

ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC POLICY IMPLEMENTATION ON THE PERFORMANCE OF HEALTHCARE DEVOLUTION IN HOMA BAY COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of Study: The purpose of the study was to examine the public policy implementation on the performance of healthcare devolution in Homa Bay County, Kenya with specific objectives to assess the effect of bureaucratic practices, citizen engagement approaches, health care infrastructure and funding and expenditure on the performance of healthcare devolution in Homa Bay County, Kenya.

Problem Statement: Despite ongoing efforts by the government and non-governmental organizations, Kenya's health infrastructure remains underdeveloped, prompting economists and public policy experts to explore ways to improve service delivery and enhance the quality of life. Devolution has emerged as a key strategy for achieving these goals, directly influencing people's quality of life and extending its effects beyond mere service provision. However, county governments often prioritize economic efficiency over effective service delivery.

Methodology: The research targeted public health professionals, including nurses and administrators from county and sub-county hospitals across nine constituencies. The researcher Employed descriptive survey design, the study used both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather data from 162 respondents, including hospital managers, clinical officers, nurses, and health record officers. The analysis involved descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, alongside inferential statistics, including Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis.

Result: Findings indicate relationships among healthcare devolution, citizen engagement, bureaucratic practices, funding, and infrastructure. Notably, a moderate positive correlation exists between healthcare devolution and citizen engagement ($r = .504$, $p = .000$), suggested that increased devolution fosters community involvement. Additionally, significant correlations between funding and health infrastructure ($r = .420$, $p = 0.000$) highlight the importance of adequate financial resources for quality service delivery.

Recommendation: Streamlining bureaucratic processes, enhancing citizen engagement, improving financial oversight, and investing in healthcare infrastructure to ensure responsive and effective service delivery in Homa Bay County.

Keywords: *Policy Implementation, Devolution, Bureaucratic Practices, Healthcare Infrastructure and Citizen Engagement Approaches*

INTRODUCTION

On August 9, 2013, the health service delivery role was legally passed to counties under the new constitutional framework. The 2013/2014 budget allocated KSh 210 billion, or one-third of the overall devolved budget, for health. The national government is in charge of policy, national referral hospitals, and capacity building; the counties are in charge of providing health services (Constitution of Kenya, 2010). Devolution aims to achieve several goals, such as advancing democracy and accountability in healthcare delivery, promoting smooth service delivery both during and after the transition period, granting people more powers of self-governance and increasing their involvement in health decision-making, acknowledging communities' right to manage their own health affairs and advance their development, safeguarding and advancing the health interests and rights of marginalized communities, including slum dwellers and underserved populations, and promoting social and economic development alongside the provision of close, easily accessible health services throughout Kenya (GoK, 2019).

The national government is in charge of developing health policy, managing national referral health facilities, developing county capacity and providing technical support, and protecting consumers, including creating norms, standards, and recommendations. County governments are in charge of county health services, which include county pharmacies and health facilities; ambulance services; primary healthcare promotion; licensing and oversight of businesses selling food to the public; cemeteries, funeral parlors, and crematoria; and solid waste disposal, refuse removal, and refuse dumps (GOK, 2019). The national MOH oversees the national referral hospitals, offers technical assistance and policy support to key national initiatives, and is still in charge of HR for health (university teaching hospitals, public universities, and medical schools). (MoH, 2019).

The administration committed to reforming the national health management system by decentralizing authority, thereby empowering counties and healthcare facilities to make

autonomous decisions regarding resource allocation and service delivery. This approach aims to enhance local governance in health management and foster greater community engagement in health-related matters. The proposed changes are grounded in the guiding principles of two Health Sector Strategic Plans, which outline a framework for effective health service delivery. Furthermore, as part of this decentralized system, District Health Management Boards and District Health Management Teams (DHMTs) have been tasked with overseeing the implementation of various activities tailored to meet the specific health needs of their respective counties. This structural shift not only aims to improve health outcomes but also encourages a collaborative approach to healthcare, ensuring that local contexts and community needs are prioritized in health management strategies (Ong'ang'a, J. & Miller P, 2020).

Despite devolution, key health indicators such as maternal mortality, child mortality, and access to essential services remain suboptimal in Homa Bay. The maternal mortality rate in Homa Bay is 453 deaths per 100,000 live births, well above the national target of 342 deaths (KNBS, 2022). Limited healthcare infrastructure and staffing shortages contribute to these challenges. The county's public health facilities often lack necessary medical equipment and medicines, making it difficult to implement national policies like Universal Health Coverage (UHC) effectively.

The political dynamics in Homa Bay have contributed to delays in policy implementation and resource allocation. Political leaders sometimes prioritize immediate, visible health interventions to gain political support, at the expense of long-term systemic improvements (Omondi, 2022). Additionally, there have been issues with mismanagement and corruption, where allocated funds for health services have not been used efficiently.

To this extent, some major progress is taking place particularly in the construction of infrastructural projects certain ground playing has been overlooked for example the government has not been committed to heavily investing in the manufacturing sector to achieve the objectives of vision 2030 remains an illusion. Considering how the process of implementation is being executed. With proper policy implementation, it is without a doubt that most of the recurrent issues in the county will fully be solved (Ong'ang'a, J. & Miller P, 2020).

There is a disparity in healthcare resource allocation across different parts of the county. While urban centers like Homa Bay Town have relatively better healthcare facilities, rural areas suffer from inadequate infrastructure, fewer healthcare workers, and limited access to essential services.

The challenge of achieving equitable distribution of resources remains a key issue for county governments, including Homa Bay (Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, 2017).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In Homa Bay County, the performance of the healthcare system has not significantly improved post-devolution. According to the Kenya Health Sector Review (2021), Homa Bay has some of the highest maternal and child mortality rates in the country. Maternal mortality stands at 453 deaths per 100,000 live births, which is well above the national average of 342 deaths per 100,000 (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2022). Similarly, the under-5 mortality rate in Homa Bay County remains alarmingly high at 90 deaths per 1,000 live births compared to the national average of 49 deaths per 1,000 live births (KNBS, 2022). These figures are a stark reflection of the county's continued struggle with effective healthcare service delivery.

Additionally, healthcare infrastructure remains underdeveloped. A recent survey by the Ministry of Health (2023) showed that only 40% of health facilities in Homa Bay County are fully equipped with essential medical supplies, which is far below the national average of 60%. Similarly, the county's hospitals are operating at just 50% of the recommended bed capacity, leading to overcrowding and long waiting times (Homa Bay County Health Department, 2023).

One of the key factors contributing to poor healthcare outcomes in Homa Bay is inadequate healthcare staffing. A 2022 report by the Public Service Commission indicated that the county faces a severe shortage of medical personnel, with only 60% of the recommended staffing levels in place (Public Service Commission, 2022). The shortage includes critical positions such as doctors, nurses, and clinical officers, which hampers the ability of health facilities to provide timely and quality care.

Moreover, healthcare funding in Homa Bay has consistently fallen short. The county receives an average of KES 1.5 billion annually for healthcare services, which is insufficient to meet its health service delivery needs, especially given the rising demand due to the county's high population growth. In contrast, the national government allocates an average of KES 5 billion per year to more affluent counties (Ministry of Health, 2023). As a result, Homa Bay has been unable to fully implement national health programs such as Universal Health Coverage (UHC), leading to inequities in healthcare access and outcomes.

Despite the existence of policy frameworks intended to address these disparities, the performance of the healthcare sector in Homa Bay remains dismal. The barriers to effective implementation include political interference, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and inadequate local governance capacity, which have all contributed to stalled or poorly executed health interventions (Omondi, 2022).

Delays in translating policy goals into actionable plans and on-the-ground improvements can stymie progress and fail to address urgent healthcare infrastructure needs. Weak monitoring and evaluation frameworks can result in insufficient tracking of policy impact and effectiveness, making it challenging to identify and address issues in real-time and therefore this study seeks to establish the public policy implementation on performance of public health care system in Homa Bay County, Kenya.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to examine the public policy implementation on the performance of healthcare devolution in Homa Bay County, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Njoroge and Moi (2020) examine the impact of devolution on healthcare administration in Murang'a County, Kenya, focusing on Gatanga Sub-county. The study highlights that healthcare administrators play a significant role in decision-making but are influenced by local politics. Devolution aims to empower healthcare management, yet challenges persist in financial planning, facility management, and human resources. Findings show that the county government is the main healthcare funder, though financial shortages, delayed funding, and equipment inadequacies hinder progress. Despite improvements in management and service delivery due to devolution, issues like limited stakeholder engagement and staff demotivation remain. The study recommends enhancing capacity building and raising awareness of healthcare administrators' roles to improve healthcare services.

Musyoka and Wanjohi (2024) explored how big data analytics can support SME performance sustainability in post-COVID-19 Kenya. SMEs, vital to the economy, face challenges like limited credit access, liquidity issues, and defaults. Focusing on supply chain management, operational flexibility, and logistics systems in Kiambu County's food manufacturing sector, the study found

that big data analytics significantly improves resilience and productivity. It emphasized the need for better digital infrastructure and training to enhance SMEs' decision-making and adaptability.

In another study Salim (2021) studied devolution and service delivery in Kenyan public service, using the county government of Marsabit as a case study. The study's findings support the approval of funding allocation and decision-making. The results showed that the majority of respondents thought that requests for funding allocation and decision approval received approvals quickly. The difficulties with funding allocation are also covered; the results indicate that insufficient funding is provided for development initiatives, which has an impact on project completion. The survey also finds that workers in the county think the Marsabit County administration is very responsible. Service delivery in Marsabit County is impacted by accountability and openness. The majority of employees, according to the researcher, have community blessings and belong to project management groups established in the community. Since the majority of inhabitants are involved in community organizations, it is easy for them to be considered before anything is implemented or for them to contribute to county development. According to the study's findings, the majority of workers participate in community-based project management groups. Because the employees are members of a community organization, it is easy for them to be involved in county development or to be consulted before anything is implemented.

According to Collins and Patrick (2021), having merchandise on hand benefits the connection more and results in customer satisfaction quickly, which boosts output. Remember that completed items, incomplete goods, and necessary raw materials need safety stock. A vital role for inventories is played by the whole manufacturing chain. It is utterly unbelievable and financially unfeasible for every item's supply to arrive at the exact location and time needed. As a result, it is always necessary to store a certain amount of inventory. When businesses have inventory, a significant amount of investments can be avoided. A decrease in population might result in cheaper operating costs, particularly for stock storage costs kept in the stockroom. But this study's main goal is to look at supply chain risk management and the productivity of certain food manufacturing companies in Kenya's Kiambu County.

Juma and Kilei (2022) shows that the study's conclusion that public participation has a favorable influence on Kenya's devolved government system's success was reached. The administration of the County of Kwale has effectively included the people in the budget planning process, and public

works and initiatives are well-liked. This involvement has also helped to strengthen financial control.

Omondi and Kiruthu (2023) explore the impact of devolution on the expansion of medical infrastructure in Nakuru County, Kenya, emphasizing its importance in healthcare delivery, including medical facilities, equipment, transportation, and ICT. Their study addresses a gap in existing literature that primarily focuses on administration and funding rather than medical infrastructure expansion. Using a descriptive research design, the authors collected data from 126 health workers across selected public hospitals, revealing that devolved medical laboratories and surgical theatres had insignificant negative effects on infrastructure expansion, while devolved maternity wards significantly contributed to positive growth. The study highlights challenges such as inadequate maintenance of laboratory equipment and limited power sources affecting surgical theatres, while recognizing the successful establishment of maternity wards through devolution. The authors recommend enhancing the procurement and maintenance of surgical equipment, utilizing idle public land for infrastructure development, and increasing funding for research and training in surgical operations, alongside efforts to recruit more midwives and nurses to improve healthcare services in Nakuru County and beyond.

Barasa *et al.* (2021) emphasize the critical need for county health departments to enhance the effectiveness of county health systems. Their research highlights several strategic recommendations to address prevalent challenges. First, there is a pressing need to prioritize resources for interventions aimed at reducing the high burden of chronic diseases, which are increasingly straining healthcare systems. Second, addressing structural quality gaps in healthcare delivery is vital to ensure that services meet the required standards. Additionally, implementing interventions to improve the quality of processes within health facilities is essential for enhancing overall patient care. The study also identifies the necessity of understanding and mitigating obstacles that hinder the absorption of health resources, as inefficient resource allocation can undermine system effectiveness. Finally, reorganizing public finance management systems is crucial to streamline funding and enhance the overall efficiency of health service delivery. Collectively, these strategies aim to create a more resilient and effective healthcare system at the county level, ultimately improving health outcomes for the population.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research targeted public health professionals, including nurses and administrators from county and sub-county hospitals across nine constituencies. The researcher Employed descriptive survey design, the study used both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather data from 162 respondents, including hospital managers, clinical officers, nurses, and health record officers. The analysis involved descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, alongside inferential statistics, including Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis. Findings indicate relationships among healthcare devolution, citizen engagement, bureaucratic practices, funding, and infrastructure.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The descriptive findings on Table below presents the influence of Healthcare Infrastructure. The data revealed that a majority of respondents (120)74.1% (Mean: 4.72, Standard deviation: 0.91) strongly agreed that influence of the availability and quality of medical equipment and technology have improved with devolution. On the performance of healthcare devolution in Homa Bay County, Kenya. This implies that optimizing availability and quality of medical equipment and technology could yield substantial benefits for healthcare facilities in terms of Customer satisfaction and Cost effectiveness, and overall performance. On the statement whether Public healthcare programs have become more effective under healthcare devolution.has a great impact on the performance of healthcare devolution in Homa Bay County, Kenya, majority of respondents (134)82.7% (Mean: 3.02, Standard Deviation: 0.84). Neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. The implication here is that there is room for improvement Public healthcare programs have become more effective under healthcare devolution within public healthcare facilities.

Additionally, a substantial majority of respondents (140)86.41% (Mean: 3.98, Standard Deviation: 0.58) The number and competence of healthcare personnel have increased due to healthcare devolution may influence the performance of healthcare devolution in Homa Bay County, Kenya 140(86.41) agree that The number and competence of healthcare personnel have increased due to healthcare devolution may influence the performance of healthcare devolution in Homa Bay County, Kenya. This suggests that public healthcare facilities need to carefully manage for speed of services and customer satisfaction.

Table 1: Descriptive findings on Influence of Healthcare Infrastructure

Statement	Strongly Disagree (F)	Disagree (F)	Neutral (F)	Agree (F)	Strongly Agree (F)	Mean	Standard Deviation
The availability and quality of medical equipment and technology have improved with devolution.	0(0.00)	2 (1.23)	0(0.00)	40 (24.69)	120 (74.07)	4.72	0.91
Public healthcare programs have become more effective under healthcare devolution.	1(0.62)	1(0.62)	134 (82.71)	3(1.85)	23 (14.19)	3.02	0.84
The number and competence of healthcare personnel have increased due to healthcare devolution.	2(1.23)	5 (3.08)	0 (0.00)	140 (86.41)	15 (9.26)	3.98	0.58

Effect of Healthcare Infrastructure, focuses on the quality and consistency of healthcare facilities. The subthemes of Medical Equipment Quality, Consistency Across Facilities, and Human Resource Capacity explore the challenges and improvements needed in healthcare infrastructure. The Chief Executive Officer of Homa Bay County Referral Hospital conveyed a positive outlook, emphasizing the substantial upgrade in medical equipment: *“The quality of medical equipment has improved significantly since devolution; the new diagnostic machines have made a big difference in patient care.”* This statement underscores the transformative impact of new diagnostic tools on service delivery, allowing for more accurate and timely diagnoses that ultimately enhance patient outcomes.

On the other hand, the County Director of Health highlighted persistent challenges, cautioning that the improvements are not consistent across all facilities. He noted, *“Sadly, the quality of medical equipment remains inconsistent. Some facilities still rely on outdated machines that can’t perform basic functions.”* This disparity suggests that while some healthcare facilities have benefited from devolution with upgraded technology, others continue to struggle with inadequate resources, which

limits their capacity to provide comprehensive care. Such inconsistencies in equipment quality can create inequities in healthcare access and outcomes across different areas.

Further contributing to the conversation, the Medical Superintendent of Sindo acknowledged progress in human resource capacity, observing a rise in both the quantity and quality of healthcare personnel: *“There has been a noticeable increase in the number and competence of healthcare personnel. Many new hires bring fresh ideas and skills to the team.”* This improvement in staffing is crucial for expanding healthcare services and introducing innovative approaches to patient care. Increased competence among personnel not only enhances service delivery but also supports the overall goals of healthcare devolution by empowering local facilities with skilled professionals who can meet diverse patient needs.

The study aimed to evaluate the effect of healthcare infrastructure on the performance of healthcare devolution in Homa Bay County, Kenya. The findings reveal a statistically significant positive correlation between healthcare infrastructure and healthcare devolution ($r = 0.035$, $p = 0.028$), emphasizing the importance of medical equipment and technology, public health programs, and healthcare personnel. A significant majority of respondents strongly agreed that the availability and quality of medical equipment have improved, indicating high satisfaction with advancements in medical resources. However, responses regarding public health programs were more mixed, suggesting there is room for improvement in their effectiveness under healthcare devolution.

Notably, perceptions about the number and competence of healthcare personnel raised concerns, as a low percentage of participants agreed that there has been an increase in workforce capacity due to healthcare devolution. Qualitative insights from healthcare officials echoed these findings, with the Chief Executive Officer praising significant upgrades in medical equipment, while the County Director highlighted inconsistencies in resource availability across facilities. The Medical Superintendent acknowledged improvements in staffing but noted that challenges remain in developing a competent workforce. Overall, these findings underscore both the successes and challenges of healthcare devolution in enhancing medical resources and public health effectiveness while emphasizing the need for targeted efforts to improve personnel capacity in Homa Bay County.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that healthcare infrastructure plays a pivotal role in the performance of healthcare devolution in Homa Bay County, Kenya. The positive correlation between healthcare infrastructure components such as medical equipment, public health programs, and healthcare personnel and healthcare devolution indicates that investments in these areas significantly enhance healthcare delivery. While respondents expressed high satisfaction regarding the improvements in medical equipment and technology, there were mixed perceptions about the effectiveness of public health programs and concerns regarding the workforce capacity. These findings highlight the need for continued efforts to address disparities in infrastructure and personnel training to fully realize the benefits of healthcare devolution.

RECOMMENDATION

To enhance healthcare devolution in Homa Bay County, it is recommended to streamline bureaucratic processes, provide ongoing training for healthcare providers, and foster open communication among stakeholders to improve collaboration and understanding of roles. Additionally, public education campaigns should be strengthened to inform citizens about available services, while genuine citizen consultation mechanisms can promote transparency and encourage community participation. Training healthcare staff in effective engagement strategies and establishing robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks will further improve service delivery. Finally, enhancing financial controls, optimizing operational planning, and ensuring adequate supplies in healthcare facilities are crucial for achieving better health outcomes and overall system performance.

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