

REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR- 55882

Title: The Influence of Administrative Decentralization on Service Delivery in Three Selected Counties of Western Equatoria State, South Sudan.

Recommendation:

Accept after minor revision.

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality	✓			
Techn. Quality	✓			
Clarity	✓			
Significance	✓			

Reviewer Name: Dr. Bishwajit Rout

Reviewer's Comment for Publication.

(To be published with the manuscript in the journal)

The reviewer is requested to provide a brief comment (3-4 lines) highlighting the significance, strengths, or key insights of the manuscript. This comment will be Displayed in the journal publication alongside with the reviewers name.

- Significance:** This study is significant as it empirically examines administrative decentralization in a fragile state, an area underexplored in existing literature. By comparing county-level outcomes, it provides valuable insights for policymakers and development practitioners seeking to improve service delivery through decentralized governance structures in post-conflict environments.
- Strength:** The study's major strengths include its mixed-methods design, rich contextual analysis, and comparative county-level approach. The integration of quantitative data with focus group discussions enhances validity. Additionally, the research contributes nuanced evidence on how decentralization outcomes vary across local contexts rather than producing uniform effects.
- Key Insight:** The key insight is that administrative decentralization does not automatically improve service delivery in fragile states. Its effectiveness depends on local administrative capacity, clarity of authority, leadership stability, and intergovernmental coordination. Decentralization functions best as a context-sensitive and networked process rather than a uniform policy intervention.

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The paper titled "*The Influence of Administrative Decentralization on Service Delivery in Three Selected Counties of Western Equatoria State, South Sudan*" mixed-methods study (n=474) evaluates administrative decentralization's impact on service delivery in South Sudan's Tambura, Yambio, and Mundri counties, using surveys, interviews, and FGDs analyzed via SPSS and thematics. Findings reveal uneven effects: positive in Yambio (B=0.205, p=0.018) and Tambura (B=0.044, p=0.048), negative non-significant in Mundri, constrained by capacity gaps and interference. Robust in contextual analysis but limited by purposive sampling and fragile-setting biases. Contributes policy insights for post-conflict decentralization, though broader validation needed.

Suggestions for Improvement:

1. Clearly articulate the study's novelty in the final paragraph.
2. Strengthen linkage between decentralization theory and service delivery outcomes. Include more recent global or regional empirical studies.
3. Quantify the problem using brief empirical indicators where possible. Sharpen focus by distinguishing symptoms from root causes.
4. Consider adding specific objectives for qualitative components. Ensure consistency between objectives and later analytical sections.
5. Organize literature thematically rather than descriptively. Critically compare findings instead of listing studies.
6. Clearly distinguish theoretical, methodological, and contextual gaps. Explicitly show how this study addresses each gap.
7. Improve clarity and consistency in describing research design. Justify the choice of sample size more rigorously.
8. Improve table formatting and labeling consistency. Avoid repetition between tables and narrative explanation.
9. Deepen critical reflection rather than reiterating results.
10. Compare findings more explicitly with contrasting studies. Emphasize policy implications more clearly.
11. Clearly state theoretical and practical contributions. Highlight implications for fragile-state governance.

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The manuscript addresses an important governance issue in a fragile, post-conflict context using a solid mixed-methods approach. While the study demonstrates empirical rigor and contextual relevance, improvements are needed in clarity, synthesis, and analytical depth. With revisions focusing on methodological coherence, theoretical integration, and concise presentation, the paper has strong potential for publication in IJAR. Addressing the identified weaknesses will make it suitable for publication in IJAR.

I recommend this paper for publication after minor revision.