Review of: "Understanding dis-functionalities in multi-agency policy collaborations in Kenya"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

This article might be based on research that is worth publishing, but the article is so unclear that I cannot tell. The article would require major revisions to be clear enough for readers to understand what research the author performed.

Some sentences in the article are meaningless, such as:

- “Because policymakers or organisational leaders consider additional structural cohesiveness and normative congruence beyond the existing administrative systems for policy effectiveness.” (p. 2)
- “And the personnel are more motivated by engaging in networks, partnerships, mutual respect, and learning relationships.” (p. 2)
- “The discussion and presentation of the findings are presented conducted alongside the referents of trust.” (p. 18)

Key terms in the article’s argument are undefined, such as “technical homogeneity”.

The article makes assertions with no support or inadequate support, for example:

- “Joint action is the way to go in navigating the complex public governance landscape.” (p. 2)
  The article does not show why joint action is the way to go, rather than independent actions that reap the benefits of competition and diversity of approach.

- “most studies on public value and governance theories identify composites of trust as critical in discerning how multi-agency collaborations function (e.g., Oomsels and Bouckaert 2014)”
  Citing one example does not substantiate that “most studies” identify trust as critical.

- “This means modern governments must achieve some degree of internal and external technical homogeneity due to the growing need to foster institutional autonomy in policy decisions” (p. 2)
  The article does not provide any evidence of “a growing need to foster institutional autonomy”. Nor does it provide any evidence that “technical homogeneity” would foster institutional autonomy.

The portion of the paper before the Methodology section should be shorter and better-focused. It should explain the question that the research will try to answer, describe the previous literature that the research will confirm, disconfirm or extend, and provide sufficient context of the institutions being studied to understand the methodology.

The Methodology section should explain what research was performed. Currently, it does not. For example, the article says, “The analysis of audited documents and annual statutory reports by KLIF members was carried out.” (p. 16) But it does not say what the audited documents and annual statutory reports are, how the author analyzed them, or what the results of that analysis was.

The article does not explain what the researchers asked in the face-to-face interviews. Ideally, the article should include whatever instructions or forms the interviewers used. At the very least, it should describe what information the interviewers tried to elicit and how they tried to elicit it. The article refers to writing interview summaries that were “thematically ordered during the data collection” (p. 17), but it does not explain what that means. The article says the themes “were tied to specific dimensions and referents” (p. 17) and it lists those dimensions and referents, but it does not list the themes.

The article does not show what the open-ended questionnaires asked, what the responses were, or how the researchers analyzed the responses.

The portion of the paper after the Methodology section makes almost no reference to any information gathered in the Methodology section or to any analysis of that information.