

An Investigation of Public Participation on Policy Formulation in Devolved Government in Keiyo South Sub County, Elgeyo Marakwet County, Kenya



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ABSTRACT: Citizens in many county governments are not empowered to understand their role in development issues and feel that policy makers do not put into consideration their contribution in major decision making particularly affecting key development programs. Citizens in many counties feel more often than not that their predicaments have not been addressed effectively by their governments, bring in a lot of conflicts which at times has resulted in public unrest. This study therefore focused on establishing an investigation of public participation on policy formulation in devolved governments in Keiyo South Sub County, Elgeyo Marakwet County, Kenya. The objectives of this study were to: establish the contribution of public participation in policy formulation in devolved government of Keiyo South Sub County, Elgeyo Marakwet County, Kenya and to determine the level of public participation on policy formulation in devolved government of Keiyo South Sub County, Elgeyo Marakwet County, Kenya. The study was based on Participatory Communication Theory and Ladder of Citizen Participation Theory. The study used a mixed-method approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative research. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The target population was 115 and the researcher obtained a sample size of 89 respondents using Yamane formulae. The study used stratified random sampling to select the respondents. The study used questionnaires and an interview schedule to collect data. The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 24 was used to analyze quantitative data from the closed-ended questions. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics involved frequencies, percentages, standard deviation, and arithmetic mean. Inferential statistics involved correlation and multiple regression. The analyzed data was presented in the form of charts and tables. Privacy was maintained during the entire research period, and participation was entirely voluntary, free from coercion or inducement. The findings demonstrated that respondents agreed with the statement that member's ideas and contributions in the public participation are given priorities (Mean=3.70, standard deviation=1.40), further, the findings indicated that that the respondents agreed with the statement that there is a moderate level of public participation on policy formulation (Mean=3.73, standard deviation=1.39). The study concluded that significant number of respondents believed in a high level of grassroots participation and others held contrary views, indicating that there may be disparities in how stakeholders perceive the depth of involvement. The study recommended that policy makers and county authorities should take steps to ensure that public participation processes are equitable and inclusive.

KEYWORDS: Public Participation, Policy Formulation, Legal Framework & Devolved Government

INTRODUCTION

Participation entails the involvement of all stakeholders. They are actively involved in decision making, and planning on development initiatives and effective utilization of public resources, (Kwena, 2013). This system enables citizens to be in control of the planning and policy formulation, choosing investment projects and making decisions on matters affecting them. In the developed economies, the aspect of people's inclusiveness in process of governance is entrenched in the legal requirement of any local government operations (Opiyo, 2017). It's a common assumption that devolved local units make more citizens participate in the governance process, establishing accountability in local government institutions consequently service delivery becomes effective. Some of the sound effects of participation is seen as poverty alleviation at the local level, development of the necessary sense of the ownership among citizens, contribute to sustainability of development initiatives, builds capacity in local community in governance, links development to people's needs, gives recognition to the marginalized, guards against corruption among the office bearers, and guarding against unnecessary political interference especially from political leaders (Muthoni, 2015). Generally public participation seeks to ensure that there is involvement of those affected by or interested in decision; this principle of

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stakeholder participation holds that those who are stricken by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process. Stakeholder participation implies that public's involvement have an impact on the issues affecting them; therefore, it is considered an important tool for empowerment in the democratic governance process (Pellizzoni, 2014).

Public participation in a democracy is a process that engages people in making decisions and planning. The public play an active role in the design and operation of service delivery systems that affect their lives. In fact, it is a process through which the members of the public are informed, consulted and/or involved in ensuring that their sentiments are taken into account especially in governance processes. This is particularly important for budget making process and implementation. According to the Constitution of Kenya 2010, meaningful citizen participation in governance is a key component for public reforms. In fact, it is the spirit behind the constitutional change in Kenya (Constitution of Kenya 2010).

Public policy formulation process is a vital activity for any government, symbolizing an overt agreement between citizen and their government; private resources in exchange for the public services and benefits that fulfill national priorities and objectives. Citizens rightfully expect governments to deliver on that promise and that public budgets should be fair, equitable and transparent. When citizens ascertain that the administration of government finances is questionable, they hold their leaders accountable and are unwilling to accept policy choices such as structural programs reforms, tax increases and spending cuts. Their resistance is cynical in the event that authorities do not take their opinions serious while apportioning public resources (Stumbraitė-Vilkišienė, 2013). In consistent with Moseti, (2014), public participation serves as mechanism for narrowing the gap among the devolved units, civil society and the local community with the intention of developing a common understanding on local initiatives, priorities and programs. Therefore, the concept of public participation pursuits at stimulating shared expertise, transparency and accountability in governance and create ownership of development programs and other community initiatives. This technique permits marginalized groups to voice out their views in the implementation of community development initiatives. It calls for full involvement of the rural poor in matters that concern them and that affect their social livelihood (Tshabalala & Lombard, 2016). Eshliki and Kaboudi (2014) list some of the importance of public participation to include promotion of consensus and stability, conflict reduction and increase of consciousness and containment and negotiating. However, they also argue that an increase in participation does not necessarily lead to an increase in service delivery. Over the years and during the clamour for a new constitution, Kenyans made public participation an important tool of reinforcement governance of public affairs (Economic & Social Rights Centre, 2013). Public participation became an important theme in debates on governance in Kenya. In recognition of the protracted struggles for democratic reforms that had taken place over the years, Kenya's Constitution 2010 included democracy and participation of the people among the values and principles of governance, which bind all government institutions as well as state officials (Kanyinga, 2014).

Public Participation should broadly encompass an interactive process between state and non-state actors of public communication and access to information, capacity building and actual engagement in county governance processes. Empowering the public should be by placing final decision-making authority in their hands. The following are forms of public participation; Collaborating with the public to develop decision criteria and alternatives and identify the preferred solution, Involving the public to ensure their concerns are considered throughout the decision process, particularly in the development of decision criteria and options, Consulting with the public to obtain their feedback on alternatives or decisions and Informing the public by providing information to help them to be effectively involved in governance (Olila, 2013).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Weak public participation, poor prioritization of projects and programs and limited application of ICT in county government has promoted the policy formulation within certain circles hence limiting the involvement of all stakeholders (Liatsis W, Carlitz R & Rajani R, 2008) . The result of the minimal participation of external stakeholder in the policy formulation has resulted to policies that do not reflect the needs of the people, and expenditures that meet the specific interest of the few (Odhiambo, 2011) (Potter B & Diamond J, 2015). Further, the policy formulation process is prone to monopolistic decision making that leads to policies that reward specific individuals by maximizing their budgetary allocations (Imbuye, 2013). Eventually, the formulated public sector policy might not contribute to the desired output of the economy of the community (Nyaga N. & Ambrose J., 2013).

It follows, therefore, that the main problem in the policy Formulation in county government is poor decision making perpetrated by senior government officials in providing for policy priorities and thereby aligning poor policies. This is further perpetuated by weak participation by external stakeholders, insufficient information for the decision on programs and projects most valued by citizens, insufficient information from external stakeholders for decisions making and limited application of ICT in policy formulation. Citizen in many county governments are not empowered to understand their role in development issues and feel that policy makers do not put into consideration their contribution in major decision making particularly affecting key development

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programs. Citizens in many counties feel more often than not that their predicaments have not been addressed effectively by their governments, bring in a lot of conflicts which at times has resulted in public unrest. This study, therefore, focused on establishing an investigation of public participation on policy formulation in devolved government in Keiyo South Sub County, Elgeyo Marakwet County, Kenya

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- i. To establish the contribution of public participation in policy formulation in devolved government Keiyo South Sub County, Elgeyo Marakwet County, Kenya
- ii. To determine the level of public participation on policy formulation in devolved government in Keiyo South Sub County, Elgeyo Marakwet County, Kenya

Research Questions

- i. What are the contributions of public citizens' participation in policy formulation in Keiyo South Sub County, Elgeyo Marakwet County, Kenya?
- ii. What is the level of public participation on policy formulation in Keiyo South Sub County, Elgeyo Marakwet County, Kenya?

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study would be significant to the county governments as it shows the importance of involving the public in the county budget process, being key in boosting the development agenda in the decentralized units. The findings of this study are also significant to citizens as it depicts their participation in the county budget process as well as in budget making process and thus encourage their participation. Academicians may also find this study useful as it adds value leading to increased knowledge of the researchers in this field of study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Empirical review

Contribution of Public Participation and Policy Formulation

Cardullo and Kitchin (2019) assessed the design of public participation in Netherlands. This article reviews three cases of adaptation planning in the Netherlands, using a theory-derived framework that links the design of public participation with nine different objectives that participation could have. These case studies illustrate that participants did not depart from an explicitly formulated and agreed-upon objective, leading to a design of the participatory process that was highly contingent. The findings suggest that a more systematic and deliberate approach, in which both the objectives and the design of public participation are communicated explicitly and are discussed by participants, increases the chance that the objectives are met.

Neshkova and Kalesnikaitė (2019) sought to exhibit cross-national patterns in respect of public participation in Colombia. The study approach used a case-oriented qualitative assessment of participation practices. It derived its data from the presentation of country case studies by experts on each system. The country cases were located within the historical development of democracy in each country. Findings showed that patterns of participation are widely variable. Also participation that is effective through routinized institutional processes appears to be inversely related to consecratory participation that uses political mobilization to challenge the legitimacy of the priority.

Kamau (2018) did a study on factors affecting the effectiveness of public participation in county governance in Kenya. The study employed a survey design with a sample size of 240 beneficiaries, and 10 representatives of the government and civil society organizations. The sampling procedure used was purposive sampling technique. The study instruments used were questionnaires. From the findings of the study it was evident that civic education plays a major role on the effectiveness of public participation in the County Government. When the residents are enlightened on their rights of participation in the affairs of the County Government, they tend to participate more and demand for their rights (Kimutai & Aluvi, 2018). It was also evident from the findings that civic education has been conducted in the County as 68.5 percent of the County residents confirmed having participated in the civic education forums. The civic education forums are mostly conducted by Civil Society Organizations and the County Government. The findings show that civic education has been effective in meeting its intended purpose with 86 percent concurring. Finally a number of strategies were proposed to enhance public participation.

Nabatchi (2012) analysis of case studies from Europe and North America examined the impact of public participation on social trust and civic engagement. The study demonstrated that when citizens are actively involved in policy processes, there is greater buy-in and support for the implemented policies. Nabatchi identified several mechanisms through which participation enhances policy outcomes: it fosters a sense of ownership among citizens, increases transparency, and improves the legitimacy of decisions.

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The research showed that participatory processes could bridge the gap between government and citizens, leading to more collaborative and less adversarial policy environments. Nabatchi concluded that fostering meaningful public engagement requires not only formal opportunities for participation but also efforts to build citizens' capacities to engage effectively, thus ensuring that participation is both inclusive and impactful.

Makara (2009) examined the role of public participation in Uganda's decentralization process, focusing on how local community involvement influences policy formulation. The study found that when citizens are actively engaged in policy processes, the resulting policies are more responsive and relevant to local needs. This was particularly evident in sectors such as health and education, where community input led to more effective service delivery. Makara's research highlighted the importance of creating institutional mechanisms that facilitate citizen involvement, such as local councils and participatory planning forums. The study also pointed out the challenges of achieving genuine participation, including limited resources, political interference, and varying levels of community awareness and engagement. Despite these challenges, the study concluded that public participation is crucial for the success of decentralization efforts, as it enhances policy relevance and accountability.

Awortwi (2013) research in Ghana focused on the impact of citizen involvement in policy formulation on the effectiveness of public services. The study revealed that engaging citizens in the policy process helps accurately identify local needs and priorities, leading to better-targeted and more effective public services. Awortwi highlighted several successful examples of participatory governance in Ghana, where community input was integral to policy decisions in areas such as water management and education. The study emphasized the role of government commitment and supportive legal frameworks in facilitating effective participation. However, it also noted challenges such as resource constraints and the need for capacity building among both citizens and officials to ensure meaningful engagement. Overall, Awortwi concluded that public participation enhances policy outcomes by making them more attuned to the specific needs of the communities they serve.

Muriu (2013) investigated public participation in the formulation of county policies in Kenya post-devolution, examining how citizen involvement influences governance and service delivery. The findings indicated that counties with higher levels of public involvement in policy-making experienced better governance and more effective service delivery. Muriu highlighted successful examples from counties where participatory budgeting and planning processes led to more responsive and accountable governance. The study emphasized the importance of creating institutional mechanisms that facilitate citizen engagement, such as public forums and consultative committees. However, it also noted challenges such as limited resources, political resistance, and varying levels of community awareness and engagement. Muriu concluded that public participation is crucial for the success of devolution, as it enhances the relevance and effectiveness of policies and strengthens accountability.

Gikonyo (2014) analyzed the impact of public participation in Nairobi County's budgeting process, focusing on how citizen input influences budget priorities and allocations. The study found that when citizens are involved in budgeting decisions, resources are more likely to be directed toward pressing community needs. Gikonyo provided examples of how public input led to significant changes in budget allocations, resulting in more effective service delivery in areas such as health, education, and infrastructure. The study emphasized the importance of institutionalizing participatory budgeting processes to ensure continuous citizen engagement. However, it also identified challenges such as limited awareness, resource constraints, and political interference. Gikonyo concluded that public participation in budgeting is essential for achieving transparent and accountable governance, as it ensures that budget decisions reflect the priorities and needs of the community.

Level of Public Participation and Policy Formulation

McCambridge et al. (2018) examined and clarified the concept and process of public involvement use in health policy decision making. The study employed qualitative concept analysis to address the lack of clarity about the concept of public involvement use, consisting of a theoretical phase, fieldwork phase and synthesis phase to guide data collection and analysis. From the findings, accountability, responsiveness, and transparency, governments are increasingly pressured to develop ways to demonstrate the value of public involvement in policy decision-making. Also discourse on public involvement use is often accompanied by discussions about the purpose of use. In addition to being a source of knowledge for policy decision-making, findings suggest that public involvement can be used for purposes of pre-empting potential problems and mitigating risks.

Strasser et al. (2019) did a study on the design of public participation. This article reviews three cases of adaptation planning in the Netherlands, using a theory-derived framework that links the design of public participation with nine different objectives that participation could have. These case studies illustrate that participants did not depart from an explicitly formulated and agreed-upon objective, leading to a design of the participatory process that was highly contingent. The findings suggest that a more systematic and deliberate approach, in which both the objectives and the design of public participation are communicated explicitly, and are discussed by participants, increases the chance that the objectives are met.

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Pathak et al., (2019) identified the overall impacts, benefits as well as factors hindering citizens' participation in public policy making and implementation. A total of 220 participants were selected through multi-stage and simple random sampling technique. Frequency counts and percentage were utilized in realizing the data collected. The findings show that overall impact of citizen participation in the making and implementation of policy in Ngor Okpala local government is not all influential; the study equally revealed that there is lack of official support for citizens to fully participate in public policy (Igbokwe-Ibeto & Osakede, 2023). Therefore, the study recommend among others, that the public should be re-oriented on the importance of citizen's participation and target beneficiaries should be involved at the formulation and implementation stage of public making in order for them to have an input in decisions that affects their lives, thereby giving them a sense of belonging and of commitment.

Rafique and Khoo (2018) examined if citizen participation in local government decision-making contribute to strengthening local planning and accountability systems. This article reviews the literature relating local level decision-making, citizen participation and accountability. It then presents the findings of a study of decision-making about the use of resources in a sample of municipal governments in Kenya and Uganda. Local governments in Kenya have traditionally offered minimal scope for citizen participation or accountability, but this is beginning to change, mainly as a result of performance conditions applied through the recently introduced Local Authorities Transfer Fund (LATF), together with an increasingly active civil society. In Uganda, which has undergone a radical decentralization, there is much greater scope for citizen participation at the local level but there are still many of the same problems of local accountability as in Kenya.

Nooh et al. (2021) did a study to ascertain the level of public awareness. Interviews of key resource persons in the legislative process were also conducted, including civil society organizations that had participated before. Theories of participative and deliberative democracy that offers citizens real democratic power over the state and the neo-liberal market-oriented approach that entrenches participation are the theoretical basis of the research. Content analysis was used to analyze open ended questions and secondary data, while measures of central tendency were used to analyze responses from closed questions. The study found that public participation has had little effect on outcome of legislation by the National Assembly. This was because there was low awareness by the public, compounded by faulty process and design of the participation process by the National Assembly.

Theoretical framework

Participatory Communication Theory

Participatory communication basically is a term that signifies the principle and practices of communication used to encompass people in the policy making of any community development initiatives (Waisbord, 2020). Its reappearance traces the roots of its meaning, which, correspondingly to the term community, originate from the Latin word *communis*, i.e. common. Therefore, the drive of communication should be to make something common, or to portion...meanings, perceptions, world views or information. In this background, distribution implies an equitable division of what is being shared, which is why communication should almost be naturally associated with a balanced, two-way flow of information (Vermesan et al., 2022).

Paulo Freire, an educational theorist, integrates participation as a key concept in his viewpoint and indicating that participation is based on the view that the historical ability of human beings is to be free from anything in life that does not provide for the involvement of people in the processes of change (Shih, 2018). Freire's theory focuses on the premise that, in order for communication to be effective, it is paramount that it be participatory, dialogic and reciprocal (Salas, 2018). Participation obliges to inaugurate the worth of individual citizens, allowing them to be part of proprietorship and take an active part in governing their surroundings and developing their capacity to act as citizens. Participatory communication is purely based on exchange of ideas, allowing the sharing of information, awareness and views among different participants, hence enabling liberation especially to the marginalized. The essential opinion of participatory communication is enabling unrestricted and exposed exchange of ideas (Luo & Xie, 2019). This theory does not demand for a replacement of the simple communication meanings related with information propagation but increases its confines to include more collaborating ways of communicating. Public participatory therefore stipulated that citizen should be involved in matters that concern them. This theory posits that decision makers should involve the public in matters that concern them, especially in matters boosting development. Participatory communication encourages the flow of information to be bottom-up, where citizens feel part of the process in any decision making but not only top-down.

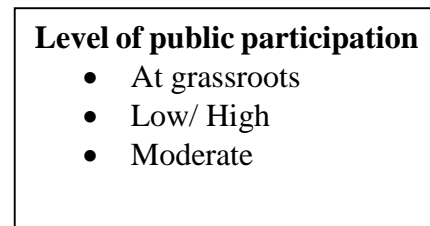
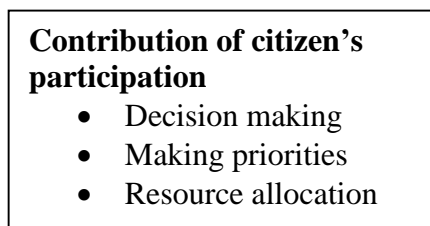
In the context of Keiyo South Sub County, applying Participatory Communication Theory involves creating platforms for continuous dialogue among residents, local leaders, and policymakers. This can be achieved through community meetings, public forums, and digital platforms that facilitate two-way communication. By doing so, the devolved government can ensure that policy formulation processes are inclusive, transparent, and responsive to the needs and aspirations of the community.

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Conceptual Framework

Independent Variables

Public Participation



Dependent Variable

Policy Formulation

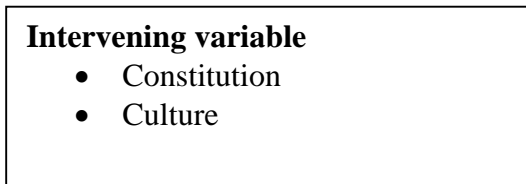
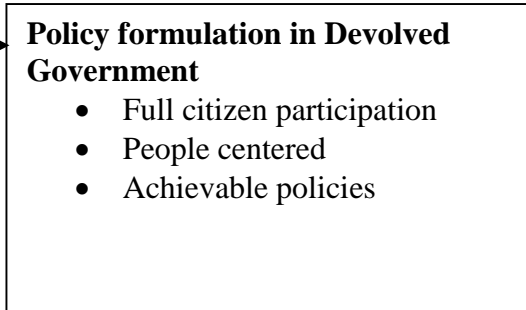


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used mixed method approach integrating both qualitative and quantitative research. The approach provides a better understanding of the research problem than using one approach (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). Qualitative data consisting of open-ended information that the researcher gathered through interviews was put into categories of information and ideas gathered during data collection was presented. The study adopted descriptive survey design. A descriptive survey design provided the nature of the information that is useful for comparison and generalization of the public participation and policy formulation (Collingridge & Gantt, 2019).

Target Population

Population refers to the total of factors that the researcher is interested in and that together make a particular specification (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2008). All those directly or indirectly involved in policy formulation in various units in Keiyo South Sub-County was included in the population for this study. Thus, the target population was the economic planning staff, ward administrators, ward development committee, budget and appropriation committee, public participation officers, chiefs, assistant chiefs and opinion leaders as presented in table 1. The target population have been chosen because they actively participate in public participation and have information concerning policy formulation in devolved government.

Table 1. Target Population

Strata	Total population
Economic planning staff	7
Ward Administrators	4
Ward development committee	33
Budget and Appropriation committee	7
Public participation officers	11
Chiefs	10
Assistant Chiefs	20
Opinion leaders	23
Total	115

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Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

The researcher obtained the sample size using Yamane formulae (1967).

$$n = \frac{N}{1+Ne^2}$$

Where n is the sample size required

N is the population size =115

e is the level of precision = 0.05

$$n = \frac{115}{1+115 \times 0.05^2}$$

n=89

Therefore, the sample size for this study was 89 respondents proportionally distributed as in Table 2. The study used stratified sampling to select the respondents. The sample was categorized into 8 stratus comprising economic planning staff, ward administrators, ward development committee, budget and appropriation committee, public participation officers, chiefs, assistant chiefs and opinion leaders. From each strata respondents was selected using proportionate simple random sampling. The researcher then administered research instruments by simple random sampling across the respondent categories. The choice of this sampling technique enhanced distribution representation and avoided bias in sampling.

Table 2. Sample Size

Strata	Sample size	Sampling procedure
Economic planning staff	5	Simple random sampling
Ward Administrators	3	Simple random sampling
Ward development committee	26	Simple random sampling
Budget and Appropriation committee	5	Simple random sampling
Public participation officers	9	Simple random sampling
Chiefs	8	Simple random sampling
Assistant Chiefs	15	Simple random sampling
Opinion leaders	18	Simple random sampling
Total	89	

Research Instruments

Questionnaires were used to achieve this. Data was gathered using a standardized questionnaire that includes both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The questionnaire was split into five sections: Section A asked general questions about the respondents i.e. demographic information, Section B focused on contribution public participation in policy formulation, Section C covered the level of public participation on policy formulation, Section D looked into the adequacy of existing legal framework on policy formulation while Section E looked into the stakeholder awareness on policy formulation in Keiyo Sub-County. Individuals selected their replies using a five-point Likert scale, allowing the researcher to quantitatively analyse the data. The drop-and-pick approach was used to administer the questionnaires. The respondents had at least a week to react once the questionnaire is dropped off, and calls and emails was made to check in with them. The researcher then made many trips to the different study areas to collect and follow-up on the research questionnaires.

Data Analysis Procedures

The completed questionnaires were checked for accuracy and consistency. Because the emphasis was on the interpretation of the results rather than on quantification, the content analysis method was used to examine the qualitative data from the open ended questions. The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 24 was used to analyse the quantitative data from the closed-ended questions. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, standard deviation, and arithmetic mean, was used to examine the results. Inferential statistics involved correlation and multiple regression analysis. The results of the analysis was subsequently shown in tables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Descriptive Statistics

Contribution of Public Participation and Policy Formulation

The study analyzed the contribution of public participation in the policy formulation process, aiming to assess the impact and significance of public input and engagement in shaping policy decisions and outcomes. Study findings were presented in table 3.

Table 3. Contribution of Public Participation and Policy Formulation

Statements		SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean	Sd
The members of the public are fully involved in the process of the decision making pertaining the county issues	F %	26 36.1	16 22.2	9 12.5	10 13.9	11 15.3	2.48	1.46
Member’s ideas and contributions in the public participation are given priorities	F %	28 39.9	20 27.8	9 12.5	5 6.9	10 13.9	3.70	1.40
Members of the public are fully involved in public participation process	F %	27 37.5	26 36.1	4 5.6	9 12.5	6 8.3	3.81	1.29
There is equity in the process of policy formulation during the public participation forums	F %	21 29.2	34 47.2	5 6.9	6 8.3	6 8.3	3.80	1.19
Total number of respondents =72								

The study results in Table 3 showed that 41(58.3%) of the respondents agreed that the members of the public are fully involved in the process of the decision making pertaining the county issues. On contrary, 21(29.2%) of the respondents disagreed that the members of the public are fully involved in the process of the decision making pertaining the county issues. Further, the study results also showed, in terms of mean and standard deviation that the respondents disagreed with the statement that the members of the public are fully involved in the process of the decision making pertaining the county issues (Mean=2.48, standard deviation=1.46).

Also, the study findings noted that 48(66.7%) of the respondents agreed and 15 (20.8%) disagreed that member’s ideas and contributions in the public participation are given priorities. Further, the study results also showed, in terms of mean and standard deviation that the respondents agreed with the statement that member’s ideas and contributions in the public participation are given priorities (Mean=3.70, standard deviation=1.40). Study findings are in agreement with what Shade and Stopnisek, (2019), found that prioritizing and valuing the input of participants can enhance the effectiveness of public participation processes. They found that when member’s ideas and contributions are given priority, it can lead to more successful public participation outcomes. The study further revealed that, 53(73.6%) of the participants agreed that members of the public are fully involved in public participation process. On contrary, 15(20.8%) of the respondents disagreed that members of the public are fully involved in public participation process. Further, the study results also showed, in terms of mean and standard deviation that the respondents agreed with the statement that members of the public are fully involved in public participation process (Mean=3.81, standard deviation=1.29). Further, study findings also are in agreement with Sjøvold et al., (2021) who found that prioritizing and valuing the input of participants can enhance the effectiveness of public participation processes. They found that when member’s ideas and contributions are given priority, it can lead to more successful public participation outcomes.

Finally, 55(76.4%) agreed that there is equity in the process of policy formulation during the public participation forums. However, majority of the respondents 12(16.6%) of the respondents disagreed that there is equity in the process of policy formulation during the public participation forums. Further, the study results also showed, in terms of mean and standard deviation that the respondents agreed with the statement that there is equity in the process of policy formulation during the public participation forums (Mean=3.80, standard deviation=1.19). Study findings disagrees with what Van Rees et al., (2020) found. Their study disagrees with the findings in this study as they found that power imbalances and the dominance of certain stakeholders can hinder the achievement of true equity in public participation processes. They highlighted challenges related to equity in policy formulation during public participation forums.

Level of Public Participation on Policy Formulation

The study investigated the extent of public participation in the process of policy formulation, shedding light on the degree to which the general public is involved in shaping and influencing policy decisions. Findings were presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Level of Public Participation on Policy Formulation

Statements		SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean	Sd
At the grassroots of the policy formulation, level of participation is high making pertaining the county issues	F	32	15	7	8	10	3.70	1.47
	%	44.4	20.8	9.7	11.1	13.9		
There is a low level of public participation on policy formulation	F	24	28	9	5	6	3.81	1.21
	%	33.3	38.9	12.5	6.9	8.3		
There is a moderate level of public participation on policy formulation	F	28	23	3	10	8	3.73	1.39
	%	38.9	31.9	4.2	13.9	11.1		
There is a high level of public participation on policy formulation	F	11	11	12	13	25	2.58	1.47
	%	15.3	15.3	16.7	18.1	34.7		
Total number of respondents = 72								

Table 4.7 showed that of the respondents 47(65.2%) agreed that at the grassroots of the policy formulation, level of participation is high making pertaining the county issues. However, 18(24.2%) of the respondents disagreed that at the grassroots of the policy formulation, level of participation is high making pertaining the county issues. Further, the study results also showed, in terms of mean and standard deviation that the respondents disagreed with the statement that at the grassroots of the policy formulation, level of participation is high making pertaining the county issues (Mean=3.70, standard deviation=1.47).

Also, 52(72.2%) of the respondents agreed and 11(15.2%) disagreed that there is a low level of public participation on policy formulation. Further, the study results also showed, in terms of mean and standard deviation that the respondents agreed with the statement that there is a low level of public participation on policy formulation (Mean=3.81, standard deviation=1.21).

Further, 51(70.8%) of the respondents agreed that there is a moderate level of public participation on policy formulation. On contrary to that, 18(25.0%) of the respondents disagreed that there is a moderate level of public participation on policy formulation. Further, the study results also showed, in terms of mean and standard deviation that the respondents agreed with the statement that there is a moderate level of public participation on policy formulation (Mean=3.73, standard deviation=1.39). The study nonetheless showed that, 22(30.6%) of the participants agreed that there is a high level of public participation on policy formulation. However, majority 38(52.8%) of the respondents disagreed that there is a high level of public participation on policy formulation. Further, the study results also showed, in terms of mean and standard deviation that the respondents disagreed with the statement that there is a high level of public participation on policy formulation (Mean=2.58, standard deviation=1.47).

CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

The study’s exploration of the level of public participation in policy formulation showcases a range of perceptions among respondents. While a significant number believe in a high level of grassroots participation, others hold contrary views, indicating that there may be disparities in how stakeholders perceive the depth of involvement. Policy makers should consider these varied perspectives to foster a more inclusive and equitable environment for public participation in policy formulation.

Conclusively, the study’s investigation into the adequacy of the existing legal framework for policy formulation highlights mixed perceptions among respondents. While a majority acknowledge the availability of these frameworks, questions remain about public awareness, utilization, and reliability. Policy makers and county authorities should address these concerns by enhancing transparency, accessibility, and public education efforts regarding the legal frameworks.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

Enhance Civic Education: To improve public participation in policy formulation, there is a need for continued and expanded civic education programs. These programs should aim to raise awareness among citizens about policy issues and the avenues available for their involvement. Such efforts can contribute to a more informed and engaged citizenry.

Promote Equity in Public Participation: Policy makers and county authorities should take steps to ensure that public participation processes are equitable and inclusive. This includes actively seeking out the input of marginalized and underrepresented groups to ensure that diverse perspectives are considered in policy formulation.

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