

# Moderating Effect of Training on the Relationship Between Customer Involvement and Service Delivery in Public Universities in Kenya

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## ABSTRACT

Public universities in Kenya have integrated customer involvement in quality management practice. However, the effectiveness of these practices remains inconsistent, prompting the need to explore factors that strengthen their impact. This study specifically examined the moderating effect of training on the relationship between customer involvement and service delivery in Kenyan public universities. Guided by Ishikawa theory and a pragmatic research paradigm, the study employed a cross-sectional research design targeting 35 public universities with a total population of 1,011 stakeholders, including deans, heads of departments, quality assurance officers, ISO coordinators, and student leaders. A sample of 287 respondents was determined using the Yamane Taro formula and selected through a combination of cluster, random, and purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected using structured questionnaires, validated by experts, and tested for reliability with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.782. Analysis was conducted using descriptive and inferential statistics, with multiple regression models applied to test the moderating role of training. The findings revealed that customer involvement significantly influenced service delivery ( $\beta = .064$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and that this relationship was positively and significantly moderated by training, indicating that training enhances the effectiveness of participatory practices in improving service outcomes. The study concludes that while customer involvement contributes to better service delivery, its impact is amplified when staff are equipped with relevant skills and knowledge through structured and continuous training. These insights provide practical implications for public universities, highlighting the need to integrate robust training programs to optimize stakeholder engagement and improve institutional responsiveness, efficiency, and overall quality of services to students, faculty, and other stakeholders.

**Key Words:** Customer Involvement, Training, Service Delivery, Public Universities, Kenya.

## INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary knowledge-driven global economy, universities play a critical role in shaping human capital, fostering innovation, and contributing to socio-economic development. As higher education institutions compete for international rankings, research funding, and student enrollments, they face increasing pressure to enhance accountability, effectiveness, and quality of service delivery. Public universities, in particular, are challenged to meet or exceed stakeholder expectations, primarily those of students, while adapting to limited resources and dynamic educational demands (Alomenu, 2023). The growing emphasis on quality assurance frameworks has led to the integration of approaches that prioritize stakeholder perspectives, particularly through mechanisms that involve students directly in institutional processes. This shift underscores a broader trend in higher education: recognizing students not merely as service recipients but as active partners in co-creating quality educational experiences.

Globally, customer involvement in higher education has evolved as a central strategy to improve transparency, responsiveness, and alignment of university services with stakeholder needs. In developed economies such as the United States and the United Kingdom, universities have institutionalized student participation in governance structures, curriculum review committees, and quality assurance boards (Smith & Brown, 2023).

These participatory mechanisms enable universities to incorporate diverse student perspectives into decision-making processes, ensuring that academic programs and administrative services reflect the needs and expectations of their primary customers. Similarly, European models, particularly in Spain, have demonstrated the value of co-creating performance metrics with students, which fosters mutual accountability and improves institutional performance (García et al., 2014). Such global experiences underscore the consensus that meaningful involvement of students contributes significantly to service delivery improvements.

In Africa, the integration of customer involvement in higher education is emerging but remains inconsistent across countries. Nigerian universities, for instance, have made notable progress by embedding student feedback systems into accreditation processes, which has improved accountability and responsiveness to stakeholder concerns (Ateke & Iruka, 2015). However, systemic challenges, including inadequate administrative capacity, resource constraints, and entrenched hierarchical decision-making structures, often limit meaningful participation. In East Africa, regional initiatives such as the East African Higher Education Quality Assurance Network (EAQAN) have advocated for participatory approaches, yet uptake remains uneven, and many universities struggle to translate stakeholder input into tangible improvements (Worku, 2022). These regional dynamics highlight the complexities of operationalizing customer involvement in contexts marked by rapid enrollment growth and resource pressures.

Kenya's public universities present a distinctive case within this regional landscape. Over the last two decades, Kenya has witnessed a rapid expansion of higher education, driven by government policies aimed at broadening access and producing a skilled workforce. While this expansion has increased enrollment and diversified program offerings, it has also strained institutional capacities, resulting in persistent challenges in service quality, responsiveness, and student satisfaction. Although many Kenyan universities have adopted quality management frameworks such as ISO 9001:2015 certification, evidence indicates that these reforms have not consistently translated into improved service delivery outcomes (Muchai, 2023). Key challenges include weak feedback loops, minimal structured student participation, and limited staff training to operationalize participatory mechanisms effectively (Wangari, Wasike, & Mungai, 2023).

Local studies underscore the limited nature of customer involvement in Kenyan public universities. Chepkemai and Bett (2018) and Dacha and Juma (2018) report that while student feedback is occasionally solicited through surveys and suggestion boxes, it is rarely integrated into policy decisions or service redesign processes. Omondi (2021) further notes that although students are sometimes consulted, their input often remains tokenistic, with little influence on institutional outcomes. This disconnect between policy aspirations and practice has contributed to dissatisfaction, diminished trust, and recurring service delivery challenges. These findings suggest that while Kenyan universities acknowledge the value of customer involvement, they lack the structured frameworks and institutional culture necessary for meaningful and sustained engagement.

Customer involvement can be conceptualized as the active participation of students in shaping services through consultation, feedback, and co-creation. It extends beyond passive feedback collection to encompass active collaboration in governance and quality assurance processes (Xie et al., 2020). Customer involvement operates across multiple dimensions, including information sharing, consultation, co-creation, and participation in decision-making. International research demonstrates that when students are actively engaged, universities benefit from improved service alignment, enhanced transparency, and increased stakeholder satisfaction (García et al., 2014). However, realizing these benefits depends on the capacity of university staff to manage and respond to stakeholder input effectively. This is where training emerges as a critical moderating factor.

Training refers to the systematic development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for effective performance (Armstrong & Taylor, 2017). In the context of higher education, training equips academic and administrative staff with the competencies necessary to engage students constructively, analyze feedback, and integrate stakeholder perspectives into institutional decision-making. As a moderating variable, training influences the strength and direction of the relationship between customer involvement and service delivery. Adequately trained staff are more likely to translate student participation into actionable improvements, while inadequate training can weaken this relationship and lead to inconsistent outcomes.

Globally, research highlights the importance of training in amplifying the impact of participatory approaches. Cheung and To (2021) found that organizations with robust staff development programs were better able to co-create services with customers and respond adaptively to feedback. In Kenya, however, studies examining training in higher education often treat it as an isolated factor rather than exploring its interactive role in enhancing the effectiveness of customer involvement (Maina, 2016; Mogaka, 2023). This gap underscores the need to examine how training can strengthen participatory mechanisms to improve service delivery outcomes in Kenyan public universities.

Service delivery in higher education refers to the ability of universities to provide reliable, responsive, and student-centered academic and administrative services. Key dimensions include reliability (consistency of services), responsiveness (timeliness and efficiency), assurance (competence and courtesy of staff), empathy (personalized attention), and tangibles (physical facilities and technology) (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). In Kenyan public universities, service delivery encompasses curriculum design and delivery, examination management, library services, student support, and research facilitation. Despite efforts to enhance service delivery through quality management frameworks, universities continue to face persistent challenges such as bureaucratic inefficiencies, delayed communication, and inadequate responsiveness to student needs (Gatimbu, 2021). These challenges erode stakeholder trust and hinder universities' ability to meet rising expectations in an increasingly competitive higher education landscape.

The synthesis of global, regional, and local literature reveals significant gaps. While customer involvement is widely recognized as a driver of improved service delivery, Kenyan universities have yet to fully operationalize this practice in a systematic and impactful manner. Moreover, although training is theoretically positioned to strengthen participatory approaches, empirical evidence on its moderating role remains limited, particularly within the Kenyan higher education context. This knowledge gap is critical given the sector's rapid expansion, rising stakeholder expectations, and pressure to align with global quality standards.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Although Kenyan public universities have adopted quality management frameworks and pursued ISO certification, they continue to face persistent service delivery challenges. These include weak feedback mechanisms, limited student and stakeholder participation in decision-making, and insufficient staff training to support quality improvement initiatives. Globally, customer involvement is recognized as a driver of improved service outcomes, yet its practical application within Kenyan universities remains inconsistent and poorly institutionalized. Moreover, existing research rarely explores the moderating role of training in strengthening the link between customer involvement and service delivery outcomes. This omission leaves a critical gap in understanding how participatory approaches, when reinforced by capacity-building initiatives, can enhance responsiveness, transparency, and performance in higher education institutions. Addressing this gap is essential for informing policy and practice aimed at improving service delivery in Kenya's public university system.

### **Objective of the Study**

The objective of this study is to establish the moderating effect of training on the relationship between customer involvement and service delivery in public universities in Kenya.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theoretical framework**

This study is anchored on Ishikawa's Theory of Quality Management, developed in the 1960s by Kaoru Ishikawa, which emphasizes a systematic approach to continuous improvement and customer-centered service provision. Although originally designed for manufacturing, Ishikawa's principles are widely applicable in service contexts, including higher education, where service delivery quality directly influences stakeholder satisfaction and institutional reputation. The theory prioritizes understanding root causes of service problems and actively involving both internal and external stakeholders in quality improvement efforts.

A central tenet of Ishikawa's philosophy is the recognition of customers both internal (staff, faculty) and external (students, parents, employers) as integral to organizational processes. This directly aligns with customer involvement, where students are engaged in decision-making, feedback provision, and co-creation of services. By integrating stakeholder perspectives, universities can align academic and administrative services with actual needs, enhancing transparency and responsiveness. Ishikawa's emphasis on quality circles also parallels participatory mechanisms in universities, encouraging collaboration between students and staff in identifying service challenges and formulating solutions.

Equally critical in Ishikawa's framework is training as a means of empowering employees to implement quality improvement initiatives effectively. Training enhances staff capabilities to analyze feedback, address service gaps, and sustain a culture of continuous improvement. In this study, training is conceptualized as a moderator that strengthens the relationship between customer involvement and service delivery. Without adequate training, even well-structured participatory mechanisms may fail to yield significant improvements, as staff may lack the skills to translate stakeholder input into actionable strategies.

The Fishbone Diagram (Cause-and-Effect Diagram), another of Ishikawa's contributions, illustrates how multiple factors such as people, methods, materials, and the environment interact to affect service outcomes. Applying this to public universities, customer involvement represents one "cause" influencing service quality, while training enhances staff competence to address systemic challenges, thus amplifying service delivery outcomes. By situating customer involvement and training within Ishikawa's broader philosophy of continuous improvement, this framework provides a theoretical lens to explore how participatory practices, reinforced by targeted staff development, contribute to superior service delivery in Kenyan public universities.

### **Customer involvement and service delivery**

Customer involvement is defined as the varying level of personal interest in each potential customer assessing and acknowledging the factors that go into consumer decision-making (Xie, et al., 2020).

Andersson and Hjertqvist (2015) investigated how a Swedish financial institution involves clients in new service development using a qualitative approach with an embedded case study design. They employed a mix of inductive and deductive reasoning, utilizing both secondary data and semi-structured interviews. The study found that customer involvement occurred in three of the four key stages of service development, but was hindered by a lack of established routine for managing this involvement. The authors recommended that businesses adopt new organizational structures to enhance customer participation in their service development programs. The current study was conducted in Kenya, targeting a population of 690 from which a sample of 287 was selected using Yamane Taro's formula and multistage sampling. Data collection involved validated questionnaires, tested for reliability with a pilot study in selected public universities, differing from the focus of the Swedish study on client incorporation in service development.

Cheung, and To (2021) in China through three consumer engagement dimensions, namely identification, interaction, and absorption, examined the direct and indirect effects of customer involvement on co-creation via the lenses of customer-dominant logic and the stimulus organism-response framework. 211 Chinese service users in Hong Kong contributed the data. Customer involvement influenced co-creation directly and indirectly through absorption and interaction, but not identification, according to the results of IBM SPSS Process models. For individuals with a high versus low relation orientation, it was discovered that customer involvement had a stronger influence on the co-creation of services. Therefore, service providers should properly employ mass media to evoke feelings of relevance and importance of services to customers. Additionally, they should constantly engage with clients on social media, which can be improved by various forms of immersion technology.

The finding from the study cannot be used to make inference about Kenya's situation as it was done in China; the different settings can influence the findings because of different circumstances guiding research in different countries such as government policies and regulations. It was performed among Chinese services users; the current study was carried out in Public Universities in Kenya to examine the impact of customer involvement on service delivery, being moderated by training. It used multistage sampling to select the respondents and



questionnaires were deployed in data collection and analysis were completed using SPSS version 26. It deployed correlation analysis to establish the relationship existing between variables.

Ateke and Iruka (2015) examined the relationship between consumer involvement in marketing and marketing performance metrics such as consumer satisfaction, new product success rate, market share, and return on investment in Nigeria's manufacturing sector. Data analysis and Spearman's Rank Order Correlation to test hypotheses was carried out. Findings indicated a positive and significant correlation between customer involvement and all marketing success measures, concluding that customer involvement is an effective strategy for enhancing marketing performance and recommending its incorporation into long-term business plans. The current research was centered on public universities in Kenya, applying a cross-sectional and correlation research design to assess the relationships between independent and dependent variables. A sample size of 287 was calculated using Yamane Taro's formula, employing multistage sampling and validated questionnaires, with analysis performed using SPSS version 26. Unlike the previous study, which used SPSS version 20.0, the findings from this study was be directly applicable to the Kenyan context.

Dacha and Juma (2018) examined the influence of user involvement, top management support, and stakeholder interaction on the efficiency of the procurement process at Jomo Kenyatta University of Science and Technology, using stakeholder theory, consumer-involvement theory, and principal-agent theory. A descriptive survey design was utilized in the study, with data collected through probability random sampling. It concluded that stakeholder sensitization is crucial and recommended increased inclusion to improve procurement efficiency. However, the recommendation lacks specificity, as it does not outline clear, actionable steps for implementing stakeholder sensitization or improving procurement efficiency. However, the study's findings may have limited generalizability, as it was based on a single institution, which may not reflect broader trends across other public sector procurement processes in Kenya's universities or beyond. The results highlighted a lack of user involvement, top management support, and stakeholder interaction in the procurement process, leading to dissatisfaction.

Chepkemoi and Bett (2018) investigated the performance of ISO-certified public universities in Kenya in relation to quality management practices, focusing on employee empowerment, customer focus, stakeholder involvement, and top management commitment. Using a descriptive research design. Data were collected through a drop-and-pick questionnaire approach, utilizing both primary and secondary sources. Findings revealed that most respondents believed ISO certification improved university performance, with strong resource generating capabilities and dedicated top management commitment to ISO QMS standards. The study highlighted that while customer focus and employee empowerment significantly influenced performance, stakeholder participation had minimal impact. The analysis suggests that top management should continue to uphold ISO values, implement employee empowerment strategies, and actively involve stakeholders in quality processes. Recommendations included regular customer involvement surveys sponsored by the Ministry of Higher Education and other contributing donors. However, the study's findings cannot be generalized to all universities in Kenya, as it specifically targeted public institutions using a descriptive design.

Osemba (2014) examined obstacles to performance contracting in Kenya's public universities, focusing on factors like target formulation, resistance to change, stakeholder involvement, and management style. The study, which utilized primary data from surveys, found that employee opposition had minimal impact on performance contract implementation. It suggested that consultative forums between university management and staff could enhance success. However, all respondents indicated that shareholder and customer involvement would have little effect on the implementation's effectiveness. Performance planning and review were identified as significant contributors to successful performance contracting. The study concluded that these variables accounted for a substantial portion of the challenges faced, recommending further research to uncover additional influencing factors. The current study focused on public universities in Kenya, employing a cross-sectional and correlation research design with a sample size of 287, calculated using Yamane Taro's formula, and data analysis performed using SPSS version 26.

In Kenya, Wangari, Wasike, and Mungai (2023) studied the effect of Quality Management Practices (QMP) on service delivery at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, using a survey targeting employees with a mix of quantitative, descriptive, and inferential methods. The study found that QMP accounted for 43.6% of the

variation in service delivery, with strong positive correlations between customer focus and continuous improvement. A weak, significant correlation was found between top management commitment and service delivery, while employee involvement exhibited a negative and insignificant effect on service delivery. It however, did not explore factors influencing this negative relationship, nor did it examine the role of contextual or environmental factors at the university. Additionally, it lacked an analysis of moderating or mediating variables such as resource availability or institutional culture, which could affect QMP outcomes. Further research could address these gaps to provide deeper insights into improving service delivery through QMP.

Omore (2022) examined the impact of employee involvement as a Total Quality Management (TQM) practice on service delivery in Nairobi County's healthcare sector, focusing on customer attention, quality improvement, and managerial. Using a cross-sectional descriptive methodology. Data were collected via questionnaires and analyzed with descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings showed that customer focus improved patient assessments and relationships, while multidisciplinary teams and continuous quality initiatives enhanced service quality. Management support was key in setting goals, motivating staff, and mobilizing resources, with a significant correlation between customer involvement and quality healthcare services. The current research examined Kenya's public universities, with a focus on the moderating effect of training on the link between quality management practices and service delivery.

Kamau, Wachira and Mwenda (2024), assessed the critical importance of customer focus on the institutional performance of private universities in Kenya. The study used a descriptive research design and a census sampling technique to randomly select the subjects. Data was collected using questionnaires, piloted at Carlile College, with Cronbach's Alpha indicating reliable scale, and both descriptive and inferential analyses were conducted. The study found a significant positive correlation between institutional performance and customer involvement, with customer focus explaining 33.61% of the variation in institutional performance. This indicates that customer involvement, as a key element of TQM, has a significant influence on the institutional performance of the universities. The study's findings may have limited generalizability, as data was collected from a single institution, potentially not reflecting the diversity of private universities in Kenya or beyond. Additionally, the description of the sampling method is inconsistent, as it mentions both a census technique and random selection, requiring clarification on how subjects were chosen and whether the sample represents the broader population.

### **Summary of Literature Review and Research Gaps**

Customer involvement has been widely examined across sectors as a critical factor influencing service outcomes. Xie et al. (2020) define it as the varying level of personal interest and engagement customers have in decision-making processes. Globally, studies highlight its role in enhancing service development and co-creation. For example, Andersson & Hjertqvist (2015), using a Swedish financial institution case study, found that while customers participate in service development stages, lack of formal routines hinder sustained engagement. Similarly, Cheung & To (2021) in Hong Kong demonstrated that customer involvement drives co-creation directly and indirectly, with interaction and absorption being key mechanisms, though cultural contexts may affect applicability elsewhere.

Regionally in Africa, Ateke & Iruka (2015) showed a positive correlation between customer involvement and marketing performance in Nigerian manufacturing, suggesting broader benefits beyond service sectors. In Kenya, various studies have investigated customer involvement in university settings. Chepkemai & Bett (2018) found ISO-certified public universities improved performance through customer focus and stakeholder engagement, while Dacha & Juma (2018) and Osemba (2014) identified limited stakeholder involvement as a barrier to procurement and performance contracting processes. More recently, Wangari et al. (2023) and Kamau et al. (2024) confirmed customer focus significantly influences service delivery and institutional performance in Kenyan universities, though results vary in strength and consistency.

Despite these insights, gaps remain. Most studies focus on direct effects of customer involvement on service outcomes, neglecting moderating variables like training. Limited research contextualizes findings to public universities in Kenya, where resource constraints, administrative rigidity, and increasing student enrollment

may alter the effectiveness of customer involvement strategies. Furthermore, previous studies often adopt descriptive designs or focus on single institutions, limiting generalizability and failing to capture broader sector-wide dynamics.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was anchored on the positivist research philosophy, which emphasizes objective observation and the quantification of relationships among variables. A correlational research design was adopted to investigate the relationships between customer involvement, training, and service delivery. The study targeted 35 public universities in Kenya, comprising 1,011 participants drawn from various departments: 247 Deans of Schools, 659 Heads of Departments, 35 Quality Assurance Officers, 35 ISO Coordinators, and 35 student presidents. Using Yamane Taro's formula, a sample size of 287 respondents was determined. The study area was stratified into eight regions, and a cluster sampling technique was applied, followed by simple random sampling to select one university from each region. This ensured equal representation of universities and minimized selection bias. Purposive sampling was further used to select specific respondents, namely Deans of Schools, Heads of Departments, Quality Assurance Officers, ISO Coordinators, and student leaders, due to their direct involvement in service delivery processes. Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire that had been validated and pre-tested for reliability. The data were cleaned, coded, and analyzed using SPSS version 26. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed in the analysis. Descriptive statistics included means, standard deviations, and frequency percentages, while inferential statistics involved multiple linear regression analysis to examine the relationships among the study variables.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Customer Involvement, Training and Service Delivery

Descriptive, correlation and inferential results were presented that combined the response from Heads of Departments (HODs)/Deans, Quality Assurance Officers (QAOs)/ISO Coordinators, and Student Leaders. This integrated all the respondents since the questionnaires share similar themes statements.

### Customer Involvement Descriptive Statistics

The interpretation focuses on the first objective variable Customer Involvement base on a five point Likert scale. The results were presented in Table 1 based on frequencies, mean and standard deviation where 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Undecided, 2 = Disagree and 1 = Strongly Disagree.

Table 1: Customer Involvement

Statement	SA(5)	A(4)	N(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	Mean	Std. Dev.
The university involves stakeholders in decision-making.	111(41.9%)	106(40.0%)	38(14.3%)	5(1.9%)	5(1.9%)	4.1811	.88186
Joint stakeholders in service delivery	109(41.1%)	105(39.6%)	36(13.6%)	11(4.2%)	4(1.5%)	4.1472	.91134
Good relations with top management and stakeholders.	114(43.0%)	92(34.7%)	35(13.2%)	20(7.5%)	4(1.5%)	4.1019	.99668
Top management has installed confidence on	107(40.4%)	102(38.5%)	29(10.9%)	19(7.2%)	8(3.0%)	4.0604	1.03542

stakeholders.							
Interaction has enhance identification and solving of problems.	137(51.7%)	81(30.6%)	35(13.2%)	792.6%)	5(1.9%)	4.2755	.92296
Interactive forums help improve services.	101(38.1%)	119(44.9%)	29(10.9%)	12(4.5%)	4(1.5%)	4.1358	.88999
Stakeholders involvement improves service delivery.	160(60.4%)	79(29.8%)	7(2.6%)	17(6.4%)	2(0.8%)	4.4264	.88080
Average						4.1898	.77991

The descriptive analysis of customer involvement reveals in Table 1 that public universities in Kenya generally embrace stakeholder participation in their operational and decision-making processes. This is evidenced by a high overall mean score of 4.1898 and a relatively low standard deviation of 0.77991, indicating a strong and consistent agreement among respondents. These results suggest that universities recognize the value of engaging stakeholders—including staff, students, and quality assurance officers—in activities that contribute to improved service delivery.

A closer look at individual items reveals that the statement "Stakeholder involvement improves service delivery" received the highest mean score of 4.4264, with 60.4% of respondents strongly agreeing and 29.8% agreeing. This overwhelming support points to a widely held belief that involving stakeholders directly contributes to the enhancement of institutional services. Similarly, the statement "Interaction has enhanced identification and solving of problems" scored a high mean of 4.2755, reinforcing the notion that two-way engagement not only fosters trust but also facilitates the timely resolution of service-related challenges.

Other statements such as "The university involves stakeholders in decision-making" and "Joint stakeholders in service delivery" recorded mean scores of 4.1811 and 4.1472 respectively, with more than 80% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing. This suggests that decision-making processes in the universities are generally inclusive, encouraging co-creation of services and policies that affect the wider university community. Such inclusivity likely enhances institutional transparency and responsiveness, which are key drivers of service satisfaction.

Despite the generally positive outlook, responses to statements like "Top management has installed confidence on stakeholders" (mean = 4.0604) and "Good relations with top management and stakeholders" (mean = 4.1019) reflected slightly lower mean scores and higher standard deviations. This indicates that while stakeholder involvement is practiced, there may be inconsistencies in how it is executed across departments or institutions, particularly in terms of trust-building and relational dynamics between leadership and stakeholders. It highlights an area where further investment in communication and leadership training could improve the quality of engagement.

The role of interactive forums also emerged as a crucial factor, with the statement "Interactive forums help improve services" receiving a mean score of 4.1358. This suggests that stakeholders view forums and platforms for dialogue as instrumental in identifying service gaps and proposing solutions. When complemented by appropriate training, such forums can become even more effective channels for participatory governance and quality enhancement.

Overall, the results demonstrate that customer involvement is well-integrated into service delivery frameworks within public universities in Kenya (mean 4.1898). Stakeholders generally feel engaged in university



processes, particularly in decision-making and problem-solving. However, there are still areas requiring attention, such as building confidence through leadership engagement and strengthening relationships between management and stakeholders.

## Training

The moderating variable training was also evaluated using a Likert scale where 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Undecided, 2 = Disagree and 1 = Strongly Disagree. The questionnaires results were presented in terms of frequencies, mean and standard deviation as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Training

Statement	SA(5)	A(4)	N(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	Mean	Std. Dev.
On the job trained are done in the university.	106(40.0%)	108(40.8%)	21(7.9%)	24(9.1%)	6(2.3%)	4.0717	1.02180
Career development gives students new skills.	113(42.6%)	107(40.4%)	10(3.8%)	25(9.4%)	10(3.8%)	4.0868	1.08538
Workshops assist in skill development of stakeholders.	135(50.9%)	94(35.5%)	20(7.5%)	12(4.5%)	4(1.5%)	4.2981	.90338
Average						4.1522	.90121

The results from Table 2 show a positive perception of training practices in public universities. The overall average mean was 4.1522 with a standard deviation of 0.90121, indicating that respondents generally agreed that training initiatives are in place and impactful, although experiences may vary slightly across institutions.

The statement “Workshops assist in skill development of stakeholders” had the highest mean of 4.2981, with more than 86% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing. This suggests a strong appreciation for workshops as key tools for enhancing stakeholders’ competencies. Similarly, the statement “Career development gives students new skills” recorded a high mean of 4.0868, showing that training programs are perceived as beneficial not only to staff but also to students, fostering institutional development.

Additionally, “On-the-job training is done in the university” also had a solid mean of 4.0717, reflecting that public universities are actively engaging staff in continuous learning within their work environment. However, the relatively higher standard deviations (1.08538 for career development) suggest some variation in training experiences, possibly due to differences in resource allocation, departmental priorities, or implementation levels.

These results reinforce the importance of structured training programs in enhancing capacity and performance within universities. They also support the premise that training moderates the impact of customer involvement, by equipping stakeholders with the necessary skills to respond effectively.

## Service delivery

The service delivery survey questions were measured using 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Undecided, 2 = Disagree and 1 = Strongly Disagree. The results were presented in Table 3 in term of frequencies, mean and standard deviation.

Table 3: Service Delivery

Statement	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean	Std. Dev.
Efficiency is promoted in the university.	170(64.2%)	90(34.0%)	3(1.1%)	1(0.4%)	1(0.4%)	4.6113	.57395
Efficiency has improved student satisfaction.	144(54.3%)	100(37.7%)	7(2.6%)	11(4.2%)	3(1.1%)	4.4000	.82480
Performance in the university is improving.	106(40.0%)	110(41.5%)	33(12.5%)	9(3.4%)	7(2.6%)	4.1283	.94074
Timely response to stakeholders needs improves services.	100(37.7%)	123(46.4%)	20(7.5%)	21(7.9%)	1(0.4%)	4.1321	.88843
Fast responses to concerns improve service delivery.	121(45.7%)	82(30.9%)	24(9.1%)	28(10.6%)	10(3.8%)	4.0415	1.14572
Average						4.2626	.73082

Service delivery outcomes, as presented in Table 3, show the most positive ratings among the variables, with an impressive average mean of 4.2626 and a relatively low standard deviation of 0.73082, indicating strong agreement among respondents and minimal variation in perceptions.

The highest-rated statement was “Efficiency is promoted in the university”, with a remarkable mean of 4.6113 and nearly 98% agreement. This implies that most public universities are perceived to be increasingly focused on operational efficiency, likely influenced by enhanced management practices and technological integration. “Efficiency has improved student satisfaction” followed closely with a mean of 4.4000, affirming that quality service delivery translates into positive student experiences.

Statements like “Timely response to stakeholders’ needs improves services” (mean 4.1321) and “Fast responses to concerns improve service delivery” (mean 4.0415) reflect the value of responsiveness as a critical component of service excellence. The mean for “Performance in the university is improving” was 4.1283, again suggesting that continuous improvement efforts are perceived to be bearing fruit.

Although the overall results are very positive, slightly lower ratings on fast responses indicate potential bottlenecks in complaint handling or communication processes. Nevertheless, the data confirms that service delivery in public universities is perceived as strong, and that the combination of training and customer involvement contributes significantly to this outcome.

## Inferential Statistical Results

Pearson Correlation were adopted to examine whether there existed relationship between Customer Involvement (CI) and Service Delivery (SD). The results were presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Correlation between Customer Involvement and Service Delivery

		CI	SD
CI	Pearson Correlation	1	.685**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000

	N	265	265
SD	Pearson Correlation	.685**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	265	265

The results indicated that the relatively strong positive relationship between CI and Service Delivery ( $r = 0.685$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) highlights the role of customer involvement in improving service efficiency, responsiveness, and satisfaction. This correlation suggests that service delivery systems in public universities improve when stakeholders are part of the process, contributing ideas and receiving services tailored to their expectations.

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no statistically significant moderating effect of training on the relationship between customer involvement and service delivery in public universities in Kenya.

The first hypothesis of the study sought to assess whether training significantly moderates the relationship between Customer Involvement (CI) and Service Delivery (SD) in public universities in Kenya.

Table 5: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.685 <sup>a</sup>	.469	.467	.53355
2	.721 <sup>b</sup>	.520	.516	.50846
a. Predictors: (Constant), CI				
b. Predictors: (Constant), CI, CI_T				

The model summary results demonstrated that customer involvement alone explained 46.9% of the variance in service delivery, as reflected by an R Square value of 0.469. However, when training was introduced as a moderating variable through the interaction term (CI\*T), the explanatory power of the model improved to 52.0% (R Square = 0.520). This increase in explanatory power indicates that the inclusion of training in the model significantly enhanced the ability to predict service delivery outcomes. The reduction in the standard error of the estimate from 0.534 in Model 1 to 0.508 in Model 2 further confirmed that the model became more accurate with the addition of the moderating variable.

Table 6: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	66.131	1	66.131	232.303	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	74.869	263	.285		
	Total	141.000	264			
2	Regression	73.265	2	36.633	141.696	.000 <sup>c</sup>
	Residual	67.735	262	.259		
	Total	141.000	264			
a. Dependent Variable: SD						
b. Predictors: (Constant), CI						
c. Predictors: (Constant), CI, CI_T						

The ANOVA results supported the significance of both models. Model 1, which included only customer involvement, had a highly significant F-value of 232.303 ( $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that customer involvement had a meaningful effect on service delivery. When the moderating effect of training was added in Model 2, the F-value remained statistically significant at 141.696 ( $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that the interaction between training and customer involvement contributes to improved service delivery by 6%. Moreover, the decrease in the residual sum of squares from 74.869 in Model 1 to 67.735 in Model 2 demonstrated that the model with the moderating effect was better at explaining the variability in the dependent variable.

Table 7: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.574	.179		8.772	.000
	CI	.642	.042	.685	15.242	.000
2	(Constant)	2.216	.210		10.543	.000
	CI	.214	.091	.228	2.350	.019
	CI*T	.064	.012	.509	5.253	.000

a. Dependent Variable: SD

The coefficients Table 7 provided more detailed insights into the influence of individual predictors. In Model 1, customer involvement had a strong and significant positive effect on service delivery ( $\beta = 0.685$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that greater involvement of stakeholders leads to improved service delivery in public universities. However, in Model 2, after including the interaction term, the coefficient for customer involvement reduced to 0.228 ( $p = 0.019$ ), suggesting that while customer involvement remained important, its direct effect reduces once training was accounted for which implied training plays a crucial role in customer involvement. Notably, the interaction term (CI\*T) had a significant positive coefficient of 0.509 ( $p < 0.001$ ), signifying that training positively moderated the relationship between customer involvement and service delivery.

The hypothesis that training has no moderating effect on the relationship between customer involvement and service delivery is rejected. The results confirm that training significantly strengthens this relationship. This implies that when public universities provide relevant training to their staff and stakeholders, it enhances the impact of customer involvement initiatives on the quality and effectiveness of service delivery. Thus, for universities aiming to improve service delivery, investing in continuous training programs alongside promoting stakeholder engagement is essential.

The findings of the current study align with multiple prior studies that affirm the positive role of customer involvement in enhancing institutional performance and service delivery, especially when complemented by supporting mechanisms such as training. For instance, Kamau, Wachira, and Mwenda (2024) found a significant positive correlation between customer involvement and institutional performance in Kenyan private universities, reinforcing the assertion that engaging stakeholders is a core driver of success. Similarly, Cheung and To (2021) in China established that customer involvement influences co-creation directly and indirectly through interaction and absorption, highlighting its crucial role in service settings. Ateke and Iruka (2015), in their study on Nigeria's manufacturing sector, also confirmed that customer involvement significantly impacts key marketing success indicators, echoing the current study's finding that customer involvement ( $\beta = 0.685$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) strongly influences service delivery. Andersson and Hjertqvist (2015) further found that customer participation throughout the service development stages improves outcomes, aligning with the present study's conclusion that customer engagement yields better service delivery outcomes in public universities.

However, some studies reported contrasting or more nuanced results. For example, Chepkemai and Bett (2018) noted that while customer focus and employee empowerment improved performance in ISO-certified



public universities in Kenya, stakeholder participation had minimal impact, suggesting possible contextual or implementation limitations. Likewise, Osemba (2014) concluded that stakeholder and customer involvement had limited influence on performance contracting in Kenyan public universities, suggesting that mere involvement without structured engagement and feedback mechanisms may not be effective. Wangari, Wasike, and Mungai (2023) found that employee involvement had a negative and insignificant effect on service delivery, indicating that not all forms of participation automatically lead to positive outcomes and that the organizational context and support systems (such as training) are essential in mediating such relationships. Dacha and Juma (2018) observed dissatisfaction arising from limited user involvement and interaction, but did not provide actionable steps, making their conclusions less robust compared to the current research.

In conclusion, the results demonstrating that training plays a pivotal moderating role in strengthening the impact of customer involvement on service delivery. The regression analysis showed that although the direct effect of customer involvement decreased from  $\beta = 0.685$  to  $\beta = 0.228$  ( $p = 0.019$ ) upon the introduction of training, the interaction term (CI\*T) had a strong, significant coefficient ( $\beta = 0.509$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This suggests that training not only reinforces but amplifies the benefits of stakeholder engagement by equipping university personnel with the skills and capacity to translate customer inputs into actionable service improvements. Hence, the study provides empirical evidence to reject the null hypothesis that training has no moderating effect, affirming that institutional training programs are essential to fully harness the benefits of customer involvement in public university service delivery in Kenya.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Summary

The study established that customer involvement plays a crucial role in enhancing service delivery in public universities. Mechanisms such as stakeholder participation in decision-making, collaborative planning, and regular communication with management were found to have a positive impact on service delivery. Training was found to significantly moderate the relationship between customer involvement and service delivery, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

### Conclusions

The study concluded that customer involvement significantly enhances service delivery. Engagement of stakeholders including students, faculty, and administrative staff in planning, implementation, and feedback processes leads to more responsive and transparent service provision. The moderating effect of training reinforces this relationship, suggesting that when both service providers and recipients are equipped with relevant skills and competencies, the impact of involvement is amplified. Therefore, structured training initiatives improve the effectiveness of participatory approaches in institutional service delivery.

### Recommendations

To strengthen customer involvement in service delivery, public universities should institutionalize structured and inclusive engagement platforms. Such platforms could include regular town hall meetings, service delivery committees, participatory planning forums, and digital suggestion systems. These mechanisms will create predictable opportunities for students, faculty, and administrative staff to contribute their views on service provision, thereby fostering transparency and responsiveness in university operations.

In addition to creating engagement structures, universities should prioritize the strengthening of feedback mechanisms, particularly those directed at students. This involves not only collecting feedback through surveys, suggestion boxes, and digital tools but also ensuring that the feedback is systematically analyzed and integrated into decision-making processes. Closing the feedback loop by communicating actions taken based on received feedback will increase trust and encourage sustained participation.

Furthermore, the study recommends the implementation of periodic training programs targeting both service providers and recipients. Training should cover participatory approaches, communication skills, and

interpretation of feedback data. The findings indicate that such training enhances the moderating effect on service delivery outcomes, meaning that when stakeholders are equipped with relevant competencies, participatory approaches become significantly more effective.

Finally, public universities should adopt evidence-based policy frameworks that incorporate measurable performance indicators. Metrics such as service delivery indices, satisfaction scores, and response timelines should be tracked and reported to assess the impact of participatory initiatives over time. By grounding service delivery strategies in empirical evidence, universities can ensure continuous improvement and alignment with the evolving needs of their communities.

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