities on performance of microfinance institutions in Kenya. *Journal of Marketing Management (JMM)*, 3(1), 91-99.
- Orwa, D. O., Akuku, C., Kimutai, G., & Onyango, R. O. (2022). Effect of Functional Strategies on Competitiveness of Sugar Industry in Western Kenya. *Journal of Business Management and Economic Research*, 6(3), 66-90.
- Shankar, R. K., & Shepherd, D. A. (2019). Accelerating strategic fit or venture emergence: Different paths adopted by corporate accelerators. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 34(5), 105886.
- Sharma, S. K., & Gupta, J. N. (2002). Application service providers: issues and challenges. *Logistics Information Management*, 15(3), 160-169.
- Sokopo, J. T. X., Masango, R. S., & Mfene, P. N. (2021). Amalgamation of Municipalities' Implications on Service Delivery The Case of Dr Beyers Naude Local Municipality. *Administratio Publica*, 29(4).
- Wang, Y. L., Tainyi, L. U. O. R., Luarn, P., & Lu, H. P. (2015). Contributions and Trends in Quality Research: A Review of the SERVQUAL Model from 1998 to 2013. *Informatica Economica*, 19(1).