

Influence of Emotional Intelligence Competencies on Internal Service Quality among County Employees in Kenya

Author:

Kithusya P. Musyoki
<https://orcid.org/0009-0005-2939-4060>

Affiliation:

Chandaria School of Business, United States International University - Africa
Email: kithusya@gmail.com

Article History: Submitted: 9th October 2025; Accepted: 2nd February 2026; Published (online): 23rd February 2026

Abstract

The general objective of this study was to determine the influence of emotional intelligence competencies on internal service quality among county employees in Kenya. In particular the study sought to determine the influence of self-awareness competencies on internal service quality among county employees in Kenya. The study was grounded on three key theories, emotional intelligence theory, learning organization theory and quality management theory. This study adopted positivist philosophy and explanatory correlational design. The target population consisted of 9165 employees drawn from the 47 counties in Kenya. The sample size was determined using Yamane's formula to obtain 383. Data was collected using structured questionnaire from which a response rate of 85% was achieved. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 26, employing both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses. Moderation effects were tested through stepwise regression modeling. The findings indicated that self-awareness competencies had a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.569$, $p < 0.01$), and explained 32.4% of the variation ($R^2 = 0.324$, $\beta = 0.636$, $t = 12.468$, $F = 155.457$, $p < 0.001$) in internal service quality. The study concludes that self-awareness competencies have statistically significant influence on internal service quality among county employees in Kenya rejecting the null Hypothesis. The study recommends that County governments institutionalize structured programs aimed at enhancing self-awareness among county employees. The study further recommends that more effort should be invested in development of emotional intelligence competencies in order to further enhance internal service quality county employees.

Key words

Competencies, County Employees, Emotional Intelligence Competencies, Internal Service Quality, Self-Awareness

Introduction

Internal service quality (ISQ) involves the delivery of high-quality, supportive services, resources, and communication occurring between an organization's internal departments, teams, and personnel, adapting core SERVQUAL dimensions such as rapid responsiveness,

consistent reliability, empathetic engagement, assured competence, and sufficient resources tailored for internal operations (Hogreve, Iseke & Derfuss 2022). Internal service quality within businesses is essential in today's globalized and competitive business world. In businesses, particularly those that provide public goods, better communication, teamwork, and resource management are encouraged by high internal service quality, and this results in an organizational structure that is more robust and dynamic and can better handle the complex demands of the contemporary market (Bwachele, Chong & Krishnapillai 2023). Within public institutions, ISQ emerges as a foundational management element, seamlessly orchestrating inter-departmental collaboration, precise resource stewardship, and optimized processes that ultimately deliver tangible citizen benefits like accelerated permit processing or readily accessible services (Al-Ibrahim, 2022).

In the public sector, internal service quality is essential for ensuring that public servants can efficiently and effectively deliver services to the community. High internal service quality leads to better resource allocation, streamlined processes, and improved employee morale, all of which contribute to more responsive and reliable public services. Enhancing internal service quality in the public sector can help overcome bureaucratic inefficiencies and improve the overall trust and satisfaction of the public with governmental operations. Additionally, it can foster innovation and adaptability in public service delivery, aligning with the evolving needs of the community (Ferguson, 2022).

In the global environment today, emotional intelligence enables employees to better manage emotions, handle interpersonal relationships, and navigate workplace dynamics, which directly enhances service quality within organizations (Jasleen & Anupam 2022). Goleman (1995) emphasized that employees with high emotional intelligence are better at understanding and responding to internal customer needs, fostering a culture of empathy and collaboration that improves overall service quality. Building emotional intelligence competencies in staff members is one strategy to improve internal service quality in businesses (Kang, Jame & Alexandris 2022). Internal service quality being the efficacy and caliber of interactions that occur within a company and have an impact on staff retention and general productivity. The capacity to control emotions and comprehend others is essential in a workplace where people frequently collaborate and communicate.

Self-awareness competencies involve understanding one's emotions, strengths, weaknesses, and values (Carden, Jones & Passmore 2022). Self-awareness competencies have been widely studied for their impact on internal service quality. Studies have shown that employees with high self-awareness are better equipped to recognize how their behavior affects others, leading to improved interpersonal interactions and service delivery. County governments in Kenya face significant challenges in delivering quality internal services, which directly impacts public service delivery (Anguche, Kimani & Ndururi 2024). Despite the devolution of power and resources under the 2010 Constitution, many counties have struggled to meet citizens' expectations for efficient and effective service delivery.

The inefficiency of delivering quality internal services has been attributed to various factors, including a lack of emotional intelligence (EI) competencies among county employees, which are critical in fostering a conducive work environment, improving teamwork, and ensuring responsive service. Research indicates that emotional intelligence competencies such as self-awareness are integral to enhancing internal service quality, yet these competencies are underdeveloped in many counties (Kamau, 2022). Recent reports show that public

Musyoki P. K.

dissatisfaction with service delivery is widespread across several counties. According to a 2022 report by the Office of the Auditor-General, more than 60% of counties failed to meet operational efficiency targets, with delays in service response times and employee dissatisfaction cited as key issues (GOK, 2022). For example, Nairobi, Kisumu, and Mombasa counties reported in-service delivery audits that only 40% of requests for services were addressed within the stipulated time frame. In addition, employee turnover and low morale is persistent problem in these counties, further exacerbating inefficiencies in internal service quality.

Despite the recognition of emotional intelligence as a potential driver of improved service delivery, there is a lack of empirical studies focusing on the role of EI competencies in enhancing internal service quality within county governments. This presents a critical knowledge gap, as existing research on service quality largely focuses on technical aspects such as operational procedures, neglecting the influence of interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence. Thus, the problem remains inadequately addressed, with no defined strategy to develop the necessary emotional intelligence competencies among county employees, leaving a gap in both theory and practice. This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating the influence of self-awareness competencies on internal service quality.

For this study, figure 1 illustrates the influence of the independent and dependent variables and the moderator. Self-awareness competencies were essential for recognizing one’s emotional states and understanding how these influenced different aspects of work performance. Related indicators include emotional recognition, self-confidence, accurate self-assessment, and decision-making processes.

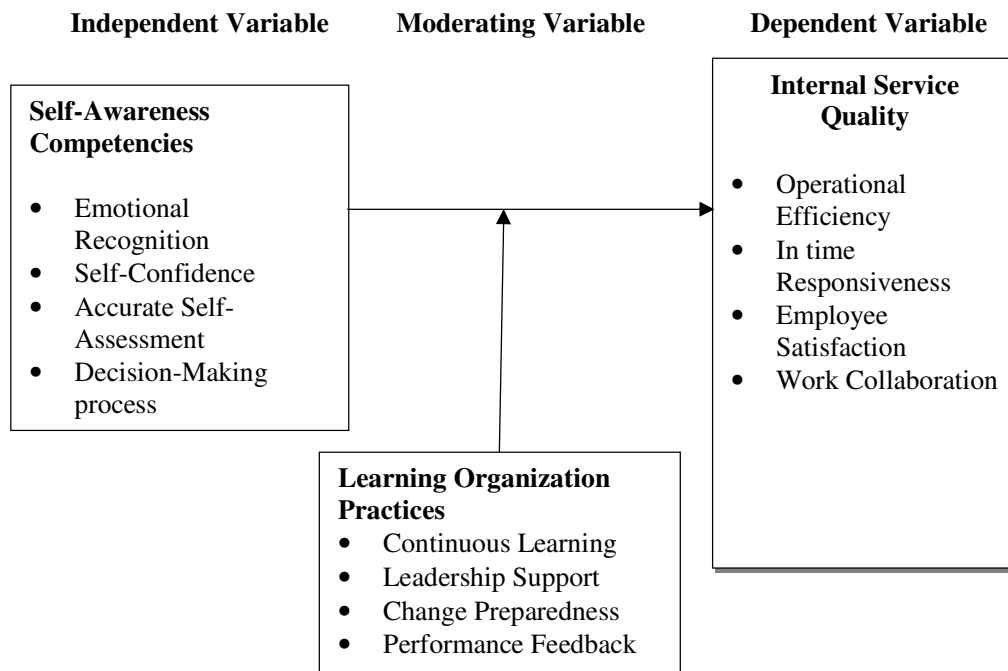


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Methodology

Study Design

The study was grounded on three key theories, emotional intelligence theory, learning organization theory and quality management theory. This study adopted Positivist philosophy and explanatory correlational design. This study adopted the positivism philosophy because it sought to objectively measure and analysed the influence of emotional intelligence competencies on internal service quality among county employees using quantifiable data. Positivism emphasized the use of scientific methods to test hypotheses, focusing on observable phenomena and measurable variables. In this study, emotional intelligence competencies such as self-awareness along with internal service quality, were treated as concrete constructs measurable through standardized tools such as questionnaires. The study aimed to establish cause-and-effect relationships, consistent with the positivist approach, by using empirical evidence to draw conclusions and ensuring that the research outcomes were valid, reliable, and generalized across the population.

This study adopted explanatory correlational design which assees the nature and strength of relationships between variables in this case, self-awareness and internal service quality. It helped to determine whether changes in emotional intelligence levels are associated with changes in service quality among county employees, without manipulating any variables. Explanatory moderation design was also used since the study included a moderating variable learning organization practices this design was relevant. It tested whether the strength or direction of the relationship between emotional intelligence competency and internal service quality varies depending on the presence or level of learning organization practices. The quantitative approach was also used as it allowed for the objective measurement of self-awareness and its influence on internal service quality. It also supported the examination of the moderating role of learning organization practices in this relationship.

Participants and Sampling

The target population for this study was county employees in Kenya. Specifically, the study targeted county employees working within public organizations across all 47 counties of Kenya. The county employees were selected because they represent the critical implementation level of Kenya's devolved governance system, where effective internal service delivery directly impacts public service quality. As such, the research captured the diverse operational contexts of urban and rural counties while addressing a significant gap in emotional intelligence research within African public sector settings. According to the data available from the Salaries and Remuneration Commission (SRC) (2025), there are approximately 226,540 county employees in Kenya. Specifically, the study targeted the County Executive Employees, County Assembly Members, Directors, Sub- County administrators, and County Public Service employees, who were 9165 employees (SRC, 2025).

Table 1
Population Distribution

Structure	Target Population	Percentage
County Executive Members	658	7%
Chief Employees	756	8%
County Assembly Members	4089	5%
Directors	1739	47%
Sub County Administrators	408	5%
County Public Service Employees	1515	28
Total	9165	100%

The study employed purposive sampling to strategically select county employees who could provide the most relevant insights into the relationship between emotional intelligence competencies and internal service quality. Given the need for participants with direct experience in service delivery and interdepartmental collaboration, the researchers targeted employees in supervisory roles, frontline service positions, and administrative departments across Kenya’s 47 counties. This approach ensured representation of diverse perspectives while focusing on individuals whose roles inherently required emotional intelligence for effective service coordination. Probability random sampling was used to select participants based on their job functions and organizational influence, the study enhanced the depth and applicability of findings to Kenya’s devolved governance context.

The sample size for this study was determined using Yamane’s formula, which is appropriate for calculating sample size when the population is known. Yamane’s formula is expressed as:

$$n = \frac{N}{(1 + N(e)^2)}$$

Where n = sample size required, N = population size, and e = alpha level, i.e., e = 0.05 if the confidence interval is 95%. Yamane’s formula to determine a sample size from the target population of 9165 at 95% confidence interval (e = 0.05) as follows:

$$n = \frac{9165}{(1 + 9165(0.05)^2)}$$

$$n = 383$$

Table 2
Sample Size Distribution

Structure	Target Population	Sample Distribution	Percentage
County Executive Members	658	28	7.3
Chief Employees	756	32	8.4
County Assembly Members	4089	171	44.6
Directors	1739	73	19.1
Sub County Administrators	408	17	4.4
County Public Service Employees	1515	62	16.2
Total	9165	383	100%

Data Collection Instruments

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from a large sample of county employees across the 47 counties. The questionnaire was distributed electronically through Google Forms, and physical copies were provided in areas with limited internet access. The instrument was pilot-tested to ensure clarity and reliability, and steps were taken to maintain respondent anonymity and data confidentiality. The survey was kept concise to encourage completion and improve data quality.

Procedure

Research procedures involved obtaining the necessary permissions and approvals from relevant regulatory bodies, including the Institutional Ethics Review Committee (IERC) and the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). The IERC ensured that research involving human subjects was conducted ethically and in compliance with established standards to protect participants' rights and welfare. NACOSTI regulates research activities in Kenya to ensure alignment with national priorities and scientific integrity. The study was submitted to both bodies for review and approval prior to the commencement of data collection, in order to guarantee ethical conduct and adherence to legal requirements.

The pilot study for this research involved administering 38 questionnaires to county employees working in public offices within Kenya's 47 counties which was 10% of the sample size of 383. Reliability was tested using a pilot study involving 38 county employees, with Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding the 0.7 threshold for all constructs.

Data Analysis

Reliability analysis was conducted to assess the internal consistency of the research instrument using Cronbach's Alpha, which measures the extent to which all items within a construct are correlated. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2022), a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.7 or higher is considered acceptable for basic research. Additionally, Kothari and Garg (2022) highlight that reliability can be assessed from two perspectives: the extent of accuracy (reliability) and the extent of inaccuracy (unreliability). Cronbach's Alpha is widely used because it evaluates internal consistency by determining how individual questionnaire items relate to each other and to the overall construct. The reliability score ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating stronger internal coherence and reliability of the measurement tool.

Table 3 presents the reliability results for the pilot study, confirming that all constructs in the research instrument achieved acceptable reliability levels. The Cronbach's Alpha values ranged from 0.713 to 0.84, demonstrating that the instrument exhibits high internal consistency.

Table 3
Reliability Statistics

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items	Conclusion
Self-Awareness Competencies	0.84	16	Reliable
Learning Organization Practices	0.755	16	Reliable

Musyoki P. K.

Internal Service Quality	0.713	16	Reliable
--------------------------	-------	----	----------

Source: Pilot Survey Data (2025)

In the final study data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 26, employing both descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and percentages) and inferential analyses (correlation and regression). Moderation effects were tested through stepwise regression modeling.

To test the specific objective, simple linear regression model was estimated individually for the emotional intelligence construct (Self-awareness competencies). The model was structured as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$$

Where:

Y= Internal Service Quality (ISQ), the dependent variable

β_0 = Regression constant or intercept

β_1 = Regression coefficients for each independent variable

X_1 = Self-Awareness Competencies (SAC)

ε =Error term assumed to be normally distributed with mean z

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are critical to ensuring the integrity of the research process and protecting the rights of the participants (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2022). Before data collection began, clearance was sought from relevant authorities, including the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the county government offices. This ensured that the study complied with all legal and ethical standards. All participants were provided with detailed information about the study, including its purpose, the procedures involved, the potential risks and benefits, and their rights as participants. Consent forms were obtained, and participation was entirely voluntary. The confidentiality of the participants was strictly maintained. Personal identifiers were removed from the data, and responses were anonymized. The data were stored securely, and access was restricted to authorize personnel only. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. They were also assured that they could skip any questions they were uncomfortable answering. In cases where sensitive information was collected, additional measures were taken to protect the privacy and security of the data. This included encrypting electronic data and securely storing physical copies. After the data collection, participants were debriefed about the study’s findings and how their data would be used. They were also given the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback on the process.

RESULTS

Response Rate

The primary data collection method employed in the study was a self-administered questionnaire. The survey was distributed using a method in which participants were provided with the questionnaire and requested to return it upon completion. The study targeted a sample size of 383 county employees across Kenya. Out of this sample, 327 participants completed and returned the questionnaires, resulting in a response rate of 85.4%,

Musyoki P. K.

as shown in Table 4 According to Sataloff and Vontela (2021) a response rate of 50% is adequate, 60% is good, and 70% and above is considered very good for analysis. Therefore, the 85.4% response rate achieved in this study was deemed highly satisfactory and sufficient for conducting both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses to address the study objectives.

Table 4
Response Rate

Respondents	Targeted Number	Response	Response Rate
County employees	383	327	85.4%
Total	383	327	85.4%

Demographic Information of the Respondents

To enrich the interpretation of the study findings, a demographic analysis was carried out focusing on key participant characteristics, including gender, age, level of education, duration in current designation, job position, reporting department, and type of employment. These variables provided important context for understanding how individual backgrounds may have influenced respondents' perceptions and experiences related to emotional intelligence and internal service quality.

Gender of the Respondents

The research evaluated the gender distribution of the respondents.

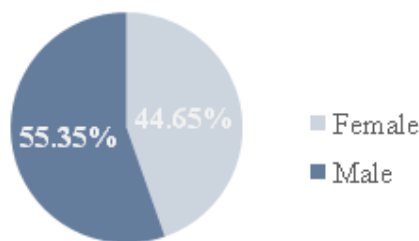


Figure 2 Gender of Respondents

As shown in Figure 2, most study participants were male, accounting for 55.35%, while female respondents comprised 44.65%. These findings indicate a relatively balanced gender mix among county employees. Although male respondents were slightly more than female, the difference was not significant, suggesting that both genders were well represented in the roles targeted by the study, including administrative, technical, and managerial positions across county governments.

Age of the Respondents

The study explored the respondents' age distribution. As illustrated in Figure 3, the largest proportion of respondents (37%) were aged between 26 and 35 years, followed closely by those aged 36 to 45 years, who accounted for 34.9%. Respondents aged 46 to 55 years made up 11.6%, while those aged 18 to 25 years comprised 10.4%. Only 6.1% of the respondents were above 55 years. These findings indicate that most county employees who participated in

Musyoki P. K.

the study were in the 26 to 45 age range, suggesting that mid-career professionals made up a substantial portion of the public service workforce engaged in internal service delivery.

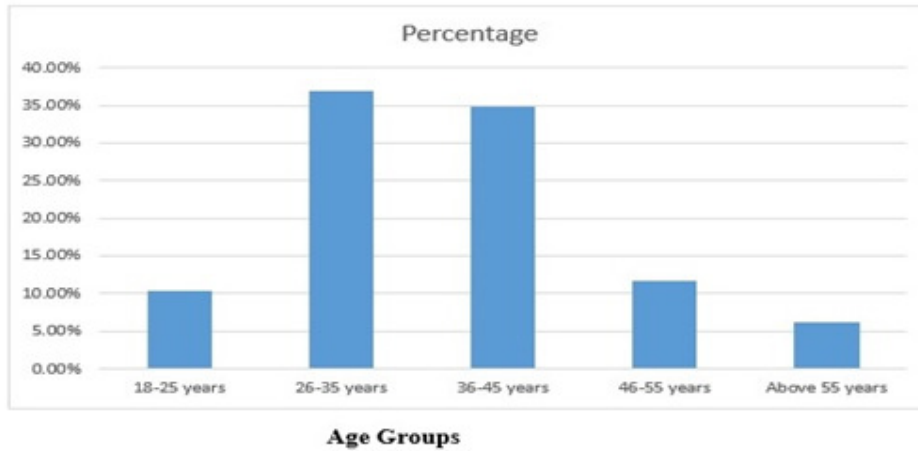


Figure 3 Age of Respondents

Education Level

The study examined the highest level of education attained by the respondents. As shown in Figure 4, majority of county employees (55.96%) held an undergraduate degree. This was followed by 22.32% who had attained a master’s degree, 8.87% who held a diploma, and 7.34% who had completed a PhD or doctorate. Additionally, 5.50% of the respondents reported having completed a professional course. These findings suggest that most respondents were well-educated, with a significant proportion holding advanced academic or professional qualifications, which likely contributed to their understanding and application of emotional intelligence competencies in the workplace.

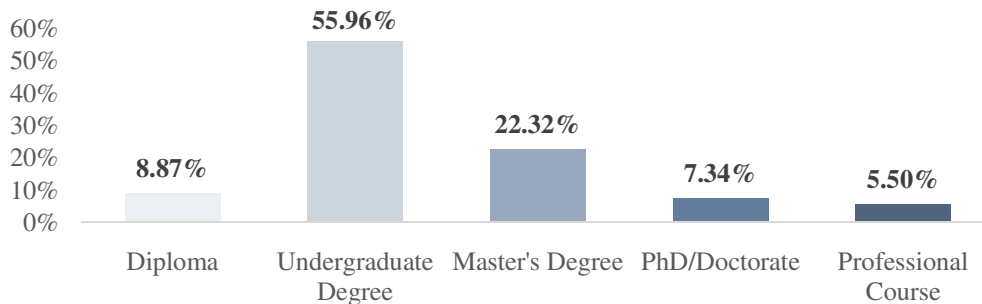


Figure 4 Highest Education Level

Length of Tenure

The study also analyzed the length of time respondents had served in their current designation. As presented in Figure 5, 28.44% of county employees had worked for a period of 1 to 3 years, followed closely by 26.30% who had been in their roles for 8 to 10 years. Respondents with 4 to 7 years of experience accounted for 19.27%, while those with less than 1 year represented 16.51%. Only 9.48% had served in their current roles for more than 10 years. These findings indicate that the majority of respondents had between 1 and 10 years of

Musyoki P. K.

experience, suggesting a workforce composed largely of early to mid-career professionals with considerable familiarity with county government operations

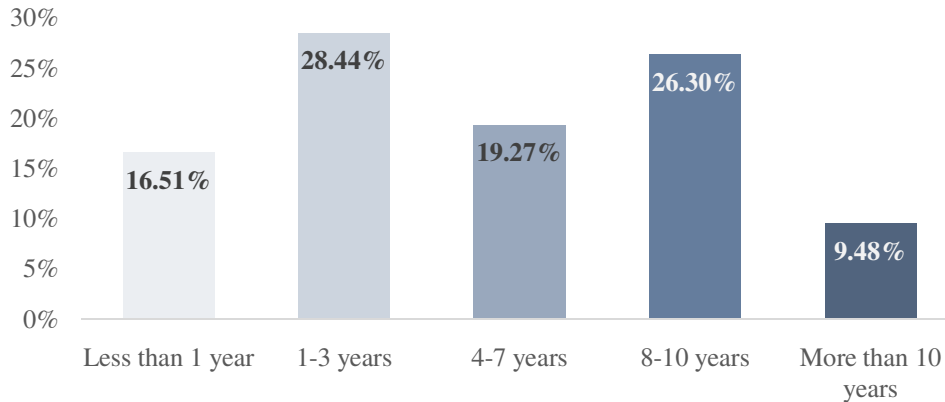


Figure 5 Length of Tenure

Current Position

The study assessed the current job positions held by county employees who participated in the research. As presented in Figure 6, the largest proportion of respondents were technical staff, accounting for 21.10%, followed by middle-level managers at 18.35% and support staff at 17.74%. Administrative staff represented 16.21% of the respondents, while senior-level managers made up 15.60%. Additionally, 11.01% of the participants identified their role as consultants. These results demonstrate that the sample included a diverse range of job categories within county governments, ensuring that insights into emotional intelligence and internal service quality reflected experiences across different functional and managerial levels.

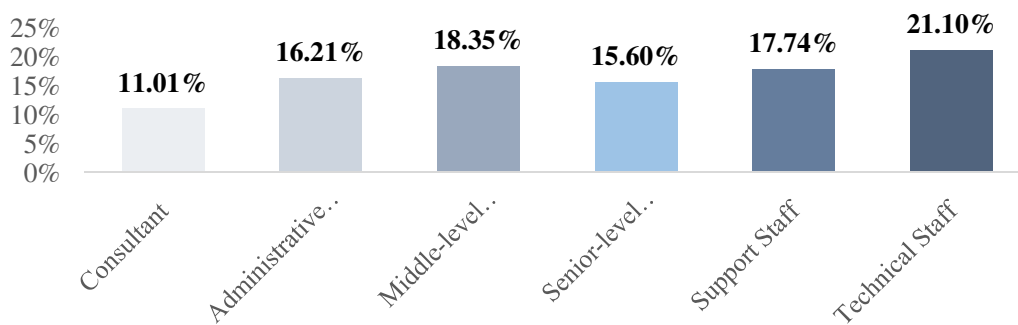


Figure 6 Current Position

Departmental Affiliation

The study also examined the departments to which the respondents reported within their respective county governments. As shown in Figure 7, the highest proportion of respondents worked in the finance department (18.65%), followed closely by human resources (18.04%) and IT (17.74%). Operations accounted for 17.43% of responses, while customer service represented 16.21%. The legal department had the smallest proportion of respondents at 11.93%. These findings indicate that the study captured perspectives from a wide range of

Musyoki P. K.

functional areas, ensuring a well-rounded understanding of how emotional intelligence competencies influence internal service quality across different operational contexts within county administration.

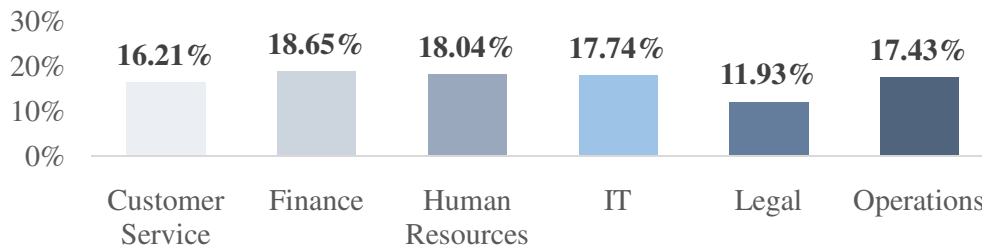


Figure 7 Departmental Affiliation

Employment Type

The study investigated the employment status of county employees who participated in the survey. As indicated in Figure 8, majority of respondents were permanently employed, accounting for 29.05%, followed by those on contract terms at 22.94%. Part-time employees made up 21.10% of the respondents, while casual workers represented 18.35%. Interns comprised the smallest group at 8.56%.

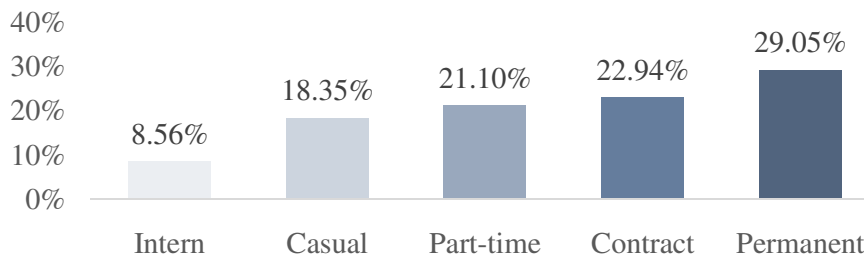


Figure 8 Employment Status

Descriptive Analysis for Internal Service Quality

This section presents the descriptive findings on the dependent variable, internal service quality, as reported by county employees in Kenya. Internal service quality was assessed through four dimensions: operational efficiency, responsiveness, employee satisfaction, and work collaboration. Respondents rated their agreement with several statements on a five-point Likert scale, and the results were summarized using mean scores and standard deviations. The overall aggregate mean score for internal service quality was 3.42 with a standard deviation of 1.27, indicating a moderate to strong perception of service quality within county departments.

The dimension of operational efficiency recorded a mean of 3.47 and a standard deviation of 1.26. Respondents agreed that service delivery processes are well-structured to reduce delays and inefficiencies (M = 3.57; SD = 1.30), and those internal workflows are optimized for accuracy and timeliness (M = 3.39; SD = 1.29). They also reported having adequate tools and resources to perform their duties (M = 3.52; SD = 1.23), and noted that their organizations continuously improve efficiency through better processes and technology (M = 3.41; SD = 1.23). This finding implies that organizations are moderately investing in process and technological improvements. Continuous innovation may enhance productivity and

Musyoki P. K.

competitiveness. However, the moderate mean suggests room for further optimization and employee involvement.

Responsiveness had an overall mean of 3.46 and a standard deviation of 1.25. Participants indicated that their departments respond to service requests in a timely manner (M = 3.47; SD = 1.36), prioritize urgent matters to maintain efficiency (M = 3.65; SD = 0.90), and encourage swift, proactive action in response to service needs (M = 3.27; SD = 1.42). They also took personal responsibility to ensure their work met responsiveness standards (M = 3.43; SD = 1.31). Employees demonstrate a fair level of accountability toward meeting service expectations. This can improve client satisfaction and operational reliability. Yet, standard deviation shows varied commitment levels across staff.

Employee satisfaction was rated moderately with a mean of 3.29 and a standard deviation of 1.29. Employees reported feeling valued and motivated (M = 3.31; SD = 1.31), supported by inclusive work environments (M = 3.28; SD = 1.40), and equipped with professional development and leadership support (M = 3.24; SD = 1.43). The workplace culture was described as encouraging engagement and commitment (M = 3.31; SD = 1.03). A culture that promotes engagement can foster loyalty and drive performance. The moderate score indicates foundational support, but more can be done to deepen employee motivation. Management may need to reinforce cultural values consistently.

Work collaboration recorded the highest dimension mean at 3.48 with a standard deviation of 1.29. Respondents affirmed that teamwork is promoted through open communication and shared responsibilities (M = 3.44; SD = 1.35), and those colleagues support one another to complete tasks efficiently (M = 3.50; SD = 1.26). Interdepartmental collaboration was also noted as a strength (M = 3.52; SD = 1.28), along with joint decision-making and cooperative goal pursuit (M = 3.46; SD = 1.29). These findings indicate that county employees experience moderate to strong internal service quality, with strengths in collaboration and operational efficiency. However, there remains an opportunity to enhance responsiveness and deepen employee satisfaction through improved engagement and support system.

Table 5
 Descriptive Statistics for Internal Service Quality

Internal Service Quality Statements	Mean	Std Dev
Operational Efficiency	3.47	1.26
My department ensures that service delivery processes are well-structured, reducing delays and inefficiencies.	3.57	1.30
Internal workflows in my organization are optimized to ensure that tasks are completed efficiently and with minimal errors.	3.39	1.29
I have access to the necessary tools, resources, and support required to perform my duties effectively.	3.52	1.23
My organization continuously evaluates and improves operational efficiency by implementing better processes and technological advancements.	3.41	1.23
Responsiveness	3.46	1.25
My department addresses service requests and inquiries in a timely manner to ensure a seamless workflow.	3.47	1.36

Musyoki P. K.

My organization prioritizes urgent matters and actively resolves service-related challenges to maintain high efficiency.	3.65	0.89
Employees are encouraged to act swiftly and proactively when responding to internal and external service needs.	3.27	1.42
I take necessary measures to ensure that my work output aligns with the organization's responsive standards.	3.43	1.31
Employee Satisfaction	3.29	1.29
I feel valued and appreciated in my workplace, which enhances my job satisfaction and motivation.	3.31	1.31
My organization fosters an inclusive and engaging work environment that prioritizes employee well-being.	3.28	1.39
I receive adequate support in terms of resources, professional development, and leadership guidance to ensure job satisfaction.	3.24	1.43
My workplace culture promotes employee engagement, leading to a high level of commitment and enthusiasm for my work.	3.31	1.03
Work Collaboration	3.48	1.29
My department encourages teamwork by fostering open communication and shared responsibilities.	3.44	1.35
Colleagues in my workplace support each other, ensuring that tasks are completed efficiently and with cooperation.	3.5	1.26
Interdepartmental collaboration is highly encouraged in my organization, ensuring that work processes are integrated and effective.	3.52	1.28
My team engages in joint decision-making and cooperative efforts to achieve our shared goals.	3.46	1.29
Aggregate	3.42	1.27

Descriptive Analysis for Self-Awareness Competencies

The descriptive findings as shown in table 6 indicates that the aggregate mean score for self-awareness competencies was 3.55, with a standard deviation of 1.21, indicating that, on average, respondents agreed with the statements provided.

The emotional recognition dimension recorded an overall mean of 3.37 and a standard deviation of 1.31, reflecting moderate agreement. Respondents reported varying ability to identify and regulate emotional responses. Specifically, the statement on being aware of how emotional state influences productivity and decision-making had the highest agreement (M = 3.51, SD = 1.28), followed by the ability to recognize colleagues' emotions based on tone and behavior (M = 3.42, SD = 1.24), and conscious adjustment of emotional responses to maintain professional judgment (M = 3.39, SD = 1.28). The lowest-rated item in this dimension was the ability to identify personal emotions in workplace situations and understand their impact (M = 3.14, SD = 1.45), suggesting that while most officers had emotional awareness, some found it difficult to consistently apply it in dynamic situations.

Self-confidence emerged as the strongest dimension, with a mean of 3.82 and a standard deviation of 1.07, indicating strong agreement. County employees expressed high levels of

Musyoki P. K.

belief in their ability to perform, adapt, and lead effectively. The highest-rated item was the belief in one’s ability to find effective solutions when faced with challenges (M = 4.08, SD = 1.14), followed closely by confidence in taking on new responsibilities and leadership roles (M = 3.92, SD = 1.05), and trust in personal ability to complete work and make sound decisions (M = 3.81, SD = 1.19). Comfort expressing differing opinions was rated lower within this dimension (M = 3.46, SD = 0.89), although still within the agreement range.

The accurate self-assessment dimension had a mean of 3.55 and a standard deviation of 1.17, also reflecting general agreement. Respondents reported frequently evaluating their own strengths and weaknesses (M = 4.05, SD = 1.09), and acknowledged being open to seeking support when facing limitations (M = 3.46, SD = 0.88). However, there was less consistency in seeking feedback from supervisors and colleagues (M = 3.39, SD = 1.32), and in using self-reflection to understand personal growth and behavioral impact (M = 3.29, SD = 1.39), suggesting some gaps in feedback-seeking and introspective practices.

The decision-making process dimension recorded a mean of 3.46 and a standard deviation of 1.28, again showing overall agreement. Respondents noted their ability to remain objective in decision-making (M = 3.43, SD = 1.29), evaluate different options critically (M = 3.46, SD = 1.27), and handle high-pressure situations with composure and rationality (M = 3.56, SD = 1.23). There was slightly less agreement on considering multiple perspectives before implementing decisions that affect others (M = 3.40, SD = 1.32), though this still fell within the positive agreement range. In summary, county employees demonstrated moderate to strong self-awareness competencies, with self-confidence standing out as the most developed attribute. While emotional recognition and accurate self-assessment were also evident, there were areas for growth in self-reflection and interpersonal emotional recognition.

Table 6
 Descriptive Statistics for Self-Awareness Competencies

Self-Awareness Competencies Statements	Mean	Std Dev
Emotional Recognition	3.36	1.31
I can identify my emotions in different workplace situations and understand their impact on my interactions.	3.14	1.45
I am aware of how my emotional state influences my decision-making and productivity at work.	3.51	1.28
I can recognize the emotions of my colleagues based on their tone, facial expressions, and behavior.	3.42	1.24
I consciously adjust my responses when I realize my emotions are affecting my professional judgment.	3.39	1.28
Self-Confidence	3.82	1.07
I trust my abilities to complete my work efficiently and make sound decisions independently.	3.81	1.19
I am comfortable expressing my opinions and ideas even when they differ from those of my colleagues.	3.46	0.89
I approach challenges with a belief in my ability to find effective solutions.	4.08	1.14
My confidence enables me to take on new responsibilities and leadership roles without hesitation.	3.92	1.05

Musyoki P. K.

Accurate Self-Assessment	3.55	1.17
I regularly evaluate my strengths and weaknesses to improve my work performance.	4.05	1.09
I actively seek constructive feedback from my supervisors and colleagues.	3.39	1.32
I use self-reflection to understand how my behavior and skills impact my professional growth.	3.29	1.39
I am open to acknowledging my limitations and seeking support when necessary.	3.46	0.88
Decision-Making Process	3.46	1.28
I remain objective when making decisions and avoid being influenced by emotions.	3.43	1.29
I take time to evaluate different options before making critical work-related decisions.	3.46	1.27
I handle high-pressure situations calmly and make rational decisions even under stress.	3.56	1.23
I consider multiple perspectives before implementing a decision that affects my colleagues or department.	3.4	1.32
Aggregate	3.55	1.21

Correlation Analysis

The study conducted Pearson correlation analysis to examine the strength and direction of the linear relationships between emotional intelligence competencies (self-awareness) and internal service quality among county employees in Kenya. The results, as presented in Table 7, indicate that the emotional intelligence dimensions had statistically significant positive correlations with internal service quality. Specifically, self-awareness competencies showed a strong positive relationship with internal service quality ($r = 0.569$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that county employees who are more self-aware tend to deliver better internal service. This finding imply that higher levels of emotional intelligence and supportive organizational learning environments are associated with improved internal service quality in the public sector. The positive and significant correlations across all variables support the theoretical linkages proposed in the conceptual framework and justify further inferential testing through regression analysis.

Table 7
Correlation Matrix

		1	2	3	4	5	6
Self-awareness competencies	Pearson Correlation	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)						
	N	327					

Musyoki P. K.

Internal service quality	Pearson Correlation	.569**	.501**	.418**	.470**	.315**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	327	327	327	327	327	327

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Regression Analysis of Self-Awareness Competencies on Internal Service Quality

The specific objective of the study was to find out the influence of self-awareness competencies on internal service quality among county employees in Kenya. Self-awareness competencies, as conceptualized in this study, refer to an individual's capacity to recognize their emotions, internal drivers, strengths, and limitations, and to understand how these affect their interactions and performance within the organization. These competencies are foundational to emotional intelligence and are considered essential for effective interpersonal engagement and service-oriented behavior in public institutions.

To assess this objective, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted. The analysis was also used to test the research hypothesis:

H0₁: Self-awareness competencies have no significant influence on internal service quality among county employees in Kenya.

The regression model estimating the influence of self-awareness competencies on internal service quality was fitted, and the model summary results are presented in Table 8. The results indicate that the correlation coefficient between self-awareness competencies and internal service quality was moderate and positive ($r = 0.569$). Furthermore, the coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.324, suggesting that approximately 32.4% of the variation in internal service quality can be explained by variations in self-awareness competencies. The remaining 67.6% is explained by other factors not included in the model, or by random error. These findings underscore the substantive contribution of self-awareness to perceived internal service quality within county government operations.

Table 8

Model Summary for Self-Awareness Competencies on Internal Service Quality

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.569	.324	.321	.49776

a. Predictors: (Constant), Self-Awareness Competencies

b. Dependent Variable: Internal Service Quality

To determine the statistical validity of the fitted model, the study also conducted an analysis of variance (ANOVA). The results presented in Table 9 indicate that the F-statistic was 155.457 with a corresponding p-value of less than 0.001, which is below the significance threshold of $\alpha = 0.05$. This confirms that the regression model is statistically significant and that self-awareness competencies make a meaningful contribution to predicting internal service quality.

Musyoki P. K.

Table 9

ANOVA for Self-Awareness Competencies and Internal Service Quality

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	38.517	1	38.517	155.457	<.001 ^b
	Residual	80.525	325	.248		
Total		119.042	326			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Self-awareness competencies

b. Dependent Variable: Internal Service Quality

The regression coefficients presented in Table 10 provide further insight into the relationship between self-awareness and internal service quality. The results show that the unstandardized coefficient for self-awareness was $\beta = 0.636$, with a standard error of 0.051. The t-value was 12.468 and statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). These findings indicate that self-awareness competencies have a positive and statistically significant effect on internal service quality.

The final regression model is expressed as:

$$\text{Internal Service Quality} = 1.166 + 0.636(\text{Self-Awareness Competencies}) + \varepsilon$$

Table 10

Regression Coefficients for Self-Awareness Competencies on Internal Service Quality

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.166	.183		6.366	.000
	Self-awareness	.636	.051	.569	12.468	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Internal Service Quality

Summary of the Hypotheses Tests and Operational Framework

Based on the findings on emotional intelligence competencies, self-awareness had statistically significant positive influences on internal service quality, as shown in table 11. The competency demonstrated a unique and measurable effect, confirming the multidimensional nature of emotional intelligence in the context of service delivery. The study revealed that emotional intelligence competencies significantly influence internal service quality, validating their role as key individual-level predictors in public institutions. As a result, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected. The regression model suggests that a one-unit increase in self-awareness competencies leads to an estimated 0.636 increase in internal service quality. These findings underscore the critical role of self-awareness in enhancing service delivery among public sector officers.

Table 11
Summary of the Study Hypotheses

Study variable	Study Hypothesis	Type analysis	of Hypothesis test result
Self-awareness competencies	H0₁ : There is no statistically significant influence of self-awareness on internal service quality.	Simple linear regression	H0₁ rejected (p < 0.05)

DISCUSSION

The study established that self-awareness competencies exert a statistically significant and positive influence on internal service quality among county employees in Kenya. Self-awareness competencies recorded a mean of 3.55 (SD = 1.21), demonstrated a significant correlation with internal service quality ($r = 0.569$, $p < 0.01$), and accounted for 32.4% of its variability ($R^2 = 0.324$, $\beta = 0.636$, $t = 12.468$, $F = 155.457$, $p < 0.001$). These metrics underscore that heightened self-awareness fosters superior responsiveness, collaboration, and interpersonal service behaviors, directly elevating internal institutional performance in devolved public settings. Employees exhibiting stronger emotional recognition, self-confidence, accurate self-assessment, and rational decision-making deliver more reliable and empathetic internal services, confirming self-awareness as a pivotal emotional intelligence dimension for public sector efficacy.

These findings align closely with Oba-Adenugu, Ezeribe, and Oba-Adenugu (2022), who surveyed 308 academic staff in Nigerian private universities and uncovered a strong, significant positive relationship between self-awareness and task performance via regression analysis. Their recommendation for targeted training to enhance self-efficacy mirrors the current study's implication that self-awareness training could amplify service quality in Kenyan counties, though their focus on universities and task performance, rather than public sector internal service quality, highlights a contextual extension here.

In contrast, Akolo and Adamu (2024) reported a positive but insignificant self-awareness effect on employee performance in North Central Nigeria, while self-management proved significant. This nuances the present results by affirming self-awareness's value, yet the current study's robust significance ($\beta=0.636$) in county contexts surpasses their healthcare findings, emphasizing its potency when paired with full EI theory over isolated analysis.

The purpose of Simon Kagwe's (2025) study was to examine how self-awareness, as a dimension of emotional intelligence, influences organizational performance in universities in Kenya through a synthesis of existing literature. The study found that self-awareness positively contributes to organizational performance by enhancing leadership effectiveness, decision-making quality, interpersonal relationships, and employee engagement, ultimately improving institutional efficiency and service delivery in universities. Musonye and Makokha (2025) confirmed self-awareness's significant positive effect on organizational performance in Kenya's Trans Nzoia County Government ($n=100$, correlation/regression), urging emotional recognition training. The current study's broader county scope, higher explanatory power, and EI-grounded correlational design extend their single-county, self-awareness theory-limited results to validate internal service quality as a key performance conduit.

Musyoki P. K.

Gitonga, Mburugu and Mwenda (2024) found self-awareness significantly enhanced Presbyterian clergy well-being in Kenya (n=176, descriptive stats), recommending recruitment testing. Aligning descriptively, the present regression strength (F=155.457) applies this to service quality, transcending clergy psychological focus to public employee collaboration, with fuller EI integration. Magut (2024) linked self-awareness to optimism in Uasin Gishu looked-after youths via mixed-methods, confirming interventions' elevation. The current adult county application mirrors this developability, but shifts to service outcomes, filling youth-specific gaps with quantifiable variance explanation.

Thapa, Akashe and Aryal, (2023) demonstrated self-awareness's significant influence on leadership effectiveness in Bangladesh enterprises advocating training for engagement. Paralleling this, Kenyan public results affirm transferability to service quality, adapting enterprise-digital emphasis to devolved governance. Welbeck et al. (2025) showed self-awareness mediated 29% of internal service quality via thought leadership in Ghanaian SMEs. The current direct effect (32.4%) complements this, extending to Kenyan public sectors omitted in their private SME analysis. Da Fonseca (2022) revealed strong self-awareness effects on internal service quality through leadership in South Africa, yet ignored frontline employees. The present study's county frontline focus ($\beta=0.636$) addresses this, aligning EI frameworks while contextualizing to Kenyan devolution. Therefore, these studies corroborate self-awareness's positive service influence across Nigeria, USA, Kenya, Bangladesh, Ghana, South Africa, and Bangladesh, empirically bridging to Kenyan county internal service quality enhancement through targeted competencies.

Conclusion

The study established that self-awareness competencies exert a statistically significant and positive influence on internal service quality among county employees in Kenya. The study is important to several key stakeholders in Kenya including county employees, county governments, citizens, human resource professionals, researchers and learning institutions to understand how emotional intelligence's link to internal service quality, thus sustaining performance. The study guides targeted interventions that can improve internal services, organizational environment, job satisfaction, and citizen-centered service delivery.

The study concludes that self-awareness competencies have statistically significant positive influence on internal service quality among Kenyan county employees. Heightened self-awareness fosters superior responsiveness, collaboration, and interpersonal service behaviors, elevating institutional performance in devolved public settings. Employees with stronger emotional recognition, self-confidence, accurate self-assessment, and rational decision-making deliver reliable, empathetic internal services, confirming self-awareness as a pivotal emotional intelligence dimension for public sector efficacy. Targeted training is necessary to amplify these outcomes.

The study recommends that county governments should implement targeted self-awareness training programs emphasizing emotional recognition, self-confidence, accurate self-assessment, and rational decision-making to boost responsiveness, collaboration, and empathetic internal services. Roll out mandatory workshops for frontline employees during onboarding and annually, using 360-degree feedback and reflection exercises tailored to devolved public dynamics. Incorporate self-awareness assessments into recruitment and

Musyoki P. K.

promotions to hire resilient candidates. Leadership should model these competencies through peer mentoring, fostering a culture of reliability.

Future studies should examine additional variables interacting with EI, such as psychological safety, organizational commitment, or resilience, to determine their influence on internal service quality among county employees in Kenya. Broaden sectoral scope to health services, education, or state-owned enterprises for generalizability beyond devolved governments.

Authorship Statement

Kithusya Peter Musyoki is the sole author of the article. A Strategic Management Doctorate Degree student at USIU-A, researched on the article, collected relevant data and pieced the data together to build the article.

Funding

No internal or external funding either by fundraising, or any other financial support from any source.

Declaration of Competing Interests

There was no known competing or any form of any conflict of interest.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge my respondents, my dissertation supervisors—whose work greatly informed this study—and my many friends from USIU-A and beyond for their support and encouragement.

References

- Akolo, M.M. & Adamu, A.A. (2024). Effect of self-awareness and self-management on employees' performance of private hospitals in North Central Nigeria. *NSUK Journal of Management Research and Development*, 9(2), (181-198). <https://jmrDNSUK.com/category/12?utm>
- Al-Ibrahim, A. (2022). Quality Management and Its Role in Improving Service Quality in Public Sector. *Journal of Business and Management Sciences*, 2(6), 123-147. DOI:10.12691/jbms-2-6-1
- Anguche, C., Kimani, H., & Ndururi, J. (2024). E-Government Services and Performance of County Governments in Kenya: The Case of Nairobi City County. *European Journal of Business and Strategic Management*, 9(3), 1–30. <https://doi.org/10.47604/ejbsm.2796>
- Bwachele, V.W., Chong, YL. & Krishnapillai, G. (2023). *Perceived service quality and student satisfaction in higher learning institutions in Tanzania*. Humanit Soc Sci Commun 10, 444. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-01913-6>
- Carden, J., Jones, R. J., & Passmore, J. (2022). Defining Self-Awareness in the Context of Adult Development: A Systematic Literature Review. *Journal of Management Education*, 46(1), 140-177. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1052562921990065>
- Da Fonseca, S. (2022). The influence of self-awareness on effective leadership outcomes in South Africa. *South African Journal of Business Management*, 53(1), 20. DOI:10.4102/sajbm.v53i1.2720

Musyoki P. K.

- Daoud, J. I. (2017). Multicollinearity and regression analysis. In *Journal of Physics: Conference Series* (Vol. 949, No. 1, p. 012009). IOP Publishing. DOI:10.1088/1742-6596/949/1/012009
- Ferguson, B. (2022). *Public administration performance measurement*. In *Competing for Influence: The Role of the Public Service in Better Government in Australia* (pp. 127–166). ANU Press. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.22459/CI.2019>
- Gitonga, F., Mburugu, B. M., Kamoyo, J. M., & Mwenda, E. (2024). The relationship between self-awareness aspect of emotional intelligence and psychological well-being of Presbyterian clergy in Kenya. *Editon Consortium Journal of Psychology, Guidance and Counseling*, 5(1), 1-11. DOI:10.51317/ecjjpgc.v5i1.521
- Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. New York: Bantam Books.
<https://www.scirp.org/reference/referencespapers?referenceid=773626>
- Government of Kenya (2022a). *County Government Act 2022*. Nairobi: Government Printer.
- Hogreve, J., Iseke, A., & Derfuss, K. (2022). The Quality management theory: Reflections, Revisions, and Reimaginings. *Journal of Service Research*, 25(3), 460-477. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10946705211052410>
- Jasleen, K., & Anupam, S. (2022). Emotional intelligence and work performance. *International Journal of Recent Technology and Engineering (IJRTE)*, 8(2S3), 3. <https://www.ijrte.org/wp-content/uploads/papers/v8i2S3/B13010782S319.pdf>
- Kagwe, S. (2025). Influence of self-awareness on organizational performance of universities in Kenya: A literature review synthesis. *African Journal of Business and Development Studies*, 2(1), 593–604. <https://doi.org/10.70641/ajbds.v2i1.166>
- Kamau, S. N. (2022). Effect of E-Government Practices Strategy on Service Delivery in The Public Sector A Case of Nakuru County Kenya (Doctoral dissertation, Egerton University). <http://41.89.96.81:4000/items/9b0df2e2-76f7-4826-afec-fb2aa5d2a755>
- Kang, G., Jame, J. and Alexandris, K. (2022), "Measurement of internal service quality: application of the SERVQUAL battery to internal service quality", *Managing Service Quality: An International Journal*, 12(5), 278-291. DOI:10.1108/09604520210442065
- Kothari, C. R., & Garg, G. (2022). *Research methodology: Methods and techniques* (4th ed.). New Age International Publishers.
- Magut, A. (2024). Relationship Between Self-Awareness as an Outcome of Psychological Support Interventions and Optimism: A Study of Perceptions of Youths in Charitable Children's Institutions in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. *Journal of the Kenya National Commission for UNESCO*, 5(1).
- Musonye, N., & Makokha, E. N. M. (2025). Employee's Self-Awareness and Organizational Performance of The County Government of Trans Nzoia Kenya. *International Journal of Recent Research in Commerce Economics and Management (IJRRCEM)* 12 (2), 35-44
- Oba-Adenuga, O. A., Ezeribe, S. N., & Oba-Adenuga, M. A. (2022). Relationship between self-awareness and task performance in selected private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. *NIU Journal of Social Sciences*, 8(3), 123-130.

Musyoki P. K.

- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2022). *Research Methods for Business Students*. Pearson.
- Sekaran, U., & Bougie, R. (2022). *Research methods for business: A skill-building approach* (8th ed.). Wiley.
- Thapa, P., Akashe, S., Palladino, F., & Aryal, R. (2023). Impact of self-awareness life skill on effective leadership in the digital era. *Journal of Academic Perspective on Social Studies*, (1), 54-64. DOI:10.35344/japss.1190883
- Welbeck, D. N. O., Amponsah-Bediako, K., & Dorhetso, S. N. (2023). Appraisal of the Effects of Emotional Intelligence on Leadership Styles of Managers of SMES in Ghana. In *Applied Research Conference in Africa* (pp. 77-95). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.
- Welbeck, D. N. O., et al. (2025). The mediating effect of thought leadership on self-awareness, self-regulation, and job performance among managers of SMEs. *Cogent Business & Management*, 12(1), 34