

## **PUBLIC CAPACITY BUILDING AND SERVICE DELIVERY IN COUNTY GOVERNMENTS IN KENYA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

While Kenya's devolved governance framework legally mandates public participation, meaningful influence on service delivery is unlikely where citizens lack the knowledge, skills, and confidence required to engage beyond symbolic attendance. This study assessed the effect of public capacity building on service delivery in county governments in Kenya, emphasizing citizen preparedness, civic education, empowerment structures, and training systems. Anchored in the Theory of Empowerment, the study used a positivist orientation and correlational design. The target population consisted of 2,037 respondents (291 ward facilitators and 1,746 public representatives). A Yamane (1967) sample of 334 respondents was selected using stratified random sampling, and 301 usable questionnaires were returned (90.1% response rate). Questionnaires captured capacity-building practices and perceived service delivery outcomes on a 5-point Likert scale; validity and reliability procedures were conducted, including construct validation and Cronbach's alpha reliability tests meeting accepted thresholds, alongside diagnostic checks supporting regression assumptions. Descriptive results showed respondents

generally agreed that capacity-building efforts were implemented (aggregate  $M = 4.030$ ,  $SD = 0.898$ ) and rated service delivery positively (aggregate  $M = 4.129$ ,  $SD = 0.849$ ). Regression analysis found a strong positive relationship between public capacity building and service delivery ( $R = 0.713$ ;  $R^2 = 0.508$ ; Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.506$ ), with the model statistically significant ( $F = 307.879$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Public capacity building significantly predicted service delivery ( $B = 0.596$ ;  $\beta = 0.713$ ;  $t = 17.825$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that strengthening citizen capacity yields substantial improvements in service delivery perceptions and outcomes. The study concludes that capacity building is not an "extra" activity; it is the mechanism that converts participation into accountability, informed input, and improved service performance. Counties should therefore institutionalize continuous civic education, inclusive training (especially for marginalized groups), refresher programs for facilitators, and dedicated funding lines to sustain capacity-building initiatives.

**Key Words:** Public Capacity Building; Service Delivery; Empowerment; Civic Education; County Governments; Kenya.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Background of the Study**

In contemporary public governance, citizen participation is increasingly recognized as a critical mechanism for improving service delivery, accountability, and development outcomes. However, evidence from both developed and developing contexts shows that participation alone does not

automatically translate into better services unless citizens possess the capacity to engage meaningfully in governance processes. Public capacity building, defined as the systematic development of citizens' knowledge, skills, awareness, and empowerment, has therefore emerged as a central determinant of whether public engagement produces tangible service delivery outcomes (Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2021).

Globally, governments have invested in civic education, training programs, and empowerment initiatives to strengthen citizens' ability to contribute effectively to public decision-making. Studies from OECD countries indicate that service delivery improves where citizens are equipped to understand policy options, budget constraints, and implementation trade-offs (OECD, 2020; WHO, 2021). Conversely, weak capacity limits participation to symbolic attendance, allowing technical and political elites to dominate decision-making processes. This has shifted scholarly attention from participation frequency to participation quality, with capacity building increasingly viewed as the primary mechanism through which engagement influences service outcomes.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the capacity gap remains a major constraint to effective public engagement. Although decentralization reforms have expanded opportunities for citizen participation, many communities lack the civic knowledge, technical understanding, and confidence required to influence service delivery meaningfully (Alhassan & Kliewer, 2022). Empirical studies from Nigeria, Ghana, and Rwanda show that inadequate training, weak civic education, and uneven empowerment structures undermine citizen oversight and reduce the effectiveness of decentralized service provision (Waddington et al., 2020; Murebwayire, 2021; Naaikuur et al., 2022). As a result, public engagement often fails to move beyond consultation to influence service implementation and accountability.

In Kenya, devolution under the 2010 Constitution institutionalized public participation as a governance obligation, with county governments required to involve citizens in planning, budgeting, and service delivery processes. Despite this legal framework, persistent service delivery challenges suggest that participation outcomes remain limited. Prior studies have documented tokenistic engagement practices, low civic awareness, and elite capture of public forums, all of which point to weak citizen capacity as a binding constraint (Kabue et al., 2022; Mohamed & Muthini, 2022). While counties conduct engagement forums regularly, limited investment in civic education and training raises questions about the effectiveness of these processes in improving service delivery.

Although existing literature acknowledges the importance of citizen capacity, empirical evidence on the direct effect of public capacity building on service delivery outcomes in devolved systems remains limited and fragmented. Most studies focus on participation procedures or communication channels, with less attention given to capacity as a core explanatory variable. This study addresses this gap by examining the effect of public capacity building on service delivery in county

governments in Kenya, thereby providing evidence on whether and how citizen empowerment translates into improved public services in a decentralized governance context.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite the constitutional guarantee of public participation under Kenya's devolved governance framework, service delivery performance in county governments remains persistently weak. National oversight reports indicate widespread inefficiencies, stalled projects, and declining public confidence in county service provision. The Controller of Budget reported that in FY2021/2022, counties collectively raised only KSh 37.8 billion against a target of KSh 57.4 billion, leading to underfunded services, delayed projects, and accumulation of pending bills (Controller of Budget, 2022). Similarly, the National Treasury noted low absorption of development budgets across counties, undermining timely delivery of essential services (National Treasury, 2023).

Although public participation is legally mandated, its contribution to improved service delivery remains questionable. Empirical studies suggest that many public engagement forums in Kenya are characterized by low civic awareness, limited technical understanding, and elite dominance, resulting in symbolic rather than substantive participation (Kabue et al., 2022; Moi, 2020). According to the Status of Public Participation Report (2023), at least 9 counties had not operationalized public participation laws, while many others lacked structured civic education programs to prepare citizens for meaningful engagement. As a result, citizens often attend forums without adequate knowledge of budgeting, service standards, or implementation constraints, limiting their influence on service outcomes.

While existing studies acknowledge the importance of citizen involvement, empirical research in Kenya has largely emphasized participation procedures and communication mechanisms rather than citizen capacity itself. Studies in devolved health and infrastructure sectors show that participation improves outcomes only where citizens possess adequate skills, awareness, and empowerment to engage effectively (Mutangili et al., 2022; Waddington et al., 2020). However, few studies have empirically isolated public capacity building as an independent determinant of service delivery performance across counties. This lack of evidence constrains policy efforts, as counties continue to invest in participation activities without clarity on whether strengthening citizen capacity translates into improved services. This study therefore addresses this gap by empirically examining the effect of public capacity building on service delivery in county governments in Kenya.

### **Specific Objectives of the Study**

- i. To assess the relationship between public capacity building and service delivery in county governments in Kenya.

### **Research Hypothesis**

**H<sub>03</sub>** There is no significant relationship between public capacity building and service delivery in Nairobi Metropolitan area, Kenya.

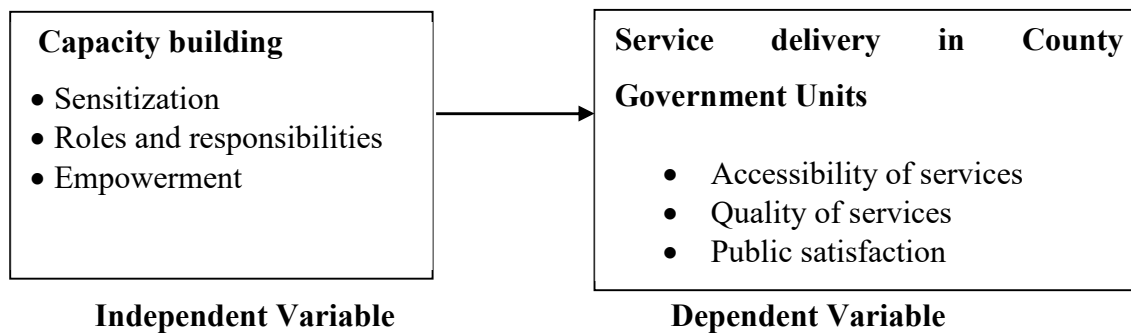
## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theory of empowerment was developed by Rappaport (1987). This theory states that systems or institutions that give their members access to resources, information, support, and the chance to grow and learn are better at fostering empowerment. Psychological empowerment, according to Kluska, Laschinger, and Kerr (2004), entails sentiments of competence, autonomy, meaningfulness, and influence over the organization. Empowered employees are more devoted to the company, take greater responsibility for their work, and are more capable of meeting institutional and job requirements in an efficient and successful way (Degner, 2005).

Empowerment is believed to happen when a government genuinely interacts citizens and gradually reacts to this engagement with mutual interest and the aim to encourage performance and development, as highlighted by Erickson, Hamilton, Jones, and Ditomassi (2003). As stated by Erickson et al. (2003), empowerment can make a substantial and meaningful contribution to the improvement of Kenya's devolution discourse, as the 2010 Kenyan Constitution stipulates that all tiers of government must guarantee sufficient public participation. This theory is therefore related to the variable on public empowerment as this will enable them to understand their roles and responsibilities as citizens of a county and help the county leadership on areas of development.

### **Conceptual Framework**



*Figure 2. 1: Conceptual Framework*

### **Public Capacity Building**

Citizens must be aware of their duties and obligations as well as possess the knowledge and abilities to carry them out in order to participate effectively. According to Okello, Oenga, and Chege (2018), capacity building is the process of enhancing knowledge, abilities, and operational ability to enable both individuals and groups to accomplish their goals. The process of improving the public's abilities, resources, and knowledge to enable them to engage successfully and support

the accomplishment of county government goals is known as capacity development (Kacou, Ika, & Munro, 2022). It is well acknowledged that capacity building plays a crucial role in community development and in guaranteeing that communities participate fully in local and regional regeneration projects. By giving people the chance to learn by experience, expanding their awareness and confidence, and enhancing their abilities, capacity building helps people become more proficient and capable of participating fully in society.

### **Empirical Review**

Ihemeje and Afegbua (2020) examined capacity building in the civil service in Nigeria. The study used historical research designs to analyze the patterns of service delivery in public sector in Nigeria. This study concluded that capacity building in the public sector face a challenge of inadequate budgetary allocation for training. Training has always been the least funded budget item in the public service. Kalisa and Gathiru (2023) sought to determine how capacity building influence project performance in Rwanda. The sample included 214 respondents from NGOs in Rwanda. Results showed that efforts aimed at increasing capacity are essential to improving the smooth transfer of projects to project recipients in Rwanda. The results of projects are significantly and favorably impacted by capacity building.

Abdikariim (2020) looked into how capacity building affected the provision of public services in Mogadishu, Somalia. 140 residents of the Somali local municipality of Mogadishu made up the sample. Surveys were employed to gather data. The results showed a strong positive link between public service delivery and the training dimension. The findings indicated a considerable favorable link between public service delivery and training, seminars, and workshops. In the Burundian province of Ngozi, Ndayizeye (2018) examined the impact of capacity on the sustainability of agribusiness initiatives. Questionnaires, interview guides, and documentary reviews were used to gather data. The primary factor determining success or failure was skills, which was followed by actions to analyze participatory capacity needs, citizen engagement in decision-making, and the involvement of local leaders in development initiatives.

In Kilome Sub County, Makueni County, Kenya, Mbatha (2021) investigated impact of community capacity development on project sustainability. 119 respondents made up the research sample. The research findings indicate that sustainability of water projects supported by the Makueni County government is positively impacted by the aspects of community capacity development. Kaimenyi and Wanyonyi's (2019) investigation was to identify the variables affecting the long-term viability of community-based county initiatives. 2420 respondents were the study's target group. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the data from a sample of 343 respondents. The results showed that project endeavors require community participation. It was also discovered that two other critical components of the elements impacting sustainability were capacity building and project implementers. Because the trainings weren't regular, they weren't sufficient to give stakeholders the necessary abilities to manage the projects.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted a correlational research design grounded in a positivist research philosophy to examine the relationship between public capacity building and service delivery in county governments in Kenya. The correlational design was appropriate because the study sought to establish the strength and direction of association between public capacity-building practices and service delivery outcomes without manipulating the study variables (Kabir, 2016). The positivist philosophy guided the study's emphasis on objective measurement, hypothesis testing, and statistical generalization of findings (Saunders et al., 2015).

The unit of analysis comprised county governments that had not fully operationalized public participation frameworks, as identified in the *Status of Public Participation in National and County Governments Report (2023)*. Specifically, nine counties, Vihiga, Tharaka Nithi, Kisumu, Mombasa, Bomet, Nyeri, Nairobi, Samburu, and Wajir, were included in the study. The unit of observation consisted of wards' public participation facilitators and public representatives drawn from civil society, religious organizations, youth groups, women groups, special interest groups, and older persons' representatives. The total target population was 2,037 respondents, comprising 291 ward-level public participation facilitators and 1,746 public representatives.

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure proportional representation of respondents based on their roles in public engagement. Using Yamane's (1967) sample size determination formula at a 5% margin of error, a sample of 334 respondents was obtained, representing 16.4% of the target population. This included 48 ward public participation facilitators and 286 public representatives. Stratification enhanced representativeness and minimized sampling bias across respondent categories.

Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires comprising both closed-ended and open-ended items. A five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used to measure perceptions on public capacity building and service delivery indicators. The questionnaire was organized into thematic sections to capture training relevance, civic education, empowerment structures, and service delivery outcomes. Data collection followed ethical approval procedures, including authorization from the university, a research permit from NACOSTI, and clearance from respective county governments. Trained research assistants supported data collection to ensure adherence to research ethics and consistency in administration.

A pilot study involving 33 respondents (approximately 1.6% of the target population) was conducted in five wards to test the reliability and validity of the research instrument. Content and face validity were assessed through expert review and alignment with existing literature, while construct validity was tested using principal component analysis with a minimum factor-loading threshold of 0.7 (Shrestha, 2021). Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, with

coefficients exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70 (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011), confirming internal consistency of the measurement scales.

Data were analyzed using SPSS Version 28. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were used to summarize respondent characteristics and variable distributions. Inferential analysis involved correlation and simple regression analysis to establish the relationship between public capacity building and service delivery. Diagnostic tests for normality, multicollinearity, linearity, and heteroscedasticity were conducted to validate regression assumptions. Findings were presented using tables and figures, and qualitative responses were analyzed thematically to complement quantitative results.

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

In this study, a total of 334 questionnaires were distributed to selected respondents comprising 48 wards' public participation facilitators and 286 public engagement representatives drawn from nine counties. These counties were chosen because they had not yet developed or operationalized their Public Participation Acts. Out of the 334 questionnaires distributed, 301 were successfully completed and returned, representing a high response rate of 90.1%. Only 33 questionnaires were either not returned or were deemed unusable due to incomplete information, accounting for 9.9% of the total distributed. A response rate of 90.1% is considered excellent in survey-based research and exceeds the minimum acceptable threshold of 60% recommended by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) for social sciences. This high response rate enhances the credibility, generalizability, and validity of the research findings. It reflects a strong level of engagement from the participants, likely due to the relevance of the topic to their roles in county public participation processes.

### **Descriptive Analysis of Public Capacity Building**

The objective of the study was to assess the relationship between public capacity building and service delivery in county governments in Kenya. Respondents were therefore asked to tick on degree to which they agree/disagree with listed statements on public capacity building.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Public Capacity Building**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D F(%)</b>	<b>NS F(%)</b>	<b>A F(%)</b>	<b>SA F(%)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>
The training given is relevant to help the participants achieve the goals of public engagement	5 (1.7%)	9 (3.0%)	38 (12.6%)	158 (52.5%)	91 (30.2%)	4.066	0.833
The county government staff define the terms of engagement in county development plans	6 (2.0%)	10 (3.3%)	39 (13.0%)	150 (49.8%)	96 (31.9%)	4.063	0.870
The participants are sufficiently prepared and briefed to have well-informed opinions and decisions	7 (2.3%)	11 (3.7%)	42 (14.0%)	145 (48.2%)	96 (31.9%)	4.037	0.901
Training is conducted for the public representatives	6 (2.0%)	10 (3.3%)	40 (13.3%)	155 (51.5%)	90 (29.9%)	4.040	0.862
There is capacity building refresher training for public engagement facilitators	8 (2.7%)	12 (4.0%)	45 (15.0%)	140 (46.5%)	96 (31.9%)	4.010	0.931
Processes and structures that empower participants have been put in place	5 (1.7%)	9 (3.0%)	37 (12.3%)	148 (49.2%)	102 (33.9%)	4.096	0.841
There is adequate civic education at the ward levels to educate the public on importance of public engagement	9 (3.0%)	13 (4.3%)	44 (14.6%)	135 (44.9%)	100 (33.2%)	4.020	0.937
The public is sensitized on their roles and responsibilities in public engagement	10 (3.3%)	14 (4.7%)	46 (15.3%)	132 (43.9%)	99 (32.9%)	3.980	0.950
The participants of public engagement forums are adequately motivated	11 (3.7%)	15 (5.0%)	43 (14.3%)	130 (43.2%)	102 (33.9%)	3.960	0.958
<b>Aggregate Score</b>						<b>4.030</b>	<b>0.898</b>

(n = 301)

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for statements related to public capacity building. The responses reflect how county governments are preparing and empowering citizens to participate meaningfully in governance processes. The analysis shows that the overall perception of capacity building efforts is positive, although certain aspects show moderate variability across counties. The highest-rated statement was “Processes and structures that empower participants have been put in place”, with a mean score of 4.096 and a standard deviation of 0.841. This reflects strong

agreement among respondents that institutional arrangements exist to enable meaningful participation. These may include dedicated offices for civic engagement, devolved participation units, or ward-level community development structures. The presence of such frameworks supports the idea that capacity building is not merely event-based, but embedded in broader governance structures. This aligns with the findings of Kacou, Ika, and Munro (2022), who emphasized that sustainable engagement requires institutional mechanisms that go beyond occasional training.

The statement “The training given is relevant to help the participants achieve the goals of public engagement” followed closely, with a mean score of 4.066 (SD = 0.833). This indicates that counties are not only conducting training sessions, but also aligning content with the goals of public participation. Relevance in training content helps ensure that participants can engage effectively with policies, budgets, and development plans. This finding is consistent with the work of Kalisa and Gathiru (2023), who found that targeted training significantly improves project engagement and outcomes. Similarly, “The county government staff define the terms of engagement in county development plans” was rated highly (M = 4.063, SD = 0.870), indicating that roles, expectations, and participation guidelines are being clarified during engagement sessions. Clearly defined terms of engagement help reduce confusion, build trust, and create a transparent environment for participation. According to Ihemeje and Afegbua (2020), structured engagement improves participant satisfaction and ensures that contributions align with strategic objectives.

The statement “The participants are sufficiently prepared and briefed to have well-informed opinions and decisions” had a mean of 4.037 (SD = 0.901). Respondents generally agreed that adequate orientation is provided before or during engagement sessions. This includes informing the public of the agenda, background documents, and expected outcomes of the forums. Well-briefed participants are more confident in articulating their views and scrutinizing development plans. These results resonate with the findings of Abdikariim (2020), who observed that pre-engagement preparation enhances the effectiveness of public meetings and forums. “Training is conducted for the public representatives” recorded a mean score of 4.040 (SD = 0.862), indicating general agreement that training sessions are offered. This suggests that counties have recognized the need for basic civic education and skills development among community representatives. However, the slightly lower ranking compared to other items may point to variability in how consistently these trainings are delivered across counties. Okello, Oenga, and Chege (2018) highlight that regular and inclusive training is essential for ensuring that all participants, especially those from marginalized groups, can participate meaningfully in governance.

The item “There is capacity building refresher training for public engagement facilitators” had a mean of 4.010 (SD = 0.931). While still within the agreement range, the slightly higher standard deviation suggests that refresher trainings are not equally implemented across counties. Ongoing

training is critical for facilitators to stay updated on policy changes, engagement methodologies, and community dynamics. Lack of regular capacity enhancement for facilitators may weaken their ability to mobilize and guide communities effectively. This echoes the findings of Ndayizeye (2018), who emphasized that continuous skills development is essential for sustaining the effectiveness of civic engagement initiatives. The statement “There is adequate civic education at the ward levels to educate the public on importance of public engagement” recorded a mean of 4.020 (SD = 0.937). While the score suggests general agreement, the wider variability indicates that the coverage and intensity of civic education programs may differ significantly across wards. This could be due to budget constraints or limited personnel to conduct grassroots sensitization. As noted by Mbatha (2021), civic education is foundational to building an informed citizenry capable of participating in development discussions and oversight functions.

Two statements recorded the lowest mean scores, though still within the agreement threshold. “The public is sensitized on their roles and responsibilities in public engagement” had a mean of 3.980 (SD = 0.950), while “The participants of public engagement forums are adequately motivated” recorded 3.960 (SD = 0.958). These lower scores suggest that while counties are engaging citizens, they may not be doing enough to inspire intrinsic motivation or clarify the ongoing roles expected from the public. Respondents may feel that incentives, recognition, or follow-up after participation are lacking. This can affect continuity and enthusiasm for future engagement. As observed by Kaimenyi and Wanyonyi (2019), capacity building efforts must go beyond knowledge delivery to include empowerment strategies that instill a sense of ownership and value among participants.

The results supported by an aggregate mean of 4.030 (SD= 0.898) show that public capacity building in county governments is generally well implemented, especially in terms of providing relevant training and setting up empowering structures. However, the findings also highlight areas for improvement, particularly in standardizing civic education across counties, ensuring regular refresher training for facilitators, and enhancing participant motivation and role clarity. These findings align with the Theory of Empowerment, which posits that individuals and communities thrive when provided with knowledge, autonomy, and the tools needed to influence outcomes (Degner, 2005). Capacity building serves as the foundation for empowerment by equipping citizens with the skills and confidence to engage with development processes. Counties that invest strategically in capacity development are likely to see improvements in both the quality of participation and the effectiveness of service delivery.

### **Qualitative Data Analysis**

**Open-Ended Question:** “How best do you wish the county government to do to assure capacity building for effective engagement?”

This question aimed to explore how respondents believe county governments can strengthen the knowledge, skills, and motivation of citizens to effectively participate in governance and development processes. Thematic content analysis revealed four central recommendations: more

frequent and inclusive training, structured civic education, capacity building for facilitators, and motivational support for participants.

A majority of respondents called for more regular and widespread training programs targeting both public representatives and ordinary citizens. Many felt that training opportunities are often restricted to a few individuals or political appointees, excluding the wider community. One respondent remarked, *“Capacity building should be for everyone, not just the same leaders every time.”* Another stated, *“We only hear that others were trained. We are never invited.”* This reflects a perceived exclusivity in training initiatives, limiting the democratic spread of knowledge and skills necessary for meaningful public engagement. A related theme was the need for structured civic education, particularly at the ward level, to help citizens understand their roles, rights, and the significance of their involvement in county governance. Respondents suggested that public participation is often ineffective because many community members are unaware of how the system works or what is expected of them. As one participant put it, *“People come to meetings but don’t know what to say or do. Teach them first.”* Another noted, *“Civic education should be continuous, not just during budget season.”* These suggestions are consistent with findings by Mbatha (2021), who emphasized that well-informed communities are more likely to demand accountability and contribute meaningfully to development projects.

Respondents also pointed out the need for ongoing refresher training for public engagement facilitators, including ward administrators and civil society actors involved in mobilization. It was noted that facilitators sometimes lack the necessary communication or organizational skills to manage inclusive forums. *“Even the facilitators need to be trained more. Sometimes they don’t guide the meetings well,”* one respondent observed. This is in line with the findings of Ndayizeye (2018), who showed that the success of participatory development often depends on the capacity of those tasked with mobilizing and guiding public involvement. Lastly, participants called for greater motivation and support for engagement participants. Some mentioned the importance of small facilitative incentives such as transport reimbursement or meals, while others pointed to the value of recognizing and celebrating active community members. As one respondent suggested, *“People get tired when they come and see nothing change. Appreciate them sometimes.”* These views highlight that effective capacity building is not only about training, but also about sustaining morale and interest in civic duties, particularly in communities that have historically been marginalized or ignored.

These findings strongly align with the Theory of Empowerment (Rappaport, 1987), which posits that individuals are more likely to engage and perform effectively when they are equipped with knowledge, feel autonomous, and believe they can influence outcomes. Empowerment happens when institutions provide not just tools but also opportunities and motivation for individuals to act meaningfully. As noted by Erickson et al. (2003), governments that invest in citizen capacity and respond to community feedback foster higher levels of trust, participation, and service delivery

outcomes. In addition, IHEMEJE and AFEGBUA (2020) found that consistent training, workshops, and civic sensitization are central to enhancing public service quality, particularly in environments transitioning toward participatory governance models. The call for more inclusive, structured, and motivational capacity-building efforts echoes a broader trend in development practice: that empowered citizens are the foundation of accountable and effective local governance.

### **Simple Regression Analysis**

The objective of the study was to determine the effect of public capacity building on service delivery in county governments in Kenya. Public capacity building refers to the structured process of enhancing the knowledge, skills, and abilities of citizens and community representatives to enable them to effectively engage with and contribute to governance processes. Well-designed capacity building ensures that participants are informed, confident, and capable of making meaningful contributions to policy formulation, monitoring, and implementation. The corresponding hypothesis was:

**H<sub>03</sub>:** Public capacity building has no statistically significant effect on service delivery in county governments in Kenya.

To test this hypothesis, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted, where service delivery was regressed on public capacity building. The analysis was carried out using a 95% confidence level and a significance threshold of  $p < 0.05$ .

*Table 2: Model Summary – Public Capacity Building and Service Delivery*

<b>Model</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>R Square</b>	<b>Adjusted R Square</b>	<b>Std. Error of the Estimate</b>
1	0.713 <sup>a</sup>	0.508	0.506	0.404

a. Predictors: (Constant), Public Capacity Building

b. Dependent Variable: Service Delivery

The model summary reveals a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.713, indicating a strong and positive linear relationship between public capacity building and service delivery. The R Square (R<sup>2</sup>) value of 0.508 indicates that 50.8% of the variation in service delivery can be explained by public capacity building alone. This suggests that over half of the differences observed in service delivery performance across county governments are attributable to variations in how effectively capacity-building strategies are implemented. The adjusted R<sup>2</sup> of 0.506 affirms that the model remains statistically reliable when adjusted for the number of predictors and sample size, underscoring its robustness and generalizability.

These findings are consistent with MBURU and GIKONYO (2021), who concluded that sustained capacity building for citizens and ward committees significantly enhances participatory planning, resource monitoring, and the successful implementation of public development projects. Their study showed that trained community members are more proactive in engaging with county governments, leading to tangible improvements in service outcomes.

**Table 3: ANOVA – Public Capacity Building and Service Delivery**

<b>Model</b>	<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Regression	50.800	1	50.800	307.879	0.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	49.200	299	0.165		
Total	100.000	300			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Public Capacity Building

b. Dependent Variable: Service Delivery

The ANOVA table reports an F-calculated value of 307.879, which is significantly higher than the F-critical value of 3.873 (based on  $df_1 = 1$ ,  $df_2 = 299$ , at  $\alpha = 0.05$ ). The extremely low p-value (0.000) confirms that the model is statistically significant and that the variation in service delivery attributed to public capacity building is unlikely to be due to chance. The high F-statistic further supports the strength and reliability of the model. These results affirm that capacity building has a real and measurable impact on how well services are delivered in Kenya’s devolved governance framework.

This conclusion echoes the work of UNDP (2022), which highlights that community empowerment through structured training programs leads to greater civic confidence, improved policy advocacy, and more inclusive development outcomes. When local actors understand budget cycles, development frameworks, and accountability mechanisms, they are better positioned to influence service design and demand results.

**Table 4: Coefficients – Public Capacity Building and Service Delivery**

<b>Model</b>	<b>Unstandardized Coefficients (B)</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>Standardized Coefficients (Beta)</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
(Constant)	1.105	0.085		13.000	0.000
Public Capacity Building	0.596	0.040	0.713	17.825	0.000

From the coefficients table, the resulting regression equation is:

**Service Delivery = 1.105 + 0.596 (Public Capacity Building)**

This equation indicates that in the absence of capacity building (score of zero), the baseline service delivery level would be 1.105. The unstandardized coefficient of 0.596 implies that for every one-unit increase in public capacity building, service delivery is expected to increase by 0.596 units. The standardized beta coefficient of 0.713, along with the t-value of 17.825, both statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicate a strong and reliable positive effect of capacity building on service delivery performance.

These findings align with the conclusions of Kobia and Gitonga (2020), who found that when citizens are trained in civic processes and service oversight, they are better able to monitor projects,

challenge inefficiencies, and ensure proper resource utilization. Similarly, Ndegwa and Ileri (2021) highlighted that structured capacity-building efforts not only improve the responsiveness of service providers but also reduce implementation bottlenecks and enhance program sustainability.

The results of the regression analysis provide strong empirical grounds to reject the null hypothesis ( $H_{03}$ ). Public capacity building has a statistically significant and positive effect on service delivery in Kenya's county governments. With more than 50% of the variance in service delivery performance explained by capacity-building practices, this factor emerges as a central pillar in the operationalization of effective devolved governance.

### **Conclusions**

The study concludes that public capacity building is the most influential public engagement dimension affecting service delivery in county governments. Service delivery improvements are most pronounced where citizens possess adequate knowledge, skills, and confidence to engage meaningfully in governance processes. Capacity building transforms participation from symbolic attendance into informed contribution, oversight, and co-production of services, thereby enhancing accountability and alignment with community needs. The study therefore establishes that without sustained and inclusive capacity-building initiatives, public engagement risks elite capture and limited developmental impact, making capacity building the primary pathway through which engagement translates into tangible service delivery outcomes.

### **Recommendations**

Capacity building should be elevated to a core policy pillar of public engagement rather than treated as an auxiliary activity. National and county governments should develop policy guidelines mandating continuous civic education and training programs for citizens and public engagement facilitators. These guidelines should emphasize inclusivity, targeting marginalized groups, youth, women, and rural communities to prevent elite capture of engagement processes. Dedicated budget lines for civic education and capacity building should be introduced to ensure sustainability and consistency across counties.

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