CITIZEN PERCEPTIONS OF THE GOVERNANCE OF PROJECTS IN KENYA

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Abstract

This paper describes the citizen perceptions of the governance of projects in Kenya. The paper is based on the study of the process of citizen involvement on local government carried out in Elgeiyo Marakwet and Nandi Counties in Kenya. The study was guided by the SERVQUAL theory which depends on five administration quality measurements, in particular effects which are tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. These perceptions reflect the information available to them at low cost, whether it is obtained through direct experience, media coverage of projects, conversations with elected and appointed officials, or some similar source. In the case of public services such as education available at low-cost reflects academic performance at schools, health centers reflect the health of the people and infrastructure reflecting the ease of movement so too will citizens' judgments of them. The growth in importance of service quality has been influenced greatly by the changing nature of the world

economies and the customers' changing needs, tastes and preferences. Quality service delivery is a challenge to many management and organizations only customer's judge quality, and the perceptions stem from how well a provider performs, against customers' expectations about how the provider should perform. When the expected service is more than the actual service, service quality is less than satisfactory. Whereas employees and leaders at the county government are an important source of knowledge about internal politics and power games inside the county, other stakeholders in the county may also have their valuable, independent perceptions of politics in administrative systems. Moreover, when public organizations are considered such perceptions and understanding of the political climate may shed light on a wider range of consequences, such as citizens' attitudes toward government, trust and faith in public organizations, agencies and their behavioral intentions, as well as actual behaviors in the democratic realm.

Keywords: *Citizen, perception, government, service delivery, service quality*

Introduction

Attributions based on service provision are most likely based on visibility and perceived control (Marvel & Girth, 2016; Mcloughlin, 2015; Stel & Ndayiragije, 2014). Local officials are more visible to rural residents than are distant national government representatives, some also suggest that the performance of, and trust in, local officials lay the foundation for the legitimacy of higher level officials and government in general. This paper focusses on one objective; influence of citizen perception on governance of projects in county governments in Kenya. Börzel and Risse (2015) argue that in areas of limited statehood, effective local governance can build trust in higher levels of government even in the absence of hierarchical authority. The more local governance services are provided in an impartial and procedurally fair way, the more they help generate and maintain generalized trust as an enabling condition for the upscaling of governance even in the absence of functioning state institutions. Similarly, Fjeldstad (2004) suggests that the extent of citizens' fiscal compliance has its basis in local governments' capacities to provide services. Although they generally found nothing automatic about the effects of citizens' perceptions of local officials on their views of higher level officials, Stel and Ndayiragije (2014) identify some instances where provincial officials with sectoral responsibilities gained approval for improvements in local service delivery.

The synthesis of the literatures on distance and service access, and on county government and attitudes toward government, suggests two divergent directions for the relationship between services and perceptions of the state as demand for better services increases. On one hand, citizens' assessments of government quality and trustworthiness may become more negative as service access and quality decline with increased distance from urban settings. As distance from cities grows, service availability falls, and the challenges of gaining access to those services increase, citizens should hold poorer opinions of government officials and the institutions of government.

In particular, satisfaction with and trust in local government officials suffers in rural areas with poor services, assuming citizens pin direct responsibility on the most proximate state actors. This hypothesis is consistent with the traditional account of the link between governance quality and accountability that underlies standard models of democratic governance. On the other hand, it may be that citizens' assessments of government trustworthiness are decoupled from their experiences with service delivery. Where citizens have no or limited experience with the government as a service provider, they might evaluate government officials on other dimensions. In this case, service quality is unlikely to serve as an engine for government accountability, since citizens simply do not expect services from government. Leaders may have difficult time attracting and retaining skilled public-sector service providers. They may lack oversight and regulatory capacity and/or authority to support performance. The

SERVQUAL theory which anchored the study best explains customers' perceptions of service quality and expectations enabling the measurement of citizen perception on governance of projects.

Methodology

This study utilized a descriptive research survey design as it not only restricted to fact findings but also result in the formulation of important principles of knowledge and solution to significant problems. The target population were from North Rift counties; Nandi and Elgeiyo Marakwet who were citizens, employees of various projects and county officials of various projects in the Counties. Multistage sampling was used in this study. The sample size was 400 respondents. In determining the sample size, this study adopted the formula and procedure for categorical data using Fishers formula. The study utilized both primary and secondary data. The primary data were obtained from the field by use of a questionnaire and an interview schedule. The secondary data were obtained from the library books, journals and previous similar studies available online. Primary sources of data included citizens filling questionnaires, key informant interviews to identify information dissemination frameworks in the target counties. These included elected public officials and civil society representatives from the target counties. In data analysis, to answer the objective, the study used Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 20) to run the descriptive analysis and SERVQUAL model to analyze the perception.

Results and Discussion

The mean scores of respondents' perceptions ranged from 2.41 to 3.64. The lowest perception item was 'Leader in the county have their citizens' best interest at heart,' they perceived that the leaders on those counties did not provide enough suitable time to listen to their citizens so as to enhance services provided. Examining the link between perceived and actual quality of government services have had little choice but to rely on subjective measures, most commonly using average perceptions within a jurisdictional unit as the benchmark against which to compare individual perceptions

Citizens' highly perceive on the appointed officials (employees at the county government) putting the interest of the people and not their own average score of 3.64. Basic service provision is at the heart of most conceptualizations of accountable governance. Standard models of accountability dynamics posit a direct relationship between declines in service access and quality and citizens' negative perceptions of the state. This implies that government officials must consider the interest of the people they served while offering the services. Citizens agreed that they felt part and parcel of the project development in their counties and that the physical facilities (Roads, water projects, women, youth projects and cattle dips) were visually appealing. In this regard, citizens who see government as providing valued services are more willing to participate actively in-service delivery and paying of taxes (Fjeldstad & Moore, 2007).

When citizens were asked whether they feel safe in raising their complaint with employees who are the appointed officials in the County government they rated it with low perception with an average score of 2.51. Citizen perceptions are important for providing basic services as they stand at the core of the social contract. Providing services demonstrates government willingness and capacity to respond to citizens' needs and demands. To the extent that citizens perceive government as fulfilling its side of the social contract, they are more willing to accept state authority and legitimacy (Levi, Sacks, &Tyler, 2009).

Service quality using SERVQUAL model

Service quality can be defined as the degree and direction of discrepancy between consumers' perceptions and expectations in terms of different but relatively important dimensions of the service quality. Customers' perceptions

of service quality and satisfaction have shown that a correlation exists between the two concepts. The relationship between the five dimensions of SERVQUAL found that every dimension of service quality had a positive relationship with satisfaction, with Reliability having the strongest relationship, followed by Responsiveness, Empathy, Assurance and Tangibility. The study on citizens' perceptions of service quality at the county government revealed that there was uncertainty among officials in their attitude to service quality in the counties, while citizens' ratings of service quality were more negative.

Evidence of openness, however, are five original SERVQUAL dimensions where according to the research; tangible covers the physical facilities, equipment and employees' facilities. Reliability covers capabilities of leaders to provide the promised services immediately, accurately and satisfactorily. Responsiveness is the wish of the employees and leaders to help citizens and provide service with receptiveness. Assurance covers the knowledge, capabilities, courtesy, and trustworthiness that are owned by the employees and leaders free of doubt. Empathy is that ease of good relationships, communication, personalized attention, and understanding of citizens' needs. Cronbach's alpha value for the overall perception scale was 0.9080 which indicated its high reliability. These values are well above the generally agreed upon lower limit of 0.60 (Marković et al., 2010, Hair et al., 2006), indicating the good internal consistency of the factors and high reliability of the scale. Based on this rationale, research developed a model to test a series of specific relationships. The theoretical model is presented in table 1. Basically, it argues the citizens' perceptions of county government services and ways of delivery in the county governments in Kenya.

Table 1: Measuring Perceived Service Quality Using SERVQUAL

Factor	Eigenvalue	Difference	Proportion	Cumulative
Factor1	3.46754	3.40791	1.0535	1.0535
Factor2	0.05962	0.11715	0.0181	1.0716
Factor3	-0.05753	0.02567	-0.0175	1.0541
Factor4	-0.08320	0.01169	-0.0253	1.0288
Factor5	-0.09489	.	-0.0288	1.0000

LR test: independent vs. saturated: chi2(10) = 1200.85 Prob>chi2 = 0.0000

Factor loadings (pattern matrix) and unique variances

Variable	Factor1	Factor2	Uniqueness
tangible	0.7070	0.1657	0.4727
reliable	0.8896	0.0561	0.2054
emphati	0.8966	-0.0710	0.1911
assuranc	0.8888	0.0159	0.2097
responsi	0.7631	-0.1540	0.3940

alpha tangible reliable emphati assuranc responsi

Average interitem covariance: 18.96814

Number of items in the scale: 5

Scale reliability coefficient: 0.9080

Hasan and Ilias (2008) argued that Empathy and Assurance were critical factors that contribute most to customers' satisfaction. In the aforementioned study on perceived service quality among 400 respondents at two counties in North Rift Kenya, tangibility and responsiveness were less significant, compared to reliability, empathy and assurance which had a greater influence on the rest. A study in Malaysian on higher education institutions, determined that all the quality attributes had a significant relationship with students' satisfaction, and highly correlated with one another (Hishamuddin & Azleen, 2008). Prugsamatz, Pentecost and Ofstad (2006) conducted a study among Chinese students in Australia' to determine their expectations of overseas universities in terms of explicit and implicit service promises. The findings revealed that influential sources of information on students' expectations of universities were *inter alia*, past experiences, advertising, and word of mouth. It was therefore suggested that the more a consumer is exposed to explicit and implicit service promises, the higher the desired and predicted expectations of the university's service quality.

A survey among 150 Malaysian public university students using the SERVQUAL instrument through a hierarchical regression analysis demonstrated that reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy significantly correlated with customer satisfaction. Khodayari and Khodayari (2011) recognized that perceived service quality reflects the difference between consumer expectations and perceptions, which depends on the size and direction of the four gaps related to the delivery of service quality on the providers' side. Customers evaluate service based on their expectations because of its dynamic, its evaluations may also shift from time to time (Kagira et. al, 2010). However, how customers evaluate what they term as a quality service today based on some principles may change tomorrow. This calls for continuous monitoring and evaluations of service quality in any service provider. Consequently, organizations that ignore customer perceptions of service quality simply give their customers reasons to switch to the competition and emphasize that focusing on the customer is an essential principle of service quality. The customers at the time of service delivery interact closely with the service providers and get an inside knowledge of the service organization. This knowledge gives them an opportunity to critically assess the service provided and the service provider. Hence, service quality plays an important role in adding value to the overall service experience. Also, customers seek organizations that are service loyal that is those that aim to provide consistent and superior quality of service for present and long term and organizations aiming for this are bound to get customers' loyalty. The growth of importance of the quality of service has been influenced by the changing nature of the world economies and the customer's changing needs, tastes and preferences (Kagira et.al 2011; Sanchez, et.al, 2007). As Turban et.al (2002), point out, offering customers quality service is the cornerstone of any successful business. It includes knowing who the customers are, what they want and exceeding their expectations as the key to business growth.

Contribution to knowledge and practice

This study contributes to the knowledge and practice through entrenchment of the citizen perception as the most powerful mechanism available for preventing popular conflict, effective leaders contribute to communities' and organizations' scope for self-determination. It emphasized on governance capacity that the staff engaged in whole of government initiatives having the skills and knowledge to do whole of government work. This clarity of roles and responsibilities facilitates accountability, transparency and responsiveness up on the government. All these characteristics are needed to make states more legitimate, effective and inclusive, to tackle poverty and to improve people's lives. It demands the leadership commitment to ensuring that all employees in various projects have the skills, knowledge and experience that they require to perform well. This also means having the ability to develop and manage people and be able to assess their performance.

Conclusion

This paper makes a novel contribution to the study of governance and leadership. Substantively, it has provided a new insight into the question of which citizens currently perceived and their attitudes and opinions concerning their respective governance of projects. The importance of this finding was the emphasis of low levels of trust exhibited by the citizens on the individual citizen perception of government actions and behaviors. The majority of citizens believed that their ability to engage with their respective elected county governments' officials was affected on how those leaders behaved, and believed that those appointed to work on various projects would behave differently. This was an important finding in relation to the question of citizen efficacy. External efficacy concerns the extent to which citizens believe that the citizens' representatives are responsive to their demands and their actions.

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