



**INFLUENCE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE DEVOLVED SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT
IN KENYA**

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Accepted: October

ABSTRACT

Public participation and community based management are typical themes in current policy and discussions revolving around decision making processes, especially those dealing with resources management. Certainly, improving delivery of public services continues to be a key objective that has occupied the agenda of public administrators and researchers. This study analyzed the social economic benefits of public participation based on the substantive quality of decisions made, resolving conflicts among competing interests, building trust in institutions of governance and educating and informing the public within Kirinyaga County. Cross-sectional primary data was collected using structured questionnaires from a representative sample of 120 respondents across Kirinyaga County. Both qualitative and quantitative aspects were acquired: Secondary data from publications was used to augment data collected by the use of structured questionnaires. Three theories of public participation namely; citizenship and rights based perspective, the communicative action theory and Arnstein ladder of participation theory were fundamental in this study. Data collected during the study was entered into a database, coded and analyzed. Descriptive, Bivariate and multivariate analysis were also performed using SPSS and other Microsoft packages such as excel. After analysis, the information was presented using tables and charts since they allowed easy comparison. Finally, the researcher gave recommendations for the study

Keyword: *Public Participation, Substantive Quality of Decisions, Incorporating Public Views, Service Delivery*

CITATION: Yegon, G. K., & Omwenga, J. Q. (2022). Influence of public participation in service delivery in the devolved system of government in Kenya. *The Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management*, 9 (4), 1066 – 1083.

INTRODUCTION

The term 'public participation' refers to community or stakeholder consultation, engagement and involvement, The International Association for Public Participation (IAP²) defines public participation as the involvement of those affected by a decision in the decision-making process. It encompasses a range of public involvement, from simply informing people about what government is doing to delegating decisions to the public. Broad public participation is a cornerstone of responsible democratic governance and a fundamental prerequisite to achieve sustainable development. It moves beyond traditional methods of public consultations by creating opportunities for the open exchange of ideas, transparency, mutual learning, and informed and representative decision-making processes (Bastidas, 2004). The principle of public participation holds that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process (Booher 2004). Public participation implies that the public's contribution will influence the decision which is a way of empowerment and a vital part of democratic governance. It is a process which offers individuals an opportunity to influence public decisions and has long been a component of the democratic decision-making process.

There have been many shifts in understanding of the concept of participation with the recent revival of public participation, partially reflected by a changing rationale for participation within the United Nations system' (John, 2009). The United Nations identifies community participation as synonymous with community development. The International Labour Organization (ILO) emphasizes that community participation should play a key role in the provision of basic needs and as a means for increasing efficiency and self-reliance.

This research project explored the potentially wide-ranging benefits of enhanced community participation to the citizenry and the Government, with the broadening of the public participation procedure towards a more collaborative one in which scientific and technical data were centered

on the interests of the different actors, it assessed the underlying link of public participation to enhanced democracy and decision-making processes and the overall effect of public involvement to sustainable development. It evaluated the effects of public participation based on the criteria of achieving four social goals: The goal of incorporating public values into decisions which is fundamental to democracy and has been the driving force behind challenges to a more managerial, expert-led model of decision making process, The second goal of increasing the substantive quality of decisions which recognizes the public as a valuable source of knowledge and ideas for making decisions, The third goal is the resolving conflict among competing interests, the fourth goal of building trust in institutions and the fifth goal of educating and informing the public. The project studied the achievements made in realizing the above goals among Citizens and County government employees.

Traditionally, the concept of public participation had been continuously debated in the development domain and political science literature. Although the concept was considered a decision-making adjunct, all schools of contemporary thought view participation as a fundamental element of planning and decision-making (Lane, 2005).

The roots of citizen participation can be traced to ancient Greece and Colonial New England. Before the 1960s, governmental processes and procedures were designed to facilitate "external" participation. Public participation was institutionalized in the mid-1960s with President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs (Yang and Pandey, 2011). A distinct concept of public participation can be traced back to 1950s to the US Environmental protection Agency which enhanced citizen participation in environmental protection programs. This ambitious effort was not limited to the EPA, nor to just environmental management. At all levels of government, citizen participation programs were launched, with the underlying assumption that if citizens became actively involved as participants in

their democracy, the governance that emerged from this process would be more democratic and more effective

Since independence Kenya has progressively shifted from a centralized to a decentralized form of governance. This paradigm shift was precipitated by the shortfalls that are often characteristic of highly centralized systems that include administrative bureaucracies and inefficiencies, and the marginalization of local communities in development processes (TISA 2010). Citizen participation in Kenya finds its early roots in development projects that benefited local communities. Throughout the post-colonial era, the country took legislative steps to provide ways for citizens to be active participants in the governing of their country. Most of these ways, however, were limited to local authorities and the implementation of laws incorporating citizen participation did not reach their full potential because citizens did not fully understand their rights or embrace the opportunity. Finally, local authorities struggled to promote local funding and planning processes to citizens, like the Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plan (LASDAP) and the Constituencies Development Fund (CDF). (Moseti 2010)

Consequently in the late 1990s, the government began the devolvement of specific funds and decision making authority to the districts, local authority and constituency levels (Legal Resources Foundation Trust, 2009). However, devolution systems and structures have lacked a coherent or coordinating framework. They have thus been marred by overlaps, duplication, and despite their multiplicity, low citizen involvement (Kenya Human Rights Commission [KHRC] and Social and Public Accountability Network [SPAN], 2010).

The promulgation of the New Constitution in August 2010 provided a strong legal foundation for the enhancement of participatory governance through devolved structures at county level. This was an important milestone because it ushered in the Devolved system of governance whose overarching principle is public inclusion in the

overall social, political, economic and ecological fabric of governance (CoK 2010). The Constitution of Kenya 2010 established 47 county governments. Article 196 of the constitution expressly obligates the County governments to institutionalize citizen participation in its decision making processes (CoK 2010). In Kirinyaga county as well as other Counties, Public participation is manifested in various facets that include project proposals for funding by the county government, public participation in Finance bills and other bills that have direct impact on the public as well as environmental and Security issues. This research project studied the social economic benefits of public participation in the quality of decision-making as perceived by the community and the County government employees who form the majority of the planners and implementers of the policies and legislative directives, based on the goals of incorporating public views in decision making, the substantive quality of decisions, resolving conflict among competing interests, building trust in institutions of governance and educating and informing the public.

Statement of the Problem

Public participation in governance and public service delivery is progressively pursued in a bid to improve the performance of governments. Certainly, improving delivery of public services continues to be a key objective that has occupied the agenda of public administrators and researchers. Confronted with constraints and shortfalls of centralized service delivery especially at the local level, governments have turned to decentralized mechanisms of service delivery (Bardhan, 2002; Ahmad., 2005; Robinson, 2007). Devolution in governance has involved the transfer of administrative, fiscal and political powers and functions of the central government to devolved unit.

The appropriate role of the public in public administration and governance has been an active and ongoing area of inquiry, experimentation, revolution, and controversy. Since the mid-1990s, debates about the need to directly engage the

public in processes of policy development and decision-making have emerged in response to the perceived crisis of democracy, which questioned the normative and functional adequacy of democratic institutions and of the rights and responsibilities of citizens (McBride, 2005). Proponents of this discourse have constantly argued that traditional representative democracy has become dysfunctional and unable to respond adequately to declining public participation in political processes and therefore service delivery. This dilemma begs for verification of benefits accruing from public participation as a model of improving efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery in the devolved units.

A look into the Kirinyaga County Public Participation Reports of 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 shows that there is need for the public to embrace public participation to enhance improved service delivery. Within the wards, in the past, there has been poor presentation despite the public advertisements and notices, with some wards recording as few as 16 members during public participation forums. On 22nd May 2016 county residents took the Kirinyaga County Assembly to court over a 370m project that was to see the construction of new Assembly chambers and offices at Kerugoya without public participation. Through their lawyer Ndegwa Njiru they asked the sitting judge Richard Limo to declare the supplementary budget unconstitutional. It is also due to this laxity of the leaders to engage the public in participation that has seen the county residents divided over squabbles on the location of the new county headquarters, even despite the President assenting to a law that will require movement of county headquarters from Kutus to Kerugoya. This is even despite the fact that county headquarter offices have been set up in Kutus at a cost of 450m. This situation is not unique to kirinyaga only. The Commission on Revenue Allocation has on several occasions been quoted admonishing counties on spending money meant for service delivery on non-critical and non-core issues and more so without public engagement.

Devas and Grant, (2003) examined the direct impact of participation on decentralized service delivery outcomes especially in the developing countries. (Lubaale, Agevi, Ngari, 2007; Syagga& Associates, 2007; Oyugi&Kibua, 2008; Cifuentas, 2008) Studied different aspects of citizens' participation in the broader aspect of local government reforms, however, these studies have not expressly sought to establish the benefits of public participation on the quality of decision making in devolved system of governance and to the extent to which these decisions achieve the overarching goals of public participation. This study sought to fill this gap by looking into the benefits of public participation on the service delivery in the devolved system of government with specific reference to Kirinyaga County in Kenya more so due to the current prevailing problems in the county as stated earlier.

Objectives of the study

The general objective of the study was to establish the relationship between public participation and service delivery in the devolved system of government in Kenya. The specific objectives of the study were;

- To assess the extent to which incorporating public views into decision making improves the quality of service delivery within Kirinyaga County.
- To determine how the quality of decisions made during public participation contribute to service delivery in Kirinyaga County.
- To examine how educating and informing the public improves service delivery in Kirinyaga County.
- To assess how public participation resolves conflict among competing interests on service delivery in Kirinyaga County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

The need to involve citizens in a meaningful way in public policy-making has been reinforced by increased dialogue about the value of participatory planning and the necessity of understanding

cultural dimensions in planning (Crawford, et al., 2008). This dialogue suggests that empowering citizens through meaningful participation in planning and designing their communities may result in more successful implementation because of citizen "buy-in," which might actually enhance the "chances and speed of implementation of community projects" (Crawford, et al., 2008,). This study is based on the following theories.

The communicative action theory

Communicative Action is a theory which aims to explain human rationality as the necessary outcome of successful communication. This theory can be traced to the German Philosopher and Sociologist, Jürgen Habermas. The theory of communicative action is mainly concerned with quality of dialogue by creating a rational basis for constructing ends and means in a democratic society. This is an approach that Watson (2002) describes as integrating scientific and interpretive/social learning perspectives. Aiming at extending and protecting democracy, Habermas defines the process of his concept of communicative rationality as a communication that is 'oriented to achieving, sustaining and renewing consensus – and, indeed, a consensus that rests on the inter-subjective recognition validity claims that can be criticized'. He speaks about the notion of communicative rationality, which is intrinsically 'dialogical', primarily concerned with inter-subjective relation, and aimed at reaching understanding in social action. In practice, however, communicative rationality has visibly distinguishing features, which entail paying attention to participation and learning, particularly through the reconciliation of different perspectives.

Citizenship and rights-based perspectives

According to (Muetzelfeldt, 2000) citizenship has recently become an influential concept in urban development and political debates in many parts of the world and that citizenship remains a mechanism by which people make claims on space and place. The rights-based interpretation of citizenship views the process of building citizenship as the assertion

and recognition of rights and as a process of transformation of practices rooted in the society as a whole. This understanding integrates concerns with socio-economic, political and civil rights. While these rights have long been viewed as developmental concerns, the rights-based view of citizenship adds an element of accountability and culpability; an ethical/moral dimension (Kabeer, 2005). An important element of the rights-based understanding of citizenship transcends a central reference in the concept of citizenship: the demand for access, inclusion, membership and belonging to a given political system.

Arnstein's ladder of participation Theory

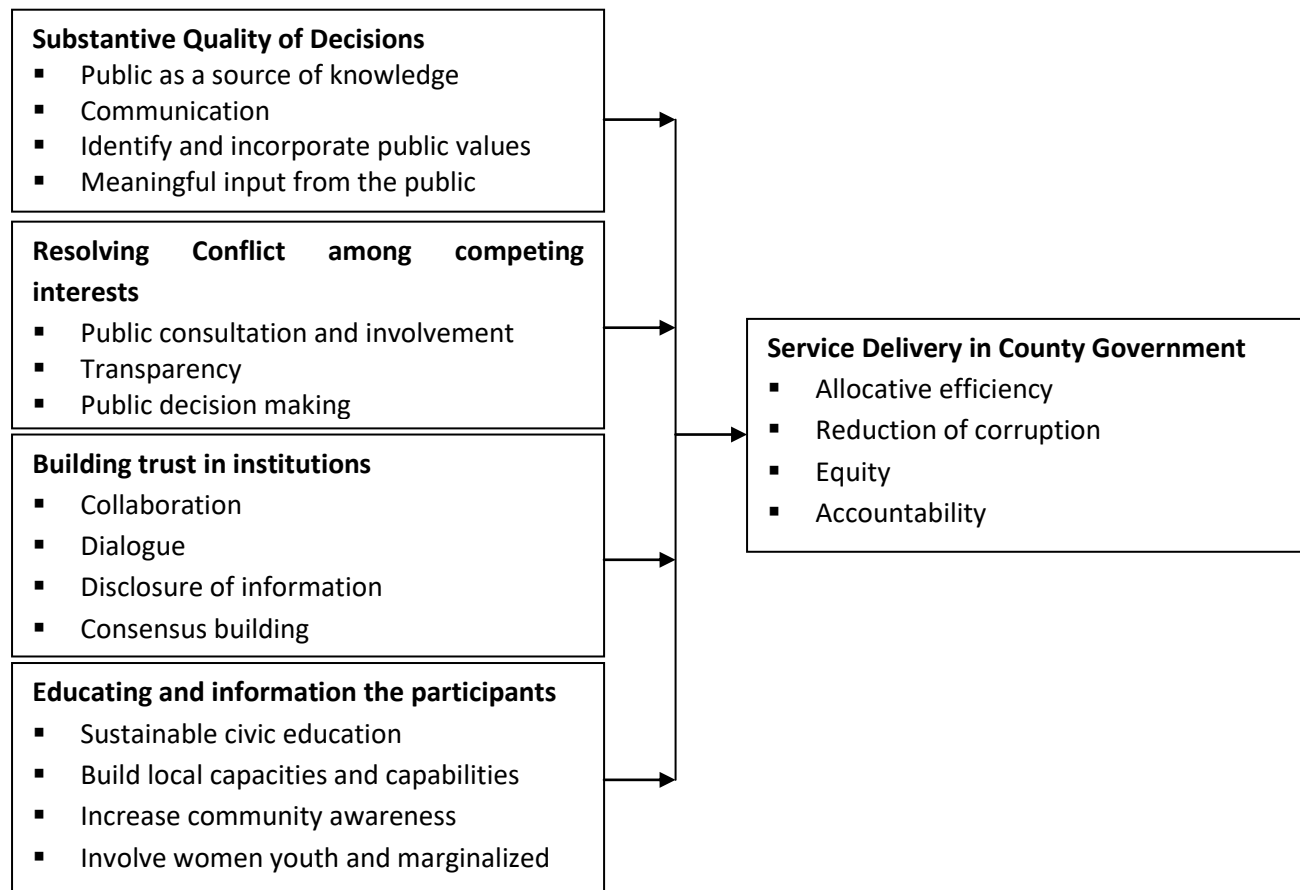
Perhaps the seminal theoretical work on the subject of community participation was by Arnstein. The particular importance of Arnstein's work stems from the explicit recognition that there are different levels of Participation.

The bottom rungs of the ladder are (1) Manipulation and (2) Therapy. These two rungs describe levels of "non-participation" that have been contrived by some to substitute for genuine participation. Their real objective is not to enable people to participate in planning or conducting programs, but to enable power holders to "educate" or "cure" the participants. Rungs 3 and 4 progress to levels of "tokenism" that allow the have-nots to hear and to have a voice: (3) Informing and (4) Consultation. When they are proffered by power holders as the total extent of participation, citizens may indeed hear and be heard. But under these conditions they lack the power to insure that their views will be heeded by the powerful. When participation is restricted to these levels, there is no follow-through, no "muscle," hence no assurance of changing the status quo. Rung (5) Placation is simply a higher level tokenism because the ground rules allow have-nots to advise, but retain for the power holders the continued right to decide. Further up the ladder are levels of citizen power with increasing degrees of decision-making clout. Citizens can enter into rung (6) Partnership that enables them to negotiate and engage in trade-offs

with traditional power holders. At the topmost rungs, (7) Delegated Power and (8) Citizen Control, have-not citizens obtain the majority of decision-making seats, or full managerial power. Obviously,

the eight-rung ladder is a simplification, but it helps to illustrate the point that so many have missed - that there are significant gradations of citizen participation.

Conceptual Framework



Independent Variable

Dependent Variable

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Empirical Review

Despite the theoretical underpinnings and advocacy for citizen participation in decentralized service delivery, evidence on the resulting impact is mixed at best especially in a developing country's context. Available studies look at how decentralization enhances participation (Von Braun and Grote, 2002; Ahmad, et al., 2005; Kauzya, 2007; Brinkerhoff, et al., 2007); design and emerging mechanisms of participation in sub-national governments (Kauzya, 2007; United Nations (UN), 2008; John, 2009; Matovu, 2011; Joshi and Houtzager, 2012); and, factors influencing citizen participation in local governments (Esonu and Kavanamur, 2011; Yang

and Pandey, 2011; Bay, 2011; Michels, 2012). Notably, few studies have examined the direct impact of participation on decentralized service delivery outcomes especially in the developing countries (Putnam, 1993 cited in Azfar, et al., 1999; Fiszbein, 1997; Isham and Kähkönen, 1999; Devas and Grant, 2003; Oyugi and Kibua, 2008). Using a cross section of secondary data on participation in Local Authorities in Kenya, this study sought to explore this link.

The extent of public participation in devolved system of government

Bastidas (2004), on 'The role of public participation in the impact assessment of Trade processes'

concludes that Public participation is based on the principle that dialogue between decision-makers and the public benefits both parties. It allows the public to gain an understanding of government decisions and policies, while providing the government with input to help them design and implement a better and legitimate trade process. Effective public participation requires not only dialogue, but also the provision of relevant information and the allocation of adequate resources in advance. If used properly, public deliberation workshops, online public deliberation, educational programs, and media outreach, among others, can enable government to effectively engage the general public and establish a more mutually beneficial government and citizen relationship.

Scott 2003 on 'Public participation on Environmental Impact Assessment' concludes that public involvement techniques should go beyond a one-way flow of information from the consultant to the public, which is considered as information dissemination. Conceiving the public as empty vessels that need to be filled with information from the "all-knowing" experts is not a very healthy conception. The public do not think of themselves as being such. They feel they not only need to be listened to but would love to keep in touch with things by assuming roles in advisory boards, and therefore why not be incorporated into the decision-making. They know they can contribute in a positive manner. That is why the NGOs and the public at large would not deter in their efforts. Unless this goal is attained their present efforts may tend to be counterproductive. Hence two-way flows of information with advisory and decision-making roles are needed by the public if the goals of the EIA process are to be achieved. The consultants likewise authorities should consider how public involvement techniques that achieve this could be initiated in the EIA systems of the different countries. He further recommends that public involvement should not be limited to a single step of the EIA. Right from the early stages the public should be

involved in the process right through to the monitoring stages. It is believed that if the process is reiterative, there will be more to gain from the process than current practices yield.

Booher et,al 2005 asserts that collaborative participation is an ideal which will never be fully attained, any more than is the ideal of participation embodied in the public hearing and review and comment procedures which depends on an informed citizenry and responsive bureaucracy, but it has more promise for dealing with the dilemmas of participation in contemporary society. It is a model where participants often say "you leave your guns Collaborative participation thus dissolves many dilemmas of theory and practice. For example, there is no need for citizens or planners to choose between the collective and individual interest. In these dialogues the effort to meet individual interests produces a collective interest, unlike the pluralist model, where individual interests are packaged without being integrated. In collaborative participation, interdependencies are uncovered and participants can discover how all may benefit from improving a resource. The issue of whether citizens know enough to be listened to also disappears as they become knowledgeable, and as agencies or other players work with them on participatory research and joint fact finding. Planners and citizens are far more likely to enjoy rather than hate this sort of participation as it can be an interesting learning experience. It is still fraught with emotions, but these methods allow venting and then moving on. Finally these processes help planners and administrators to become more in touch with their communities and citizens to understanding political and economic realities.

Public participation, according to Devas and Grant (2003), is the ways in which citizens exercise influence and control over the decisions that affect them. It is the intervention of citizens with determined social interests in public activities. This can be directly or indirectly. Direct participation occurs where citizens-individually or in various forms of self-organization actively engaged in the

decision-making processes on matters affecting them. Robinson, (2007) argues that indirect participation is where citizens express their preferences through their elected and other representatives. It (indirect participation) is also referred to as political participation as the citizens' role is limited to selecting representatives.

According to Kenya Institute of Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA) (2006), citizen participation can be both a goal of and a means to effective devolution. It is a goal, when decentralization creates opportunities for participation by bringing government closer to the people. In that case interaction of the citizens and the state is expected to increase when there is proximity to government institutions. On the other hand, it is a means to effective devolution where the citizen through their collective action provide the demand- side input of service preferences as well as the necessary pressure of ensuring that those empowered to deliver services perform their duties accordingly.

Cheema and Rondinelli (2007) argue that citizen participation has come to the centre of devolution reforms as a result of what is termed the transition from government decentralization to decentralized governance. Promoted by economic and political pressures and conditions of international development partners, governments especially in developing and least developed countries are increasingly incorporating the principles of good governance in their decentralization efforts, hence decentralized governance.

Accordingly, (Singh, 2007) argues that successful devolution is one that allows for increased participation of the citizens in the policy cycle i.e. in planning, implementation and evaluation. It enables the strengthening of local people's capacity in decision making by 'providing greater access to local political participation. As a means to effective devolution, Robinson (2007) mentions that citizen participation improves service delivery by affecting its key determinants including allocative efficiency, accountability and reduction of corruption, equity,

quality of service and cost recovery. It enhances allocative efficiency by providing the means for 'demand revelation thus matching of allocations to user preferences.

On accountability and reduction of corruption, citizen participation facilitates information dissemination and increased public awareness on the actions of government. This is particularly so where it 'increases the political cost of inefficient and inadequate public decisions. By participation, it is argued that citizens cultivate ownership of the policy decisions undertaken and thus increases their willingness to pay for services hence there are higher chances of cost recovery (Robinson, 2007). Inclusion of the marginalized and the poor in decision making would lead to pro-poor policies hence assuring equitable service provision. Quality of service is likely to be a result of citizens input and feedback on the standards of services expected.

The Mechanisms of public participation in devolved system of government

Kauzya (2007) notes that mechanisms are the instruments or channels that are used to achieve an intended objective. Kauzya argues those mechanisms of citizen participation can largely be categorized into vote and voice. Vote is the means through which citizens select their representatives at the local level. Devolution facilitates this by putting in place structures that allow citizens to exercise their voting power with limited 'hindrance or interference from the central government. Voting can be limiting as participation is only interpreted as elections, which in many countries happens once in every three to five years. Participation in terms of voice is where citizens have the power to influence 'the making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of decisions that concern their socio-politico-economic wellbeing and to demand accountability from their local leadership'. Kauzya posits that voice is facilitated by decentralization when there is a transfer of power and authority for making socio-politico-economic decisions from the central government to local government and communities.

Azfar, et al., 2004) observe that public participation and responsiveness to citizens' needs and preferences are important components of democratic governance. Some of the commonly used mechanisms are: *Elections* are a basic mechanism through which citizens express their policy preferences. This is by voting for the candidate (political party) that offers the promise that matches the expectations of citizens. However, electoral practice has shown that in many countries, promises made during elections are rarely kept. Further, few political party manifestos express clear policy programmes that they intend to pursue once in office. *Surveys* can be used by local governments to establish the expectations and satisfaction of citizens with service delivery. The concern with surveys has to do with sampling of respondents. Where it is poorly done then the views may not be representative of the citizens' preferences and may lead to ineffective policy choices. *Town meetings/public hearings/hotlines* can be used to provide a direct platform where citizens articulate their preferences, disappointments and other proposals on improving service delivery. *Direct community involvement* in service delivery takes the shape of service implementation and management committees. It also involves citizen's contribution in kind (such as providing materials, expertise and labour), and in cash in the delivery of public goods. *Exit* has been called 'voting with your feet'. This is where the citizens can either move to another jurisdiction that is more responsive to their needs or simply switch the service provider. This means that there have to be an alternative which depend on the nature of the service. For instance in health and education, citizens can shift to private providers of the said services. However for regulatory services where only government is the provider, the switching option is unviable. *Participatory planning and budgeting* is where citizens participate in formal platforms where plans and budgets for service delivery are made. This depends on the willingness of the local government to create such forums and to seek mobilize the citizens to participate. The awareness and capacity of the

citizens is thus a key factor in this mechanism of participation. Finally, *Monitoring and Evaluation* is the last, yet important, opportunity for citizen participation. Citizens can engage in closely following the implementation of services to ensure that it is according to the plans and that resources are put to their rightful use. This presupposes that the citizens have correct information of the project/service being provided. In evaluation the citizens participate in the whole project/service review to ascertain if it is accomplishing its intended objectives.

The influence of citizen participation on the service delivery in devolved system of government

Cheema and Rondinelli (2007) observe that the relationship between citizen participation and devolution is conditioned by complex political, historical, social, and economic factors which differ in magnitude and importance from country to country. Secondly, despite the international support for citizen participation in decentralized service delivery, there is a dearth of data on the resulting influence on service delivery. Robinson (2007) observes that a major problem with available empirical literature is that there is no systematic or comparative evidence on whether increased citizen participation in decentralized local governance generates better outputs in provision of education, health, drinking water and sanitation services.

A key internationally recognized successful case of local participation is that of participatory budgeting and auditing in Brazil's southern city of Porto Alegre (United Nations (UN), 2005; Cheema, 2007; Van Speier, 2009). Cheema (2007) notes that beginning in 1989 when the Brazilian Workers Party (PT) won the municipal elections, local assemblies have been organized to propose debate and decide on allocations and spending of the municipal investment. As a result, as of 1996 the number of households with access to water services had increased by 18 per cent, the municipal sewage system was expanded by 39 per cent and the number of children enrolled in public schools doubled. The observed outcomes were found to

have increased the trust of the people in government and motivated them to pay taxes leading to a 50 per cent increase in government revenues.

Van Speier (2009) in his review of Ian Bruce's book, *The Porto Alegre Alternative: Direct Democracy in Action* has observed that participation energized citizen involvement and especially of the poor and illustrated the 'positive effects that government-supported citizen participation can have on urban planning. Michels (2012) in a study on Citizen Participation in Local Policy Making: Design and Democracy in developed countries found an impact in 11 cases of participatory governance and five of the deliberative forums. The study found that citizen participation had a clear impact on policy through participatory governance than through deliberative forums. Notable in the above studies is that the influential potential of citizen participation is only unleashed when other enabling factors are addressed.

Factors leading to a positive citizen influence on decentralized service delivery

According to Robinson (2007), there are conditions under which increased citizen participation in local governance leads to improved service delivery. Such conditions are a combination of political, institutional, financial and technical factors. The performance of decentralized service delivery depends on the design of decentralization and the institutional arrangements that govern its implementation. It also depends partly on the effectiveness of civil society and on certain aspects of the social structure within the jurisdiction. John (2009) posits that the capacity of the citizens participating is also an important factor. Their education, the socio-economic status, their networks are all important factors in determining whose voice gets heard and what decisions get adopted. Information – its quality, accessibility, accuracy – is also a key determinant in ensuring an effective influence.

Devas and Grant (2003) make a conclusion in their study of citizen participation in local government in

Kenya and Uganda that information needs to be shared widely and strategically. Other factors that they find critical are committed local leadership and external pressure from the civil society organizations, the central government and development partners. This is similar to the findings of Yang and Pandey (2011) who establish that public management factors matter in citizen participation. They find that key aspects of public management such as the level of red tape, elected official support, hierarchical authority and transformational leadership are key to determining the impact that citizen participation has on service delivery. Particularly they establish that red tape and hierarchical authority are negatively associated with participation outcomes. Positive outcomes are associated with elected official support, transformational leadership of the chief executive officials, and, the participant competence and representativeness. The above variables were found to be significant even when participant competence, representativeness, and involvement mechanisms are controlled for. It thus occurs that effective participation is a factor of interrelated variables.

Bay's (2011) underscores in a study on Citizen Participation and Social Service Delivery in Nicaragua which established that: Municipal political configurations, the local balance of partisan power, legacies of conflict and cooperation, local leadership and the availability of subsidies determine who participates, how they participate and the quality of and access to social service delivery under participatory governance. These factors point to the need for intentional action and will of both the government officials and the citizens in making participation work. Avritzer, (2009) observes that participation is only likely to work where government officials (especially politicians) and citizens agree. It is only in such an environment that citizen's preferences are likely to be taken seriously.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted disproportionate random sampling to select the wards within the county where the study undertook this will enhance the representation of both rural and urban setting within the county. Both descriptive and qualitative aspects were queried using structured questionnaires. This study used descriptive research design. The population for the study was Kenyan citizens who reside in Kirinyaga County as well as County Government staff who were the designers and implementers of outcomes of public participation and had resided in the county for at least six months prior to the study. The study covered the four constituencies in Kirinyaga county namely; Mwea, Gichugu, Ndia and Kirinyaga central constituencies. Respondents included both members of the public and county officials. In addition, respondents were above the age of 18 and below the age of 70 years.

During the study, the researcher focused on residents of Kirinyaga County. As such, participants in the study included government employees in the county as well as community members who had lived in the region for at least six months prior to the study. The researcher accessed the respondents as they went about their normal business particularly in public places such as sports ground and local administrative offices. In addition, the researcher would visit the county government offices in Kirinyaga to access active government workers. The accessible population was classified according to occupations that are predominant in the area. During the study, the researcher would restrict the processes of data collection to places accessible to the public since private firms mainly require formal access permit.

Studying the entire population of Kirinyaga County would have been a difficult and tiring process. As a result, the researcher applied probability sampling to reduce cost and time as well as obtain a sample that represented the population characteristics fairly.

In-depth interviews and semi-structured questionnaires were used to gather primary data

during the study. On the other hand, online journals, company record, related books and reports were used to gather secondary data. Since the study was conducted in a non-professional environment, the researcher personally interviewed the respondents and filled in the responses in the questionnaire. Since the study acknowledged the use of both quantitative and qualitative study design, it was possible to include closed and open questions in the questionnaires. The questions covered data and information relating to benefits of public participation based on the criteria of achieving four social goals of; increasing the substantive quality of decisions within the County; resolving conflict among competing interests; building trust in institutions and educating and informing the public.

The mass of data collected was coded, summarized into frequency tables, and analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The qualitative technique was used to conduct content analysis especially from the qualitative data collected from the questionnaires. Data was presented using frequency distribution tables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher recorded 100% response rate. Since the questionnaires were administered by the researcher, none of the questionnaires was damaged or lost.

Descriptive Analysis

During the study, the researcher sought to gather specific personal information from the respondents. Information on gender, age distribution and education were significant to the study. There were more male (62%) participants than female (38%) respondents during the study. Female participant were slightly under-represented, but the researcher considered this distribution satisfactory since the role of decision making and leadership in this region is mainly designated to men rather than women. Young people, (aged 18-35 years) constituted of the largest group (50%) of participants during the study. The second largest group (37%) constituted of middle-aged people (aged 36-55 years). Older

citizens formed a smaller group (13%). The population in Kirinyaga County constitutes of more young people than senior citizens. As such the age distribution in the sample can be considered a fair representation of the population in the region. In addition, the researcher was interested in finding out the levels of education recorded by the participants. Majority of the respondents confirmed to have had access to some form of education

ranging from primary to tertiary education. From the study results, it was evident that majority of the respondents (49%) had acquired basic education up to secondary level. A considerable proportion of the participants (21%) had pursued tertiary education after the secondary education. Table 1 below is a tabulation of the frequencies for different variables studied during the survey

Table 1: Frequencies for Different Variables

Variable	Count	%
Gender		
Male	237	62
Female	147	38
Age		
18-35 years	193	50
36-55 years	140	37
56 and above	51	13
Access to Education		
Yes	246	64
No	138	36
Level of Education		
Primary	113	29
Secondary	188	49
Tertiary	83	21
Occupation		
Government	119	31
Others	265	69

Bivariate and Multivariate Analysis Using SPSS

Correlation Coefficients

Bivariate and multivariate analysis was conducted using SPSS to establish statistical relationship between the different variables under study. A 2-tailed Pearson's correlation was carried out at 0.01, level of significance to check for possible relationship or association between the various aspects that influence service delivery in Kirinyaga County. Existence of a relationship between the variables of study implies that there is a level of dependence in the way they influence the response variable (Public Service Delivery). Variables whose correlation coefficient is zero are said to be independent. The researcher focused on two aspects of correlation namely; direction and strength. As such, correlation could be positive or

negative with the strength ranging from 0 to ± 1 . Results from the Pearson's correlation analysis showed evidence of positive correlation between the variables.

The highest correlation was between accountability and transparency with a positive correlation coefficient of 0.867. This implies that high levels of accountability result in increased transparency in government institutions. There was also high positive correlation between accountability and effective decisions (.860) as well as transparency and effective decisions (.854). When these highly correlated variables occur together, they have a great impact on public service delivery. Table 2 shows the Pearson's correlations coefficients for the variables.

Table 2: Pearson’s Correlations Coefficients

Correlation Coefficient	Public Aspirations	Resolving conflicting Interests	Effective Decisions	Transparency	Accountability
Public Aspirations	1	.461	.675	.651	.538
Resolving Conflicting Interests	.461	1	.785	.679	.839
Effective Decisions	.675	.785	1	.854	.860
Transparency	.651	.679	.854	1	.867
Accountability	.538	.839	.860	.867	1

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

Regression Model Summary

Multivariate analysis was conducted with an aim of formulating an ideal model for the data. The regression model used for the analysis was defines as:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5$$

Where, β_i s are the coefficients; $i = 1...5$

$Y =$ Public Service Delivery

$X_1 =$ Accountability

$X_2 =$ Transparency

$X_3 =$ Resolving Conflicting Interests

$X_4 =$ Public Aspirations

$X_5 =$ Effective Decisions

From the study results, the value of the coefficient of determination was .402 (R Squared=.402). This means that the model explains 40.2% of the variability of the data. R is the correlation between the dependent variable and the predictor variables. The value (.634) indicates that there is a high correlation between the dependent variable (Public Service Delivery) and the predictor variables used in the model. Figure 4.12 presents the model summary details.

Table 3: Regression model summary

Model 1	R	R Squared	Adjusted R Squared	Std Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.634	.402	.394	.55982	.417

Coefficients

The model defined above is important in predicting the values of the dependent variable. From the analysis, the researcher obtained the values of the coefficients $\beta_0, \beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4$ and β_5 as 1.532, 1.093, 0.330, 0.087, 0.495 and -1.087 respectively. Further, the researcher sought to investigate whether all the variables included in the model were significant; at a 0.01 level of significance. From the analysis, accountability, transparency, Public aspirations and effective decisions had significant effect in

predicting public service delivery in Kirinyaga County. As a result the model reduces to:

$$Y = 1.430 + 0.540X_1 + 0.532X_4 + 0.600X_5$$

Although resolving conflicting interests was included in the model the variable did not have significant influence on Public service delivery. This implies that the resolving conflicting interest has minimal impact on the model when used with the other predictors. As such, the variable can be removed from the model. Table 4 represents the values of the coefficients for the model.

Table 4: Coefficients for the model

Model 1	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	1.532	.095		16.169	.000
Accountability	1.093	.103	1.201	10.621	.000
Transparency	.330	.078	-.406	-4.207	.000
Resolving Conflicting Interests	.087	.069	.100	1.266	.206
Public Aspirations	.495	.053	.532	9.366	.000
Effective Decisions	-1.087	.087	-1.226	-12.456	.000

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main goal of decentralizing the system of governance in Kenya was to curb the short falls of the centralized system as well as bring governance closer to the public. This implies that there is a better opportunity for the members of the public to take part in governance in the devolved system of governance. Improving service delivery remains a key agenda for the devolved government. Public participation allows citizens to influence the system of governance as well as the decisions made or projects endorsed by the county government. The main of the study was to establish a relationship between public participation and public service delivery in Kirinyaga This chapter presents a summary of the study findings, recommendations and conclusions from the study. In addition, the researcher provides an insight for further research on the topic of study.

The researcher set out to study the relationship between public participation and service delivery in Kirinyaga County. During the study, the researcher investigated the rate of public participation in government projects, quality of decisions made, information on service delivery and the use of public participation in resolving conflicting interests. The study revealed significant findings that will inspire valuable changes in the way the administrators in the region engage the members of the public. The following is a summary of the key findings obtained from the study.

Women were fairly represented in the study. The observation on gender representation in public

participation and leadership is an important aspect particularly in rural areas. This implies that women are not only capable but actually participate actively in political matters as well as governance. With proper engagement of women in decision making in the county ensures that their interests and needs are represented which is a positive development in ensuring representation of minority groups.

Most people residing in Kirinyaga County have had access to basic education up to the secondary level. In addition, the population consists of 50% young people. These two factors are essential in facilitating effective public participation since majority of the people can read. Also, the young people possess great energy and creativity that can be harnessed through public participation.

Public participation in Kirinyaga County is low. More than half of the respondents said they had never taken part in any government project. Therefore, it is necessary to sensitize the residents on the essence of public participation as well as deal with the factors that bar them from engaging in public forums.

Members of the public are not adequately involved in the decision making process. The small proportion involved in the decision making process constitute of leaders and government officials. This means that the members of the general public are left out or only partially involved in the decision making process.

According to the study results, most members of the public have never suggested a project. In

addition, there was low incorporation of projects suggested by members of the public. While there is enough reason to suggest that most people are not keen to suggest projects during public forums, lack of proper structures to allow easy communication could attribute to the low public participation.

There exists an information gap regarding public service delivery among members of the public. When asked whether the projects suggested during public forums had been implemented most said they were not aware of the details. This implies that there lacks proper channels for members of the public to access information regarding public service.

While the number of public inspired projects remains low, the researcher gathered that the rate of project incorporation is also low. This could be as a result of corruption or lack of adequate funds to implement the projects. It is important to note that the low rate of project incorporation could have detrimental impact on the citizen's willingness to participate in government projects.

According to the study results, residents of Kirinyaga County believe that public participation is critical in ensuring the adoption of better decisions in the county government. Decisions made as a result of public participation were highly rated by the respondents. From the study results, it was clear that the respondents unanimously agreed that better decisions could be achieved through increased public participation.

Public participation was identified as an ideal solution for conflicting interests between administrators and members of the public and among residents. Through public participation, different parties can present their arguments and reasons why they support one project and not another. This way, the residents jointly agree on the projects that best represent their aspirations. Additionally, public participation directly enforces accountability since the residents can make enquiries about the progress of county projects during the public forums.

Public participation plays an important role in enhancing the systems of governance in the county. From the study, it was evident that public participation increases accountability, reduces corruption and ensures equity in the allocation of public resources.

Bivariate analysis confirmed the existence of positive correlation between the dependent and predictor variables (accountability, transparency, resolving conflicting interests, public aspirations and effective decisions) used in the regression model. This implies that an enhancement or increment on the predictor variables leads to improved service delivery in the county.

Public participation refers to the involvement of those affected by a decision in the decision-making process. It encompasses a range of public involvement, from simply informing people about what government is doing to delegating decisions to the public. Broad public participation is a cornerstone of responsible democratic governance and a fundamental prerequisite to achieve sustainable development. The principle of public participation holds that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process. This research explored the potentially wide-ranging benefits of enhanced community participation to the citizenry and the Government, with the broadening of the public participation procedure towards a more collaborative one in which scientific and technical data were centered on the interests of the different actors, it assessed the underlying link of public participation to enhanced democracy and decision-making processes and the overall effect of public involvement to sustainable development. It evaluated the effects of public participation based on the criteria of achieving four social goals namely: incorporating public values into decisions; increasing the substantive quality of decisions; resolving conflict among competing interests and building trust in institutions. From the study results, it was clear that increasing public participation helps enhance service delivery.

A number of problems were noted during the study regarding public participations and service delivery. Following the findings from the study, the researcher made some recommendations aimed at increasing public participation regarding service delivery in the county.

The county government should invest on ways of increasing information availability to the residents. Information is essential for citizens' action. It enables people to know what is happening both around them and elsewhere and hence take appropriate action. In some cases, citizens fail to exercise their civic duties due to lack of information or because they do not understand their roles in ensuring successful service delivery. Residents should be sensitized on the importance of participating in government forums and giving their input so that they can be served better.

Administrators should utilize different institutions such as churches, administrative offices and public events to inform residents on the essence of public participation.

Conduct regular consultative meetings with village elders and leaders on better ways of reaching the public. This will aid in developing a communication system that is favors the lifestyle and needs of Kirinyaga county residents.

Adopt better and far reaching communication infrastructure. Information sources, resources, ICT equipment and internet connections should be established, strengthened and updated to contain

current and relevant information. They should also be accessible, easy to use and updated.

Conduct regular public forums during which technical documents and information such as budgets and laws can be translated or broken down for the locals.

Design mechanisms of incorporating and adopting projects suggested by the locals in order to encourage more public participation.

The locals should be enlightened on the relevance of public participation. Public education campaigns should be undertaken to ensure that citizens are aware of their right to participate in decision-making processes.

Administrators should invest on research to ensure continued improvement of public service delivery. In addition, data gathered during public forums should be recorded and stored for future reference.

Suggestions for Further Studies

The following study covered only a small area of Kirinyaga County implying that there are several other areas where the role of public participation in service delivery. Further studies should be conducted in the other counties to allow comparative analysis. Comparative studies covering the relationship between public participation and public service delivery in two or more counties is also a viable area of study.

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