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Moderating Effect of Training on the Relationship Between Customers' Feedback and Service Delivery in Public Universities in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Customer feedback is widely recognized as a critical driver of continuous improvement in service-oriented institutions, including public universities, where quality of service directly affects student satisfaction, faculty performance, and institutional reputation. However, the extent to which feedback mechanisms translate into improved service delivery often depends on the training and capacity of staff to interpret and act on the information provided. This study examined the moderating effect of training on the relationship between customer feedback and service delivery in public universities in Kenya. Guided by Ishikawa's quality management theory and anchored on a pragmatic research paradigm, the study adopted a cross-sectional design targeting 35 public universities, with a population of 1,011 respondents comprising deans of schools, heads of departments, quality assurance officers, ISO coordinators, and student leaders. A sample size of 287 was determined using Yamane Taro's formula, and respondents were selected through cluster and purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected using structured questionnaires, validated through expert review, and tested for reliability with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.782. Analysis involved descriptive statistics and multiple regression modeling using SPSS version 26. Findings revealed that customer feedback had a significant positive influence on service delivery ($\beta = .073$, $p < 0.05$), and this relationship was significantly strengthened by training, demonstrating that staff training enhances the capacity to utilize feedback for service improvement. The study concludes that while feedback mechanisms are vital, their effectiveness is maximized when universities institutionalize continuous professional development and equip staff with skills to respond to stakeholder concerns effectively. The research recommends that public universities adopt integrated feedback and training systems aligned with international quality assurance standards to ensure streamlined administrative processes, responsive handling of inquiries and complaints, and efficient allocation of institutional resources. These insights contribute to policy and practice by highlighting the dual importance of customer engagement and staff development in achieving sustainable service delivery in higher education institutions.

Key Words: Customers' Feedback, Training, Service Delivery, Public Universities, Kenya.

INTRODUCTION

In today's globally competitive and knowledge-driven era, universities are increasingly expected to deliver high-quality services that meet or exceed the expectations of multiple stakeholders' students, parents, governments, employers, and the wider public (Alomenu, 2023). Public universities, in particular, play a critical role in shaping human capital, fostering innovation, and advancing socio-economic development. However, they face mounting pressure to align their services with global quality benchmarks amid resource constraints, mass enrollment, and evolving pedagogical demands. To address these challenges, higher education institutions worldwide have adopted customer-centered approaches, among which customer feedback systems have become a cornerstone for enhancing accountability, transparency, and service delivery (Smith & Brown, 2023; NBA, 2023).

Globally, customer feedback understood as systematic input provided by service users regarding their experiences, expectations, and satisfaction levels is integral to continuous improvement in both the private and public sectors (Bolton et al., 2018). In higher education, feedback mechanisms enable institutions to gauge the quality of academic programs, support services, and administrative processes, providing actionable data for corrective measures and strategic planning. For example, in the United States and the United Kingdom, student evaluation surveys and real-time feedback apps are institutionalized tools for improving course delivery, library services, and administrative responsiveness (Johnson, 2019). Similarly, universities in India and Malaysia have adopted multi-channel feedback systems, including digital platforms and suggestion forums, to foster participatory decision-making and align services with student needs (Ahmad et al., 2017). These innovations underscore a paradigm shift from provider-centric to customer-centric models in higher education management.

Within Africa, public universities have also begun recognizing the importance of feedback in improving service outcomes, yet structural and systemic barriers persist. In Nigeria, for instance, Okolo et al. (2021) demonstrated that effective feedback mechanisms in the banking sector significantly enhanced customer retention—a principle applicable to higher education. However, studies by Akinyele and Olorunsola (2023) and Katungi and Tumwesigye (2022) found that in Nigerian and Ugandan universities, feedback collection is often sporadic, poorly analyzed, and rarely informs meaningful institutional reforms. The limited integration of feedback into policy and management decisions undermines its potential to enhance service delivery and customer satisfaction.

In the East African context, challenges are amplified by rapid student population growth, limited infrastructure, and inadequate staff training in feedback analysis. Worku (2022), examining quality initiatives in East Africa, highlighted how feedback systems remain underdeveloped, leading to gaps between user expectations and service outcomes. While universities increasingly solicit feedback through student surveys and focus groups, such input is seldom acted upon, eroding trust and perpetuating perceptions of bureaucratic inertia. These trends reflect a broader regional struggle to embed feedback-driven quality improvement in public service institutions.

Kenya's public universities are no exception to these challenges. Despite efforts to implement quality management reforms including; ISO 9001:2015 certification and performance contracting service delivery outcomes remain inconsistent (Wangari et al., 2023). Students frequently report dissatisfaction with administrative processes, examination management, and academic support services due to slow response times, inadequate communication channels, and minimal follow-up on reported issues (Omondi, 2021). Studies by Muhumed (2017) and Muchai (2023) revealed that while ISO adoption improved post-examination services and enhanced documentation practices, it failed to fully address structural inefficiencies in handling student complaints and feedback. Moreover, the lack of robust feedback loops—where input is collected, analyzed, acted upon, and communicated back to stakeholders—continues to undermine stakeholder trust and institutional credibility.

The situation is further complicated by limited staff capacity in managing and utilizing feedback effectively. Training deficits in data interpretation, customer relations, and service improvement methodologies hinder the ability of faculty and administrative staff to translate feedback into actionable improvements (Mogaka, 2023). Consequently, even where feedback is collected, its impact on service delivery remains muted due to inadequate skills, fragmented processes, and weak institutional support. This underscores the need to explore how training can moderate the relationship between customer feedback and service delivery in public universities, potentially unlocking the transformative potential of feedback systems.

Customer feedback refers to the information provided by clients—in this context, students and other university stakeholders—about their experiences with services and products offered by an institution (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). Feedback can take many forms, including satisfaction surveys, suggestion boxes, online reviews, complaint logs, and focus group discussions. Within higher education, it encompasses assessments of teaching quality, administrative efficiency, facilities, and support services.

Scholars such as Bolton et al. (2018) argue that customer feedback is both a diagnostic and developmental tool: it identifies gaps in current services and guides future innovations. In universities, structured feedback mechanisms enable administrators to monitor academic delivery, evaluate support services, and respond proactively to student concerns. Globally, institutions that systematically integrate feedback into decision-making processes have achieved notable improvements in service reliability, responsiveness, and student satisfaction (Johnson, 2019). Conversely, weak feedback systems result in missed opportunities for reform, eroded trust, and declining institutional reputation.

In the Kenyan context, studies highlight persistent weaknesses in feedback management, including ad hoc collection methods, lack of transparency in handling complaints, and limited follow-up actions (Wangari et al., 2023). Addressing these gaps requires not only robust feedback frameworks but also enhanced staff competencies to analyze and act on feedback data—an area where training plays a critical role.

Training, defined as the systematic process of developing knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for effective job performance (Armstrong & Taylor, 2017), serves as a vital enabler of organizational change and service improvement. Within higher education, training equips staff with competencies in customer service, feedback analysis, conflict resolution, and process improvement.

As a moderating variable, training influences the strength and direction of the relationship between customer feedback and service delivery. When university staff are adequately trained, they are better positioned to interpret feedback accurately, prioritize issues, and implement corrective actions effectively. Conversely, insufficient training weakens the impact of feedback, as staff may lack the skills to translate insights into meaningful service enhancements.

Global evidence supports this moderating role: universities in the UK and Australia, where staff development programs are integral to quality assurance frameworks, have reported higher levels of service responsiveness and student satisfaction (Smith & Brown, 2023). In Kenya, however, training initiatives are often irregular, resource-constrained, and poorly aligned with institutional feedback systems (Maina, 2016). This gap highlights the need for empirical investigation into how training can strengthen the feedback–service delivery nexus in public universities.

Service delivery in higher education encompasses academic and administrative functions that collectively define the student experience. It includes curriculum delivery, examination management, registration processes, library services, student counseling, and infrastructural support. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry's (1988) SERVQUAL model identifies key dimensions of service quality—reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles—that remain relevant in assessing university performance.

High-quality service delivery is critical for public universities in Kenya, which face increasing competition from private institutions and international universities offering online programs. Meeting student expectations not only enhances institutional reputation but also contributes to retention, graduation rates, and employability outcomes. However, persistent service delivery gaps—manifested in delayed administrative processes, inadequate communication, and limited responsiveness—continue to undermine the public perception of these institutions (Gatimbu, 2021).

Statement of the Problem

Globally, customer feedback is recognized as a powerful driver of service improvement in higher education, yet its potential remains underexploited in many developing countries. In Kenya, despite widespread adoption of ISO certification and performance contracting in public universities, service delivery challenges persist, including slow response to student complaints, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and inconsistent academic support services (Wangari et al., 2023). While feedback systems exist, they are often poorly structured, underutilized, and disconnected from decision-making processes.

A critical barrier to leveraging feedback effectively is inadequate staff training. Without the skills to analyze, interpret, and act on feedback, university personnel struggle to close the feedback loop—collecting data but failing to translate it into tangible service improvements (Mogaka, 2023). Empirical research exploring the moderating effect of training on the feedback–service delivery relationship in Kenyan public universities is scarce. Existing studies focus largely on quality management frameworks in manufacturing or healthcare, leaving a gap in higher education contexts.

This study addresses this gap by investigating whether and how training enhances the impact of customer feedback on service delivery outcomes in Kenyan public universities. By focusing on training as a moderating variable, the study seeks to uncover actionable strategies for building institutional capacity to respond to stakeholder needs and improve overall service quality.

Objective of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the moderating effect of training on the relationship between customer feedback and service delivery in public universities in Kenya. Specifically, it seeks to assess whether enhanced training strengthens the ability of institutions to translate feedback into improved academic and administrative services.

RELATED LITERATURE

Theoretical Review

The Ishikawa Theory, developed by Kaoru Ishikawa in the 1960s, provides a foundational framework for understanding how organizations can systematically enhance service quality through structured problem identification and resolution (Bolton et al., 2018). Initially designed for quality control in manufacturing, Ishikawa's principles have been widely adapted to service contexts, including higher education institutions, where customer feedback serves as a critical driver for continuous improvement (Johnson, 2019). The theory posits that quality is built into processes rather than inspected at the end, emphasizing that all organizational members—from leadership to frontline staff—must contribute to quality enhancement (Nasr et al., 2014).

A central component of Ishikawa's philosophy is the recognition of both internal and external customers as vital to organizational performance. In public universities, students function as external customers whose feedback provides critical insights into academic and administrative service quality (Okolo et al., 2021). This feedback guides institutions in identifying gaps in service delivery, designing appropriate interventions, and fostering transparency and accountability. Studies in Nigeria and Uganda, for example, demonstrate how structured feedback mechanisms enhance responsiveness and improve institutional performance, although challenges in generalizability and representativeness remain (Akinyele & Olorunsola, 2023; Katungi & Tumwesigye, 2022). These findings underscore the necessity of robust feedback systems in achieving improved service outcomes in higher education.

Equally important is the role of training as a moderating factor in translating feedback into actionable improvements. Ishikawa emphasized that empowering employees through training equips them to analyze customer input, identify root causes of service problems, and implement targeted solutions effectively (Momaya et al., 2021). In the context of public universities, training ensures that academic and administrative staff possess the competencies to process student feedback constructively, thereby maximizing its potential to enhance service delivery. Without sufficient training, feedback systems risk becoming symbolic rather than transformative, failing to close the gap between student expectations and actual service outcomes.

The Fishbone Diagram, also known as the Cause-and-Effect Diagram, is among Ishikawa's most influential tools. It illustrates how multiple factors—such as people, methods, materials, environment, and measurement systems—collectively contribute to service delivery challenges (Johnson, 2019). For public universities, this approach helps trace systemic issues such as inadequate staff training, communication breakdowns, or insufficient infrastructure that undermine responsiveness to student feedback. By focusing on root causes rather than symptoms, the Fishbone framework enables institutions to implement sustainable improvements rather than short-term fixes.

Customers' Feedback and service delivery

Bolton, et al., (2018), asserts that customer feedback is the data, opinions, concerns, and suggestions that members of a community offers regarding their interactions with the business, goods, or services. This input directs enhancements to the consumer experience and has the capacity to spur constructive change in any industry.

Johnson (2019) explore the relationship between student's feedback and service delivery in public colleges was examined, focusing on service quality and student satisfaction among Public Colleges in California. A mixed-methods approach was used to explore how student feedback affects teaching, administrative services, and overall institutional performance. The research introduced the "Student Feedback and Service Delivery Framework" (SFSD-F) to assess the impact of feedback on service outcomes. A quantitative survey of 400 students explored their satisfaction with academic and administrative services. The results demonstrated that student feedback was positively correlated to service improvements, particularly when the feedback was timely and constructive. Formal feedback channels, like course evaluations, were found to have a stronger impact on service delivery than informal methods. Nonetheless, the study did not account for institutional differences, such as college size, resource availability, or geographic location, which might influence how feedback is collected, processed, and applied. Further research could explore how these factors moderate the relationship between feedback and service outcomes.

Nasr et al., (2014) examined the effect of positive customer feedback on the welfare of frontline staff, businesses, and society through the lens of transformational service research (TSR) in the USA. This study, addressing the understudied topic of positive feedback, employed a multidisciplinary approach to develop the "Positive Feedback Model" (PFM). It contrasted perceptions of positive customer feedback between managers and front-line workers, utilizing two exploratory qualitative studies. The findings revealed that positive customer feedback, often directed at front-line staff, is a neglected yet powerful area of service research capable of enhancing service success. The PFM outlines various formats, distribution methods, and timings for delivering positive feedback, highlighting its broad impacts on the health of service entities. The current study adopted a cross-sectional design, utilizing correlation analysis to establish relationships between variables, and administered questionnaires to a sample of 287 determined using the Yamane Taro formula, contrasting with the previous study's use of structured interviews.

Okolo et al., (2021) investigated the impact of customer feedback on banking deposits in South-Eastern Nigeria, focusing on customers of Access Bank, UBA, and First Bank in Enugu, Awka, and Owerri. The study utilized a survey methodology, calculating a sample size of 384 using Freud and William's formula, with a reliability score of 0.879 determined through Cronbach's alpha. A questionnaire was administered to these clients, with 300 responses collected and analyzed using SPSS version 22 via simple linear regression. Findings revealed that customer feedback significantly enhances customer retention in banks, positioning it as an effective service marketing strategy. The study recommended that the banks continually improve their processes for gathering and implementing customer feedback to enhance client engagement and service quality. The current study was conducted in Kenya, targeting a population of 1011, from which a sample of 287 was drawn using the Yamane Taro formula, employing multistage sampling and validated questionnaires, in contrast to the previous Nigerian study focused on banking.

Akinyele and Olorunsola (2023), explores how customer feedback, primarily from students, impacts service quality and institutional performance at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. It used a case study approach to investigate customer feedback. The study employs descriptive statistics to analyze data collected from student surveys. The results suggest that effective feedback systems lead to improved administrative services and better student satisfaction. However, while the case study offers detailed insights, its findings may not be generalizable to other institutions in Nigeria or beyond such as Kenya.

Katungi and Tumwesigye (2022), explored the effectiveness of customer feedback mechanisms in Makerere University, Uganda, and their contribution to improved service delivery. A cross-sectional approach was used, with quantitative data collected through questionnaires administered to students at the university. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to analyze the data. The findings highlight the significant role of student feedback in improving teaching methods, course offerings, and administrative services. Conversely, the study does not mention how representative the sample is of the broader student population, which could limit the generalizability of the results. Additionally, it lacks qualitative data, which could provide deeper insights into student perceptions and experiences with the feedback system an endeavor the current study is seeking to pursue.

Momaya et al., (2021) examined the role of customer feedback systems in Kenyan businesses, highlighting the challenges companies face in attracting and retaining clients. The study emphasized that online feedback collection enables businesses to evaluate and enhance their service and product offerings, allowing for better understanding of customer needs. This system helps identify both dissatisfied and satisfied customers, showcasing its evolution from pre-technology methods to its current advantages. The current study focused on public universities in Kenya, utilizing a cross-sectional research design, the study collecting data through questionnaires, contrasting with the previous research's reliance on online feedback systems. Analysis was conducted using SPSS version 26 to provide both descriptive and inferential statistics.

Summary of Literature Review and Research Gap

Research on customer feedback and service delivery demonstrates its critical role in enhancing organizational performance across sectors. Bolton et al. (2018) define customer feedback as opinions and suggestions that guide service improvements, a concept widely applied in higher education. Johnson (2019) found that structured student feedback in Californian colleges improved teaching and administrative services but overlooked institutional variations, while Nasr et al. (2014) highlighted positive feedback's psychological and organizational benefits for frontline staff in the U.S., without examining moderating factors such as training. African studies, including Okolo et al. (2021) on Nigerian banks and Akinyele and Olorunsola (2023) on Nigeria's University of Ibadan, showed that feedback systems improve retention and satisfaction but are limited in generalizability and sector focus. Similarly, Katungi and Tumwesigye (2022) at Uganda's Makerere University and Momaya et al. (2021) in Kenyan businesses confirmed feedback's role in improving services but lacked exploration of feedback in public universities and how training may enhance its effectiveness.

These studies reveal key gaps: most are sector-specific to banking or business and rarely address public universities in Sub-Saharan Africa; few explore training as a moderating factor that could strengthen the link between customer feedback and service delivery; and many rely on case studies or qualitative approaches, limiting generalization. This study addresses these gaps by focusing on Kenyan public universities, using a quantitative approach to examine how training influences the effectiveness of feedback systems in improving academic and administrative service delivery. This contribution is crucial given Kenya's growing higher education sector and the need for responsive, high-quality service standards.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was grounded in the positivist research philosophy, which emphasizes objective observation and the quantification of relationships among variables. This approach enabled the collection of empirical data, systematic statistical analysis, and derivation of generalizable conclusions across public universities in Kenya. The research targeted 35 public universities, covering a population of 1,011 participants drawn from administrative and academic units. These included 247 Deans of Schools, 659 Heads of Departments, 35 Quality Assurance Officers, 35 ISO Coordinators, and 35 Student Presidents. Using Yamane's formula for finite populations with a 95% confidence level, a sample size of 287 respondents was determined as adequate for statistical reliability. To enhance representativeness, cluster sampling was first used to classify universities geographically, after which one university was randomly selected from each cluster. Within the selected universities, purposive sampling identified key informants due to their direct involvement in service delivery and feedback mechanisms.

Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires, which underwent pilot testing to ensure validity and reliability (Cronbach's alpha values above 0.7 for all constructs). Responses were coded and analyzed using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and frequencies) summarized participant perceptions, while Pearson correlation assessed inter-variable associations. Multiple linear regression models were employed to test hypothesized relationships, with model fitness evaluated using R-squared values, F-statistics, and confidence intervals for regression coefficients. Effect sizes (standardized beta values) were reported to aid interpretation of practical significance.

While the study centered on customer involvement and training, potential confounding influences such as organizational culture and leadership styles are acknowledged as additional factors that may shape service

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delivery outcomes. Methodologically, the reliance on self-reported data introduces potential response bias, and institutional variations across the 35 universities may limit direct comparability. These limitations, however, provide avenues for further research, such as multi-level modeling or qualitative follow-up studies to capture contextual dynamics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Customers' Feedback, Training and Service Delivery

The study adopted descriptive and inferential statistics to test the moderating effect of training on the relationship between customers' feedback and service delivery. The hypothesis was therefore tested using inferential statistics specifically regression analysis.

Customers' Feedback Descriptive Statistics

The results on customers' feedback which were presented in five points Likert scale where 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Undecided, 2 = Disagree and 1 = Strongly Disagree. This was presented in Table 1 using frequencies, mean and standard deviations.

Table 1: Customers' Feedback

Statement	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean	Std. Dev.
Time feedback for quality service to stakeholders	132(49.8%)	91(34.3%)	27(10.2%)	14(5.3%)	1(0.4%)	4.2792	.87762
Feedback management system improves services.	117(44.2%)	112(42.3%)	22(8.3%)	13(4.9%)	1(0.4%)	4.2491	.83385
Effective performance appraisal system	96(36.2%)	122(46.0%)	37(14.0%)	9(3.4%)	1(0.4%)	4.1434	.80846
Service ratings help management improve services.	112(42.3%)	107(40.4%)	31(11.7%)	13(4.9%)	2(0.8%)	4.1849	.87892
Positive feedback encourages better service and promotions.	128(48.3%)	100(37.7%)	27(10.2%)	10(3.8%)	0(0.0%)	4.3057	.80303
Feedback leads to fast	105(39.6%)	122(46.0%)	27(10.2%)	7(2.6%)	4(1.5%)	4.1962	.83891

response and timely review.							
Feedback makes increase inclusivity of stakeholders	151(57.0%)	94(35.5%)	16(6.0%)	4(1.5%)	0(0.0%)	4.4792	.68017
Average						4.2625	.63060

The descriptive analysis of the customer feedback variable indicates that feedback mechanisms are perceived as a vital component of quality service delivery in public universities in Kenya. The overall average mean score was 4.2625 with a relatively low standard deviation of 0.63060, suggesting strong and consistent agreement among respondents on the importance and effectiveness of feedback in enhancing service delivery. These findings underscore that public universities not only receive feedback but also increasingly rely on it as a tool for continuous improvement.

Among the individual items, the statement “Feedback makes increase inclusivity of stakeholders” received the highest mean score of 4.4792, with 57.0% of respondents strongly agreeing and 35.5% agreeing. This reflects a strong consensus that feedback processes promote inclusiveness and allow stakeholders—especially students and academic staff—to feel heard and involved in shaping service standards. Similarly, “Positive feedback encourages better service and promotions” also scored highly with a mean of 4.3057, showing that recognition through feedback can motivate staff to improve their service performance and professional conduct.

The statement “Time feedback for quality service to stakeholders” recorded a mean of 4.2792, suggesting that prompt and timely responses to feedback are integral to maintaining stakeholder satisfaction. This finding implies that universities have put in place mechanisms for quick action based on the feedback received. Additionally, “Feedback management system improves services” achieved a mean of 4.2491, with 86.5% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing, indicating that structured systems for collecting and utilizing feedback contribute significantly to service quality.

The results on the question “Service ratings help management improve services” and “Feedback leads to fast response and timely review” had mean scores of 4.1849 and 4.1962, respectively. These findings highlight the role of structured evaluation—such as rating systems—in enabling leadership to identify areas for improvement and take responsive action. Likewise, the presence of an “Effective performance appraisal system” (mean = 4.1434) suggests that feedback is not only externally gathered from stakeholders but also internally operationalized through structured staff assessment mechanisms.

While the overall sentiment is positive, a small percentage of respondents indicated neutrality or disagreement, as seen in the undecided responses (ranging from 6% to 14%) and minor disagreement (ranging from 0.4% to 5.3%) across some items. These minor variations could point to inconsistencies in feedback implementation across different departments or institutions.

The results reveal that customer feedback mechanisms are well-established and highly valued in public universities. Respondents agree that timely, structured, and inclusive feedback processes lead to improved service delivery, staff motivation, and institutional responsiveness. These findings reinforce the importance of feedback as a quality management practice and suggest that its impact on service delivery could be significantly enhanced when moderated by effective training.

Training

Analysis of training as the moderating variable, measured on a five-point Likert scale, revealed generally positive perceptions regarding training practices in public universities. The five-point Likert scale; 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 overall mean score was 4.1522 with a standard deviation of 0.90121, signifying that most respondents agreed that structured training initiatives are in place and are beneficial, though some variability exists across institutions. Among the items assessed, the statement “Workshops assist in skill development of stakeholders” received the highest mean rating of 4.2981, with over 86% of respondents expressing agreement or strong agreement. This underscores the critical role workshops play in enhancing competencies among staff and other stakeholders. Similarly, “Career development gives students new skills” achieved a mean of 4.0868, highlighting recognition of the benefits of training not only to employees but also to students, thereby supporting institutional growth. The statement “On-the-job training is done in the university” recorded a mean of 4.0717, confirming active efforts by universities to promote workplace learning. However, higher standard deviations, particularly for career development (1.08538), suggest variations in how training is delivered, potentially attributable to disparities in resources, departmental focus, or program implementation levels. These findings reaffirm the significance of training as a key enhancer of other quality management initiatives, enabling stakeholders to utilize feedback effectively and improve service delivery outcomes.

Service delivery

The service delivery items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale, where 5 denoted Strongly Agree, 4 Agree, 3 Undecided, 2 Disagree, and 1 Strongly Disagree. The findings are summarized in Table 3, presented in terms of frequencies, mean scores, and standard deviations.

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

Results on service delivery, also measured on a five-point Likert scale, indicated highly favorable perceptions, with an overall average mean of 4.2626 and a low standard deviation of 0.73082, signifying strong consensus among respondents. The statement “Efficiency is promoted in the university” achieved the highest mean of 4.6113, with nearly universal agreement, suggesting that operational efficiency is widely recognized as a priority across institutions. Closely following was “Efficiency has improved student satisfaction” (mean = 4.4000), illustrating that enhanced efficiency translates into better student experiences. Additionally, items focusing on responsiveness, such as “Timely response to stakeholders’ needs improves services” (mean = 4.1321) and “Fast responses to concerns improve service delivery” (mean = 4.0415), emphasize the importance of prompt communication in service quality. The slightly lower score for “Performance in the university is improving” (mean = 4.1283) may point to ongoing efforts that are yet to achieve uniform results across institutions. Overall, the findings demonstrate robust service delivery outcomes, bolstered by effective training and customer feedback mechanisms that together foster institutional improvement.

Inferential Statistical Results

The Pearson Correlation Analysis presented in Table 4 provides valuable insights into the relationships between Customer Feedback (CF) and Service Delivery (SD) in public universities in Kenya.

Table 4: Correlation between Customers’ Feedback and Service Delivery

		CF	SD
CF	Pearson Correlation	1	.670**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	265	265
SD	Pearson Correlation	.670**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	265	265

Transformative Leadership (TL) also demonstrated a high correlation with Service Delivery ($r = 0.728$, $p < 0.01$), emphasizing the crucial role leadership plays in shaping service standards and outcomes. Leaders who inspire, motivate, and guide their teams with a clear vision contribute significantly to service quality improvements.

H_0: There is no statistically significant moderating effect of training on the relationship between customers’ feedback and service delivery in public universities in Kenya

This hypothesis examined whether training strengthens or weakens the influence of customer feedback on service delivery outcomes.

Table 5: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.670[a]	.449	.447	.54349
2	.737[b]	.543	.540	.49570
a. Predictors: (Constant), CF				
b. Predictors: (Constant), CF, CF_T				

The first model, which included only customer feedback (CF) as a predictor, yielded an R^2 of 0.449, indicating that feedback alone explained 44.9% of the variance in service delivery. Adding the interaction term between customer feedback and training (CF_T) in Model 2 increased the R^2 to 0.543, suggesting a 9.4% improvement in explanatory power. This gain demonstrates the significant moderating effect of training. The standard error decreased from 0.54349 to 0.49570, reflecting improved predictive accuracy.

Table 6: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	63.314	1	63.314	214.347	.000[b]
	Residual	77.686	263	.295		
	Total	141.000	264			
2	Regression	76.622	2	38.311	155.913	.000[c]
	Residual	64.378	262	.246		
	Total	141.000	264			
a. Dependent Variable: SD						
b. Predictors: (Constant), CF						
c. Predictors: (Constant), CF, CF_T						

ANOVA results confirmed statistical significance for both models ($p < 0.001$). The increase in regression sum of squares from 63.314 to 76.622 and corresponding reduction in residual sum of squares illustrates the incremental explanatory value of incorporating training as a moderator.

Table 7: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.952	.229		4.167	.000

	CF	.777	.053	.670	14.641	.000
2	(Constant)	1.859	.242		7.677	.000
	CF	.256	.086	.221	2.987	.003
	CF_T	.073	.010	.544	7.359	.000
a. Dependent Variable: SD						

In Model 1, customer feedback strongly predicted service delivery ($\beta = 0.777$, $p < 0.001$). After introducing training (Model 2), the direct effect of customer feedback declined to $\beta = 0.256$ ($p = 0.003$), indicating partial moderation. The interaction term (CF_T) was highly significant ($\beta = 0.073$, $p < 0.001$; 95% CI [0.053, 0.093]), confirming that training amplifies the influence of customer feedback on service delivery.

The findings reject the null hypothesis (H_0), demonstrating that training significantly moderates the relationship between customer feedback and service delivery. Public universities that combine structured feedback systems with training programs experience superior service outcomes compared to those relying on feedback alone. This result is consistent with Bolton et al. (2018) and Johnson (2019), who emphasize that customer feedback mechanisms yield optimal results when institutions equip staff with competencies to analyze and act upon feedback.

However, alternative explanations warrant consideration. Factors such as organizational culture or leadership style (not explicitly measured in this study) could also influence how feedback is processed and acted upon, potentially confounding the observed moderation effect. Additionally, variation in institutional resources among the 35 universities may affect the scalability of training interventions.

Two key limitations should be acknowledged. First, the reliance on self-reported data introduces potential bias, as respondents may overstate the effectiveness of feedback or training initiatives. Second, institutional heterogeneity—differences in size, funding, and governance structures—may limit generalizability of findings to all Kenyan public universities. Future studies could address these limitations by adopting multi-level modeling or incorporating qualitative insights to contextualize the statistical results.

The study provides robust evidence that training serves as a critical moderator in the feedback–service delivery nexus. By investing in targeted capacity-building programs, universities can transform raw feedback into actionable improvements, enhancing responsiveness and transparency. This insight underscores the strategic value of integrating feedback systems with ongoing staff training to achieve sustainable service excellence in higher education institutions.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Customer feedback mechanisms were found to be effective in improving service quality. The study found that elements such as timely responses, inclusive participation, and actionable reporting contributed positively to service delivery. The analysis confirmed that training significantly moderates the relationship between customer feedback and service delivery. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Conclusions

The study sought to examine the moderating effect of training on the relationship between customer feedback and service delivery in public universities in Kenya. Findings revealed that customer feedback plays a critical role in enhancing service delivery by enabling institutions to identify gaps, understand stakeholder needs, and implement corrective measures. However, the impact of feedback was found to be significantly amplified when training was introduced as a moderating factor. Staff members who had undergone training demonstrated greater ability to analyze and interpret feedback, translate insights into actionable improvements, and align service provision with user expectations. This underscores that feedback alone, while valuable, is insufficient without the requisite staff competencies to manage and operationalize it effectively. Consequently, the study concludes that structured training programs are essential for strengthening participatory approaches and fostering accountability and transparency in university service delivery systems.

Recommendations

To maximize the value of customer feedback in public universities, institutions should establish comprehensive feedback management frameworks that integrate both technological and human resource elements. Modern digital tools, such as mobile feedback applications, interactive kiosks, and web-based surveys, should be adopted to facilitate timely and efficient data collection. Equally important is the institutionalization of continuous training programs aimed at equipping staff with skills in feedback analysis, interpretation, and utilization for decision-making. These programs should be embedded within broader quality assurance frameworks to ensure that insights from feedback are systematically incorporated into policy reviews and operational strategies. By coupling robust feedback systems with sustained capacity-building efforts, universities can cultivate a culture of responsiveness and service excellence, thereby improving stakeholder satisfaction and institutional performance.

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