

## Leadership Qualities and Service Delivery: A Critical Review of Literature

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**Abstract:** Service delivery is the most widely used measure of performance in the public sector. This paper is a critical review of literature with a focus on how service delivery is linked to leadership qualities, ethics and accountability. The four concepts explaining the variables under focus in this paper are introduced through a brief presentation. The study discusses theoretical perspectives deemed most appropriate for this work. These are the path-goal theory, resource based view and principal-agent theory. It is evident that there are numerous studies which have taken different methodology approaches and are conducted in diverse contexts. There however exist conceptual, theoretical, methodological and contextual gaps which need to be addressed in future studies. The key emerging knowledge gap is the fact that the available studies have not investigated the link between leadership qualities, ethics and accountability on one hand and service delivery on the other. Given the importance of improving service delivery it is therefore imperative for scholars and practitioners to understand the nature of this link and to explore it to improve especially with regard to the public sector entities. The review has developed a clearer understanding of the concept and how they relate with the theoretical perspectives. The review underscores the need for practitioners to work towards ensuring organisations are aligned with best practices for leadership qualities, ethics and accountability to ensure better service delivery. The review further highlights need for policy makers to put in place regulatory framework to nurture effective leadership, enhance ethics and accountability for better service delivery.

**Keywords:** Leadership quality, ethics, accountability and service delivery

### INTRODUCTION

Service delivery relates both to the provision of tangible goods as well as intangible services and this can be done by individuals, businesses, corporate, government institutions, private companies and non-profit organizations [1]. Both the private and public sector services aim at improving the lives of the recipients and are catalysts of achieving and experiencing rapid economic and social development. Service delivery is central to individual, firm and national economic and social success.

As Flynn (1990) observed, certain of the public services' established activities may be contracted out operationally, in some countries, to private firms but the delivery of such services may continue to be funded from taxation and remain governed by public service criteria. Public services can differ significantly from commercial private sector services in a number of ways. In addition to their primarily noncommercial character, public services are often distinguished by an absolute, or at least comparative, lack of competition in the normal market sense of seeking to entice customers away from their competitors or rival service providers. Humphreys [2] holds that public services are often monopolistic or oligopolistic. Torres and Pina [3] note that as a result, many of the basic features of a

commercial marketplace are quite simply absent from the delivery of public services. In addition, given the regulatory role often performed by public services such as tax collection and law enforcement, not only are public services often monopolistic or oligopolistic in character, but they can also be mandatory.

Given the importance of achieving tangible improvements in the quality of services delivered by the private and public sector organization and agencies to customers and citizens there is need to continuously strive to understand factors that can contribute to improved service output. Among those issues the paper identifies and reviews are leadership qualities, ethics and accountability. These factors influence the nature of services provided through various aspects of the service delivery structures, processes and components.

Leadership is critical for the success and survival of all forms of organizations. Hughes, Ginnett and Curphey [4] argue that the role of leadership in organizations is to put structure and order. Leadership in organizations has to direct and coordinate the work of group members and building interpersonal relationships with others. Influence by showing your followers that you want to achieve results is critical. Leaders who are visionary can actually steer the

organization towards great success. Leadership effectiveness is shown by quality results evidenced in outputs such as products and services. The coordination of the human element in achieving set goals and objectives is critical. Getting results through others and the ability to build cohesive, goal-oriented teams is the essence of a good leader [5]. To achieve the desired results leaders have to possess certain traits, skills and adopt suitable management styles.

Apart from possession of noted qualities, leadership will have to be ethical and accountable to varied stakeholders in service delivery chain to be effective. Barrington (1984) propounded a similar idea by stating that leadership involves intellectual and moral content in order to analyse what needs to be done and act on that analysis. This underscores the question of responsible leaders because they have to work on the shortcomings and project future plans and strategies. This discussion emphasizes partnerships—a leader cannot work alone but needs a team. Raga and Taylor [6] contend that ethics are as important for the public servant as blood for the body. Ethical leadership easily influences followers. Employees who do not perceive a leader to be an ethical leader are less likely to be influenced by him or her [7].

Accountability is also related to ethical leadership and the ability of organization to deliver desired results. Accountable leadership indicates willingness and ability to justify one's beliefs, feelings and actions to others in line with implicit or explicit expectation. Leadership accountability has to do with acceptance of responsibility, voluntary transparency and answerability which are important for result driven environments [8]. According to Byrkjeflot, Christensen and Læg Reid [9], recent transformations of the public sector have been accompanied by shifts in conceptions of accountability from democratic forms to managerial ones and from professional to market accountability. Nyamori [10] noted that this has in turn been marked by a shift from accountability for processes, equity and access to inputs, outputs as well as results.

During the last two decades, management and more so, marketing science has witnessed a paradigm shift from short-term exchange transactions to long-term, mutually satisfying relationships between customers and firms. Relationship management receives renewed interest in marketing [11]. Consequently, organizations are focusing heavily on customer relationship development and investing in customer relationship management systems. The customer-seller relationships are now recognised as pervasive, inescapable and highly interdependent, with ties between consumers and businesses vital to the interests of both parties [12].

As noted by Halinen [13], service delivery is the cornerstone of organizations in the private and public sectors and is currently at the centre of relationship management. Service delivery is influencing design and structure of organizations as they strive to get the optimal delivery approaches, processes and procedures. According to Panda (2003) in most cases, the success of a service provider is dependent on the high quality relationships with customers. By understanding that service quality is of greatest importance to consumers, organizations are able to refocus their resources to lower costs while boosting market share, profitability and consequently improving the consumer experience.

The paper is structured into nine main components each detailing specific area of interest and the relationship between study variables. The paper begins by discussing the theoretical framework upon which the paper is grounded upon and the concept of service delivery. The paper then discusses the independent variables – leadership qualities, ethics and accountability. The paper then delves into the linkage between the variables before discussing the. The paper then identifies the knowledge gaps before making a conclusion.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This section discusses the theories upon which the paper was based. Three theoretical perspectives were deemed suitable basis upon which the issues considered in the paper could be canvassed. These are path-goal theory, resource based view and principal agent theory.

The path-goal theory developed by House (1971) and revised over the next several years, argues that leaders can adjust their own behaviors to adapt to contingencies and in this way find the most suitable style for any particular situation. The theory states that the main goal of the leader is to help subordinates attain the subordinates' goals effectively, and to provide them with the necessary direction and support to achieve their own goals as well as those of the organization [14].

The propositions under path-goal theory are valuable in guiding study of leadership and its relation to service delivery. The propositions underscore the importance of a leadership to possess the right qualities to be able to guide and motivate the subordinate to perform tasks effectively and deliver appropriate goods and services [15].

Resource Based View suggests that a firm's strategic advantage is based on its distinct combination of assets, skills, capabilities by utilizing core competencies and resources (Andersén, 2012). The RBV theoretical perspective affirms that each among these resources, there are those which can be exploited

and become sources of competitive advantages under certain conditions. According to the resource based view success or failure of organizations in public and private is rooted in identifying and utilizing specific resources (Kristandl & Bontis, 2007).

According to Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) the resource-based view supports the investigation into the generation and existence of capabilities in order to explore how capabilities including leadership alter resources in firm-specific ways (or not) and lead these resources to higher performance. This paper holds that leadership qualities, ethics and accountability are among the core competencies and resources necessary for proper service delivery in organization in both private and public sector.

According to Jensen and Meckling (1976), agency theory attempts to describe this relationship using the metaphor of a contract. The agency theory otherwise termed the principal-agent theory is directed at agency relationships in which one party - the principal, delegates work to another - the agent, who then performs the work (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Specifically, the agency theory is concerned with two key problems that occur in the agency relationship. The first problem arises when there are conflicting or partly conflicting desires or goals between the principal and the agent. This arises due to difficulties or costs for the principal to verify what the agent is actually doing and in that case whether the agent has behaved or is behaving appropriately (Farrell, 2003). The second problem is that of risk sharing that arises when the principal or agent have different attitudes towards risk and therefore may prefer different actions because of their risk preferences (Leruth & Paul, 2006).

This theory is relevant to this paper as it explains the interactions between varied actors in the service delivery process. The actors include leaders/managers, employees, suppliers and customers/citizens among others whose interactions lead to agency problems which have to be resolved. As noted by Bold, Svensson, Gauthier, Mæstad and Wane [16] there are varied stakeholders with different interests which have to be managed for efficient service delivery. The next section discusses the concept of service delivery, service quality and customer satisfaction.

## **SERVICE DELIVERY**

As noted in the background service delivery is the dependent variable upon which the study is based. The paper begins by elucidating on what is meant by the service delivery concept and then discusses service quality. The chapter then discusses customer satisfaction a concept closely related to service quality.

## **Concept of Service Delivery**

Service delivery concept is derived from the process of achieving services. The service concept has been defined in many different ways. Collier [17] referred to it as customer benefit package or the things that provide benefit and value to the customer. Further, Edvardsson and Olsson [18] define service as the detailed description of what is to be done for the customer (what needs and wishes are to be satisfied) and how this is to be achieved. Fox and Meyers [1] define service delivery as the provision of public activities, benefits or satisfactions to the citizens.

Service delivery relates both to the provision of tangible public goods and intangible services and this can be done by government institutions, organisations, private companies, non-profit organisations and individual service providers. Mitchinson (2003) however hints that the rethinking of public service delivery has been driven by economic pressures and increasing expectations from citizens. These definitions augur well with the concern of this study which is service delivery concept. This paper notes that 'service delivery' as a variable is widely used in developmental studies based in the public sector [19].

## **Quality of Services**

One of the key concerns in service delivery is the quality of services provided. According to Agus, Baker and Kandampully (2007) there are two perspectives to the ongoing pursuit of quality service delivery. First, from the perspective of the service organisation, there is a desire to survive and compete in a global environment. Secondly, from the perspective of the customer, there is a desire for better quality services. Service quality researchers [20, 21] agreed that the quality of service should be evaluated using customer perspective. This is due to the characteristics of intangibility, inseparability of production and consumption, heterogeneity, and perishability exhibited by services [22, 23].

Whereas service quality has achieved considerable popularity across the private sector, the public sector has been slower to take up the concept. This paper notes that service delivery concept when studying the public sector is the equivalent of performance concept when studying the private sector. The paper argues that while varied measures for profit organisations have been used in research there is yet to be conclusive performance measure for the public sector organisations which have distinct features from for profit organisations.

## **Customer Satisfaction**

Service experiences are the outcomes of interactions between organizations, related systems/processes, service employees and customers.

Customer satisfaction is deemed one of the most important experiences in the service delivery models and is highly related to service quality. Kotler [23] defined satisfaction as a person's feeling of contentment or discontent ensuing from comparing a product's perceived performance (or outcome) in relation to his or her expectations. The importance of customer satisfaction is derived from the generally accepted philosophy that for a business to be successful and profitable, it must satisfy its customers [24].

Customer satisfaction has been defined as a feeling of the post-consumption experienced by the customers [25]. In contrast to the cognitive focus of perceptions, customer satisfaction is deemed an effective response to a product or service [26]. The concept of customer satisfaction and its implications in various industries have been somewhat elusive due to the complex nature of people's perceptions and evaluations [27, 28]. For businesses in services industries, achieving customer satisfaction is far more challenging and is determined by various factors among them leadership in these organisations [29]. It is for this reason that the paper reviews issues on leadership qualities and how they link to service delivery in the subsequent section.

## **LEADERSHIP QUALITIES**

Leadership is the ability to inspire people to work together as a team to achieve common objectives. The study conceptualizes three classifications of leadership qualities including personality traits, leadership skills and leadership styles. The last sub section links leadership qualities to service delivery.

### **Personality Traits**

Personality is the dynamic organization of psycho physiological systems that creates a person's characteristic pattern of behaviour, thoughts, and feeling. Some personality trait researchers believe that, for the most part, personality traits are generated by nature and are stable, but some other researchers indicate personality traits will continue to evolve and may even change, even though the natural-born temperament may never change (Sternberg, 2000). The personality traits have been developed from the Trait Theory which can be divided into two schools. The first school believes that people have the same set of traits, and why each one is different is because; the level of each trait is shown differently. Thus, traits commonly exist in every one of us. However, the other school believes that individual variance comes from the trait combination, which varies from one person to another, so that everyone has his/her own set of specific traits (Sternberg, 2000).

Cattell [30] divided traits into two categories- surface trait and source trait while Allport [31] categorized traits into three types - cardinal trait, central

trait and secondary trait. On the other hand, Eysenck [32] claimed that personality has only three major traits: extroversion, neuroticism and the psychotic. McCrae, Costa and Busch [33] classified personality traits into five factors- extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness. Astin and Astin (2000) identify individual leadership traits including self-knowledge, authenticity/ integrity, commitment, empathy and competence.

### **Leadership Skills**

Being effective in any responsibility requires a set of three broad skills identified by Katz (1974) as technical skills, conceptual skills and human skills. These skills are not interrelated, yet they have traditionally been examined separately and developed independently. Technical skill involves specialized knowledge and analytical tools within a particular specialty and facility in the use of the tools and techniques of the specific discipline.

Human skill is the ability to be effective interpersonally, to be an effective team builder and team member. It requires skill in leadership, communications, team building and decision making. The skill influences the one's relationships not only with subordinates, but also with peers, supervisors, citizens and external groups. Conceptual skill involves the ability to take unrelated information and organize it in comprehensive, ordering ways. It can be thought of as "organized seeing", the ability to refine chaos into simpler, more refined, understandings [34].

Literature has identified other skills required of leaders. These include cognitive skills such as "personal mastery", "self-reflexivity" and motivational skills such as "inspiring", "trustworthy". Social skills such as "willing to trust", "a good listener" in addition to "able to build and maintain mutual trust" have also been noted [35, 36]. Bennis [37] has noted that interpersonal skills, good judgment, and character are the qualities that distinguish truly effective leaders from those who are merely adequate.

### **Leadership Styles**

The concept of leadership style emerged through classical studies conducted by [37]. They identified authoritarian, democratic and laissez-faire styles of leadership, and demonstrated that leadership style had a profound effect on group productivity and interactions with other group members and the leader. Other leadership styles which have gained prominence in contemporary leadership theory include transformational leadership, transactional leadership and servant leadership, styles [38].

Transformational leaders are motivators with the ability to share a vision of future possibilities that inspires fellow employees to place the needs of the

group above their own individual interests. Transformational leadership is inspirational, providing scope for intellectual and creative development, which values the role of the individual in achieving a shared vision. Transactional leadership is more closely allied to traditional management techniques with the leader establishing organizational goals and entering into a contractual arrangement with subordinates based on reward and punishment.

The servant leader, on the other hand, leads through service. The idea of the servant leader is not new, having been introduced by Robert Greenleaf in 1977. However, its precepts based on empathy, healing, listening and building community have enhanced meaning in today's business environment (Otieno, 2013).

### **Leadership Qualities and Service Delivery**

Literature suggests there are diverse linkages between leadership qualities and service delivery indicators in organisation in private and public sectors. Research on leadership styles has focussed on the orientation of the leader toward completing tasks, motivating people and the leadership styles (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Burke and Collins [40] for example find that leadership qualities have an impact on performance of tasks and in turn how services are delivered.

Bennis [37] asserts that leaders add value by thinking abstractly and strategically, articulating a vision and purpose for followers, and providing a vision, and even hope, for workers. Sarver and Miller [39] found transformative leaders as most effective among the law enforcers in Texas United States of America. Transformational leaders were characterized as confident, energetic, and open-minded.

Nevertheless, it is clear that successful and sustainable performance in any organisation is linked to its effective leadership approaches and management practices, the capabilities and capacity of individuals and teams [41]. Freedman and Tregoe (2003) noted that strategic leadership lays emphasis on ethics and accountability to promote greater productivity than either managerial leadership or transformational leadership. The next sections address the issues of ethics and accountability and they relate to leadership and service delivery in organisations.

## **ETHICS**

### **Ethical Culture and Expectations**

Ethics lie at the heart of human relationships and hence at the heart of the relationship between leaders and followers [42]. Ethics has long been an outstanding issue in the day to day running of organizations over the past decades. The issue has however become more scrutinized due to the globalization trend which has put more pressure on

organizations and governments to be more accountable and responsive to their consumers and citizens [43]. In Africa, the efforts towards recognizing ethical values within governments have been more emphasized due to the high corruption and governance issues and unethical behavior evidenced in their public sectors [44].

Ethical culture relates to societal expectations on leaders, employees and customers. Society is predicated upon behaviour that it expects will advance itself. Leadership is established and allowed to exist because in capitalist societies it is deemed to have a central and pivotal role in the betterment of society.

### **Ethical Structures**

Ethical structures consist of code of ethics, ethical audits, ethics ombudsman, ethics committee, ethics training committee and support to whistleblowers [45]. Ethical structures are intended to support organizations' ethical concerns across organizations. There is a need for ethical structures that surround the modes in which organizations strive to inculcate corporate and business ethics [46].

Without ethical structures there are no supports in place to create ethical processes and evaluate ethical performance. Ethical structures serve as a support that the organization and its staff should be able to relate to at the strategic, tactical and operational levels of business practices. It is a point of reference to other stakeholders in the marketplace and society [46].

### **Ethical Processes**

Ethical processes consist of ethical performance appraisal, staff education, aid in strategic planning, consequences for a breach, communication of the code to organization workers, dissemination of the code to new staff, dissemination of the code to customers, dissemination of the code to suppliers, communication of the code to other stakeholders and revision of the code [48]. There is a need to support the staff of the organization in different ways; otherwise they will not know the corporate standpoint on ethical business practices. In particular, staff may not know how to act and behave in situations requiring ethical considerations.

According to Maina (2013), organizations need to be aware that ethical values and principles change over time and vary across contexts. It is therefore crucial to create processes that contribute to regulating organizations' ethical business practices, but also there must be structures in place to support staff in their ethical actions and behaviours.

### **Ethical Practices by Stakeholders**

Perrin (2012) defines practices as what people do or what really happens. Further, Korkman (2006) define practice as a way of doing that is embedded in

the context of inwardly and outwardly interlinked elements that focus on tasks performance. Ethical practices thus refer to what is really happening in the organisations with regard to ethics and consist of resolving ethical dilemmas, assisting the bottom line and effectiveness of the code of ethics [47]. Ethical practices by stakeholders relates to how ethical structures and processes are performing.

Ethics cover a diverse landscape of practices, some with legal implications, all of which stakeholders must be aware of and adhere to. These include adherence to organisational policies and mission, in the conduct of the day-to-day activities. Ethical practices also relate to justice and integrity in the conduct of tasks where all stakeholders [49]. In certain scenarios stakeholders have also to uphold confidentiality and privacy in addition to exhibiting self control [50].

### **Ethics and Service Delivery**

One such study is by Kuye and Mafunisa [46] who examined the responsibility of public servants. The article explains the importance of administrative responsibility and examines the interrelated issues of administrative accountability, public service ethics, and the public interest. The paper contends that the “responsible” bureaucrat is commonly perceived as one who pursues such issues as accountability, integrity, neutrality, efficiency, effectiveness, responsiveness, representativeness, and equity in the procurement of good governance in the public domain.

Huhtala, Kangas, Lämsä and Feldt (2013) point out that ethicality is an essential dimension of leadership, because leadership is a process in which leaders influence their followers to achieve organisational goals such as service delivery. Akhavan et al. [48] also find a positive and strong correlation between ethics and organizational performance. Maina (2013) established a negative correlation was between corruption and service delivery in the ministry of Lands in Kenya. Maina observed that citizens got delayed services and in some cases no services were offered due to corruption in form of bribes solicitation. Ethics is closely interlinked to accountability with the two concepts revolve around responsibility of various stakeholders and thus the next section discusses accountability in detail.

### **ACCOUNTABILITY**

The third independent variable considered in this paper was accountability. The paper conceptualized that accountability works interdependently with leadership qualities and ethics to influence nature of services delivered. The paper describes nature of accountability, mechanisms of accountability and then links accountability to service delivery.

### **Nature of Accountability**

According to Bavly as cited by Wood and Winston [8] accountability implies acceptance of responsibility, and anyone who serves as an agent or leader should be willing to be held accountable. Accountability has been classified into several types. For example, depending on who is accountable for what and to whom Carino (1983), classifies accountability into traditional, managerial, program and process types. Similarly, Romzeck and Dubnick (2001) identify four main types of accountability: bureaucratic, legal, political, and professional. Bureaucratic accountability is concerned with the need to follow the rules and procedures. Legal accountability stresses on principal-agent relationship and advocates various forms of oversight. Political accountability focuses on the responsiveness to the constituency while professional accountability emphasizes role of experts who are guided by integrity and professionalism in any organization.

Although accountability is classified into several types, at a broader level accountability can be classified into two: internal and external. Advocates of internal accountability emphasize devoting greater attention to public officials' own professional and personal values and ethics. Internal accountability also signifies that at each level of the organizational hierarchy, public officials will remain answerable to those who supervise their work. In contrast, external controls are designed to enable institutions outside the bureaucracy to oversee the activities of public officials and compel them to act responsively and efficiently. In other words, external accountability refers to the process whereby public servants remain answerable, for actions carried out and performance achieved, to relevant authorities outside their organizations [51].

### **Accountability Mechanisms**

Stirton and Lodge (2001) identify four mechanisms of ensuring accountability. The first mechanism is voice which seeks to promote individual contributions and redress to public provision. According to Goetz and Jenkins [52], voice includes variety of mechanisms – formal and informal – through which people express their preferences, opinions and views. Voice refers to the ability of stakeholders to have their views considered in the decision making process, and to the ability of other affected stakeholders, including civil society organizations, to have their views considered by organisation's governing structures [1]. To exercise voice in this sense, stakeholders need channels to have their opinions heard, as well as a culture of openness and appropriate safeguards to protect those expressing views that are controversial or unpopular.

The second mechanism relates to choice which includes all mechanisms including “exit” from provider. Mir, R., Mir, A., and Bapuji [53] note exit refers to situation where organizational actors vote with their feet implying consumers have a choice not to buy a firm's products. The third mechanism is information which facilitates the quality of knowledge, enhancing voice and choice. There is need for ease of access of information on various organisational issues for accountability [1]. Such information needs to be perceived as actionable. For stakeholders to be able to act on this information, an enabling environment needs to reduce fear of reprisals. Incentives for information-led action increase with the likelihood that those in positions of power will actually respond to voice [1].

The fourth mechanism is representation which refers to institutionalized promotion of interest to compensate for over representation of other interests. Representation in terms of accountability, the representative is conceived as someone who is to be held to account for what he or she does [54]. Representativeness concerns to what extent partnerships include various stakeholders' interests. This is determined by the extent to which an appropriately wide range of stakeholder groups participating formally in the network, as lead or participating partners.

#### **Accountability and Service Delivery**

Deininger and Mpuga [55] in a study based in Uganda found that improved accountability to help reduce corruption and improve the quality with which critical public services are provided. Khemani [56] in a study in Nigeria's health sector found evidence of limited accountability at local levels, specifically reflected in the non-payment of salaries of health workers, variation in which cannot be explained by appealing to lack of resources available to local governments.

According to Bold et al. [16] service delivery outcomes are determined by the relationships of accountability between policymakers, service providers and citizens. Health and education outcomes are the result of the interaction between various actors in the multi-step service delivery system, and depend on the characteristics and behavior of individuals and households. While delivery of quality health care and education is contingent foremost on what happens in clinics and in classrooms, a combination of several basic elements have to be present in order for quality services to be accessible and produced by health personnel and teachers at the frontline, which depend on the overall service delivery system and supply chain [57]. It emerges that leadership in organisations is intertwined with ethics and accountability. The next section thus examines and discusses the relationship among leadership qualities, ethics and service delivery.

#### **LINKAGE AMONG LEADERSHIP QUALITIES, ETHICS, ACCOUNTABILITY AND SERVICE DELIVERY**

The paper's main purpose was to critically review available literature in a bid to understand the link among leadership qualities, ethics and accountability on one hand and service delivery on the other. A sub section on measurement of the variables is given before the available studies are discussed.

#### **Measurement of the Variables**

The available studies had used various measurement scales and indicators for the variables under consideration. Majority of the studies which collected primary data used five or seven point Likert scales to measure the variables. The Likert scales contained statements indicative of the variables.

For example with regard to leadership traits, Kearns et al. 2015 used indicators including, “organized seeing” and “the ability to refine chaos into simpler, more refined, understandings” in their Likert scale. Khemani [56] used trends of payments of salaries as an indicator for accountability by local governments in Nigeria. The choice of measurement scales and indicators is important as it determines the findings obtained.

#### **Leadership Qualities, Ethics, Accountability and Service Delivery**

The interplay between the study's variables has not been exhaustively investigated with only limited studies available. One such study by Raga and Taylor [6] analysed the impact of accountability and ethics on public service delivery in South Africa. The study reviewed literature with regard to ethics and accountability and its relationship with service delivery in South Africa. Another relevant study is by Crowe [58] who studied challenges for leadership and accountability in local public services in England through a summative review. The study found that various governance models considered raise different questions for local leaders about accountability and good governance. The studies reviewed have vital lessons but have some weaknesses and thus the next section explores the knowledge gaps.

#### **Knowledge gaps**

A number of knowledge gaps are emerging from the studies being reviewed. First there is noted a conceptual weakness where the available studies have not studied the four variables of interest in this paper together. Most of the available studies have focused on two or three variables and did not provide theoretical underpinnings for studying influence of leadership qualities on service delivery in the public sector. For instance, Khemani (2006) focused on accountability and service delivery in local authorities in Nigeria having offered no theoretical grounding for his study.

Despite the fact that each of these studies was able to provide successful outcomes, each of them was identified to have methodological shortcomings. Kanyane (2010) alluded to limitations of relying literature reviews only and the narrow scope in his study on public service delivery issues in the Zuma administration. The next section makes conclusion based on the reviewed studies highlighting the key lessons learnt and gives the proposed conceptual framework for the review.

## **CONCLUSION**

This section gives final submissions of the paper. It starts by highlighting key emerging and lessons learnt issues from the review. The section then discussed the theoretical, practice and policy implications. The paper ends by outlining the conceptual framework.

### **Key Emerging Issues and Lessons Learnt from Review**

The paper is premised on the need to understand leadership qualities, ethics as well as accountability and how they link to the process of turning diverse resources and other inputs into services and goods. A proper understanding of these factors will enable stakeholders to take advantage of emerging opportunities as well put in place strategies to address the challenges facing firms and society. Understanding of the service delivery dynamics will also enable stakeholders to embrace changes. This will facilitate taking up the opportunities offered by better performance management, better financial management and better information technology systems, thus improving customers and clients' satisfaction while deploying scarce resources optimally.

This paper notes that service delivery concept when studying the public sector is the equivalent of performance concept when studying the private sector. The paper holds that service delivery concept offers a promising performance measure for the public sector. The literature review and specifically empirical studies highlighted under this review were selected to cover the key areas of this study. A review of related empirical studies is undoubtedly a very essential exercise for a research project. Critical lessons from the reviewed literature emerged. First, it was realized that some theories and theoretical frameworks, if well justified can be applied in supporting studies related to leadership qualities and its linkage to service delivery. It also emerged that related previous studies had different findings depending on their context. It is evident that research into service delivery factors that are linked to it such as leadership qualities, ethics and accountability is still in its infancy and that the findings are as yet inconclusive.

### **Theoretical Implications**

The study made important theoretical insights which can aid a better understanding of leadership qualities and how they influence service delivery. The paper has developed clearer understanding of service delivery, leadership skills, ethics and accountability concepts and has elucidated the measurement of the variables. The review has also highlighted how path-goal theory, resource based theory and agency theory apply to the study of leadership qualities and service delivery. This study lays the ground for further and better conceptualisation and theoretical review on leadership qualities and service delivery.

The prevailing situation as highlighted by the section on knowledge gaps gives the motivation to future studies in this area. There is need for advancing research in this area as Sub Saharan African nations such as Kenya are still struggling with how to improve public sector service in a bid to create conducive environment for inclusive growth and development. Future studies need to adopt and modify available measurement tools on service delivery, leadership skill, ethics and accountability in varied contexts across countries with unique characteristics such as Kenya.

### **Implication for Practice**

There is need by practitioners especially in the public sector agencies to explore and adopt organizational designs that could be developed to address the need for greater efficiency, effectiveness, and responsiveness of services provided. The service delivery design adopted should be aligned to the best practices with regard to leadership qualities, ethics and accountability to ensure optimal output.

The paper attempts to provide a clearer understanding of the service delivery and factors that influence it, as this will enable practitioners to better segment their consumer/citizen needs, communicate more effectively with the consumers/citizens, develop more effective distribution and pricing strategies, and tailor service elements to meet the needs of their target consumers. The review emphasizes the need for practitioners to approach issues of leadership qualities and services as interconnected aspects which need to be tackled holistically.

### **Implication for Policy**

As observed by Sridhar [59], service delivery systems need to take on greater importance in policy-making and planning circles. The review offers insights which can guide policy makers and planners in designing service delivery models to meet the demands of diverse customers/citizens needs and ensure customer satisfaction. For example, with regard to County Governments, policy makers can utilize insights in this study to put in place a regulatory framework to guide leadership and service delivery.

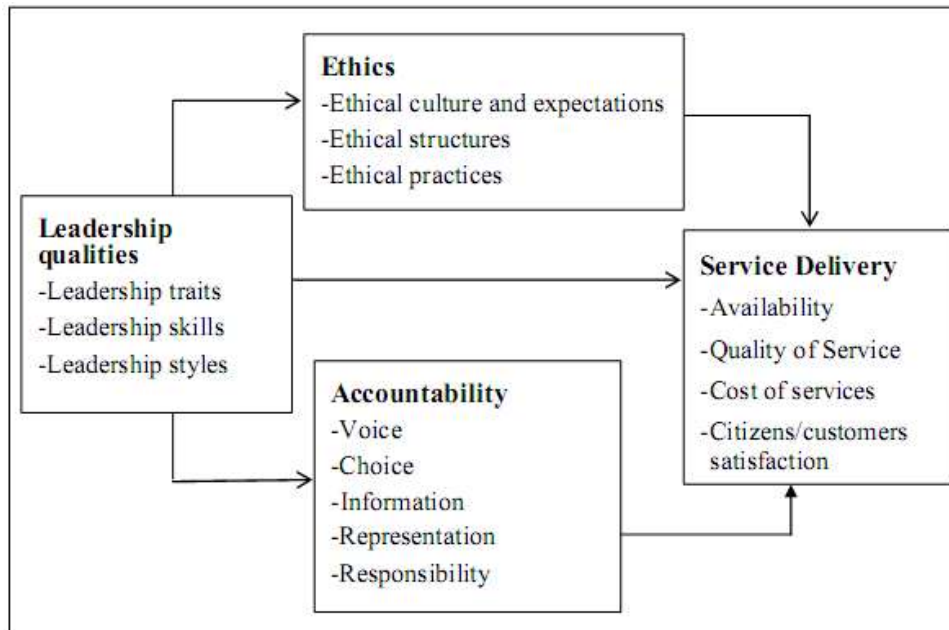


The importance of ethics and accountability is emphasized in the review. This will guide the policy makers in putting in place and enforcing ethical codes of conduct and accountability mechanisms which will enhance quality of leadership and consequently service delivery.

**Conceptual Framework**

A conceptual framework explains relationships between interlinked concepts and explains the connections between the variables (Smyth, 2004). The

paper conceptualises the linkage amongst leadership qualities, ethics and accountability on one end and service delivery on the other. Leadership qualities, ethics and accountability constitute the independent variables. Service delivery is the dependent variable. The independent variables influence the dependent variable as illustrated in Figure 1. Leadership qualities (traits, skill and styles) directly interact with service delivery.



**Fig-1: Conceptual framework for leadership qualities and service delivery**

The framework depicts a situation where accountability and ethics first interact with leadership qualities and consequently service delivery. The study assumes that accountability and ethics interact with leadership for them to influence service delivery in organisations. Based on the conclusions and the conceptual framework, the review ends by outlining the implication of this paper on theory, practice and policy in the next section.

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