Change Resistance Management, Strategic Change Management Practices and Service Quality in Counties in Western Kenya

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Abstract		Original Research Article

Globally, service delivery has remained an issue of utmost concern among public organizations as it anchors key government operations. Statistics indicate that delivery of service in terms of health, sanitation and infrastructure in county governments of Kenya averages 39% countrywide with that of the ten county governments in western Kenya averaging 28%. This is against the Transparency International Kenya requirement of 40%, indicating poor service delivery. Both change resistance management and strategic change management have been shown to improve service delivery. Prior studies focus on change resistance and strategic change management for business organizations. Moreover, the moderating role of change resistance management on the relationship between strategic change management practices and service quality has not been explored in the context of county governments in Kenya. The study sought to investigate the influence of change resistance management on the relationship between strategic change management practices and service quality among county governments in western Kenya. Correlational research design was used, targeting 380 directors and chief officers. Questionnaires were used to collect data. Results showed that change resistance management has a significant moderating effect on the relationship between and change resistance management and service quality (R2Change = .129, p = .003), implying that change resistance management leads to an increase of 12.9% in the original effect of strategic change management practices on service quality. It is concluded that change resistance management practices be embraced among so as to improve service delivery.
Keywords: Strategic Change Management, Counties, Service Quality, Kenya.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, effective service delivery has been considered an important aspect of organizational performance especially in public organizations. According to [1], the public governance practices seek efficient and effective service delivery. One of the justifications for having public organizations is to serve as an instrument of service delivery [2]. As asserted by Salihu [3], the goal of public organizations is to deliver efficient welfare, social and essential services to the public. Improving service delivery is therefore without doubt a cardinal pillar in the act of governance. It is with this pillar therefore, that managerial and governance reforms have been revolving around engendering efficient and effective service delivery by public organizations. However, according to [1] several variables have been shown to mitigate against the delivery of efficient and effective infrastructural, social and welfare services by public organizations worldwide including corruption, lack of probity, insufficient funding, stifling government policies, government instability, and structural changes. This is especially true for the relatively young governments such as those in African countries which are facing many structural changes, which calls for strategic change management.

Strategic change management are the actions, processes and decisions that are executed by an organization's members to realize their strategic intentions [4]. This helps organizations to achieve the highest impact, efficiency and have the least interruption and negative consequences. According to [3], managing strategic change is about managing the unfolding non-linear dynamic processes during strategy implementation, but rather change or alignment in policy, systems, styles, values, staff and skills of an organization to realize a strategy. Organisations

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therefore need to manage their strategies when dealing with competition and challenges around theirservice delivery [4] defined strategic management practice as the process whereby managers establish an organizational long-term direction, set specific performance objective, develop strategies to achieve these objectives in the light of all relevant internal and external circumstances, and undertake to execute the chosen action plans. Accordingly, strategic change management is therefore a strategy used to ensure smooth transitions of teams, individuals and organisations to a desired future in order to gain a competitive advantage.

Theoretically, the group dynamics, the open systems and the change management theories have been used to explain how change management affects organizational performance. The group dynamic theorists assert that during organizational changes, the focus of change should be at the group or team level and that it is ineffectual to concentrate on individuals to bring about change as they will be pressured by the group to conform [5]. On the other hand, proponents of the open systems theory observe that the focus of change should neither be on the individual nor on the group, but on the entire organization [6]. At the extreme end, the change management theorists argue that people react differently to change requiring management to use different approaches to manage the change.

Theoretical and empirical literature on the moderating effect of change resistance management shows that change resistance management could moderate the relationship between strategic change management and service quality. As asserted by [7], the effect of strategic change management practices on firm service delivery could be moderated by several factors [8] in a study in Europe found that quality of service delivery is of great concern to the public, and that the effect of management commitment could moderate the relationship between change management and service delivery of the firms. The study was however conducted in a developed country unlike the relatively new devolved units in Kenya [9]. In a study on change management in America noted that certain aspects of change management in the public service to help spur quality of service delivery have been carried into practice but some have proved difficult to implement. The study however descriptive in nature. The present study intends to focus on the moderating effect of change management [10]. In a study in on a study on change resistance management among public listed firms in Tehran Stock Exchange found that the nature of public service management is changing and that, while some of the changes strengthen it, others create major problems because they involve the adoption of models based on the private sector. The study was however conducted among public companies unlike the present study which was be conducted among devolved units [11]. In a study on change management in public

institutions found that the problem with public institutions and their difficulty in managing change emanates from ineffective, or lack of it, of change management practices which involve lack of communication of change, lack of staff participation and collaboration, resistance to change by staff, unsuccessful direction to change by management in the public service. The study was descriptive in nature which implies that the moderating effect of change resistance management on the relationship between strategic change management and service quality was not established.

In Kenya, the service delivery aspects of public sector performance, including service standards, cost expectations, time lines and avenues for redress, are set out in citizens 'service delivery charters. The charter was introduced in the public service in 2006, as the key performance sub-indicator under the —service delivery perspective in performance contracts. The charter is an instrument that documents and broadcasts the services rendered by a public institution, the expected service standard, service quality, requirements to qualify for the service, cost, timelines and avenues for redress. Measurement of achievements on the various aspects of the charter is highly qualitative, determined, as it is, by customer and stakeholder feedback and surveys. Recently, technology has been employed to not only speed up service delivery but to also facilitate measurement. Elsewhere, a Transparency International Kenya report indicates that service quality in the recently established county governments is poor, averaging 39% countrywide with that of the ten county governments in western Kenya averaging 28% [12]. It is documented that there is unsatisfactory health service delivery, poor sanitation facilities and even poor infrastructure in the region. The report notes that a service delivery of less than 40% is poor. While the report attributes the unimproved economic standings of these county governments to factors such as corruption, change management practices has been left out; which is interesting considering that county governments have been in operation for less than ten years and change and transition is a common feature in such situations. However, despite these theoretical underpinnings advocating for decentralization governance, findings on the impact of decentralization governance on service delivery is mixed and inconclusive and more particularly on the moderating effect of change resistant management on the influence of strategic change management practices on service delivery among county governments in Western Kenya.

MATERIAL AND METHODS
The study adopted the correlational survey research design which, according to [13], is structured to examine the relationship between variables and situations within organizations. Morris and Wood (1991) acknowledge the importance of correlational research design especially when the intent is gaining

broader understanding of the context of the research and processes being enacted in a relational framework. Further, [13] argues that correlational survey allows for quantitative data and consequent analysis via relationship testing. Quantitative analysis was used through the use of questionnaires to get numerical data that described the phenomena of change management practices and quality of service delivered.

The study targeted heads of departments of all county governments in the western part of Kenya comprising the directors of departments and the chief officers. This is because these are the officers who are concerned with implementation of change. According to statistics, there are averagely 26 directors in each county and 12 chief officers. This implies that the target population was 380 from the ten sub-county governments in western Kenya. Census technique was used to select the 380 respondents consisting of directors and chief officers. According to Sekaran [13], census is a non-probabilistic sampling design in which the researcher selects all participants to be included in a study because they have particular characteristics that are of interest to the researcher. The method was considered suitable since the target population was not large.

To ensure panel data validity, the research items in the study were evaluated in terms of face, content and construct validity by using expert opinions of experts. Data reliability is tested using the Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) unit root test. The Jarque-Bera (JB) test of normality, Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) test for multicollinearity and the Breusch-Godfrey Serial Correlation Lagrange Multiplier (LM) test for autocorrelation are conducted to ensure that the data is suitable for regression analysis.

Model 1 and 2 tested the moderating influence of change resistance management on the relationship between strategic management practices and service quality among county governments in western Kenya. Model 3 introduced change resistance management in order to establish its contribution in the general quality of service delivered model.

$SQ_3 = \beta_{03} + \beta_{13}\ COMM + \beta_{23}\ PART + \beta_{33}\ DIRE + \beta_{43}(Z) + \varepsilon_3$ *1*

Where the variables are defined as:
β_{03} = The constant term for model 3
β_{ij}, β_{ij},β_{ij}=The parameters to be estimated with *i* representing the coefficient and *j* the model

SQ_3- Quality of service delivered for model 1
COMM - Communication of change process
PART - Management Participation in change process
DIRE – Management Direction of change process
Z- Moderating element of change resistance management
ε- Error term

Model 2 encompasses the dependent variable, the independent variables and the cross-product interaction term of the dependent and the potential moderating variable.

$SQ_4 = \beta_{04} + \beta_{14}\ COMM + \beta_{24}\ PART + \beta_{34}\ DIRE + \beta_{44}(Z) + \beta_{54}\ COMM*Z + \beta_{64}\ PART*Z + \beta_{74}\ DIRE*Z + \varepsilon_4$ ...*2*

Where the variables are defined as:
β_{04} = The constant term for model 2
β_{ij}, β_{ij},β_{ij}=The parameters to be estimated with *i* representing the coefficient and *j* the model
SQ_3- Quality of service delivered for model 2
COMM - Communication of change process
PART - Management Participation in change process
DIRE – Management Direction of change process
Z- Moderating element of change resistance management
ε- Error term

RESULTS
Out of the target population of 380 made up of 120 chief officers and 260 directors, 97 chief officers and 161 directors participated in the study. The overall response rate was therefore 67.9%.

A total of ten items were used to explore the extent to which management communication of change occurs in the departments or ministries in the county governments. Results of this exploration are presented in Table 1.

The overall mean response score among respondents with regard to the extent of management communication of change was 4.16. This value lies in the interval which implies that the respondents showed agreement that the extent of management communication of change existed in the county governments (Mean = 4.16). Moreover, the overall standard deviation (SD=0.673) was quite small which is an indication of consistency in agreements among the respondents.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Communication of Change

	Mean	SD
Management effectively explains the reasons for and means of strategic change to win the support of everyone in the organization	4.12	.502
Communication is viewed as central to the quality service delivery success of most all organizations	4.10	.761
Employees have successfully adopted the proposed change or changes	3.91	.609
The level of readiness employees feel regarding the change is high after management communication	4.32	.567
Supervisors or management are effective in disseminating information concerning change.	4.01	.671

	Mean	SD
Change is always communicated on time	4.33	.798
There are clear communication channels that are used to communicate any change	4.62	.712
For any change that is brought, there is a policy on how it is communicated to all the concerned parties	3.91	.812
Intensive workshops are held where change is communicated	4.01	.734
There are personnel in our organization who are tasked with the responsibility of communicating change	4.22	.812
Overall	**4.16**	**.674**

Participation in change process was the second construct that measured strategic change management. Results of this exploration are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Participation in Change Process

	Mean	SD
Those who will be affected by the change are rarely involved in the change process	3.82	.877
Participation in change process leads to better decisions than would have otherwise been achieved	4.11	.768
The change agent retains control of the change process but does not delegate certain tasks to teams or groups	3.87	.679
The management creates opportunities for individual voices to be heard in collaborative change endeavours	4.41	.998
There are definite strategies used to ensure that all staff members' voices can be heard	4.11	.609
Generally, we are always involved in the change process	3.97	.897
There is a clear policy on how everyone is to participate in the change process	3.56	.781
The inter-department collaborations on participation in change management help ever employee	3.67	.824
The change process in the organization must involve everyone	3.89	.782
All management ensures that collaborative efforts in change are effectively executed	4.12	.786
Policies on change collaboration are clearly stated	4.39	.894
Sometimes changes are explained by management in workshops so that everyone participates in the change process	4.22	.951
Overall	**4.01**	**.806**

Results in Table 2 on the extent of participation in change process show that the respondents agree that there is participation in change process (Mean = 4.16). The overall small standard deviation (SD=0.673) shows consistency in agreements among the respondents.

The third construct in which strategic change management was operationalised was management direction of change. The descriptive results of this exploration are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on Management Direction of Change

	Mean	SD
There is the use of personal managerial authority to establish a clear future strategy on how change will occur	4.51	.502
Power strategies are used in situations where the change must be implemented quickly and a few resources are available for programmes of education or negotiation.	4.38	.710
Change implementers use manipulation strategies to force us into accepting change which rarely helps quality service delivery.	4.38	.609
Management is deeply involved in the change process by helping employees to adopt to the changes	4.16	.758
Generally, there is effective management direction to change	4.42	.567
Management has a clear policy on how all changes will be effected	4.29	.617
Management regularly holds meeting with employees to explain all changes that are necessary	4.44	.649
There is a budgetary allocation for workshops where the management explains the changes	4.17	.798
All management is required by policy to give instructions in their sections on change	4.19	.719
Overall	**4.32**	**.873**

Results in Table 3 on the extent of management direction of change show that the respondents agree that there is participation in change process which is the overall mean (Mean = 4.32).

The dependent variable of service quality which was measured by tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and emphathy. Table 4 shows the extent of these qualities.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics on Service Quality

	Mean	SD
TANGIBLES	4.12	.981
The county government has modern working equipment	4.01	.716
The county government's physical facilities are visually appealing	3.12	.691
The property and equipment in the county are as desired by standards	3.55	.904
RELIABILITY		
The county government is reliable in terms of timelines	4.00	.893
Employees in the county governments are sympathetic and reassuring	3.87	.760
The county government performs the service right, the first time	4.43	.762
RESPONSIVENESS		
Employees instil confidence in customers	3.90	.509
Employees tell customers exactly when the services will be performed	3.99	.900
Employees give customers prompt services.	4.34	.780
ASSUARANCE		
Employees in still assurance in customers	3.89	.783
Employees place confidence in employees in this respect.	4.15	.674
Employees always respect customers	4.42	.879
EMPHATHY		
The county government gives customers individual attention	4.22	.609
The county government has working hours suitable for all customers	3.43	.765
The employees understand customer specific needs	3.91	1.09
Overall	**3.93**	**.871**

Results in Table 4 shows that the extent of service quality as measured by the constructs of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy good as shown by the respondents overall mean and standard deviation (Mean = 3.93, SD = 0.871).

The moderating variable in the study is change resistance management. It was measured by ten items. The results of the descriptive analysis are as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics on Change Resistance Management

	Mean	S.D
Management has formal avenues for addressing resistant to change from employees	.21	.02
There is every effort to involve workers unions is implementing change to reduce resistance to change	.75	.12
Workshops and trainings have been conducted to ensure that any resistance to change is reduced	.44	.20
There are formal mechanisms for change resistance monitoring	.55	.33
Any resistance to change is immediately identified and arrested.	.22	.88
All employees who resist change are guided accordingly	.62	.57
Management controls all aspects of change resistant	.98	.92
Workshops and trainings are regularly held to reduce change resistance	.53	.01
There is a clear working policy on direction by management of change resistant	.22	.11
Change resistance is accepted as normal in case of any changes	.10	.01
All departments in the organization are encouraged to air their views on the effect of any changes	.78	.20
Overall	**.84**	**.07**

Table 5 above shows that the respondents agree that change resistance management mechanisms are in existence in the county governments. This is shown by the mean of 3.84 and the standard deviation of 1.07 which indicates that the responses were not far from each other.

Pearson's product moment correlations were used to examine whether there exists a relationship between supply chain determinants and organizational performance. This was necessary since as noted by [13], regression can only be conducted after correlations have been confirmed. Table 6 below shows results for the correlation analysis. For each case, COMM is Communication of Change, PART is Participation in Change Process, DIRE is Management Direction of Change, REL is Reliability, RESP is Responsiveness, ASSR is Assurance and EMPH is Emphathy.

Table 6: Correlation between Study Variables

	COMM	PART	DIRE	REL	RESP	ASSR	EMPH
COMM	1						
PART	.231	1					
DIRE	.435	.544					
REL	.768**	.721**	.981**				
RESP	.812**	.788**	.777**	.887**			
ASSR	.755**	.890**	.767**	.790**	.712**		
EMPH	.880**	.705**	.900**	.988**	.710**	.998**	

**Correlations Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 6 shows correlation between the study variables. Correlation analysis shows the direction, strength and significance of the relationships among the variables of study with correlation coefficients lying between -1 for a strong negative correlation, and +1 for a strong positive correlation [13]. It is therefore shown that there is a strong positive correlation between communication of change and all the measures of service quality. Specifically, there is a strong positive correlation between; communication of change and reliability ($R = .768$), which implies that a unit increase in communication of change leads to a 76.8% increase in reliability in the county governments; participation and reliability ($R = .721$), which implies that a unit increase in participation in change management leads to a 72.1% increase in reliability in the county governments; management direction of change and reliability in the county governments ($R = .981$), implying that a unit increase in management direction of change leads to a 98.1% increase in reliability in the county governments.

Table 6 also shows that there is a strong positive correlation between the independent variables and responsiveness as a measure of service quality. It is shown that there is a strong positive correlation between; communication of change management and responsiveness in the county governments ($R = .812$), implying that there is a 81.2% increase in responsiveness for every unit increase in communication of change; participation and responsiveness ($R = .788$), implying that a unit increase in participation leads to a 78.8% increase in responsiveness among the workers in the county governments; management direction of change and responsiveness ($R = .777$), implying that a unit increase in management direction of change leads to a 77.7% increase in responsiveness among workers in the county governments.

It is also shown in Table 6 that the correlation between the independent variables and assurance as a measure of service quality. Specifically, there is a strong positive correlation between; communication of change management and assurance among the workers in the county governments ($R = .755$), which implies that a unit increase in communication of change management leads to a 75.5% increase in assurance; participation in change management and assurance ($R =$

.890), implying that a unit increase in participation in change management leads to 89.0% increase in assurance, and; management direction of change and assurance ($R = .767$), which indicates that a unit increase in management direction of change leads to a 76.7% increase in assurance.

The correlation between the independent variables and empathy as a measure of service quality shows a strong positive correlation between the variables. It is shown that there is a strong positive correlation between; communication of change and empathy ($R = .880$), which indicates that a unit change in communication of change leads to 88.0% increase in empathy; participation in change management and empathy ($R = .705$), implying that a unit increase in participation in change management leads to 70.5% increase in empathy, and; management direction of change and empathy ($R = .900$), which shows that there is a 90.% increase in empathy for every unit increase in management direction of change.

The high correlation coefficients between the measures of the dependent variable of service quality shows that there is a high level of co linearity between the indicators as expected for measures of the same variable.

The study sought to examine the moderating influence of change resistance management on the relationship between strategic change management practices and service quality among county governments in western Kenya. To achieve this, the steps proposed by [14] were used [14] proposed a three-step approach in which several regression analyses are conducted and significance of the coefficients is examined at each step. The following regression results were obtained for each step.

Table 7 shows that the three models were all significant (p-value< 0.05) in all the three cases). The Coefficient of Determination (R square) for the first model was 0.121, meaning that strategic change management practices (SCM), on its own, contributed 12.1% to the change in service quality in the county governments. However, upon the introduction of change resistance management as predictor, the R square significantly changed from .121 (12.1%) to .157 (15.7%) an increase of 0.36. This means that strategic

change management practices and change resistance management explain up to 15.7 % of the service quality. With addition of the change resistance management in the model as a moderator, the model further improved albeit marginally to an Rsquare of .286, a significant increase of 0.129 (12.9%). This implies that if change resistance management is introduced in the county governments, there will be an increase of 12.9% in the original effect of strategic change management practices on service quality. This implies that change resistance management significantly moderates the relationship between strategic change management practices and service quality. This result agrees with findings by [15-17] in a study in on change management who found that the

nature of public service management is changing and that, while some of the changes strengthen it, others create major problems because they involve the adoption of models based on the private sector. The study found that change resistance management moderates relationships where there is change. The study however contradicts findings by [3, 18-21] who found that the problem with public institutions and their difficulty in managing change emanates from ineffective, or lack of it, of change management practices which involve lack of communication of change, lack of staff participation and collaboration, resistance to change by staff, unsuccessful direction to change by management in the public service.

Table 7: Moderated Model Summary

				Change Statistics					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.348[a]	.121	.112	9.52457	.121	13.352	1	255	.000
2	.396[b]	.157	.139	9.37828	.36	4.050	1	254	.047
3	.535[c]	.286	.213	9.32161	.129	2.172	1	251	.003
a. Predictors: (Constant), COMM, PART, DIRE									
b. Predictors: (Constant), COMM, PART, DIRE, CRM									
c. Predictors: (Constant), COMM, PART, DIRE, CRM, SCM.Z									
d. Dependent Variable: SQ									

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings from the third objective which was to examine the moderating influence of change resistance management on the relationship between strategic change management practices and service quality among county governments in western Kenya, and the finding that change resistance management significantly moderates the relationship between strategic change management practices and service quality, it is concluded that change resistance management is a significant positive moderator of the relationship between strategic change management practices and service quality.

It was therefore concluded that change resistance management is a significant positive moderator of the relationship between strategic change management practices and service quality. It is recommended that change resistance management practices be embraced among the practices so as to improve service delivery.

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