PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND ITS EFFECT ON SELECTION AND EXECUTION OF PROJECTS: A CASE OF SIAYA COUNTY

Omiti Gedrick John.
Student, Master of Public Policy and Administration, Kenyatta University, Kenya.
Edna Moi.
Professor, Department of Public Policy and Administration, Kenyatta University, Kenya.

Full Length Research

ABSTRACT

The public participation in project selection and implementation is a varied activity that entails the contribution and involvement of numerous stakeholders. The sustainability and viability of projects depend on how well they are carried out. The research aimed is to explore the effect of public participation in selection and execution of projects in Siaya County, Kenya. The study objectives were; to assess how public participation in project identification affect selection and execution of projects, to access the procedures used in public invitation on selection and execution of projects and to establish the ladder of public participation on selection and execution of projects in Siaya County, Kenya. Stakeholder theory and Arnstein's Theory of Public Participation served as the study's guiding theories. A descriptive research design was utilized for this study. The Siaya County residents who are the subject of the study are locals. The sample size was determined using the Fisher formula. To choose the 384 participants for the study, random sampling techniques were used. To gather information, questionnaires and interview schedules were employed. With the aid of SPSS version 26, the data was examined. Tables showing frequency distributions were used to depict the analyzed data. The study findings revealed that project identification, procedures used in invitation and ladder of public participation significantly impacted the selection and execution of projects. The results show that public participation throughout project processes fosters a sense of community ownership and support. It contributes to the identification and mitigation of concerns, promoting effective conflict resolution and consensus building. The engagement of diverse stakeholders, guided by the ladder of public participation, ensures that projects are designed with a holistic understanding of the community's needs, values, and aspirations. The study concludes that public participation plays a pivotal role in shaping the selection and execution of projects, influencing outcomes at various stages from project identification to implementation. The effectiveness of public participation is closely tied to the procedures used in invitation and the ladder of public participation applied throughout the process. Project identification, the initial phase of project development, benefits significantly from public involvement. The study recommends that the project team should invite community members to share their thoughts on various projects in order to facilitate community participation and guarantee a smooth project identification phase. The project team should involve community members in all planning activities, such as work sequencing, work scheduling, budgeting, staffing, and obtaining approvals from government agencies, in order to maximize participation in the planning phase and successfully complete the projects.

Key Words: Public Participation, Project Identification, Procedures and Execution Of Projects

INTRODUCTION

Public participation is a means of power redistribution that allows the underprivileged to actively participate in deciding their own interests and destiny (Arnstein, 1969: 216). Because of this, project initiators must recognize that the public has the right to timely information and meaningful engagement in ideas that could have an impact on their lives and livelihoods. As a result, initiatives would eventually be executed perfectly and sustainably (Enserink & Alberton, 2016). Additionally, a growing body of research indicates that development initiatives stand a better chance of long-term success if the individuals with the greatest stake feel as though they have a genuine stake in the outcome and have the power to influence and share control over the programs, choices, and resources that have an impact on them (IMF 2021). Alternatives to exclusion include strained support, which might impair service use, lessen project sustainability, and restrict cost recovery.

In agreement, the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2, 2014) claims that excluding the public from project management processes will only fuel conflict. It also outlines the fundamental principles of public participation, such as the right of individuals who will be impacted by a decision or project to actively participate in the process. According to this, people who have the biggest investment in the project's creation and execution will feel recognized and that they have a sense of ownership over it.

In the United Kingdom (UK), all levels of government have created citizen and stakeholder involvement in all planning processes impacting citizens (Holmes, 2018). Since citizen involvement is viewed as a tool to inform planning, organizing, or funding of events, it includes a wide range of consultations, focus group studies, and online discussion forums. It is stated that this would bring benefits that can be derived from a dependable and meaningful resident involvement program, such as information and concepts on public concerns, public assistance for planning decisions, a spirit of participation, and trust between government and the general public (Kanu, 2018).

According to research from Malaysia, effective public participation can be a difficult policy process that calls for in-depth and thorough engagement (Nyong'a & Gachanja 2021). According to Lemarleni, Ochieng, Gakobo, and Mwaura (2017), providing timely and accurate information to the public regarding project planning procedures is a critical step in achieving the projects' objectives. It is accepted across the world that involving the members of the public in project management serves as a link between local communities and other stakeholders whose interests and well-being are embedded in such projects. In some cases, by properly incorporating local community, conflicts emerging from project participants owing to misunderstanding can be easily resolved. The study's findings also showed that the outcomes of projects were significantly impacted by citizen involvement in their selection and execution.

Decentralization was pioneered in Ghana to encourage locals' involvement in life-affecting development activities. The promotion of efficient and responsive local governance for the purpose of reducing poverty has, however, been shown to be undermined by the sporadic absence of space for community involvement in project selection and execution. Furthermore, it is uncommon to find systems and practices that let

communities take part in assessing and monitoring development efforts. A number of programs and projects have been designed employing participatory approaches to involve diverse perspectives of people in the development process as active participants rather than passive observers (Ahenkan, Bawole & Domfeh, 2013).

In their investigation on the effects of community participation on integrated water resources management in Tanzania, Dungumaro and Ndalahwa (2012) discovered comparable findings. They understand how crucial it is to include locals in the project management process. They claimed that lowering conflicts that occur during the project management cycle is one of the key objectives of community participation. The study also revealed the importance of taking into account community needs and interests at all levels of project design, execution, and management at the local level.

Article 10 (1-4) of Kenya's 2010 constitution enshrines public participation in all initiatives impacting the public. Article 1(1-4) grants the people sovereign power, which they must exercise in accordance with the constitution, making citizen participation vital in all phases of project management and sustainability. In addition, the Kenya County Governments Act of 2012 has stringent social accountability standards that counties must execute. It goes on to say that citizen engagement allows county governments to empower citizens in their operations as well as consider, debate, and affect project resource allocations. Section 87 of the Act states that timely access to information, papers, and other information important to policy information and implementation is required for citizen engagement.

Statement of the Problem

Strong social accountability provisions are given by the Kenya county government Acts, which counties are required to implement. This mandates public participation in the development and execution of all county programs (GoK, 2010; GoK, 2012; CGS, 2018). Particularly, there are two ways that the public can participate in Siaya: either directly by visiting each of the 30 wards or indirectly through written memos from the populace. Despite the aforementioned restrictions, there are still issues that frequently result in public complaints. The slow speed of project execution, the failure to incorporate some suggestions in the planning documents, the low budgetary allocations to projects, the lack of sufficient copies of progress reports on ward projects, and the lack of timely information on participation are some of the primary criticisms. Local politics have occasionally triggered standoffs.

Citizens have expressed tremendous dissatisfaction and disappointment with the benefits of devolution compared to other county administrations in Nyanza, making public engagement processes and outcomes challenging. Counties continue to express concern about a variety of issues, including the lack of supportive institutional, legal, and policy frameworks; inadequate civic education; a lack of capacity; inadequate resources; difficulties in gaining access to information; and a general lack of civic awareness among the populace. Therefore, the study aims to examine public participation and its effect on selection and execution of projects in Siaya County.

Objectives of the study

The survey objectives were;

i. To assess how public participation in project identification affect selection and execution of projects in Siaya County, Kenya.
ii. To access the procedures used in public invitation on selection and execution of projects in Siaya County, Kenya.
iii. To establish the ladder of public participation on selection and execution of projects in Siaya County, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Frame work

This research utilized Arnstein's public participation theory developed in 1969. According to this notion, participation in communal activities increases over time. The theory is predicated on the idea that a number of variables, such as group leadership, members' attitudes toward a project, the center of authority, issues with processes, and capacity to carry out a particular exercise, have an effect on activities in any community environment. The theory's identification of several rungs of participation, including community manipulation, consultation, and actual engagement, is critical in regard to this study. Arnstein's refers to it at these levels as the point where community control and partnership exist.

This approach has the advantage of giving the general public the ability to actively take part in making decision while carrying out and supervising project-related activities. It highlights once more how important it is to view involvement as empowering both people and groups within the community. This idea has drawn criticism for its step-by-step approach to public engagement, where each phase stands for a large category of topics. This strategy could result in major variations in the quantity and caliber of information being sent to community members at every level. This could result in ineffective project planning as a result.

At whatever level, more control is always favored over less control, as the theoretical application of the ladder shows. More control over people's engagement isn't always a good thing, though. If not handled appropriately by extensive public input, this could result in project failure. Because it serves as the foundation for other elements that affect public participation in different project activities, this theory is appropriate as an independent variable of public participation. This notion is incorporated by researchers to enhance project selection and execution.

Concept of Public Participation

Public participation has long been regarded as a crucial step in the decision-making process because it allows citizens the chance to affect public decisions on subjects that are important to them. government (Freeman, 2010). The inclusion of individuals in activities or projects will have an impact on them, in accordance with the notion of public participation, which stipulates that those affected by a choice have

the right to participate in the decision-making process (Coenen, 2019). Citizens are people, groups, or organizations that have a say in political decisions, according to Freeman (2010). In order to design or carry out public policies and programs through public engagement, stakeholders may interact with governmental institutions, political personalities, non-profit organizations, and corporate organizations. When discussing community involvement in the planning process, Sherry Arnstein (1969) outlined a ladder of citizen participation that serves as a map for determining who holds sway when significant decisions are being made. According to Arnstein's methodology, a transfer of power based on citizen engagement allows for the purposeful participation of citizens who are currently excluded from political and economic processes. At each step of the ladder, which goes from less important to more important levels of engagement, there is some kind of empowerment. Arnstein developed a scale to show how to evaluate social ventures depending on the degree of community involvement in the design. The model's eight tiers indicate various degrees of citizen and decision-maker power distribution.

Project Identification and its effect on Selection and Execution of Projects

In the Nyeri County, Mavole and Ndegwa (2017) performed research on the impact of community participation on the execution of public health projects. Examining how public engagement affects a project's likelihood of success was the study's main goal. The study focuses on the identification, design, implementation, monitoring, and assessment phases of projects. It attempted to address the following queries: How much public participation affects project identification for public health projects; how much public participation affects project planning; how much public participation affects how projects are designed among citizens; and how much public participation affects project monitoring and evaluation. Public participation has an impact on project discovery, planning, designing, monitoring, and evaluation for the successful execution of public projects, according to the outcomes of a descriptive study. In order to ensure that public projects satisfy their goals and the interests of the general public, the study recommended community involvement throughout all phases of any public project.

El-khalek, Aziz, and Morgan (2019) all concurred that it is crucial to prioritize community involvement throughout the project initiation phase. This is based on research that demonstrates the effectiveness of community networks in enhancing public health. The survey's goal was to determine how neighborhood associations and community organizations worked together to ensure people' involvement in decision-making and environmental projects. The outcomes uncovered that community involvement at the project's outset helped residents cooperate, offer their ideas, and share responsibility for the development effort.

Coline, Salaj, Johansen, and Lohne (2023) emphasize that the growth of smart cities is affected by the impact of public engagement procedures on participants. Innovation is a complicated process that needs human involvement to be successful and long-lasting. To attain the aims of smart cities, participatory approaches that involve citizens in decision-making, such as planning, should be adopted. Both public engagement and specialized training are required to achieve these goals. Ahmadabadi and Heravi (2019) contend that it is crucial to involve community people from the beginning of a project because it strengthens their capacity to recognize issues, take part in the decision-making process, and transform

these issues into workable solutions. They came to the realization that being involved in the project's beginning helped the community find workable solutions for environmental, health, and social problems.

Procedures Used in Public Participation on Selection and Execution of Projects

In the Netherlands, Lin and Kant (2021) carried out research on how social media affects civic engagement. The survey utilized used a mixed methods approach, including content analysis, online information gathering, and interviews, to comprehend the characteristics of social media interactions. The key outcomes are: Although the government still plays a major role in top-down tactics, social media helps to increase social inclusion by attracting more people who might not be able to participate using traditional techniques, promoting contact, and facilitating various degrees of citizen power. For more inclusive involvement, significant levels of social media adoption and policy support are necessary. They also increase the effectiveness of participation in terms of openness, accessibility, and practical solutions. Nyseth, Ringholm, and Agger (2019) researched on novel forms of public participation outside the formal planning system was conducted in Denmark. The research design utilized in the survey was explanatory. A total of 252 people in all took part in the study. The findings disclosed that public forms were used in enhancing public participation through collaborative workshops and road show. Organized workshops that bring together project planners, designers, and the public to jointly develop project ideas, plans, and solutions. This fosters a sense of ownership and shared responsibility in project selection and execution.

Ladder of Public Participation on Selection and Execution of Projects

According to a research by the Institute of Economic Affairs (2015) on the state of county information dissemination frameworks and public engagement, which included case studies of Isiolo, Kisumu, and Turkana, Kisumu county had decentralized institutions for public participation at the ward and sub-county levels. According to the study, ward meetings were place once every three months, but there were no committees or meetings at the village level. According to the report, Turkana County had failed to set up offices for village councils and administrators since there were no policies defining how they should operate.

Odhiambo (2017) and Opiyo, (2017), carried out a parallel study on effective public participation mechanisms in the counties of Mombasa, Kilifi, Taita Taveta and Kajiado in order to explicit provisions in various laws, public participation mechanisms include budget preparation and confirmation sessions, public assemblies, citizen forums, etc. The survey found that Mombasa and Taita Taveta used town hall meetings more frequently than Kajiado and Kilifi. The four counties reported that ward and sub-county administrators were helpful in mobilizing. However, none of the counties had set up village administrative units.
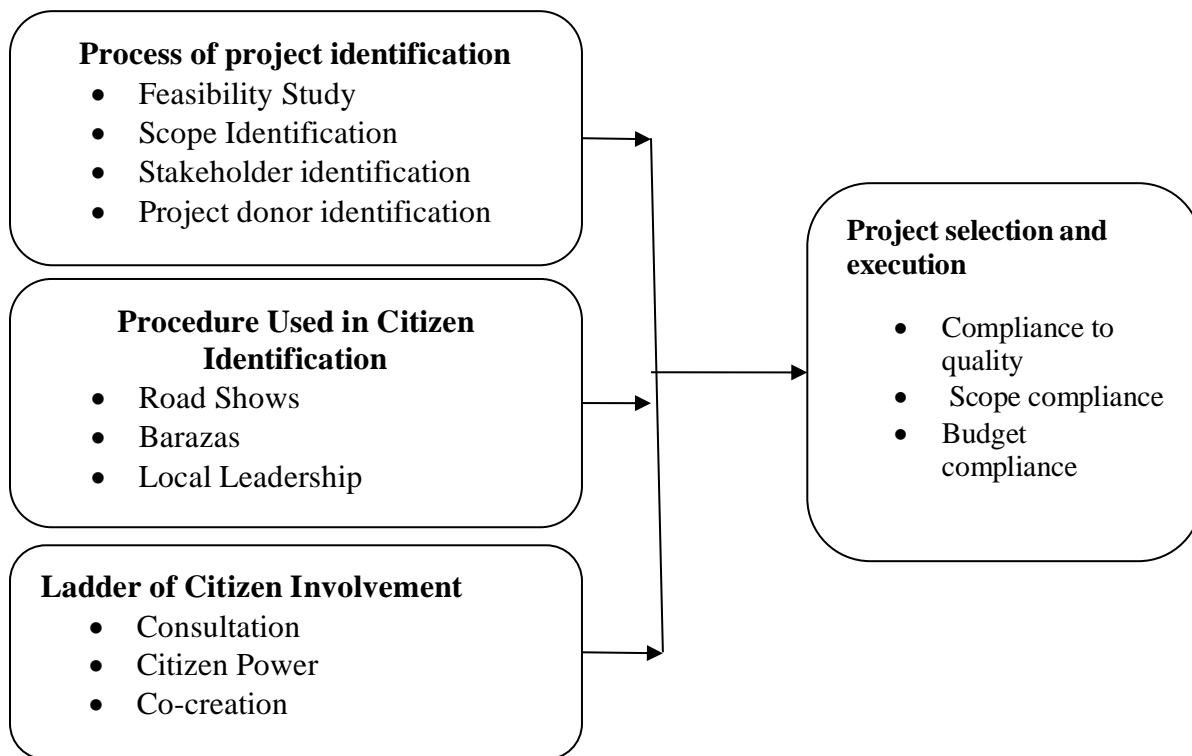
The importance of including the public in the project execution phase was highlighted by Ianniello Iacuzzi, Fedele, and Brusati (2019). The reason for this is that development initiatives are made for and by the people whose involvement makes a project successful or unsuccessful. Thus, the authors demonstrate how an essential component of successful development projects is involving individuals who will be impacted by or affected by the effort. Their involvement in the project improves the project's sustainability and lessens disputes between social stakeholders, in addition to increasing the possibility that they will discover a local solution that meets their needs. Involving stakeholders would help boost community trust, comprehension of the issue, project buy-in, and knowledge of local challenges. The

authors agree that it was critical to take into account stakeholders' contributions to the monitoring process. They believed that the community's active participation in meetings, public hearings, task forces, focus groups, advisory committees, surveys, and interviews was a critical aspect in assessing if the final product was in line with their aims and constraints.

The active involvement of stakeholders in the monitoring process provides the public with the chance to voice their thoughts and provide suggestions, and is a very successful form of empowerment, according to Botchwey, Johnson, O'Connell, and Kim (2019). The research backed up the idea that the project may be enhanced or changed to accommodate for shifting political, social, cultural, and economic situations. The survey confirmed that participation reduced the level of community alienation. The study found that participation by the public during the monitoring stage enhanced levels of volunteerism and civic engagement since people no longer felt excluded or alienated by outsiders.

In their research on a typology of stakeholder analysis and engagement methodologies, Das, Laishram, and Jawed (2019) emphasize the significance of public participation in project implementation and implementation. Their understanding of the fundamental rights to participation prompted this reiteration. According to their research, public involvement facilitated the monitoring procedure by boosting people's self-confidence and aiding participants' ability to respond more skillfully to local issues. The study also showed that community involvement in local development projects improved social and networking conditions in addition to economic ones.

Conceptual Framework

Process of project identification
- Feasibility Study
- Scope Identification
- Stakeholder identification
- Project donor identification

Procedure Used in Citizen Identification
- Road Shows
- Barazas
- Local Leadership

Ladder of Citizen Involvement
- Consultation
- Citizen Power
- Co-creation

Project selection and execution
- Compliance to quality
- Scope compliance
- Budget compliance

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design for this study was descriptive and correlational. Essentially, research is the pursuit of knowledge of any form. The population of Siaya County, as estimated by the National Census Report of 2019, is 993,183 people. A representative sample of 384 respondents was carefully selected through the Sileyew (2019) formula. Primary data was collected using a questionnaire and an interview schedule. Before being coded for analysis, the main data collected from the questionnaires in this study was examined for omissions, readability, and consistency. The data was organized, coded, and analyzed using the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS), which also produced a quantitative report. Regression analysis was employed in this study to establish the relationship between the independent variable (effects of public participation) and the dependent variable (Project selection and execution). Tables were subsequently used to present the results after analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The researcher distributed 384 questionnaires to the selected respondents. However, 275 questionnaires were dully filled and returned. This gave a response rate of 71.6% which is deemed sufficient for the study. On the general information of the respondents, 56.7% of respondents are male and 43.3% are female in terms of gender distribution. This suggests that the findings of the study did not adversely affect gender stigma, as both male and female respondents in this review showed decent involvement. On age distribution, 112(40.7%) of the respondents were aged between 46 and 55 years, 86(31.3%) were aged between 36 and 45 years, 49(17.8%) were aged above 55 years while 28(10.2%) were aged between 26 and 35 years. This implies that different age group participate in study hence distinct perspectives, need and priorities were captured. On the distribution of respondent education level, 9.8% of the respondents had attained primary level, 21.2% had attained secondary education level, 28.7% had attained diploma level, 24.7% had attained bachelor's degree while 15.6% had attained Master's level. The level of education of the general public is a major determinant of meaningful engagement in project development. Education and development are closely related.

Project Identification

The participants were requested to indicate their agreement level with parameters related to effect of project identification on selection and execution of projects on a Likert Scale where 5- strongly agree, 4- agree, 3- moderately agree, 2-disagree and 1-strongly disagree. The mean and standard deviation were derived. The Table 1 display the findings on project identification.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for Project Identification

Statements	n	Mean	Std. D
Public participation in project initiation strengthens community capacity in a project.	275	3.67	0.712
Public participation during project initiation helps members of the community to participate in development of a project.	275	3.61	0.624
Project initiation through public participation helps identify project stakeholders.	275	3.46	0.645
Public participation in project initiation helps identify problems and translate them into solutions or actions.	275	3.55	0.678
Project initiation through public participation helps to establish the feasibility of a project.	275	3.51	0.702
Public participation in project initiation helps identify project scope.	275	3.44	0.669
Project initiation facilitates feasibility studies and identification of project donors.	275	3.57	0.654
Average scores		**3.54**	**0.669**

Source: Field Data (2023)

The findings presented in Table 1 show that most participants agreed that public participation in project initiation strengthens community capacity in a project (mean = 3.55; S.D = 0.712). The participants agreed that public participation during project initiation helps members of the community to participate in development of a project (mean = 3.61; S.D = 0.624). Further, the respondents agreed that project initiation through public participation helps identify project stakeholders (mean = 3.46; S.D = 0.645). Also, the majority of respondents agreed that public participation in project initiation helps identify problems and translate them into solutions or actions (mean = 3.55; S.D = 0.678). Identification sets the stage for selecting projects that align with the organization's strategic objectives. The findings agreed with the findings by Mavole and Ndegwa (2017) who established that public participation has an impact on project discovery, planning, designing, monitoring, and evaluation for the successful execution of public projects. During project identification, an initial assessment of potential risks is conducted. This information is crucial during project selection, as it allows organizations to choose projects with manageable risks. Understanding the potential challenges upfront helps in developing effective risk mitigation strategies.

From the findings, the respondents agreed that project initiation through public participation helps to establish the feasibility of a project (mean = 3.51; S.D = 0.702). The participants agreed that public participation in project initiation helps identify project scope (mean = 3.44; S.D = 0.669). Additionally, the respondents agreed that project initiation facilitates feasibility studies and identification of project

donors (mean = 3.57; S.D = 0.654). Project identification involves a preliminary feasibility analysis to determine if a project is viable and achievable. This is consistent with findings of a study by El-khalek, Aziz, and Morgan (2019) who revealed that project identification sets the foundation for effective project selection and execution by aligning projects with organizational goals, assessing resource needs, identifying risks, and providing a basis for feasibility analysis. A thorough and well-executed identification process enhances the likelihood of successful project outcomes. Further, Nthiga and Moi (2021) claims that identifying projects involves identifying key stakeholders and their interests. This project phase is vital during project selection and execution, as it helps in managing stakeholder expectations, ensuring their involvement, and addressing their concerns throughout the project life cycle. From the qualitative findings, it was noted that identifying projects involves estimating the resources, including financial, human, and technological resources, required for successful execution. This information is vital for effective resource allocation, preventing over commitment and ensuring that the necessary resources are available when needed. Public participation is not merely a procedural requirement but a transformative force that enhances the quality, relevance, and sustainability of projects. By embracing inclusivity, transparency, and collaboration, project stakeholders harness the collective wisdom of the community, leading to projects that resonate with the people they aim to serve. The success of project selection and execution is intrinsically tied to the depth and authenticity of public participation, making it a cornerstone of responsible and community-driven development.

From the interview schedules, it was noted that *"proper project identification ensures that the selected projects align with the overall objectives and goals of the organization. This alignment is essential for the successful execution of projects and contributes to the strategic direction of the company. Thorough project identification includes assessing potential risks and challenges associated with a project. This proactive approach allows organizations to make informed decisions about whether to proceed with a project and develop strategies to mitigate identified risks during execution".*

Procedures Used in Public Invitation

The participants were requested to indicate their agreement level with parameters related to effect of procedures used in public invitation on selection and execution of projects on a Likert Scale where 5- strongly agree, 4- agree, 3- moderately agree, 2-disagree and 1-strongly disagree. The mean and standard deviation were derived. Table 2 display the findings on procedures used in public invitation.

Table 2 Descriptive statistics for procedures used in public invitation

Statements	n	Mean	Std. D
The information provided during the public invitation process was clear and easy to understand.	275	3.64	0.652
The methods used for public invitation, such as meetings and online platforms, were accessible and convenient for me.	275	3.53	0.674
The public invitation process encouraged active participation from a diverse range of stakeholders.	275	3.57	0.701
The project organizers demonstrated transparency by sharing updates and progress related to the project execution.	275	3.67	0.673

The public invitation process provided a sense of ownership and collaboration, making me feel like a valued contributor to the project.	275	3.63	0.689
Overall, I am satisfied with the procedures used in the public invitation process for the projects in Siaya county.	275	3.55	0.694
Averages		**3.60**	**0.681**

Source: Field Data (2023)

The findings displayed in Table 2 revealed that most participants agreed that the information provided during the public invitation process was clear and easy to understand (mean = 3.64; S.D =0.652). The participants agreed that the methods used for public invitation, such as meetings and online platforms, were accessible and convenient for me (Mean = 3.53; S.D =0.674). Further, the respondents agreed that public invitation process encouraged active participation from a diverse range of stakeholders (Mean = 3.57; S.D = 0.701). The procedures used in public invitations play a vital role in shaping the selection and execution of projects. They contribute to transparency, fairness, and efficiency in the selection process, which, in turn, influences the success of the projects that are ultimately chosen for execution. The findings corroborate with results of a study by Nyseth, Ringholm, and Agger (2019) who established that public forms were used in enhancing public participation through collaborative workshops and road show. Organized workshops that bring together project planners, designers, and the public to jointly develop project ideas, plans, and solutions. This fosters a sense of ownership and shared responsibility in project selection and execution.

Furthermore, the results in Table 4.6 show that majority of respondents agreed that project organizers demonstrated transparency by sharing updates and progress related to the project execution (mean = 3.67; S.D = 0.673). The participants agreed that public invitation process provided a sense of ownership and collaboration, making me feel like a valued contributor to the project (Mean = 3.63; S.D = 0.689). Also, respondents agreed that they are satisfied with the procedures used in the public invitation process for the projects in Siaya county (Mean = 3.55; S.D = 0.694). The procedures help in managing and controlling costs by providing guidelines on budget expectations and considerations. This influences the selection of projects that fit within the allocated budget. The findings are supported by findings of a study by Mwiru (2015) who established that some of procedures used in public participation for project selection and execution were awareness and outreach, public meetings, workshops and focus groups. Public participation in the selection and execution of projects is a critical aspect of democratic governance and community development. Social media helps to increase social inclusion by attracting more people who might not be able to participate using traditional techniques, promoting contact, and facilitating various degrees of citizen power (Lin & Kant, 2021).

From the interview schedules, it was noted that "*public invitations, such as requests for proposals (RFPs) or invitations to tender, are common methods used by organizations to solicit bids from external parties for projects. Public invitations encourage competitive bidding, allowing organizations to receive proposals from multiple vendors or contractors. This fosters competition, potentially leading to better-quality proposals, competitive pricing, and innovative solutions. The procedures used in public invitations emphasize transparency by providing clear guidelines and criteria for participation. This*

transparency builds trust among stakeholders, including potential bidders, and ensures a fair and open process".

From the qualitative data, it was noted that public invitations provide a platform for engaging with the community. This involvement allows stakeholders to contribute ideas, voice concerns, and ensure that projects align with the community's needs. The procedures used in public invitations contribute to the overall success of project selection and execution by promoting competition, transparency, and adherence to established standards. These procedures help organizations identify the most qualified and capable partners, ultimately enhancing the likelihood of successful project outcomes. Public invitations often include a due diligence phase where bidders are required to provide detailed information about their capabilities, financial stability, and past performance. This helps mitigate the risk of selecting an incapable or unreliable contractor. Contracts resulting from public invitations include performance guarantees or bonds, adding an extra layer of assurance that the selected entity

Ladder of Public Participation

The participants were requested to indicate their agreement level with parameters related to effect of ladder of public participation on selection and execution of projects on a Likert Scale where 5- strongly agree, 4- agree, 3- moderately agree, 2-disagree and 1-strongly disagree. The mean and standard deviation were derived. Table 3 displays the findings on Ladder of Public Participation.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics for Ladder of Public Participation

Statements	n	Mean	Std. D
The public has been actively involved in decision-making processes related to the project.	275	2.46	1.615
The public's involvement in decision-making progressed from mere consultation to actual delegated power.	275	2.13	1.622
The public's opinions and suggestions genuinely considered during project selection and execution.	275	2.43	1.638
I feel that the public has the opportunity to influence project decisions beyond just being informed	275	3.49	0.643
The project organizers actively encouraged collaboration and partnership with the public throughout the project lifecycle.	275	3.38	0.649
The level of public participation in the project empowered the community to make meaningful contributions	275	3.52	0.629
Average scores		**2.90**	**1.132**

Source: Field Data (2023)

The findings presented in Table 3 show that majority of the respondents disagreed that public has been actively involved in decision-making processes related to the project (mean = 2.46; S.D = 1.615). The participants disagreed that public's involvement in decision-making progressed from mere consultation to actual delegated power (mean = 2.13; S.D = 1.622). Further, the respondents disagreed that public's

opinions and suggestions genuinely considered during project selection and execution (mean = 2.43; S.D =1.638). As public participation levels increase, there is generally a greater emphasis on transparency. This means that decision-making processes, project details, and relevant information are made more accessible to the public. This transparency led to increased trust and understanding among stakeholders. This is supported by the findings of a study by Ianniello Iacuzzi, Fedele, and Brusati (2019) involving stakeholders would help boost community trust, comprehension of the issue, project buy-in, and knowledge of local challenges. The community active participation in meetings, public hearings, task forces, focus groups, advisory committees, surveys, and interviews was a critical aspect in final project outcomes.

Further, the study findings present in Table 4.7 indicate that majority of the respondents agreed that they feel that the public has the opportunity to influence project decisions beyond just being informed (mean = 3.49; S.D = 0.643). The respondents agreed that project organizers actively encouraged collaboration and partnership with the public throughout the project lifecycle (mean = 3.38; S.D = 0.649). Also, most participants agreed that level of public participation in the project empowered the community to make meaningful contributions (mean = 3.52; S.D = 0.629). Involving the public in project selection and execution bring diverse perspectives, local knowledge, and unique insights. This contribute to better decision-making by considering a wider range of factors and potential impacts. Collaborative decision-making often results in solutions that are more robust and acceptable to the community. The findings are supported by the findings of Das, Laishram, and Jawed (2019) who emphasized that community involvement in local development projects improved social and networking conditions in addition to economic ones. The active involvement of stakeholders in the monitoring process provides the public with the chance to voice their thoughts and provide suggestions, and is a very successful form of empowerment, according to Botchwey, Johnson, O'Connell, and Kim (2019).

The qualitative data revealed that ladder of public participation provides a structured approach to involving the public in decision-making, and its various rungs offer different levels of engagement. Through increased transparency, diverse perspectives, and community ownership, the ladder enhances the selection and execution of projects, contributing to more successful and sustainable outcomes. Public participation fosters social cohesion by bringing community members together to collaborate on common goals. This sense of unity can contribute to the successful implementation of projects and the overall well-being of the community.

From the interview schedules, it was established that "*The ladder encourages transparency by involving the public in decision-making processes. This transparency helps build trust between the community and the decision-makers, as people are more likely to support projects they understand and have had a say in. Public participation allows for the inclusion of diverse perspectives. Different community members may have unique insights, needs, and concerns that decision-makers may not be aware of. Involving the public ensures a more comprehensive understanding of the community's needs. Higher levels of public participation, such as collaboration and empowerment, provide opportunities for the community to actively contribute to the project design. This result in projects that better align with the community's values, preferences, and long-term goals.*

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

From the study findings, the study concludes that public participation plays a pivotal role in shaping the selection and execution of projects, influencing outcomes at various stages from project identification to implementation. The effectiveness of public participation is closely tied to the procedures used in invitation and the ladder of public participation applied throughout the process. Project identification, the initial phase of project development, benefits significantly from public involvement. By engaging the community in the identification process, diverse perspectives and local insights are brought to the forefront, enriching the understanding of community needs and aspirations. This early collaboration sets the stage for projects that are more attuned to the unique context and priorities of the community. The procedures used in inviting public participation are critical determinants of the level and quality of engagement. Open and inclusive invitations, employing a variety of communication channels, facilitate broad representation. Clear and accessible information helps build trust and ensures that stakeholders, regardless of background or demographics, contribute meaningfully to the decision-making process. The ladder of public participation serves as a framework for understanding the depth of engagement throughout the project life cycle. From the lower rungs involving information sharing to the higher rungs of collaboration and empowerment, each level brings distinct benefits. As the ladder is ascended, transparency, inclusivity, and the quality of decision-making improve, laying the foundation for successful project execution.

Recommendations

From the findings, the study recommends that;
The researcher recommends that the project team should invite community members to share their thoughts on various projects in order to facilitate community participation and guarantee a smooth project identification phase. The project team should involve community members in all planning activities, such as work sequencing, work scheduling, budgeting, staffing, and obtaining approvals from government agencies, in order to maximize participation in the planning phase and successfully complete the projects. Their participation would allow the project team to guarantee that the initiative is driven by demand and to take community concerns into account.

The county government should involve the community when performing quality assurance tests, drafting progress reports, managing communications, reporting project risks, and managing the schedule of the development project. This participation would create trust and encourage the people's commitment to the implementation and success of the project. The researcher recommends that the project team and decision-makers promote participatory monitoring by accepting feedback from the community and anticipating project issues after it has been handed over. This tracking and control would help the project team deliver the desired product on time, cost, and with sufficient resources.

There should be a collaborative decision-making through the ladder of public participation. Advocate for the implementation of the ladder of public participation as a guiding framework for decision-making

processes. Encourage stakeholders to ascend the ladder, moving from lower levels of information sharing to higher levels of collaboration and empowerment, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility among the community.

REFERENCES

Ahmadabadi, A. A., & Heravi, G. (2019). The effect of critical success factors on project success in Public-Private Partnership projects: A case study of highway projects in Iran. *Transport policy*, *73*, 152-161.

Bahadorestani, A., Naderpajouh, N., & Sadiq, R. (2020). Planning for sustainable stakeholder engagement based on the assessment of conflicting interests in projects. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, *242*, 118402.

Boaz, A., Hanney, S., Borst, R., O'Shea, A., & Kok, M. (2018). How to engage stakeholders in research: design principles to support improvement. *Health research policy and systems*, *16*(1), 1-9.

Botchwey, N. D., Johnson, N., O'Connell, L. K., & Kim, A. J. (2019). Including youth in the ladder of citizen participation: Adding rungs of consent, advocacy, and incorporation. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, *85*(3), 255-270.

Coline S, Salaj T.A, Johansen A and Lohne, J (2023). Evaluating the Impact of Public Participation processes on participants in Smart city development.

Das, R., Laishram, B., & Jawed, M. (2019). Public participation in urban water supply projects–The case of South-West Guwahati, India. *Water research*, *165*, 114989.

El-khalek, H. A., Aziz, R. F., & Morgan, E. S. (2019). Identification of construction subcontractor prequalification evaluation criteria and their impact on project success. *Alexandria Engineering Journal*, *58*(1), 217-223.

Enserink, B., & Alberton, M. (2016). Public participation in China: Strengths, weaknesses, and lessons learned. *Journal of Environmental Assessment Policy and Management,18*(01).

Ianniello, M., Iacuzzi, S., Fedele, P., & Brusati, L. (2019). Obstacles and solutions on the ladder of citizen participation: a systematic review. *Public management review*, *21*(1), 21-46.

Lemarleni, J. E., Ochieng, I., Gakobo, T., & Mwaura, P. (2017). Effects of resource allocation on strategy implementation at Kenya Police Service in Nairobi County. *International Academic Journal of Human Resource and Business Administration,2*(4), 1-26.

Lin, Y., & Kant, S. (2021). Using social media for citizen participation: Contexts, empowerment, and inclusion. *Sustainability*, *13*(12), 6635.

Mavole NJ and Ndegwa N.M(2017). Influence of Public participation on successful implementation of public health projects in Nyeri.

Mwiru, M. (2015). *The importance of community participation in development projects at local level: A case of Dodoma municipal council* (Doctoral dissertation, Mzumbe University).

Nthiga G.K and Moi E(2021) . Public participation effects on execution of Constituency Development Fund in Makueni, Kenya.

Nyong'a, E. M. M., & Gachanja, P. M. (2021). Public Participation in the Policy Making Process: An Evaluation of Makueni County, Kenya. *International Journal of Current Aspects,5*(2), 36-49.

Odhiambo R, Opiyo S , (2017). Effective public Participation Mechanism in Mombasa, Kilifi,Taita Taveta and Kajiado.

Sileyew, K. J. (2019). Research design and methodology. *Cyberspace*, 1-12.

Tobi, H., & Kampen, J. K. (2018). Research design: the methodology for interdisciplinary research framework. *Quality & quantity*, *52*, 1209-1225.

Tracy, S. J. (2019). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. John Wile