



**STRATEGIC EVALUATION PRACTICE ON SERVICE DELIVERY OF WATER DEPARTMENT OF THE COUNTY
GOVERNMENT OF HOMABAY; KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

Service Delivery is a very important phenomenon in every organization. Rewarding any organization always solely, depend on the reflection of Service Delivery results. Strategic Evaluation Practice is an element of Strategic Management Practices; hence, linking up of Strategic Evaluation and Service Delivery provides an indicator on how performance has to do with Service Delivery is reflected within the organizations. Water being an essential product to the community requires strategic capabilities that would bring along effectiveness and efficiency on involved processing functions of the product. The main objective of the study was to examine the Influence of Strategic Evaluation Practice on Service Delivery of the Water Department of the County Government of Homabay; Kenya. Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The target population consisted of employees of the water department of the County Government of Homabay; Kenya. The entire target population was studied since it was manageable. Descriptive and inferential statistics findings of the data were analyzed by use of Statistical Package of Social Sciences version 24 (SPSS). Collection of data was done by use of questionnaire as the instrument. Pilot study was conducted on employees who were not among the main sample of the study. Structural regression equation model was developed to test the relationships between the variables. ANOVA was performed to analyze the effect of Strategic Evaluation Practice on Service Delivery. The overall finding of the study was that Strategic Evaluation Practices had an influence on service delivery in the water department of the County Government of Homabay; Kenya. The study recommended for encouragement of the use of Strategic Evaluation practices since it improves the Service Delivery. The study recommended for further studies on similar variable, different organizations and methods.

Key words; *Strategic Evaluation, Service Delivery*

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INTRODUCTION

In many developing countries, the issue of Service Delivery is a challenge that needs to be addressed given the low quality of service provision and the pressing needs of the poor (Agrawal, 2016). Yang, Hueng and Hong (2015) supports this view when he states that local councils in Malaysia continue to face pressure to improve their Service Delivery, hence, increased level of education of the population has led to a more vocal and more discerning citizenry that expects better services and accountability from its local government. Moreover, rapid industrialization and urbanization of countries have created a challenging environment for the local government. Maroa and Muturi (2015) affirm that in Nepal, public service delivery has remained lower than what was targeted when Nepal announced delivery of public services to its people through a planned development effort.

USA is well known for its significant improvements in ensuring strategic management practices in its devolved units which has seen an explosion in development of infrastructure for economic sustainability. The rural communities in the USA have grown to enviable levels and most of the devolved units are deemed semi or partially autonomous (Kelegama, 2011). Ever since the introduction of counties in Latin America development planners and academic scholars have underlined the role co-operatives should and do play in stepping-up development. Regionally, the problem of Service Delivery due to poor strategic management practices or culture is a problem that is faced by many towns in the world, especially in Africa and other developing countries. Kiplagat (2016) alluded to the fact that, delivery of services has a direct and immediate effect on the quality of the lives of the people in a given community, hence, Poor services can make it difficult to attract business or industry to an area and it will also limit job opportunities for residents. Kariuki (2013) indicates, improving public service delivery is one of the biggest challenges worldwide.

Gwayi (2010) argues that municipalities in South Africa face serious challenges in implementing Service Delivery options that will enhance existing structures in the sphere of local government points towards the need for strategies to improve Service Delivery. To date, there are limited studies that have formally investigated the causes of poor Service Delivery and the strategies that can be implemented to improve the Service Delivery in local authorities. The Rwandese Association of Local Government Authorities (RALGA) in 2010 reported on the factors affecting Service Delivery in local governments.

Municipal Research and Services Centre (2013) defines service delivery as the actual producing of a service such as collecting refuse and disposing it or lighting the streets. Whitaker (2010) concurs with this argument and observes that depending on the kind of service being offered, each service has a primary intervention of transforming the customer and that the client himself or herself is the principle beneficiary. Whether it is learning new ideas or new skills (education), acquiring healthier habits (health), or changing one's outlook on family or society (social services), only the individual served can accomplish the change. He or she is a vital co-producer of any personal transformation that occurs (Whitaker, 2010); hence, service provider or agent can only use his or her skills and conduct activities to facilitate the process. Whitaker further insists that in delivering services, the agent helps the person being served to make the desired sorts of changes by supplying encouragements, suggesting options, illustrating techniques, and providing guidance and advice but the agent alone cannot bring about the change. Both the citizen and the agent together produce the desired transformation.

Proper service delivery requires strategic management practices involving the art and science of formulating, implementing, and evaluating cross-functional decisions that enable an organization to achieve its objectives (Strickland, 2013). According to Agrawal (2016), it is the formal process, or set of

processes, used to determine the strategies (actions) for the organization. For service delivery to be of quality, strategic management has to focus on many areas, including; the integration of management, marketing, finance/accounting, production/operations, research and development and computer information systems, hence; Strategy as practice for service delivery perspective looks at strategy as something people do. Strategic practice is based on the common sense idea that we have to relate tactics to strategy and strategic goals. This involves asking what kind of choices organizations must make in order to be effective in the short term and at the same time take on this challenge.

Service delivery in any organization requires strategic management practices which consist of four basic elements; strategic planning, implementation, evaluation and control (Makanga, 2017). It is within these four elements that strategic management practices are manifested and is also described as the strategic management process that effect proper service delivery. Strategic leadership is a component of strategic management practice that involves provision of direction and leadership toward implementation of planned strategy. Strategy formulation is the development of long-range plans for the effective management of environmental opportunities and threats, in light of corporate strengths and weaknesses. It includes defining the corporate mission, specifying achievable objectives, developing strategies and setting policy guidelines.

Service industry plays an increasingly important role in the economy of many countries. Current global competitive environment delivering quality service is considered as an essential strategy for success and survival (Bhattacharyya and Cummings, 2015). Even the public sector organizations have come under increasing pressure to deliver quality services Senior and improve efficiencies (Kiplagat, 2016). Customer needs and expectations are changing when it comes to governmental services and their quality requirements. However, service quality practices in public sector organizations is slow and

is further exacerbated by difficulties in measuring outcomes, greater scrutiny from the public and press, a lack of freedom to act in an arbitrary fashion and a requirement for decisions to be based in law (Maroa & Muturi, 2015).

Agrawal (2016) looks at strategic practice as the internal factors, which include personnel, finance, and manufacturing capabilities and may be analyzed based on functional approach, value chain approach or resource-based view approach, hence, external factors may include macroeconomic matters, technological change, legislation, and socio-cultural changes, as well as changes in the marketplace or competitive position.

Aggrawal (2016) finds formative evaluations to be vital because they provide information about performance early enough for management to make the necessary arrangements to avert a crisis before it is too late. The study finds fault in summative evaluations for the reason that they do not readily provide solutions to current problems, but instead, they seek to get information to preempt problems in subsequent periods. On the other hand, formative evaluations are intent on improving the current period's performance by gauging performance against standards set and deploying corrective actions where the need arises (Gupta, 2016). It is from these corrective actions that formative evaluations gain popularity. According to Conner (2007) Once it has been established that a firm's performance is a bit off course, management can institute adjustments that will not only help in bringing back production in the current period but also other periods to come in the future.

Formative evaluations have been found in the study by Yang, Kueng, and Hong (2015) to be entirely instrumental in positively influencing organizational performance when they are paired with monitoring procedures. The source posits that formative evaluation gives meaning to monitoring procedures, which are carried out every-day. The outcomes of this study indicated that this form of evaluation is just as important as a final evaluation that occurs at

the end of a financial period. Salam (2017) laments many firms are too obsessed with a summative evaluation to the extent that they disregard the role that formative evaluation plays in determining organizational performance. According to the same source, most firms tend to confuse formative evaluations with monitoring processes, and hence several organizations find themselves practicing the latter without knowing how much they are missing from also engaging in the former.

Controversially, Song, Moon, Chen, and Houston (2018) find that formative evaluation is more effective at enhancing productivity and hence performance relative to summative evaluation. The source claims that when evaluations and monitoring procedures are carried out now and then in a firm, there is likely to be disciplined and that it is this discipline that ultimately leads to better organizational performance. According to the study, monitoring is a practice that involves continuous examination and scrutiny of organizational processes seeking to understand how progress is being achieved. On the other hand, formative evaluations use data from monitoring processes to establish whether and to what extent objectives are being achieved.

Statement of the Problem

Globally, Service Delivery in public sector is affected by internal and external factors; hence the need of Strategic management to be applied and regarded as very important in organizations, most organization have competitively managed to carry out activities and functions just because of application of strategic management practices. Strategic Evaluation being part of the function of strategic management practices is vital for the growth and development of the organization. However, Galbreath (2010) asserts that the conceptual links between strategic management practices and service delivery have little or no empirical verification. Similarly, most theoretical and empirical researches that have been done focused the studies only on the relationships between strategic management and corporate

financial performance with less expression on service delivery (Lee, 2008).

Reviews of past researches investigated in Kenya on performance of public sector show that the studies assessed other contextual issues that impacted service delivery but not directly linked strategic management practices inclusive of Strategic Evaluation. Nathan (2004) carried out a study that examined the effect of competitive strategies on the relationship between strategic Human Resource Management and firm performance of Kenya's corporate organizations. Most scholars among them; Uzel, Namusonge and Obwogi (2014) investigated the effect of strategic management drivers on performance of the hotel industry at the Kenya's Coast but linking up Evaluation Strategy with service delivery was not reflected in the study.

Strategic management practices that determine service delivery in public sector especially on County Governments has been generalized without zeroing on directly associated strategies that could make the public sector deliver services in proper quality and quantity on consideration that County Governments are non profit making organizations in that employees may not care whether they offer better service delivery or not. It is against this backdrop that this study of Strategic Evaluation on Service Delivery was undertaken to fill the research gap of because of less coverage on Strategic Evaluation by the scholars.

Research Objective

The objective of the study was to investigate the Influence of Strategy Evaluation Practices on Service Delivery in the Water department of the County Government of Homabay; Kenya. The study was guided by the following research hypothesis;

- **H₀₁:** There is no significant effect of Strategic Evaluation on Service Delivery in the Water department of the County Government of Homabay; Kenya

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dynamic Capabilities Theory

The dynamic capabilities have been defined as the ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies to address rapidly-changing environments (Stanley, 2015). According to Tesot (2012), dynamic capabilities have also been defined as the capacity to renew competencies so as to achieve congruence with the changing environment by; adapting, integrating, and reconfiguring internal and external organizational skills, resources, and functional competencies. The qualifying characteristic of the dynamic capability is that the capability not only needs to change the resource base, but it also needs to be embedded in the firm, and ultimately be repeatable. The need for the dynamic capabilities is informed by the permanent risk of erosion of superior firm-specific

resources and competences in the contemporary business environment of hyper competition.

Resource Dependency Theory

The resource dependence theory was postulated by Pfeffer and Salancik in 1978. Organizational success in resource dependency theory is defined as organizations maximizing their power (Pfeffer 1981). Research on the bases of power within organizations began as early as Weber (1947) and included much of the early work conducted by social exchange theorists and political scientists. Generalization of power-based arguments from intra-organizational relations to relations between organizations began as early as Selznick (1949). Resource Dependency Theory characterizes the links among organizations as a set of power relations based on exchange resources.

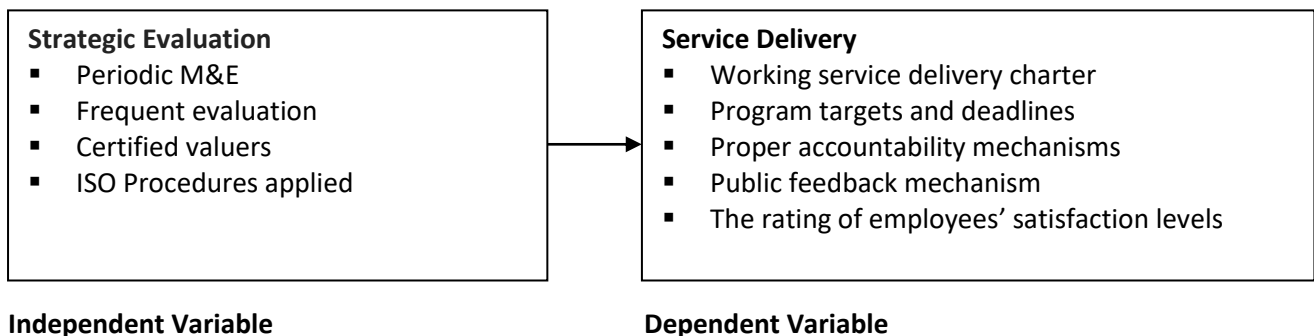


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Author

Review of the Variable

The study by Abdalla (2015), argues that more than ever organizations need to achieve the very best training and performance improvement possible. Today's competitive environment requires a workforce that cannot only learn quickly, but that can rapidly and consistently transform new learning into enhanced individual, team, and organizational performance. The source finds that thoughtful, efficient, and constructive evaluation is at the heart of continuous improvement and is vital to unlocking the desperately needed potential of learning for performance improvement.

Similar sentiments are shared in Chepkwony (2016) where it is argued that when the evaluation is held as sacred in an organization. The two studies agree on the fact that there is always the feeling that an individual needs to perform when there is a prospective evaluation than when there is none. For this reason, it is believed in both cases that strategy evaluation impacts performance as it drives up the urge to perform highly and impress during evaluation. However, the effect of evaluation can be separated into two aspects of formative and summative assessment.

Its findings suggested that strategic summative evaluations provide a method for verifying the efficiency and effectiveness of organizational strategies, as well as a way to determine whether the strategy being implemented is moving the business toward its intended strategic objectives. The evaluations were also found to help in establishing when and what actions are necessary to align business performance with the targets. In Yuliansyah, Rammal, and Rose (2016), summative evaluations are lauded for their comprehensiveness in establishing performance. The argument presented therein is that it is rather impossible for an evaluation to thoroughly measure performance accurately unless the period has come to an end. While this may be true to some extent, other studies have also opined that there are periodical criteria that are used and do not require for the end of a financial period for them to be valid.

Chenhall (2005) opines that strategic evaluations begin by establishing a performance target according to business objectives. This performance target includes both qualitative and quantitative performance benchmarks to which the individual and organizational performance is compared to actual. Qualitative benchmarks are subjective factors such as skills, competencies, and flexibility. Quantitative benchmarks include "hard facts" such as net profit, earnings per share of stock or staff turnover rates.

In the study by Goodwin and Wright (2001), strategic evaluations are observed to work under the assumption that because the business environment is dynamic, variances will commonly exist between ideal and actual performance. Regular strategic evaluations provide an objective, effective way for a business to evaluate, analyze and modify performance expectations. A favorable variance can tell a business what it's doing right and confirm it's on the right track while a negative variance can be a signal that the performance of management and staff needs to change.

With such information, Bunnefeld, Hoshino, and Milner-Gulland (2011) advise that business is well

positioned to work towards the improvement of performance to match or surpass expectations. Additionally, the source suggests that summative evaluations ought to be about measuring performance concerning the standards set at the beginning of a period. To make evaluations effective in influencing future performance, it is vital for management to consider revising goals at the end of a season if there is a need to do so. The purpose is to make goals both challenging and realistic (Tayler, 2010).

Baker, Collier and Jayaraman (2017) argue that when summative strategic evaluations pinpoint areas where the business did meeting strategic objectives, corrective actions can attempt to solve the problem in future periods. A good example cited in the source is if a business establishes strategic technical goals are not achieved because staff do not have up-to-date qualifications, the business can design training programs that bring skill sets in line with technical objectives.

Pérez-López, Moreno-Romero and Barkemeyer (2015) argue that if a business discovers the business object itself is out of line – such as unrealistic goals – it can take steps to change the objective and bring it to the line with real-life potential. Summative evaluation role in organizational performance was the subject of investigation in Alidrisi and Mohamed (2012) where it was established that it creates the feeling of responsibility among management and staff of a firm. Previous strategy evaluations also provide guidance and directions that are to be followed in subsequent periods for better performance.

Summative evaluations in business are also said to be beneficial in positively influencing performance because they seek to reveal the deficiencies that have caused an aspect to fail. This kind of evaluation is both forward-looking and also considering historical information. According to Bhattacharyya and Cummings (2015), its purpose is always to look for better ways of achieving organizational goals. It does not matter whether goals have been achieved or not; summative

evaluations must still present recommendations for better practices in the future nevertheless.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher employed descriptive survey design. Descriptive Survey design was suitable as it could be used to collect data that describes accurately the nature and extent of influence of strategic evaluation on service delivery. Target population encompassed all departments with focusing to staff that were directly linked to departmental decision making. The study target was 51 respondents from 4 departments under study. These departments include Human Resource, IT, Finance and Inspectorate. Data was collected in a span of one week. The questionnaire was distributed among the responsible officers of the targeted population in County Government of Homabay and then was collected after one week. The collected data was thoroughly examined and checked for errors and tabulated accordingly. The study used descriptive statistics to analyze the data to establish patterns, trends and relationships. Data was presented in frequency tables. The effect of strategic Evaluation practices on service delivery was established using linear regression analysis. The applicable regression model is shown below:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + e$$

Y is service delivery,

β_0 is a constant; β_1 is the regression coefficients for strategic evaluation practices.

X_1 – strategic evaluation practices

e -residual error

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Fifty one (51) questionnaires were administered to sampled respondents in the water department of the County Government of Homabay. However, 48 questionnaires were returned completely filled representing a response rate of 94.12 %. This surpassed Mugenda and Mugenda (2008) of greater than 70% and Babbie (2004) of greater than 60% return rate. Fairly good response rate was achieved due to adoption of drop and pick method in the administering of questionnaires.

Descriptive Statistics

Strategic Evaluation on Service Delivery

Strategic Evaluation variable was to determine the influence of strategic evaluation on service delivery in the Water Department of the County Government of Homabay; Kenya. The results were presented in Table 1 in which percentage are presented outside brackets while frequency in the brackets. The agreement ranged from 1 strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-undecided, 4-agree and 5 strongly agree. SDV is the standard deviation.

Table 1: Strategic Evaluation

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SDV
Evaluation exercises are carried out by professionals	2.2(3)	22.5(31)	31.2(43)	38.4(53)	5.8(8)	3.23	0.938
Evaluation Procedures follow ISO certified standards	5.8(8)	8.7(12)	15.9(22)	45.7(63)	23.9(33)	3.73	1.098
Evaluation functions carried out in time limits	13.8(19)	13(18)	29.7(41)	27.5(38)	15.9(22)	3.19	1.253
Evaluation exercises are carried out within budgetary resources	9.4(13)	13(18)	32.6(45)	36.2(50)	8.7(12)	3.22	1.086
Evaluations are done frequently	10.1(14)	15.2(21)	23.9(33)	39.9(55)	10.9(15)	3.26	1.155
Evaluation processes are interlinked with other all organization processes		2.2(3)	8.7(12)	42.8(59)	46.4(64)	4.33	0.728
Evaluation exercises are carried out by professionals	10.1(14)	10.9(15)	27.5(38)	37(51)	14.5(20)	3.35	1.163
Overall mean						3.47	

Table 1 showed that 38.4% and 5.8% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed respectively that evaluation exercises are carried out by professionals. A mean of 3.23 implies that evaluation was relevant to service delivery. On the other hand, 45.7% of the respondents agreed that evaluation functions follow the ISO standards, while 23.9% strongly agreed with a mean 3.23. This implies that to a great extent, Evaluation was a relevant strategy on service delivery.

The results also revealed that 27.5% and 15.9% of the sampled respondents agreed and strongly agreed respectively that evaluation functions are carried out within time limits. However, small number of the respondents were undecided that there idea of evaluation was not as the concern of the study as shown by 29.7% with a mean of 3.19. Similarly, 36.2% and 8.7% of the sampled respondents agreed and strongly agreed respectively that evaluation was done within the budgeted resources. standards. However, 32.6% of the respondents were undecided whether implementation was under budgetary resources with a mean of 3.22.

The result further revealed that 39.9% and 10.9% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed respectively that are evaluation was reviewed frequently. A mean of 3.26 implies that some respondents were for the idea as stipulated in the question while others disliked. 46.4% strongly agreed that implementations are regularly interviewed. 42.8% of the respondents agreed with a mean of 4.33. This implies that, respondents agree with the question that was asked. Finally, 37.0% of evaluation exercises are carried out by professionals, 14.5% of the respondents strongly agreed on the same. A mean of 3.35 implies that respondents confirmed that there is relevance of strategic evaluation on service delivery.

Service Delivery

Service Delivery variable was as dependent variable. The results were presented in Table 2 in which percentage are presented outside brackets while frequency in the brackets. The agreement ranged from 1 strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-undecided, 4-agree and 5 strongly agree. SDV is the standard deviation.

Table 2: Service Delivery

	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SDV
There has been less complaints of recent by clients	9.4(13)	12.3(17)	12.3(17)	32.6(45)	33.3(46)	3.86	1.122
The County Government of Homabay staffs are always taken for training	19.6(27)	21.7(30)	26.8(37)	14.5(20)	17.4(24)	2.88	1.357
The expenditure rate has been on the decline of late	7.2(10)	7.2(10)	18.1(25)	41.3(57)	26.1(36)	3.83	1.062
Officers are satisfied by the work	0.7(1)	17.4(24)	26.1(36)	52.2(72)	3.6(5)	3.41	.843
County Government of Homabay management benchmark with other organizations on efficiency		13.8(19)	39.1(54)	41.3(57)	5.8(8)	3.57	0.793
Overall						3.51	

The results in Table 2 showed that 32.6% of the respondents agreed and 33.3% also strongly agreed that there is less complaints from clients. However, 12.3% of the respondents were undecided on whether there is less complaint with a mean of 3.86. On the other hand, 14.5% and 17.4% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed

respectively the county government staff were always taken for training. A mean of 2.88 implied that not respondents supported that the staffs are taken for training.

The results also revealed that 52.2% of the respondents agreed that officers are satisfied with their work, while 3.6% strongly agreed. A mean of

3.41 indicate that there are others who are not satisfied with the idea of their work. Similarly, 5.8% and 41.3% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed respectively that county officers benchmark activities to other groups, with mean of 3.57, it implied that respondents agreed with the statement and others refrained. Finally, 41.3% of the respondents agreed that County of Homabay officers benchmark with other organizations, and 26.1% of them strongly agreed. A mean of 3.83 implied that most of the respondents agreed and

others never supported the idea of relevance of service delivery.

Inferential Statistics

Correlation Analysis

The results revealed that the relationship between Strategic Evaluation and Service Delivery is positive and significant (R=0.669, P=.0000). This implied that the Service Delivery amongst the County Government of Homabay; Kenya is significantly influenced by Strategic evaluation.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Analysis

		SE
Strategic Evaluation	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	51
Service Delivery	Pearson Correlation	.669**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	51

Table 4: Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.506	.227		2.230	.027
1 Strategic Evaluation	.262	.056	.339	4.653	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Service Delivery

Regression Coefficient

From the regression coefficient, the study utilized unstandardized regression coefficient in the formulation of study model.

$$\text{Service Delivery} = 0.506 + 0.262X_1$$

Where;

X_1 = Strategic Evaluation

ϵ = the error of term

Strategic Evaluation had significant positive influence on the Service Delivery ($\beta = 0.262$, $p = .000$) implying a unit change in Strategic Evaluation would result to significant change in Service Delivery by 0.262 units in the same direction. Basing on the findings, the study rejected the null hypothesis as $P < 0.05$. This implies that Strategic Evaluation Practices have a significant positive influence on the Service Delivery. Increase in Strategic Evaluation would results to increase in Service Delivery.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Linear regression results using un-standardized beta coefficients showed that Strategic Evaluation has significant positive influence on Service Delivery in the Water Department of the County Government of Homabay; Kenya ($\beta = .262$, $p = .000$). This suggests that a unit change in Strategic Evaluation would result to significant change in Service Delivery by 0.262 in the same direction. Basing on the values of β and P, there was adequate evidence to reject fourth null hypothesis as Strategic Evaluation have significant influence on Service Delivery ($\beta \neq 0$, $P < 0.01$).

Finally, the study concluded that Strategic Evaluation have significant influence on the Service Delivery. Consequently, the hypothesis was therefore rejected.

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