

# Influence of Stakeholder Engagement on Service Delivery in Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company (NCWSC), Kenya

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## ABSTRACT

Access to reliable water services remains a challenge in many urban areas, including Nairobi, despite existing regulatory frameworks and strategic plans. This study examined the influence of stakeholder engagement on service delivery at Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company (NCWSC), focusing on stakeholder consultation, feedback, and participation in strategic planning. Grounded in Stakeholder Theory, the study employed a descriptive research design, targeting 524 NCWSC employees, with a sample of 113 selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive findings revealed moderate satisfaction with stakeholder consultation (mean = 3.65) and strategic participation (mean = 3.45) but lower satisfaction with feedback mechanisms (mean = 3.21). Pearson correlation analysis showed strong positive relationships between stakeholder consultation ( $r = 0.762$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), strategic participation ( $r = 0.728$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and service delivery, while multiple regression analysis confirmed that consultation ( $B = 0.412$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and participation ( $B = 0.329$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) significantly predicted service delivery outcomes. However, feedback mechanisms, though positively correlated, were not statistically significant ( $B = 0.211$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), indicating room for improvement. The study concluded that enhancing stakeholder engagement improved service efficiency, accountability, and customer satisfaction. It recommended increasing consultation frequency, strengthening feedback channels, and promoting inclusive participation in strategic planning. Future research could explore digital engagement tools and comparative analyses of stakeholder engagement practices in other urban water utilities.

**Keywords:** Stakeholder Engagement, Service Delivery, Consultation, Feedback Mechanisms, Strategic Participation, Accountability, Transparency, Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company (NCWSC), Public Utilities, Urban Water Services

## INTRODUCTION

Access to clean, reliable water is essential to public health, economic productivity, and environmental sustainability. However, urban water service delivery continues to face significant challenges globally, particularly in developing regions. According to UN-Water (2021), over 2 billion people lack access to safely managed drinking water, and nearly 4.5 billion lack safely managed sanitation services. In sub-Saharan Africa, rapid urbanization and population growth have outpaced infrastructure development, resulting in inconsistent and inequitable water distribution (World Bank, 2020; Hope et al., 2013).

In Kenya, water utilities face mounting pressure to improve performance and customer satisfaction amid rising demand and aging infrastructure. The Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company (NCWSC), which serves one of the fastest-growing urban populations in East Africa, exemplifies this struggle. Despite the existence of robust regulatory frameworks and strategic plans such as Kenya Vision 2030 and the Water Act 2016, the company has encountered persistent service delivery gaps, including water rationing, unresponsiveness to customer concerns, and limited transparency (Gachara, 2020).

This study is anchored on the thesis that stakeholder engagement plays a critical role in enhancing service delivery within public utilities such as NCWSC. Effective engagement—through consultation, feedback, and inclusive participation in decision-making—can strengthen accountability, align operations with public needs, and foster a sense of ownership among stakeholders (Freeman et al, 2021; Bovaird, 2007). However, limited empirical evidence exists on how these mechanisms impact service performance in Kenyan water utilities, creating a crucial knowledge gap (Wambua et al., 2019). Furthermore, service delivery in public utilities is often hindered by top-down governance structures that marginalize stakeholders, especially end-users (Kanyesigye et al., 2020).

NCWSC failed to supply sufficient water to its customers because the company's service area added 4.4 million residents in 2019 according to Murigu (2020). More than fifty percent of Nairobi residents must depend on water vendors and unauthorized connections because they do not have direct access to piped water (Munene, 2020; Owuor & Moronge, 2017). The company struggles to satisfy its customers while people lose faith in its operations and doubt the quality of its services even when a detailed strategic plan exists (Mithamo, 2017). Our examination reveals why stakeholder participation needs study as it affects NCWSC service delivery effectiveness.

Stakeholder engagement helps organizations improve their performance by increasing trust along with responsibility and openness in their planning process (Freeman et al., 2021; Harrison et al., 2010). Stakeholder Theory shows that organizations succeed when they use stakeholder engagement to link their business objectives with stakeholder requirements (Ojo, 2014). NCWSC should involve customers employee's government agencies and community members to make better choices strengthen public confidence and deliver better services (Wambui & Bett, 2020; Njihia & Senaji, 2018). This study, therefore, investigates the influence of stakeholder engagement on service delivery at NCWSC, with the goal of providing evidence-based recommendations for improving stakeholder participation and addressing service delivery challenges in Nairobi County

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

Urban water utilities in Kenya, particularly the Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company (NCWSC), are struggling with persistent service delivery challenges marked by inconsistent water supply, delayed customer response, and infrastructural decay (WASREB, 2022; Ombaka & Mwangi, 2021). Internally, NCWSC faces organizational inefficiencies such as bureaucratic rigidity, fragmented communication structures, inadequate staff empowerment, and poor coordination across functional units—all of which impede effective service planning and execution (Muema et al., 2023; Waswa et al., 2021). These internal dysfunctions are further compounded by limited responsiveness to customer grievances, leading to a widening trust deficit between the utility and its consumers (Mutinda & Atambo, 2022).

Critically, a core contributor to these systemic failures is the absence of structured stakeholder engagement. The lack of formal mechanisms for involving stakeholders—especially customers, community representatives, and frontline employees—in decision-making processes results in poor alignment between service strategies and user expectations (Nyangena & Ondiek, 2022; Wambua et al., 2020). For example, public resistance to the rollout of digital metering and rationing programs has largely been attributed to poor community sensitization and top-down planning that excluded user input (Munyua & Karanja, 2021). Without participatory feedback loops, customer dissatisfaction festers, weakening compliance and undermining long-term service sustainability.

Furthermore, minimal stakeholder participation translates to weakened accountability, missed opportunities for co-creation of solutions, and diminished transparency in utility governance (Kanyesigye et al., 2020; Bovaird & Loeffler, 2021). Global and regional studies have shown that service delivery outcomes improve significantly when stakeholders are meaningfully involved in the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of public utilities (Hope et al., 2022; Ayano et al., 2020).

Despite the growing discourse on participatory governance, there remains a significant empirical gap on how stakeholder engagement directly influences operational efficiency and service quality within urban water

utilities in Kenya. Addressing this gap is essential for transforming NCWSC into a responsive, citizen-oriented institution. More importantly, insights from this research can serve as a replicable model for utilities across sub-Saharan Africa striving to enhance service delivery in complex urban settings (Kahura & Ogada, 2023; Andrews et al., 2021).

## Study Objective

To investigate the influence of stakeholder engagement on service delivery at Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company (NCWSC), with a specific focus on key components of engagement, including stakeholder consultation, feedback, and participation in strategic planning, and how these practices impact the efficiency, accountability, and overall service outcomes at NCWSC.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Perspectives on Stakeholder Engagement

The theoretical foundation of this study is grounded in Stakeholder Theory, which posits that an organization's survival and success depend on its ability to meet the expectations of various stakeholders—not just shareholders or regulators, but also employees, customers, and the wider community (Freeman, 1984; Parmar et al., 2010). In public service organizations like NCWSC, where legitimacy and performance are influenced by citizen satisfaction, stakeholder engagement becomes essential. The theory emphasizes that engaging stakeholders in decision-making fosters trust, shared goals, and accountability, leading to improved service outcomes (Mitchell et al., 1997; Jones et al., 2018).

To deepen this perspective, Participatory Governance Theory complements Stakeholder Theory by providing a normative framework for how stakeholder inclusion can enhance transparency, responsiveness, and accountability in public administration (Fung, 2015; Bovaird & Loeffler, 2021). This theory underscores that when citizens and interest groups are involved in co-producing services, it strengthens policy implementation and builds institutional resilience. In the context of NCWSC, mechanisms such as stakeholder consultations, feedback platforms, and collaborative planning can enhance alignment between service goals and user needs, leading to improved satisfaction and trust.

Additionally, insights from Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) offer behavioral mechanisms for understanding internal stakeholder dynamics. OCB emphasizes voluntary employee actions—such as taking initiative, helping coworkers, or offering service improvements—that are not formally rewarded but significantly influence organizational effectiveness (Organ et al., 2006). Empirical studies show that such behavior often flourishes in environments where engagement, recognition, and trust are present (Yahaya et al., 2020), reinforcing the case for internal stakeholder involvement at NCWSC.

These theories collectively provide a robust framework for understanding the empirical findings discussed later in this paper, particularly regarding how inclusive engagement practices influence both customer satisfaction and employee initiative. For instance, as shown in the analysis of descriptive and inferential data, areas with stronger stakeholder participation reported higher perceived service efficiency, supporting the assertion that participatory models yield better operational outcomes.

### Empirical Review

Empirical literature strongly supports the proposition that stakeholder engagement plays a pivotal role in enhancing public service delivery. For instance, Aaltonen and Kujala (2016) found that stakeholder involvement significantly influences project success, with organizations demonstrating high engagement levels achieving greater project clarity, goal alignment, and reduced resistance. Similarly, Omotayo et al. (2020) reported that active stakeholder input accounted for up to 40% of the variance in development project outcomes. This effect is often attributed to mechanisms such as improved communication channels, shared decision-making, and greater buy-in from both internal and external stakeholders. Engagement promotes

transparency and inclusivity, leading to decisions that better reflect user needs and are thus more sustainable (Chinyio & Olomolaiye, 2010).

In the context of water utilities, Mutizwa-Mangiza and Muguti (2017) observed that participatory governance practices among water boards in sub-Saharan Africa led to significant gains in service reliability, particularly when local community leaders were involved in oversight. Conversely, Kivuva and Mulwa (2018) identified cases in Kenya where engagement efforts were symbolic or poorly coordinated, yielding negligible improvement in service delivery. These studies contrast in highlighting that the quality and authenticity of engagement—rather than its mere presence—determine success. Effective engagement hinges on inclusive structures, consistent communication, and power-sharing between service providers and stakeholders.

From an internal stakeholder perspective, Wangari et al. (2021) demonstrated that employee involvement in decision-making correlates with higher job satisfaction and a proactive approach to addressing customer concerns. In the Nairobi Water sector, staff who were regularly consulted exhibited greater commitment to institutional goals. However, Njuguna and Kariuki (2022) caution that unless engagement is institutionalized rather than event-based, its long-term effect is limited. These findings reinforce the importance of embedding engagement into organizational culture and policy, not treating it as an occasional strategy.

Despite broad support for stakeholder engagement, contradictions exist. For instance, Mkongi et al. (2020) found no significant link between community engagement and efficiency in water billing systems in Tanzania, citing weak institutional capacity and lack of follow-up mechanisms. Such findings illustrate that stakeholder engagement is not a panacea. Contextual factors such as organizational maturity, regulatory frameworks, and political will greatly influence outcomes. This diversity of findings points to the need for a diverse approach—recognizing that engagement strategies must be tailored to specific organizational environments like NCWSC, where historical governance issues and operational bottlenecks have hindered citizen trust.

In the Kenyan context, Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company (NCWSC) has implemented various stakeholder engagement initiatives as part of its strategic plan, but service delivery challenges persist. Studies such as those by Korir et al. (2021) and Njihia and Senaji (2018) have emphasized the need for stronger feedback mechanisms and more inclusive stakeholder engagement practices to address inefficiencies in service delivery at NCWSC. These findings suggest that while stakeholder engagement is essential, its effectiveness depends on how well the engagement processes are designed and implemented.

## Research Gaps

Despite the growing body of literature on stakeholder engagement, several empirical gaps remain, particularly in urban water utility settings like Nairobi. First, few studies have conducted longitudinal assessments of stakeholder engagement initiatives, making it difficult to understand their sustained impact on service delivery over time (Kivuva & Mulwa, 2018; Mkongi et al., 2020). Second, much of the existing research tends to generalize stakeholder groups, with limited focus on the differentiated roles and influence of internal versus external stakeholders—such as employees, regulators, customers, and community leaders. Third, the influence of cultural norms and socio-political dynamics on stakeholder participation strategies remains underexplored, especially in urban African contexts where informal power structures often shape engagement outcomes. These gaps are particularly relevant for the Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company (NCWSC), which operates in a complex socio-political and organizational environment. Addressing these knowledge gaps could lead to more targeted and culturally responsive engagement models that significantly enhance accountability, responsiveness, and the quality-of-service delivery.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Study Design

The study adopted a descriptive research design, which was well-suited for exploring the patterns and nature of stakeholder engagement within the Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company (NCWSC). This design enabled the researcher to systematically capture and present a detailed picture of existing engagement practices



and their perceived influence on service delivery. Its strength lies in contextualizing data within real-life organizational settings, making it particularly effective for investigating complex human-centered dynamics such as engagement behaviors, communication flows, and institutional culture—critical aspects in a public utility environment like NCWSC (Kothari, 2011; Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

## Study Population

The target population comprised 416 staff members from the Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company (NCWSC), categorized into senior management, middle-level managers, and junior staff. These groups were deliberately selected because they represent distinct tiers of organizational influence and engagement in service delivery processes. Senior managers shape strategic decisions and engagement frameworks; middle-level managers translate policies into operational actions, while junior staff directly interact with customers and implement service routines. Including all three tiers allowed for a comprehensive understanding of how stakeholder engagement is perceived and practiced across hierarchical levels. The distribution of the target population by job cadre is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Target Population Distribution**

Cadre	Target Population (n)
Senior Management	40
Middle-level Managers	120
Junior Staff	364
<b>Total</b>	<b>524</b>

## Sampling Procedure

The study employed stratified random sampling to ensure representativeness across different organizational levels within NCWSC. The population was first stratified into three distinct categories: senior management, middle-level managers, and junior staff. Within each stratum, simple random sampling was used to select respondents proportionally, thereby preserving the unique perspectives of each group. This approach minimized bias and enhanced the reliability of the findings by ensuring that each subgroup had an equal chance of inclusion. Proportional allocation was used to determine the sample size per cadre, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Sample Size Distribution**

Cadre	Target Population (n)	Proportionate Sample ( $n/N \times 113$ )
Senior Management	40	9
Middle-level Managers	120	26
Junior Staff	364	78
<b>Total</b>	<b>524</b>	<b>113</b>

## Data Collection Tools

Data were collected using structured questionnaires, which included both closed-ended and Likert-scale items tailored to capture perceptions on stakeholder engagement and service delivery. The questionnaire was pre-tested to ensure clarity and reliability. This tool was ideal for collecting standardized responses efficiently across diverse respondent categories, enabling consistent measurement of attitudes, practices, and organizational behaviors relevant to the study objectives.

## Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics summarized demographic data and stakeholder engagement levels, while Pearson correlation was applied to assess linear relationships between stakeholder engagement and service delivery. Multiple regression analysis was employed to determine the predictive power of stakeholder engagement on service delivery outcomes. These methods were suitable due to their robustness in analyzing interval-scale data and identifying both strength and direction of relationships between variables.

## Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from Kenyatta University and NACOSTI. Informed consent was secured from participants, and their anonymity was ensured using participant codes. Respondents were informed of their right to withdraw at any point without consequences, and all data were kept confidential to maintain ethical standards.

## RESULTS

### Demographic Characteristics

The study achieved a response rate of 86.73%, with 98 out of 113 targeted respondents completing and returning the questionnaires. The gender distribution showed a slightly higher proportion of male respondents (52%) compared to females (48%), reflecting near parity in NCWSC's workforce. Most respondents (61%) were aged between 31 and 50 years, indicating that the majority had significant professional experience. This age group was followed by those aged 20-30 years (23%) and those above 50 years (16%).

In terms of professional roles, junior staff constituted the largest group (65%), followed by middle-level managers (27%) and senior management (8%). This distribution aligns with the organizational structure of NCWSC, where operational tasks are primarily carried out by junior staff. Regarding educational qualifications, the majority of respondents (44%) held a diploma, followed by those with a bachelor's degree (32%), a certificate (15%), and postgraduate qualifications (9%), reflecting a diverse mix of educational backgrounds.

**Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	51	52
	Female	47	48
Age	20-30	23	23
	31-50	60	61
	Above 50	15	16
Job Cadre	Junior Staff	64	65
	Middle-level Managers	26	27
	Senior Management	8	8
Education Level	Certificate	15	15
	Diploma	43	44
	Bachelor's Degree	31	32
	Postgraduate	9	9

## Stakeholder Engagement and Service Delivery

The descriptive findings revealed mixed perceptions of stakeholder engagement practices at NCWSC. The respondents rated stakeholder consultation, feedback, and participation in strategic planning on a 5-point Likert scale. As shown in Table 4, the average score for stakeholder consultation was 3.65, indicating moderate satisfaction, while stakeholder feedback scored lower at 3.21, suggesting the need for more robust feedback mechanisms. Stakeholder participation in strategic planning received a mean score of 3.45, reflecting moderate involvement.

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics on Stakeholder Engagement Practices**

Stakeholder Engagement Component	Mean	Standard Deviation
Stakeholder Consultation	3.65	0.74
Stakeholder Feedback	3.21	0.82
Participation in Strategic Planning	3.45	0.78

These findings suggest that while NCWSC engages stakeholders to some extent, gaps remain in the feedback and participation processes, which may hinder service delivery improvements. Respondents highlighted the need for more frequent consultations and transparent decision-making to enhance stakeholder trust and accountability.

### Pearson Correlation and Regression analysis

To evaluate the relationship between stakeholder engagement and service delivery, inferential analysis using Pearson correlation and multiple regression was conducted. The results provide critical insights into how different aspects of stakeholder engagement contribute to service delivery outcomes at NCWSC.

The Pearson correlation analysis results are presented in Table 6. The findings reveal significant positive relationships between stakeholder consultation ( $r = 0.762$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), stakeholder feedback ( $r = 0.689$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and strategic participation ( $r = 0.728$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) with service delivery. Stakeholder consultation exhibited the strongest positive correlation with service delivery, followed closely by strategic participation, indicating that enhancing these practices is crucial for improving service delivery at NCWSC.

**Table 6: Pearson Correlation Coefficients for Stakeholder Engagement and Service Delivery**

Variables	Service Delivery	Consultation	Feedback	Strategic Participation
Service Delivery	1	0.762**	0.689**	0.728**
Consultation	0.762**	1	0.701**	0.711**
Feedback	0.689**	0.701**	1	0.674**
Strategic Participation	0.728**	0.711**	0.674**	1

**Note: Pearson correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).**

To further assess the predictive power of the stakeholder engagement components on service delivery, a multiple regression analysis was performed. The results, presented in Table 7, show that stakeholder consultation ( $B = 0.412$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and participation in strategic planning ( $B = 0.329$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) had statistically significant positive effects on service delivery. However, stakeholder feedback ( $B = 0.211$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) was not statistically significant, suggesting that while feedback contributes to service delivery, it is less impactful than consultation and strategic participation.

The regression model was statistically significant ( $F = 24.78$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), with an adjusted  $R^2$  of 0.585, indicating that 58.5% of the variation in service delivery can be explained by stakeholder engagement practices.

**Table 7: Multiple Regression Coefficients for Stakeholder Engagement and Service Delivery**

Predictor Variable	B	Standard Error (SE)	Beta ( $\beta$ )	t	p-value
Stakeholder Consultation	0.412	0.092	0.476	4.48	0.001
Stakeholder Feedback	0.211	0.110	0.190	1.92	0.061
Participation in Strategic Planning	0.329	0.085	0.355	3.87	0.001

**Note: Regression model:  $F = 24.78$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.585$ .**

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study strongly support the principles of Stakeholder Theory, which emphasizes the importance of involving various stakeholders in organizational decision-making. This theory suggests that when stakeholders are engaged meaningfully, organizations are more likely to meet service expectations and improve performance (Freeman, 1984; Harrison et al., 2019). At NCWSC, both stakeholder consultation and strategic participation were found to significantly influence service delivery. This suggests that involving stakeholders at different levels of planning and operations helps the organization to better align its services with public needs.

Stakeholder consultation was shown to have a positive and significant relationship with service delivery. This supports past studies that argue consultation allows organizations to understand stakeholder expectations, gather useful insights, and build trust (Bryson, 2018; Kabeyi, 2019). In the case of NCWSC, consulting stakeholders may help reduce resistance to new projects, improve communication, and encourage community support. When people feel heard, they are more likely to participate in and support the company's activities, which enhances overall service quality and responsiveness.

Likewise, strategic participation showed a strong influence on service delivery outcomes. This involves engaging stakeholders in key decisions and planning processes, not just in minor or symbolic ways. Prior research shows that when stakeholders are involved in setting priorities and reviewing performance, it promotes accountability and long-term cooperation (Aaltonen & Kujala, 2016; UN-Habitat, 2021). For NCWSC, such participation helps to create a sense of shared responsibility and ensures that the utility is more responsive and better prepared to address urban service demands.

On the other hand, stakeholder feedback did not show a significant influence on service delivery. This finding may be explained by how feedback is handled in practice. Although feedback is collected, it may not be effectively analyzed or used in decision-making. Similar studies have found that unless feedback mechanisms are well-designed and actively managed, they may not lead to actual improvements (Mwangi & Ombaka, 2022). In NCWSC, feedback processes might be underdeveloped, poorly coordinated, or lacking follow-up, which limits their impact on service delivery.

Finally, it is important to consider the broader context of Nairobi. Factors such as rapid population growth, political interference, and limited infrastructure make it harder for utilities like NCWSC to implement stakeholder engagement fully (Wangui & Kinyanjui, 2020; World Bank, 2021). These external challenges may affect how well stakeholder engagement strategies work, even when the intention is good. Therefore, improving service delivery at NCWSC requires both internal reforms and support from external actors, including government and civil society.



## CONCLUSION

This study established that stakeholder engagement significantly influences service delivery at Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company (NCWSC). Specifically, stakeholder consultation ( $r = 0.637$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and strategic participation ( $r = 0.701$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) were found to have strong positive correlations with improved service outcomes, highlighting their crucial role in fostering inclusive planning and informed decision-making. However, stakeholder feedback ( $r = 0.219$ ,  $p = 0.104$ ) showed no significant relationship, suggesting inefficiencies in how feedback is currently managed. These findings imply that while NCWSC has made progress in involving stakeholders in planning and consultation, there remains a critical need to strengthen feedback mechanisms—potentially through digital tools or interactive platforms that facilitate timely, actionable responses. The implications extend beyond NCWSC, offering valuable insights for other urban utilities in Kenya and sub-Saharan Africa grappling with service delivery challenges amid rising urban demands. Nonetheless, limitations such as the study's reliance on self-reported data and its focus on a single organization may affect generalizability.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

To enhance stakeholder engagement and improve service delivery at NCWSC, it is recommended that the company increases the frequency and inclusivity of stakeholder consultations and strengthens participation in strategic planning through continuous engagement platforms. Improving feedback mechanisms, such as timely responses and better communication channels, is also essential. Future research should explore comparative studies across multiple utilities, integrate longitudinal data, and examine how cultural or contextual factors influence stakeholder engagement outcomes to inform more adaptive, participatory governance models.

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