



The Impact of Patronage Dynamics in Government Employment on Service Delivery in Wajir County, Kenya

Ahmed, Guhad Omar

Mount Kenya University, Kenya

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Abstract

Government performance and service delivery in the public sector is largely dependent on the quality of its service providers defined by the individuals employed in different departments of the sector. Nevertheless, the process through which governments recruit and select public employees is often marred by employment dynamics affecting the labor market as a whole. This paper addresses the impact of patronage dynamics in government employment on service delivery in Wajir County Kenya. Adopting the attraction selection attrition theory, the author explores how patronage dynamics affect the hiring process in government employment assessing the consequences of the same in-service delivery. Through descriptive research design, the study used questionnaires and interviews to collect data from 169 respondents selected by stratified sampling technique. Descriptive statistics is used in the analysis of collected data which is further presented in tables. The findings of the study indicated that patronage dynamics significantly undermine both employment and service delivery in Wajir County, hence diminishing job opportunities for qualified individuals, further eroding public trust and social cohesion. The study recommends implementation of transparent and merit-based recruitment and promotion practices across public institutions which is paramount to mitigating the influence of patronage on access to employment opportunities in government. This will eventually enhance the quality of service delivery.

Introduction

The recruitment and selection of employees in a governments' public sector should be done based on objective selection criteria (Mohammad, 2020). This is where applicants for a specific advertised job present academic and professional credentials for analysis and further undergo an interview process before they are determined for the job. However, with the evolving work environment and employment dynamics, most workers in the public sector get hired through unprofessional influence, a procedure that does not guarantee their work tenure, affecting service delivery. While measuring employment dynamics is crucial for understanding the labour market's overall health, and for policymakers, employers, and workers to make informed decisions about job creation, workforce development, and career paths, the patronage system has significantly influenced most government employment. In this, workers are hired into government positions on a *reciprocal relationship between a patron and a client that can be described through loyalty, financial aid, and ethnic association, among other privileges*. In the case of partisan loyalty in government employment, for instance, employment in



public positions is often done to reward specific ethnic regions or groups for political support (Colonnelli et al., 2019).

Kazmi (2018) observes that service delivery involves the aspects of a business that govern how various processes interact between customers and service providers, resulting in either the creation or loss of value for the customer. Service, being intangible, cannot be stored or owned and encompasses exchanges of information, knowledge, and other assets (Jackson, 2019). Pujari et al. (2016) emphasise the importance of providing delivery services any time and anywhere to effectively distribute goods and services to customers. This highlights how a robust service delivery approach enhances product delivery and adds customer value.

This paper explores patronage dynamics as an intersection between two significant areas namely; the politicisation of public bureaucracy and clientelism. While this connection to broader theories enhances our understanding of patronage, it can also lead to confusion regarding its nature within public service. Scholars have extensively analysed the pivotal role of government positions in clientelistic systems. According to this perspective, patronage hinders development by creating a mismatch between job requirements and the skills of the appointed individuals, resulting in inefficiencies and reduced effectiveness within public institutions. Consequently, the focus on political connections over competence undermines the quality of public services and hampers overall development efforts.

Politicisation of the Public Bureaucracy

Patronage which involves appointing individuals to public positions based on their political loyalty, personal connections, or clan affiliations rather than their qualifications and merit, primarily examines bureaucratic procedures in industrialised democracies. This system of favoritism can lead to inefficiencies and reduced effectiveness within public institutions, as positions are filled by individuals who may lack the necessary skills and expertise for their roles. It focuses on the perceived increase in political influence over the appointment and management of public servants in government positions. Many scholars suggest that the merit-based system is gradually eroding, with political involvement becoming more prevalent. Some discussions suggest that patronage involves favouritism in job appointments, often called "jobs for the boys and girls." However, in our study, we adopt a typology based on the work of Panizza et al. (2017), which emphasises that while providing employment to political supporters is significant, presidents, prime ministers, and their ministers prioritise maintaining control over government and formulating effective policies.

In the public sector, patronage is often associated with a broader literature known as clientelism (Hicken, 2011) or sometimes neopatrimonialism (Erdmann & Engel, 2007). Both concepts highlight the significance of personal rule in governance and are considered forms of legitimate domination within Weberian terms. Although "clientelism" and "patronage" are frequently used interchangeably, they should be distinguished as related but distinct phenomena. While political patronage primarily involves the influence of political parties or executives in appointing public servants, clientelism focuses on the symbiotic relationships between individuals in various governance roles. The study of patronage typically begins with appointing public servants as a reward for loyalty to specific politicians or parties, whereas clientelism centres on the connections between political leaders and their constituents.

In patronage systems, individuals are granted positions and often elevated to prestigious roles within the government. Conversely, in clientelistic models, supporting the patron typically results in more economic benefits, such as lower-level government positions or rewards for the local community.



Therefore, patronage is often associated with elite politics, whereas clientelism is more aligned with mass politics.

The main objective of patronage is to exercise control over the government, particularly the executive branch. Conversely, clientelism aims to uphold the patron's political standing by securing clients' votes in exchange for rewards. In most clientelistic arrangements, patrons prioritise winning elections over government control. The rewards often include "pork barrel" projects or economic benefits for individuals or regions. While distributive politics are widespread in many political systems, clientelistic practices are commonly observed in Latin America, Africa, and Southern Europe. Clientelism tends to create harmful feedback loops, as Bianchi et al. (2010) analysed. Moreover, clientelistic politics may involve appointing personnel in the public sector, especially through mass patronage in local communities controlled by individuals.

Public employment can reward individuals who offer political support to their patrons. These public positions typically occupy lower levels within the government. However, our paper focuses on patronage jobs, which are often found at the highest echelons of government. While some high-level positions may be obtained through personal connections, they are more commonly linked to party affiliation or perceived professional capabilities to carry out significant tasks in the public sector.

Considering the above, it is crucial to distinguish between appointments made for patronage and clientelistic purposes. This differentiation is often overlooked in existing literature but is vital for understanding the functioning of political patronage. Patronage appointments, which we are interested in, are those made by political leaders to bolster their administrations or advance their careers as policy-makers within the government. These appointments predominantly occur at senior levels of government, with appointees typically assuming administrative roles.

Regarding appointments in the public sector, Panizzal et al. (2018) observe that appointments made for clientelistic reasons tend to be more widespread and are driven more by individual ambition than by a desire for effective governance. This implies that in selecting appointees for government positions, the patron may not hold an executive position but instead uses legislative or local authority to create public sector jobs. Many of these positions are low-level and lack relevance for public policy. While significant for the participants involved, these clientelistic arrangements are often detrimental to effective governance, representing a misuse of appointments.

Obongo (2013) states that patronage appointments harm key public service institutions. These include loyalty to the ruling government without maintaining institutional integrity and stakeholder trust. The study argues that the lacklustre performance of public sector reforms in Kenya is not due to the failure of implemented reforms but the hindrance of initiatives by vested political interests. Obongo (2013), therefore, emphasises the need for fundamental political change or engaging with the fear of reform among ruling elites to effectively implement reforms. It suggests that successful reforms require altering bureaucratic incentives to transform power dynamics within the bureaucracy. This paper provides valuable insights into the challenges posed by clan dynamics in employment and service delivery, particularly concerning patronage and political interests. The study highlights the importance of addressing entrenched power structures and vested interests to achieve meaningful reform. Unlike Obongo's study, this paper particularly focuses on the impact of patronage clan dynamics on employment and service delivery in Wajir County, Kenya. It seeks to understand how clan affiliations influence hiring practices and service provision, intending to provide context-specific recommendations to address these challenges. While Obongo's study offers a broader analysis of political patronage and reform in Kenya, the current study narrows its scope to examine the specific



dynamics of clan-based favouritism and its implications for public sector performance in Wajir County.

In another study, Peters and Pierre (2004) noted a common observation regarding the public sector: It has become more influenced by politics. While the exact meaning of this term is often left unspecified, it generally suggests that public service members now need to pay more attention to political matters than in the past. Furthermore, it seems that politicians holding elective offices are dedicating increased time and effort to ensuring that public service members align with their own partisan and policy preferences.

Halligan (2021) observes that Politicization encompasses various mechanisms through which political actors seek to influence public administration. This includes appointing individuals to government positions based on political considerations (patronage) and employing subtler methods to shape the behaviour of public servants. For instance, governments may establish parallel structures where political officials oversee career civil servants and seek to exert control over them. Additionally, performance management systems may impose political constraints on civil servants' actions, with good performance aligned with government objectives.

On the other hand, Peters (2013) identifies various forms of politicisation, with direct politicisation being a central focus of this paper. Direct patronage involves appointing public servants based on political considerations rather than professional qualifications. This practice is observed in countries like Italy, Mexico, Thailand, and several African nations (Peters & Bianchi, 2020). However, mass patronage aimed at creating jobs for electoral purposes aligns more with clientelism than the type of patronage discussed in this study. Another form is professional politicisation, where individuals appointed to public positions are political and professional. For instance, in Germany, two teams of senior civil servants are affiliated with a political party. This setup aims to balance professionalism and political commitment. Italy also experiences this patronage, particularly in staff support positions within governmental administrations. Redundant politicisation, the third version, results from overlapping organisational structures monitoring each other. This pattern was prominent in communist countries and could also be seen in prefectural systems of Napoleonic regimes. Additionally, ministerial cabinets serve as political advisory and enforcement bodies in countries like France, Belgium, and the European Union, allowing ministers to appoint individuals loyal to them, often mirroring existing expertise within the ministry (Godmer, 2017).

Godmer (2017) also observes that dual politicisation involves the legislative and executive branches participating in politicisation. This model often includes legislative approval of executive appointments and many political appointments within the legislature. This practice aims to balance the analytic capacity within the executive branch. The United States exemplifies this form of patronage, where institutional and partisan politics intersect. Anticipatory Politicization is a subtler form of politicisation where public servants anticipating a change in government retire or seek alternative employment. This phenomenon reflects a form of reverse patronage observed in countries like Denmark, which is known for its resistance to patronage and politicisation.

Social Politicization extends beyond political parties and executives influencing public servant appointments. Various interest groups also play a role in influencing these appointments, seeking to have their members appointed to government positions. This patronage is particularly significant when political parties and interest groups have close connections, such as labour unions and social democratic parties, often as a reward for supporting specific candidates in elections.



D'Arcy and Cornell (2016) conducted a study assessing the impact of decentralisation on rent-seeking and patronage in Kenya, particularly focusing on the devolution of powers to county governments. They argued that while decentralisation was expected to reduce these practices, it shifted them to the local level, perpetuating ethnic patronage politics. The study highlighted that despite the decentralisation efforts, the "our turn to eat" mentality persisted, leading to marginalised ethnic minorities within some counties. This study informed the current research by providing insights into the persistence of clan dynamics, particularly in the context of decentralised governance in Kenya. It emphasised the significance of understanding how decentralisation influences patronage networks and ethnic politics at the local level. The findings of D'Arcy and Cornell (2016) underscored the importance of considering the broader socio-political context when examining clan dynamics in employment and service delivery. The current study differs from D'Arcy and Cornell's research in its focus on clan dynamics and their impact on employment and service delivery in Wajir County, Kenya. While D'Arcy and Cornell's study provided a broader analysis of decentralisation and patronage politics in Kenya, the current study narrows its scope to examine the specific implications of clan dynamics within the context of a single county.

Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) Theory

Schneider et al. (1995) suggest that when an organisation successfully recruits and hires individuals with the appropriate knowledge, abilities, and skills in sufficient numbers, it gains a significant advantage in dealing with challenges and opportunities in its environment compared to competitors who struggle to build and maintain their workforce. Edwards (1994) agrees that successful strategies begin with acquiring, retaining, and developing resources, including people, to meet minimum standards. Vroom (1966) emphasises that recruitment involves seeking qualified individuals to fill existing or newly established positions. He also highlights the importance of the recruitment process, stating, "The process cannot begin until the organisation determines the type and quantity of employees needed." Furthermore, according to the Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) theory (Schneider et al., 1995), effective selection systems should result in a strong person-organization fit, which can increase employee loyalty to the organisation. Additionally, employee awareness of thorough hiring practices and diligence during recruitment may improve perceptions of personal competence. Research indicates that perceived personal competence is closely linked to commitment (Edwards, 1994), suggesting that the recruitment process can positively impact employee dedication.

Method

The study employed a descriptive research design to provide generalisable results from a representative sample to a larger target population (Omair, 2015). The research design also facilitated data collection and reporting of numerical results to parameters in the study. The research was conducted in Wajir County. This is because the study focused on residents and government employees who live and work in the area. According to Ngechu (2004), they form the target audience by providing necessary information. The target population constituted 300 participants from Wajir, and a sample of 169 respondents was obtained using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formulae.

$$S = \frac{X^2 NP(1-P)}{d^2(N-1) + X^2 P(1-p)}$$

S= Required sample size

X²= the table value of chi-square for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level (4.500)

N= The Population size

P= The population proportion (assumed to be .50 since this would provide the maximum sample size)



D= the degree of accuracy expressed as a proportion (.05)

This study adopted a stratified sampling technique for selecting the sample size. According to Cooper and Schindler (2014), the stratified sampling method is used when researching a large population and thus was relevant for this study, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample Population

Classification of population	Population target	Sampling procedure	Sample size
Government Employees and Residents	300	Stratified Sampling	Interviews -30
			Questionnaires: Government employees - 70 Residents-69
Total	300		169

The study adopted a structured questionnaire for 70 government employees and 69 residents and an interview guide for 30 government employees for data collection. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 24. Measures such as mean and standard deviation were calculated to provide insights into the central tendency and variability of the variables under investigation. These descriptive measures offered a comprehensive overview of Wajir County, Kenya's patronage dynamics within the context of government employment. The analysed data was presented in tables, as shown in the following section.

Patronage Dynamic Consequences on Employment and Service Delivery

The study aimed to assess how patronage dynamics affect the employment and service delivery status within Wajir County. Table 2 presents the data on the consequences of patronage on service delivery and employment in Wajir County, as reported by the 70 employees who responded to the questionnaires. This table summarises respondents' agreement levels regarding the impact of patronage dynamics on various aspects of their work and the quality of public services provided. The insights gathered from these employees offer a detailed perspective on how political influences shape employment practices and affect the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery in the region.



Table 2: Patronage dynamic consequences on employment and service delivery

	N	SD	%	D	%	U	%	A	%	SA	%	Mean	Std. Dev
I have been employed in a position that I felt I was not qualified for	70	15	10.8	24	17.3	19	13.7	64	46.0	17	12.2	3.32	1.210
I have seen cases where individuals were appointed to positions due to their connections rather than qualifications	70	3	2.2	8	5.8	16	11.5	64	46.0	48	34.5	4.05	0.943
Patronage dynamics affect employment opportunities for qualified individuals	70	3	2.2	6	4.3	15	10.8	69	49.6	46	33.1	4.07	0.898
I have ever been denied an employment opportunity because I did not have connections or support from powerful individuals or groups	70	8	5.8	11	7.9	6	4.3	51	36.7	60	43.1	4.30	0.848
Patronage dynamics affect social cohesion and trust in government institution	70	4	2.9	8	5.8	10	7.2	52	37.4	65	46.8	4.22	0.917
Patronage dynamics affect economic growth and development	70	3	2.2	8	5.8	16	11.5	77	55.4	35	25.2	4.15	0.892
Total Mean	70											4.02	

Source: Field Data, 2024

Table 2 above presents data on the consequences of patronage on employment and service delivery in the context of Wajir. According to the data, 58.2% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had been employed in positions they felt were unqualified, with a mean score of 3.32. In contrast, 28.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This indicates that many employees feel placed in roles based on factors other than their qualifications, likely due to patronage dynamics. A substantial 80.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they have seen cases where individuals were appointed to positions due to their connections rather than qualifications, with a mean score of 4.05. Only 8% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This high level of agreement suggests that nepotism and favouritism are common in employment, undermining meritocracy.

In addition, 82.7% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that patronage dynamics affect employment opportunities for qualified individuals, with a mean score of 4.07. Only 6.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This highlights the negative impact of patronage on fair employment practices, where deserving candidates are overlooked. 79.8% agreed or strongly agreed that they had been denied employment opportunities due to a lack of connections or support from powerful individuals or groups, with a mean score of 4.30. Only 13.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This shows that personal connections significantly influence job opportunities, disadvantaging those without such networks.



A large majority (84.2%) agreed or strongly agreed that patronage dynamics affect social cohesion and trust in government institutions, with a mean score of 4.22. Only 8.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed, suggesting that favouritism erodes public trust and harms the social fabric by creating divisions. More so, 80.6% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that patronage dynamics affect economic growth and development of economic progress. This perception can be attributed to several factors, such as inequitable access to opportunities, misallocation of funds, corruption and inefficiency, and erosion of public trust.

The overall mean score of 4.02 across all statements indicates a strong consensus among respondents that patronage dynamics significantly impact employment and service delivery in Wajir County. This high mean score shows that most employees perceive patronage as a major issue influencing how jobs are allocated and public services are provided.

Service Delivery

The table below presents data collected from the residents of Wajir County, to whom services are rendered. The data focuses on the region's effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery. This section aims to provide a comprehensive overview of residents' experiences and perceptions regarding public services, highlighting key areas such as delays, prioritisation of services based on connections, quality of services received, and the extent to which residents' needs and concerns are addressed. The data was collected from 69 residents of Wajir County.

Table 3: Service Delivery Experiences in Wajir County

Service Delivery Experiences

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	SD	%	D	%	U	%	A	%	SA	%
I have noticed that the quality of public services I receive is often lower compared to those who have connections with public officials	69	3.74	1.133	4	5.8	7	10.1	10	14.5	30	43.5	18	26.1
I feel that my needs and concerns are frequently ignored or inadequately addressed by public services because I lack the necessary connections.	69	4.14	0.862	2	2.9	1	1.4	6	8.7	36	52.2	24	34.8
I have experienced delayed service delivery due to patronage dynamics.	69	4.17	0.747	0	0	3	4.3	5	7.2	38	55.1	23	33.3
I have witnessed cases where public officials prioritize providing services to certain individuals or groups due to their connections.	69	4.25	0.793	0	0	3	4.3	6	8.7	31	44.9	29	42.0
Total	69	4.07											

Source: Primary Data 2024

According to Table 3 above, the statement on the quality of public services the residents receive is often lower compared to those who have connections with public officials, who had a mean score of 3.74 and a standard deviation of 1.133. This indicates a considerable agreement among respondents, with 43.5% agreeing and 26.1% strongly agreeing that the quality of services is lower for those without



connections. Only a small percentage disagreed or strongly disagreed (5.8% and 4%, respectively), highlighting a widespread perception of unequal service quality.

Regarding whether their needs and concerns are frequently ignored or inadequately addressed by public services because they lack the necessary connections, the mean score was 4.14, with a standard deviation of 0.862. Most respondents (52.2% agreed and 34.8% strongly agreed) felt that their concerns were often ignored. The low percentages of disagreement (2.9% and 1.4%) reinforce the perception of neglect for those without the right connections.

In addition, the statement "I have experienced delayed service delivery due to patronage dynamics" had a mean score of 4.17 and a standard deviation of 0.747. This statement received strong agreement from 55.1% and strong agreement from 33.3% of respondents, indicating that delays in service delivery due to patronage are a common experience. No respondents strongly disagreed, and only 4.3% disagreed, underscoring the prevalence of this issue.

The statement "I have witnessed cases where public officials prioritise providing services to certain individuals or groups due to their connections" had a mean score of 4.25, with a standard deviation of 0.793. A high level of agreement (44.9%) and strong agreement (42%) were noted, reflecting the widespread observation of preferential treatment in service delivery. Again, no respondents strongly disagreed, and only 4.3% disagreed, confirming the perception of favouritism in public service provision.

The interviews revealed that patronage practices in Wajir County significantly demotivate qualified individuals, who often find their career prospects limited by the emphasis on connections rather than professional competencies. Respondents noted that many talented and skilled professionals are overlooked for public positions in favour of those with political or clan affiliations. Consequently, the public service sector suffers from inefficiency and ineffectiveness, as positions are filled by individuals who may not be adequately qualified, leading to poor service delivery and decreased public trust in government institutions.

To address these issues, interviewees emphasised the need for implementing merit-based hiring practices, where jobs are awarded based on qualifications and experience rather than connections. Establishing clear and transparent job application and promotion criteria can help ensure fairness and restore confidence in the public service sector. Additionally, the respondents indicated that anti-corruption measures, including strict penalties for nepotism and favouritism, can deter such practices.

Discussion

The findings have shown how employee patronage dynamics affect service delivery in Wajir County. The findings reveal that patronage significantly undermines the efficiency and quality of public services. It was established that most individuals were employed in positions for which they were unqualified, indicating that job allocation often prioritises political connections over competence, thus creating a workforce that feels more accountable to their political benefactors than to the public. These findings agree with other literary scholars, such as Kjaer and Therkildsen (2013), who underscore that patronage can have significant implications for the functioning of public institutions, undermining the efficiency of public service delivery. The two argue that when jobs are allocated based on political considerations rather than competence, the overall quality of service provision is likely to suffer.

The results of these studies are also supported by Mwenda and Tangri (2005), who observe that employees who owe their jobs to political patronage may feel more accountable to their political benefactors than the public. This can lead to a lack of accountability and transparency in service



delivery, as employees prioritise the interests of their political patrons over those of the community. This is particularly problematic in essential healthcare, education, and infrastructure services. This practice is common in many parts of the world, including Kenya, where political leaders often use public employment to consolidate power and maintain loyalty among their supporters.

According to the data, 80.6% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that patronage dynamics affect economic growth and development of economic progress. This perception can be attributed to several factors, such as inequitable access to opportunities, misallocation of funds, corruption and inefficiency, and erosion of public trust. Linder (2016) argues that it is essential to implement policies that promote merit-based allocation of resources and opportunities to foster economic progress. This would help ensure that the most qualified individuals and firms can contribute to the county's development, leading to more efficient and equitable economic outcomes.

This high mean score in this study shows that most employees perceive patronage as a major issue influencing how jobs are allocated and public services are provided. Similarly, De Wit and Berner (2009) observe that patronage dynamics severely affect service delivery, particularly for marginalised communities. When public officials prioritise their clans or connections, marginalised groups often receive poorer services or are overlooked. This results in unequal access to essential healthcare, education, and infrastructure services. Marginalised communities, already disadvantaged, suffer further when services are not distributed fairly. This deepens existing inequalities and undermines social cohesion and trust in government institutions. The perception that services are provided based on personal connections rather than needs erodes public confidence and can lead to social unrest.

As a result, qualified individuals may be overlooked in favour of those with strong clan connections or personal ties to powerful individuals. This leads to a workforce that may not be the most capable or skilled, as positions are filled based on favouritism rather than merit. As deduced from the interviews, such practices demotivate qualified individuals and reduce their career prospects, fostering a culture of dependency on connections rather than professional competencies. This also results in a less efficient and effective public service sector, as job performance takes a back seat to maintaining political and personal allegiances.

Implementing merit-based hiring practices is crucial, where jobs are awarded based on qualifications and experience rather than connections, which can help address employee patronage issues (Brierley, 2021). Clear and transparent job application and promotion criteria should be established to ensure fairness. Enhancing accountability and transparency in public administration is also essential. Regular audits and reviews of hiring practices and service delivery processes can identify and address biases. Anti-corruption measures, including strict penalties for nepotism and favouritism, can deter such practices. Additionally, civil society organisations can play a vital role by advocating for reforms, monitoring government activities, and raising public awareness about the negative impacts of patronage.

According to Attraction-Selection-Attrition, organisations attract individuals with values or affiliations similar to those already in power. In the context of patronage, public institutions attract candidates with strong clan affiliations or personal connections with existing officials. During the selection process, these candidates are chosen based on their connections rather than their qualifications or competencies. Jøranli (2018) observes that this ensures that the hiring process favours those who are part of the same social or political networks as the decision-makers, thereby reinforcing the influence of patronage. As a result, the workforce becomes homogeneous, reflecting the biases and affiliations of those in power rather than a diverse and skilled group of professionals.



The data on service delivery from the residents of Wajir County indicate several critical issues related to the influence of patronage dynamics. Generally, residents report a notable disparity in the quality of services they receive, with many feeling that their access to high-quality public services is hindered by their lack of connections to influential public officials. This perception of inequality is a significant concern, as it suggests that service delivery is not based on need or merit but rather on personal relationships and patronage networks.

The ignorance of residents' service delivery affects their satisfaction with public services and erodes their trust in public institutions. When people perceive that they are being sidelined in favour of those with better connections, it fosters a sense of disenfranchisement and frustration, undermining social cohesion and the legitimacy of government institutions.

The data also highlight the experience of delayed service delivery. Residents report significant delays in receiving public services, which they attribute to the patronage system. Such delays can harm their daily lives and well-being, as timely access to healthcare, education, and infrastructure is essential for community development and personal welfare. The inefficiency introduced by patronage dynamics slows down service delivery and contributes to a less responsive public sector.

The observation of public officials prioritising services for certain individuals or groups based on connections points to a systemic problem within the governance framework. This favouritism exacerbates existing inequalities and creates an environment where public trust is continually eroded. The preferential treatment of certain groups over others based on personal connections undermines the fairness and integrity of public service provision.

When employment is based on relationships rather than merit, the overall quality and efficiency of public services decline (Perry & Wise, 1990). This is because positions are filled by individuals who may not be the most qualified or competent, leading to inadequate service provision. Marginalised communities, in particular, suffer as they often lack the necessary connections to influential people to access quality services. Furthermore, according to the ASA theory, individuals who do not fit the dominant culture or values of the organisation (those without strong connections) are likely to leave, further entrenching the homogeneity and inefficiency within the workforce. This attrition cycle perpetuates a system where public institutions remain dominated by individuals prioritising maintaining their connections over performing their duties effectively.

Conclusion

The study concludes that patronage dynamics in government employment significantly undermine service delivery in Wajir County. The findings show that many individuals are employed based on political connections rather than qualifications, leading to a more loyal workforce to their political patrons than public service principles. This practice results in inefficiencies and delays, especially in essential services such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure. Additionally, the prevalence of patronage diminishes job opportunities for qualified individuals, further eroding public trust and social cohesion. The bias towards connected individuals or groups exacerbates social inequality and hinders economic growth.

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