

ABSTRACT

With the Promulgation of the new constitution in 2010 in Kenya, most government functions were decentralized. Services that were initially offered from a centralized position were devolved and brought to the counties, an action that was largely attributed with efficiency and effectiveness in operations within the counties. With this in place, challenges like corruption, nepotism and poor task assignments and massive inefficiencies are still being faced during the dispensation of services at the county levels. Lean practice, majorly the reason for operational success in the Toyota Production system in Japan during tough economic times and industrial revolution in the early 1980's is one of the managerial approaches that were initiated with the aim of elimination of wastages in the operational activities within Vihiga county government. However, the challenges are still evident with cases of malpractices in procurement processes and operational activities still being reported. For instance, questionable purchases, overpriced construction projects and the withdrawal Labour citing dishonored debts by the county government. This poses a major question on the effectiveness of lean practices. The purpose of this research was therefore to study the effect of lean practices on operation performance of Vihiga county government in Kenya. The specific objectives were to establish the extent of lean practices within Vihiga County, establish the state of operational performance and to determine the relationship between lean practices and operational performance at vihiga county government. The study was guided by a conceptual framework where the independent variable was lean practices and the dependent variable was operational performance. The study adopted both descriptive and the correlation designs. The study population was eighty staff drawn from the procurement and the operations departments; a pilot study was done before the actual research. Primary data was collected using questionnaires. validity of the study was ascertained through an expert opinion while the reliability was ascertained through split half method. Descriptive analysis revealed that the level of lean practices within the county was rated by a weighted mean of 2.81, while the operational performance of the county government was illustrated by a weighted mean of 2.56. Correlation analysis revealed there was a weak significant relationship between lean practice and operational performance ($r=0.237$, $p=0.033$) implying that as lean practice is implemented, operational performance also increases. The study concluded that there is significant relationship between lean practice and operational performance. The study recommended that county government should implement lean practice since it is positively related to operational performance. The study may be useful in policy makers in relation to operations and lean practices.