

## **DOES COMPETITIVE FLEXIBILITY AFFECT SERVICE DELIVERY? EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM THE COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF NYERI, KENYA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

In Kenya, County governments in play a pivotal role in promoting local development, improving citizen welfare and ensuring effective and sustainable service delivery. However, many counties have continued to face persistent challenges, including inefficiencies in project implementation, inadequate innovation, slow adoption of new technologies and limited responsiveness to changing citizen needs. The study sought to determine the effect of competitive flexibility on service delivery in the County Governments of Nyeri in Kenya. The study was anchored on the dynamic capabilities theory and the new public management theory. Descriptive and explanatory research designs were employed. The target population comprised management staff from selected departments across of Nyeri County governments. Stratified random sampling was used to select a representative sample of respondents. A semi-structured

questionnaire was used to collect primary data. The validity of the questionnaire was assessed through face, construct and content validity, while its reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, with a threshold of 0.7. Data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistics. The study revealed that competitive flexibility had a positive and significant effect on service delivery ( $\beta=1.269$ ,  $P<0.05$ ). The study concluded that competitive flexibility is a major determinant of effective service delivery in Nyeri County and that enhancing competitive flexibility through market adaptation, innovation and public expectations to emerging needs can substantially improve the service efficiency, service quality and service accessibility in the County Government of Nyeri.

**Keywords:** Competitive Flexibility, Market Adaptation, Innovation, Public Expectations, Service Delivery, County Government of Nyeri.

## **INTRODUCTION**

County governments are very instrumental in fostering local growth, enhancing the well-being of the citizens and maintaining a sustainable economic growth by offering effective services (Morss, 2021). These governments have the role of offering basic state services like health care, education, water and infrastructure which are important in enhancing living standards and productivity. However, county governments are placed in challenging administrative operation settings with limited resources, bureaucratic inefficiencies and socio-economic uncertainties (Karim, 2022; Jones & Williams, 2023). Due to this, improving the efficiency, quality and accessibility of service delivery has become a topical issue, more so, at the time, when citizens are increasingly demanding accountability, inclusiveness and responsiveness in governance.

Governments around the world are changing their administrative systems in order to make them more flexible and competitive in offering public services. The developed countries like the United States and the United Kingdom have redesigned their governance systems to be

more responsive based on creative and competitive systems (Bennett, 2021; Turner, 2023). Competitive flexibility, which is the capacity of the public institutions to change strategies, embrace innovation and dynamically respond to the shifts in service demands in such countries has been found to be central in facilitating good governance. In the same vein, the emerging economies like Nigeria and South Africa have also realized that it is imperative to increase the flexibility of governance to overcome inefficiencies, inequality, and equitable service delivery (Adewole, Johnson & Akinola, 2021; Dlamini, 2023). These international trends bring out the reality that competitive flexibility by governments will yield better service results and will attract citizen confidence.

East African nations like Tanzania and Uganda have embraced the reforms of decentralization, trying to enhance the competitiveness and make the process of service delivery more efficient (Komba, 2022; Nabimya, Lutaaya & Kasirye, 2023). Nonetheless, their progress has been derailed by endemic hindrances such as ineffective institutional coordination, political influence and disparities in resources. Devolution in Kenya, which was anchored in the 2010 Constitution, was aimed at facilitating inclusivity and bringing services near the citizens. County governments, including the County Government of Nyeri, have been struggling to ensure effective and competitive service delivery despite such intentions because of the lack of innovation, adaptive capacity and inflexible administrative structures (Muturi, Ochieng & Wanjiru, 2021; Omollo, Nyakundi & Achieng, 2023).

This has led to the development of competitive flexibility as one of the key competencies that county governments ought to embrace to enhance the delivery of services (Muchiri & Kinyua, 2025). It allows governments to plan their adjustments in policies, embrace technological and process-based innovations and redesign their service designs to align with the evolving citizen demands (Thompson, 2022). Competitive flexibility by county governments is associated with increased responsiveness, efficiency and high-quality service delivery despite a dynamic or resource-constrained environment (Ahmed and Ali, 2021). It also enables creativity, continual increase and adaptability- essential factors to make sure that devolved units are resilient to political, economic, and environmental difficulties (Smith and Williams, 2023).

Although it is important, there is little empirical study on the impact of competitive flexibility in the devolved system of Kenya on service delivery. The majority of previous research has focused on resource allocation, human resource management and governance reforms and had a little emphasis on competitive flexibility as an outcome of service delivery. Moreover, the current literature has mostly covered the concept of flexibility in the context of a private or a corporate environment, thus creating a gap in the literature about its applicability in the context of a county government. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to describe the impact of competitive flexibility on service delivery in the Kenyan county government with a special reference to Nyeri County. It will be used in the study to gain insights into how competitive adaptability, innovation and strategic reform can increase efficiency, quality and accessibility of county based service delivery.

### Statement of the Problem

County governments need to provide services to facilitate local development, improve the welfare of citizens, and provide sustainable growth. Nevertheless, the quality, accessibility, and efficiency of County Government of Nyeri services have significantly decreased during 2020-2023 (KHSDIS, 2021; KNBS, 2022; WASREB, 2022; KRB, 2024; MoH, 2024). According to reports by the Kenya Health Service Delivery Indicator Survey (2021) and the Ministry of Health (2024), the quality of healthcare has been steadily declining, with adequately staffed facilities decreasing to 62% in 2023 and the availability of necessary drugs decreasing to 45% in 2024. On the same note, Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2022) findings indicate that the quality of education has declined because of poor infrastructure and lack of learning facilities in government schools. The availability of vital services has deteriorated, and the water coverage has decreased to 72% in 2022 compared to 98% in 2020 and the share of roads in good condition has declined to 45% in 2024 compared to 54% in 2020, thereby restricting access to vital services (WASREB, 2022; KRB, 2023). Moreover, the budget absorption rate decreased to 73 percent in 2022/2023, compared to 83 percent in 2020/2021, and it is expected to decline to 68 percent in 2023/2024, mainly because of the inefficiencies in the procurement process, the lack of effective interdepartmental cooperation, and the increasing wage bill that is eating up the development funds (Controller of Budget, 2022; Commission on Revenue Allocation, 2022). These inefficiencies underscore the necessity to increase the flexibility of coordination to become more responsive and deliver services in the County Government of Nyeri.

A study by Rajagopalan, Singh and Kumar (2021) examined the effect of competitive flexibility on service-delivery in local governments in India and found that counties with higher flexibility in resource allocation were able to improve service efficiency by 15%. However, this study was conducted in a different socio-economic and political context, limiting its applicability to the Kenyan setting. Mensah and Frimpong (2020) examined the effect of competitive flexibility on service delivery in Ghanaian public institutions, finding that flexibility in decision-making significantly improved service quality. The study operationalized competitive flexibility through scenario planning. Further, these studies relied heavily on quantitative data, lacking in-depth qualitative insights that could provide insightful empirical evidence of the role of competitive flexibility and therefore would require the inclusion of open-ended questions in the data collection tool.

### Research Objective

The research objective of the study was to determine the effect of competitive flexibility on service delivery in the County Government of Nyeri, Kenya.

### Hypotheses of the Study

The study sought to test the following hypotheses:

*H<sub>a</sub>: Competitive flexibility has a statistically significant effect on service delivery in the County government of Nyeri, Kenya.*

***H<sub>0</sub>: Competitive flexibility has no statistically significant effect on service delivery in the County government of Nyeri, Kenya.***

## **THEORETICAL LITERATURE REVIEW**

The research was based on the Dynamic Capabilities Theory and the New Public Management Theory that offer a solid theoretical basis in explaining the role of flexibility in coordination in service delivery in County Government of Nyeri.

### **Dynamic Capabilities Theory**

Teece, Pisano, and Shuen (1997) were the first to develop the Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT) to describe the ways in which organizations can combine, develop, and redesign internal and external competencies to respond to the rapidly changing environments. The theory is clear that dynamic environments necessitate organizations to build three fundamental capabilities namely sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring. The sensing capability is the ability to recognize and interpret the opportunities and threats in the external environment, the seizing capability is the ability to mobilize and deploy resources to exploit the opportunities, and the reconfiguring capability is the ability of organizations to realign and transform their resources and processes to ensure effectiveness in the face of change (Teece, 2007).

Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) furthered the theory by explaining dynamic capabilities as recognizable and particular processes like product development, strategic decision-making and alliance formation that integrate and reconfigure resources. Helfat and Peteraf (2003) subsequently explained that dynamic capabilities are path-specific and change with time as a result of learning and adaptation. The theory emphasizes that organizations have to keep creating new routines and management practices to be effective and resilient in uncertain conditions (Schilke, Hu, & Helfat, 2018).

Although it has its merits, critics like Kurtmollaiev (2017) claim that DCT does not have a clear definition of operations and might not be able to fully describe how capabilities can be converted into performance outcomes. On the same note, Njoroge and Kinyua (2025) observed that dynamic capabilities are not sufficient to ensure high performance unless they are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable. Nevertheless, the theory is still central in the process of comprehending how organizations adapt to changing conditions by being strategic and operationally adaptable.

Dynamic Capabilities Theory, when applied to County Government of Nyeri, can be used to describe how the flexibility of competitiveness supports service delivery by allowing departments to reorganize administrative processes, re-align interdepartmental communication, and combine resource use in response to new needs (Kiarie & Kinyua, 2025). Competitive flexibility is a dynamic capability that enables organizations to align and adjust their operations to changes in policies, demands of citizens, and environmental shocks (Awais et al., 2023).

### **New Public Management Theory**

The New Public Management (NPM) Theory is a reform paradigm that developed in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century to transform the public sector organizations to be more efficient, accountable, and citizen-oriented. The theory was proposed by Hood (1991) and focused on the use of the management practices in the private sector in the administration of the government to enhance service delivery. Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011) built on the idea by adding the principles of decentralization, performance-based management, and customer-oriented service delivery. NPM promotes the use of market-based mechanisms, decentralization, and result orientation instead of process orientation by governments (Lodge and Gill, 2016).

The theory was later revisited by Dunleavy and Margetts (2006) to incorporate the digital-era governance, whereby technological innovations and data systems can be used to improve efficiency in the delivery of services. The usefulness of NPM reforms is evidenced by empirical studies: Pollitt and Bouckaert (2019) have discovered that decentralization and performance-based management enhanced efficiency and accountability in state institutions, and Mensah et al. (2022) have determined that NPM-related digitalization enhanced transparency and responsiveness in the Ghanaian public service.

The main assumptions of NPM are that public organizations can perform better when they embrace the principles of competition, customer orientation, and managerial accountability (Hood, 2020). It assumes that decentralization leads to flexibility, competition leads to efficiency, and performance measurement leads to accountability (Barzelay, 2019; Hammerschmid, Oprisor & Stimac, 2017). Also, NPM presupposes that the technological innovations contribute to the accessibility and responsiveness of services (Christensen & Læg Reid, 2016).

Regarding the flexibility of coordination, NPM offers a model of how decentralized and collaborative administrative systems can be used to improve service delivery. The flexibility of coordination is in line with the principles of NPM that encourage horizontal coordination, interdepartmental communication, and participatory decision-making to minimize bureaucratic bottlenecks (Njuguna & Kinyua, 2024). Through coordination flexibility, delays are reduced and responsiveness to the needs of the people is enhanced by allowing departments to collaborate and exchange information effectively.

The NPM theory in the Nyeri County context justifies the necessity of having coordinated management structures that combine various departments to deliver services effectively. The county projects on performance-based management, digital service systems, and citizen feedback systems are examples of practical implementations of the NPM principles (Chepkemai, 2018; Muthoni & Waithaka, 2020). Flexibility in coordination is therefore an important managerial instrument within the NPM framework that enhances efficiency, transparency, and citizen-focused governance in the provision of services by counties.

## **EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

A study by Ahmed and Khan (2021) explored the relationship between competitive flexibility and organizational performance in the context of public sector organizations in Pakistan. The research, which surveyed 150 public employees, found that organizations with greater competitive flexibility were able to respond more effectively to external changes, thereby improving service delivery. Specifically, the study highlighted that flexibility in adjusting policies and resource allocation was positively correlated with improved citizen satisfaction and service quality. While the findings were significant, the study's narrow focus on a single country limits its applicability to the Kenyan context, particularly in Nyeri County. This study will address that gap by investigating how competitive flexibility impacts service delivery within the local government of Nyeri.

Liu, Li and Zhang (2022) conducted a research that evaluated the effect of competitive-flexibility on service delivery among Chinese state institutions. The methodology adopted by the researchers was a survey structure where the answers of 200 public sector workers were recorded, and it was found that competing flexibility offers the organizations the possibility to predict and respond better to the changes found in the demands and the environment. It has been concluded in the study that, the public institutions which were provided with greater levels of competitive flexibility could easily improve the efficiency of their services as well as increase the overall levels of satisfaction which could be witnessed by the citizens. Nevertheless, the contextual gap is the focus of the study on the Chinese institutions that might work under the various regulatory and socio-political conditions. The present research is going to extend this study through investigating about the County Government of Nyeri, where competitive flexibility might have a different dynamics.

In a research carried out by Otieno and Wambua (2020), the influence of competitive flexibility on service delivery was explored on Kenyan government parastatals. Sample size of 120 employees of different parastatals was used in the study and the researcher identified that the competitive flexibility adopted by the organizations could make them deliver efficient and timely services to the population. The study has also known fast response to policy and technology in order to enhance better service delivery to be one of the major drivers of service delivery. Though valuable knowledge was gained through the study, this type of study is not so pertinent to the study underhand which will specifically touch on dynamics of competitive flexibility in local government of Nyeri County.

In their 2023 study, Muema and Ochieng investigated the relationship between competitive flexibility and the provision of public services by Kenyan local government authorities. According to a study that polled 250 workers from several county administrations, competitive flexibility improved service delivery by enabling quicker decision-making, resource usage, and citizen response. However, the research study did not explicitly focus on Nyeri County, which presents certain obstacles in terms of service delivery due to the county's demographic and geographic characteristics. The present study aims to fill the gap by examining Nyeri County and its relation to the issue of competitive flexibility and its contribution to the enhancement of service delivery.

Hassan and Niazi (2021) explored competitive flexibility in the Middle East by studying the adaptive mechanisms used by the public organizations to deal with pressures imposed by competition in service delivery. To prove this, the research done with a survey base of 180 employees indicated that competitive flexibility had a very positive impact on the results in service delivery which were multiplied by better production efficiency, satisfaction levels and public interaction. The applicability of the study in the Nyeri County is however restricted by the variances between the socio-economic and political climate of the Middle East and Kenya. In this study, this concern will be addressed because the researchers will examine the extent to which competitive flexibility impacts service delivery in the Kenyan public sector specifically focusing on the local government of Nyeri County.

A study by Muraya (2016) examined the competitive flexibility adopted to enhance performance by the County Government of Kajiado, Kenya, revealing that public organizations must continuously adapt to dynamic environments through strategic flexibility to remain competitive. The study found that strategies such as differentiation, pricing, cost leadership, quality improvement, and efficient service delivery enabled the County to enhance its performance, particularly in revenue collection and service quality. These strategies reflect elements of competitive flexibility, which allows organizations to anticipate and respond to environmental changes through adaptive resource utilization and service diversification. Building on these insights, the current study explored how competitive flexibility influences service delivery within the County Government of Nyeri, Kenya, emphasizing the ability of local governments to adapt strategies, processes, and resource allocations to achieve sustainable performance and improved citizen outcomes in a competitive governance environment.

### Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework showing the relationship between the independent and dependent variable is presented in Figure 1.

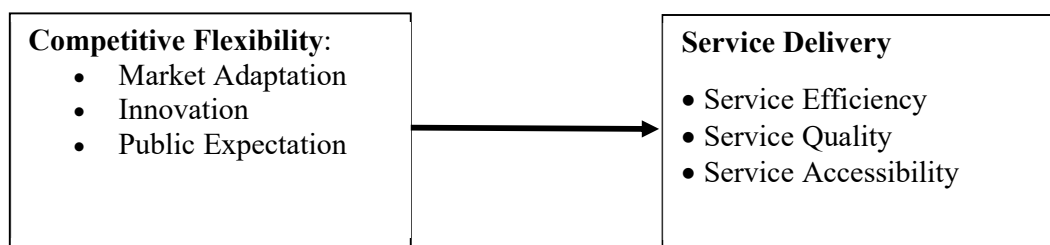


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework  
Source: Author (2025)

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design was descriptive, making it possible to collect and analyze both qualitative and quantitative data systematically and describe the nature of variables and their relationships (Kothari, 2019; Creswell, 2018). This design was selected due to the fact that it gives a true picture of phenomena and enables the analysis of correlation between coordination flexibility

and service delivery. Similar studies that have utilized descriptive research design to examine the relationship between organizational variables have been successfully conducted by Mensah et al. (2021) and Mwangi and Omondi (2020).

The target population was 334 employees in the County Government of Nyeri in the management category that was divided into senior, middle, and lower-level management. County Executive Committee Members and Chief Officers were part of the senior management; Directors, Deputy Directors, and Assistant Directors were part of the middle-level management; and unit supervisors were part of the lower-level management. The choice of these groups was based on the fact that they are directly involved in the processes of coordination and service delivery in the county.

The sample was calculated by the formula of Yamane (1967) at a 5 percent margin of error, which gave a sample of 182 respondents. Stratified random sampling method was used proportionally to make sure that all the management levels were well represented. The sampling factor ( $p = 0.5449$ ) was used between strata: 13 senior management respondents, 60 middle management respondents, and 109 lower management respondents. This guaranteed proportional representation and increased generalizability of results.

The semi-structured questionnaire with closed-ended and open-ended questions was used to gather primary data. The instrument was separated into sections according to the variables of the study: resource flexibility, coordination flexibility, strategic action flexibility, competitive flexibility, and service delivery. Closed-ended questions were based on the five-point Likert scale to assess the opinion of respondents, whereas open-ended questions provided a more in-depth understanding.

The clarity, validity and reliability of the questionnaire were tested by carrying out a pilot study on 18 respondents (10 percent of the sample) in Murang'a County. The supervisor and departmental faculty members reviewed the face and content validity, whereas the literature review ensured construct validity. Cronbach's Alpha was used to test reliability, and all constructs had a score above the 0.7 mark: competitive flexibility (0.855), and service delivery (0.789), which confirmed high internal consistency.

Kenyatta University and the National Commission of Science, Technology, and Innovation gave the go-ahead to data collection. The researcher used a drop and pick later method, and data collection was done in 14 days.

Data analysis was done using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to show the means, standard deviations and percentages, whereas correlation and multiple regression analyses were used to establish the relationships and impacts of variables. The regression equation used was:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + \varepsilon$$

Where:

$Y$  = Service Delivery

$X$  = Competitive Flexibility

$\beta_0$  = Constant

$\beta_1$  = coefficients

$\varepsilon$  = Error Term

The test of statistical significance was done at the 95% confidence level ( $p < 0.05$ ) in SPSS. Open-ended responses were analyzed thematically to supplement quantitative results and provide qualitative data.

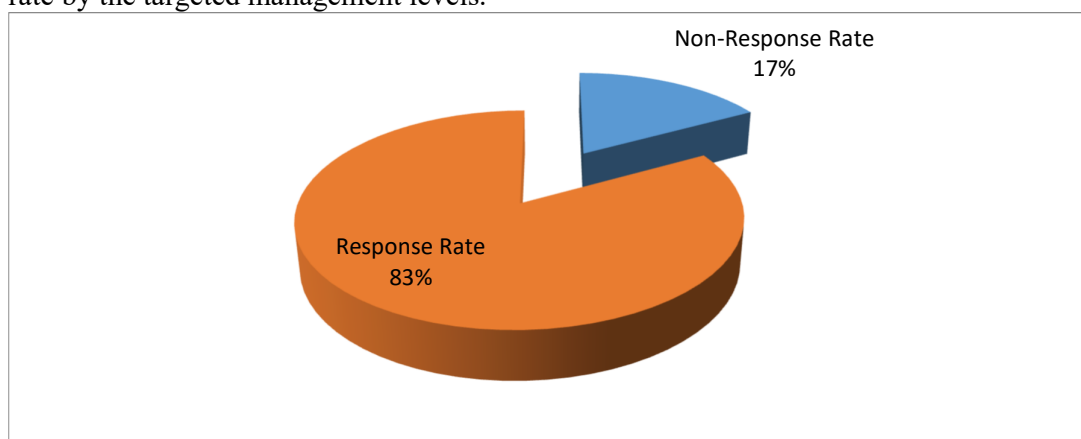
The study followed ethical standards strictly. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants, and they were guaranteed confidentiality and could leave at any point without repercussions. The informed consent was obtained and the information gathered was utilized only in academic purposes. Data collection was done with the approval of the concerned university and government bodies.

## DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS

The results of response rate, sample mean and sample standard deviation were analyzed and discussed in this section.

### Response Rate

The questionnaire was given to 182 respondents who included senior, middle, and lower-level management in the print copy of the questionnaire. Among these 151 questionnaires were duly filled and returned and 31 were not returned. Figure 4.1 depicts the results of the participation rate by the targeted management levels.



**Figure 2: Research Participation Rate**  
Source: Field Observation (2025)

The questionnaires completed constituted a percentage of 83 of the total number that was administered to the target management levels. This is an implication of a 17 percent non-response rate. As Fincham (2008) points out, the response rate is directly proportional to the level of representativeness of the sample and inversely proportional to non-response bias. The survey research has a satisfactory response rate of over 70 percent, and the 83 percent in this study is enough to make generalizations about the findings.

### Competitive Flexibility

Competitive flexibility is the ability of the County Government to alter its strategies, programs, and service delivery mechanisms to respond to the changing market trends, population dynamics, and community expectations. It also emphasizes the importance of innovation, resident feedback, and integration of new ideas and technologies in their competitiveness and efficient service delivery. Table 1 has summarized the observations made by the researcher on competitive flexibility.

**Table 1: Competitive Flexibility**

| <b>Statements</b>                                                                                                   | <b>Mean</b>   | <b>Std Dev</b> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Market strategies are adapted to meet the changing needs of its residents.                                          | 3.7761        | 0.49806        |
| Market trends influence how services are structured and delivered.                                                  | 2.9844        | 0.48765        |
| County programs are realigned to fit current population dynamics.                                                   | 3.2322        | 0.54446        |
| Innovation in public service delivery is central to maintaining the County Government of Nyeri's competitiveness.   | 3.3233        | 0.51128        |
| Innovation in service delivery helps the County Government of Nyeri stay competitive and relevant to the community. | 2.9008        | 0.51112        |
| New ideas and technologies are encouraged to improve services.                                                      | 3.2221        | 0.54422        |
| Public expectations are regularly evaluated to ensure the needs of citizens are met.                                | 3.0001        | 0.54444        |
| Resident feedback is used to improve service experience.                                                            | 3.1899        | 0.48991        |
| Managing public expectations is crucial to maintain the County Government's reputation and legitimacy.              | 3.3142        | 0.50123        |
| <b>Aggregate Score</b>                                                                                              | <b>3.2056</b> | <b>0.52018</b> |

*Source: Field Observations (2025)*

The results of the observations on the aspects of competitive flexibility as indicated by the tabulated statements have been utilized in the production of summary measures to be further subjected to statistical analysis. The total aggregate mean of 3.2056 and a standard deviation of 0.52018 portrays that the County Government of Nyeri is moderately able to adjust to the changing conditions in the environment it operates in. The action of the mean values indicates that comparatively better performance was registered in modifying market strategies to the needs of the residents ( $M = 3.7761$ ,  $SD = 0.49806$ ) and anchoring competitiveness in innovation ( $M = 3.3233$ ,  $SD = 0.51128$ ). These results suggest that although innovation and responsiveness are identified in the County Government of Nyeri, more can be done to institutionalize the practices completely.

Conversely, lower scores were obtained in the responsiveness to market trends ( $M = 2.9844$ ,  $SD = 0.48765$ ) and the direct contribution of innovation to maintaining competitiveness ( $M = 2.9008$ ,  $SD = 0.51112$ ). This difference in reactions probably has the implication that though adaptation is recognized to be significant, the translation of these priorities into coherent policies and practices is not yet effectively achieved. The fact that the standard deviations between the respondents are moderate (between 0.48765 and 0.54446) also indicates that there is a certain degree of dissimilarity in the opinion of the stakeholders regarding the competitive flexibility of the County Government of Nyeri.

Comparisons with empirical studies indicate that the results are consistent with literature on the significance of competitive flexibility in improving the performance of the public sector. Ahmed and Khan (2021) and Liu, Li, and Zhang (2022) have shown that organizations that are more competitive in terms of flexibility enhance efficiency, service quality, and citizen satisfaction through proactive reallocation of resources to changes in the environment. On the same note, Otieno and Wambua (2020) in a Kenyan setting demonstrated that competitive flexibility in parastatals resulted in the timely response to policy changes and innovations. Muema and Ochieng (2023) also stated that competitive flexibility is more effective in decision-making within county governments, whereas Hassan and Niazi (2021) found that adaptive mechanisms in public agencies can better service delivery outcomes worldwide. The implication of the total score of competitive flexibility in Nyeri County is that, although moderate scores of adaptability, innovation, and citizen engagement are observed, there is still a definite opportunity to enhance competitiveness by improving the alignment of service delivery to market trends and technological development. By filling these gaps, the County Government of Nyeri will be able to strengthen its legitimacy, respond to the increasing expectations of the people and remain relevant in a fast-changing environment.

### Service Delivery

One of the main indicators of the effectiveness and efficiency of the County Government in meeting the needs of its residents is service delivery. It is a complex construct, the area of concern of which is the degree to which services are provided within the anticipated timeframes, adhere to quality standards, are fairly accessible, and use resources in a cost-efficient way. The construct also focuses on professionalism and competence of the county staff in the performance of their mandates. In this research, the service delivery was broken down into various dimensions, which included timeliness, resource efficiency, operational effectiveness, service quality, professionalism, accessibility, equity, and responsiveness to barriers. Table 2 has summarized the observations made on the set of aspects that have been contextualized as service delivery.

**Table 2: Service Delivery**

| Statements                                                                                | Mean          | Std Dev        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Services are delivered within expected timeframes.                                        | 3.7761        | 0.49806        |
| Resources are utilized to ensure cost-effective service delivery.                         | 2.9844        | 0.48765        |
| Operations are handled swiftly to avoid unnecessary delays.                               | 3.2322        | 0.54446        |
| Services offered meet the established quality standards.                                  | 3.3233        | 0.51128        |
| County staff demonstrate professionalism and competence in delivering public services.    | 2.9008        | 0.51112        |
| Public services meet community expectations.                                              | 3.2221        | 0.54422        |
| Services are easily accessible to all residents regardless of their location.             | 3.0001        | 0.54444        |
| The County Government promotes equal access to essential services.                        | 3.2226        | 0.54547        |
| There have been put in place mechanisms to address barriers to accessing public services. | 3.3345        | 0.56534        |
| <b>Aggregate Score</b>                                                                    | <b>3.2218</b> | <b>0.52800</b> |

*Source: Field Observations (2025)*

The tabulated statements of the operational aspects of service delivery were analyzed into summary measures of mean and standard deviation to create the foundation of the further

statistical analysis. The overall mean of 3.2218 and the standard deviation of 0.52800 indicate a moderate level of performance, which means that although the service delivery in Nyeri County has some strengths, there are also certain gaps that need to be addressed.

The highest rating was the timeliness of services ( $M = 3.7761$ ,  $SD = 0.49806$ ), which indicates a fairly high level of agreement among respondents that the County Government of Nyeri provides most of the services in a timely manner. This observation indicates that service schedules are fairly upheld, which is consistent with the argument by Mugo and Kariuki (2020) that service timelines adherence creates citizen trust and legitimacy in county governments. Conversely, the lowest scores were on efficiency in resource utilization ( $M = 2.9844$ ,  $SD = 0.48765$ ) and staff professionalism ( $M = 2.9008$ ,  $SD = 0.51112$ ), which indicates issues regarding the judicious use of the public resources and the professionalism of county staff in providing services. Hassan and Niazi (2021) reported similar results and found that the lack of cost-efficiency is limited by inefficiencies in the use of resources in the public sector and the resulting lack of satisfaction among citizens.

The middle scores were obtained in the areas of operational effectiveness ( $M = 3.2322$ ,  $SD = 0.54446$ ) and quality standards ( $M = 3.3233$ ,  $SD = 0.51128$ ). These results indicate that service operations and quality are not homogeneous, although they are generally acceptable. This fact is consistent with Ahmed and Khan (2021), who discovered that the unequal quality assurance systems in the state institutions tend to lead to the dissatisfaction of citizens and the decrease in the effectiveness of the service delivery process.

The dimensions of equity and accessibility had mixed results, where accessibility ( $M = 3.0001$ ,  $SD = 0.54444$ ) and the promotion of equal access ( $M = 3.2226$ ,  $SD = 0.54547$ ) showed a partial success in the inclusivity goals. Mechanisms that deal with barriers to access were rated moderately ( $M = 3.3345$ ,  $SD = 0.56534$ ), which indicates that there is still the effort but not complete towards inclusive governance. As Liu, Li, and Zhang (2022) note, fair access to services is also essential in the legitimization of local governments, which is echoed by these results. Equally, Otieno and Wambua (2020) noted that the equitable service provision gaps in Kenyan counties are barriers to social cohesion and policy implementation.

The implication of the overall mean response is that although Nyeri County has significant strengths in timeliness and adherence to basic quality standards, there are still gaps in cost effectiveness, staff competence, and fair access. These issues are not exclusive to Nyeri County, as comparisons with the existing literature reveal that they are common in most of the devolved units where resource scarcity, capacity constraints, and institutional inefficiencies continue to be a problem (Muema & Ochieng, 2023). Nevertheless, the empirical gaps that are being filled by this study are the localized insights that help to fill the gaps in the empirical evidence by specifically pointing out how these dimensions are manifested in the context of governance in Nyeri.

### Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

This analysis provides insights into the extent to which competitive flexibility contributes to the performance of public service delivery.

**Table 3: Output of Coefficientsa**

| Model |                         | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t     | Sig. |
|-------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
|       |                         | $\beta$                     | Std. Error | Beta                      |       |      |
| 1     | (Constant)              | 13.727                      | 2.634      |                           | 5.211 | .000 |
|       | Competitive Flexibility | 1.269                       | .379       | .781                      | 3.345 | .001 |

a. Dependent Variable: Service Delivery

Source: Field Observations (2025)

$$\text{Service Delivery} = 13.727 + 1.269 \text{ Competitive Flexibility}$$

Competitive flexibility was found to have a strong positive and significant impact on service delivery, as shown by a beta coefficient of 1.269 and a p-value of 0.001. This indicates that the County Government Nyeri ability to adapt programs, policies, and innovations in response to market trends and citizen expectations substantially enhances service outcomes. Empirical evidence supports this result; Ahmed and Khan (2021), Liu, Li, and Zhang (2022), and Otieno and Wambua (2020) all highlighted that competitive flexibility allows organizations to respond quickly to external pressures, implement innovations, and improve efficiency, ultimately boosting citizen satisfaction. Muema and Ochieng (2023) and Hassan and Niazi (2021) similarly emphasized that adaptive capabilities in public organizations strengthen responsiveness and service relevance. For Nyeri County, fostering competitive flexibility can therefore serve as a critical mechanism for maintaining high-quality and timely service delivery while aligning with evolving community needs.

### Conclusion

This paper has determined that competitive flexibility in County Government of Nyeri has positive and significant impact on service delivery. The findings showed that the quality, accessibility, and timeliness of the public services are significantly improved when the county can modify its programs, be innovative, and react promptly to the evolving needs of the community. Competitive flexibility enables the county to be proactive and to respond to the new challenges like fiscal limitations, technological advancements, and changing expectations of the citizens. Through the implementation of new practices, competitive benchmarking, and the incorporation of citizen feedback systems, the county enhances its ability to provide efficient and citizen-focused services. The research finds that the creation of competitive flexibility by innovation, responsiveness, and continuous improvement is a major contributor to sustainable service delivery performance in Nyeri County.

### Recommendations

This paper suggests that the County Government of Nyeri ought to institutionalize competitive flexibility by inculcating innovation and responsiveness in its governance systems. The county executives are advised to create innovation units in departments to discover, test, and commercialize new models of service delivery that would improve efficiency and satisfaction

among citizens. The adoption of digital platforms should be used to gather real-time citizen feedback, which will enable the county to modify its policies and programs according to the new needs of the community. It should be encouraged to benchmark with the best counties and private institutions to facilitate learning and best practices adoption. Also, the county management should invest in the ongoing capacity building to develop a culture of creativity, experimentation, and proactive problem-solving in the staff. Reward systems to promote innovative performance should be supported by policy frameworks and competitive practices should be incorporated in the county planning, budgeting, and monitoring processes to maintain the long-term adaptability and effectiveness.

### **Discussions and Future Research Recommendations**

This discussion has particularly looked at how competitive flexibility impacts on service delivery within the County Government of Nyeri. The results were localized and could not be extrapolated to other counties or government levels without additional confirmation. The study was cross-sectional and therefore, it only captured the relationship between competitive flexibility and service delivery at a single point in time, omitting the dynamics that may arise over time. Future studies may take a longitudinal or comparative design to examine the effect of sustained competitive flexibility on service delivery in multiple counties in the long run. The mediating effect of digital transformation, leadership flexibility, and organizational learning on the impact of competitive flexibility on service results may also be addressed in further studies. Exploring the interaction between cultural, political, and institutional forces and competitive flexibility would also offer more insight into how county governments can attain lasting gains in the delivery of public services.

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