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The Influence of Supportive Management on Service Delivery in Commercial Banks in Northern Kenya.

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study investigated the relationship between supportive management and service delivery in commercial banks in Northern Kenya. Drawing on Self-Determination Theory and Social Exchange Theory.

Methodology: The study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, targeting 221 employees across 30 commercial bank branches. A sample of 141 front-line employees participate. Stratified sampling technique was used to select respondents proportionally. Collected data was analysed using both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The results will be presented in the form of figures, tables and percentages. Data collected through structured questionnaires and interview guide including 18 branch managers that provided qualitative insights via interviews.

Findings: Descriptive statistics indicated a high perception of supportive management (aggregate mean 4.47) and service delivery (mean 4.69). Correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between supportive management and service delivery ($r = 0.796$; $p = .000$). Regression analysis confirmed that supportive management is a consistent and significant predictor of service delivery ($\beta = 0.371$, $p = 0.000$). The findings emphasize the critical role of supportive management and the importance of firm-level resources in enhancing service quality in the unique Northern Kenya banking context.

Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy: These study contribute new evidence on service delivery and Supportive management literature, especially within the context of unique and marginalized regions like Northern Kenya. Theoretically it supports Social exchange theory, emphasizing reciprocity. When organization provide necessary support, resources, and rewards, employee feel obliged and reciprocate with loyalty and increased efforts in turn enhance service delivery. Practically, within banking industry, prioritize leadership development programs that foster coaching, mentorship, and transparent and open communication, while also tailoring engagement practices to bank size. Policy-wise, bank regulators and CBK could develop policy and its guideline on modalities of supportive management and leadership development policy to promote and enhance employee engagement and retention of managers

Key words; *Supportive Management, Service Delivery, Commercial Banks, Northern Kenya.*

INTRODUCTION

Commercial banks are vital to economic growth as they provide credit, financial intermediation, and customer-oriented services. In today's competitive environment, service delivery has become a key differentiator influencing customer satisfaction and loyalty. Effective service delivery depends not only on technological advancement but also on supportive management practices such as employee motivation, open communication, and leadership commitment. Globally, supportive management has been shown to foster employee engagement and improve organizational performance (Rahaman et al., 2020). In Africa, supportive management is increasingly recognized as a vital catalyst for organizational performance and service quality, particularly within the banking sector (Okafor, 2021). Similarly, Martela (2023) observed, employees are more engaged when communication is clear and bidirectional, confirming that the bank emphasizes clarity in its managerial communication. This helps in streamlining service delivery and maintaining trust.

In Kenya, especially in the northern region where banking services are expanding into underserved areas, supportive management is crucial in overcoming operational hurdles and enhancing customer experience (Mwangi, 2020). This underscores the importance of examining how supportive management influences service delivery in commercial banks. Karani, (2018) emphasized the importance of supportive management in fostering employee engagement and enhancing service delivery in Kenyan banks. Similarly, Omamo & Awuor, (2018), indicated that individual efforts should be valued and acknowledged by bank leadership, who should also provide personal compliments for outstanding work, positive reinforcement in the form of verbal praise and acknowledgement for hard work and reaching goals, talk and encourage employees to receive personal attention, and reward good performance, as features of good employee engagement practices that should be investigated for banks to adopt and enhance customer satisfaction and quality of service for effective service delivery.

In Kenya, the banking industry faces significant human capital challenges, including high turnover, declining engagement, and service inconsistency. Studies indicate that perceived organizational support reduces turnover intention, and work-life balance measures elevate engagement. However, many banks, especially in underserved regions like Northern Kenya, have yet to institutionalize comprehensive engagement practices.

Northern Kenya, comprising counties like Garissa, Wajir, Marsabit, Isiolo, and Mandera, presents a unique context due to its distinct socio-economic and cultural landscape. This region is traditionally underserved by financial services, with limited access to formal banking and a population characterized by specific cultural values (e.g., home banking, religious prohibitions on interest), socio-economic activities (pastoralism), and high illiteracy rates that influence customer and employee behavior. Despite recent expansion of commercial banks in the region, employee engagement remains crucial due to challenges like limited access to education and professional development for employees. The poor service delivery in commercial banks in Northern Kenya is also attributed to employee disengagement and turnover.

Saks (2019) show that employees with supportive managers are more likely to be engaged and motivated. However, existing studies are heavily focused on Western management styles, the reviewed literature does not consider the influence of local leadership practices, cultural expectations, and challenges that might affect the relationship between management support and engagement. Additionally, Kiio (2021) showed that management support was positively correlated ($r = 0.515$, $p = 0.000$) and statistically significant in predicting service delivery outcomes in public health institutions. Therefore, this article focuses on the investigation of the relationship between Supportive Management and service delivery in commercial banks in Northern Kenya.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is primarily anchored on Social Exchange Theory **(SET)**, formalized by Blau (1964), which posits that workplace relationships are reciprocal exchanges of tangible and intangible benefits. When organizations provide resources like fair rewards, recognition, and support, employees feel obliged to reciprocate with effort, loyalty, and engagement. Kahn (1990) extended SET to conceptualize employee engagement as a psychological contract, where discretionary effort is exchanged for organizational investment. SET provides a foundation linking HR practices to outcomes like job satisfaction, service quality, and retention. This theory is relevant as it helps understand how supportive management, by providing guidance, resources, and recognition, fosters reciprocal engagement from employees, which in turn drives service delivery.

The study is also supported by Self-Determination Theory **(SDT)**, introduced by Deci and Ryan (1985), which asserts that individuals are most motivated, productive, and satisfied when three basic psychological needs autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled. In organizational settings, environments that support employee autonomy and competence tend to produce highly engaged, innovative, and committed staff. SDT explains how motivation quality directly influences workplace engagement and service outcomes, linking internal motivation to job performance and service delivery. Supportive management practices, which provide coaching, mentorship, and empowerment, directly align with fulfilling these psychological needs.

HYPOTHESIS

This article addresses the following null hypotheses:

H_{05}: There is no statistically significant relationship between Supportive Management and service delivery in the commercial banks in Northern Kenya.

DATA AND METHODS

The study adopted the pragmatism research philosophy. Pragmatism emphasizes practical approaches to research, focusing on solutions to real-world problems by integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods. This philosophy was suitable due to its flexibility in combining subjective employee perceptions with objective service delivery metrics, aligning with the study’s goal of generating actionable recommendations for improving banking performance. It overcomes the weaknesses of purely positivist or interpretivist approaches by providing a flexible and reflexive research design.

Research Design

A convergent parallel mixed-methods research design was adopted. This design involves the simultaneous collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, followed by independent analysis and subsequent merging of results for comprehensive interpretation. This approach enhanced the credibility and depth of understanding of complex issues like employee engagement and service delivery, allowing for comparison, relation, or contrast of findings from both methods. It ensured that both numerical trends and contextual insights were considered, supporting triangulation to enhance validity and reliability.

Target Population

The target population comprised 221 frontline bank employees working in 30 commercial bank branches in Northern Kenya. This included 60 managers (30 branch managers and 30 operations managers), 101 tellers, 30 customer care staff, and 30 credit section officers. All these categories of employees are directly engaged in service delivery processes and are well-positioned to provide informed feedback on service delivery indicators and employee engagement practices.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size was calculated using the Cochran formula for finite populations, resulting in a sample of 141 employees. This sample was proportionally distributed across job categories to ensure representation: 19 Branch Managers, 19 Operations Managers, 65 Tellers, 19 Customer Care Staff, and 19 Credit Section Staff.

Multistage sampling was employed, combining stratified random sampling and purposive sampling. Stratified random sampling was used to divide the target population into strata based on job roles (managers, tellers, customer care, and credit staff) to ensure proportional representation and reduce bias. From each stratum, a random sample was selected. For the qualitative component, purposive sampling was used to select managers (Branch Managers) for in-depth interviews, based on specific criteria to gain focused insights.

Data Collection Instruments

Data was collected using a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire to collect quantitative primary data from operations managers, tellers, customer care staff, and credit section staff. A pilot test was conducted in selected commercial banks in Tana River County with 15 respondents to identify any potential issues with the instruments and refine them. The reliability of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, with all variables achieving coefficients above 0.70, indicating acceptable internal consistency. Content validity was ensured through expert review, and construct validity was tested using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO = 0.902) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($p < .000$), confirming suitability for factor analysis.

Descriptive Statistics for Supportive Management

The descriptive analysis of supportive management revealed that commercial banks in Northern Kenya demonstrate strong leadership practices that enhance employee engagement and service delivery. Regular coaching and mentorship (M = 4.24, SD = 0.80) and constructive feedback (M

= 4.29, SD = 0.74) were highly valued, showing managers' commitment to staff development, consistent with Chale (2023) and Anitha (2014). Employee involvement in goal-setting (M = 4.20, SD = 0.78) and open communication on organizational objectives (M = 4.22) reflected a participative and transparent management culture, aligning with Kamayaki & Mihayo (2019). Support for employee-driven innovation (M = 4.03) further highlighted management's role in empowering staff and fostering commitment. However, performance appraisal fairness scored lowest (M = 3.86), suggesting room for improvement in transparency. Overall, the findings underscore that supportive leadership through mentorship, feedback, participation, and communication remains a critical driver of employee growth, innovation, and organizational alignment in the banking sector.

Table 1: ***Descriptive Statistics for Supportive Management***

Statement	SD F (%)	D F (%)	N F (%)	A F (%)	SA F (%)	Mean	Std Dev.
The bank management provides regular coaching and mentorship to employees.	0 (0.0%)	4 (3.4%)	15 (12.7%)	48 (40.7%)	51 (43.2%)	4.24	0.80
The bank has a structured mentorship program that supports employees' career development.	0 (0.0%)	4 (3.4%)	15 (12.7%)	51 (43.2%)	48 (40.7%)	4.21	0.79
Bank employees receive constructive feedback from managers that enhances professional growth.	0 (0.0%)	4 (3.4%)	8 (6.8%)	56 (47.5%)	50 (42.4%)	4.29	0.74
Bank management involves employees in goal-setting processes.	0 (0.0%)	4 (3.4%)	14 (11.9%)	54 (45.8%)	46 (39.0%)	4.20	0.78
There is clear and open communication from management on organizational goals and expectations.	0 (0.0%)	5 (4.2%)	13 (11.0%)	51 (43.2%)	49 (41.5%)	4.22	0.81
Bank managers ensure team goals align with individual job roles.	0 (0.0%)	4 (3.4%)	14 (11.9%)	53 (44.9%)	47 (39.8%)	4.21	0.78
Bank managers ensure employees have the necessary info and resources to perform their job.	0 (0.0%)	3 (2.5%)	14 (11.9%)	57 (48.3%)	44 (37.3%)	4.20	0.75
The bank management appraises employees fairly for the work they do.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	45 (38.1%)	44 (37.3%)	29 (24.6%)	3.86	0.78
Managers provide timely and clear instructions on tasks and responsibilities.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	43 (36.4%)	41 (34.7%)	34 (28.8%)	3.92	0.81
Management motivates and helps employees to achieve set targets.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	47 (39.8%)	41 (34.7%)	30 (25.4%)	3.86	0.80
Managers empower employees by initiating and implementing innovative ideas.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	38 (32.2%)	39 (33.1%)	41 (34.7%)	4.03	0.82

Source: Researcher, (2025)

Descriptive Statistics for Service Delivery

The descriptive statistics reveal generally positive perceptions of service delivery in the bank. Most employees agreed that policies and procedures enable effective customer service (M = 3.60) and that training prepares them to handle diverse interactions (M = 3.55). Availability of resources (M = 3.50) and responsiveness to inquiries (M = 3.41) were moderately rated. Stronger consensus emerged on financial targets being met (M = 4.03), technology use (M = 4.03), and effective issue-resolution processes (M = 3.84). Overall, results reflect efficiency, customer focus, and reliability in service delivery.

Table 2: ***Descriptive Statistics for Service Delivery***

Statement	SD F (%)	D F (%)	N F (%)	A F (%)	SA F (%)	Mean	Std Dev.
The bank's policies and procedures make it easy for employees to satisfy customer needs effectively.	1 (0.8%)	16 (13.6%)	35 (29.7%)	43 (36.4%)	23 (19.5%)	3.60	0.98
Employees' opinions and suggestions regarding service improvement are taken seriously by the bank.	1 (0.8%)	14 (11.9%)	53 (44.9%)	38 (32.2%)	12 (10.2%)	3.39	0.86
The bank employees have necessary resources and information to provide high-quality service to our customers.	1 (0.8%)	16 (13.6%)	46 (39.0%)	33 (28.0%)	22 (18.6%)	3.50	0.98
Training received by employees in the bank equips them well to handle diverse customer interactions.	1 (0.8%)	15 (12.7%)	41 (34.7%)	40 (33.9%)	21 (17.8%)	3.55	0.96
Employees respond promptly and effectively to the inquiries and service requested by customers.	0 (0.0%)	22 (18.6%)	45 (38.1%)	32 (27.1%)	19 (16.1%)	3.41	0.97
The bank consistently meets customer expectations through reliable and high-quality service.	1 (0.8%)	18 (15.3%)	48 (40.7%)	34 (28.8%)	17 (14.4%)	3.41	0.94
Employees understand how retaining existing customers through excellent service contributes to the bank's long-term profitability.	2 (1.7%)	14 (11.9%)	36 (30.5%)	43 (36.4%)	23 (19.5%)	3.60	0.99
The bank regularly achieves the annual financial targets set.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	41 (34.7%)	33 (28.0%)	44 (37.3%)	4.03	0.85
When issues arise that impact service delivery, there are effective processes in place to resolve them quickly.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	49 (41.5%)	39 (33.1%)	30 (25.4%)	3.84	0.81
The bank effectively leverages technology to improve workflow and customer service.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	39 (33.1%)	37 (31.4%)	42 (35.6%)	4.03	0.83

Source: Researcher, (2025)

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Hypothesis Testing
The null hypothesis was tested through correlation and regression analysis.

Correlations Between supportive management and Service Delivery

Table 3: Correlation analysis for supportive management and service delivery

		Service Delivery
Supportive Management	Pearson Correlation	.796**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	118

Source: (Researcher 2025)

The analysis used Pearson's correlation coefficients to assess the strength and direction of the relationship and supportive management showed a strong correlation with service delivery ($r = 0.796$, $p = .000$). This emphasizes that leadership which mentors, guides, and empowers employees plays a vital role in service quality. This finding aligns with Wambua and Gichure (2023) and Maina and Gachunga (2023), who documented that supportive leadership significantly enhances employee productivity and customer service outcomes.

Regression Analysis between supportive management and Service Delivery

Table 4: Coefficients for Supportive Management and service delivery in the commercial banks

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.023	.205		4.997	.000
	Supportive Management	.733	.052	.796	14.167	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Service Delivery
Source: (Researcher 2025)

To test this hypothesis, the regression model $Y = 1.023 + 0.733X_4 + e$ was used. The unstandardized coefficient for Supportive Management was 0.733, with a p-value (Sig.) of 0. 000.Since the p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05, reject the null hypothesis (H04). This confirms that Supportive Management has a statistically significant and positive relationship with Service Delivery in commercial banks in Northern Kenya. A one-unit improvement in supportive management practices leads to a 0.733 increase in service delivery scores, similarly, holding other factors constant the standardized beta value 0.796 implies that a unit enhancement in supportive management enhances service delivery by 79%. This finding is reinforced by Wambua & Gichure (2023) and Maina & Gachunga (2023), who found that supportive leadership significantly enhances employee productivity and service efficiency. Similarly, Han *et al.*, (2020) concluded that employee satisfaction—largely influenced by supportive management—was positively correlated with service delivery performance.

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These results were consistent with the qualitative data obtained from Branch Managers who responded through interview guide. Most respondents indicated that supportive management have relationship with service delivery in the banks. In their explanations, it was established that the mentorship and coaching, setting goals, clear and open communication and willingness and motivation will boost employee morale hence feel valued and supported to perform their duty and achieve the set goals in the bank. One participant had this to say:

“Managers in the bank should be a role model in duty performance as a sign of good leadership that motivate employees to perform better” (Respondent 21, female, Branch manager).

Another respondent stated that:

“Bank whose management are supportive have employees who are satisfied and passionate to do their work” (Respondent 5, female, branch manager).

It was also established that bank where there is coaching and mentorship and employee involvement the day to day operations will have better service delivery. Another respondent stated:

“Managers should guide and mentor employees to enhance performance” (Respondent 8, female, Branch manager).

Respondent 13 had this to say on the role of the manager in goal setting and target achievement

“Managers should take lead in involving employees in identifying and setting goals and ensure that all the set targets are achieved within specified period by providing” (respondent 13, Male, Branch manager).

The importance of communication in place of work has been overemphasized to have a smooth and successful operation.one respondent said.

“Employees who are regularly updated and aware of the day to day operations of their work place through open communication and engagement feel encouraged, valued and develop ownership and loyalty thus enhances performance with minimum supervision” (respondent 5, Male, branch manager).

SUMMARY

The study revealed that employee engagement practices, including supportive management, are well-established in commercial banks in Northern Kenya, contributing to effective service delivery. Supportive management emerged as a consistently strong and significant predictor of service delivery. Furthermore, firm size was identified as a critical factor, significantly increasing the explanatory power of the model and demonstrating a moderating effect, particularly through financial indicators like deposits and assets, on the relationship between engagement and service delivery. While employees generally perceive a positive work environment and growth opportunities, the effectiveness of these aspects can be enhanced by firm-specific resources and a strong managerial support system.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings on the relationship between Supportive management and service delivery, the results of correlation analysis showed a strong positive correlation, similarly, in the regression analysis supportive management remained a significant and consistent predictor across models, the effect was strong and significant in step 1 and remained significant in step 2, even after controlling for other employee engagement practices, suggesting that employees who perceive their supervisors as supportive are more likely to deliver high-quality service. These results confirm the critical role of supportive leadership in sustaining service excellence regardless of organizational changes or structural context. The consistent significance across steps highlights that supportive management directly motivates staff and fosters a customer-oriented culture. These findings reaffirm existing literature (Kiio, 2021) and confirm a strong and statistically significant positive correlation between management support and service delivery outcomes, emphasizing how emotional support and feedback mechanisms enhance service quality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Supportive management emerged as the most consistent and significant predictor of service delivery. Therefore, recommendation to practice include: (i) senior management should make it essential to foster a leadership culture that is nurturing, responsive, and involving employees (ii) Banks should invest in leadership development programs that emphasize coaching, emotional intelligence, and employee empowerment. (iii) Managers should also be evaluated and rewarded based on their ability to support their teams and enhance customer-centred outcomes.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Supportive management stood out as a strong and consistent predictor of service delivery. While this validates the importance of leadership, it also opens a path for deeper exploration. Future research could examine which specific managerial behaviors (such as coaching, feedback, emotional support) are most effective in enhancing service delivery, and whether these effects vary across employee roles such as tellers, credit officers, and customer care staff. This study focused on commercial banks in Northern Kenya limiting its generalizability to other bank or other service sector, further study could conduct comparative study preferably using same study variables for branches within one bank for instance branches of KCB Bank in Kenya or commercial banks in urban areas and with better socio- economic aspect or even compare banking sector with other service sectors such health and hospitality industry.

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