

Strategic Role of Huduma Centre Initiatives on Public Service Delivery Among Residents of Nakuru County

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Abstract : The public service delivery in Kenya was characterized by slow pace of service delivery, corruption, inefficient public service providers, low morale amongst government workers, and poor attitude towards service delivery. Additionally, accessibility to government services was hampered by need to move between different government's offices sometimes located only in big towns. Kenyans were therefore not satisfied with the government service delivery. In response to the poor service delivery in Kenya, the Government of Kenya has conceptualized and executed diverse initiatives over the years in order to improve service delivery in government sector. Most notable of these initiatives include the Results Based Management framework that was founded performance contracting and citizen service charters. These initiatives have had limited successes in enhancing efficiency and effectiveness in public service delivery. However, the problem of service accessibility due to centralization of some government services in major towns was still a challenge. In line with the 2010 Kenya's constitution that created a devolved government structure in order to improve the service delivery to citizens in their locality, there was need for the central government to improve its service delivery to Kenyans. The government therefore created Huduma centres concept that centralizes service provision under a single roof. This study seeks to examine the strategic role that the Huduma centres have played in service delivery in County of Nakuru. The study was based upon Kurt Lewin's Force theory of change, Richard Oliver's Expectation-Disconfirmation theory, Jensen and Meckling Agency theory and Freeman's Stakeholder's theory. The study was carried out in Nakuru County which has one Huduma Centre one stop shop situated along Kenyatta Avenue. The target population of the study were customers assessing various services at the centre on any particular random day. The target population is 600 customers. The sample size of the study was 86 respondents. The study adopted a case study design using quantitative approaches in the collection of data. Primary data was sought from the customers using questionnaires. A pilot study was used to refine the instrument. The study thus addressed the strategic role of Huduma Centres initiatives on public service provision. The adjusted R-Square value in this case is 0.74 implying that 74% variability in the Outcome variable is explained by the independent variables. Thus the independent variable is fairly in control of the response variable. The ANOVA results fit with the four explanatory variables was significant owing to the fact that the p-value for the ANOVA test was 0.000 less than the accepted 5% level of significance. The individual predictors were tested for linear relationship with the response variable. The null hypothesis for this test is that there is no linear relationship between each predictor as examined individually with the response variable. The p-values for t-test statistic are shown in the right most column of the table below at 0.05 level of significance. From the findings of the study we can conclude that huduma centre initiatives have had a significant impact on public service delivery among residents of Nakuru County. For this study, the major recommendation is for the Huduma Centres all over the country to emphasize on the four variables as they have a considerable power in determining service delivery ratings.

Keywords: Accountability, Transparency, Public Service Delivery

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I. Introduction

Public service delivery is key in ensuring that the government meets its commitment to the citizens as well as realization of development. The public service delivery in terms of quality, ease of access, speed of provision and cost element is critical in poverty alleviation and achievement of developmental milestones such as Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Okello, 2014). This could either be directly and indirectly through enhancing the availability and affordability of education, health, energy, and information and communication technology services, alleviating poverty and empowering women through entrepreneurial and employment creation opportunities in services enterprises respectively (Isango, 2012). The government launched the Huduma centre in order to improve the public service delivery in Kenya.

According to Korir (2015), the Huduma Kenya is a Government of Kenya multichannel public service delivery strategy that seeks to enhance service provision efficiency through a one stop service provision centres. Therefore, the Huduma Kenya initiative is conceptualized along the concept of integrated public service provision and with an aim of providing integrated public services hence transforming service delivery processes (Korir, 2015). Similarly, Ng'aru & Wafula (2015) indicate that the Huduma Kenya program is an Integrated Service Delivery (ISD) strategy that aims at the delivery of Public Services through a "One Stop Shop" Model with great emphasis in Customer Service Excellence. The Huduma secretariat was instituted through the Presidential Gazette Notice No.2177 of 31st March, 2014 that established the governance structure of the Huduma Kenya Programme. Huduma Centres are meant to improve public service delivery in diverse ways. The "one stop approach" means that diverse services are congregated under a single roof effectively making it possible for service seekers to access it conveniently without moving from one building to another (Ng'aru & Wafula, 2015).

Public service delivery was also to improve through the use of ICT technologies such as the online e-Huduma web portal to provide integrated services offered by various government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) and a unified and integrated channel Huduma payment gateway to facilitate ease of payment for government services, through post-pay. The Huduma Centres initiatives have been awarded diverse awards including United Nations Public Service Award by the United Nations. Others include Best Customer Service in Public Sector by the Institute of Customer Service Kenya, and Best use of Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) in public sector by the ICT Association of Kenya (Ministry of Devolution & Planning, 2015).

The Government of Kenya established Huduma centres in 2013 in order to decentralize the service provision to the citizenry and improve public service delivery (Kiragu, Kariuki, & Ikuu, 2015). The Huduma centres currently offer a set of 45 government services. Among these services include the provision of the identity cards, reporting of lost national identity cards, issuance of Kenya Revenue Authority personal identification numbers, and issuance of driving licenses among other functions (Ng'aru & Wafula, 2015). The Huduma Centre serves as a one stop shop in service provision of government services. The Huduma Centre serves as one stop shop with diverse changes to be undertaken or introduced (Ng'aru & Wafula, 2015). These new aspects to be introduced include online e-Huduma web portal to provide integrated services offered by various government ministries, departments and agencies and a unified and integrated channel Huduma payment gateway to facilitate ease of payment for government services.

Other services are introduction of m-Huduma platform to offer M-Government services to citizens from their mobile phones and a Huduma call centre to provide customer service using a single dialing prefix. Through the Huduma Kenya platform, the government aims at enabling citizens to access integrated public services via their phones, computers and personal digital assistants (PDA)(Ministry of Devolution & Planning, 2015). The new portal is also expected to enhance service delivery and eradicate graft loopholes. Tenders and vacancies in the public service are also expected to be accessible on the platform. Users were able to directly post their comments and complaints regarding government services.

The Government of Kenya has often provided poor services to the citizens as characterized by slow pace of delivery of diverse services, corruption in service provision, loss of critical files, and bureaucratic nature of a centralized government service infrastructure amongst other challenges (Mwangi, 2015a). Amongst the reasons that have been advanced for poor service provision include a poorly trained workforce, fairly low education levels amongst a large number of the government workforce, poor working culture, corruption, low morale, bloated public sector and low embracing of cutting edge ICT technology in service provision (Onyango, 2015). The government has over the years introduced diverse initiatives in order to improve the service delivery quality. These initiatives include rapid results initiative, and service charters through Results Based Management (RBM) framework, performance contracting and the embracing of the ICT services in diverse ministries (Simiyu, 2012). The service charters or Citizen Service Charters were adopted by the Government of Kenya in 2004 as part of the Results Based Management framework. The citizen charter has been defined as a written statement prepared by a public institution which outlines the nature, quality and quantity of service that citizens should expect from the institution and how to make complaints or suggestions for improvement (Malango, 2013). The citizen service charter had several benefits associated with them including helping the public institutions to manage user expectations about public services and to provide a framework for public participation. They also encouraged public bodies to measure and assess performances by committing themselves to standards of service that the public expects and evaluating how they measure against those standards (Haron, 2005). Finally, the Citizen Charters provided the public with recourse to file complaints and seek redress where the standards have not been met. Despite the numerous initiatives to address public service delivery, the initiatives have enjoyed limited success levels as they have been perceived as short term cost containment measures. Therefore, the diverse challenges in public service delivery have continued to prevail leading the government to re strategize on ways to address the challenges. The Huduma Centres seeks to revolutionize and simplify the public service delivery to Kenyans.

According to Ariga & Gathogo (2016), Nakuru town was founded in 1904 alongside the Uganda Railway approximately 160 km from Nairobi. It sits at the central part of the former Great Rift Valley province with a population of approximately 2 million people (County Government of Nakuru, 2016). The County Government of Nakuru was formed as a result of the government devolvement of the government structure. Kenya's devolution is based on article 6 (2) of the constitution which describes the government of Kenya to be at two levels which are distinct and interdependent (Kadiri, 2010). These two levels of the government are the central and county governments. Apart from County Government of Nakuru, there are 46 other county governments. The county has eleven sub counties that include Nakuru Town East, Nakuru Town West, Bahati, Rongai, Subukia, Kuresoi North, Kuresoi South, Gilgil, Naivasha, Njoro, and Molo sub counties (County Government of Nakuru, 2016).

II. Literature Review

Theoretical Review

The theoretical review was based on the forces theory of change, expectancy disconfirmation theory (EDT), agency theory and stakeholders' theory..

Force Theory of Change

The force theory of change is attributed to Kurt Lewin who conceptualized it in 1957. The theory indicates that the key to resolving social conflict is through the facilitation of planned change through learning and so enable individuals to understand and restructure their perceptions of the world around them. Kurt Lewin (1957) introduced the three-step change model. This social scientist views behaviour as a dynamic balance of forces working in opposing directions.

Driving forces facilitate change because they would push residents in the desired direction (Bett, 2012). Restraining forces hinder change because they push residents in the opposite direction. Lewin believed a successful change project involved three steps: unfreezing, change and refreezing. The unfreezing stage is based on the notion that the human behaviour is based on a quasi-stationary equilibrium supported by a complex field of forces. Before old behaviour can be discarded and new behaviour successfully adopted, the equilibrium needs to be destabilized (unfrozen) (Kibue, 2013). For this to be successful, driving forces that direct behaviour away from the existing status quo must be enhanced. The second stage of the forces theory of change is based on the notion that the process of changing behaviour is movement. In this step, it is necessary to move the target system to a new level of equilibrium. It is necessary to take into account all the forces at work, and identify and evaluate, iteratively, the available options. This Action Research-based learning approach enables groups and individuals to move to a more acceptable set of behaviours (Mulwa, 2012).

Finally, the final step of force theory of change is the refreeze stage. This seeks to stabilize the group at a new quasi-stationary equilibrium in order to ensure that the new behaviours are relatively safe from regression (Muteti, 2013). The new behaviour must be, to some degree, congruent with the rest of the behaviour, personality and environment of the learner else it may simply lead to a new round of disconfirmation. This step needs to take place after the change has been implemented in order for it to be sustained or "stick" over time (Bett, 2012).

The Force theory of change has been criticized as being simplistic and its stages of change being unrealistic to the manner in which change occurs in real world. The model is a simple and planned one with the change process involving three stages of unfreezing, changing and refreezing. This quaintly linear and static conception is wildly inappropriate due to the fact that there have been major differences in change in real world. This is occasioned by simultaneous nature of change, speed of occurring changes, complexity of changes and the impacts accompanying changes (Mulwa, 2012). The theory is applicable in this study in the context that Huduma centre was introduced in order to address challenges in public service delivery in Kenya. The Huduma centre in this context introduces an element of change in the public service delivery in Kenya. This study wishes to examine the impact the Huduma centre has had on public service delivery in Kenya through examination of the transparency and accountability levels, customer satisfaction levels, and reliability of public service delivery. The study therefore examined whether there has been any change in service delivery hence the applicability of the theory.

Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (EDT)

This theory indicates that customers compare a new service experience with a standard they have developed. Their belief about the service is determined by how well it measures up to this standard. The theory presumes that customers make purchases based on their expectations, attitudes, and intentions (Muteti, 2013). Later, during or after consumption, a perception of performance occurs as customers evaluate the experience. The process is completed when customers compare the actual service performance with their pre-experience standard or expectation.

The result is confirmation, satisfaction, or dissatisfaction. There are four components to this paradigm: expectations, perceived performance, disconfirmation of beliefs and satisfaction (Mwangi, 2014). The level of expectations represents pre-consumption expectation. Performance refers to the customer's perception of service. Disconfirmation results if there is a discrepancy between expectations and performance. Finally, satisfaction is determined by combining the satisfaction outcomes for the various attributes of the service. The theory has three operational assumptions. The first operational assumption is that when expectations are high and performance is low, moderately low disconfirmation results – i.e. expectations are not met. High performance results in moderately high level of expectations being met (EM) due to confirmation. The second operational assumption is based on when expectations are low, low performance results in very low EM ratings, while high performance results in very high EM ratings due to a surprise effect.

Finally, the last assumption is that if expectations match performance at any level, conformation results and EM represents the value of the expectations/performance level. According to expectancy disconfirmation theory customers often make some judgment about a product or service, its benefits and the likely outcomes of using the product or accessing the service. The EDT has been critiqued on its assumptions in the way in which it measures customer satisfaction from perceived quality of products or services. The basic assumption that a customer must have a pre-purchase expectation to be able to experience disconfirmation of those expectations could be invalid to some extent (Muteti, 2013).

Lack of experience with a service or lack of familiarity with a destination may cause expectation to be tentative and uncertain. Wider experience on the other hand seems to foster more realistic expectations. The theory was applicable in this study in the context that the citizens have diverse expectations in their interaction with Huduma centres. These expectations are built by diverse aspects including the new concept of one stop shop government services under a roof, the award won by the initiative across the world, and the execution of the initiative under a new constitution dispensation which champions devolution and decentralization of government services.

Transparency and accountability in Public service delivery

Transparency and accountability in service delivery is concerned with the ability of the citizens to be served in a dignified manner, to have reliable service provision in government office and to have their expectations met. Reliability in public service delivery measures the consistency in the holistic service provision including availability of service attendants, availability of necessary documentation, consistency in the turnaround timeframes, and consistency in the provided information for public consumption (Mulwa, 2015). While measuring users' satisfaction with public sector goods and services, reliability is considered to be an important indicator to evaluate performance of public service delivery (Haron, 2005).

Across the world, diverse measures have been developed by the governments to design their institutional framework to allow citizens' rights to be acknowledged and heard. Such a framework helps to ensure the reliability of public services by informing citizens of their rights and by providing them with channels of redress and quality assurance. Statements of citizens' rights might also promulgate basic service and process standards, e.g. the Citizens' Charter that existed in the United Kingdom (Wairiuko, 2013). The assessment of citizens' rights recognition has become even more compelling in a context of decreasing trust in national governments and in leadership (Mwangi, 2015b). Few countries have a common definition of patient or taxpayer rights, let alone a standardized regulatory framework for the implementation of complaint practices. Public services in many African countries are confronted with many challenges, which constrain their delivery capacities (Okello, 2014). Reliable service delivery in the Public sector is generally presented as mechanisms to save money and hold bureaucrats and contractors accountable, even more so in periods when governments see performance tools as a way of cutting spending (Kiptoo, 2012). This basic narrative about performance management may work well as political rhetoric, but it sends an essentially negative message to the public employees who are the service deliverers.

This message suggests that there is need therefore for employees to be closely monitored via performance control systems; managers to adapt appropriate leadership style and support the service delivery as well manage change effectively (Otieno & Omwenga, 2015). The World Bank noted that corruption is a crisis that is detrimental to the economic, social, and political growth of developing countries (Chewa, 2013). Similarly, Mulwa (2015) observed that corrupt practices are among the greatest challenges facing political leadership in emerging democracies.

In most developing countries, it is a standard practice for civil servants to expect a bribe or kick back for every service that they provide (Onyango, 2015). Constitutional and human rights notwithstanding, failure to produce an inducement can result to unnecessary delay or outright denial of the public service requested (Kiragu et al, 2015). One stop shops can enhance the enforcement of rules and regulations by eliminating the face to face encounter with service provider that induces corrupt practices. According to Malango (2013), online services not only eliminate the bureaucracy but also eradicate the personal touch that could involve favoritism or

corruption and enable the tracking of responses from the government. The open government is critical to the empowerment of citizens and an inclusive society. It ensures that decision makers, whose decisions affect the lives of people in the community, are fully accountable and responsive to the general public (Otieno & Omwenga, 2015). Open government also guarantees more equitable, sustainable, and effective use of the country's available resources towards fair delivery of public services (Korir, 2015).

According to Simiyu (2012), equal access to public information is a fundamental human right in a democracy like Kenya. In a country that only the elite leaders have access to political and economic power, availability of information is crucial in creating a level playing ground in terms of knowledge and ability to convert the information into action. According to Kiptoo (2013) who argued that advertising government jobs on the Internet enhances the ability for those who have no connection to apply. When information is posted online, the whole world has access to it. The e-government is a tool that can enhance transparency and accountability in the delivery of public services (Otieno & Omwenga, 2015). Nevertheless, Korir (2015) argued that such objectives cannot be achieved without robust two-way communication between citizens, business, nongovernmental organizations, and government agencies.

III. Objective Of The Study

To assess the strategic role of the Huduma Centre initiative on public service delivery among residents of the County of Nakuru.

IV. Research Hypothesis

H₀: Services offered at Huduma Centre initiatives have no significant influence on enhancing transparency and accountability in service delivery amongst residents of County of Nakuru.

H_A: Services offered at Huduma Centre initiatives have a significant influence on enhancing transparency and accountability in service delivery amongst residents of County of Nakuru.

V. Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive research design and specifically a case study technique. The target population was the customers of Huduma Centre in Nakuru and front office personnel of Huduma centre in Nakuru. This was because these were the people with the receiving and dissemination of services at Huduma centre in Nakuru, respectively. It is estimated that an average of 600 customers are served at Huduma Centre in Nakuru on a daily basis. This study employed Nassiuma's (2009) formula to calculate the size of the sample for the customers. The formula to scientifically derive the sample from the target population is illustrated hereunder.

$$n = \frac{NC^2}{C^2 + (N-1)e^2}$$

Where

n = sample size

N = size of target population

C = coefficient of variation (0.5)

e = error margin (0.05)

Substituting these values in the equation, estimated sample size (n) was:

$$n = \frac{600(0.5)^2}{(0.5)^2 + (600-1)(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 86 \text{ respondents}$$

Therefore a sample size of 86 respondents was used for the study. Therefore, 86 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents of which 71 questionnaires were returned making a response rate of 82.56%. This response rate was deemed sufficient as it is above the 80% that is recommended by Mugenda & Mugenda (1999).

VI. Findings And Discussions

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Transparency and Accountability

	SD %	D %	U %	A %	SA %
Greater knowledge on the government processes and procedures in services provision	0%	0%	19.7%	36.6%	43.7%
Reduction of corruption aspects in services provision	0%	9.8%	16.9%	26.8%	46.5%
Greater adherence by the public servants to the laid service charter	0%	25.6%	25.4%	38.0%	11.3%
Ease of follow up on pending issues during service provision	4.2%	1.4%	11.2%	28.2%	55%
Ease of access to supervisors/persons in authority during service provision challenges	1.4%	15.5%	16.9%	45.1%	21.1%

Most of the respondents (43.7%) strongly agreed that Huduma Centres had improved transparency through impacting greater knowledge on government processes and procedures in service procedures. Availing information to the masses has been attributed to promote transparency by Simiyu (2012) who asserted that equal access to public information is a fundamental human right in a democracy like Kenya. The respondents who were more inclined to agree that Huduma Centres had reduced corruption in government service delivery were 26.8%, while those who disagreed were 9.8%, those who were undecided were 16.9% and those who strongly agreed were 46.5%. The one stop shop nature of Huduma Centres was attributed Malango (2013), to have a particular ability to enhance the enforcement of rules and regulations by eliminating the face to face encounter with service provider that induces corrupt practices. The number that disagreed that there was greater adherence by public servants to the laid down service charter were 25.6%, those who were undecided were 25.4%, while those who agreed were 38.0%.

On the other hand, 11.3% of the respondents strongly agreed that there was improved adherence by government officials. Adherence to service charter has been documented to improve service delivery through elimination of face to face encounters with service providers believed to reduce instances of corrupt practices (Malango 2013).

Up to 4.2% and 1.4% of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed that Huduma Centres had improved follow up on pending issues during service provision. 55% of them however strongly agreed, 11.2% were undecided and 28.2% agreed. Follow up may be defined as reliability in service delivery. Respondents strongly agreed that there was follow up in Huduma Centres, translating to Haron, (2005) emphasis on reliability as an important indicator of transparency. 45.1% of the respondents agreed that Huduma Centres had improved ease of access to supervisors/persons in authority, 15.5% disagreed, 16.9% were undecided and 21.1% strongly agreed.

Table 2: Means and Standard Deviations of Transparency and Accountability

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Greater knowledge on the government processes and procedures in services provision	3	5	4.2254	0.7964
Elimination of corruption aspects in services provision	2	5	4.1408	0.9899
Greater adherence by the public servants to the laid service charter	2	5	3.4789	0.9980
Ease of follow up on pending issues during service provision	1	5	4.4930	0.6943
Ease of access to supervisors/persons in authority during service provision Challenges	1	5	3.7465	0.9815

Respondents did not strongly disagree with any of the prompts provided to them by the questionnaires. They were on average inclined to agree that Huduma Centres had helped in impacting greater knowledge on the government processes and procedures in services provision (mean=4.2245, std. dev. =0.79673) Respondents seemed to agree that Huduma Centres had contributed to reduction in corruption in government service provision, with a mean score of 4.1408 and standard deviation of 0.98989. Respondents also agreed (mean= 3.4789, std. dev. =0.99799) that there was improved adherence by the public servants to the laid service charter due Huduma Centre Services. Respondents were additionally inclined to agree that there was ease of follow up on pending issues and ease of access to supervisors (mean= 4.4930, std. dev. =0.6943 and mean=3.7465, std. dev.=0.98152 respectively) due to Huduma Centre services.

VII. Conclusion

The null hypothesis that services offered at Huduma Centre initiatives has no significant influence on enhancing transparency and accountability in service delivery amongst residents of County of Nakuru was rejected at 5% level of significance thus giving sufficient evidence to conclude that Huduma Centres have enhanced transparency and accountability.

VIII. Recommendation

Huduma Centres all over the country should emphasize on the transparency and accountability as they have considerable power in determining service delivery ratings.

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