DRIVERS OF CORRUPTION AND PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY IN DEVOLVED SYSTEMS OF GOVERNMENT: CASE OF KIAMBU AND NAIROBI CITY COUNTIES, KENYA.

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DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.

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DEDICATION

To my husband Wilson, and my children Robby and Tabby, for their love and unwavering support.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AIE	:	Authority to Incur Expenditure
ACECA	:	Anticorruption and Economic Crimes Act
AGK	:	Auditor General of Kenya
CBOs	:	Community Based Organization (s)
CDFs	:	Constituency Development Fund (s)
CEC(M)	:	County Executive Committee Member
COVID-19	:	Corona Virus Disease
CLPI(s)	:	County Level Policy Instrument (s)
DCIO	:	Directorate of Criminal Investigations Office
DNA	:	Deoxyribonucleic acid
DPP	:	Director of Public Prosecutions
DSG(s)	:	Devolved Systems of Government (s)
EACC	:	Ethics and Anticorruption Commission
EU	:	European Union
FGD(s)	:	Focus Group Discussion (s)
FIG.	:	Figure
GDP	:	Gross Domestic Product
GNACTA	:	Global Network on Anticorruption, Transparency and : Accountability
HR	:	Human Resource
IEBC	:	Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission
ICT	:	Information Communication Technology
ICRN	:	Interdisciplinary Corruption Research Network
ID(s)	:	Identification Card (s)
IFMIS	:	Integrated Financial Management Information System
IMF	:	International Monetary Fund
KACA	:	Kenya Anti-Corruption Authority
KCB	:	Kenya Commercial Bank
KEPSA	:	Kenya Private Sector Alliance
KES	:	Kenya Shilling
KLR	:	Kenya Law Reports
KU	:	Kenyatta University
MCA(s)	:	Member (s) of County Assembly

MMU	:	Multimedia University of Kenya
MP(s)	:	Member(s) of Parliament
NACOSTI	:	National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation
NCIC	:	National Cohesion and Integration Commission
NGO(s)	:	Non-Governmental Organization (s)
NMS	:	Nairobi Metropolitan Services
NPM	:	New Public Management
OECD	:	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PFMA	:	Public Finance Management Act
PSD	:	Public Service Delivery
PSR(s)	:	Public Sector Reform (s)
SDG(s)	:	Sustainable Development Goal (s)
SCA(s)	:	Subcounty Administrator (s)
TEL	:	Telephone Number
TI	:	Transparency International
UK	:	United Kingdom
UN	:	United Nations
UNCAC	:	United Nations Convention Against Corruption
UNDP	:	United Nations Development Program
UNECA	:	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
U. S	:	United States of America
U.S $	:	United States of America Dollar
WB	:	World Bank

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Bureaucratic procedures: refer to red tape, hierarchies and specializations.

Corruption: refers to embezzlement and bribery.

County level policy instruments: these refer to the laws, policies, regulations, rules, guidelines, procedures and practices put in place by counties to govern the behavior and decision-making processes of its staff.

Devolved system(s) of government: is the constitutional vesting of political, administrative and fiscal responsibilities in a regional or local government. In this study, devolved systems of government refer to Kiambu and Nairobi City counties.

Drivers of corruption: refers to organisational culture, bureaucratic procedures, information processing, public awareness and county level policy instruments.

Information processing: refers to how devolved systems of government collect, receive, analyze, utilize and disseminate information to curb corruption.

Organisational culture: refers to the processes and interactions and coordination mechanisms at intra-organizational level, inter-organizational level and between the organization and members of the public.

Public awareness: refers to civic education forums and civic educational materials.

Public service delivery: is the mechanism through which governments provide services to the public and refers to the accessibility of those services in terms of geographical reach and affordability and the quality of services as defined by their reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy, and responsiveness.

ABSTRACT

Although Kenya has experimented with devolution as a model to deliver effective and efficient public services, there is a glaring knowledge gap that interrogates drivers of corruption within devolved systems of government on public service delivery. The main objective of the study was to identify the effects of corruption drivers on public service delivery in Kiambu and Nairobi City counties. The research sought to examine the effect of organizational culture on public service delivery; to determine the effect of bureaucratic procedures on public service delivery; to identify the effect of information processing on public service delivery; to analyze the effect of county level policy instruments on public service delivery. The study utilized institutional theory, commons theory, policy networks theory, multiple-streams framework and a qualitative research approach. Authorizations were obtained from Kenyatta University, National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation, Ministry of Education, County Commissioners and authorities from the two counties before embarking on the research. The study population consisted of 126 respondents who were staff working in strategic functions in the two counties, members of the public accessing services at the time of the study, suppliers to the two county governments, the minorities, youth, women, business leaders, religious leaders, the disabled, non-governmental organizations, and political leaders in both counties. Purposive and convenience sampling was done. In-depth interviews were held with 12 members of the public drawn from service delivery points in each county, 10 public officers from each county sampled from strategic functions of the executive arm of the government, namely, sub county administration, supply chain, authority to incur expenditure, finance, revenue, human resource, payroll, communications, public participation, and information communications technology. In-depth interviews were also carried out with respondents from eight strategic functions within the legislative arm of each county, namely, human resource, authority to incur expenditure, finance, supply chain, communications, information communications technology, public participation, and payroll. The study interviewed 24 suppliers of goods and services from each county, 12 from the executive and 12 from the legislature. Additionally, two focus group discussions were conducted in each county, consisting of members representing the following nine key stakeholder groups: minorities, youth, women, business leaders, religious leaders, the disabled, non-governmental organizations, and political leaders. Data analysis was undertaken using thematic analysis and the findings discussed under each objective. The study found that organizational culture, bureaucratic procedures, information processing and county level policy instruments, were key drivers of corruption in both counties and this affected the accessibility and quality of public services. The data also showed that bureaucratic procedures and information processing provided the institutional structures that enabled an organizational culture of corruption, to thrive. The findings further demonstrate the culture of corruption was made possible by the lack of public awareness and the failure to enforce county-level policy instruments. Thus, this study concludes that public awareness acted as a moderating variable between the drivers of corruption and public service delivery while county-level policy instruments acted as drivers of corruption, instead of helping prevent corruption. The researcher recommends that counties take public awareness and enforcement of county-level policy instruments seriously, if they are to overcome corruption challenges and improve the quality and accessibility of public services. The researcher has provided an anticorruption scorecard to assist the counties in this regard.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

This section discusses public service delivery and corruption in devolved systems of government as part of the background to the study. It also provides a statement of the problem, the study objectives and research questions, the assumptions, justification, significance, and scope (delimitations and limitations) of the study.

1.1 Background of the study

Many scholars view public service delivery as the *raison d'être* (justification for the very existence) for governments, that without it, governments, as we know them, would not exist (Diaz-Serrano & Meix-Llop, 2019). They argue that through the provision of public services, governments fulfill their social contract with the citizens. Thus, many countries establish devolved systems of governments to improve service delivery (Efriandi, Couwenberg, & Holzhacker, 2019). This position is rooted in the political economy theory argument that devolution ensures accessibility of public services in terms of geographical reach by bringing services closer to the people and increasing efficiency by removing layers of bureaucracy (Efriandi, Couwenberg, & Holzhacker, 2019).

According to global best practices, many devolved governments strive to provide quality and accessible services in terms of affordability and geographical reach (Abasili & Akinboye, 2019). For services to be considered efficient and effective, they must be available and affordable (Abasili & Akinboye, 2019). This means, they must be physically accessible at the point of service (Abasili & Akinboye, 2019). They also must be within the economic reach of the citizens, for them to be considered affordable (Ahmad, Devarajan, Khemani, & Shah, 2005; Abasili & Akinboye, 2019). In quality terms, the services must meet the needs of the citizens, for them to be considered of good quality (Yarow, Jirma, & Siringi, 2019). These needs include timeliness, reliability, and pricing predictability (Sujarwoto, 2017; Matt, 2013). This means if services are provided in a haphazard manner, they cannot be considered reliable (Barr, Lindelow, & Serneels, 2009; Arends, 2020). If they are provided when you no longer need them, then they are no longer timely (Abasili & Akinboye, 2019). If provided at fluctuating prices, then they are not predictable (Sackeyfio, 2018). In addition, services must reflect value for money, and the government must ultimately be held accountable

for them (Starke, Naab, & Scherer, 2016). This means the government cannot provide services at inflated costs and expect to be lauded for providing quality services (Yarow, Jirma, & Siringi, 2019). Thus, the SERVQUAL model of reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy and responsiveness, has been utilized in this study.

Public service delivery in Kenya's devolved system of government is governed by the 2012 County Government Act, which outlines the principles of public service delivery in the counties, vesting county governments with the legal mandate to provide public services within their geographical jurisdictions (Oluoch, 2016). These principles include the need to offer services in an equitable, efficient, accessible, transparent, non-discriminatory, and accountable manner, bearing in mind the key principle of subsidiarity between the two levels of government (Omoyefa, 2008; Mogeni, 2009; Wagana, 2017). The counties are also expected to adhere to the public service delivery standards which stipulate that priority must be given to the basic needs of the public and that devolved governments must ensure all citizens have access to basic services (Adamtey, Obeng, & Sarpong, 2020; Olowu & Wunsch, 2004; Wagana, 2017). The standards provide that services shall be delivered efficiently, effectively, and sustainably and be of good quality (KLR, 2020; Ochieng, 2018). These standards require that county governments must have tariffs and pricing policies for the provision of all public services, and that these tariffs and pricing policies must be friendly to poor households, who must have access to basic services (KLR, 2020; Ochieng, 2018).

Although the devolved governments are currently the largest providers of public services in Kenya, there is growing evidence that public services have been declining (Karuri, 2014; Ochieng, 2018). A survery done in 2017 showing that over 67% of Kenyans are unhappy with the level of county public services in terms of accessibility and quality (Stedtjer, 2018; Martini, 2012, Locatelli et. al, 2016; Nyabuga, 2017; Khalid & Thompson, 2019). A further review of public service delivery literature shows that inadequate provision of public services in the Kenyan counties affects the standard of living of communities, leaving them with inadequate access to basic services particularly in the slums and rural areas (Taaliu, 2017; Africog, 2016; Arends, 2020). A recent KNBS study shows that one in every three Kenyans, or over 15.9 million of Kenyans live below the poverty line on less than a US $ per day, and that over 53% or

23.4 million Kenyans, have no access to basic services such as food, water and shelter (KNBS, 2020; Wafula, 2020). Further research showed there were 79.3% delays in service delivery within the counties due to corruption (EACC, 2016).

The declining levels of service delivery are compounded by the presence of drivers of corruption which pose significant challenges in the realization of service delivery goals (Tarawallie, 2018; Ali, S.M 2018, Maina, 2013). Embezzlement in the form of revenue theft and misappropriation of budgets and bribery in the form of unofficial charges and kickback for tenders, in particular, have been singled out, for being rampant in Africa (Heywood, 2018; Barr & Serra, 2010). The World Bank (WB) puts the annual global bribery at over 3% of the world's income, at US $ 1 trillion (Kimeu, 2014; Andrei & Vishny, 1993; Shon & Cho, 2020). In developing countries alone, funds lost to embezzlement are estimated to be ten times the amount of official development assistance, which currently stands at US $153 billion (Arends, 2020). It is estimated that Africa loses over U.S $ 50 billion to embezzlement, every year, despite being the second fastest growing economic region in the world (Andrews M. , 2013; Cloutier, 2017).

Evidence shows that corruption undermines the redistributionary nature of public services, as the poor end up disproportionately paying a higher cost when accessing services, a situation that creates inequalities in society, exacerbating poverty and has an overall adverse effect on human development (Sanogo, 2018). For example, a study in Mexico found that the poorest households spent more than 30% of their income on bribes (unofficial charges) while middle-income households spent only 14% on bribes (Garduno, 2019). Similar findings were found in the Western Balkans and Papua New Guinea, where unofficial charges (bribes) affected public service delivery by denying access to the poor (Engelbert & Kaltenborn, 2019).

Scholars posit that certain drivers of corruption are responsible for these kinds of distortion. Among them, is organisational culture, which defines interactions at the intra-organizational, inter-organizational and organizational to public, levels (Berthod, 2018). Research shows that these interactions are defined by social control mechanisms that determine norms and behavior expected in those spaces. They set standards of behavior and enforcement mechanisms for the expected behavior (Kubbe & Engelbert,

2018). Thus, when it comes to corruption norms, they determine if public officials will be corrupt or not and this has been shown to affect public service delivery (Kobis, Carter, & Starke, 2018). In Africa, many studies show that an organizational culture of corruption has been responsible for deteriorating public services (Heywood, 2018). Further, in Kenya, a culture of corruption in public offices has been decried for affecting public service delivery (Fonshell, 2019).

Added to this, is bureaucratic procedures, which are characterized by hierarchies, red tape and specializations (Dunlop & Radaelli, 2019). Research shows that they cause inflexibility and stifle innovation among officials charged with public service delivery, thus creating conditions for corruption to take root, thus negatively affecting public service delivery (Dunlop & Radaelli, 2019). For example, studies carried out in Papua New Guinea showed that bureaucratic procedures were key drivers of embezzlement and bribery which were blamed for deteriorating public services (Walton, 2020).

Other studies have identified information processing as a corruption driver as it determines the information dissemination procedures, the dissemination channels, and accessibility of those channels (Martins, Fernandes, Rohman, & Veiga, 2018). Studies show that when dissemination procedures and channels are not accessible to the public, there is increased corruption due to decreased transparency (Martins, Fernandes, Rohman, & Veiga, 2018). For example, a study that was done in over 150 countries on information processing showed that corruption becomes less when transparency improves and this was shown to have a positive impact on public service delivery (Martins, Fernandes, Rohman, & Veiga, 2018). Thus, public awareness is considered a moderating variable, with scholars arguing that failure to conduct civic education leads to lack of transparency and encourages corruption, which adversely affects public services (Novi, Piacenza, Robone, & Turati, 2019). Studies done in countries in Asia and Europe show that such corruption affects public service delivery while studies in Africa show that corruption has been blamed for the poor services in the public sector (Barr & Serra, 2010). In Kenya, corruption has been blamed for the deteriorating public services in the counties (Kimeu, 2014).

This study considers county level policy instruments in the form of laws, policies, regulations, rules, procedures, guidelines and practices, as a key driver of corruption,

as failure to implement them has been known to aid and abet corruption (Mackey, 2019). This position is supported by studies done in western countries and the third world countries of Asia and Latin America (Hao, Chen, Liao, & Wei, 2020; Placek, Ochrana, Pucek, & Nemec, 2020). Globally, the link between county level policy instruments as key drivers of corruption and public service delivery has been captured in studies showing improved services in situations where the rule of law is upheld (Kobbe & Engelbert, 2018). In Africa, studies show that deteriorating public services have been attributed to failure to uphold the rule of law (through county level policy instruments) in many subnational governments (Heywood, 2018). Studies done in Kenya have decried the level of non-compliance to county level policy instruments which has led to poor services in many counties (Kimeu, 2014).

Further studies show that corruption in devolved systems of government occurs because drivers of corruption offer opportunities for private gain (Alfano, Baraldi, & Cantabene, 2020). Corruption has particularly been singled out in Kenya, as it poses a significant threat to the realization of the goals of devolution by robbing county governments of much-needed resources which are meant for public service delivery (Andersen, Johannesen, & Rijkers, 2020; Shon & Cho, 2020). Currently, Kenya is ranked among the most corrupt countries in the world, at position 154 out of 182, with over 30% of public resources being lost to embezzlement, which translates to well over US $ 6 billion (Oyugi, 2006; TI, 2019).

Since the country adopted devolution, the Auditor General's annual reports show that from 2013 to 2018, Kenya has lost over Kshs 5 trillion to embezzlement, with Kshs 250 billion stolen in 2016 alone (Khamisi, 2018; AG, 2018). Numerous scandals involving embezzlement of public funds have also emerged within the devolved governments, with several leaders and officials being arrested and charged (Orwa, 2020). In Kiambu and Nairobi City counties specifically, an Ethics and Anticorruption Report carried out in 2018 and the Auditor General's report of 2018, singled out the counties for having the highest levels of embezzlement and bribery practices.

When it comes to bribery, a recent study found that the majority of Kenya's urban residents are forced to pay bribes to access services within the counties, with bribe amounts of over Kes 50,000 accounting for 41% of the bribes paid out by Kenyans

within the devolved governments (Khamisi, 2018). Other studies show that 63% of Kenyans have to pay bribes to access county health facilities, 59% have to pay bribes to access water and sanitation services, 58% have to pay bribes to access markets, and 57% have to pay bribes to access trade licenses (T1, 2016; Africog, 2016). A study done by EACC in 2015 showed that 81% of the respondents identified embezzlement and bribery as being rampant within the counties (T1, 2015; EACC, 2015). A Corruption Risk Mapping report done by KEPSA also reported that embezzlement and bribery were the most prevalent forms of corruption within the counties, with both being rampant in the procurement, supply, finance, and human resource departments (Otieno, 2018).

The Auditor General's reports have singled out public procurement as the single most notorious conduit through which embezzlement occurs within the counties (Oluoch, 2016; D'Arcy *et al*, 2016; Ireri, Ongus, Laboso, Mwiti, & Onsongo, 2017). The reports also identify revenue theft as a significant conduit used for stealing public funds within the counties, where public officers charged with collecting government revenue end up stealing the money they collect at source and converting it to personal use instead of surrendering it to the devolved government (AG, 2018; Oyugi, 2006).

In Kenya, there is hardly any scholarly work on corruption in devolved systems of government despite corruption having been identified as one of the greatest challenges facing the devolved governments and there is hardly any information on the drivers of corruption as identified in this study (Rodriguez-Pose & Gill, 2003; Markward, 2009; Goel and Nelson, 2011; Lessmann & Markwardt, 2010; Asea, 2018; Adamtey, Obeng, & Sarpong, 2020). This study is contextually based in Kiambu and Nairobi City counties, which are two devolved systems of government in Kenya. The study area, Kiambu and Nairobi City counties have similar characteristics, as they are both cosmopolitan and enjoy a symbiotic relationship as their economies and infrastructure, are intertwined (KNBS, 2020). They both have fairly large urban populations, with Nairobi having a bigger urban population, and are next to each other, geographically. Thus, we have people living in Kiambu who work in Nairobi City and vice versa, with spillovers of public service challenges occurring due to the fluid nature of the residents (KNBS, 2020). In terms of corruption, both counties received adverse audit reports during the 2018 audit from the Auditor General, where Kiambu could not explain

variances in its financial statements, to the tune of Kes 45 billion and further understated its cash and bank balances by Kes 753 million, while Nairobi City council had irregular revenue withdrawals to the tune of Kes 6 billion, undisclosed bank account balances of Kes 3 billion and variances between revenue receipts and banking records of over Kes 1.8 billion, among other financial irregularities (Auditor General, 2018).

1.2 Statement of the problem

Although policy makers recommend devolution as the panacea for quality and accessible public services, the presence of corruption within devolution poses complications (Cloutier, 2017). The current theoretical literature advances the notion that devolution reduces corruption, but these findings are based on Western countries and the third world countries of Asia and Latin America and may not be culturally applicable to Kenya where there are contextual differences such as those based on culture, levels of poverty, unemployment, and crime rates (Alfano, Baraldi, & Cantabene, 2020; Chalil, 2020; Sekkat K, 2018; Akhigbe, 2015; Shon & Cho, 2020). Thus, the linkage between devolution and corruption is not straightforward for a country such as Kenya, and assessing devolution's impact on corruption is conceptually challenging (Alfano, Baraldi, & Cantabene, 2020). This makes a case to examine the drivers of corruption more compelling, given that corruption and deteriorating public services in Kiambu and Nairobi City counties have been reported in various government reports yet few empirical studies have been done in this area (Fonshell, 2019; Auditor General, 2018).

It is important to note that before devolution, which was implemented in Kenya in 2013, Kiambu and Nairobi City counties did not exist (Fonshell, 2019). Instead, there were several county councils, municipal councils and other regional structures of the central government, that carried out the functions of the present-day counties (Fonshell, 2019). Thus, corruption was mainly concentrated at the central government level as most of the resources had not been devolved (EACC, 2020). The county and municipal councils were part and parcel of the central government ministry of local government and their level of service delivery was determined by the central government (Fonshell, 2019). Studies show that the key drivers of corruption as captured in this study (organizational culture, bureaucratic procedures, information processing, county level policy instruments) were key drivers of corruption within the central government, before devolution (Kimeu, 2014; EACC, 2020). There was a culture of corruption that was

centralized at the headquarters in Nairobi and many government reports decried the bureaucracy and lack of information from the center (EACC, 2020). The central government had tried to implement several public sector reforms before devolution, in a bid to contain the issue of corruption and improve service delivery. These initiatives included privatization of some public services and massive increases in public sector salaries (Khamisi, 2018). However, these did not yield the required results, as corruption continued to be mentioned in many government reports as a big challenge and deteriorating public services was also cited in various government reports (Auditor General, 2018, EACC, 2018). Thus, devolution was conceived as an anticorruption strategy and one of the biggest public sector reforms to solve the problem of deteriorating public services. However, after Kenya enacted the 2010 Constitution, and devolution was established in 2013, the situation spiraled out of control and corruption became 'devolved' with dire consequences for public services, as captured by various government reports (Auditor General, 2018, EACC, 2018). Kiambu county for instance, was given a qualified opinion by the Auditor General in the 2018 audit report. This was due to variances between the financial statements, as the whereabouts of over Kes 45 billion could not be accounted for. Further, cash and bank balances were understated by over Kes 753 million and unreconciled cash book balances stood at Kes 290 million. The county also maintained over 12 undisclosed bank accounts and payments of over Kes 929million were made without any supporting documentation. Unverified payments to employees stood at Kes 637 million and pending bills with no supporting documents stood at Kes 2.3 billion. During the same year, Nairobi City county received a disclaimer of opinion report due to unaccounted cash withdrawals of over Kes 209 million, irregular payment to suppliers through cash payments of over Kes 381 million, undisclosed bank account balances of over Kes 3 billion, irregular withdrawals from the revenue account of over Kes 6 billion, variance between revenue receipts and banking records of over Kes 1.8 billion, and for having over 26 Mpesa paybill numbers that they did not provide access to, for auditing. Due to this information, one is left wondering why devolution did not bring about the much-needed results, in reducing corruption and improving public services. There is therefore, a contextual gap that this study seeks to fill.

Additionally, there is a gap at the methodological level, for there is a preponderance of quantitative data in the field, with few qualitative studies, a situation which makes it

challenging to unravel the true in-depth nature of corruption within devolution (Maher, Hadfield, Hutchings, & Eyto, 2018; Sekkat, 2018). Available quantitative data is a plethora of corruption indexes that are not very useful for policy makers and the few qualitative studies undertaken have primarily been anecdotal, a situation that points to an empirical gap that requires further investigation (Hess, 2020; Cheeseman, 2018; Gustafsson & Scurrah, 2019). Thus, this study takes a qualitative approach to fill this gap.

Furthermore, there is a conceptual gap that calls for research that delves deeper into the issue of drivers of corruption. The study looks at organizational culture, bureaucratic procedures, information processing, and county level policy instruments as key variables in driving corruption and public awareness as a moderating variable, and this may be the first time these concepts are being utilized.

Previous studies have also tended to focus on accessibility aspects of service delivery without critically interrogating the quality aspects (Kimenyi, 2018: Wagana, 2017). This study seeks to look at the quality aspects utilizing the SERVQUAL model and thus fills an important conceptual gap.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study was to identify the effects of corruption drivers on public service delivery in Kiambu and Nairobi City counties.This study sought to:

1. Identify the effects of organisational culture on public service delivery in Kiambu and Nairobi City counties.
2. Determine the effect of bureaucratic procedures on public service delivery in Kiambu and Nairobi City counties.
3. Analyze the effect of information processing on public service delivery in Kiambu and Nairobi City counties.
4. Examine the effect of county level policy instruments on public service delivery in Kiambu and Nairobi City counties.

1.4 Research questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the effect of organisational culture on public service delivery in Kiambu and Nairobi City counties?

2. To what extent do bureaucratic procedures affect public service delivery in Kiambu and Nairobi City counties?
3. How does information processing affect public service delivery in Kiambu and Nairobi City counties?
4. What is the effect of county level policy instruments on public service delivery in Kiambu and Nairobi City counties?

1.5 Assumptions of the study

The study assumed the reports of corruption within the selected counties as reported by the Auditor General Reports are correct. The research further assumed the nature of corruption is clandestine, and the conditions under which it thrives are not straightforward. The study made the assumption that current laws, policies, regulations, rules, procedures and practices have proved inadequate in stopping corruption. The study took cognizance of the fact that existing systems of adducing evidence on corruption are not foolproof, and sometimes data collected in this area can be very subjective. The study further assumed the counties would allow the researcher access the respondents and that the respondents would be cooperative, despite the sensitivity of corruption as a subject.

1.6 Justification and significance

1.6.1 Justification of the study

The research interrogates the key drivers of corruption in Kiambu and Nairobi City counties, as these counties have been mentioned in various government reports for having the highest levels of embezzlement and bribery (EACC, 2016; Auditor General, 2018). The two counties are fairly homogenous, in that they geographically border each other, and are both cosmopolitan, with a mix of residents who intersperse both counties for various activities. Although Nairobi City is the capital city, a sizeable number of the population lives in Kiambu, while working in Nairobi (KNBS, 2020). Thus, the two being fairly similar in character and facing a similar challenge of high levels of corruption, made the case to look at these two together, compelling. The research will provide empirical data to help the counties improve service delivery. The data will be of interest to professionals, non-government organizations and civil society. The study may thus catalyze social change that could eventually defeat the means and ends of corruption in the counties.

1.6.2 Significance of the study

This study is significant for the counties of Kiambu and Nairobi City as it will assist them deal with the drivers of corruption and improve service delivery, through the utilization of the proposed anticorruption scorecard. It will also be useful to the national government, as it provides important information that can inform anticorruption policy making through the proposed anticorruption scorecard. Further, it will benefit academia as it adds important empirical data to the existing reports that have mainly been carried out by the EACC (2020), the Auditor General (2018) and a few non-government organizations such as Africog (2016) in this area. The study reinforces the findings of these studies and confirms the presence of drivers of corruption which have adversely affected service delivery in these two counties.

1.7 Scope of the study

The geographical scope of the field work was Kiambu and Nairobi City counties. The study was confined to investigating the drivers of corruption and their effect on public service delivery through a qualitative approach. This was a cross-sectional study that was limited to sampling strategic functions within the two counties, at the particular time of the data collection. It was also confined to sampling nine key stakeholders from each county. Suppliers and members of the public were also be sampled until the data reached saturation. The interviews were done over a three-month period. Thus, due to time and resource constraints, respondents were confined to those available during the time of this study. Although the study collected data from the two counties, this was not a comparative study as a comparative analysis would have been insightful, given that the data collected was more or less similar and the two counties were utilized to draw lessons for the rest of the counties in Kenya.

1.7.1 Limitations

The study was carried out in two purposively sampled counties and targeted strategic functions, members of the public, and suppliers. The study was limited by psychological boundaries created by participants' unwillingness to share information. The limitation was overcome by triangulating methods, with focus group discussions providing additional information. As with any study employing qualitative methodologies, this study has limitations of an epistemological nature. The evidence compiled is not replicable or 100% objective as it contains the views and perspectives of various stakeholders.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

This section introduces the study variables and provides an empirical review of their relationships. A critique of the existing literature is also provided, together with identified research gaps and a summary of the literature.

2.1 Empirical review of the study variables

This section introduces the seven variables of the study and provides an empirical review of their relationships. The variables are public service delivery, drivers of corruption, organizational culture, bureaucratic procedures, information processing, and county level policy instruments, and public awareness.

2.1.1 Public service delivery

Public service delivery is the mechanism through which governments implement their policies and provide services to the public (Diaz-Serrano & Meix-Llop, 2019). The provision of services is considered so critical that it has been cited as the *raison d'être* for governments, without which governments as we know them would not exist (Gowan, Seymour, Ibarreche, & Lackey, 2001). Scholars posit that it is through public services that citizens are able to assess government performance and hold governments to account, with those that fail to deliver good services risking removal from office (Kincaid, 2013). The provision of public services is therefore a key function of devolved governments. Such services include housing, water, waste management, sanitation, health, education and street cleaning, depending on the allocation of powers between the central government and the devolved governments.

At the global level, public service delivery is at the core of the 17 goals of the SDGs and is key to the realization of fundamental human rights (Arce & Hendricks, 2019). Indeed Article 21 (2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides that everyone has the right of equal access to public services in their country and from their local government (UNECA, 2005; TI, 2019). Further, global public service delivery standards prescribe that, citizens have a right to public services of good quality (WB, 2017; Starke, Naab, & Scherer, 2016). Thus, devolved governments have a responsibility to ensure the services they provide meet certain quality parameters.

Scholars postulate that public services are a key performance indicator for governments globally (Rahim & Shirazi, 2018). They argue that public services should be of good quality, geographically accessible, and affordable, especially to the poor, and not discriminate against any group of people (Starke, Naab, & Scherer, 2016; McCollum, Limato, Otiso, Theobald, & Taegtmeyer, 2018). According to global best practices, for services to be considered good quality, they must be available, efficient, effective, and affordable (Abasili & Akinboye, 2019). This means they must be physically accessible at the point of service for them to be considered available. However, some services may be available but of such poor quality that it is like having no services (Adamtey, Obeng, & Sarpong, 2020). For example, if what is available is polluted water that is unfit for human consumption, it is like having no water (Maina, 2013; Arends, 2020). For them to be efficient, they must be provided at the least possible cost without any wastage of time or public resources. For them to be effective, they must fulfill the needs of the citizens. They also must be within the citizens' economic reach for them to be considered affordable (Ahmad, Devarajan, Khemani, & Shah, 2005; Abasili & Akinboye, 2019).

In quality terms, public services must meet the expectations of the citizens (Yarow, Jirma, & Siringi, 2019). These expectations include timeliness, reliability, and pricing predictability (Sujarwoto, 2017; Matt, 2013). When services are provided intermittently, they cannot be considered reliable (Barr, Lindelow, & Serneels, 2009; Arends, 2020). If they are provided when they are no longer needed, they are no longer timely (Abasili & Akinboye, 2019). If provided at fluctuating prices, they are not price predictable (Sackeyfio, 2018). In addition, services must reflect value for money, and the government must ultimately be held accountable for them (Starke, Naab, & Scherer, 2016). This means the government cannot provide services at inflated costs and expect it to be rated as quality service (Yarow, Jirma, & Siringi, 2019).

According to the SERVQUAL model, for public services to be considered good quality, they must meet the five criteria of reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy, and responsiveness (Prentkovskis, *et al*., 2018). Reliability refers to the dependability and accuracy of the service while assurance refers to the public officers' knowledge and courtesy which must inspire trust and confidence among the public (Raza, Umer, Qureshi, & Dahri, 2020). Tangibles refer to the physical facilities, equipment,

personnel, and communication materials available for public services (Prentkovskis, *et al*., 2018). Empathy relates to the individual attention and caring attitude given to the public by the officers giving public service while responsiveness is concerned about the public officers' willingness to help and provide prompt services (Raza, Umer, Qureshi, & Dahri, 2020; Prentkovskis, *et al*., 2018). Thus, the study utilizes the SERVQUAL model to analyze the dimensions of service quality and the perceptions of service quality within Kiambu and Nairobi City counties.

Due to the centrality of public services to government performance, scholars have called for accountability mechanisms to measure if governments are delivering services in tandem with citizen priorities and if such services are being provided at the lowest possible cost to the citizens (Barr & Serra, 2010). Governments on the other hand, in response to citizens' needs, have set up service delivery frameworks, which outline the principles, standards and policies, that guide service delivery, in a bid to ensure services meet the citizens' expectations (Efriandi, Couwenberg, & Holzhacker, 2019). Such frameworks provide checks and balances that ensure the government is accountable to the people (Efriandi, Couwenberg, & Holzhacker, 2019). In some countries, citizen-led service delivery assessments have been deployed as an alternative mechanism for making governments accountable (Efriandi, Couwenberg, & Holzhacker, 2019). In both citizen-led and government-initiated frameworks, the participation of the local communities is considered critical (Ahmad, Devarajan, Khemani, & Shah, 2005; Efriandi, Couwenberg, & Holzhacker, 2019).

The need for community participation in such accountability frameworks has been cited as one of the reasons for governments devolving services to local levels (Reinikka & Svensson, 2006; Rijckeghem & Weder, 2001; Efriandi, Couwenberg, & Holzhacker, 2019). Scholars argue that devolution ensures accessibility of public services in terms of geographical reach by bringing services closer to the people (Wagana, 2017). It is assumed that providing the service at the grassroots would be cheaper and hence, more affordable to the local communities (Samekto, 2012; Wagana, 2017). They also argue that this removes layers of bureaucracy and increases efficiency (Efriandi, Couwenberg, & Holzhacker, 2019).

Contrary to these views, empirical evidence indicates that corruption has become a major hindrance for breaking the public service delivery chain and distorting the accessibility and quality of public services (Ali S. M., 2018; Tarawallie, 2018; Shah, Thompson, & Heng-FU, 2004; Maina, 2013). Studies have shown that corruption undermines the human right of equal access to public services by making public services inaccessible to the poor and other marginalized groups, rendering the state's obligations to safeguard the rights of all citizens meaningless (Samekto, 2012; Khalid & Thompson, 2019). This was particularly noted in developing countries that are still struggling with governance challenges.

Thus, corruption undermines public services' redistributionary nature, as the poor end up disproportionately paying a heavier price when trying to access services, creating inequalities in society (Sanogo, 2018). When public services are unavailable, the poor are the most affected since the rich can afford private services, which exacerbates poverty and has an adverse effect on human development (Bussell, 2010; Khalid & Thompson, 2019). Therefore, governments that fail to deal with corruption effectively deprive their citizens of the right to accessible and affordable public services (Kayode, Adagba, & Anyio, 2013; Khalid & Thompson, 2019).

In Kenya, delivery of services in the devolved governments is governed by the 2012 County Government Act, which outlines public service delivery principles in the counties, vesting county governments with the legal mandate to provide public services within their geographical jurisdictions (Oluoch, 2016). These principles include the need to offer accessible and quality services, bearing in mind the principle of subsidiarity between the two levels of government (Omoyefa, 2008; Mogeni, 2009; Wagana, 2017).

The counties are also expected to adhere to the public service delivery standards, which stipulate that priority must be given to the basic needs of the public, and that devolved governments must ensure all citizens have access to basic services (Adamtey, Obeng, & Sarpong, 2020; Olowu & Wunsch, 2004; Wagana, 2017). The standards also provide that, services shall be delivered efficiently, effectively, and sustainably and be of good quality (KLR, 2020; Ochieng, 2018). These standards require that county governments have tariffs and pricing policies for the provision of

all public services, and that these tariffs and pricing policies must be friendly to poor households, who have a right to access essential services (KLR, 2020; Ochieng, 2018).

The counties are given expenditure responsibility for devolved functions, the power to generate their revenue, impose taxes and borrow money in order to provide public services (Wagana D. M., 2017). They exercise executive powers and elect their leaders and legislature through the county assemblies (Finch & Omolo, 2015). Additionally, they have the power to control the civil service and mobilize resources (Fonshell, 2019). The Fourth Schedule of the Kenya Constitution provides for the transfer of power and functions from the national government and devolves several functions to the counties such as agriculture, health, pre-primary education, transport and public works which are needed at the grassroots (Constitution of Kenya, 2010).

A review of public service literature in Kenya shows that inadequate provision of public services affects the standard of living of communities, leaving them with no access to essential services mainly in the slums and rural areas (Talia, 2017; Africog, 2016; Arends, 2020). A recent KNBS study shows that one in every three Kenyans or over 15.9 million of Kenyans, live below the poverty line on less than a US $ per day and that over 53% or 23.4 million Kenyans, have no access to basic services such as food, water, and shelter (KNBS, 2020; Wafula, 2020). Low access to education has also exacerbated gender inequity and stoked ethnic tensions and conflict (Khamisi, 2018; Ayee, 2010; Koehler, 2018; Khalid & Thompson, 2019; Kariuki & Kasomi, 2011; Taaliu, 2017; Oyugi, 2006; Simiyu, Mweru, & Omete, 2014; Mutonyi, 2010).

The devolved governments are currently the largest providers of public services in Kenya, with over 70% of the public services currently devolved (Stedtjer, 2018). There is evidence that public services in the counties have been declining, with a survey done in 2017 showing that over 67% of Kenyans are unhappy with the level of public services in the counties in terms of their accessibility and quality (Martini, 2012, Locatelli et. al, 2016; Nyabuga, 2017; Khalid & Thompson, 2019; Karuri, 2014; Ochieng, 2018).

2.1.2 Drivers of corruption

Corruption is a complex global problem that is difficult to define but is often construed as the abuse of public office for private gain (Alfano, Baraldi, & Cantabene, 2020). Scholars who support this definition posit that corruption is made possible by the fact that public offices offer opportunities for private gain through misappropriation of budgets, bribes, and kickbacks for tenders, by influencing who gets to supply public goods and services, and the terms of those tenders and contracts (Klaveren, 1989; Lennerfors, 2009; Suprayitno & Pradiptyo, 2017). Although corruption takes various forms such as fraud, collusion, extortion, patronage, clientelism, nepotism, elite capture, and influence peddling, this study focuses on embezzlement and bribery as they together cost the world economy over United States of America (U.S) $ 7.727 trillion per year (World Bank, 2020; Abdullah, 2019). The World Economic Forum estimates that embezzlement alone costs the global economy over U.S $ 5.127 trillion per year while bribery costs over U.S $ 2.6 trillion or 5% of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) every year (Shah, Thompson, & Heng-FU, 2004). Embezzlement in the form of direct theft or misappropriation of public resources and bribery, in the form of soliciting, giving, offering, and receiving money and items of value, as a way of influencing actions of public officers, is particularly rampant in developing countries and especially in Africa, hence the need to look at this issue in the context of Kenya (Heywood, 2018; Barr & Serra, 2010).

Embezzlement and bribery specifically enable the wealthy and political elites to limit their taxes, avoid costly regulations, obtain contracts at inflated prices, and get concessions and privatize firms at throw-away prices, thus robbing devolved governments of much-needed resources to provide public services (Gurgur & Shah, 2002; Andersen, Johannesen, & Rijkers, 2020; Kimeu, 2014; Andrei & Vishny, 1993; Shon & Cho, 2020). Estimates show that Africa loses over U.S $ 50 billion to embezzlement every year, despite being the second-fastest growing economic region in the world (Andrews M., 2013; Cloutier, 2017). Africa is also home to some of the poorest people in the world, yet corrupt leaders are known to facilitate the looting of the continent's resources, and impoverished citizens are forced to fork out bribes to access government services (Andrews M., 2013; Chalil, 2020).

Devolution has thus, increasingly been recommended to countries that are struggling with corruption and service delivery challenges especially in Africa and other third world countries (Martinez-Vasquez, Lago-Penas, & Sacchi, 2017; Olowu & Wunsch, 2004; Adamtey, Obeng, & Sarpong, 2020; Crook & Manor, 2000; Diaz-Serrano & Rodriguez-Pose, 2015). This is because devolution has been cited for improved public services in countries such as Chile and Nepal (Okolo & Akpokighe, 2014; Crook & Manor, 2000; Diaz-Serrano & Rodriguez-Pose, 2015). This is in contrast to centralized governments that have long been blamed for having bureaucratic layers that cause inefficiencies in public service delivery (Finch & Omolo, 2015; Olowu & Wunsch, 2004; Adamtey, Obeng, & Sarpong, 2020

Although devolution is assumed to improve public services, the empirical literature on this topic is mixed and the bulk of the literature comes from developed countries and the third world countries of Asia and Latin America (Aroney, 2015; Kincaid, 2013; Kousser, 2014; Rijckeghem & Weder, 2001; Starke, Naab, & Scherer, 2016; Adamtey, Obeng, & Sarpong, 2020: Abasili & Akinboye, 2019). Studies conducted in these countries tend to support the view that devolution improves the accessibility and quality of public services, while studies conducted in China have contradicted this view (Hao, Chen, Liao, & Wei, 2020; Martinez-Vasquez, Lago-Penas, & Sacchi, 2017; Placek, Ochrana, Pucek, & Nemec, 2020).

There is hardly any information coming from Africa, and the few studies available have produced mixed results (Adamptey, 2014; Bhagwan, 2014; Englebert & Mungongo, 2016; Hobdari, Nguyen, Dell'Erba, & Ruggiero, 2018; Mkhululi, 2016; Sackeyfio, 2018). They include a study done in Côte d'Ivoire's municipalities, which found that devolution improved accessibility and quality of public services (Sanogo, 2018). In contrast, a study done in Zimbabwe found that devolution led to inaccessible and deteriorating public services due to corruption (Chigwata, 2017).

When it comes to corruption, the current theoretical and empirical literature advances the notion that devolution reduces the level of corruption (Fisman & Gatti, 2002; Shon & Cho, 2020; Chalil, 2020; Cloutier, 2017; Sekkat K, 2018). Scholars postulate devolution does this in three ways; by improving accountability, reducing elite capture, and introducing inter-jurisdictional competition (Albornoz & Cabrales, 2013). They

posit that local people are better informed of the local conditions and would therefore be better able to evaluate the performance of their local and devolved governments, hence improving accountability (Ahmad, Devarajan, Khemani, & Shah, 2005).

This assumption was tested using the implementation of the E.U Cohesion Policy in two meso-level territorial units, with recent experience of devolution, in Scotland (UK) and Tuscany (Italy) (Polverari, 2015). The study assessed the extent to which devolution was a causal factor in the changes observed and the degree to which the policy's accountability transformed in response to the changes observed. The results showed that devolution strengthened accountability in both Tuscany and Scotland, although this was more pronounced in Scotland than in Tuscany, mainly due to the different starting points and different scope of the devolution reforms that were introduced (Polverari, 2015).

Scholars who argue that devolution decreases corruption by reducing elite capture from the central government have been criticized for assuming that national or local elites are incapable of distorting local economic decisions when services are devolved (Abasili & Akinboye, 2019). Evidence from devolved systems shows that due to policy overlaps or contradictions and unclear chains of responsibility when competences are shared, devolution may lead to *status quo* entrenchment, especially in situations where devolved authorities have veto powers, thus creating state capture by local elites (Arends, 2020). Other scholars have also argued that devolution could end up leading to more corruption through decreased financial rigor when resources are distributed from the center (Suprayitno & Pradiptyo, 2017).

In terms of inter-jurisdictional competition, scholars who see devolution reducing corruption argue that devolved governments will desire to attract investments to their jurisdictions, so they will have to be competitive to investors by establishing market-friendly laws and regulations, which will force them to reduce corruption (Chalil, 2020). They also argue that inter-jurisdictional competition is likely to encourage policy transfers and adoption of best practices among the devolved governments, thus curbing corruption (Chalil, 2020; Bahl & Bird, 2018). However, critics have pointed out that the multiplicity and complexity of decision-making in devolved contexts makes it

difficult for stakeholders to attribute responsibility for decisions and attract investment on their own (Alfano, Baraldi, & Cantabene, 2020).

These positions have been challenged for not accounting for the governance challenges that face accountability mechanisms that encourage the growth of corruption networks instead of discouraging them (Prasetyono, 2019). They also do not account for corruption's fluid and autopoietic nature, where more accountability leads to more people being co-opted into the gravy train, leading to increased corruption (Boone *et al*., 2019). There is also an assumption that there will be more empowerment of citizens to reduce corruption, which is not always the case (Opalo, 2020). Studies show that due to information asymmetry between those in leadership and the citizens, the citizens do not often have the information or the capacity to interpret the information, which limits their ability to oversight government (Mulyaman, Ismail, & Raya, 2019). Thus, scholars have assumed that local people are better informed of their rights and needs at the local level, which often has not been the case especially in low-income countries with high illiteracy levels (Muyengwa & Child, 2017).

Scholars have also assumed that local people can evaluate the local government's performance but have not taken into account the part played by local elites in distorting attempts to hold local governments to account. Further, scholars have ignored the role of national elites in distorting local economic decisions and even holding local elites in a form of capture (McCollum, Limato, Otiso, Theobald, & Taegtmeyer, 2018).

Scholars who support interjurisdictional competition have been challenged to explain how the competition would reduce corruption instead of actually increasing it (Plotica, 2017). Such competition has been known to be attractive to investors who prefer privacy and discretion and would pay any amount to get in, so the competition would turn out to be a competition of who pays more bribes, not who does not pay bribes (Bader, 2020). Moreover, studies have shown that inter-jurisdictional competition does not necessarily lead to less corruption as politicians are more interested in their political survival especially in countries like Kenya (Fonshell, 2019). Competing political interests have been known to affect policy transfers and interfere with best practice uptakes, particularly in third-world countries (Amundsen *et al*., 2017).

The presence of drivers of corruption such as organizational culture, bureaucratic procedures, information processing, and county level policy instruments in devolved systems of government further complicates development outcomes through their negative impact on public service delivery (Bhattarai P. C., 2003; Adamtey, Obeng, & Sarpong, 2020). Although scholars have argued that devolution could improve public service delivery through increased government responsiveness, better oversight, and increased grassroot participation, through public awareness, corruption drivers are capable of eroding such gains and rendering these efforts futile (Diaz-Serrano & Rodriguez-Pose, 2015; Adamtey, Obeng, & Sarpong, 2020).

Thus, the linkage between drivers of corruption and public service delivery is not straight forward and assessing devolution's impact on public service delivery is conceptually challenging. This makes a case to examine this area more compelling, especially because there is a lot of research on devolution's economic and political impacts but little on these drivers of corruption (Alfano, Baraldi, & Cantabene, 2020).

Despite the reported significant impact corruption has had on devolved governments, curbing it has not been easy for several reasons, among them the scarcity of empirical evidence that could inform robust policy reforms (Chen, Jiang, & Villeva, 2015; D'Arcy, 2016; Chalil, 2020). Studies on corruption and devolution are still at a nascent stage, and the available studies have mainly been conducted in developed countries and third world countries of Asia and Latin America (Carlucci, Cira, Immordino, Loppolo, & Yigitcanlar, 2017; Mulyaman, Ismail, & Raya, 2019; Suprayitno & Pradiptyo, 2017; Zhang, 2019; Haryanto, Astuti, & Manajemen, 2017; Garduno, 2019; Fergusson, Molina and Riano, 2018). The available cross-country data has produced mixed results, and so have the few studies from Africa, leaving policy gaps (Lierl, 2017; Motshegwa, Mutonono, & Mikazhu, 2019; Kelechi, 2018; Weylandt, 2013).

The monitoring of corruption in Kenyan institutions has also not been robust, with current practices relying on faulty, anecdotal corruption indexes and politicized interventions (Hope K. R., 2014b; Khamisi, 2018). In the absence of robust empirical evidence to inform public sector reforms, Kenya's attempts to deal with corruption have followed global trends, using a *managerialism* and *interventionist* approach (Garduno, 2019). This has involved criminalizing corruption, tightening procedures, and arresting

the culprits (Chen, Jiang, & Villeva, 2015; Garduno, 2019). There was even a business attempt at increasing public sector wages and privatizing public services, which did not yield the requisite results but ended up exacerbating corruption (Ayee, 2008; Abasili & Akinboye, 2019; CS, 2016; Khamisi, 2018).

Currently, there is hardly any scholarly attempt to examine corruption in Kenya's devolved system of government. The available studies have mainly looked at the merits and demerits of devolution and have mainly produced quantitative data, without digging deeper into the issues in a robust manner, through qualitative research methodologies, hence the need for this study (Anassi, 2004; Karuri, 2014; Taaliu, 2017; Ko & Samajdar, 2010; Stedtjer, 2018).

The study identifies organisational culture, bureaucratic procedures, information processing and county level policy instruments as key drivers of corruption, as discussed in the next section. Public awareness is also discussed, as a key moderating variable that explains the strength of the relationship between the drivers of corruption and public service delivery.

2.1.3 Organizational culture and public service delivery

Scholars posit that organizational culture determines the norms of behavior in organizations and defines interactions at the intra-organizational, inter-organizational and organizational-public levels (Berthod, 2018). They argue that this occurs due to the system of social control that organizational cultures are able to wield over individuals, affecting their behavior and determining what is considered normal in any given environment. They posit that organizational cultures are able to do this by reinforcing norms of behavior through descriptive norms and sanctioning wrong behavior through injunctive norms (Kubbe & Engelbert, 2018). Thus, organizational cultures are able to determine individual behavior by applying descriptive norms that set behavioral standards and by applying injunctive norms that mete organizational sanctions on those who dare break the descriptive norms. In the context of devolved systems of government, organizational cultures are thus able to shape the standards of behavior for public officials, especially in matters to do with corruption, and thus ultimately affect the level of public service delivery (Kobis, Carter, & Starke, 2018).

Institutional theorists argue the presence of descriptive and injunctive norms within the organizational culture of government institutions such as devolved governments serve to protect the longevity of governments (Berthod, 2018). They basically argue that governments are institutions that need to survive, in perpetuity from one administration to another. Thus, they posit that organizational cultures are a significant factor that helps governments transition from one administration to another, seamlessly. They view this as a survivalist tactic and an evolutionary adaptation that government organizations have acquired, to be able to survive from one leadership to another. However, there is a scholarly view that some of these survivalist behaviors by organizational cultures may actually be detrimental for government institutions as it may impend their existence especially in the face of substantial external threats or shocks from the environment (Berthod, 2018). Others argue that such survivalist behaviors may cause conformist cultures that could cause indigestion in government institutions and implode from within due to revolt from staff in reaction to an idea whose time has come, causing an eruption and affecting public service delivery (Berthod, 2018). In the context of corruption in devolved systems of government, such external shocks and internal eruptions when they occur, may provide policy windows for implementing anticorruption measures and improving public service delivery (Wickberg, 2018).

Research shows that organizational cultures are powerful determinants of human behavior as they are formally imposed through laws and regulations and informally enforced through institutional practices and behavioral cues (Kubbe & Engelbert, 2018). They thus set social norms that are accepted as the standard of behavior that is expected of everyone in a given space (Wickberg, 2018). Therefore, in the context of corruption in devolved systems of government, they could help explain corruption behavior among public officials and explain the levels of public service delivery. This is because although individuals in government organizations may have different ideas, or values and attitudes on corruption, which they hold privately from the organizational culture of the government they work for, studies show such officials are not allowed to exhibit these views outside the official organizational culture (Kobis, Carter, & Starke, 2018). This holds them in a kind of capture and affects their behavior when confronted by corruption at work, thus affecting the level of public service delivery.

Further, many organizational cultures consist of several norms of shared standards of beliefs of acceptable behavior that are influenced by the greater society (Kobis, Carter, & Starke, 2018). Thus, a societal culture that condones corruption feeds into an organizational culture that tolerates corruption. Conversely, corruption within organizational culture has been known to feed into corruption within society, creating a vicious cycle and an autopoietic system that is self-sustaining (Kobis, Carter, & Starke, 2018). This has often been captured through the attitude of members of the public towards corruption and the attitude of public officials, who are also part of the greater society.

Evidence also indicates that organizational cultures influence the decisions of public servants through peer pressure (Kubbe & Engelbert, 2018). Scholars posit that organizational cultures are able to do this through organizational traditions which are enforced by peers at work (Kobis, Carter, & Starke, 2018). Thus, organizational cultures determine, to a large extent, corruption practices in devolved systems of government, through such peer pressure. Other times, dominant individuals within organizations can influence the organizational culture by imposing their own decisions on what is acceptable and not acceptable, thus creating written and unwritten rules of norms that other staff must follow (Kobis, Carter, & Starke, 2018). Thus, in terms of corruption in devolved systems of government, the presence of dominant figures in certain positions may affect the corruption practices within an institution, and consequently affect public service delivery.

Studies show that organizational cultures also govern relationships within organizations, at the intra-organizational, inter-organizational and with members of the public level, due to their influence of social norms (Bayanova, *et al*., 2019). These social norms affect corruption and have been framed in the principal-agent theory by scholars, who assume that public servants, as agents of the general public (who is the principal), will abuse their powers to steal public funds and extort bribes from the public (Garduno, 2019). The argument behind such behavior has been framed in economic terms, where rational and principal agency theorists believe that individuals will maximize their material benefits. However, organizational cultures have been known to defy this approach, as they have been reported to both enable and disable corruption practices, based on the dominant social norms at play (Bayanova, *et al*., 2019). Thus, it

is not in all organizational cultures in devolved governments that public servants will expect bribes for services rendered, rendering public service delivery levels unpreditable.

Evidence shows the influence of organizational culture on individual and organizational behavior is significant. Studies from Russia found that organizational culture created and maintained the identity and uniqueness of institutions (Bayanova, *et al*., 2019). This significance was also captured in Indonesia where studies showed that organizational culture played an important part in communicating, implementing and institutionalizing the vision, mission and goals of organizations (Lubis & Hanum, 2019: Elsbach & Stigliani, 2018; Paais & Pattiruhu, 2020). Other studies show that organizational cultures are important factors in corrupt institutions as they influence public services, although there is little empirical research that addresses the characteristics of such cultures and few studies from Africa (Campbell & Goritz, 2014.

A study done in Iran among 279 companies on the direct and indirect effects of organizational culture reported that organizational culture has significant influences on individual behaviors and level of public service delivery (Abdil, *et al*., 2018). This was also reported in studies carried out with 100 respondents from 11 institutions of higher education in Indonesia, where organizational culture affected the behavior of staff and the level of public service delivery (Susilo, Wike, & Ahmadi, 2020). Research from Malaysia shows that organizational culture played a significant role in determining corruption practices among employees and public service delivery levels (Muhamad & Gani, 2020). A study done in Indonesia on 108 health workers found that organizational culture affected the performance of public officials in terms of public service delivery (Astuti & Soliha, 2021). This means that organizational culture is capable of affecting public service delivery and influencing individual behaviors when it comes to corruption practices. This was confirmed by studies on organizational culture in Iraq which found that organizational culture directly affected corruption and public service delivery (Al-Jundi, Shuhaiber, & Al-Emara, 2019). Other studies have found that organizational cultures are the reason corruption research is not exactly welcomed, or prioritized due to the organizational attitude towards corrupt activities (Gomez, 2020).

Studies from South Korea on organizational corruption found a nexus between the creation and tolerance of an organizational culture of corruption by large, dynastic, family-owned conglomerates, and the political elite (Jun, Kim, & Rowley, 2019). The study established a direct relationship between organizational culture and the tolerance of corruption within Korean firms. Case studies involving a Brazilian company (Odebrecht) that is one of the biggest corruption cases globally and that is synonymous with bribery and kickbacks, for securing construction projects in many countries corruptly, showed how corruption within organizational cultures influence political environments, public services and employees' organizational corruption (corruption done on behalf of the organization) (Morales & Morales, 2019). Other studies done in Germany with 563 participants confirmed the link between organizational culture, employees' organizational corruption and public service delivery (Campbell M. , 2015). However, there is inadequate empirical literature on this and the characteristics of organizational cultures and the underlying assumptions, values and norms that promote employees' corruption that ultimately affects public service delivery, are still unknown (Jancsics, 2019).

In Kenya, a study involving 185 participants, from 30 organizations in Nairobi found that there was a significant relationship between organizational culture and the tolerance of corrupt practices among NGOs in Kenya (Kimemia, 2013). The study found a strong connection between organizational culture and decisions to engage in corrupt practices and the tolerance of corrupt practices, which all played a role in determining the dominant organizational culture, thus affecting service delivery.

Since organizational cultures determine what is normal or acceptable behavior in a given environment, they are also capable of influencing the success of anticorruption initiatives. Many scholars have blamed organizational cultures for the failure of current anticorruption strategies that have been trialed in devolved systems of government which have involved targeting the demand side of corruption (who are mainly public officials) and ignoring the supply side (which is the public who give out bribes) (Li E. , 2021). These approaches have however, been informed by principal agent theory and seek to target the agent (public official) who is abusing the trust bestowed on him by the principal (public). As such, they do not often address themselves to the bigger

cultural context in which corruption occurs and fail to address themselves to the corruption culture as a whole.

Thus, the researcher believes organizational cultures are powerful anticorruption tools which can be harnessed to normalize anticorruption cultures in devolved governments. This approach could equally be helpful for anticorruption policies, as there is a growing body of scholarship that claims that anticorruption efforts have generally failed globally, in spite of the emphasis on convictions on the demand side of corruption (Li E. , 2021). This position was confirmed by studies done in Iran where 373 administrative experts were interviewed, with the results showing that organizational culture played a significant role in preventing administrative corruption and improving public services (Rabiee & Assef, 2012). Another study done on designing and explaining the model of Islamic organizational culture to deal with administrative corruption in organizations, came up with models of organizational cultures that can be utilized to fight corruption and improve services (Zarandi & Madani, 2016). These studies show that organizational cultures can be one of the preventive tools against corruption and may inform current anticorruption approaches that emphasize prevention rather than punishment.

Studies done on organizational culture parameters that are needed to fight corruption in an organization with 1000 employees found that 5% of the workforce was a critical threshold, in terms of the number of whistleblowers required to constrain the spread of corruption and if this number was increased to 25% the corruption contagion was negligible (Nekovee & Pinto, 2019). The same study found out that organizational cultures that had flatter structures were more easily corruptible than taller structures, although they spread the corruption lower than taller structures. Since organizational cultures are embedded within the structures, processes, interactions, and the coordination mechanisms of institutions, this impacts corruption and public service delivery within devolved systems of government (Al-Jundi, Shuhaiber, & Al-Emara, 2019).

Further, research has shown that organizational cultures that support a strong compliance culture that enforces fidelity to the laws and policies set out by organizations and society are a powerful anticorruption weapon (Alina, Cerasela, &

Raluca-Andreea, 2018). Such laws and policies include international agreements, regional conventions, best practice guides and corruption perception indicators. Thus, organizational cultures that set standards of behavior in adherence to such laws and policies, are able to act as anticorruption weapons through the development and implementation of ethical standards, procedures, practices and policies that promote zero tolerance to corruption (Mahmoudi & Majd, 2021). Consequently, organizational culture is a key driver of corruption and a key target of anticorruption efforts in a bid to improve public service delivery levels.

2.1.4 Bureaucratic procedures and public service delivery

Bureaucratic procedures often involve hierarchal systems where chains of command are present, and coordination and control of organizations are centralized, causing unnecessary delays in service delivery through unnecessary specializations and red tape (Dunlop & Radaelli, 2019). Scholars, fault bureaucracy for being dysfunctional due to the presence of corruption within bureaucratic procedures, inflexibility in service delivery which also acts as a barrier to innovation among bureaucrats, low output from public officials, and low morale witnessed among government officials (Dunlop & Radaelli, 2019). This view has been supported by studies carried out in Papua New Guinea, which is a country that is reported to be acutely corrupt, where public officials prioritized corruption over public service delivery, leading to unnecessary delays in service provision and the enactment of bureaucratic barriers that enabled corruption and hindered public service delivery (Walton, 2020).

Studies from Russia on administrative corruption showed a similar result, with excessive administrative procedures increasing bureaucratic hurdles for businesses, a situation which supported the rent seeking activities of regulatory agencies and affected the cost of doing business (Krylova, 2018). Similar studies carried out in Russia, also showed that imposition of arbitrary bureaucratic procedures increased corruption (Ibodullaevich & Kizi, 2021). Other studies from China on bureaucratic corruption equally found that corruption undermined productivity and affected public service delivery (Wang E. , 2021).A study done from 100,000 public procurement contracts within the Czech Republic and Hungary from 2009-2021 found that EU funding increased corruption risks by up to 34% due to overly formalistic compliance and accountability mechanisms introduced by the EU that increased government

bureaucratic procedures and red tape and this impacted service delivery (Fazekas & King, 2019). Thus, bureaucratic controls of corruption were turned into facilitators of corruption.

A further study that examined Hong Kong's transformation from a pervasively corrupt nation to an international model of anticorruption, reported that Hong Kong's anticorruption efforts were mainly geared towards reducing the discretion of junior officials by setting clear procedures and this had the effect of increasing bureaucratic procedures and re-introducing corruption, which affected public service delivery levels (Smartis, 2018). A key part of efforts to end the endemic corruption involved minimizing the informal discretion of frontline officials, who were perceived to be the crucial source of bribery but this ended up increasing the distance between the government and the people, encouraging more bureaucratic procedures and more corruption, and less efficiency in public service delivery (Smartis, 2018). Further formalization led to opportunistic rent seekers bypassing the bureaucratic systems to commit corrupt acts and this affected public service delivery levels (Smartis, 2018). The study concluded that effective anticorruption programs require more than just targeting the 'bad apples' but more about transforming entire cultures (Smartis, 2018). The study recommended fundamental changes in the operation of the informal norms of government routines, rather than targeting the corruption players directly in a bid to improve public services (Smartis, 2018). The study argued this would be more effective as environments in which people act can be modified, thus affecting their interests and corruption tactics, rather than acting on people directly. Further, the study routed for the demarcation of what was acceptable as gifts and what was considered bribery, based on the value of the gift (Smartis, 2018).

A study in Africa that interviewed 864 bureaucrats, across 80 randomly sampled local governments in Ghana showed that granting politicians the discretionary powers to oversee bureaucrats led to increased bureaucratic procedures and more administrative malfeasance that affected public service delivery (Brierley, 2019). The study concluded that politicians misused their powers by increasing bureaucratic procedures to facilitate their corrupt behavior and even went to the extent of threatening to transfer and dismiss officers who did not cooperate and this affected public service delivery (Brierley, 2019). Politicians also leveraged their discretionary powers to incentivize bureaucrats

to extract rents from the state on their behalf. The findings further showed that politicians utilized the corruption within the bureaucratic procedures to fund their election campaigns as there were limited institutional safeguards (Brierley, 2019). The research confirmed that granting of greater political oversight may increase bureaucratic procedures and affect public service delivery and does not necessarily improve governance by reducing corruption (Brierley, 2019).

However, pro- bureaucracy scholars argue that corrupt exchanges can be helpful in specific contexts and could be construed as the fifth factor of production and help improve public service delivery (Brown & Cloke, 2011; Arce & Hendricks, 2019). This means that corruption may contribute to easing the burdens of bureaucracies by providing a way of navigating them, thus improving public services (McCollum, Limato, Otiso, Theobald, & Taegtmeyer, 2018). This was the case for studies conducted in Russia which showed that corrupt exchanges were embedded within bureaucratic procedures and that such bureaucratic procedures provided favorable conditions for corrupt exchanges during routine interactions between the private sector and public officials of three regulatory authorities, which had the effect of easing the way of doing business for the private sector, thus improving public services (Bondeli, Havenvid, & Solli-Saether, 2021). Other studies from Asia confirmed this view, with corruption being equated to 'speed money' as it reduced the time taken in time consuming bureaucratic procedures, thus saving money and boosting profitability for enterprises, and ultimately affecting public service delivery (Nguyen & Luong-Montenegrin, 2020).

Studies from China seem to also support these views and suggest that enhanced monitoring of bureaucratic hierarchies as an anticorruption measure, may be counter-productive and lead to poor service delivery. Research that utilized a dataset of sub provincial inspections in China found that anticorruption measures involving intensive top-down monitoring reduced the productivity of bureaucrats by scaring them away from utilizing informal practices that they would otherwise rely on to accomplish their work, and this affected public service delivery (Wang E. H., 2021). Thus, the findings showed that intensive state led efforts to lower corruption within bureaucratic hierarchies undermined productivity and service delivery. Although scholars of state building view effective bureaucratic procedures as those that increase bureaucrats' productivity, enable service delivery and curb corruption, these findings from China

suggest that curbing corruption within bureaucratic hierarchies may undermine productivity and service delivery (Wang E. H., 2021).

These views are not surprising, given that many studies on corruption have been done from a functionalist and rational theoretical framework (Adamtey, Obeng, & Sarpong, 2020). The functionalist approach views corruption as how *things are done* (to jump the queue and cut through burdensome regulatory requirements). This approach has been criticized for being tautological as it is difficult to tell when corruption will be functional (or not) (Montero, 2018). It also makes it difficult to tell why some people will be corrupt and others not and what public service delivery problems are likely to respond to corrupt solutions (Kobis *et al*., 2016). Consequently, bureaucratic procedures are a key driver of corruption and a key target for anticorruption efforts in an effort to improve public services.

2.1.5 Information processing and public service delivery

Studies show that devolved governments have established procedures for collecting, receiving, analyzing, and disseminating information (Martins, Fernandes, Rohman, & Veiga, 2018). Scholars view these mechanisms and forums as essential avenues for disseminating information to improve public services. Thus, they expect such forums to be accessible to the public, especially to persons living with disabilities. Studies done on the relationship between electronic government and corruption in over 150 countries showed that when information is readily available to the public, there is improved transparency, and corruption becomes less as people would easily be found out if they engaged in corruption (Martins, Fernandes, Rohman, & Veiga, 2018). Thus, the dissemination of information empowers people to make their own decisions.

In Kenya, the devolved governments are expected to award 30% of procurement tenders to women and those living with disabilities, and procurement information is expected to be disseminated to these groups to enable them access such opportunities (Oyugi & Getuno, 2019). However, accessibility of information is not always guaranteed for critical audiences and this ultimately affects public service delivery. A study that was done in Italy on 261 foreign companies in 25 host countries, showed that corruption in information processing increased dissemination costs and ended up limiting the

accessibility of such information to critical stakeholders, thus affecting public service delivery (Rabbiosi & Santangelo, 2019).

Studies show that corruption in information processing takes various forms, such as missing information, withholding of information, disappearance of information, the lack of evidence, and modification of documents (Mingob & Cerrillo-i-Martineza, 2018). A study done in Spain showed that to prevent the occurrence of corruption associated with such management of information by a public official, there is need to incorporate transparency obligations into every record's lifecycle through regulation, and utilize record management as a corruption prevention tool for greater accountability and better public service delivery (Mingod & Cerrillo-i-Martinez, 2018).

Other studies have shown that red tape is one of the tactics utilized in information processing for corruption purposes due to the discretionary powers accorded to bureaucrats. This was observed in a study conducted in Zimbabwe involving 100 individuals and 50 small to medium size private firms, from 1998 to 2018 where red tape was utilized to extort bribes from those seeking information from government offices, thus affecting public service delivery (Muzurura, 2018).

Scholars in public administration and legal studies posit that public information disclosures through information dissemination, is a necessary requirement in eradicating corruption in information processing and improving public service delivery (Villeneuve, Mugellini, & Heide, 2020). They argue that accessibility of public information to citizens, improves governance and policy making, and improves public service delivery (Villeneuve, Mugellini, & Heide, 2020). Thus, citizens who are engaged in such processes are able to oversight governments from an informed perspective, which will lead to better services. This position is supported by research that shows that public information when simplified and disseminated to the public through information processing, improves transparency and helps keep corruption in check, and improves public services. For example, in Ukraine dissemination of public information led to greater transparency and reduced corruption in government, and improved services (Bondarenko, Utkina, & Kolesnikova, 2021). Studies that looked at corruption in the energy sector found that information processing was an important tool in mitigating corruption risk and improving public services (Lu, *et al*., 2019). Conversely, a study that looked at the issue of public information disclosures in

Indonesia found that dissemination and accessibility of information channels was a challenge in the corruption prone provinces of Indonesia, which also were struggling with service delivery challenges (Jannah, Sipahutar, & Hariyati, 2020).

Other studies have found that many of the impediments to public information disclosures comes from misunderstandings by bureaucrats who maintain non-disclosure practices for their own survival, as most of them are implicated in corruption (Jannah, Sipahutar, & Hariyati, 2020). Such officials also apply tactics of classifying information, as secret and confidential to avoid availing them to the public (Jannah, Sipahutar, & Hariyati, 2020). Thus, overreliance on prevailing practices without making it mandatory to disseminate information on corruption to the public, is not likely to make any impact in curbing corruption or improve public services. Hence the reason many scholars call for the enactment of information dissemination procedures and policies by governments (Jannah, Sipahutar, & Hariyati, 2020).

One of the impacts of corruption within information processing that has been captured by empirical evidence, is poor service delivery. Studies show that when corruption infiltrates information processes, the results are poor service delivery. This was the case in a study that looked at corruption processes within information processes that involved drug procurement globally (Kohler & Dimancesco, 2020). They found that substandard drugs were delivered due to corruption within the information processing systems that involved the procurement of the drugs and called for the establishment of accountability mechanisms and transparency to curb corruption and improve public services (Kohler & Dimancesco, 2020). Other studies show that dissemination of information to citizens equips citizens with the skills to oversight governments and ensures governments is accessible and responsive, and this improves public service delivery (Arayankalam, Khan, & Krishnan, 2021). E- government has been particularly singled out for improving government administrative effectiveness, curbing corruption and improving service delivery (Arayankalam, Khan, & Krishnan, 2021).

A study done in Nigeria captured the dual nature of information processing, where the media was utilized to fight corruption and at the same time utilized to propagate misinformation to cover up corruption (Nwankwo, Babatunde, Uchenna, & Comfort,

2018). The findings showed that information processing was critical in fighting corruption through the use of digital platforms, communication infrastructure, social media, and information technologies, and for closing information circulation and dissemination gaps that were often exploited by corrupt officials to perpetuate corrupt practices (Nwankwo, Babatunde, Uchenna, & Comfort, 2018). However, the study noted that the same information processing was utilized to propagate misinformation that covered up corruption and so it was a dual sword, that could be utilized to improve or adversely affect public service delivery levels.

In terms of anticorruption, studies show that information processing can be a powerful ally against corruption. Studies from Uganda show that short message texts on corruption helped voters to hold their elected officials accountable and this improved public service delivery (Buntainea, Jablonskib, Nielsonc, & Pickering, 2018). The study had noted that politicians were manipulating information to prevent voters from knowing the truth but mobile text messages enabled NGOs to share credible information on corruption and hold politicians to account (Buntainea, Jablonskib, Nielsonc, & Pickering, 2018). The study involved 16,083 participants during the 2016 Uganda district elections and the NGOs processed information on corruption by simplifying it and disseminating it to voters, which led to improved public services (Buntainea, Jablonskib, Nielsonc, & Pickering, 2018).

Other studies on anticorruption in information processing have lauded the influence of social media in combating corruption in the public sector. This was confirmed by studies from Indonesia where advances in ICT enabled faster information processing and enabled people to interact across various platforms, including social media, to discuss corruption matters (Prabowo, Hamdani, & Sanusi, 2018). Such interactions enabled disseminations and discussions of news and information related to corruption, with the end result being that citizens became more engaged and actively involved in anticorruption efforts and this improved public service delivery (Prabowo, Hamdani, & Sanusi, 2018). Scholars have specifically argued that e-government is effective in combating corruption and improves public service delivery in information processing as it removes the need for physical interactions (Arayankalam, Khan, & Krishnan, 2021). A study done in 137 countries on the dissemination of information in terms of data availability, data accessibility and data serviceability found that accessibility of

information improved when dissemination channels were geared to reaching information users and such accessibility reduced corrupt incidents and improved public service delivery (Kaya & Seebeck, 2019).

Another study done in the city of Sao Paulo which looked at information processing within an open government initiative found that it was important to integrate information processing ecosystems and invest in collaborative data between the society, private organizations and government sector in order to curb corruption and improve public services (Santos, 2019). Further studies done in the EU on the use of ICT technologies in information processing where information was disseminated through interactive channels such as e-government found that the digitization of administration processes improved accessibility and transparency and had a positive effect on public services and on corruption as captured by Transparency International's corruption perception index (Androniceanu, Kinnunen, & Georgescu, 2020). A study in China that analyzed 134 circulars of intraparty disciplinary punishments that were utilized to sanction corrupt officials found that information processing procedures and dissemination channels that reinforced the ethical norms expected of public officials received more public support for their anticorruption efforts and improved public services (Fudan, 2021). Studies from Israel that investigated the dissemination of information on corruption within different media found that each dissemination channel had its strengths and limitations as an anticorruption tool and there was need to rely on the broader media ecosystem by utilizing multiple channels to reach different audiences and improve public services (Schauseil, 2019).

Research from Spain on information dissemination and disclosures found that government secrecy requirements limited accessibility of information and this created loopholes for corruption through missing documents, disappearance of information, lack of evidence or modification of documents (Mingo & Cerrillo-i-Martinez, 2018). The study recommended the incorporation of transparency obligations into a record's lifecycle to minimize corruption risks associated with secrecy requirements as a way of preventing and fighting corruption within information processing. They also recommended that legislation on record management and archiving needs to take into account the accessibility of information, its transparency and accountability, in order to reduce corruption and improve public service delivery. Another study found that

administrative transparency in information processing is a tool for corruption prevention, as most corrupt transactions were deliberately concealed and hidden, and thus transparency acted as a deterrent to corruption and helped improve public service delivery (Ponti, Cerrillo-i-Martinez, & Mascio, 2021). The study also found that digitization processes in information processing in the form of big data analytics and open data approaches contributed to the effectiveness of anticorruption programs and public service delivery (Ponti, Cerrillo-i-Martinez, & Mascio, 2021). Thus, information processing is a key driver of corruption and a key target of anticorruption measures in order to improve public services.

2.1.6 County level policy instruments and pubic service delivery

Empirical findings on county level and local government policy instruments addressing corruption in devolved units shows that most of their policy instruments are borrowed from the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), which is an international policy instrument that emphasizes international cooperation to prevent corruption by classifying it as a crime and recovering assets for those caught in corruption in addition to providing information and technical support to countries that cooperate (Mackey, 2019). Thus, many county and local government level instruments concentrate on punishment as a deterrent through law enforcement and judicial action.

Scholars view these policy instruments from the rational theory approach, which look at corruption as a conflict between the principle (members of the public who own public funds) and the agent (public servants who steal public funds), thus focusing solutions on strengthening institutions, training, and legislation (Dunlop & Radaelli, 2019). UNCAC borrows from this tradition by emphasizing criminalization and law enforcement, which many countries use as a template for anti-corruption strategies. These approaches have been based on *interventionism* (arresting the culprit after the corrupt act) and *managerialism* (tightening systems, procedures, and protocols to seal corruption loopholes).

County-level policy instruments can be viewed from this perspective as part of *interventionism* and *managerialism* as they tend to borrow from these international and national frameworks. However, these approaches have been criticized for being based on Western experiences and the exceptional case studies of Hong Kong and

Singapore (Beyerle, 2014; Albrecht, 2017). Ideological concerns of the high moral ground taken by anti-corruption proponents, especially those coming from the West and being pushed to third world countries, have been raised (Abdullah, 2019). Critics argue that the anti-corruption discourse and measures to fight it are highly Western-centric and riddled with ideological interests of the superpowers, where global powers supersede national interests to push their agendas and legitimize epistemological claims about corruption (Andersen, Johannesen, & Rijkers, 2020). For example, the global Corruption Perceptions Index is seen as legitimizing the anti-corruption measures, that western countries have placed on developing countries to eliminate obstacles to the free flow of capital (Andersen, Johannesen, & Rijkers, 2020).

Nevertheless, many countries are prioritizing corruption eradication through the utilization of institutional anti-corruption frameworks as policy instruments in an effort to improve public services (Moroff, 2019; Gong & Yang, 2020). In Indonesia, the use of such frameworks was pursued through the establishment of the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK). Studies assessing the effectiveness of KPK's ability to investigate, prosecute and deal with high level corruption showed that the Commission was threatened by pro-corruption networks that resisted and consolidated themselves to fight the anticorruption reforms and this affected public service delivery (Umam, Whitehouse, Head, & Khan, 2020). However, the study identified social forces from the media and civic society who had emerged and were countering the pro-corruption networks and lending support to KPK's anticorruption efforts to buttress its work and prevent its further marginalization by pro-corruption networks in an effort to improve public services (Umam, Whitehouse, Head, & Khan, 2020).

Scholarly studies on policy instruments from the health sector show that they rely on internationally binding legal instruments such as the Global Network on Anticorruption, Transparency and Accountability (GNACTA) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to mobilize global action against corruption and improve public services (Mackey, 2019). In contrast, studies from the energy sector show that local policy instruments were preferred. For example, a study done in Brazil showed that the government relied heavily on local policy instruments to curb corruption and improve public service delivery within the state corporation, Petrobras, which was

riddled with corruption scandals involving kickbacks from suppliers to politicians (Lima-de-Oliveira, 2020).

In the environmental sector, a cross sectional study from 20 industrialized democracies that included Greece, Sweden, Poland and Denmark, which was carried out from 1990 to 2012 utilized environmental policy instruments to gauge the relationship between public perceptions of political corruption and the strength of national climate change mitigation policies (Rafaty, 2018). The study found that greater perceptions of corruption were robustly associated with weaker climate change mitigation policies and lower perceptions of corruption were associated with stronger climate change mitigation policies and improved public service delivery (Rafaty, 2018). Thus, the study showed a link between the levels of corruption and the effectiveness of climate change mitigation policy instruments and public service delivery.

Other studies have looked at donor conditionalities as an anticorruption policy instrument on third world countries and did an assessment of the effectiveness of such external stimuli in curbing corruption and improving public services, at the national level (Borz, 2019). The findings show that the intervening impact of EU post conditionality and GRECO's (Groupe d'Etats Contre La Corruption) monitoring on countries anticorruption records, had a positive impact, as it triggered national responses towards corruption eradication and improved pubic services (Borz, 2019). Another study that looked at the effectiveness of peer reviews as an anticorruption policy instrument that was utilized by international organizations to monitor state compliance with international anticorruption legal frameworks, found that previously understudied peer reviews such as the OECD Working Group on Bribery, the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption, and the Implementation Review Mechanism of the UN Convention against Corruption, faced challenges of differing degrees of authority, with the observed variations being due to membership sizes, compositions of the peer reviewers, the institutional designs and the types of officials that were involved in the peer review process, and this affected public service delivery (Jongen, 2018).

Evidence gathered from governance policy instruments from 48 countries in Africa between 1996-2014 showed that financial stabilization and financial deepening

instruments were the best tools for reducing inequality and corruption, and improving public services even though there were governance dynamics in the persistence of income inequality through financial access (Tchamyou, 2021). Fiscal policy instruments have also been utilized for anticorruption, with studies from Nigeria showing that corruption adversely affected economic growth and public service delivery despite the presence of fiscal policy instruments and there was need for the government to ensure effective use of money supply and government expenditures to improve the economy and seal resource leakages through corruption (Adegoriola, 2018).

Studies show that devolved systems of government utilize various policy instruments such as laws, policies, regulations, rules, procedures, and practices to curb corruption and to improve public services (Damania, Sterner, & Whittington, 2020). In China, budget cycles were utilized as policy instruments to fight corruption within the provinces and to improve public services, with local leaders being promoted based on their integrity (no corruption) and economic performance (Xiao, Gong, & Zhang, 2019). In Nigeria, whistleblowing, a federal government policy instrument, was utilized within the states, leading to the discovery and recovery of stolen public resources and improved public services (Salihu, 2019). In South Africa, local governments borrowed lifestyle audits as a policy instrument to fight corruption and improve public service delivery (Munyao, 2019).

In Kenya, the counties have borrowed various policy instruments from the national government in a bid to curb corruption and improve public services. These include vetting of public officers, wealth declarations, lifestyle audits, witness protection, whistleblowing, and monitoring of bank accounts held overseas by public officers (Munyao, 2019). Further, some counties in Kenya have included indicators for corruption eradication in the performance contracts for their staff, and there have been attempts to ensure public officers charged with corruption step aside from their positions (Kempe Ronald Hope, 2013). Thus, there has been an attempt to implement some of the county level policy instruments.

2.1.7 Public awareness and public service delivery

Scholars who advocate for accountability in devolved systems of government argue that public awareness is a critical component of accountability in public service delivery (Novi, Piacenza, Robone, & Turati, 2019). Thus, they expect devolved governments to develop mechanisms of educating the public about corruption. They argue that with more public awareness, there will be more accountability, as more empowered citizens demand quality services, a situation that would reduce corruption and improve public service delivery (Opalo, 2020). However, studies show that due to information asymmetry between those in leadership and the citizens, the citizens often do not have adequate information or the capacity to interpret it, especially in low-income countries with high illiteracy levels (Mulyaman, Ismail, & Raya, 2019). Thus, accountability scholars argue that conducting civic education forums is a prerequisite in helping local communities evaluate the performance of devolved governments when it comes to public services (Magessa, Wynne-Jones, & Hockley, 2020).

Studies done in developing countries show that conducting civic education forums is a critical component of fighting corruption (Chege & Wang, 2020). The use of information technology in such public awareness initiatives has been lauded, as it has encouraged more public discussions and more ethical conduct by motivating staff to report corruption in their workplaces (Chege & Wang, 2020). However, some scholars have found the effect of public awareness controversial, as the same awareness makes people fear reporting corruption, mainly due to weak whistleblowing protection policies (Chege & Wang, 2020). Thus, even though public awareness through the use of information technology in whistleblowing has been found to be effective in some studies, its effect on reducing corruption is limited due to the fear of the unknown. Therefore, some scholars have argued that the success of public awareness in improving public service delivery and as an anticorruption intervention strategy was mainly contextual and not a one-size fits all, recommendation (Chege & Wang, 2020).

In the health sector, public awareness was found to be an effective anticorruption weapon as it highlighted health corruption and placed pressure on government officials and policy makers to tackle it, hence improving the quality and accessibility of healthcare services (Mackey, 2019). A study involving 202 college students in Taiwan

also found that public awareness helped people realize the negative impact of corruption and enabled them to work collaboratively to disrupt it in order to improve public service delivery (Huang, Hsiao, & Shin-Lin, 2021). Other studies have shown that tackling the supply side of corruption which mainly involved the private sector through public awareness, helped highlight grand corruption involving high level public officials and politicians, thus applying public pressure to eradicate it and increased pressure for improved public services (Mahmud, Mohamed, & Arshad, 2022).

The importance of public awareness in fighting corruption was equally reported by studies carried out in Indonesia, where public awareness of the anticorruption laws led to better compliance to the laws on corruption, thus reducing corruption and improving public services (Dewantara, *et al*., 2021). This was also observed in Papua New Guinea, where studies showed that public awareness played a critical role in improving governance by reducing corruption and increasing effective and efficient public services (Ezebilo, Odhuno, & Kavan, 2019). In Cameron, public service delivery and the effectiveness of their anticorruption institutions, were deemed to be failing due to inadequate public awareness, as Cameroon continued to be ranked among the most corrupt countries in the world by the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (Bechem, 2018).

A study on corruption awareness in the Indonesian society as a whole and Indonesian organizations in general found that unethical behavior (corruption) was impacted by inadequate sensitization and there was need to conduct more civic education forums and provide civic education materials if anticorruption and public service improvement efforts were to succeed (Ashari, Nanere, & Trebilcock, 2018). Other studies have shown that in countries susceptible to high corruption levels, government auditors play an important role in combating and mitigating corruption through public awareness of their audit reports (Ashari, Nanere, & Trebilcock, 2018).

Research carried out on public awareness around corruption in Indonesia found that there was little public awareness and high corruption levels, especially within the licensing, and procurement of goods and public service delivery sectors, which triggered further research on public awareness involving anticorruption campaigns in

which Facebook and Instagram were utilized, to try and raise the level of public awareness, in an effort to improve public services (Yulianita, Nurrahmawati, & Maryani, 2020). The results showed that Facebook was a more effective tool for galvanizing public support on anticorruption initiatives and improving public services, as it had more active comments, more flexible time durations and more diverse targets than Instagram (Yulianita, Nurrahmawati, & Maryani, 2020). The study further underscored the importance of public awareness as an important anticorruption tool, emphasizing that when people were more informed and aware of the corruption going on, they were better able to spread it to other people and galvanize public support for anticorruption efforts and demand improved public services (Yulianita, Nurrahmawati, & Maryani, 2020). Thus, public awareness, through civil education forums and availing of civic education materials, were capable of explaining the relationship between the drivers of corruption (organizational culture, bureaucratic procedures, information processing, county level policy instruments) and public service delivery, thus acting as a moderating variable.

2.3 Literature gaps

This section looks at the empirical literature on the variables of this study by discussing several studies to build a case for the current study and contrasts the studies with the proposed study based on their scope, objectives, variables, findings, research gaps, methodological approach, and context.

2.3.1 Summary of literature gaps

	Study	Gaps
1.	Alfano, Baraldi, & Cantabene (2020) did a paper on fiscal decentralization and corruption.	• Study utilized quantitative approach. • Did not utilize conceptual framework as outlined in this study.
2.	Magessa, Wynne-Jones, & Hockley (2020) studied decentralized forest management approaches in Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Malawi, and Ethiopia.	• Study confined to forestry sector. • The study did not utilize conceptual framework as proposed in this study. • The study did not look at embezzlement and bribery. • The study did not look at quality aspects of public service delivery.
3.	Mulyaman, Ismail, & Raya (2019) studied the Asian countries of Thailand, South Korea, Philippines, and Indonesia to determine whether decentralization, as prescribed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), reduced corruption in Asia.	• The study did not look at the conceptual variables in this study. • The study did not look at public service delivery.
4.	Stedtjer (2018) carried out a study on the effect of devolution on the public's ability to reduce corruption.	• The study looked at Western and central Kenya at the regional level while this study focused on Kiambu and Nairobi City counties. • The study did not look at public service delivery.

5.	McCollum, Limato, Otiso, Theobald, & Taegtmeyer (2018) studied health decentralization in Kenya and Indonesia. this research does.	• Study did not look at embezzlement and bribery as conceptualized in this study. • The study did not utilize the conceptual variables in this study. • Study did not look at public service delivery as a variable. • The study adopted a comparative approach, while this research is a case study of two counties.
6.	Iwuamadi & Hassan (2018) studied decentralization, governance, and corruption in Nigeria and Bangladesh.	• This study did not tackle embezzlement and bribery. • The study also did not cover public service delivery as this research does. • The study utilized secondary data, while this research is an empirical study.
7.	Dza, Kyeremeh, Dzandu, & Affran (2018) studied corruption within Ghana's local government public procurement processes.	• The study did not look at organizational culture, bureaucratic procedures, information processing, public awareness and county-level policy instruments as variables in this study. • It also did not look at public service delivery which is a dependent variable in this research.

		• The study was specific to Ghana, while this research is contextually based in Kenya. • The study used a quantitative approach, while this research utilizes a qualitative approach.
8.	Suprayitno & Pradiptyo (2017) looked at corruption and fiscal decentralization within Indonesia.	• The study did not delve into embezzlement and bribery. • Study did not look at public service delivery, as tackled in this research. • The study used a quantitative approach, while this research utilizes a qualitative methodology. • The study was carried out in Latin America, while this research was done in Kenya.
9.	Haryanto, Astuti, & Manajemen (2017) analyzed corruption and decentralization in Indonesia.	• At the conceptual level, the study looked at corruption in general while this research focuses on embezzlement and bribery. • The study did not look at public service delivery as captured in this research. • In terms of methodology, this study was a case study using a quantitative approach, while this research has taken a qualitative approach.

2.4 Research gaps

From the available literature, the studies are mainly confined to first world countries and the third world countries of Asia and Latin America, leaving a contextual gap in Africa and Kenya in particular. There is a paucity of empirical literature on corruption in Kenya's devolved systems of government, especially in Kiambu and Nairobi City counties. There is also a conceptual gap as available studies have not delved into the drivers of corruption as identified in this study, which has looked at organizational culture, bureaucratic procedures, information processing, county level policy instruments as key drivers of corruption and public awareness as a moderating variable. Available studies have also focused on accessibility and not dwelt on the quality aspects of service delivery. Thus, this study seeks to fill this conceptual gap. At the methodological level, majority of the available studies have taken a quantitative approach while this study takes a qualitative approach. Thus, the study sought to fill this methodological gap.

2.5 Summary

This section has introduced the independent variable, drivers of corruption and the dependent variable, public service delivery, the moderating variable, public awareness and their relationships. Drivers of corruption are represented by four variables: organizational culture, bureaucratic procedures, information processing, county level policy instruments. Public service delivery has accessibility and quality of services as the key focus. An empirical review of the literature in this area and a critique of current studies and research gaps has been provided. A conceptual framework has also been provided, and the key theories that anchor this study, the institutional theory, the commons theory, the policy networks and multiple streams framework have been introduced.

2.5 Theoretical/conceptual framework

2.5.1 Theoretical framework

The study utilizes institutional theory, commons theory, policy networks theory and multiple-streams framework.

2.5.1.1 Institutional theory

There are currently two schools of thought in the theory of institutions. There is an old institutional theory whose foundational work was written by Philip Selznick (1948). This theory conceives organizations as organisms that adapt to environmental threats

(Mettenheinn, 1996; Cardinale, 2017). They regard the formal and informal structures within organizations as being in tension, and these together, being in tension with their larger organizational environment (Peters B., 2000; Peterson & Peters, 2020; Wijk, Zietsma, Dorado, Bakker, & Marti, 2019). Such formal and informal structures are part and parcel of the processes, interactions, and coordination mechanisms that together comprise the organizational culture of the county governments that this study seeks to examine. The institutional theory thus helps illuminate how such organizational cultures affect the accessibility and quality of public services.

The new institutionalism school of thought on the other hand was propounded by scholars such as John W. Meyer in 1977 and later by Brian Rowan and Lynn Zucker (Powel and DiMaggio, 1991; Peterson & Peters, 2020). This new approach to institutions, sought to offer explanations for organizational phenomena through three critical philosophical underpinnings: rational myths, isomorphism, and legitimacy (Lammers & Garcia, 2017). Rational myths refer to made up stories that explain natural events and natural forces in the lives of people and organizations (Berthod, 2018). Research shows such myths influence organizational culture, hence the choice of this theory in examining this topic (Berthod, 2018).

Isomorphism refers to similarities of processes and structures in institutions, due to the tendency to imitate and copy each other (Suddaby, 2010; Peterson & Peters, 2020). Scholars argue this duplication is a survival instinct, where government institutions look to their peers for appropriate behavioral cues (Weimer, 1995; Cheeseman, 2018; Berthod, 2018; Wijk, Zietsma, Dorado, Bakker, & Marti, 2019; Suddaby, 2010; Peterson & Peters, 2020). Thus, the theory is critical in helping us interrogate the key drivers of corruption (organizational culture, bureaucratic procedures, information processing and county level policy instruments) as these are found within an institutional context where behavioral cues are obtained from other government institutions.

Aside from isomorphism, legitimacy is a critical philosophical underpinning for institutional theorists. Legitimacy is defined as the perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are sanctioned by society (Dimaggio & Powell, 1991; Cardinale, 2017). According to this theory, organizations deem legitimacy critical for survival and

adopt legitimate designs, regardless of their relevance or organizational priorities (Lammers & Garcia, 2017). Thus, the researcher utilizes this theory to interrogate red tape, hierarchies and specializations in bureaucratic procedures, which are legitimate structures of public service delivery within the governments of Kiambu and Nairobi City counties but which are also key drivers of corruption, as seen in this study.

Despite these developments, the institutional theory continues to have significant theoretical and methodological shortcomings due to the static nature of the institutional explanations it offers and the difficulties of measuring institutional variables (Wijk, Zietsma, Dorado, Bakker, & Marti, 2019). Scholars have faulted it for its inability to explain radical change and organizational adaptations (Scott, 2013; Peterson & Peters, 2020). It has also been accused of neglecting organizational competition and organizational agency (Alston, Eggerston, & North, 1996; Peterson & Peters, 2020). Critics have observed that it does not incorporate individual dynamics within organizations or choices that are not purely derived from organizational structures (Brusson, 1999; Peterson & Peters, 2020).

Nevertheless, the two schools of thought in institutional theory have put institutions at the core of the analysis of organizational conduct, and situated organizations in the larger institutional ecosystem, thus illuminating how institutions constrain or support organizational actions and decisions (Weimer, 1995; Lammers & Garcia, 2017). They have also demonstrated how organizations rely on institutions to access resources, reduce uncertainty, increase predictability and intelligibility for their actions (Wijk, Zietsma, Dorado, Bakker, & Marti, 2019; Berthod, 2018). Such influences would thus be expected to explain the institutional constrains faced by the key drivers of corruption as conceptualized in this study and their relationship to public service delivery in Kiambu and Nairobi City counties.

This study takes the view that corruption is facilitated by the key drivers of corruption as identified in this study. The researcher situates corruption in the institutional cultures and social norms of county governments, as these institutions are known to influence organizational behavior that affects public service delivery by setting standards of behavior through descriptive norms and enforcing consequences of violating such norms through injunctive norms (Kunicova, 2006; Kolstad & Wiig, 2009; Myint, 2000;

Peterson & Peters, 2020). The researcher seeks to interrogate these drivers and by so doing, provide insights into how government institutions may be restructured to curb corruption and improve public service delivery.

It is important to note that institutions are often taken for granted as part of normative systems, giving meaning to social life and maintaining social order (Scott, 2013). However, they have specific identifying characteristics, such as resilience and stability (Lammers & Garcia, 2017). This means they persist over time and are enduring. They are also independent and influence social life (Cardinale, 2017). In the context of government as an institution, certain aspects of government's role provide stability and resilience in society. This influence is particularly noticeable within the public service, where certain informal and formal traditions are deeply entrenched (Wijk, Zietsma, Dorado, Bakker, & Marti, 2019). These practices influence the behavior of public officers, who in turn influence the level of service delivery. Underlying these practices is the corruption culture among officers which is fueled by the drivers of corruption, thus affecting public service delivery (Scott, 2013; Peterson & Peters, 2020).

Thus, county governments as institutions of government, have their own informal and formal systems, structures, rules, norms, routines, schemes, values, activities and material resources, that influence the behavior of public officials. It is the researcher's contention that such influences are fueled by the key drivers of corruption and this ultimately affects public service delivery.

2.5.1.2 The commons theory

The commons theory was first expounded by Garrett Hardin in 1968, in his famous 'tragedy of the commons' article, where he explained how resources which are collectively held in common may become depleted and lead to societal ruin (Ghorbani & Bravo, 2016). This study considers county budgets, to be artificial commons that have emerged from a knowledge-based economy. These budgets are finite resources which are collectively held in common but face the threat of depletion if not well utilized. Hence the utilization of this theory to interrogate the key drivers of corruption that threaten the proper management of budgets in the two county governments of Kiambu and Nairobi City counties.

The theory argues that due to man's selfish nature, tragedies such as economic bankruptcy are inevitable because no user has any incentive to limit their use of the commons (Ghorbani & Bravo, 2016). It is thus virtually impossible to stop other users from accessing the shared resource (Ghorbani & Bravo, 2016). In the same vein, due to man's inherent selfishness, government officials siphoning public funds have no incentive to stop, unless deterrent measures are put in place, such as county-level policy instruments. This is because man's short-term self-preservation instincts prevent him from acting in ways that secure his long-term interests. They forget that when public resources are well managed, everyone stands to gain. The researcher utilizes this theory to interrogate county level policy instruments which are meant to deter corruption but end up being drivers of corruption, hence threatening the commons.

The theory further posits that commons have certain homogenous characteristics, such as being free and available for exploitation, which makes participation involving a sense of shared mutuality difficult to achieve (Ghorbani & Bravo, 2016). Researchers argue that the failure to cultivate this shared purpose for fairness is due to man's greedy nature, thus leading to the inevitable tragedy of the commons (Ghorbani & Bravo, 2016). Scholars of this school also believe that resources that are publicly owned are particularly prone to this tragedy (Herzberg, 2020). This is because people would scramble and compete for the resources, in the absence of any external restrains such as laws, policies and regulations (Herzberg, 2020). Thus, resources would be destroyed and everyone would lose. The theorists believe that social restrictions such as laws, policies and regulations, would lead to cooperation and people would share and take care of the common resources and the tragedy would only occur if there is no cooperation (Herzberg, 2020).

This may explain why some scholars have argued that the tragedy of the commons should be called the tragedy of the unregulated commons (Taylor, 2018). Their argument being that free access and unrestricted demand for a finite resource diminishes through exploitation, with the rate of depletion depending on the number of users wanting to access the common, their utilization habits, and the state of the common (Taylor, 2018). Although the benefits of exploitation accrue to groups or individuals who are motivated to maximize the use of the resource, the cost of the exploitation is borne by everyone (including those who are not exploiting it). This

causes demand for the resource to increase, causing the problem to snowball till the resource collapses or is extinct (Daniels, 2007). This has led scholars to call for governance systems for the commons (Taylor, 2018). Thus, the researcher's interest in utilizing this theory to interrogate county level policy instruments, which are one of the governance systems for safeguarding the budgets in the county governments.

Public awareness, has also been trialed as a governance system, with scholars arguing it improves accountability and transparency. Indeed, the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNAC), obligates governments to enact policies that improve public awareness to curb corruption, as a way of avoiding the tragedy of the commons and improving public services (Yakowitz, 2011; OECD Policy Responses to COVID-19, 2020). Hence the researcher's interest in utilizing the theory to interrogate public awareness.

The researcher also utilizes this theory to interrogate information processing. This is because scholars have argued that digital information is a finite resource. They argue that a network is a common resource, which can be prone to overuse, with pollution causing noise and corruption of channels due to overproduction of redundant data. Additionally, there are concerns over unrestricted digital resources which have been utilized to commit crimes and to spread misinformation and fake news (Herzberg, 2020). This is important for this study especially in the context of information processing and public awareness where information dissemination procedures, dissemination channels and civic education forums utilize digital platforms and data, and their use affects the quality and accessibility of public services.

There is also an argument going on, that there is a tragedy of the digital commons occurring in the digital environment, due to a digital divide (Herzberg, 2020). Scholars posit that unrestricted access causes over exploitation of digital resources and because of the gulf between those who have easy access to the internet and computing, and those who do not, negative externalities are created which lead to this tragedy. As a solution, scholars present cooperation rather than regulation as the best way to mitigate this tragedy and improve public services (Taylor, 2018). However, since the digital world is not a closed system in which a central authority can regulate users, scholars argue that voluntary cooperation must be fostered through digital governance structures that

motivate multiple stakeholders to engage and collaborate in decision making (Herzberg, 2020). Thus, some scholars are in favor of informal rules and codes of conduct to promote ethical behavior and foster trust in the digital space in a bid to improve services (Taylor, 2018). Others argue for an alternative to managing relations between people, with access itself being governed by expansion of network capacities (Herzberg, 2020). Hence the researcher's interest in utilizing this theory to interrogate public awareness and information processing and their relationship to public service delivery.

Hardin's theory on the tragedy of the commons has been criticized for not accounting for demographic transitions that showed that commons were successfully managed over the centuries and for failing to distinguish between common property and open access resources (Herzberg, 2020). Others posit that the commons theory is utilized to justify privatization of communal resources especially in third world countries and calls it the tragedy of the failure of the commons (Taylor, 2018). Thus, critics have faulted it for being inexhaustive, as it predicts the tragedy of the commons as an outcome of resource exhaustion without looking at scenarios where resource restrictions may guarantee its sustainability and improved public services. This view has been supported by studies carried out by Prof Elinor Ostrom who demonstrated that communities have always taken care of common resources sustainably without hierarchal regulations or privatizations (Herzberg, 2020). Nevertheless, this theory has added value in this study as it enables us to interrogate the tragedy of the key drivers of corruption which are supposed to enhance public service delivery but end up exacerbating corruption and adversely affecting public services.

2.5.1.3 Policy networks theory

The policy network theory emerged in the 1970s seeking to explain public policy making processes and policy outcomes. The main proponents of this theory are Gowa and Agronoff who emphasize on resource exchanges within policy actors, as determining policy change (Gowa, 2019; Agranoff & Kolpakov, 2019). The theory presupposes the presence of policy communities that play an important role in agenda-setting for governments (Agranoff & Kolpakov, 2019). These may be loose networks, well-funded transnational networks, or even embedded within governments as members of task forces, intersectoral working groups, or fully-fledged parastatals, who seek to influence and sometimes implement government agendas (Agranoff & Kolpakov, 2019).

The main philosophical underpinning of this theory is that resource exchanges among interdependent actors, determines public policy outcomes. Proponents view policy decisions as products of resource exchanges involving actors and their preferences, their strategies and perceptions of problems and possible solutions, together with the policy network's specific rules and norms in a given policy space (Compston, 2009). Policy decisions are conceptualized as the main output of resource exchanges in which the policy preferences of actors are moderated in order to obtain necessary resources from other actors (Agranoff & Kolpakov, 2019). Thus, policy decisions are products of resource exchanges in which the policy preferences of relevant actors prior to resource exchange are amended in order to obtain needed resources from other actors.

Further, the theory presupposes that causes of changes in resource exchanges are due to changes in the preferences and strategies of network actors, and changes in their norms and rules (Gowa, 2019). Scholars argue that these changes could be the result of exogenous forces, such as perceived or actual changes of reality in the policy space (Compston, 2009). The theory also posits that changes in these variables are caused by changes in the actors and in their perceptions of problems and solutions to policy issues (Agranoff & Kolpakov, 2019).

Since policy changes consist of changes in policy instruments and or their settings and changes in the content of the official decisions that choose policy instruments and their settings, the issue of resource exchanges become paramount (Gowa, 2019). Scholars argue that if there were no resource exchanges even among public actors, the policy decisions made would simply reflect the policy preferences of whichever public actor had the legal power to make decisions (Compston, 2009). Policy network theory holds that this is rarely the case. They argue that where resource exchanges occur, this often involves the relevant public actor making amendments to their preferred policy in exchange for resources from other actors (Agranoff & Kolpakov, 2019). Where there are no such amendments, the resulting policy remains that of the preferred relevant public actor and where policy amendments are made, the resulting policy decision can be conceptualized as consisting of the policy preferred by the relevant public actor prior to the resource exchange as amended by the public actor concerned in exchange for resources from other network members (Compston, 2009). They argue that if such

preferences and policy amendments are exactly as they were the last time the relevant issue came up for decision, no policy change is made (Gowa, 2019). Thus, for policy change to take place, logically the pre-existing preferences of the relevant public actor (s) and the amendments made in the course of resource exchange, must change, and the issue for policy network theory as a theory of policy change, is to provide a logically coherent and empirically plausible account of what causes changes in this policy environment (Compston, 2009).

According to Robert Agronof, policy networks play a crucial role in problem identification, information exchanges, identification and enhancement of emerging technologies, improving knowledge infrastructure, and mutual capacity building (Agranoff R., 2021). Joanne Gowa also argues that these policy networks often take the place of government with their immense influence, especially when coalescing around an issue of importance to them (Gowa, 2019). She argues that there is always a dominant player or actor with more resources or more influence than others in such networks. Such networks are also known to change positions based on new information, technologies, emerging realities and negotiations with governments (Gowa, 2019). Therefore, the theory sees a direct causal link between changes in resource exchanges, preferences, strategies, rules and norms, and policy change.

It then follows that policy changes consist of changes in policy instruments and more specifically, changes in the content of official decisions on policy instruments and their settings. Since public policy consists of policy instruments (such as laws, policies, regulations, rules, procedures, guidelines, practices as outlined in this study), this theory is crucial in explaining how various actors navigate the policy space and the mechanisms involving resource exchange that enable corruption to thrive within county level policy instruments and hence adversely affect public service delivery. Additionally, the researcher believes corruption is a wicked problem that requires the actions of policy networks to eradicate if public services are to be improved.

Despite these positive developments, the policy networks theory has faced criticism. It has been accused of concentrating too much on relationships of influence and the trajectory of interactions which occur within policy making, without focusing on learning as a critical pillar at the conceptual and analytical level (Compston, 2009).

Others have criticized it for not really being a comprehensive theory of policy change, arguing that the theory is better at explaining policy stability rather than policy change (Agranoff & Kolpakov, 2019). Other researchers have dismissed the theory altogether and argued that the concept of policy networks alone does not provide an explanation for policy change (Compston, 2009). Nevertheless, this policy adds value in this study as it supplements gaps left by other theories, in offering an explanatory perspective in the form of resource exchanges between various actors, as being critical to the relationship between the drivers of corruption and public service delivery.

2.5.1.4 Multiple streams framework

The multiple streams framework was formulated by John Kingdon in 1984. Its major philosophical tenet is based on the presence of a problem stream, a policy stream and a political stream, that initially act on their own but later converge to create a window of opportunity for policy change (Mackey, 2019).

The theory argues that the problem stream begins with the recognition of an issue that requires government intervention (Barkhorn, Huttner, & Blau, 2013). It sees the problem stream begin to form when government reports, media stories, or scholarly works, capture the existence and magnitude of an issue, which is then problematized through increased media coverage and amplification of such information to critical audiences in civil society, who disseminate it further, to attain public attention (Mackey, 2019). Thus, scholars of this theory see this process of recognition of a problem, as fluid, involving various actors and activities such as public awareness, information processing, lobbying and galvanizing of public pressure against the government, to force it to act on the problem (Barkhorn, Huttner, & Blau, 2013). Such public pressure, they argue, could also stem from pronouncements from leaders, judgments from the courts, which all contribute to problematize the issues (Mackey, 2019).

The theory views the policy stream as involving the conceptualization of solutions and proposals to address the issues identified in the problem stream (Mackey, 2019). The theory posits that processes in the policy stream involve the actions of several players such as policy makers, researchers, academia and think-tanks who come up with ready-made solutions for the problem and rapidly churn out an acceptable solution for the masses and the political class (Hutchinson, Balabanova, & McKee, 2019).

According to the theory, the politics stream consists of factors in the political realm that can be leveraged to act on the problem (Mackey, 2019). Such factors could include an imminent election or regime change, or initiatives to recalibrate government administrative arrangements, or emerging public pressure on the issue, or coercion from key sectors that are capable of holding the government at ransom (Hutchinson, Balabanova, & McKee, 2019). Scholars argue this pressure could also be exogenic, coming from external stakeholders such as the Bretton Wood institutions, as they are capable of leveraging their international position to effect change (Mackey, 2019). They further argue that the recognition of the problem by the political leadership is key to the crystallization of the politics stream (Hutchinson, Balabanova, & McKee, 2019).

John Kingdon argues that the policy window occurs when the problem, policy and political streams coalesce, to create policy change (Hutchinson, Balabanova, & McKee, 2019). This can be graphically represented, as shown **Fig. 2:1**.

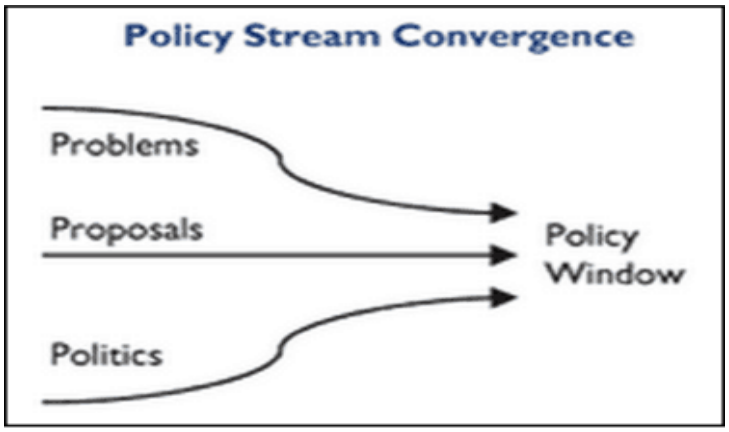


Fig. 2.1 Multiple-streams policy framework

Source: (Hutchinson, Balabanova, & McKee, 2019).

The theory views policy windows as important agenda setting opportunities and represent a period of time when there is a greater chance of policy change happening. They view it as an opportunity for advocates of policy change to push changes through and to galvanize public action towards a policy solution.

According to John Kingdon, these windows are sporadic, as they are capable of opening up predictably and sometimes unpredictably (Hutchinson, Balabanova, & McKee, 2019). He argues that the congregation of public interest through massive campaigns,

boycotts, media reports, and civil society pressure, is capable of exerting pressure on the political class and forcing a policy window (Bangura & Larbi, 2006). He also argues that policy windows easily close up when public mood changes and the public feels the problem no longer exists or they feel trying to resolve the problem is an exercise in futility, or the crisis is over and they want to move on, or key personnel changes made in the political stream have caused the public to no longer care about the problem anymore, or the public feels there is no available policy alternative at that moment, in the policy stream that could address the problem (Bangura & Larbi, 2006). In such situations, the theory argues that the role of policy entrepreneurs becomes critical, as they often have ready-made policies available on short notice, and these stand a better chance of being adopted when the policy window is still open (Hutchinson, Balabanova, & McKee, 2019).

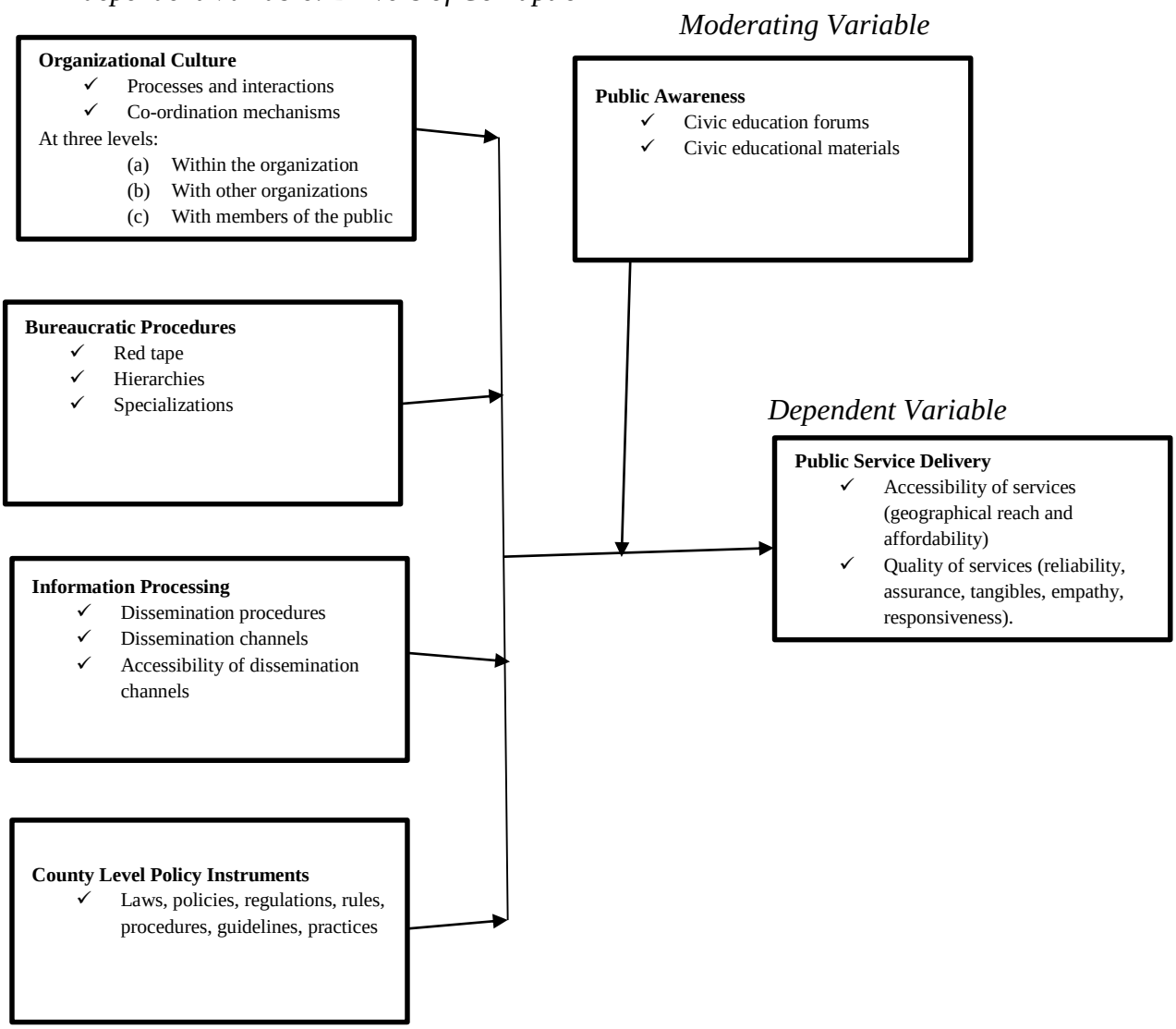
Even though John Kingdon's theory provides the scenarios that bring about policy change, it has been criticized for not predicting, with certainty, when policy change will occur (Hutchinson, Balabanova, & McKee, 2019). It has also been criticized for concentrating too much on U.S domestic policy, limiting its generalizability to other settings (Mackey, 2019). Nevertheless, its applicability to other contexts is work in progress, as studies from Europe have begun affirming the framework and a few studies have been done in Africa. Multiple streams framework is utilized in this study to interrogate the effect of organizational culture, bureaucratic procedures, information processing and county level policy instruments on public service delivery. Since these variables are key drivers of corruption within fluid policymaking processes, the theory is critical in helping us understand the mechanisms through which these undermine or promote public service delivery. The theory is also crucial in illuminating the influence of public awareness in explaining the relationship between the drivers of corruption and public service delivery, within the devolved system of governments' policymaking processes, where competing policy priorities and rapidly evolving dynamics, could potentially undermine or promote these drivers of corruption and ultimately promote or undermine public service delivery targets.

2.5.2 Conceptual framework

The study's conceptual framework shows the link between the independent variable (drivers of corruption), the dependent variable (public service delivery) and the moderating variable (public awareness). It also shows the relationship between the

seven variables in this study, namely: drivers of corruption, organizational culture, bureaucratic procedures, information processing, county-level policy instruments, public service delivery and public awareness. Organizational culture is construed as processes, interactions and coordination mechanisms, within the organizations, with other organizations and with members of the public. Bureaucratic procedures, is construed as red tape, hierarchies and specializations. Information processing, is construed as dissemination procedures, dissemination channels, and accessibility of dissemination channels. County level policy instruments is construed as laws, policies, regulations, rules, procedures, guidelines and practices. Public awareness is construed as civic education forums and civic educational materials. Public service delivery is construed as accessibility of services in terms of their geographical reach and affordability and the quality of services as exemplified by the SERVQUAL model of reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy and responsiveness. The study hypothesises that the drivers of corruption (organisational culture, bureaucratic procedures, information processing and county level policy instruments) adversely affect the accessibility, affordability and quality of public services. The study also hypothesises that public awareness affects this relationship. The conceptual framework is shown as **Fig 2.2**.

Fig. 2.2 Conceptual framework



CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section introduces the research philosophy and design, the variables and categories of analysis, the location and site of the study, the target population, the sampling technique and sample sizes, the research instruments, the pilot study, the validity, reliability and data collection techniques, the analysis and presentation of data, and the logistical and ethical considerations for this study.

3.2 Research philosophy and design

3.2.1 Research philosophy

Research philosophy, categorized as ontology, epistemology and axiology, enabled the researcher to determine which approach should be adopted in this particular study and the reasons for the chosen approach, as guided by the research questions. These categories have critical philosophical assumptions that explain world views and their assumptions helped the researcher to determine the research strategy to adopt and the methods of the strategy chosen.

Thus, the study adopted subjectivism as espoused by ontology. Subjectivism sees social phenomena as emerging from perceptions and consequences of social actors concerned with the existence of those perceptions (Stephenson, 2019). Consequently, the researcher adopted a subjectivist philosophy to determine the views of various respondents on the effect of the drivers of corruption on public service delivery in Kiambu and Nairobi City counties.

The study was also influenced by epistemology of the feeling research, as the acceptable standard of knowledge in this particular area of study. This was because the study was concerned with the feelings and attitudes of various respondents towards the drivers of corruption. Thus, the research focused on interpretivism philosophy as a research philosophy. This means the study looked at the assessment of the differences between human beings as social players, whose actions have their own set of meanings and whose interpretations have to be conducted within a myriad of several meanings,

involving those individuals and others outside those individuals (Persson, Rothstein, & Teorell, 2019).

The philosophical category of axiology also influenced this study. This involved making judgements, through the process of social enquiry into the drivers of corruption. The researcher's axiological skills were utilized to make judgements about the content and conduct of the research. Consequently, the researcher's values influenced the philosophical approach, the data collection and data analysis procedures. Thus, the researcher adopted an interpretative phenomenology approach, to capture the richness of data on corruption. The researcher also adopted a qualitative research strategy based on interpretivism philosophy, with the intention of capturing the subjective meaning of social actions around the drivers of corruption and their effect on public service delivery. The researcher believes that human behavior is shaped by how people interpret their world, and for us to grasp the subjective meaning of social action surrounding corruption, a qualitative interpretative approach would be most appropriate (Stephenson, 2019). This approach enables us to gain an in depth understanding of corruption which is difficult to obtain from survey questions. In essence, respondents in the study were free to discuss their experiences, feelings and thoughts, without any limitations and without being reduced to ticking boxes in a questionnaire. In this vein, the researcher was able to ask questions that cannot be reduced to numbers, such as the how and why questions, which are critical in understanding corruption and the context in which it takes place. The researcher believes that corruption is a sensitive topic that required the use of this approach to gain detailed information, as quantitative approaches may not have been able to capture the non-verbal clues and other contextual data. The study followed in the interpretivist tradition of being word based in terms of content, data collection, data analysis and report writing (Persson, Rothstein, & Teorell, 2019).

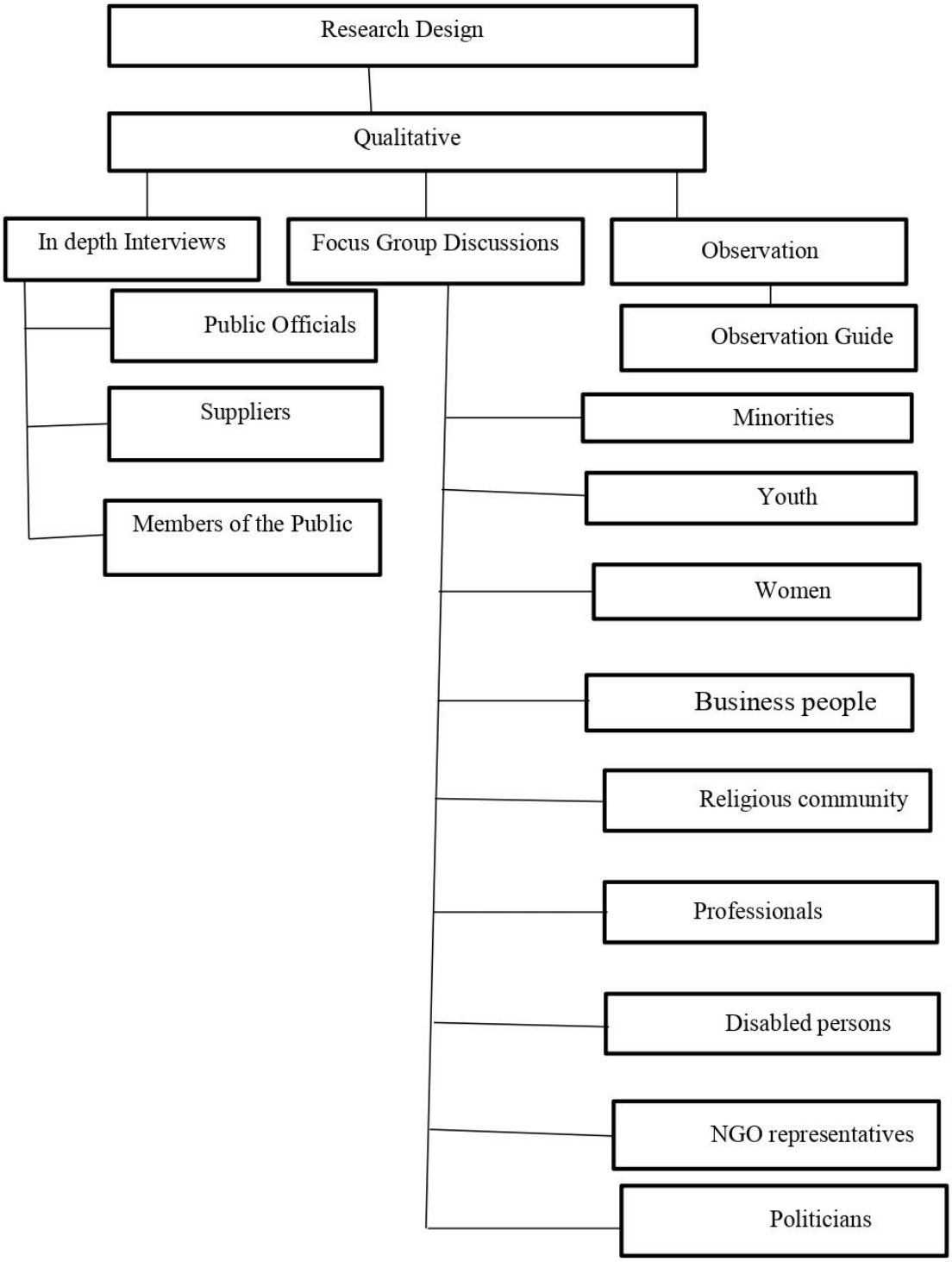
3.2.2 Research design

The study adopted a qualitative research design and took a cross-sectional approach in data collection, where information was collected at a specific point in time. The study immersed itself into the world of the persons interviewed, their values, rituals, symbols, beliefs, and emotions through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. This approach derives from the *verstehen* tradition, where researchers are urged to put

themselves in the shoes of their research subjects (Schwickerath, 2018). The researcher also utilized interpretative phenomenology, to capture the richness of respondents' experiences. This approach enabled the researcher to explore non-verbal clues such as attitudes, thus providing more contextual data (Schwickerath, 2018). To enrich this, the researcher also used simple descriptive statistics to facilitate illustrations of findings on the biographical details of the respondents, with the use of percentages, tables and figures.

The research design is as shown in **Fig. 3.2.**

Fig.3.2 Research design



3.3 Variables and categories of analysis

The study adopted Mugenda and Mugenda's approach which views a variable as a measurable characteristic that can assume different values among subjects (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). In this study, the independent variables are those factors deemed to affect public service delivery. Thus, the drivers of corruption are the independent variable and public service delivery is the dependent variable. Drivers of corruption are conceptualized as organizational culture, bureaucratic procedures, information processing and county level policy instruments while public awareness is construed as a moderating variable. The moderating variable determines the strength of the relationship between the independent and dependent variable. Thus, public awareness determines the strength of the relationship between the drivers of corruption and public service delivery.

Organizational culture is further broken down to the processes, interactions and coordination mechanisms at three levels; within the organization, with other organizations and with members of the public. Bureaucratic procedures are simplified to red tape, hierarchies and specializations. Information processing is broken into dissemination procedures, dissemination channels and the accessibility of those channels. Public awareness is presented as civic education forums. County level policy instruments are viewed as laws, policies, regulations, rules, procedures, guidelines and practices. Public service delivery is conceptualized as accessibility of services in terms of their geographical reach and affordability, and the quality of services in terms of the SERVQUAL model of reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy and responsiveness. The variables have thus been categorized as shown in **Table 3.1**.

	Variable	**Category of Analysis**
1.	Public service delivery	• Accessibility of services (geographical reach & affordability) • Quality of services (SERVQUAL)
2.	Drivers of corruption	• Organizational culture • Bureaucratic procedures • Information processing • County level policy instruments
3.	Organizational culture	• Processes (intra-county, intercounty and county-public levels). • Interactions (intra-county, intercounty and county-public levels).

		• Coordination mechanisms (intra-county, intercounty and county-public levels).
4.	Bureaucratic procedures	• Red tape • Hierarchies • Specializations
5.	Information processing	• Dissemination procedures • Dissemination channels • Accessibility of dissemination channels
6.	Public awareness	• Civic education forums • Civil educational materials
7.	County level policy instruments	• Laws & policies • Regulations & rules • Procedures, guidelines & practices

Table: 3.1 Variables and category of analysis

Source: researcher.

3.4 Location and site of the study

3.4.1 Site selection and description

The research was conducted in Kiambu and Nairobi City, two Kenyan counties, which are geographical units enshrined in Kenya's 2010 Constitution as units of devolution. A boundary map of Kenyan counties is attached (Fig. 3.2). The study focused on the two counties because they have been cited for embezzlement and bribery by the government audit reports, and governors of the two counties have been impeached for alleged corruption, with pending court cases, and there are reports of deteriorating public services within these counties (Auditor General, 2018). Further, the two counties were fairly similar in terms of their cosmopolitan nature, and bordered each other, with residents residing and working in either county, hence faced unique challenges that this study sought to unravel.

3.4.2 Kiambu

Kiambu county lies in the Central Kenya region between Longitude 360 31' and 370 15' East, and Latitudes 00 25' and 10 20' South of the Equator, and covers an area of 2,543.5 km2. It borders, Nairobi City and Kajiado Counties to the South, Murang'a to the North and North East, Machakos to the East, Nyandarua to the North West, and Nakuru to the West (KCG, 2020; KPHC, 2019). The county has 12 sub-counties as shown in Fig.3.3 namely; Limuru, Kikuyu, Kabete, Lari, Gatundu South, Gatundu North, Githunguri, Kiambu, Kiambaa, Ruiru, Juja, and Thika, which have 60 wards. The number of people is 2,417,735, with 60% of the population living in urban centers

due to proximity to Nairobi City, where most people work during the day (KPHC, 2019).

3.4.3 Nairobi City

Nairobi City County lies on latitude 1.286389 and longitude 36.817223 coordinates and is Kenya's capital city. It is situated about 140kms from the Equator, and is surrounded by plains, cliffs, and forests next to the East of the Rift Valley and with Ngong Hills to the West. The 2019 census put its population at 4,397,073 and leading economic activities include businesses, manufacturing, technology, and tourism (KPHC, 2019). The Nairobi City County has a unique situation as four functions, namely transport, public works, planning and management, ancillary services, and health were transferred to the national government, and the national government has delegated them to the Nairobi Metropolitan Service (NMS). The county has 17 sub-counties as seen in Fig.3.4, namely Westlands, Dagoretti South, Lang'ata, Kasarani, Embakasi South, Embakasi Central, Dagoretti North, Embakasi North, Embakasi East, Embakasi West, Madaraka, Kamukunji, Starehe, Kibra, Roysambu and Mathare.

3.5 Target population

The target population is 126, as shown on **Table 3.2**.

Units of Analysis	**Units of Observation**	**Total**
2 counties	10 public officers (executive)	20
2 counties	8 public officers (legislature)	16
2 counties	9 key stakeholder groups	18
2 counties	12 suppliers (executive)	24
2 counties	12 suppliers (legislature)	24
2 counties	12 members of the public	24
Total:	**63 Units of Observation**	**126**

Table: 3.2 Units of analysis and observation

Source: Researcher.

This represents the people living, working or doing business in Kiambu and Nairobi City counties. This includes members of the public who were conveniently sampled at the service delivery points during this research. It also includes disabled persons, professionals, business leaders, women, youth, minorities, politicians, members of non-

governmental organizations, suppliers to the two county governments and public officials from the two counties who were carrying out the following strategic functions: finance, AIE, subcounty, revenue, human resources, payroll, supply chain, public participation, ICT and communications.

The interest in the strategic functions was because research had shown that such offices faced specific vulnerabilities when it came to corruption and were responsible for shaping organizational cultures through their processes, interactions and coordination mechanisms (Kubbe & Engelbert, 2018). Additionally, these offices were public facing and interacted with the public in the course of delivering services. Thus, they played a significant role in shaping corruption drivers such as organizational culture, bureaucratic procedures, public awareness, information dissemination and county level policy instruments.

Individuals representing the minorities, youth, women, business leaders, religious leaders, professionals, persons living with disabilities, non-governmental organizations, and political leaders, were identified from lists provided by the department of social services in each county. The interest in these groups was due to the fact that these were key opinion shapers and users of the public services provided by the county governments. The level of public services impacted them differently with some vulnerable groups being disadvantaged and disproportionally affected by inaccessible and poor public services. The interest in members of the public at service delivery points was informed by the need to capture the views of the residents as they received services from the county governments. Suppliers were also included, as they faced specific vulnerabilities when trying to obtain tenders and payments for services and goods in the counties. These were obtained from lists provided by the county governments.

3.6 Sampling technique and sample size

3.6.1 Sampling technique

The research adopted a multistage sampling method involving three stages. Stage one involved selecting specific counties to be included in the study through purposive sampling. Stage two of the sampling process involved the choice of the study units. These were guided by the literature review, which showed the areas of interest for this

study. Thus, the strategic functions identified from the literature review from the executive arm of the county governments were 10, namely: supply chain, finance, revenue, payroll, human resources, AIE, communications, ICT, public participation and sub-county administration. This informed the convenient sampling of one person to be interviewed, from each of these strategic functions. The strategic areas identified from the legislative arm of the county governments were eight, namely, supply chain, finance, payroll, human resources, ICT, communications, public participation and AIE functions. This informed the convenient sampling of eight persons to be interviewed from the legislature.

Further, the literature revealed the gaps in service delivery which informed the choice of members of the public as a study unit. Thus, the study chose to interview 12 members of the public from various service delivery points such as car parks, markets, revenue offices, water billing points and agricultural offices. The choice of 12 members was based on empirical evidence that shows that non-probabilistic sample sizes reach saturation within the first 12 interviews and essential elements of the critical meta-themes are present as early as the 6th interview (Maher, Hadfield, Hutchings, & Eyto, 2018).

Nine stakeholders representing minorities, women, youth, business leaders, religious leaders, the disabled, NGOs, political leaders and professional groups in focus group discussions were also sampled. The number of nine was purposively identified from stakeholder lists provided by the counties. These were deemed important opinion shapers in the counties as they had diverse views and experiences to share on the topic.

Further, the study interviewed 24 suppliers from each county, 12 from the executive and 12 from the legislature, as they faced certain vulnerabilities when it came to obtaining tenders and payments for services and goods in the counties. The number of 12 was informed by scientific evidence showing that qualitative samples reach saturation within the first 12 interviews and major thematic elements are present as early as the 6^{th} interview (Maher, Hadfield, Hutchings, & Eyto, 2018).

Stage three of the sampling process involved the selection of the respondents. The researcher identified individuals to be interviewed from the 10 strategic offices of the

executive arm of the county governments and the eight strategic offices of the county assemblies through convenience sampling. A list of these staff was obtained from the human resource departments and through informal referrals. All staff members working in the relevant offices were eligible for interviewing, regardless of their official position. Thus, the sample size from each county was 10 officials from the executive arm of the county government and eight from the county assembly. Sampling for the nine key external stakeholders to represent the minorities, the youth, women, business leaders, religious leaders, professionals, the disabled, non-governmental organizations, and political leaders in each county was done through convenience sampling. A list of the key persons who represented these stakeholder groups and their contacts was obtained from the department of social services in the counties and through informal referrals. One person representing each key stakeholder was invited for a focus group discussion in each county, and the total sample size for this group was nine. Sampling for the 12 members of the public was done at various public service delivery points such as healthcare centers, markets, and car parks, through convenience sampling. This depended on the number of persons willing to be interviewed when the researcher visited the facilities. The physical locations were as directed by the relevant county officials and through informal referrals. The total sample size for this group was 12. A list of suppliers was obtained from the county websites and from informal referrals. The researcher interviewed 12 suppliers from the executive and 12 from the legislature based on convenience sampling until the data reached saturation.

3.6.2 Sample size

The available population is the number of staff working in the specified strategic function at the county headquarters and the sub-counties. As this was a qualitative study, respondents were chosen from this group through convenience sampling until saturation was achieved.

3.7 Research instruments

The study utilized a semi-structured interview guide, a focus group discussion guide and an observation guide. The observation guide was utilized to capture verbal-visual and body language interactions and other contextual details, during the interactions.

3.7.1 Interview guide

The interview method is a way of collecting data through oral-verbal stimuli and responses that are oral-verbal (Maher, Hadfield, Hutchings, & Eyto, 2018). The study utilized an interview guide for in-depth interviews with public officials, members of the public and suppliers. This tool had general questions and was structured around specific variables in order to cover the study objectives. Through this tool, the researcher delved into the respondent's views, perceptions, opinions, experiences and attitudes on the drivers of corruption and their effect on public service delivery. The researcher was able to gain access to a respondent's level of understanding and experience, in great detail. The researcher paraphrased the questions and used probing techniques as appropriate, to gain access to the respondent's views, in order to capture rich information.

3.7.2 Focus group discussion guide

Scholars generally utilize focus group discussion guides as a qualitative tool for obtaining in-depth information on a particular subject (Maher, Hadfield, Hutchings, & Eyto, 2018). The researcher utilized a focus group discussion guide, to obtain deeper information on the drivers of corruption and their effect on public service delivery. The focus group discussions provided a forum where stakeholders could be free to air their views on corruption, without the fear of being victimized or feeling the information may be personalized. This focus group discussion guide thus facilitated these free discussions especially on areas that could not be easily talked about on a one-to-one basis. This provided the researcher with a means of gauging the specific stakeholder's views on the topic at hand.

3.7.3 Observation guide

An observation guide is a tool that researchers utilize to gain deeper insights into a group or respondents who are targets of a study (Maher, Hadfield, Hutchings, & Eyto, 2018). The researcher utilized an observation guide with a phenomenological target of capturing hidden meaning and hidden social norms from the respondents. This was meant to document verbal and non-verbal communication and other contextual information.

3.8 Pre-testing/pilot study

The researcher utilized the first few minutes of the interviews and the first few minutes of the focus group discussions for purposes of ensuring the research instruments captured the necessary data by adjusting questions and time as necessary, to ensure all the relevant information was captured. This ensured any language barriers or language difficulties and any preliminary issues were addressed accordingly.

3.8.1 Validity tests

Face validity refers to whether a tool, based on first impressions and a casual observation of it, measures, what it claims to measure (Maher, Hadfield, Hutchings, & Eyto, 2018). The researcher ensured face validity by utilizing information that has already been verified through the literature review of the critical variables of this research. Information was also obtained from trustworthy sources such as the Kenya Constitution (2010) and the County Government Act (2012). Further, the researcher asked people with expertise in this area whether the indicators reflected the concepts in the study. Thus, the researcher consulted experts in corruption studies and researchers who have undertaken similar studies. One of them was a PhD student who had recently completed his studies on corruption at Tangaza University College. The researcher also discussed the research instruments with the Ph.D. supervisors and made adjustments as advised.

The researcher established credibility by spending time in the field learning the respondents' environment and the socio-cultural context of the study. The researcher made in-depth observations during the study. The researcher additionally carried out respondent checks by looking at the data with the respondents as opportunities arose during the interactions. The researcher further utilized triangulation techniques by using multiple data sources, several theories and multiple research assistants and deviant reviews to establish credibility.

The study established confirmability by triangulating theories, investigators, data sources, and methods as discussed under credibility (above). The researcher also established confirmability by keeping an audit trail of the research procedures from the beginning to the end of the research.

Dependability was achieved in this study through an inquiry audit. This was conducted by two researchers, who were not part of this study. The audit looked at the processes and the results, to see if the interpretations are supported by the data. This involved evaluating the quality of the data collection, the data analysis, and the conclusions.

The researcher was concerned about the extent to which the results of this qualitative study could be transferred or generalized to other contexts. To enable such a process, the researcher has provided a detailed description of the research process and the data analysis procedures. This will enable other researchers to carry out an evaluation that could lead to contextual comparisons and generalized conclusions in other settings.

3.8.2 Reliability

Reliability is about the consistency of a measure in reproducing the same results under similar conditions (Maher, Hadfield, Hutchings, & Eyto, 2018). The reliability of a measurement is thus determined by its ability to produce consistent results, after several tests. In this study, the researcher used the test-retest method during data collection, to test the instrument's reliability. This involved repeating the interviews with the same group of people, two months after the initial interviews. This was done for two respondents in each category, drawn from public officials in the executive and legislative strategic functions, key stakeholder groups, suppliers drawn from the executive and legislative arms, and members of the public. Thus, a total of 12 respondents were interviewed twice. The fact that the repeat results did not deviate from the original ones, was proof of reliability.

3.9 Data collection procedures

As part of the data collection procedures, the researcher sought authority from Kenyatta University and the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). Authority was also sought from Kiambu and Nairobi City counties, the County Commissioners of both counties and the Ministry of Education. The primary data was collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The researcher adhered to COVID 19 (Corona Virus) health protocols and all the discussions and interviews were carried out in Kiswahili and English. The study was carried out in September, October, November and December, 2021.

3.10 Data analysis procedures

Qualitative data was collected from 126 respondents from the two counties which were the units of analysis. The massive trove of data was in the form of field notes, audio recordings and handwritten interviews. The field notes, audio clips and hard written interviews were transcribed verbatim into word documents by the researcher. The first step the researcher took to analyze the data was data familiarization. This process began in the field and continued during the transcription phase. This involved the researcher acquainting herself and immersing herself into the data, after which the researcher began the process of giving structure and meaning to the trove of field notes and transcribed data through coding and data reduction. Chunks of data were reduced to manageable levels by summarizing them into patterns and drawing meanings. This was an iterative process as it involved going through the materials several times, and through the field notes and transcripts over and over again, and noting any theoretical ideas that kept emerging from the reading of these materials.

The researcher applied a qualitative thematic analysis approach, with particular objects of interest being identified from the interviewees' transcripts and annotated with brief comments. These summarized comments were embedded into the researcher's reflections on the key areas of interest on the research topic as expounded by each of the interviewees. The annotated responses were coded, with comments from the researcher. As coding progressed, themes that converged sets of coded data, began emerging. These themes were then subjected to a thematic analysis, so as to ensure that the interpretations of the data reflected the interviewees' framework of meaning, as captured in the transcribed data and field notes.

The researcher then looked critically at the data, and the relevant literature, in a back-and-forth process, in order to position the research within the body of knowledge and contribute to scholarship in this area. This was an analytical process that was extremely rigorous, involving several revisions, with interim summaries written from emerging themes being revised constantly, and being subjected to the relevant literature for similarities, differences and areas of interest. The process involved engaging with the theoretical frameworks to analyze the emerging voices in the data. The final writeup of the analysis and the results of this analysis was substantial and formed the core of this thesis.

3.11 Logistical and ethical considerations

3.11.1 Logistical considerations

Research assistants who accompanied the researcher were trained on information probing techniques and other data collection techniques to enable them collect sensitive data on corruption before accompanying the researcher to the field. They were also fully equipped with research instruments and recording gadgets, to assist the researcher. To ensure accessibility to participants, the researcher liaised with the office of the governors at the counties, and the office of the county commissioner.

3.11.2 Ethical considerations

One of the significant ethical considerations the researcher took on board is whether harm could come to the participants. There was the possibility that some participants may have broken down and emotionally got hurt by narrating traumatic experiences involving corruption. To mitigate this, the researcher made it clear upfront to all the participants that participation was voluntary and they were free to terminate the interview at any time or take a break if they felt emotionally unable to continue. They were also to let the researcher know if answering any question or talking about an issue made them feel uncomfortable. The participants were given the option of coming along with someone they can trust, for the interview, if the need arose. Thus, it was important that the research experience ought not to be a disturbing one for them.

The other area of harm that the researcher considered was the danger of the participants facing backlash from society, colleagues, and job losses or expulsion from professional associations, for sharing sensitive information on corruption and the danger that such information could jeopardize the careers and reputations of others not involved in this study, including organizations. There was therefore a need to protect participants from being identified and counties from being identifiable. Following best practice, the transcribed interviews do not contain participants' names or any details that would identify them. All the interview materials and records were treated confidentially, and information supplied for this research was anonymized. References to individuals were removed. No coded interviews were publicly shared and only the supervisors of this thesis had access, for purposes of academic guidance.

Another aspect the researcher considered was the issue of informed consent. All prospective participants were given as much information as they needed to decide whether they wished to participate in the research. The researcher addressed any concerns raised, and consent was sought verbally or in writing, before interviewing began.

The ethical issue of privacy was anticipated. The research generated very personal and sensitive information, emerging from a relationship of trust and close rapport between the researcher and respondents. This issue was tackled by ensuring all participants knew of their right to, not answer any question or to share any aspect they were not comfortable talking about, without giving any explanation. Thus, anyone who did not feel comfortable, was not included as a respondent. Study materials were treated confidentially and were only accessed by the researcher and supervisors of this thesis to safeguard the privacy of the informants. Due to the sensitivity of the topic and the fact that the information was gathered from public officers in the county governments, a lot of caution was applied in dealing with the data. Informants were assured of total anonymity, and numbers replaced their names. Access to the informants' names was restricted to the researcher and supervisors only. No identifying information was entered into the database, and all research files and records are in the sole custody of the researcher. The dissemination of the research findings was restricted to aggregated data as corruption information can harm an individual's integrity and cause litigation.

The researcher faced a major moral dilemma as to whether to intervene or report to the authorities when incidents of corruption were encountered and reported during the research. The researcher remained confidential, not to lose credibility among the participants and so that future research in this area may be possible, by not divulging such information or reporting to the authorities.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The research sought to investigate the effect of drivers of corruption on public service delivery in the counties of Kiambu and Nairobi City. Data was obtained from 126 respondents consisting of members of the public, suppliers, key stakeholders and public officers carrying out strategic functions in these two counties. The raw data was subjected to thematic analysis by transcribing it, coding it, grouping emerging ideas together, and establishing themes, through the use of the Nvivo computer program for qualitative analysis.

4.2 Biographical Data

Biographical data on the gender, age, the length of time the respondents have worked, lived and carried out business within the respective counties, was captured. Response rate for respondents on the researcher's list was 65% and the researcher had to look for replacement respondents to interview, till saturation was achieved.

4.2.1 Gender

Data on the gender of the respondents is presented in **Table 4:1.**

Unit of Analysis	**Unit of Observation**	**Male**	**Female**	**Totals**
Kiambu	Public Officers from Executive	6	4	10
Nairobi City	Public Officers from Executive	4	6	10
Kiambu	Public Officers from Legislature	5	3	8
Nairobi City	Public Officers from Legislature	4	4	8
Kiambu	Stakeholder Groups	1	8	9
Nairobi City	Stakeholder Groups	1	8	9
Kiambu	Members of the Public	6	6	12
Nairobi City	Members of the Public	5	7	12
Kiambu	Suppliers from Executive	9	3	12
Nairobi City	Suppliers from Executive	8	4	12
Kiambu	Suppliers from Legislature	10	2	12
Nairobi City	Suppliers from Legislature	9	3	12
Total:		**68**	**58**	**126**

Table: 4.1 Respondents by gender

Source: Researcher

This shows that out of the 126 respondents who were interviewed, 54% were male while 46% were female. The study was thus more or less gender balanced.

4.2.2 Age

The study had four types of respondents: public officials, stakeholder representatives, suppliers and members of the public. Their average ages are as shown in **Figs 4.1** and **4.2**.

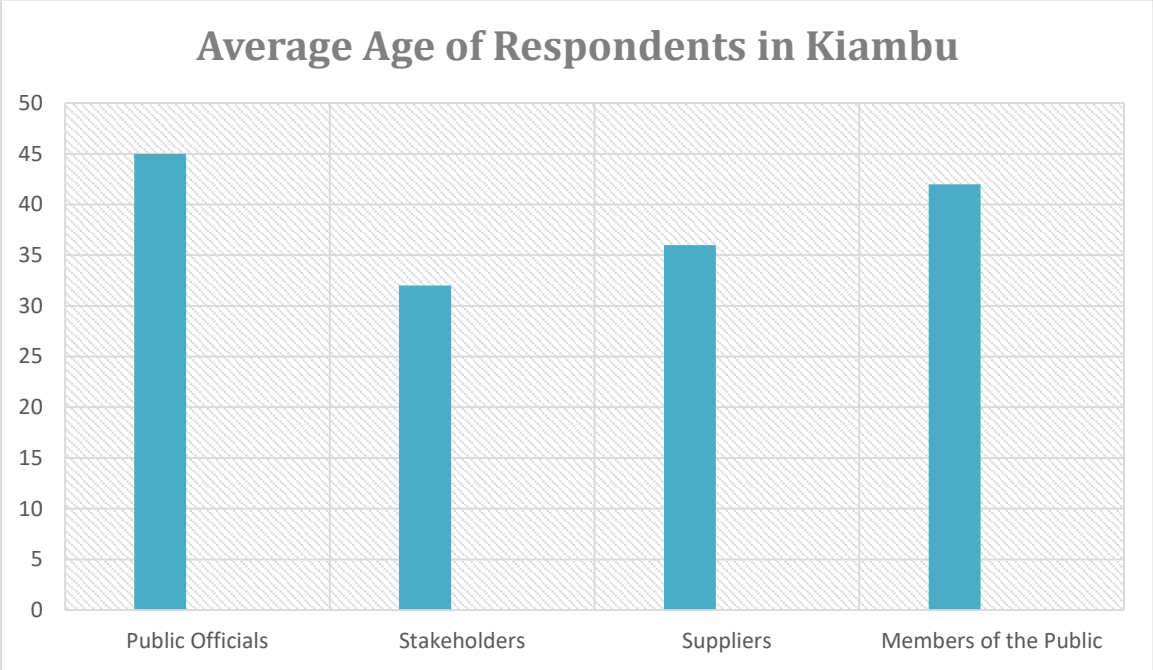


Fig. 4.1 Average age of respondents in Kiambu County.

Thus, the average age of public officials was 45 years, meaning they had a lengthy experience with government operations, since the inception of devolution at the counties. Many stakeholders were in the age below 35, meaning they were relatively young and represented the growing youth majority in the county. The suppliers were also relatively young as they were mainly 35 years on average. Members of the public were on average 42 years of age and this represented a demand for public services within this age group.

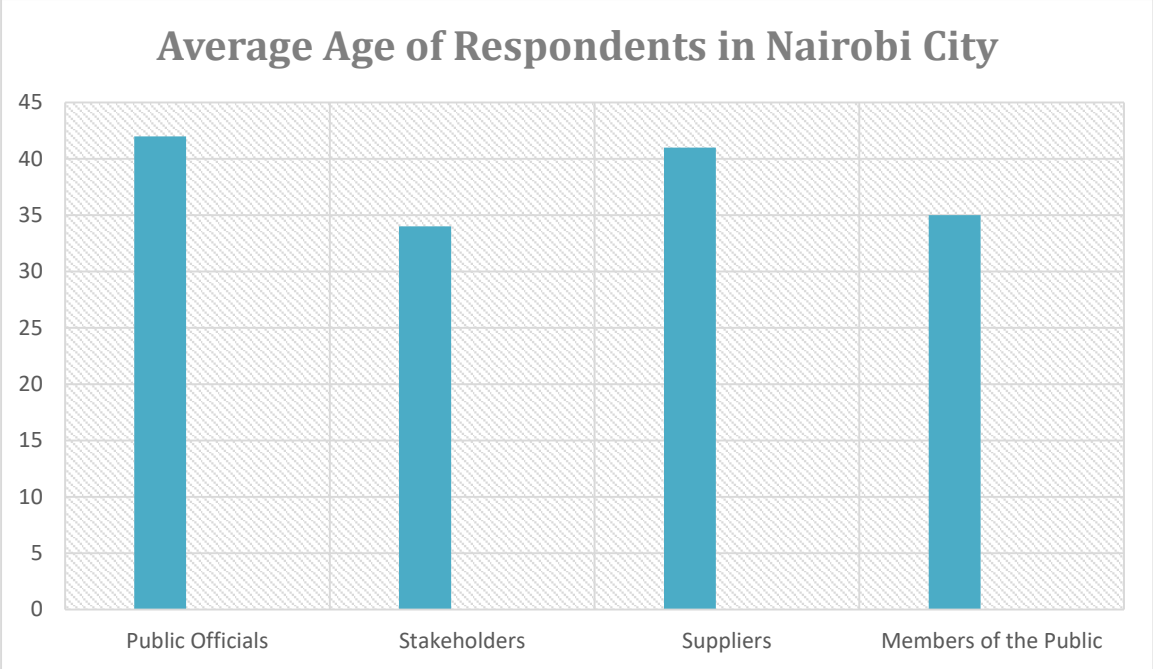


Fig. 4.2 Average age of respondents in Nairobi City.

Comparatively, public officials interviewed from both counties were in the 40-45 years age range. The representatives from stakeholders were in the 30-35 years range. Suppliers were in the 35-46 years range while members of the public who were interviewed were in the 35-46 years range.

4.2.3 Length of service

Most of the public officers had worked for the defunct local authorities and transferred their services to the county governments in 2013. Their lengths of service varied from 5 years to 15 years. Many suppliers had done business with the counties for 8 years while others had done business for only two years. Representatives from stakeholder groups said they had lived in the counties for about 5 years. Members of the public interviewed said they had lived within the two counties for more than 10 years.

4.3 Findings

This chapter presents the results of the study and discusses the findings. The chapter offers an analyses and interpretation of the results, in line with the literature reviewed and the data obtained from the field. In the absence of published official government data on this topic, the researcher relied on the opinion of key informants, field observations and field experiences. Thus, the conclusions drawn from this study may not be generalized. Nevertheless, the opinions of officials who are responsible for key

strategic functions within Kiambu and Nairobi City counties, together with the suppliers and members of the public, provide valuable insights into corruption in devolved systems of government and public service delivery.

In interpreting and analyzing the data, the researcher sought to establish relationships within the data and establish linkages to studies done elsewhere and to explain the observed elements in the data, for better understanding. This effort is also meant to provide a theoretical conceptualization that could guide further research into this area. The study uses codes to report the results, with Kiambu county being represented by K and Nairobi City County represented by N. Respondents are labelled numerically from 1 to 63 as part of providing anonymity and confidentiality. The discussion, interpretation and analysis in this study is organized into themes and presented below:

4.3.1 Effect of organizational culture

This study is premised on the assumption that organizational culture determines what is acceptable and not acceptable within an organization, as captured by the norms of behavior within an organization's interactions, processes and coordination mechanisms (Al-Jundi, Shuhaiber, & Al-Emara, 2019). The findings show that organizational culture was a key driver of corruption in the form of embezzlement and bribery within the two counties and it had a significant impact on public service delivery. Further, there was no significant difference between the effects of the drivers of corruption on public service delivery within the two counties. Thus, a comparative analysis of the two counties would not have been insightful. Hence, the results were thematically analyzed as follows:

4.3.1.1 Processes

The results show that corruption in the form of embezzlement and bribery had been normalized within the processes of both counties, to an extent it had become the mode of conducting official business. Thus, the organizational culture of both counties acted as a driver of corruption, by ensuring little or few services could be delivered without it. One respondent (N63) summarized this in the following words:

> …*shida ukiangalia* corruption basically I can put it this way, if you need something done, *lazima uchote*, even if it is accessing the disability funds, *ambazo wanakula tu*. *Hata ku-beg*, *lazima u-need* license, *na lazima uchote*…

> (…the problem with corruption basically, I can put it this way, if you need something done, you must bribe, even if it is accessing the disability funds, which they steal. To beg, you need a license and you must bribe for the license).

This basically showed that bribery was a form of currency that was the mode of transacting business such that without it, you could not access funds or obtain licenses. This is bound to have an effect on those who do not have the money to bribe, as they would not be able to access services. This meant that such a culture affected the accessibility of public services, limiting it to those who could bribe.

The respondent further alludes to the loss of public funds through theft. If true, this would mean that the public would not receive the required services due to lack of funds. Thus, there was a nexus between embezzlement and public service delivery. The data further demonstrates the situation in the Kenya public sector where similar studies showed that corruption adversely affected public services in the counties (Maina, 2013; Mutula, Muna, & Koma, 2013; Muna, 2016; Simiyu, Mweru, & Omete, 2014; Ochieng O. , 2021).

The data also shows that corruption had been normalized to an extent that respondent K10 said that "…it was like we devolved corruption." He further decried the effect this had on public services in the counties, which he said were in a dire situation. This position is supported by data showing a massive increase in corruption in the Kenyan counties, where studies showed that 63% of Kenyans have to pay bribes to access services (T1, 2016; Africog, 2016).

The grave effects of normalized corruption on public service delivery, was further captured by informant K7 who eerily asked: '*sina kitu mfukoni, nitakufa nisipopata dawa, nitawatolea wapi kitu kidogo?*' (I have nothing in my pockets, I will die if I don't get medicine, where will I get money to bribe them?). The situation was desperate, as he needed life-saving drugs which he could not access as he had no money to bribe. This means that the public service had been rendered inaccessible to him as he could not afford the bribe. This data confirms studies that reported over 80% of Kenyans have to pay bribes to access county health facilities (T1, 2016; Africog, 2016; WB, 2017; Martini, 2012; Khamisi, 2018). It also tallies with other studies done in Africa, where unofficial charges (bribes) were the reason behind patients postponing their first visit

to hospitals in West Africa, with adverse consequences on the timeliness of diagnosis for cancer patients (Cloutier, 2017; Dza, Kyeremeh, Dzandu, & Affran, 2018). This also had dire public health consequences, as demonstrated by the Ebola crisis where citizens of Sierra Leone and Liberia failed to seek health services due to lack of money for bribes (Abasili & Akinboye, 2019; Sanogo, 2018; Asea, 2018; Sackeyfio, 2018; Ayee, 2010; Wanyama, 2019; Rugumyamheto, 2004).

Thus, the data confirms available evidence from the rest of the world which shows that by rendering services inaccessible, unofficial charges effectively marginalize those who cannot pay bribes and deprives them of access to public services (Arends, 2020). Those who cannot afford to bribe are shut out and denied services, while the quality of services offered to those who cannot bribe is affected since they cannot incentivize the public officials (Hess, 2020). It is important to note that unofficial charges (bribes) disproportionately affect the poor, as they rely heavily on government-subsidized services for their livelihoods (Klarity, 2018). They also pay a higher percentage of their income to bribes (Goel, Mazhar, Nelson, & Ram, 2017).

Incidents of internal and external auditors being looped into the bribery cartels were reported in both counties, with many of them being compromised to sanitize audit reports, as reported by K29 and N26. They also complained of the negative effect this had on public services, as money meant for service delivery was stolen and the stolen money was partly utilized to bribe these auditors. This portrays the gravity of the normalization of the corruption culture, as institutions and offices that are meant to provide oversight and watch over the (budgets), which are commons as per the commons theory, are compromised and have become moribund. This data confirms the Auditor General's reports which have always given damning evidence about corruption in Kenya (Auditor General, 2018). If we apply John Kingdon's multiple-streams policy framework to this data, the policy stream in this context, has not matured due to the presence of the Auditor General as the only actor who is anticorruption. Key players such as academia, media, and think tanks that could come up with policies to tackle corruption, are missing. The policy stream requires the availability of viable solutions to solve the problems identified in the problem stream (Hutchinson, Balabanova, & McKee, 2019).

According to the data, the only stakeholder in this stream is the Auditor General and his reports alone, are inadequate in maturing this stream. The absence of policy entrepreneurs is also significant, as they play a key role in any policy change initiative. Policy solutions are often floated as ideas by experts from academia, civil society or bureaucrats, as such experts stand a better chance of having their ideas adopted due to the assumed support from their support bases. These experts sometimes morph into policy entrepreneurs, taking on advocacy work to influence the policy agenda space (Cohen, 2021).

In terms of the development of the problem stream, the absence of an informed public that identifies corruption as a key issue, means that this stream will not mature any time soon. The absence of any actors in the politics stream also means, a policy window is not likely to open up soon for policy interventions to occur. In the same way, if we apply the policy networks theory to this data, the absence of active networks within the data confirms the normalization of corruption within the Kenyan society, as key stakeholders such as the media, and non-governmental organizations do not view it as an urgent issue requiring lobbying and pressuring the government for intervention.

The corruption culture in the society was also confirmed by respondent K22 who narrated that corruption has always been there since "*zamani, just that imeongezeka a lot. Hizi corruption start with the mwananchi agreeing to chota kitu kidogo."* (Corruption has been there since time immemorial, just that it has increased a lot. This corruption starts with the public agreeing to bribe). The respondent further said that corruption was the reason public services were poor. The statements show that corruption was already a part of the normative structure, as it had been there since time immemorial and its normalization, was only expected to continue. Thus, if this was the norm, it also meant poor public services was the norm. This situation was also captured by informant K49 who gave the example of Kiambu county where top positions were secured by certain interested parties through campaign financing during the 2017 general election and when they took power, it was now time for them to recoup their expenses through embezzlement of public funds and kickbacks for tenders. K49 further argued that such people prioritize corruption over public service delivery. Thus, public services had become worse due to the diversion of key resources (money). Respondent

N27 further said that everyone is corrupt, it is just that we do not all have the opportunity to steal or receive bribes. He narrated:

> *Mimi nikiingia hapo, nitafanya vile wengine wanafanya nijiestablish vizuri kwanza, kesi baadaye*. (If I ever occupy the positions, I'll do the same thing that is done (commit corruption) so that I establish myself first. I'll deal with the outcome of my actions later).

Respondent N21 explained that corruption in the county governments was reflective of the greater societal corruption, with those benefiting from dipping their hands in the commons through embezzlement, expressing happiness while those denied services (members of the public) grumbling for being forced to bribe, to get any services. This view was supported by respondent N31 who joked, while laughing and said; "…corruption is sweet for those getting deals at the expense of the greater public." Respondent N11 further affirmed this position when he also said; "…*kuna vitu huwezi* change (there are things you cannot change), connections work. For instance, *ikiwa kuna* tender *na kuna mtu ako na mtu kwa* county, *na labda wewe uko* more qualified than him, *hautapata*." (There are things you cannot change, connections work. For instance, if there is a tender and there is someone with connections at the county, even if you are more qualified than him, you will not get the tender). This view was supported by respondent N59 who came from one of the minority groups in the county and lamented about the 'connections culture' that was brought about by corruption. He said corruption is difficult to eradicate because it is deeply entrenched in our normative societal structures. He gave the example of Kenyans jumping queues, instead of waiting for their turn, to receive a public service. He also said when Kenyans want their children to go to good schools, they *chota* (bribe) and that even in weddings, you find *umejiingiza kwa mix*, (you're in that category of corrupt people), *sababu auntie yako anakuitia pillao hapo nyuma* (because your aunt has called you for special rice behind the tent as others have normal food). Thus, corruption in Kenya is so rampant that respondent N59 summed it by saying *navumilia kuwa mkenya* (I endure being a Kenyan) and that the public had given up on public services. This data shows that corruption is generally accepted in Kenya and is in agreement with studies that show that an average of 5,369 employees per year were convicted for corruption at the workplace between 2015 and 2018 (The Star Newspaper; KNBS, 2020). The data further confirms reports showing that over 64.4% of the governors at the counties were unwilling or uncommitted to fighting corruption and over 59.6% of Kenyans did not

have any confidence in the county governments' commitment to fight corruption (EACC, 2016).

The data contrasts with scholars who argue that devolution in Kenya was an anticorruption measure that should have reigned in corruption (EACC, 2016). The data shows corruption has actually been devolved and deeply entrenched into the organizational culture of both county governments, and this was affecting the delivery of public services. This position is reflected in the attitude of the members of the public, such as respondent N21, who had a fatalistic attitude towards corruption and had accepted it as part of the cost of doing business with the county governments, as he felt that to eradicate it was a mammoth task. Thus, the respondent felt he has to factor the cost of corruption in the provision of public services, from his own pocket. The data confirms that corruption is a part of the normative structure of the two counties and it is considered abnormal when you do not bribe or steal public funds. It is no wonder that many scholars have pointed out that anticorruption policies have generally failed globally, as they have failed to eradicate corruption due to such entrenched cultures, with scholars arguing that one can only hope to reduce it and not eradicate it (Bull & Heywood, 2019).

Respondent N14 lamented the "*kujuana*" culture (connections culture) and an *uta-do* culture of impunity that had made it almost impossible to access public services without paying bribes and which basically meant that those engaging in corruption were highly protected. He put it this way:

> Corruption is in the DNA (Deoxyribonucleic acid) of the county government officials. They are like drug addicts who can't quit drugs just from the blue. Corruption is addictive and cannot be stopped without repercussions. There is a lot of nepotism and tribalism in the offices, for example, you get a job because your father works in a certain office, or you find in one office, there are only members of one tribe and money changes hands. These members of this tribe have been referred by their brothers, cousins or even friends. So, the chain is rather continuous because it is no longer merit, but who you know. *Kwanza Nairobi hii imejaa familia peke yake, unakuta mtoto ameachiwa kazi na babu yake, na baba yake aliachiwa na babu yake, wote wanafanya kazi huku*. *Uta-do? Huwezi watoa, wako protected.* (For instance, Nairobi City County is full of families, where a child, father and grandfather all work together and inherit jobs. You can do nothing. You cannot remove them, as they are protected).

By stating that corruption is part of the DNA of the county officials, the data confirms that corruption has been normalized to an extent that it was a part of the image, identity and reputation of the counties. This is because staff often reflect the image, identity and reputation of an organization (McNamee, 2016). Bribery is mentioned as a key practice that has enabled other types of corruption such as nepotism, tribalism, favoritism and cronyism to take hold. Thus, public service delivery suffered due to incompetent and unskilled staff who were hired for their connections. The data thus supports studies done in Peru which showed that bribery led to nepotism and incompetent staff being hired, a situation which weakened public service delivery (Gustafsson & Scurrah, 2019).

In both counties, there was an institutional culture of impunity, with structures, processes and interactions that were designed to facilitate public service delivery being utilized for the benefit of a few cronies who enjoyed political protection, as narrated by respondent N62. Respondent K7 also reported:

> …*Hawa watu wako-protected* (these people are protected). *Wanakuuliza, uta-do*? (They ask you, what will you do?). They know you are going nowhere even if you report them. This happens because there are people benefiting from these structures and institutions lack the capacity and political will to stop this from happening. County governments are state organs that ought to be there to serve the public, but they have been turned into institutions that benefit a few individuals…

The data shows impunity on the part of those engaging in corruption, at the expense of public service delivery. This situation confirms evidence from studies in Africa that show that devolved government structures provide local leaders with the opportunities to abuse their power by providing political protection to their cronies (Kameir & Kursanyi, 1983; Alfano, Baraldi, & Cantabene, 2020). This breeds impunity and weakens anticorruption efforts. The data further tallies with evidence that shows that efforts to eradicate corruption in devolved governments in Africa have been dismal, as anticorruption interventions are often ignored or implemented half-heartedly by technocrats and politicians who have more to gain than to lose, by burying investigations (Mutonyi, 2010; Minja, 2017; Mutangili, 2019; Chen, Jiang, & Villeva, 2015; D'Arcy, 2016).

Notably, there is an organizational culture of 'othering' or blaming others (outsiders) for the corruption in the counties. The respondents pointed a finger at 'others' but never inwards (at themselves). For example, respondent K41 blamed the bosses, saying that: "…*shinda iko kwa wakubwa, wanapora mali ya uma, ndio raia hawapati huduma ya kutosha na inayofaa".* (The problem is with the top bosses as they steal public resources and the public end up not getting adequate and quality public services). He complained that corruption from the rich *inaumiza mtu wachini ambao wanafinyiliwa hapo chini kama chapati* (corruption from the rich hurts the poor by pressing them flat like a piece of chapati). This data affirms the blame game culture which is common within government institutions, as few people rarely take the blame when things go wrong (Cardinale, 2017). It also confirms the dire effects on public services, when public resources are stolen. When this is viewed from the institutional theory viewpoint that looks at government as an independent institution, capable of influencing organizational cultures of county governments, certain aspects of the blame game culture provide stability and resilience in governments (Cardinale, 2017). Scholars posit that this influence is particularly noticeable within the public service, where certain informal and formal traditions are deeply entrenched (Wijk, Zietsma, Dorado, Bakker, & Marti, 2019). Underlying these practices is the corruption culture among officers, which equally affects public service delivery (Scott, 2013; Peterson & Peters, 2020). These practices influence the behavior of public officers, who in turn influence the level of public service delivery. Thus, the data agrees with the theory's view of organizational culture and its influence on public service delivery.

The researcher experienced the county organizational culture first hand, through the barriers and bottlenecks placed on the way of this research, as she tried to get clearances from the gatekeepers in each county. The intergovernmental coordination mechanisms were poor, especially in Kiambu, where the researcher got clearance from the county commissioner but the county government refused to recognise it. The security guards in Kiambu county categorically told the researcher: 'you cannot do the research here, there is no corruption here.' Further, the suppliers in Kiambu had been instructed by the county officials to shun the research, as reported by respondent K20 from whom I was able to collect data, after making informal contacts. All these hurdles that were placed in front of the research meant that public service delivery was poor, as one could not get the necessary service.

A culture of suspicion and corruption was also encountered during the focus group discussions, with people afraid of attending such a forum, insisting on letters from the chief. As reported by respondent N58:

> …People fear corruption…Go slowly. People are scared of giving information as they fear the eyes and ears of the government. If it was another topic, they would have agreed, corruption *ikitajwa* somewhere *ndiendaga itheru, ona hanini* (I don't like jokes even for a minute when corruption is mentioned), if it was topics like early pregnancies, no problem. The corruption name is very dangerous. At the mention of that name, people jump 6 feet high. Even the time of Jesus, there was corruption. In the county everywhere there is corruption. Do not mention corruption at the subchief or chief's office, *niukuhurwo* (you will be beaten). Anything touching on government, you do not rush. People are fearing you may be EACC or CID…You know people have come and left their work and want to be paid, Kes 5000 or 10,000 cash. You have to pay us, even if this meeting is only for 30 minutes, you pay us a full day.

The data shows that corruption has been normalized, as the way one should receive services. The residents now expect and demand bribes, even before giving out any service or information. The data also shows that people generally fear the government as they believe the government is involved in corruption. This position is in line with studies that have shown that corruption in government is responsible for policy failures in many developing countries and in Africa (Damoah, Akwei, & Amoako, 2018). The people also accept that corruption has been there in society for a long time. As such, they expected to be bribed for attending the focus group discussions, in compliance with the normalization of the corruption culture in society.

Respondent K2 makes a desperate plea to the government to eradicate corruption, showing a level of helplessness on her part and perhaps on the part of other members of the public when confronted by corruption. She was also desperate for public services, as she was poor and could not afford the bribes. The plea shows she recognizes corruption as a problem in society that needs government intervention, and she also recognizes that the government has the means and the machinery to eradicate it. In accordance with John Kingdon's multiple streams framework, this is the beginning of the problem stream, where key stakeholders affected by an issue are able to identify it as a problem that requires governmental intervention. For the likes of K2, the problem stream has crystallized as she is able to see the issues around the road not being built as

one involving corruption and she is able to identify that government requires to act on the same, and she realises she cannot afford bribes to access public services as she was poor.

From the theory of the commons viewpoint, respondent K2's helplessness in the face of the corruption menace shows the situation of the tragedy of the commons, where members of the public are unable to control the government officials siphoning the budgets which are commons belonging to everyone. Although he felt helpless, the link between the stolen funds and lack of public services, was clear to him. Respondent N43 also expressed his frustration with the depletion of public resources and decried the public attitude towards embezzlement where people feel the public money belongs to no one in particular, even when public services continued to deteriorate. The budgets are finite resources and the public are unable to ensure the public officials entrusted with managing them, provide public services, like fixing the road. The situation if left to continue, would lead to economic bankruptcy and policy failure, according the the commons theory (Ghorbani & Bravo, 2016). Thus, the challenge of how to best safeguard such limited resources and prevent a tragedy of the commons has been a major concern for scholars.

Respondent N23 captured this helplessness by saying 'Kenya *ni* Kenya,' meaning Kenya is full of corruption and there is nothing anyone can do about it. He also added that Kenya is known for poor public services due to corruption, so that is not new. Respondent N10 also laughed knowingly when the researcher asked him this question, saying 'Corruption is there, *iwe hospitali au kortini au kwa ofisi kubwa za serikali*.' (Corruption is there, whether in hospital, courts or high offices in government). He said it was the only way to offer public services. The informants noted that the culture of corruption stems from the greater society, in which the devolved governments find themselves. In one of the focus group discussions, one of the respondents from Nairobi (N61) lamented that:

> …people look at us like ATMs (automatic teller machines), we have to give *kitu kidogo* to those above us and to those below us. As a politician I have to talk nicely to the MCAs (members of county assemblies) and MPs (Members of Parliament) for something to be done. Money makes things happen. It quickens things. You can't be in a society where you try to be clean when everyone is

> dirty, you get mainstreamed to fit in (People look at us like money machines. We have to bribe those above us and those below us).

This data confirms the presence of a culture of acceptance and normalization of corruption within the two counties that is borrowed from the greater society. Since corruption is already normalized within the Kenyan society and there is nothing unique about its normalization in the devolved governments, society then expects one to behave according to this normative culture. Thus, corruption had become a mode of conducting official business and a part of the public service delivery expectations within the counties. The data confirms various studies that have identified corruption as one of the greatest obstacles to Kenya's socio-economic development (Andersen, Johannesen, & Rijkers, 2020). The country is currently ranked among the most corrupt countries globally, at position 154 out of 182 (Andersen, Johannesen, & Rijkers, 2020).

The organizational culture of corruption specifically affected women more adversely as expounded by N61 who reported that:

> We have experienced corruption *sana, tena sana*. (We have experienced corruption a lot). As women to get any position, you have to bribe, and even normal jobs, it is hard. Most of the work and jobs are taken by men. Yet we need the jobs to get money to bribe for the jobs. You can't get money to bribe for the job when you are jobless as a woman. So, you're forced to give your body instead. And we have a big care burden, if you have a small child, you can't be able to take care of it and still keep a job. You will mostly be fired for leaving work early or arriving late if you get a family emergency.

The data shows that women were differentially and disproportionately affected by corruption. They have to bribe to get jobs and when they do not have the money for bribes, they are forced to give sexual favors. Keeping jobs is also a big challenge for them, as they have huge family responsibilities. The workplaces are not conducive or alive to their struggles. Thus, public services were poor and non existent for them, as they could not afford to bribe and they had to undergo humiliating experiences (sexual favors) to get public services. Therefore, the level of public services they received could not meet the quality standards of the SERVQUAL model as it did not have empathy and it took their dignity away. This data supports studies showing strong links between gender and corruption and how the two genders are disproportionately affected by corruption (Bauhr & Charron, 2020).

Other respondents such as K48 shared about interdepartmental and intradepartmental conflicts within the counties, that he attributed to the corruption culture, as each department and individuals within the department, competed to control 'corruption pipelines.' Respondent K29 lamented that areas such as staff welfare, environmental cleanliness, county workers' uniforms, county vehicles, maintenance of infrastructure and other equipment were neglected due to this kind of conflict, and this ultimately affected service delivery. When the county vehicles are not repaired, it means the collection of garbage and other essential services requiring transport, cannot be carried out. Further, if the staff do not have adequate equipment and resources such as uniforms, public services are bound to suffer. This confirms that the quality of public services did not meet the SERVQUAL model of tangibles and assurance.

Additionally, the processes, interactions and structures that are supposed to run smoothly for example in the case of budgetary activities, were also reported by respondent N26 to cause conflict especially during implementation of county projects. This caused lapses in accountability and oversight, as the legislature is supposed to be the watchdog on behalf of the greater public to ensure public money is well spent. When they get compromised through bribery or engage in conflicts, their oversight role is forgotten or diminished, thus affecting public service delivery. These scenarios project an image of county governments in constant conflict due to the corruption lurking within their organizational cultures, and this situation is not conducive for public service delivery.

Respondent N41 lamented about gaps in intercounty coordination between the two counties in terms of providing seamless public services to their residents. He complained of shared services such as water and electricity where competition and infighting between the two counties left the public at the mercy of cartels who extorted them for bribes to connect them to the grid or to connect them to water services, while funds that had been allocated to provide them with such services, were stolen and diverted. Respondent N39 also pointed a finger at intercounty rivalry and blame-games, which he said were to blame for the inaccessibility of services to residents who lived near the borders of each county. He attributed these intercounty conflicts to corruption, over who will control which revenue sources, and said they interfered with intercounty relationships.

This data tallies with studies done in Kenya showing that devolution entrenched a cabal of rent-seeking politicians capable of constructing new conflicts and fomenting divisive politics that often take an ethnic angle, in the name of securing their communities access to public services and devolved government resources (Orr, 2019). The data is also in agreement with a study that compared devolution within the healthcare sector in Kenya and Indonesia that found that decision-making and prioritization led to inaccessible and inadequate services as these processes were captured and distorted by local elites that fomented conflicts between the arms of the devolved governments, and within the executive (McCollum, Limato, Otiso, Theobald, & Taegtmeyer, 2018).

Respondent K4 complained of being treated as an outcast in his own county, a situation that affected his accessibility of public services in terms of geographical reach as he had to travel long distances to obtain services and in terms of affordability due to the bribes he was expected to fork out for the services. He reported being denied services because of a perception that he is not from that county and the attitude of the county officials is that it is not the responsibility of the county governments to ensure he gets these services. This was attributed to political leaders marginalizing people from his ethnic community and referring to them as '…*muki, or andu a ruguru*' (strangers or people from the West). The respondent recalled being informed by a county official that "…*mimi ni mtu wa Nai, nirudi huko*" (that I was a resident of Nairobi who should go back to Nairobi). He said he was made to feel that *hii ni mali ya wenyeji* (that the resources in Kiambu county belonged to the indigenous people only). Yet this was a public resource and according to the theory of the commons, the resources belonged to everyone, and he had every right to access the common, just like anyone else. Such barriers forced those who were desperate for services to bribe, as confirmed by respondent N20 who reported that, "*if you are desperate, lazima uchote"* (you must bribe). Local political leaders also favored areas where they got more votes, as reported by respondent N4. This state of affairs reflects a failure of leadership as both counties are multiethnic, with over 45% of the population in Kiambu county coming from other regions ((KNBS, 2013; Star Newspaper, 2022)

In the healthcare sector, respondent K4 complained of discrimination and reported being informed that "…if you are from Nairobi, do not come here". He referred to

several pronouncements made by leaders, who were threatening an influx of patients from Nairobi City County who were flocking to Kiambu after doctors in Nairobi City went on strike. The respondent complained that when Kiambu county doctors were on strike, the residents got medical services from Nairobi City, yet the leaders of Kiambu complain that they have limited budgets to cater for their people only.

The respondent further complained that Kiambu county was rolling out Kiambu identity cards, to ensure only those who have them, can access services within the county. Upon inquiry and verification of this statement, the researcher discovered that indeed there were Kiambu resident cards but these were prepaid visa cards issued for purposes of payment of revenue, in partnership with Kenya Commercial Bank (KCB) but which some residents from Nairobi feared would be used to discriminate against them, when accessing services.

Respondent N12 further lamented that the two counties were operating in silos instead of coordinating to offer seamless services, a situation which left residents no alternative but to bribe their way through the confusion, in order to get services. The data points to a tragedy of the commons in that a few people who are the gatekeepers to the commons are plundering the common resources and denying others access. The clamor for services in one county when there is a deficient in the other, shows the tragedy of the commons, when one side of the commons is exhausted, everyone rushes to where the commons are still available and there is no foolproof way of stopping them from depleting the commons or a way of ensuring each county takes proper care of their commons to avoid this kind of situation. The data also shows that the county governments are not adhering to Article 21 (2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which provides that everyone has the right of equal access to public services (UNECA, 2005).

Respondent N43 gave an example of how embezzlement of funds at Pumwani which is a referral hospital that handles maternity cases from Machakos, Kiambu and Kajiado affected the flow of public services. He said there were hardly any structures to support intercounty coordination, and many citizens could not geographically access the services at Pumwani. He explained that there was no free-flowing transport system between the counties and no structured emergency evacuation systems as patients had

to pay for ambulance services which were expensive, making affordability a big challenge. He also said the quality of services was affected due to inadequate medical personnel and resources at the referral hospital. He further narrated that:

> … the records indicate the hospital was to get an upgrade costing in excess of Kes 100 million a few years back but when you go down to the hospital today, the theatres still hold up to 50 patients a day as it was many years before, so it means there is no improvement yet money was spent. More expectant mothers come hoping to use the theatres, hoping that what they read on the news is the true reflection of what is happening, but upon reaching they find congestion, and lack of human resources. This slows down service delivery. The other day a woman delivered her baby at the car park, as there were no hospital personnel to attend to her. If the wards were expanded, then they would have hired more health workers but since they never did that, they are unable to take more patients and the end user has to bear the consequence of this…

On fact checking the information from this respondent, the researcher discovered that Pumwani Maternity Hospital had indeed been allocated an upgrade in excess of Kes 100 million, which was actually Kes 510 million in 2015 and the incident of the mother who delivered at the car park without the help of hospital staff was widely captured in the local and international media (Kenya News Agency, 2015; Wanjohi, 2020). These two incidents demostrate a link between embezzlement of funds and the lack of public services.

From the point of view of the respondent, the public funds to expand the hospital and hire staff were misappropriated and thus the woman who delivered on the tarmac, suffered lack of services due to the misappropriation of budgets. The embezzlment also affected intercounty public services, as there were no intercounty coordination structures to provide seamless services between the counties. There were inadequate personnel at Pumwani Hospital and the public could not afford evacuation services and means of transport between the counties.

The data confirms studies done in other parts of the world which shows that embezzlement through the misappropriation of budgets, robs governments of much-needed resources to provide public services (Gurgur & Shah, 2002; Andersen, Johannesen, & Rijkers, 2020; Kimeu, 2014; Andrei & Vishny, 1993; Shon & Cho, 2020). It also confirms studies done in Kenya which show that the country currently

loses over US $6 billion, which is well over 30% of its public resources to embezzlement including money lost within the counties (Oyugi, 2006; TI, 2019). A recent study done on the perceptions and experiences of corruption in the public service in Kenya confirmed this view (National Crime Research Centre, 2018). The data further confirms reports done by the Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA) that showed that embezzlement within the counties was rampant in the procurement, supply, finance, and human resource departments (Otieno, 2018). Thus, if money was stolen from Pumwani Hospital, it was mostly stolen using these channels. The procurement office would have issued tenders to contractors, who would then supply substandard work or disappear after being paid by the finance department and the human resource department would be roped in to ensure unqualified people were hired, a situation which would only balloon the wage bill but not deal with the congestion at the hospital, as qualified critical staff such as doctors and nurses, would still be unavailable. The data further confirms studies showing that embezzlement in Kenya is carried out through state capture, with many scholars referring to it as budgeted corruption (Khamisi, 2018). The data demonstrates the tragedy of the commons, where the county budgets which are common resources, are misappropriated by a few officials, to the disadvantage of the greater public.

According to respondent N44, coordination mechanisms and corruption are in direct proportionality, in that the more the number of people involved, the higher the amount of bribery that is paid out. He explained that each person wants a cut and to take care of everyone involved, the kickback must be huge enough to feed the entire chain. This has a trickledown effect in that the person awarded the tender, will end up doing shoddy work or using sub-standard materials to recover the money he used for kickbacks. “This is the unfortunate situation we find ourselves in,” he added.

This data shows the effect of corruption within the organizational culture on corruption, in that the more entrenched the corruption, the more public services suffer, as people have to fork out more bribes to obtain services and to feed the corruption chain. The data affirms studies done in Kenya by the Ethics and Anticorruption Commission (EACC) which reported that kickbacks for tenders within the devolved governments was responsible for many procurement irregularities such as bid-rigging, inflation of prices, splitting of tenders (to make them low value to beat the requirements of the law),

tampering with client documents, conflict of interest, political influence and unqualified staff being hired or presiding over procurement functions, which all contributed to poor service delivery (EACC, 2015).

Thus, artificial increases in the cost of public services was experienced due to inflated tenders, which constrains resources, leading to inadequate and inaccessible services (Beuermann & Amelina, 2018; Africog, 2016; Sumah, 2018; Hope K. R., 2018). The types of poor services captured in the EACC report covered all sectors and included shoddy construction of roads and bridges, which all contributed to the public receiving inadequate or no services (EACC, 2015). The data from this study suggests these irregularities are deliberately set up by the corruption cartels to ensure the kickbacks earned would cover all the players in the decision-making chain.

The researcher captured an organisational culture of suspicion and fear around corruption research from this study. This was best exemplified in Kiambu county where one of the top aides to H.E the Governor had this to say about this research:

> The Governor has declined to approve the research. He stated, in his own words: "This is a wrong choice of topic, it sounds quite incriminating, and bearing in mind that after the research is done, it becomes a public document, he fears it may taint his legacy."

This statement was very telling of the institutional culture of protectionism within Kiambu county government. It also shows poor public service delivery in the form of research information that was not expediated. This data confirms findings from the rest of the world where research on corruption is not exactly welcomed and researchers face dire risks when they attempt to study it (Gomez, 2020).

The researcher also experienced this culture of suspicion and protectionism at the Kiambu county assembly where, after accepting to be interviewed, some of the respondents changed their minds, after the topic was introduced and the researcher had to look for other respondents to interview. Similarly, in one of the offices of Nairobi City County, one of the respondents, a public official in one of the strategic functions the researcher was interested in, literally ran away in fear of giving information, once

the researcher announced that she was conducting research on corruption. Thus, poor public service delivery was experienced when seeking research information.

Respondent N19 reported that many public officials use rudeness and hostility to mask the corruption culture and keep off members of the public who might be snooping around. Thus, public service delivery was not prioritized, as the public officials looked at their own interests. This was confirmed by respondent N35 who said that "…when you don't bribe, the public officers are rude and their attitude is terrible." Respondent K18 on the other hand did not provide forthright information regarding his direct involvement in corruption, preferring to shift blame to other persons. He narrated that:

> …Yes, I've been asked to give money to get something done but I won't say by who. We've been instructed against our will to do some corrupt activities but *siwezi* dig into it that much (I can't). No and I can't answer that.

This data shows that corruption is happening clandestinely and to get the information from the public officers is a tough call. The respondent had participated in bribery to get services and was clearly a part of a cartel, as he had received instructions from someone he was unwilling to mention. He even states that he has been forced to participate in corruption against his will, but he is unwilling to give further details, perhaps for his own safety. Thus, the researcher was not surprised that some respondents did not give responses to some of the questions in this study and the researcher had to look for more respondents. Some of the tactics utilized to avoid the corruption topic involved, pretending to be suddenly, busy or pretending something urgent, have come up. Respondent N44 for instance said, *"*…if the *man in charge* said that Kes 2 billion is stolen from the government every day, then who are these people stealing this Kes 2 billion?" This statement was very revealing as the President of the Republic of Kenya is on record confirming that the country loses over Kes 2 billion every day to corruption. Thus, this data confirms that the corruption culture is acknowledged from the highest levels of government.

This data further confirms findings that have reported that studies on corruption face measurement challenges, as there is no official data and this remains one of the critical empirical challenges in the field (Cheeseman, 2018). The data confirms the stance taken by scholars who argue that by its very nature, corruption is an illicit and secretive act,

with individuals and institutions going to great lengths to conceal it (Prasetyono, 2019). Therefore, attempts to measure it often cause participants to reduce their illicit behavior during measurement or innovate new methods to mask their behavior, as captured by this data (Arce & Hendricks, 2019). It then becomes difficult to produce correlations or test different theories or determine corruption's impact, as it cannot be measured accurately, as seen from this data (Cheeseman, 2018).

The data agrees with studies that show that embezzlement is difficult to detect, as most organizations are forced to rely on warning signs rather than actual incidents of embezzlement, to prevent it (Odeku, 2018). As such, scholars posit that organizations should look out for certain behaviors among the staff which might raise suspicion, as seen from this data. Such behaviors include officials with a possessive attitude and rudeness as confirmed by this data. (Piper, 2017; Maulidi, 2017). The data also tallies with studies showing that embezzlers do not like leaving evidence of their crimes and are likely to destroy or hide under negative sattitudes and rudeness when questioned about corruption (Rustiarini, Sutrisno, & Nurkholis, 2019; Maulidi, 2017; Kobis, Prooijen, Righetti, Paul, & Lange, 2017; Arends, 2020).

The data shows that public officers in the two counties do not adhere to the standards of quality services as per the SERVQUAL model. When they show rudeness and negative attitudes and dismiss members of the public who cannot bribe or refuse to bribe, it shows they do not have empathy or a caring attitude to members of the public, nor are they willing to help them as per the SERVQUAL standards of public service delivery (Raza, Umer, Qureshi, & Dahri, 2020; Prentkovskis, *et al.*, 2018).

Respondent N13 narrated how she had struggled to get a tender several times without success until she got a connection to an officer, whom she had to bribe, to connect her to another officer, in a chain of various officials she also had to bribe, and there was no guarantee of being awarded the tender. In her own words:

> It is a chain. We applied several times until we found a connection in the city county government and our luck changed. Bribery is a must. We bribed different officials to get the tenders. The bribes have cost us suppliers a lot of money. The government officials' only concern is how much bribe they will get. They do not care if the work they assigned is done. They do not care about the quality of services, just how much their cut is. Hence, because of their greed the public receives poor sanitation and ensure poor living conditions. Yet in that sub-

> county there was a supplier who was awarded the tender for garbage collection and who was fully paid by the government. The litter problem in Nairobi for example, there are sub-counties that you will go to and find litter dispersed everywhere. This will result in people getting sick especially children, and this affects the quality of life. Air quality, environmental hazards, dangers of uncollected litter and blocked sewers will be a problem. So, at the end of the day, it is the ordinary citizen who is suffering because the government officials live in areas where the conditions are conducive.

This data confirms the existence of corruption cartels that use the procurement system as a corruption pipeline for receiving bribes and controlling who gets the tender awards for supplying services in the county. This lady had tried to apply directly but could not go through until she was introduced to someone with the right connections. The data confirms these connections work in a chain and the bribery amounts get bigger the more people are involved. The scenario painted by this data is that the bribe amounts demanded by the public officials are unsustainable and unreasonable, to an extent that the supplier is left with no money for service delivery after paying off the bribes. The supplier is thus a player within a long chain of corruption cartels, that are to blame for the poor services experienced by members of the public.

In this vein, the data portrays a culture where corruption is the main objective and not delivery of public services. This culture demonstrates the tragedy of the commons, in that the public officials care less about the public needs and they do not view their role as one of safeguarding the common interest of the public but to pursue their own selfish interests. The data also demonstrates the effect of the corruption culture on public services, as the health of the citizens is affected when litter is not collected, and especially the heath of young children. The air quality is also affected and with many environmental hazards and blocked sewers brought about by uncollected litter, the common citizen is left with poor services in the form of poor living conditions and poor sanitation. Consequently, the quality of life and the life expectancy of the citizens is also affected.

This data confirms studies which have demonstrated that corruption is made possible by the fact that public offices offer opportunities for private gain through kickbacks for tenders by influencing who gets to supply public goods and services, and the terms of those tenders and contracts (Klaveren, 1989; Lennerfors, 2009; Suprayitno & Pradiptyo, 2017). It also supports studies that show that suppliers are used as conduits

of kickbacks for tenders, at the expense of public service delivery (Bangura & Larbi, 2006; Mutangili, 2019).

The data further affirms studies showing that corruption within the organizational cultures of devolved governments occur with the connivance of suppliers, who provide 'kickbacks' (bribes) to keep the tenders flowing, as suppliers who do not bribe, are denied government tenders (Ades & Tella, 1999; Nyambariga, 2016; Khamisi, 2018). Thus, the respondent in this data, was denied a tender until she got a connection and had to bribe a chain of people before the tender could be given.

The data tallies with studies showing that in any bribery scenario, there are always two or more parties involved, usually the giver and the receiver, with the giver and the receiver sometimes acting as proxies for other parties behind them, through a complex web of networks that make it almost impossible to trace the real faces behind each transaction (Granovetter, 2007; Graaf, 2007; Wellalage, Locke, & Samujh, 2019). Thus, the respondent in this data, was taken through a chain of people she bribed and could not tell the real faces behind the deals she was bribing for. This is one of the reasons scholars cite for bribery being one of the most rampant and complex types of corruption to uproot, even though it is criminal in many jurisdictions (Granovetter, 2007; Andrei & Vishny, 1993; Bratsis, 2003; Arends, 2020).

The data additionally affirms the position taken by scholars who argue that kickbacks for tenders is among the most challenging types of corruption to capture, as the acts leave no official records and take place in absolute secrecy (Jeppesen, 2019; Arce & Hendricks, 2019; Baccouche, 2016; Englebert & Mungongo, 2016; Gustafsson & Scurrah, 2019; Montero, 2018). The scholars posit that this happens because current auditing techniques do not detect kickbacks for tenders, and the problem is compounded by the fact that auditors have few preventive roles and often come into the picture after the bribery has occurred (Jeppesen, 2019; Albornoz & Cabrales, 2013).

Studies from Kenya show that kickbacks occur when a contractor pays the public officer a certain sum of money, as captured in this data (Mutangili, 2019). Usually, 5% to 20% of the overall contract value after the contractor wins a tender is promised, although according to this data, the bribe amount being demanded appears excessive

(Mutangili, 2019). The corrupt payment is promised in advance to influence the recipient of a successful bid. The bribe may be monetary or in the form of goods or services, such as expensive gifts, credit cards, sexual favors, or overpaying for reciprocal services (Nyambariga, 2016). The data confirms that sometimes, an individual's job can also heighten the risk of kickbacks for tenders, particularly for those who work in procurement and finance, as seen in this data, where there was a chain of officials to bribe, before the tender could be given (Mutangili, 2019). This means that the more people there are to bribe, the less priority is given to public service delivery, which in the absence of resources, becomes almost non-existent.

This information confirms several studies that have identified kickbacks for tenders as one of the biggest challenges facing devolution in Kenya, with over 53% of Kenyans dissatisfied with the level of public service delivery in the counties (Wagana, Iravo, & Nzulwa, 2015; Miriti, 2016; Koehler, 2018; Kimathi, 2017; Yarow, Jirma, & Siringi, 2019; Barasa, Manyara, Molyneux, & Tsofa, 2017; Ochieng, 2018; McCollum, Limato, Otiso, Theobald, & Taegtmeyer, 2018; Ngigi & Busolo, 2019; Tsofa, Goodman, Gilson, & Molyneux, 2017; Kanyinga, 2016; Munge, 2020; TI, 2014).

An organizational culture of laxity and ineptitude, further characterized the culture of corruption within the two county governments. The management did not bother to provide covering staff for uninterrupted service delivery, as the researcher did not find public officials in some of the offices when she visited, even though there were Covid 19 protocols in place. The tragedy of the commons is reflected here, as public officers get away with offering no public services when no one is watching yet the services they offer belong to everyone (like the commons). Thus, in the absence of policy networks that would keep an oversight over them, such as an active media, these officials continue to entrench a culture of laxity and ineptitude that is prone to corruption. This culture was not identified in the data as a problem within the meaning of John Kingdon's multiple streams framework and a policy window is therefore unlikely to open up soon. Further, the culture shows the quality of public services offered could not meet the SERVQUAL model of reliability and responsiveness.

The data also shows that corruption research is not exactly welcomed in both counties, and the counties go to great lengths to avoid scrutiny, whether from the academia or

investigative agencies, implying they have a lot to hide. They refused to receive the researcher's official letters, showing the organisational culture of how they deal with public correspondences and demonstrating how unwelcome the topic of corruption was. This culture confirms the empirical position that organizational cultures are to blame for the fact that corruption research is not exactly welcomed and that dire risks face those who dare to carry out research into corrupt activities (Caiden, 2013; Prabowo, 2014; Toke, Arye, Hillman, & Qijun, 2020; Gomez, 2020). One of the scholars, Gomez (2020) was writing in the context of administrative decentralization in Colombia, which was plagued by drug cartel wars. This situation also explains the scarcity of knowledge in this field and the lack of policy recommendations that are grounded on empirical evidence in this area.

Respondent N57 explained that part of the reason that corruption research is viewed with suspicion and is not exactly welcomed, is that it would expose the goings on in the counties and therefore illuminate the corruption that goes on. Respondent K1 confirmed that staff and suppliers had been warned and instructed not to cooperate with the research and as a result there was a defensive culture of protectionism among the respondents. Respondent K34 was particularly openly unreceptive and hostile, terming my research as politically instigated. Respondent N34 expounded on this further and said that the culture of suspicion negatively affected public services as the public could easily cease having confidence in the government of the day. This situation can be best explained by the commons theory in that no one wants to take responsibility for depleting the commons (public budgets) and everyone will go an extra mile to hide the fact that they are misusing the common resources (public funds) hence there will always be a culture of suspicion whenever corruption is involved.

The suspicion culture was further captured in the respondents' refusal to be recorded and to sign consent forms. Respondent N62 for instance gave a lot of rich information but on condition that he is not recorded. Even those respondents who had booked interviews would disappear the minute the researcher turned up for the interviews. Others who had agreed to be interviewed ended up dodging questions and leaving areas unanswered, such as respondents N31, N11, K29 and N26. They seemed to have had a unanimous agreement under the radar to allow the interviews but give very little information to the researcher. They also seemed intent on frustrating the researcher's

efforts by being available in the office but appearing to be too busy to give the researcher any audience. Thus, the researcher was asked to wait, till she would get tired and leave. Such was the case with respondents K12 and N35 who took several days of waiting before the researcher could get audience with them. Some respondents like N24 were even audacious and asked to be bribed in order to give the researcher any information. Respondent K16 and K18 who had agreed to meet me informally, changed their minds after they saw the topic was corruption. The topic clearly was not welcome and it took a lot of explanations to change their minds and get the data. Thus, the level of public service delivery was poor, as far as obtaining research information was concerned.

With this state of affairs, it is not surprising that the monitoring of corruption in Kenyan institutions is not robust, as current practices rely on faulty, anecdotal corruption indexes and politicized interventions (Hope K. R., 2014b; Khamisi, 2018). In the absence of robust empirical evidence to inform public sector reforms, Kenya's attempts to deal with corruption have followed global trends, using a *managerialism* and *interventionist* approach (Garduno, 2019). This has involved criminalizing corruption, tightening procedures, and arresting the culprits (Chen, Jiang, & Villeva, 2015; Garduno, 2019). There was even a business attempt at increasing public sector wages and privatizing public services, which did not yield the requisite results but ended up exacerbating corruption (Ayee, 2008; Abasili & Akinboye, 2019; CS, 2016; Khamisi, 2018).

This study takes the view that policy networks can play a critical role in oversighting such common resources. According to available empirical evidence, these networks have been known to influence government agendas and play a critical role in solving collective action problems such as corruption (Agranoff & Kolpakov, 2019). However, the absence of policy networks from this data shows that the corruption problem is not likely to be sorted anytime soon.

Respondents like N49 applauded the research as "a good initiative to open the nation's eyes on matters of corruption in the devolved governments". Respondent N6 also had this to say:

> This is amazing research. How I wish you could focus on one county only for in depth coverage. Corruption is very delicate and needs in depth feedback from people. Though, it is a good job and your approach to me made me give you full audience.

Many other respondents applauded this research. They include respondents N62, K2, N56, N52, N41, N35, K49 and K43 who said this research was brave and we need more of such research to enable us tackle corruption, not just in the devolved governments but also in the national government.

4.3.1.2 Interactions

The data shows the normalization of a corruption culture had led to corruption being the mode of conducting official business (*modus operandi*) in the interactions with government. This was summarized by respondent N30 this way:

> During the weighing of the lorries to determine the number of tons collected, the owner of the company liaises with the weighing department at the dumpsites to double the weights measured or put any weight that they have agreed in advance. At the end of the month when the payments are made by the finance department, the official in charge of weighing is given his share together with his people, and something goes to the finance department to release the payment, while the rest of the money goes to the garbage collection company owner.

The implications of this scenario on service delivery means that a lot of garbage is left uncollected, as the service provider are paid for little or no service. The level of coordination and interaction portrays a system that is well structured and well-coordinated, with county officials in weighing and finance departments colluding with garbage collectors to embezzle public funds. The data demonstrates how embezzlement is a direct consequence of the processes, interactions and coordination mechanisms of the counties and members of the public. The public officials' interactions with suppliers, facilitates theft of public funds, instead of facilitating public service delivery, thus entrenching an organizational culture of corruption.

The data further demonstrates how embezzlement is facilitated by institutional structures of government that are meant to deliver public services. Structures such as those of the weighing department and finance department offer critical services as they are supposed to ensure prudent utilization of public resources but are instead utilized to siphon public funds. Thus, corruption is facilitated by institutional structures and is a

direct consequence of the interactions and coordination that occurs within these structures. According to institutional theory, such organizational cultures normalize corruption and influence the behavior of public officials, as they expose them to what is acceptable in a given space, thus further entrenching corruption (Kunicova, 2006; Kolstad & Wiig, 2009; Myint, 2000; Peterson & Peters, 2020). This has dire consequences for public services, as a review of public service literature in Kenya shows that inadequate provision of public services such as garbage collection, affects the standard of living of communities, leaving them with poor health outcomes especially in the slums and urban areas (Talia, 2017; Africog, 2016; Arends, 2020).

The study found that corruption was so entrenched in the processes, interactions and coordination mechanisms of the two counties, that it had even developed its own 'standard operating procedures'. Respondent K17 affirmed this view when he reported that corruption was no longer 'news' to anybody going for services within the counties. He said he was used to it and public services were on sale to the highest bidder. Respondent K56 revealingly shared that in every public office he has visited, there are staff who are referred to as "friendly" (those who receive bribes) and those who are "not friendly" (don't tolerate bribes). The "friendly" ones, process things very fast but at a cost, as you have to "buy them lunch" or give them "ink" for their pens. The not so friendly ones are rare and in the minority. The "friendly" ones are the first point of call for anyone who wants to get service. Thus, public services had been commodified and only those who bribed were allowed access.

The *modus operandi* also involved behind-the-scenes coordination by various departments involved in the delivery of public services who share in the bribes and coordinate to guarantee impunity that protects their source of income if any of them is caught with the vice. As respondent N13 explained…

> If person "Y" is caught with a bribing case, but the boss at the disciplinary department is his friend because he gets a cut from the bribery money, the letter disappears from the file at the Human Resource Department. Files and letters disappear or are hidden for a fee. For example, the file cannot be found is a story we tell members of the public at lands office if they are looking to transact, so that they can bribe us first.

This data shows the existence of cartels that control corruption 'pipelines' that collect bribes from members of the public and share it out among cartel members. The data demonstrates the mode of operation of the pipelines, as members of the public are funneled into the pipelines through the use of 'friendly' staff and the use of 'lost files' and 'lost letters' so as to induce them to part with unofficial charges that keep the pipelines flowing. The data also exposes how members of the pipelines coordinate to ensure their tracks are covered and to ensure that culpable members escape accountability, through the use of the human resource department which frustrates any disciplinary cases against members of the cartel, and through other staff who ensure files and letters disappear at will. Thus, a system for serving corruption and thwarting public service delivery has been set up and operationalized.

Members of the public must be a frustrated lot when it comes to receiving services, as files and letters disappear, causing unnecessary delays and expenses, and with requirements to pay bribes, making services inaccessible and unaffordable to many. Thus, the data captures the mechanisms of the corruption culture in great detail and demonstrates the extent to which the culture is entrenched within the two counties, causing devastating consequences on public service delivery.

The existence of 'standard operating procedures' within the organizational culture of both counties was confirmed by respondent N62 who had similar experiences:

> … I have encountered corruption in the finance department, where other departments cannot get their money released in time to deliver on projects like environmental conservation and cleaning of the streets, unless bribes are paid to some finance staff. This hinders accessibility of services… I have also experienced corruption in the coordination mechanisms in the lowest unit of administration within the county which is the ward administrator. If I have to bribe at that level to get a service, it means that service delivery will be interrupted, as I may not afford the cost of the bribe. Those who bribe are the ones who will get their building plans approved and we have witnessed buildings collapsing in Nairobi and Kiambu, killing people. Why is that? It is because corruption is entrenched within the coordination mechanisms of the county governments…

This data highlights corruption within the interdepartmental processes, with staff having to bribe fellow staff members in finance to release their allocated funding. The data shows the 'standard operating procedures' involve internal bribery of key staff who were gatekeepers of public resources. Thus, the formal county structures were

dispensed with or rendered dysfunctional and replaced by politically protected informal structures to facilitate these illegal transactions. This situation had an adverse effect on public services, as reported by N62. Further, this kind of corruption had tragic and devastating consequences for both counties, as buildings that had been approved were reported to have collapsed and killed several people. These were matters that were widely reported in the international and national media (Dahir, 2019; Wambui, 2021).

The data confirms studies done in Nigeria which showed rampant unofficial charges, with government ministries having to bribe staff from the Ministry of Finance in order to get their statutory allocation of funds (Kayode, Adagba, & Anyio, 2013). This had a spiral effect on corruption within the structures of government, with devastating consequences for public service delivery (Abasili & Akinboye, 2019). The data further affirms studies showing devolution increased bribery in the form of unofficial charges within the coordination mechanisms of devolved governments, as public officials at the local levels quickly learned and adopted the organizational culture of corruption from the central government, leading to inaccessible and poor public services (D'Arcy, 2016; Shon & Cho, 2020).

The findings from this study reveal other 'standard operating procedures' employed by the cartels involved the creation of 'pipelines' to ensure public money flows from the public coffers to individual pockets. Respondent K30 explained that during procurement, corruption within the organizational structure started with the tender committees being handpicked with an agenda of aiding access to public funds. He described a well-orchestrated mechanism whose purpose was the embezzlement of public funds and collection of bribes from prospective suppliers. He said tenders would be allotted to specific suppliers who acted as brokers and intermediaries to facilitate the movement of public funds to individual public officers, through kickbacks. This had a devastating impact on public service delivery as resources would no longer be available to provide public services.

The data tallies with available literature that shows that bribery mainly occurs at procurement points, with public officials receiving kickbacks in order to give suppliers access to government tenders (Bhagwan, 2014; Arends, 2020; Otieno, 2018). The corrupt payment is promised in advance to influence the receiving of a successful bid

and may be monetary or in the form of goods or services, such as expensive gifts, credit cards, sexual favors, or overpaying for reciprocal services (Nyambariga, 2016). The net effect of these extra payments on public services is adverse, as the supplier will have to load the extra costs of the kickbacks to recoup the cost of delivering the service, with the public shouldering the burden. Thus, the public would end up getting poor services or no services at all (Mutangili, 2019).

Some suppliers said these 'standard operating procedures,' run like an 'enterprise.' Respondent N38 explained:

> …kila mtu from bottom to top, lazima a-facilitate pesa itoke ama ingie, kama inatoka kwa budget ama inaingia kutoka kwa hongo, lazima a-facilitate, ama utang'olewa na ukiwa mngumu unaweza poteza maisha yako. Tena being employed in government offices depends on who you are and who you know in order to facilitate these corruption pipelines, this leads to unemployment of qualified people who have no such connections. The few qualified people who get employed are for sanitizing the actions of the unqualified, and they have to bribe to get the job anyway. Job kaa ya messenger na cleaner huku lazima uchote...
>
> (Everyone from bottom to the top, must facilitate the corruption pipeline to flow, with money getting out from the public budgets or getting in from bribes. If you impend the flow, you will be removed or end up losing your life…For positions like those of messenger and cleaner, you must bribe to get employment).

The data shows that staff within the hierarchy of the government, were required to ensure the 'pipeline' was well functioning and bribes flowing. Those who did not cooperate, would be removed from strategic areas or even lose their lives if they did not cooperate. It also illustrates that some of those who were employed in these offices had political connections. Thus, public service delivery was adversely affected by the corruption culture.

The data illustrates that when the main purpose of strucures in government are subverted to serve corrupt interests, anticorruption reforms are unlikely to succeed, as the public officials would not implement them in the first place or face the consequences of non-implementation due to political protection. The net effect is that the public would end up with inaccessible and poor services, as the government machinery would not be deployed to deliver public services but to facilitate corruption.

Thus, the data confirms empirical evidence from anticorruption studies which shows that many anticorruption reforms are often ignored or implemented half-heartedly by public officials and politicians due to these dynamics (Mutonyi, 2010; Minja, 2017; Mutangili, 2019).

Some of the *modus operandi* of the corruption cartels within the organizational culture was captured through the interactions of the county government officials and members of the public where respondent N15 warned: '…*ukiona kaju, potea'* (when you see the county government enforcement officers, you run away very fast). In other words, you do not wait to be told what law you have broken, you get away before they get you. Respondent N31 added: '*kaju wanatudharau, lazima uwachotee,* otherwise, *unaweza ndedi'* (you must bribe them or they will kill you) and he gave the example of the case of a hawker who was clobbered to death by county enforcement officers in 2015. The context of the incident as reported in the media was that the said hawker was beaten to death by four county enforcement officers for hawking along Duruma Road in the city centre (Chacha, 2016).

The data shows how fear, insecurity and death have infiltrated the interactions and coordination mechanisms of the counties, with county officials misusing their coercive power to extort bribes from members of the public, thus adversely affected public service delivery. The data shows that counties as institutions of government are projecting power to members of the public, who are fearful of its officers. This is explained by institutional theory which posits that governments have the legitimacy and monopoly to apply coercive power, which can be regulative and have the force of law, which in this case, is being misused to aid corruption in the form of bribery and to control the accessibility of public services in the form of licenses (Mach & Olsen, 1989).

The researcher witnessed firsthand an incident of the misuse of coercive power to in the theft of revenue and extortion of bribes in Kiambu county:

> … at a place where a vendor was hawking boiled eggs… I noticed an argument between a vehicle owner and an officer wearing a yellow apron. The motorist had packed wrongly. In his defense, he had dashed into a chemist to purchase drugs, but the queue was longer than expected and when he emerged, his vehicle had been clamped. "It was only a minute late, and I am not obstructing anything.

Surely, you can't be this unfair". The motorist retorted while gesturing in the air. *"Sheria ni sheria bro. Wacha kizungu mingi. Enda kwa ofisi ya county ukalipe alafu ukuje tukufungulie*". (The law is the law, brother, stop too much fuss, go to the county office and pay the fine and then come for me to unclamp your vehicle). And the lady went on with her work. The man continued to mumble but was then approached by a guy who mumbled something to him and there was gesturing and then nodding of heads and pointing towards the direction of the lady in the yellow uniform. The man then hurriedly went towards the direction of the lady in uniform and was seen to be pleading and after a small talk, they looked like they were shaking hands and then there was smiling and they looked like they were now friends. And true they were friends because his vehicle was unclamped. And off he drove. So, I approached her and started a conversation. At first, she was very adamant, stone faced and very unfriendly. She almost created a scene, but then I calmed her down by shaking her hand. "*Tulia madam, mimi sina maneno, nataka tu usaidizi kidogo kwako. Si lazima tuwe hapa. Tunaweza enda mahali tukae tuongee sisi wawili*.' (Calm down, madam, I have no problem with you, I just need your help. It's not a must we talk here. We can go to another place we talk in private). So, we got away from the crowds and went behind a nearby building ... I explained to her what I wanted and showed her letters from the County Commissioner and from NACOSTI as authorizations for the research. I then showed her the consent form and asked her to sign it. She was adamant and wanted to leave, but I managed to convince her not to leave after I assured her, I would not take too much of her time. "*Unasema signature ya kufanya nini? Are you sure unafanya PhD ama umetumwa kutuchunguza na watu wa anticorruptio*n? (You say you need my signature for what? Are you sure you're doing a PhD study or you have been sent to investigate us by the anticorruption commission?) I was able to interview her, as she gave a chilling account of the corruption culture in the county, as respondent K35 and I filed the report below:

(I asked: *Nimeona mtu hapa "amekusalimia*" – Is that your way of working *ama ni kumhurumia?* I have seen someone greet you here, is that your way of working or were you being merciful to him?)

Hahaha! Salamu ni lazima kwa hii kazi yetu. (She laughs: 'greeting' or 'bribe' is a must for this kind of work). And we appreciate instances where *salamu zinakuja kwa sababu our salaries sio kubwa kama za watu wengine hapa kwa county* (we appreciate when bribes come because our salaries are not big like for some people in this county). *Alafu pia this job ya kusimama* the whole day is difficult. (Additionally, this job entails standing all day and it is difficult). Sometimes *huna hata* lunch, so in cases where the member of the public is on the wrong, we are quick to clamp their vehicles. (Sometimes you have no lunch). This is because we know they can't leave with the clamp. And *lazima watutafute*. (They must look for us). So wakitutafuta we quote a high figure *na wakiteta* we tell them; "*Waende kwa ofisi*". (So, when they look for us, we quote a high figure to make it easier for them to pay us a bribe and if they are reluctant to pay up, we tell them to go to the office). And since most of them are in a hurry, they try to negotiate with us. For those who have no clue or those who want to proceed to the county offices, we have some brokers we work with. Their main duty is to approach the person who is behaving like

> they want to go to the office and advise them to follow us. They then explain to them what to do (give us a bribe). We usually then share what we get with them (the bribe money).

This incident confirmed the *modus operandi* of the county officials' interactions with members of the public, in the sense that there was a pipeline of brokers who ensured that revenue meant for the county ended up individual pockets. These brokers played a critical role of convincing members of the public and especially the problematic and difficult ones, to pay the bribes in exchange for not being charged the revenue due for parking or clamping. They also played a key role in terms of coordination of the bribery activities to ensure deniability, as the county officials could always feign ignorance of their existence. Thus, they formed the public facing part of the bribery cartels. This obvious stealing of public revenue meant that money for public service delivery would be inadequate and the county would not be able to give quality, accessible and affordable services without these financial resources.

The officials also systematically put in place informal procedures that ensured the money flowed into their pockets. One of these procedures involved the identification of opportunities to extort bribes. This involved the use of hawk-eyed revenue collection officials and brokers who quickly spotted gullible members of the public who were in a hurry and easily amenable to paying bribes. Such gullible members of the public were then targeted for extortion, after they got frustrated and helpless. Thus, corruption was prioritized over public service delivery and this led to poor services that did not meet the SERVQUAL standard of quality.

The officials ensured that opportunities to extort bribes were immediately seized, through the swift clamping of vehicles, so that members of the public who were in a hurry had no choice but to bribe. The officials also utilized their coercive powers to intimidate members of the public by quoting the law and cowing those who dared question them. They utilized code words such as '*salamu*' which means greetings, to conceal the fact that they were asking for bribes. At the same time, they were amenable to haggling on the final bribe to be paid, almost like they were transacting a legitimate business, and they would start by quoting a high figure, then reduce it, as negotiations went on. To ensure someone paid the bribe amount they were asking, they would refer the customer to the county offices (which they knew would not be a cheaper option for

them) so the person will end up paying the bribe. Thus, county revenue was systematically funneled to individual pockets instead of the county revenue fund from where the county draws financial resources to provide public services.

This data confirms the findings of various public reports in Kenya that have highlighted dismal performance on revenue collections from the devolved governments, with many reports stating that the performance of the devolved governments is far worse than the defunct local authorities which collected more revenue (Auditor General, 2018). The data from this study shows that the reason for the dismal performance in revenue collection is that the revenue money ends up in individual pockets, as members of the public have been funneled into a corruption pipeline and incentivized to prefer paying bribes, instead of paying the revenue directly to the county. The data fundamentally supports empirical evidence from studies that have reported rampant theft of revenue in devolved governments (Bullough, 2020; Fan, Lin, &Treisman, 2010; Suprayitno & Pradiptyo, 2017; Beyerle, 2014; Adamtey, Obeng, & Sarpong, 2020). The data in essence, also affirms the views of anti-devolution scholars who have argued that devolution is tantamount to devolving corruption (Heywood, 2018; D'Arcy, 2016; Alam & Gerbaba, 2019).

Additionally, the data supports the view that devolution tends to benefit a few people, who occupy a privileged position, such as employees in a position to enrich themselves, due to state capture by local elites (Xie, Zou, & Davoodi, 1999; World Bank, 2012a; Bull & Heywood, 2019; Weight, 1995; Wagana, 2017). Studies show that devolution produces a proliferation of bureaucrats to support new devolved government structures, and these bureaucrats end up managing revenue collections at the local level, and become easily incentivized by the opportunity to steal revenues (Alfano, Baraldi, & Cantabene, 2020; Barr & Serra, 2010; Ko & Samajdar, 2010). Scholars argue that such bureaucrats form a critical support base for the local leaders and local elites, and often act as conduits for stolen revenues and other corruption malpractices (Bull & Heywood, 2019). Thus, the revenue collection officials cited in this study, are able to enrich themselves because they are probably part of a wider cartel that enjoys political protection from local elites.

The data demonstrates the tragedy of the commons, in that the members of the public are comfortable paying a smaller bribe to the county revenue collection team, as opposed to paying more to the county government for parking and towing services, due to their selfish short-term interests that jeopardize the long-term interests of the need to provide efficient public services, which would benefit all. The government officials equally do not feel an obligation to safeguard the commons but selfishly maximize their immediate needs by extorting bribes, to the detriment of the greater public good. Therefore, the revenue faces depletion, which according to the theory of the commons, is a finite resource, which if not well managed, can lead to policy failure and societal breakdown (Ghorbani & Bravo, 2016). Thus, the county revenue which belongs to all, is not safeguarded but tragically lost to corruption.

The data also shows the revenue collection official excusing her corrupt behavior by alluding to her working conditions and low salary and using these to justify the corruption within the revenue collection system. This position contradicts studies that show that increasing salaries for public sector workers does not necessarily root out corruption or decrease it (Ayee, 2008). There have been business attempts at increasing civil service wages, in a bid to curb corruption in various parts of the world, with disastrous results (Ayee, 2008). Most of these attempts ended up exacerbating corruption instead of rooting it out. In Kenya, a major public wage review was undertaken in 1999, with the aim of offering competitive packages to attract highly skilled talent from the private sector and the results were underwhelming and increased corruption (Mogeni, 2009).

Further evidence provided by this data demonstrates the callousness with which the public officials approach their work, as they have no regard for responsiveness or empathy in terms of public service delivery. The data further confirms that corruption is indeed clandestine and lurks in the shadows, with the deployment of brokers and other shadowy tactics meant to conceal it. Scholars argue that revenue theft is hard to detect because it mostly takes place in secret, away from the prying eyes of the public, and this makes it challenging to capture until a government audit is carried out (Shon & Cho, 2020; Hobdari, Nguyen, Dell'Erba, & Ruggiero, 2018). In many developing countries and Africa, the culprits often getaway as public fraud remains silently undetected or is rarely thoroughly investigated (Weylandt, 2013; Nkongho, 2019).

The data also confirms findings from the rest of the world showing corruption research is not exactly welcomed or supported, as the respondent showed reluctance to participate and was suspicious of the researcher's intentions (Hess, 2020). This could partly be due to the approach that Kenya has taken in tackling corruption, as these approaches have been based on *interventionism* (arresting the culprit after the corrupt act) and *crime* and *punishment* approaches, hence creating an atmosphere of fear and apprehension among public officers (Beyerle, 2014; Albrecht, 2017). Further, Kenya's anticorruption efforts have focused mainly on the 'demand side' of the corruption transaction, where policy interventions mainly target public officials who steal public funds or receive bribes, without any policy interventions for the 'supply side' involving those giving out bribes, who are mainly members of the public.

Other modes of operation for the corruption cartels within the counties, involved misappropriation of budgets through payments to phony suppliers, as narrated by N34, K30, N28 and N36. They reported that money was spent without approved budgets and proper documentation to facilitate fraudulent payments to non-existent suppliers, a situation which left the public with no services or poor services. This situation forced members of the public to look for services in neighboring counties, thus facing increased costs in terms of accessibility and affordability. The data confirms studies that showed misappropriation of budgets occurring mainly through the issuing of fraudulent payments (Bhagwan, 2014; Arends, 2020; Otieno, 2018). It also confirms the vulnerability of the budgets, which according to the theory of the commons, is a finite resource, which is prone to depletion through corruption. When such resources which are meant to provide public services are depleted, it means that public services would suffer.

Kickback for tenders was another *modus operandi* of the corruption cartels and a normalized behavior within the organizational culture of both counties. As N13 explained:

> For us to renew our tender we had to give something. Sometimes you give so much you're left dry and bleeding. Everything has a price and you must pay up to get what you want. Sometimes you make losses. Kickback of tenders is always a win for the officials in charge and at times not so for us suppliers. This corrupt practice has led to people getting tenders and yet they are not qualified

> therefore resulting to poor services. The public is always the one feeling the negative outcome. If the award is given to the wrong supplier of course they will supply goods which are substandard and sometimes a danger to themselves and the public.

From this data, it is clear that those who fork out bribes are the ones awarded tenders. Thus, bribery is a systemic behavior that is normal within the tendering processes. This systematized corruption does not care if suppliers are making losses or not. It also does not care about the need to provide accessible and quality public services to the citizenry. The key officials who benefit from the bribery have no regard for the business side of the equation or the public facing side of it, as substandard goods and services are delivered under their watch. Thus, their short-term interests in accordance with the theory of the commons, blinds them to their own long-term interests, as they would benefit more if they safeguarded the public resources for the benefit of all. The issue of substandard goods being delivered endangers not only the lives of the public but also the suppliers, as they are part and parcel of society. For instance, if one is meant to supply chemicals to treat water and they supply toxic or substandard chemicals, the impact would be felt by everyone, including the suppliers and this would be a great danger to themselves as well as the society.

This data seems to affirm studies that have shown that kickbacks for tenders in devolved systems of government have a negative effect on public service delivery (Markward, 2009; Carlucci, Cira, Immordino, Loppolo, & Yigitcanlar, 2017; Stedtjer, 2018; Bahl & Bird, 2018; Fan, Lin, & Treisman, 2009; Fisman & Gatti, 2002; Tsofa, 2017). For example, in Latin America devolution led to increased kickbacks for tenders at the municipal levels of government and there were particularly massive increases in Colombo that led to poor service delivery (Garduno, 2019; Everett, Neu, & Rahaman, 2006; Fergusson, Molina and Riano, 2018; Prasetyono, 2019). The data contrasts with findings from Italy and the U.S where devolution decreased bribery in the form of kickbacks for tenders and caused better service delivery (Carlucci, Cira, Immordino, Loppolo, & Yigitcanlar, 2017; Shon & Cho, 2020). The data however, confirms findings from Kenya that reported kickbacks for tenders in devolved governments had affected public service delivery, with small and medium sized companies being particularly vulnerable, as they reported over 54% of incidents involving kickbacks (Kimenyi, 2018; Otieno, 2018).

Nearly all the respondents viewed kickbacks for tenders as the *modus operandi* of the two counties and lamented that this had adverse consequences on public services, making them more expensive and out of reach for the poor. Thus, those who could not bribe, would not get tenders and the public would end up receiving substandard services, as the suppliers would need to recoup their costs before offering any services.

4.3.1.3 Coordination mechanisms

Many respondents confirmed that corruption has its own *lingua franca* (special language) in the coordination mechanisms, among the county officials, with its own specific *lingo.* As explained by N41 and N14 it had such words as "*ongea vizuri*" (talk nicely), "*tusaidiane*" (let's help each other), "*toa za macho*" (remove for the eyes), "*toa za mafuta*" (remove for petrol) and "s*alamu*" (greetings). The study encountered such code words and phrases, including *tusaidiane* (let us help each other), *nione kando* (see me outside), *ongea vizuri* (talk nicely), *tuelewane* (we agree), *toa kitu kidogo* (remove something small), *umeenda tu hivyo?* (You are leaving us, just like that without leaving us a bribe?), *umetuletea nini leo* (what you brought us today in form of a bribe?), *toa kitu kikubwa* (remove something big), *chota* (fetch), *toa cha macho (*remove for the eyes*), toa kila kitu* (remove everything), *chota* (remove), *tkk, mbuzi, kodoo, grease, ink, fuel* and *chicken,* and *AIE* (authority to initiate eating). A glossary of these terminologies has been provided under Fig. 4.1 in the Appendix.

Thus, corruption had its own *lingo* and one needed to speak the correct *lingua franca* to receive public services. This situation offers an explanation for corruption research being resisted, as the researcher went through the front door, calling corruption by its name, while the perpetrators preferred that it stayed in the shadows, undisturbed. The researcher did not speak the right *lingua franca* to be admitted to the corruption conversation. Further, the researcher wanted corruption to be brought on the table for interrogation but her boldness was shocking to the perpetrators, who either took off in fear, or simply shut her down. This is not surprising given that in most of the reviewed literature, corruption is sometimes hidden in words such as *governance* and *challenges* as scholars have sometimes tended to be 'politically correct' and afraid to name corruption (Gomez, 2020).

The data thus showed the organizational culture of corruption had thrived to an extent that it has developed its own coded language. Therefore, for one to survive, one had to master the corruption *lingo*. In the same vein, the data portrays that corruption was so deeply embedded within the organizational culture that it had become one of the key identifiers of the organizational culture, in the counties. Thus, without it, one could not receive public services. This has huge implications in terms of reputational management, as organizational culture defines what the public perceives to be the values and the identity of these counties. Most importantly, the data shows that corruption is addictive and hence it is not easy to eradicate, without serious backlash.

According to the institutional theory, government institutions tend to be mimetic by copying each other, without even realizing it, and tend to behave alike, so it was not surprising that both counties tended to copy each other and mirror corruption within their organizational cultures. The data confirms studies done in developing countries where bribery was so embedded in governmental structures that those in power utilized bribery to perpetuate themselves in power, with voters being bribed with stolen public money to influence electoral outcomes (Damoah, Akwei, & Amoako, 2018; Bhattarai P. C., 2003). The voters, in turn, expected the officials to loot more public funds on their behalf and channel it to them, leading to a vicious circle of embezzlement and bribery and deteriorating public services (Dong, 2011; Chen, Jiang, & Villeva, 2015; Alfano, Baraldi, & Cantabene, 2020). The data also tallies with evidence from studies that show that bringing culprits of corruption to account in most developing countries is not easy, as local political leaders at the devolved governments may be culpable and provide political protection to their accomplices (D'Arcy, 2016; Alfano, Baraldi, & Cantabene, 2020).

4.3.2 Effect of bureaucratic procedures

The study views bureaucratic procedures in the form of red tape, hierarchies and specialization, as bottlenecks that cause unnecessary delays in the delivery of public services (Dunlop & Radaelli, 2019). The data collected confirmed that such unnecessary delays have enabled corruption to be deeply engrained within the bureaucratic systems of both counties. Red tape, hierarchies and specialization were exploited by cartels to facilitate ‘corruption pipelines’ that they controlled. Those looped into the corruption chains were given ‘cuts’ (bribes), and this caused adverse

effects on public service delivery. Thus, the bureaucratic procedures provided the structures that supported corruption within the organizational cultures of both counties.

4.3.2.1 Red tape

Red tape was one of the drivers of corruption and affected service delivery. Respondent N62 narrated how red tape was used to extort bribes:

> …I went to city hall to get a liquor license and I was tossed around yet I had the requisite fee in cash. I went round, going and coming every day until I had to give something on top of the official fee to get that license…

This data shows that red tape was utilized to extort bribes from members of the public who were seeking services from the county governments. Respondent N58 additionally elaborated that some offices were situated on ground floors, while others were in upper floors which made it difficult for the disabled to access. Thus, physical infrastructures were utilized to limit access to certain offices. This had the desirable effect of creating mechanisms for corruption cartels to thrive, with the data showing that accessibility of these corruption channels was controlled by individuals within the hierarchies. This was expounded by respondent N58 who explained that security guards acted as gate keepers, allowing only those who had 'connections' through the locked gates. He identified these as people who had bribed or were known corruption brokers. Thus, the data supports studies that have faulted bureaucracy and red tape for being dysfunctional due to corruption that creates unnecessary barriers to service delivery (Dunlop & Radaelli, 2019).

Respondent K36 further captured his experiences with bureaucracies and bribery as follows:

> … the process of applications for bursaries involves certain steps that must be followed, and it takes long for it to be finalized. I have to get signatures from the county officials at many levels. It is frustrating…Accessibility of these services in terms of geographical reach is difficult for me because of the distances involved from the ward to the county headquarters. It is also an expensive process since I have to incur travel expenses. Also, I may end up not receiving the bursary, hence time and money wastage. In terms of quality of services, most government officials do not create time to attend to the public. One time I had to wait for an official to browse something on their phone before they could attend to me… Also, most asked me for '*kitu kidogo'* (bribe) before giving me the bursary forms, which is an extra expense for me. One time I dared to report them to higher authorities, only to discover they are together and always get a 'cut' of what we pay in bribes. From that time, I was silenced…

The data shows that tedious processes that involve red tape, with several signature levels are involved in the bursary application processes and utilized to frustrate those seeking services. Residents have to travel from the wards to the county headquarters and this costs a lot of money, especially because they are forced to make several trips, due to the red tape in place. To make matters worse, there is no guarantee that the bursary application will be successful. The government officials are also not concerned about timely delivery of services as they prioritize browsing over their phones instead of offering public services. This added to the burden of having to pay unofficial charges (bribes) makes the process expensive and unattainable for many citizens. Further, the services being offered away from the wards meant that services were not geographically accessible at the local level for most residents.

These scenarios demonstrate how corruption in the form of bribery is deeply entrenched as the *modus operandi* within the bureaucratic structures. The data also shows whistle blowing is unwelcome, as the cartels control every stage of the process and are present within the various hierarchies of the county. Red tape is utilized to frustrate the citizens and extort bribes, and hierarchies are misused to ensure reported corruption incidents are never actioned and prospective whistleblowers are silenced, as public service delivery continued to suffer.

The data further shows services are geographically inaccessible due to the distance from the ward to the county headquarters and due to the fact that one has to make several trips, thus incurring a lot of expenses. In addition, the requirement to pay unofficial charges (bribes) makes the services out of reach in terms of affordability. This data is in line with studies that have shown that bribery mainly occurs at service delivery points, when government officials demand unofficial charges from residents who are seeking public services by frustrating them and burdening them with unnecessary red tape (Bhagwan, 2014; Arends, 2020; Otieno, 2018). It is also in line with studies that have reported that whistleblowing by members of the public is one of the most reliable methods of detecting bribery (Mutangili, 2019; Montero, 2018).

According to respondent N3, these bureaucratic hurdles are deliberately placed to bamboozle the public and keep them running in circles, until they bribe out of

frustration. He said that processes and authorizations kept changing, based on which office someone visited. There were unpredictable changes in the processes and authorization levels, and the public were not sure what to expect or what was required at every stage. He claimed this was one of the tactics the corruption cartels utilized to ensure the bribery pipelines continued to flow from the public. Respondent K25 further narrated that these hurdles were sometimes escalated to crisis level through backlogs which were then utilized to embezzle public money through hurriedly created rapid results initiatives. The researcher equally experienced firsthand the bureaucratic red tape hurdles that are used to frustrate public service delivery when the researcher tried to access respondents for this research. The researcher was taken round in circles, with key gatekeepers insisting on new requirements before they could give clearance for the research to take place.

The frustration of the members of the public with the bureaucratic red tape hurdles was further captured by respondent N27 who lamented:

> …In these offices, I have shed tears my friend from the frustrations of how I have been handled by the employees within these organizations. They see me as a nuisance, if I am unable to give in to their demands. Urgh! Counties are too much! It is either their way or the highway. Competent suppliers like me cannot get tenders because I am not able to cough up the huge sums that I have been asked to pay. The less competent ones but who have the financial power or a "tall relative" within the government are able to get their documents checked in record time and in most cases do not go through the whole tender application processes. They aren't taken through meaningless and time-consuming processes like me. Those who are given the tenders don't deliver high-quality service to the people which isn't fair to the public and to me who wants to give the best to the public.

These situations confirm that corruption is deeply entrenched as a *modus operandi* within the bureaucratic structures of the tendering system, where red tape is used to extort bribes. The data confirms the frustration faced by members of the public as they try to access public services (tenders). Only those with 'connections' and those able to bribe get the tenders. The rest are made to go through meaningless and time-consuming processes without any success. This situation confirms studies done in public procurement that have showed that competition for government tenders often leads to more corruption, through kickbacks for tenders, as competing bidders try to outdo each other by offering higher bribes and this consequently adversely affects the services offered (Dza, Kyeremeh, Dzandu, & Affran, 2018; Karuri, 2014; Nyambariga, 2016;

Piga, 2011: Karuri, 2014). Such services would be shoddy due to the cutting corners and shortcuts that suppliers would employ to try and recoup their bribe monies. Thus, public service delivery would be gravely affected.

Respondent N60 also narrated:

> …*shinda ziko* (problems are) everywhere, you go through many processes when you need a service. I must have a disability ID (identity card). It's like I cut my legs and left them at home. They can see I am disabled but will insist on a disability ID. They want other qualifications that they are not asking other people. I am not given priority even when I am learned. I am told to bring a letter from the chief, yet the chief does not even know me. I am told to go to Nyayo House. Going through those stairs for a signature from the DO (District Officer) there, is a nightmare. The buildings are not fully accessible to the disabled but with a bribe, I am able to get the documents. Those who don't have money give up and go home with their problems.

This shows that, as part of the red tape, members of the public are asked for unnecessary papers in order to get services, which are all excuses for bribes. Respondent N8 captured it this way:

> …*Toa hongo* (bribery) is a deadly disease that has become a culture within so many departments in this county. Where are we really headed as a country? (*The respondent was in pain and in tears as he said this*). I am worried of the next generation, my children. There are too many interests at work. Corruption is so engrained. It's a disease. It is a virus worse than COVID-19. If you don't do as instructed, it's an issue. You're victimized. Following the boss' lead, if he or she is corrupt all the people in the offices must follow suit. Shape or ship out, if not, you are shown the door. You have to sing the same song as the boss.

Respondent K9 summed it by saying that corruption had made the counties a man eat man society. You either ate with the cartels or become their *kitoweo* (food). He emphasized that corruption prosecution was for those thieves who are caught and any thief who is not caught, *ni mla chake* (eating his own wealth). Thus, honest people were abhorred and viewed derogatively as ignorant and stupid, for not taking advantage of corruption opportunities. Respondent K47 expounded this by saying that in the corruption chain, everyone was part of the food chain. He explained that you either ate others or became their meal, as the big bosses were eating the small ones, just like the bigger crocodiles ate their young ones. Respondent K37 reported that *wakubwa wanajuana* (the big bosses know each other) so *kwa ufisadi wanafichana* (they hide each other). He argued that on the outside the counties look good but inside, they are

rotten and stinking to the high heavens and there was no regard for public service delivery standards in terms of their accessibility and quality.

This data shows that counties have become like an animal farm, where some animals are eaten and others are left with no choice but to eat others to survive. The big bosses cover each other's corruption according to this data and there are no consequences for committing corruption due to the rampant impunity provided by the connections of 'knowing people'. Further, there is a societal attitude captured in one of the respondent's views who said that those thieves who are not caught, are eating their own wealth, which is a statement meant to justify corruption, implying that it is acceptable to steal or receive bribes, as long as you are not caught. Poor or non-existent public services were the norm, as per this data. Further, the situation captures the gravity of the corruption problem in the devolved systems of government in Kenya and the pain of working within a corrupt system where you have little option but to join the culture or be thrown out. This situation confirms studies that have shown that corrupt people often influence and coerce others to be corrupt, thus breeding a culture of corruption (Khan M. H., 2006; Garduno, 2019).

Further, some respondents felt bureaucracies were just excuses for corruption. For example, respondent N58 said that even churches were not spared the bureaucratic corruption as they had to bribe for licenses to open new branches, and to get certificates of compliance. If they did not bribe, they would be taken round in circles until they got frustrated and bribed. Thus, a culture of corruption was embedded in the red tape bureaucratic procedures and this affected the accessibility and quality of public services.

Respondent N21 also identified red tape as a significant barrier in service delivery and a collection mechanism for bribery. He had this to say:

> … I walked into a county office requiring a simple business permit that should not take so many signatures to produce but due to the corruption level within that office, I was asked to come back another time or pay some facilitation fee to be served. Such practices make public services inaccessible, expensive and of poor quality from my assessment.

The data shows public officials utilizing red tape to extort bribes and by so doing, they make public services inaccessible and of poor quality. The behavior of these public officials is against Article 47 of the Kenya Constitution 2010 which provides for the right to fair administration action (Kenya Law, 2010). The Article specifically provides that public services must be offered expeditiously, efficiently and lawfully, which is not the case here as the public officials are more interested in receiving bribes.

4.3.2.2 Hierarchies

The use of hierarchies to stifle public service delivery and ensure bribery occurred was reported by respondent N16 who explained:

> …these bureaucracies help us to cut off the suppliers we don't want and also not to look suspicious before the public. Our massive public display of paperwork is a cover up of what happens behind these closed doors, so no one snoops around to find out what is really happening. Centralization of tenders and all financial spending decisions at the county headquarters is really hurting geographical reach and service delivery to our people but we have no choice but to continue with the system…

This confirmed that the counties had not fully devolved their services as the tenders and finances were still controlled from the headquarters, thus creating hierarchies in the decision- making process. The centralization of decision making made it easier for cartels to cut off suppliers they did not like by causing bureaucratic bottlenecks for them. It also made it easier to cover up the corruption through shuffling papers from one office to another, to avoid public scrutiny of the processes involved in the tendering system. As a result, services were not geographically accessible and the citizens were not getting timely services.

The researcher observed various techniques that public officials utilized within the bureaucratic procedures of hierarchies in order to perpetuate bribery. Chief among these techniques, was the use of rudeness by staff, and deflection techniques, where they pretended to be in a hurry or too busy, in the hope that members of the public will not ask too many questions when services are delayed, at various hierarchal offices. This was expounded by respondent N52 who narrated that the bureaucrats utilized physical barriers such as locked gates during working hours, in the hope that members of the public will get turned away by the locked gates. Other techniques included the use of human barriers, where the security guards ensured that members of the public did not

get past the gate, in addition to utilizing deflection techniques by saying the boss was not in, as expounded by respondent N52, who explained that:

> …these officials use ujaja to get away with not giving us services. Mara, they tell us hii service niya national government na tunajua hii kazi ni ya county. Na ile red tape wanatushungusha nayo! Getting a signature is a big headache. You can come here for several days, because they want to kulia everything. Imagine a disabled person like me going to 7 different offices chasing one service, every day. It's insane! There is no service given without kulia something. If you don't chota at any step, you stagnate there forever, ama file ina-potea. Most of the county revenue ends up in people's pockets, hakuna receipts unapewa and if you insist on receipts, they give you fake ones. (These officials use tricks to get away with not us giving services. Sometimes they tell us this service is for the national government and we know this work is for the county. And the red tape they use to take us round in circles! Getting a signature is a big headache. You can come for several days because they want to eat everywhere. Imagine a disabled person like me going to 7 different offices chasing one service, every day. It's insane! There is no service given, without bribing. If you don't bribe at any step, you stagnate there forever or the file suddenly disappears. Most of the county revenue ends up in people's pockets, and if you insist on receipts, they give you fake ones).

This data shows that the county officials utilize devolution to misinform the public about the responsibilities of the two levels of governments. This is highlighted as one of the tricks the county officials used to get away with providing little to no services. The data also shows how hierarchies are utilized to take citizens in circles when they need a service such as a signature on a document. They take them through different offices and ask them to come daily, in an effort to ensure they get bribes. If one does not bribe, the file stagnates at one stage within the hierarchy or simply disappears. The data confirms that no service can be rendered without bribing, thus affirming that a bribery culture had taken root. This situation tallies with studies that have reported government officials deliberately increasing hierarchies to extort bribes (unofficial charges), thus distorting public service delivery for their own benefit (Alfano, Baraldi, & Cantabene, 2020; Haryanto, Astuti, & Manajemen, 2017).

The data further shows that county revenue is stolen or ends up in people's pockets through non-issuance of receipts or issuance of fake receipts. This affirms studies that have identified revenue theft as a significant conduit for the stealing of public funds within the counties, where public officers charged with collecting government revenue end up stealing the money they collect at source and converting it to personal use

instead of surrendering it to the government (Auditor General, 2018; Oyugi, 2006). The data further confirms studies that have shown that most revenue is lost through the non-issuance of receipts and the issuance of fake receipts (Mantzaris & Pillay, 2017). When public money is stolen in this way, it means public officials cannot receive the required financial resources to offer accessible and quality public services.

The data also shows how the corruption culture is perpetuated from generation to generation, as one generation of old employees' hands over to another generation of new employees. The mentality of the young generation, as reported by respondent N20 is to get county jobs and utilize the hierarchies to perpetrate corruption. If we look at this scenario from an institutional theory viewpoint, the institutionalization processes of government which involve hierarchies, are meant to bring stability and smooth transitions in government but in this case, they are aiding and entrenching intergenerational corruption and causing public services to deteriorate as staff are not hired on merit (Calvert, 1995; Lammers & Garcia, 2017).

Further, the process of deinstitutionalization in institutional theory, where the legitimacy of an established practice is eroded or discontinued, is important for breaking such intergenerational corruption. The deinstitutionalization process posits that institutions affect social behavior by developing new structures to counter emerging challenges, or discontinuing old structures and practices that are outrightly harmful, thus such processes are powerful weapons against corruption, and could inform anticorruption efforts in devolved systems of government (Brusson, 1999; Peterson & Peters, 2020). The data further shows that corruption practices emerge from bureaucratic hierarchies and this theory offers solutions in terms of deinstitutionalization of established corrupt practices, and thus offers a way of eroding and discontinuing corruption cultures within devolved systems of government (Alston, Eggerston, & North, 1996; Cheeseman, 2018).

Respondent N9 claimed there was corruption in the bureaucratic hierarchies that counties utilized to access funding. He explained that counties had to go through political processes that sometimes delayed the disbursement of funds as the political leadership extorted bribes to approve disbursements, causing delays in salaries for staff

and other service providers. He said this had an adverse effect on public service delivery, and further explained:

> In the hierarchies of leadership in each county, there are several interests at play. For example, the citizens demand certain services from the governor. They also make certain demands from their MCAs, and at the end of the day, there has to be a give and take between the assembly and the executive, but the time consumed in these negotiations creates a dark room, where corruption creeps in and the common *mwananchi* (common man) is forgotten, as MCAs take bribes to pass what the governor wants in the budget.

Thus, these bureaucratic hierachies were utilized by members of the county assemblies as bribery opportunities and they took the chance to extort as much money as possible from the governors. This position is supported by studies that have shown that bribery occurs between local legislatures and devolved executive authorities at the expense of public services (Cheeseman, 2018; Sampson, 2010; Adamolekun, 2011).

Respondent N35 singled out cases of public officials bribing members of the public when there are investigations on corruption from the EACC or the Directorate of Criminal Investigations Office (DCIO). Such bribery was carried out through the use of junior officers who were proxies for the bosses higher up the bureaucracy to avoid a situation where the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) could use members of the public as prosecution witnesses. Respondent N35 said this was common especially for suppliers who were targeted as prosecution witnesses by the DPP. Thus, bribery was used to ensure the 'corruption pipeline' was not dismantled by the authorities and the hierarchies in place continued their practices. The data affirms that bribery, in the form of soliciting, giving, offering, and receiving money and items of value, as a way of influencing the actions of others, is particularly rampant in devolved systems of government, as reported in studies done in Africa (Heywood, 2018; Barr & Serra, 2010).

Respondent N54 summed the lengthy procedures of hierarchies where the typical excuse was "*mkumbwa hayuko"* (the boss is not in) as being inherently *kafkaesque* comparing them to nightmares. Respondent K10 added to this data by confirming that the county officials utilized brokers as bribe collection agents, then deliberately lost maps for parcels of land to facilitate land grabbing, thus fomenting conflicts and causing denial of public services. Respondent K41 referred to these county bureaucrats as "… *wajanja wanakula pesa yetu, pesa inapotea hewani*" (they are cunning and steal

our money and make it disappear into thin air). Thus, corruption within the bureaucracies was orchestrated by the county officials who utilized hierarchies and various brokers to extort bribes and deny public services to the citizens. The danger with these kinds of scenarios is that corruption within the bureaucracy poses a security threat as it exposes the counties to terrorism, since anyone can be bought. This data confirms studies that show that bribery in Kenya has reached alarming levels, exposing the country to terrorism (Hope K. R., 2018; Khalid & Thompson, 2019).

Respondent N7 complained that hierarchal procedures were utilized to ensure 'corruption pipelines' were well oiled. He explained that this involved delaying or denying services by adding unnecessary layers of authorization to a process or a document. For example, an issue that should take one officer to sign off may be assigned ten officials who must each sign off, thus causing unnecessary delays and inconveniences. Also, he explained that when a person was at the tail end of such a process, they could be informed to come back the next day because the concerned officer was not in, which was often, a code name for bribery. This level of public service delivery does not meet the SERVQUAL model of quality or the accessibility parameters expected of the public office.

As respondent N7 further expounded, if one paid a bribe, the absent officer would suddenly be available and the authorization issued immediately. This situation shows how internal coordination mechanisms within the hierarchies are utilized to perpetuate corruption and speaks of processes that are deliberately made tedious, making public services inaccessible. This also makes services more expensive and unreachable to those who cannot afford to bribe and those who cannot afford the transport costs for the various trips required to follow up on the same. This was well captured by respondent K7 who lamented on the many trips he had to make to the county offices following up on his business license.

The data shows such delayed services are poor services as they do not meet the SERVQUAL model of quality. In other words, they do not meet the standards of reliability as they are not accurate or dependable. They also do not meet the standards of assurance in terms of courtesy on the part of the public officials, and they do not meet the standards of empathy as the public officials show no sense of care and

individual attention to them. Further, the services cannot be said to be responsive, as the public officials do not provide prompt services and are not willing to help unless they are bribed.

The data further shows the layers of hierarchal bureaucracy from the security at the gate to the top bosses was reflective of the hurdles that the members of the public had to go through to obtain a service. Respondents K34, K7 and N7 reported being turned away by security guards at the gates and being asked for appointments before being allowed through the gates. Respondent K34 specifically asked, 'how will you get an appointment from someone you don't even know? I am coming here for a service and I don't know the officers in there'. This points to a culture of 'kujuana' (do you know anyone) which means those with connections were being allowed in. Respondent K34 pointed out that these were mostly brokers and wheeler dealers who were well known to the devolved governments. Thus, public services were either poor or non-existent and reserved for those with 'connections'.

These scenarios speak to a culture of service through brokers who are well known to those inside and who could easily navigate the bureaucracy. The data confirms studies that have shown that brokers play a key role in ensuring corruption becomes an integral part of how a government functions by operationalizing and normalizing corruption within its bureaucratic procedures (Marquette and Pfeiffer, 2015; Manzetti and Wilson, 2017). Thus, public service delivery was left at the hands of outsiders (brokers) who did not care about providing accessible and quality public services. The researcher experienced this hierarchal bureaucracy first hand, when she visited the procurement office in one of the counties, to receive a list of the suppliers, and was kept waiting for a list that never came, for an entire day. The researcher left frustrated and even when she got the greenlight to interview someone from the AIE and communications department the next day, the respondents had been briefed not to cooperate and not much information was gleaned from the interaction. The researcher thus had to be innovative and requested the respondents to meet outside the office environment to obtain the rich data and file this report:

> The Director came and went away and I was kept waiting at the waiting room for hours. I tried to make a move to interview him but was turned away and told not to do that again. The security guard said. "*Nimepigia secretary wa clerk na amesema ungoje. Director atakuja mwenyewe kwa waiting room akisha settle.*

> *Wewe enda ukae huko na ungoje."* (I have called the secretary to the clerk and he has said you wait. The Director will come himself to the waiting room once he settles. You go and sit there and wait). The sergeant at arms tried to help me but was stopped. He then asked, "Why do you want to question us one on one? *Ungewacha* questionnaire and then you come back for the answers. (You should leave the questionnaire behind). *Ama unaweza wacha number utumiwe* answers." (You should leave your number we shall send you the answers). I tried one more time to go to the director's office to interview anyone there and this is what I was told. "Everyone is busy right now, even madam (the finance secretary) *ako* (is) busy. *Mfuate* (follow) instructions and just leave the questionnaire with me and I will give it to her." I gave out the interview guide but they couldn't decipher so I quickly rephrased the questions and he said: "Don't give me a hand written questionnaire, I need it typed," I offered to give him the training tool with the interview guide which he accepted. He said "Send it to me via my email which is…" He further said, "*Ata hapa mmesaidiwa sana huko kwa governor hamtapata kitu."* (Here you have been helped a lot, at the Governor's office, you will get nothing).

Thus, it was clear the hierarchal bureaucracies of the county governments had conspired to frustrate the research and this was evidence of poor services.

Other hierarchal tactics utilized by the public officials to avoid the research included outright rudeness and cold receptions, refusal to accept the researcher's letters of introduction, claiming that they do not accept letters from individuals but from institutions, refusal to answer telephones, switching off their cellphones, pretending to go for a short call then disappearing from the interview before the researcher has started the session, asking the researcher to email the interview guide and claiming they would then get back with an interview appointment and failing to do so, and categorically telling the researcher the research topic was unwelcome. All these techniques were utilized to deny services and reflected on the lack of accessible and quality services from the two counties.

In addition, the researcher was at one time ignored and made to sit on the grass as she waited to be attended, for a full day. The researcher was also kept running around in circles, in different offices, without being assisted. The researcher was also requested to avail other unnecessary letters from the university, despite having a letter of introduction from the university and a research permit from NACOSTI. The clearance processes took several weeks and the researcher had to devise means of reaching the

respondents informally through referrals. All these experiences were evidence of poor and non-existent public services.

Further data shows that layers of bureaucracy were added to ensure members of the public did not reach the top officials for service delivery, with such hierarchies being utilized to promote corruption, as respondent K17 narrated:

> I have not been successful. I have to come here almost daily to book an appointment. Affordability is an issue because I am incurring transport costs and using my time. I even removed 'something small' (bribe) hoping to be assisted but it has never materialized. The bottlenecks of bureaucracy, red tapes and hierarchies involved when trying to reach the governor are off putting. Many people approaching that office are likely to shun it due to fear. Personally, I am almost giving up. There are too many layers of people you need to pass through…

This demonstrates that the bureaucratic systems are utilized to promote corruption, with access to certain offices given to those who are able to facilitate the system with bribes and this in itself was not a guarantee of access. This was particularly rampant in key offices such as those of the governor, finance, revenue and procurement as expounded further by respondent K31 who said that officials within these offices, utilized junior officers such as cleaners and messengers, as gatekeepers to keep out anyone who wanted to see the bosses and to keep out new suppliers who might be interested in tenders or anyone snooping around for information that could jeopardize the corruption pipelines. He explained that these hierarchal systems were coordinated internally and externally by cartels that were ruthless. Thus, corruption within such hierarchies had a significant impact on the accessibility and quality of service for many residents, as the cartels, controlled access to public services and determined the cost of public services. This data confirms studies that showed institutional hierarchies are often prone to corruption, which causes unnecessary delays and denial of services (Dunlop & Radaelli, 2019).

Incidents of structural corruption were also reported in the counties. This was captured by data from respondent N10 who said that there was a silent agreement between the top bosses and their juniors, where the bosses would "eat" the big tenders and the juniors would "eat" the smaller tenders. Consequently, there was a trickle-down effect of corruption within the hierarchies and a culture of turning a blind eye to corruption within the bureaucracy, as a way of perpetuating structural corruption. Thus, corruption

has become part and parcel of the public service delivery mechanisms. This was silently replicated across government departments and silently observed. Respondent N10 explained:

> … there is structured corruption in offices. The other day someone wanted *ku-sign-iwa* document (my signature) and they had to "*toa kitu kidogo*" (bribe me) for it to be approved faster…all projects are monitored in this county and controlled by a cartel that directs the eating and monitors the eating…so I have to allow them to eat the big tenders and be content with the small ones I get. That's why the bosses overlook complaints of bribery within the bureaucracies… For instance, someone was following their retirement benefits the other day, and I told them this will take a whole long process. But between you and me, this file will be moved from office to office, until we will inform that person, your file is lost and they have to fork out at least Kes 20,000 for it to be moved from 'lost' status to 'found.' If they are not willing to push some cash in the mix (bribe), then the file will gather dust in the lockers as the officers continue to give excuses.

The data shows that structural corruption is organized in a cartel manner, where they have jurisdictional territories for what the bosses' control (the big tenders) and the juniors have their territory (small tenders) as nearly all public officials participate in the embezzlement of public funds, through the tendering system. There is even a 'headquarters,' where the cartel activities are coordinated, as they direct and monitor their corruption activities. This situation confirms studies that have decried the level of embezzlement in Kenya, referring to it as budgeted corruption (Khamisi, 2018). When financial resources meant to provide public services are embezzled, public service delivery suffers as there would be no resources to provide accessible and quality services.

The data shows that these networks ensure members of the public are constantly milked for bribes and that hierarchal structures that are supposed to facilitate public service delivery are utilized to exploit the members of the public. As this goes on, complaints of corruption from members of the public are ignored, to ensure the corruption networks operate uninterruptedly. The data confirms studies done on decentralization in 80 countries, about firms' actual experiences with bribery, which found that in countries with decentralized systems, bribery was more rampant than in centralized ones (Fan, Lin, & Treisman, 2009; Farzana, 2017). Cases of contractors delaying projects in order to continue "siphoning funds" were reported by respondent N46 who said that

bureaucratic hierarchal structures were utilized as protection mechanisms for such corruption. He said that in cases where protection was not bought from high up (through bribery), such projects were stopped. Respondent N9 also explained:

> There is a case where a water drilling project had to stop even after it was approved by the assembly because the interest of some big man in the area was not served. When you don't bribe him, he stops your project…We also have contractors who delay projects in order to continue being paid for no services. Such contractors usually have serious protection from the top echelons of the bureaucracy.

The data shows the top hierarchy in the bureaucracy controls public services with contractors being paid for doing very little. The data also shows that the county governments are in a state of capture, where 'big men' in the area have the capacity to stop services, unless you bribe them. This confirms studies that show embezzlement, through misappropriation of budgets tends to be localized in devolved systems of government (Fan, Lin, & Treisman, 2010; Fantaye, 2004; Motshegwa, Mutonono, & Mikazhu, 2019). While it is assumed that local politicians are closer to their grassroot voters and hence more accountable to them, evidence shows that devolution of public expenditure responsibilities gives local politicians a greater incentive to steal public funds (Alfano, Baraldi, & Cantabene, 2020). Consequently, when public funds are embezzled, public service delivery is affected, as the resources to provide services are no longer available.

Respondent K34 captured this by saying:

> Bureaucracy…ensures…the juniors don't question their seniors even when something is amiss. I do what I am told, to avoid repercussions, even if it involves facilitating their corruption…Red tape makes most employees like me to lack empathy towards citizens because I am not the final authority on anything. This leads to unsatisfactory service. The juniors like me are so frustrated and we pelt this out on the people who seek services.

From this data, bureaucracy is used to ensure adherence to the corruption cartels' demands, as junior officers have no choice but to facilitate the corruption pipelines. Due to the fact that the juniors do not have the final word on many public service delivery processes, they lack empathy and pour their frustrations on members of the public. Thus, in line with the SERVQUAL model of service delivery, there is lack of individual attention to members of the public which causes poor service delivery (Prentkovskis *et al*., 2018).

Respondents K4 and N2 explained that the more people involved within the bureaucracy, the higher the bribe due to "…*kuna midomo mingi ya kukula*.." (more mouths to feed). This means there are more people to share the bribe with, so the amount of the bribe has to be higher, making the service more expensive to the public. This situation confirms studies that show corruption that is embedded within such bureaucratic structures is difficult to uproot as it has many tentacles and thrives in the shadows (Shon & Cho, 2020; Hobdari, Nguyen, Dell'Erba, & Ruggiero, 2018). In many developing countries and Africa, the culprits often get away as such bribery remains silently undetected or rarely thoroughly investigated due to political interferences (Weylandt, 2013; Nkongho, 2019).

Respondent N62 noted that when corruption was uncovered, the top brass within the hierarchal bureaucracy often left the juniors to face the music alone. This position tallies with studies that have shown that despite the great effort in terms of resources, institutions, policies and initiatives dedicated to fighting corruption, countries still report dismal and sub-optimal outcomes, mostly because anticorruption reforms are always ignored or implemented half-heartedly by technocrats, politicians and the public, with the junior officers left exposed as scapegoats or sacrificial lambs (Mutonyi, 2010; Minja, 2017; Mutangili, 2019). For women, the hierarchal bureaucratic environment was specifically harsh as they were required to endure sexual harassment in the course of service delivery or engage in sexual favors to obtain the service, as reported by respondent N61 who narrated as follows:

> ..it's so sad when searching for a job, as a woman because men see me as a woman first, not as a skilled staff…they will want me to pay with my own body… you are also directed to many offices from one to the other, all of them manned by men, asking me to give my body yet I went to school with the same men, and I am skilled…so I see some women giving their bodies as a sacrifice, if she is a single mother, it's hard to see your children suffer, you sleep with the man for 5 minutes and you ask God to forgive you…

The data shows that women are sexualized and not valued for their skills by men who want to prey on them. This makes the women desperate and give in to sexual demands by male decision makers, in order to survive and to feed their children. The data further confirms studies that show that descriptive and injunctive norms within society play a huge role in shaping the behavior of men and women in the context of corruption in

such bureaucracies, as men find it normal to take advantage of women and to sexualize them when they go for services, while the women feel they are obligated to submit to the sexual favors as a way of surviving in the given environment (Kobis, Prosijen, Righetti, & Lange, 2015; Swamy, Knack, Lee, & Azfar, 2001; Ilyas, Rasheed, & Faiz, 2020; Kobbe & Engelbert, 2018; Kobbe & Varraich, 2020). Services given in such situations cannot be said to meet the SERVQUAL standards of quality and accessibility.

Respondents N42 and N62 narrated scenarios where the bureaucracy consisted of cartels who used brokers to extort bribes and to offer protection from county enforcement action. They also placed cronies in strategic offices within the bureaucratic hierarchy to act as conduits of stealing public funds and then used lawyers to hide their ill-gotten wealth. There was a vehicle designated to collect money daily and take it to the specified drop off point for one of the county bosses, as reported by respondent N62. This data reveals the scale of the corruption that was taking place, in the counties, with brokers coordinating with bureaucrats to steal public funds and protect those who offer bribes. The data confirms studies that have shown that corruption within devolved governments is often made possible by the fact that public offices offer opportunities for private gain where officials engage in embezzlement and bribery (Alfano, Baraldi, & Cantabene, 2020). This kind of corruption involving abuse of office for private gain has been identified in Africa as a major challenge as it threatens to water down the gains envisaged in the devolution of public services (Andersen, Johannesen, & Rijkers, 2020; Shon & Cho, 2020). Further, when money that is meant to provide public services is stolen, it means the public services will be either non-existent or of very poor quality.

Respondent N4 decried the culture of suspicion for members of the public found snooping around the county offices. The data shows that the institutional culture of suspicion was reinforced by bureaucratic procedures which formed a protective cocoon around the top leadership as layers upon layers of hierarchies were added to ensure ordinary members of the public did not reach the top officials easily, or get wind of the corruption that was going on. The data shows this culture is not conducive to delivery of accessible and quality services. It also affects the public's service-seeking behavior as many of them would not bother or give up once they learn what is going on. This suspicion culture is best explained by institutional theory and is reflective of government institutional culture, where the public is considered a threat or enemy to

the leadership in government and the public officials are physically protected in fortified structures and surrounded by bodyguards, as reported by respondent K17. Counties as institutions of government are affected by structures, rules, norms, and routines of government and some of these norms have been borrowed from government as an institution (Berthod, 2018). However, this hierarchal bureaucracy creates an environment for corruption to thrive and as observed by the researcher, those who were coming in to make donations to the county leadership in the counties, were given first class reception while those coming to see the top bosses on foot, with nothing to donate, were herded into a grass patch, to sit and wait all day, then asked to come another day. Such situations reveal the poor services offered to the citizens of these counties and the standards of service delivery do not meet the SERVQUAL model.

The fortresses and infrastructure invested in protecting those who superintend over the public budgets were massive as reported by respondent K17. The data shows that these leaders feared exposure from the public and confirms reports from respondents who complained that these protective infrastructures were utilized to intimidate and deny services to members of the public, as expounded by respondent N4 and N62. Respondent N4 further explained that the leadership tries to dominate the usage of the public budgets by excluding other users and protecting themselves from scrutiny as they steal public monies. Since embezzlement of public funds was a major activity, it means public services were non-existent or of poor quality.

According to the theory of the commons, such public budgets are common resources which are fraught with perils of overuse by one category of users, such as these leaders who are busy siphoning off public funds (Ghorbani & Bravo, 2016). This situation could easily lead to the tragedy of the commons, if corruption is not kept in check. This is particularly so because there was a glaring absence of policy communities in the researchers' interactions with both counties. Further, respondents like N62, K17 and N4 felt that the county assemblies, the senate, media and the civil society were not very effective in oversighting the counties. Thus, any hopes of safeguarding the commons (budgets) from theft and improving public services through pressure from such oversight institutions, were dim. Nevertheless, there was the presence of the problem stream in the data in terms of John Kingdon's multiple streams framework, as many respondents such as N62, K17, N4 and N47 identified corruption as a problem within

the bureaucratic hierarchies. However, the absence of a policy and politics stream in the data means that the residents of Kiambu and Nairobi City County will have to wait longer before a policy window can coalesce to bring forth change and improve public service delivery.

Respondents N62 and N4 specifically highlighted the presence of a culture of fear within the bureaucracy that ensured the corruption pipelines flowed smoothly, with junior staff members fearful of repercussions of disobeying 'orders from above' even when the orders conflicted with their ethical beliefs. The hierarchy was respected more than fidelity to the public as captured by respondent N46 who talked of the frustration the public goes through while trying to access public officials for public services. He said this occurred mainly due to physical barriers and gatekeepers like security guards, receptionists, messengers, who made it very difficult to access assistance from the required officials unless one bribed. This had the effect of denying services to those who could not afford the bribes. The respondent specifically decried the inhumanity and insensitivity of the staff who deliberately misplaced documents and made individuals travel every day trying to get a signature on a document, without caring that one is wasting time and spending money on transport. The respondent tried to complain to one of the secretaries about the delays, and was told '…you know what you need to do, to get this done quickly'. He said he knew it meant he had to bribe to get the service expeditiously.

The data shows that corruption within the hierarchies utilized a culture of intimidation and fear to ensure everyone within the hierarchies adhered to what the cartels wanted. They also utilized physical infrastructures, human barriers and red tape to ensure the bribery continued unabated. This is in conformity with studies done in Kenya that showed that frontline public officers, controlled access to various officials and their offices, often acting as human barriers for the top bosses and controlling who has access to them, in addition to being collecting agents for unofficial charges (bribes) on behalf of their bosses (Stedtjer, 2018; Taaliu, 2017). Their bribe seeking tactics have been captured in the corruption literature and include intimidating members of the public and frustrating them with unnecessary delays and red tape to ensure they paid the bribes demanded (Otieno, 2018). This situation means those who could not bribe, would not be able to access the public services.

It was not surprising that members of the public who tried to reach the top bosses in the counties faced red tape bureaucratic challenges, with incidents of 'come tomorrow' being the order of the day, as reported by respondent N46. He observed this was in contrast to smoothly arranged appointments for those who bribed. Thus, the hierarchal bureaucracies were utilized to normalize the corruption culture, as explained further by respondent N14:

> … getting the stock code before supplying the goods after one receives a tender is very tricky since the people on board have a lot of alternatives... Only those with the connections get that code. And connections mean you have promised or already paid something…the people in power communicate bribery indirectly (she laughs and gives an example). You, get into an office, you are told that you have gotten the tender, then the in-charge keeps quiet or smiles and looks at you in silence, and it is therefore upon you to know that you must give some token so as to get the real deal. The modes of corruption are silence, smiles, calling you to their offices in private, and it's up to you to know what to do…There is also corruption at the point of delivery where one supplier arrives at 08:00 am with stationery, another supplier arrives with office furniture at 10:00 am, but because "*unajulikana*" (you're known) they offload your load first. When you supply, you have to bribe to get your goods received and you have to bribe to get your invoice received. Corruption is just money, no one will tell you, *nigawie shamba ndio* I do this favor for you" (no one will tell you divide for me some land so that I do this favor for you). Bribing is the language in both counties, if you have no money, everything is stuck…

The data shows that without bribes, nothing moves. The cartels within the bureaucracy demand kickbacks for tenders from suppliers and bribes are paid at every stage of the administrative processes, such as giving them the stock codes, offloading their supplies and getting their invoices officially received. The mechanisms of how those higher up the hierarchy request for bribes and kickbacks is captured through their calculated silences, knowing-smiles and private meetings in their offices. This data confirms studies that have shown that the nature of one's job can expose one to certain vulnerabilities when it comes to kickbacks for tenders (Mutangili, 2019). In this data we see the team that is receiving the deliveries playing a critical role, together with the team that is officially receiving the invoice, and the team that gives out the stock code. All these have to be bribed, for anything to move forward and for public services to be given. The data also confirms studies that have shown that kickbacks for tenders are difficult to detect, and the most reliable method so far, has been through whistleblowing (Mutangili, 2019; Montero, 2018). The data further agrees with studies that have shown

that since devolution was introduced in Kenya, there has been a tremendous increase in embezzlement and bribery and deteriorating public services (EACC, 2016). There were 83.7% bribery incidents and the average bribe by service was highest among the kickbacks for tenders, where Kshs 196,987.82 was required, followed by Kshs 63,687.39 average needed for bribing to get employment within the counties (EACC, 2016).

Respondent N63 who was living with disability, had this to say in one of the focus group discussions:

> … *Mambo ya hongo na wizi wa pesa za uma*…Cartels *wana* control *hiyo maneno,* if you question, you are told, 'orders from above.'(When it comes to matters of bribery and theft of public funds, cartels are the ones who control those things. If you question, you are told, 'orders from above.')

The statement talks of 'cartels' controlling everything at the counties and 'orders from above' which means there are deeply entrenched forces within the counties, that run through the hierarchies, who ensure embezzlement and bribery thrives. It also means that these hierarchical corruption structures within the bureaucracy act as command-and-control centers, with instructions coming from above for lower-level cadre officers to implement. Thus, corruption's *modus operandi* is normalized within the hierarchical structures to ensure bribery and embezzlement continue without disruptions. This situation confirms studies which have showed that normalization of corruption within bureaucratic structures is responsible for corruption being an autopoietic system and accounts for the entrenchment of corruption cultures in many institutions, with devasting consequences for public service delivery (Goerl & Nelson, 2010; Gupta, Davoodi, & Alonso-Terme, 1998; Gupta, Davoodi, & Tiongson, 2001; Liu T., 2017; Moradi, Quaquebeke, & Hunter, 2018; Andvig & Moene, 2014).

4.3.2.3 Specializations

Further, respondents like N62 felt that the specializations within the bureaucracy were overwhelming and bribing them was too expensive. This forced him to obtain fake licenses from River Road and continue with his life. Thus, the data captures one of the major effects of corruption, of the public losing faith in government services and looking for illegal alternatives to solve their problems (Andrews, 2018b; Dike, 2010; Rahman). When people look for fake documents, it affects the quality of services and

public safety is affected. Cheap liquor which does not meet the requirements for public consumption can be sold and there have been media reports showing that both counties have had incidents of people going blind after drinking substandard liquor (Otieno J. , 2018; Gayle, 2014).

Further, the acquisition of fake licenses denies the counties the revenue they require to provide public services and is unfair in the sense that some people end up paying no taxes. Such impunity can foment political unrest (McCollum, Limato, Otiso, Theobald, & Taegtmeyer, 2018). The data is in line with studies that have reported that corruption is responsible for policy failures and the entrenchment of crimes such as fraud within government processes, due to massive failures in service delivery (Gurgur & Shah, 2002; Martinez, Kukutschka, Banoba, & Cooksey, 2019). Such failures often occur when government specializations demand unreasonable bribes, or make unreasonable demands on their citizens as seen in this data.

More data on this was also provided by respondent N44 who gave an example of such unreasonableness by government officials when he was asked to build a toilet in order to get a license yet his business did not require such facilities and other people with similar kiosks, were not being asked for such requirements. This made him feel the bureaucratic specializations were creating hurdles in order for him to bribe and sure enough after he bribed, he got the license. Thus, public services were inaccessible to those who could not bribe.

Further, respondent K12 who ran a clothes boutique narrated how she was asked to pay for multiple licenses that she did not need by various specializations in the county, such as food handler's certificate (yet she did not provide food services), electricity fees yet her kiosk did not have any electricity connection, COVID 19 license fees of Kes 3,500 and fire engine fees (yet her premise was a temporary kiosk). She felt these multiple license demands were meant to ensure she bribed the officials so that she could stop being harassed. She claimed to have paid Kes 2,000 in bribes each time the county enforcement teams raided her kiosk. This affected the accessibility of services in terms of affordability, as only those who could bribe would get this service.

Such demands did not spare the youth, as respondent N60 lamented that the bureaucratic hierarchies of being asked for different types of clearances before one could get a job within the counties, was a big obstacle for the youths, due to the bribes they had to pay for each process and due to the fact that they did not have the money to obtain these clearances. Therefore, such unreasonable demands were part of the tactics utilized within the bureaucratic specializations to frustrate members of the public. These hurdles led to non-existent or poor public services.

The bureaucratic specializations were deployed to keep the researcher seeking approvals from higher up the county hierarchies. Many officials said it is not in their docket to clear the research and would refer the researcher to other officials, who would say the same thing, hoping the researcher would give up on the research topic. The officials declined to give the researcher the list of suppliers and the researcher had to obtain these from the county websites and through informal referrals. The behavior of the technocrats towards this research was typical of government bureaucratic hierarchies that fail to live up to their service delivery standards. Respondent K28 was equally kept waiting for hours and he narrated how he had been chasing his payments for several months without success. He even tried to see an officer whom he could see from where he was waiting at the reception, and the officer shrugged him off and ignored him completely. Such behavior on the part of the county officials does not reflect the quality standards required of a public office and does not meet the SERVQUAL standards of quality public service.

Respondent N43 decried the specialization bureaucracy involved in the procurement of medicine through KEMSA which the counties blamed for delays in service delivery but which he said is an excuse they use for extorting bribes. He also decried the red tape in procurement of expensive medical equipment like some cancer machines which were now obsolete in some counties due to lack of trained personnel to operate them. This situation confirms the tragedy of the commons where the public ends up paying for the misuse of the commons (the finances used to purchase the equipment) and the cost of the non-delivery of public services (Ghorbani & Bravo, 2016). Thus, the public suffered by not receiving services for services they had already paid for.

The researcher experienced some of the bureaucratic specializations in real time when trying to get clearance from the gate keepers for this research. The researcher was required to get additional authorization letters and taken round in circles, with hurdles being introduced at every stage, till the researcher gave up on utilizing the official channels and decided to informally contact the target respondents. In the words of the researcher:

> I proceeded to the office of the Secretary to the Clerk of the County Assembly and was advised to write a letter seeking authorization from the Clerk of the County Assembly…. At the executive when I gave my letter of introduction, the secretary handed my letter to the tea-lady to hand it over to the county secretary's office. When the tea lady went upstairs, there was a gentleman who was hovering around the reception. I spoke to him about the letter and he took me to the County Secretary's office. The secretary to the county secretary advised that I should get a letter from Kenyatta university addressing the Governor to authorize the research. I tried explaining to her that we already had authority from NACOSTI but she stood her ground. I proceeded to the Governor's office to enquire whether the research could proceed, and the secretary referred me back to the secretary to the county secretary who was aloof and very adamant to serve me. She said; "Who allowed you here? Don't you see I don't have a mask?" She further proceeded to sneer at me and retorted; "I thought I advised you to go back to the institution and bring a letter addressed to our office. Was that so difficult?" She then called somebody in HR and she was advised to ask me to go the next day and see a certain lady from Human Resources. I left the offices tired, but hopeful – that the next morning I will have authorizations from both offices. The next day I tried to reach the respondents directly. The ICT department which received me well and were willing to participate in the interview cut my interview short after I introduced the topic of the research. They made an excuse that I had not used the right channel as only through the office of the clerk, would they be authorized to engage with me. The procurement office was not available and I had to liaise with the accounts office for suppliers' contacts but was advised that only the clerk's office has the authority to share that information with me. I wrote a letter addressing the clerk's office for permission to interview the stated departments as per my research and another letter requesting for the county assembly suppliers' contacts. This was done as the per the clerk secretary's order. Finally, the county assembly gave their letter of authorization as attached in Appendix A13 and I was able to interview all the respondents officially.

Copies of some of the letters the researcher was requested to obtain are hereby attached as Appendix A15. Bureaucratic specializations were thus utilized to deny the researcher services, with hurdles being introduced in the researcher's quest for research authorization. This situation is typical of government bureaucracy as defined by institutional theorists who argue that government procedures are part of institutional cultures of government (Berthod, 2018; Dimaggio & Powell, 1991; Zucker, 1987).

Although these bureaucratic specializations are part of the *modus operandi* of governments, the culture of corruption that seems to be embedded in these devolved bureaucracies, is a worrying trend that risks institutionalizing corruption within devolved governments in Kenya. There is a gradual institutionalization of bribery and embezzlement which contributes to legitimizing these practices, within these bureaucratic structures and socializing others into it, in such a way that it gradually becomes normalized, forming a culture of corruption within the public service delivery ecosystem of the devolved governments (Ashforth & Anand, 2003; Muco, 2017). Thus, it will soon become impossible to receive any service without providing a bribe, if this trend is not reversed.

Respondent N31 pointed out the existence of interdepartmental competition for bribes among specializations designated for service delivery in various departments. He narrated that the specializations caused rivalries that frustrated members of the public by sending them from one department to another, so that they could pay more bribes, knowing all along that only their specializations could officially issue the document that the member of the public was seeking. He said this was a culture that was entrenched, to ensure money flowed from the members of the public to the cartels within the specializations designed for service delivery. He further explained that:

> Sometimes the bureaucratic specializations of the different departments collide in cases where our office feels another department wants to "eat" more than us. Thus, even when our office has the capacity to handle a task, we can deliberately turn you down because we are trying to sabotage another department which is receiving a "bigger cut" in form of bribes…so when the member of the public becomes desperate, after being taken round from department to department, they are forced to fork out more bribes to us, for we are the only ones who can officially give them that service and we end up benefitting by getting more in terms of bribes.

These situations confirm the presence of 'corruption pipelines' which are facilitated by bureaucratic specializations, with members of the public being moved from one department to another, where they have to bribe, as the bureaucratic specializations act as receiving and collecting mechanisms for the bribes. Thus, competition for bribes among specialization departments, caused poor services as each department tried to outdo each other by extorting more bribes from members of the public. Respondent

N26 confirmed this position and said that a department could even decide not to offer you any service because you have not been able to pay a certain sum of money that they have set and that is final and you could go nowhere. This information shows that the individuals in the bureaucracy are a law unto themselves and there is nothing a common person can do to access the services without paying the bribes they have set. The data shows that bureaucratic structures that were meant to bring public service delivery to local communities under devolution, are causing denial of services to the residents of the counties, and this position contrasts with studies that have championed devolution as the key to defeating Weberian bureaucracy which caused governments to become multilayered, inefficient, and a burden to the public (Bhattarai, 2008; Morgan, Baser, & Morin, 2010; Sujarwoto, 2017).

Respondents K34, N22 and K12 explained that corruption within bureaucratic specializations was common. Specifically, N2 outlined that:

> Corruption arises when someone feels that he or she is the only one capable of doing the task and this, in turn, affects the accuracy and credibility of the service offered. Since no other staff has the skills I have, I ask for bribes for services through proxies…

Thus, the data shows that staff in the devolved governments utilize their specializations within the bureaucracy as bribery opportunities, instead of using them for public service delivery. Thus, this data contradicts the available theoretical and empirical literature that advances the notion that devolution reduces corruption (Suprayitno & Pradiptyo, 2017; Albornoz & Cabrales, 2013; Shon & Cho, 2020).

Other times specializations within the counties, act as bottlenecks in service delivery as they facilitate the corruption pipelines, with respondent N52 reporting that:

> …. the finance revenue office told me they can't do anything about adjusting my rates until the trade department writes a letter to them, yet that's an internal matter. I am just an outsider, why do they keep pushing me from one department to another? I followed this for more than one year but the day I paid something small (bribed), the letter was written and I got my rates adjusted in a matter of minutes.

This situation demonstrates how government which is structured in functions to deliver services, is segregated into silos for purposes of facilitating 'corruption pipelines.' The inter departmental coordination mechanisms work to ensure members of the public are

frustrated in order to extort bribes from them. Sometimes the public is even informed that a certain equipment is not functional when it is actually in good working order, in order to extort unofficial charges from them, as reported by respondent N23. These scenarios affirm the position taken by available studies that show that bribery mainly occurs at public service delivery points, as that is where government officials extort unofficial charges from members of the public who require public services (Bhagwan, 2014; Arends, 2020; Otieno, 2018).

As respondent K17 reported:

> …for most of the equipment such as fire trucks and ambulances, you are told they are grounded when you request for services but when you pay something small, suddenly they are available. And sometimes they are grounded due to minor issues because the money to repair them has been stolen.

This shows that embezzlement affects service delivery as the equipment that was supposed to be serviced is grounded and is not available for service delivery. The situation is dire as people who need essential services involving life and death matters, such as fire trucks and ambulances, are forced to pay bribes. Thus, these specialized services were utilized for corruption.

Further, unqualified staff were placed in dockets where they did not possess the required technical skills to offer services. This was reported by respondent N34 who explained that it was one of the tactics used by the cartels to facilitate the corruption pipelines. The sad part is that some of these specialized functions were responsible for critical services and oversight functions, such as surveying, quality assurance, audit, and monitoring and evaluation. Respondent K19 explained such functions were utilized to sanitize corrupt processes and acted as bottlenecks to those who did not bribe, by causing delays and frustrations in a bid to extort more bribes from members of the public.

These situations had dire consequences particularly for quality assurance teams responsible for sensitive areas such as public health, where their oversight role can mean life or death to members of the public. The data confirms studies that have shown that unofficial charges have adverse consequences on health care, as was reported in West Africa, where many patients postponed going to hospital, due to the requirement to pay bribes, causing delays in diagnosing cancer cases (Cloutier, 2017; Dza,

Kyeremeh, Dzandu, & Affran, 2018). A similar scenario was reported in Sierra Leone and Liberia during the Ebola crisis, as many patients failed to seek medical services due to lack of money for bribes (Abasili & Akinboye, 2019; Sanogo, 2018; Asea, 2018; Sackeyfio, 2018; Ayee, 2010; Wanyama, 2019; Rugumyamheto, 2004). It also confirms studies from Slovakia which showed that Slovakians had difficulties accessing essential services such as hygiene, fire and environmental protection due to the requirement to pay bribes (Marasova & Horehajova, 2017). A household survey done in Kazakhstan showed the rich had no problems accessing public services, as they only bribed to get quicker services, while the poor had to fork out bribes for benefits, they were already entitled to, which made the benefits inaccessible (Marasova & Horehajova, 2017). The data confirms the impact of bribes and embezzlement on public service delivery as captured in Latin American literature, where household surveys reported that citizens were staying away from public services due to the requirement to pay bribes and to provide kickbacks for tenders (Arce & Hendricks, 2019). The data also confirms studies from Kazakhstan, where parents had to bribe to get their children admitted to schools, and they had to bribe further to get the teachers to pay any attention to the children, causing differentials between the rich and poor kids in terms of quality of education services (Marasova & Horehajova, 2017).

The data further shows the creation of unnecessary specializations, as one of the tactics utilized to entrench corruption within the bureaucracies. Respondent N23 explained that there were specializations within the bureaucracies that were created specifically to aid corruption. He talked of a plethora of approval levels that were required from different offices and different departments which were cumbersome but were a way of "spreading the eating" so that more staff could have the chance to extort bribes from the public. Additionally red tape within the specializations, was deliberately increased, to ensure the bribes continued flowing to the public officials.

Respondents N23, K12 and K8 decried the counties' tactics of ensuring the non-existence and underfunding of key offices such as those of internal audit, and monitoring and evaluation offices, that are supposed to oversight critical functions. They reported that the bureaucratic specializations ensured oversight structures such as audits, quality assurance and monitoring and evaluation, remained moribund and non-functional in order to aid corruption. This was expounded by respondent N9, who said

that corruption crept in when those with the AIE, which he referred to as those with the "authority to initiate eating" openly extorted bribes from debtors who needed to be paid due to lack of oversight offices which are supposed to reign such corruption. Thus, the absence or weakening of such critical oversight offices ensured corruption within the bureaucratic systems continued unabated.

This data confirms studies that have shown the importance of audits and monitoring and evaluation systems in helping detect the theft of public funds and providing key warning signs of embezzlement in public institutions (Odeku, 2018). Further, the data shows the disillusionment with devolution, as the country has cumulatively spent over Kes 2.3 trillion on devolution since it was established in 2013. Respondent K46 blamed structural corruption within the bureaucracy for the fact that the counties had little to show for the billions they were allocated every year. Studies on the impact of devolution in Kenya have all reported that corruption is a significant challenge facing Kenya today and that public services within the counties continue to deteriorate (Kanyinga, 2016; Kimathi, 2017; Yarow, Jirma, & Siringi, 2019; Tsofa B., 2017; Ochieng, 2018; Ngigi & Busolo, 2019; Munge, 2020; McCollum, Limato, Otiso, Theobald, & Taegtmeyer, 2018; Finch & Omolo, 2015; Barasa, Manyara, Molyneux, & Tsofa, 2017).

From the data, it is clear that corruption within the bureaucratic procedures of the two counties had serious adverse effects on public service delivery and the results tally with findings from countries that found that corruption within bureaucratic procedures affects public services negatively (Dunlop & Radaelli, 2019).

4.3.3 Effect of information processing

The study views information processing as an important function that enables devolved governments to provide accessible and quality public services (Martins, Fernandes, Rohman, & Veiga, 2018). The findings show that information processing acted as a key driver of corruption within the two counties and this affected public services adversely. The entrenchment of a corruption culture within the information dissemination procedures, and in the dissemination channels and their accessibility, was made possible by bureaucratic structures, that served to buttress an organizational culture of corruption within the two counties.

4.3.3.1 Dissemination procedures

To begin with, the mere lack of information dissemination procedures, which was noted in both counties, was a corruption mechanism that public officials in the bureaucracy utilized to ensure that budgets meant for information processing were misappropriated and that information did not flow to the public or other relevant audiences, to facilitate extortion of bribes, as narrated by respondent N8:

> … in an organization, there should be clear ways of passing information amongst the staff and the general public. The modes of communication should also be reliable. Here at the counties, we do not care about these procedures or those who live in the remote areas. If we have tenders or jobs, they are advertised in the newspaper, so if you have no access to the newspapers, too bad... Since we have the information, we can hoard it and anyone needing it, will have to bribe us. Although applying for these tenders and jobs is not a guarantee that you will succeed. You have to bribe and even bribing, can fail. It depends on who has deeper pockets than you…I sell to the highest bidder…we use the cyber cafes to collect bribes on our behalf. They charge the public for government forms which should be free. When members of the public come to our offices, we direct them to a specific cyber where they pay the bribe before receiving the service they want.

The data shows the absence of structured information dissemination procedures has allowed corruption cartels to infiltrate the county system and trade with its information. Thus, the bureaucratic hierarchies control the information processing by determining the dissemination procedures, the channels and their accessibility. They hawk information to the highest bidder and determine which mode of dissemination to use, regardless of its inaccessibility to remote areas or to specific categories of people. Since information is handled in an *ad hoc* way, those privy to it take the liberty to hoard it and use it to extort bribes from those who need it, thus enabling a corruption culture to thrive. The data shows the presence of corruption pipelines that run from the county offices to the cyber cafes, which are major conduits for collecting bribes (unofficial charges) from the public. The coordination of this bribery is done by the public officials who direct the public to specific cyber cafes, where they go and pay unofficial charges. Thus, public services were only accessible to those who bribed.

The data shows that corruption cartels within the bureaucratic hierarchies controlled the information processes through approvals and they directed how and when information could be disseminated, and to whom it could be released. It also shows that public

information was commodified and only those who could afford to pay a bribe for it, were served. It was therefore not surprising that there were no guidelines on how information should be processed, disseminated or accessed, in the two county governments. This data affirms studies that show there is increased corruption when information is withheld from the public and is not widely circulated, as citizens would not be able to play an oversight role effectively in the absence of such information (Martins, Fernandes, Rohman, & Veiga, 2018).

Respondents N26 and K35 reported that information was deliberately hidden from the public as a way of ensuring the public paid bribes to get it. Respondent K35 explained that:

> … In the county laws, *kila kitu imewekwa vile inafaa kutekelezwa* (everything is put in its place), *hata vile revenue inafaa kuchukuliwa* (even how revenue should be collected and the charges for each service), but we hide that information from the public. I take advantage of that. *Na tukijua mtu anaelewa haya maneno huwa tunacheza chini*. (Loosely interpreted it means – if we know someone understands what we are doing, we don't bring a lot of hullabaloos about it so that it doesn't escalate to something ugly).

This data shows that in situations where the counties have laws that stipulate charges for revenue and other services, the public officials do not give this information to the public but instead take advantage of the public's ignorance to collect unofficial charges (bribes). Thus, information processing is used as a tool of corruption by ensuring the revenue information does not reach the intended recipients who are members of the public. The bureaucrats exploit this fact of ignorance by the members of the public to extort bribes, to the detriment of public service delivery. This situation confirms studies that have shown that there is always an information asymmetry between government officials and the citizens who receive public services, with scholars identifying the dissemination of information by governments to the public as a critical pathway to empowering citizens to make informed decisions (Mulyaman, Ismail, & Raya, 2019).

Respondent N3 shared:

> Each department deals with its information *kivyake* (its own way). The staff in procurement are even taken for training and informed about the laws but they still break them. The ICT and Finance staff block access to IFMIS (Integrated Financial Management Information System) when they don't want you to access funds. So, corruption *hapa ni lazima* (compulsory) if you want to be helped.

The fact that the counties did not have information processing procedures or guidelines meant that information was handled in an *ad hoc* manner and this left loopholes for corruption to thrive, as each department decided how to handle its information. Although the departments in the counties appeared to be deliberately working in *silos,* the data shows that they perpetuated the corruption culture by sharing corruption practices within the information processing systems and worked in cahoots with each other. Thus, public services were available to only a select cabal of people, with the means to bribe. The data confirms studies done in other parts of the world that showed that corruption cultures are perpetuated when corruption influences individual behavior and individuals, in turn, influence corruption and it becomes a vicious cycle that adversely affects public service delivery (Moradi, Quaquebeke, & Hunter, 2018; Andvig & Moene, 2014). Thus, a corrupt person will most likely influence others to be corrupt, a situation that breeds a culture of corruption and this adversely affects public service delivery (Khan M. H., 2006; Garduno, 2019).

Surprisingly, some of the respondents, like N24 wanted the researcher to bribe him before he could give any information. In his own words, "*nikikumbali lazima mnunue* lunch". He gave examples of how information processing used proxies for corruption, where for instance, properties in the county records were registered in the names of certain proxies but the real owners were the bosses, so the document information systems are manipulated to hide the true beneficiaries and when the public tries to gather information on such syndicates, they are taken round in circles, because internally the departments do not share information with each other and each department keeps its information secret. This data shows that bribery was so common within the information processing in exchange for information that respondent N24 was bold enough to demand the same from the researcher who was a stranger to the environment.

There was information that there were proxies who hold properties on behalf of big bosses, as further expounded by N24, which is kept under wraps, and this speaks of the lack of transparency on the part of the county governments. In such shadowy transactions, public services cannot be accessible to those without appropriate information. This data contradicts studies that show that devolution promotes

transparency in government leading to accessible and improved public services and reduced corruption (Garman, Haggard, & Willis, 2001; Alam & Gerbaba, 2019).

When it came to the automation of revenue, respondents K16, N3 and N30 dismissed it as a farce. They argued that the systems are always down to ensure the manual system is what is in use, to facilitate the theft of revenues. In the words of respondent K16:

> … Revenue collection should be fully automated but it is not, where would the bosses get their cuts? The automation of revenue collection, tendering, requisitions, contract awards, dissemination of county news and ongoing projects and many other functions, are all prone to information being manipulated with the core objective of stealing funds. Even records are manipulated, which denies the citizens their right to accountability. My work as ICT is to rubber stamp what the top bosses want. In as much as I keep the county systems and soft wares up to date to prevent the system from collapsing and to prevent viruses, most of the critical work has to be checked and approved by the bosses. They keep all the approvals to themselves so as to avoid airing out their dirty linen. Even HR records have to be approved. Whatever I put on the website has to also be approved. But the job vacancies and tenders I post on the county website are merely for public relations. The bureaucracy here makes sure no information is leaked about what we are doing, as it can lead to immediate dismissal. I can block some email addresses from sending in applications and only receive applications from those we favor. Corruption here is as normal as having a cup of tea. Big tenders are always shelved in secrecy. Huge tenders such as for schools, roads, hospitals, are rarely advertised or shared publicly… Also, with partial adoption of ICT in this county, some services like county approvals, licenses and work permits take such a long time, as this facilitates monies to be collected *kado* (bribery).

This data shows that automation systems in the information processing were rendered moribund by cartels that bypassed the system to enable the stealing of county revenues. Information manipulation was also rampant, as it allowed the embezzlement of public funds. The respondent's work was only to rubber stamp what the top bosses in the hierarchy wanted, including blocking some email addresses from receiving applications. Huge tenders were not advertised and county approvals for other documents took forever, due to the need for bribery. In his own words, corruption had been so normalized within information processing, that it was like having a cup of tea. Thus, this mode of operation affected public services, as those without the requisite information, could not access public services.

The situation depicts bureaucratic hierarchies that directed what information should be processed and shared, with the junior officers risking their jobs, if they dared share

anything that had not been approved by the bosses. The data also shows that information hoarding led to secrecy and information leakages were not allowed, in order to cover up the corruption that was going on. Thus, public service delivery was not prioritized as corruption was the main activity. The data affirms studies that showed that corruption is a shadowy phenomenon that is difficult to control, as it thrives in opaque environments where information disclosure is low and public participation almost non-existent (Lee, Iwasa, & Dieckmann (2019).

The researcher noted a culture of suspicion around information processing, as most of those interviewed were not comfortable "spilling the beans." Respondent N3 specifically interrogated the researcher, and kept checking around to see if there was anyone else eavesdropping and was only comfortable after he realized the researcher's agenda was genuine research. Thus, the culture of suspicion found in the counties' organizational culture and within their bureaucratic procedures, was replicated in the *modus operandi* of the corruption cartels within information processing. The culture involved releasing no information, for fear of giving away too much information. This ultimately affected public service delivery as citizens could not get the information they required to make informed decisions.

This culture of suspicion as engrained in government information processing procedures is borrowed from institutional theory where government entities are inclined to release as little information as possible due to the fear of information security breaches (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Peterson & Peters, 2020). Although the media and civil society can promote a culture of transparency and accountability, the absence of active policy networks from the data shows that this is a problem that is not going away soon. The crystallization of the problem stream as expounded by John Kingdon's multiple streams framework may have taken place due to the public's recognition of the problem of corruption within the information processing but in the absence of a policy and politics streams, there is not likely to be a policy window to bring change in this area. Notably, the information the county governments hoard are commons that belong to everyone, according to the theory of the commons. The situation of hoarding of information due to corruption is reflective of the tragedy of the commons in that a few people are trying to reap maximum benefits from a common resource at the expense of the rest of the members of the public and hoarding information that belongs to all.

Thus, the misuse and overuse of the common resource is likely to result in the tragedy of the commons in the form of a total collapse of public services.

4.3.3.2 Dissemination channels

An information hoarding culture in the counties led to information being deliberately disseminated through inaccessible channels to some of the citizens. This was aptly captured by respondent N60 who said:

> …there are people who cannot access some of these channels like noticeboards. If you place an ad on the 10th floor and I am disabled, how will I reach there? How will I know the noticeboard exists there? The *askari* (guard) at the ground floor cannot even let me past the gate, how will I get the information? How will this information be available to the blind? If you put in on the website, how many people have access to the internet? How will someone in Mathare, Kibra, Mukuru, Korogocho, get this information? These people will not have access to the county government portals and you deny them information that they are entitled to, then when the county is recruiting, or undertaking projects, communities become hostile and it was because the information did not reach them and the channels used were limited and inaccessible. To me the bureaucrats in these county governments don't want people to access information because they work in cahoots with suppliers due to the kickbacks for tenders….

The data shows how information placed on noticeboards becomes inaccessible due to the fact that not many people know the noticeboards exist in the higher floors, as majority will expect them to be placed in the ground floors where there is more traffic (more people). Also, the disabled would not be able to reach such floors unless there are lifts. The presence of human barriers in the form of security personnel who limit access to such floors means the accessibility of such noticeboards is limited to a few. Also, the blind would not get such information due to the unavailability of information in braille. Further, if the information is placed on the website, there are those who would not be able to access the internet, especially those living in the slums where poverty is high and they may not afford internet services. Thus, public services would not be accessible to these groups of people.

The data shows the limitations of different dissemination channels and the consequences of not reaching communities with appropriate information, as community hostilities during project implementation arises due to lack of adequate information. Failure to provide adequate information is poor service delivery on the part of the county government and confirms studies that have emphasized the importance of

community buy-ins in government projects and the role of information dissemination in such initiatives to avoid conflict (Ahmad, Devarajan, Khemani, & Shah, 2005; Efriandi, Couwenberg, & Holzhacker, 2019).

The data also shows that the reason county officials do not wish the public to access information is due to the corruption that goes on in the form of kickbacks for tenders. This confirms studies that have shown devolution in Kenya brought with it an unprecedented increase in embezzlement and bribery, with over 83.7% of bribery incidents being reported and deteriorating public services (EACC, 2016). The average bribe by service was highest among the kickbacks for tenders, where Kes 196,987.82 was required, followed by Kes 63,687.39 average needed for bribing to get employment within the counties (EACC, 2016).

The data further highlights the gaps in information dissemination in the two counties and confirms the linkages between information processing and bureaucratic procedures and how this reinforces the corruption culture within the organizational processes, interactions and coordination mechanisms. This gap was particularly pronounced among the youth with respondent N60 narrating how the youth only get to hear of information through rumors, from friends or on social media when staff in the county offices tell their children about what is happening and those children then post the information on social media where other youth pick it up and consume it. Therefore, the youth received information about the counties from other youth, and always second or third hand, in the dissemination chain. This is a worrying trend especially because the devolved governments are expected to set aside 30% of the government tenders for the youth, among other special interest groups and the dissemination of procurement opportunities to such a critical audience should be regarded as paramount by the counties (Oyugi & Getuno, 2019). This demonstrates poor public service delivery on the part of the county governments.

Women outlined the difficulties they faced in sending and receiving information during the focus group discussions due to gender stereotypes that are propagated within society and normalized within the information processing mechanisms of both counties. In the words of respondent N61:

> …society believes that women are mouthy and so as a woman, I might leak information because women are supposed to have big mouths, while men keep secrets. So, if there's a big job with good money, I will be kept in the dark and even if I get to know, the job won't be given to me because of this belief.

From this data, the gender stereotype of women being seen as persons who cannot keep secrets is used against them, as they are kept in the dark about lucrative government opportunities, and important information is selectively not shared with them. Thus, they face discrimination when accessing opportunities due to inadequate access to information. The data also shows women face discrimination during appointments, as such beliefs color the decisions of the appointing authorities. Such discrimination shows poor public service delivery. This data confirms studies from countries such as Thailand that showed that women were locked out of lucrative positions because they were viewed as untrustworthy with information (Bjarnegard, 2018). It also confirms studies that have demonstrated that such gender stereotypes are often utilized to perpetuate the derogation of women by treating them as unworthy of receiving sensitive information and using such stereotypes to invalidate their views and exclude them from key decisions (Bearman, Korobov, & Thorne, 2009).

4.3.3.3 Accessibility of dissemination procedures

While respondents generally agreed the counties placed advertisements on websites and newspapers, this was not effective according to them, as respondent N14 explained:

> …the unwritten rule remains: who do you know, and what do you have? Due to selfish interests, tender information is only shared to favored suppliers, which is against the Public Procurement Act. The advertisements are meant to hoodwink the public…sometimes I only post it on the procurement portal, instead of advertising in all the channels, and I pocket the money saved…

Respondents N12, N30 and K53 also confirmed this position, where the unwritten rule was about how much one could give as a bribe and a closely knit who-do-you connections culture. Thus, hoarding of information and preferential leakage of information to those who bribed and those who were part of the connections culture were some of the tactics used to ensure the 'corruption pipelines' kept flowing. Thus, services were given to those who had 'connections.' This confirms studies showing that such tactics are often utilized in procurement processes to manipulate circumstances

surrounding a bid to benefit a preferred tenderer, with information leaks to preferred bidders being common (Graeff & Kleinewiese, 2020; Prasetyono, 2019).

Respondent K54 reported cases of misinformation where suppliers who had not delivered items were covered up by public officials, with the information given to the public being to the contrary. He also explained that sometimes a supplier is deliberately given the wrong information to knock out the competition, and reported situations where on paper a project is reported as complete but on the ground it does not exist. This situation shows that non-existent public service delivery and poor services, would be covered up by government officials. Respondent N17 further reported alterations of information in the system "for the right price" and respondent N21 reported the auctioning of information "to the highest bidder." This means that only those who could bribe would access government services. He also explained that:

> … the closer you are to the source of information, the easier to access it and the farther you are, the hard it becomes to access such important information. So, there's an information distance, the closer you are to the source of information, the more lucrative your position, so people fight to get in there. This kind of information will also not be published under county websites and procurement portals, making it very difficult to acquire. So, I hoard it and sell it clandestinely…

The data shows information being utilized as a tool of manipulation, with the public being hoodwinked about what is really happening in terms of delivery of public supplies and the status of public projects, as reports show a project has been completed when in actual fact, there is nothing to show for it on the ground. Thus, poor service delivery or the lack of public services, was common. Unwanted suppliers are deliberately misled to knock them out of the competition and those who need favors requiring alteration of information in the online systems, are given, for the right price. As respondent N21 confirmed, information is on auction to the highest bidder. Thus, the closer you are to the source of information, the more advantaged you are in your ability to receive information and auction it to the highest bidder. These deals are done clandestinely and confirm studies showing that corruption takes place in the shadows, making it very challenging to detect unless an audit uncovers it or money goes missing (Shon & Cho, 2020; Hobdari, Nguyen, Dell'Erba, & Ruggiero, 2018). These clandestine activities were riddled with corruption and adversely affected public service delivery.

Respondent N11 confirmed that although tender advertisements are done online, backdating and online systems manipulation occurred. He explained:

> …A tender might be starting on a 15th but I write the 25th. So, by the time the others realize there is a tender, the project is already halfway. Then there are scenarios where the tenders are given to foreigners… Training on how to register as a supplier, and how to log onto the portal and register in IFMIS are done secretly to limit the number of people who attend. Even after the training *unashtukia tu m-China ako na* tender (you wake up to find the tender has been given to a Chinese). (He laughs).

The data shows manipulation of information is done to favor certain tenderers. Training on accessing the online portals is done clandestinely to limit information to only those who are favored and sometimes, foreign contractors are awarded tenders, out of the blue. These scenarios demonstrate how information processing systems are manipulated to achieve the ends of corruption. They are thus an integral part of the *modus operandi* of the corruption culture as they provide a pipeline that ensures the success of corruption's "standard operating procedures" to the detriment of public service delivery. The data affirms studies that have shown that embezzlement of public funds happens through the manipulation of information and one of the ways of detecting it is through flagging of contractors who suddenly begin to exclusively and constantly win tenders (Mantzaris & Pillay, 2017). When only a small clique of tenderers are preferred, it means money is embezzled and public service delivery is bound to suffer.

Techniques utilized by bureaucrats responsible for information dissemination to keep the bribes flowing involved the application of red tape. Respondent K38 explained that when members of the public insist on specific information, they are often misdirected to other irrelevant offices (red tape) to keep them off their back or so they can easily give up their quest for information or get frustrated and bribe for the information. Thus, bureaucratic procedures were utilized in tandem with information processing procedures to entrench the corruption culture within the county governments. Other tactics were reported by respondent N27 who narrated that:

> …I can make innocent looking clerical mistakes deliberately and displace information to make it look like they were just minor issues. For example, even though it is a requirement that the various tenders be posted in the procurement portals, I can sometimes "forget" to post them. After this, I tell the preferred bidders about the availability of the tenders secretly and ask them to apply…

The data shows that the level of manipulation of information processing systems to meet the demands of corruption cartels is very high. It is clear from this data that these dissemination channels are run by corruption cartels, with bribes being paid to delay the relaying of information to third parties, as confirmed further by respondent N8. Thus, public services in the form of information is only available to those who could afford to bribe. The data confirms studies that show that procurement processes are often influenced to benefit a preferred bidder through the manipulation of information (Graeff & Kleinewiese, 2020; Prasetyono, 2019; Mutangili, 2019).

This was further confirmed by respondent N7 who said:

> …I always bribe so that important information *inakaliwa* (sat on) and not given to third-parties…such information can include a lucrative transfer, a promotion, or payment of arrears…I rotate the same people within lucrative areas such as revenue collection, where there are opportunities for receiving bribes. To be posted there, they must *toa za macho* (bribe me).

From this narration, it is clear that information hoarding was a tool used to frustrate members of the public and internal staff so could bribe. Even those who wanted internal transfers to lucrative sectors where there were opportunities to extort bribes, had to bribe. Incidents of information sabotage to paralyze a department's activities were reported by respondent N6:

> …If they don't pay me, I give the opposite information. I don't care if they are paralyzed. If they want my help, *wachote* (they must bribe me).

Information manipulation was not limited to tenders and inter departmental information but extended to payrolls as well. Respondent K12 put it this way:

> … there are separate payroll lists that have designations that are nonexistent. Ghost workers are a phenomenon, and the ghosts get paid anyway, just that it's known by the select few here. I know we have cases of *ukora* (criminality), where dates of employment were backdated and money stolen by the bosses, and the counties are notorious for not paying statutory dues and checkoff loans for staff, *mpaka watu wanagoma* (until staff go on strike).

The existence of parallel payrolls demonstrates the existence of deeply entrenched corruption within information processing systems that is utilized by the cartels to steal from the commons (budgets). What is surprising is that, although both counties have invested massively in information processing technologies, as reported by respondents N6 and K5, this has not translated into better public services as corruption has ensured

any gains to be made have been erased. In the words of respondent K8, nothing really changes, as phantom headcount exercises meant to clean up the payroll rarely result in any changes to remove the ghost workers. Financial information was particularly enshrouded in secrecy, with respondents K25, K23 and K10 saying the counties took extra measures to guard it. Respondent K10 narrated:

> …if there is any corruption, it stays with us and it would be suicidal for any officer in the executive especially in a sensitive area like finance to say anything. Please make sure you don't quote me whatsoever. It would end my job. As you have noted, the executive has delayed in replying your letter requesting to do this research. We were alerted about it. You might actually never get a response… because you are being seen as "enemies of the county". Internally even departments don't get to know how their budgets are managed because everything is centralized in one person's office. The system, shields the executive. You will even get very junior officers frustrating you because they are under instruction to treat with contempt anyone seeking information. In fact, the screening begins from the gate….

The data shows the danger that staff face if they release information. Information about the research had been circulated internally and the cartels had already formulated tactics on how to sabotage the research. Thus, corruption within the information processing was well hidden within the bureaucratic hierarchies and was part of the counties' organizational culture to try and sabotage the research.

Respondent N20 shared that information processing procedures were manipulated to extort bribes from members of the public:

> … if information is not captured or keyed in properly and your name is missing, say from the bursary list, you have to "pass money under the table" (bribe) ...

This means that those who bribed are the ones who got the bursaries and money had to change hands for information to be corrected in the system. Respondent N41 complained that to view or access information, the excuse of "systems are down" was a code name for bribery. When one paid the bribe, the systems were restored and one was served. He gave examples of how the ICT systems are sometimes deliberately hacked or corrupted, to cover up corruption scandals. He explained that the supply of poor, quality ICT equipment was due to bribery, which led to poor performance, hence the system became easy to hack. There have been cases where such fraudsters have been facilitated by internal staff since the systems are already weak and the staff are already prone to corruption, he added. Without proper dissemination channels put in place to communicate with the public, he says, information flows in installments to the

public, leaving gaps. This means there was poor service delivery. Thus, the public never has the full picture of what is happening. This situation is consistent with studies that have shown that there is always an information asymmetry between local leaders and the general public, as the leaders hold more information than they are willing to release to the public and this caused poor service delivery (Magessa, Wynne-Jones, & Hockley, 2020).

Respondents K42, K34, N50, N4 reported that decentralized registries that are run by the counties create corruption loop holes as information is scattered in various sub-counties and one has to travel to the different registries to get information on land matters. They complained that these records are always manipulated, especially those involving inventories, through forgery of documents and false accounting which causes losses in public revenue during information processing. Respondents K4, K15 and N44 detailed how such information is distorted and manipulated through corrupt deals, as it passes through too many hands (bureaucrats). Such losses through theft means less money is available to provide public services, leading to poor services or lack of services.

From this data, it was clear that corruption in both counties, affected how information was processed. The data points to a moribund system where corruption had rendered information dissemination procedures non-existent and where they existed, they had become dysfunctional. Whatever little information that the corruption cartels left for dissemination was left struggling in a government culture of less is more. This was clearly poor service delivery on the part of the county government. According to institutional theory, this is typical of government bureaucracy, where the culture of sharing information with the public is not very robust, particularly in third world countries (Weimer, 1995; Peterson & Peters, 2020). In this context, the information was also filtered to an extent that it was no longer useful, as reported by respondent K4. There was also an internal clamor for information with staff competing to access information, and the need-to-know principle of information dissemination which is the practice in government, was ignored. Respondent K4 lamented that official roles were replaced by *ad hoc* information hawkers and corruption cartels, while respondent K15, lamented that information processing within the counties followed the shifts in political

power, based on which corruption cartel wielded more influence. Thus, it appears that public services were subject to the political whims of those in power.

Further, the data shows that information channels meant for displaying information to the public were sometimes utilized to con members of the public through willful misrepresentation with racketeers taking advantage of the public and the perpetrators facing no consequences due to protection from "godfathers", as reported by respondent N23. This confirms the presence of a culture of impunity for those misusing the information processing systems. Additionally, respondent N23 narrated that there were suspicious fires that burnt crucial documents in the counties, as entire books of records would disappear with evidence in infernos. In his own words, "anything can disappear with the right amount of money" and with the loss of evidence, impunity for the perpetrators is guaranteed. Thus, public services would be unavailable when records are destroyed.

According to institutional theory, the institution of government is not known to disseminate information consistently and it is not surprising that the counties are not any different, as they exercise power within the government institutional framework (Weimer, 1995; Peterson & Peters, 2020). As captured by respondent K24:

> …communication from the office of the governor is useless. Voting them was useless. They don't perform their duties. People get arrested by the *kajus* (county enforcement) even when they have done nothing and they must bribe before they are released.

Thus, when the communication is inadequate, there is bound to be disaffection against the government of the day. As respondent N2 noted, if the procedures necessary to acquire information are hindered by corruption, then information acquisition becomes costly, favoring only the affluent and discouraging the poor who cannot afford the channels favored by the rich such as internet and computers, and who end up being arrested by enforcement officers for offenses they are not even aware of, thus the common man will not be happy about the government of the day. This also shows that the county governments are not making efforts to offer services to the most vulnerable and the poorest of the poor. The data also shows public services are declining. Further, respondent N33 gave examples of staff who leak information to the media due to

frustrations with the corruption and this goes to show what happens when there are gaps in information processing.

The absence of policy networks within the data shows that the media and civil society have not taken up the matter of information processing and access to information by the public as a policy issue and thus, corruption within information processing is likely to continue. The data confirms that information is a common that is entrusted to devolved governments on behalf of the people but the commons face the challenges of the tragedy of the commons, in that a few people are controlling access to the commons by denying some access and misapplying the commons for their own selfish ends, thus adversely affecting public service delivery (Ghorbani & Bravo, 2016). Further, the fact that the information is not disseminated to the public and when it is disseminated, the dissemination channels are not accessible to the public, means that the mechanisms the county governments have put in place to ensure the public is informed on how to safeguard the commons (budgets) are moribund as they have been infiltrated by corruption and need rethinking if public services are to improve. The data further confirms studies done in over 150 countries that found a relationship between information processing and corruption, with greater accessibility of information to the public improving transparency and decreasing corruption and improving public services (Martins, Fernandes, Rohman, & Veiga, 2018).

4.3.4 Effect of county level policy instruments

This study takes the view that devolved governments have an obligation to employ a range of county level policy instruments such as laws, policies, regulations, rules, guidelines, procedures and practices in order to address corruption within their structures (Damania, Sterner, & Whittington, 2020). The data from this study shows that county level policy instruments was one of the drivers of corruption together with organizational culture, bureaucratic procedures and information processing that affected public service delivery in both counties. The data further shows that county level policy instruments were weakly enforced, thus turning them into tools of corruption, rather than tools for fighting corruption. This situation made them key drivers of corruption that affected public service delivery. Thus, the corruption culture had interlinkages that buttressed corruption within the bureaucratic procedures and information processing despite the presence of county level policy instruments.

4.3.4.1 Laws and policies

The data reveals that counties do not follow their county level laws and policies, unless it suits them and this creates a culture of impunity, where the rule of law is not entrenched or respected, leading to poor service delivery. Respondent N13 reported:

> The laws and regulations…are just a mockery and it's just for show. If they were working, there would be no cases of corruption in the counties. People would get tenders because they deserve them and suppliers who don't adhere to the suppliers' code of conduct would be blacklisted. Here, even blacklisted international con artists can bid for tenders because they are conduits for siphoning public money. If the laws and policies were working, cases of corruption would be unheard of. People who are eligible would get the tenders. The law and policies are for covering the cartel businesses that happen behind closed doors, to hoodwink the public and to cover up the impunity of the cartels. Not following the laws and regulations has led to suppliers and public officials getting away with corruption. The public may receive poor infrastructure which does not guarantee their safety and yet the officials are not answerable for this…

The data shows the county level policy instruments were not enforced, especially in the procurement departments where blacklisted suppliers were allowed to tender, leading to poor public services in the form of poor infrastructure. Respondent N19 similarly complained of blacklisted suppliers who were able to secure tenders. Additionally, respondent N17 demonstrated how county level policies were circumvented by suppliers through the bribing of county officials. This meant that such suppliers would offer substandard services, in a bid to recoup their bribery costs. Respondent K27 added that corruption within the tendering systems in the counties was so high that one could literally pay someone to go to prison on their behalf. Data from respondent N21 further cited the inflation of the prices of goods and services during procurement yet the government had price guidelines that were issued by treasury showing what is reasonable in terms of charges and these were not followed. He further explained that:

> …We have crafty county officials at the procurement departments who will inflate the price of anything for personal gain. Now the effect of this is that money intended for public service ends up in the pockets of a few individuals thus denying the people access to basic services... People always get what they do not deserve, through bribery and connections. It is the currency here and…everyone understands it.

Additional data showed levels of impunity for those engaging in corruption. As respondent N41 narrated:

> …*kuna wale wa "uta-do*" (there are those untouchables) who ask for bribes and have protection all the way up…This zero-tolerance of corruption policy is a farce as it is not enforced…

This showed that individuals would get away with corruption at the expense of deteriorating public services. This data was contrary to the devolved governments' stated policy that their counties were corruption free zones, as captured by one of their billboards, shown in **Fig. 4.3.**



Fig. 4.3 Anti-corruption billboard at Kiambu County Assembly

Source: Field Data (2021).

The data confirms studies that show that when laws are not enforced, impunity takes root, leading to further entrenchment of corruption and lack of public accountability by devolved governments (Mutula, Muna, & Koma, 2013).

The data also shows that county level policy instruments are the weakest link in the fight against corruption within the counties, as these instruments are exploited by cartels to milk the public, as reported by respondent N44. He said that county policies facilitated corruption, as people knew they could get away with corruption by utilizing loopholes in the law. This was worsened by inadequate oversight from the legislative arm of the county governments, as reported by K52, who said that deals were cut with the county assemblies and auditors bribed to give favorable reports. This was done in

spite of the presence of laws that clearly outline the oversight roles of these critical institutions and offices. It is noteworthy that there is no county level policy instrument that legalizes corruption but individuals utilized the policy instruments, to commit corruption, at the expense of providing accessible and quality public services.

The data also shows that laws and regulations including financial policies which dictate that payments should be made via vouchers and receipts issued, are ignored to facilitate theft of public funds, which leads to poor services because the funds that had been put aside to deliver a certain service are no longer available or are less than what had been budgeted and therefore inadequate to provide the service, as reported by respondent K16. In the long run, the services become more expensive and the patient who goes to a government hospital, will find infrastructure gaps such as the lack of an Xray machine and will be forced to go look for private facilities as explained by respondent K56. The same respondent further elaborated that suppliers circumvent policies and regulations to supply substandard drugs that endanger the public as money meant for the drugs is embezzled. This data shows a direct link between corruption and poor service delivery. When shortcuts are utilized due to corruption, the public is the one that ends up suffering. This confirms studies that have showed that corruption is linked to deteriorating public services (Ali S. M., 2018; Tarawallie, 2018; Shah, Thompson, & Heng-FU, 2004; Maina, 2013).

From the data, it appears that most laws and policies are broken to favor certain suppliers, who are utilized by public officials as conduits for embezzlement of funds, as expounded by respondent K55. He further explained that if the suppliers get a 60 to 90-day credit as per the county policies, some of them found ways of reducing this to 15 days, after submitting a certain percentage to their 'godfather' in the form of a bribe. He explained that these corruption shortcuts were common among MCAs who often pushed their way into supplying goods in the county governments and using their positions to blackmail the governors. Thus, the law of conflict of interest was ignored, at the expense of deteriorating public services. This situation provides evidence that supports empirical findings that show that procurement fraud mainly occurs through a conflict of interest where nondisclosure of interests happens, leading to poor services (Karuri, 2014). The data affirms studies that have revealed that making the culprits of such corruption to face the law is not easy, as most of them are local political leaders

who provide political protection for themselves and their accomplices (D'Arcy, 2016; Alfano, Baraldi, & Cantabene, 2020).

Further, respondent N30 explained that the MCAs often demanded to be bribed with international trips before approving county budgets. He explained that if the governors failed to accede to such requests, they were threatened with impeachment, and court cases, and this led to stalled projects and deteriorating public services. Thus, the data shows service delivery is hampered and little can move until the MCAs pass the budgets. The data is in line with studies that show that local elites are capable of causing local capture and increasing corruption levels (Opalo, 2020).

Respondents K33 and N31 shared that the county laws were 'meant to be broken' and the county officials are a law onto themselves. Respondent N31 narrated it thus:

> …*Sisi kanjo, ndio sheria*. All the cash we collect from these places should be taken to the revenue offices which we rarely do. This is the practice within all counties…These are the rules that govern us…*Hata wale wako ofisi, wanatumia printing paper ya serikali for personal work…Hata kwa tenders, kila mtu anajisaidia kivyake*.
>
> (We, as county enforcement officers, are the law. All the cash we collect from these places should be taken to the revenue offices which we rarely do. This is the practice within all the counties…These are the rules that govern us…Even those in offices, they use government printing paper for personal work…. Even, those dealing with tenders, everyone is helping themselves in their own way).

Thus, laws requiring that revenue be banked are not followed but replaced with unwritten laws where the money goes into individual pockets and officers use office supplies for personal work, which is against the human resource practices and regulations. Yet these resources (money and supplies) were meant for providing public services, hence their unavailability makes public services poor or inaccessible. Respondent K3 further explained that members of the public have to bribe to get licenses and permits, and that in tendering, the laws are not followed, as everyone helps 'themselves.' Respondent K35 further confirmed that:

> *Hapa sisi ndio sheria. Kuna wakubwa wetu ndio but huwa hatuingilii kazi ya wengine. Supervision yao sio mzuri. Alafu there is no fixed expected amount kila jioni. So, we can do a few tweaks here and there and survive. We hope hatutashikwa kwa sababu hiyo nayo mtu anaenda home.*
>
> (Here we are the law. We have bosses but we don't interfere with their work. Their supervision is not so good. There is no fixed expected amount that we

> must take to them every evening. So, we can do a few tweaks here and there and survive. We hope we will never be caught because we can be fired.)

The data shows that the revenue officers are the law. They decide how much to charge and how much to pocket. There is even an accepted culture of disregarding the law so that the bosses stay in their lane and the juniors stay in their lane, as long as money is flowing in between in the form of revenue theft and bribes. There is equally a culture of *see-no-evil hear-no-evil* with regard to the corruption culture that goes on. It is therefore not surprising that respondents such as N11 felt that crime pays within the counties and people are able to ignore laws that they find inconvenient without any consequences. Thus, corruption was the main activity and public service delivery was ignored. The data confirms studies that show that corruption in such situations breeds impunity and weakens devolved governments' public service delivery mechanisms (Kameir & Kursanyi, 1983; Alfano, Baraldi, & Cantabene, 2020).

Respondent K50 revealed incidents of laws that were enacted to defraud the public. He explained:

> …the county government set up a youth fund where all applicants were required to pay Kes 5,000 to be considered for a loan. Now, almost 60,000 youths applied, raising over Kes 300 million in application fees. Yet the county allocated only Kes 300 million for the fund, the excess money we paid as application fees, was stolen. Youth who got loans were goons and cronies of politicians and no procedures were followed to ensure they will repay the cash. Up to now, those youths have never repaid the money.

The data shows that over Kes 300 million was raised in application fees for the youth fund and the youth did not get adequate information on where the money went. The data also shows that some youths benefited due to their political connections and they have never repaid their loans to date. This puts to question the sustainability of such funds which are meant to uplift the standards of the youth in small scale enterprises by boosting their businesses. This begs the question if such loopholes are deliberately created to facilitate the theft of public funds at the expense of providing accessible and quality public services. As narrated by respondents K16, N36 and N38, the county laws and procedures on handling cash are equally broken to facilitate theft of public funds. Respondent N38 expounded:

> …funds are released without proper allocation or budgets, which is against the law. Also, the law discourages manual handling of cash and should be avoided at all times. Yet cash is always preferred to facilitate stealing. The cash is handled by a few selected cronies who are used as conduits to steal the money.

The data shows the release of funds without proper allocation and the manual handling of cash, which is handled by a few cronies, to facilitate the theft of public funds. When funds are embezzled, it means there will be less resources dedicated to public service delivery, leading to poor services. The data confirms studies from Kenya that show that misappropriation of budgets is endemic because there are people in power, who together with their cronies, utilize their offices for personal enrichment (Mogeni, 2009; D'Arcy, 2016; Awuor, 2014; Kimeu, 2014; Oyugi, 2006; Khamisi, 2018; Cannon & Ali, 2018; Kagwanja & Southall, 2009).

Respondent N55 who sounded disappointed and helpless about the corruption menace, shared that county officials who are supposed to enforce the laws, are always in cahoots with the police and extort bribes from motorists, instead of enforcing the law. This disregard for the county level policy instruments created a culture of fear and suspicion among the staff, as explained by respondent N16, who felt that staff did not know who to trust. This sense of fear was affirmed by the researcher, as potential respondents were initially hostile and unhelpful, keeping the researcher waiting for hours and refusing to share the list of suppliers to the counties. Most of them said "*sitaki kumwaga unga*" (that they do not wish to lose their daily bread) and it took some convincing to get them to cooperate. Public services being delivered in such an environment of fear and mistrust do not meet the SERVQUAL quality standards. This data confirms other studies that have shown that corruption research is not exactly welcomed or supported as respondents and researchers are often afraid of the personal risks involved in delving too much into corruption activities (Hess, 2020; Caiden, 2013; Prabowo, 2014; Toke, Arye, Hillman, & Qijun, 2020).

When it came to the application of county level policy instruments, respondent N6 and N9 felt that certain policies like those for waivers of interests were enacted to favor certain elite interests and consisted of individuals who were trying to evade taxes. Respondent N22 explained that influential businessmen do not pay their fair share of taxes within the counties, as they often collude with county officials for waivers in exchange for bribes. Respondent N27 specifically felt that there were separate laws for the poor and for the rich. She added:

> … *(laughing hysterically*)…Corruption will never be defeated, *tuishi tu nayo kama ukimwi* (we live with it like HIV/AIDS). In Kenya, the law is only for the poor as the influential individuals disregard the law and can bribe themselves out of any situation. They use the laws to facilitate corruption. There are cases where public officers, insert their associates in government payrolls where they offer absolutely no services to the county governments yet they receive salaries. There have been cases where money is disbursed to accounts of non-existent schools which are actually personal accounts of big wigs as bursary funds are stolen. In such cases, the county wastes money on services that were never received by the public…

Respondent N21 explained that the ghost workers problem in the counties exists because the human resource policies are not enforced and people steal public money because of impunity which starts at the top. The data further shows cases of bursary money being disbursed to non-existent schools but which are actually personal accounts of the big shots. From this situation, we see that bosses bloat the payroll with their friends and relatives, in total disregard of the human resources policies, and also steal bursary funds with impunity, without a care about the impact this will have on public service delivery. Also, the fact that the rich get away with disregarding the law, means that laws are utilized to perpetuate corruption. The data affirms studies showing that corruption breeds impunity and weakens public service delivery (Kameir & Kursanyi, 1983; Alfano, Baraldi, & Cantabene, 2020).

Respondent K6 narrated that the consequences of the impunity and failure to adhere to laws and policies had drastic effects on public service delivery within the two counties and could lead to organized crime, money laundering and terrorism. He said such outcomes could easily destabilize the economies of Kiambu and Nairobi City counties and undermine the stability of the devolved governments generally. The data confirms studies that show that corruption in Kenya has reached a scale where it has increased the county's risk to terrorism, since anyone can be bought (Kanyinga, 2016; Khamisi, 2018; AG, 2018).

Respondent K41 argued that failure to implement laws and policies was to blame for the increasing cases of embezzlement in the counties. He said:

> *Tender wakubwa wanapiga hesabu yao and they don't care about public service delivery. If you have no hela to bribe them, you will die in the house my friend… The President should do something about county corruption, pesa inakuliwa tu*

> *akiangalia. He should sack those county officers, and jail them, and return stolen funds to the public…Information about vaccines like Covid-19 come late to us…even Covid-19 awareness is not done… usaidizi, iko na wenyewe …we are like cows made to graze on the grass, with no helper...* (The bosses do their mathematics when it comes to tenders and they do not care about public service delivery. If you have no money to bribe them, you will die in the house my friend… The President should do something about county corruption because money is being stolen as he is watching. He should sack those county officers, and jail them, and return stolen funds to the public…Information about vaccines like Covid-19 come late to us…even Covid-19 awareness is not done… help is not forth coming…we are like cows made to graze on the grass, with no helper...)

The data shows the top bosses do not care about public services but about how much money they will make from the tenders. Those who cannot bribe are left out of the deals. The public looks up to the President to take action by sacking and jailing the corrupt and returning the stolen funds so that public services may improve. This aspect of the data shows a lack of public awareness on the part of the public in terms of knowing which functions are performed by the county governments and which ones are performed by the national government. This gap is not surprising given this study's findings on corruption in conducting civic education forums in the counties. Thus, the President is blamed for services that are supposed to be provided at county level by the devolved governments and carries the blame for corruption within the county level policy instruments, instead of laying the blame on the county leadership led by the governors and the county speakers. Nevertheless, the data confirms reports that have shown that the national government has incorporated indicators for corruption eradication in the performance contracts of staff in the devolved governments, with the President and the judiciary specifically making serious attempts to ensure public officers that are charged with corruption, particularly governors, step aside from their positions until cleared (Kempe Ronald Hope, 2013).

During the focus group discussions, respondent N61 pointed out that corruption in county level laws and policies had the effect of discriminating against women, especially with the new Covid-19 regulations that caused the collapse of many women run businesses. She shared:

> …women are not aware of policies targeting them. With covid, we wake up and find new rules, because society has made it difficult for women. We are seen as inferior and incapable, yet so many policies affect us and when there is corruption within those policies, we are the ones affected the most. They always

> lump us together with the youth and disabled but we are more marginalized. Our small businesses have closed due to Covid-19 regulations that stipulate we must close early due to the curfews. But our customers are evening customers, how do we cope? We also have lactating mothers who have no access to lactating facilities because the county has none, which is not a priority for the men. They do not accept pregnant women when hiring, so you wonder where we are supposed to go. The counties have designed areas for smoking but no designated areas for lactating. We don't smoke, all we want is to breastfeed our kids. Why do smokers have more rights than us? We are forced to bribe if we are caught on the wrong side of the law. Corruption is rooted in society and the government talk of eradicating it, is not sincere. We must start from the younger generation, teach them that corruption is bad and teach them about the implications of not tackling it. We must also start with ourselves. If my mother goes to hospital and finds a big queue and I talk to someone and pay 100 bob (Kes 100) for her to jump the line, I am being corrupt. We should consider stopping this behavior…

The data shows that women were adversely affected by the new Covid-19 curfew regulations which required them to close their businesses early and this affected their livelihoods. From the data, the women were not consulted or informed of these measures. Thus, women were disregarded by county policy making processes. Respondent N57 explained that when policies and laws are enacted without involving the people it affects, and procedures introduced without consulting them, it creates room for corruption. Thus, women did not have access to lactating facilities, as they were not consulted on their needs, while men had designed smoking areas. When the women were caught on the wrong side of the law, they had no choice but to bribe. The data shows that corruption is deeply rooted in society and the public do not trust the government when it says that it will eradicate it. The respondent felt that corruption can best be tackled by the younger generation, who need to be inculcated with the right values, and that change starts with us individually doing the right thing and stopping the corruption. Respondent N1 also shared experiences on the 30% tenders for women, youth and the disabled in the devolved governments and said that "*kwa*-ground *vindu-ni* different" (on the ground things are different). She complained that individual interests had pervaded the processes and non-deserving cases were the ones benefitting. This shows that public services had become poor and inaccessible. The data affirms studies from the rest of the world which showed that women are often left out of critical policy making processes due to entrenched discrimination and patriarchy in society (Bjarnegard, 2018).

On the issue of critical infrastructure such as ICT, respondent N1 felt that such systems were deliberately anchored on weak laws and policies to make it easier for cartels to utilize them to commit cybercrimes through internal collusion. The respondent rooted for self-execution systems and fool proof ICT systems to root out corruption in devolved governments. Respondent N57 gave the example of cybercrimes and pyramid schemes where members of the public lost money daily due to various scams but the county governments watched as people were being conned. He said this was an area requiring regulation but the chief architects of these scams were 'untouchable' people who acted with impunity and could not be prosecuted. This means that the public lost faith in the government's ability to provide public services. Thus, any services provided by the government would fall short of the SERVQUAL standard of reliability and responsiveness. The data confirms studies that have blamed the failure of current anticorruption approaches for being based on *interventionism* where people are arrested after the corrupt act, and *managerialism* where governments tighten processes and procedures to seal gaps in anticorruption legislation and policies (Beyerle, 2014; Albrecht, 2017).

Respondent K20 reported the presence of corruption within the county, where the alcoholic drinks control fund was not accounted for as stipulated in the county's Alcoholic Control Act. He further explained that county level policies on the control of alcoholic drinks were ignored as bars that are not supposed to run for 24 hours were busy running for 24 hours after getting special licenses and special protection from the county officials through bribery. The respondent additionally revealed that counties rarely defended themselves in court and this weakened the enforcement of their own laws. Such situations also made opportunists to take advantage and bring up phony cases, where they went ahead and got orders against the county governments. He mentioned that such cases were ideal opportunities for county government officials to embezzle public funds, as the counties end up paying other parties a lot of money. Thus, when public funds were embezzled, public service delivery would deteriorate due to lack of adequate financial resources to provide the services. The data supports reports that show that devolved governments scored poorly in the World Rule of Law index, which ranked Kenya in position 101 out of 126 countries in 2019 and where ordinary Kenyans in the counties scored the devolved governments against several factors, including absence of corruption (World Justice Project, 2019).

Respondent N19 noted that the failure to implement the constitution fully by devolving services beyond the wards, was the root cause of the corruption culture within the counties. He argued that public officials preferred to handle all the money decisions at the headquarters and this was where corruption was centralized. Thus, he argued that there was need to ensure counties decentralized their services beyond the wards. This was supported by respondent K4 who said that he had suffered a lot in terms of service delivery as he was forced to travel from ward to ward looking for licenses yet the law says he should get services close to where he lives. This position is in line with the requirements of the delivery of public services in the devolved governments of Kenya, which is governed by the County Government Act, 2012. The Act outlines the public service delivery principles in the counties, vesting county governments with the legal mandate to provide public services within their geographical jurisdictions (Oluoch, 2016). These principles include the need to offer accessible and quality services, bearing in mind the principle of subsidiarity between the two levels of government (Omoyefa, 2008; Mogeni, 2009; Wagana, 2017). The counties are also expected to adhere to the public service delivery standards, which stipulate that priority must be given to the basic needs of the public, and that devolved governments must ensure all citizens have access to basic services (Adamtey, Obeng, & Sarpong, 2020; Olowu & Wunsch, 2004; Wagana, 2017). The standards provide that, services shall be delivered efficiently, effectively, and sustainably and be of good quality (KLR, 2020; Ochieng, 2018). These standards require that county governments have tariffs and pricing policies for the provision of all public services, and that these tariffs and pricing policies must be friendly to poor households, who have a right to access essential services (KLR, 2020; Ochieng, 2018). Additionally, the Act and the Kenya Constitution 2010 require that county governments devolve their services to the village level.

The data shows that unclear county policy instruments are also responsible for some of the corruption within the devolved governments, as members of the public do not have access to the laws and regulations within their counties, as narrated by respondent K17 who said that county officials take advantage of this fact to levy unofficial charges (bribes) on members of the public. Respondent N57 added that although counties had publicly displayed service delivery charters, there was no published list of the cost of

the services to the public. Thus, the public was vulnerable to overcharging from corrupt public officials, who pocket the balance. He further explained that non-issuance of receipts and fake receipting is not flagged by the members of the public due to ignorance. Respondent K3 explained that this one of the conduits utilized by county officials to steal revenue, right under the noses of the public. Respondents K3 and N57 noted that the public always blamed the counties when an issue of corruption arises, as public service delivery standards and procedures kept changing, which created confusion. Thus, members of the public utilized the confusion to bribe and jump queues, as explained by respondent N4, who also said:

> …we use rapid results initiatives as cash cows to milk money from the public coffers. We just create them to make allowances for ourselves and to steal the rest of the money. Service delivery charters are meaningless as those with money for bribing circumvent them. We need a radical policy shift to tackle corruption in the counties as it is not ending any time soon...

The data shows that county officials utilize rapid results initiatives to create allowances for themselves and to steal public monies. The data also shows that service delivery charters are disregarded as long as one can bribe. This means that services would be inaccessible to those who cannot bribe. The data clearly identifies corruption as a huge problem within the counties and the respondent acknowledges that a radical policy shift is needed if corruption in the counties is to be tackled. According to John Kingdon's multiple streams framework, the identification of the corruption issue by the members of the public and other critical stakeholders, as an area that requires intervention by the government, is one of the critical steps in the formation of a problem stream. Thus, the identification of the corruption problem in this data is an important step that shows the maturation of John Kingdon's problem stream. However, since there was no policy solution in the data and the politics stream had not crystallized yet, no policy windows were likely to open up any time soon.

In the light of the commons theory, the county level policy instruments are supposed to safeguard the commons (public money) from being stolen but the data shows that the policy instruments are actually doing the opposite and promoting corruption. Respondent K15 explains this situation by postulating that the county laws and policies were formulated by individuals who were conflicted as there is no way they would make laws to empower the public and deny themselves the powers they need to continue practicing corruption. Respondent K4 explains this in these words:

> …Buildings are collapsing a lot due to corruption within the building policies. The engineers are being bribed to look the other way as the public suffer and lose their lives when buildings collapse…The counties also do not adhere to the law on ensuring they employ minority communities.

The data shows that buildings are collapsing despite the presence of building policies due to engineers being bribed to look the other way. Thus, poor services were provided by the planning departments. Counties are also not adhering to laws on employment of minority communities. Respondent N48 opined that the judiciary was not facilitating the implementation of the county level policy instruments and the county courts were merely clearing grounds for bribes to the county officials. Thus, respondent N54 felt the county level policy instruments were tools of corruption. He narrated:

> … corrupt officials do not adhere to the county laws and regulations…there's no proper enforcement and people get away with it because they can bribe the policymakers and law enforcers… corruption is what makes services to the public unaffordable and unreachable. Forensic auditing should be carried out in the counties and enforcement of the laws needs to be prioritized…This research is a beautiful gesture. I wish the research much success in helping us tackle corruption and hope it gets published.

Thus, disregard for the laws due to corruption was the major problem that made services unaffordable and unreachable for members of the public. The data calls for forensic audits, enforcement of the laws and more research in this area, to tackle corruption. The data confirms studies showing that corruption causes disregard of laws and breeds impunity (Mutula, Muna, & Koma, 2013).

The data is further reinforced by information from respondent N23 who narrated incidents where the law was utilized by county enforcement officers to extort bribes from members of the public who had not broken any law. He explained:

> …today as I alighted from one *matatu* (public transport) at the OTC bus stop, a county *askari* (enforcement officer) tells his colleague, "…*songa hii ni ngombe yangu…*" (move, this is my cow to milk for money). …so, we passengers alight as the *askari* collects 100 bob (Kes 100) from the conductor… Unfortunately, there are no hotlines for whistleblowers like me to report this kind of corruption…

Thus, county enforcement officers collected protection fees from the public service vehicles and there were no whistleblowing mechanisms for members of the public to report this kind of corruption, unlike in Nigeria where whistleblowing was utilized to

recover stolen public resources (Salihu, 2019). This situation led to poor services and inaccessible services for those who could not pay the 'protection fees.'

The data paints a picture of private businesses at the mercy of the county governments, for without bribing, they could not survive. Thus, the respondents had varied views on how corruption within the county could be eradicated. Some respondents felt a county like Nairobi City should be a metropolis with devolved decision making to grassroot structures, as this would remove biases and ensure the public got accessible and quality public services. Respondent K16 supported this view and added that there is need to revise the laws and policies against corruption within the counties, and institute a system of accountability to ensure the public gets quality services. Respondent N11 opined that bureaucratic levels in offices need to be cut down to increase efficiency, and vouched for the installation of suggestion boxes for the public to give their views. He also recommended computerization and automation of payments and government processes, with receipts being issued after every payment.

Several respondents lauded this research for its boldness to tackle corruption within devolved governments in Kenya. Respondent N50 specifically found the research to be "a very thoughtful deed. Kenya needs solutions to mitigate corruption." Respondent N54 also said the research is "…a beautiful gesture, I wish the research much success and hope it gets published." Respondent K26 said, "…in my view, more research should be done on corruption and appropriate action taken on corrupt officials." Respondent K25 had similar sentiments, while respondent N2 advised that:

> …as a country we will remain static if we do not change our mindset and come up with solutions to deal with corruption… We need to recognize and identify corruption as a problem within county governments. The Judiciary should ensure *bona fide* application of the laws regulating corruption without compromise or favoritism…

Thus, he vouched for change of mindset among the members of the public, the recognition of the corruption problem in the devolved governments and the independence of the judiciary in applying the laws on corruption. Some respondents, however, were disillusioned, like respondent N27 who shared:

> … (laughing hysterically)… In Kenya, the law is only for the poor…Corruption will never be defeated, *tuishi tu nayo kama ukimwi* (we live with it like HIV/AIDs).

Thus, to him, the law applies only for the poor in Kenya and corruption will never end, so we will have to learn to co-exist with it, the way people co-exist with HIV/AIDs. Respondent N9 reinforced this view by noting that mounting evidence now points largely to corruption being the biggest challenge to public service delivery and development in the counties. He added that the existing county level policy instruments were adequate in fighting corruption and what the counties needed were leaders who are committed to fighting corruption for the greater good of the people. This position was affirmed by national leaders such as the Right Hon. Raila Odinga and President Uhuru Kenyatta during the 7th devolution conference, where they decried that Kenyans had devolved corruption to the counties and public services were deteriorating (The Presidency, 2021; Odinga, 2021; Star, 2022; Posta Mate, 2021).

When we analyze this data in the light of the institutional theory, we note that government as an institution is the one that birthed the institutionalization of new devolved governments in Kenya, in accordance with the Kenya 2010 constitution. This institutionalization process saw the counties emerge and it also brought forth the deinstitutionalization of entities that are no longer considered part of government and those that belonged to the defunct local authorities. Based on this data, it appears that some of the practices of these abolished entities that involved corruption may have been carried forward during transition and become part and parcel of the new structures created in the devolved governments (Peterson & Peters, 2020). In this regard, corruption and poor service delivery practices may have been passed on to the devolved governments from the old entities. Thus, the entrenchment of corruption within the devolved governments, despite the presence of deterrent measures and deterrent structures in the form of laws, policies, procedures, rules, regulations, guidelines, practices and service delivery charters, is worrying and there is need to look at the structural and historical root causes in order to address this problem more comprehensively.

This data is also similar to studies done elsewhere that found that devolved governments utilized various policy instruments to curb corruption, most of them borrowed from national and international frameworks (Damania, Sterner, & Whittington, 2020). This is expected of devolved governments from an institutional theory point of view, as they tend to duplicate each other's structures for survival, through mimetic isomorphism by

looking at peers for behavioral clues. According to the theory, devolved governments utilize policy instruments to solve problems (Berthod, 2018). The data however shows that corruption is embedded within the policy instruments and instead of solving the problem, they have become tools of corruption.

In line with the commons theory, the policy level instruments are put in place to safeguard the commons (budgets) but this is not happening as they are being utilized to deplete the commons and create externalities (corruption). No user with access to the budgets has any incentive to limit their stealing and even those obtaining bribes from the public, have no motivation to limit it, thus leading to the tragedy of the commons and the total collapse of public services. County level policy instruments are supposed to curb the externalities of corruption that are created by the use of the commons but the data shows this is not happening. Thus, a tragedy of the commons is likely to occur if corruption within the counties is not tackled adequately.

From the perspective of John Kingdon's multiple streams framework, it is clear from the data that the laws and policies which are supposed to provide solutions within the policy stream to tackle the corruption problem within the counties, are no longer working and there is need to reconceptualize alternative solutions. Unlike studies done in China, there are no sanctions in Kenya's devolved system of government that are tied to budgetary cycles, thus counties get away with mismanagement of funds for five years of every administration, unless the national bodies mandated with fighting corruption such as EACC and DCIO step in. Further, the performance management tools that are supposed to hold the counties to account on levels of public service delivery are hardly implemented or are implemented haphazardly, leading to more pain for the citizens. Additionally, the whistleblowing policy instrument has not been utilized within the counties as was the case in Nigeria (Salihu, 2019). The data also shows no lifestyle audits have been done in the counties, as happened in South Africa.

4.3.4.2 Regulations and rules

Respondents K30 and N33 decried the lack of anticorruption structures and enforcement capabilities within the county that could be utilized to fight corruption at the devolved level in a bid to improve public service delivery. Recent research on public sector corruption in Kenya found that counties had not put in place any structures,

regulations, rules, measures or initiatives to fight corruption (National Crime Research Centre, 2018).

Respondents K30 and N33 shared that the regulations and rules for curbing corruption were mainly national level policy instruments and these were rarely enforced, as parties involved in these deals, were powerful people and there was the feeling that these were national level, not county level. Respondent N21 particularly felt the counties had abandoned the anticorruption war to the national government agencies such as the EACC and DCIO. He said in the absence of county level structures, regulations and rules to tackle corruption, a big void is created and a lot of things can happen in the process. He argued that cartels are quick to take advantage of such situations, for their own benefit, and impact public service delivery negatively. In his own words:

> …cartels utilize such opportunities to award themselves licenses, business permits, lucrative tenders and even receive bribes on behalf of government officials. They enjoy it when county governments and national government laws are in conflict, so they can take advantage to operate with impunity. This happens a lot in the alcoholic drinks and betting control subsectors.

Respondent N34 further explained:

> *Policy instruments are the weakest links in the fight against corruption. Kupita a certain road in the city centre, just kupita once, I must pay 500 bob to kaju. Imagine napita hiyo road more than 30 times per day. Si hio ni fleecing me to death?*
>
> (Policy instruments are the weakest links for corruption. To pass a certain road in the city centre, just passing there once, I must pay Kes 500 to the county enforcement officers. Imagine I pass that road more than 30 times per day. Isn't that fleecing me to death?)

Thus, from this data, it was clear that regulations and rules were being utilized to extort bribes from the public instead of maintaining law and order. Public transport vehicles had to pay protection money to the county enforcement officers, just to pass through a specific road. The amount was high and the operators complained of being fleeced to death. This shows that corruption affected public service delivery adversely as it made it inaccessible and unaffordable to those who cannot bribe. Respondent N14 agreed with this position and said that corruption in the counties was too rampant and changing it would require societal efforts and a lot of time. He expressed frustration that counties do not run a meritocratic system in these words:

> Corruption is too engrained in the DNA of the counties. It is like a virus that is very difficult to remove. It requires everyone's effort and society's intervention and it takes time…Corruption sucks. It is not a good thing. How I wish we could get everything through merit, but unfortunately, this is Kenya…The counties should make improvements on geographical reach by building offices at the local levels to offer services. We need full devolution for services to reach *wananchi* (public) and stop this corruption.

The data shows corruption is deeply entrenched in the devolved governments' organizational culture and could be compared to a virus that is difficult to remove. The public recognizes that it requires time and everyone's efforts to remove it, if public services are to improve. Thus, a problem stream is present, according to John Kingdon's multiple streams framework and what is now required is a policy and politics stream, which would couple to create a policy window for corruption to be uprooted. The respondent is alive to the existing corruption within the Kenyan society in general and blames corruption within the counties for the devolved governments' failure to fully devolve services to the grassroots. The data recommends anticorruption approaches that favor devolution as an anticorruption strategy and supports the current theoretical and empirical literature which supports the view that devolution would reduce corruption (Fisman & Gatti, 2002; Shon & Cho, 2020; Chalil, 2020; Cloutier, 2017; Sekkat K, 2018).

Respondent N36 blamed the existing county regulations and rules for being weak and failing to reign in corruption. He explained that:

> Corruption is everywhere in the counties, in the markets, matatus, lands, schools, even in the offices. The most affected are the poor as they cannot afford the unofficial charges. All we need to do is enforce the existing laws to ensure everyone receives accessible and quality services. The government should also ensure the people from different parts of Kenya but residing in the county receive equal treatment and reduce this bribery thing. Manual handling of cash should be avoided and everything made electronic and staff working in those areas to be limited, with monthly, quarterly and yearly reporting done to the public to show how funds were allocated and utilized. We should have limited staff working in the office to reduce such cases. *Tupunguze ukora jameni* (let's limit this criminality please).

The data shows that corruption is rampant in every sector of the county governments and affects those who are poor mostly, as they are the ones who cannot afford to bribe and who are then locked out of public services. The data supports enforcement of current laws as the solution to curbing corruption in the counties. This means ensuring

equal treatment for all Kenyans residing in the counties, avoiding the manual handling of cash in the counties and availing periodic reports to the public. Similar views were shared by respondent N12:

> …(laughing)…you can't use the law to cover up wrong doing, the law is strict and against corruption, so *huwezi cheza na sheria* (you can't play with the law)… some people have failed to follow the law and they rely on their own thinking and use corruption for their own personal interests and gains…some practices like *chai* (bribery) is a daily routine in our office…it is a chain of people from the bottom to the top (laughing)…I hope *wewe sio* DCIO" (I hope you are not Directorate of Criminal Investigations Officers)…*Umalizane na mimi kwanza* (finish with me first, meaning give me a bribe).

Thus, the data shows that public officials carry on with corruption, in spite of the presence of national level regulations and rules that strictly forbid them from engaging in it. This ultimately negatively impacts public service delivery.

Respondent K56 narrated that county governments spent a lot of money on salaries and recurrent expenditure at the expense of development, which is contrary to the controller of budget's regulations which stipulate that a county government must not spend over 35% of its budgets on salaries. He revealed that this occurs because the counties find it easier to steal from recurrent budgets and fill the workforce with ghost workers and bloated staff after receiving bribes. Respondent N36 further explained that this corruption extends to the theft of revenues, as most of the revenue collected in the counties, is not banked, contrary to the Public Finance Management (PFM) Act 2012 which requires all revenues to be banked into the County Revenue Fund. Respondent N62 additionally reported that many counties operate over 30 bank accounts, which is illegal, as such accounts are deliberately set up to facilitate the theft of public monies. When such money is stolen, it impacts service delivery as funds for providing public services will no longer be available. The data tallies with studies that have shown that embezzlement occurs mainly through the theft of revenues at source and the insertion of ghost workers in payrolls, which ultimately affects public services (Bhagwan, 2014; Arends, 2020; Otieno, 2018).

Respondent N7 explained that counties flout rules on expenditure ceilings, in order to steal monies. He argued that over expenditure on projects is caused by embezzlement, which leads to pending bills and more looting of public funds. He said cases of suppliers quoting over the budget also leads to white elephant projects, which are complete on

paper but do not exist on the ground. This means that the public do not get the service which has been paid for. The respondent further decried the level of illiteracy and ignorance among members of the public who are made to sign attendance registers, for non-existent public functions, which are then utilized to siphon money by public officials. This shows lack of service delivery yet money has been paid. Respondent K51 explained this was made possible by the collusion of a small clique of hotels and suppliers. Respondent N6 complained that the common man is not involved in the decision making due to corruption, as the counties ignore the laws on public participation.

4.3.4.3 Procedures, guidelines and practices

Respondent N25 reported that bribery practices were a normal occurrence in offices, as hierarchies of public officials supported the practices, without regard to the need to prioritize public service delivery. The respondent hoped that the researcher was not a DCIO officer and wanted to be bribed for his information. The data demonstrates that in spite of the counties adopting various guidelines and procedures from the national government that include the vetting of public officers, wealth declarations, lifestyle audits, witness protection, whistleblowing and monitoring of bank accounts that are held overseas by public officials, corruption in the counties, was still rampant and affecting public service delivery (Munyao, 2019).

This position was further confirmed by respondent N26 who felt that the guidelines, practices and procedures in the county governments were there for the sake of having them but not really adhered to. For example, he said there was a requirement that a company applying for a tender must have been operational for the past six months, which was often ignored as companies less than one month old got tenders and at the same time those that have been operational for at least a year were disqualified. The respondent felt that a service delivered by an experienced company was better than one delivered by a company that had no experience, as the public would get quality services. Respondent N26 additionally pointed out that the credibility of those who sat in the tendering boards was wanting, as county policies were not followed in their appointment. He said the boards were filled with individuals who were corrupted, at the expense of public service delivery. Consequently, the deliberate disregard of county level guidelines and procedures led to more corruption and poor service delivery for the

residents. The data supports available studies that show that policy instruments often aid corruption in the absence of effective oversight from the public (Mutula, Muna, & Koma, 2013).

Respondents such as N7 reported that bribery was a common routine and it was often practiced to avoid guidelines and procedures that had been put in place by the devolved governments. Thus, someone needing a favor to jump the procedures would bribe so that the county officials would look the other way. This means public services would not be accessible to those who could not bribe. Respondent N7 explained that this bribing also involved incidents where criminal offenses had been committed, such as assaulting of hawkers. He gave the example of county enforcement officers who had clobbered a hawker to death and how the entire case was swept under the carpet due to money changing hands. The case was widely reported in the media and the county government has attempted to rebrand the enforcement team, in a bid to make the scandal go away (Chacha, 2016; Omulo, 2021).

Respondent K53 narrated that many officials working in the counties were unqualified, as their main role was to award tenders to specific cronies. Due to this, he explained that many suppliers were afraid of making any supplies during the last year before the elections, since the new government may decide not to pay them and obtain their own new suppliers. Respondent K5 further reported on the disregard for human resource policies when it came to allocation of 'lucrative postings' (those that allowed staff to extort bribes and pocket revenues). She claimed many staff had been employed as mosquito catchers but were now in the lucrative function of 'revenue collection' even though they did not have the skills or qualifications to do such work. In this way, county level human resource policies were ignored in a bid to perpetuate corruption. Thus, corruption within the organizational culture made the officials disregard procedures and guidelines to hire officials who were qualified and allocate work to those who are unqualified, with the sole purpose of perpetuating corruption within the revenue and tendering system, at the expense of providing quality public services. Respondent K3 reported that nearly everyone trying to get a job had to bribe for it and this was not a guarantee, as they still needed connections. Thus, even the technical expertise of the

staff was questionable, as they may not be in a position to provide quality public services.

This disregard for county policy instruments extended to the legislature where self-interest took precedence. Respondent N62 explained:

> MCAs have collective personal interests which they protect when passing laws. For example, there was this time that MCAs refused to pass the finance bill in order to blackmail the governor to allocate them some money for their ward fund which had been declared illegal by the courts. They also allocated themselves money for bench marking on dairy farming in Rwanda only to travel to Rwanda to learn that Rwanda benchmarks their dairy farming from Kiambu, which was a shameful waste of resources. There are laws in the county against misuse of public funds but they are ignored with impunity. In most counties the MCAs black mail governors to give them money and if he refuses, they try to impeach him. But when they receive the money then he is praised as the best. Unless we address these teething problems in devolution, then corruption will be permanent and institutionalized in the counties…

The data shows the disregard of county level guidelines and procedures where counties hire unqualified staff and MCAs demand to be allocated funds illegally and use their political powers to threaten the governor with impeachment. Due to impunity, the MCAs from Kiambu went to Rwanda to benchmark on an area where Rwanda benchmarks from Kiambu, which was a huge embarrassment and waste of public funds. The county treasuries are supposed to review expenditure on travel and subsistence allowances to ensure it is credible and institute control measures to curtail this kind of unnecessary expenditure and avoid wasteful spending, in line with county level budgetary policies but these were clearly ignored. This also shows poor service delivery. The data confirms studies showing failure to reign in corruption breeds impunity and has an adverse effect on public services (Kurer, 1993; Tanzi, 1998; Persson, Rothstein, & Teorell, 2012; Garduno, 2018).

Respondent K22 explained how public officers steal time meant for public service delivery as follows:

> *There is this notion ya public that we work 8 hours a day. That is, in real sense, far from the truth. We can easily work 3 hours per day. Ambazo hata in real sense, unaweza pata 3 hours of the 8 ni za lunch, 1 hour tea break, meaning the mwananchi will only be served 3 hours a day and ikifika 4.00 pm wengine wetu kama mimi huwa already ready to leave the office and some as early as 3.30 pm.*(There is this notion from the public that we work 8 hours a day. That is, in real sense, far from the truth. We can easily work 3 hours per day. You can find that 3 hours of the 8 is for lunch, 1 hour is for tea break, meaning the public will

> only be served 3 hours a day and when it reaches 4.00 p.m some of us like me, are already ready to leave the office and some leave as early as 3.30 pm).

The respondent further explained that this situation facilitated corruption, as those who bribed were the ones who were given priority during the few hours that the public officers worked. The data shows the culture at the counties is for staff to waste time on lunches and breaks, which is against the human resource practices, at the expense of the delivery of public services. In fact, according to respondent K19, the professionals working in the counties, were the weakest link in the fight against corruption, as they exhibited this behavior and engaged in corruption. He elaborated:

> The accountants, engineers and lawyers facilitate corruption by using their *ujaja* (knowledge) to evade the county level laws, policies and regulations. For example, public work engineers use their skills to make bills of quantities that comply with the law but circumvent the system to ensure they are able to steal funds. As such corruption is not a war that scholars and the civil society will win anytime soon…

Thus, specialist bureaucrats would utilize their knowledge for corruption, instead of public service delivery. The data paints a picture of impunity as procedures, guidelines and practices, were not respected. Respondent K42 casually told the researcher that "here, procedures are not followed" and money is used to solve any problem with the procedures, as policies are selectively applied for those with money to get away with it, while those without money suffered the consequences. This is in contrast to Section 232 of the 2010 Kenya Constitution which provides for the values and principles of public service which are applicable to county governments. They include the need to maintain high ethical standards, the economic and effective use of public resources, and the need to involve the public in the process of decision making. Further, the Leadership and Integrity Act 2012 provides that public officers must respect the Constitution and avoid activities that amount to abuse of office or misuse of public funds. It also out laws conflicts of interest in tendering process within the public office in which a public officer is serving. Furthermore, the county governments are required to promote transparency and provide accurate information to the public for fair competition and merit in recruitment and promotions; and opportunities for all genders, ethnic groups and people with disabilities. Thus, the county governments were not following these guidelines and practices.

Interdepartmental procedures were not spared as reported by respondent K13 who gave examples of how some departments who held key passwords and processes such as for IFMIS or county treasuries would require a bribe to get a signature or authority to withdraw money. Thus, any department that required the services would have to budget for the bribe money separately. This clearly made public services inaccessible to those who could not bribe. This data confirms studies in Nigeria that showed that bribery was so pervasive among government ministries that other government ministries would have to bribe the Ministry of Finance to get their allocation of funds (Kayode, Adagba, & Anyio, 2013; Abasili & Akinboye, 2019).

Respondents N37 and K26 explained that many county guidelines such as those forbidding spitting in public, no dumping of litter and zebra crossings were utilized to extort bribes from members of the public. Thus, when members of the public were caught on the wrong side of the law, they were faced with no choice but to bribe, to be let go. Respondent K26 further talked of the selective application of the law, as senior people who were arrested for breaking Covid-19 regulations such as not wearing a mask or being found outside curfew hours, were usually released after paying something small (bribe) to the county enforcement officers, while the poor who could not afford to bribe, were locked up. This situation was extended to traffic offenses and supplier payments, such that those who had traffic offenses paid bribes to get away with it, while those suppliers who wanted to be paid, had to pay a bribe to get their payments released, as narrated by K26. In his own words, he said, *pesa humulikwa na pesa* (money is used to produce other money) so the suppliers had no choice but to bribe, if they wanted their payment. He also argued that when there is corruption, laws are not followed and the only law followed in the counties, is the law of money. Thus, public services were inaccessible to those who did not have money. He further expounded:

> Over-speeding and having unroadworthy vehicles are the norm nowadays. Laws have been passed on the essential things that a car should have before it is used on the public roads but these are not followed. The road *askaris* (county enforcement officers) will take as low as 50 shillings and allow a car that is not roadworthy and could cause an accident to go scot-free. This leads to increased accidents, loss of lives and increased expenses to the public because of the medical bills and healthcare costs in hospitals… According to the procurement laws, payment should be done after successful delivery of services. In these counties, many projects are paid when they are incomplete. The contractor then decides to not complete the project. This leads to a lot of unfinished infrastructure like hospitals, schools and roads. The public therefore have no

> access to the services. They are forced to look for alternative means which could be expensive. In my view, more research should be done on corruption and appropriate action taken on corrupt officials…

Thus, corruption within the enforcement of county guidelines left unroadworthy vehicles on the roads, which caused accidents, loss of lives and extra strains on the economy in terms of healthcare costs and other expenses. Suppliers were also paid without having completed the projects, causing losses to the public, as the public had to find alternative ways of getting the services they were denied through incomplete projects. Respondent K25 added that the suppliers often circumvented the laws by supplying hot air and walking free, with no consequences to their actions, due to the impunity and protection from the county government officials. Both respondents called for more research on corruption and appropriate action on corrupt officials. The data is in line with studies from Kenya that show that embezzlement often occurs through the payment of suppliers for incomplete projects or non-delivered goods and services (Mutangili, 2019).

The data shows that the public have given up on the eradication of corruption from the counties and feel that they have to co-exist with it, just like they co-exist with other diseases such as HIV/AIDS. The public also feel the laws are only for the poor, as the rich can bribe themselves out of any situation. The data shows that government officials embezzle public funds by inserting their cronies into the payrolls as ghost workers and they end up receiving salaries but offering no services. This adversely affects public service delivery.

The data shows that the counties tended to copy each other's practices, as far as disregard to county level guidelines was concerned. This is not surprising, given that they are both government institutions, and they more or less have similar procedures, guidelines and practices. According to institutional theory, governments are mimetic and tend to copy each other's practices, so it was likely the two counties copied each other's practices, as they border each other. However, it is worrying when governments copy bad practices such as corruption from each other. While respondent N51 explained that there are internal audit departments in each county to oversight expenditures and ensure such practices are not copied, it was disheartening to note that these staff were political appointees who could not overrule the decisions of their appointing authorities.

Thus, they could only watch as county level policy instruments were disregarded and corruption continued within the counties and public services deteriorated.

Respondent K8 talked of the practice where delays by counties of paying salaries and remitting statutory deductions for staff, caused untold suffering. He said that monies were often diverted to pay favored suppliers, as staff suffered. This forced staff, especially those in critical functions such as healthcare, to demand bribes from the public to sustain themselves and to go on strike. This had a drastic effect on public services as desperate members of the public faced dire situations while accessing care.

Further, respondent K8 explained the practice of suppliers not paid on time, forced them to bribe in order to get paid, which means they had to always overquote their prices to recover the lost monies through bribery, thus creating a vicious circle of corruption. This made public services expensive as the public paid for services at inflated costs. Respondent K20 also explained that procurement guidelines were often ignored and tenders awarded to staff or to those who gave kickbacks. Thus, there was service denial to those who could not bribe.

Although the counties have borrowed most of their county level policy instruments from the national government, the study found that most of these instruments were not adhered to. The data showed that even policy instruments passed at the county level by the county assemblies were not fully implemented. The data also shows that performance of public officers was not tagged to their integrity and there were hardly any sanctions for those caught with corruption. Further, many of the county level policy instruments in both counties, were similar to local policy instruments in other parts of the world, as they emphasized law enforcement and judicial action, with the only difference being that in Kenya, these laws were rarely enforced and judicial action was intermittent. This adversely affected public service delivery.

The researcher has therefore designed an anticorruption scorecard to help the counties deal with corruption. This is the researcher's original contribution to the body of knowledge and practice. The proposed scorecard is shown on **Appendix A21.**

4.3.5 Effect of public awareness

This study believes that public awareness is a critical aspect of accountability as it empowers the public to oversight devolved governments and ensure corruption does

not take root (Novi, Piacenza, Robone, & Turati, 2019). However, the findings from this study show a dire lack of public awareness, and that the relationship between the drivers of corruption (organizational culture, bureaucratic procedures, information processing, county level policy instruments) and public service delivery could be explained by this lack of public awareness. The data shows that due to the lack of public awareness, corruption rampaged through the bureaucratic procedures and information processing systems, entrenching an organizational culture of corruption.

4.3.5.1 Civic education forums

The data paints a picture of a public that has no idea money is being stolen right under their noses and there is a clear information asymmetry between what the county officers know and what is known by the members of the public. This lack of awareness was confirmed by the fact that nearly all respondents said that public awareness is rarely carried out and often left to other third-party intermediaries such as pastors, politicians and non-governmental organizations. In the words of respondent N59:

> …as a church we educate our congregation on what is happening in the county government. Sometimes we partner with the MCAs to come to church and make announcements about the bursaries.

From this data, the pastor is the one left with the responsibility of educating members of the public on the activities of the county government and this means that he will only communicate what is in his best interests and not necessarily what is in the best interests of the county government or the members of the public. The information the public receives is already curated by others, including by members of the local county assemblies. This information brokerage means that the public does not receive information first hand and cannot be able to interrogate its source adequately. It also means that the information communicated will likely be framed to suit the interests of the conveyors of the information and not necessarily the interests of the public. This is poor service delivery, as the information reaching the public may be twisted, as confirmed by respondent K56 who said:

> … Sadly, it's only the suppliers and the officials who have the right information on how much they are stealing from us. The information that reaches the public is always twisted to fit specific narratives that do not compromise their corrupt ways. Thus, civic education forums are not a priority for the county government since they don't want the public to "*chanuka*" (to be informed about corruption).

Thus, the counties deliberately keep the public from knowing what is going on to ensure they do not identify corruption as a problem, as this would trigger the crystallization of the problem stream and galvanize public interest around the issue, in accordance with John Kingdon's multiple streams framework (Mackey, 2019). This situation ensures the public do not get to protect the commons (public budgets), as they would not be aware of the corruption that is going on. It also means that policy networks in the community would also be in the dark on the county governments' operations and would thus not be in a position to lobby around the issue of corruption to bring policy change in this area (Agranoff & Kolpakov, 2019). This also means that anticorruption policies targeting the supply side of corruption where the public required to know what to do in the event that they are pressurized to give bribes or face situations where embezzlement is occurring, were doomed to fail and efforts to improve public service delivery would equally fail.

Further information showed that public awareness forums in the counties were not any different from political rallies, with the "tuachie kakitu culture" (leave us some money) narratives, dominating the events. This was narrated by respondent N14 who also expounded that such forums were mainly attended by idle and jobless youth, most of whom were school dropouts due to poverty and who survived on being hired as political goons to create violence and boo opponents of the highest bidder and who were also utilized by certain political kingpins to shoot down policies that they did not want. As such, public awareness forums were not meaningful but avenues for political competitions and conflicts. Thus, public service delivery was not prioritized or considered important.

Further, respondent N36 explained that the county bosses routinely claimed to be conducting civic education forums while none actually took place, with budgets for such events ending up being misappropriated. The respondent described it thus:

> … *pesa zinakunywa maji* (money is stolen) so the common *mwananchi* (public) suffers for not having quality services, as the corruption goes on.

The data shows that public services suffer as the money reserved for conducting public awareness is stolen by the county officials. Thus, the county governments are not interested in empowering the public to evaluate their performance and oversight them

in terms of accountability. They are also not interested in providing quality services in the nature of civic education. This data supports studies that show that public awareness is crucial in governance and anticorruption strategies (Magessa, Wynne-Jones, & Hockley, 2020). Public awareness does this by narrowing the information asymmetry between the county bureaucrats and members of the public. By narrowing this gap, the public is empowered to question the public expenditure figures that the government officials table to the public. Respondent N13 captured this situation this way:

> … There is usually a lot of money given out for projects which the public is not aware of and if some of the public get wind and know the right figure, they are either bribed or the issue is played down by the county officials... Corruption has altered the information the public receives. The government controls the information to release to the public…The government plays mind games on the public. This has resulted to the public receiving poor infrastructure such as roads, hospitals and schools, hence causing difficulties in their lives.

The data shows county officials do not like releasing information on the amount of money released for projects, and when the public gets wind of the information, the officials' resort to bribery to ensure the information does not leak further and then play the issue down. Thus, corruption affects the way information is disseminated to the public and the public officials often play mind games on the public to ensure there is no proper public awareness. The consequences of this, is that the public receives poor services in the form of roads, hospitals and schools and they are not able to question it. Thus, the data confirms studies that have demonstrated the importance of public awareness in empowering the public to oversight public resources as an anticorruption measure (Opalo, 2020).

In explaining the lack of public awareness, respondent N43 explained that counties often prioritize projects that have maximum kickbacks and forget about simple projects that could make a real difference in the lives of the citizens and improve public service delivery. This data confirms studies that have demonstrated that corruption enables public officials to redesign programs and propose projects with few public benefits and many opportunities for private profit (Akhigbe, 2015; Andersen, Johannesen, & Rijkers, 2020). The public's lack of awareness on the corruption problem in this data means that the problem stream is yet to crystallize, in accordance with John Kingdon's multiple streams framework and there is not likely to be a policy window soon to tackle this challenge within the counties.

Further, the data shows an absence of policy networks that could actively be engaged to empower the members of the public on the *modus operandi* of corruption within the county governments and the ways and means of ensuring accountability for public funds and public service delivery. Due to this gap, situations where the county governments' budgetary allocations for civic education were diverted to other uses, as reported by respondent N30, had no one to question them or make any follows ups. It is therefore not surprising that public awareness in both counties was low and the county officials wasted no time in exploiting this fact. Respondent K35 explained how the public officials exploited the ignorance of the public in these words:

> *Kuna ile* general information that everyone knows. *Hiyo* we don't interfere. *Mtu anaenda kwa* county *ama* subcounty offices. But *kama hii* where we have clamped a vehicle *na mtu hajui* what to do, we don't inform. *Wacha hiyo* ignorance *tuitumie vizuri*… (There is general information that everyone knows. That, we do not interfere. Someone goes to the county or subcounty offices. But if it is like this one here, where we have clamped a vehicle and someone does not know what to do, we do not inform him. Let us exploit his ignorance and milk the maximum bribes from him.)

The data shows that the public officials exploit the information asymmetry with the members of the public instead of carrying out public awareness so that the public knows what is expected of them. The exploitation takes the form of corruption and ends up deeply entrenching a bribery culture within the counties and affecting public service delivery. Thus, the public are not empowered as they do not know what is going on and the reason for the poor and inaccessible services. As captured by respondent N8, the public was so ignorant that they could not distinguish between services that they are supposed to receive from the county governments and those they are supposed to receive from the national government. As such, they would complain about corruption during a recruitment exercise for Independent Electoral Commission (IEBC) jobs by blaming the counties and not appreciating that this was an independent commission, whose functions did not fall under the devolved governments.

The situation also points to poor intergovernmental coordination when delivering services to the public, as nobody from the county bothered to address these gaps or at least refer the public to the appropriate channels for support. The data shows this gap was exploited by corruption cartels to further entrench corruption within the devolved systems of government and get away with poor service delivery. Respondent K23 was

particularly upset that empowerment of the public is not prioritized by the county governments. In his own words:

> *Ati* (surprised) public awareness? – Let's not even go there… do you think a budget about awareness on financial matters would be easily passed? Especially exposure of this corruption to the public? It is unheard of…can you trust the same people to let the public be aware about matters finance and corruption? The public will only hear there were audit queries from the media, and that is if the story manages to get there…

The data shows that the public officials do not prioritize public awareness for self-preservation reasons, as they do not want their corruption exposed to the public, which could lead to their removal from office. Thus, the public will only get to know there were audit queries from the media and that is if the story gets there in the first place. The data illustrates the problem with current accountability literature, where governance models recommend public awareness without providing appropriate supportive mechanisms that demonstrate how these models would work, given that the public officials who are supposed to carry out the public awareness are the same individuals who are involved in corruption (Rajasekhar, Babu, & Manjula, 2018).

In the words of respondents N16 and N51, the lack of public awareness is very deliberate in the counties and has dire consequences as it keeps the public ignorant so that the corruption pipelines can flow uninterruptedly, as the public continue to receive poor services or no services. Respondent N51 explained:

> …county officials do not want to educate the masses about their corruption in the delivery of services and goods. They do this purposely to keep the masses in the dark about what goes on in their departments. This way, if the masses are not knowledgeable of the activities that happen in the departments, they will not be able to notice the corrupt dealings of these officials. Thus, we continue to receive poor or no services…

The data captures the dilemma of how to ensure public officials implicated in corruption engage the public in a meaningful way about corruption. As the data shows, the officials are unwilling to enlighten the public about their activities as this would expose them. This situation is compounded by the corruption already embedded within the civic awareness forums, as expounded by respondent K8 who explained that these county officials often charge members of the public for attendance to the public awareness forums and this is likely to lock out a sizeable number of residents who cannot afford such charges. Respondent N15 also pointed out that some of these forums

were done in secret. Further, respondent K8 explained that county officials determined who would attend, based on those able to bribe. He even talked of "professional attendees" who are paid to participate in such forums and sign attendance lists to facilitate the theft of public funds. He gave the example of a venue where selected participants would make a "technical appearance" and officials would claim they spent an entire week there. When such incidents happen, it becomes difficult for even audit systems to detect them. Thus, the data confirms studies showing that although bribery facilitates embezzlement of public funds, it is one of the most challenging types of corruption to detect, as it leaves no traces for the auditor to pick up and the public are often unwilling to take responsibility for their role (Jeppesen, 2019; Arce & Hendricks, 2019; Baccouche, 2016; Englebert & Mungongo, 2016; Gustafsson & Scurrah, 2019; Montero, 2018).

Respondent N45 talked of the long distances that limit the public from attending such forums whenever they are convened and how money meant to reimburse such attendees for transport is stolen by corrupt county officials. It was apparent from the data that most officials take advantage of the fact that many members of the public do not know their rights and are not aware of these forums. As respondent K25 explained:

> … meetings and workshops are held on paper, in that there is documentation that a certain forum in a certain village took place but in real sense no such thing happened. The money set aside for the activity was divided among officials responsible for the activity.

The data shows corruption in conducting civic education forums, as phantom meetings are held and money for transport refunds stolen. This was also pointed out by respondent K34 who claimed that counties always budget for civic education forums every year but do not hold them. Thus, public services continued to suffer as money was embezzled. He explained:

> …where the monies end up, is a mystery. Only the top chain of command can answer.
> The assembly which should act as a watchdog and ensure these forums happen, do not take any action, leading one to question if they are in cahoots with the executive or ignorant of their constitutional mandate.

Thus, the local legislature that should oversee the devolved governments do not play their role in ensuring civic education forums take place. This data contradicts studies

that have shown that devolution improves oversight by local legislatures and increases grassroot participation (Diaz-Serrano & Rodriguez-Pose, 2015; Adamtey, Obeng, & Sarpong, 2020).

As respondent N62 pointed out, civic education is one of the challenges in the counties, as public participation is not carried out as required but done as a formality where officials invite a few friends for photographs at their headquarters and call it civic education, without inviting citizens from all walks of life, like those who live in the slums of Mathare and Kibra. He explained:

> …corruption has infiltrated the way the county conducts civic education forums...this is one of the major challenges we're facing in this county because public participation is not conducted as required. You know civic education must be conducted in word and spirit and not just as a formality. You find that someone invites a few friends and takes them to city hall for a photo session and says that is civic education. Civic education must involve the whole county from places such as Kibra, Mathare to Embakasi and all the wards and villages. When the finance bill is still in the assembly, the public must be taken through the vote heads and shown that in infrastructure, we have allocated this amount, in education, roads, health, we have allocated this amount. Information should be disseminated on how much has been budgeted for each vote head as that's the only way the public will be able to ensure accountability. But when people do not have this information, the officials take advantage to steal public funds.

It is clear from this data that the public are not taken through the various vote heads and allocations of public funds in the budgetary processes, which is critical for them to be able to oversee public expenditures in their counties. Public officials take advantage of this ignorance and take a few people to their headquarters, where they take photographs and claim to have done civic education. There is therefore a dire lack of empowerment of the public in terms of enhancing their capacity to play their oversight role, as what is happening is mere public relations and no training is taking place. This situation is partially attributed to the fact that civic education in the counties, is handled in a compartmentalized way, where respondent N5 reported that departments rolling out activities are expected to carry out their own public awareness. As such there was no county wide approach to civic education. Respondent N54 captured this situation in these words:

> … corruption is deeply embedded in public service delivery and that is why the education of the masses is ignored. Simply put, there is no education where corruption is involved. Corrupt officials will squander the money meant for civic education to the detriment of the public…

Thus, at the county level, there was no common approach to ensuring the public were empowered with information and when it was left to individual departments, there was no accountability or follow through to ensure actual civic education took place. Corruption seemed to be embedded in every stage of the public service delivery system. Thus, the data contradicts studies that show that devolution decreases corruption through increased public oversight (Diaz-Serrano & Rodriguez-Pose, 2015; Adamtey, Obeng, & Sarpong, 2020).

Respondent N23 felt that civic education forums were an effective way of curbing corruption, as the public would be empowered to play an oversight role over the financial resources of the county. However, he noted that counties were deliberately underfunding this activity or stealing all the money set aside for it because according to him, no forums have been held in the counties. Respondent K11 said that the public awareness budget was always being channeled to the public relations department and this caused interdepartmental conflicts. He gave a scenario where the public relations department received non-factual information from the department of agriculture and ended up sending the wrong information to the farmers, which ended up affecting their produce. This caused unnecessary losses to the farmers and he dreaded the situation if the matter had involved drugs and human health. Respondent K7 on the other hand felt that public awareness programs are sometimes camouflaged as health awareness sessions or health camps where private actors attend to exploit the public for services which are supposed to be free, such as maternal healthcare and cervical cancer screening. Thus, public awareness was used to exploit an already overburdened public and public services continued suffering. This situation confirms studies that have demonstrated the critical nature of public awareness in accountability mechanisms for devolved governments (Novi, Piacenza, Robone, & Turati, 2019). Indeed, respondents K6, N20 and K47 reported that corruption is minimized when public awareness is carried out by the county governments.

However, the same respondents decried the inaccessibility and inadequacy of the few public awareness forums carried out, with respondent N17 explaining that:

> … public awareness in terms of forums where the public is notified of projects and use of public funds, has slightly helped to reduce corruption. Where the public is aware of projects, those who are corrupt know the public is watching

> and so will think twice before they steal…But the county officials ensure the awareness forums are held in hotels where the common *mwananchi* (public) cannot access. The corruption in public awareness happens in those hotels. First, there is no assurance to the public that they are getting the right information. Second, the teams deployed to teach there are often unqualified and give scant information or hedgy answers and skirt issues. Third, the people giving information are a bit biased because they are the same people who commit corruption thus, they leave out sensitive information that can be utilized to nab them...

The data shows that public awareness plays a key role in reducing corruption. However, the conduct of civic awareness in the counties leaves a lot to be desired, in terms of venues and the contents of such forums. There is need for meaningful engagement on the structuring of such forums so that the public can benefit and play an active role in oversighting the county governments. The data also shows a direct link between corruption and the lack of public awareness, where the public officials limit the information conveyed to the public to avoid self-implication. Also, respondent K16 linked the public's lack of awareness to the corruption within the counties in these words:

> ...take various issues like, cars getting clamped without their knowledge because county level procedures have not been explained to the public, the officials use it to extort cash from the public through unprocedural clamping. When there's an increase in parking fees and there is lack of civic education to know if these have been increased, you end up paying more, *kumbe* (so) it's the corruption culture you are feeding. There is delay in services when you refuse to bribe and you're taken round in circles on the same issue due to corruption within the bureaucracy and this is due to lack of public awareness of what is happening.

The data confirms that the public is gullible when not empowered with information, as the public officials take advantage of them to extort bribes through unprocedural clamping of vehicles, unofficial charges on parking and through red tape. Thus, the data shows the linkages of corruption in public awareness, which feeds into information processing procedures that fail to inform the public about the new parking charges, with bureaucratic red tape further reinforcing the corruption culture. The data also shows the presence of information asymmetry between the county officials and members of the public, as the members of the public do not have adequate information on corruption and the counties' operations. Thus, the data confirms studies that show the existence of information asymmetry between those in leadership and the members of the public and which call for public awareness initiatives to bridge this gap and improve public service delivery (Mulyaman, Ismail, & Raya, 2019).

The corruption cartels within public awareness utilized various strategies to ensure hardly any information leaked about their modes of operation. One strategy involved keeping the members of the public in the dark and other strategies encountered by the researcher involved denying the existence of corruption within public awareness, and avoiding any discussions on it. Others involved stacking barriers for academia to ensure they do not study it so that little remains known about it and people will not be able to attribute the lack of services to the corruption in government. The barriers experienced within the public awareness extended to limiting information dissemination to ensure as little as possible is known about their *modus operandi* by members of the public. The public officials in public awareness who were key gate keepers of research data, created bureaucratic bottlenecks for the researcher, in a bid to disallow the study of corruption within their structures. Given these scenarios, it is not surprising that the field of corruption has no theory of corruption, as the topic is often avoided and ignored by academia, researchers, government and even members of the public. As such, little is known about its *modus operandi* and this consequently limits the effectiveness of policy interventions that are recommended to curb it and efforts to improve public service delivery.

The data is an indictment of county governments as one of the institutions legally mandated to carry out civic education in Kenya, despite the availability of civic education materials and training resources from the national government (Ministry of Devolution, 2016). Without civic education, the citizens of these counties have no meaningful way of receiving information from the county governments and participating in the democratic governance of their counties. The main objective of providing civic education is to ensure there is an informed citizenry that effectively participates in the democratic affairs of the devolved governments on the basis of mutual understanding and ownership, based on enhanced knowledge of the affairs of the devolved governments. It also helps disseminate information and create awareness on civic rights, values, and obligations, which should be exercised by all citizens, including the marginalized and disadvantaged groups. As such, the lack of meaningful civic education forums due to corruption within public awareness in Kiambu and Nairobi City counties, raises fundamental questions on how the citizens of both counties

can be expected to be informed on their rights and obligations to enable them play their civic duties.

The data also confirms the importance of public awareness in safeguarding the commons (the public resources) as failure to carry out public awareness leads to the tragedy of the commons, with massive corruption threatening the depletion of the common resources (Ghorbani & Bravo, 2016). The data is overall in agreement with studies done elsewhere that call for greater public awareness as one of the ways of reducing corruption and improving accountability mechanisms in devolved systems of government in a bid to improve public service delivery (Novi, Piacenza, Robone, & Turati, 2019; Abasili & Akinboye, 2019).

4.3.5.2 Civic educational materials

The data shows that hardly any civic educational materials were availed to residents of both counties. In the words of respondent K13:

> *…hakuna materials yoyote tunapewa hukusu hii corruption. Hawatupatii hata ile report ya Auditor General. Tunaisikianga tu kwa magazetti. Bona hawatupatii materials zote za kifedha? Na zile za tutuonyesha mambo ile tunafaa kuangalia vile serikali inaendelea?*
> (…we do not get any materials on corruption. We are not given the Auditor General's report. We hear about it in the media. How come they don't give us materials about the finance issues? And materials to show us how to oversight government operations?)

This position was confirmed by respondents K34, K3 and N54. Their viewpoints showed that civic educational materials were not availed, including key government documents such as the Auditor General's reports. They would only hear about these reports from the media and the county governments made no efforts to simplify the information and provide some informational materials, for their consumption. Thus, civic education was left to the media and other players, as public services continued to deteriorate.

This data, coupled with the lack of civic education forums, confirms the lack of public awareness in both counties. When viewed from the multiple streams framework, it appears that the problem stream cannot mature anytime soon in these counties, as the lack of public awareness has not been identified as a problem that requires solutions.

Thus, the commons (public budgets) face risks due to lack of public awareness, and the citizenry will continue to receive poor services.

Another respondent, N43 lamented as follows:

> *Ikiwa pesa za kuchapa materials for civic education zinaibiwa wazi na hakuna kitu kutafanya, nani atatuchanua mali yote ikiimbiwa?*
> (If money meant for producing civic education materials is stolen in broad daylight and we do nothing, who will enlighten us, when all the government resources are being stolen?)

Thus, resources for producing civic education materials are stolen openly and the citizens do not do anything about it. The respondent rhetorically asks who will enlighten them on how to oversight the government, when all the resources are being stolen (embezzled). This data shows the importance of public awareness in the oversight of government and in ensuring that public services are of a good quality and are accessible (Magessa, Wynne-Jones, & Hockley, 2020).

Respondents N47, N34 and K38 noted that the counties expected members of the public to visit their websites to obtain information. However, they also noted, that the material on the website was not comprehensive and could not be deemed to be adequate as it was not simplified, or in a format that the public could be able to consume it. Besides, they noted the presence of language barriers, as all the materials were in the English Language, thus, excluding a sizeable population that spoke Kiswahili, which is the national language and equally an official language in Kenya. Respondent K38 added that the county websites were not reliable as they kept crashing and being offsite most of the time. Thus, he argued, the citizenry would not be able to get information whenever they needed. This clearly was poor service delivery. These situations are in agreement with data collected from other studies that showed that availing civic educational materials and conducting civic education forums, helps reduce corruption by improving accountability and improving public service delivery (Novi, Piacenza, Robone, & Turati, 2019).

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the findings and implications guided by the research objectives, together with conclusions from the study. The chapter also presents the study's recommendations for curbing corruption within Kiambu and Nairobi City counties and argues that these could have a positive impact and assist the two counties in reigning corruption.

5.2 Summary

This study sought to explore the effect of organisational culture as a corruption driver on public service delivery in Kiambu and Nairobi City counties. The data paints a picture of corruption that is normalized and runs as an enterprise, with its own standard operating procedures and language. The culture of corruption enabled public officials to create and control corruption pipelines that ran through the organizational hierarchies, as critical gatekeepers, with brokers playing an intermediary role of ensuring the bribery and embezzlement was not traced directly to the public officials. The officials utilized the coercive power of their positions as government officers to embed brokers within the organizational interactions and coordination mechanisms, to an extent that actors within the corruption pipelines were more powerful than the official channels of government.

The corruption culture utilized bureaucratic procedures in the form of red tape, hierarchies and specialisations and information processing to entrench and reinforce the corruption pipelines, leaving the public with poor or no services. Further, corruption within public awareness ensured little or no civil education forums were conducted, so the public remained ignorant of what was happening at the counties. Surprisingly, some members of the public condoned corruption and its acceptance in the greater society means that it will be an uphill task for the counties to counter it. Thus, the study concludes that organisational culture was a key driver of corruption that adversely affected the accessibility and quality of public services within the two counties.

The data collected confirms that bureaucratic procedures provided the organizational structures through which corruption pipelines were established. Red tape, hierarchies and specializations were exploited by cartels to cause bureaucratic delays that enabled corruption to thrive, causing public services to be inaccessible and unaffordable. Thus, corruption was the *modus operandi* and the *lingua franca* within the bureaucratic procedures of both counties. The study concludes that bureaucratic procedures was a key driver of corruption that adversely affected the accessibility and quality of public services in the two counties.

The findings show that corruption within information processing was linked to corruption in bureaucratic procedures, as information processing was one of the bureaucratic processes that corruption pipelines utilized to ensure the bribes and embezzlement practices continued uninterrupted. Thus, bureaucratic hurdles in the form of lack of information dissemination procedures, the failure to disseminate information and the inaccessibility of dissemination channels ensured that only a few people got information. The findings further confirm linkages between information processing and organizational culture as information processing was a driver of corruption within the organizational processes, interactions and coordination mechanisms.

The study noted that although both counties have invested in some level of automation and e-services, these initiatives have not translated into better services for the residents of Kiambu and Nairobi City counties. The study concludes that information processing was a key driver of corruption that adversely affected the accessibility and quality of public services in the two counties.

The findings show that county level policy instruments within Kiambu and Nairobi City County have been agents of corruption instead of being tools of fighting corruption and have been utilized to entrench the corruption culture and provide impunity for its perpetrators. The corruption culture is made possible by the failure to enforce the existing county level policy instruments, which breeds a culture of impunity with no respect for the rule of law.

The findings also show that corruption within county level policy instruments enables corruption within bureaucratic procedures, information processing and public awareness and is the reason why an organizational culture of corruption exists in the two counties, due to the failure to adhere to county level policy instruments. The study concludes that county level policy instruments acted as a key driver of corruption and affected the accessibility and quality of public services in the two counties.

The findings show that due to corruption within public awareness, the public are not empowered to oversight the county governments, causing an organizational culture of corruption to take root. The data shows an information asymmetry between what the public knows about corruption and what the county officials know about it, leading to the public receiving poor or no services. The study concludes that public awareness was a moderating variable that explained the strength of the relationship between the drivers of corruption and the accessibility and quality of public services in the two counties.

5.8 Conclusion

By examining the effect of corruption drivers on public service delivery in Kiambu and Nairobi City counties, this study has established that organizational culture, bureaucratic procedures and information processing adversely affect public service delivery. The study has also established that public awareness is a key moderating variable that explains the strength of the relationship between these drivers of corruption and public service delivery. The results suggest that counties need to devise means and ways of reigning these drivers of corruption if public services are to be improved.

5.9 Recommendations

Arising from the findings of this study, the researcher makes the following recommendations to enable Kiambu and Nairobi City counties to root out corruption:

5.9.1 Curbing corruption within organizational culture

To curb corruption within their organizational cultures, the researcher recommends the following for both Kiambu and Nairobi City counties:

5.9.1.1 Utilize the anticorruption scorecard to gauge the level of corruption

The researcher strongly recommends that Kiambu and Nairobi City counties consider utilizing this study's proposed anticorruption scorecard, as outlined in **Appendix A21**. This tool will assist the counties as it has been modelled from the data gathered from these two counties.

5.9.1.2 Conduct civic education on corruption issues

The study recommends that Kiambu and Nairobi City counties conduct civic education and provide civic educational materials on corruption issues. There is a need for counties to have a difficult conversation around this topic with their staff and members of the public and normalize this conversation in their everyday interactions. Counties must make efforts to bring the dialogues around corruption into the mainstream talk, as part of their organizational culture change, so that public officials do not run away when the word is mentioned. The study findings show that the mention of the word 'corruption' changed the mood of public officers, with many shying away and feeling somewhat scared and terrified. Since the fear culture at the mention of 'corruption' is institutionalized within its structures, this needs to be de-institutionalized or removed if corruption is to be fought successfully. The researcher believes change will not happen in an environment of fear, where public officials dread 'change' more than they dread corruption which has been normalized within these institutional structures. This means counties must put in place specific measures to un-name corruption and change their institutional cultures through staff sensitizations. Thus, both Kiambu and Nairobi City counties need to take immediate and urgent steps to ensure corruption becomes abnormal (and not the norm), within their organizational cultures by investing in culture change initiatives through staff sensitizations.

5.9.2 Curbing corruption within bureaucratic procedures

To tackle corruption within bureaucratic procedures, the researcher recommends the following measures:

5.9.2.1 Carry out process reviews

Both counties need to carry out an audit of their bureaucratic procedures with a view of removing unnecessary processes that may be causing red tape and impending service delivery. This would entail reviewing hierarchal processes in order to reduce

unnecessary approval levels that may give rise to corruption opportunities and cause delays in service delivery. The audit should also critically look at the specializations and provide a simplified procedure for the public to access specialized offices, without unnecessary red tape or too many hierarchal approvals and bottlenecks. Thus, simplified approval processes for the public should be the goal.

5.9.2.2 Minimize red tape, hierarchies and specializations

The researcher recommends both counties minimize red tape, hierarchies and specializations and adopt open plan offices and open-door policies to improve service delivery. Having staff working in open, large spaces, together, instead of working individually in closed private offices, will minimize the chances of delays in service delivery, as there will be no privacy to conduct corruption business. Additionally, Kiambu and Nairobi City counties should consider adopting an open-door policy to avoid situations where members of the public are not allowed in certain offices, and being asked to make appointments before meeting certain officers. This would go a long way to curbing corruption and ensuring accessibility of services to all.

5.9.3 Curbing corruption within information processing

To root out corruption within information processing, the researcher recommends the following measures for Kiambu and Nairobi City counties:

5.9.3.1 Develop information dissemination procedures

For rooting out corruption in information processing, both counties need to urgently come up with dissemination procedures for the information they generate and receive. These procedures should be anchored on sound information processing policies that ensure transparency and openness in the dissemination of information. The data shows that the absence of information dissemination procedures, creates opportunities for corrupt public officials who take advantage of the loopholes to extort bribes from members of the public and to embezzle public resources. Thus, having dissemination procedures in place would go a long way to reducing corruption opportunities.

5.9.3.2 Utilize diverse dissemination channels

The study recommends that both counties ensure their dissemination channels are accessible to all members of the public by using diversified dissemination channels.

They need to take specific measures to particularly reach those with low literacy levels and especially the poor who mostly live in the slums, who were being left out by current dissemination channels. They should also ensure the vulnerable members of the society such as the elderly and those living with disabilities, are able to receive and access information, as the data showed they were being left out. Thus, provision needs to be made for the deaf, the blind and those with physical and other disabilities. The information dissemination channels should also be able to reach the youth as data from this study showed that they received information from the county governments through second and third parties. Thus, there is need for counties to include social media as one of the dissemination channels that reaches the youth, avail information in sign language and in braille, to reach the deaf and blind. There is also need to avail information in Kiswahili to reach those who do not understand English. Awareness creation sessions in the slums should also be carried out in order to reach the poor physically. Additionally, both counties should utilize radio stations that may be operating in the slums and those that may reach other target audiences such as the elderly.

5.9.4 Curbing corruption within public awareness

To root out corruption within public awareness, the researcher recommends the following measures for both Kiambu and Nairobi City counties:

5.9.4.1 Carry out civic education forums

To curb corruption within public awareness, the researcher recommends that Kiambu and Nairobi City counties carry out robust civic education forums. They need to ensure members of the public participate meaningfully in the affairs of the counties. This means they must make appropriate and adequate budgetary provisions for civic education forums and ensure the accessibility of such forums to members of the public. They should also ensure the venues and agendas for such forums are adequately publicized in advance. Additionally, they should ensure that information disseminated during such forums is adequate and factually correct, to enable the members of the public participate meaningfully in the deliberations. Carrying out robust public awareness will enable the corruption conversation to move from the shadows, onto the table, and remove the fear and suspicion culture that this study found within the counties, so that everyone can contribute to strategies of curbing corruption. Kiambu and Nairobi City counties and indeed, all counties in Kenya need to take public

awareness very seriously as it is a game changer in terms of empowering the people to oversight county governments and to discuss matters of corruption. This would go a long way to empowering their citizens to be a part and parcel of the county government decision making processes and would enable citizens to play their civic duty diligently.

5.9.4.2 Provide civic educational materials

It is recommended that both counties provide civic educational materials for their citizens. This will ensure they are well informed of what is going on in their counties. Such materials should be in the language and formats accessible to the citizens. This will go a long way to empowering the citizens by keeping abreast of what is happening in their counties. Thus, they will be able to play their oversight role more effectively.

5.9.5 Curbing corruption within county level policy instruments

The study proposes the following recommendations for Kiambu and Nairobi City counties:

5.9.5.1 Enforce policy instruments

The researcher recommends that both counties enforce their county level policy instruments. It is important to note that all the county level policy instruments within the two counties outlaw corruption, hence implementing the policy instruments would go a long way in reigning corruption within their organizational cultures, bureaucratic procedures, information processing, public awareness and county level policy instruments. The researcher further recommends that both counties come up with enforcement mechanisms and make adequate budgetary provisions for these policy instruments to ensure no lapses occur.

5.9.5.2 Strengthen county-level policy instruments

Both counties need to strengthen county level policy instruments and establish anticorruption structures within their organizations, rather than having to rely on the EACC and other national government resources. The researcher strongly feels the counties need their own county level structures for dealing with corruption as it has become a menace that needs to be dealt with swiftly. They require to redesign their organizational architectures and set up foundational structures that ensure the effective detection, disruption, prevention and deterrence of corruption within their

organizations. Such structures will enable Kiambu and Nairobi City counties to take a strong stand against corruption to counter the complacency culture that has enabled corruption to thrive within their county level policy instruments. The researcher also recommends where there are identified gaps in the county level policy instruments, such gaps be filled by enacting new instruments, as necessary. For example, the current approach of the existing county level policy instruments emphasizes criminalization of corruption, which targets individuals and not institutions. This causes a bloody fight-back culture among those targeted, and forces corruption to become clandestine, instead of discouraging it. Emphasizing criminalization creates a culture of fear, as everyone is afraid of being implicated, and those implicated, spend their time trying to exonerate themselves, thus entrenching an unsafe work environment that is not conducive for implementation of an anticorruption culture. This does not encourage a voluntary reporting and disclosure culture. The researcher strongly believes this is the main reason many anticorruption efforts have failed and calls for an approach that fights systems, not individuals. The focus should be on re-socializing staff and unlearning corruption by establishing and nurturing organizational cultures that have zero tolerance to corruption. By changing the organizational culture, counties will be able to change the way they conduct business, and hence crystallize change from the grassroots that would eventually create change in society.

5.10 Contribution to the body of knowledge

This study contributes to the existing scholarship on the drivers of corruption by providing empirical data from Kiambu and Nairobi City counties. The gaps in the literature suggest the research, has made a significant contribution, as there is inadequate data in this area. The empirical data obtained forms the basis of policy recommendations that the study has made, which have the potential to rein in corruption within the counties of Kiambu and Nairobi City. These policy recommendations have the potential to be extrapolated to other counties in Kenya with similar characteristics. The researcher further presents a proposed model of an anticorruption score card and argues that this could be harnessed to curb corruption within Kiambu and Nairobi City counties and could also be successfully adopted by other counties with similar demographics. The scorecard is presented in Chapter Four as Fig. 4.4 and is the researcher's original contribution to the body of knowledge and practice.

A review of available literature shows there is little research on corruption within Kenya's 47 counties, despite corruption having been identified as one of the significant challenges facing devolution (Fonshell, 2019). Further, none of the available studies have delved deeply into the drivers of corruption in devolved systems at the contextual level, and there is little empirical evidence on this in Africa (Adamtey, Obeng, & Sarpong, 2020). The available studies have mainly concentrated on developed and third-world countries in Asia and Latin America (Kousser, 2014; Starke, Naab, & Scherer, 2016). This study thus provides contextual data at the conceptual level in an area where there is hardly any empirical data. The study is important for academia as there are contextual and conceptual gaps in the field that this study has addressed, as studies on devolution are still at a nascent stage and there is currently no theory of corruption. The study will therefore be of interest to scholars who wish to pursue further research in other devolved contexts.

At the methodological level, the study has made a contribution by taking a qualitative approach, as there is a preponderance of quantitative data in the field, which mainly consists of a plethora of corruption indexes and few qualitative studies (Sekkat, 2018; Chalil, 2020). This approach has made a more robust interrogation of the research topic possible and brought forth a more detailed and rich data on the drivers of corruption in devolved systems of government and their effect on public service delivery (Maher, Hadfield, Hutchings, & Eyto, 2018). The study has thus provided rich qualitative data and hopefully will encourage more qualitative studies in this area.

Another area of contribution is that the study has taken a holistic approach to public service delivery. Current studies have mainly tackled aspects of accessibility of public services without delving into the quality aspects and without interrogating the effects of drivers of corruption on public service delivery, as conceptualized in this study (Kimenyi, 2018: Wagana, 2017; Fonshell, 2019).

5.11 Suggestions for further research

This study recommends that similar studies be carried out in the other 45 counties in Kenya to enable comparisons to be made. If such studies are undertaken, they would assist in developing better policy instruments for fighting corruption within the Kenyan counties. Further, similar studies could be undertaken in Africa and developing

countries that are experimenting with devolution, to further understand the mechanisms of corruption in the form of embezzlement and bribery within devolved systems of government in different cultural contexts to inform policy development in this area. Additionally, the researcher calls on scholars interested in studying corruption in devolved systems of government in Africa to consider utilizing the proposed conceptual model presented in this study so as to generate empirical data to validate this model and move scholarship forward in this field.

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APPENDICES

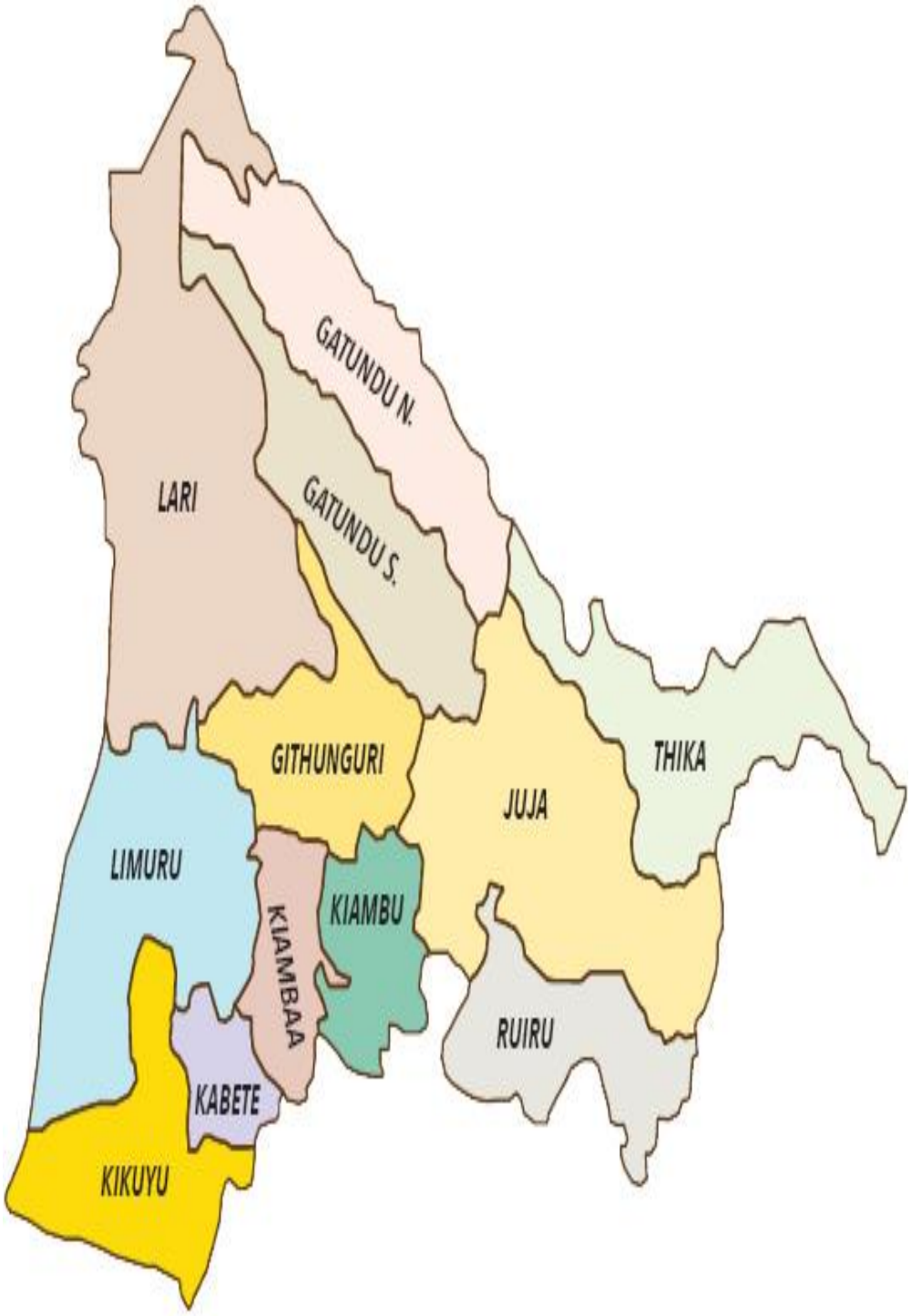
A1: A map of Kenya's 47 counties

Fig. 4.5 A map of Kenya's 47 counties



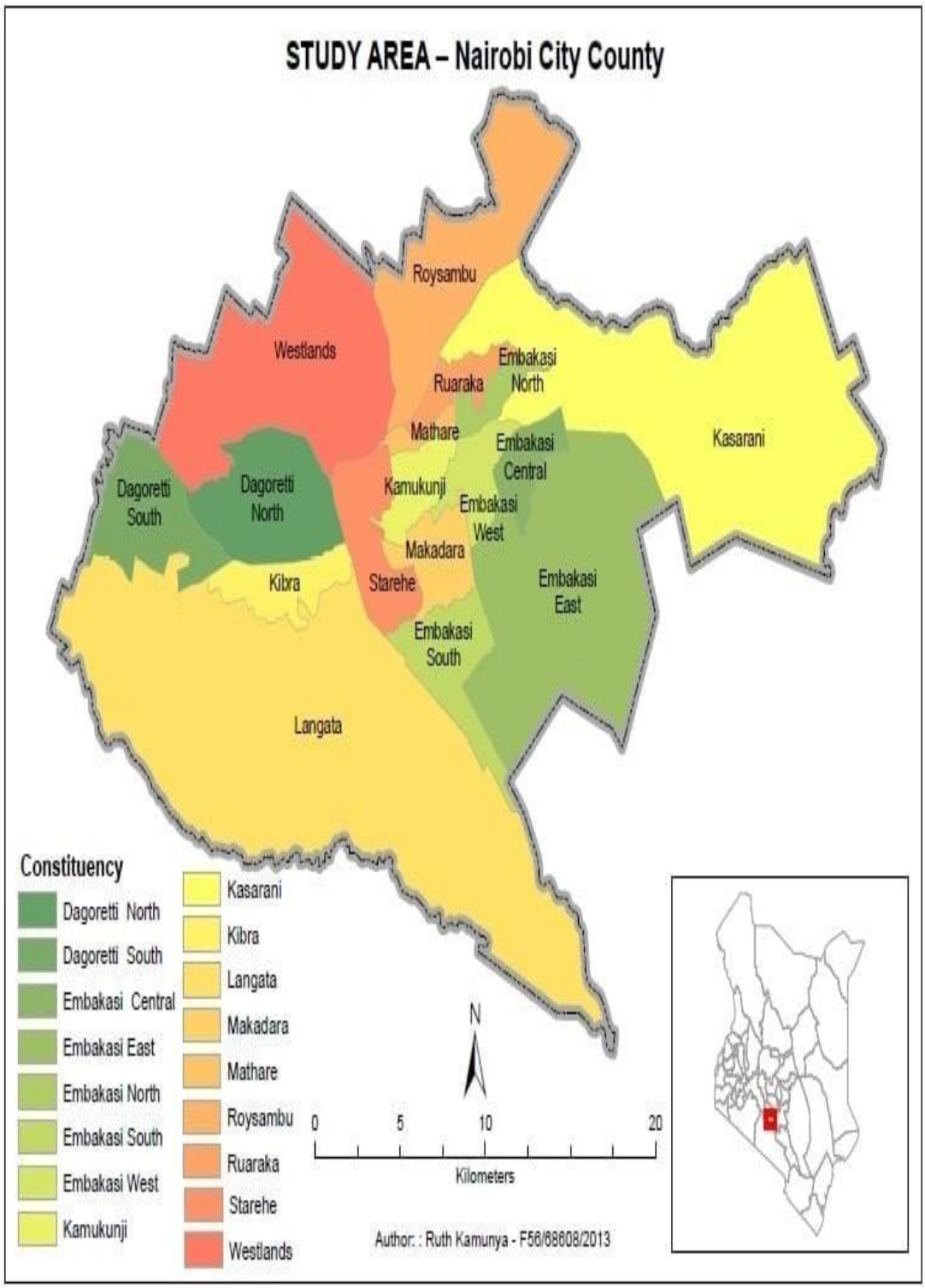
A2: A map of the sub-counties of Kiambu

Fig. 4.6 A map of the sub-counties of Kiambu



A3: A map of the sub-counties of Nairobi City

Fig. 4.7 A map of the sub-counties in Nairobi City



A4: Letter of introduction

Date…….

To…….

…….

…….

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Collection of Research Data

I am a Ph.D. student in Public Policy and Management at Kenyatta University, currently undertaking thesis research with the title: "Corruption in devolved systems of government and public service delivery in Kiambu and Nairobi City counties, Kenya." I would like to carry out some in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with some of your staff and members of the public. The information provided will be used for academic purposes. All participants will be provided with anonymity, and their information will be confidential. If you have any questions or would like further information about this research, I will be happy to discuss this with you in person or through your designated representative. My telephone contact is hereby attached for ease of contact. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely

JMwangi
PhD student

A5: Letter of confidentiality

To be signed by all research assistants:

I……of Kenya National Identification Card No…….and PO Box……...Town……Telephone Number……do hereby solemnly swear that I shall not disclose any information collected from the research on "Corruption in devolved systems of government and public service delivery in Kiambu and Nairobi City counties, Kenya" to any unauthorized person. I recognize that doing so would be unethical and betraying the trust bestowed on me as a data collector and research assistant. I commit to executing my duties with diligence and safeguarding all materials and information from unauthorized access. I confirm that I have been taken through the protocol of engagement and terms of reference, which include:

1. Ensuring all participants sign the consent forms before embarking on the research.
2. Use of designed data collection instruments as instructed.
3. Ensuring the research is carried out within the agreed timeframe.
4. Data entry is done within 24 hours of collecting the materials.
5. Data is protected and surrendered to the researcher.
6. Maintaining utmost confidentiality with all informants.

Having understood the terms and conditions of this engagement, I hereby append my signature below.

SIGNATURE

A6: Participant consent form

Consent to participate in research

This research is entitled: "Corruption in devolved systems of government and public service delivery in Kiambu and Nairobi City counties, Kenya." The research is for academic purposes and the questions we ask you revolve around corruption in devolution and your opinion on its effect on public service delivery. The questions will be about your opinion or past and present experiences in this area. Some of the questions may be sensitive, and we will take measures to ensure you are comfortable answering them. Participation is entirely voluntary, and you do not have to answer a question, unless you want to and you can withdraw from the interview or discussions, at any stage, without offering any explanation. You also have a right to request that any data collected from you be withdrawn and destroyed. Confidentiality will be granted during and after the research. Your response will be anonymized, and nobody will be able to link the responses to you. The data obtained from you will be combined with data from other people and reported together as part of the research findings. In case of further questions, please contact the lead researcher, Wawira Mwangi, on telephone no 0722-747571.

( ) **YES**, I have read the above information and hereby consent to participate in the research.

( ) **NO**, I have read the above information and do not give wish to participate in the research.

NAME:

SIGNATURE:

A7: Interview guide

For public officers in supply chains, finance, revenue, payroll, human resources, AIE, subcounty administration (SCAs), communications, ICT, and public participation at executive and legislative arms of the county government and for members of the public at service delivery points such as health centers, markets, parking lots and suppliers of county governments.

	Questions	**Probe for…**
1.	Could you kindly tell us some general information about yourself, like your age, gender and how long you have received services from the county government or how long you have been doing business with the county government or how long you have worked for the county government?	Age, gender, length of business relationship, length of service delivery from the county government or length of service in the county government.
2.	What is your view of the interactions, processes, and coordination mechanisms of the county government, within the county, with other counties, and with the public?	bribery, embezzlement, public service delivery
3.	What is your experience with red tape, hierarchies and specializations, in the county?	bribery, embezzlement, public service delivery
4.	How would you describe your experience with information dissemination procedures, dissemination channels, and accessibility of dissemination channels in the county?	bribery, embezzlement, public service delivery
5.	What is your experience with civic education forums and civic education materials provided by the county government?	bribery, embezzlement, public service delivery

6.	What is your view of laws, policies, regulations, rules, procedures, guidelines, practices of the county?	bribery, embezzlement, public service delivery
7.	How would you describe the services you receive from the county government?	Accessibility and quality of public services.
8.	Wrap up question, is there anything else you would like to add?	

A8: Focus group discussion guide

For minorities, youth, women, business leaders, religious leaders, professionals, the disabled, NGO representatives and political leaders.

	Questions	**Probe for…**
1.	What is your view of the interactions, processes and coordination mechanisms of the county government, within the county, with other counties and with the public?	bribery, embezzlement, public service delivery
2.	What is your experience with red tape, hierarchies and specializations, in the county?	bribery, embezzlement, public service delivery
3.	How would you describe your experience with information dissemination procedures, dissemination channels, and accessibility of dissemination channels, in the county?	bribery, embezzlement, public service delivery
4.	What is your experience with civic education forums and civic education materials provided by the county government?	bribery, embezzlement, public service delivery
5.	What is your view of the laws, policies, regulations, rules, procedures, guidelines, and practices of the county government?	bribery, embezzlement, public service delivery.
6.	How would you describe the services you receive from the county government?	Accessibility and quality of public services

A9: Observation guide

	Observation points	**Phenomenological target**
1.	Respondent's words and actions.	Unravel hidden meanings.
2.	Contextual information-environment around the respondent and around the venue.	Unravel hidden meanings.
3.	Respondent's non-verbal clues such as sighs, discomfort, smiles and silences.	Unravel hidden meanings.
4.	Access to the settings and environment and sense of belonging for the respondent.	Unravel social norms and hidden meanings.
5.	What is not happening, especially if something ought to happen, for example, service delivery.	Unravel hidden meaning.
6.	Aspects of the environment that seem to be taken for granted by the respondents.	Unravel social norms and hidden meanings.
7.	Respondent communicating different things to the interviewer and through non-verbal clues as captured by the observation tool.	Unravel hidden meaning.

A10: Glossary of corruption terminology

Fig. 4.8 Glossary of corruption terminology

This glossary of terms captures the words which are not in English but form the vocabulary used to transact corruption deals in this study.

AIE: refers to 'authority to initiate eating' (in place of 'authority to incur expenditure') and refers to those with access to public money.

Chicken: refers to 'a chicken' meaning you give out a bribe amount commensurate to the price of a chicken (figuratively).

Chota: refers to 'fetch something big' meaning you give a big bribe.

Fuel: refers to 'paying for fuel' to facilitate a public service by bribing the official.

Grease: refers to 'oiling the hands of the public official' meaning you give a bribe to him or her, as motivation for the service or to smoothen the service process.

Ink: refers to 'paying for ink' to facilitate a public service by bribing the official.

Kodoo: refers to 'a sheep' meaning you give a bribe amount that is equivalent to the price of a sheep.

Mbuzi: refers to 'a goat' meaning you give a bribe amount that is equivalent to the price of a goat.

Nione kando: refers to 'see me aside or outside' which means, see me in private by giving me a bribe if you want to be assisted.

Nunua lunch: refers to 'buy lunch' which means, give a bribe.

Ongea vizuri: refers to ‘talk nicely’ by giving a bribe.

Salamu: refers to ‘greetings’ which means, giving a bribe.

Toa kila kitu (sometimes referred to as TKK): refers to ‘remove everything’ meaning you give all the money you have in your pocket, in the form of a bribe.

Toa kitu kidogo (also called TKK): refers to ‘remove something small’ which means you need to bribe.

Toa kitu kikubwa (sometimes also TKK): refers to ‘remove something big’ meaning you give a bigger bribe than you are offering.

Toa za macho: refers to ‘remove something for the eyes’ by giving a bribe.

Toa za mafuta: refers to ‘remove for petrol’ by giving a bribe to facilitate a transaction or service.

Tuachie kakitu: refers to ‘leave us with something’ by giving a bribe .

Tuelewane: refers to ‘let us agree,’ meaning you understand that you ought to give a bribe to get this service.

Tusaidiane: refers to ‘lets help each other’ by giving a bribe to facilitate a service one requires from a public official.

Umeenda tu hivyo: refers to ‘you are leaving just like that’ meaning you cannot leave without giving a bribe.

Umetuletea nini leo: refers to ‘what have you brought us today’ meaning how much bribe have you brought us today.

.

A11: Research permit

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: **424299**

Date of Issue: **06/September/2021**

RESEARCH LICENSE



This is to Certify that Ms.. Justa Wawira Mwangi of Kenyatta University, has been licensed to conduct research in Kiambu, Nairobi on the topic: Corruption in devolved systems of government and public service delivery in Kiambu and Nairobi City counties, Kenya. for the period ending : 06/September/2022.

License No: **NACOSTI/P/21/12726**

424299

Applicant Identification Number

Director General
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Verification QR Code

NOTE: This is a computer generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document, Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.

A12: Authorization from County Commissioner, Kiambu County

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND CO-ORDINATION OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENT
COUNTY COMMISSIONER, KIAMBU

Telephone: 066-2022709

Fax: 066-2022644
E-mail: countycommkiambu@yahoo.com
When replying please quote

County Commissioner
Kiambu County
P.O. Box 32-00900
KIAMBU

Ref.No: **ED.12/1(A)/VOL.V/18**

09th September, 2021

Ms., Justa Wawira Mwangi,
Kenyatta University,
P.O. Box 43844-00100,
NAIROBI - KENYA

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Reference is made to National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation Letter Ref No. **NACOSTI/P/21/12726** dated **06th September, 2021**.

You have been authorized to conduct research on ***"CORRUPTION IN DEVOLVED SYSTEMS OF GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY IN KIAMBU AND NAIROBI CITY COUNTIES, KENYA."*** The data collection will be carried out in ***Kiambu County*** *for a period ending* **06th September, 2022.**

You are requested to share your findings with the County Education Office, Kiambu, upon completion of your research.

Festus Kimeu
FOR: COUNTY COMMISSIONER
KIAMBU COUNTY

Cc National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
P.O. Box 30623-00100
NAIROBI

County Director of Education
KIAMBU COUNTY

All Deputy County Commissioners (***For information and record purposes***)
KIAMBU COUNTY

"Our Youth our Future. Join us for a Drug and Substance free County".

A13: Authorization from Ministry of Education



Republic of Kenya

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EARLY LEARNING AND BASIC EDUCATION

Telegrams: "SCHOOLING", Nairobi
Telephone: Nairobi 020 2453699
Email: rcenairobi@gmail.com
cdenairobi@gmail.com

When replying please quote

REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
NAIROBI REGION
NYAYO HOUSE
P.O. Box 74629 – 00200
NAIROBI

Ref: RDE/NRB/RESEARCH/1/65 Vol.1

DATE: 9th September, 2021

Ms. Justa Wawira Mwangi
Kenyatta University

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

We are in receipt of a letter from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation regarding research authorization in Nairobi County on the topic: *"Corruption in Devolved System of Government and Public Service Delivery in Nairobi City County, KENYA."*

This office has no objection and authority is hereby granted for a period, ending **6th September, 2022** as indicated in the request letter.

Kindly inform the Sub County Director of Education of the County you intend to visit.

REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION NAIROBI
09 SEP 2021
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
P.O. Box 74629, NAIROBI

HESBON NYAGAKA
FOR: REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
NAIROBI.

Copy to: Director General/CEO
National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
NAIROBI.

A14: Authorization from the County Assembly of Kiambu

COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF KIAMBU
COUNTY ASSEMBLY OF KIAMBU

Clerk's Chambers
County Assembly of Kiambu
Assembly Buildings
P.O.Box1492-00900
KIAMBU

Tel: 067 586 000
Email:info@kiambuassembly.go.k
kiambucountyassembly@gmail.com
Web: www.kiambuassembly.go.k

When replying please quote
REF NO: **CAK/2/2/2 Vol. 1(18)**

November 11, 2021

Ms. Justa Wawira,
Kenyatta University,
Department of Public Policy and Administration,

Dear Sir,

RE: **APPROVAL TO CONDUCT ACADEMIC RESEARCH ON CORRUPTION IN DEVOLVED SYSTEMS OF GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY IN KIAMBU AND NAIROBI CITY COUNTIES.**

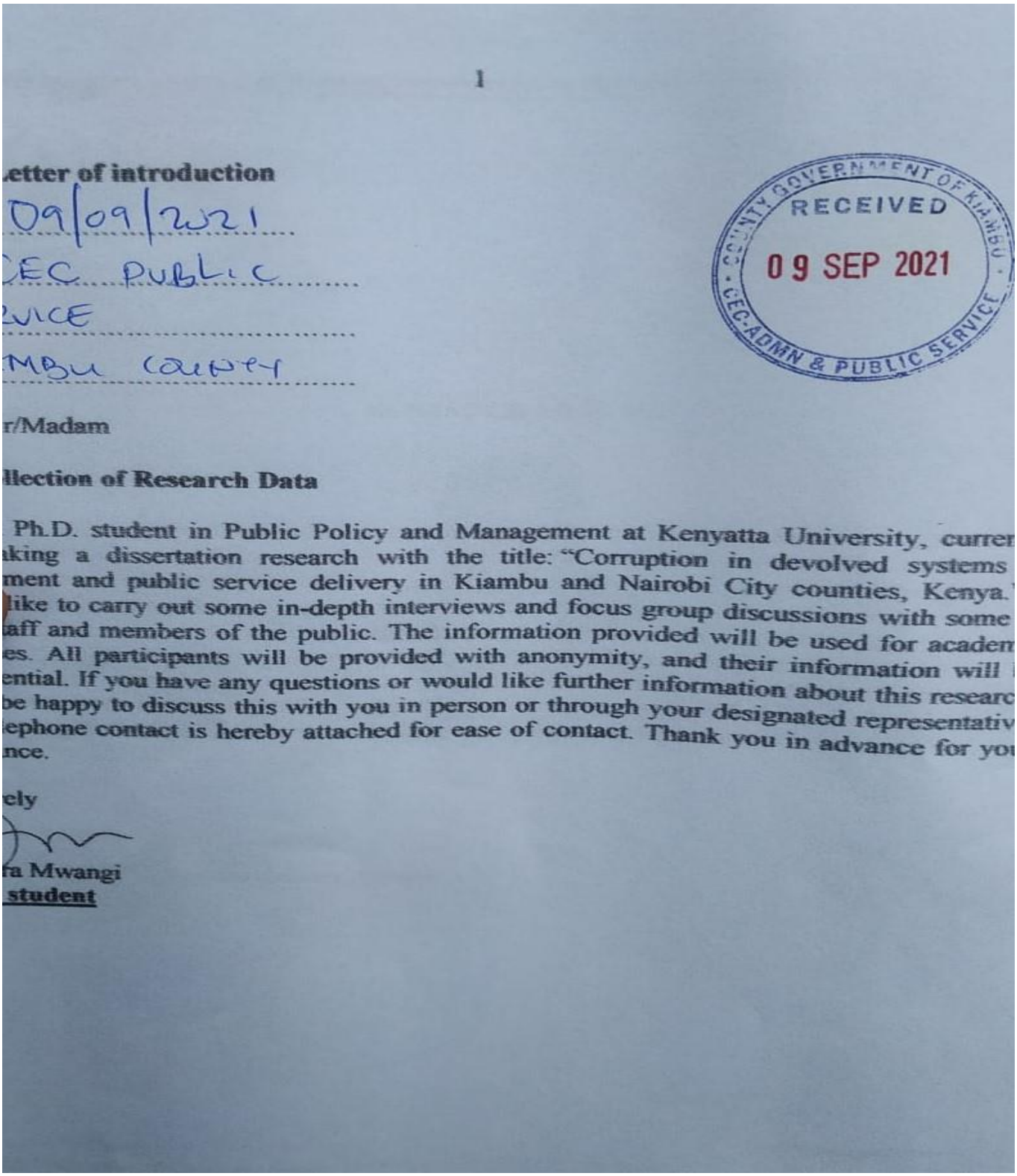
The County Assembly of Kiambu Service Board considered and approved your request to conduct research in the Assembly on the aforementioned subject matter for Doctorate Studies.

Your contact person while undertaking this exercise will be the Assembly Deputy Clerk, Mr. Benjamin Gachie.

Yours Sincerely,

Simon Kimani Rugu
CLERK, COUNTY ASSEMBLY OF KIAMBU
Cc: Hon Speaker, County Assembly of Kiambu
Deputy Clerk, County Assembly of Kiambu

A15: Received letter at Kiambu County Government



1

Letter of introduction

09/09/2021

CEC PUBLIC

SERVICE

KIAMBU COUNTY

COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF KIAMBU
RECEIVED
09 SEP 2021
CEC-ADMN & PUBLIC SERVICE

r/Madam

llection of Research Data

Ph.D. student in Public Policy and Management at Kenyatta University, curren
aking a dissertation research with the title: "Corruption in devolved systems
ment and public service delivery in Kiambu and Nairobi City counties, Kenya."
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taff and members of the public. The information provided will be used for academ
es. All participants will be provided with anonymity, and their information will
ential. If you have any questions or would like further information about this researc
be happy to discuss this with you in person or through your designated representativ
lephone contact is hereby attached for ease of contact. Thank you in advance for you
nce.

ely

ra Mwangi
student

A16: Letter of introduction from Kenyatta University



KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR (ACADEMIC)

15 SEP 2021
(ACADEMIC)
P.O. Box 43844 - 00100 NAIROBI

FAX: 811242/811575
E-mail: admissions-pg@ku.ac.ke
Website: www.ku.ac.ke

P.O. Box 43844, 00100
NAIROBI, KENYA
Tel: 020-8703223/22
Mobile: 0780 830 830

OUR REF: C82/CTY/37961/2017

DATE: 14th Sept., 2021

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION FOR MWANGI JUSTA WAWIRA, REG. NO. C82/CTY/37961/2017

The above named is a student at Kenyatta University pursuing Doctor of Philosophy in Public Policy and Administration in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Ms. Mwangi is in the process of writing her Research Thesis entitled **"Corruption in Devolved Systems of Government and Public Service Delivery in Kiambu and Nairobi City Counties, Kenya".** She is seeking permission to collect data from your institution to enable her write her Thesis.

This is therefore to introduce Ms. Mwangi to your esteemed Government/Organization/Institution for the above purpose.

Any assistance accorded to the student in furtherance of her career is highly appreciated.

Sincerely,

DR. BENARD KIVUNGE,
AG. REGISTRAR (ACADEMIC)

BK/rac

Transforming Higher Education....Enhancing Lives
Kenyatta University is ISO 9001:2015 Certified

A17: Authorization from County Commissioner, Nairobi



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: **424299**

Date of Issue: **06/September/2021**

RESEARCH LICENSE

This is to Certify that Ms.. Justa Wawira Mwangi of Kenyatta University, has been licensed to conduct research in Kiambu, Nairobi on the topic: Corruption in devolved systems of government and public service delivery in Kiambu and Nairobi City counties, Kenya. for the period ending : 06/September/2022.

License No: **NACOSTI/P/21/12726**

424299

Applicant Identification Number

Director General
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Verification QR Code

Recommended

8/9/21

COUNTY COMMISSIONER
NAIROBI COUNTY
P. O. Box 30124-00100, NBI
TEL: 341666

NOTE: This is a computer generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document, Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.

A18: Received letter at Kiambu Governor's Office

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND CO-ORDINATION OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENT
COUNTY COMMISSIONER, KIAMBU

Telephone: 066-2022709

Fax: 066-2022644
E-mail: countycommkiambu@yahoo.com
When replying please quote

County Commissioner
Kiambu County
P.O. Box 32-00900
KIAMBU

Ref.No: **ED.12/1(A)/VOL.V/18**

09th September, 2021

Ms.. Justa Wawira Mwangi,
Kenyatta University,
P.O. Box 43844-00100,
NAIROBI - KENYA

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Reference is made to National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation Letter Ref No. **NACOSTI/P/21/12726** dated **06th September, 2021.**

You have been authorized to conduct research on ***"CORRUPTION IN DEVOLVED SYSTEMS OF GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY IN KIAMBU AND NAIROBI CITY COUNTIES, KENYA."*** The data collection will be carried out in ***Kiambu County*** *for a period ending* **06th September, 2022.**

You are requested to share your findings with the County Education Office, Kiambu, upon completion of your research.

GOVERNOR KIAMBU COUNTY
09 SEP 2021
P.O Box 2344-00900, KIAMBU

Festus Kimeu
FOR: COUNTY COMMISSIONER
KIAMBU COUNTY

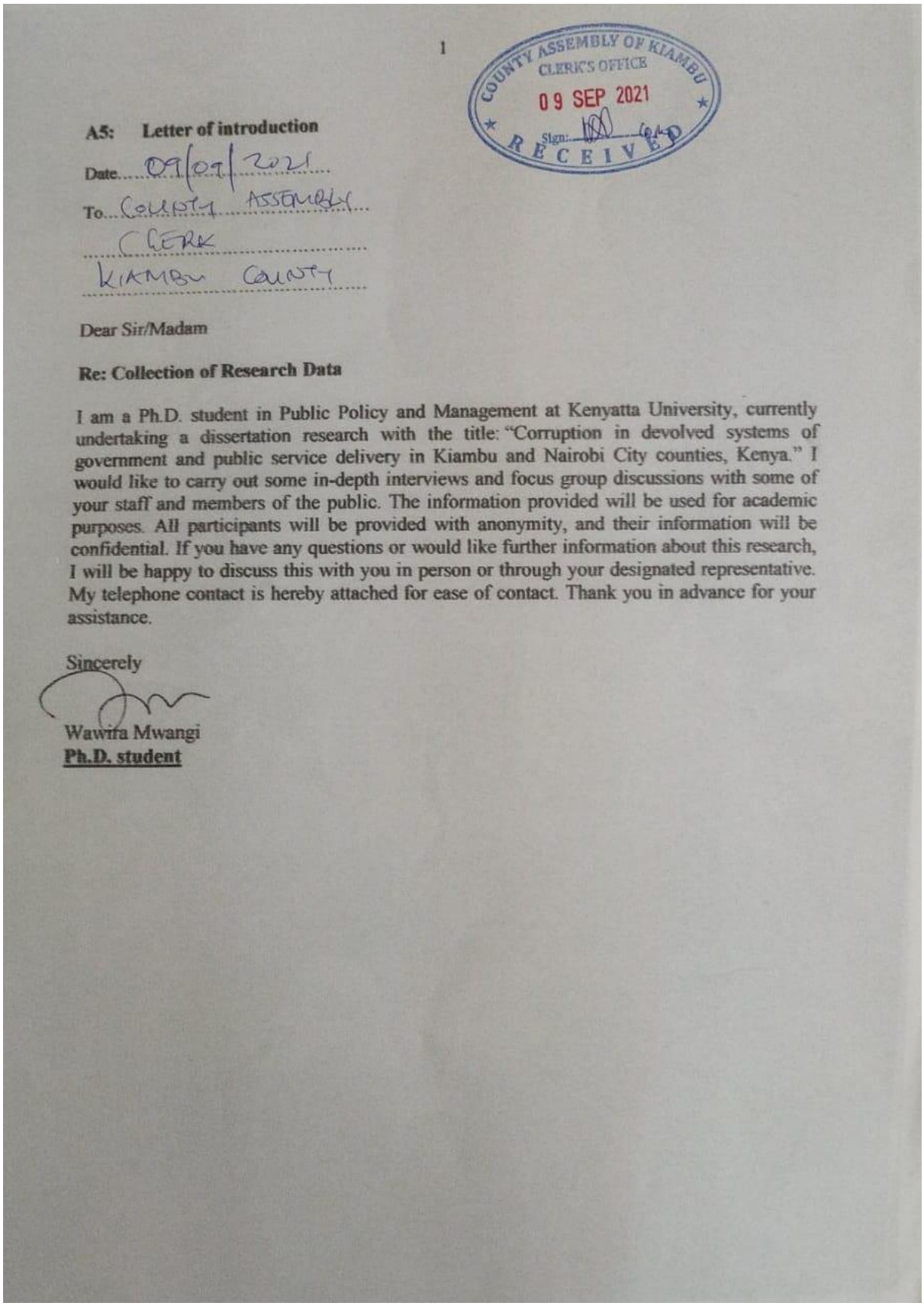
Cc National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
P.O. Box 30623-00100
NAIROBI

County Director of Education
KIAMBU COUNTY

All Deputy County Commissioners (***For information and record purposes***)
KIAMBU COUNTY

"Our Youth our Future. Join us for a Drug and Substance free County".

A19: Received letter at County Assembly of Kiambu



1

COUNTY ASSEMBLY OF KIAMBU
CLERK'S OFFICE
09 SEP 2021
Sign:
RECEIVED

A5: Letter of introduction

Date 09/09/2021

To COUNTY ASSEMBLY
CLERK
KIAMBU COUNTY

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Collection of Research Data

I am a Ph.D. student in Public Policy and Management at Kenyatta University, currently undertaking a dissertation research with the title: "Corruption in devolved systems of government and public service delivery in Kiambu and Nairobi City counties, Kenya." I would like to carry out some in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with some of your staff and members of the public. The information provided will be used for academic purposes. All participants will be provided with anonymity, and their information will be confidential. If you have any questions or would like further information about this research, I will be happy to discuss this with you in person or through your designated representative. My telephone contact is hereby attached for ease of contact. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely

Wawira Mwangi
Ph.D. student

A20: Received letter at Governor's Office and County Assembly of Kiambu



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND CO-ORDINATION OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENT
COUNTY COMMISSIONER, KIAMBU

COUNTY ASSEMBLY OF KIAMBU
CLERK'S OFFICE
09 SEP 2021
RECEIVED

Telephone: 066-2022709

Fax: 066-2022644
E-mail: countycommkiambu@yahoo.com
When replying please quote

County Commissioner
Kiambu County
P.O. Box 32-00900
KIAMBU

Ref.No: **ED.12/1(A)/VOL.V/18**

09th September, 2021

Ms.. Justa Wawira Mwangi,
Kenyatta University,
P.O. Box 43844-00100,
NAIROBI - KENYA

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Reference is made to National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation Letter Ref No. **NACOSTI/P/21/12726** dated **06th September, 2021.**

You have been authorized to conduct research on ***"CORRUPTION IN DEVOLVED SYSTEMS OF GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY IN KIAMBU AND NAIROBI CITY COUNTIES, KENYA."*** The data collection will be carried out in ***Kiambu County*** *for a period ending* **06th September, 2022.**

You are requested to share your findings with the County Education Office, Kiambu, upon completion of your research.

GOVERNOR KIAMBU COUNTY
09 SEP 2021
P.O Box 2344-00900, KIAMBU

Festus Kimeu
FOR: COUNTY COMMISSIONER
KIAMBU COUNTY

Cc National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
P.O. Box 30623-00100
NAIROBI

County Director of Education
KIAMBU COUNTY

All Deputy County Commissioners (***For information and record purposes***)
KIAMBU COUNTY

"Our Youth our Future. Join us for a Drug and Substance free County".

A21: Proposed Anticorruption Scorecard for County Governments

Purpose: This scorecard is meant to provide devolved governments in Kenya with an assessment tool for combating corruption in the form of embezzlement and bribery within their organizational cultures, bureaucratic procedures, information processing, public awareness, and county level policy instruments. The tool measures perceptions of the extent of corruption within these structures. Therefore, it is important to note that the tool is subjective and opinions on it may vary. Although imperfect, the tool will help devolved governments gauge perceived levels of corruption and help shine light on shortcomings in their anticorruption processes. Thus, the county governments can utilize the tool to gauge the effectiveness of their anticorruption systems and to improve their anticorruption governance by using the tool to highlight areas that may require intervention. The weighted ratings are assigned to each factor and cumulative scores tabulated to provide a total score.

Method: Those filling out this scorecard should answer each question by selecting the box that most closely tallies with their views on the question asked. The score is tabulated from the scoring matrix, with the cumulative scores summed in the last column. The tool's accuracy and representativeness increases, with more people who complete the scorecard and with the inclusion of more diverse audiences drawn from both internal and external stakeholders of the County Governments. Hence the target should be to have as many people completing this scorecard as possible, and to include both internal and external stakeholders in filling out this scorecard.

Outcome: The available points on the scorecard is 50. The higher the score for a County Government, the better it is at preventing corruption within its organizational culture, bureaucratic procedures, information processing, public awareness, and county level policy instruments.

Target Area	Scoring Matrix-10	Scoring Matrix-7	Scoring Matrix-5	Scoring Matrix-2	Scoring Matrix-0	TOTAL SCORES
(1)Organizational Culture- This measures the extent to which the organizational processes, interactions and coordination mechanisms at the intra-organizational, inter-organizational and organizational-public levels, are perceived to be infiltrated by bribery and embezzlement.	Very Rare	Not Often	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	

To what extent have you encountered corruption within the organizational culture of the County Government? *In other words, how often did you have to bribe to get any services and how often did you encounter incidents of public officials stealing public funds?*						
(2)Bureaucratic Procedures- This measures the extent to which corruption may have infiltrated the organization's red tape, hierarchies and specializations. **How often have you encountered corruption within the bureaucratic procedures of the County Government?** *In other words, how frequently did you experience deliberate delays that were aimed at making you pay a bribe and how frequently did you encounter incidents of such delays being utilized to steal public money?*	Very Rare	Not Often	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	
(3)Information Processing- This measures the extent to which corruption may have become embedded in the	Very Rare	Not Often	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	

dissemination procedures, dissemination channels and the accessibility of those channels. **How frequently have you encountered corruption within the information processing of the County Government?** *In other words, how often were you denied information or experienced delays in accessing information until you paid a bribe for the information and how often were public funds stolen utilizing such incidents of withholding and delaying information?*						
(4) Public Awareness- This, gauges how far corruption may have crept into civic education forums and civic educational materials. **How much corruption have you encountered within the civic education forums conducted by the County Government?** *In other words, to what extent have you encountered bribery as you tried to participate or participated in civic*	Very Rare	Not Often	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	

education forums conducted by the County Government and how often does theft of public funds take place through such processes?						
(5) County Level Policy Instruments- This measures the extent to which corruption may have become a part of the laws, policies, regulations, rules, guidelines, procedures and practices of the County Government. **How frequently have you encountered corruption within the County Level Policy Instruments of the County Government?** *In other words, how often were the county policy instruments utilized to demand bribes from you and to steal public funds?*	Very Rare	Not Often	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	