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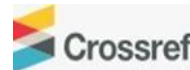
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Abstract

Purpose: Kenya's devolved administrative structures are yet to realize full implementation of the envisaged devolved units hence underscoring outstanding service delivery. The challenges crippling the progress of devolution have ranged from deficient human resource, legal and institutional infrastructure, capacity gaps, corruption and conflicting association with national government's deliverables. As such, the current study focused on the effect of Legal factors on strategic leadership practices and the devolved administrative structures in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties, Kenya.

Materials & Methods: The population targeted was 500 respondents of the study site. Both Purposive and stratified random sampling techniques were utilized where sample size of 223 was drawn. The design of the study deployed was descriptive research that sought to produce answers to phenomenon's questions on what, where, and when. Instrument's reliability was tested using Cronchba's alpha reliability of 0.7 that was acceptably reliable. Quantitative and qualitative analytical methods therefore were used. Multiple linear regression was used to test the effects of legal factors on strategic leadership practices and the devolved

administrative structures. Data was presented in tables and thematic narrations.

Findings: The study concluded that, there was a significant effect of legal factors on the relationship between the strategic leadership practices and devolved administrative structures. Hence, legal factors were found to have moderating effects on relationship between strategic leadership practices and devolved administrative structures.

Implications to Theory, Practice and Policy: The study's findings provide constructive perspectives for policymakers at the National and County government levels, addressing impediments to decentralized administrative systems in county governments, contributing to enhanced knowledge aligned with the 2010 Kenyan Constitution, influencing resolutions for Vision 2030, and serving as a reference for the national government to address shortcomings in county administrations' policy implementation.

Keywords: *Legal Factors, Strategic Leadership Practices, Devolved Administrative, Structures, Selected Semi-Arid, Counties, Kenya*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

2.0 Background of the Study

Most administrative structures utilize co-production methods to enhance the delivery of services that relate to maintenance of a system. Service delivery has been enhanced due to innovative strategies that has been emanating from devolved administrative structures (Sudhipongpracha & Wongpredee, 2016). Networking development, systematic and flexible thinking, leaders' reflective, continuous professional growth and cautious planning and management skills were strategic leadership approaches prevalent in the majority of the education sector. Strategic leadership was discovered to greatly rely upon the vocational education collages (Bin & Zulkipli, 2019). Absorptive, strategic alignment, adaptive capacity, strategic orientation, restlessness, strategic intervention and leadership wisdom were the key practices of strategic leadership that were commonly utilized in the work place.

In Kenya, after twelve years into devolution, counties 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 (COK, 2010). The creation of devolved administrative structures was to guarantee the provision of timely, effective, efficient and accountable governance deliverables all over the country.

Twelve years down the path of devolution, the envisioned benefits are yet to be realized. Constant conflicting interests and clash of mandate with the national government has derailed the good intentions of the 2010 Constitution promulgation (Kangu, 2015). The challenges crippling the progress of devolution, in almost all counties, has ranged from deficient human resource, legal and institutional infrastructure, capacity gaps, conspicuous corruption and conflicting association with national government's deliverables. Consequently, sectors like Health have stagnated or even retrogressed in the quality of services offered (Kimathi, 2017). Occasional sermons from the Senate for governors to shade light on how public funds were utilized, looming motions of governors' impeachment 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.

Devolution was reviewed in light of de-concentration of authority from the centre to the peripheral units of administration. The problem of decentralization of control against the de-concentration of power from the national to other government levels necessitates that coordination be pursued to prevent needless power squabbles and disputes between governments at various levels. 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.

The study is of the opinion that keen crafting of line of tasks and responsibilities defined a linear system of devolved governance therefore calling for short-term legislative acts and most importantly a continuous refinement of these Acts. The fruits of devolution are realized when

there is political goodwill and support from the central government. Entirely, devolution requires not only administrative, political and legal as prerequisites for its functionality, but also cultural, social and economic aspects that deemed to promote accountability for utilization of government funding by responsible local leaders, participation of locals in planning, service delivery at the local level, and implementation of government programs (Banerjee et al, 2020). With the help of analytical frameworks, evidence on the experience on devolution was drawn from four countries: Philippines, Ghana, Uganda and Zambia.

Strategic Leadership Practices and Devolved Administrative Structures

Scholars Norzailan, Othman, and Ishizaki (2016) term strategic leadership as those approaches unleashed in response to vested interest, resistance from within and external environmental variability. Özer and Tinaztepe (2014) view strategic leadership as a bridge connecting strategic functions and leadership roles that justifies the manner in which an organization carries out certain activities. According to Engert and Baumgartner (2016), strategic leadership is an endeavour of problem identification and strategy formulation that provide solutions to those problems. According to these scholars, strategic leadership is a necessity in fostering, advancing and maintaining over time organizational significance.

Empirical evidence from Malaysia's education vocational colleges suggested high level expression of strategic leadership (Bin & Zulkipli, 2019). The scholars noted that some of the prevalent practices of strategic leadership were the alignment of strategies, wisdom in leadership, strategic intervention, restlessness, and orientations of strategies, absorptive and adaptive capacity. Research by Chan (2018) in Hong Kong revealed that kindergarten leaders were able to surmount challenges that were facing the sector with the help of strategic leadership. Key in beating the challenges were reflective leaders, systematic thinking, networking development, flexible leadership, continuous professional development and ability to plan and management prudently in most kindergarten schools.

Odero, Egessa, and Oseno (2019) examined the effect of strategic leadership on the performance of commercial and financial corporations in Kenya. The study discovered that effective organizational culture, corporate strategic direction, balanced organizational controls, effective management of corporate resources portfolio, and an emphasis on ethical practices were highly correlated with the performance of the aforementioned institutions. On the other hand, Masungu, Marangu, Obunga, and Lilungu (2015) while investigating the effect of strategic leadership on the performance of devolved system in Kakamega County concluded that there was need for devolved governments to employ strategic leadership in their operations as this enhances their level of operations. Empirical evidence on the strategic leadership and performance of the small and the medium enterprises in Kenya revealed that nurturing organizational culture, development of human and social capital, managing employees to contribute to organizational goals and aligning core competences with strategic objectives have a positive influence on firm performance (Ogechi, 2016). Similarly, it was discovered that strategic leadership plays a vital role in the execution of tactical decisions at Kenyan public universities (Ogaja & Kimiti, 2016). In the current study, strategic leadership practices were assessed based on resource allocation, public accountability and stakeholders' involvement. Resource allocation calls on a plan(s) for transforming the culture of the organization in areas like performance standards, ability to deliver, quality, teamwork, flexibility and customer service that specifies the people with diverse attitudes, personal characteristics and beliefs (Harrison, Hall & Nargundkar, 2017).

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 the implementation of proactive environmental practices, stakeholders significantly influence decisions among them notably in different ways (Rasi, Abdekhodae & Nagarajah, 2014). For instance, employees and customers are involved during process-based changes while senior managers are interested in participating on matters concerning internal management improvements. The participation of stakeholders in the identification, execution, and monitoring of the automotive emission control project in Nairobi, Kenya, revealed an effect on the project's performance (Njogu, 2016).

On the other hand, involvement of stakeholders in the road projects at Kenya national highways authority indicated that awareness, seminars, conferences and feasibility had a great positive influence on road project performance (Nyandika & Ngugi, 2014). In contrast, there was an imbalance in stakeholders' involvement in change management in public entities (Obong'o, 2017). It was observed that stakeholders were involved in developing sound procedures for effective changes, giving feedback to management, piloting phase before rolling out changes, and giving their feedback and views through a series of meetings. The study noticed that there was no involvement of the staff in the design phase of the change process. This research sought to assess stakeholders' involvement using seminars, conferences, meetings, feedbacks, needs and values. The above studies failed to describe the effect of legal factors on the relationship between strategic leadership practices and devolved administrative structures.

Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties

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 resource allocation, public accountability and stakeholders' involvement have 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 km² of the 17,083.9 km² in Taita Taveta is habitable and therefore under the direct exercise of the County roles as compared to 8,008.9 km² 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 whether strategic leadership practices have an effect on the performance of devolved administrative structures in the two counties shaped the formulation of this study.

Problem Statement

While the implementation of devolved administrative structures in Kenya has brought about positive changes and opportunities, challenges and gaps still persist. The success of these structures depends on various factors, such as the equitable allocation of resources, transparent decision-making processes, effective public accountability mechanisms, and stakeholder participation. Issues of corruption, power imbalances, and inadequate capacity among local leaders can hinder the effective functioning of devolved administrative structures. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the effects of legal factors on the relationship between strategic leadership practices and decentralized administrative structures in the Kenyan counties of Taita Taveta and Makueni.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

This study adopted transformational leadership theory. The theory was developed by James Macgregor Burns in 1978, focusing on creating positive change within an organization. It emphasizes the importance of caring for the interests of others and working towards the collective goals of the group. According to Manzoor, Wei, Nurunnabi, Subhan, Shah, and Fallatah (2019), transformational leadership aims to enhance morale and performance by aligning employees' self-worth and identity with the organization's collective identity. This can result in increased motivation, engagement, and commitment among employees.

According to Ngcobo-Mthembu (2017), transformational leadership is characterized by creating a culture of purpose, respect, and unity within an organization. It fosters a positive work environment by inspiring and motivating employees to achieve higher levels of performance. As such, the theory informed legal issues arising due to strategic leadership practices.

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.

Rahman, Othman, Yajid, Rahman, Yaakob, Masri, and Ibrahim (2018) argues that strategic leadership is grounded on strategic leadership's visionary capabilities that focus on developing an organization that will eventually be transformative. Strategic leadership goes beyond possession of unique aptitudes which leads to learning and development of new forms of ideas and information, to include adaptability to dynamism and incorporation of complexities arising from external environment (Shoemaker & Krupp, 2015). 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.

In the current research study, Devolution was reviewed in light of de-concentration of authority from the centre to the peripheral units of administration. 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.

Strategic Leadership Practices

Wang, Zhang and Jia (2017) studied the personal characteristics of strategic leaders and firm performance in China. The characteristics were personality, personal experience, cognitive styles, values and leadership behaviour. The characteristics were further grouped into three styles; morality, clear and strong authority and concern and considerateness. However, Wang et al. (2017) did not focus on collective institutional strategic leadership influence on a devolved administrative setup. Algarni and Male (2014) in their review on models and constructs of leadership so as to evaluate the role of educational leaders in promoting and developing public schools in Saudi Arabia, concluded that, the current system viewed educational leadership as a single individual's responsibility suggesting maintenance as compared to development and management in contrast to leadership. Although the current Saudi education system promoted a collaborative learning environment, the conclusions of Algarni and Male (2014) are contradictory.

In this study, devolved administrative setup was the foci not the educational setup, and an investigation of strategic leadership practices like resource allocation, public accountability and stakeholders' involvement unlike a sweeping investigation on constructs of leadership. In Ghana, Ofori and Atiogbe (2014) conducted an investigation on strategic planning with Public Universities being units of observation. They discovered that information and communication use translated to a successful implementation of their strategic plans and that staff members viewed strategic planning as a responsibility for only the top management. Serfontein et al. (2019) also found out that strategic leadership had a direct association with operational strategy and further related to return on assets (ROA) and earnings per share (EPS) in a business organization in South Africa.

In contrast to this study, strategic leadership practices like resource allocation, programs, plan formulation and execution of policies regulation were not investigated. Odera et al. (2019) while studying the impact of strategic leadership on performance of commercial and financial state corporations in Kenya, discovered that, a balanced organizational control in the management of human, financial, and social capital plus the organizational culture was effective towards the realization of good performance. Odera et al., (2019) restricted his study on financial institution and not the devolved administrative structures. Another study on strategic leadership and change management at the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) by Ndunge (2014), identified staff retraining, strategy formulation, branding of parks and reserves and culture change as change programs that which turned around low staff morale, financial constraints/corruption, poaching, poor performance and the lack of passion to deliver services. This was also the outcome in a case study by Jumanne and Njoroge (2018), while researching on Organizational Change Management and Employee Performance in Public Sector Organizations in Kenya. Masungu et al. (2015), while studying the influence of strategic leadership on the performance of devolved government systems in Kakamega County, concluded that Strategic leadership in devolved government improves the level of performance. They only focused on Kakamega County which this study expanded to two other counties.

Further, Rigii, Ogutu, Awino, and Kitiabi (2019) emphasized that county leadership has to incorporate strategic leadership and innovatively train its employees for improved service delivery. Their scope was limited as it did not include resource allocation or execution of policy regulations in the devolved units. Therefore, the current research sought to unravel whether devolved administrative structures could be influenced by strategic leadership practices.

There is plenty of literature on the subject organizational performances and strategic leadership (Asencio & Mujkic, 2016), but few studies on the effects of strategic leadership practices on devolved administrative structures in Kenya. Saboe et al. (2015) argued that, most of the previous studies of transformational leadership have been overall about the transformational leadership as compared to its dimensions and expectations. It Limited researches on strategic leadership has ever focused on the scope of strategic leadership practices on the devolved administrative structures in Kenya. This research aims to bridge the gap by establishing the scope of strategic leadership practices in relation to the devolved administrative structures.

3.0 MATERIALS AND METHODS

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).

Variables (Units of Analysis)

The unit of analysis was public accountability and devolved administrative structures in Kenya as inferred from the two selected Counties. In addition, this study drew its unit of observation from two Counties which are semi arid and included the following; Governors, Deputy

Governors, Speakers of County Assembly, Members of County Assemblies, County Executive Committee Members, Chief Officers, the County Public Service Board Members, Directors/Managers, Sub County Administrators, Ward Administrators and the Village Administrators.

Location of the Study (Site)

The location of the research is Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties in the Coast and Eastern regions which are the former Coast and Eastern Provinces respectively. Taita Taveta County as a study site of this research is located in Coastal region which is the former Coast Province and its about 17, 083.9 km². While Makueni County as a study site is located in the Eastern region which is the former Eastern Province and its approximately 8,008.9 km².

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 3.1.

Sampling Techniques and Sample Size 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.

Sample Size Table 2: Sample Respondents Distribution for Selected Semi-Arid Counties in Kenya (Taita Taveta and Makueni)

Leadership Position	Population	Sample Respondents $n = N/(1 + N(e^2))$
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.

$$n$$

$$n_i = \left(\frac{\quad}{N} \right) N_i$$

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 .

Pilot Study (Pre-Testing)

Kajiado County was identified and used for the pilot study. This endeavour is crucial in unravelling the challenges the research was likely to experience in conducting actual data collection, cost estimate of the data collection process and approximate time required for the entire data gathering process. It provided an insight on how the respondent understands the items in the research instrument, the duration the respondents used to finish filling the questionnaire and effectiveness of the data collecting instrument in the field. In this study, 20 respondents were selected for piloting and they were from the same organization and were uniquely marked to avoid inclusion of redundancy of respondents in the research. The outcome revealed that, the administered questionnaires were complex for the respondents to reply, consequently forcing their revision for purposes of enabling respondents to comprehensively respond to questionnaires promptly.

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.

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).

$$C_i = \sum f_i w_i + \sum f_i$$

Where,

C = Represents the Composite Index.

f = Represents the total respondents

w_i = Represents the Relative Weight for each particular variable.

i = Represents the total components.

As was recommended by Field (2017), that when checking for relationships between predictor and response variables, normality, Linearity and Heteroscedasticity should be used in carrying out the testing, which this study conducted. In regards to qualitative data analysis, thematic analysis and direct quotes (participants' voices) were adopted.

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:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_{11}Ra + \beta_{12}Pac + \beta_{13}Sin + \varepsilon \dots\dots\dots \text{Equation 3.1}$$

Where,

Y = Devolved Administrative Structures

β_0 to β_{03} = Constants

β_{11} to β_{13} = Regression coefficients (The Slope)

Ra = Resource allocation practices

Pac = Public accountability practices

Sin = Stakeholder involvement practices

ε = Error Term

4.0 FINDINGS Data Analysis, Presentation and Interpretation 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, 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.

Table 3: 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 4.1 illustrates the proportion of the research tool issued that were dully filled and those that were unfilled.

Demographic Characteristics Table 4: Demographic Characteristics

Description	Category	Count	Percentage
Gender	Male	134	67
	Female	66	33
Education Level	O/A Level	12	6
	Certificate/Diploma	52	26
	Bachelors	118	59
	Postgraduate	18	9
Position in the County	Director	32	16
	CO	44	22
	CECM	92	46
Years serving in the County government	0 – 3 Years	59	29.5
	3 – 5 Years	95	47.5
	6 – 8 Years	36	18

Source: Research Data (2021)

In terms of gender, majority (67%) of the respondents were Male while 33% of the participants were female. Majority of the participants were male because they are the majority of the employees in the two county governments hence reflecting since time in memorial the cultural gender disparity. More than half (59%) of the participants had attained a Bachelor's degree level of education, 26% had attained a Certificate or Diploma level while 9% and 6% of the participants had attained a Postgraduate degree and O/A level of education respectively. The participants with higher education qualifications were fewer due to the fact of inaccessibility of education since independence.

Legal Factors' Effect on the Relationship Between Strategic Leadership Practices on Devolved Administrative Structures

The study determined the effect of legal considerations on strategic leadership practices and devolved administrative structures in the counties of Taita Taveta and Makueni, Kenya. In doing so, the study conducted a three step multiple regression model. The study computed the aggregate values for strategic leadership practices and the devolved administrative structures. Again, the study computed an interaction term between strategic leadership practices and legal factors. Correlation coefficient (r) was computed to describe the strength and direction of the effect on the devolved administrative structures from strategic leadership practices or legal factors or the interaction term. Coefficient of determination (R^2) was computed to describe the proportion of variation in the devolved administrative structures that has been accounted for by strategic leadership practices or legal factors and the interaction, which are the regressors. In step one, the study tests whether there exists an effect on the aggregate value for strategic leadership practices and the devolved administrative structures in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties. The hypothesized relationships were that;

H_{0a}: There is no significant from strategic leadership practices on the devolved administrative structures in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties.

Table 5: Model Summary for Strategic Leadership Practices on the Devolved Administrative Structures

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.237 ^a	.056	.051	.3018779
a. Predictors: (Constant), Strategic Leadership Practices				

Source: Researcher (2021)

From the model summary in Table 5, strategic leadership practices were positively correlated to the devolved administrative structures ($r = .237$). 5.6% of the variation was on the devolved administrative structures in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties, they were accounted for by strategic leadership practices ($R^2 = .056$) with a standard error of .302. Therefore this implies that the study fails to reject the null hypothesis and recognizes that the legal factors do have a moderating effect on the strategic leadership practices on devolved administrative structures.

Table 6: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Strategic Leadership Practices on the Devolved Administrative Structures

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.071	1	1.071	11.755	.001 ^b
	Residual	18.044	198	.091		
	Total	19.115	199			
a. Dependent Variable: Devolved Administrative Structures						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Strategic Leadership Practices						

Source: Researcher (2021)

In determining whether to reject the null hypothesis in favour of the alternative hypothesis, ANOVA was conducted where the F -statistic and the associated P -value were used for determination. From Table 6, F -statistic = 11.755 and the associated P -value = .001, leads the research to reject the null hypothesis that there is no significant effect from strategic leadership practices on the devolved administrative structures in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties, in favour of the alternative hypothesis. In essence the research concludes that there was a significant effect from the strategic leadership practices on the devolved administrative structures in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties.

Table 7: Regression Coefficient for Strategic Leadership Practices on the Devolved Administrative Structures

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig. B
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.609	.320		5.024	.000
	Strategic Leadership Practices	.390	.114	.237	3.429	.001
a. Dependent Variable: Devolved Administrative Structures						

Source: Researcher (2021)

Strategic leadership practices on devolved administrative structures was quantified as represented in Table 7 by the regression coefficients developed. Strategic leadership practices had a significant direct effect on the devolved administrative structures in Taita Taveta and

Makueni Counties ($\beta_1 = .390$, $P_{value} = .001$). The eventual regression is as presented in equation 4.1.

$$Y = 1.609 + .390SLP \dots\dots\dots \text{Equation 4. 1}$$

Equation 4.1 indicates that for a unit increase in strategic leadership practices, there will be an associated direct increase in effect of devolved administrative structures by 39%, holding other factors constant. The study concludes that there is a significant effect of strategic leadership practices on devolved administrative structures. In Step one, legal factors (the moderator) are introduced. The individual significance of strategic leadership practices and legal factors on devolved administrative structures was then evaluated. The hypothesized relationships were that;

H_{0b}: There is no significant cumulative relationship of strategic leadership practices and legal factors on the devolved administrative structures in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties.

Table 8: Model Summary for Step 1

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.272 ^a	.074	.064	.2997870

a. Predictors: (Constant), Legal factors and Strategic Leadership Practices

Source: Researcher (2021)

From the model summary in Table 8, 7.4% of the variation on devolved administrative structures in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties, was accounted for by strategic leadership practices and legal factors ($R^2 = .074$) with a standard error of . 299. In determining whether to reject the null hypothesis in favour of the alternative hypothesis, ANOVA was conducted, where the *F-statistic* and the link P_{value} were used. The findings conform to the findings by Serfontein et al. (2019) that strategic leadership had a direct association with operational strategy. The findings above are also in harmony with the findings by Masungu et al. (2015) that strategic leadership led to improvement on performance of devolved government system.

Table 9: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Step 1

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.410	2	.705	7.845	.001 ^b
	Residual	17.705	197	.090		
	Total	19.115	199			

a. Dependent Variable: Devolved Administrative Structures

b. Predictors: (Constant), Legal factors and Strategic Leadership Practices

Source: Researcher (2021)

In Table 9, $F_{statistic} = 7.845$ and the associated $P_{value} = .001$, leads the study to reject the null hypothesis, that there was no significant cumulative relationship of strategic leadership practices and legal factors on the devolved administrative structures in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties based on the operationalization, in favour of the alternative hypothesis. In essence the study concludes that there was significant cumulative relationship of strategic leadership practices and legal factors on the devolved administrative structures in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties. The findings conform to the findings by Serfontein et al. (2019) that strategic leadership had a direct association with operational strategy. The findings above are also in harmony with the findings by Masungu et al. (2015) that strategic leadership led to improvement on performance of devolved government system.

Table 10: Regression Coefficients for Step 1

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig. B
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.552	.319		4.860	.000
	Strategic Leadership Practices	.519***	.131	.315	3.961	.000 ^b
	Legal factors	-.129	.067	-.154	-1.942	.054
a. Dependent Variable: Devolved Administrative Structures						

Source: Researcher (2021)

Strategic leadership practices and legal factors on devolved administrative structures as operationalized was quantified as represented in Table 10 by the regression coefficients that was developed. The Strategic leadership practices therefore had a significant direct effect on devolved administrative structures ($\beta_1 = .519$, $P_{value} = .000$), but legal factors had to have a non-significant inverse effect on the devolved administrative structures ($\beta_1 = -.129$, $P_{value} = .054$).

Table 11: Model Summary for Step 2

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.274 ^a	.075	.061	.3003030
a. Predictors: (Constant), Interaction term (Strategic Leadership Practices * Legal Factors), Strategic Leadership Practices and Legal factors				

Source: Researcher (2021)

From the model summary in Table 11, 7.5% of the variation in devolved administrative structures in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties was accounted for by strategic leadership practices, legal factors and the interaction term ($R^2 = .075$) with a standard error of .300. In step three, interaction between strategic leadership practices and legal factors (the moderator) is introduced to equation 4.2. The individual significance of strategic leadership practices, legal factors and the interaction on the devolved administrative structures was then evaluated. The hypothesized relationships were that;

H_{0c}: There is no significant cumulative relationship of strategic leadership practices, legal factors and the interaction terms, on the devolved administrative structures in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties.

$$Y = .528 + 1.837SLP - 972SLP * Lf \dots\dots\dots \text{Equation 4. 2}$$

Table 12: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Step 2

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.439	3	.480	5.320	.002 ^b
	Residual	17.676	196	.090		
	Total	19.115	199			
a. Dependent Variable: Devolved Administrative Structures						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Interaction term (Strategic Leadership Practices * Legal Factors), Strategic Leadership Practices and Legal factors						

Source: Researcher (2021)

In determining whether to reject the null hypothesis in favour of the alternative hypothesis,

ANOVA was conducted, where the *F-statistic* and the associated *P_{value}* were used. From Table 12, *F_{-statistic}* = 5.320 and the associated *P_{value}* = .002, leading the study to reject the null hypothesis that there was no significant cumulative association of strategic leadership practices, legal factors and the interaction term on part of the devolved administrative structures in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties, in favour of the alternative hypothesis. In essence the study concludes that there was significant cumulative relationship of strategic leadership practices, legal factors and the interaction term on part of devolved administrative structures in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties.

In addition, the effect of strategic leadership practices, legal factors and the interaction term on devolved administrative structures was quantified as presented in Table 12, by the regression coefficients developed. Individually, strategic leadership practices had a significant doublefold direct relationship on devolved administrative structures ($\beta_1 = 1.837$, *P_{value}* = .018), legal factors had an insignificant effect on devolved administrative structures ($\beta_2 = .376$, *P_{value}* = .688) and the interaction term had a significant effect on the devolved administrative structures in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties ($\beta_3 = -.972$, *P_{value}* = .030). The eventual regression is therefore as presented in equation 4. 3.

Table 12: Regression Coefficients for Step 2

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t - statistics	Sig. B
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.528	1.829		.289	.773
	Strategic Leadership Practices	2.198	.657	1.837	3.346	.018
	Legal factors	.315	.784	.376	.402	.688
	Interaction term (Strategic Leadership Practices * Legal Factors)	-1.826	.278	-.972	-6.569	.030
a. Dependent Variable: Devolved Administrative Structures						

Source: Researcher (2021)

$$Y = .528 + 1.837SLP - 972SLP * Lf \dots\dots\dots \text{Equation 4. 3}$$

Equation 4.3 indicates that for a unit increase in strategic leadership practices, there will be an associated direct increase in effect on devolved administrative structures by 52.8%, holding all other factors constant. Also, for a unit increase in the interaction term (strategic leadership practices * legal factors), there will be an associated decrease in effect of devolved administrative structures by 97.2%, holding other factors constant. In the second step, legal factors solely did not have a significant effect on the devolved administrative structures in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties.

Decision Criteria for Moderation

For moderation to occur, the interaction term should be significant (Kenny & Baron, 1986). Moreover, in the case of a partial moderation, the moderating variable should be significant in step two, otherwise a complete moderating effect suffices. According to the current study, strategic leadership practices was significant in step one and two. Legal factors were significant in step two. The interaction was also significant in step two. Additionally, another method of assessing moderation would be an observable increment in *R²* from step one to step two due to the introduction of the interaction term (Mackinnon et al., 2015). As such, in step one, *R²* = .074

and after the introduction of the interaction term $R^2=.075$, evidence that moderation has taken place. Thus, the study observes that legal factors had got a complete moderating effect on the link between the strategic leadership practices and devolved administrative structures in both Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties in regards to their operationalization.

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 13: Qualitative Data Analysis

Themes Adopted	Narrative Description
Strategic Leadership	state of strategic leadership in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties has been progressive although self interests kept coming up and hindered the positive progress on County development, it has enhanced service delivery through the devolved units by reaching more people at the grassroots hence meeting them at their point of need.
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.
Legal Issues	80% of the respondents who were interviewed indicated that the legal issues had effects on the devolved administrative structures operations in the counties. While 20% of the respondents indicated that the legal issues had no effects on the devolved administrative structures operations in the counties. 60% of the respondents affirmed that leadership in the county had legal issues that affected service delivery by the devolved administrative structures. However, 40% of the respondents did not affirm that leadership in the county had legal issues that affected service delivery by the devolved administrative structures.

State of Strategic Leadership in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties

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

"Strategic leadership has been progressive although self interests kept coming up and hindered the positive progress on County development." (IS011)

"It has enhanced service delivery through the devolved units by reaching more people at the grassroots hence meeting them at their point of need." (IS018)

"Strategic leadership has of late been utilized by most organizations in my county to position them competitively in an ever changing and turbulent environment. This is gaining popularity in both the profit making and not for profit making organizations." (IS07)

"Working toward greater efficiency and accountability in resource management." (IS0 9)
"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, strategic leadership has substantial decision-making responsibilities that cannot be delegated." (IS05)

Effectiveness of County Operations in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties

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. Nevertheless, 20% of the respondents did not affirm that the county's operations have been effective through the practice of stakeholder involvement. Further, 60% of the respondents 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." (IS02)

"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." (IS06)

"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." (IS03)

"Devolved county administration to the grass roots. Quite effective, but still a work in progress." (ISO4)

"Yes, are less effective -however hey are better placed to deliver and address local needs effectively. County government do not exist simply to provide services." (IS011)

Legal Issues in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties

On the question of legal issues, 80% of the respondents who were interviewed indicated that the legal issues had effects on the devolved administrative structures operations in the counties. Although, 20% of the respondents indicated that the legal issues had no effects on the devolved administrative structures operations in the counties. Moreover, 60% of the respondents affirmed that leadership in the county had legal issues that affected service delivery by the devolved administrative structures. Nevertheless, 40% of the respondents did not affirm that leadership in the county had legal issues that affected service delivery by the devolved administrative structures.

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

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 research 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 study's objective was to determine the moderating effect of Legal factors on strategic leadership practices and the devolved administrative structures in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties, Kenya. The decision was that, Null hypothesis was rejected. On the interaction between strategic leadership practices and legal factors which is the moderator, significant and cumulative association between strategic leadership practices, the legal factors and the terms of interaction on these devolved administrative structures in both Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties were manifested. Thus, the legal factors have moderating effect on the association between the strategic leadership practices and the devolved administrative structures in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties.

From the qualitative analysis, strategic leadership has enhanced service delivery though 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 strategic leadership i.e., barrier to high quality training were the stumbling blocks to the practice of strategic leadership in their respective counties (Taita Taveta and Makueni) on devolved administrative structures operations. 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.

Conclusion

From study's objective, the research concludes that there was significant cumulative relationship of strategic leadership practices, legal factors and the interaction term on the devolved administrative structures in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties. Thus, legal factors have a moderating effect on the association between strategic leadership practices on the devolved administrative structures in Taita Taveta and Makueni Counties, Kenya. From the qualitative analysis, Strategic leadership practices have enhanced service delivery though 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.

Recommendations for Policy Implication

The findings found that, rise in strategic leadership practices leads to enhanced operationalization of devolved administrative structures. Henceforth, strategic 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. On strategic leadership practices, which stood to be significant in operationalization of devolved administrative structures, County Government top Leadership must distinguish and recompense improvement of operationalization of devolved administrative structures. The administration and policy makers must consequently originate programmes which guarantee judicious and sensible consents that top leadership makes wherever probable experts and professionals in particular fields might need for delivery of service.

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 randomness 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. Strategic leaders and administrators ought to make available sustenance for investment stratagem through Stakeholders involvement as a way of building human capital which is a key asset in institutions in full structural realization. This research was conducted at a time when decentralized units in the country have reached their peak of development and maturity and are attempting to stand on their own. The structures are attempting to gain traction since the constitution of 2010 and the subsequent general election of 2013 brought their existence into being.

Consequently, this research may be of considerable use to the stakeholders:

The study findings provided policy makers and government players in the National and County government sectors with constructive views for further research. The research study provided potential beneficiaries with insights into a variety of issues that impeded the county governments' implementation of decentralized administrative systems. The policy actors used the suggested results that would undoubtedly emerge from the study to provide resolutions to the obstacles encountered by county governments while implementing different predetermined tactics. This increased knowledge and expertise in executing the administrative systems in Counties as stipulated in the 2010 Kenyan Constitution. The research outcomes were purposively used towards the National Government by means of places of interest in the aspects that were stimulus in the execution of policies by county governments in Kenya. The accomplishment of Vision 2030 stood profoundly reliant on the recital performance besides the accomplishment of execution of policies by the county administrations. This being made by way of their premeditated scheduling as the counties were steered by the Vision 2030 which acts as the blue print intended for their development. In addition to enabling county governments to provide effective leadership, the study's findings served as a reference for the national government about the shortcomings of county governments in policy implementation.

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