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Policy Governance and Performance of County Governments in  
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## Policy Governance and Performance of County Governments in Kenya



<sup>1</sup>\*Peter Moffat Muriithi, <sup>2</sup>Dr. Paul Kariuki, <sup>3</sup>Dr. Jared Deya, <sup>4</sup>Dr. Ezekiah Kimani

<sup>1</sup>PhD Student, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6780-0772>

<sup>2,3,4</sup>Lecturer, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** The general objective of the study is to examine the influence of policy governance on performance of county governments in Kenya. The study was guided by Systems Theory.

**Methodology:** The study employed a descriptive research design that also employs the quantitative and qualitative approaches due to its in-depth analysis of the influence of administrative governance structures on service delivery in the devolved units in selected county governments in Kenya. The study targeted all the 47 county governments in Kenya. In this study, the unit of analysis was 47 county governments while the unit of observation comprised of 10 County executive committee's members (CECs) in each county thus making 470 and 47 speakers of the county assemblies hence making a total of 517 respondents. The study's sample size was reached at using Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination formula. The 220 respondents were chosen with the help of stratified random sampling technique. Structured questionnaires and interview schedule was used in the collection of qualitative and quantitative data. The data collection tools were pilot tested to confirm their reliability and validity.

**Findings:** The study found that policy governance is statistically significant in explaining performance of county governments in Kenya. The influence was found to be positive. This means that unit improvement in policy governance would lead to an increase in p performance of county governments in Kenya. Based on the findings, the study concluded that policy governance positively and significantly influences performance of county governments in Kenya.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice:** The study therefore recommends that the management of county governments in Kenya should ensure that county policies are evidence-based, inclusive, and regularly reviewed to align with the evolving needs of local communities. This can be achieved by integrating data-driven approaches, such as conducting regular impact assessments and soliciting feedback from citizens, civil society organizations, and experts.

**Keywords:** *Policy Governance, Performance of County Governments, Systems Theory*

## Background of the Study

Policy governance has emerged as a critical determinant of public sector performance, particularly within devolved systems of government (Chilenga-Butao, 2020). In Kenya, the promulgation of the Constitution of 2010 marked a significant shift from a centralized system of governance to a devolved structure, resulting in the establishment of 47 county governments. Devolution was intended to enhance democratic governance, improve service delivery, promote accountability, and foster equitable socio-economic development across the country. Central to the realization of these objectives is effective policy governance at the county level (Setiawan *et al.*, 2022).

Policy governance refers to the framework of policies, rules, and institutional mechanisms through which public organizations are directed, controlled, and held accountable. In county governments, policy governance encompasses the formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies that guide administrative operations, financial management, and service delivery. Sound policy governance provides strategic direction, clarifies roles between political and administrative actors, and ensures that public resources are utilized efficiently and transparently (Engdaw, 2022; Setiawan; 2022).

MacLeod (2020) opines that decentralization is based on the principle of subsidiarity and identifying three forms of administrative decentralization which deconcentration, delegation, and devolution. In a nutshell, good governance refers to the public administration process that maximizes public interest. One of its essential features is that it is a kind of collaborative management of public life performed by both the State and the citizens (Maina, Namusonge, & Kabare, 2016). Delivering quality service in devolved governance is one of the most difficult tasks (Setiawan *et al.*, 2016; Setiawan *et al.*, 2022). As a result of this, devolved governments have had different policy instruments, which are meant to improve the efficiencies, effectiveness, and quality of public services (Texter, 2021). Among the instruments, administrative governance structures are one of the most important tools that have been used to improve the quality of public service delivery in the devolved units (Chilenga-Butao, 2020).

Amuhaya, Namusonge and Nthigah (2018) have made a very crystal understanding about what discretionary powers devolved units should be acquainted with in administrative governance structures arenas. The delegated systems are one of the most important discretionary powers that should be given to devolved governments to govern their units. Delegated systems discretion equipped county governments with a minimum set of powers and capacities to initiate regulatory legislation on issues affecting their jurisdiction. They need to have the authority to approve and issue generally binding ordinances on public matters in their jurisdiction nevertheless subjected to the national and state laws (Boex & Smoke, 2020).

Therefore, the devolved units' needs to have devolved redistribution of responsibilities with effectively designed channels of local accountability, if it needs to deliver quality public service

delivery (Dick-Sagoe, 2020). Goel *et al.*, (2017) find out those redistribution of responsibilities improves perceptions of government performance. Lameck (2017) has also shown the positive effects of devolved redistribution of responsibilities on the quality of governance and service delivery in the devolved governance. In the same vein, Mbau, Iraya, Mirie and Njihia (2020) opine that redistribution of responsibilities in the decentralized enhances autonomy and all the efforts made by the devolved government are intended to improve the efficiencies and effectiveness of the government to provide improved service to the public at the local level.

Since 1970 to 2020, at least 150 countries have implemented administrative governance reforms (Tester, 2021). However, the service delivery consequences of such reforms are theoretically ambiguous. Devolving administrative authority to local governments can improve public service delivery because of better information availability, better knowledge of citizens' preferences or better monitoring capacity at the local level (Miranda-Lescano *et al.*, 2023). However, service delivery could worsen if state capacity is weaker at the local level, if local officials are more likely to be corrupt, if decentralization results in loss of economies of scale, or if local elites can more easily capture public resources (Chaudhary & Lyer, 2022). The reforms have drawn widespread attention from scholars in political science, economics, public administration, and in some cases sociology ( (Steytler, 2019; Chaudhary & Lyer, 2022; Miranda\_Lescano *et al.*, 2023; Tester, 2021; Barasa, Manyara, Molyneux, & Tsofa, 2017; Cheruiyot, Oketch, Namusonge, & Sakwa, 2017; Waribu, Kabare, & Sakwa, 2018; Abass, Munga, & Were, 2017; Li & Luo, 2023).

### **Statement of the Problem**

County governments in Kenya are intended to play a key part in the country's growth through providing public services (Auditor General, 2019). The Kenyan county administrations especially the devolved units have been plagued by a slew of issues, including sloppy work, low-quality goods and services, inefficiency, corruption and lack of professionalism leading to waste of huge amounts of public resources (Cheruiyot *et al.*, 2017). The devolved units of county governments in Kenya still find it hard to effectively and efficiently deliver services to citizen satisfaction (Abass, Munga & Were, 2017; Gathii & Otieno, 2018; Cheruiyot *et al.*, 2017, Karama, 2022). For instance, according to Auditor General Report (2019) over Kshs.16 billion cannot be accounted for by the county governments and the same report mentions lack of effective administrative governance structures as a catalyst that has triggered the vice. This has slowly led to the deterioration of the counties' service delivery affecting even the country's GDP growth index from 7% in 2018 to 5.3% in 2019 (Cheruiyot *et al.*, 2017). This has slowly led to the deterioration of the county performance affecting even the country's GDP growth index from 7% in 2019 to 5.8% in 2021 (Tester, 2021). The decline in financial performance in the counties is such that the aggregate revenue collected for FY2019/20 was at ksh.32.52 billion and its target was set at ksh.57.66 billion as the annual budget declined by 8.6% as compared to the FY2018/1

at ksh.35.02 billion. These low revenues generated lead to delayed projects, insufficient funds to run the devolved units in counties and poor service delivery

Further, a report by Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA) highlights key sectors like health, water and sanitation, education among others which have faced challenges in service delivery (Kyalo, Kimeli & Evans, 2017) associated with issues of accountability and integrity in county governments of Kenya. A survey done by Transparency International (TI) (2020), reported that 41% of Kenyans were not satisfied with their county governments' service delivery due ineffective leadership and governance structures. Over half of the sampled citizens, that is, 53% stated that they were dissatisfied with the county governance, 28% were either satisfied nor dissatisfied and only 18% stated that they were satisfied. Cases of fraud have been reported in almost all counties (Mwangi & Kihara, 2021). The budget absorption rate from the counties in 2014/2015 was 79%, 2015/2016 was 80%, 2016/2017 was 80%, 2017/2018 was 74%, 2018/2019 was 67% and 2019/2020 was 73%. The development absorption rate in 2014/2015 was 63%, 2015/2016 was 65%, 2016/2017 was 66%, 2017/2018 was 49%, 2018/2019 was 51% and 2019/2020 was 46% as per the controller of Budget Implementation Reports. The pending bills among the 47 counties increased from KSH 2.2 billion in 2013/14 to KSH37.8 billion in 2014/15 and marginally declined to KSH37.4 billion in 2015/16 and KSH35.8 billion in 2016/17 (Auditor General, 2019). The question was, "Whether administrative governance structures had any influence on the service delivery in the devolved units in the selected county governments in Kenya?"

Conceptual gap exists in the reviewed studies since administrative governance structures are employed. The unique variables used in this study include administrative autonomy, delegated systems, redistribution of responsibilities and allocation of resources. It is for these contextual and conceptual gaps, many studies literally show decentralization enhances public service delivery. Very scanty pieces of evidence have been made to show how likely administrative governance structures affect the provision of public services. Hence, this study tries to stare at the effect of policy governance on performance of county governments in Kenya.

### **General Objective**

The general objective of the study is to examine the influence of policy governance on performance of county governments in Kenya.

### **Theoretical Review**

#### **Systems Theory**

Systems theory was first introduced by biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy in (1972). The theory holds that a system is a cohesive conglomeration of interrelated and interdependent parts that are either natural or man-made. Every system is delineated by its spatial and temporal boundaries, surrounded and influenced by its environment, described by its structure and purpose, and

expressed in its functioning. In terms of its effects, a system can be more than the sum of its parts if it expresses synergy or emergent behavior (Drack & Pouvreau, 2015). Changing one part of the system usually affects other parts and the whole system with predictable patterns of behavior. For systems that are self-learning and self-adapting, the positive growth and adaptation depends on how well the system is adjusted with its environment. Some systems function mainly to support other systems by aiding in the maintenance of the other systems to prevent failure (Luhmann, 2018).

A system can be defined as an entity, which is a coherent whole such that a boundary is perceived around it in order to distinguish internal and external elements and to identify input and output relating to and emerging from the entity (Wilkinson, 2019). Broadly, there are two types of system; (a) open system and (b) closed system. Closed system theory originates from classical (Newtonian) physics of closed system thinking whereby few variables are tolerated in an observation so as to minimize the influence by external variables (Mutafov, 2021)

The closed system theory is attributed to Norbert Wiener, a distinguished mathematician and engineer at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) who developed it in 1949 (Chikere & Nwoka, 2015). Open systems theory has its foundations in biology, particularly Darwin's work on the evolution of the species. The popular version of open systems theory is attributed to Ludwig Von Bertalanffy who in 1964 used the term 'general systems theory' to describe the main ideas and to distinguish them from closed systems thinking (Marigwa & Onyango, 2020). The fundamental notion of general systems theory is its focus on interactions. The system theory postulates that a single autonomous element is different from its behaviour when the element interacts with other elements (Hull, 2019).

Whereas closed systems use error-controlled regulation to eliminate external influence, open systems use anticipatory control since it is as a result of interaction with the environment that a system achieves a dynamic stability (Njue, Kyalo, Mulwa, & Mbugua, 2016). System theory is founded upon the principles that the subsystems are; open, focused, interrelated, continuously transforming inputs into outputs, flexible, responds to environment through feedback, brings about the equilibrium to the system and are coherent (Njue *et al.*, 2016). Consistent with this view Ludlow, and Otto (2018) indicate that in open systems there are exchanges of energy, matter, people, and information with the external environment. In closed systems there are no exchanges of information and matter, just exchanges of energy.

Systems theory focuses on the arrangement of and relations between the parts and how they work together as a whole. The way the parts are organized and how they interact with each other, determines the properties of that system. The behavior of the system is independent of the properties of the elements. This often referred to as a holistic approach to understanding phenomena (Chikere & Nwoka, 2015). Every organized enterprise does not exist in a vacuum. It is rather known to depend on its external environment which is a part of a larger system, such as

the industry to which it belongs, the economic system and the society (Chikere & Nwoka, 2015). Systems theory was used to establish the influence of policy governance on performance of county governments in Kenya.

### Conceptual Framework

Conceptual framework can be defined as a set of broad ideas and principles taken from relevant fields of inquiry and used to structure a subsequent presentation (Myers, 2019). Figure 2.1 shows the conceptual framework which was used and depicts the interrelationship between the study variables. The independent variable is Policy Governance while the dependent variable is the performance of county governments in Kenya.

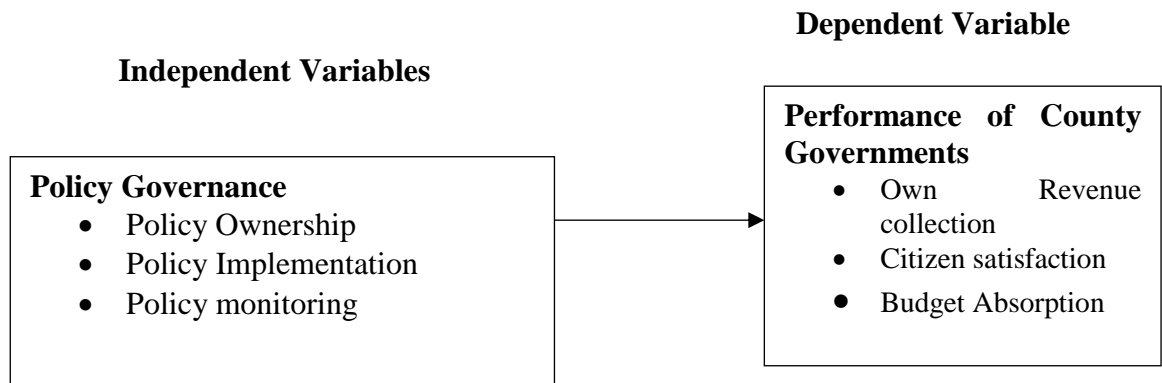


Figure 2. 1: Conceptual Framework

### Empirical Review

#### Policy Governance and Performance of County Governments

Karungani and Ochiri (2017) conducted a study on the effect of policy and regulatory framework on organizational performance. The research was carried out based on a quantitative research design. A survey strategy was used. Purposive sampling was used to select 87 employees from the procurement department of the Nairobi County Government. Data was collected using questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive and regression analytical techniques. The findings of the research show that indeed, policy and regulatory framework within the procurement sector plays a very important role in improving organizational performance. The research also revealed that policy and regulatory framework led to improvement in organizational performance by creating a level of playing field for organizations engaged in the procurement field

According to Koech and Namusonge (2017) compliance with procurement regulatory framework plays a very important role in bringing forth improved organizational performance. In addition to compliance with procurement regulatory framework, other factors that improve organizational performance include transparency, professionalism and procurement procedures. The research

further established that compliance with procurement regulatory policy framework enhance organizational performance by bringing forth transparency and professionalism within the procurement process. However, a research by Kasisi *et al.* (2018) revealed that government regulations have a negative impact on procurement performance. The research further showed that compliance with government procurement regulation was accompanied with a high level of bureaucracy which led to adversely affected procurement performance and the overall organizational performance. Nevertheless, the regulatory framework plays a very important in

Mutafov (2021) study focused on the responsibilities distribution between different levels of government for public services delivery in EU countries. The main goal of the study was to review and analyze the pros and cons when public services were provided by different levels of government in EU countries. Methods such as analysis and synthesis, comparative method, mathematical and statistical were used for achieving the goal. The results established that the distribution of responsibilities for public services delivery in EU countries, which sought to fully cover the principle of subsidiarity stated in the European Charter of Local Self-Government. Transferring more powers will lead to new responsibilities to local government and it needs to be more effective, as larger municipalities would be able to fit in faster and better. The conclusions are related to the more efficient and effective distribution of public services between different levels of government.

Marigwa and Onyango (2020) study focused on the effects of role overlap between county and national government staff on service delivery in Nyamira County, Kenya. The rationale of this study was to create awareness of how the socio-economic affect the quality of services provided by the Counties. The structural functionalism and public choice theory formed the basis for this study. The study adopted a convergent research design, which enabled the collection of quantitative and qualitative data from 153 respondents stratified into; the county executives, county legislators, county employees, employees of the National Government, and members of the public using Stratified random sampling and purposive sampling method. The research findings clearly indicates that ,7.20% of the total respondents generally disagree that role overlap exists between county and National Government staff, 77.80% of the total respondents were in agreement that role duplication exists in the structures of the devolved units in Nyamira county.

According to Nyaboke *et al.*, (2018) policy regulatory framework in procurement has a significant impact on integrity, accountability, professionalism and fairness. Additionally, the research findings showed that policy regulatory framework maximizes the level of service provision within the organization. Therefore regulatory framework leads to improvement in organizational performance. Awino and Marende-Getuno (2019) a comprehensive procurement policy regulatory framework governs all stages of the procurement process including issues related to transparency, ethics and all methods within the procurement process. The research further showed that good policy regulatory framework within the procurement process brings

forth improvement in organizational performance by bringing forth transparency, openness, impartiality, integrity and fair competition. Organizations have high chances of delivering superior levels of performance when they operate in environments of openness, impartiality and fair competition. Therefore, comprehensive procurement regulatory policy frameworks bring forth enhanced organizational performance.

Ochieng (2018) study focused on who is responsible on the local government and accountability for service delivery in Kenya's devolved health sector. It examined service delivery in the health sector in Kenya within the context of the country's newly introduced devolved system of government, which created 47 county governments under the 2010 Constitution. It examines three key responsibilities: resource mobilization, distribution and administration, decision-making, and political accountability, and their bearing on outcomes for delivery of health services. The study argues that devolution of the health function in Kenya has been only partial, leading to challenges of coordination between the national and county governments and ambiguity over responsibility for service delivery; both factors which risk undermining the opportunities that devolution creates or promises.

Koehler (2018) study explored policy perceptions and responsibility of devolved decision-making for water service delivery in Kenya's 47 county governments. Specifically, it examined factors that influence decision-makers' perception of their responsibility for water service delivery in their counties. Drawing on interviews from all county water ministries, a sociopolitical risk model leveraging public choice theory is developed and tested. Information on election margin, climate risk, urbanization, poverty levels, water budget and citizen satisfaction is modeled to explain variations in the policymakers' perceptions of their responsibilities. Results reveal that county water ministries recognize increased political responsibility for the poor outside current provision areas across water quantity, quality, and accessibility and non-discrimination criteria.

Kigume, Maluka and Kamuzora(2018) study examined the decentralization and health services delivery in Tanzania. The analysis of decision space was based in planning, allocation, and use of financial resources. Using the decision space approach, this study aimed to understand the amount of decision-making space transferred from the central government to institutions at the periphery in the decentralized health system in Tanzania. The findings of the study indicated that the decentralization process in Tanzania had provided authorities with a range of decision-making space. In the areas of priority setting and planning, district health authorities had moderate decision space. However, in the financial resource allocation and expenditure of funds from the central government, the districts had narrow decision-making space. The districts, nevertheless, had wider decision-making space in mobilizing and using locally generated financial resources.

Simon, Alala and Janet(2019) study analyzed the effect of resource allocation on service delivery in county governments in North Rift, Kenya. The key function of the government is to delivery service to its citizen. County governments in Kenya were perceived as best placed to deliver services to the citizens at the local level. However gaps exist in the service delivery where citizens had expressed dissatisfaction with the services provided. The study adopted a quantitative survey design where data was collected using self-administered questionnaires and analyzed by correlation and regression analysis. The study revealed there was a moderate positive correlation between resource allocation and service delivery. It also revealed that resource allocation had a statistically significant effect on service delivery in county governments in North Rift, Kenya.

Bossert *et al.* (2023) investigated the relation between decentralization and equity of resource allocation in Colombia and Chile. The “decision space” approach and analysis of expenditures and utilization rates was used to provide a comparative analysis of decentralization of the health systems of Columbia and Chile. Evidence from Colombia and Chile suggests that decentralization, under certain conditions and with some specific policy mechanisms, can improve equity of resource allocation. In these countries, equitable levels of per capita financial allocations at the municipal level were achieved through different forms of decentralization the use of allocation formulae, adequate local funding choices and horizontal equity funds. Findings on equity of utilization of services were less consistent, but they did show that increased levels of funding were associated with increased utilization. This suggests that improved equity of funding over time might reduce inequities of service utilization. Therefore, decentralization can contribute to, or at least maintain, equitable allocation of health resources among municipalities of different incomes.

Karama and Muia (2019) study focused on the effect of financial resources on the delivery of devolved services in selected counties in Kenya. The study was anchored on Resource Based View Theory, employing a blended research design and positivism approach. Data was collected using structured and open-ended questionnaires from 384 employees. Results from regression analysis showed that financial resources had significant and positive effects on devolved service delivery. The study concludes that financial resources are significant drivers of projects in counties. It is however a delicate balance since financial resources may be in place but the mechanisms to deploy them may be non-existent. Therefore, it is important for county governments to provide both financial and organizational resources in order to achieve improved delivery of county services.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The descriptive research design allows the researcher to gather information, summarize, present and interpret it for the purpose of

clarification (Karama, Iravo, & Shale, 2019). The design is suitable for the study since it enables description of both dependent and independent variables. Therefore, this design is appropriate for this study which extensively tested the analysis of the relationships between variables (Amuhaya, Namusonge, & Nthigah, 2018). It is on this premise the current study adopted descriptive research design to establish the influence of administrative governance on performance of county governments in Kenya.

### **Research Philosophy**

The study adopted epistemology to question and validate whether the information known by the researcher was what actually existed as a reality. Epistemology as a branch of philosophy deals with the sources of knowledge. This philosophical orientation is most appropriate in this study since the researcher seeks to confirm whether the hypothetical factors of administrative governance have influence on performance of county governments in Kenya.

### **Target Population**

The study targeted all the 47 county governments in Kenya. In this study, the unit of analysis was 47 county governments while the unit of observation comprised of 10 County executive committee's members (CECs) in each county thus making 470 and 47 speakers of the county assemblies hence making a total of 517 respondents. The results from the study generally can reflect how commitment influenced administrative governance and performance of county governments in Kenya.

### **Sample Size and Sampling Technique**

The study's sample size was reached at using Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination formula (Russell, 2018). Using this formula, a representative sample was obtained. The study's total population is 517.

The formula that was used for arriving at the sample size is;

$$n = \frac{\chi^2 NP(1 - P)}{(ME^2(N - 1)) + (\chi^2 P(1 - P))}$$

Where:

n=sample size

$\chi^2$ =Chi-square for the specified confidence level at 1 degree of freedom

N=Population size (517)

P = is the proportion in the target population estimated to have characteristics being studied. As the proportion was unknown, 0.5 was used.

Chuan and Penyelidikan (2016) indicate that the use of 0.5 provides the maximum sample size and hence it is the most preferable.  $496.53/2.253$

ME=desired margin of Error (Expressed as a proportion)

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 517 * 0.5 * 0.5}{(0.05^2 * 517) + (1.96^2 * 0.5 * 0.5)}$$

$$n = 220$$

**Table 1: Sample Size**

Category	Target Population	Sample Size
CECs	470	200
County Speakers	47	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>517</b>	<b>220</b>

The 220 respondents were chosen with the help of stratified random sampling technique. Stratified random sampling technique was used since the population of interest is not homogeneous and could be sub-divided into groups or strata to obtain a representative sample. This sampling technique divides the population into groups or strata. The strata are reached upon on the basis of the shared traits (Singpurwalla, 2017). One of the advantages of stratified random sampling is that it allows for each of the strata to be well represented when the sample is chosen (Bryman & Cramer, 2016). The study then used simple random sampling to select respondents from each group.

### Data Collection Instruments

The researcher used questionnaires in collecting the primary data from the sampled respondents in the county governments. The questionnaires had both open and closed ended questions. Closed ended questions restricted the respondents to a certain category in their responses while the open ended questions allowed the respondents to give their personal view of the study. The study collected both primary and secondary data.

A self-administered structured questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data from county treasury employees. As indicated by Kombo and Tromp (2006), the use of this instrument assumed that the respondents understand the significance of the research and could understand the items in the instrument.

Abdi, Mbithi and Kithinji (2021) explain that secondary research involves the use of data gathered in a previous study to test new hypotheses or explore new relationships. They also

indicate that secondary analysis of existing data is efficient and economical because data collection is typically the most time-consuming and expensive part of a research project. Secondary data was used to validate the findings from analysis of primary data which was collected using questionnaires. The strategy of using both primary and secondary data to address the same study objectives is meant to improve the interpretive coherence and improve both communicative and pragmatic validity of the study results. This study utilized secondary data from county governments.

### **Pilot Study**

A pilot study is conducted to detect weaknesses in design and instrumentation and to provide proxy data for selection of a probability sample (Cooper & Schindler, 2019). The pilot study involved 22 randomly selected respondents from counties that were not part of the study. The pilot study constituted 10% of the study population. The rule of thumb is that 1% to 10% of sample size should constitute the pilot test according to Portney (2020).

### **Data Analysis and Presentation**

The study collected qualitative and quantitative data. Data from the questionnaires was edited and coded and then keyed into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 24). Response on each item for the open-ended questions was put into a specific main theme for ease of analysis. Data was summarized and then analysed by use of descriptive statistics using frequencies, means, standard deviation and percentages. Inferential statistics were utilized to generate meaning and relationships. Multi-regression analysis was used to establish the degree of mathematical relations between the study variables

The quantitative data was analysed by the use of descriptive and inferential analysis. Descriptive (mean and standard deviation) was used to portray the sets of categories formed from the data.

This study also conducted inferential statistics through correlation analysis. The correlation analysis matrixes were obtained for all the variables where factors were checked for chances of multi-collinearity (Bett & Memba, 2017). there is no correlation between the variables, that is the variables are uncorrelated.

Multiple regression analysis in the form of equation was applied to test whether or not the alternative hypotheses stipulated in the study are true. Keraro and Isoe (2017) advocate that multiple regression helps to decide whether the individual hypothesis is statistically supported or not. F-test and Student's t-test were used to test the significance of the dependent variable Y on the influence of the independent variables  $X_1$ -  $X_5$  at 5% level of significance. For the hypothesis to be accepted or rejected, a comparison was made between the critical t-values and the calculated t-values. If the calculated t-value was greater than critical t-value, then the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Also if the calculated F-value is greater than critical F-value and p-value

less than .05, then the alternative hypothesis is accepted (Abass, Munga, & Were, 2017; Cheruiyot, Oketch, Namusonge, & Sakwa, 2017).

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_2 + \varepsilon$$

Where: -

Y is performance of county governments in Kenya

X<sub>1</sub> is Policy governance

β<sub>0</sub> is a constant

ε is Error term

## RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Descriptive statistics

#### Policy Governance and Performance of County Governments

The third specific objective of the study was to establish the influence of policy governance on performance of county governments in Kenya. The respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement on various statements relating to policy governance and performance of county governments in Kenya. The results were as presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Policy Governance and Performance of County Governments**

	Mean	Std. Deviation
All county employees participate in setting objectives of the counties	3.898	0.773
County government officials set achievable objectives	3.890	0.865
The county government ensures effective policy formulation and adoption	3.803	0.864
Am satisfied with the process of policy formulation and adoption in our county	3.800	0.839
The county government ensures effective implementation of formulated polices	3.772	0.756
Am satisfied with the effectiveness of the policy implementation process in the county government	3.729	0.661
The county government has a team tasked for policy evaluation	3.713	0.660
Am satisfied with the effectiveness of the policy evaluation process in our organization	3.697	0.557
<b>Aggregate</b>	<b>3.788</b>	<b>0.747</b>

From the results, the respondents agreed that all county employees participate in setting objectives of the counties ( $M=3.898$ ,  $SD= 0.773$ ). In addition, the respondents agreed that county government officials set achievable objectives ( $M=3.890$ ,  $SD= 0.865$ ). Further, the respondents agreed that the county government ensures effective policy formulation and adoption ( $M=3.803$ ,  $SD= 0.864$ ). The respondents also agreed that they are satisfied with the process of policy formulation and adoption in their county ( $M=3.800$ ,  $SD= 0.839$ ). The findings are in line with the findings of Karungani and Ochiri (2017) who revealed that policy and regulatory framework led to improvement in organizational performance by creating a level of playing field for organizations engaged in the procurement field. In addition, Nyaboke *et al.* (2018) confirmed that policy regulatory framework maximizes the level of service provision within the organization.

From the results, the respondents agreed that the county government ensures effective implementation of formulated policies ( $M=3.772$ ,  $SD= 0.756$ ). In addition, the respondents agreed that they are satisfied with the effectiveness of the policy implementation process in the county government ( $M=3.729$ ,  $SD= 0.661$ ). Further, the respondents agreed that the county government has a team tasked for policy evaluation ( $M=3.713$ ,  $SD= 0.660$ ). The respondents also agreed that they are satisfied with the effectiveness of the policy evaluation process in their organization ( $M=3.697$ ,  $SD=0.557$ ). The findings concur with the findings of Awino and Marendi-Getuno (2019) who established that good policy regulatory framework within the procurement process brings forth improvement in organizational performance by bringing forth transparency, openness, impartiality, integrity and fair competition.

The respondents were further requested to indicate the Policy Governance affect performance of county governments in Kenya. From the results, the respondents indicated that policy governance plays a pivotal role in enhancing the performance of county governments in Kenya by setting a clear direction and providing a framework for the efficient delivery of services. Several respondents emphasized that having sound and well-structured policies enables county governments to prioritize key areas such as healthcare, education, infrastructure, and poverty alleviation. By clearly defining goals, objectives, and responsibilities, policy governance allows for better coordination among different county departments, leading to more streamlined and effective service delivery. When policies are aligned with the needs of the citizens, they help ensure that resources are allocated appropriately, maximizing their impact on the community.

Additionally, the respondents highlighted that effective policy governance fosters stability and consistency within county governments. Well-formulated policies reduce the likelihood of political interference or ad-hoc decision-making, which often disrupts development projects and service delivery. Respondents noted that counties with strong policy frameworks are better equipped to implement long-term strategies, as these policies provide a structured approach to addressing both immediate and future challenges. For instance, having a comprehensive land-use

policy can guide urban planning and resource management, while education policies ensure consistent improvements in learning outcomes. This stability enhances the county government's ability to perform effectively over time, even amid changes in leadership or political dynamics.

Moreover, many respondents pointed out that effective policy governance promotes transparency and accountability within county governments. Clear and transparent policies make it easier for the public to understand how decisions are made, how resources are allocated, and how outcomes are measured. This transparency helps reduce corruption and enhances public trust in the county government. Respondents also noted that involving citizens in the policy-making process fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility, leading to better implementation and adherence to policies. In conclusion, the respondents agreed that policy governance is essential for ensuring that county governments in Kenya operate efficiently, remain accountable, and achieve sustainable development outcomes that benefit the broader population.

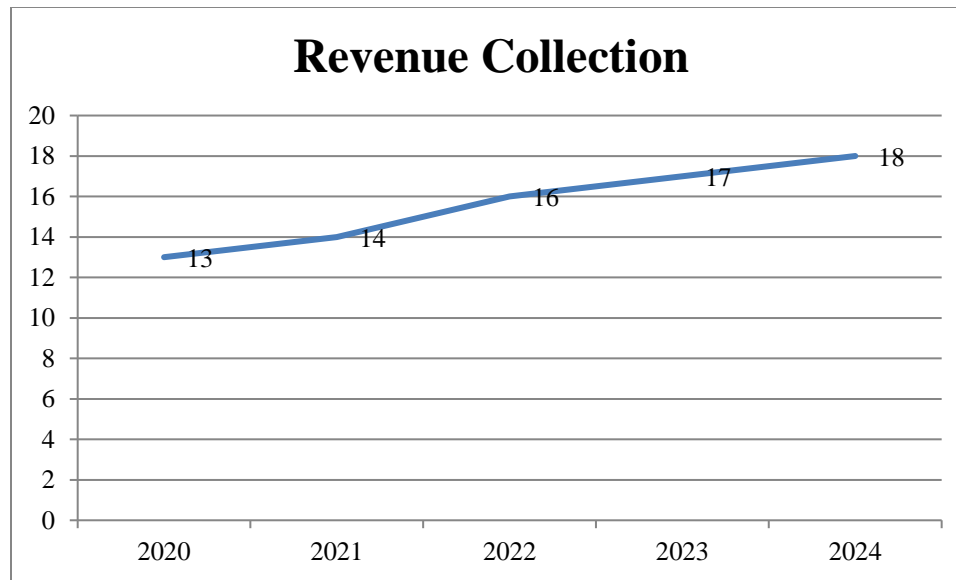
**Table 3: Performance of County Governments**

	Mean	Std. Deviation
The county government consistently delivers services to citizens within reasonable time frames, meeting established service delivery standards.	3.871	0.843
Service delivery processes are designed to minimize delays and ensure timely response to citizens' needs and requests.	3.853	0.773
County government officials prioritize urgent service requirements and promptly address time-sensitive issues.	3.752	0.763
Services provided by the county government are accessible to all citizens, regardless of their geographical location or socio-economic status.	3.697	0.673
The county government has established service centers or points of access in various regions to ensure convenience for citizens.	3.673	0.663
Measures are in place to accommodate the needs of vulnerable and marginalized populations in accessing services.	3.663	0.864
The county government strives to deliver high-quality services that meet or exceed citizens' expectations.	3.620	0.592
Service delivery standards and performance indicators are in place to monitor and maintain the quality of services provided.	3.608	0.717
<b>Aggregate</b>	<b>3.700</b>	<b>0.727</b>

From the results, the respondents agreed that the county government consistently delivers services to citizens within reasonable time frames, meeting established service delivery standards ( $M=3.871$ ,  $SD=0.843$ ). In addition, the respondents agreed that service delivery processes are designed to minimize delays and ensure timely response to citizens' needs and requests ( $M=3.853$ ,  $SD=0.773$ ). Further, the respondents agreed that County government officials prioritize urgent service requirements and promptly address time-sensitive issues ( $M=3.752$ ,  $SD=0.763$ ). The respondents also agreed that services provided by the county government are accessible to all citizens, regardless of their geographical location or socio-economic status ( $M=3.697$ ,  $SD=0.673$ ). In addition, the respondents agreed that the county government has established service centers or points of access in various regions to ensure convenience for citizens ( $M=3.673$ ,  $SD=0.663$ ). The findings concur with the findings of Ali *et al* (2021) who revealed that county governments must invest in better technology and capacity building to enhance their revenue collection processes. In addition, Mulandi and Christine (2022) confirmed that local governments that implemented property taxes and user fees for local services were able to increase their revenue collection.

From the results, the respondents agreed that measures are in place to accommodate the needs of vulnerable and marginalized populations in accessing services ( $M=3.663$ ,  $SD=0.864$ ). In addition, the respondents agreed that the county government strives to deliver high-quality services that meet or exceed citizens' expectations ( $M=3.620$ ,  $SD=0.592$ ). Further, the respondents agreed that service delivery standards and performance indicators are in place to monitor and maintain the quality of services provided ( $M=3.608$ ,  $SD=0.717$ ). The findings concur with the findings of Mustafov (2021) who established that service quality, responsiveness, and transparency were key factors influencing satisfaction. In addition, Bossert *et al* (2023) found that the performance of local governments in service delivery was highly variable, with counties that had better infrastructure and staff training achieving higher satisfaction levels.

The study also collected secondary data on Performance of County Governments (own revenue collection, customer satisfaction and budget absorption). The secondary data covered 5 years ranging from 2020-2024. The results are as shown below.



*Figure 1: Revenue Collection*

From the results in the figure above, the data indicates a consistent upward trend in revenue collection over the five-year period from 2020 to 2024. In 2020, the revenue collection stood at 13%, which increased to 14% in 2021. This growth continued in 2022, reaching 16%, followed by a further increase to 17% in 2023. By 2024, the revenue collection had risen to 18%.

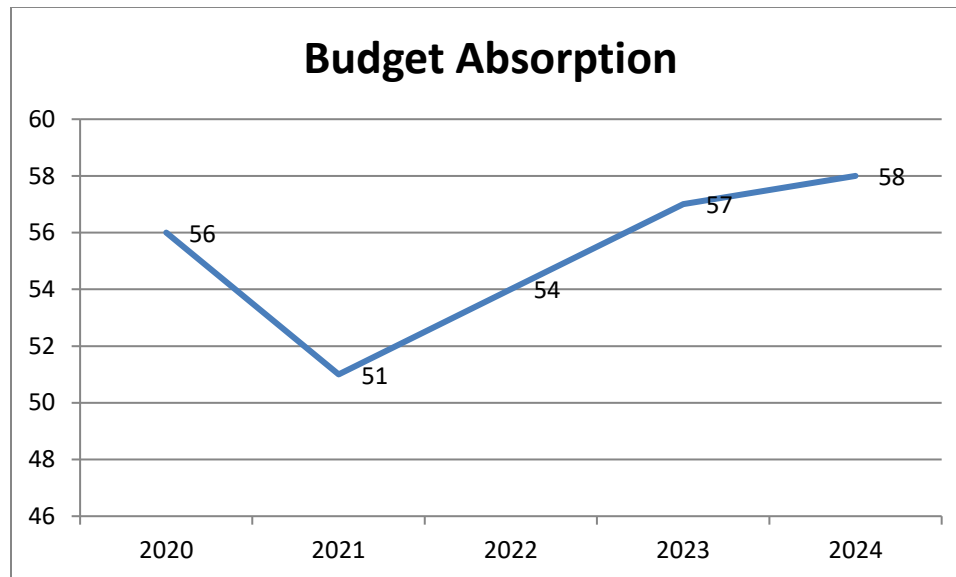
Overall, the trend demonstrates steady and incremental growth in revenue collection each year, reflecting a positive trajectory in financial performance. The year-on-year increases suggest continuous improvements in the ability to mobilize and manage local revenue. The gradual rise also points to enhanced consistency and predictability in revenue outcomes, which is essential for planning and fiscal sustainability.



*Figure 2: customer satisfaction*

From the results in the figure above, the customer satisfaction levels between 2020 and 2024 show a generally upward trend, despite a slight decline in the initial year. In 2020, customer satisfaction stood at 8%, which dropped marginally to 7% in 2021. However, a notable recovery was observed in 2022, with satisfaction levels rising to 10%. This upward momentum continued into 2023 and 2024, with satisfaction increasing to 11% and 13%, respectively.

Overall, the five-year period reflects an improvement in customer satisfaction, particularly from 2022 onwards. The progression from 7% in 2021 to 13% in 2024 represents a six-percentage-point increase, suggesting improved public perceptions of service delivery and engagement over time. Despite the initial decline, the sustained growth in the later years highlights a positive direction in overall customer experience and satisfaction.



*Figure 3: budget absorption*

The budget absorption rates between 2020 and 2024 exhibit a fluctuating but overall positive trend. In 2020, the absorption rate was at 56%, which declined to 51% in 2021. This drop represents a temporary dip in the effective utilization of allocated financial resources. However, in 2022, there was a recovery to 54%, followed by further improvements to 57% in 2023 and 58% in 2024.

Despite the initial decline observed in 2021, the general trend over the five years is upward. The increase from 51% in 2021 to 58% in 2024 reflects a cumulative gain of 7 percentage points, indicating growing efficiency in the utilization of budgeted funds. This pattern suggests enhanced fiscal discipline and possibly improved planning and implementation capacity over the years.

### **Test for Hypothesis One**

The second objective of the study was to establish the influence of policy governance on performance of county governments in Kenya. The corresponding hypothesis was policy governance does not have a statistical significant influence on performance of county governments in Kenya.

A univariate analysis was therefore conducted to test the null hypothesis. From the model summary findings in Table 3, the r-squared for the relationship between policy governance and performance of county governments in Kenya was 0.261; this is an indication that at 95% confidence interval, 26.1% variation in performance of county governments in Kenya can be attributed to changes in policy governance. Therefore, policy governance can be used to explain 26.1% change in performance of county governments in Kenya. However, the remaining 73.9%

variation in performance of county governments in Kenya suggests that there are other factors other than policy governance that explain performance of county governments in Kenya

**Table 4: Model Summary for Policy Governance**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.511 <sup>a</sup>	.261	.260	.75632

a. Predictors: (Constant), policy governance

The analysis of variance was used to determine whether the regression model is a good fit for the data. From the analysis of variance (ANOVA) findings in Table 5, the study found out that that  $\text{Prob}>F_{1, 199} = 0.000$  was less than the selected 0.05 level of significance. This suggests that the model as constituted was fit to predict performance of county governments in Kenya. Further, the F-calculated, from the table (70.129) was greater than the F-critical, from f-distribution tables (3.889) supporting the findings that policy governance can be used to predict performance of county governments in Kenya.

**Table 5: ANOVA for Policy Governance**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	15.218	1	15.218	70.129	.000 <sup>b</sup>
1 Residual	43.042	198	0.217		
Total	58.260	199			

a. Dependent Variable: performance of county governments in Kenya

b. Predictors: (Constant), policy governance

From the results in table 6, the following regression model was fitted.

$$Y = 0.283 + 0.358 X_3$$

( $X_3$  is Policy Governance)

The coefficient results showed that the constant had a coefficient of 0.283 suggesting that if policy governance was held constant at zero, performance of county governments in Kenya would be at 0.283 units. In addition, results showed that policy governance coefficient was 0.358 indicating that a unit increase in policy governance would result in a 0.358 unit improvement in performance of county governments in Kenya. It was also noted that the P-value for policy governance was 0.000 which is less than the set 0.05 significance level indicating that policy

governance was significant. Based on these results, the study rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternative that policy governance has positive significant influence on performance of county governments in Kenya.

**Table 6: Beta Coefficients for Policy Governance**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	0.283	.075		3.773	.002
policy governance	0.358	0.092	0.357	3.891	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: performance of county governments in Kenya

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusions

The null hypothesis test was ‘Policy governance does not have a statistical significant influence on performance of county governments in Kenya. The study found that policy governance is statistically significant in explaining performance of county governments in Kenya. The influence was found to be positive. This means that unit improvement in policy governance would lead to an increase in p performance of county governments in Kenya. Based on the findings, the study concluded that policy governance positively and significantly influences performance of county governments in Kenya.

### Recommendations

Further, the study recommends that the management of county governments in Kenya should ensure that county policies are evidence-based, inclusive, and regularly reviewed to align with the evolving needs of local communities. This can be achieved by integrating data-driven approaches, such as conducting regular impact assessments and soliciting feedback from citizens, civil society organizations, and experts.

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