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STRATEGIC DECISIONS AND SERVICE DELIVERY OF DEVOLVED HEALTH CARE SERVICES IN NAIROBI CITY COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The goal of strategic decision making in health care services provision is to support the implementation of the Vision 2030 and to improve the health outcomes in population and, to respond to people's expectations while reducing the inequalities in both health and responsiveness. However, even after devolution of the healthcare services, statistics demonstrate poor service delivery in the devolved healthcare units in Kenya. This study thus established whether strategic decisions are made in the healthcare units in the county governments, and if so, how they affect service delivery of devolved health care services. A descriptive research design was adopted where the target population comprised of medical superintendent, nursing officer in-charge and hospital administrator from the level 5 and 4 facilities, health facility officer in-charge from level 3 facilities as well as the County Health Management Team and Sub County Health Management Team from 10 sub counties. In total, this list comprised of 117 respondents who were obtained by stratified purposive method. A structured questionnaire was the preferred instrument to collect quantitative data which was analyzed quantitatively through descriptive and inferential statistics.

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The descriptive statistics were mean and standard deviations. on the other hand, inferential statistics were correlation and regression analysis. The main tool for data analysis was statistical package for social sciences version 24 which generated tables and figures that aided in interpretation. the study established that both rational strategic choices and consensus strategic choices have a positive effect on devolved healthcare service delivery. It was recommended that policy makers in the public health sector of Nairobi County to embrace rational strategic decisions such as embracing objective decision, use of logic in decision making, analyzing facts before decisions are made, ensuring that specific steps from problem identification to solutions are made before making decisions and encouraging employees to follow a formal process in solving a conflict. They can also accelerate the use of Consensus Strategic Decisions such as ensuring that common will is respected in decision making, reaching a consensus before making key announcements, respecting and considering the opinion of minority, respecting the opinion of all the employees irrespective of cadre as well as respecting it when employees advance a common goal.

Key Words: *Rational Strategic Decisions, Consensus Strategic Decisions, Devolved Health Service Delivery, Kenya*

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Today, the world is changing; managers are faced with multitude of decisions every day. They have to make decisions even if they are not willing to do so and Barnard (2017) argues that making decision is a burdensome task. Drucker (2016) states that the product of managers is decisions and actions. Pearce and Robinson (2016) indicated that decision-making is inevitable because to explicitly avoid making a decision is in itself to make a decision. Dutton *et al* (2014) indicated that to make too many decisions too fast may introduce many unfamiliar problems into management forcing executives in unpredictable environment to make more and more decisions and at a faster pace. Thompson (2017) defines strategy as a plan of action designed to achieve a specific goal or series of goals within an organizational framework. Strategy is the pattern of objectives, purposes or goals and the major policies and plans for achieving these goals, stated in such a way as to define what business the company is in or is to be in and the kind of company it is or is to be. Strategy is largely about using internal assets to create a value-added proposition.

Mintzberg (2017) explains that strategy involves action plan of a company for building competitive advantage and increasing its triple bottom line over the long-term. The action plan relates to achieving the economic, social, and environmental performance objectives. In essence, it helps bridge the gap between the long-term vision and short-term decisions. Strickland *et al* (2018) explain that strategy specifies the organization's mission, vision and objectives, developing policies and plans to execute the vision and allocating resources to implement these policies and plans. Various researchers have discussed what strategic decisions are, their characteristics and their importance. Dess and Priem (2015) define strategic decisions as those decisions which affect the long-term performance of the business and which relate directly to its aims and objectives. They directly affect the nature and the success of the firm are typically novel, and occupy the thinking of senior management (Sergio, 2015). However, they can be greatly influenced by people lower down in the organization (Bower, 2016). Mintzberg *et al* (2017) also state that strategic decisions are those fundamental decisions that shape the course of an organization. There are many models of decision making useful for strategists in conceptualizing decisions. Some of the most well-known according to Rahman and De Feis (2009) are rational decision making, incremental strategic decision making, consensus strategic decision making and intuitive strategic decisions. Other models include bounded-rationality model, mixed scanning model, polis model, garbage can model and bargaining model (Nooraie, 2012).



The importance of strategic decisions is that they are the means by which scarce resources of an institution are rationally committed to satisfy managerial expectations for success (Bass 2014). According to Cathy (2017), they deal with the long-term health of an enterprise. They guide the management in working towards achieving goals of the organization. Dutton & Duncan (2014) put forth that the importance of strategic decision-making is that it combines experience with training which aid in developing the skills. Strategic decisions bind a team and improve focus on working towards performance of organizations. In other words, the decisions which are important in terms of actions taken, the resources committed, or the precedents set. In devolved healthcare services, strategic decision-making calls for quality health care service provision that focuses on three areas namely; health system inputs, organizational structure and processes, and the quantity and quality of personal and non-personal health services in relation to health care needs of a population. Therefore, the goal of strategic decision making in health care services provision is to support the implementation of the Vision 2030 and to improve the health outcomes in population and, to respond to people's expectations while reducing the inequalities in both health and responsiveness.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Even after devolution of the healthcare services, statistics demonstrate poor service delivery in the devolved healthcare units in Kenya. There is erratic / shortage of drugs in most public health facilities and cases of customer complaints have been on the increase too. Statistics by International Rescue Committee (2018) indicated that just 63% of Kenyans have access to government health services. In Nairobi county, which is densely populated, there are 124 health facilities per 100 square kilometers but far fewer facilities per 10,000 people, that is 2.4. In terms of workforce, the ratio of healthcare workers to the population falls below the WHO recommended 230 per 100,000 people (Government of Kenya 2017).

To turnaround poor organizational performance, scholars have indicated that it is critical to have strategic decisions which have been lauded as the means by which scarce resources of an institution are rationally committed to satisfy managerial expectations for success (Bass 2014). Cathy (2017) also reasoned that strategic decisions guide the management in working towards achieving goals of the organization and also bind a team and improve focus on working towards performance of organizations. In that regard, the study sought to establish whether strategic decisions are made in the healthcare units in the county governments, and if so, how they affect service delivery of devolved health care services.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- i. To establish the effect of rational strategic decisions on service delivery of Nairobi County's health services.
- ii. To determine the effect of incremental strategic decisions on service delivery of Nairobi County's health services.
- iii. To examine the effect of consensus strategic decisions on service delivery of Nairobi County's health services.
- iv. To establish the effect of intuitive strategic decisions on service delivery of Nairobi County's health services.

THEORETICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

The study was guided by the Rational Choice Theory and Strategic Leadership Theory. The Rational Choice Theory developed by Hommans (1961) is based on the assumption that individuals choose a course of action that is most in line with their personal preferences. Rational choice theory is used to model human decision making, especially in the context of microeconomics, where it helps economists better understand the behaviour of a society in terms of individual actions as explained through rationality, in which choices are consistent because they are made according to personal preference.

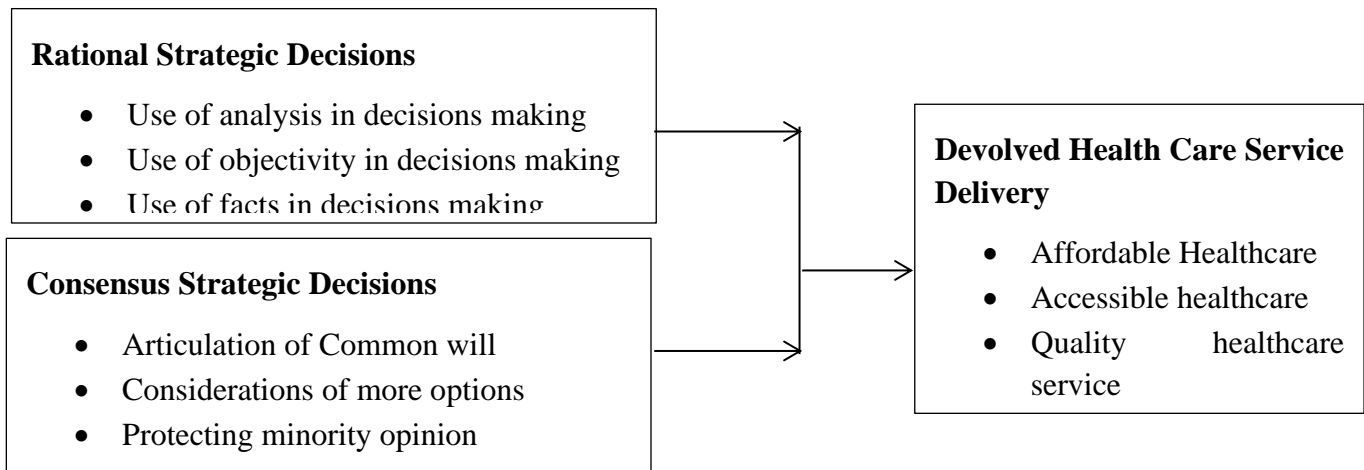


This theory by Hommans (1961), asserts that all financial decisions are motivated by possibility of realizing profit. Further, individuals must anticipate the outcomes of alternative courses of their action and calculate which action will be best for them. In the end, rational individuals choose the course of action that is likely to give them the greatest satisfaction or profit. One key element in rational choice theory is the belief that all action is fundamentally rational in character (Homans, 1961). Rational decision-making approach reduces chances of errors, assumption, distortions, guesswork, subjectivity, and many other causes of inequitable judgments (Hastie & Dawes, 2010). The key elements of all rational choice explanations are individual preferences, beliefs, and constraints. Preferences denote the positive or negative evaluations individuals attach to possible outcomes of their actions. Preferences can have many roots, ranging from culturally transmitted tastes for food or other items, to personal habits and commitments. The theory has been used to establish the effect of rational strategic decisions on performance of Nairobi County's health services.

The essence of strategic leadership involves the capacity to learn, the capacity to change and managerial wisdom (Boal & Hooijberg, 2001). Strategic leadership theories are concerned with the leadership of organizations and are marked by a concern for the evolution of the organization as a whole, including its changing aims and capabilities (Selznick, 1984). According to Boal & Hooijberg (2001) strategic leadership focuses on the people who have overall responsibility for the organization and includes not only the head of the organization but also members of the top management team. Activities associated with strategic leadership include making strategic decisions, creating and communicating vision of the future, developing key competences and capabilities, developing organizational structures, processes and controls; sustaining effective organizational cultures and infusing ethical value systems into the organization (Hunt, 1991; Ireland & Hitt, 1999). Strategic leaders with cognitive complexity would have a higher absorptive capacity than leaders with less cognitive complexity. To the extent that these leaders also have a clear vision of where they want their organization to go the absorptive capacity will have a greater focus. That is, strategic leaders look at the changes in the environment of their organization and then examine those changes in the context of their vision (Boal & Hooijberg, 2001). This theory is relevant to the study as it highlights the functions of a leader and how they manage change and maintain proper organizational structures, processes and culture for success. The theory has been used to determine the effect of incremental strategic decisions on performance of Nairobi County's health service.



Conceptual Framework



Independent Variables

Dependent Variable

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Rational Strategic Decisions

Rational decision-making favors objective data and a formal process of analysis over subjectivity and intuition. In this model, decision making assumes that the decision maker has full or perfect information about alternatives; it also assumes they have the time, cognitive ability, and resources to evaluate each choice against the others (Gudonavicius & Savaneviciene, 2018). This model assumes that people will make choices that will maximize benefits for themselves and minimize any cost. They use analysis, facts and a step-by-step process to come to a decision. Rational decision making is a precise, analytical process that companies use to come up with a fact-based decision (Lambert, 2018). This model leverages objective data, logic, and analysis instead of subjectivity and intuition to help solve a problem or achieve a goal. It's a step-by-step model that helps you identify a problem, pick a solution between multiple alternatives, and find an answer (Lambert, 2018). Generally, it is a multi-step process for making choices between alternatives. The process of rational decision-making favors logic, objectivity, and analysis over subjectivity and insight.

This model of decision making however faces criticism because it makes unrealistic assumptions, particularly about the amount of information available and an individual's ability to processes this information when making decisions. The approach also supports bounded rationality whereby an individual's ability to act rationally is constrained by the information they have, the cognitive limitations of their minds, and the finite amount of time and resources they have to make a decision. Another criticism is that because decision-makers lack the ability and resources to arrive at optimal solutions, they often seek a satisfactory solution rather than the optimal one (Paliukas & Savaneviciene, 2018).



A study by Waweru (2018) assessed the effects of strategic decisions on performance of commercial banks in Kenya and established that there is an effect of strategic decisions regarding human resource management which directly impact on key performance indicators. The study found out that there is the effect of strategic information technology on performance of KCB Group. The study recommended an improvement of these decisions to realize a better performance. Wathanga, K'Aol and Ngugi (2017) looked into the effect of comprehensive strategic decision-making and long-term orientation on the organizational performance of dairy co-operatives in Kenya and indicated that long-term orientation significantly predicted revenue per customer.

Consensus Strategic Decisions

Consensus decision making is a creative and dynamic way of reaching agreement between all members of a group. Instead of simply voting for an item and having the majority of the group getting their way, a group using consensus is committed to finding solutions that everyone actively supports, or at least can live with. This ensures that all opinions, ideas and concerns are taken into account. Through listening closely to each other, the group aims to come up with proposals that work for everyone (Rapert, Lynch & Suter, 2016). By definition, in consensus no decision is made against the will of an individual or a minority. If significant concerns remain unresolved, a proposal can be blocked and prevented from going ahead. This means that the whole group has to work hard at finding solutions that address everyone's concerns rather than ignoring or overruling minority opinions (Mirzaei, Fredriksson & Winroth, 2016).

Consensus is used widely by people around the world working towards a more just and equitable society: from small voluntary groups, co-operatives and campaign networks to businesses, local communities and, in some cultures, across much wider regions. The exact process may differ depending on the size of the group and other factors, but the basic principle of co-operation between equals remains the same (He, Shrestha & von Krogh, 2016). Consensus enables people to take collective control over the decisions that affect them. At its heart is a respectful dialogue between equals, with people working together to meet everyone's needs. From the individual's perspective this means having as much control as possible over decisions that affect people, without having undue control over everyone else (Rapert, Lynch & Suter, 2016).

Kigera (2016) conducted a study on strategic decisions and performance of Bob Morgan Security Company in Kenya and established that the company has value for experienced personnel for effective and efficiency operational performance. Kinuthia (2015) assessed the factors influencing strategic decision-making process in the Ministry of Roads (HQs) and established that a predetermined strategic decision-making process exists in the Ministry of Roads. In addition, Edh (2015) conducted a study on strategic consensus among workers and managers and established that empirically and conceptually, workers have been overlooked or given a passive role in the MS formation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design used in this study was a descriptive research design. In the present study, the population included, 117 Facility In-Charges and Departmental Heads of 53 Public Health Facilities (PHFs) (level 5, level 4 and level 3) in Nairobi County with inclusion of 6 County Health Management Team and 5 Sub-County Health Management Team in the 10 Sub Counties as highlighted in Table 1. The unit of observation was health care workers serving as facility heads, departmental heads, Nairobi County and Sub County Health Management Committee Members CHMT and SCHMT).



Table 3.1 Target Population

Stratum	Number of Health Facilities	Population
Level 5	3	9
Level 4	1	3
Level 3	49	49
County Health Management Team		6
Sub County Health Management Team		50
Total	53	117

Purposive sampling was used to select all the 53 public health facilities (level 5, 4, and 3) respectively. This study specifically selected top level managers of the health facilities in Nairobi County and the health committee members of the County Health Services and Sub County Health Services. In this study the main data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire which collected quantitative data that was analysed through descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics included mean and standard deviations while inferential statistics were used to determine the relationship between strategic decisions and service delivery in devolved units. Inferential statistics included Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis. The following is the multiple regression model was adopted by the study:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + e$$

Where: **Y** = Devolved Health Care Service Delivery, **X₁** = Rational strategic decisions, **X₂** = Consensus strategic decisions, **e** = Error term, **α** = constant, **β** = coefficient of independent variables

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The target respondents were 117 categorized as either facility heads, departmental heads, Nairobi County and Sub County Health Management Committee Members CHMT and SCHMT). Therefore, a total of 117 questionnaires were issued of which, 84 were properly responded to give a response rate of 72 percent. This response rate was achieved through persistence. Those respondents who had not responded to the questionnaire in the allocated time, were given 2 more weeks to respond. Emails were also used and follow-ups were made through emails and phone calls. Ultimately, this response rate was achieved. As reasoned by Leedy (2010), a response rate above 50 percent is consistent.

Descriptive Statistics

The respondents rated statements on each variable on a Likert scale. This subsection gives the responses summarized into mean and standard deviation. The presentation is for each variable in the study.

Descriptive Statistics of Rational Strategic Decisions

The respondents rated statements on Rational Strategic Decisions as shown in Table 2. The results hypothesize that the public health sector of Nairobi County government embraces objective decision to a high extent (M = 4.20), use of logic in decision making to a high extent (M = 3.99), Requires that facts are analyzed before decisions are made to a high extent (M = 4.12), ensures that specific steps from problem identification to solutions are made before making decisions to a high extent (M = 4.11) and also encourages employees to follow a formal process in solving a conflict to a high extent (M = 4.23).



Generally, it can be postulated that rational strategic decisions are widely appreciated in the public health sector of Nairobi County government to a high extent ($M = 4.13$). A standard deviation of 0.84 is small enough compared to the mean to infer that the variations were not widely varied. The findings are consistent with Lambert (2018) who argued that rational strategic decisions leverage objective data, logic, and analysis instead of subjectivity and intuition to help solve a problem or achieve a goal and is being adopted in the public sector.

Table 2 Descriptive Results of Rational Strategic Decisions

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation
My organization embraces objective decision	4.20	0.82
My organization embraces use of logic in decision making	3.99	0.90
My organization requires that facts are analyzed before decisions are made	4.12	0.75
My organization ensures that specific steps from problem identification to solutions are made before making decisions	4.11	0.84
My organization encourages employees to follow a formal process in solving a conflict	4.23	0.88
Overall	4.13	0.84

Descriptive Statistics of Consensus Strategic Decisions

The statements on Consensus Strategic Decisions were rated on a Likert scale and the average and standard deviation of the responses is shown in Table 3. The results postulate that the public health sector of Nairobi County government ensures that common will is respected in decision making to a high extent ($M = 3.79$), a consensus is reached before making key announcements to a high extent ($M = 3.73$), respects and considers the opinion of minority to a high extent ($M = 3.83$), respects the opinion of all the employees irrespective of cadre to a high extent ($M = 3.77$) as well as respects it when employees advance a common goal to a high extent ($M = 3.57$). Generally, it can be hypothesized that the organization embraces Consensus Strategic Decisions to a high extent ($M = 3.74$). Based on the small standard deviation of 0.91 compared to the mean, it can be argued that the respondents did not vary in their responses. Rapert, Lynch and Suter (2016) also argued that the use of consensus decision making has been widely adopted around the world working as a move towards a more just and equitable society.



Table 3 Descriptive Results of Consensus Strategic Decisions

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
My organization ensures that common will is respected in decision making	3.79	0.75
My organization ensures that a consensus is reached before making key announcements	3.73	0.92
My organization respects and considers the opinion of minority	3.83	0.89
My organization respects the opinion of all the employees irrespective of cadre	3.77	0.99
My organization respects it when employees advance a common goal	3.57	1.01
Overall	3.74	0.91

Descriptive Statistics of Devolved Healthcare Service Delivery

The respondents rated the extent to which they agreed on statements measuring Devolved Healthcare Service Delivery of Nairobi County. The Mean and Standard Deviation results presented in Table 4 suggest that the respondents agreed that the facility has experienced reduced number of customer complaints regarding service delivery (M = 4.00), the facility has experienced an increased number of customer compliments regarding service delivery (M = 3.73), the facility offers quality healthcare based on WHO approved standards (M = 3.87), the cost of healthcare in the facility is affordable (M = 3.77) and that the facility does not experience erratic supplies of essentials (M = 4.01). The results generally demonstrated better healthcare service delivery (M = 3.88). A small standard deviation of 0.88 indicated a small variation in the responses.

Table 4 Descriptive Results of Devolved Healthcare Service Delivery

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
The facility has experienced reduced number of customer complaints regarding service delivery	4.00	0.91
The facility has experienced an increased number of customer compliments regarding service delivery	3.73	0.84
The facility offers quality healthcare based on WHO approved standards	3.87	0.85
The cost of healthcare in the facility is affordable	3.77	0.92
The facility does not experience erratic supplies of essentials	4.01	0.90
Overall	3.88	0.88



Correlation Analysis

To determine the relationship between the variables, correlation analysis was carried out and the results shown in Table 5. The results showed that Rational Strategic Decisions affects Devolved Healthcare Service Delivery positively and significantly ($r = 0.661$; $P\text{-Value} < 0.05$). The implication is that increasing the use of Rational Strategic Decisions significantly improves Devolved Healthcare Service Delivery. The findings coincide with that of Waweru (2018) who assessed the effects of strategic decisions on performance of commercial banks in Kenya and established that it has a significant and positive impact on key performance indicators. It was also determined that Consensus Strategic Decisions has a positive and significant effect on Devolved Healthcare Service Delivery ($r = 0.527$; $P\text{-Value} < 0.05$). This implies that adopting Consensus Strategic Decisions would improve Devolved Healthcare Service Delivery significantly. The study by Kigera (2016) on strategic decisions and performance of Bob Morgan Security Company in Kenya also showed that when Consensus Strategic Decisions are low, it causes misunderstandings which affect delivery negatively.

Table 5 Correlation Matrix

		Rational Strategic Decisions	Consensus Strategic Decisions	Devolved Healthcare Service Delivery
Rational Strategic Decisions	Pearson Correlation	1		
Consensus Strategic Decisions	Pearson Correlation	.327**	1	
Devolved Healthcare Service Delivery	Pearson Correlation	.661**	.527**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	
	N	84	84	84
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

Multiple Regression Analysis

A multiple regression model was established to determine the effect of strategic decisions on devolved healthcare service delivery. The model summary results in Table 6 show that strategic decisions (rational strategic decisions, consensus strategic decision) mutually account for up to 73 percent of the variation in the devolved healthcare service delivery in Nairobi County ($R\text{-square} = 0.73$). This implies that other factors can account for up to 27 percent of the devolved healthcare service delivery.



Table 6 Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.854	0.73	0.716	0.2796
Predictors: (Constant), Rational Strategic Choices, Consensus Strategic Choices			

Model significance was also established to find out whether the regression model linking strategic decisions to devolved healthcare service delivery was a good fit. As presented in Table 7 the F statistic value of 53.38 was significant (P-value < 0.05) to demonstrate that the model was a good fit. It could hence be used to test the suggested effect.

Table 7 ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	16.695	4	4.174	53.38	.000
Residual	6.177	79	0.078		
Total	22.872	83			
Dependent Variable: Devolved Healthcare Service Delivery					
Predictors: (Constant), Rational Strategic Choices, Consensus Strategic Choices					

The regression model coefficients Table 8 demonstrates that Rational Strategic Decisions have a positive and significant effect on Devolved Healthcare Service Delivery ($\beta = 0.508$; P-value < 0.05). This shows that a unit increase in Rational Strategic Decisions would lead to an improvement in Devolved Healthcare Service Delivery by 0.508 units. The findings coincide with that of a study by Wathanga, K'Aol and Ngugi (2017) who looked into the effect of comprehensive strategic decision-making on the organizational performance of dairy co-operatives in Kenya and revealed that it had improved the financial performance. The effect of Consensus Strategic Decisions on Devolved Healthcare Service Delivery was established to be positive and significant ($\beta = 0.193$; P-value < 0.05). This shows that a unit increase in Consensus Strategic Decisions would lead to an improvement in Devolved Healthcare Service Delivery by 0.193 units. Positive and significant effects on performance were also realised in the adoption of strategic decisions as shown in a study by Kigera (2016) on strategic decisions and performance of Bob Morgan Security Company in Kenya.

Table 8 Model Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-1.547	0.393		-3.934	0.000
Rational Strategic Decisions	0.508	0.063	0.517	8.053	0.000
Consensus Strategic Decisions	0.193	0.061	0.207	3.166	0.002
Dependent Variable: Devolved Healthcare Service Delivery					



Regression Model

Devolved Healthcare Service Delivery = (1.547) + 0.508 Rational Strategic Choices + 0.193 Consensus Strategic Choices

CONCLUSIONS

Embracing objective decision, use of logic in decision making, analyzing facts before decisions are made, ensuring that specific steps from problem identification to solutions are made before making decisions and encouraging employees to follow a formal process in solving a conflict is associated with an improvement in Devolved Healthcare Service Delivery. Another conclusion of the study is that ensuring that common will is respected in decision making, reaching a consensus before making key announcements, respecting and considering the opinion of minority, respecting the opinion of all the employees irrespective of cadre as well as respecting it when employees advance a common goal is associated with an improvement in Devolved Healthcare Service Delivery.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings that Rational Strategic Decisions affects Devolved Healthcare Service Delivery positively and significantly the study recommends the policy makers in the public health sector of Nairobi County to embrace Rational Strategic Decisions such as embracing objective decision, use of logic in decision making, analyzing facts before decisions are made, ensuring that specific steps from problem identification to solutions are made before making decisions and encouraging employees to follow a formal process in solving a conflict. In regard to the findings that Consensus Strategic Decisions affects Devolved Healthcare Service Delivery positively and significantly the study recommends the policy makers in the public health sector of Nairobi County to accelerate the use of Consensus Strategic Decisions such as ensuring that common will is respected in decision making, reaching a consensus before making key announcements, respecting and considering the opinion of minority, respecting the opinion of all the employees irrespective of cadre as well as respecting it when employees advance a common goal.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No potential conflict of interest was recorded by the authors.

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