



**ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION ON DEVOLVED GOVERNANCE: A CASE  
OF KISII COUNTY EXECUTIVE**

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**Abstract**

*Devolution being a new phenomenon in Kenya, the capacity of the counties to face up with communication challenges and potential structural complexities to ensure that they are managed sustainably is a concern. County Government's capacity to entrench communication to ensure proper service delivery remains an area of concern. The purpose of this study was to assist in understanding how organizational communication contribute to the general performance of county governments in Kenya and possibly stimulate the exchange of ideas among employees, public and private experts, policy makers and implementers on policy guidelines for optimal implementation of good governance.*

**Keywords:** *Devolution, County Government, Organizational Communication, Kisii County, Communication Channels*

**Introduction**

Jamii Organizational communication has been in existence from ancient times and is probably more important in modern and complex organizations. A number of changes have taken place in the process of communication mostly because of emergence and development of technology (WebFinance Inc., 2018). The way and style of communication by employees today has changed compared to how they communicated in the last several decades.

The way communication is done is central to the success of most organizations and therefore, as organizations get more complex in structure and in the way they function, it becomes necessary to re-evaluate the way organizational communication occurs to ensure that they function effectively (Cummings & Worley, 2014). Whether it is exchanging task related information or relational information, there is need to communicate with others in the organization. Proper communication helps improve function, meet the goals, and maintain relationships in organizations. Communication plays a vital role in the functioning of any organization, whether it is for business, nonprofit, educational, or government organizations.

According to (Wikipedia, 2016), "Devolution is the statutory delegation of powers from the central government of a sovereign state to govern at a sub-national level, such as a regional or local level. It is a form of

administrative decentralization. Devolved territories have the power to make legislation relevant to the area.” The county assemblies as enshrined in the constitution of Kenya 2010 are mandated with legislation and playing an oversight role on the management of county government funds and functions by the county executive which comprises of the governor and his/her cabinet to form the executive arm of the county government.

Many organizations including devolved governments conduct the communication process at three primary levels; interpersonal level i.e. between supervisor-subordinate, between groups (coworkers), and at an organizational level which (within the organization and outside stakeholders and clients). Communication also takes place in three major forms i.e. verbal, non-verbal and written communication. The direction that the communication flows is generally guided by the structure of the organization or organizational hierarchy hence it may occur from top-down, bottom-up, or horizontally and between individuals, within or between groups, or at an organizational level (Postmes, 2003). The downward communication involves supervisor to subordinate communication, upward communication involves communication from subordinate to supervisor, and horizontal communication involves communication with people (coworkers) at the same level. Communication among different departments is referred as cross-channel communication (Miller, 2008).

Effective communication plays a critical role in the entire accomplishment of the organization hence should have a fundamental role in the strategic planning process for all organizations. Quirke, (2012) posits that communication is vital as people need to understand the strategy, its context and the rationale behind it. Companies should know that communication with their people is vital if the energies and the efforts of their employees are to point in the same direction. Making the Connections shows how to use internal communication to turn strategy into action. According to Quirke, it is therefore important that employees are aware of the strategies of an organization so that these strategies can be performed. Therefore, for effective strategy implementation, effective communication is a requirement.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Organizational Communication contributes effectively towards the organizational success. This is only possible if it is used to perform its key functions which include controlling, customer service, motivating, emotional expressions and decision making. Several research and organizational reports point out that positive organizational communication is one of the most important factors that help build effective employee motivation. Whitworth & Riccomini (2005) cite a couple of organizational research by General Electric and Hewlett-Packard in the eighties that concludes: “The better the managers' communication, the more satisfied the employees were with all aspects of their work life”. Building a positive communication with employees is important because they are the organization’s best ambassadors or loudest critics.

Contrary to Articles 95 and 96 of the County Government Act, 2012 that provide for the establishment of a county communication framework and promote access to information, communication at the Kisii County Executive is still far from effective. Kisii County has uncoordinated communication structure, lack of professional training, no culture of disclosure and lack of implementation of legal framework. This has led to dissatisfaction of employees and customers thus poor service delivery. It is on this premise that the study undertakes to establish the effect of organizational communication on devolved governance in Kisii County, Kenya.

## **Objectives of the Study**

The specific objectives were to:

- i. Establish how organizational communication channels affect devolved governance in Kisii County
- ii. Establish effect of employee communication skills on devolved governance in Kisii County
- iii. Examine the effect of organizational communication structure on devolved governance in Kisii County.

## **Significance of the Study**

The study contributes to the practice of organizational communication and specifically demonstrates the ability of devolved governments to use organizational communication to enhance governance. The study present an opportunity to the County executive to streamline communication mechanisms and techniques in a bid to realize the importance of principles of governance that includes participatory, transparency and accountability, equity, effectiveness and efficiency and responsiveness in organizational management and operations. It will provoke the need to train staff on communication skills and further allocate resources towards improving communication infrastructure. Through the findings, the study will equip government employees with the relevant skills and knowledge necessary for effective communication and further explore ways through which the government will engage its employees satisfactorily to enhance service delivery. As a result, the study intends to create an environment where leaders are able to understand the needs of employees and how to meet their expectations. It will lead to a motivated, inspired, retained and engaged workforce hence enhancing productivity and performance.

To the County Assemblies, the study will justify the need to pump more resources towards communication hence mobilize them for approval of budget on communication. To the citizens, the study will improve timely services which are necessitated by accessibility and availability of information. It will encourage transparency on how county government activities are conducted in order to generate trust, team spirit and accountability with the aim of enhancing customer satisfaction.

## **Area of study**

The study was basically concerned with organizational communication on devolved governance in Kenya. It was conducted at the Kisii County headquarters at the former Municipal building along Kisii-Daraja Mbili road using a sample survey of 620 county employees and a sample size of 86 respondents. According to the Constitution of Kenya (2010), Kisii County is among the 47 devolved units created under Article 11 of Constitution of Kenya 2010 and it shares common borders with Nyamira County to the North East, Narok County to the South and Homabay and Migori Counties to the West.

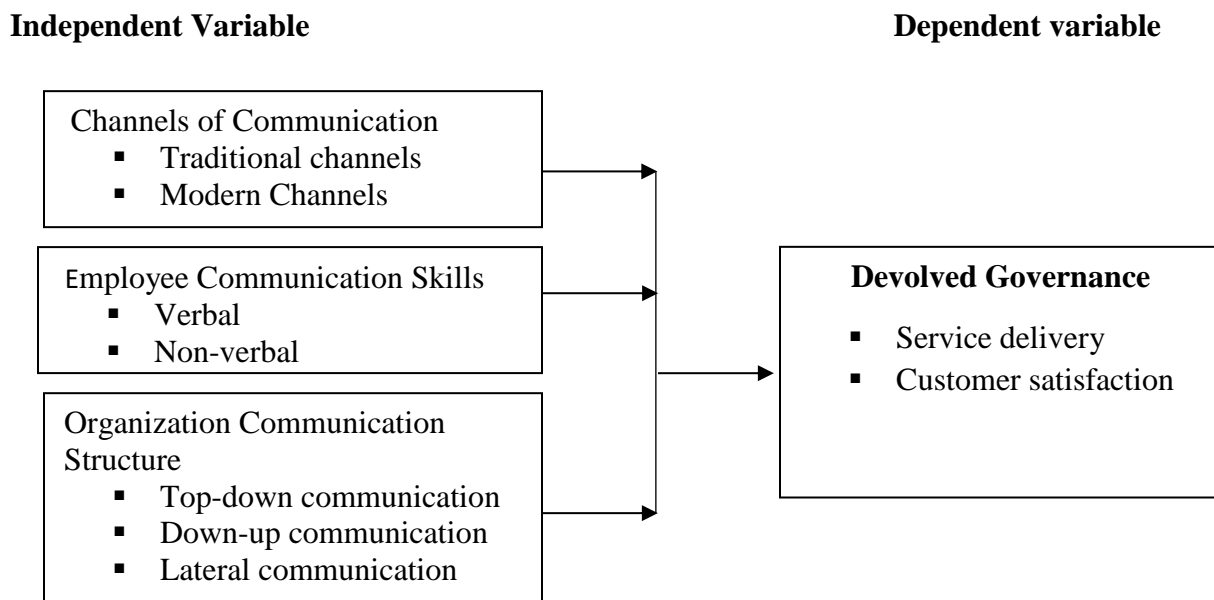
The county lies between latitude 0 30'and 1 0'South and longitude 34 38'and 35 0'East. The county covers a total area of 1,332.7 km square and is divided into nine constituencies namely: Kitutu Chache North, Kitutu Chache South, Nyaribari Masaba, Nyaribari Chache, Bomachoge Borabu, Bomachoge Chache, Bobasi, South Mugirango and Bonchari. It has 9 sub-counties and 45 Wards respectively. The county's total population is projected at 1,226,873. Population distribution in the county is influenced by such factors as physical, historical, patterns of economic development and policies pertaining to land settlement. The county is characterized by a hilly topography with several ridges and valleys and relies more on agricultural activities (www.kenyampya.com, 2012)

### Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a set of wide-ranging ideas and principles taken from various field of inquiry and are used to assemble a presentation (Muli, 2014). It is a framework with a brief description of a phenomenon under study represented in a graphical or diagram of major variables of the study. It can also be referred to as a research tool whose intention is to create awareness and an understanding to a researcher of the situation under study. In relation to this study, the conceptual framework was based on the human relations theory which emphasizes on the importance of human needs and of providing conditions for each employee to achieve their human potential.

This human relations concept discusses how persons in different roles in the organization’s framework should communicate with each other so that both (individual and organizational) outcomes can be improved. The inter-relationship emphasizes on the importance of informal communication. By understanding this concept, it is possible to show how communication in an organization can contribute to improving organizational and individual outcomes at the county government of Kisii.

The following framework depicts the relationship between the independent and dependent variables based on four independent variables and a dependent variable as represented diagrammatically in figure 1.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

### Research Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive research design because of its specific nature and the fact that it facilitates a general understanding and interpretation of the problem. According to Mitchell & Jolley (2012), accurate descriptions played a key role in social policy reforms by helping students and other researchers go beyond simply memorizing terms to develop a true understanding of research design. Good description provokes the ‘why’ questions of explanatory research. The issues in this study being the effect of organizational communication on devolved governance in Kisii County was thus aimed at addressing the essential questions in the research such as why, who, when, what, and how the phenomenon affected good governance.

The study used questionnaires and observation in the collection of primary data while secondary data was obtained through published documents such as books, journals, periodicals, magazines and reports to supplement the primary data. Questionnaires were chosen and designed to elicit information that could be obtained through the written responses of the subjects. It consisted of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents.

The questionnaire was semi-structured in nature, with both open and close-ended questions. While the close-ended questions guided the respondents' answers within the choices given, the open-ended ones were helpful in gathering more detailed responses especially in cases where the researcher had no pre-determined options. Observation method was included in the study to complement the questionnaire as a data collection tool and method.

### Sample and Sampling Techniques

A sample is 'a subset of the target population' (Saunders, 2011: 51). It is also referred to as a sub-section of the population which is selected to participate in a study. A sample can be used to derive inferences about the population if appropriate sample size and sampling techniques are used.

A sample size is the number of units of observation that the researcher intends to collect information from. To get the sample size in this study, the researcher applied the formula proposed by Singh, & Masuku, M. B. (2014) since it is simple to use, and it is scientific and can be used in cases of large populations despite there being other various formulas that have been proposed for sample size determinations. Thus, to come up with the sample size from 620 employees which was the target population in Kisii County Executive, the study specified a 10 percent error. The following formula was used to find the sample size in the study:

$n = \frac{N}{1 + (N * e^2)}$  Where:

n= sample size

N = Number of employees

e = Tolerance at desired level of confidence; probability level of  $\alpha = 0.1$

How the formula is used is as shown below:

$$n = \frac{620}{1 + (620 * (0.1 * 0.1))}$$

$$n = \frac{620}{1 + (620 * 0.01)}$$

$$n = \frac{620}{1 + 6.2}$$

$$n = \frac{620}{7.2}$$

$$n = 86$$

The distribution of the sample across the categories was done using the formula

Number of individuals x the sample size

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Total Population

In order to carry out a scientific study, every 7<sup>th</sup> employee on the list was selected as a respondent until the desired 7<sup>th</sup> respondent in Kisii County Executive category was achieved and this gave a total of 86 respondents from the sample.

Category	Population	Sample size
Top level Management	30	4
Middle level Management	122	17
Lower level Management	468	65
<b>Total</b>	<b>620</b>	<b>86</b>

**Table 1: Population and Sample Distribution**

### Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

#### Introduction

The study findings were presented to establish the effect of organizational communication on devolved governance: A case of Kisii County. The data was gathered exclusively from the questionnaire as the research instrument. The study was also endeavored to test a correlation between communication and job satisfaction by analyzing the significance of different dimensions of communication satisfaction with a view that satisfaction is multifaceted. The questionnaire was designed in line with the objectives of the study.

#### Data Presentation

The following research questions were analyzed to determine how communication affected job performance and satisfaction among staff members which in turn affected the level of governance in the county. The research questions addressed each dimensions of communication separately as well as the total score of communication effect and staff satisfaction dimensions. The following research questions were used as guidelines in discussing the findings of the study.

- i. How does an organizational communication channel affect devolved governance in Kisii County?
- ii. What is the effect of employee communication skills on devolved governance in Kisii County?
- iii. What is the effect of organizational communication structure on devolved governance in Kisii County?

#### Response Rate

A total of 86 questionnaires were distributed to employees across the three levels of management i.e. top, middle and lower level. Out of this, 60 questionnaires were returned which translated to 69.77% response rate as shown in Table 2 below:

	Questionnaires administered	Questionnaires filled & Returned	Percentage
Respondents	86	60	69.77%

**Table 2: Respondents’ response Rate**

This, according to Babbie (2010), a response rate of 60% is good, while 70% is considered very good and 50% thought to be adequate for analysis and reporting from manual surveys. This is because the benchmark response

rate is usually set at 50% which is regarded as desirable. Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, (2010) sets the adequacy bar at 75% and argues that the larger the response rate, the smaller the non-response error. The response rate was therefore adequate for the study to make relevant conclusions based on the responses. This reasonable response rate was made a reality after the researcher made personal calls and visits to remind the respondent to fill-in and return the questionnaires.

**Gender**

The research sought to establish the gender distribution of the respondents and the findings were as indicated in table 3 below:

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	30	50%
Female	18	30%
Did not Respond	12	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 3: Respondents’ Gender**

From the results, both male and female respondents participated in the study and the results showed that 50% were male, 30% were female and 20% of the respondents did not indicate their gender. The results indicated that the two genders were adequately represented in the study since there was none which was more than the two-thirds. This means the study findings met the threshold after attaining the required gender representation.

**Age of Respondents**

The study undertook to establish the ages of respondents who participated in the study as recorded in table 4 below:

<b>Age (years)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
20 – 25	6	10%
26-30	12	20%
31-40	24	40%
41-50	12	20%
+50	6	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 4: Age of Respondents**

From the findings, 10% of those who filled the questionnaires were aged between 20 - 25years, 20% were between 26 - 30 years, 40% were aged between 31 - 40 years, 20% were aged between 41 - 50 years and 10% were aged 50 years and above. The findings were in agreement with those of Gannon, T. N. (2011) who established that there are two natural age peaks of the late 20s and mid 40s who are productive in organizations. The two peaks fall in both the two age brackets used in this study. Again, this shows that those who were interviewed were adults who were capable of making independent judgments and the results of a research process involving them was deemed to be valid and reliable.

Communication whether group, mediated, interpersonal, or other, will remain at the center of how we view, interact with, and relate to those of different ages at work despite the continuous pace of technological change that will surely transform many aspects of tomorrow’s organizations. Therefore, the more we can understand how individuals of different generations communicate and perceive their communication with each other, the better placed we are to craft solutions for the cross-generational organizational communication challenges and opportunities of now and of the future.

According to the findings, it was established that the workplace, by its very nature, was rich with intergroup dynamics, with age in-group and out-group distinctions being but just one of the many intergroup characterizations. For instance, the social categories such as rank, gender, ethnicity, teams, and age were termed as influential factors to communication between organizational members and their identity formation processes. Therefore, it is likely that age created a feeling of organizational commitment depending on both experience and the conservative attitude it produced in the structure of the organization’s communication process. This was well demonstrated in table 4 where a majority of respondents (40%) were aged between 31-40 years of age. This then clearly indicated that age had an influential impact on organizational communication as a result of the responses that were gathered from the questionnaires responded from this age group.

Respondents aged 20 years and below and those aged 50 years and above returned the lowest response i.e. 6 respondents each representing 10% due to what was believed to be age stereotypes in society where the elderly people (employees) being considered to be eccentric, weak, feeble-minded, irritable, and cognitively deficient (poorer memory skills) while the young employees aged below 20 years being thought of lacking interest in participating in research activities due to their lack of competence in the field.

**Length of Service**

The study determined the length of service held by the respondents in order to ascertain the extent to which their responses could be relied upon to make conclusions on the study problem using their working experience as shown in table 5 below:

<b>Length of Service</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Less than 2 years	15	26%
2 - 5 years	28	45%
6 - 10 years	15	25%
Above 10 years	2	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 5: Length of Service**

Majority (45%) of the respondents comprised of employees whose length of service was between 2 – 5 years since the inception of county government administrative units in Kenya in 2013 after the new constitution was promulgated in August 2010. This meant that being a source of information regarding the research topic was highly reliable and could form a better foundation on which future management within the count will heavily base their bench-marking activities on with a view to making any meaningful development and re-adjustments for better customer service delivery.

This was closely followed by employees with less than 2 years of service with 26% response. Despite this category of employees posting the second highest response rate, their stay at the county government was less



than 2 years thus didn't have much experience on how organizational communication worked. However, that doesn't completely rule them out of being in possession of vital information on how the operations were conducted. At 25% was a group of employees with a working experience of 6 - 10 years and 4% had a working experience of 10 years and above.

These two groups were of greater interest because the birth of Kisii county government found them already working in the municipal council that was later transformed into a county government hence the reason as to why they had more working experience than the overall number of years the county government has been in existence. It was revealed that the length of service had a direct impact on the level of understanding of organizational communication and operations of the county.

It took new employees longer time to understand how the county operated in terms of organizational structural communication from the top management to the lower cadres and vice versa compared to old employees who have been into the system for quite some time. These findings were in line with the assertions by Karangi, & Mwangangi, (2017) who noted that respondents with a high working experience assist in providing reliable data on the study problem since they have technical experience on the problem being investigated by the study.

**Level of Education**

The study further set out to find the respondents' level of education in order to ascertain if they were well equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to aid the county in working towards achieving its established goals and objectives as indicated in table 6 below:

Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage
Diploma	22	38%
Degree	24	40%
Masters	10	15%
PhD	4	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 6: Level of Education**

From the study findings, majority (40%) of the respondents with a frequency of 24 indicated that they had university first degree, followed by a frequency of 22 which translated into 38% indicating they had diploma while a frequency of 10 representing 15% indicated that they had Master's degree and finally 7% of the respondents with a frequency of 4 said they had doctorate qualifications.

Drawing judgment from the above findings, it was very clear that all the respondents had the necessary level of education and understanding which according to experts impacts on employees' communication and motivation. Research revealed that highly educated employees were more motivated by intrinsic rewards than the less educated people who had a higher preference for extrinsic rewards. This means that there existed a relationship between communication, level of education, and motivation which consequently affected the level of performance within the county government.

This group of employees understood the organizational communication process within the county well and could provide relevant information that could help the research draw her conclusions and recommendations based on reliable data and in case of any substantiation they were in a position to validate and prove that because of their level of education and ability to access, retrieve, synthesize and share information.

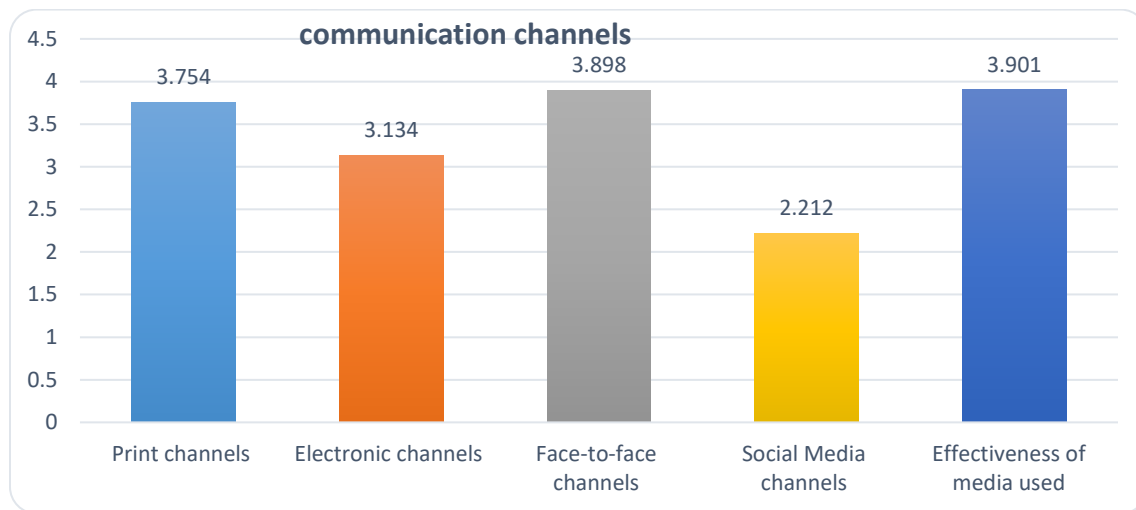
### Organizational Communication Channels

The study assessed the effect of communication channels on devolved governance in Kisii County as presented in table 7 below:

Description	No.	Mean	Std
Print channels	44	3.754	.234
Electronic channels	38	3.134	.233
Face-to-face channels	46	3.898	.431
Social Media channels	44	2.212	.169
Effectiveness of the Media used	41	3.901	.832

**Table 7: Channels of Communication**

The findings’ statements were presented on a five point Like-type scale where 5 = Very Great Extent, 4 = Great Extent; 3 = Moderate Extent; 2 = Small Extent; 1= Very Small Extent. The scores of Very Great Extent and Great Extent were perceived to be equivalent to a mean score of 3.5 to 5.0 respectively. The score of Moderate Extent represented a statement equivalent to a mean score 2.6 to 3.4. The score of Small Extent and Very Small Extent represented an equivalent mean score of 1.0 to 2.5 respectively. Using the mean score rating, the findings were presented in a chart form as shown in figure 2 below:



**Figure 2: Communication Channels**

Despite modern media being more effective in changing the knowledge by creating multiple communication possibilities for organizations and stakeholders, the research established that majority of the respondents concurred that face-to-face with a mean of 3.898 and print channels means of communication with a mean of 3.754 were used to a very greater extent compared to other channels of communication at the organization while relaying and conveying messages and information between the management and its employees.

This was followed by electronic channels to a moderate extent which registered a mean of 3.134 while Social Media which represents modern means of communication that is faster and more reliable than the traditional ones came in last with a mean of 2.212 as it was utilized to a very smaller extent. It was also demonstrated from the findings that media was effectively used in the county following a return response of 41 with a mean of 3.901 which indicated to be on a very great extent.

However, looking at figure 2 above, the researcher concluded that following the results obtained in the study, it was realized that integrating traditional into modern communication channels was not negotiable and could have a positive effect on motivating employees thus creating a possibility of enhancing the desired level of satisfaction on employees. This is so because when you fuse face-to-face, print media (memos, letters, etc.) which are important with media such as social media, E-mails, blogging, they enhance communication in organizations hence spurring organization growth and development.

### Employee Communication Skills

The study sought to assess the influence of employee communication aspects on devolved governance in the study area as presented in table 8 below:

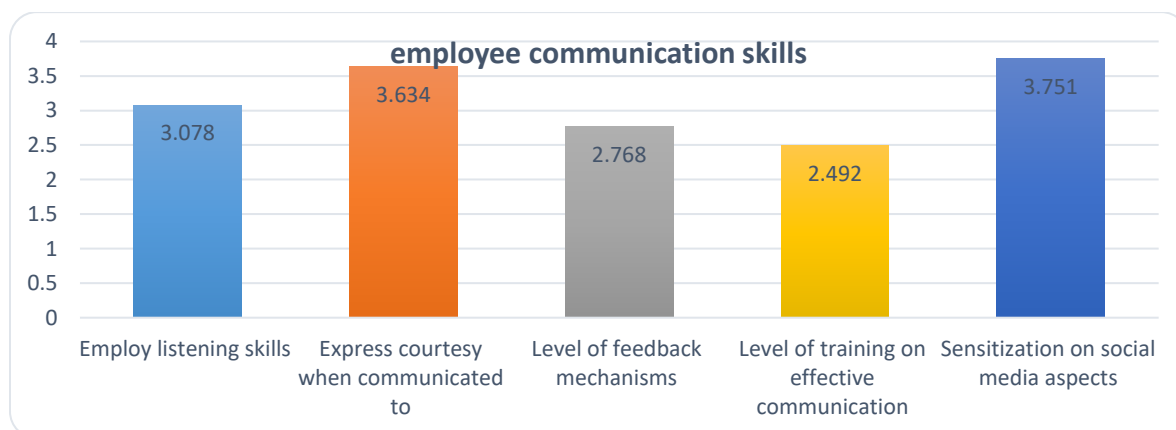
Description	No.	Mean	Std
Employ listening skills	40	3.078	0.234
Express courtesy when communicated to	42	3.634	0.233
Level of feedback mechanisms	48	2.768	0.431
Level of training on effective communication	45	2.492	0.169
Sensitization on social media aspects	39	3.751	0.832

**Table 8: Employee Communication Skills**

This section presented findings to statements posed in this regard with responses given on a five-point like scale where 5 = Very Great Extent; 4 = Great Extent; 3 = Moderate Extent; 2 = Small Extent; 1= Very Small Extent. Table 4.7 presented the findings with the scores of ‘Very Great Extent’ and ‘Great Extent’ being taken to represent a statement equivalent to a mean score of 3.5 to 5.0 (Great Extent).

The score of ‘Moderate Extent’ were taken to represent a statement equivalent to a mean score of 2.6 to 3.4. The score of ‘Small Extent’ and ‘Very Small Extent’ were taken to represent a statement equivalent to a mean score of 1.0 to 2.5 (Small extent).

The data in Table 8 was however presented in a clustered column to compare values across categories by using vertical rectangles as shown in figure 3 below to give a better understanding by demonstrating it graphically using the mean score rating as described in the likert-scale:



**Figure 3: Employee communication skills**

From the findings, respondents indicated that employees employed listening skills to a moderate extent i.e. with a mean of 3.078 when communicating. This depicted an employee force that doesn't really value listening as an important component in an organizational communication process. However, it important to note that listening is vital to effective working relationships among employees and between management and staff.

Listening skills highly impact on an organization's interaction with customers and other businesses. Therefore, to improve on listening skills, employees ought to give the other person their full attention and maintain eye contact. When they are done speaking, rephrase their remarks and ask whether you understand them correctly. Continue to ask questions to gain a better understanding of their statements.

The respondents further indicated that to a very great extent, they expressed courtesy when being communicated to while handling clients at a return response of 3.634 mean. The level of feedback mechanisms received a 2.768 mean rating signifying a moderate extent in its application in the communication structure within the organization. This means that the county government's top management did not emphasize and engage so much on feedback mechanisms as a component in the communication process. However, the respondents acknowledged efforts by the county governments to offer necessary feedback on various issues that the residents and other clients wanted clarified or addressed. Going forward, the respondents felt it was important for the county administrators and executive managers to put more emphasis on enhancing the feedback mechanism so as to facilitate more transparency that aids in promoting a unit workforce within the organization for better service delivery.

From the findings, it was also established that the level of training on effective communication posted the least rating with a mean of 2.492 that corresponded with a very small extent on the likert survey scale. This implied that the management did not invest much in capacity building on employees' communication knowledge and skills which is deemed as the engine in the organizations' management. From these revelations, it was quite obvious that the county government cared less about improving the quality of employees' skills in the communication process within the organization to warrant effective and smooth sharing and exchange of ideas, opinions, suggestions and other important information.

Training and Development has a direct relationship with effectiveness of the devolution of counties in Kenya. When the county Executive and Assembly are well trained and thoroughly developed they will deliver the agenda of their respective county governments and hence the reason why this kind of relationship exists.

Interestingly, it was pleasing to learn that the county government was highly involved in sensitization of social media aspects as a means of communication within the organization with a mean of 3.751 which put it in a range of very great extent on a likert scale in its application by employees through awareness creation by the top management. This was due to the nature of social media tools which allows multiple communications to take place at any one given time thus saving on time and resources.

### **Organizational Communication Structure**

The study sought to assess the influence of organizational communication structure on devolved governance in the study area as presented in table 9 below:

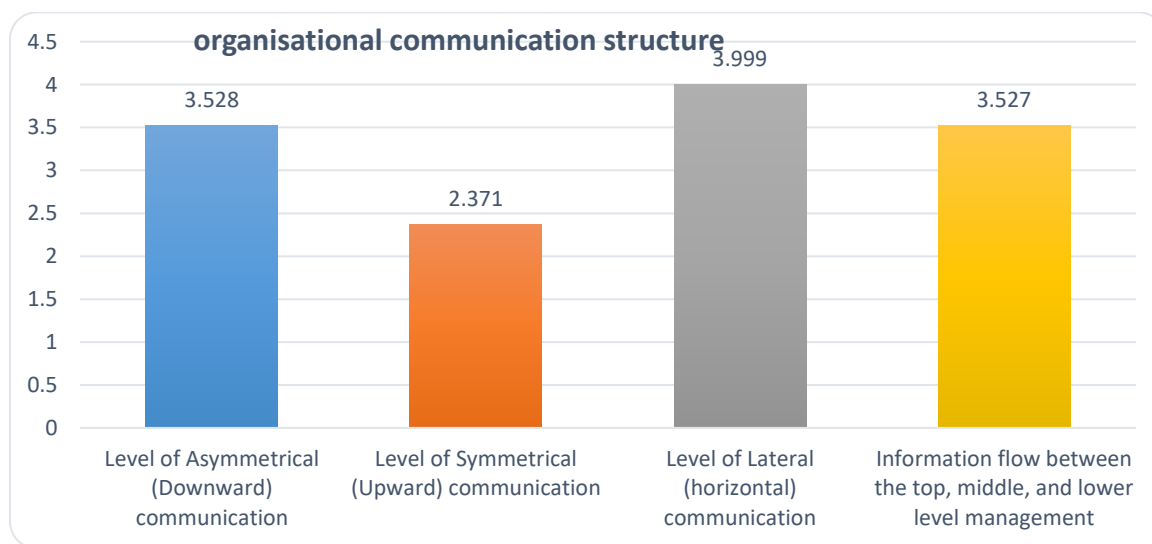
<b>Description</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std</b>
Level of Asymmetrical (Downward) communication	38	3.528	1.5
Level of Symmetrical (Upward) communication	44	2.371	0.5

Level of Lateral (horizontal) communication	48	3.999	0.6
Information flow between the top, middle, and lower level management	50	3.527	0.3

**Table 9: Organizational Communication Structure**

This section presented findings to statements posed in this regard with responses given on a five-point likert scale where 5 = Very Great Extent; 4 = Great Extent; 3 = Moderate Extent; 2 = Small Extent; 1= Very Small Extent. The findings were presented in both and chart formats. The scores of ‘Very Great Extent’ and ‘Great Extent’ were taken to represent a statement highly agreed upon which was equivalent to a mean score of 3.5 to 5.0. The score of ‘Moderate Extent’ was taken to represent a statement agreed upon moderately which was equivalent to a mean score of 2.6 to 3.4.

The score of ‘Small Extent’ and ‘Very Small Extent’ were taken to represent a statement agreed upon on a minimal scale equivalent to a mean score of 1.0 to 2.5. These findings were illustrated in form of a column chart using the mean score as shown in figure 4 below:



**Figure 4: Communication dimension**

The results of the respondents as shown in the table above indicated that to a great extent with a return response of 3.528 mean score, the county government employed the use of Asymmetrical (Downward) communication dimension in the management and running of their functions and operations. The employees therefore did not agree to its application in the organization’s operations as the main means of communication. As much as the dimension did not give room for feedback and input in departmental decisions, process, and procedures from the lower levels, the county government felt it was the best channel of communication to its employees at the lower cadre.

On the other hand, despite the Symmetrical or Upward communication channel being a system that allows the lower level employees to express their suggestions, attitude or opinion as input to upper level managers for consideration, it was the least (small extent) utilized form of channel with a mean of 2.371. However, the respondents in their own thinking felt that going forward; the communication channel should be adopted because it gives way for feedback from employees which can help improve the organization’s development

agenda since it allows participation hence boost morale among employees and motivate them to work more towards fulfillment of assigned tasks and targets.

The respondents further felt that the channel provided room for feedback hence lower level employees' reactions and opinions could be returned to the superiors for necessary action(s) before a final decision or position was taken on the matter. This to a greater extent could offer and facilitate collective decision making thus creating and enhancing harmony for a favourable environment where creativity and innovation of ideas could be supported.

According to feedback from the findings, lateral (horizontal) communication dimension was the most utilized channel in the organization (county) with a mean score of 3.999. Various levels of employees within the county made use of lateral communication channel to pass around and share information regarding the functions and activities of the organization. They cited the main reason being due to its increased cooperation and efficiencies between people and units across an organization. However, they felt that in some way, it limited them to their peers at the same rank and position and could end working as a substitute to upward and downward communication by the top management hence ignoring them and their grievances.

More so, the employees stated that the top management was likely not to understand issues facing them when strictly limited to lateral dimension of communication. There was a feeling of a possibility of experiencing information overload since there was less information filtering at this level to ensure only current and relevant information is retained or accessed. The respondents further felt that the system did not motivate employees at the lower level since organization members were unwilling to expend the additional effort that it required.

The respondents highly agreed with the notion that the county government management allowed free flow of information between the top, middle and lower levels of management within the organization. This was reflected in their response mean score of 3.527 as per the 5 point like scale where 3.5 to 5 points indicated to be highly agreed upon.

Communication is a necessary and important component in any organization to develop team, individual and organizational success. Effective two-way group and individual communication makes employees happier and creates higher job satisfaction; the manager will also find more satisfaction and be happier at work. Two-way communication is the tool that allows managers to delegate more effectively, create strategies for enhanced departmental success, and more appropriately align the goals of the department to the goals of the organization. As managers communicate and listen more, they could find that increased communication improves their attitude and enhances the office culture.

The results of the survey support other research that shows employees who are informed and included in decision making enjoy greater job satisfaction, have a higher self-esteem, and feel valued at work. Enrollment Management supervisors that encourage employees to provide suggestions and opinions may experience an increase in employee job satisfaction and higher productivity; which, speaking as a supervisor, improves the manager's attitude tremendously. The respondents felt that communication was provided with the opportunity to provide feedback and input in departmental decisions, process, and procedures.

### **Compliance aspects of Governance**

In relation to the study, respondents were also asked to indicate the extent to which identified factors affected the devolved governance as regards compliance to some aspects of governance in the county government of Kisii. The findings were presented as shown in table 10 below:

<b>Description</b>	<b>0%-10%</b>	<b>11%-20%</b>	<b>21%-30%</b>	<b>31%-40%</b>	<b>Over 50%</b>	<b>Mode</b>
Compliance with communication regulations	1	3	11	17	69	5
Level of communication expenditure	3	3	14	26	49	4
Communication in relation to service delivery	1	3	3	34	60	5
Communication in relation to customer satisfaction	1	3	20	43	34	3
Transparency and accountability in the county government	1	3	23	34	40	3

**Table 10: Compliance to governance aspects**

Compliance is defined as the set of processes and structures the organization uses to ensure that employees and the organization as a whole conform and abide by the internal and external rules of conduct and regulations.

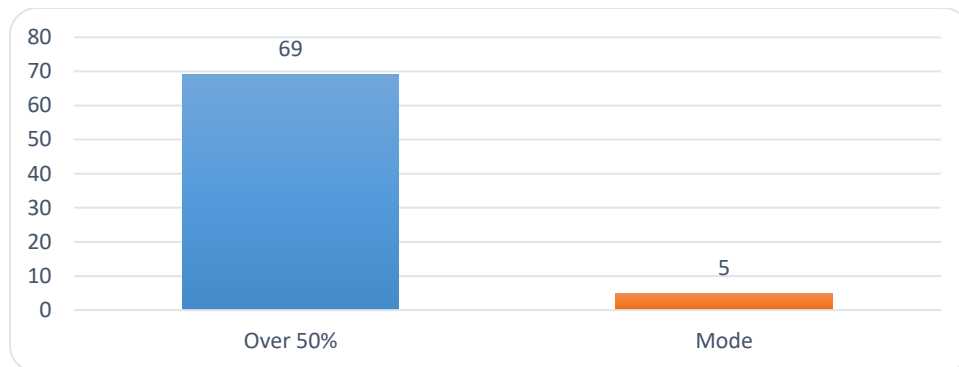
The data collected was from different indicators of the variables in devolved governance which was ordinal (nominal) categorical or variable. The data was therefore presented in frequency tables with the median derived from the respondents’ response rate being used as the appropriate measure of the central tendency (modal class). The modal class took a rating scale of: 1 (10-19%) =Very small extent); 2 (20-29%) =Small extent); 3 (30-39%) =Moderate extent; 4 (40-49%) =Great extent and finally 5 (50-100%) =Very great extent. The results were presented both in table (Table 10) as shown above and column chart as shown below in subsequent sub-titles. The first indicator for the dependent variable required knowing what was the devolved governance level of compliance with the communication regulations?

However, each variable was discussed separately with a view of ensuring that each one of them is properly examined on how it impacted on the organization’s communication process at the county before they combine together to yield a more profound effect on the entire system. This was meant to help the researcher with information about how each of the variables operated within the dependent variable by highlighting the strengths of their correlations.

**Compliance with communication regulations**

From the findings, it was found that 1% of the respondents felt the county government complied with communication regulations to an extent of 0%-10% while 3% respondents thought the county did slightly better with a compliance rate of 11-20% to communication regulations. However, 11% of the respondents had 21%-30% return rate on compliance by the organization, while 17% of the respondents felt the county complied with the regulations up to 31%-40%. The highest response rate of 69% by the respondents indicated that over 50% on compliance to communications regulations was achieved by their employer.

However, the respondents believed that there was room for improvement and were hopeful that the entire management team will ensure a better performance on the same in the future. This variable was illustrated in a column chart as shown in figure 5 below:



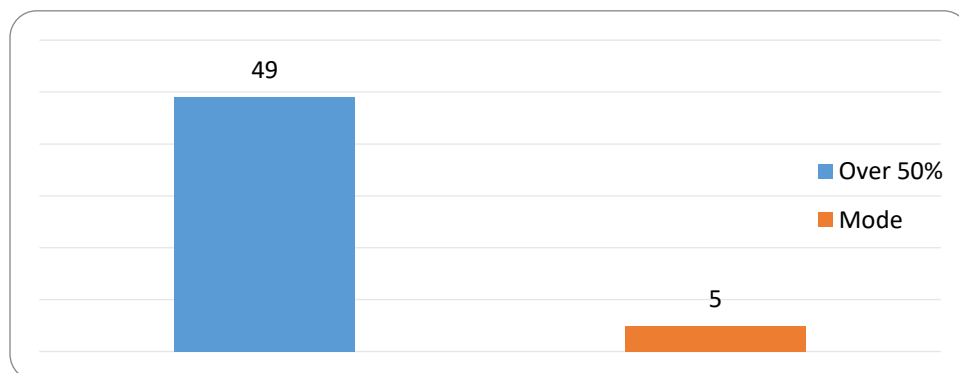
**Figure 5: Compliance with communication regulations**

The modal class was 5 with respondents who had over 50% compliance. This implied that an average level of compliance with communication regulations at the county was over 50% with a majority of the county government employees (69%) noting that compliance to communication rules and regulations supported the communication operations of the county government. This is because the flow of the workplace could be impacted negatively from time to time when workers violate the policies established by the organization and even if they do so with the best of intentions.

It is usually believed that when the organization’s entire team works towards the same goal and follow the same regulations, it is easier for it to fulfill the established goals and objectives. However, the respondents felt that when the organization understood truly why the rules were in place, it could be easier to communicate that urgency to its team of employees to help achieve the established goals as a united rather than a disjointed entity.

**Level of communication expenditure**

It was noted from the findings that, 3% of the respondents replied that there was 0%-10% compliance to expenditure as per the laid down regulations in the constitution while 3% indicated that the county government spent 11%-20% on communication expenditure. 14% of the respondents showed that there was 21%-30% on communication expenditure while 26% of the subjects interviewed returned 31%-40% response regarding the expenditure. Finally, of the total target population reached, 49% of the respondents returned over 50% results on communication expenditure as an answer which is normally below the average mark that reflects the total possible attainment of the level of compliance despite the level of communication expenditure being over 50%. This derived a modal class of 4. The researcher illustrated this variable in a chart format as shown in figure 6 below:



**Figure 6: Level of Communication expenditure**



From the statistics, the researcher established that 49% of the respondents which was the highest return results and is below average on the rate-scale believed that the county government’s expenditure on communication was over 50%. Despite respondents acknowledging that the county recognized the value and importance of communication in its administrative and organizational operations and functions as far as service delivery was concerned, they wanted the management to slightly increase the cost of expenditure on the organization’s communication systems to hit or even the 50% mark for effective service delivery.

### Communication in relation to service delivery

From the study’s findings, 1% of the respondents’ indicated that communication as a component contributed 0%-10% to service delivery at the county implying that it did not play a major role in the county’s performance. 3% of the respondents said that communication helped improve service delivery up to 11% - 20% of the total county government’s performance rating.

This was a good sign for the county since some employees realized the significance role played by communication in service delivery. On the other hand, 3% felt that only 21%-30% of communication accounted for the county’s performance on service delivery. More so, 34% interviewees returned 31%-40% results of communication as the contributing and supporting factor to service delivery to the people of Kisii County and other stakeholders. This was presented in a chart form as shown below in figure 7:

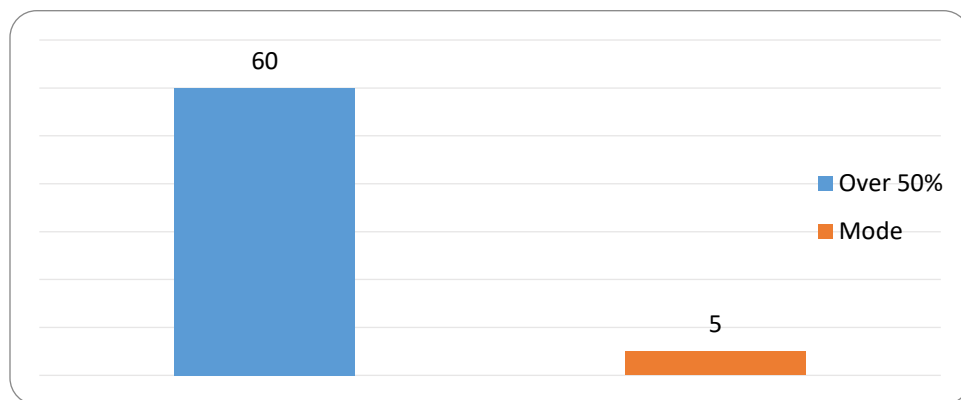


Figure 7: Communication in relation to service delivery

The modal class was of the respondents who had over 50%. The mode was found to be 5 which implied that on average the level of communication in relation to service delivery was over 50%.

As a result, a greater percentage (60%) of the respondents gave over 50% as communication’s contribution towards service delivery in the county. This showed that both the employers and employees to a greater extent appreciated the essence of communication in service delivery in the organization. This huge return response meant that sharing of ideas, feelings, thoughts, and many other things that employees shared at the county made it possible for better service delivery. This also meant that there were accelerated communication interventions in support of service delivery initiatives at the organization through developing systems that aimed at strengthening the communication infrastructure and functions of county departments and committees.

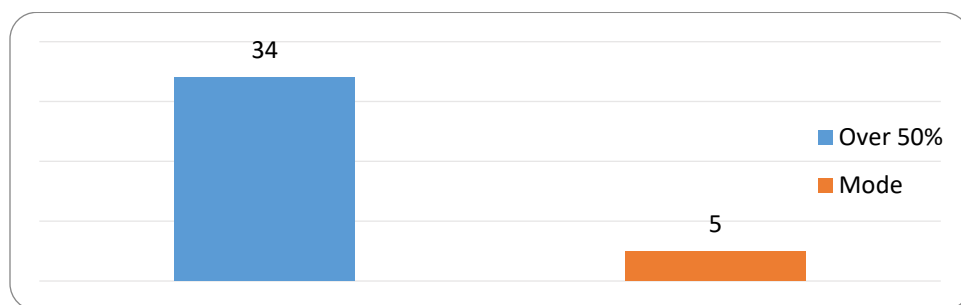
### Communication in relation to customer satisfaction

The statistical results implied that 1% of the respondents’ agreed that only 0%-10% communication as a component played some role in customer satisfaction when asked about the level of communication in relation

to customer satisfaction. On the other hand, a paltry 3% of the respondents intimated that 11%-20% of communication contributed to service delivery that met customer’s level of satisfaction. This category felt that despite the county government having a communication mechanism in place; it was not doing enough in communicating explicitly to its constituents while rendering service(s) to them.

Another category of respondents (20%) maintained that 21%-30% of the same component i.e. communication was the reason as to why customers felt satisfied while seeking services at the county offices. This showed that the county’s level of performance was sloping up in the eyes of employees and customers hence the need to maintain and improve on communication standards in order to post better and excellent performance and results. Interestingly, a majority of the respondents (43%) stated that 31%-40% of communication accounted for customer satisfaction while only 34% of the respondents believed that over 50% communication aided in the satisfaction of customers at the county.

These two responses were significant in the study but unfortunately they were below average as far as service delivery was concerned. The modal class was of the respondents who had 40%. The mode was 4 which implied that on average, the level of communication in relation to customer satisfaction was 43%. The above statistics was illustrated in chart form as shown below in figure 8 to help understand how this variable affected governance at the county.



**Figure 8: Communication in relation to customer satisfaction**

According to Thomas and Tobe (2013) “loyalty is more profitable” and therefore these figures ought to increase in light of trust being an essential element in any kind of relationship. Customer loyalty is usually considered one of the main ways through which companies and organizations can maintain and increase their revenues. This is because the customers are not only concerned with price, but also to the quality of goods and services and the way they are delivered. Therefore, customer satisfaction should be among the main concerns of organizations, regardless of their size and their market share.

However, it was believed that continuous and frequent communication with the customers could improve the weaknesses highlighted by customers i.e. accuracy and ease of understanding of the issues, response time and overcoming on long periods on services offered by the county. The county should therefore seek to maintain good long term relationships with partners, employees, shareholders, and customers and to gain confidence through open communication, trust and intercultural cooperation.

### **Transparency and accountability in the county government**

County government came into existence to restore the public confidence that had been eroded by the rising impunity by public service holders and leaders at the national government who were mandated to safeguard the country’s resources and provide services with utmost humility, accountability and integrity. Therefore,

transparency and accountability are the only two components that the county government could adopt and embrace to inject trust into the public in having confidence in those chosen, elected, or appointed in managing people’s resources and offering services to the citizens and residents.

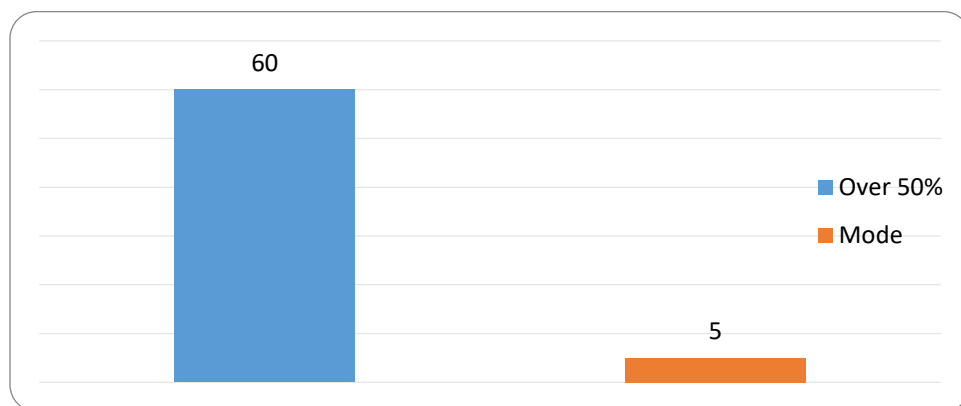
This is so because they are critical for the efficient functioning of a modern economy and for fostering social well-being in any organization. For this to happen, communication plays a key role in ensuring that the public understands how funds meant for development are being utilized. Therefore, the executive ought to freely communicate their strategies, operations and use of funds in a more transparent and accountable manner to remove any doubts of misconceptions by the public.

From the responses, 1% of the respondents’ indicated that the county government management shared 0%-10% information touching on affairs of running the organization for transparency and accountability purposes. However, 3% of the respondents proclaimed that the county government conveyed 11%-20% information regarding transparency and accountability. According to this category of respondents, there were minimal revelations of information concerning county government activities especially the financial resources on which the residents of the county had more interest on how they were being spent on their behalf.

Another 23% of the respondents revealed that they were aware of 21%-30% of the information about financial management and other resource utilization at the county. 34% of the respondents divulged that they knew 31%-40% of information concerning the organization’s activities and operations by employees who are the major stakeholders needed to have an open and free access to publications of public documents in order to know what was happening in their organization.

However, 40% of the respondents stated that over 50% of the information about transparency and accountability was in the public domain. This endorsement however moderate it is was enough to boost citizens’ and residents’ confidence in county management affairs and plans because the presence of transparency and accountability plays a key role in improving the quality of policymaking and investment decisions.

It also attracts more partners and stakeholders because of how it demonstrates its commitment to the principles of transparency and accountability which were in line with the international community’s standards in promoting good practices in the region. The modal class was of the respondents who had over 50%. The mode was found to be 5 (60%) which implied that on average the level of transparency and accountability in the county government was over 50%. This was summarized in a chart form as shown in figure 9 below:



**Figure 9: Transparency and accountability**

Good governance, integrity, transparency and accountability are principles of governance which provide impetus for rapid social, economic and political transformation. Transparency facilitates availability of information that could be used to measure the authorities' performance and to safeguard against any possible misuse of powers. In that regard, transparency serves to realize accountability hence authorities could be held responsible for their actions. Trust would be lacking in government (national or county) and those whom it governs (citizens, employees, customers, partners, etc.) without the existence of transparency and accountability. The end result would be social instability and an environment that could be less than conducive to economic growth.

### **Summary of Research Findings**

The findings indicated that organizational communication supplementing rational management positively influences the performance of devolved government. However, the Kisii county government management did not carry out training of employees to a greater extent as a type of rational management. More so the employees did not have a common conviction in decision-making.

It was also revealed that information on transparency and accountability was not widely shared by the executive with the rest of the employees thus creating an impression of a management that is out to hide something from the public. The findings on the communication in relation to customer satisfaction showed that the county's level of performance was sloping up in the eyes of employees and customers hence the need to maintain and improve on communication standards in order to post better and excellent performance and results.

### **Findings, conclusions and recommendations**

#### **Introduction**

The conclusion and recommendations were mainly focused on addressing the purpose of this study which was to examine the effect of organizational communication on devolved governance in Kisii County. The study was also intended to establish the relationship between communication dimension and service delivery as a result of the two variables coming into play. More specifically, the researcher sought to answer the following research questions:

- i. How do organization communication channels affect devolved governance in Kisii County?
- ii. What is the effect of employee communication skills on devolved governance in Kisii County?
- iii. What is the effect of organization communication structure on devolved governance in Kisii County?

#### **Summary of the findings**

The study sought to scrutinize the effect of organizational communication on devolved governance, a case of Kisii County, Kenya. The statistical analyses presented in this study were based on three research questions that were highlighted and enumerated in Chapter 1 and 4. A total of 86 employees participated in the study from a population of 620 staff members (Top, middle and lower level management) employed at Kisii County Government.

The survey used a Likert-type scale (where the participants had to choose from one of the following responses: Very Great Extent = 5, Great Extent = 4, Moderate Extent = 3, Small Extent = 2, and Very Small Extent = 1. The scores of Very Great Extent and Great Extent were perceived to be equivalent to a mean score of 3.5 to

5.0 respectively. The score of Moderate Extent represented a statement equivalent to a mean score 2.6 to 3.4. The score of Small Extent and Very Small Extent both represented an equivalent mean score of 1.0 to 2.5.

The researcher selected Kisii County as a case study because it falls within the industry/market (counties) of study and it is also within place of reach for purposes of data and information collection. The summary of the study findings presented herein followed the research objectives formulated in chapter one of the study.

#### **a) Establishing how Organizational Communication Channels affect Devolved Governance in Kisii County**

The study established that face-to-face channels such as speeches, focus group discussions, meetings, social events among others were the most utilized forms of communication in the county returning a mean score of 3.898 (very great extent). The print channels of communication for instance memos, notices, letters, newsletters, reports, brochures, policy manuals, and posters were the second most used posting a mean score of 3.754 which translated to a great extent.

It was also found that electronic channels including emails, television, video-conferencing, bulk-SMS, instant messaging systems and wikis were moderately used i.e. to a moderate extent with a mean score of 3.134 as per the Like-type scale. However, Social Media channels which are the latest and modern systems of communications such as Face book, WhatsApp, Instagram, blogs, twitter, etc. were used on small extent returning a mean score of 2.212. The researcher further established that the media used for communication was effectively used to a great extent with a mean of 3.901.

However, it was noted that the employees preferred a combination of multi-faceted tools and channels of communication depending on the nature of communication and the suitability of system of communication tool to be applied in that particular circumstance. Employees were further of the opinion that there must be willingness from the top management in engaging the lower cadre of employees in the communication process so as to participate in giving opinions and freely expressing challenges facing them so that they become owners of decisions arrived at within the organization.

#### **b) Determining the effect of Employees' Communication Skills on Devolved Governance in Kisii County**

The study's results indicated that to a great extent (Mean of 3.078), employees employed listening skills when communicating. They also expressed courtesy when being communicated to which indicated a moderate extent with a Mean of 3.634. The level of feedback with a Mean of 2.768 was moderately extent meaning it wasn't considered amongst the priorities in the communication process within the organization. This in turn impacted on the decisions made by the top management since the lower cadre felt excluded from fully participating in the decision making process.

Surprisingly, employees training on effective communication received the least consideration from the organization's management which felt that capacity building on employees to enhance their communication skills was unnecessary and could not add any value to the county's operations and functions. However, all was not lost as the county government management team took into consideration the aspect of social media sensitization as a means of communication to employees within the organization by creating awareness about its ability to allow multiple communications making it register a mean of 3.751 and with a standard deviation of 0.832 which gave it a very great extent of its utilization.

**c) To examine the effects of Organization Communication Structure on Devolved**

**Governance in Kisii County**

The study found out as revealed in Table 9 by the respondents that to a great extent the organization engaged in Asymmetrical (Downward) communication (Mean of 3.528) as compared to Symmetrical (Upward) communication (Mean of 2.371). This meant that the county government preferred one way communication dimension where all the decisions emerged from the top management without or with little input from the lower level employees.

However, the lower cadre of employees preferred the symmetrical/upward communication which provided room for their opinions, suggestions, emotions, feedback, etc. to be considered and feel they were appreciated. The organization further engaged in lateral (horizontal) communication to a great extent with a mean score of 3.3999). Respondents disputed the notion that there was free information flow between the top, middle and lower level management. The participants of this study seemed to think that their organization was centralized and stratified and did not allow employees to participate in decision making.

They wanted a type of communication system or channel that could free them from the shackles of intimidation, suppression, discrimination, and exclusion from participating in important activities and decision-making processes within the organization. They wanted to be part of the process hence the need and desire for a working organizational communication channel or system. From the results, one could tell that organizational structure was a strong predictor of internal communication. For instance, employees positively associated symmetrical system of communication to organizational justice which meant that employees were more likely to perceive that they were treated fairly by their organization.

**Conclusion**

Based on the study findings, the study concluded that Channels of communication, employee communication skills and organizational communication structure had a significant effect on devolved governance.

The study concluded that organizational channels of communication were the main factors that affected devolved governance. The study showed that the channels of communication significantly influenced devolved governance. Therefore, the more the channels of communication were utilized, the better the governance. This indicated that the channels of communication had a positive effect on devolved governance. Most of the respondents indicated that the County Government used traditional channels of communication as compared to the modern channels of communication. Majority of the respondents were of the opinion that electronic communication be embraced to facilitate the flow of information in all organization's levels of management from top to bottom without any bias.

The study further noted that employees' communication skills formed the second important factor that affected devolved governance. The study demonstrated that employee communication skills had a profound influence on devolved governance. This implied that improving levels of employee communication skills would increase the performance levels of devolved governance. This showed that employee communication skills had a positive effect on devolved governance.

The findings however, revealed minimal training on communication to their employees; and concurred that training as a component was important because it enhances performance and service delivery ultimately to customer satisfaction. The findings therefore emphasized what Balci, (2015) observed that people with

enhanced communication skills could cope better with the problems they encounter in their lives by developing satisfying relationship and can be more successful in their professional lives. Otenyo, E. E. (2017) effectively argued that whereas Kenya's trade unions are relatively weak organizationally, there is room for ICTs to be leveraged for the greater benefit of workers. He advocated for strengthening of institution through capacity building as a main enabler of good e-government progress which Kisii County government could recommend.

The study concluded that organizational communication structure was the third important factor that affected devolved governance. The study indicated that organizational communication structures had a significant influence on devolved governance. This implied that increasing levels of organizational communication structure would increase the levels of devolved governance.

This showed that organizational communication structure had a positive influence on development in county governance. The results also showed that only top management interacted and communicated unlike the middle level management who exhibited some form of centralization and reluctance in which (Hage, 2017) hypothesized that it inhibited communication in organizations. It was therefore noted that there was low information flow between the middle and lower levels of management which affected customer satisfaction. According to Hage, 2017, decentralization encouraged the dispersion of information and decision making in an organization.

### **Recommendations of the study**

The study recommended for improvement of the channels of communication to enhance devolved governance. This could include blending traditional channels with modern means of communication in complementing each other in the communication sphere within the organization. Using print channels such as memos, notices, letters, brochures, newsletters, reports, policy manuals, annual reports and posters, alongside electronic channels such as email and voice mail, Intranets, blogs, podcasts, chat rooms, business TV, video conferencing, instant messaging systems and wikis together with face-to-face channels such as speeches, meetings, focus groups, brown bag lunches, social events and gatherings for communication could aid in gaining a better understanding of the dynamics in employees behavioural effect to job performance which directly affects the organization's performance.

The social media channels such as Face book, WhatsApp were also found to be very important channels of communication though they needed to be explored more to enhance communication. The researcher encourages the county government to embrace the use of more modern channels of communication at all levels of management. This is because e-communication allows multiple communications and it is fast, accessible, convenient, accurate, effective and efficient. More training should be conducted on new technology and how it can be utilized to improve on organizational communication to ultimately enhance good governance.

The study recommends for an improvement of employee communication skills to influence devolved governance. The researcher expressed the need for capacity building of county governments' employees on communication skills. The employees should adopt listening skills when communicating, express courtesy and instill feedback mechanisms in the organization. This is because training on effective communication and sensitization on social media aspects will play a greater role and impact in improving the quality of service delivery in the County.

The county government engaged in asymmetrical (Top-down) communication and lateral (horizontal) communication more than Symmetrical (Down-Top) communication. The study recommends for more employee engagement with the top management through the initiation of upward communication channel. It is important that the organization creates an environment that gives employees the confidence to communicate to their seniors on matters affecting the organization without fear of victimization. Information flows between the top, middle and lower level management should also be improved. The study therefore recommends that there is need to enhance communication among all levels in the organization and encourage freedom of expression.

By emphasizing on promoting symmetrical (upward) communication systems, the county will not only be able to address issues affecting the employees but will also be able to get the feedback on performance of their duties. More so, downward communication will assist the county management in getting things done in the right way because employees will be able to understand what is expected of them from the management which shall then help them execute specific duties effectively. On the other hand, lateral communication will help employees be able to create teamwork spirit and thus enhance their performance through teamwork kind of operations.

The study further recommends for an establishment of an internal communication policy to guide communication procedures in the organization as a critical step towards good governance. The policy will improve on the performance of the organization by stipulating the purpose of communication, the structure of communication, content and messaging including rules of operations when communicating. Communication to all stakeholders is necessary to ensure that the strategic process receives support from all concerned functions. Communication should be done on a timely manner so that employees may know about the changes that will occur and prepare themselves prior to implementation.

### **Suggestions for further studies**

The study is a milestone for further research in the field of communication and governance in Africa and particularly in Kenya. The study demonstrated factors that influence devolved governance which include channels of communication, employee communication skills and organization communication structure. This study should be expanded further in future to determine the effect of channels of communication, employee communication skills and organizational communication structure on devolved governance. Future researchers should also base their studies on effects of internal communication on service delivery to the customers to ascertain their level of satisfaction.

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