AN ASSESSMENT OF THE JOINT EFFECTS OF SERVICE QUALITY DIMENSIONS, AND PERFORMANCE BENCHMARKS ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AT ELDORET LAW COURTS

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Abstract

Service quality dimensions, performance benchmarks and customer satisfaction are very significant concepts for the judiciary as a service provider and all its institutions under it must recognize these dimensions if they are to be productive and remain constitutionally relevant. It is very important for courts to know how to evaluate these constructs from the court users' perspective so as to understand their needs and satisfy them. Service quality is considered to be very critical for courts because it contributes higher customer satisfaction, profitability, reduced cost, improved customer loyalty and retention. The main purpose of this study is to assess customer satisfaction and service quality using SERVQUAL model within the performance benchmarks such as performance appraisals and quality service systems. Data was collected from a population of 1815 respondents made up of 140 convicts, 83 remandees, 23 advocates and 82 parties with pending children cases obtained using stratified random

sampling. The results on performance benchmarks (performance appraisal and quality management systems) provided amazing results with a negative relationship between performance appraisal at (-0.071) with the significance of (p = 0.246) with customer satisfaction. The study also found that no significant relationship between performance appraisals, service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction. But quality management systems had a positive effect with the significance level of (0.770) with customer satisfaction but this was no significant relationship between quality management systems and customer satisfaction.

Keywords: Service Quality Dimensions, Customer Satisfaction, Justice, Performance Appraisal, Rater, quality Management Systems

INTRODUCTION

For a long time before the 2010 constitution the Kenya Judiciary experienced and has continued to experience various problems ranging from inefficiency, incompetence and corruption in the country's judicial system. Persistent problems that have infiltrated into the Kenya Judiciary system comprise of lengthy case delays and backlog of cases; limited access by the public; lack of adequate facilities; allegations of corrupt practices; cumbersome laws and procedures; questionable recruitment and promotional procedures; general lack of training; weak or non-existence of sanctions for unethical behaviour and inequitable budget. The inefficiency, incompetence and corruption in the Judiciary have resulted into loss of public confidence in the institution.

Kenya has the potential for improving customer service and enhancing service quality at all its local trial courts. It is unquestionable that court users in every part of the country do not always receive the kind of customer service they expect. In even handedness, courts face far greater challenges serving customers just like other service sectors in the country. Being public institutions, courts serve varied customers or users, clients and stakeholders, which in fundamental nature generate complexities over and above what is typically practiced in private sector institutions. The various groups served by courts may well have different and conflicting demands and expectations for service provision. For courts, it's apparent that those in charge ought to establish the varied and multifaceted requirements of court customers which definitely make it difficult for the management to establishing priorities in customer service let alone improvement efforts. In the country, the judiciary and all court operations must be seen to not only apply justice and exemplify the country's democratic values and ideals of the judicial

service while adhering to legal mandates and national and state constitutional requirements to provide full access to justice for all people.

In the hindsight, the country's judicial reforms have affected governance structures where the Judiciary has been decentralized and democratized. Distinct courts, namely, the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal, High Court, all known as superior courts, have been reinforced by magistrates' courts located all over the republic with a High Court in every county in the near future (Strengthening Judicial Reforms, 2002).

The judicial reforms already undertaken are designed to deal with the issue of the backlog cases by computerisation of the Judiciary, the digitisation of its records, declarations by judges and magistrates on pending rulings and judgements. Judicial Officers are visiting prisons to make sure criminal justice becomes a focus of urgent attention. We are making sure that nobody is in prison illegally and that criminal cases and appeals are fast-tracked

To improve service quality, the judiciary has restructured where the Judicial Service Commission (JSC) has been expanded to reflect representation from key stakeholders, namely, the public, the Law Society of Kenya and the Judiciary itself. This study therefore addressed the service quality dimensions of court performance based on the performance measurement tools such as performance appraisal and quality management systems in place to re-enforce the country's judicial reforms. These measures assessed the effectiveness and efficiency of Eldoret Law courts in addressing the critical issues in the judicial reform agenda.

Performance benchmarks are designed to measure systems service quality dimensions. Data to be measured is defined into specific measurable elements provided by an organization parameter to measure the quality of its service. Through performance measurement, a process by which an organization monitors important aspects of its programs, systems, and processes in used. In this context, performance measurement includes the operational processes used to collect data necessary for the performance measures. Performance management is a forward-looking process used to set goals and regularly check progress toward achieving those goals. In practice, an organization sets goals, looks at the actual data for its performance measures, and acts on results to improve the performance toward its goals.

The Judiciary's performance measures and indicators are aimed at streamlining internal processes and systems, improving efficiency and effectiveness, meeting stipulated timelines, increasing accountability and productivity of judges and judicial officers and staff and promoting quality service. The key performance benchmarks used include the Judiciary Strategic Plans, Annual Work Plans, Performance Management and Measurement Understanding (PMMU), Citizens Service Delivery Charters and Standards, Quality Management Standards, Performance Appraisals, Performance reporting performance benchmarks and court user and

employee satisfaction surveys. This study used the performance appraisal and quality management standards because of the availability of information that is quantifiable.

Management theory and practice have long established a link between effective performance measures and effective management (Drucker, 1995). The effectiveness of any given performance measure in the judicial system depends on how it will be used. For performance measures to have meaning and provide useful information, it is necessary to make comparisons, evaluate progress in achieving given goals or targets, assess trends in performance over time, or weigh the performance of one organization against another (Poister, 2003).

Performance benchmarks are used as a management tool and require to be broadened to include inputs and process multiple measures of its programs from the different perspectives of customer, employee, process, and finance (Kaplan, 1996 and Poister, 2003).

Statement of the Problem

The new 2010 Constitution decentralized judicial services and in effect taking services closer to the people. The Judiciary continuously monitors its service through the performance benchmarks and the Office of the Judiciary Ombudsperson (OJO) which is an accelerated grievance/feedback management mechanism established in August 2011 under the Office of the Chief Justice. The Office of the Ombudsperson has registered 9,776 complaints in 2011/2012 and 9,093 complaints in 2012/2013 against the judiciary.

Key problems in decentralized courts range from inefficiency, incompetence and corruption. Some of these problems have become persistent such as case delays and backlog of cases; limited access by the public; lack of adequate facilities; allegations of corrupt practices; cumbersome laws and procedures; questionable recruitment and promotional procedures; general lack of training; weak or non-existence of sanctions for unethical behaviour (impunity) and inequitable budget. The inefficiency, incompetence and corruption in the Judiciary resulted into the introduction of performance appraisals and quality service systems to reduce loss of public confidence in the institution.

This study therefore sought to assess why the judiciary has numerous complaints of customer dissatisfaction about the quality of services offered by the Judiciary amidst performance benchmarks (such as performance appraisals and quality management systems in place) and training. Hence, the study investigated the relationship between service quality dimensions, performance benchmarks and customer satisfaction in Eldoret Law Courts in Kenya.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This study applied three theories namely the assimilation – contrast theory as proposed by Anderson (1973) which suggested organizations should perform until its performance is deemed as acceptable. The theory was used to explain the relationships among the service quality and customer satisfaction dimensions (variables) in the conception model. It was also used in the study to understand the growing public complaints and in effect to assess the theory robustness.

Contrast Theory was also used as proposed by Hovland, C., Harvey, O., Sherif (1957). It defines the cause of discrepancy between one's own attitudes and the attitudes represented by opinion statements. The theory was critical in interpreting the results on service quality dimensions and on customer satisfaction.

Equity theory is built upon the argument by Stouffer et al.(1949) that man's rewards in exchange with others should be proportional to investments. This theory was used to address the customer satisfaction variable within the context of legal reforms in the country. The major short coming of this theory is that in the handful of studies that have examined the effect of equity on customer satisfaction, equity appears to have a moderate effect on customer satisfaction and post - purchase communication behaviour.

Specific Objectives

To investigate the joint effects of performance benchmarks and the service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction at Eldoret Law Courts

Research Hypotheses

H_0: There is no significant joint effect of service quality dimensions and performance benchmarks on the customer satisfaction at Eldoret Law Courts.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Nyangweso *et al.*, (2014) assessed critical service quality attributes leading to customer satisfaction as well as the challenges customers in Kisii Town, Kisii County face in obtaining quality service from Kenya Power. The study used descriptive research design and data was collected using structured questionnaires from a stratified random sample size of 125 respondents. The responses were measured on a five-point Likert Scale and data was analysed using correlation techniques, weighted averages as well as frequencies and percentages. Their findings indicated that most customers were satisfied with the attributes of tangibility and assurance and dissatisfied with the service aspects of reliability and responsiveness of the

organization as well as with notification of impending outages. This study was based on small a sample size. It would therefore be important that further studies on the same topic be carried out encompassing a larger sample size from varied regions of the country to corroborate the findings.

Obulemire *et al.*, (2014) conducted a study on applicability of SERVQUAL/RATER model in assessment of service quality among local authorities in Kenya. A cross sectional survey research design was used to conduct the study. Responses on fourteen (14) transactional dimensions of service quality based on SERVQUAL/RATER model were obtained. None of the dimensions of quality service delivery achieved a dissatisfaction threshold of 50% and a conclusion was made that the majority of customers of Municipal Council of Nakuru are satisfied with dimensions of quality service delivery.

Owino *et al.*, (2014) examined the dimensions of service quality in the education sector and tested the existence of a significant difference in service quality perception between public and private university students in Kenya. Data was collected from 750 randomly selected respondents. Using a 56 item scale instrument factor analysis, questions on service quality were decomposed into four dimensions; human elements reliability, human elements responsiveness, non-human elements and service blue print. Factor analysis was employed in determining potent service quality dimensions and Analysis of Variance test used in comparative analysis. A four factor construct was revealed, with service blue-print emerging as an additional dimension of service quality in the Kenyan university context. By uncovering service blue print as an additional dimension of service quality, the study demonstrated that service quality theorist can discover more service quality dimensions specific to a service context. The study established that there exists a significant difference in the dimensions of service quality between public and private university students with reliability having the highest factor loading.   The findings indicated that students in private universities experience different service quality from those in public universities. On this premise it was recommended that the regulatory authority (Commission of University Education) should standardize the learning environment, to assure all students of equal value or treatment irrespective of the university they attend.

In the hotel industry; Karitu & Oloo (2014) investigated customers' perceptions and expectations of service quality within hotel guests' in hotels within the Western Kenya tourism circuit. Data was collected from 120 hotel guests using open and closed questions questionnaire adapted to the SERVQUAL scale for hospital services on 22 variables and the responses were measured on a seven degrees Likert scale. The reliability of the questionnaire was determined through piloting and the Cronbach's alpha using a pilot study of twelve guests, who were later excluded from the study. The scale on perceptions towards excellent hotels had

a Cronbach alpha of. 0.893 while that on actual service at the hotels had an alpha of 0 .859. The questionnaire was thus considered reliable in the scores were above the recommended value of.7. Descriptive analysis of data was conducted and presented quantitatively as means, frequencies and percentages. The findings indicated that actual service was less than expected service in 18 variables. Four dimensions responsiveness and empathy, reliability, assurance and tangibles emerged as having the greatest impact on customers and as being indicators of the service quality levels of excellent hotels. They recommended that further research be conducted on the service quality perceptions and expectations of guests with difference cultural backgrounds. Responsiveness and empathy dimensions measure different aspects and the study did not justify why the two dimensions were analysed as one.

Malhan (2014) measured the customers' expectation levels of service quality in the food retail sector against their perceptions levels of the service quality at Uchumi hypermarkets to determine the gap between customers' expectations and their perceptions of service quality. A descriptive research design was adopted using a SERVQUAL survey instrument. The study was conducted through self-reported SERVQUAL questionnaire consisting of 29 statements of service attributes grouped into five service quality dimensions on 150 respondents selected through convenience sampling method. Their key findings include confirmation that customers have a higher expectation for service quality in retail supermarkets than is anticipated. The study identified a gap between customers' expected service and customers' perceived service was identified and recommended that Uchumi needs to offer online shopping services to its customers and stay in line with its competitors who have already been offering this service.

The only study on service quality in the Judiciary was carried out by Kurgat & Ombui (2013) to determine factors affecting service delivery in the judicial system in Kenya. Stratified random sampling was used to sample the population of 80 respondents. Only 37 respondents which is equivalent to 43% returned the filled questionnaires. Data was analysed qualitatively using descriptive methods and was presented using pie charts, tables, graphs, frequencies and percentages. The study did not use the SERVQUAL/RATER MODEL and does not disclose which model was used but nevertheless found that lack of adequate skilled personnel and poor technological systems undermines the quality, speed and efficiency of court services.

Studies on service quality in the Judiciary are lacking but available research has shown that many authors have developed service quality dimensions for different industries studied according to customers' preferences. There is consensus that among the models for measuring service quality, the most acknowledged and applied model in diversity of industries is the SERVQUAL/RATER (service quality) model developed by (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). There is

further consensus that delivering service quality has significant relationship with customer satisfaction.

Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988) considered the SERVQUAL as a measure service quality by considering the performance points with service quality determined as the difference score between the two. However, the score interpretations were considered of high diagnostic value for practice due to the differences of score structure of perceived performance. But this was criticized heavily due to methodological measurement differences in scores (Watson *et al.*, 1998). These differences led to the amount of work that has been done on determining whether the Information System SERVQUAL scale retains adequate data quality properties to use in research models (Teas, 1993;Van Dyke, T.P., Kappelman, L.A. & Prybutok, 1997). The above two studies did not explicitly consider moderating effects or intervening effects on the service quality dimensions which the current study considered. Much of the studies bypass intervening and moderating effects on the issue by employing only the perceived service performance component. A number of studies have made service quality dimensions or components as separate measures of the model and as the best approach to retain the information of both expected and perceived performance yet avoided difference in score issues (Klein, G., Jiang, J.J., Cheney, 2009). The current study considered the score issues by the moderating effects.

The empirical literature in existence has a large number of different definitions for service quality, Different perspectives however critically appreciate that service quality converges at the extent to which a service meets customers' needs or expectations ((Asubonteng *et al.*, 1996). Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988) summarizes that service quality is a form of attitude that is related to satisfaction but not equivalent to it and that it results from a comparison of expectations with perceptions of performance.

METHODOLOGY

The study used a descriptive design and covered customers served at Eldoret Law Court within Uasin Gishu County in the Rift Valley part of Kenya. This court serves Uasin Gishu County and parts of Kakamega, Trans Nzoia and Elgeyo/Marakwet Counties. The study focused on accused persons who are in prison custody, remandees; advocates and parties who have pending children cases. The population of this study is 1815 respondents who comprise of 775 convicts 460 remandees and 450 parties with pending children cases and 130 advocates registered and practicing in Eldoret town for the last the five years. The above population was selected because they were easily accessible and represented a large and growing number of convicts in prisons. In addition, they have a good understanding of service quality dimensions provided by the judiciary. Stratified random sampling was used to obtain the sample size

ensured that the four categories of respondents were adequately sampled to facilitate comparison among the groups using the Yamane method (Yamane, 1967). A sample size of 328 respondents was obtained. Data was collected at the point of service delivery using an on-the-spot-administered questionnaire.

A one way ANOVA was used to simultaneously test the effect of each of the service quality dimension (independent variables), and performance measures on the dependent variable (customer satisfaction) so as to identify any interaction effect at both 95% and 99% level of confidence. A correlation analysis was used in this study to identify the degree of association between service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction. To test if service quality dimensions still predict customer satisfaction when moderating variables are in the model a regression was run for a final model $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + \beta_2 Z + \varepsilon$. Where: X represents the service quality dimensions, Z represents the effects of the moderating variable and Y represent customer satisfaction.

The study used the F test to establish if independent variables assisted in predicting the dependent variable. ANOVA R-square was used to establish measures of the proportion of the variation in the dependent variable that was explained by variations in the independent variables. The results are presented in tables to show the relationship between service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The study investigated the joint effects of Service Quality Dimensions and Performance Benchmarks on Customer Satisfaction at Eldoret Law Courts and the results generated from the statistical data are presented. Thus, a significant predictor of an output measure in simple regression analysis at various points did not enter the stepwise regression model when determining the incremental contribution.

Table 1: Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
					Change Statistics				
1	.216[a]	.046	.043	.116	.046	14.717	7	2113	.000
2	.216[b]	.046	.044	.116	.000	.009	1	2113	.925
3	.216[c]	.046	.044	.116	.000	.078	1	2114	.780
4	.215[d]	.046	.045	.116	.000	.091	1	2115	.763
5	.215[e]	.046	.045	.116	.000	.692	1	2116	.406
6	.214[f]	.046	.045	.116	.000	1.068	1	2117	.301

The results in Regression table above for models 2 and 3 have coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.044 which meant that 4.4% of the variation in customer satisfaction is accounted for by the joint effects of service quality dimensions, performance appraisals and quality service systems investigated. 95.6% of the variation remained unexplained. It is important to note that in model 2 assurance customer service dimension was not entered in the model. Likewise in model 3, reliability and assurance was not entered in the model. The (p-values = 0.925 and 0.780) respectively for model 2 and 3 was more than (0.05) implied that the study failed to reject the null hypothesis and that the joint effects of service quality dimensions, performance appraisal and quality service systems have no significant relationship with customer satisfaction at Eldoret Law Courts.

Models 4 to 6 have coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.045 which meant that 4.5% of the variation in customer satisfaction is accounted for by the joint effects of service quality dimensions, performance appraisals and quality service systems investigated. 95.5% of the variation remained unexplained. It should be noted that in model 4, quality management systems responsiveness and assurance were not entered in the model while in model 6, Quality Management Systems, Tangibility Responsiveness, Assurance and tangibility were not entered in the model. The (p-values = 0.763, 0.406 and 0.301) respectively for model 4, 5 and 6 were more than (0.05) implied that the study failed to reject the null hypothesis and that the joint effects of service quality dimensions, performance appraisal and quality service systems have no significant relationship with customer satisfaction at Eldoret Law Courts.

The study finding in table 1 are not consistent with the study findings of Nyangweso *et al.*, (2014) findings that most customers were satisfied with the attributes of tangibility and assurance and dissatisfied with the service aspects of reliability and responsiveness of the organization.

The results are consistent with that of Malhan (2014) who measured the customers' expectation levels of service quality in the food retail sector against their perceptions levels of the service quality at Uchumi hypermarkets and found that customers have a higher expectation for service quality in retail supermarkets than is anticipated. Finally the study findings add value to the findings of Kurgat & Ombui (2013) on factors affecting service delivery in the judicial system in Kenya because their study did not disclose the model used but nevertheless found that lack of adequate skilled personnel and poor technological systems undermines the quality, speed and efficiency of court services

Table 2: ANOVA[a] Analysis

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	1.377	7	.197	14.717	.000[b]
1	Residual	28.241	2113	.013		
	Total	29.618	2120			
	Regression	1.377	6	.229	17.177	.000[c]
2	Residual	28.241	2114	.013		
	Total	29.618	2120			
	Regression	1.376	5	.275	20.606	.000[d]
3	Residual	28.242	2115	.013		
	Total	29.618	2120			
	Regression	1.375	4	.344	25.745	.000[e]
4	Residual	28.243	2116	.013		
	Total	29.618	2120			
	Regression	1.365	3	.455	34.101	.000[f]
5	Residual	28.253	2117	.013		
	Total	29.618	2120			
	Regression	1.351	2	.676	50.616	.000[g]
6	Residual	28.267	2118	.013		
	Total	29.618	2120			

a. Dependent Variable: Satisfied
b. Predictors: (Constant), QMS, Reliability, Tangibility, Empathy, Responsiveness, Assurance, PA
c. Predictors: (Constant), QMS, Reliability, Tangibility, Empathy, Responsiveness, PA
d. Predictors: (Constant), QMS, Tangibility, Empathy, Responsiveness, PA
e. Predictors: (Constant), Tangibility, Empathy, Responsiveness, PA
f. Predictors: (Constant), Tangibility, Empathy, PA
g. Predictors: (Constant), Empathy, PA

The table above shows the ANOVA which was used to assess the overall significance of the variables in the regression model. In model 1 in table 1 (F = 14.717, p = .000). This implies that the independent variables of dimensions of service quality (reliability, responsiveness, assurance, tangibility, empathy) Quality Management Systems and Performance Appraisal considered together were significant in explaining customer satisfaction as measured by the service quality dimensions. The studies therefore failed to accept the null hypothesis and accepted the alternative hypothesis and conclude that there are significant joint relationships between service quality dimensions Quality Management Systems, Performance Appraisal and customer satisfaction at Eldoret Law Courts. The results are also consistent with that of Malhan (2014) who found that customers have a higher expectation for service quality in retail supermarkets than is anticipated but not consistent with those of Nyangweso et al., (2014) who found that most customers were satisfied with the attributes of tangibility and assurance and dissatisfied with the service aspects of reliability and responsiveness of the organization.

Table 3: Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	.173	.014		12.422	.000	.146	.200
	Reliability	.000	.003	.005	.187	.852	-.004	.005
	Assurance	.000	.003	.002	.095	.925	-.005	.005
	Tangibility	.002	.002	.021	1.008	.313	-.002	.005
	Empathy	.004	.002	.047	2.154	.031	.000	.008
	Responsiveness	.002	.002	.018	.835	.404	-.002	.005
	PA	-.071	.061	-.282	-1.160	.246	-.190	.049
	QMS	.017	.060	.071	.293	.770	-.099	.134

a. Dependent Variable: Satisfied

The findings from the table above indicate that the five service quality dimensions are positively related to overall service quality and are indeed drivers of customer service satisfaction. The study findings indicate that all the standardized coefficients of beta relating the five service quality dimensions: reliability, empathy, responsiveness, assurance and tangibles to overall service quality have the expected positive sign, are therefore statistically significant and therefore they are all drivers of customer service satisfaction.

According to the findings above, the joint effect model 1 provides all of the significance levels are $P < 0.05$ for all the customer service dimensions indicating that there is a significant relationship between the five service quality dimensions and overall customer service satisfaction. This means that only five hypotheses were therefore supported at a 95% confidence interval.

At 95% confidence intervals these columns put confidence intervals based on the standard error of estimate around the regression coefficients *a* and *b*. At 95% confidence that the value of the constant *a* lies somewhere between 0.146 and 0.200.

The study findings also further indicated that empathy was the most important driver of service quality dimension among the respondents at Eldoret law courts with a significantly high coefficient of 0.047. The service quality dimension has the highest t-value. The t statistics can in the study helped in determining the relative importance of each variable in the model. The value of its regression coefficient *b,* (unstandardized) lies somewhere between 0.000 and 0.008. Other important drivers are tangibility, reliability and assurance.

The introduction of performance benchmarks or measures namely performance appraisal and quality management systems, performance appraisal provided a negative relationship with performance appraisal of (-0.071) with the significance of (p = 0.246) which is

higher than 0.05 and therefore the study fails to reject the null hypothesis that performance appraisal creates no significant relationship between service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction.

The effect of quality management systems had a positive effect with the significance level of 0.770 which is higher than 0.05 implying that with the introduction of the quality management systems, there is no significant relationship between quality management systems and customer satisfaction.

The Unstandardized coefficients (B) are the regression coefficients which the study established for the final regression equation;

$Y = .173 + .002x_1 + 002x_2 + 004x_3 + .002x_4 + -.071x_5$

Where X_1 Tangibility,

X_2 Empathy

X_3 Responsiveness

X_4 Performance appraisal

X_5 Quality management systems

The beta coefficient tells you how strongly the independent variable associated with the dependent variable.

The findings above are inconsistent with the findings of Muturi and Mbiti (2015) that the experience and impact of implementing the Quality Management Systems of ISO 9001: 2008 Standard at the University of Nairobi, in relation to effectiveness on service delivery, operational performance, automation, implementation challenges and related emerging issues.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The study investigated the joint effects of Service Quality Dimensions and Performance Benchmarks (performance appraisal and quality management systems) on Customer Satisfaction at Eldoret Law Courts. The regression results established that only 4.3% of the joint effects of service quality dimensions, performance appraisals and quality service systems investigated accounted for customer satisfaction and 95.7% of the variation remained unexplained. The (p-value = 0.000) was less than (0.05) implied that the study failed to accept the null hypothesis and therefore the joint effects of service quality dimensions, performance appraisal and quality service systems have a significant relationship with customer satisfaction at Eldoret Law Courts

The results are not significant when any of the factors are removed from the model. When the ANOVA analysis was run to assess the overall significance of the variables in the

regression model, the independent variables of dimensions of service quality performance benchmarks considered together were significant in explaining customer satisfaction as measured by the service quality dimensions and therefore they are all drivers of customer service satisfaction. Although all the customer service dimensions indicated that they had a significant relationship with customer service satisfaction, empathy was the most important driver of service quality dimension with significantly high coefficient of 0.047 based on Unstandardized Coefficients.

The performance benchmarks (performance appraisal and quality management systems) provided astounding results with a negative relationship of performance appraisal at (-0.071) with the significance of (p = 0.246) with customer satisfaction. The study fails to reject the null hypothesis that performance appraisal has no significant relationship between service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction. However, though quality management systems had a positive effect with the significance level of (0.770) with customer satisfaction, it did not have significant relationship between quality management systems and customer satisfaction.

The results are also consistent with that of Malhan (2014), Nyangweso *et al.*, (2014), Lai (2004); Manani *et al.*, (2013); Auka *et al.*, (2013); Karitu & Oloo (2014); Nyangweso *et al.*, (2014) and Martey and Frempong (2014) who found a significantly positive relationship between service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction. Other findings consistent are those of Chang and Yeh, 2002; Chen and Chang, 2005; Park et al., 2004 and Gilbert and Wong, 2003 who found that service quality value must be attained or modified based on similar attributes found in those articles.

The findings are inconsistent with those of Muturi and Mbiti (2015) who found that the implementing the Quality Management Systems of ISO 9001: 2008 Standard improved operational performance. These findings have significant implications for the competing theories on the service quality dimension measures as discussed in the Literature Review.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the court clients' perceptions of service quality and their impact on satisfaction on the basis of the service offered by Eldoret law courts which is the provider of judicial services. It was found that the perceptions about service quality among the respondents about the services offered in the court despite using performance benchmarks were highly low. Therefore, it is possible to suggest that it is important for the court to review evaluate performance measures and take into account this finding while continuing its service provision in terms of maintaining its quality perception at high levels for prolonged periods. The results of the regression analysis indicate that the most important factor affecting the satisfaction levels of

the court users is empathy and that is why, particular attention and importance should be placed on this service quality dimension.

Having established how court clients perceive service quality through a service quality tool, these findings can benefit the court management and other service organizations. Measuring service quality helps management to improve service provision, monitor, maintain and improve service quality and performance. Findings show that court users expect more than what they are provided by these courts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has generally established that service quality and customer satisfaction are important determinants in sustaining the overall performance system of the judicial system. There are therefore some suggestions for the judiciary derived from the findings of this research to help improve customer satisfaction. Eldoret law courts should focus on improving service quality by investing in manpower training; enhance customer care service through intensive routine personnel training and provision of better customer-friendly atmosphere to customer serving staff.

This study had some limitations in that only one court that is Eldoret Law Courts was the only court studied; secondly most of the respondents did not understand the role of performance measures such as performance appraisal and quality management systems. Lastly, the litigants with pending criminal cases and were either out on bond or had pending civil cases were important respondents for this study but were not studied and their satisfaction level could not be assessed.

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