



INFLUENCE OF DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS ON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE DEVOLVED GOVERNANCE IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

There are many factors that influence public participation; one of them is demographic factors. This study established how demographic characteristics of the public influence their participation in development activities in the devolved system of governance in Kenya. The chi square test for independence, from the value at $\chi(12) = 40.9, p = 0.000$; established that there was significant association between demographic characteristics and public participation activities. It was also established that demographic factors such as age, gender and level of education influence public participation to a large extent. It was found that; male tend to participate more than female; youth tend to participate more than elderly people; and the educated people tend to make more meaningful and quality contribution. Therefore there is need to have a proper planning so as to optimise the participation of all stakeholders by considering their gender, age and level of education.

Key words: *Demographic factors, people-driven development, devolution, public participation*

INTRODUCTION

Public participation is a useful tool to promote the involvement of the public in governance. The World Development Report, World Bank (2000), states that governments at all levels have begun to understand the importance of inclusive, participatory and consensual models of public participation. According to White (1992), public participation is an active involvement of the local population in decision-making concerning development projects and their implementation. This definition is supported by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) which further highlights that in public participation, people themselves are afforded an opportunity to improve their conditions of living, with as much reliance as possible on their own initiative (Davids, Theron and Maphunye, 2005).

Participation has captured the imagination and hopes of politicians, policy makers and practitioners alike (Jochum, Pratten and Wilding, 2005; Cornwall, 2008). Across the globe from Brazil to India to the United States - we have witnessed 'an explosion' of interest in participation over the past decade; this is particularly true for public participation (Dunn, 2007). For example, in adopting the African charter on democracy, elections and governance in 2007, the 53 member states of the African Union committed themselves to, amongst others; promote the conditions that are necessary to foster citizen participation and transparency (AU, 2007).

Active citizen participation underpins a democratic and inclusive society. The artery of a healthy liberal democracy is the participation of citizens in decision making and project development. Lack of participation is a missed opportunity for Kenyans to hold their leaders to account and to influence the outcomes. After the promulgation of the Constitution, Kenyans participation in public fora and project development is increasing. However this is not the case in all County Governments where public participation is still very low. Sustained public participation and project implementation, poses numerous problems to planners and social service providers,



especially in developing countries. In addition project beneficiaries are still not fully participating in the identification, planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of projects that are meant to improve their lot.

Achieving Sustainable Development to many nations remains a major concern as clearly evidenced by the numerous strategies that are being adopted. Public participation is one of the strategies that have been adopted by many nations towards achieving sustainable development. There are many factors that influence public participation; one of them is demographic factors. Although the concept of public participation and devolution has been anchored in the Kenyan constitution, its full implementation is yet to be achieved. The devolved system of governance is anchored on people-driven development model; public participation being the key ingredient. Devolved system of governance being a new approach to development and governance in Kenya; there was need therefore to establish how demographic characteristics of the public influence their participation in development activities in the devolved system of governance in Kenya.

The main objective of the study was to establish the influence of demographic factors on public participation in the devolved system of governance in in Kenya with emphasis on South Rift Counties.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Devolution

Devolution is a form of political decentralization, which involves full transfer of responsibility, decision-making, resources and revenue generation to a democratically elected county government that is autonomous and fully independent from the national government. Decentralization is often linked to concepts of participation in decision-making, democracy, equality and liberty from higher authority (Dutta, 2009). Devolution is widely seen as a mechanism to institutionalize citizen participation in development planning, increase the opportunities for political participation thereby enhancing democratic political culture and enhance communities' sense of ownership (Oloo, 2006).

Kenya has progressively shifted, over the years, from a centralized to a decentralized system of governance. The promulgation of the New Constitution in August 2010 provides a strong legal foundation for the enhancement of participatory governance through devolved structures at county level. In 2010, Kenya promulgated a new constitution that overhauls the current local government system by establishing 47 county governments (Constitution of Kenya, 2010). Article 196 of the constitution expressly obligates the county governments to institutionalize citizen participation in its decision making processes. This is expected to improve the governance of the devolved governments including service delivery.

The Constitution of Kenya seeks to ensure effective citizen participation in all facets of governance, to which the county governments must respond. According to the report by the Task Force for Devolved Government, RTFDG (2011), the new constitution seeks to reverse the centralized non participatory governance paradigm by institutionalizing and embracing governance system and a leadership with integrity. It does this primarily by: establishing an enabling normative framework; creating relevant governance institutions; creating checks and balances on the exercise of executive power; providing for facilitative legislation; enhancing public participation in governance as a bulwark against abuse of power.

Public Participation

Public participation is the involvement of all parties who may potentially have an interest in a development or project, or be affected by it. It entails a wide range of activities that can range from providing information, through consultation to direct involvement of the public in aspects of the decision-making process. Participation is the process



by which stakeholders exert influence and share control over priority setting, policy making, resource allocation, and/or programme implementation (World Bank, 2002).

The objective behind public participation is to facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision made by government. Okello, Oenga and Chege (2008) further define it as a process whereby stakeholders influence policy formulation, alternative designs, investment choices and management decisions affecting their communities. Public participation is seen as a form of empowerment and is a vital part of democratic governance. Generally people tend to resist new ideas if these are imposed on them. Participation has greatly contributed to the sustainability of development initiatives, strengthened local capacity, given a voice to the poor and marginalized and linked development to the people's needs (Odhiambo and Taifa, 2009).

Citizen participation has come to the centre of decentralization reforms as a result of what Cheema and Rondinelli (2007:1) term, 'the transition from government decentralization to decentralized governance'. Promoted by economic and political pressures and conditions of international development partners, governments especially in developing and least developed countries are increasingly incorporating the principles of good governance in their decentralization efforts, hence decentralized governance (Cheema and Rondinelli, 2007:1). Accordingly, it is argued that successful decentralization is one that allows for increased participation of the citizens in the policy cycle i.e. in planning, implementation and evaluation. It enables the strengthening of local people's capacity in decision making by 'providing greater access to local political participation' (Singh, 2007).

Citizen participation can be both a goal of and a means to effective decentralization; it is a goal, when decentralization creates opportunities for participation by bringing government closer to the people (Robinson, 2007). In that case interaction of the citizens and the state is expected to increase when there is proximity to government institutions. On the other hand, it is a means to effective decentralization where the citizen through their collective action provide the demand side input of service preferences as well as the necessary pressure of ensuring that those empowered to deliver services perform their duties accordingly.

Demographic Factors and Public Participation

Demographic factors are socioeconomic characteristics of a population expressed statistically, such as age, sex, education level, income level, marital status, occupation and religion. Demographic characteristics like gender, age, level of education and marital status; are among the factors that influenced public participation in County integrated development planning process (Mutwiri, 2016).

The level of community awareness determines the extent of public participation in county integrated development planning process. According to Mutwiri (2016), demographic characteristics influences public participation in county integrated development planning process; he also noted that demographic characteristics like; Multiple roles of women in the family setup limits their partaking in County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP), low education levels of women hinders their participation in CIDP, low levels education among local communities have decreased public participation in CIDP, young men and women feel excluded in their societies thus demotivated from participating in participating in CIDP. Mitwiri's findings are in support of the research by UNDP and IPU (2013) that there is strong evidence that participation of young people in formal, institutional political processes is relatively low when compared to older citizen across the globe.

Meaningful participation in project development largely depends on the educational status of public people. There is a strong link between development and education. Indeed, formal and non-formal education is the bedrock of a transformative approach to community development (Kane, 2006; Fraser, 2005). Education can enhance the potential for people at the grassroots level to experience social change (Kane, 2006). It engenders the acquisition of educational experiences which go beyond academic or professional qualifications and it helps the individual to find his or her purpose in the community (Hunt, 2009). Just like in other developing countries, a large proportion of the



Kenyan population resides in the rural areas, where most people are largely illiterate and depend on farming for their livelihoods. It is evident that illiterate people hardly understand the nitty-gritty of a development project and thus their illiteracy is a great hindrance to their participation. Illiterate people are often looked down upon as problematic as they more often cannot articulate their demands and put forward their opinions in a systematic way. Hence, their illiteracy is leading them to non-participation.

The educated people would most likely appreciate public development better than the less educated. If the people appreciate public development their attitude towards participating in public project developments is likely to be favourable (John, 2009). According to John (2009), education level of the citizenry has a significant correlation in the level of public participation. Education often enhances citizen's awareness of governance programs and how to engage the governance system (Ahmad et al., 2005).

Equally, Mwenda (2010) links levels of education to the public's ability to express their interests in self-determining governance of the people and by the people, but argues that lack of sufficient education, particularly in marginalized communities, hampers information dissemination, hence, low levels of participation. Oyugi and Kibua (2008) similarly argue that public citizens who sit on development and planning board for county governments on volunteer basis are all educated. Joshi and Houtzager (2012) significantly correlate education, information and public participation. Further, they argue that the ability to coherently articulate policy issues within the budgetary planning forums favor those with higher levels of education. Pasek et al (2008) argues that level of education elevates citizen's ability to participate in public functions that require a level of technical skills and ability. They contend that the reason the public doesn't have the desire to participate in forums like budget participation is that they feel inadequately informed or educated to be of value. Finkel, Horowitz & Rojo-Mendoza (2012), conducted a research in South Africa and Dominican Republic to determine how engaged the public was on issues of devolved governance and budgetary processes. In their findings, education, the ability to articulate petitions, understand technical budgetary language enabled citizens to engage more actively and effectively not only in the budgetary formulation, but in other civic duties. Pasek et al (2008), agrees with Finkel, Horowitz & Rojo-Mendoza (2012) findings, and further argues that positive education levels raises the public's stakes, awareness and desire to desire the kind of future that want through governance processes like public formulation.

According to John (2009) lower levels of education in devolved units negatively correlate with public participation. KHRC (2010) report on public participation highlights the reality of education in civic process that informs public participation. The report findings argue that citizens without education, lacks ability to assimilate information, therefore, can rarely formulate interests in civic duties like budget formulation. Mboga (2009) draws the correlation to the impact levels of education have in public participation in Kenya. He argues that education expands the ability of the public to appropriate desires, interests, and has their voice heard in logical concise and organized process like budget formulations.

Conceptual Framework

This is a diagrammatical representation showing how variables in this study will inter relate with each other. It shows the relationship between independent variable, dependent variable and moderating variables. Figure 1 below shows the conceptual framework for this study.



Figure 1: Conceptual Framework *Source: Author (2019)*

From the figure above it is conceptualized that Public Participation is the dependent variable and it is influenced by demographic factors which is independent variable. In this study demographic factors included age, gender and level of education; while public participation was about public involvement in: budget making process, law making and legislation process by county assembly, vetting of public officers by county assembly, policy making & formulation process, making of development plans and proposals, implementation of development projects and programs, and monitoring & evaluation of development projects/programs.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study was conducted through analytical survey approach. The analytical research usually concerns itself with cause-effect relationships; in this case demographic factors-public participation. The findings can be used for explanation and prediction. Analytic survey studies are deductive, quantitative research designs that can be used for theory testing and predictive purposes.

Sampling Techniques

This study employed proportionate stratified random sampling where the 3 counties were stratified as 3 stratas, out of which samples were drawn in proportional to the population size of each for members of the public who responded to questionnaire. The study adopted Simple random sampling to obtain responses to questionnaire of the residents of the three counties who were 18 years and above. An individual participant was selected randomly to fill the questionnaire until the total sample size for that particular county was exhausted.

The study population comprised of adult population in Bomet, Kericho and Narok counties in South Rift counties; who were more than a million in number according to Kenya Population and Housing Census of 2009 (Kenya national Bureau of Statistics, KNBS, 2010). The sample size of the study was determined based on Robert V. Krejcie and Daryle W. Morgan's table (1970). Therefore a sample size of 384 was drawn from the target population of 1,051,077 which is more than 1,000,000, and was proportionately divided in the three counties as shown below in the Table 1.

Table 1: Sample Size per County

County	Adult Population (18 years & above)	Percentage (%)	Sample Size	Percentage (%)
1 Kericho	350,767	33.4%	128	33.3%
2 Bomet	330,992	31.5%	121	31.5%
3 Narok	369,318	35.1%	135	35.2%
Total	1,051,077	100%	384	100%

Source: Author (2019)



Data Collection Instruments

The quantitative data was obtained through closed-ended questionnaire. Questionnaire was administered to members of the public who are adults and residents of the three counties. Data analysis started when all the data had been captured. Data analysis for this study was done using the SPSS. Quantitative data was analyzed through descriptive statistics and inferential statistics and presented in frequency tables, pie charts and bar charts; inferential statistics utilized Chi square and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents with the aim of establishing the general background of respondents that participated in the study. The demographic characteristics discussed include gender, level of education and age bracket.

Gender of the Respondents

The researcher established the gender composition of the public that responded to the questionnaire and the findings are presented in Figure 2.

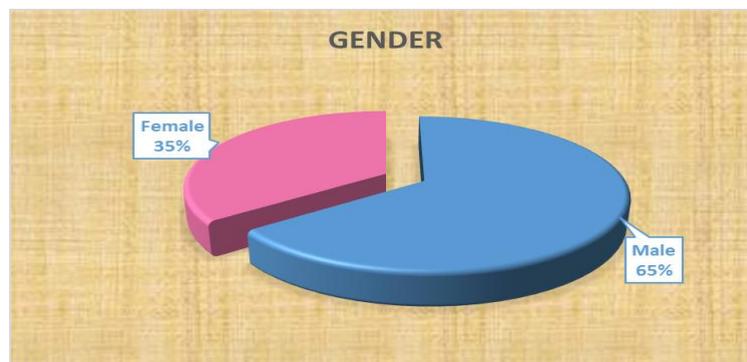


Figure 2: Pie chart on Respondent's gender Source: Author (2019)

As illustrated in the figure 2, majority of the respondents were male. One of the possible explanations accounting for high number of male respondent's is that majority are house heads, youthful male are more outgoing and more willing to give their views; while women are more reserved.

Level of Education of the Respondents

The researcher established the level of education of the public that responded to the questionnaire and the findings are presented in Figure 3.

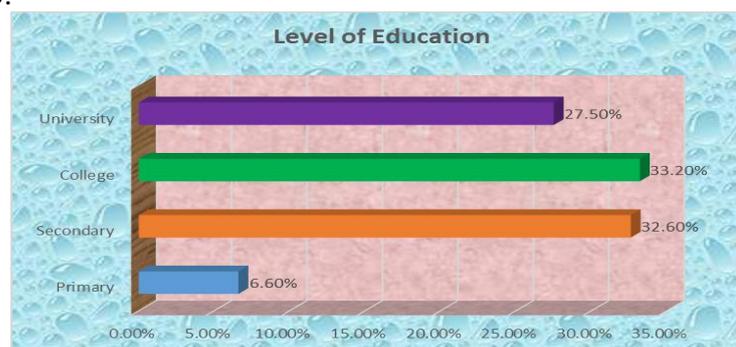


Figure 3: Bar chart on respondents' level of education Source: Author (2019)



As illustrated in the figure 3; respondents were composed of those with primary level of education up to university level. Majority of the respondents had either college or university education. College and university students have higher intellectual capacity to participate in development and public participation activities and are willing to give their opinion or views; due to their level of education. Therefore, these further imply that majority of the public are in a position to participate in all processes of public participation. The education level is a key determinant of acquisition and application of skills and knowledge. Education level provides insight into the respondent's knowledge in public participation. More educated participants are considered to make informed choices on development issues affecting them.

Age Bracket of the Respondents

The researcher established the age bracket of the public that responded to the questionnaire and the findings are presented in Figure 4.

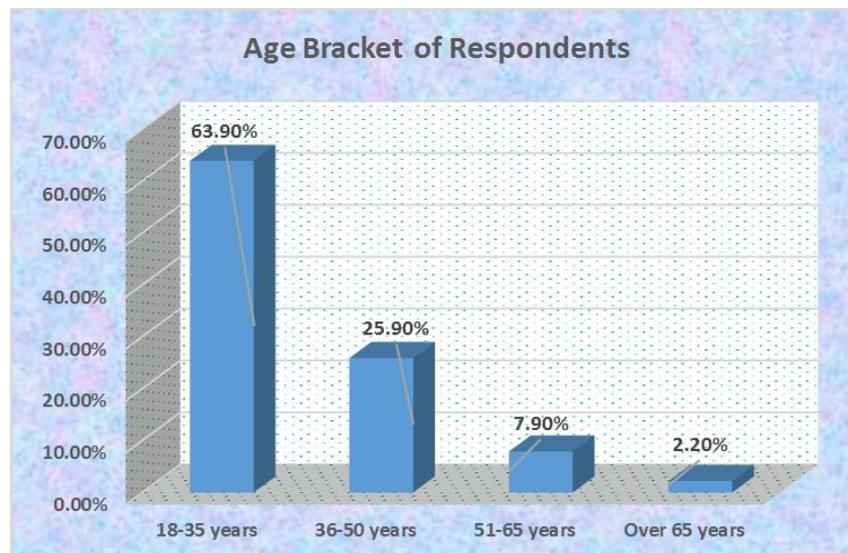


Figure 4: Bar chart on age bracket of the respondents Source: Author (2019)

As illustrated in the figure 4, the composition of participants varied from the youth to the senior citizens, with majority being the youth. The youth are the most energetic and active group of the adult population who tend to be involved more in development activities such as public participation and are willing to give their opinion or views. Therefore this is an opportunity that the government can utilize to ensure as many young people as possible participate in development activities.

CHI- SQUARE TEST FOR INDEPENDENCE

The chi square test for independence was used to establish if indeed there was any association between gender, age and level of education on the Involvement in Budget Making process, Involvement in Law making & Legislation process by county assembly, Involvement in Vetting of Public officers Involved in policy making & formulation process, Involvement in development planning & proposals writing, Involvement in implementation of development projects and programs and Involvement in M & E of development projects/programs as discussed below.



Table 2: Crosstab Demographic factors and Public participation activities

		Pearson Chi-Square	Df	Assmp. Sig. (2-sided)
Level of education	Involved in Budget Making process	40.9	12	0.000
	Involved in Law making & Legislation process by county assembly	18.603	12	0.099
	Involved in Vetting of Public officers	10.637	12	0.56
	Involved in policy making & formulation process	23.334	12	0.025
	Involved in development planning & proposals writing	31.074	12	0.002
	Involved in Implementation of development projects and programs	30.239	12	0.003
	Involved in M&E of development projects/programs	31.072	12	0.002
Age	Involved in Budget Making process	29.952	12	0.003
	Involved in Law making & Legislation process by county assembly	15.719	12	0.204
	Involved in Vetting of Public officers	8.476	12	.747
	Involved in policy making & formulation process	15.38	12	.221
	Involved in development planning & proposals writing	9.136	12	.691
	Involved in Implementation of development projects and programs	28.295	12	0.005
Gender	Involved in M&E of development projects/programs	38.75	12	0.000
	Involved in Budget Making process	7.058	4	0.133
	Involved in Law making & Legislation process by county assembly	7.014	4	0.096
	Involved in Vetting of Public officers	19.654	4	0.001
	Involved in policy making & formulation process	10.983	4	0.027
	Involved in development planning & proposals writing	3.852	4	0.426
	Involved in Implementation of development projects and programs	18.637	4	0.001
	Involved in M&E of development projects/programs	8.862	4	0.065

Source: Author (2019)

From table 2, the chi square test shows that level of education and gender had a statistically significant association for the items tested. For example, the level of education and involvement in budget making process was $\chi(12) = 40.9, p = 0.000$. The above findings show that public participation can be improved with increase in the level of education and training. The public that is educated have more information and are aware of their responsibilities and expectations from the government of the day. They can easily be trained and can access a lot of information regarding the development activities of the county government.

However, there was no significant association between age and the variables tested for the Pearson chi square test. Majority of the variables had a value greater than $p = 0.05$ implying that perhaps age was not a significant factor for the items tested. The findings indicates that age did not place a significant difference on respondents decisions in “Involved in Law making & Legislation process by county assembly” was $\chi(12) = 15.719, p = 0.204 > 0.05$ and also age did not place a significant difference on respondents decisions in “Involved in policy making & formulation process” $\chi(12) = 15.38, p = 0.221 > 0.05$. However, age was not a significant determinant for respondents decisions on



“Involved in Implementation of development projects and programs” and Involved in M&E of development projects/programs” with $\chi(12) = 28.295$, $p = 0.05$ and $\chi(12) = 38.75$, $p = 0.000$ respectively which are below 0.05.

DISCUSSION

The study found that; majority of the respondents were male, 65%. One of the possible explanations accounting for high number of male respondent's is that majority are house heads, youthful male are more outgoing and more willing to give their views; while women are more reserved. Majority of the respondents had either college or university education. The composition of participants varied from the youth to the senior citizens, with majority being the youth. The youth are the most energetic and active group of the adult population who tend to be involved more in development activities such as public participation and are willing to give their opinion or views.

The study found that; the level of education played a significant determinant on the specific items tested except for citizens getting involved in vetting of public officers. The age factor did not play a significant determinant in the outcomes of public participation as observed. It appears that apart from age playing a significant role in public participation on vetting of public officers, the level of education and gender were not considered to important factors. Lastly, gender had mixed outcomes on the perception of respondents on public participation. However, most of items which include public participation, Budget Making, law making, vetting of public officers, policy making and formulation process, development planning and proposals and monitoring and evaluation of development projects tested suggest that gender did not influence the outcome of citizen participation to a large extent.

CONCLUSIONS

In view of the above findings, the study concludes that:

Demographic characteristics like gender, age and level of education, are among the factors that influenced public participation.

One of the possible explanations accounting for high number of male respondent's is that majority are house heads, youthful male are more outgoing and more willing to give their views; while women are more reserved. The study therefore concludes that, there is need to involve more women in public participation because more men tend to be involved than women yet some development projects affects women more than men.

Majority of the public are in a better position to participate in public participation because of their level of education which is above secondary education and majority of them are youthful hence there are energetic and active; therefore they can participate more in development activities. College and university graduates have higher intellectual capacity to participate in development and public participation activities and are willing to give their opinion or views; due to their level of education. Therefore, these further imply that majority of the public are in a position to participate in all processes of public participation. The education level is a key determinant of acquisition and application of skills and knowledge. Education level provides insight into the respondent's knowledge in public participation. More educated participants are considered to make informed choices on development issues affecting them.

Participants varied from the youth to the senior citizens, with majority being the youth. The youth are the most energetic and active group of the adult population who tend to be involved more in development activities such as public participation and are willing to give their opinion or views. Therefore this is an opportunity that the government can utilize to ensure as many young people as possible participate in development activities.

The chi square test for independence, from the value at $\chi(12) = 40.9$, $p = 0.000$; established that there was significant association between demographic characteristics and public participation activities. It was also establish that demographic factors such as age, gender and level of education influence public participation to a large extent. It was found that; male tend to participate more than female; youth tend to participate more than elderly people; and the



educated people tend to make more meaningful and quality contribution. Therefore there is need to have a proper planning so as to optimize the participation of everybody by considering their gender, age and level of education; and by also providing relevant information and undertaking civic education.

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