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Influence of Strategic Partnerships on Service Delivery of Public Water Service Providers in Kenya

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Abstract

Purpose: This study examined how strategic partnerships affect the service delivery of public water providers in Kenya, aiming to improve access to safe, reliable, and affordable water.

Methodology: The study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative phase involved a survey of 184 personnel from 46 randomly selected public water providers, with data analyzed through regression analysis to examine relationships between variables such as strategic partnership, resource distribution, diversification, and innovativeness. Following this, qualitative data were collected via semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders to provide in-depth contextual insights. The target population consisted of 88 public water service providers, with a sample size determined using the Krejcie and Morgan formula to ensure representativeness.

Findings: The data analysis revealed a significant positive influence of strategic partnerships on service delivery outcomes. The regression analysis ($F = 94.509$, $p = 0.000$) demonstrated that strategic collaborations are crucial in improving service quality, reliability, and efficiency among public water providers in Kenya. These findings highlight the importance of fostering strategic alliances to address infrastructural, operational, and financial challenges faced by the sector.

Unique Contributions to Theory, Policy, and Practice: Theoretically, this study extends the Resource-Based View (RBV) framework by applying it to the public utility sector, emphasizing strategic partnerships as valuable resources that enhance organizational performance. Policy-wise, the findings support the need for an enabling regulatory environment that encourages collaboration, innovation, and digital transformation within the water sector. Public water providers should strengthen partnerships to enhance service delivery, financial sustainability, and access to safe, affordable water in Kenya.

Keywords: *Regulation, Public Provision, Public Choice, Economics of Regulation, Service Delivery*

JEL Codes: *L32, L51, L52, Q25*

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INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

This study primarily examined two key constructs: Service Delivery and strategic partnerships within the context of water supply services. Service Delivery is defined as the comprehensive process by which water is supplied to customers, encompassing not only the physical provision of water but also the supporting activities that ensure its quality, reliability, and accessibility. Key dimensions of service delivery in this sector include the continuity of supply, the quality of the water provided (meeting health and safety standards), the efficiency and timeliness of responses to infrastructure issues and customer concerns, and the affordability of the service (Kayaga et al., 2020; Osborne et al., 2022). Measurable indicators of service delivery effectiveness can include the average number of hours per day of water availability, the results of water quality tests against national or international standards, the mean time to resolve reported leaks or disruptions, and customer service response times (WHO & UNICEF, 2021; World Bank, 2022).

The second core construct is strategic partnerships, which refer to collaborations between water service providers, government agencies, private sector entities, and community organizations aimed at improving water service delivery. Strategic partnerships in this study encompassing joint ventures, formal agreements, and resource sharing initiatives indicate deliberate associations aimed at achieving mutual objectives. These mechanisms reflect the depth and structure of inter-organizational relationships aimed at enhancing competitive advantage. Strategic partnerships are crucial for leveraging resources, expertise, and innovations to enhance service quality, expand access, and ensure sustainable management of water resources. These collaborations can influence various aspects of water services, including infrastructure development, capacity building, funding, and policy advocacy (Liu et al., 2019; UN-Water, 2021). Metrics for assessing the effectiveness of strategic partnerships often involve evaluating the number and quality of partnerships formed, the outcomes achieved through these collaborations, such as improved infrastructure or increased service coverage, and stakeholder satisfaction and engagement levels (Smith & Johnson, 2020; ADB, 2022). These measures provide valuable insights into how strategic partnerships contribute to the overall success and sustainability of water supply services.

Service delivery is essential in building strong customer relationships, driving long-term business growth and giving a positive reputation to organisations (Nitin et al, 2023). It encompasses the efficient and effective provision of products and services with a view of fulfilling or satisfying the users' requirements. It entails reliability, quality, efficiency, customer focus and response (Osborne et al, 2022). Service delivery in water supply sector which encompasses reliable water supply, quick response to system failures, water quality, affordable tariffs and prompt response

to customer concerns (Kayaga et al, 2020) is crucial for promoting public health, economic development, and environmental sustainability (Obeng-Odoom, 2020).

Water supply service providers play a vital role in ensuring access to safe and reliable water supply and proper sanitation facilities is essential for preventing waterborne diseases, supporting economic growth, protecting and preserving the environment (Mugabi & Kayaga, 2020; Obeng-Odoom, 2020). However, many communities around the world still grapple with inadequate water supply services, which has far-reaching consequences on human well-being and sustainable development (WHO & UNICEF, 2021). Effective service delivery in water companies encompasses several critical elements; including consistent water availability, efficient infrastructure maintenance, and prompt response to customer concerns (Mugabi & Kayaga, 2020). Well-functioning companies contribute to the prevention of waterborne diseases, support economic activities that rely on clean and safe water, and foster environmental conservation by managing wastewater effectively (Obeng-Odoom, 2020; Kayaga & Smout, 2019).

Furthermore, reliable service delivery enhances customer satisfaction, builds trust in the companies, and promotes overall community well-being (Kayaga & Smout, 2019; Rouse, 2020). However, many water supply companies face significant challenges in delivering quality services, stemming from factors such as aging infrastructure, limited financial resources, inadequate technical capacity, and inefficient management practices (World Bank, 2022; UNICEF, 2019). These challenges often lead to water shortages, intermittent supply, poor water quality, and inadequate sanitation facilities, particularly in developing countries and marginalized communities (UN-Water, 2023).

Statement of the Problem

While public water service providers are expected deliver reliable, clean and affordable water to all residents efficiently, the reality is starkly different. Many water service providers are struggling with inadequate and intermittent water supply, high rates of water losses, poor water quality and low coverage of the service areas. The magnitude of the problem is evident from various statistics. A review of the Water Services Regulatory Board (WASREB) Impact Reports from 2020 to 2023, indicates that only about 20% of the 88 public water service providers met at least only three out of eight key measurable performance indicators. Non-revenue water (NRW) remains alarmingly high, averaging 43% with some service providers reporting losses exceeding 50%. Additionally, the WASREB Impact Report 2022 highlights that customer satisfaction levels are below 50%. For instance, in Kakamega and Kericho, only 60% of the population has access to piped water.

Various interventions have been implemented by different stakeholders with the aim of improving water services. The Government, through the Water Sector Trust Fund, has

rehabilitated and expanded water infrastructure and capacity-building initiatives, such as training programs (WSTF, 2020). The World Bank has implemented the performance improvement plans and the development of management information systems for service providers in the region (World Bank, 2018). In spite of these various interventions, the services generally have remained poor. Connectivity has remained significantly low at 64%, NRW high at 43%, revenue collection low at 75% and the hours of supply averagely at 17 (WASREB, 2023). This prolonged poor service delivery can lead to the outbreak of waterborne diseases, such as cholera, typhoid, and diarrheal, putting immense strain on already overburdened healthcare systems (Obeng-Odoom, 2020). It can also hinder economic growth exacerbating poverty levels in the region (Kayaga & Smout, 2019). The service providers may face financial instability, leading to potential staff retrenchments, infrastructure deterioration, and further erosion of service delivery capabilities (WSRB, 2021).

Objectives of the Study

To determine the influence of Strategic Partnerships on service delivery of public water service providers in Kenya.

Research Hypothesis

$H_0$1: Strategic partnership has no statistically significant influence on service delivery of public water service providers in Kenya.

THEORETICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory

The Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, developed by Barney (1991) and Wernerfelt (1984), posits that an organization's competitive advantage derives from its unique, valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources and capabilities. The theory emphasizes that organizations are heterogeneous in their resource endowments, which are often not easily transferable across firms, allowing for sustained competitive benefits through strategic resource management (Barney, 2001). These resources can be tangible, such as infrastructure and financial assets, or intangible, like organizational knowledge and skills (Amit & Schoemaker, 1993). The RBV is relevant because it provides a framework for understanding how public water service providers can leverage their internal resources—such as technology, human capital, and infrastructure to improve service delivery and adapt to changing environmental and regulatory demands.

Despite its strengths, the RBV has notable criticisms. Its static nature means it often overlooks the dynamic aspects of competitive environments, failing to account for how organizations need to continuously reconfigure and develop resources in response to external changes (Priem & Butler, 2001; Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000). Additionally, the theory has been criticized for its

inward focus, emphasizing internal resources while underestimating external factors like industry competition, political influences, and regulatory frameworks (Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010). Nevertheless, in the context of water utilities, RBV offers valuable insights into how internal capabilities can be strategically managed to enhance service quality, efficiency, and sustainability, especially when aligned with evolving customer needs and environmental conditions.

Service Quality Theory (SQT, SERVQUAL Model)

The Service Quality Theory, particularly exemplified by the SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (mid-1980s), provides a framework for assessing service delivery by measuring the gap between customer expectations and perceptions of actual service received. It identifies key dimensions such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangible aspects, which collectively influence perceived service quality. In the water sector, especially in the Kenyan context, this theory is pertinent as it highlights critical areas where service delivery can be improved to meet user expectations amid challenges like unreliable supply and unequal access.

While the SERVQUAL model offers valuable insights, it has limitations. One major critique is its inherent subjectivity, as perceptions of service quality are influenced by individual experiences, cultural factors, and contextual influences, which may not always accurately reflect actual service performance (Ammar & Saleh, 2023; Salumi et al., 2022). Additionally, since the model was originally developed for competitive markets with customer choice driving quality improvements, its applicability in monopolistic public utilities—such as water providers in Kenya—may be limited. Despite these weaknesses, the theory remains relevant for understanding how internal organizational factors, resource allocation, and technological adoption can enhance service quality, leading to improved accessibility, reliability, and customer trust in public water utilities.

Empirical Literature Review

Strategic Partnership and Service Delivery

This empirical literature highlights the significant role of strategic partnerships in improving water service delivery across diverse contexts. Studies like Coombes and Hampson (2019) show that public-private partnerships (PPPs) can bring private sector expertise, financing, and innovation, but their success depends on clear governance, risk-sharing, and community involvement. These partnerships tend to perform better when supported by transparent processes and strong institutional frameworks, especially in urban settings.

Research from high-income countries, such as Levin and Tadelis (2020), indicates that contracting out municipal water services can lead to efficiency gains and cost savings. However, the effectiveness varies depending on the level of competition and service complexity. These

studies emphasize that well-designed contracts and effective monitoring are critical, though their findings are primarily based on developed country contexts, which may limit their applicability to developing countries like Kenya.

In Africa, studies like those by Dzwairo et al. (2020) and Dos Santos et al. (2017) focus on the role of partnerships in promoting integrated water resources management (IWRM) and environmental sustainability. They find that stakeholder collaboration can address complex water challenges by leveraging shared resources and expertise. Success, however, depends heavily on governance structures, stakeholder participation, and supportive regulatory frameworks. Most of these studies are qualitative and do not quantitatively measure the actual impact of partnerships on service delivery.

In Zimbabwe, Chikozho and Mapedza (2017) explored the opportunities and challenges of PPPs in advancing IWRM and environmental sustainability. Their qualitative study used document analysis, stakeholder interviews, and case studies to demonstrate that PPPs can enhance resource mobilization and expertise sharing. However, they found that the success of such partnerships hinges on governance, stakeholder involvement, and regulatory support. Notably, their research lacked quantitative analysis of how strategic positioning influences service delivery outcomes. The current study addresses this gap by combining qualitative insights with robust quantitative analysis to better understand these relationships.

In Kenya, research by Wambua and Omido (2021) and Owuor et al. (2019) show that PPPs and community-based organizations can improve water and sanitation access, especially in informal urban settlements and rural areas. Their success depends on community engagement, strong governance, and capacity-building initiatives. Mugo and Jagero (2022) highlight that stakeholder engagement is vital for effective project implementation, resource mobilization, and community buy-in, despite challenges like conflicting interests and limited capacities. These studies underscore the potential of partnerships but also emphasize the need for enabling conditions to maximize their impact.

Overall, while existing research demonstrates that strategic partnerships can significantly enhance water service delivery, most studies focus on urban or high-income settings. There remains a notable gap regarding how these collaborations function in rural and semi-urban areas of Kenya, which face unique infrastructural, socio-economic, and institutional challenges. Addressing this gap through context-specific research can inform policies and strategies to strengthen partnership effectiveness in these underserved areas.

Conceptual framework

Figure 2.1 summarizes the relationship between the independent variable, which is strategic positioning, and the dependent variable which is, service delivery. The conceptual framework is developed after a review of related literature on the study variables.

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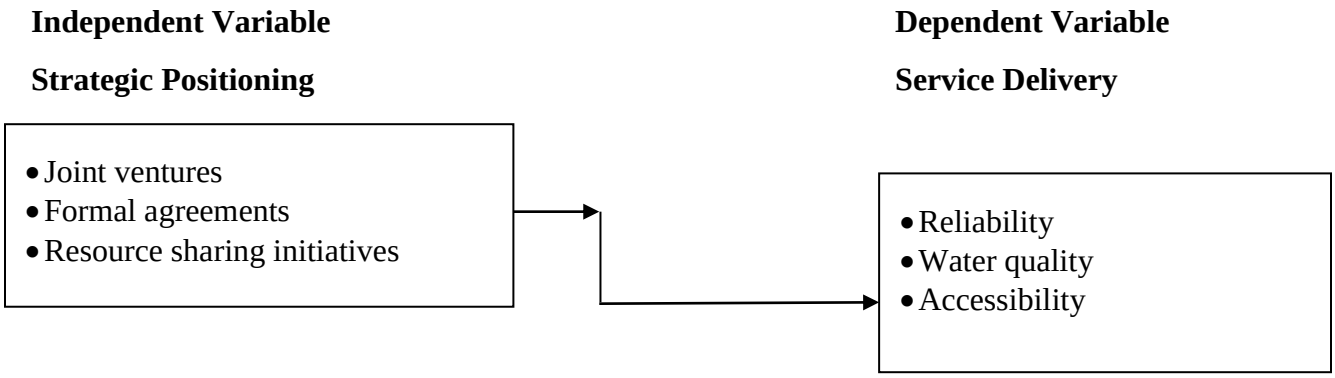

Figure 1: Showing Interactions of Strategic Partnerships and Service Delivery

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research employed a mixed-methods design, specifically an explanatory sequential approach, to comprehensively determine the influence of Strategic Partnerships on service delivery of public water service providers in Kenya. This involved first collecting and analyzing quantitative data through a cross-sectional survey using structured questionnaires administered to a sample of key personnel within these organizations. This quantitative phase aimed to test hypotheses and identify relationships between the variables.

Following the quantitative phase, qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders, including managers, employees, and customers. This qualitative phase was designed to provide deeper insights and context to explain and elaborate on the findings from the quantitative analysis. The mixed-methods approach was chosen for its ability to integrate the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods, enhancing the study's credibility, generalizability through triangulation, and providing a more complete understanding of the complex research problem.

The target population for the study comprised all 88 regulated public water service providers in Kenya, as identified by WASREB. Within each provider, four key staff members (Financial Managers, Technical Managers, Commercial Managers, and Customer Service Managers) were identified as respondents, resulting in a total target population of 352. To determine a manageable yet representative sample size, the Krejcie and Morgan formula was applied to the target population of 352, yielding a required sample size of 184 respondents. These 184 respondents were drawn from a stratified random sample of 46 water service providers, ensuring representation across different size categories (very large, large, medium, and small) and providing diverse strategic and operational insights.

Data collection utilized structured questionnaires for quantitative data on strategic positioning, technological capabilities, and service delivery, employing closed-ended questions based on existing literature and validated scales. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather

qualitative data from key Chief Executive Officers or Managing Directors, providing rich, in-depth perspectives. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (percentages, mean, standard deviation) and inferential statistics, including regression models to examine the relationships between the independent variable (resources distribution and the dependent variable (service delivery). Specifically, separate regression models were employed to assess the influence of each independent variable on service delivery, with the model for resource distribution and service delivery explicitly presented.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Response Rate

The study administered a total of 184 questionnaires to employees of public water service providers across Kenya. Out of these, 141 questionnaires were completely filled and returned, resulting in a response rate of approximately 76.63%. However, 43 questionnaires representing 23.37% were never returned. This response rate of 76.63% is considered high and acceptable for survey-based studies, as it surpasses the 70% threshold recommended for robust statistical analysis (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The high response rate implies that the findings are representative of the target population and provide reliable insights into the study objectives. It also indicates a strong willingness among participants to engage with the study, reflecting the relevance of the research topic to stakeholders in the public water service sector.

Table 1: Response Rate

Response Rate	Frequency	Percentage
Returned	141	76.63%
Not Returned	43	23.37%
Number Distributed	**184**	**100%**

Source: Research data, 2025

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive Statistics for Strategic Partnership

The study aimed to evaluate how strategic partnerships influence service delivery among public water service providers in Kenya. Respondents provided feedback on key aspects such as joint ventures, formal agreements, and resource-sharing initiatives. Data was collected through survey questions that assessed these practices using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). The summarized results are presented in Table 2. The findings indicate strong support among respondents for the role of strategic partnerships in improving

water service delivery. A significant 72.4% (mean score of 4.01, SD 0.92) agree that their organizations actively engage in joint ventures with other entities to enhance service delivery, reflecting widespread recognition of the importance of collaborative efforts.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Strategic Partnership

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev
Our organization actively engages in joint ventures with other entities to improve service delivery.	0.00%	7.10%	20.60%	36.90%	35.50%	4.01	0.92
We have formal agreements with stakeholders to leverage resources and expertise.	0.00%	7.80%	26.20%	36.90%	29.10%	3.87	0.92
Our partnerships involve resource-sharing for infrastructure development and maintenance.	0.00%	9.90%	21.30%	35.50%	33.30%	3.92	0.97
We collaborate with community-based organizations to enhance service delivery.	0.00%	4.30%	14.20%	46.80%	34.80%	4.12	0.81
We make formal agreements to define the relationships with other sector agencies.	0.00%	10.60%	14.90%	45.40%	29.10%	3.93	0.93
We regularly evaluate the effectiveness of our strategic partnerships.	0.00%	7.10%	19.10%	39.00%	34.80%	4.01	0.91
We partner with local authorities to address water service delivery challenges.	0.00%	11.30%	24.80%	34.00%	29.80%	3.82	0.99
Our roles are clearly defined in the joint ventures to enhance transparency and accountability.	0.00%	9.20%	19.10%	37.60%	34.00%	3.96	0.95
Average	0.00%	8.41%	20.03%	39.01%	32.55%	3.955	0.93

Source: Research data, 2025

Additionally, 66% (mean score of 3.87, SD 0.92) believe their organizations have formal agreements with stakeholders to leverage resources and expertise, emphasizing the value of structured relationships. Furthermore, 68.8% (mean score of 3.92, SD 0.97) affirm that partnerships involve resource-sharing for infrastructure development and maintenance, which likely ensures infrastructure adequacy. An even higher 81.6% (mean score of 4.12, SD 0.81)

highlight collaboration with community-based organizations to improve service delivery, underscoring grassroots engagement, while 74.5% (mean score of 3.93, SD 0.93) recognize the importance of formal agreements with sector agencies to define relationships. Lastly, 73.8% (mean score of 4.01, SD 0.91) agree that their organization's roles are clearly defined within joint ventures to promote transparency and accountability.

These findings support existing research emphasizing that structured collaborations, private sector involvement, and effective governance are critical for enhancing water service delivery. The high levels of engagement and formalization of partnerships demonstrate their significance in leveraging expertise, financing, and innovation. The study also highlights that effective governance and monitoring mechanisms are essential to ensure these partnerships are sustainable and transparent, ultimately contributing to improved infrastructure and service quality in Kenyan water utilities.

Descriptive Statistics for Service Delivery

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Service Delivery

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev
Our organization provides a reliable water supply with minimal interruptions.	0.00%	9.20%	18.40%	39.00%	33.30%	3.96	0.94
System networks are regularly monitored and inconsistencies addressed.	0.00%	9.20%	15.60%	37.60%	37.60%	4.04	0.95
Service delivery strategies ensure accessibility for underserved populations.	0.00%	5.70%	18.40%	44.70%	31.20%	4.01	0.85
Efficient processes are in place for managing customer complaints.	0.00%	7.10%	16.30%	45.40%	31.20%	4.01	0.87
Our organization adheres to strict water quality standards.	0.00%	9.20%	22.70%	43.30%	24.80%	3.84	0.91
Communication with customers includes quality deviations and conservation efforts.	0.00%	10.60%	19.90%	39.00%	30.50%	3.89	0.96
Contingency plans ensure service delivery during emergencies.	0.00%	7.10%	20.60%	35.50%	36.90%	4.02	0.93
We explore innovative solutions to improve service quality and operational efficiency.	0.00%	7.80%	18.40%	39.00%	34.80%	4.01	0.92
Average	0.00%	8.24%	18.79%	40.44%	32.54%	3.9725	0.91625

Source: Research data, 2025

The dependent variable in this study was service delivery, reflecting the performance outcomes of public water service providers in Kenya. Respondents evaluated aspects such as reliability,

accessibility, customer satisfaction, and quality assurance using a five-point Likert scale. The findings, summarized in Table 3, reveal that organizations are perceived to provide reliable water supplies with minimal interruptions, indicated by a mean of 3.96 and a standard deviation (SD) of 0.94, with 72.3% of respondents agreeing. System networks are regularly monitored and issues addressed promptly, with a mean of 4.04 and SD of 0.95, representing 75.2% agreement. Accessibility efforts to serve underserved populations scored a mean of 4.01, SD 0.85, with 75.9% agreement; customer complaint management was rated similarly at a mean of 4.01, SD 0.87, with 76.6% agreement. Contingency planning was rated highly, with a mean of 4.02, SD 0.93, and 72.4% agreement, highlighting preparedness for emergencies. Additionally, innovative approaches to improve service quality and efficiency received a mean of 4.01, SD 0.92, with 73.8% agreement.

In contrast, adherence to strict water quality standards received somewhat lower ratings, with a mean of 3.84 and SD of 0.91, and 68.1% of respondents agreeing, indicating potential areas for improvement in quality assurance. Communication with customers about quality deviations and conservation efforts was rated positively, with a mean of 3.89 and SD 0.96, representing 69.5% agreement. Overall, these results suggest that Kenyan water providers perform well in network monitoring, emergency preparedness, and customer responsiveness, though maintaining high standards of water quality remains a challenge. The findings align with prior research emphasizing the importance of customer satisfaction, innovation, and contingency planning in enhancing service delivery, while highlighting the need to strengthen quality assurance mechanisms.

Correlation Analysis

In reference to Table 4 the analysis of correlations related to strategic partnership, a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.516 was observed between joint ventures and service delivery indicating a strong relationship. A Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.726 with a significance level of 0.000 indicates a strong, statistically significant positive relationship between resource sharing initiatives and service delivery, confirming that greater collaboration and resource sharing are associated with improved performance in water services. Additionally, a positive correlation was observed between joint partnerships and service delivery, supporting the notion that collaborative efforts enhance service outcomes.

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Table 4: Correlation for Strategic Partnership

		Joint ventures	Formal agreements	Resource sharing initiatives	Service delivery
Joint ventures	Pearson Correlation	--			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.			
	N	141			
Formal agreements	Pearson Correlation	-.003	--		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.974	.		
	N	141	141		
Resource sharing initiatives	Pearson Correlation	.578**	-.043	--	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.609	.	
	N	141	141	141	
Service delivery	Pearson Correlation	.516**	-.177	.726**	--
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.053	.000	.
	N	141	141	141	141

Source: Research data 2025

This suggests that formal agreements alone may not directly influence service performance in a meaningful way. identified between formal agreements and service delivery; however, this relationship was not statistically significant, as evidenced by a significance value of 0.053.

Qualitative insights further reinforce these quantitative findings, as participants highlighted those partnerships with sector players, donor agencies, NGOs, and local communities significantly facilitated access to financial resources, technical expertise, and modern technologies. Participant 1 (PPT1) noted, “Collaborations with private entities have allowed us to access advanced technologies and financial resources that would otherwise be unattainable,” while another participant emphasized the importance of community partnerships: “Working with community groups has helped us access local resources and build trust, which is critical for the success of our initiatives.” These findings align with empirical studies such as Furlong et al. (2021), Prasad (2020), and Koehler et al. (2018), which highlight that strategic alliances and resource-sharing collaborations enhance infrastructure development, financial sustainability, and service efficiency in water management, especially in developing country contexts. The results reaffirm that fostering partnerships is vital for improving service delivery in resource-intensive sectors like water supply.

Regression Analysis

The study aimed to examine the impact of strategic partnerships on the service delivery of public water providers in Kenya. Using Pearson correlation analysis, the research assessed the strength and direction of the relationship between these variables, with correlation coefficients indicating

the degree of linear association. Additionally, a regression model analyzed the influence of strategic partnerships on service delivery, with results generated using SPSS software, as detailed in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 5: Model Summary for strategic partnerships and service delivery

Model Summary for Strategic Partnership and Service Delivery				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.842[a]	0.710	0.702	0.36092

a. Predictors: (Constant), strategic partnerships and service delivery (dependent variable); Source: Research data, 2025.

In reference to Table 5 the model summary for strategic partnerships and service delivery, revealed a calculated R value of 0.842 revealing that strategic partnership has strong positive correlation on service delivery with 0.842 > 0.5. Moreover, the study established an adjusted R square value of 0.702. This reveals that strategic partnership (resource sharing, joint venture and formal agreements) contribute to 70.2 percent of service delivery of public water service providers. This explains that other factors outside the scope of this research contribute to service delivery of public water service providers by 29.8 percent. The study was in line with Kalunda, (2023) who found a positive correlation between strategic partnerships on service delivery among commercial banks in Kenya.

Table 6 Analysis of Variance

ANOVA for Strategic Partnership and Service Delivery						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	36.933	3	12.311	94.509	.000[b]
	Residual	15.110	116	.130		
	Total	52.043	119			

a. Dependent Variable: Service delivery

a. Predictors: (Constant), strategic partnerships and service delivery (dependent variable); Source: Research data, 2025.

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) confirmed the overall significance of the regression model, with a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) and an F-statistic of 94.509, which exceeds the critical value of 2.68. These results indicate that strategic partnerships such as resource sharing, joint ventures, and formal agreements have a statistically significant positive impact on the service delivery of public water service providers in Kenya. The Pearson correlation analysis supported this, revealing a strong positive relationship with a coefficient of 0.726 ($p = 0.000$), reinforcing those strategic collaborations significantly enhance service outcomes.

The study's findings align with prior research, such as Dos Santos et al. (2017), who found a positive link between public-private partnerships and urban water security in Ghana, and

Kalunda (2023), who identified a significant relationship between strategic partnerships and service delivery in Kenya's financial sector (p = 0.007). While the contexts differ urban water security, banking, and water utilities the consistent positive association underscores the importance of strategic collaborations across sectors. The study contributes to the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory by empirically demonstrating that strategic partnerships are valuable resources that bolster institutional capabilities. However, limitations include a small sample size and data collected at a single time point, suggesting that future research should explore longitudinal designs and broader regional comparisons to better understand how leadership and governance influence partnership success. Ultimately, the null hypothesis stating that strategic partnerships have no effect was rejected, confirming their significant influence on service delivery in Kenya's public water sector.

Table 7 Regression Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model	**B**	**Std. Error**	**Beta**	**t**	**Sig.**
1 (Constant)	.955	.258		3.699	.000
Joint venture	-.084	.042	-.100	-2.001	.048
Formal agreements	.053	.061	.056	.865	.389
Resource sharing	.772	.064	.794	12.160	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Service delivery

b. Predictors: (Constant), strategic partnerships and service delivery (dependent variable); Source: Research data, 2025.

The regression analysis showed that joint ventures and resource sharing have a significant positive effect on the service delivery of public water providers, with p-values of 0.048 and 0.00, and t-statistics of 2.001 and 12.160, respectively, both exceeding the critical value of 1.96. Specifically, resource sharing had a strong positive influence, with a coefficient of 0.772, indicating that a one-unit increase in resource sharing improves service delivery. Conversely, joint ventures showed a potential negative impact, as an increase in joint ventures could negatively affect service delivery, supported by a coefficient of -0.084. Formal agreements, however, had an inverse relationship with service delivery, with a p-value of 0.389 and a t-statistic of 0.865, both below the threshold for significance.

The regression equation, Service delivery = 0.955 – 0.084 joint venture + 0.053 formal agreements + 0.772 resource sharing, highlights that resource sharing notably enhances service delivery, while joint ventures may have a detrimental effect if increased. These findings align with Segero (2023), who identified a significant link between joint ventures and operational risks in Kenya’s affordable housing sector, and Negi et al. (2024), who found a positive relationship

between resource sharing and the design of multi-client warehouses. Overall, the results suggest that resource sharing is a key driver of improved service delivery in public water utilities, whereas the role of joint ventures may be more complex and context-dependent.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The study conclusively demonstrates a significant positive influence of strategic partnerships on the service delivery of public water service providers in Kenya. Specifically, the findings highlight that both joint ventures and resource sharing initiatives, as key forms of strategic partnerships, play a crucial role in enhancing service delivery outcomes. These partnerships, involving collaborations with diverse entities such as other sector players, donor agencies, and NGOs, were found to be instrumental in overcoming resource constraints and improving technical capabilities. Access to vital financial resources, specialized technical expertise, and the adoption of modern technologies were directly facilitated through these strategic alliances, enabling water service providers to implement initiatives that would have been challenging to undertake independently.

Furthermore, the study underscores the particular value of partnerships with local communities, emphasizing their contribution to accessing local resources, fostering a deeper understanding of local needs, and building essential trust. This community-level engagement is identified as critical for the successful implementation and long-term sustainability of service delivery strategies, ultimately ensuring more inclusive and effective water services. The robust positive correlation observed between strategic positioning (which includes strategic partnerships) and service delivery further strengthens the conclusion that strategic collaborations are a powerful driver of improved performance within the public water sector in Kenya. Therefore, fostering and leveraging diverse strategic partnerships is a key recommendation for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of water service delivery.

Recommendations

Given the significant positive influence of strategic partnerships on service delivery, it is recommended that public water service providers in Kenya actively pursue and strengthen collaborative initiatives. This should involve a deliberate strategy to identify and engage with a diverse range of potential partners, including other sector players, donor agencies, non-governmental organizations, and crucially, local communities. Providers should develop clear frameworks and agreements for joint ventures and resource sharing initiatives, ensuring transparency and mutual benefit. The focus should be on leveraging these partnerships to gain access to much-needed financial resources, acquire advanced technical expertise, and adopt innovative technologies that can improve infrastructure, operational efficiency, and water quality.

Furthermore, the study's findings highlight the importance of community engagement within these partnerships. Therefore, service providers are encouraged to prioritize building strong relationships with local communities, recognizing their unique insights into local needs and their potential role in resource mobilization and building trust. Recommendations should include establishing formal mechanisms for community participation in planning and decision-making processes related to water service delivery. By fostering these strategic partnerships, particularly those that are inclusive and community-focused, public water service providers can significantly enhance their capacity to deliver sustainable, reliable, and equitable water services to the population of Kenya.

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