

Influence of Public Participation on Enhancing Democratic Governance

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Abstract

Devolution framework in Kenya is anchored in article 174 of the Constitution which espouses the relationships where political, administrative and fiscal power is distributed to semi-autonomous territorial and sub-national units which seek to promote accountability, transparency, responsiveness and legitimacy in a state. For this to be achieved, the devolution framework borrows heavily on public participation framework. The purpose of this study was to establish the influence of public participation on enhancing democratic governance. The study adopted descriptive and correlation research design. All the forty-seven (47) counties in Kenya were targeted, with five officers per counties forming the sample frame. Regression models was used to examine the influence of the public participation on democratic governance in Kenya. The results revealed that there was a positive relationship between public participation and democratic governance. This finding implied that an improvement in public participation leads to an improvement in decentralized units. The study recommends for an inclusion of public input since it highly contributes to democratic governance and the feel of belonging of the people. Public participation is very critical for perception of fairness and justice

Keywords: *Public participation, Democratic governance, Devolution framework, Constitution*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Devolution is one of the various forms of decentralization which is an attribute of all governments globally. Kauzya (2007) observes that various decentralization forms offer vertical and horizontal decentralization, where vertical offers a vote while horizontal offers a voice to the citizens. Devolution embraces both where the citizens are heard and their vote counts in assembling the governance structure. Globally therefore, it is not if governments decentralize but rather how and why they do choose their preferred mode of decentralization.

The global arena has successful experiments of devolution, with federalism being the most successful experience at the United States of America and India devolution experience. The India story is a worth experience due to its resilience despite its curious basis on language, as has the Ethiopian Constitution of 1994 which provided for secession that had been tried by its former Province of Eritrea (Society for International Development, 2011).

Africa has since independence of her states in the 1960's and 1970's lived in the glory of one party democracies, as an extension of the consensus of a traditional set up to guard nationalism. One-partyism and centralized state fed each other, providing the political space for political actors to monopolize the distribution of resources and delivery of services. This state of affairs, Kauzya (2007) and Ndegwa (2002) concur threatened the equitable delivery of services as those holding the purse strings of the states in Africa could on most cases use the budget to exercise client – patronage political philosophy, where it rewarded supporters and punished the critics or opposition (perceived or real).

According to Kim and Lee (2012), the guiding principles of the public participation concept include representative and participatory democracy, the promotion of good ethics and promotion of good conduct. Public participation helps construct informed citizenry blocks with a sense of ownership of all amenities and services accessed to them. Democratic governance therefore thrives where politics becomes an arena where different groups struggle to have their interests recognized. For the struggle to play out in a fair manner, it becomes essential that decisions are made in a transparent and accountable manner to avoid negating the democratic gains on states (Biegelbauer & Hansen, 2011).

County governments are expected to facilitate public participation on the financial operations with Articles 201 and 202 providing for a public finance management Act. The constitution further provides for article 209 which attends to the taxation burden and revenues and how they should be shared fairly across the two governmental levels towards the attainment of inclusive equitable development. Provision for all government revenues to be first paid into the consolidated fund before being withdrawn is entrenched in Article 206 of the Constitution (CoK, 2010).

Article 203 of the constitution provides for the criteria for sharing out the government revenue ring fenced for county governments, which has been set at 15 per cent. Article 204 as well provides for an initial 20-year Equalization Fund of 0.5 per cent of annual revenues, to be allocated with the advice from the Commission on Revenue Allocation (CRA). This provision seeks to address primary social and physical infrastructure inequalities in marginalized areas in the spirit of Articles 215, 216 and 217 (CoK, 2010).

Article 10 identifies public participation as a National Value and principle of governance. Article 174 of the CoK, 2010 that articulates the objects of devolution provides for the participation of the public in the exercise of the powers of the state and in the making of decisions affecting them. Article 232(d) guarantees the involvement of the people in the process of policy making in the public service. Article 196(1)(b) requires county assemblies to facilitate public participation and involvement in the legislative and other business of the assembly and its committees. The Fourth Schedule to the Constitution allocates county governments the role of ensuring and coordinating the participation of communities in governance at the local level. Section 3(f) of the County Governments Act, 2012 provides for public participation while section 87 of the same Act requires county governments to facilitate public participation in conducting its affairs.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Public participation in the County assemblies has largely been undermined (TISA, 2015). The County assemblies have been using national newspapers to advertise public participation even in areas with low literacy levels and low newspaper distribution and access. This has led to selective involvement of people in public participation forums, limited sharing of budget documents, and when shared, is in technical language limiting participation, poor feedback to communities after the public participation exercises. TISA (2015) observes that communication gaps between the County executive, the County assembly and the ward

administrators are worsening the situation. The information gap has resulted in slow, late, inaccurate or incomplete communication. Civic education is also yet to have any meaningful impact on Kenyans as many citizens do not know that there were specific processes in which they were required to participate and offer their views. Community level infrastructure development programme is yet to take root to support village and ward level programmes (Finch & Omolo, 2015).). Therefore, this study sought to investigate on the relationship between democratic governance indicators of transparency, accountability, responsiveness and Legitimacy and Public Participation.

1.2 Objective of the Study

The purpose of this study was to establish the influence of public participation on enhancing democratic governance

1.3 Research Hypothesis

H₁: public participation has an influence on democratic governance in Kenya

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Literature: Regulatory theory

Regulatory theory holds that agencies must have clear guidelines of their operations and their processes must be understood by all. This is mostly to allow transparency and public participation on its operations and processes. The public participation is expected to compel the institution or agency to put into consideration and priority, the societal interests (Stewart 1975). The idea is to ensure that operations of an agency respond to the priorities of the citizens and cushion them from political pressures.

2.2 Empirical Review

Bratton and Mattes (2005) studied the relationship between public participation and democratic deepening. The study found out that half of the citizens of Mali, Zimbabwe, Nigeria and Zambia interviewed were psychologically disengaged from politics. The study found out that 'voter turnout has declined across Sub-Saharan Africa between founding and subsequent elections.

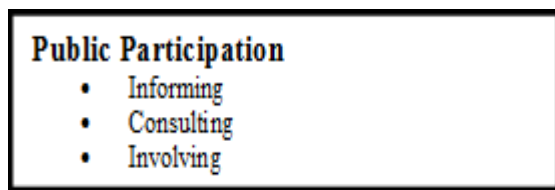
Tyler (1990) undertook a study to examine the importance of public participation in organizational democracy. The findings indicated that governments' inclusion of public input highly contributed to democratic governance and the feel of belonging of the people. Public participation was pegged on the high performance of the leaders and the economy at large. (Herian et al. 2012) undertook a study on the role of public participation in Lincoln, Nebraska on effective budgeting. The objective of the study was to examine the attitudes of individuals who were presented with information about public input processes used by a local government to develop its budget. The study used the 2010 US Census Bureau estimates to do a random telephone survey, a purposive sampling online survey, a series of town hall meetings, and one public meeting for residents who had attended a prior held meeting on budget issues.

This multifaceted approach to collect input was designed to give individuals multiple outlets through which to state their opinion about their city's affairs and perception towards measuring the impact of public deliberation upon perception of fairness. The sample included 607 respondents. The study concluded that public participation is very critical for perception of fairness and justice. It also captured that process fairness positively impact on overall evaluation of governmental performance and legitimacy. The findings also indicated that the effects of process fairness though public participation were greater among individuals high in uncertainty over the devolved unit.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The guiding principles of the public participation concept include representative and participatory democracy, the promotion of good ethics and promotion of good conduct. Public participation helps construct informed citizenry blocks with a sense of ownership of all amenities and services accessed to them. Democratic governance therefore thrives where politics becomes an arena where different groups struggle to have their interests recognized. For the struggle to play out in a fair manner, it becomes essential that decisions are made in a transparent and accountable manner to avoid negating the democratic gains on states (Biegelbauer & Hansen, 2011).

Independent Variable



Dependent variable

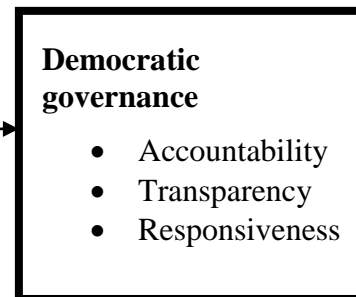


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This research adopted descriptive and correlation research design. The study embraced the philosophical foundation of naturalist and positivist forms of inquiry, which are loosely referred to as the qualitative and quantitative methods respectively. The study population consisted of all the 47 Counties in Kenya. The study used a census for all the forty-seven counties in Kenya, targeting critical officers in the implementation framework of devolution in Kenya. The County executive were represented by the governor or his representative, while the county assembly speaker was represented the County assembly. The IEBC County coordinator represented the electoral agency, which is tasked with the enormous task of civic education in the country. County attorneys provided the much desired legal framework situation of the devolution framework in the counties.

Questionnaires were designed to collect information on the influence of public participation in Kenya on democratic governance. The questionnaire instrument for data collection was preferred as it helps the respondents to be objective and more precise in responding to research questions. Simple linear regression model was used to link the relationship between public participation and democratic governance.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + \epsilon$$

Where

Y = Democratic Governance

X = Public Participation

β_0 = Intercept coefficient

β_1 = Regression coefficient

ϵ = Error term

4.0 FINDINGS

4.1 Response rate

The number of questionnaires that were administered was 188 and a total of 166 questionnaires were properly filled and returned. The response rate result is shown in Table 1. The response rate was 88.29%.

Table 1: Response Rate

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|------------|-----------|---------|
| Returned | 166 | 88.29% |
| Unreturned | 22 | 11.71% |
| Total | 188 | 100.00% |

4.2 Descriptive statistics

4.2.1 Public participation

Public Participation was measured by 6 statements. Respondents were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 5; where 1= strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree and 5= Strongly Agree. The analysis is on Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Public Participation

| Statements | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree | Mean | Std. Dev |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|-------------|-------------|
| Effective public participation allows the public's values to be identified and incorporated into decisions that ultimately affect them | 4.8% | 3.6% | 0.0% | 62.0% | 29.5% | 4.50 | 0.75 |
| Public participation ought to be appropriately legislated to operationalize its key objectives | 10.8% | 3.6% | 0.0% | 50.6% | 34.9% | 4.67 | 0.81 |
| Public participation encompass an open, accountable process through which individuals and groups within selected communities exchange views on the development and operation of services that affect their lives | 6.4% | 3.2% | 3.1% | 74.1% | 13.2% | 4.39 | 0.70 |
| Public participation is an indication of awareness of social capital as critical governance variable that guides towards critical understanding, fostering and guiding development | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 60.2% | 39.8% | 4.40 | 0.49 |
| Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 22.3% | 77.7% | 4.78 | 0.42 |
| Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision-making agencies | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 42.8% | 57.2% | 4.57 | 0.50 |
| Average | | | | | | 4.55 | 0.61 |

The results show that 62.0% agreed with the statement that effective public participation allows the public's values to be identified and incorporated into decisions that ultimately affect them. 50.6% agreed that public participation ought to be appropriately legislated to operationalize its key objectives, 74.1% agreed that public participation encompass an open, accountable process through which individuals and groups within selected communities exchange views on the development and operation of services that affect their lives, 60.2% agreed that public participation is an indication of awareness of social capital as critical governance variable that guides towards critical understanding, fostering and guiding development while 77.7% strongly agreed that Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision. The overall mean of the responses was 4.55 which indicates that majority of the respondents agreed with the statements on public participation. The standard deviation of 0.61 indicates that the responses were closely varied. The study is consistent with that of Cele (2015) who posits that public participation encompass an open, accountable process through which individuals and groups within selected communities can exchange views and influence decision making. As such, the process includes engaging people, deciding, planning and playing an active part in the development and operation of services that affect their lives. It is important the public participation is understood in its appropriate context.

4.2.2 Democratic Governance

In this study, democratic governance was measured by 6 statements. Respondents were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 5; where 1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree and 5= Strongly Agree. The analysis is on Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics On Democratic Governance

| Statements | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree | Mean | Std. Dev |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|-------------|-------------|
| Transparency has improved under the devolved system | 16.3% | 20.5% | 4.8% | 58.4% | 0.0% | 3.05 | 1.20 |
| Accountability has improved under the devolved system | 0.0% | 0.0% | 15.7% | 65.1% | 19.3% | 4.04 | 0.59 |
| Legitimacy of governments has been enhanced by the devolved system | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 24.7% | 75.3% | 4.75 | 0.43 |
| Political Leaders are accountable in my county | 0.0% | 39.8% | 14.5% | 45.8% | 0.0% | 3.06 | 0.93 |
| Processes and institutions are more transparent in my county | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 65.1% | 34.9% | 4.35 | 0.48 |
| Responsiveness to citizen's needs has improved under devolved system | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 84.9% | 15.1% | 4.15 | 0.36 |
| Average | | | | | | 3.90 | 0.67 |

The results show that 58.4% agreed with the statement that transparency has improved under the devolved system, 65.1% agreed that accountability has improved under the devolved system, 75.3% agreed that legitimacy of governments has been enhanced by the devolved system, 45.8% agreed that Political Leaders were accountable in their county, 65.1% agreed that processes and institutions were more transparent in their county, while 84.9% agreed that responsiveness to citizen's needs had improved under devolved system. The overall mean of the responses was 3.90 which indicates that majority of the respondents agreed with the statements on democratic governance. The standard deviation of 0.67 indicates that the responses were closely varied.

4.3 Loading factor

Table 4 shows sub variables under the variable Public participation, that had factor loadings greater than 0.4 and were accepted for analysis. All the sub variables had values more than 0.4 and therefore they were accepted and thus no sub variable was drop dropped. Table 4.5.3: Factor Loading for the Construct Public Participation

| Statements | Factor Analysis |
|--|-----------------|
| Effective public participation allows the public's values to be identified and incorporated into decisions that ultimately affect them | 0.701 |
| Public participation ought to be appropriately legislated to operationalize its key objectives | 0.791 |
| Public participation encompass an open, accountable process through which individuals and groups within selected communities exchange views on the development and operation of services that affect their lives | 0.773 |
| Public participation is an indication of awareness of social capital as critical governance variable that guides towards critical understanding, fostering and guiding development | 0.808 |
| Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision | 0.517 |
| Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision-making agencies | 0.763 |

Table 5 shows sub variables under the variable democratic governance, that had factor loadings greater than 0.4 and were accepted for analysis. All the sub variables had values more than 0.4 and therefore they were accepted and thus no sub variable was dropped.

Table 5: Factor loading for the Construct democratic governance

| Statements | Factor Analysis |
|--|-----------------|
| Transparency has improved under the devolved system | 0.583 |
| Accountability has improved under the devolved system | 0.536 |
| Legitimacy of governments has been enhanced by the devolved system | 0.78 |
| Political Leaders are accountable in my county | 0.487 |
| Processes and institutions are more transparent in my county | 0.471 |
| Responsiveness to citizen's needs has improved under devolved system | 0.494 |

4.4 Scatter Plot of Public Participation and Democratic Governance

A visual examination of scatter plot indicates a positive liner relationship between public participation and democratic governance. This implies that an improvement in public participation leads to improvement in democratic governance

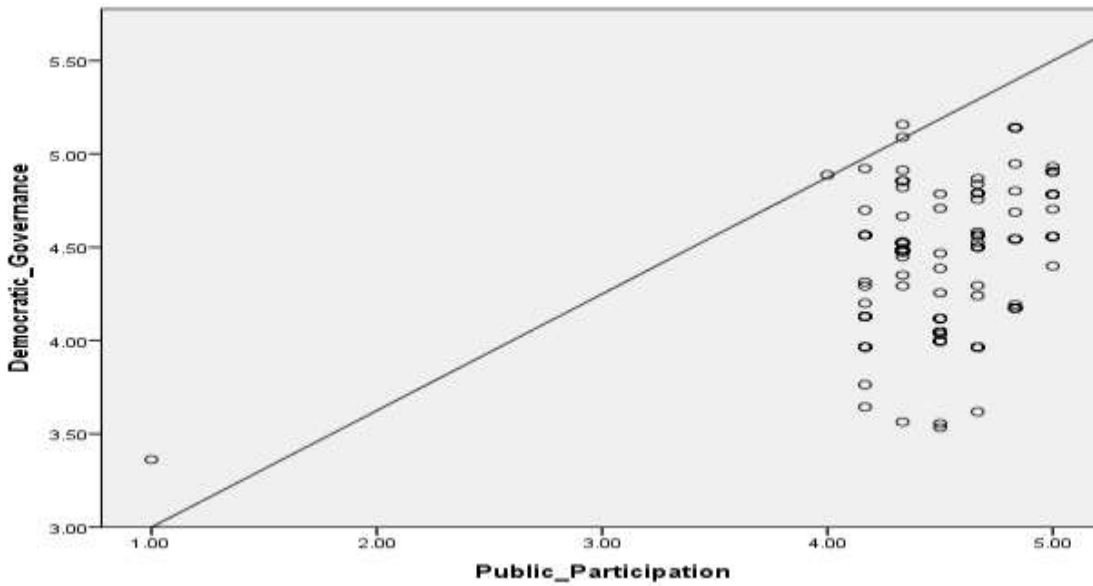


Figure 2: Scatter Plot of Public Participation and Democratic Governance

The Pearson's r correlation between public participation and democratic governance is 0.386. This means that there is a weak relationship between the two variables. It means the changes in one variable is weakly correlated to change in the second variable since 0.386 is not close to one. 0.386 is however positive therefore an increase in one value leads to increase of the other. There is a statistical significance between public participation and democratic governance ($p=0.000$).

Table 6: Correlation between Public Participation and Democratic Governance

| | | Democratic Governance | Public Participation |
|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Democratic Governance | Pearson Correlation | 1.000 | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | 0.000 |
| Public Participation | Pearson Correlation | .386** | 1.000 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.000 | |

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

Fitness of Model

The fitness of model explains the relationship between public participation and democratic governance. Public participation was found to be satisfactory variables in determining democratic governance. This was supported by the coefficient of determination also known as the R-square of 0.149. This means that decentralized units explains 14.9% of the variations in the dependent variable. These results further mean that the model applied to link the relationship of the variables was satisfactory.

Table 7: Model Fitness

| Model | Coefficient |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| R | 0.386 |
| R Square | 0.149 |
| Adjusted R Square | 0.144 |
| Std. Error of the Estimate | 0.34486 |

The ANOVA results indicate F statistic of 28.729 which was greater than f critical of 5.8 implying that the model was statistically significant. Further, the results imply that the independent variable, public

participation was a good predictor of democratic governance. This was also supported by the reported $p=0.00$ which was less than the conventional probability of 0.05 significance level.

Table 8: Analysis of Variance

| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|------|
| Regression | 3.417 | 1 | 3.417 | 28.729 | .000 |
| Residual | 19.504 | 164 | 0.119 | | |
| Total | 22.921 | 165 | | | |

Table 9 results revealed a positive relationship between public participation and democratic governance ($\beta = 0.370$). The relationship was also significant at 5% level of significance ($P\text{-value}=0.000$). This finding implied that an improvement in public participation by one unit led to a 0.370-unit improvement in decentralized units.

Table 9: Regression Coefficient

| | B | Std. Error | beta | t | sig |
|----------------------|-------|------------|-------|-------|-------|
| (Constant) | 2.758 | 0.314 | | 8.783 | 0.000 |
| Public Participation | 0.370 | 0.069 | 0.386 | 5.360 | 0.000 |

The specific model is;

$$\text{Democratic Governance} = 2.758 + 0.370X$$

Where;

X = Public Participation

Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis was tested by using the linear regression (table 9). The acceptance/rejection criteria were that, if the p value is less than 0.05, the H_0 is not rejected but if it's greater than 0.05, the H_0 fails to be accepted. Based on this objective and literature review, the following alternative hypothesis was formulated for testing.

H_1 : Public participation has an influence on democratic governance

Results in Table 9 show that the p-value was $0.000 < 0.05$. This indicated that the alternative hypothesis was not rejected hence public participation has an influence on democratic governance. This study is consistent with that of Cele (2015) who posits that public participation encompass an open, accountable process through which individuals and groups within selected communities can exchange views and influence decision making. As such, the process includes engaging people, deciding, planning and playing an active part in the development and operation of services that affect their lives. It is important the public participation is understood in its appropriate context.

5.0 Conclusions

It was found that the relationship between Public Participation and democratic governance in Kenya was positive and significant. The results provided sufficient statistically significant evidence to signify the relationship. It can be concluded that effective public participation allows the public's values to be identified and incorporated into decisions that ultimately affect the citizens. Public participation is indication of awareness of social capital as critical governance variable that guides towards critical understanding, fostering and guiding development it promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision-making agencies.

6.0 Recommendation

The study identified that public participation has positive and significant relationship with democratic governance process in Kenya. The study recommends for an inclusion of public input since it highly contributes to democratic governance and the feel of belonging of the people. Public participation is very critical for perception of fairness and justice. It also captured that process fairness positively impact on overall evaluation of governmental performance and legitimacy. According to this study public participation involves an open, accountable process through which individuals and groups within selected communities can exchange views and influence decision making. Public participation make citizens engage within themselves, decide, plan and play an active part in the development and operation of services that improve their democratic space.

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