INFLUENCE OF WOMEN LEADERSHIP ON GOVERNANCE OF COUNTY GOVERNMENTS IN KENYA: A CASE STUDY OF NAIROBI COUNTY GOVERNMENT

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Abstract: **Governments in the 21st century face major discontinuous change that makes leadership and governance more difficult and more complex than ever before in seeking to deliver services to citizens. This explains why in the modern-day world, public management attention has increasingly focused on leadership and governance and their effect to service delivery. This study views leadership and governance as fundamental in the current devolved government system in Kenya and their future direction. Of keen interest is the influence of women leadership on governance of county governments in Kenya; where leadership and governance plays a very vital role in bringing about efficient service delivery to citizens. Kenya's constitution 2010 contains a provision that should radically change political representation for women particularly the provision for two-third gender rule, gender equality in political parties and equal right of opportunities influence women. The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of women leadership on governance of county governments in Kenya: a case of Nairobi County Government. This study used descriptive research design and data was collected from both primary and secondary sources targeting a population of sixty four (64) women leaders in both county executive and county assembly in Nairobi County. The data was fed into statistical package for social science (SPSS version 21) and data presented in form of tables, graphs, charts and percentages for clarity. Principally, the results indicated a relationship between women leadership and governance. When correlated against leadership competences; governance has a very strong relationship which was statistically significant. These shown that leadership competences as an independent variable could be used to explain governance as a dependent variable.**

Keywords: **governance, women leadership, government system.**

1. INTRODUCTION

Within the complex and dynamic management of both national and devolved governments in the 21st century, leadership plays a very vital role in effective and efficient service delivery to the electorates. Consequently, there is need therefore, to ensure that leaders have appropriate capabilities that provide relevant knowledge; skills and attributes to ensure service delivery to the citizens in a way that is distinct to the people. Echoing the essence of leadership and governance in Africa, Afegbua and Adejuwon (2012) expressed that leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth, therefore, a call for attention on leadership and governance is well-timed and no doubt topical, reflecting the worldwide thrust toward political and economic liberalization. Without leadership and good governance, the likelihood governments can meet people's expectations when confronting the challenges of the global economy will be greatly reduced (Pazireh, Akhlagh & Akbari, 2014). The essence of leadership and governance in public organizations encompass the capacity and ability to learn and to change (Boal & Hooijberg, 2001).

Leadership and governance studies have gained popularity in the recent past, with an enormous body of literature on each area generating impetus in the existence and study of these disciplines. It is enlightening to note that no organization has achieved meaningful growth and development without the involvement of or effective leadership (Obasola, 2002). For leadership, it is considered to be one of the most studied concepts in organizational development studies and debated from diverse perspectives (Bass, 1985; Davies & Davies, 2008; Daft, 2011; Pazireh, Akhlagh & Akbari, 2014). A leader can be described as someone who has commanding authority or influence (Nahavandi, 2012). In the world today, governance has become a key subject of global significance and one of the most commonly used phrases in the current public organizations management It is the engine of economic growth viewed from a global perspective; and increasingly responsible for providing employment, infrastructure and improving the wellbeing of the electorates. The efficiency and accountability of governments is now a matter of both private and public interest, and governance has, thereby, come to the head of the international agenda (Lemo, 2004).

Governance is concerned with the processes, systems, practices and procedures; the formal and informal rules that govern public institutions. This is the manner in which these rules and regulations are applied and followed, the relationships that these rules and regulations determine or create, and the nature of those relationships (PSICG, 1999). Essentially, governance addresses the leadership role in the institutional framework. Governance, therefore, refers to the manner in which the power to govern is exercised in the stewardship of the public's total portfolio of assets and resources with the objective of service delivery and improved livelihood (Lemo, 2004).

The Nairobi County Government, in execution of responsibilities and functions bestowed upon it, is divided into two arms: county executive and the county assembly. The county executive led by the governor charged with the responsibility of policy formulation. The executive comprises of the County Executive Committee, County Public Service Board;

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The Constitution of Kenya, 2010 guarantees that not more than two-thirds of the members of any government both national and county shall be of the same gender (Chitere, 2013). Despite this legal framework championing for women leadership involvement in government systems, Kenya's aspiration and hopes for good governance are largely unfulfilled. It is recognized that Kenya's failures particularly in the county governments have come about largely as a result of among other things; poor leadership, low women representation in governments; and inadequate preparation of the leadership that assumes the responsibility to govern. Although counties have battled on, confronting their awesome problems of county development not only are the women leaders unprepared but unaided, their efforts have been at best being recorded in leaders profiling as opposed to an account of their influence in overall county governance.
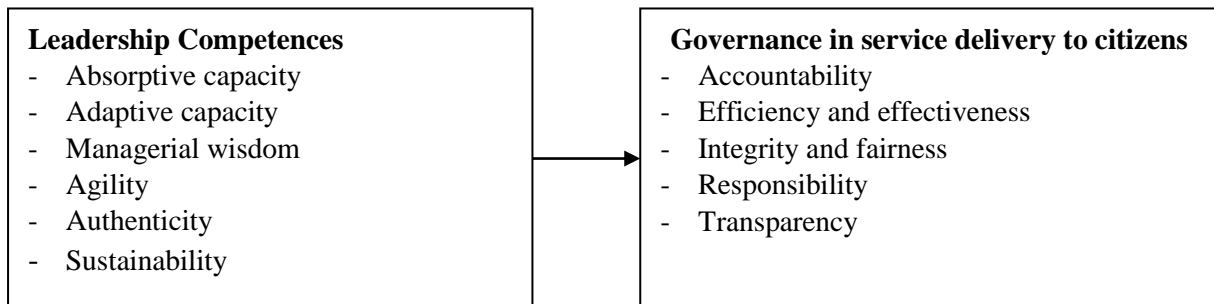
Obasanjo (1993) noted that, it needs to be realized that the morass of governance in devolved governments emerged primarily as a result of lack of checks and balances in centralized system of government. In effect, a decline in moral and discipline caused or combined with bad policies, eroded professional standards and ethics and weakened the system of governance. Poor governance has become the major challenge and source of devolved government's predicament and socio-economic crises (Afegbua &Adejuwon, 2012).

Moreover, while a few researchers have in recent past began to document on women's participation in public sector management in Kenya (Chelang'a, 2012; Mbugua, 2011; Chitere, 2013, Wamalwa, 2013; & MSI, 2014); such documentation has left out the influence of women leadership on governance of county governments in Kenya. It is against these backdrops, this study seeks to establish the influence of women leadership on governance of county governments in Kenya with a focus on Nairobi County Government.

The purpose of this study was to establish the influence of women leadership on governance of County Governments in Kenya, a case of Nairobi County Government.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

On leadership, both the practitioners and scholars alike recognize it as crucial to responding to the hyper-turbulent external environment that face private, government corporations and not-for-profit organizations. The developing economies, Kenya not being an exceptional are becoming more open markets as opposed to socialism; therefore, leadership will play a significant role in responding to the new demands. Leadership theories assume that organizations are a clear reflection of their leaders (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996). What the leaders' value and their beliefs determine how organizational issues affecting the overall objectives are responded to, that is, interpreted acted upon. As noted by Zoogah (2009) there are insufficient studies of leadership and responses in African organizations.

Conceptual Framework:

Leadership Competences	**Governance in service delivery to citizens**
- Absorptive capacity	- Accountability
- Adaptive capacity	- Efficiency and effectiveness
- Managerial wisdom	- Integrity and fairness
- Agility	- Responsibility
- Authenticity	- Transparency
- Sustainability	

Leadership Capabilities:

Leaders have the ability to develop strategic capabilities. Prahalad and Hamel (1990) use the term 'core competencies' while Stalk *et al.* (1992) use the term 'strategic capabilities'. Leadership abilities enable a company to successfully meet new challenges by reconfiguring existing abilities and resources rather than having to seek new ones. The questions that strategic leaders ask is: 'What strategic capabilities do I need to sustain and develop for the future?' as well as 'How do I meet current challenges?' By focusing on strategic capabilities, leaders position themselves and their organizations to be sustainable and successful in the longer term. In other words, leadership competences are those abilities to undertake organizational activity and, second, individual abilities: strategic leaders have the organizational ability to: be strategically orientated; translate strategy into action; align people and organizations; determine effective strategic intervention points; develop strategic competencies; a dissatisfaction or restlessness with the present; absorptive capacity; adaptive capacity; and wisdom (Kimberly & Hooijberg, 2012).

Kimberly and Hooijberg (2012) expressed that leadership competences are the capabilities organizational managers possess in order to create and maintain absorptive and adaptive capacity in addition to obtaining managerial wisdom. They include the absorptive capacity that involves the ability to learn by recognizing new information, assimilating it, and applying it; the adaptive capacity that involves the ability to change due to variations in conditions; and the managerial wisdom that consists of discernment and intuition (Kimberly & Hooijberg, 2012

Research Gap:

Recently, it has become evident that the current public sector management landscape in many countries is of great concern in the light of well-informed electorates. This demand for an effective leadership capabilities, including competences, styles and roles are exercised for efficient service delivery in addressing the citizens' needs. Scrutiny by the public and pursuit of good livelihood has brought in more dynamic leadership approach where women are now expected to portray their leadership prowess and influence governance of public resources. However, some current examples of this 'women leadership-governance' mismatch have seen some governments fall behind due to their failure on leadership dynamism (Nahavandi, 2012). That is, leaders failed to build-up the appropriate leadership capabilities required to take advantage of flexibility as public demanded.

Therefore,unless such leadership capabilities are understood and become an explicit part that influence the strategic decision making levels of the government their strategic potential may not be fully exploited and, indeed, may become lost via a range of strategic decisions including policy formulation, county development planning and establishment of programmes to address public interests, thereby sacrificing such leadership capabilities. The researcher wants to allude to the notion of leadership resonance as a means of unifying notions of capabilities, competencies linked to governance within and across counties (local governments). Brown (2000) has already defined leadership resonance as: an on-going, dynamic, strategic process whereby citizens' requirements and leadership capabilities are in harmony and resonate. Leadership resonance which depicts the influence women in leadership positions across the counties is more than strategic fit, which has often been used (rightly in the past) to describe the 'fit' between the county's capabilities and the citizens that it serves. Leadership resonance is about ensuring continuous linkages and harmonization between leadership capabilities and governance in the county governments.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive research design. A descriptive research design describes the attributes of phenomenon or population being studied. Descriptive research is the investigation in which data is collected and analysed so that to describe the specific phenomenon in its current events, current trends and linkages between different factors at the current time (Saunders & Thornhill, 2009). The study used both qualitative and quantitative data.

For the purpose of this study the researcher studied all women leaders of the two arms of the Nairobi County Government, which is, the Executive and County Assembly as tabulated in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Target Population

Arm of the County	Description	No of Women Leaders
Executive	CEC Members	5
	Departmental & Directorates' Leaders (Chief Officers & Directors)	12
	County Public Service Board	4
	The City Inspectorate	1
	County Investigations and Information Analysis	3
	County Advisories	4
County Assembly	The Speaker	1
	Members elected by the registered voters of the each wards	4
	Special Seat Members	13
	Members of Marginalised Groups (including persons with disabilities and the youth)	17
Total		64

Source: NCG (2017). Women Leaders in Nairobi County Government

4. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Respondents Work Experience:

Work experience was deemed important as it indicated the respondents' understanding of leadership, governance in service delivery to citizens at the county. The experience in terms of cumulative years that the respondents had worked at the county or former Nairobi City Council is tabulated in Figure 1 as follows:
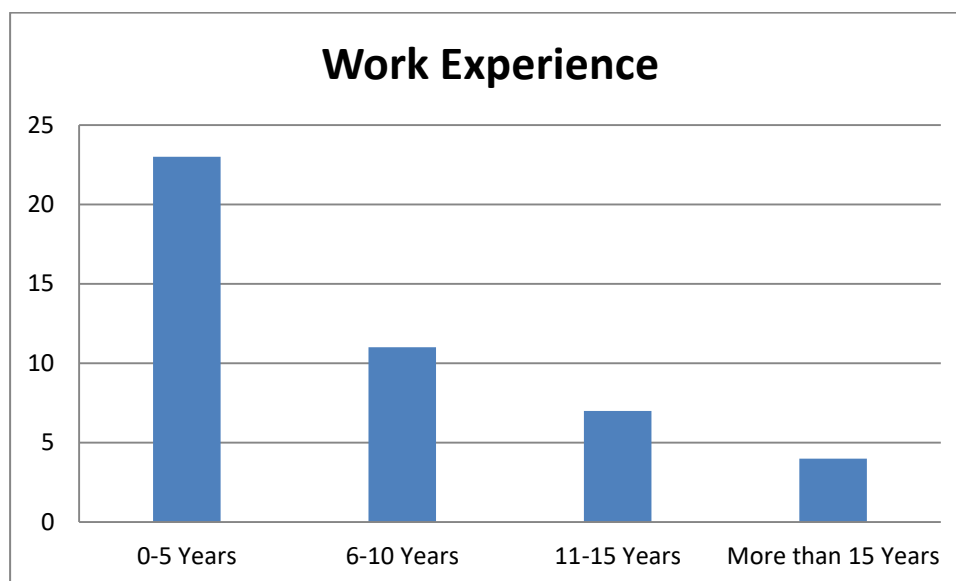

Figure 1: Work Experience with the County/ Nairobi City Council [NCC]

The results show that majority of the respondents (51.1%) had worked for the County/ NCC below 5 years, 24.4% had worked for 6-10 years, 15.6% for 11-15 years, while only 8.9% had worked for over 15 years. This shows that most of the women leaders at the county have joined Nairobi County Government with the emergent of devolution in Kenya.

Arm in the County Government:

The respondents were asked to indicate which arm of county government they represent or work for. The responses were categorized into two groups for ease of clarity. The computed percentages are presented in Figure 2 below.
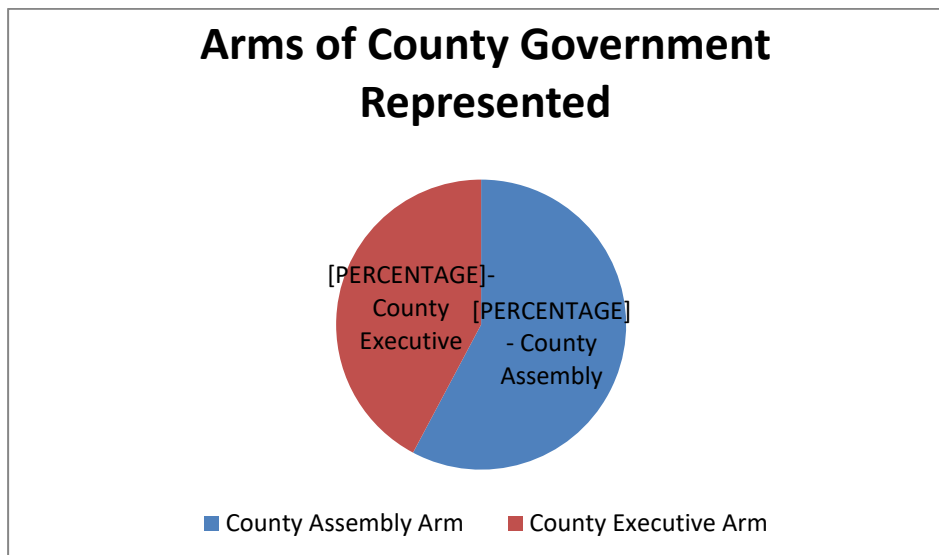

Figure 2: Arms of County Government Represented

From Figure 4.4 above, the results show that majority of the respondents (58%) works for county assembly, while 42% works for the county executive.

Women Leadership:

To understand leadership competences among the women leaders at the county, the respondents were given statements on leadership competences and were to rate the extent each of the elements play a role in defining overall leadership capabilities. The scale was 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree and 5= strongly agree. The results are analysed and tabulated as per the Table 2 below:

Table 2: Women Leadership Competences

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
Absorptive capacity (ability to learn by recognizing new information, assimilating it, and applying it)	0%	0%	13.2%	57.9%	28.9%
Adaptive capacity (ability to change due to variations in conditions)	0%	10.5%	15.8%	63.2%	10.5%
Managerial wisdom (consists of discernment and intuition)	0%	5.3%	21.1%	47.4%	26.3%
Agility (Having foresight to spot change in the horizon, anticipate what comes next and develop needed strategies)	0%	5.3%	15.8%	57.9%	21.1%
Authenticity (Creating clarity and articulating Company's vision. Building trust among the staff)	0%	15.8%	5.3%	47.4%	31.6%
Sustainability (demonstrating social responsibility by balancing business results with concern for the greater good)	2.6%	7.9%	13.2%	47.4%	28.9%

Scale: 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly Agree

From the findings in Table 2 above, when respondents were to give their opinion on the ability of women leaders to learn by recognizing new information, assimilating it, and applying it; 57.9% agreed, 28.9% strongly agreed, 13.2% neither agree nor disagree and none disagreed with the statement. When respondents were to give their opinion on the ability of women leaders to change due to variations in conditions, 63.2% agreed, 15.8% neither agree nor disagree, 10.5% both strongly agree and disagree; none strongly disagreed with the statement. When respondents were to give their opinion on women leaders' managerial wisdom, 47.4% agreed, 26.3% strongly agreed, 21.1% neither agree nor disagree, 5.3% disagreed and none strongly disagreed with the statement. When respondents were to indicate the women leaders' agility,

57.9% agreed, 21.1% strongly agreed, 15.8% neither agree nor disagree, 5.3% disagreed and none strongly disagreed with the statement. In addition, when respondents were to indicate the women leaders' authenticity, 47.4% agreed, 31.6% strongly agreed, 15.8% disagreed, 5.3% neither agree nor disagree and none strongly disagreed with the statement. Finally, when respondents were to indicate on whether women leaders demonstrate social responsibility by balancing business results with concern for the greater good, 47.4% agreed, 28.9 strongly agreed, 13.2% neither agree nor disagree, 7.9% disagreed and 2.6% strongly disagreed with the statement. Basically, majorities of the respondents agree with the statements that indicated the elements of women leadership competences.

Governance of County Governments:

On the tenets of corporate governance, the respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which the various beliefs or tenets of governance that they demonstrate and their fellow women leaders that describe overall governance at the county. The results were analysed and tabulated as per Table 3 below.

Table 3: Tenets of Governance

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
Accountability	0%	7.9%	23.7%	36.8%	31.6%
Efficiency and effectiveness	0%	2.6%	13.2%	31.6%	52.6%
Integrity and fairness	0%	7.7%	16.0%	39.5%	36.8%
Responsibility	0%	7.9%	15.8%	36.8%	39.5%
Transparency	0%	2.5%	20.3%	46.8%	30.0%

Scale: 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3- Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly Agree

From Table 3 above, the respondents were to give their opinion on the extent to which accountability as a tenet of governance is demonstrated by women leaders to help define overall governance at the county, 36.8% agreed, 31.6% strongly agreed, 23.7% neither agree nor disagree, 7.9% disagreed and none of the respondents indicated that they strongly disagreed with the statement. When respondents were to give their opinion on efficiency and effectiveness, 52.6% strongly agreed, 31.6% agreed, 13.2% neither agree nor disagree, 2.6% disagreed and none of the respondents indicated that they strongly disagreed with the statement.

More so, when respondents were to give their opinion on the extent to which integrity and fairness as tenets of governance is demonstrated by women leaders to help define overall governance at the county 39.5% agreed; 36.8% strongly agreed 16.0% neither agree nor disagree, 7.7% disagreed and none of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. When respondents were to give their opinion on responsibility, 39.5% strongly agreed; 36.8% agreed 15.8% neither agree nor disagree, 7.9% disagreed and none of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. Finally, when respondents were to give their opinion on the extent to which transparency as a tenet of governance is demonstrated by women leaders to help define overall governance at the county 46.8% agreed; 30.0% strongly agreed 20.3% neither agree nor disagree, 2.5% disagreed and none of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. Chiefly, majorities of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the statements that indicated the tenets of governance is demonstrated by women leaders to help define overall governance at the county.

The researcher discusses the key findings in relation to previous work done by other contributors in the area of women leadership and governance. The results of the study helped to address the research problem that Kenya's failures particularly in the county governments have come about largely as a result of among other things; poor leadership, low women representation in governments; and inadequate preparation of women leadership that assumes the responsibility to govern. Although counties have battled on, confronting their awesome problems of county development not only are the women leaders unprepared but unaided, their efforts have been at best being recorded in leaders profiling as opposed to an account of their influence in overall county governance. Yet, very little researches have been to establish women's participation in public sector management in Kenya.

The findings indicated that leadership competencies significant influence on governance of county governments in Kenya. As noted earlier, the research findings are in agreement with Wamalwa (2013) and Hunt (1999) which shown a significant relations between women leadership and governance. Women leadership enhance the governance that have an effect on service delivered to citizens (Serafimovska & Ristova, 2009). Therefore, the study addressed the problem and from the

findings it has helped determine the correlation between women leadership and governance in county governments in Kenya. In addition, the study findings conclusively helped achieve the purpose of this study was to establish the influence of women leadership on governance of County Governments in Kenya, a case of Nairobi County Government. .

The main objective of the study was to determine the influence of women leadership competences on governance in Nairobi County Government. On the findings drawn from data analysis, absorptive capacity (ability to learn by recognizing new information, assimilating it, and applying it) played the greatest role in defining overall leadership competences at Nairobi County Government with the highest mean score of 4.0 and standard deviation of 0.890. Other factors that play a role in defining leadership competences are adaptive capacity (ability to change due to variations in conditions); managerial wisdom (consists of discernment and intuition), agility (having foresight to spot change in the horizon, anticipate what comes next and develop needed strategies); authenticity (creating clarity and articulating organization's vision and building trust among the staff); and sustainability (demonstrating social responsibility by balancing business results with concern for the greater good). In general, women leadership capability is built in organizations by aligning leadership competences to provide good governance for effective service delivery (Sajjadi, 2014; & Senge, 1990).

5. SUMMARY

The respondents of this study comprised of the women leaders at Nairobi County Government comprising of both arms, that is, the County Executive and County Assembly. The study's response rate is deemed appropriate as was made up 70.3% of respondents comprising of all the cadres of women leaders. This study resonate closely with those of Kimberly and Hooijberg (2012) on influence of women leadership on governance that in devolved systems of government and other public organizations, all levels of leadership understand the strategic direction of local or county government and influence governance.

It is great concern when it comes to the age of the women leaders at the county; majority (77.8%) are aged 41 years and above and as noted by Datallo (2008) the most productive workforce in organization are in the age group between 26 to 40 years, thus Nairobi County Government has less productive workforce when it comes to women leaders (22.2%) and will pose a challenge to succession planning for the Nairobi County Government. The study also found out that most of the women leaders at the county have a bachelor's degree and above (70.2%) with only 29.8% have a college certificate or diploma. Consequently, the Nairobi County Government's women leaders are well educated and this shows that there is a clear understanding of the influence of leadership on governance at the county.

On the period the staff have worked for the Nairobi County Government or previous Nairobi City Council, majority of the respondents (51.1%) had worked for the County/ NCC below 5 years; a clear indication that they could have inadequate information in relation to the County's history and organizational culture. However, this does not affect the study since the focus of the study is mainly after the establishment of county government systems in Kenya in 2013. Therefore, the county can easily adopt change in their strategic leadership direction. This is agreement with Lewin (1992) work as he argued that with newer leaders; organizations can introduce a clear and appealing option for a new pattern of behaviour.

With new change introduced to newer women leaders, the county will be able to consolidate new practices and it flows from efforts to maintain the adoption period and reinforce the changes until they become internalized and the norm (Cummings & Worley, 2005). This is further supported by more recent work by Bamford and Forrester (2003) who reasoned that change as initiated by leaders works with management who have worked for less than 10 years in an organization as they can be able to discard old behaviour, processes, structures and culture; successfully adopting new approaches.

Principally, the results indicated a relationship between women leadership and governance. From the correlations table, All the correlation coefficients were significant at P= 0.01 implying a 99% confident level. When correlated against leadership competences; governance has a very strong relationship which was statistically significant. These shown that leadership competences as an independent variable could be used to explain governance as a dependent variable. Leadership styles when correlated against governance indicated a strong positive relationship between the two variables and hence leadership styles could be used as an independent variable to describe governance as a dependent variable. The correlation coefficient was significant at 99% confident level.

6. CONCLUSION

Leadership capabilities and governance have been, and continue to be, important disciplines of study for both researchers and practitioners. This study has demonstrated the importance of better integrating these areas of study. If governance is to be effective in county governments in Kenya, then there is need to more closely marry the women leadership and governance concepts in study's investigations of governance for effective service delivery. In this study, women leadership was conceptualized and operationalized at various cadres in both arm of the county government, whereas governance was assessed at an output level. The findings as discussed per each objective above increase the confidence that the significant relationships are not spurious or based on linear forms of bias. Furthermore, although most studies of leadership and governance are specific to each concept, this study is in keeping with a series of recent studies (e.g., Kurtz *et al.*, 1998; Damme, 2001; Naidoo & Mutinta, 2014; Yarimoglu, 2014) investigating cross-concepts relationships so as to obtain and examine variance in critical variables, such as women leadership and governance.

The literature reviewed focused on a broader context of leadership and governance components with focus on women leadership capabilities and governance; and models applicable in running organizations.. Thus, the findings supported earlier work by Kimberly and Hooijberg (2012) who noted that leadership capabilities comprises of competences possessed by leaders, styles they apply and roles they play in organizations. In the light of the findings of the study, the researcher concludes that for Nairobi County Government to effectively deliver services to citizens and improve livelihoods; leaders have to play their roles, apply different styles, show competences, overcome constraints and have the tenets of good governance.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

The findings of this study have practical implications for county governments in Kenya. The study found several statistically significant relationships with practical applications. County governments that are keen on improving livelihoods of people must be concerned with leadership roles, leadership styles, leadership competences, constraints to women leadership as well as good governance. Women leaders in the counties should possess absorptive capacity, adaptive capacity; managerial wisdom, be agile, be authentic and have sustainability view by balancing business results with concern for the greater good of the citizens.

With intent to improve county government performance and quality service delivery; it requires having all women leaders support and engagement.

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