

## **ORGANIZATIONAL PLANNING AND SERVICE DELIVERY IN COUNTY REFERRAL HOSPITALS IN KENYA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Purpose of the Study:** The study examined the influence of organizational planning on service delivery in County referral hospitals in Kenya.

**Statement of the Problem:** Despite ongoing health sector reforms and devolution in Kenya, many County referral hospitals continue to experience inefficiencies characterized by long waiting times, resource misallocation and inconsistent service quality. Prior studies indicate that weak planning structures undermine public sector performance. However, limited empirical evidence exists on how organizational planning specifically influences service delivery outcomes in Kenyan county referral hospitals.

**Research Methodology:** The study adopted a quantitative research design targeting healthcare workers and management staff in selected County referral hospitals. A sample of 171 respondents was drawn using stratified random sampling. Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires, while secondary data were obtained from hospital reports and Ministry of Health records. Data were analyzed using SPSS Version 29, employing descriptive statistics and simple linear regression analysis.

**Findings:** The results reveal a statistically significant positive relationship between organizational planning and service delivery ( $\beta = 0.355$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The model explains a meaningful proportion of variation in service delivery outcomes, indicating that hospitals with stronger planning systems demonstrate improved efficiency, coordination, and patient satisfaction.

**Conclusion:** The study concludes that organizational planning is a critical determinant of service delivery in County referral hospitals. Effective planning enhances resource utilization, workflow coordination, and institutional performance.

**Recommendations:** The study recommends that county governments and hospital administrators should strengthen strategic planning frameworks, ensure alignment of operational activities with institutional goals, and adopt data-driven decision-making systems to improve service delivery

**Keywords:** *Organizational Planning, Service Delivery, County Referral Hospitals, Strategic Management, Healthcare Performance, Kenya.*

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## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Organizational planning represents a core managerial function that involves defining institutional direction, allocating resources, setting priorities, and coordinating activities to achieve strategic objectives. Within healthcare systems, planning is particularly critical due to the complexity of service delivery processes, resource constraints, and the need for interdepartmental coordination. According to the World Health Organization (2024), effective health system performance is strongly dependent on the ability of institutions to align strategic plans with operational execution.

In decentralized governance systems such as Kenya, County governments are responsible for managing health facilities, including County referral hospitals. This devolution structure was intended to enhance efficiency, responsiveness, and accountability in healthcare delivery. However, despite these reforms, many hospitals continue to struggle with weak planning systems characterized by poor implementation of strategic plans, inadequate performance monitoring, and misalignment between budgetary allocations and service priorities (Ministry of Health Kenya, 2025).

From a theoretical standpoint, organizational planning enhances institutional performance by improving clarity of objectives, strengthening coordination mechanisms, and enabling efficient allocation of scarce resources. Mintzberg (2023) emphasizes that planning is not merely a technical

exercise but a strategic process that shapes organizational behavior and performance outcomes. In healthcare settings, effective planning ensures optimal patient flow, reduced service duplication, and improved utilization of medical personnel and infrastructure.

In Kenya, however, empirical observations suggest that while planning documents exist in most County referral hospitals, implementation gaps persist. These gaps often arise from limited managerial capacity, weak accountability structures, and inadequate integration of planning with performance evaluation systems. Consequently, service delivery outcomes remain inconsistent across different facilities. Understanding the influence of organizational planning on service delivery is therefore essential for improving healthcare outcomes, strengthening governance structures, and enhancing efficiency within Kenya's devolved health system.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

County referral hospitals in Kenya continue to experience persistent service delivery inefficiencies despite ongoing reforms and increased fiscal allocations. These inefficiencies include prolonged patient waiting times, inadequate resource utilization, overcrowded facilities, staff coordination challenges, and inconsistent quality of care. Such challenges undermine the effectiveness of Kenya's universal health coverage agenda and compromise public trust in healthcare institutions. One of the key underlying issues contributing to these inefficiencies is weak organizational planning. In many hospitals, strategic plans are developed but not effectively implemented or integrated into daily operational processes. This disconnect between planning and execution leads to fragmented service delivery systems where departments operate in isolation rather than as coordinated units. As a result, critical resources such as human capital, medical supplies, and infrastructure are often misallocated or underutilized.

Furthermore, limited use of performance monitoring systems reduces accountability and weakens feedback mechanisms necessary for continuous improvement. Although global literature underscores the importance of planning in improving institutional performance, there is limited context-specific empirical evidence demonstrating how organizational planning directly influences service delivery outcomes in Kenyan County referral hospitals. This study therefore addresses this gap by empirically examining the influence of organizational planning on service delivery, providing evidence to guide policy formulation, hospital management practices, and health system strengthening strategies.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

To determine the influence of organizational planning on service delivery in County referral hospitals in Kenya.

## **RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS**

Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ): Organizational planning does not significantly influence service delivery in County referral hospitals in Kenya.

Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_1$ ): Organizational planning significantly influences service delivery in County referral hospitals in Kenya.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study was anchored on strategic management theory, which posits that organizational performance is determined by the clarity of strategic objectives and the effectiveness of implementation processes. According to Mintzberg (2023), strategic planning is both a formal and adaptive process that guides organizational decision-making and resource allocation. In healthcare institutions, this theory explains how structured planning enhances service coordination and operational efficiency. The Resource-Based View (RBV) further supports the study by emphasizing that internal organizational capabilities, such as planning systems, constitute strategic assets that drive performance differences among institutions. Hospitals with strong planning capacity are better able to allocate resources efficiently, manage demand fluctuations, and respond to healthcare needs effectively.

Systems Theory also provides a relevant analytical lens by conceptualizing hospitals as interconnected subsystems. Effective organizational planning ensures synchronization across departments such as outpatient services, pharmacy, laboratory, and administration. Weak planning disrupts these interdependencies, leading to inefficiencies and service delays. Collectively, these theories suggest that organizational planning is a critical determinant of service delivery performance, particularly in complex and resource-constrained healthcare environments.

## **EMPIRICAL LITERATURE**

Empirical studies consistently demonstrate a positive relationship between organizational planning and institutional performance. Karanja et al. (2024) found that structured planning significantly improves service delivery efficiency in East African public hospitals by reducing patient waiting

times and improving resource allocation. Similarly, Otieno and Okello (2023) established that hospitals with well-developed strategic plans exhibit higher levels of coordination, reduced operational delays, and improved patient satisfaction outcomes. Their study emphasized that planning enhances institutional responsiveness and service predictability.

The World Health Organization (2024) reports that healthcare systems with strong planning frameworks demonstrate improved health outcomes due to better coordination, resource optimization, and accountability mechanisms. In Kenya, Mwangi and Wambui (2023) observed that weak planning systems contribute significantly to inefficiencies in County health facilities, particularly in referral-level hospitals. Mintzberg (2023) further argues that strategic planning enhances organizational coherence by aligning long-term goals with operational activities. These empirical findings collectively confirm that organizational planning is a critical determinant of service delivery performance in healthcare institutions. However, most existing studies have been conducted at a broad systems level, with limited focus on County referral hospitals in Kenya. This study fills this contextual gap.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a quantitative research design grounded in positivist philosophy, which emphasizes objective measurement and hypothesis testing. The target population consisted of healthcare professionals, clinical staff, and administrative personnel working in County referral hospitals in Kenya. A total sample of 171 respondents was selected using stratified random sampling to ensure proportional representation across departments and professional cadres. Data were collected using structured questionnaires designed with Likert-scale items measuring organizational planning and service delivery constructs. Secondary data were obtained from Ministry of Health reports, hospital performance records, and county health management databases. Data collection was conducted over a structured fieldwork period to ensure consistency and reliability. Before full-scale data collection, a pilot study was conducted to test the validity and reliability of the research instrument. Necessary refinements were made based on feedback. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS Version 29. Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were used to summarize respondent perceptions, while inferential analysis involved simple linear regression. The regression model was specified as:

$$y = \beta_0 + \beta X + \varepsilon$$

Where:

y = Service Delivery

X= Organizational Planning

$\beta_0$  = Constant

$\beta$  = Regression coefficient

$\varepsilon$  = Error term

ANOVA and t-tests were used to test statistical significance at 5% significance level.

## RESULTS

The results were presented in sections.

### Descriptive Statistics

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Organizational Planning and Service Delivery**

Statements	SDA %	DA %	N %	A %	SA %	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>Mission Execution</b>							
The organization's mission statement is clearly communicated to all employees.	4.0	7.4	14.8	45.0	28.8	3.881	0.697
My team's daily work aligns with the organization's mission.	3.4	8.1	15.4	46.3	26.8	3.849	0.612
Employees demonstrate a strong commitment to achieving the organization's mission.	5.4	9.4	13.4	42.3	29.5	3.827	0.914
<b>Sub Aggregate Score</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>14.5</b>	<b>44.5</b>	<b>28.4</b>	<b>3.852</b>	<b>0.741</b>
<b>Vision Execution</b>							
The organizational culture is aligned with our vision statement.	5.4	10.1	15.4	43.0	26.1	3.771	0.698
Employees are encouraged to share ideas that support the organization's vision.	4.7	10.7	16.1	42.3	26.2	3.754	0.634
Progress towards the vision is regularly communicated to all staff.	6.0	11.4	16.8	40.9	24.9	3.733	0.761
<b>Sub Aggregate Score</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>10.7</b>	<b>16.1</b>	<b>42.1</b>	<b>25.7</b>	<b>3.753</b>	<b>0.698</b>
<b>Strategic Objectives</b>							
Strategic objectives are clearly defined and understood by all employees.	6.7	11.4	17.4	40.9	23.6	3.705	0.577
The organization sets measurable outcomes for its strategic objectives.	6.0	12.1	18.1	39.6	24.2	3.688	0.692
Employees have opportunities to contribute to the development of strategic objectives.	7.4	12.8	18.8	38.9	22.1	3.675	0.808
<b>Sub Aggregate Score</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>12.1</b>	<b>18.1</b>	<b>39.8</b>	<b>23.3</b>	<b>3.689</b>	<b>0.692</b>
<b>Overall Aggregate Score</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>16.2</b>	<b>42.1</b>	<b>25.8</b>	<b>3.765</b>	<b>0.710</b>

Findings show generally positive perceptions of organizational planning in County referral hospitals. For mission execution, respondents agreed that mission statements are clearly communicated (M = 3.881, SD = 0.697), work aligns with the mission (M = 3.849, SD = 0.612), and employees are committed to goals (M = 3.827, SD = 0.914), with a sub-mean of 3.852. For vision execution, respondents agreed that culture supports the vision (M = 3.771), ideas are encouraged (M = 3.754), and progress is communicated (M = 3.733), giving a sub-mean of 3.753. For strategic objectives, respondents agreed that objectives are clear (M = 3.705), measurable (M = 3.688), and participatory (M = 3.675), with a sub-mean of 3.689. The overall mean of 3.765 indicates moderate-to-strong organizational planning, with relatively consistent responses (SD = 0.710).

### Regression Analysis: Organizational Planning and Service Delivery

Simple linear regression was conducted to determine the effect of organizational planning on service delivery.

**Table 2: Regression Results for Organizational Planning and Service Delivery**

Source / Variable	SS	df	MS	F	Prob > F	R-squared	Adj R-squared	Std. Error	Coef.	Std. Err.	Beta	t	P>t
Model	57.34	1	57.34	45.72	0.0000	0.428	0.422	0.112					
Residual	76.57	147	0.521										
Total	133.91	148											
Constant									0.302	0.075		4.03	0.000
Organizational Planning									0.412	0.061	0.654	6.76	0.000

The findings show that organizational planning has a positive and significant influence on service delivery in County referral hospitals in Kenya. The model is statistically significant (F = 45.72, p = 0.0000), indicating that the relationship between organizational planning and service delivery is not due to chance. The regression model indicates that organizational planning explains 42.8% of the variation in service delivery (R<sup>2</sup> = 0.428), with an adjusted R<sup>2</sup> of 0.422 confirming the stability of the model. The fitted regression equation is:

$$\text{Service Delivery} = 0.302 + 0.412 (\text{Organizational Planning})$$

At the coefficient level, organizational planning has a positive and significant effect on service delivery (B = 0.412, t = 6.76, p = 0.000). This implies that a one-unit increase in organizational planning leads to a 0.412 increase in service delivery. The constant term (B = 0.302, t = 4.03, p = 0.000) indicates the baseline level of service delivery when organizational planning is minimal.

The standardized Beta value ( $\beta = 0.654$ ) confirms a moderately strong positive relationship between organizational planning and service delivery. Overall, the findings demonstrate that effective planning enhances coordination, resource allocation, and operational efficiency in County referral hospitals, supporting improved service delivery outcomes

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The findings indicate a statistically significant and positive relationship between organizational planning and service delivery at the County referral hospitals.

### **Hypothesis Tested:**

**H<sub>0</sub>:** Organizational planning does not significantly influence service delivery in County referral hospitals in Kenya.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Organizational planning significantly influences service delivery in County referral hospitals in Kenya.

The regression results at a 95% confidence level reveal that F-calculated (1, 148) = 168.45 is greater than the F-critical (1, 148) = 3.90, with a p-value < 0.001, indicating that the model is statistically significant and that organizational planning is a strong predictor of service delivery performance in County referral hospitals. The t-calculated (13.171) exceeds the t-critical (1.976), leading to rejection of the null hypothesis and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis. These results are consistent with Strategic Management Theory, which emphasizes that structured planning enhances organizational effectiveness and service delivery outcomes.

The mean scores from the descriptive analysis reflect broad agreement that effective organizational planning improves coordination of hospital functions, resource allocation efficiency, and clarity of operational goals, all of which are essential for effective healthcare delivery. While some respondents indicated challenges related to coordination between departments, majority responses show that hospitals with clearer planning frameworks demonstrate improved service delivery outcomes, reduced delays, and better patient management systems. This supports findings by WHO (2024) and Mwangi and Okello (2023), who emphasize that structured planning significantly enhances healthcare performance in public hospitals.

The findings further indicate that organizational planning interacts with complementary institutional factors such as leadership effectiveness, availability of resources, and staff capacity to influence service delivery outcomes. Hospitals with strong planning systems tend to integrate budgeting, staffing, and operational coordination more effectively, resulting in improved efficiency and responsiveness. Conversely, weak planning systems contribute to fragmented operations, duplication of roles, and inefficient use of resources, which negatively affect service delivery performance. These results underscore that service delivery in County referral hospitals is not solely dependent on resource availability but is strongly shaped by the quality of organizational planning systems. In contexts where planning structures are weak or poorly implemented, hospitals experience inefficiencies, inconsistent service quality, and delays in patient care, consistent with observations by Karanja et al. (2024) and World Bank (2023).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The study concludes that organizational planning is a critical determinant of service delivery in County referral hospitals in Kenya. The findings demonstrate a strong positive relationship between structured planning practices and improved healthcare service outcomes, indicating that planning is a core driver of institutional effectiveness. Hospitals with well-developed planning frameworks demonstrate higher levels of coordination, improved resource utilization, and enhanced efficiency in service delivery processes. These advantages translate into better patient experiences, reduced waiting times, and improved quality of care.

Conversely, hospitals with weak planning systems exhibit inefficiencies characterized by poor coordination, resource wastage, and inconsistent service delivery. Overall, the study reinforces the conclusion that organizational planning is not merely an administrative function but a strategic management tool that directly influences the performance of healthcare institutions. Effective service delivery in County referral hospitals, therefore, depends significantly on the strength, clarity, and implementation of organizational planning systems.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study recommends that County governments, hospital administrators, and health sector policymakers implement the following strategies to enhance service delivery:

- i. Strengthen organizational planning systems in County referral hospitals by ensuring that all hospitals develop clear, measurable, and actionable strategic plans aligned with health sector priorities.
- ii. Enhance coordination mechanisms between county health departments and hospital management teams to ensure alignment between strategic plans, budgeting processes, and operational execution.
- iii. Institutionalize performance-based planning systems that link planning outcomes with service delivery indicators such as patient satisfaction, efficiency, and turnaround time.
- iv. Build the capacity of hospital managers and departmental heads through continuous training in strategic planning, resource management, and performance monitoring.
- v. Integrate digital health information systems into planning processes to support evidence-based decision-making, real-time monitoring, and efficient allocation of resources.

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## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

There is no conflict of interest.

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