

## Learning Orientation as an Antecedent of Service Delivery: A Review of Literature

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**Abstract:** The current practices of successful companies are to increase customer service delivery through knowledge and skills among their members. The global economic forces organizations to be more innovative in an ever more competitive, complex, transforming and dynamic environment. Organizations have to predict the business market changes, to choose strategic business decisions, to maximize the Customer Lifetime Value, and to utilize technical strategies to enable them to constitute and systematically follow the standard quality service delivery in aiming high profitability and durability. The development of diverse global business has brought about new challenges and has enhanced the competitiveness of organizations across the sphere and to remain relevant in the industry, organizations have been forced to re-invent themselves internally and externally in order to retain their customers. Organizational managements need to create a quality service delivery strategies that keeps customers coming back, a strategy which will ultimately shield one's organization from the external competitors. Therefore, organizations need develop strategies among many activities in the organization in order to attain organizational competitiveness. Currently, technological innovations is a key component in resolving major strategic issues. Business entities are becoming increasingly dependent on Information Communication Technology to improve their service delivery. In order to gain from the available technology, there is need to integrate technological strategies with business strategies to remain relevant in a business. This study sought to review existing conceptual, theoretical and empirical literature on learning orientations and service delivery with a view to highlighting the knowledge gaps suitable to form basis for future research work. Existing empirical literature on learning orientations is supplied with evidence of results that are not conclusive, different conceptualization of learning orientations as well as diversity of contextual variables. The review also revealed key indicators of quality service delivery as one of the outcomes of learning orientations in organizations. Ultimately, a set of relationships were for the dimension learning orientations and service delivery were modeled as a guide for future research work in the field of strategic management.

**Keywords:** Learning Orientation, Innovation Capability and Service Delivery

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The key to achieve competitiveness in a business entity through service delivery, is the ability of the organization's human capital to learn (Sinkula, 1997; Baba, 2015). The learning orientation involves individuals throughout the organization to create and use knowledge to offer quality service delivery (Calantone, 2002). Salunke, (2019) demonstrates the importance of learning orientations is to have the service delivery timeline. A higher learning orientation can provide quality services delivery to customers for the survival and growth of the organization.

Learning orientation also uses organizational knowledge to promote acquisition of high market share, as it guides the ideals of organizational culture to enable companies to the beliefs, practices, principles and traditions on how the organization should operate based on the understanding of business service delivery in response to changes in the markets (Bature, 2018). With learning orientation, managers play a fundamental role in building the right environment. The commitment to learning must be seen, both by managers and employees, as a value that leads to quality service delivery in the organization. Learning orientation of an organization plan resources as well as technological capacities can present a sustainable service delivery to organization operating in a dynamic markets provided that the organization is capable of detecting the changes and comprehend their outcomes, and constantly

reorganize their company-definite processes and resource bases to fit the requirements of the business environment (Salunke, 2006; Teece, 2007).

A shared learning explains us that managers are responsible for the learning orientation in their organization. Again, it is important to note that, in an open-mindedness culture, employees see themselves as partners, they communicate freely and managers know how to interpret it (Lita & Faisal, 2018). Learning orientation creates conditions of improving organizational service delivery for competitiveness in the market, due to this, it increased adaptability of the company, allowing the individuals to take advantage of the opportunities detected with cognitive mechanisms based on learning (An et al., 2017; Mahmoud et al., 2016; Wolff et al., 2015).

Hussein, et al., (2014) suggest that the learning orientation helps to improve the service delivery and change the capacity of response of the organization, which later attract interest in developing organizations that promote and encourage learning; it is associated with the prompt delivery of the product, cost improvement, quality and confidence in the performance (Tajeddini, 2016). Proper learning orientations, according to Hussein et al. (2014) helps organizations add value to their products and services hence enhancing customer quality service delivery. For organizations to meet customers' demands and expectations diversity, organizations need to become well conversant with the undefined industry condition by comprehending the varying needs of customers, as well as reacting to new competitors in the market.

Von, (2012) defined Service delivery as any contact with the public administration during which customers- citizens, residents or enterprises - seek or provide data, handle their affairs or fulfil their duties. These services should be delivered in an effective, predictable, reliable and customer-friendly manner. According to several authors, service delivery is subject to opportunities exploited in the market, team members must be motivated to learn, develop and share their skills, as well as their learning habits with others (Von, 2012). As interpreted by Danjuma and Rasli (2012), service delivery has been an issue of considerable debate and many researchers have agreed that it is an evasive concept (Parasuraman, et al., 1985; Carman, 1990). Quality service delivery is an attribute that is extrinsically perceived, based on the consumer's experience of the service he/she has encountered (Parasuraman et al., 1991).

In addition, for a better and more conclusive understanding of Quality service delivery, Danjuma and Rasli (2012) highlight the work of Grönroos (2007), which used the total perceived service model in comparison with customers' expectations of service and their experience after obtaining the service. Grönroos (2007) conceived that customers look for two service quality dimensions to evaluate: First, technical quality, which is what has been delivered by the service provider or what the customer actually obtained, and second functional quality, which is the manner in which the services are delivered. Both dimensions affect the image of the service provider. This is also confirmed by Khan (2012).

According to Parasuraman, et al. (1985), there are three well-documented characteristics of services that need to be considered for a clear understanding of quality service delivery, namely intangibility, heterogeneity, and inseparability. First, almost all services are intangible because they are performances rather than objects, and accurate manufacturing specifications concerning uniform quality cannot easily be set or determined. Most services are not quantifiable and cannot be measured or even tested, let alone verified, prior to any sale to assure quality. Due to this intangibility, marketers find it difficult to conclude how consumers perceive their services and evaluate their organization's quality service delivery (Kayabasi, et al., 2013; Tuan, 2012; Zeithaml, 1981).

Therefore, organizations should have the innovative capacity to put together, construct, and reorganize external as well as internal proficiencies so as to alter their operational abilities such that they address the quickly changing environment. In organizations within sectors betraying bigger environmental dynamism, (D'Aveni, 1994; Hitt, et al., 1998) for instance speedy changes in markets, technologies, as well as competition, the top management should make fast strategic choices and develop innovative strategies as well as creative strategies to make a swift response ability to tackle the changing external circumstances and in that way to survive and thrive in the new setting. Covin and Slevin (1989) maintain that an innovation capability will enhance the effectiveness and efficiency

of planning as well as communication, and will with dynamism improve the aptitude to react. As the changes in the environment happen faster, an upper level of dynamic innovative capabilities is necessary to meet the needs of customers.

With the dynamic environment, the technological life cycle (TLC) is repeatedly reduced causing product research as well as development being gradually more speed up and technologies that compete each other regularly emerging (Hosseini, Soltani, & Mehdizadeh, 2018). In a dynamic business world, business competitiveness is short-lived other than sustainable (D'Aveni, 1994). Considering the resource-based view (RBV) of the organizations, companies achieve and maintain a competitiveness through service delivery so as to get hold of entrepreneurial rents (Wernerfelt, 1984; Barney, 1991). Therefore, for an organization to be able to predict as well as take hold of opportunities in the business dynamic environment, organizations should have both the resources and capability to reorganize their accessible asset bases along with the processes (Teece & Pisano, 1994).

### **2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Proper organizational quality service delivery is achieved and managed more effectively and efficiently through learning orientation. Although a lot of research has been done on learning orientation and service delivery in education sector, the review of the literature on the concept of learning orientation has failed to find an agreed definition in business entity (Reich & Benbasat, 1996; Henderson & Venkatraman, 2013; Powell, 2016). The major aim of this study is to define, within the context of Business entity, what constitutes learning orientation and which is perceived as the most important, and to identify how learning orientation influence the enhancement of service delivery. Additionally, a lot of strategic management research work has been done in developed countries. Though studies in third world economies have appeared in recent years, the results left overlooked (Wilkins & Emik, 2019).

Likewise, most of the researches about learning orientation had picked certain dimensions in separate, as well as focusing on private organizations and learning institutions, mainly in developed countries, while learning orientation may vary in public and private learning and business organizations (Sharma & Behl, 2021). Public learning and business organizations work under a noncompetitive settings, but every private learning and business organization operates to achieve specific objectives, in terms of optimizing service delivery, and customer needs expectation to remain relevant in the industry (Henriques et al., 2019). To achieve these objectives, complex decisions making on the allocation of scarce resources with strategic economic significance is required (Rashid & Simpson, 2019). Therefore, while learning orientation of technology, operations, employees and customers could enhance decision effectiveness on allocating resources and quality service delivery; given that private sector organizations seem to achieve a significant impact of their strategic planning and its content on service delivery (Jacobsen & Johnsen, 2020).

According to research conducted by Yusuf and Saffu (2017), developed countries keep on doing economic reforms, private and public companies need to be customer service-oriented to keep up with reforms requirements aside from the profits accrued. Decision makers of these developed countries often need organizational learning orientation and technological strategic planning to intensify the service delivery of their organizations, meeting their customers' needs and elevating service delivery level. Moreover, Baron (2006) suggested that the organizations need further research for key issues, such as the factors that enable or prevent strategic planning and technological activities, and the applicability of integrating business and technological strategies in organizations in developing countries. Undoubtedly, without solving these issues most organizations in third world economies will not be able to integrate learning orientation strategies and technological strategies directed at building business strategy in a route to enhance quality service delivery.

### **3. CONCEPTUAL LITERATURE**

#### **3.1. Concept of Learning Orientation**

The Learning Orientation scale measures the tendency or habit of seeking to increase one's knowledge and skills; toward valuing the learning process as a means to accomplish mastery over a task; toward being interested in challenging activities; and toward using information seeking as a personal strategy when problem solving (Kim, Atuahene & Gima, 2010). The present investigation adopts the resource-based theory and innovation capabilities (Kim, Atuahene & Gima, 2010) since it

has an early role in the development of company competitiveness. This approach visualizes companies as a system of structures that generate profitability (Barney, 2001), not because of their strategic investments, but rather to base their performance on resources and internal capabilities that strengthen the organization service delivery (Yazfanfar, 2013).

Learning Orientation is a construct that acknowledges the attitude of managers to consider learning as a key resource for the organization, also understands the need to unlearn obsolete knowledge, to eliminate old mental models, and welcome new learning (Baba, 2015). “Learning is a crucial process in achieving an adequate crisis response, a proper return to normality” (Baba, 2015). The Learning Orientation is considered as a resource and organizational capability that supports companies to develop their competitiveness and organizational service delivery.

According to Zhao, Li, Lee & Chen, (2011), learning is one of the most important resources to develop the ability to make decisions that correspond to the effectiveness of the company. Not consolidating learning means that errors are not detected or corrected, which cause an organization to be inefficient due to the lack of information shared or developed by the same members of the organization; therefore, the problems increase due to the ambiguity that persists due to the sub structured sequence of learning practices. Hakala, (2013), defined the learning orientation as the set of organizational values that proactively influence the knowledge generation, in order to interpret, evaluate, accept or reject the information received by the company. It causes a predisposition of individuals to have routines related to learning commitment, open-mindedness and shared vision.

On the one hand, Baker and Hakala, (2013), related the scope of the learning orientation as a capacity that improves the company’s offer, since it maximizes the correct interpretation of the links that conform the value chain (customers, distribution channels, competitors, etc.) to provide solutions according to the orientation of the current market (Ellinger, 2015 & Iyer, 2019). For Baba (2015), learning orientation is a collective capacity derived from the cognitive and experiential process and involves the acquisition, exchange and use of knowledge. In the same way, (Liao, 2017) defined the learning orientation as an organizational process to improve individual knowledge by transforming it into part of the knowledge system of the organization, in an organized and understandable way as well as the commitment to learning, open-mindedness and shared vision (Lita & Faisal, 2018).

Regarding the learning orientation structure, Baba, (2015) point out three dimensions: commitment to learning, open mindedness and shared vision. Others measure learning orientation with four dimensions: commitment to learning, open-mindedness, shared vision and knowledge exchange (Hurley & Hult, 1998); and Cardona and Calderón (2006) consider the learning orientation formed with the dimensions of commitment to learning, ability to unlearn what has been learned, openness and experimentation. In the context of this study, three organizational values that predispose the organization to learn are considered: commitment to learning, an open-mindedness and a shared vision.

Commitment to learning is the degree to which an organization values and promotes learning, it plays a key role in promoting the culture of sharing knowledge within the organization (Baba, 2015), and considering this as a long-term investment that it becomes a survival factor (Ratnawati, Soetjipto, Murwani & Wahyono, 2018). A shared vision welcomes the individual efforts towards the same direction in order to share information that could influence in a positive way the knowledge base of an organization, a company must continuously renew operational systems routines, and innovative capabilities according to the dynamics market’s needs (García, *et al.*, 2011; Bature *et al.*, 2018). Open-mindedness details the policies of the company, the basis or normativity that have to do with the openness to new ideas and/or initiatives that collaborators promote (Bature, *et al.*, 2018).

### *3.1.1. Perspectives of Learning Orientation*

Learning orientation is viewed from different perspectives. Grinstein, (2008) viewed Learning orientation from a perspective of a mental set that enables stakeholders to evaluate and recalibrate inputs and the outcomes, processes and policies required for growth. This includes organizational strategies such as market, learning, strategic, entrepreneurial, innovation, employee, competitor, customer and cost orientation.

Ellinger, Chen, Tian and Armstrong, 2015) viewed learning orientation from a perspective of market learning orientation which is strongly correlated with entrepreneurial learning, employee orientation, and innovation capability. Gatignon and Xuereb, (1997) viewed learning orientation from perspectives of strategic directions and orientations, which create certain business behavior, which subsequently results in superior service delivery. Learning orientation has been identified as an organizational behavioral characteristic on how to conduct business by achieving alignment with the environment (Baba, 2015; Grinstein, 2008). Learning orientation therefore refers to organizational behavioral characteristics or practices and routines designed for the purpose to support the strategic learning management process. Importance of learning orientation has also been recognized in the nonprofit sector (Johl & Toha, 2021).

Baba, (2015) viewed learning orientation from a perspective of Innovation. Innovation capability orientation (ICO) refers to companies that introduce new and high quality products, services, processes, and methods of production, which enables them to become technological leaders. That is why this orientation is often labeled technological or product orientation (Grinstein, 2008). ICO seems to be closely related to entrepreneurial orientation. It reflects organizational propensity to identify market opportunities, act proactively, take risks, build new competencies, innovate, and transform themselves and the market (Atuahene-Gima & Ko, 2001; Bhuian, *et al.*, 2005).

The relationship between learning orientation and service delivery has generally been found to be positive (Zhao, *et al.*, 2011). That is why organizations are continuously looking for ways to increase their learning capacity. Learning and knowledge have been recognized as major sources that can enable organizations to offer quality service delivery to its customers (Ferreira, Coelho & Moutinho, 2020). High levels of learning orientations have also been associated with increased innovations (Johl & Toha, 2021) and creativity (Loewenberger, 2013). Allameh and Khalilakbar (2018) found that learning orientations enhances the possibility to develop new products successfully in high-tech companies. Learning orientations influence positively the level of service delivery in international business venturing (Kropp, *et al.*, 2006). Learning orientations is also essential for exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities.

Learning orientation is usually related to the process of knowledge development (Grinstein, 2008). Baker and Baba, (2015) define it as “an organizational characteristic that reflects the value that an organization places not only on adroitly responding to changes in the environment but on constantly challenging the assumptions that frame the organization’s relationship with the dynamic environment.” Baba, (2015) consider learning orientation as a set of knowledge-questioning values. Felix, (2005) sees learning orientation as “the manifestation of the organization’s propensity to learn and adapt accordingly” and equates it with the process of organizational learning.

The development of a learning orientation can be considered a conscious attempt by management to coordinate organizational activities and introduce behavioral routines with the purpose to increase individual and organizational knowledge base and provide change perspectives. It enables organizations to translate their knowledge into new value added more effectively and therefore achieve their mission and vision. Learning orientation may therefore represent a developmental approach that enables the translation and transformation of new strategic initiatives into superior service delivery (Hunt, Morgan & Dickson, 1996).

### *3.1.2. Dimensions of Learning Orientation*

Organizations often make a common mistake; they assume that getting people to learn is largely a matter of motivation. When people have the right attitudes and commitment, learning automatically follows. But effective double loop learning is not a simple function of how people feel. It is a reflection of how they think, the cognitive rules and reasoning they use to design and implement their actions. Organizations can resolve this dilemma by making employees reason about their behaviors a focus of organizational learning orientation (Argyris, 1991).

A development program restricted to adaptive learning orientation might very well focus on organizational policies and procedures, compliance requirements, job mastery, and problem solving skills. But one that is designed to enhance generative learning will focus on the five core learning disciplines highlighted by Senge & Hitt, (1995). To achieve higher learning orientation; some

dimensions include; First: Commitment to Learning; It involves imparting quality values and skills that include a desire to excel in school, a perpetual sense of the importance of learning, and belief in one's own abilities. Commitment to learning is the degree to which an organization values promotes learning, plays a key role in promoting the culture of sharing knowledge within the organization (Sinkula et al., 1997), considering it as a long-term investment that it becomes a survival factor (Calantone, 2002). Second: shared vision; A shared vision welcomes the individual efforts towards the same direction in order to share information that could influence in a positive way the knowledge base of an organization, a company must continuously renew operational systems routines, and capabilities according to the dynamics market's needs (García, 2011; Bature, 2018).

Third: Open-mindedness; It details the policies of the company, the basis or normativity that have to do with the openness to new ideas and/or initiatives that collaborators promote (Bature, 2018). Forth: Intra-organizational knowledge sharing; Knowledge sharing is the process of transferring tacit (undocumented) and explicit (documented) information from one person to another. In an organization, sharing knowledge not only increases productivity, but it also empowers employees to do their jobs effectively and efficiently. The process of intra-organisational knowledge transfer has been deeply analysed by several academics in the last few years. The work undertaken by García, 2011 and Bature, 2018 has set the ground for studying the spatial replication of knowledge inside an organization (i.e., intra-organisational). Intra-organizational knowledge sharing can be: - the individual level as cited by García, 2011 and Bature, 2018, define transfer at the individual level as 'how knowledge acquired in one situation applies (or fails to apply) to another' or organizational level where knowledge transfer manifests itself through changes in the knowledge of a unit. For example, one marketing team may learn from another how to better answer to a request for proposal, or a product team learn from another how to reduce time-to-market. Thus, knowledge transfer in organizations can be defined as the process through which one unit (group, department or division) is affected by the experience of another (Bature, 2018).

Fifth: Systems thinking; According to García, 2011 and Bature, 2018, system thinking is a way of thinking about, and a language for describing and understanding, the forces and interrelationships that shape the behaviour of systems. Sixed: Personal mastery; On the other hand, Hooi and Ngui (2014) and Potnuru,(2019) found that Personal mastery is learning to expand organizational personal capacity to create the results we most desire, and creating an organizational environment that encourages all its members to develop themselves towards the goals and purposes they choose. Seventh: Mental models; García, 2011 and Bature, 2018 describe Mental models as reflecting on, continually clarifying and improving our internal pictures of the world, and seeing how they shape our decisions and actions of and organization. Eighth: Team learning; Team learning is transforming conversational and collective thinking skills, so that groups of people can reliably develop intelligence and ability greater than the sum of individual member's talents (García, 2011; Bature, 2018).

### *3.1.3. Adoption of Learning Orientation in Strategic Management and Outcomes*

Learning orientation of an organization is a process that is achieved through the interaction of the organization with its internal and external environment (Abdulai, Mahmoud & Yusif, 2012). In fact, the learning process helps organizations to improve their actions through knowledge and also it creates a better understanding of the external dynamic environment (Ojha, Struckell, Acharya, & Patel, 2018).

Learning orientation, which is derived from the organizational learning theory (OLT), indicates the desire of organization to create and use knowledge (Sinkula, Baker, & Noordewier, 1997; Mahmoud, Blankson, Owusu-Frimpong, Nwankwo, & Trang, 2016; Sheng & Chien, 2016). It leads to a great increase in organizational knowledge capability and also helps organizations in searching for information and assimilating, developing and creating new knowledge (Huang & Wang, 2011; Verdonschot, 2005). So, we can conclude that learning orientation by developing the organization's relationship with its external and internal dynamic environment plays a significant role in expanding organizational knowledge.

A study by Chiang and Hung, (2010) contributed to the development of a tool to improve learning orientation between businesses and technological strategies. This was achieved by generating relative information related to prioritizing technological projects that meet business needs with the objective

to achieve higher return on investment. A process model of reconfiguration of the organization's IT and organizational resources, competencies and capabilities was developed (Chiang & Hung, 2010; Z. Wang & Wang, 2012). The findings of the study showed that the relationship between learning orientation and information system offer quality service delivery.

Owing to the importance of learning orientation (Baumol, 2002; Serrano-Bedia, Concepción López-Fernández, & García-Piqueres, 2012), learning orientation is hypothesized as having a positive impact on business quality service delivery and IT effectiveness. Researchers have proposed a number of tools and methods concerned with the assessment of learning orientation, such five core learning disciplines highlighted by Senge & Hitt, (1995).

### 3.2. The Concept of Service Delivery

Service delivery is an attribute that is extrinsically perceived, based on the consumer's experience of the service he/she has encountered (Parasuraman, 1991). As interpreted by Danjuma and Rasli (2012), quality service delivery has been an issue of considerable debate and many researchers have agreed that it is an evasive concept (Ferreira, Coelho & Moutinho, 2020). In addition, for a better and more conclusive understanding of service delivery, Danjuma and Rasli (2012) highlight the work of Grönroos, (2007), which used the total perceived service model in comparison with customers' expectations of service and their experience after obtaining the service. Grönroos, (2007) conceived that customers look for two service quality dimensions to evaluate: *Technical quality service delivery*, which is what has been delivered by the service provider or what the customer actually obtained, *Functional quality service delivery*, which is the manner in which the services are delivered. Both dimensions affect the image of the service provider. This is also confirmed by Rahman, Khan and Haque (2012) and Akhtar (2011).

According to Ferreira, Coelho and Moutinho (2020), there are three well-documented characteristics of services that need to be considered for a clear understanding of quality service delivery, namely intangibility, heterogeneity, and inseparability. First, almost all services are intangible because they are performances rather than objects, and accurate manufacturing specifications concerning uniform quality cannot easily be set or determined. Most services are not quantifiable and cannot be measured or even tested, let alone verified, prior to any sale to assure quality. Due to this intangibility, marketers find it difficult to conclude how consumers perceive their services and evaluate their organization's quality service delivery (Kayabasi, *et al.*, 2013; Tuan, 2012).

Second, services have high labor content and are heterogeneous. Performance often varies from one producer to another, from one customer to another, and from one day to another (Ferreira, Coelho & Moutinho, 2020). Consistency of behavior from service personnel or providing uniform quality in their work delivery is difficult to ensure, because what the organization intends to deliver may be entirely different from what the consumer receives (Rodrigues, Barkur, Varambally & Motlagh, 2010; Mosahab, Mahamad, & Ramayah, 2010).

Third, the production and consumption of many services are inseparable from each other, (Kayabasi, 2013; Tuan, 2012). Basically, it is said that quality in services is not engineered or built into the product at the factory and then delivered intact to the consumer (Kayabasi, 2013; Tuan, 2012). In the dynamics of business with the operation of labor-intensive services, quality occurs during service delivery through the interaction between the customer and the representative from the service company (Kayabasi, 2013; Tuan, 2012).

In clarifying the development of quality service delivery, Urban, (2010) made use of the classic explanation of the fundamental question: 'how is quality service delivery formed?' According to Urban, (2010), there are five key contributors to the customer quality service delivery gap in the model developed by (Kayabasi, 2013; Tuan, 2012). These are: - word-of-mouth communications, Individual needs, Previous experiences, and Service product content and External communications of a marketer to its customers. The first three and the fifth factor influence customers' expectations, whereas the fourth takes shape on the quality perception (Urban, 2010).

#### 3.2.1. Measuring Service Delivery

Managers of outstanding business organizations try to develop measures for every part of the customer experience so that they can monitor where they are meeting or failing to meet their own

definition of quality service (Ratnawati, Soetjipto, Murwani, & Wahyono, 2018). According to (Ratnawati, Soetjipto, Murwani, & Wahyono, 2018), these measures are critical to ensure that the service is delivered to the customer as it should be. According to Phil Crosby in *Quality Is Free (QIF)*, the price of not conforming to a quality standard can be calculated. That price is how much it costs to fix errors and failures that result from not meeting the quality standard in the first place. Some standards are built directly into the design of the service system. For example, a restaurant bar is designed to contain sufficient beer capacity and wine storage space to meet forecasted demand. Some standards are for employee use in anticipating customers coming in the door Hossain and Hossain, (2012).

Clow, & Vorhies, (1993), Clow, & Vorhies, (1993) affirmed that Quality service delivery can be measured through SERVQUAL Scale. It is one of the most accepted service quality assessment scale, it was developed by Parasuraman, (2005). It uses a 44-item scale which is further grouped into five categories (tangibles, reliability, assurance, empathy and responsiveness) to measure service quality before and after service consumption (Khan & Fasih, 2014). The gap between a customer's expectation before and after service consumption affects the level of a customer's satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Clow, & Vorhies, 1993). Clow, & Vorhies, (1993) also support the view that customers who are exposed to additional promotional material about a service could have their expectations of service quality influenced. Naidoo (2011) also suggest that service delivery organizations with a developed customer relationship management can track complaints and give indication of the service quality perception of customer.

Fodness & Murray (2007) suggests the use of a gap theory to analyse service quality. The gap theory addresses service quality through analysing the differences between customers expected services quality and the actual service quality received. Elements of SERVQUAL includes: Reliability. The ability to deliver the promised service in a consistent and accurate manner. Assurance. The knowledge level and politeness of the employees and to what extent they create trust and confidence. Tangibles. The appearance of e.g. the building, website, equipment and employees. Empathy. To what extent the employees care and give individual attention. Responsiveness. How willing the employees are to offer a speedy service.

Kitana, (2016) suggested the use of Post-Service Ratings as a way of measuring service delivery. It is the simplest and least expensive technique for assessing the degree to which service delivery is meeting service standards while service is being delivered involves simply encouraging managers to keep their eyes open, especially to the interactions between employees and customers (Kitana, 2016). Management by walking around, sometimes called in hospitality organizations "walking the front," means that managers are observing the operation first hand, looking for problems or inefficiencies, talking to both customers and employees to assess their reactions, and then recording and relaying any information that might improve service quality (Pathak, 2014). Managers know their own business, its goals, capabilities, formal and informal service standards, and the job performance standards for their employees (Pembi, 2019).

Pembi, (2019) advocated for follow-up survey (or multi-round survey or multi-phase survey) as a type of survey in which households included in it are repeatedly interviewed in the second, third, fourth or more visits, to obtain information on vital events by noting the changes in composition of the households that have taken place between successive visits. According to Pembi, (2019), the benefits of Conducting a Follow-Up Survey are; Firstly, the survey will allow the organization to determine if their products and services have been helpful to the client after transacting business with them (Pembi, 2019). Second, it will aid in distinguishing plans that they must consider to raise their satisfaction rating (Pembi, 2019). Third, the follow-up survey will be a tool for acknowledging if the process that they are mandating in their premises are effective and have contributed to the success of their business (Pembi, 2019). Lastly, the form can be used as a marketing strategy since it will allow the client to be reminded of the purchases and transactions associated with the company (Pembi, 2019).

Mort & Drennan (2007) said that the new mobile digital communication technologies (In-App Surveys) increased the opportunities for capitalizing the relationship with customers through enhanced mobile information services. They argued that the customer's involvement in using mobile services depend on personal attributes, innovativeness and self-efficacy. As Rajan (2009) said, the



ultimate objective of business intelligence is to provide quality service and timely information which position the company in the market and changes the customer behaviour. Customer's preferences and supply chain operations need to be improved through enhanced communication. They suggested that the mobile communication and advertisements interact with the customers individually. Apart from that, the relationship between the customers and the organizations shall be improved through such mobile advertisements.

According to Michelson, (2004) and Potužak, (2007), Mystery Shopping is a preferred way of measuring service delivery. It is not marketing research and it is the practice of using trained shoppers to anonymously evaluate customer service, operations, employee integrity, merchandising, and product quality (Michelson, 2004 & Potužak, 2007). The verification is performed using a simulated purchase by trained inspectors who verify the general quality of customers' service at the fictitious order of the goods or services (selling processes, technical and social standards of a seller, their expert knowledge and professional behaviour) as well as general appearance and shopping area layout (exterior, interior). A trained inspector poses as a client, and following the prearranged evaluation criteria, reviews the behaviour of workers including the ambience and atmosphere. The data and knowledge from mystery shopping can be used for enhancing and preventive measures to improve the quality of services to retain existing customers and gain the new ones (Clark 2008; Toptest 2008).

Atkinson and Coffey (1997) defined document analysis as a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material. Like other analytical methods in qualitative research, document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Rapley, 2007). Atkinson and Coffey (1997) refer to documents as 'social facts', which are produced, shared, and used in socially organized ways. Documents that may be used for systematic evaluation as part of a study take a variety. They include advertisements; agendas, attendance registers, and minutes of meetings; manuals; background papers; books and brochures; diaries and journals; event programs (i.e., printed outlines); letters and memoranda; maps and charts; newspapers (clippings/articles); press releases; program proposals, application forms, and summaries; radio and television program scripts; organizational or institutional reports; survey data; and various public records. Scrapbooks and photo albums can also furnish documentary material for research purposes. These types of documents are found in libraries, newspaper archives, historical society offices, and organizational or institutional files (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Rapley, 2007).

Corbin and Strauss, (2008); Rapley, (2007) affirmed that Customer Effort Score (CES) is a type of customer satisfaction survey used to measure the ease of service experience with an organization. It asks customers to rate the ease of using products or services on a scale of "very difficult" or "very easy." Customer Effort Score was originated by the Corporate Executive Board using a simple, cross-sectional research approach without the benefit of actual measures of customer behavior in the research model. The Customer Effort Score focused on factors affecting customer attitudes in a customer service environment, particularly with some problems to be addressed. The level of effort the customer had to expend proved to be the key factor determining a customer's likelihood of shopping with or recommending a business in the future (Rapley, 2007).

IkSuk, (2002) on the other hand suggested First Contact Resolution Ratio as the best way of service delivery measurement. FCR is the percentage of callers that does not require any further contacts or callbacks to address their previous reason of calling (SQM, 2007; Feinberg, Leigh, Rajesh and IkSuk, 2002). Also in support of FCR arguments is the fact that it ought to be defined from the customer perspective, which any attempt by organizations to calculate will amount to an incorrect estimate (IkSuk, 2002). Rajesh and IkSuk, (2002), argued that FCR is a customer perception of the outcome of a service encounter as implemented within the CRM strategy of any firm.

Odhiambo and Kinyua (2022) adopted tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy to measure service delivery in Tier One Private Hospitals in Nairobi City County, Kenya. This set of indicators were drawn from the postulate of the service quality (SERVQUAL) model on the features characterizing quality service delivery as propounded by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988). However, Murerwa and Kinyua (2021) operationalized service delivery as reliability, responsiveness,

assurance and affordability in the context of Multinational Pharmaceutical Firms operating in Nairobi City County, Kenya. Service delivery has also been conceptualized as service quality, accountability and revenue stream (Mbulwa & Kinyua, 2021) in the context of Turkana County in Kenya. Similarly, customers' needs, competitor intelligence, technological leadership and delivery channel were chosen as latent indicators for service differentiation among Deposit Taking Saccos in Nairobi City County, Kenya (Mbugua & Kinyua, 2020).

### 4. LITERATURE REVIEW

An extensive review of the vast body of relevant theoretical and empirical literature was carried out as guided by the key construct in this conceptual review. This section therefore, presents the theories that underpin the construct of learning orientation and service delivery as well as related empirical literature.

#### 4.1. Theoretical Review

Two theories namely, Resource- Based View and contingency Theory were reviewed as presented in the preceding section.

##### 4.1.1. Resource- Based View Theory

Resource-Based View (RBV) was initially developed by Edith Penrose to explain the Growth of the Organization (TGF) where she detailed organization resources. According to Penrose (1959), Wernerfelt (1984), and Barney (1991), more importance in this concept started to be attached to resources and competencies in the organization as the basis for formulation of the strategy. The key attributes that make resources 'strategic' as stated by Chi, (1994); is that resources are:- valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable. Chi, (1994) also highlighting the role of resources in helping organizations attain sustained competitive advantage. The assumption of the resource based view theory is that an organizations' superior performance is possible due to the use of the resources the organization owns or controls. Further, according to the model the way the organization uses the resources affects its performance (Wernerfelt, 1984). The theory further emphasizes on the resources characteristics and the capabilities acquired by the organization that leads to sustainable performance (Kraaijenbrink, Spender & Groen, 2018). Molloy, Chadwick, Ployhart and Golden (2011) explains that, resources are a source of advantage such that an organization can dominate its rivals based on the way they build, position and safeguard the resources that are distinct and allow them to gain an advantage over their rivals. Barney and Hesterly (2015) noted that resources are made up of the capabilities and competencies of the organization.

According to the definition of resources in strategic management literature, they are the stock of things that belong to the organization. Arend & Levesque, (2018) defined competencies as the organizations abilities that allow for differentiation or improved service delivery of quality by use of technological systems that are more responsive, which results to the organization gaining a competitive advantage in the market place. Mckelvie and Davidsson, (2009); Andersén (2016) postulated that Resource Based View is essential in strategic management as it concentrates on organizations resources as the key source of enhanced performance and a competitive advantage in the market points out that capabilities are made up of an organization's knowledge, ability, skills and experiences that make it possible for the organization to operate and use its resources to perform effectively. Similarly, Lockett, Thompsons and Morgensrern (2009) indicate that the theory of RBV pinpoints the organization's resources and abilities that enable the organization to operate above the ordinary and enhances the organization's performance.

The RBV model allows the management to check if they have capabilities and resources that can enable the organization gain superiority. This will see them perfect their operations to gain an advantage when it comes to performance. It also allows the management to combine different resources to gain sustainable performance. The theory gives the organization an advantage as it highlights the factors that can be used to gain a competitive advantage. If an organization is to achieve CA and enhance its performance then the resources under its ownership have to be rare, valuable, no substitutable and inimitable. Valuable resources improve the performance of the organization. Rare resources allow the organization to have an advantage as very few organizations will have such

resources. Resources that are inimitable are costly to imitate and the non-substitutable resources cannot be replaced by the competitors as they do not have alternatives (Barney & Hesterly, 2015).

Resources that are termed as tangible are those that are physical in nature and might include raw materials, facilities and equipment. Intangible are not physical and can include organizational values, brand, processes and networks of the organization. When the two resources are compared the intangible resources are likely to result to a competitive advantage compared to the tangible ones (Leiblein, 2011). Therefore, the theory is essential in supporting the organization's intellectual resources. The assumption of the theory is that employees will seek to maximally use the resources available and that the organization will make rational decisions based on the economic environment (Barney, 2007).

The RBV theory has however been critiqued just as it has been supported. One of the critics is that it makes the reality in an organization seem too simple and also assumes there is a linear relationship between competitive advantage, organization resources and the organization performance (Kraaijenbrink, Spender & Groen, 2018). Further, the model ignores environmental factors that affect the performance of the organization. This theory is relevant as it suggests that resources that are valuable, rare, difficult to imitate, and non-substitutable best position a organization for long-term success. These strategic resources can provide the foundation to develop organization capabilities that can lead to superior performance over time. The theory underpins the constructs of strategic alignment and competitive advantage. The RBV as perspective for informing development of strategies among firms in various industries and sectors has been used by management researchers to anchor research variables (Kinyua, 2015; Kinyua, Muathe & Kilika, 2015; Kimaru & Kinyua, 2018; Muthoni & Kinyua, 2020; Ong'esa & Kinyua, 2020; Ojiambo & Kinyua, 2022).

### *4.1.2. Contingency Theory*

The proponent of contingency theory of leadership was Austrian psychologist Fred Edward Fiedler in his insightful 1964 article (*A Contingency Model of Leadership Effectiveness*). According to Fiedler, (1964), the theory emphasised on the importance of both the leader's character and the circumstances under which the leader operates. A research on leadership behavior from Ohio State University in 1966 demonstrated that effective leadership revolves around building good rapport and interpersonal relationships (Consideration); and initiation of organizational structure that ensures task completion and goal accomplishment. A parallel research was conducted by University of Michigan's Survey Research Center. The research investigated group productivity to assess effective leadership behaviors. According to Donaldson, (2001), the outcome were highly related to the consideration and initiating structural behaviors identified by the Ohio State studies. In the year 1967, Fiedler, the proponent of contingency theory of leadership, separated from each other three variables that influence leadership effectiveness. According to Fiedler, the first variable is situational characteristics; these are leader-member relations. It shows the extent to which the manager likes and is liked by fellow staff. The second variable is organizational structure, and it shows whether the job and its definitions are well structured and understood by the employees. Finally, the third variable is leadership power, and it shows the extent to which the manager is empowered through formal authority to do their job and how it influences leadership effectiveness (Fiedler, 1967).

In view of Bastian & Andreas, (2012), the essential feature of the theory is its behavioral approach that relates to the optimal acceptable of organizational structure based on possible situations. Bastian & Andreas, (2012), stated that there is no one best way of organizing; a leadership style that proved effective in one situation may not be most successful in another. Donaldson (2001) affirms that the contingency theory is concerned with leadership and situations, matching leadership style to situations. The style is either task motivated or relationship oriented, and situations-leader-member relations, task structure and position power. The leadership mode is contingent upon both internal and external environment variables while effective leadership depends on how well the leader's style fits the context.

Contingency theory is a midrange theory that involves identifying and matching context settings with organizational settings (Hambrick 1983). Since the 1960s, a considerable volume of research has been

conducted using contingency theory as the principal framework, relating the dynamic functional environment to organizational characteristics (Burns & Stalker 1961; Emery & Trist 1965; Lawrence & Lorsch 1967; Woodward, 1965) or to strategic management (Hambrick 1983, Hofer 1975, Porter 1980). The postulates of contingency theory have been used for underpinning research constructs in extant literature (Kinyua, 2015; Kinyua, Muathe & Kilika, 2015; Kimaru & Kinyua, 2018; Muthoni & Kinyua, 2020; Ong'esa & Kinyua, 2020; Chebiego, Kinyua & Muchemi, 2021; Ojiambo & Kinyua, 2022).

### 4.2. Empirical Literature Review

This reviews empirical evidence from various studies on technology tangibles, continual improvement, service reliability and service responsiveness on performance of business entities. Significant changes on service delivery have come about due to the innovation that has happened in the information technology. This has brought about changes in the demands patterns in the society. With these effects, there is an increasing need to involve technology in passing on skills in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, because its adoption has reformed health, education, businesses and other key systems. Additionally, these changes have brought about the adoption of new methods of production hence educating people new skills on various areas so as to raise productivity (Tomei, 2005).

Joseph and Stone (2003) conducted a study on the role of ICT knowledgeable functional level employees in enhancing the service delivery in banks. The objective of the study was to understand the dynamics of the quality service delivery, with an emphasis on the role of ICT knowledge creation, database, data storages, data sealing, and retrieval of information and application of software in banking industry. The methodology employed includes an empirical study based on data collected from all over United Kingdom (UK). More than 489 banking sectors were sampled for data collection. Data was collected and analyzed. The results of the study implied that there is a positive impact of ICT knowledgeable functional level employees on quality service delivery of commercial banks.

Curry and Penman, (2004) postulated that mechanical advancement in the United Kingdom (UK) has prompted the depersonalization of the service delivery process and the 'human factor' between the business and client at the neighbourhood level. They anyway concede that improved service arrangement, with the correct blend of human info and Information Technology will hold customers in the long haul.

Odhiambo, (2015) conducted a study on how banking organizations adopt new methods of offering banking services by educating employees on new skills on various areas so as to raise profit. The focus of the study was tangible technology which commercial banks focus on including aspects like ATMs, ATM Cards, and electronic money transfers. The empirical setting for the study is Kenya banking institutions. The study employed 500 top management in Kenya commercial banks. The study findings revealed that information technology is a strategic asset that can help provide the organizations in emerging markets with reputation and earn social support if effectively implemented. Individuals and teams need to use quality tools and systems to facilitate measurements and problem solving. Management: Enabling Conditions for total Quality: quality service delivery requires leadership and total commitment from senior management to quality goals. They must ensure that an appropriate infrastructure exists to support a holistic and not a compartmentalized approach to institutional management (Çakar & Ertürk, 2010).

In order to empirically test for effectiveness of service delivery on organizational operations, data was collected from the hotel service sector in Greece. Greece was chosen because it has a service economy that is based heavily on tourism and hospitality. In order to generalize the results to the population, a primary, quantitative research was carried out based on structured questionnaires (Parasuraman, 2006). In order to ensure that the collected sample is representative of the population, data collection was carried out through a two-stage cluster sampling method (Parasuraman, 2006). Following this approach, the first stage involved the random selection of 389 hotels from the total population of hotels in large cities in Greece. From the 389 hotels we contacted, 120 agreed to participate in our study, resulting in a response rate of 31 % at this stage. The generated findings show that the quality service delivery demonstrates a significant impact on hotel business performance and customer satisfaction.

In the second stage the "key informant" method was followed (Kumar, Stern, & Anderson, 1993) in order to collect data on the service delivery system. Hence, in each hotel a structured questionnaire

was completed by a manager who had a good knowledge of the hotel's service delivery procedures. The list of the participants includes managers responsible for service delivery such as, operations directors, marketing directors or general managers. At the same stage, in order to collect customer data, with the hotel managers' approval, 5 customers were personally interviewed on the hotels' premises. After discarding 15 unusable customer questionnaires, the total sample consisted of 120 questionnaires from managers and 585 questionnaires from customers. The findings obtained revealed knowledgeable hotel managers and customers (Through feedback) can contribute to quality service delivery offer by hotel sectors.

According to Loewenberger, (2013), Human resource management is a necessary subtext of this entire discussion of quality service delivery practices, but it is also important to focus on the role of human resources management in moving an organization toward quality service delivery. Human resources play four important roles in quality service delivery hotels: strategic partner, quality manager, change agent, and employee advocate (Steward & Brown, 2008). Steward & Brown, (2008) carried out a study about the service delivery process and organizational structure. The result of the study confirms that participation in the service delivery is not limited to a small number of individuals who are at the top of the organization. Therefore, the horizon of learning orientation must be expanded from the top management level to the lower functional levels for giving better opportunities to identify possible flows in the interrelationships of strategies in different organizational functions.

The service industry is undoubtedly a labour-intensive industry. Its success depends; on the social and technical skills of its personnel, their ingenuity and hard work, their commitment and attitude. Mohanty and Lakhe (2012) carried out a study to establish the effect of employee involvement and organizational performance among state agencies in Thailand. Exploratory research design was used and data collected from 148 employees working in the state agencies in Thailand. The study established that the employees who know the most about a certain process are those who do it more frequent. The study established that training employees well and giving them responsibility to inspect quality of their work eliminate the cost of inspections and control. Thus, the success of the hotel industry depends on the quality of its employees and their effective management in order to assist the organization to achieve its objectives. However, the usual criticism of the human resource management departments of service organizations is that they constitute a cost center (Loewenberger, 2013).

Matisia (2010) study on the employee performance improvement and security in the Kenyan organizations. The study focused generally on all the organizations in Kenya i.e. the manufacturing sector the agricultural sector the health sector organization. Data was collected from 511 respondents. A descriptive research design was used. The target population for this study comprised of 5 NHIF accredited facilities in Wajir County. The respondents in the study was therefore be NHIF members. Since the population is small, a census adopted involving all the members of the population in the study. The questionnaire was administered using a drop and pick later method. The study established that employee performance improvement will increase the rate of offering quality services to customers and employee satisfaction. This is because although the investment on employees is directly measurable, in contrast, the outcomes of the investment are very difficult to measure. These outcomes are generally measured with intangible factors such as employee satisfaction, innovative capability, customer complaints, etc (Steward & Brown, 2008).

Peters, Hofmann and Kn'ebel, (2015) emphasize that best organizations align their corporate strategies to their customer requirements. Focusing on the customer does not only apply to the external customers (Lin, Chen, & Chiu, 2010). Every employee is a customer within the organization (internal customers) and in order do a good job, their needs also have to be fulfilled. In order to satisfy external customer, the internal customers also need to be satisfied. Customers have a role in their own satisfaction and the ultimate quality of the services they receive.

Hubbert, (1995) conducted a study on Weight Watchers International. The number of participants were 283 females who were just joining Weight Watchers of Arizona (Hubbert, 1995). The first of two questionnaires assessed expectations and was administered immediately following new-member orientation to the Weight Watchers programme (orientation session, video presentation, and written materials). The second survey followed one month later and asked the women about their experiences,

weight loss outcomes, attributions, and satisfaction with the amount of weight lost and with Weight Watchers.

It was believed that in this highly participatory service, members would recognize the significance of their role and would attribute some of the credit for success to themselves. The study found that members do indeed attribute success in this context both to themselves and to Weight Watchers.

According to Peters, Hofmann and Kn'ebel, (2015) an external customer service program should include providing customers with timely information and quick responsiveness to complaints, and maintaining a corporate goal to reduce the quantity of questions or complaints while recognizing all successful efforts by employees in providing outstanding service. The power now enjoyed by customers has raised expectations and these expectations often determine whether customers will stay at a particular hotel. Providers of mammography services can facilitate the customer's contributions to her own satisfaction by managing her expectations. By educating new patients about the process - including the vital necessity of her own efforts and compliance with instructions - providers enhance the likelihood of customer satisfaction. Empirical evidence is provided by the laboratory experiment designed to determine the effects of providing women with a "realistic service preview" of a mammography screening experience on their satisfaction with the service and the provider (Faranda, 1994).

The experiment utilized a role-playing methodology, and led subjects through a vicarious service experience at a fictitious women's health clinic. Subjects were 134 women who had never experienced a mammogram and who had little knowledge about the procedure. Half the women were given a realistic preview of the process, while the other half received no preview. The preview itself consisted of detailed, written information about mammography (including, among other topics, what is mammography, how the procedure works, instructions to follow before the procedure, the role of mammography, and some common misconceptions), and a short video illustrating the entire procedure.

### **4.3. Proposed Theoretical Model**

Theoretical model is imperative in helping to reveal the relationship between independent variables, moderating variables, mediating variables and dependent variable. In the case of this independent study, a theoretical model was proposed that illustrated the relationship between learning orientations and service delivery. This relationship is demonstrated in a chart marked as Figure 5.1.

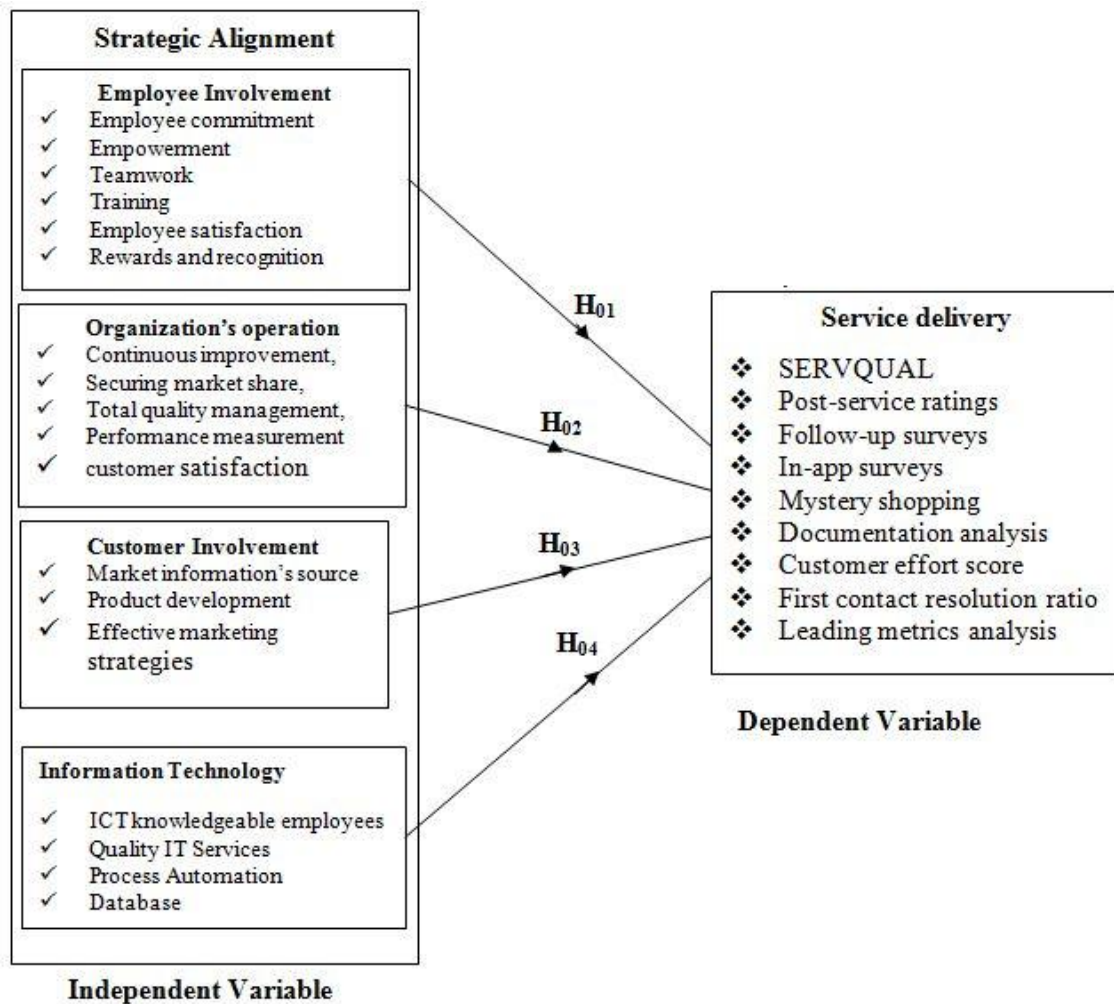


Figure1. Proposed Theoretical Model

Source: Author (2022)

The proposed model shows learning orientations is the independent variable and service delivery is the dependent variable. In this study, learning orientations is measured by employee involvement, organizational operations, and customer involvement and information technology. Information technology is a very critical construct under learning orientations. This is a strategic asset that helps provide an organization with reputation and earn social support. Information technology is very much useful in learning orientations in organization to offer quality service delivery.

Organizational operations, as a concept of learning orientations, enhance quality service delivery. This enhances internal capabilities of an organization enabling it to offer quality service delivery increasing its profitability. Employee involvement in the formation and execution of an organization's strategies enhances quality service delivery of the organization as the views and perceptions of employees who execute the strategies are taken care of. Also customer involvement is very important as the organization gets to precisely know what the customer needs are for its success. Service delivery as the dependent variable is determined by SERVQUAL, post-service ratings, follow-up surveys, in-app surveys, mystery shopping, documentation analysis, customer effort score (CES), first contact resolution ratio and leading metrics analysis. An organization that has effectively offered quality service delivery experience continuous improvement of product and services, secures large market share, total quality management, good performance measurement and customer satisfaction making the organization remain relevant in the market for a longer time. Turbulence in the market environment forces business organizations to strategically reinvent their operations to offer quality service delivery and outdo their rivals.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The relationship between learning orientations, innovation capability, environmental dynamism and service delivery is assessed in this independent study. The main goal of this study was to suggest the most appropriate theoretical model that illustrates the relationship between learning orientations and service delivery. Through reviewing of theoretical literature and empirical literature, this independent study assessed the characteristics of learning orientations including its parameters and understands how they affect service delivery. The guiding principles and theories in this study were based on Resource- based view theory and Contingency theory.

In the study, an appropriate theoretical model is proposed and it helps in illustrating the relationship between independent variable and dependent variables comprising of learning orientation and service delivery. The study revealed that information technology is a very critical strategic asset that can help organization in dynamic environment to cope with competition. Similarly, the review of literature SERVQUAL, post-service ratings, follow-up surveys, In-app surveys, mystery shopping, documentation analysis, customer effort score (CES), first contact resolution ratio and leading metrics analysis as suitable indicators for measuring service delivery. The propositions of the study besides enriching the empirical and theoretical literature on learning orientation and service delivery, also serve to guide scholars in the field of strategic management on prospective studies with potential to impact organizational outcomes and market performance in diverse industries and business sectors.

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