



**INFLUENCE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN COUNTY ANNUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FORMULATION IN NYANDARUA COUNTY, KENYA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Public participation plays a significant role in the success of devolved governments in Kenya. The study therefore sought investigate the influence of public participation in county annual development plan formulation in Nyandarua county with the objectives being to determine the participants' selection criteria during the formulation of the County annual development plan, to determine the methods of participants engagement in formulating the annual development plan in Nyandarua County, and to establish participants feedback mechanisms in county annual development plan formulation in Nyandarua County. The study was informed by two theories that are vital in unwrapping the puzzle surrounding the public involvement and engagement and are the Theory of Empowerment and the Cognitive Engagement Theory. From a reachable population of 334,932 citizens in the county, a sample size of 384 participants were selected through a snowball sampling technique. A survey research design was adopted where questionnaires and structured and unstructured interviews were utilized to gather information from the selected participants. Data analysis was done using the SPSS software (version 26.0). The results provided statistical evidence that a positive and significant influence exists between public participation and annual development plan formulation. Specifically, the three drivers; participants' selection criteria, methods of participants engagement, and participants feedback mechanisms tested in this study were found to be significant and to have positive influence on the annual development plan formulation in Nyandarua County. The study recommends initiation of strong measures that promote public awareness in integrated development planning, Annual Development Plan program should be tailored to encompass the dynamic nature in demographic characteristics of citizens and that the county government needs to improve on public relation, reporting as well as policy communication as this was found to be positively related to public participation levels in annual development plan.*

**Key words:** Annual Development Plan Formulation, Communication, County, Feedback, Public Participation

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## INTRODUCTION

According to the World Bank (2011), participation is a process where stakeholders have a major impact and a say in decisions about policies, resource allocation, priority setting, and access to products and services that belong to the general public. Stakeholder participation is highly valued since it enhances productivity and product quality. By expanding the information base, encouraging creativity, and facilitating social backing for policy development and execution, it improves the decision-making process.

The World Bank (2015a) view public participation to be a process where firms make consultations with individuals, groups, and statutory bodies prior to arriving to a decision. In addition, public participation is also considered as two-way communication to reach better and acceptable decisions (World Bank, 2015b). Additionally, public participation results to satisfactory programs, and better collaborative governance.

Governance experts think that it is crucial to launch a well-organized public engagement initial in the life cycle of a prearranged intercession and maintain it throughout. Omollo (2011) pointed out that in any normal institutional management practice, the public participation process should concentrate on navigable matters pertinent to the making decision, conform to the ethics guidelines, uphold moral commitments and respect participants' beliefs and interests.

The importance of public participation (WB, 2015) in enabling the general people to understand the development goals at hand has been recognized by nations such as the United States of America, United Kingdom, Brazil, and India. Also, in Porto Alegre, one of the Brazilian cities where structured budget participation resulted in improved access to services and accountability (Cabannies, 2014; Fox, 2014). In addition, the adoption of the participatory budgeting in the city of Porto Alegre led to a notable rise in tax revenues, as instant prominence of the services that aroused from their involvement

inspired the residents to upsurge their conduct of paying taxes.

In Africa, in the 1960s, public participation was undeveloped in constitution-making but dashed many preliminary anticipations (Menski, 2019). However, regarding the above, this aspect of public involvement has undergone notable appreciation in various African countries where citizens are highly considered in developing and implementing governments' projects and programs. For instance, through public participation, Ghana has adopted various accountability and participatory mechanisms at the national and local levels for citizens, which include public engagement in collective action and the right of citizens to participate in elections (Media & Governance Series, 2019).

Even though through different forms, public participation has been practiced in Kenya even before the 2010 constitution was promulgated. The only entities allowed to participate in public life during the colonial era were the municipal governments. Due to the inhabitants' unclear understanding of their rights and unwillingness to take advantage of the opportunity to express their opinions and expectations, the laws governing citizen participation did not fully recognize their potential. Devas and Grant (2003) claim that the inclusion of residents in decision-making led to a significant change in the expenditure priorities of local government in Kenya.

A legislative framework for enhancing public participation at the local level was created with the adoption of the Kenyan constitution (2010) and the implementation of the devolved form of governance. According to Kenyan Constitution of 2010, Article 196 (1) (b), county assembly must allow the public to participate in county government activities as a part of the country's core values and guiding principles. The constitution emphasizes that those who are marginalized and less respected should be given the opportunity to participate in united social and economic life in general and counties (Kanyinga, 2014).

Several county governments for instance, the Makueni county government have effectively incorporated public participation in formulating annual development plans. The World Bank recently praised Makueni County's model for allowing district residents to choose which development plans to implement and to manage the projects that have been commissioned. According to the World Bank, the Makueni County public participation model includes not only project documentation but also full public participation during implementation (Roy, 2022).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Public participation is progressively being pursued globally to enhance the Annual development plan formulation of devolved countries (Finch, 2015). This is a fact that has been appreciated by many nations which include USA, UK, India, and South Africa. World Bank study (2015b) found a positive correlation between public participation and improved country Annual development plan formulation, but the actual Annual development plan formulation of Kenya counties were dismal. This is despite efforts being made to adopt public participation through legal frameworks in Kenya. Additionally, widespread resource embezzlement has reportedly occurred in numerous Kenyan counties, sparking ongoing demonstrations and strikes across the country. As a result, the public is no longer confident in the way that county governments are run.

The Kenyan Constitution 2010 article 220(2) together with the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) 2012 section 126 mandates County Governments to prepare Annual Development Plans each financial year which will act as their annual development blueprints. The constitution requires the counties to undertake public participation while preparing the ADP.

According to Transparency International (2015), poor Annual development plan formulation exhibited by the counties has resulted to worsening public goodwill related to poor public-government links. Nevertheless, despite an escalating public

participation across various counties, the Annual development plan formulation exhibited by the Kenyan county governments is still in question. This means that public trust in the decentralized system of government, which is negatively affecting the development and growth of Kenyan counties, is beginning to erode (IEA, 2015; WB, 2015a). According to the World Bank reports, Nyandarua County has been ranked as the best performing counties under the Kenya Devolution Support Program (KDSP) in the last three consecutive years, however, the county continues to experience persistent demonstrations from the residents over poor road network, lack of proper health care facilities, water shortages, poor electricity connectivity among other social challenges.

The proposed study therefore sought to establish the influence of public participation in county annual development plan formulation in the County.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- To determine the participants' selection criteria during the formulation of the Nyandarua County annual development plan.
- To determine the methods of participants engagement in formulating the annual development plan in Nyandarua County, Kenya.
- To establish participants feedback mechanisms in county annual development plan formulation in Nyandarua County.

### **Research Questions**

- How are the public participation participants selected while formulating the annual development plan in Nyandarua County, Kenya?
- How are the residents engaged during the formulation of the annual development plan public participation in Nyandarua County, Kenya?
- What are the feedback mechanisms in county annual development plan formulation in Nyandarua County, Kenya?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Review

Various theories linked to this study were examined in this section. Scholars highlights that theoretical framework provides a researcher an avenue through which to examine the world from a new theoretical perspective. Besides, a theoretical framework helps create a connection between the theoretical and practical elements of the topic under study and relates to the logical foundation upon which a study was conducted. The following theories served as the study's framework.

### The Theory of Empowerment

The Theory of Empowerment argue that, when various methods of interventions are used, they guide individuals toward realizing a sense of control. According to Zimmerman (2000), people may feel stranded for various reasons, but authorization theory have a focus on how domination has a role to this experience. The theory is centered on helping sidelined citizens at separate, group, and public levels.

In this context, the citizens in Nyandarua County may be experiencing various challenges that may hinder them from achieving their personal and communal goals. However, by nurturing the idea that they can change their circumstances and gaining a profound awareness of the intricate social, economic, and political realities in the contexts that adversely affect them, they can increase their power through empowerment. This involves dissecting their capabilities in these settings and searching for suitable workarounds for the boundaries that substitute their direction. By making this type of awareness, individuals can associate with other people who are going through comparative things and offer their encounters (Kanyinga, 2014). However, it is essential to note that public participation processes fail when they have been completed as one-way communication or are done in secret or in a climate that advances protectiveness.

### The Cognitive Engagement Theory

Founded by Meece, Blumenfeld, and Hoyle in 1988, the Cognitive Engagement Theory focuses more on the wiliness of members to take part in the learning activities and their determination to stick to a topic in the long term (Malik, 2021). In this context, the theory will define the extent to which the willingness of the residents and their ability to take part on the annual development plans. This involves how eager the citizens are to invest in developing development plans (Corno & Mandinach, 1983). By educating the residents on the participation benefits, they will be motivated and be actively involved in development plans.

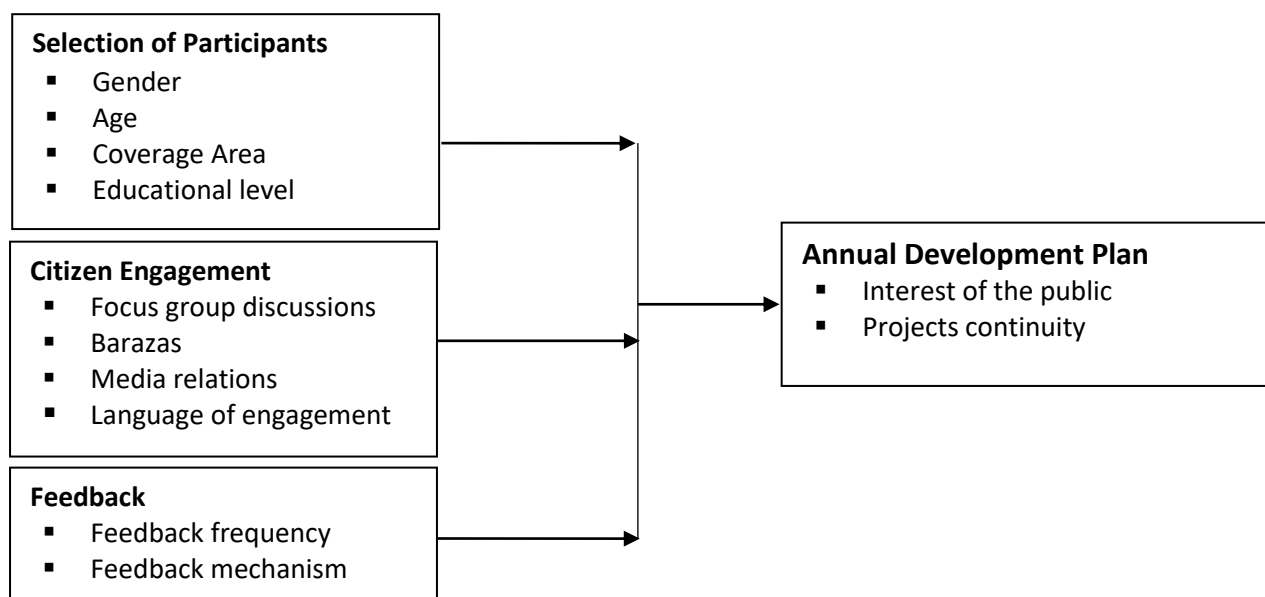
In view of the conceptual framework of client commitment, Ponciano and Brasileiro (2014) planned four commitment measurements to gauge member cooperation and contribution to resident science projects. These commitment measurements could be applied in different settings where we are keen on client commitment in application with limited times, for example, commitment, persistence, and contribution. Member commitment over the long run considers their places of responsibility, times of supported commitment, withdrawals, and reengagements.

### Conceptual Framework

**Independent Variable:** Some of the independent variable considered when doing this study included the selection of participants, citizen engagement and the method of involvement. When selecting the participants, some of the factors that were considered are the coverage of the area and the feedback mechanism. For this reason, the selection of the participants was dictated by the location and the availability of providing feedback. Citizen engagement was essential for this study to offer their suggestions and input when conducting the study. Different methods of involvement were used such as baraza, media relation and focus group discussions. The different platforms provides an opportunity for public participation to be successful and efficient.

**Dependent Variable:** The dependent variable for this study includes the annual development plan, interest of the public, and agenda. The annual development plan is the main variable which is dependent the success of public participation and other variables such as availability of resources. Agenda refers to the main objective

of the public participation which will be determined by the engagement of citizen and their willingness to participate. The interest of the public is dependent on the need and wants of the people in the county. Therefore, it is dependent of the availability of a platform for them to articulate their needs.



### Independent Variables

### Dependent Variables

**Figure 1: Diagram showing the conceptual framework**

### METHODOLOGY

This survey utilized a descriptive research design. The research design collected evidence using a well-designed survey or interview guide. The target populace of this research entailed the sub-counties in Nyandarua County, with a reachable adult population of 334,932 citizens who could offer more information about the county. A snowball sampling technique was used in this study as it drew participants with ample knowledge of the study topic. The study relied on a sample size of 384.

Data was collected by use of questionnaires. The questionnaires were developed from the objectives of the study and administered by the researcher to the respondents. The collected data was analyzed by both descriptive and inferential statistics with

the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0. The following regression model was adopted.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \varepsilon$$

Where:

Y represents Annual development plan formulation

$\beta_0$  represents Beta Constant

X1 represents participants' selection criteria.

X2 represents methods of participants engagement.

X3 represents participants feedback mechanisms.

$\varepsilon$  represents Error Term

$\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$  represent Regression coefficients of independent variables

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Public Participation Awareness

The study sought to establish whether the respondents had heard about public participation in

annual development plan formulation. Results on whether public participation awareness influence public participation in annual development plan formulation is shown in table 1.

**Table 1: Public participation**

Opinion	Frequency	Percent
Yes	279	80.6
No	67	19.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>100.0</b>

From most of the respondents as shown by 80.6% have heard about public participation in annual development plan formulation whereas 19.4% of the respondents were not aware.

### Understanding of Annual Development Plan

The study sought to establish whether the respondents understand what annual development plan is. Results on whether respondents attending public participation understand the meaning of annual development plan were shown in table 2.

**Table 2: Public participation**

Opinion	Frequency	Percent
Yes	261	75.4
No	85	24.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>100.0</b>

From most of the respondents as shown by 75.4% know the meaning of annual development plan whereas 24.6% of the respondents did not know.

### Descriptive Statistics

This section presents the findings and discussion in respect to the objectives stated and answers the research questions thereby. For establishing how well each variable in reference to public participation is implemented, respondents were to respond statements on a Likert scale of 1 to 5 where, 1 meant that the respondents Strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-Not sure, 4 they to a Agree and 5 meant to a Strongly Agree. For purpose of interpretation, a mean score of  $0 \leq 1.5$  means that

the respondents strongly disagreed, between  $1.50 \leq 2.50$  means they disagreed,  $2.50 \leq 3.50$  they were respondents were not sure on the extent of variable,  $3.50 \leq 4.50$  means they agreed and above 4.50 means the respondents strongly agreed that to a large extent there is that variable within public participation.

### Influence of participants' selection criteria during the formulation of the Nyandarua County annual development plan

The aim of the research study was to determine the influence of participants' selection criteria during the formulation of the Nyandarua County annual development plan.

**Table 3: Influence of participants' selection criteria during the formulation of the Nyandarua County annual development plan**

Participants' selection criteria	Mean	Std.Dev.
The selection criteria used during the selection of participants is effective		
The criteria used eliminates selection bias	3.13	.915
The county selects the persons to participate in the formulation of annual county development plans	3.71	.671
Community members are notified of public participation forums within their regions	3.48	.831
Majority of residents participate in formulation of annual county development at the very basic level	3.59	.430
Low levels education for local communities have decreased public participation in ADP	3.47	.637
Participation of young in ADP is low compared to older citizen across the counties	4.01	.900
People with higher trust on the integrated development planning formulation process participate more effectively	3.89	1.00
Citizen attitude toward county government determines the extent of citizen's participation in ADP	3.99	.781
The level of community awareness determines their public participation in county integrated development planning process	4.21	.670
<b>Average mean</b>	<b>3.80</b>	<b>.899</b>

Participants' selection criteria during public participation influence Annual development plan formulation in the county with a standard deviation .899 and a mean 3.80. This implies a slightly positive correlation between participants' selection criteria and Annual development plan formulation in the counties hence need to improve on the participants' selection criteria to ensure effective public participation. This is agreement with Ndirangu (2013) who argues that government must

have set standards to ensure that selection criteria in public participation should not be discriminative.

**Influence of the methods of participants engagement in formulating the annual development plan in Nyandarua County, Kenya.**

The objective of the research study was to determine the methods of participant's engagement in formulating the annual development plan in Nyandarua County, Kenya.

**Table 4: Influence of the methods of participants engagement in formulating the annual development plan in Nyandarua County, Kenya.**

Methods of participants engagement	Mean	Std. Dev.
Nyandarua County engages with the members of the public in the formulation of the annual development plans	3.47	1.064
Dedicating resources to support matters of importance to the citizens encourages public participation in ADP	3.61	1.21
Perceived benefits by the citizens on county development initiatives influences their participation in ADP	4.38	1.26
Citizens expect mutual interactions with county government, and they seek a balance between the social costs of interaction.	3.48	1.1
Acting in the best interest of locals encourages community participation in ADP	4.01	.94
Community attitude to process of governance limits their participation in ADP	4.34	.76
Awareness of Participation program gives interested Communities opportunity a chance to influence the outcome.	4.45	.65
Nyandarua County engages with the members of the public in the formulation of the annual development plans	3.24	.99
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.99</b>	<b>0.91</b>



Methods of participants' engagement in public participation has helped the county to improve their annual development plan formulation with a standard deviation 0.91 and a mean 3.99. This implies a positive correlation between methods of participants engagement and Annual development plan formulation in the county hence need to dynamically focus on methods of participants engagements to ensure effective public participation in Annual development plan formulation. This is agreement with Aspden and Brich (2005) argument that there are several factors and issues that influence public 'attitude towards

participation in local government affairs and decision- making. These consist of citizen's satisfaction for their involvement, citizen interest and understanding of local government, citizen trust of the local government and its members, and previous experience of voluntary participation.

#### **Examining participants' feedback mechanisms in county annual development plan formulation in Nyandarua County.**

The objective of the study was to examine the effect of participants' feedback mechanisms on the Annual development plan formulation in Nyandarua County.

**Table 5: Examining participant's feedback mechanisms in county annual development plan formulation in Nyandarua County**

<b>Participants feedback mechanisms</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>
The county provides feedback on issues raised by the public during public participation	3.68	1.14
The county provide feedback to the issues raised by the public	3.81	0.96
The number of local community members participating in ADP have generally increased	3.47	1.01
Development Projects initiated by county government are operating efficiently under the management of the localcommunity members.	2.84	1.21
The number of complaints from local community members oncounty development programs or policies has decreased	3.79	0.93
Local community Support development projects initiated by county government have increased	3.87	1.22
More positive comments on citizen engagement by countygovernment have been received from the public	3.50	1.05
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.61</b>	<b>0.95</b>

Participants feedback mechanisms has helped counties improve public participation hence effective annual development plan formulation in the county with a standard deviation 0.95 and a mean 3.61. This implies a positive correlation between participants feedback mechanisms and Annual development plan formulation in county government hence need to dynamically focus on participants feedback mechanisms to spearhead public participation. This results to effective annual development plan formulation. A study by Seimuskane & Vor斯拉va (2011) reveal that citizens'

satisfaction with their local authority's programs and work is an important attribute in formation of the citizens' attitude towards the authority. At local authorities' level, citizens' satisfaction has the very strong linkage with the trust level, that is, citizens are most satisfied with the work of the local authority, when trust level levels are high.

#### **Public participation rating**

Respondents were requested to rate level public participation in county annual development plan formulation process.

**Table 6: Public participation in ADP**

Level public participation	Frequency	Percentage
Don't know	67	19.5
Good	157	45.5
Very Good	122	35.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 6 shows the level public participation in county annual development planning formulation. From the research findings, 45.5% of the respondents indicated that public participation in ADP was good, 35.0% of the respondents indicated

that public participation in ADP was very good whereas 19.5% of the respondents were not sure. This implies that public participation in ADP was generally good.

### Multi-collinearity Test

**Table 7: Collinearity Test for Independent variables**

Model	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
X1	.982	1.026
X2	.686	1.760
X3	.876	1.402

Participants' selection criteria had VIF of 1.026 and tolerance of .982, methods of participants' engagement had VIF of 1.760 and tolerance of .686, participants' feedback mechanisms had VIF of 1.420 and tolerance of .876. This shows that the variables had a VIF that is way less than 10 and tolerance value of more than 0.1 ruling out the possibility of multi-collinearity (Field, 2009). Therefore, the results imply that there was no multi-collinearity problem among independent variables.

### Overall Model (Multiple Regression Model)

Table 8 shows that the combined independent variables, which constitute the public participation practices can explain 85.9% of the variance in Annual development plan formulation in Nyandarua County. This supports the general view that public participation practices are very important in determining Annual development plan formulation.

**Table 8: Model Summary for Combined Regression Model Results**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.931 <sup>a</sup>	0.859	0.214	60.31114

a. Predictors: (Constant), X3, X2, X1

The ANOVA test for the combined model has a P-value of 0.000. This is less than the set level of significance of 0.05 for normally distributed data. The results further revealed that the model had an F-ratio of 245.018, which is significant at 0.005 level and shows that the model significantly explains the effect of public participation on firm Annual development plan formulation. The results

indicated that public participation has a great influence on Annual development plan formulation in Nyandarua County implying that participants' selection criteria, methods of participants' engagement, participants feedback mechanisms, had a significant and positive impact on the Annual development plan formulation in Nyandarua County.

**Table 9: Combined ANOVA results**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	34.389	4	8.59725	245.018	.000a
Residual	101.129	342	0.2957		
Total	135.518	346			

a. Predictors: (Constant), X3, X2, X1

b. Dependent Variable: Y

To establish the direction of the relationship, either directly or inversely, coefficient analysis was done as shown on Table 10.

**Table 10: Coefficients for Overall Regression Model for Direct Effect**

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	.342	0.139		12.134	0.4565
X1	.518	0.216	.405	1.157	0.000
X2	.644	0.687	.422	-0.209	0.000
X3	.389	0.383	.283	-1.774	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Y

The model before moderation was stated as in Equation 3.3.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \epsilon,$$

Where:

Y= Annual development plan formulation,

$\beta_0$  = Constant

$\beta_{(1-3)}$  = Coefficients of independent variables

$X_{(1-3)}$  = Independent variables

The regression coefficients for the overall model are as shown above in table 10. The regression coefficients for the participants' selection criteria, methods of participants' engagement, participants' feedback mechanisms, are 0.518, 0.644, and 0.389 respectively. The model was transformed as shown below.

$$Y = .342 + 0.518X_1 + 0.644X_2 + 0.389X_3$$

The p-values for participants' selection criteria, methods of participants' engagement, participants' feedback mechanisms, were 0.000, 0.000, 0.000, and 0.001 respectively. The findings imply that participants' selection criteria, methods of participants' engagement, participants' feedback mechanisms, had a significant and positive impact

on the Annual development plan formulation in Nyandarua County.

Bastidas (2004) Governments need to better consider public participation not only to effectively engage the general public, but also to establish a more mutually beneficial government and citizen relationship. Omolo, (2010) argues that for devolution to be successful citizens must be politically conscious, they must not only be aware of their rights and responsibilities but also know the channels via which they can exercise them.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research results indicated that participants' selection criteria impacted positively on Annual development plan formulation in the Nyandarua County. This can be attributed to the fact that participants' selection criteria, such as the level of community awareness determines their public participation in county integrated development planning process hence effective formulation. It therefore, follows that the Nyandarua County leadership needs to enhance, foster and vary their dynamic capabilities with respect to selection

criteria to suit the ever changing demands in the society to enhance effective annual development plans formulation

It was established that methods of participants' engagement enhance Annual development plan formulation in the Nyandarua County. This is attributable to the good methods of participants engagement such as Local radio station, short message service, and posters use of local use door to door campaigns, partnering with local churches campaigns and county portal, the findings are in support the findings by McCommon (2013) that community awareness and participation are valuable in improving community welfare, training people in local administration and extending government control through self-initiatives.

Participants' feedback mechanisms were found to have a significant and positive relationship with Annual development plan formulation in the Counties. This was attributed to the county providing feedbacks on issues raised by the public during public participation. The study also found that a positive and significant influence exists between methods of participants' engagement of the Nyandarua County and its Annual development plan formulation. It can be concluded that the methods of participants engagement of the government is an important variable that explains,

to a greater extent, the variations in county's Annual development plan formulation.

The study noted that low level of public awareness on contributed to poor public participation in integrated development planning process, thus the strong measures that promote public awareness on integrated development planning need to be instituted. The study noted that level of trust, fairness, clarity and transparency of the processes, level of coordination and engagement and the perceived community value in the participation whole process all influenced public participation in ADP thus the study recommend that the county government need to improve on public relation, reporting as well as policy communication as this was found to be positively related to public participation levels in ADP.

#### **Suggestions for Further Research**

The focus of this study was to investigate the influence of public participation in county annual development plan formulation in Nyandarua County. There is need to carry out a similar study in other counties. Also, there is need to carry out a deeper investigation in establishing if similar results can be reported among the non-governmental, not for profit organizations. An interesting topic to study would be assessing the effectiveness of the initiated citizen engagement measures by the county.

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