Citizens' Perceptions On The Status Of Governance (Public Service Delivery) In The Counties: The Case Of Migori County, Kenya

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Abstract:- Governance is the process of decision-making and how those decisions are implemented. Good governance involves quality public service delivery, accountable-decision-making, and civic engagement. Devolution helps make good governance feasible. Kenya thus adopted devolution to improve governance and catalyse development to the local levels. However, since enactment of the new constitution of 2010, the status of public service delivery(aspect of governance) in the local governments had not been determined and documented especially from the perspective of the citizens who consume the public goods. The purpose of this study thus was to determine the citizens' perceptions of the quality of public service. The study adopted a case study research design where a diverse case of two sub counties (Nyatike Sub County and Suna West Sub County) was selected purposively. Target population of the study was 453,362 adults of the county and the accessible population (N) was164, 959 adults in the two sub counties. From this a sample of 156 was sampled by non-proportionate and simple random sampling where 78 citizens were selected from each sub county. SERVQUAL questionnaire was adopted as the instrument of data collection.The survey captured customers' expectations of an excellent public service and compares these with their perceptions of the service being delivered. The data was analysed using means, percentages, two sample t test and hotelling's t square at 5% significance level by the help of STATA software.The findings indicate negative perceptions of the quality of services delivered by the county. This article concludes with recommendations to policy practioners and government officials within the new devolution framework
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Key words:- *Governance, perceptions, Policy, Delivery, Citizen*

I. INTRODUCTION

Good governance involves quality public service delivery, accountable-decision-making, and civic engagement. Good governance requires that institutions serve all stakeholders within a reasonable and acceptable time-frame. It means that institutions and processes produce results that satisfy the needs and meets the needs of society while using resources at their disposal at best (IEA, 2010). Public service delivery is thus key to county governments. It is important, especially for public service delivery, to be reliable and dependable in order to gain the trust of the public and meet their expectations. The governments are thus now under increasing pressure to demonstrate that their services are customer-focused and that continuous performance-improvement is being delivered. Since Kenya adopted the new devolution framework comprehensive citizen perceptions towards status of governance especially the dimension of governance on quality of public service had never been studied in any of the Kenyan counties. Yet it is important to constantly get citizens' feedback towards public service in order to improve it. The purpose of this paper was thus to examine generally the quality of public service delivery in the counties in Kenya, the case of Migori county, and recommend policy options to help enhance it. The study used the SERVQUAL disconfirmation approach to examine the gap between customers' general expectations of public service delivery and their perceptions of what happens.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Valerie and Berry (1985), service quality can be defined as an overall judgment similar to attitude towards service offered, and thus the ability of the organization to meet or exceed customer expectations. Perceived service quality results from comparisons by customers' expectations with their perceptions of service delivered by the suppliers. If expectations are greater than performance, then perceived quality is less than satisfactory and hence customer dissatisfaction occurs (Parasuraman*et al.,* 1985; Lewis and Mitchell, 1990).

In measuring service quality, Kotler and Keller (2009), identified essential variables such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles. Reliability is the ability to perform promised service dependably and accurately. Responsiveness is the willingness of the service provider to help customers to provide prompt services and have the knowledge to answer questions and handle complaints. Assurance provides security to customers with their transactions and employees which are consistently courteous. Empathy is how the employees give individual attention to their customers and who deal with them in a caring fashion. Tangibles are the appearance of physical facilities, employees who have a neat and professional look, equipment, printed and visual materials associated with the service. These variables capture in them efficiency, effectiveness and responsiveness.This research was conducted within the framework of public choice theory. This theory is important since it provides that the individual residents ought to make choices and decisions on what, which and how public functions should be conducted.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a case study research design in finding answers to this research question. A diverse case of two sub counties within Migori County was selected. The target population the study was the 453, 362 adult population of Migori County. This is the population to which the researcher generalizes these results. The accessible population was the 164, 959 adult population of Suna West and Nyatike Sub County to which the researcher drew the sample from. The rationale for selecting Migori County was that, since it's the researcher's home county, it was easier for him to sample the study population because he is conversant with the area population and the native languages. The sub counties were selected purposively. Nyatike Sub County was chosen because it represents the sub county with most administrative units and with a large rural population and Suna West sub county chosen because it represents the sub county with least administrative units and with a large urban population within Migori County. The study adopted purposive and non-proportionate sampling. From the target population a sample size was drawn using Nassiuma's formulae (Nassiuma, 2000):

$$n = \frac{NC^2}{C^2 + (N-1)\,e^2} \qquad n = \frac{164959 \times 0.25^2}{0.25^2 + (164959-1)\,0.02^2}$$

$$n = 156.103 \quad (156 \text{ respondents})$$

Where: N = Population, C = Coefficient of variation, e = Standard error. C=25% (acceptable according to Nassiuma (2000)), e = 0.02 and N= 252762.

The researcher then took all the names of citizens from each of the two sub counties who accessed the county headquarters recorded at the county service access desk- an office at the entrance of the county headquarters where all citizens in need of any county service register first- and sample from those. The researcher then used non-proportionate and simple random sampling to pick 78 citizens from each of the two sub counties randomly from each's list. Excel random sample software was used. These citizens were then contacted to respond to the questionnaire.

In order to elicit information on citizens' expectations and perceptions of the quality of service delivery, the questionnaire included the standardized SERVQUAL scale, developed and validated by Parasuraman et al., (1985). The SERVQUAL scale, which is in two parts – service expectations and perceptions of actual service delivery quality - comprises five dimensions, namely tangibility (4 items), reliability (5 items), responsiveness (4 items), assurance (4 items) and empathy (5 items). Responses were measured on a seven-point Likert scale, where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = Neutral, 5 = slightly agree, 6 = agree, 7 = strongly agree. In addition, the questionnaire included a section designed to gather the participants' demographical information and a cover letter outlining the purpose of the study. The questionnaire was then piloted on a convenience sample of 16 residents of Ndhiwa Sub County in the neighboring county. For the pilot, Cronbach alpha value of 0.860 was attained which exceeded the recommended level of 0.700, thereby indicating reliability (Malhotra, 2010). An average inter-item correlation value of 0.299 was recorded on the scales. This suggests convergent and discriminant validity, as this value fell within the recommended range of 0.15 to 0.50 (Clark & Watson, 1995). Permission to carry out the survey was obtained from the Kenya National Commission for science, Technology and Innovation. The researcher then visited the County Commissioner and county research office and informed them of the study. Thereafter, the researcher sought the list of citizens from the two sub-counties who had been served in the last 6 months and sampled non-proportionately to get 78 from each sub-county. The researcher adhered to all ethical considerations while conducting the study.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of the survey revealed that the sample of citizens consisted of 51% males and 49% females. More than 62% of the respondents were between the ages of 18 to 40 especially in Nyatike sub County. Approximately 82% have between secondary schooling to university education especially in Nyatike as well. 50% of the respondents were either teachers or farmers.The mean ratings, gap scores, T test and hoteling's T squared values across the five dimensions were then calculated. The gap scores for each attribute was calculated

by subtracting the expectation means from the perception means. A negative service quality gap indicates that customer expectations are greater than their perceptions, based on the service provided. Positive service quality gaps result when customer perceptions exceed customer expectations. In this study all service quality gaps were found to be negative and they were statistically significant at 5% levels. As seen in Table I below, the highest average gap between citizen perceptions and expectations exists in assurance and empathy dimensions. The t values are significant showing that the mean of perceptions and that of expectations significantly differ in both of the sub-counties. Hotelling's T square was calculated to find out if the difference in mean of the gap scores differs significantly in the two sub-counties in the five dimensions. The gap mean scores differ significantly except in assurance and tangibility dimensions.

V.   CONCLUSION

The assessment of service quality expectations and perceptions investigated in this study provide evidence that service provider gaps must be reduced. In order to bridge the gap between customers' perceptions of service delivery in the counties, the counties need to constantly train their employees to enhance their customer service skills. The training should focus on the ability to help citizens resolve their queries and problems quickly. In the process of resolving such problems, they should show a caring, courteous attitude and a sincere interest in helping customers. Furthermore, employees should improve their knowledge and skills so that they can provide a fast and reliable service to their customers. More importantly, service enhancement through customer orientation will provide the county governments with an opportunity to gain confidence from the tax-paying public.This study therefore shows how important it is for an organization or government to conduct a survey and consider the opinions of its customers and its employees in identifying areas for service quality improvements. It is therefore very important for them to know how customers evaluate service quality and what they can do to measure and improve service quality.

VI.   LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

There were limitations in this study that need to be acknowledged. First, the study was limited to one county, therefore the reliability of the results restrict the extent to which the findings can be generalized across the Kenyan public service. Secondly, this study looked at the perceptions of customers, thereby excluding the views of county leadership. Given the financial and resource constraints under which public sector organizations operate, it can be argued that it is crucial to measure management perceptions of organizational service quality practiced so that they can also understand customer expectations. Such information will then assist management in identifying cost-effective ways of closing service quality gaps and of prioritizing which gaps to focus on, a critical decision given the scarcity of resources. This study provides public service quality researchers with useful guidelines for future research.

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VII.   APPENDICES

Table I: Showing Perceptions, Expectations, Gap scores, Corresponding T test values and Hotelling's square values of service quality in both sub-counties.

Sub counties		Nyatike				Suba West			
Mean Measures	Perce-ption	Expect-ation	Gap(B) (P-E)	T test (P & E)	Perce-ption	Expect-ation	Gap(A) (P-E)	T test (P&E)	Hoteling T sq. (B&A)
Tangibles	3.028	6.563	-3.542	30.980 0.000	3.504	6.765	-3.261	22.402	2.827 P=0.095

									0.000
Reliability	2.367	6.411	-4.044	38.784 0.000	3.206	6.371	-3.165 0.000	14.520 0.000	16.878 0.000
Responsiveness	2.587	6.417	-3.830	36.303 0.000	2.949	6.099	-3.151 0.000	23.141 0.000	30.703 0.000
Assurance	2.156	6.465	-4.309	30.852 0.000	2.360	6.316	-3.956 0.000	28.244 0.000	3.450 0.065
Empathy	1.819	6.050	-4.231	35.394 0.000	2.705	6.497	-3.791 0.000	46.475 0.000	13.879 0.000
Overall Mean	2.391	6.381	-3.991		2.945	6.500	-3.465		Largely significant