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Public Accountability Practice and Devolved Administrative Structures in Selected Semi-arid Counties in Kenya

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Abstract

Purpose: Devolved administrative structures serve a critical role in insulating public officials against power abuse and enhancing the stability of the political environment. Since the inception of devolution in Kenya, proper operationalization of devolved administrative structures ought to be in place. The problem lies in the operationalization of devolved administrative structures that has led to poor service delivery. This study intended to bridge the gap by determining the effect of public accountability practices on the devolved administrative structures.

Methodology: The study incorporated institutional theory explaining an institution as entities that are dependent on each other to form complete systems that are concerned with internal interdependence. The target population was 500 respondents from Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties. Purposive sampling was utilized to sample the top leadership who are mandated to oversee functions in the devolved administrative setups; the governor's, deputy governors, speakers of county assembly and clerks of county assembly. Random sampling technique was utilized to sample members of county assemblies, county executive members, chief officers, county public service board members, directors, sub-county administrators, ward administrators, and village administrators

Findings: The study found significant relationship between public accountability and devolved administrative structures.

Recommendation: This study recommends that top leadership in Counties must come up with project ideas which are persuasive and create improvement of devolved administrative structures that give persuasive transformation.

Keywords: *Public accountability, devolved administrative structures, Taita-Taveta, Makueni, Counties, Kenya*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Sub-national governments have been identified to bring accountability among public officials, replacing bureaucratic decision-making red tapes, propagating bottom-up planning approach and fostering the independence of resource mobilization and utilization (Sirili et al., 2018). The researchers were of the opinion that, despite good devolved administrative structures being seen, it encompasses numerous challenges that mostly entail inadequate and incompetent personnel, untimely disbursement of funds from the national government, giving citizen participation a blind eye, political intrusion and inadequate financial allocations. The laws place responsibilities in the hands of County governors to ensure in place the proper functioning of administrative structures.

After twelve years into devolution, counties in Kenya are deemed to have their respective administrative structures operational. This calls for transformative strategic leadership from among the governors in order to realize full implementation of the envisaged devolved units hence underscoring outstanding service delivery, accountability, citizen involvement and transparency in exercising power (Constitution of Kenya, 2010). The creation of devolved administrative structures was to guarantee the provision of timely, effective, efficient and accountable governance deliverables all over the country.

Recently, the health workers in Tana River County did strike, complaining about delayed salaries, denied promotion and unconducive working environment that is riskier for their health and the same was replicated in Nairobi County plus other Counties issuing notices of strikes. Additionally, constant wrangles between the County members of assembly and their respective governors on issues of governance, accountability, public participation, and transparency has been part of their new normal in counties of Taita Taveta, Kirinyaga, Nairobi, Bomet and Laikipia. The leadership of governors has been under challenge, which is a benefit of devolution (Cheeseman, Lynch & Willis, 2016), but when the two factions consistently flex their muscles, it is the devolved administrative units that are hardly hit by that conflict (Steeves, 2015). Lack of leadership in resource distribution mobilization has also been attributed to poor governance strategies (Mutungi, Njoroge & Minja, 2019).

Occasional sermons from the Senate for governors to shade light on how public funds were utilized, the looming motions of the governors' impeachments and human rights activists' demonstrations seeking justice for citizens over the mismanagement of Counties. This deficiency in leadership has turned around public trust, outcry and even rebellion as an expression of dissatisfaction on devolution deliverables (Khaunya & Wawire, 2015). One is left wondering whether the systemic failures could be attributed to devolution of national functions or misguided leadership strategies.

This study focused on the County government setup in which decision making and actions taken are independent but with insightful supervision of the central government and in line with their general policy at the sub-national levels. Article 89 of the Constitution also gives provides for the construction of wards, that which led to the realization of the really development of village units via the legislations by the County Assemblies and in such other units as a county government may deem appropriate under the circumstance(s) (CoK, 2010). Governments rely heavily on accountability measures to safeguard and enhance the performance of public sector entities (Schillemans, 2016). Said, Alam and Aziz (2015) are also of the same opinion that improvement of public services is as a result of improving

accountability in the public sector. For accountability to work effectively it needs some metaprinciples: – transparency, responsiveness and participation (Van Genstel & Van Lochem, 2020). In this study, public accountability was assessed through public officials' reputation, stakeholder relationship, improved public services, and timely and comprehensive information. The outcome of projects is defined by the involvement of stakeholders especially during the initiation, planning, implementation and review of projects (Kobusingye, Mungatu & Mulyungi, 2017). The creation and facilitation of workshops provides solution to a range of barriers and thus fosters stakeholders' involvement, enhancing better insights into their needs, values and concerns (Storvang & Clarke, 2014).

In the recent past, Taita Taveta County has had countless incidences of mismanagement reports emanating from the members of the County assembly and successive impeachment motions against the governor (Gathumbi, 2018). In 2018 to 2019 fiscal year, a dysfunctional and almost paralyzed County executive was left at the mercies of the County assembly who vehemently were declining to pass any expenditure bill on the floor of their assembly (Mberi, Sevilla, Olukuru, Mutegi & Weru, 2017). This conflicting execution of powers almost tainted the image of the good willed 2010 constitution (Kimathi, 2017). In light of the unending tension between the office of the governor and the County assembly of Taita Taveta, one is left pondering as to whether public accountability had a pivotal influence for good progression or worse retrogression of devolved administrative structures in County governments.

Contrastingly, Makueni County, which neighbours Taita Taveta County as the focus of this study, has progressively had a non-strained cooperation and coordination between the County executive and the County assembly members between 2017 to date. One outstanding success in that County is the successful implementation of the universal Health Coverage (UHC) programme piloted by the national government where part of its implementation plan was to be met by County government resources (Barasa, Rogo, Mwaura & Chuma, 2018). In addition, the County has occasionally recorded a positive rating on proper utilization of public resources and public image. With a case example during 2017/2018 fiscal year, together with Nyandarua County, was ranked as the best in the utilization of public funds (Njeru, 2019).

With regards to average potential just before devolution, one will more likely suggest that Taita Taveta County as compared to Makueni County was at a better level to achieve prosperity before 10-year lapse of devolution. 5,879 km^2 of the 17,083.9 km^2 in Taita Taveta is habitable and therefore under the direct exercise of the County roles as compared to 8,008.9 km^2 in Makueni County that is under Devolution. The population size is also considerably lower than that of Makueni at 340,671 persons, 20 persons per square kilometre, as compared to 987,653 persons, 120 persons per square kilometre, in Makueni County (Census, 2019). Therefore, why the big disparity in developmental achievement when having the same geographical location and by extension the same social cultural challenges and strengths? Thus, an interest to investigate public accountability's effect on the performance of devolved administrative structures in the two counties.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Globally and locally, interrelated researches in the field of strategic leadership have been done. However, a majority of them focused on isolated sectors, disregarding the administrative structures in County government. In South Africa, the impact of strategic leadership on performance of business enterprise and their operational strategy was studied (Serfontein et al., 2019). The study by Serfontein et al. (2019) was on how strategic leadership has affected the

performance of business enterprise together with the operational strategy. From a study conducted by Muli (2015), the level of devolution implementation varies with respect to the role's leaders play to actualize processes. Kenyans expressed disappointment from performance of county government. More than half (53%) of the residents were dissatisfied with how county government works, with 28% being neither satisfied or disappointment while only 18% indicated that they were satisfied. Muli (2015) identifies that the dissatisfaction and displeasure was as a result of unimplemented reforms (54%), the never fulfilled campaign promises (19%) and corruption/ethnicity/nepotism (13%). In addition, the accomplishment of objectives set out, which are documented as five-year strategic plans, by County governments are derailed by the same governments (Khaunya, Wawire & Chepn'eno, 2015).

Moreover, the operationalization of the strategic plans by the county governments was described by the researchers as weak and faced with numerous challenges. Nevertheless, some counties like Bomet, Makueni and Kakamega have fully operationalized and implemented up to between 70% and 90% the devolved administrative units like village units as capsulated in the 2010 Kenyan Constitution and other legislation at the national and county levels while other counties are yet to fully operationalize and implement them. The above studies failed to link public accountability and devolved administrative structures. This study determined the effects of public accountability on decentralized administrative structures in the Kenyan counties of Taita Taveta and Makueni.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEWED

2.1 Devolved Administrative Structures

Empirical evidence from commonwealth of independent states, eastern and central Europe on conditions for successful decentralization, Florian and Becirevic (2014) observed that civic participation mobilization, development of human resources and, legislative framework and process were behind the success of devolution in those jurisdictions. The current study sought to borrow heavily from Hitt, Ireland and Hoskisson (2016) arguments on strategic leadership concepts as they have been deemed empirically accepted and conceptually valid in the past. This concepts on strategic leadership are based on aspects of maintaining flexibility, envisioning, thinking strategically, anticipating and encouraging employees to be innovative thereby resulting to organizational transformation that has positively impacted organizational performance. In this case therefore, devolved administrative structures are paramount in establishing small segments that enhance fair political competition whereby the minorities who were previously aggrieved are handed an opportunity to control local government hence bringing about stability in the political environment and scaling down any chances of power abuse through the transfer of considerable number of functions from the central government to the grass root (Faguet, 2017). Local governments are bestowed with functions and powers previously held by the National government, courtesy of the devolution.

Devolved administrative structures, therefore in the wake of tensions, conflicts and challenges brought by a given model of devolution, bold the intergovernmental coordination to surmount the same. Dupas, Basurto and Robinson (2017) viewed devolution as the process through which the national government bestows part of her powers to authorities at the periphery solely to spur rural development and as a way of transitioning to democracy. **2.2 Public Accountability Practices and Devolved Administrative Structures**

Accountability for the longest time has been regarded as the cornerstone of successful public management (Forrer, Kee, Newcomer & Boyer, 2014). In order to build trust among workers with diverse experiences and backgrounds, performance measures are critical and will assist managers to assess, engage and over time improve organizational performance, thus enhancing accountability (Forrer et al., 2014). In a study done by Forrer et al. (2014) on publicprivate partnerships and the public accountability question in the UK, where the performance measurement for public-private partnerships accountability were to include the development of a strategy that is efficient andeffective in the collaborative process, that involves monitoring and evaluation against standards of value-for-money according to government and citizen expectations.

However, this study deviated from public-private partnerships to investigate devolved administrative structures' performance focusing more on access to information, social audits and publication of citizen's budget which Forrer et al. (2014) did not research. Devolution was meant to create a political structure which will be more transparent and more accountable to the marginalized and poor groups in the society, bringing the government closer to people (Deshingkar, Johnson & Start, 2015). In a study on devolution and development in India, done by Deshingkar et al. (2015), devolution lead to local elites capturing a large share of public resources at the expense of the poor.

However, some of the national government programs like subsidies on rice for low-income households and providing credit packages to women's self-help groups, enhanced and empowered the poor and vulnerable in India. In this study, public accountability practices such as communication and access to information, social audits and publication of budgets that Deshingkar et al. (2015) were silent on, were investigated. In South Africa, Munzhedzi (2017) examined the significance of power separation in maintaining public accountability. Results concluded that, the most fundamental responsibilities of parliament were to oversight the executive arm, to ensure that projects, programmes and policies are carried out as approved. However, the legislature encounters the challenge of political seniority within the ruling party, such that the members of parliament shy from holding the executive to account fearing political assassination of their character and reprimand from their party.

In the case of Munzhedzi (2017), the target level of governance was the national government and accountability was towards the legislature. In this study, the target level of governance was the County governments and accountability was to the citizen in the respective counties. In Nigeria, Ibietan (2017) investigated corruption and public accountability, where the study found out that the existing external and internal mechanisms of achieving accountability were ineffective since they lacked political goodwill as sanctions placed on offenders were weak and easily canvassed thus did not deter potential and actual offenders from engaging in corruption. Contrastingly, Ibietan (2017), focused largely on why corruption persisted, which this study diverged and focused more on exploring strategic leadership practices which addresses public accountability in relation to the performance of those structures of devolved administration.

Devolved units in Kenya are facing challenges manifested in call for dissolutions of county governments by the citizens on the account of legitimacy, degenerating levels of accountability and transparency, substandard access to devolved public services, recurring inequalities in the distribution of county resources that does not consider accountability, equitability and transparency. However, four decades into independence, roll out of plans have suffered setbacks in Kenya due to issues shrouded with poor leadership majorly occasioned by

politicians and part of management administrators (Minja, 2017). More often, impeachment motions are levelled against the county boss over accountability and prudent resource allocations notwithstanding dissatisfaction over salary delay for county staff. Formal and informal means are usually used in order to hold executive to account, where the members of county assemblies whether out of selfish interests or controlling the executive power, regenerates into accountability (Dyzenhaus & Cheeseman, 2018).

Although milestone progress has been achieved through county governments, mistrust still exists between members of county assemblies and the county executive. This mistrust further cascades downwards to the citizens who picture devolution as devolved 'corruption' from the national government (Opalo, 2019). Supremacy battles occasionally being displayed over who is transparent and prudent in planning for development between county assemblies and the county executive members (Khaunya & Wawire, 2015). Accountability was categorized into two by Wa Gĩthĩnji and Holmquist, (2016) on their assessment of reform and political impunity in Kenya - transparency without accountability with thematic areas being Horizontal and vertical accountability among branches of government and government to its citizens respectively. While horizontal accountability is monitored through checks and balances, vertical accountability from politicians remains unaccountable (Wa Githinji et al., 2016).

Ochieng (2017) while answering the question of 'Who is responsible for Kenya's devolved health sector?' realized that the burden of accountability squarely lies on the counties although decision making and resource management authority still remains with the national government. Ochieng (2017); Jumanne & Njoroge (2018) suggested that this relation requires the right accountability and coordination mechanism. This study investigated communication and access to information, social audits and publication of citizens' budgets as measures for leadership accountability. **2.3 Theoretical Review**

2.3.1 Institutional Theory

Institutional theory was developed by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy in 1983. It explains an institution as a cumuation of entities the depende on each or other to form a complete system. Institutional theory is concerned with interactions and interdependence of structures within a sytem (Anderson, 2016). An organization is viewed as a social system which work together with a formal framework and the resources within their environment, plough back the resources (products generated/services offered) to that environment. The theory views managers as pivotal in concentrating roles to individual parts of the system, implying that a sharp focus is placed on the productivity of each part/individual within an organization (Lammers & Garcia, 2017).

Further, Institutional theory argues that Organization do not exist in isolation but fits into a larger social and economic system. It focuses on interpersonal behaviour and group that nurtures collaboration (Ramosaj, 2014). In this study, Institutional theory guided the visualization on devolved administrative structures as a result of collective strategic leadership practices headed by the County Executive and trickles down to Members of County Assembly, Staff, and many stakeholders. The institutional theory places more emphasis on integration and unity of constituent fragments making up an organization such that there is communication and connections both interior and exterior towards the realization of the organization's goal. Thus, addressing the effects of resources allocation, public accountability, stakeholders' involvement and legal issues on leadership practices exercised by the County governments.

This theory is predicated on the notion that managers should concentrate on the function performed by each component of an organization, as opposed to dealing with each component independently (Hannagan, 2002). The theory asserted that organization do not exist in a vacuum but rather as part of a larger system, such as societal structure or the economic system, into which they fit. The systems approach focuses on both interpersonal and collective behavioral components that contribute to a cooperative system (Ramosaj, 2014.). Institutional theory was utilized to help clarify strategic leadership practices and the implications they have on the devolved administrative structures in the Counties in Kenya, for the objectives of this study. Kenya's county governments are complex structures which are comprised of the executive, MCAs, staff, and several stakeholders.

The institutional theory stresses the coherence and integrity of orga nizations and focuses on communication between its component parts and links with the interiorand outer environments. This institutional theory suggests that organizations must be studied holistically, with consideration given to the interrelationships between its components and their external environment linkages. This research attempted to evaluate county governments to see how their leadership practices would affect the operations of decentralized administrative structures, whereupon the hypothesis was formulated.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive research design. The objective of descriptive study design is to determine who, what, where, when, and how much. It was considered appropriate because it sought to generate an accurate profile for factors, events and circumstances (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). The design sought to answer the phenomenon's question on what, where, and when it occurs. Situations are examined with the view of establishing what is the norm, that is, what may be anticipated to occur under the same conditions. Also mixed-methods of research which advocated for adoption of both quantitative and qualitative analytical methods was used since it is deemed to be prudent for social research (Morgan, 2014).

3.2 Target population

Table 1: Distribution of target population for selected semi-arid counties in Kenya (Taita Taveta and Makueni)

Designation	Total population
Governor	2
Deputy Governor	2
Speaker of County Assembly	2
Member of County Assembly	83
County Executive Committee Members	17
Chief Officers	22
Clerk of County Assembly	2
County Service Board Members	13
Directors and Managers	140
Sub County Administrators	10

Ward Administrators	65
Village Administrators	142
Total	**500**

Source: Research Data (2021)

The target population was derived from Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties. Encompassing the target population was the top leadership that was purposively sampled from the two county governments whose findings were generalized to the rest of 45 County Governments as reflected in table 1.

3.3 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

3.3.1 Sampling Techniques

The research employed purposive and random sampling to draw from the target population of 500, a sample size of 223 in the leadership of the two semi-arid counties. These were the governor's, deputy governors, speakers of county assembly, members of county assemblies, county executive committee members, chief officers, county public service board members, directors/managers, sub county administrators, ward administrators and the village administrators who made a representation of 223 respondents.

Therefore, Purposive sampling was utilized to sample the top leadership who are mandated to oversee functions in the devolved administrative setup; the governor's, deputy governors, speakers of county assembly and clerks of county assembly. Further, random sampling was utilized specifically to the members of county assemblies, county executive committee members, chief officers, county public service board members, directors/managers, sub county administrators, ward administrators and village administrators who are in leadership capacities in Taita Taveta and Makueni County governments.

3.3.2 Sample Size

Table 2: Sample distribution for selected semi-arid counties in Kenya (Taita Taveta and Makueni).

Leadership Position	**Population**	**Sample Respondents** $n = N/(1 + N(e\text{^}2))$
Strategic Level		
Governor	2	1
Deputy Governor	2	1
Speaker of County Assembly	2	1
Member of County Assembly	83	37
County Executive Committee Members	17	8
Chief Officers	22	10
Clerk of County Assembly	2	1
Functional Level		
County Service Board Members	13	5
Directors and Managers	140	62

Operational Level		
Sub-County Administrators	10	5
Ward Administrators	65	29
Village Administrators	142	63
Total	**500**	**223**

Source: Research Data (2021)

The sample size was calculated using Yamane (1967) formula;

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

Whereby;

n - Represented the computed sample size,

e - Represented 0.05, which was the margin of error allowed and N

- Represented the size of the population.

The study's sample size was;

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e^2)} = \frac{500}{1+500(0.05^2)} = 222.2 \approx 223.$$

Further, using Cochran's (1977) formula for proportional allocation of the sampled respondents, Table 3.2 was generated. The formula is as illustrated below.

$$n_i = (\frac{n}{N})N_i$$

Where;

n_i Is the expected sampled individuals in stratum i,

n Is the computed sample size,

N Is the Target population of the study and, N_i

Is the population in stratum i.

3.4 Validity of Research Instruments

Validity of the study was realized through necessary adjustments on the data collection instruments based on the outcome of the pilot research in order to ensure the research instruments measure the intended measurements (Saunders et al.,2016). Key also to be avoided through the post-pilot study adjustments are the ambiguous responses. The research instruments were inspected in comparison to the study objectives so as to guarantee relevance on the constructs under study. Concurrently, the researcher's supervisor provided expert opinion in assessing the validity of the research instruments. This validity of the study tool was evaluated using researchers' subjective evaluation of the tool in relation to the study objectives, the operationalization of terms, review of theoretical and empirical literature, and the opinion from the Supervisors and experts' consultation. Items in the research tool that were not in tandem with the research objectives, conflicting with operationalization of terms and

Supervisors and Experts evaluation recommended editing, were restructured again before being deployed in the actual data collection process.

3.5 Reliability of Research Instruments

In order to ascertain the reliability of research tools, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was employed to test the questionnaires and the interview schedules. Field (2017), Cooper and Schindler (2014) were of the same opinion that a value of greater or equal to 0.7 Cronbach's alpha is adequate to measure the accepted reliability of an instrument. Consequently, additional questions, modification and any recurrence that were in the questions would have their corrections done at this stage.

3.6 Data Collection (Procedure) Techniques.

Questionnaires and Interviews were administered. The questionnaires were distributed through a drop-off and pick-up method, and respondents were allowed one month to complete the questions. The study held face-to-face interviews with the sampled interviewees and also drop questionnaires to respondents for later picking so that respondents had ample time to fill them.

3.7 Data Analysis and Presentation

Since the data collected were both quantitative and qualitative in nature, the quantitative data was sorted, edited and coded into SPSS version 26 then analysed in STATA version 12. The analysis of quantitative data involved both descriptive and inferential statistics. Simple linear regression presented a linear relationship between the strategic leadership practice – public accountability practices and devolved administrative structures, quantified the extent of the effect and direction of association, whether direct or inverse association. These direct or inverse association provided the individual contribution of each independent variable on performance of devolved administrative structures (Zhang, 2017). The significance and proportion of variation on response variable explained by the multiple linear regression model, were derived from goodness of fit statistic (R-squared statistics). In addition, composite index for the variables of the study were computed by harmonic mean formula (Wilson, 2019).

3.8 Empirical Model

According to Field (2017), different models can be adopted in analysing quantitative data, among them are; Probit, Logit and Regression models (Njoroge, Muathe & Bulla, 2015). This study utilized multiple linear regression analysis to assess the effect of dependent variable on the across the independent variables as shown by the models below:

$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_{11}Pac + \varepsilon$ ..... equation 1

Where,

Y = Devolved Administrative Structures $\boldsymbol{\beta_0}$

= Constant

$\mathbf{B_{11}}$ = Regression coefficient (The Slope)

Pac = Public accountability practices **ε**=

Error Term

4.0 DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Response Rate

The study targeted 500 respondents in top leadership levels drawn from Taita Taveta County in Coastal region and Makueni County in Eastern region. The respondents were made up of top leadership purposively sampled from the two County governments. The top leadership from the two County Governments comprised of the leaders at the strategic level, functional level and operational level. The top leaders from strategic levels were; governor, deputy governor, speaker of county assembly, member of county assembly, countyexecutive committee members, chief officers and clerk of county assembly. The leaders from functional level were; county service board members, directors and managers while the leaders from operational level were sub-county administrators, ward administrators and village administrators.

Table 2: Response rate

Research Instrument	Duly filled	Unfilled	Expected Count
Questionnaire	182 (81.61%)	19 (8.52%)	201 (90.13%)
Key Informant Interviews	18 (8.07%)	4 (1.79%)	22 (9.87%)
Total	**200 (89.69%)**	**23 (10.31%)**	**223 (100%)**

Source: Researcher (2021)

Out of the 500 individuals targeted, the study computed a sample size of 223 individuals. However, from the 223 anticipated respondents, 200 respondents fully filled the issued questionnaire and returned them, giving a response rate of 89.69% which the study deemed adequate for further analysis. Only 10.31% of the sampled respondents did not fully fill the issued questionnaires or did not consent to fill the research tool due to tight schedules, away from office on special assignment, misplacing the questionnaires and not seeing the essence of filling the questionnaires. Table 2 illustrates the proportion of the research tool issued that were dully filled and those that were unfilled.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

4.2.1 Public Accountability Practices

Respondents were expected to identify the degree to which public accountability procedures were implemented in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties while evaluating public accountability practices.

Table 3: Public accountability practices

	Public (Leadership) Accountability Practices	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)	Mean	STD
C1	The strategies of the county government are communicated to stakeholders and county teams in a timely manner.	8.5	56	23	8.5	4	2.435	.911

C2	Information continuously circulates among senior leadership, key stakeholders and county government team members.	6	66.5	20	7	0.5	2.295	.707
C3	County leadership always validate responses given by county government employees in a timely.	5	60.5	27.5	5.5	1.5	2.38	.734
C4	Transparency, trust and honesty through regular communication is enhanced by county leadership within and to the Public.	10	66	18	5.5	0.5	2.205	.711
C5	Networking with other counties' stakeholders is enhanced by County leadership as a public information dissemination process requirement.	8.5	4	27	59	1.5	3.41	.931
C6	With the help of communication, organizational leaders are able to establish team commitment which later benefit the citizens.	8.5	61.5	24.5	3.5	2	2.29	.754
Aggregate Value for Public (Leadership) Accountability Practices							2.50	.293

Source: Researcher (2021)

As indicated in table 3, (56%) of the participants agree that the strategies of the county government are communicated to stakeholders and county teams in a timely manner, also 23% of the respondents were neutral on whether strategies of county government are communicated to stakeholders and county teams in a timely manner or not. Participants who were 8.5% of the respondents strongly agreed the strategies of the county government are communicated to stakeholders and county teams in a timely manner. However, a similar proportion, 8.5%, were disagreeing that the strategies of the county government are communicated to stakeholders and county teams in a timely manner. Further, 4% of the participants strongly disagreed that the strategies of the county government are communicated to stakeholders and county teams in a timely manner. The mean of 2.435 and standard deviation of 0.911 imply that respondents generally were agreeing that the strategies of the county government are communicated to stakeholders and county teams in a timely manner.

The revelations above conform to the arguments of Said, Alam and Aziz (2015) that improvement of public services is as a result of improving accountability in the public sector. These findings are also in tandem with the suggestions by Schillemans (2016) governments rely heavily on accountability measures to safeguard and enhance the performance of public sector entities. On whether information continuously circulated among senior leadership, key stakeholders and county government team members, (66.5%) of respondents agreed that information circulated amongst senior leadership, key stakeholders and county government members. Participants who were 20% of respondents were neutral on whether information circulated among senior leadership, key stakeholders and county government team members or not. However, 7% of the respondents agreed that information continuously circulated among senior leadership, key stakeholders and county government team members. In contrast, 6% of the respondents were strongly agreeing that information continuously circulated among senior leadership, key stakeholders and county government team members. Only 0.5% of the respondents strongly disagreed that information continuously circulated among senior leadership, key stakeholders and county government team members.

The mean of 2.295 and standard deviation of 0.707 imply that respondents generally were agreeing that information continuously circulated among senior leadership, key stakeholders and county government team members. In terms of County leadership always validating responses given by county government employees in a timely manner, majority (60.5%) of the respondents agree that County leadership always validate responses given by county government employees in a timely manner. 27.5% of the respondents were neutral on whether County leadership always validated responses given by county government employees in a timely manner or not. However, 5.5% of the respondents disagreed that County leadership always validated responses given by county government employees in a timely manner. In contrast, 5% of the participants were strongly agreeing that County leadership always validate responses given by county government employees in a timely manner. Only 1.5% of the respondents strongly disagreed that County leadership always validate responses given by county government employees in a timely manner. The mean of 2.38 and standard deviation of 0.734 imply that respondents generally were agreeing that County leadership always validate responses given by county government employees in a timely manner.

Further, on Transparency, trust and honesty through regular communication and county leadership, majority (66%) of the respondents agree that transparency, trust and honesty through regular communication was enhanced by county leadership within and to the Public. 18% of the respondents were neutral on whether transparency, trust and honesty through regular communication was enhanced by county leadership within and to the Public or not. However, 10% of the participants strongly agreed that transparency, trust and honesty through regular communication was enhanced by county leadership within and to the Public. In contrast, 5.5% of the respondents were disagreeing that transparency, trust and honesty through regular communication was enhanced by county leadership within and to the Public. Only 0.5% of the respondents strongly disagreed that transparency, trust and honesty through regular communication was enhanced by county leadership within and to the Public.

The mean of 2.205 and standard deviation of 0.711 imply that respondents generally were agreeing that transparency, trust and honesty through regular communication was enhanced by county leadership within and to the Public. The findings therein are in harmony with theVan Genstel and Van Lochem (2020) arguments that for accountability to work effectively it needs some meta-principles – transparency, responsiveness and participation. In terms of networking

with other counties' stakeholders and enhancement of County leadership as a public information dissemination process requirement, more than half (59%) of the respondents were disagreeing that networking with other counties' stakeholders was enhanced by County leadership as a public information dissemination process requirement. 27% of the respondents were neutral on whether networking with other counties' stakeholders was enhanced by County leadership as a public information dissemination process requirement or not.

However, 8.5% of the respondents strongly agreed that networking with other counties' stakeholders was enhanced by County leadership as a public information dissemination process requirement. Further, 4% of the respondents were agreeing that networking with other counties' stakeholders was enhanced by County leadership as a public information dissemination process requirement. Only 1.5% of the participants strongly disagreed that networking with other counties' stakeholders was enhanced by County leadership as a public information dissemination process requirement. The mean of 3.41 and standard deviation of 0.931 imply that respondents generally were neutral that networking with other counties' stakeholders was enhanced by County leadership as a public information dissemination process requirement.

In addition, regarding the help of communication and team commitment which benefit citizens, while 61.5% of the respondents were agreeing, while 8.5% of the participants strongly agreed that with the help of communication in this, organizational leaders were able to establish team commitment which later benefited the citizens. Particitants who were 24.5% of the respondents were neutral and, 3.5% of the respondents were also disagreeing that, with the help of communication as a public accountability practice to organizational leaders, it was able to establish team commitment which later benefited the citizens or not. The mean of 2.29 and standard deviation of 0.754 imply that respondents generally were agreeing that, with the help of communication in an organization, organizational leaders were able to establish team commitment which later benefited the citizens. The study found that citizen's benefit from their leaders contravenes Deshingkar et al. (2015) perspective that devolution led to local elites capturing a large share of public resources at the expense of the poor. Therefore, the respondents from Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties were neutral on the Public accountability practices, as exercised in both Counties, as shown by the mean of 2.5 and standard deviation of 0.293 from the computed aggregate value for public accountability practices in the table above.

4.2.2 Devolved Administrative Structures

In assessing devolved administrative structures, respondents were required to show the extent to which they agree with the postulated statements on devolved administrative structures in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties has been.

Table 4: Devolved administrative structures

	Devolved Administrative Structures	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)	Mean	STD
G1	There are acceptable levels of Administrative Structures in your County Government.	32.5	50.5	13	4	0	1.89	.778

G2	The devolved administrative structures in your County government have been responsive to public concerns and complaints	10.5	20.5	8.5	43	17.5	3.37	1.277
G4	Administrative structures' initiatives in your County are influenced by Strategic leadership.	7.5	15.5	10	43	24	3.61	1.219
G5	The Administrative structures in the County has contributed to the achievement of the desired goals of Leadership.	17	21	45	17	0	2.62	.959
G6	Devolved administrative structures have successfully been operationalized in your County in the last 8 years.	15.5	28	47.5	9	0	2.50	.862
G7	Devolved administrative structures performance is influenced by effective leadership.	23	75	2	0	0	1.79	.455
G8	Formulation of unique strategies that foster performance of the devolved administrative structures is the preserve of the top leadership.	18.5	30	51.5	0	0	2.33	.771
G9	The devolved administrative structures in your County government have been efficient in the delivery of County services	9	16	45.5	26	3.5	2.99	.962
G10	The leadership implements administrative structures in line with the legal processes and procedures.	9	13.5	46.5	23.5	7.5	3.07	1.015
G11	The devolved administrative structures in your County government have been effective in the delivery of County services	7	35	27	23.5	7.5	2.9	1.077
Aggregate Value for Devolved Administrative Structures							2.71	.310

Source: Researcher (2021)

As indicated in table 4, 50.5% of the participants agreed that there were acceptable levels of administrative structures in their county government. Within which 32.5% of the respondents were strongly agreeing that there were acceptable levels of Administrative Structures in their county government. With 13% of the respondents being neutral that there were acceptable levels of administrative structures in their county government, with only 4% disagreed that there were acceptable levels of Administrative Structures in their county government. The mean of 1.89 and standard deviation of 0.778 imply that respondents generally were agreeing that there are acceptable levels of administrative structures in your county government. These findings support the arguments by Glaser (2017) that the success of devolution hinges on proper developed and implemented structures, policies of institutional nature, structures of administration and strategies spurring, encouraging, and enlisting local community into active participation. On whether the devolved administrative structures in the County government have been responsive to public concerns and complaints, a substantial proportion (43%) of the respondents disagreed that devolved administrative structures in the County government have been responsive to public concerns and complaints. Also, 17.5% of the respondents were strongly disagreeing that devolved administrative structures in the County government have been responsive to public concerns and complaints. 20.5% of the respondents were agreeing that devolved administrative structures in the County government have been responsive to public concerns and complaints. Further, 10.5% of the respondents were strongly agreeing that devolved administrative structures in the County government have been responsive to public concerns and complaints. However, 8.5% of the respondents were neutral that devolved administrative structures in the County government have been responsive to public concerns and complaints. The mean of 3.37 and standard deviation of 1.277 imply that respondents generally were neutral that devolved administrative structures in the County government have been responsive to public concerns and complaints.

The findings are in line with the revelations that devolved administrative structures are paramount in establishing small segments that enhance fair political competition whereby the minorities who were previously aggrieved are handed an opportunity to control local government hence bringing about stability in the political environment and scaling down any chances of power abuse through the transfer of considerable number of functions from the central government to the grass root (Faguet, 2017). Further, on devolved administrative structures success in the last 8 years, a substantial proportion (47.5%) of the respondents were neutral that devolved administrative structures have successfully been operationalized in the County in the last 8 years. 28% of the respondents were agreeing that devolved administrative structures have successfully been operationalized in the County in the last 8 years. In addition, 15.5% of the respondents strongly agreed that devolved administrative structures have successfully been operationalized in the County in the last 8 years. In contrast, 9% of the respondents were disagreeing that devolved administrative structures have successfully been operationalized in the County in the last 8 years. The mean of 2.50 and standard deviation of 0.862 imply that respondents generally were neutral that devolved administrative structures have successfully been operationalized in the County in the last 8 years. These findings march the evidence from the commonwealth of independent states that participation mobilization, development of human resources and, legislative framework and process were behind the success of devolution in those jurisdictions (Florian & Becirevic, 2014). Furthermore, majority

(75%) of the respondents were agreeing that devolved administrative structures' performance is influenced by effective leadership. 23% of the respondents were strongly agreeing that devolved administrative structures' performance is influenced by effective leadership.

However, 2% of the respondents were neutral that devolved administrative structures' performance is influenced by effective leadership. The mean of 1.79 and standard deviation of 0.455 imply that respondents generally were agreeing that devolved administrative structures' performance is influenced by effective leadership. The findings above prove right arguments of Hitt, Ireland and Hoskisson (2016) that concepts of strategic leadership among them; maintaining flexibility, envisioning, thinking strategically, anticipating and encouraging employees to be innovative result to organizational transformation that positively impact organization performance. More than half (51.5%) of the respondents were neutral that formulation of unique strategies that foster performance of the devolved administrative structures is the preserve of the top leadership. 30% of the respondents were agreeing that formulation of unique strategies that foster performance of the devolved administrative structures is the preserve of the top leadership. Further, 18.5% of the respondents strongly agreed that formulation of unique strategies that foster performance of the devolved administrative structures is the preserve of the top leadership. None of the respondents were disagreeing that formulation of unique strategies that foster performance of the devolved administrative structures is the preserve of the top leadership. The mean of 2.33 and standard deviation of 0.771 imply that respondents generally were agreeing that formulation of unique strategies that foster performance of the devolved administrative structures is the preserve of the top leadership. Furthermore, 45.5% of the respondents were neutral that devolved administrative structures in the County government have been efficient in the delivery of County services. 26% of the respondents were disagreeing that devolved administrative structures in the County government have been efficient in the delivery of County services.

Further, 16% of the respondents agreed that devolved administrative structures in the County government have been efficient in the delivery of County services. Also, 9% of the respondents strongly agreed that devolved administrative structures in the County government have been efficient in the delivery of County services. However, 26% of the respondents were disagreeing that devolved administrative structures in the County government have been efficient in the delivery of County services. Also, 3.5% of the respondents were strongly disagreeing that devolved administrative structures in the County government have been efficient in the delivery of County services. The mean of 2.99 and standard deviation of 0.962 imply that respondents generally were neutral that devolved administrative structures in the County government have been efficient in the delivery of County services. On leadership implementations, administrative structures, legal processes and procedures, 45.5% of the respondents were neutral that leadership implements administrative structures in line with the legal processes and procedures. Respondents who were 23.5% of the participants were disagreeing that leadership implements administrative structures in line with the legal processes and procedures. Further, 7.5% of the respondents strongly disagreed that leadership implements administrative structures in line with the legal processes and procedures. Contrastingly, 13.5% of the respondents agreed that leadership implements administrative structures in line with the legal processes and procedures. Further, 9% of the respondents were strongly agreeing that leadership implements administrative structures in line with the legal processes and procedures. The mean of 3.07 and standard deviation of 1.015 imply that respondents generally were neutral

that leadership implements administrative structures in line with the legal processes and procedures.

Lastly, on the question of devolved structures' effectiveness in delivery of County service, a substantial proportion (35%) of the respondents were agreeing that devolved administrative structures in the County government have been effective in the delivery of County services. 27% of the respondents were neutral on whether devolved administrative structures in the County government have been effective in the delivery of County services or not. However, 23.5% of the respondents were disagreeing that devolved administrative structures in the County government have been effective in the delivery of County services. Also, 7.5% of the respondents were strongly disagreeing that devolved administrative structures in the County government have been effective in the delivery of County services. Thus, the respondents from Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties were neutral on the Legal factors, as exercised in both Counties, as indicated by the mean of 2.71 and standard deviation of 0.31 from the computed aggregate value for devolved administrative structures in the table above.

4.3 Inferential Analysis

4.3.1Effect of Public Accountability Practices on Devolved Administrative Practices

The study computed composite indices for public accountability practices and Devolved Administrative Practices in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties. Then, the coefficient of determinants (R^2) was generated to describe the proportion of variation in Devolved Administrative Practices that has been accounted for by public accountability practices, which were the regressors. The regression model summary, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and model coefficients' outputs generated.

Table 5: Model summary for public accountability practices on devolved administrative practices

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.272[a]	.074	.069	.2990378

a. Predictors: (Constant), Aggregate value for Public Accountability practices

Source: Research data (2021)

From the model summary in table 5, the coefficient of determination (R^2 = . 074) indicates that 7.4 percent of the variation in Devolved Administrative Practices in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties was explained by the changes in public accountability practices. This shows that public accountability Practices accounted for a significant variation in Devolved Administrative Practices in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties. In terms of the overall significance of the regression equation, table 6 presents the F_ statistic and P_v_{alue} used to test the null hypothesis.

H_0: There is no significant statistical effect of public accountability practices on Devolved Administrative Practices in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties.

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Table 6: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-Statistics	Sig.
	Regression	1.409		1.409	15.758	.000[b]
1	Residual	17.706	1 198	.089		
	Total	**19.115**	**199**			

a. Dependent Variable: Aggregate Value for Performance of Devolved Administrative Structures

b. Predictors: (Constant), Aggregate value for Public Accountability practices

Source: Research data (2021)

From table 6, the *F-statistic* was 15.758 and the associated *P_value* = 0.000. Since the calculated *P-value* was less than α = 0.05, there is evidence against the null hypothesis, that there is no significant statistical effect of public accountability practices on the Devolved Administrative Practices in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties. As such, the rejection of the null hypothesis implies that public accountability practices had a significant effect on Devolved Administrative Practices in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties. The eventual regression model was generated from model coefficients output in table 7.

Table 7: Regression results for public accountability practices (model of coefficients)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-statistics	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.987	.182		10.920	.000
Aggregate value for Public Accountability practices	.287	.072	.272	3.970	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Aggregate Value for Devolved Administrative Structures

From table 7, the regression equation is as presented in equation 2.

$Y = 1.987 + 0.287Pac$ …….……..……. equation 2

Where;

Y - Represents Devolved Administrative Practices in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties.

Pac – Represents Public Accountability Practices.

Public accountability practices were significantly affecting the Devolved Administrative structutres in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties at $P\_{value} = 0.000 < 0.05$). Further, a (β = .287 means that a 1% improvement in public accountability practices leads to a 28.7% increase in the Devolved Administrative structures in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties. Overly, the results provide evidence that public accountability practices had a significant effect on Devolved Administrative structures in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties, hence supports the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0).

4.4 Qualitative Analysis

In addition to the study issuing questionnaires to respondents who were randomly sampled, the study also administered interview to the respondents who were purposively sampled and they included top leadership; the Governor's, Deputy Governors, Speakers of County Assembly and Clerks of County Assembly. Their responses were captured and presented in the active voice (verbatim) as presented below.

Table 8: Qualitative data analysis

Themes adopted	Narrative description
Challenges to Public accountability Practice	The respondents identified the following as stumbling blocks to the practice of public accountability in their respective counties (Taita Taveta and Makueni) on devolved administrative structures' operations; the main issues that created challenges in public accountability was steted by the respondents as; SelfInterests especially to the regions that supported the county government leadership, Corruption and misappropriation of funds as leaders put in place take the government money allocated to various projects for their selfish own benefits, e there is barrier to access to high-quality training and coaching, Late reimbursement of finance from the government makes it challenging to effectively run and administer services locally, Poor goal setting and lack of alignment, Inability to track progress, People not connected to the strategy.
Effectiveness of County Operations	In terms of the county operation effectiveness, 80% of the respondents affirmed that the county's operations have been effective through the practice of stakeholder involvement. 20% of the respondents did not affirm that the county's operations have been effective through the practice of stakeholder involvement.

4.4.1 Public accountability Practice in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties

In relation to the state of strategic leadership in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties, the respondents indicated that…

"Working toward greater efficiency and accountability in resource management."
"There is dearth of evidence on how strategic leadership affects performance of organizations.
Strategic leadership is one of key drivers that have performance influence over organizations through strategic decision-making.
Regardless of their title and organization's function, leadership has substantial decision-making responsibilities that cannot be delegated."

4.4.2 Effectiveness of County Operations in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties

In terms of the county operation effectiveness, 60% of the repondents indicated that the practice of working under the strict laws has boosted the devolved administrative structures of the counties. Although, a substantial proportion (40%) of the respondents indicated that the

practice of working under the strict laws has not boosted the devolved administrative structures of the counties. In addition, the respondents were required to describe the nature of the county's operations, whether the operations were efficient or effective.

The responses were as follows;

"If I was to rate the effectiveness and efficiency of County operations on a scale of 1 to 10, then it will be at 4. That is, there is to some extent efficient and effective operations but not at the expected moderate rate?"
"The operations are relatively good. The citizens are able to access services from the county government though the overlap from the national government, untimely dispersal of county funds and underfunding causes conflict?"
"My county establishes important local laws (ordinances) and enforce laws that protect citizens from harmful behaviour. They also encourage citizens and businesses to get involved in their communities. Yes, they are efficient and effective."

"Devolved county administration to the grass roots. Quite effective, but still a work in progress?"
"Yes, are less effective -however they are better placed to deliver and address local needs effectively. County government do not exist simply to provide services."

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of findings

The study aimed at examining the effect of public accountability practices and devolved administrative structures in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties, Kenya. The research entirely relied on pragmatism research philosophy in informing the collection of data that reflected the reality of the phenomenon under study. Descriptive research design was employed in this resaerch which targeted 500 individuals drawn from Taita Taveta County in Coastal region and Makueni County in Eastern region. The top leadership comprised of the leaders at the strategic level, functional level and operational level. The leaders from strategic levels were; Governor, Deputy Governor, Speaker of County Assembly, Member of County Assembly, County Executive Committee Members, Chief Officers and Clerk of County Assembly. The leaders from functional level were; County Service Board Members, Directors and Managers while the leaders from operational level were Sub-County Administrators, Ward Administrators and Village Administrators.

The Analysis of variance (ANOVA) part in this study was used as the criterion for rejecting or failing to reject the null hypothesis. From the qualitative analysis, public accountability has enhanced service delivery through the devolved units by reaching more people at the grassroots and meeting them at their point of need. Nevertheless, politicized resource allocation, especially to the regions that supported the current county government, and a lack of skills in public accountability practices.

5.2 Conclusion

The research concluded that public accountability practice had a significant effect on devolved administrative structures in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties. From the qualitative analysis, public accountability practice have enhanced service delivery through the devolved units by reaching more people at the grassroots and meeting them at their point of need. The citizens are able to access services from the county government though the overlap

from the national government, untimely dispersal of county funds and underfunding causes conflict.

5.3 Recommendations for Policy Implication

The findings found that, rise in public accountability as a practice leads to enhanced operationalization of devolved administrative structures. Henceforth, leaders should set up structures that care for executional inventiveness and guarantee that responsibilities to be executed should as well be connected to the policies, additionally ensuring information movement should be done continuously and efficiently. The public accountability practice, stood to be significant in operationalization of devolved administrative structures, hence top County Government Leadership must distinguish and recompenses improvement of operationalization of devolved administrative structures.

In addition, administrators must have significant independence extended to them to determine how resources are allocated for purposes of actualizing the service delivery in devolved structures. It also recommends that public accountability must be endeared often with a purpose of addressing newly emerging stratagems with randomity to hi-tech, financial and demographical vicissitudes. In this current research, it is recommended that entirely major decision-making processes in line with strategic work relations must conform to the administered prescribed guidelines with actions shaped by proper behaviour that shall get demarcated principles as the basement from these. Strategic leaders in top leadership must endeavour to sheerly and precipitously connect approximately in all stratagems, through indistinct appearances connecting communiqué in addition to accountability principles placed before it.

Proceeding to Stakeholders involvement, this current research posits that strategic leaders and administrators must offer thought-provoking occasions to personnel to rally in self-built concerts. County Government top leadership must place tactics which enable prolific besides broad-minded working related atmosphere. In addition, strategic leaders and administrators must distinguish virtuous talents and recompense them whereas providing prospects to employee's profession improvement.

5.4 Recommendation for further research

It is recommended that studies of this similarity can be done to other Counties in Kenya. It's important to note that this type of research consumes a lot of time and resources. In addition, organizational ethics could be given an exploration as a variable that should give explanations to the influence surrounding strategic leadership practices. This research focused on strategic leadership practices on devolved administrative structures. However, there was small margin of variation in operationalization of devolved administrative structures that was giving explanation from the strategic leadership practices point of view. Therefore, it shows that there are some factors not within these that drives the operationalization of devolved administrative structures. It is therefore critical if these factors are given consideration that would necessitate for future studies. The findings of this research will also formulate a theme of locus in imminent scholarly researches on strategic leadership practices and the roles it can play in operationalized devolved administrative structures and premeditated strategies by the county governments. The prosed literatures will power the valued knowledge for academic to research tenacities as countless and innumerable scholars can make good usage of the discoveries as their angled point of regimented empirical references. In addition, the research can supplementarily add

worthiness to the prevailing numeral acquaintance of knowledge in running of county governments in Kenya and the rest of the continents.

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