

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN STRATEGIC POLICY MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABLE SOCIO- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN TAITA TAVETA COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The significance of Public Participation in Strategic Policy Management for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya, cannot be understated. This research project seeks to investigate how Public Participation influence sustainable socio-economic development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya. The specific objectives to this study include investigating the effect of public participation during the strategy formulation phase on sustainable socio-economic development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya; assessing the impact of public participation during the strategy implementation phase on sustainable socio-economic development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya; and evaluating the effect of public participation during the strategy evaluation phase on sustainable socio-economic development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya. The study is grounded in three theoretical frameworks, namely Stakeholder Theory, Governance Theory and Sustainable Development theory. In order to accomplish the stated objectives, a descriptive research design was employed for this study. The research covered all 20 wards in Taita Taveta County. A sample size of 422 respondents was drawn from 9 County Executive Committee Members, 14 Ward Administrators, 14 Members of the County Assembly and 385 household representatives. Household representatives were selected using stratified random sampling while key informants from the government's executive and legislative arms was chosen through purposive sampling. The research utilized descriptive research design approach, combining surveys and interviews administered

through questionnaires and interview schedules as primary sources, supplemented by secondary sources such as policy documents and briefs. The collected data underwent comprehensive analysis using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive analysis, including means, modes, and standard deviations, was employed to delineate the basic characteristics of the study population. Inferential statistics like Pearson's Product Moment correlation and multiple regression models discerned relationships between variables. Throughout the research process, ethical considerations were paramount with adherence to established protocols. This research offered a deep understanding of how public participation, as a strategic management practice, contribute to sustainable socio-economic development. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights into the dynamics of strategic management practices, potentially informing recommendations for enhancing sustainable socio-economic development in the county. The study's findings, highlights the significant roles of public participation on Strategy Formulation, Strategic Policy Evaluation, Institutional Capacity, and Strategic Policy Implementation in driving Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya. Key findings include the strong positive impact of Institutional Capacity and Public Participation in Strategic Policy Evaluation, with recommendations focused on enhancing organizational frameworks, implementing continuous public engagement during policy evaluation, and improving strategic planning and

execution. Further research is suggested on external factors influencing development,

the role of emerging technologies, and the long-term impacts of strategic policies.

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Public participation is not only recognized as a right in various international covenants, declarations, and charters such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, but it also aligns with strategic management principles and practices (Taylor, 2020). Its roots in strategic management, emphasizing transparency, inclusivity, and stakeholder engagement, underscore its relevance in today's decision-making landscape (Nzimande, 2023).

Public participation in governance and policy-making is a fundamental principle of democratic societies and is essential for sustainable socio-economic development (Krick, 2021). As a strategic policy management practice, public participation plays a critical role in ensuring that policy decisions are inclusive, effective, and aligned with sustainable development goals.

Globally, frameworks such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) highlight the need for strategic planning and management to address interconnected challenges such as poverty, inequality, climate change, and environmental degradation (UN, 2023). These global initiatives emphasize the importance of involving citizens at all stages of policy management to ensure sustainable outcomes.

Public participation ensures that the voices of citizens are heard and considered in decision-making processes, leading to more inclusive and effective policies (Nielsen et al., 2021). This participatory approach aligns with strategic management practices, which involve structured and intentional methods, procedures, and undertakings by organizations or governments to synchronize their objectives with sustainable socio-economic progress and ensure the enduring sustainability of their activities (Molnar, 2018). By integrating public participation into strategic policy management, governments and organizations can create policies that are not only more responsive to the needs of their communities but also more likely to achieve long-term sustainable socio-economic development.

Sustainable socio-economic development, a global imperative, recognizes the multidimensional nature of achieving balanced economic growth while promoting environmental preservation, and social equity (Denisova & Kupriyanov, 2020). Effectively managing sustainability initiatives entails creating, implementing, and evaluating policies aimed at realizing objectives for sustainable socio-economic development. Public participation in policy formulation, implementation and evaluation, is a crucial component of strategic policy management practices aimed at achieving sustainable socio-economic development (Sapru et al., 2023).

On the African continent, initiatives like the African Union's Agenda 2063 emphasize the importance of strategic policy management practices in achieving socio-economic objectives (AU et al., 2023). The African Union underscores the role of public participation in policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation as crucial for advancing the continent's sustainable development goals. Similarly, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) seeks to promote inclusive growth, sustainable development, and social cohesion across Africa (Mhangara et al., 2019). These continental efforts highlight the significance of public involvement in governance to ensure that policies are reflective of the people's needs and aspirations and that the ultimate policy outcomes was the desirable socio-economic development.

In Kenya, the government has made significant efforts to promote sustainable socio-economic development through the implementation of various strategic management practices. The Vision 2030 strategic plan sets out long-term goals aimed at transforming Kenya into a globally competitive and prosperous nation while promoting equitable development and environmental sustainability (GoK, 2018). Kenya's Constitution of 2010 mandates the involvement of citizens in various aspects of governance, including policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation, ensuring that public participation is enshrined in the country's legal framework. This legal mandate is operationalized through various legislative and policy frameworks. The County Governments Act of 2012 provides a comprehensive framework for public participation at the county level, ensuring that communities affected by service delivery decisions have the right to participate in the decisions that impact their daily lives (Ochieng, 2018). Counties are also mandated by Article 185 of the Constitution of Kenya to independently formulate legislations, policies, and plans for the effective performance of the devolved functions, including the management and exploitation of the county's resources and the development of its infrastructure and institutions (RoK, 2010). Despite these frameworks, the practical implementation and impact of public participation on policy outcomes remain areas of concern.

Public participation in strategic policy management involves the active engagement of citizens in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of policies. During the formulation phase, public input can help identify community needs, preferences, and priorities, leading to more relevant and acceptable policies. This phase ensures that the policies crafted are reflective of the actual needs and aspirations of the community, fostering a sense of ownership and commitment towards the policies (Mukuri & Wamitu, 2020).

In the implementation phase, involving the public can enhance transparency, accountability, and community ownership of development initiatives (Park et al., 2023). This phase benefits from the community's active participation as it ensures that the policies are executed as intended, with the community playing a watchdog role, thereby reducing instances of mismanagement and corruption.

During the evaluation phase, public feedback is crucial for assessing policy effectiveness and making necessary adjustments (Bryer, 2021). This phase allows for the assessment of the

policies' impact on the community, identifying what works and what needs improvement, thus facilitating continuous improvement in policy management.

Taita Taveta County, located in Kenya's coastal region, exemplifies national and global socio-economic and environmental concerns. The county features diverse landscapes, including urban and rural areas, national parks covering 62% of its land, wildlife conservancies, natural forests, fertile agricultural lands, mineral-rich mining zones with gemstones and iron ore, and ranches where the county proud itself as a disease-free zone (CGoTT-DFEP, 2023). It is traversed by significant national and international transport networks such as the Ikanga Airstrip, Mombasa-Nairobi-Kampala Highway, Voi-Taveta-Holili Highway, and the Standard Gauge Railway (CAoTT, 2023). This combination of rich biodiversity and strategic infrastructure underpins the county's substantial economic potential, attracting considerable global attention (CGoTT, 2019).

Despite its abundant resources, Taita Taveta County faces significant socio-economic challenges, including high poverty rates, limited access to quality education, unemployment, inadequate infrastructure, inadequate healthcare, and environmental degradation (KIPPR, 2021). These challenges necessitate strategic policy interventions that are not only effective but also sustainable.

According to Deinibiteim & Maureen (2022) the civic spaces provided for in the various laws and policies are meant to catalyse socio-economic development by providing avenues where residents can contribute meaningfully on policy formulation, implementation and evaluation, towards diverse matters of interest to them. These avenues aim to empower citizens and create a sense of ownership and accountability in the decision-making processes (Wanjiku Ngunjiri, 2023).

Despite the theoretical benefits of public participation, there is a notable gap in empirical research on its actual impact on strategic policy management in Taita Taveta County. Existing studies have often focused on the general principles of public participation without delving into its specific effects on the different stages of policy management. This gap in knowledge hinders the ability of policymakers to design and implement participatory processes that genuinely contribute to sustainable socio-economic development (Bautista-Puig et al., 2021).

This research study aims to address the existing gap by systematically investigating the role of public participation in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of strategies for sustainable socio-economic development in Taita Taveta County. By examining each stage of the strategic policy management process, the study will provide a comprehensive understanding of how public participation influences policy outcomes. The findings will offer valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers interested in enhancing participatory governance and promoting sustainable development in Kenya and beyond. By focusing on the stages of policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation, the study seeks to provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of public participation in achieving sustainable development outcomes. The insights gained from this research was crucial for

designing more effective participatory governance frameworks that can be applied not only in Taita Taveta County but also in other regions facing similar challenges.

Problem Statement

The Constitution of Kenya 2010 establishes a framework for devolution, empowering county governments to manage and govern their regions to achieve socio-economic development (RoK, 2010). This framework, bolstered by devolution legislations, emphasizes the crucial role of public participation in policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation for sustainable development. These principles align with global frameworks like the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the African Union's Agenda 2063, which advocate strategic management practices to foster sustainable socio-economic growth (AU, 2015; UN, 2023).

Despite these frameworks, Taita Taveta County struggles to convert strategic management practices into sustainable socio-economic outcomes. The county grapples with high poverty levels, unemployment, inadequate infrastructure, limited access to quality education, and environmental degradation (CBK et al., 2022; KNBS, 2021). Reports from the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) and the International Budget Partnership Kenya reveal significant deficiencies in budgetary control, revenue generation, and public participation, all of which impede the county's development (IBPK, 2022; OAG, 2022)

There is a notable limited empirical research on the specific factors obstructing the successful implementation of strategic management practices in Taita Taveta County. Identifying and understanding these factors is essential for aligning the county's development efforts with global, continental, and national objectives. This research seeks to explore the complexities of strategic management practices, focusing on leverage of public participation in policy formulation, implementation and evaluation, to enhance sustainable socio-economic development in Taita Taveta County. By gaining a deeper understanding of these dynamics, the research intends to improve participatory practices and policy outcomes, ultimately establishing a foundation for sustainable development in the county.

The findings of the study will enhance a more detailed comprehension of how global, continental, and national goals can be successfully achieved at the local level, making sure that Taita Taveta serves as an exemplar for sustainable development within Kenya and Africa as a whole.

Objectives of the Study

General Objective

To evaluate the role of Public Participation in Strategic Policy Management for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya

Specific Objectives

1. To investigate the effect of public participation during the strategy formulation phase on sustainable socio-economic development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya.
2. To assess the impact of public participation during the strategy implementation phase on sustainable socio-economic development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya.
3. To evaluate the effect of public participation during the strategy evaluation phase on sustainable socio-economic development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya
4. To determine the effect of Institutional Capacity on sustainable socio-economic development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya

Research Hypotheses

- H₀₁:** Public participation during the strategy formulation phase has no significant effect on sustainable socio-economic development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya.
- H₀₂:** Public participation during the strategy implementation phase has no significant impact on sustainable socio-economic development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya.
- H₀₃:** Public participation during the strategy evaluation phase has no significant effect on sustainable socio-economic development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya.
- H₀₄:** Institutional Capacity has no significant effect on sustainable socio-economic development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya.

Significance of the Study

This study holds profound significance in advancing the understanding and practice of public participation in strategic policy management for sustainable socio-economic development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya. By systematically investigating the role of public participation across the stages of policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation, the study aims to provide empirical insights that are both actionable and transformative.

Moreover, this study is significant for its focus on institutional capacity building in facilitating effective public participation. By identifying institutional strengths and weaknesses that facilitate participatory governance for sustainable socio-economic development, the research aims to provide guidelines for enhancing organizational readiness and responsiveness to citizen inputs, thereby strengthening governance frameworks in the county.

Lastly, by demonstrating the influence of participatory approaches in promoting sustainable socio-economic development, this study aims to empower local communities to actively engage in governance processes. By demonstrating the tangible benefits of public participation, the research seeks to foster community cohesion, social capital, and a sense of ownership over

development initiatives, ultimately contributing to long-term socio-economic sustainability in Taita Taveta County.

In conclusion, this study is poised to make a significant contribution to both academic discourse and practical policymaking by providing empirical evidence and actionable insights into the role of public participation in strategic policy management. The outcomes of this research are expected to inform policy reforms, enhance governance practices, and promote sustainable development outcomes in Taita Taveta County and potentially serve as a model for similar regions striving to achieve inclusive and participatory governance.

Scope of the Study

This research will focus specifically on Taita Taveta County in Kenya. It aims to evaluate the role of Public Participation in Strategic Policy Management for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya.

The study will examine the variables of public participation, as strategic policy management practices, during the phases of policy formulation, implementation and evaluation and its impact on sustainable socio-economic development.

Limitations of the Study

The main probable limitation of this study is that there may be communication barriers between the researcher and the community representatives when responding to the instruments leading to inaccurate data. However, the study will overcome this by allowing the respondents to use either English or Swahili when responding to the instruments. Furthermore, the study may face limitations regarding data availability and reliability. These limitations may be addressed by confining the research questions to post-devolution era, conducting thorough data validation and utilizing multiple data sources to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the findings (Fraser et al., 2023; Leung, 2015).

Additionally, the study's findings may be influenced by the specific context of Taita Taveta County and may not be fully applicable to other regions with different political, social, and economic dynamics. However, the study aims to provide insights and recommendations that can be adapted and contextualized in similar settings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter summarizes the literature that already exists on the role of Public Participation in Strategic Policy Management for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya. It also presents the theoretical and conceptual framework guiding the study as well as highlights the identified empirical literature gaps to be filled by the study.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical foundations are essential in elucidating the intricate dynamics shaping the impact of Public Participation in Strategic Policy Management for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya. This study employs three key frameworks—

Stakeholder Theory, Governance Theory and Sustainable Development theory — to comprehensively explore the role of Public Participation in Strategic Policy Management for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya.

Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder Theory, introduced by Edward Freeman in 1984, posits that organizations, and by extension, public policy frameworks, should consider the interests and concerns of all stakeholders in their decision-making processes (Freeman et al., 2015).

The theory emphasizes inclusive decision-making processes where stakeholders beyond traditional shareholders are involved in policy formulation, implementation and evaluation (Bridoux & Stoelhorst, 2022). In Taita Taveta County, this could translate to participatory governance structures that ensure community voices are heard and integrated into policy decisions affecting their socio-economic well-being.

The study aims to utilize the stakeholder theory in examining extent to which various stakeholders have been actively engaged through public participation in policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation, and its impact on sustainable socio-economic development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya.

Governance Theory

Governance theory, developed by various scholars including Kooiman (2003) and Rhodes (1997), explores the structures, processes, and relationships through which public decisions are made and implemented. It explores how different actors, such as government authorities, civil society organizations, and the private sector, interact and collaborate to make and implement policies. Its core principles include accountability, transparency, participation, and effectiveness.

This study will apply governance theory to analyse the effectiveness of governance structures, institutions and processes related to Public Participation in Strategic Policy Management in Taita Taveta County and their influence on sustainable socio-economic development. It will consequently examine how these structures and institutions influence the participatory formulation, implementation, and evaluation of policies for sustainable development.

Sustainable Development theory

The Sustainable Development theory, also known as the Brundtland Report (1987), underscores the imperative of fostering development that meets current needs while safeguarding the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

This theoretical framework offers insights into how strategic management practices can be structured to advance long-term social, economic, and environmental well-being. It prioritizes the delicate equilibrium among economic growth, social equity, and environmental sustainability (Daly, 1990). Understanding the three pillars of sustainability—economic viability, social equity, and environmental sustainability—facilitates the participatory

formulation, implementation and review of policies that not only promote economic growth but also ensure social justice and environmental preservation.

The Sustainable Development Theory provides a robust framework for guiding this research, in examining how public participation, as a strategic management policy practice, has been applied to influence sustainable socio-economic development in Taita Taveta County.

Conceptual Framework

The hypothesized relationships between the study variables and the indicator of each variable are as illustrated in the conceptual framework in Figure 1.1 below.

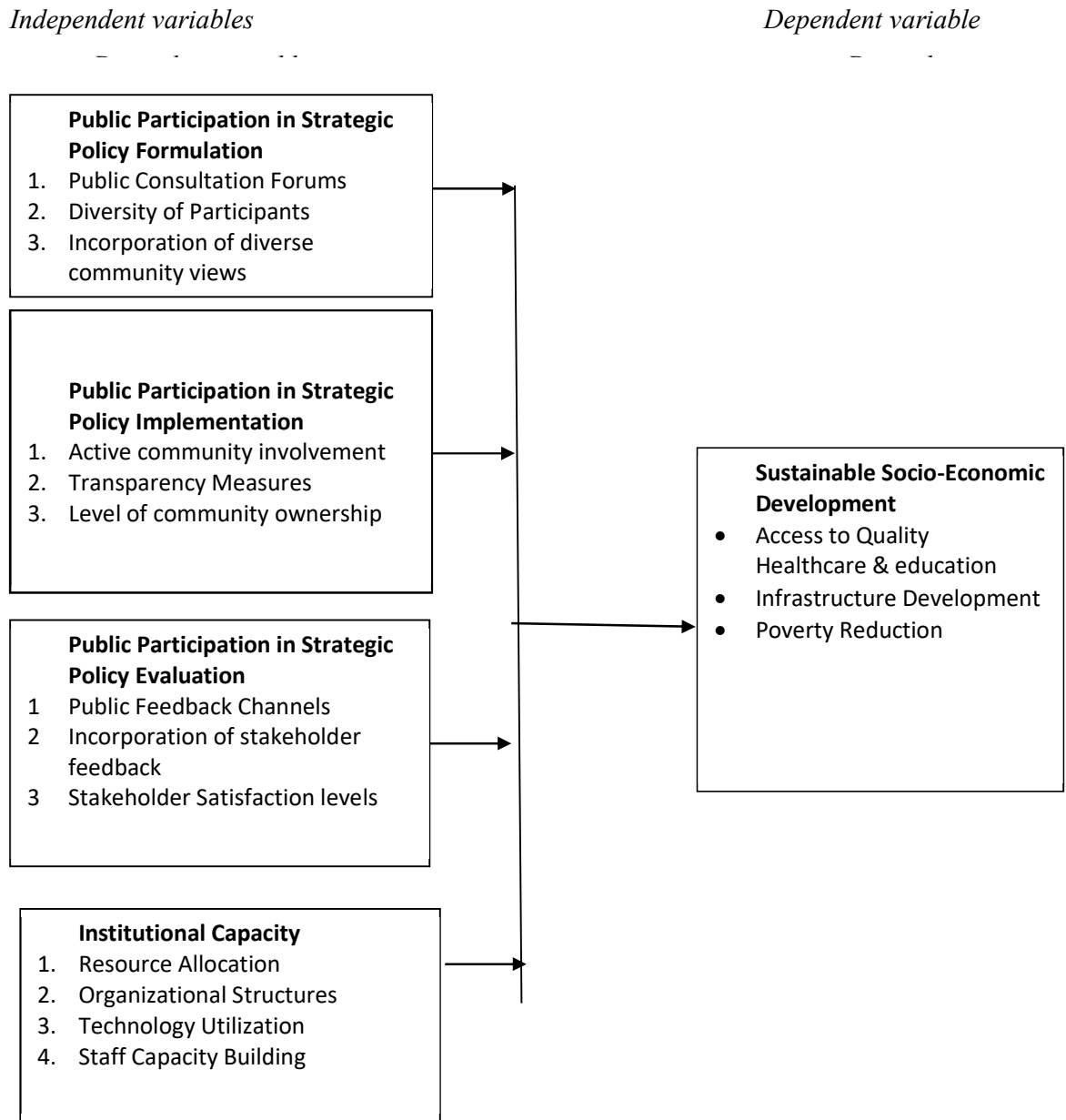


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework

As depicted in Figure 1.1 above, the independent variables are Public Participation in Strategic policy formulation, Public Participation in Strategic policy implementation, Public Participation in Strategic policy evaluation and institutional capacity, while the dependent variable is Sustainable Socio-Economic Development.

Empirical Review

Public Participation in Strategic Policy Formulation

Globally, public participation in policy formulation is recognized as a pivotal strategic management practice which guides inclusive sustainable socio-economic development (UNESCO, 2019). Public participation empowers citizens in an environment where they can identify, address and resolve issues that matter most to them, resulting in sustainable socio-economic development (Hoop, 2020).

During the formulation of strategic policies, public participation enhances policy relevance and community acceptance. Turgel et al. (2020) emphasize that citizen inputs during policy formulation help identify local priorities and challenges, thereby improving policy responsiveness. Research by Johanson (2018) indicates that public participation in policy formulation leads to more comprehensive and effective policies. In his study Johanson (2018) found that inclusive processes resulted in policies that were better aligned with community needs and environmental sustainability.

At the global level, various international organizations have developed indicators and frameworks to guide participatory policy formulation for sustainable development. For example, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals provide a comprehensive framework for addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges. Similarly, at the African continent level, the African Union Agenda 2063 sets out a strategic framework for inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development (AU et al., 2023; UN, 2023).

In Kenya, the policy formulation process is guided by various legal and policy frameworks, including the Constitution of Kenya, the County Governments Act and the Vision 2030 agenda (GoK, 2018). These frameworks emphasize the importance of public participation, including on socio-economic and environmental policies to ensure their effectiveness in promoting sustainable development.

Policymakers and scholars emphasize the importance of context-specific policies that align with the specific needs and context of each region in order to effectively address socio-economic challenges and promote sustainable development. Tödting et al. (2018) stress the necessity for effective policies that consider the diverse challenges faced by individual regions and people, particularly in the context of transitioning towards sustainable development. Similarly, Slade et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of context-specific interventions to

promote rural endogenous development, highlighting the need for adequate public participation so as to arrive at policies tailored to the specific needs of rural territories.

Effective policy formulation leads to coherent and comprehensive plans for sustainable development. These plans should address socio-economic, environmental, technological, and political factors to achieve significant economic progress (Hansson-Forman et al., 2021). Policy formulation should also heavily prioritise inclusivity and environmental sustainability to ensure a balanced and equitable approach to development (Zhao et al., 2022). Moreover, policy formulation should be guided by evidence-based research and analysis to identify key drivers of sustainable socio-economic development in the region.

Counties are obligated by the constitution to formulate 5-year County Integrated Development Plans (CIDP), which provide contextualized-county-specific roadmap towards socio-economic development. They are further mandated by the Constitution of Kenya, to develop their own policies and plans, aligned with national and global development objectives as well as the CIDP to drive sustainable socio-economic development (RoK, 2010).

Taita Taveta County has also developed its County Integrated Development Plan, which serves as a framework for policy formulation and development in the county (CGoTT-DFEP, 2023). However, there is scanty literature as to whether the CIDP and the corresponding county sector-specific policies were adequately taken through public participation and whether the citizens inputs were adopted for sustainable socio-economic development.

Public Participation in Strategic Policy Implementation

Public Participation in Policy implementation is the strategic management practice of executing formulated policies, that encapsulates resource allocation, activity coordination, stakeholder engagement, and progress monitoring (Sapru et al., 2023). Effective policy implementation is crucial for achieving sustainable socio-economic development outcomes as it determines the effectiveness and efficiency of translating policies into concrete actions that directly impact the region's socio-economic development (Jong et al., 2019; Mohamed & Coorey, 2022).

Researchers, such as Sermagambet et al. (2022) argue that successful policy implementation requires adaptive strategies that consider the unique socio-economic and cultural contexts of different regions. They further highlight issues such as administrative capacity, availability of resources, corruption, and political instability as factors that can impede effective implementation.

Zheng et al. (2021) further provides a lens for understanding the importance of flexibility and learning in policy implementation. Adaptive governance encourages iterative processes that allow for adjustments based on feedback and changing circumstances (Uppal & Dunphy, 2019). This approach is particularly relevant in dynamic socio-economic environments. Studies have shown that overcoming implementation challenges requires strong leadership, effective coordination mechanisms, adequate resources, clear communication channels, and stakeholder engagement (Sobikwa & Phooko, 2021).

In Kenya, policy implementation at the county level is supported through the County Government Act, 2012, and the Constitution of Kenya 2010, which mandates counties to ensure public participation as it executes its assigned functions and responsibilities (RoK, 2010).

The act provides a framework for the establishment of county executive committees, county assembly, and various departments to ensure effective implementation of policies at the sub-national level (Muwonge et al., 2022). Furthermore, the Sustainable Development Goals, as set by the United Nations, provide a global framework for participatory governance towards sustainable development and serve as a guide for national and county-level policy implementation in Kenya (UNDESA, 2020).

Opalo (2020) argues that citizen engagement enhances accountability, reduces corruption risks, and improves development outcomes. Similarly, Ochieng (2018) demonstrate that public engagement in implementation fosters community support and compliance, which result to better policy outcomes.

Despite the existence of policy frameworks and structures for participatory policy implementation at the county level, there are still challenges in effectively translating policies into actions for sustainable socio-economic development (Basheer et al., 2022). Odhiambo and Opiyo (2017) cite the main challenges as a lack of capacity and resources at the county level, limited technical expertise, inadequate infrastructure, and a fragmented policy implementation process involving multiple actors, leading to coordination challenges and inefficiencies in policy implementation.

In the context of Taita Taveta County, participatory policy implementation is crucial for translating the strategic management practices into tangible results. However, there are indications that Taita Taveta County faces significant challenges in effectively implementing policies for sustainable socio-economic development. For instance, in 2018, the County Government of Taita Taveta released a report indicating that only 40% of the planned projects were successfully implemented (CGoTT, 2018). This implies that there may be gaps in participatory policy implementation processes within the county.

Further to this, the County formulated the Integrated County Development Plans for the periods 2013-2017, 2018-2022 and 2023-2027, which serve as the blueprint for socio-economic development in the county (CGoTT, 2023). However, there have been concerns raised regarding the actual implementation of some of these plans and its impact on sustainable development.

These challenges in participatory policy implementation and their impact on sustainable socio-economic development in Taita Taveta County highlight the need for a comprehensive exploration on the mechanisms in place for participatory implementation of policies and its influence on sustainable socio-economic development outcomes.

Public Participation in Strategic Policy Evaluation

Participatory Policy evaluation is the strategic management practice involving collection and analysis of data, by involving relevant stakeholders, to determine whether the policies have achieved their objectives and to identify areas for improvement. It is an essential component of the policy cycle as it allows for the assessment of policy effectiveness, efficiency, and impact on socio-economic development. Participatory Policy evaluation provides valuable insights into whether policy interventions are achieving their intended goals and contributing to sustainable socio-economic development (Moyi, 2020).

At the global level, there is a growing recognition of the importance of participatory policy evaluation in promoting sustainable development. International organizations such as the United Nations and the World Bank emphasize the need for rigorous policy evaluation to ensure accountability, learning, and continuous improvement in the pursuit of sustainable development goals (Fazil Hajiyeve, 2021).

At the African continent level, there has been a shift towards evidence-based policymaking and evaluation. This is evidenced through initiatives such as the African Peer Review Mechanism, which promotes good governance, development, and sustainability through regular participatory policy evaluations (AU, 2021).

In the case of Kenya, participatory policy evaluation is also gaining prominence. Policy evaluation is mandated by the Constitution of Kenya, which requires all levels of government to undertake regular evaluations of their policies and programs to assess their impact on sustainable development by involving citizens. Consequently, the government has established various institutions and mechanisms for policy evaluation, such as the National Assembly, the Senate, the County Assemblies and the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (Jumanne et al., 2023; Ntalala, 2020). In this regard, the national government has implemented various policy evaluation mechanisms, such as conducting regular performance audits and evaluations of government programs (Ochieng, 2018).

The County Government Act 2012 further emphasizes the need for policy evaluation at the county level by requiring county governments to establish monitoring and evaluation frameworks, by involving various stakeholders, to assess the effectiveness of their policies and programs (RoK, 2020). The Counties are also expected to employ performance contracts as a tool for evaluating the performance of public officials and institutions, which include citizens feedback (COG, 2018). These evaluation mechanisms aim to ensure that policies are implemented effectively and efficiently, and that they contribute to the overall socio-economic development at the local level.

The role of public participation in policy evaluation is underscored by research conducted by Nyong'a & Gachanja (2021). Their study on Public Participation in the policy Making Process in Makueni County showed that public feedback helps identify gaps and areas for improvement, enhancing the overall effectiveness of policies, while fostering transparency,

accountability and public trust in governmental institutions. Additionally, Zongo (2022) found that participatory evaluation processes lead to more accurate assessments of policy impact and sustainability.

Towards this end, the County Government of Taita Taveta formulated the integrated monitoring and evaluation policy framework in line with the national requirements (CGoTT, 2019). This policy framework aims to guide the county in evaluating the implementation and impact of its policies and programs. However, it is not clear how effectively this policy framework is being implemented and what impact it has had on sustainable socio-economic development in the county.

Institutional Capacity in Public Participation

Effective public participation necessitates establishment and facilitation of civic spaces of engagement such as public forums, community meetings, public hearings, consultations and participatory budgeting (Bobbio, 2019; Roblek et al., 2020). These mechanisms provide opportunities for citizens to voice their opinions, contribute to decision-making processes, and hold government officials accountable (Hendricks et al., 2018).

Institutional capacity plays a crucial role in facilitating effective public participation. Kone & Mapitsa (2021) argues that well-equipped institutions with clear mandates and adequate resources integrate citizen inputs into policy processes effectively, enhancing policy outcomes. Conversely, limited institutional capacity for conducting public participation, lack of standardized frameworks guide for public participation, and limited resources allocated to public participation activities jeopardize this crucial strategic policy management practice (Križnik et al., 2019). These challenges hinder the ability of policymakers to effectively formulate, implement and evaluate the impact of the policies on sustainable socio-economic development.

A study conducted in Kenya by UNDP's Amkeni Wakenya program examined the effectiveness of public participation mechanisms in Taita Taveta County (Odhiambo & Opiyo, 2017). The study found that while public participation mechanisms, such as public forums and civic education programs, were in place, there were significant challenges in their implementation. These challenges included a lack of responsiveness from the County Government in addressing petitions, delays in providing responses to petitioners, and insufficient resources allocated for implementing public participation initiatives. Additionally, there were concerns about the effectiveness of these mechanisms in reaching marginalized groups and ensuring their meaningful participation. However, this study did not specifically look at how some of these institutional challenges and gaps influenced sustainable socio-economic development.

Understanding the capacity of institutions, structures and mechanisms established to facilitate public participation processes in Taita Taveta County for sustainable socio-economic development is crucial.

Research Gaps of the study

The literature reviewed stresses the importance of inclusive and stakeholder-oriented policy formulation, implementation and evaluation for sustainable socio-economic development (AU et al., 2023; Johanson, 2018; UNESCO, 2019).

However, the current literature reveals significant gaps in understanding the role of public participation in various stages of strategic policy management for sustainable socio-economic development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya.

Firstly, while studies acknowledge the potential of public participation in policy formulation to enhance policy relevance and community acceptance, there remains a lack of empirical evidence on how citizen inputs during this phase translate into effective policy outcomes tailored to local needs in Taita Taveta County.

Secondly, in the realm of policy implementation, challenges such as bureaucratic resistance and inadequate funding are recognized barriers to sustained public participation (Kennedy, 2021). However, there is a need for deeper insights into these challenges within the context of Taita Taveta County and their specific impacts on development outcomes.

Thirdly, the evaluation of policy effectiveness through public participation is essential for ensuring transparency and accountability (Slade et al., 2020). Yet, empirical studies that examine the practical outcomes of citizen involvement in policy evaluation, particularly in Taita Taveta County, remain scarce.

Institutional capacity plays a crucial role in facilitating effective public participation (Blanco et al., 2021). However, there is a gap in understanding the specific institutional strengths and weaknesses that affect participatory governance in Taita Taveta County, hindering the optimization of policy-making and evaluation processes.

Lastly, while participatory approaches are advocated for promoting sustainable socio-economic development (Beyuo, 2020; Rublev et al., 2021; UNDP, 2018), there is limited research on how different community groups perceive and engage in these processes in Taita Taveta County, thus impeding the development of inclusive and representative governance practices.

Addressing these gaps was pivotal for advancing the understanding and implementation of effective public participation strategies in strategic policy management in Taita Taveta County for sustainable socio-economic development. This study aims to fill these gaps by providing empirical insights that can guide policymakers, practitioners, and researchers in enhancing participatory governance and achieving sustainable development goals in the region.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes in detail the research design employed, the study location, target population, sampling procedure and sample size, research instruments used, and finally, data collection procedures and methods of data analysis.

Research Design

This study will utilize a descriptive research design methodology. The descriptive research design evaluates a situation or phenomenon as it exists in its current state (Mackey & Gass, 2021). The use of a descriptive research design is appropriate for this study because it allows for the collection of data that can address inquiries about the present condition and the role of Public Participation in Strategic Policy Management For Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya.

According to Gerstein et al. (1988) descriptive research design provides a systematic and scientific approach to data collection and presentation, ensuring that the results obtained are valid and reliable. Furthermore, Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) assert that descriptive research is a reliable means of collecting data to accurately understand the current status of the problem being studied.

This design facilitates data collection from a large sample size, ensuring a representative view of the population (Kaburu et al., 2022).

Location of the Study

The study was conducted in Taita Taveta County, Kenya, which has been purposefully sampled. Taita Taveta is one of the 47 counties in Kenya and one of the six counties located in the coastal region. It is approximately 200km North West of the coastal city of Mombasa and 360km South East of Nairobi the capital City of Kenya.

The county covers an area of 17,084.1km² with 10,649.9 km² (62.3 per cent) being within Tsavo East and Tsavo West National Parks. The county borders Kitui, Makueni and Tana River Counties to the north; Kilifi and Kwale Counties to the east; Kajiado County to the north-west and the Republic of Tanzania to the South. The county lies between longitude 37°36' east and 30° 14' east and latitude 2°46' south and 4° 10' south.

Taita Taveta County has 96,429 households with a total population of 340,664 residents, out of which 215,687 are aged 18 years and above; it is divided into 4 sub-counties with a total of 20 wards (CBK et al., 2022; KNBS, 2019).

Target Population

The targeted population of this study is the community members and leaders in Taita Taveta County. All the four (4) sub counties within Taita Taveta County were sampled. The population of this study was sampled from the 31 Members of the County Assembly (MCAs), 20 Ward Administrators and 96,429 households.

Apart from the targeted office bearers, the inclusion criteria for the household study respondents to participate was one respondent per selected household, who is a county resident aged 18 years and above; while the exclusion criteria were those deemed not to be of sound mind and citizens who have stayed in Taita Taveta County for a period less than three years.

Table 3.1 Population Distribution

Respondent type	Population
Elected MCAs	20
Ward Administrators	20
County Executive Members	10
96,429 Households	96,429
Total	96,479

Source: CIDP, 2023-2027; KNBS (2019)

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

For the purposes of this study, the County residents’ representative of the households was sampled using stratified random sampling while purposive sampling was used for the key informants who are officials from the executive and legislative arm of the government.

The use of these sampling methods is informed by the need for respondent specificity and the need for ensuring randomness ((Kothari, 2004) The main aim that was taken into consideration when deriving the sample size was the need for it to be representative and manageable enough for the entire population under study. Therefore, the appropriate sample size from the 96,429 households required for the study purposes was obtained through Cochran (1965) formula, thus;

$$n = \frac{Z^2 \times p \times (1-p)}{e^2}$$

Where; n = sample size; Z = the Z score value extracted from a z-table \hat{p} = the proportion of the population which has the attribute in question; e = Margin of error.

In this study, at 95% confidence level, the Z-score is 1.96; p is taken as 0.5, e to be 0.05; therefore, fitting this into the formula:

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5(1-0.5)}{0.05^2} = 384.16 \approx 385$$

The sample size for the households was therefore 385.

To select the sample from the county residents, the researcher systematically profiled all the targeted households into their respective sub counties and wards. The sample size was then spread proportionately across these Wards; each selected household produced one respondent, thus ensuring that the sample size well spread and representative.

The researcher used Yamane (1967) method to calculate sample sizes of the targeted population of the 20 elected MCAs, 20 Ward Administrators and 10 County Executive Members in Taita

Taveta County. The Yamane method was preferred as it is simple, accurate and yields a representative sample for small populations.

For 20 elected MCAs:

In Yamane's Formula :

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

where:

- n = the sample size
- N = the targeted population (20)
- e = the level of precision at 95% confidence level (0.15)

fitting the formula into the equation

$$n = \frac{20}{1+20(0.15)^2} = 13.7 \approx 14 \text{ respondents}$$

For 20 ward administrators:

In Yamane's Formula :

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

where:

- n = the sample size
- N = the targeted population (20)
- e = the level of precision at 95% confidence level (0.15)

fitting the formula into the equation

$$n = \frac{20}{1+20(0.15)^2} = 13.7 \approx 14 \text{ respondents}$$

For 10 County Executive Committee Members;

In Yamane's Formula :

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where:

- n = the sample size
- N = the targeted population (10)
- e = the level of precision at 95% confidence level (0.15)

fitting the formula into the equation

$$n = \frac{10}{1+10(0.15)^2} = 8.2 \approx 9 \text{ respondents}$$

The total sample size was therefore 422 as tabulated below:

Table 3.1 Sample Distribution

Respondent type	Population	Sample Size
Elected MCAs	20	14
Ward Administrators	20	14
County Executive Members	10	9
96,429 Households	96,429	385
Total	96,479	422

Data Collection Instrumentation

Data for the study was obtained from primary sources through structured questionnaires and interview schedules, as well as secondary sources which involved reviewing relevant policy documents, briefs and publications related to Public Participation in Strategic Policy Management for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya. The interview schedules and questionnaires to be used was structured along the objectives in order to capture the respondents' views on the research problem. Questionnaires were mainly preferred due to ease of analysis (Wang et al., 2015).

Pilot Study

Pre-testing of the questionnaires was done among 43 non-participatory respondents, which is 10% of the total sample size. The pre-testing respondents was excluded in the actual study. The results of the pilot study was not incorporated into the main study.

Validity

In order to ensure standardization of the instruments of this research, validity was established through good instrument design to reflect the research objectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study used both construct and content validity to determine the validity of the instruments, with independent experts enlisted to assess conceptual clarity and investigative bias. The results of the pre-test assisted in reviewing and redesigning the instruments through removing irrelevant items, adding missing information and rephrasing ambiguous statements in the instruments. As such, the validity of the instruments employed for the actual study was expected to have improved.

Reliability

The internal consistency method was used by this study to establish the reliability of the research instruments. To measure the reliability coefficient of the research instruments, the Cronbach's (Alpha) Reliability Coefficients was obtained for all the variables in the study. According to DeVellis and Thorpe (2022) , as a rule of thumb, a research instrument may be used only if a Cronbach reliability coefficient of 0.70 or greater is attained on a substantial sample. Where < 0.7 , the research instruments was revised and retested to acceptable levels. The study, therefore, adopted $\alpha = 0.70$ as its reliability coefficient.

Data Analysis and Presentation

For quantitative analysis, data collected by the questionnaires was subjected to cleaning, editing and coding and then subjected to further analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0 computer program. Data analysis was accomplished through descriptive statistics and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive analysis was undertaken using frequencies and percentages while inferential statistics comprised of Pearson's Product Moment correlation and multiple regression models to determine the nature of the relationship between the variables. The multiple regression model was assumed to hold under the following equation;

$$y = b_0 + b_1 x_1 + b_2 x_2 + b_3 x_3 + e$$

Where;

y = is the dependent variable (Sustainable Socio-Economic Development)

b_0 = is the y-intercept (constant)

X_1 = Public Participation in Strategic Policy Formulation

X_2 = Public Participation in Strategic Policy Implementation

X_3 = Public Participation in Strategic Policy Evaluation

b_1 to b_3 , are the coefficients for the independent variables X_1, X_2 and X_3 , and e = the regression model's estimated error representing the variability in y that is not explained by the predictors.

The study considered causal mediation analysis to explore how public participation influences sustainable development through institutional capacity.

Logistical and Ethical Considerations

The researcher subscribed to established ethical protocols when carrying out the study. The first explicit consent to conduct the study was solicited from the respondents so as to ensure that their involvement and participation to this study was out of their own will (Dubnewick et al., 2021). Respondents were also informed of their freedom to participate in the study and were guaranteed utmost privacy and confidentiality. They were not obligated to include their names of contacts on the questionnaires. The respondents were treated with respect and courtesy (Gajjar, 2013). In data analysis, to safeguard utmost integrity of collated data, the researcher ensured accuracy in encoding of the survey responses in order to warrant generation of truthful and verifiable statistics from the study (Heeringa et al., 2017). The researcher sought permits to conduct research in the area, to ensure compliance with the laws of Kenya about research.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter looks at the findings of the research together with their discussions. Inferential and descriptive statistics have been employed in the analysis of data. Descriptive statistics such as means, percentages, and inferential statistics like multiple regression and correlation. The study's main objective included the relationship between public participation in strategic policy management and sustainable socio-economic development in Taita Taveta county, Kenya.

Response Rate

Out of four hundred and twenty-two questionnaires that were distributed, only 400 were responsive. As shown in Table 4.1, the questionnaires returned added up to 94.8% response rate that was taken to be excellent. This is because according Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), research achieves a response good enough to proceed with when it attains a 50% response rate, it is sufficient when it is at 60% any response above 70% is considered excellent. Posting a 94.7% response rate, the study's response can be employed in the realization of other goals such as reporting.

Table 4.1: Response Rate

Questionnaire	Frequency	Percent
Returned	400	94.8
Un-returned	22	5.2
Total	422	100.0

Demographic Information

The study showed specific distribution of respondents by gender, age, educational level and how long they had lived in Taita Taveta County.

Distribution of Respondents by Gender

The investigation took into consideration the gender distribution among the participants. The findings revealed that 39.25% (157) of the respondents were female, while 60.75% (243) were male, indicating a majority of male participants. This is aligned with the KNBS (2019) report that found male to be more than females in Taita Taveta County. Further, this can be related to the fact that traditionally, in most households, the male gender is attributed to decision making, hence their notable active involvement in matters public participation.

Table 4.2: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	243	60.75
Female	157	39.25
Total	400	100.0

Distribution of Respondents by Age

In analysis of the age distribution among the participants, the findings revealed that 24.75% (99) were aged between 18-29 years, 16.50% (66) were aged between 30-39 years, 27.75% (111) were aged between 40-49 years, 18.25% (73) were aged between 50-59 years, while 12.75% (51) were aged 60 and above years. This can be translated to mean that despite the youth being the vibrant age cohort forming the majority of the population they do not turn out in large number for public participation.

Table 4.3: Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age	Frequency	Percent
18-29	99	24.75%
30-39	66	16.50%
40-49	111	27.75%
50-59	73	18.25%
60 and above	51	12.75%
Total	400	100.0

Distribution of Respondents by education level

Moreover, a common practice among organizations involves utilizing education as a measure of an individual's skill proficiency or productivity (Benson et al., 2004). Consequently, the research considered it crucial to investigate whether the educational attainment of respondents had an impact on the Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya. From all the respondents interviewed, 11.75% were Post Graduate Degree holders, 38.75% were holders of Bachelors' degree, 49.50% were holders of a Secondary School as the highest level of education, as shown in table 4.5 below. These findings demonstrate that as much as the level of education matters in giving policy inputs, the majority of the population involved in this strategic practice are those with basic secondary education, which could compromise the quality of inputs given.

Table 4.4: Distribution of Respondents by their highest education level

Highest education level	Frequency	Percent
Post Graduate Degree	47	11.75
Bachelors' degree	73	18.25
Secondary School	280	70.00
Total	400	100.0

Distribution of Respondents by how long they have lived in Taita Taveta County

In terms of respondents' response on for how long they have been residents of Taita Taveta County, 28.75% were Less than 1 year, 32.75% of the respondents indicated that they had been residents for a period between 1-3 years. 29.75% of the respondents say that they have lived in Taita Taveta County for 3-5 years while 8.75% of the respondents said that they have lived in Taita Taveta County for More than 5 years.

Table 4.5: Distribution of Respondents on how long they have lived in Taita Taveta County

Period Lived	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1 year	115	28.75
1-3 years	131	32.75
3-5 years	119	29.75
More than 5 years	35	8.75
Total	400	100.0

Pilot Study Results

The research instrument was tested for validity and reliability. A sample of forty-three (43) questionnaires drawn from the Taita Taveta County, Kenya were subjected to the pilot study. According to Creswell (2018), the rule of thumb is that 10% of the sample should constitute a pilot test.

Validity of Research instrument

Validity was tested by employing face validity and content validity to ensure correctness of the questionnaire. Through content validation and in consultation with Taita Taveta County-Kenya professionals, Taita Taveta County-Kenya lecturers and my supervisors, it was confirmed that the items were a representative sample of all items within the content domain of interest and that they would address the desired issues.

Reliability of Research instrument

Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. The overall Cronbach Alpha was 0.858 which was found to be very good and hence the research instrument was reliable for the current study. George and Mallery, as cited by Kimaku et al. (2019), stated that the reliability of the constructs was acceptable based on the rule that when Cronbach’s alpha value is greater than 0.9, it is considered excellent; when value is 0.8 is deemed very good and when it is 0.7, it is rated as good.

Table 4.6: Overall reliability coefficients (Cronbach Alpha) of the independent variables

S/No.	Variable	No. of Items	Cronbach Alpha Value
1	Strategic Policy Implementation	5	0.825
2	Strategy Formulation	5	0.915
3	Institutional Capacity	5	0.854
4	Strategic Policy Evaluation	5	0.904
	AVERAGE	5.0	0.875

Table 4.7: Overall reliability coefficients (Cronbach Alpha) for the dependent variable

S/No.	Variable	Cronbach Alpha Value
1	Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya	0.869

Descriptive Analysis

In this section Likert scale questions are presented by the study where research participants were required to tell their opinion on a number of statements concerning the role of Public Participation in Strategic Policy Management for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya. The research utilized a five-point Likert scale ranked as follows, 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-neutral, 4-agree, 5-strongly agree. The standard deviations and means employed in the interpretation of the findings where a mean value of 1-1.4 was strongly disagree, 1.5-2.4 disagree, 2.5-3.4 neutral, 3.5-4.4 agree and 4.5-5 strongly agree. Standard deviation measures the level to which the responses deviate from the mean. A standard deviation greater than two is considered to be large and suggests that respondents held varied opinions on the other hand, when research participants had similar opinions a value less than 2 was recorded.

Public Participation in Strategy Formulation

To obtain information about the first independent variable Strategy Formulation, several statements were asked and the respondents required to provide feedback on a Likert scale of one (1) to five (5), for 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being neutral, 4 being agree and 5 being strongly agree to the statements. On the statement “The County Government of Taita Taveta conducts regular public participation forums for policy formulation” 5.6% of the respondents disagreed to the statement, 23.5% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to the statement, 57.8% of the respondents agreed to the statement whereas 13.1% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement, with a mean of 3.78 and standard deviation 0.739. On the second statement “I have participated in public consultations for policy formulation in the past year?” 20.1% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to the statement, 41.0% of the respondents agreed to the statement while 38.9% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement, with a mean of 4.21 and standard deviation 0.741. On the statement “The public consultations for policy formulation in the past year have been very inclusive, 2.8% disagreed with the statement, 38.6% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to the statement, 32.3% of the respondents agreed to the statement whereas 26.3% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement, with a mean of 3.82 and standard deviation 0.885. Regarding the statement “My opinions and suggestions were considered in the policy formulation process”, 13.1% strongly disagreed to the statement, 10.4% of the respondents disagreed to the statement, 23.9% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to the statement, 35.5% of the respondents agreed to the statement whereas 17.1% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement, with a mean of 3.33 and standard deviation 1.367.

On the statement “The feedback mechanism for public opinions during consultations is transparent and effective.” 8.4% strongly disagreed to the statement, 23.9% disagreed to the statement, and 23.5% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to the statement, 31.1% of the respondents agreed to the statement whereas 13.1% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement, with a mean of 3.17 and standard deviation 1.178.

Table 4.8: Strategy Formulation Frequencies

Strategy formulation	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev.
The County Government of Taita Taveta conducts regular public participation forums for policy formulation	-	5.6	23.5	57.8	13.1	3.78	.739
I have participated in public consultations for policy formulation in the past year	-	-	20.1	41.0	38.9	4.21	0.74
The public consultations for policy formulation in the past year have been very inclusive.	-	2.8	38.6	32.3	26.3	3.82	.885
My opinions and suggestions were considered in the policy formulation process.	13.1	10.4	23.9	35.5	17.1	3.33	1.36
The feedback mechanism for public opinions during consultations is transparent and effective.	8.4	23.9	23.5	31.1	13.1	3.17	1.178

Public Participation in Strategic Policy Implementation

To obtain information about the first independent variable Strategic Policy Implementation, numerous statements were asked and the respondents required to provide feedback on a likert scale of one (1) to five (5), for 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being neither agree nor disagree, 4 being agree and 5 being strongly agree to the statements. On the statement “I am aware of ongoing policy implementations by the County Government of Taita Taveta” 15.1% strongly disagreed to the statement, 13.9% of the respondents disagreed to the statement,

35.5% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to the statement, 24.7% of the respondents agreed to the statement whereas 10.8% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement, with a mean of 3.02 and standard deviation 1.195.

On the statement “I have somehow been involved in the implementation of these policies” 12.5% strongly disagreed to the statement, 8.8% of the respondents disagreed to the statement, 10.8% of the respondents were neutral to the statement, 43.8% of the respondents agreed to the statement whereas 24.1% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement, with a mean of 3.54 and standard deviation 1.306. On the statement “The policy implementation process in Taita Taveta County is very transparent”, 5.2% strongly disagreed to the statement, 23.9% of the respondents disagreed to the statement, 19.1% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to the statement, 20.7% of the respondents agreed to the statement whereas 31.1% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement, with a mean of 3.49 and standard deviation 1.291. Regarding the statement “The level of community ownership in the policy implementation process in the county is very high”, 4.8% strongly disagreed to the statement, 15.9% of the respondents disagreed to the statement, 7.6% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to the statement, 47.0% of the respondents agreed to the statement whereas 24.7% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement, with a mean of 3.71 and standard deviation 1.145.

On the statement “The County Government of Taita Taveta provides regular updates on the progress of policy implementation.” 4.8% strongly disagreed to the statement, 29.9% disagreed to the statement, 5.2% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to the statement, 41.8% of the respondents agreed to the statement whereas 18.3% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement, with a mean of 3.39 and standard deviation 1.223.

Table 4.9: Strategic Policy Implementation Frequencies

Strategic Policy Implementation	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev.
I am aware of ongoing policy implementations by the County Government of Taita Taveta.	15.1	13.9	35.5	24.7	10.8	3.02	1.195
I have somehow been involved in the implementation of these policies.	13.5	8.8	10.8	43.8	24.1	3.54	1.306
The policy implementation process in Taita Taveta County is very transparent.	5.2	23.9	19.1	20.7	31.1	3.49	1.291

The level of community ownership in the policy implementation process in the county is very high	4.8	15.9	7.6	47.0	24.7	3.71	1.145
The County Government of Taita Taveta provides regular updates on the progress of policy implementation.	4.8	29.9	5.2	41.8	18.3	3.39	1.223

Public Participation in Strategic Policy Evaluation

To obtain information about the first independent variable Strategic Policy Evaluation, numerous statements were asked and the respondents required to provide feedback on a likert scale of one (1) to five (5), for 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being neither agree nor disagree, 4 being agree and 5 being strongly agree to the statements. On the statement “I have somehow participated in policy evaluation activities organized by the County Government of Taita Taveta” 2.0% strongly disagreed to the statement, 2.8% of the respondents disagreed to the statement, 11.6% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to the statement, 30.6% of the respondents agreed to the statement whereas 53.0% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement, with a mean of 4.30 and standard deviation 0.922. On the statement “Feedback collected during the evaluation phase is effectively used to improve policies” 5.6% strongly disagreed to the statement, 7.1% of the respondents disagreed to the statement, 5.6% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to the statement, 53.8% of the respondents agreed to the statement whereas 27.9% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement, with a mean of 3.91 and standard deviation 1.058. On the statement “I am satisfied with the County Government’s approach to evaluating its policies, 5.6% strongly disagreed to the statement, 27.1% of the respondents disagreed to the statement, 19.1% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to the statement, 27.5% of the respondents agreed to the statement whereas 20.7% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement, with a mean of 3.31 and standard deviation 1.229.

Regarding the statement “The County Government of Taita Taveta involves community members in setting the criteria for policy evaluation.”, 10.4% strongly disagreed to the statement, 2.8% of the respondents disagreed to the statement, 19.1% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to the statement, 41.8% of the respondents agreed to the statement whereas 25.9% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement, with a mean of 3.70 and standard deviation 1.188. On the statement “The results of policy evaluation activities are shared openly with the public” 21.9% strongly disagreed to the statement, 29.1% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to the statement, 39.0% of the respondents agreed to the statement whereas 10.0% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement, with a mean of 3.15 and standard deviation 1.284.

On the statement “The level of community ownership in the policy implementation process in the county is very high” 9.6% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to the statement,

41.0% of the respondents agreed to the statement whereas 49.4% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement, with a mean of 4.40 and standard deviation 0.658.

Table 4.10: Strategic Policy Evaluation Frequencies

Strategic Policy Evaluation	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev.
I have somehow participated in policy evaluation activities organized by the County Government of Taita Taveta.	2.0	2.8	11.6	30.7	53.0	4.30	0.922
Feedback collected during the evaluation phase is effectively used to improve policies.	5.6	7.1	5.6	53.8	27.9	3.91	1.058
I am satisfied with the County Government’s approach to evaluating its policies.	5.6	27.1	19.1	27.5	20.7	3.31	1.229
The County Government of Taita Taveta involves community members in setting the criteria for policy evaluation.	10.4	2.8	19.1	41.8	25.9	3.70	1.188
The results of policy evaluation activities are shared openly with the public	21.9	-	29.1	39.0	10.0	3.15	1.284

Institutional Capacity

To obtain information about the first independent variable Institutional Capacity, numerous statements were asked and the respondents required to provide feedback on a likert scale of one (1) to five (5), for 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being neither agree nor disagree, 4 being agree and 5 being strongly agree to the statements. On the statement “The training and capacity levels of the staff involved in facilitating public participation is adequate” 2.8% strongly disagreed to the statement, 2.0% of the respondents disagreed to the statement, 13.5% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to the statement, 51.8% of the respondents agreed to the statement whereas 29.9% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement, with a mean of 4.04 and standard deviation 0.875. Regarding the statement “There are adequate resources allocated for public participation activities in Taita Taveta County”, 8.0% strongly disagreed to the statement, 18.7% of the respondents disagreed to the statement, 16.3% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to the statement, 51.8% of the

respondents agreed to the statement whereas 5.2% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement, with a mean of 3.27 and standard deviation 1.177.

On the statement “The existing structures and mechanisms for public participation in Taita Taveta County are effective”, 2.7% strongly disagreed to the statement, 12.4% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to the statement, 56.6% of the respondents agreed to the statement whereas 28.3% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement, with a mean of 4.08 and standard deviation 0.809. On the statement “The County Government of Taita Taveta ensures continuous improvement of public participation frameworks through regular reviews” 2.8% strongly disagreed to the statement, 25.5% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to the statement, 57.8% of the respondents agreed to the statement whereas 13.9% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement, with a mean of 3.80 and standard deviation 0.780. On the statement “The feedback from public participation forums is effectively integrated into county policies and programs” 10.3% strongly disagreed to the statement, 14.3% of the respondents disagreed to the statement, 26.7% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to the statement, 37.5% of the respondents agreed to the statement whereas 11.2% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement, with a mean of 3.25 and standard deviation 1.150.

Table 4.11: Institutional Capacity Frequencies

Institutional Capacity	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev.
The training and capacity levels of the staff involved in facilitating public participation is adequate	2.8	2.0	13.5	51.8	29.9	4.04	0.875
There are adequate resources allocated for public participation activities in Taita Taveta County	8.0	18.7	16.3	51.8	5.2	3.27	1.177
The existing structures and mechanisms for public participation in Taita Taveta County are effective	2.7	-	12.4	56.6	28.3	4.08	0.809
The County Government of Taita Taveta ensures continuous improvement of public participation frameworks through regular reviews	2.8	-	25.5	57.8	13.9	3.80	0.780

The feedback from public participation forums is effectively integrated into county policies and programs

Sustainable Socio-Economic Development

The dependent objective of this study was Sustainable Socio-Economic Development five research questions were posed to the respondents. Table 4.12 presents the descriptive statistics results generated for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development. To obtain information about the dependent variable Sustainable Socio-Economic Development, various statements were asked and the respondents required to provide feedback on a likert scale of one (1) to five (5), for 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being neither agree nor disagree, 4 being agree and 5 being strongly agree to the statements. On the statement “Public participation has positively impacted employment rates in Taita Taveta County” 4.9% strongly disagreed to the statement, 13.5% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to the statement, 63.3% of the respondents agreed to the statement whereas 18.3% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement, with a mean of 3.90 and standard deviation 0.862.

On the statement “Access to quality healthcare has improved as a result of public participation in policy management.” 2.8% strongly disagreed to the statement, 2.0% of the respondents disagreed to the statement, 4.8% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to the statement, 76.1% of the respondents agreed to the statement whereas 14.3% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement, with a mean of 3.97 and standard deviation 0.723. On the statement “The impact of public participation on infrastructure development in the county is high”, 12.7% strongly disagreed to the statement, 5.6% of the respondents disagreed to the statement, 12.0% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to the statement, 44.2% of the respondents agreed to the statement whereas 25.5% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement, with a mean of 3.64 and standard deviation 1.274.

Regarding the statement “The impact of public participation on infrastructure development in the county is high”, 20.7% disagreed to the statement, and 25.9% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to the statement, 37.1% of the respondents agreed to the statement whereas 16.3% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement, with a mean of 3.49 and standard deviation 0.997. On the statement “Public participation has led to effective poverty reduction strategies in Taita Taveta County” 2.7% strongly disagreed to the statement, 12.4% disagreed to the statement, 29.5% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to the statement, 37.5% of the respondents agreed to the statement whereas 17.9% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement, with a mean of 3.55 and standard deviation 1.012. On the statement “Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of life in Taita Taveta County as influenced by public participation in strategic policy management;” 12.4% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed to the statement, 48.6% of the respondents agreed to the statement

whereas 39.0% of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement, with a mean of 4.27 and standard deviation 0.667.

Table 4.12: Sustainable Socio-Economic Development frequencies

Sustainable Socio-Economic Development	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev.
Public participation has positively impacted employment rates in Taita Taveta County	4.9	-	13.5	63.3	18.3	3.90	0.862
Access to quality healthcare has improved as a result of public participation in policy management.	2.8	2.0	4.8	76.1	14.3	3.97	0.723
The impact of public participation on infrastructure development in the county is high	12.7	5.6	12.0	44.2	25.5	3.64	1.274
Public participation has led to effective poverty reduction strategies in Taita Taveta County.	-	20.7	25.9	37.1	16.3	3.49	0.997
Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of life in Taita Taveta County as influenced by public participation in strategic policy management	2.7	12.4	29.5	37.5	17.9	3.55	1.012

Inferential Statistics

Both correlation and regression analyses were performed to find out the degree of relationship between the variables and the contribution of independent variables towards the dependent variable for correlation and regression respectively.

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis identified the existence or otherwise of relationship between Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya, and all the other variables. Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient was used, the correlation coefficient (r) was used to establish whether there was linear relationship between the variables of interest in the study. The coefficient of determination (r^2) was used to check for goodness - of - fit. The value of r ranges between -1 and +1, $r = 0$ implies no correlation, $r = 1$ means perfect correlation.

Correlation analysis for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya

From table 4.13 below, there is a positive significant relationship between Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya and Strategy formulation. The Pearson's correlation coefficient was 0.653, p -value < 0.001 . This implied that 65.3% of Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya is explained by Strategy formulation. Likewise, there was a strong positive significant relationship between Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya and Public Participation in Strategic Policy Evaluation, with a Pearson's correlation coefficient of 0.763 and a p -value < 0.001 , implying that 76.3% of Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya is explained by Public Participation in Strategic Policy Evaluation. Between Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya and Institutional Capacity the Pearson's correlation coefficient was 0.800 and a p -value < 0.001 , which implied a strong positive significant relationship. The results imply that 80.0% of Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya is explained by Institutional Capacity .

Congruently, the correlation coefficient between Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya and Strategic Policy Implementation was 0.700 and p -value < 0.001 respectively, implying a high positive significant relationship between the two variables, implying that 70.0% of Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya is explained by Strategic Policy Implementation.

Table 4.13: Correlation matrix for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya' variable

Correlations

	Y	X ₁	X ₂	X ₃	X ₄	
Y	Pearson Correlation	1	.653**	.763**	.800**	.700**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0	0	0	0
	N	367	367	367	367	367
	**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

Correlation analysis for Strategy formulation

Table 4.14 below shows that there were strong positive significant relationships between Strategy formulation and all other independent variables. The correlation coefficients were 0.598, 0.780, 0.617, and 0.540, all with p-values less than 0.001.

Table 4.14: Correlation matrix for Strategy formulation variable

		Correlations				
		Y	X ₁	X ₂	X ₃	X ₄
X ₁	Pearson Correlation	.653**	1	.598**	.780**	.617**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0		0	0	0
	N	367	367	367	367	367
	**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

Correlation analysis for Strategic Policy Evaluation

Table 4.15 below shows that there were strong positive significant relationships between Strategic Policy Evaluation and Strategy formulation, Institutional Capacity and Strategic Policy Implementation. The correlation coefficients were 0.598, 0.804, 0.872, and 0.817, all with p-values less than 0.001.

Table 4.15: Correlation matrix for Strategic Policy Evaluation variable

		Correlations				
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		Y	X ₁	X ₂	X ₃	X ₄
X ₂	Pearson Correlation	.763**	.598**	1	.804**	.872**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0		0	0
	N	367	367	367	367	367

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

Correlation analysis for Institutional Capacity

From table 4.16 below, it is shown that there were strong positive significant relationships between Institutional Capacity variable and Strategy formulation, Strategic Policy Evaluation, Strategic Policy Implementation. The correlation coefficients were 0.780, 0.804, and 0.760 all with p-values less than 0.001. This implied that 78.0% of Institutional Capacity was explained by Strategy formulation, 80.4% of Institutional Capacity was explained by Strategic Policy Evaluation, and 76.0% of Institutional Capacity was explained by Strategic Policy Implementation

Table 4.16: Correlation matrix for Institutional Capacity variable

		Correlations				
		Y	X ₁	X ₂	X ₃	X ₄
X ₃	Pearson Correlation	.800**	.780**	.804**	1	.760**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0	0		0
	N	367	367	367	367	367

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

Correlation analysis for Public Participation in Strategic Policy Implementation

Table 4.17 below shows that there were strong positive significant relationships between public participation in Strategic Policy Implementation variable and public participation in strategic policy formulation, Strategic Policy Evaluation, Institutional Capacity and Strategic Policy Implementation. The correlation coefficients were 0.617, 0.872, 0.760, and 0.841, all with p-values less than 0.001. This implied that 61.7% of Public Participation in Strategic Policy Implementation was explained by Strategy formulation, 87.2% of Strategic Policy Implementation was explained by Strategic Policy Evaluation.

Table 4.17: Correlation matrix for Strategic Policy Implementation variable

		Correlations				
		Y	X ₁	X ₂	X ₃	X ₄
X ₄	Pearson Correlation	.700**	.617**	.872**	.760**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0	0	0	
	N	367	367	367	367	367

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

Summarized correlations for all variables

Table 4.18 below depicts a summary of correlations of all the variables.

Table 4.18: Correlation matrix for all variables

		Correlations				
		Y	X ₁	X ₂	X ₃	X ₄
Y	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
	N	367				
X ₁	Pearson Correlation	.653**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0				
	N	367	367			
X ₂	Pearson Correlation	.763**	.598**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0			
	N	367	367	367		
X ₃	Pearson Correlation	.800**	.780**	.804**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
	N					

	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0	0	
	N	367	367	367	367
	Pearson Correlation	.700**	.617**	.872**	.760**
X ₄	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0	0	0
	N	367	367	367	367

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

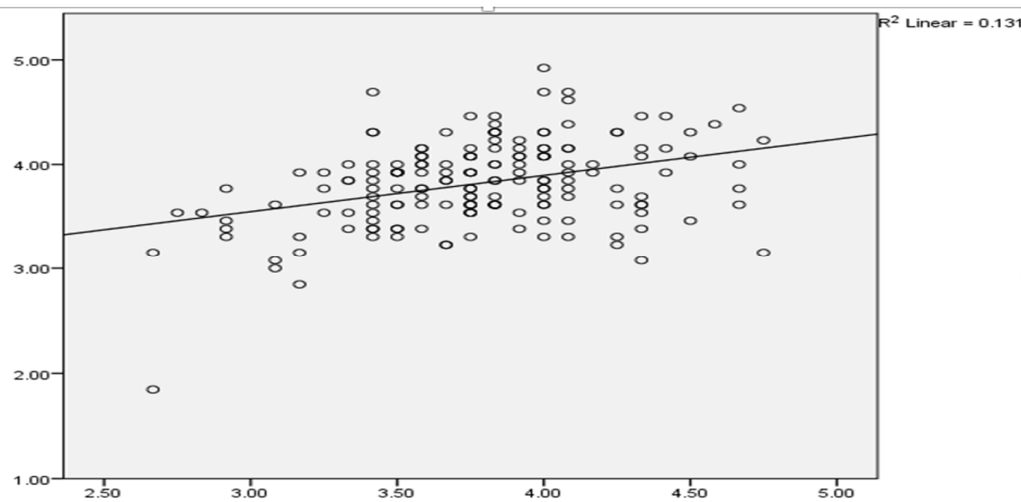
Diagnostic Tests

Before conducting regression analysis computation, the research tested whether assumptions of regression analysis were met by the data. The data was therefore tested for assumption violations of linearity and normality, multicollinearity and Autocorrelation.

Linearity Test

Another assumption held in regression analysis is that the independent variable which is the predictors and the dependent variable which is the predicted have a linear relationship. Linear relationship come into existence when the dependent variable's (Y) values and the independent variable's (X) values fall on a straight line when plotted on a graph. It does not matter whether the line falls in a positive or negative slope. As shown in Figure 4.1, Public Participation in Strategic Policy Management have positive linear relationship with Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya. The results suggest that that increased Public Participation in Strategic Policy Management results in the rise of Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya.

Figure 4.1: Scatter plot for Public Participation in Strategic Policy Management and Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya.



Normality Test

In this research, investigation for normality was done by Shapiro Wilk test. The null hypothesis for Shapiro Wilk test was that the population is normally distributed; since there is enough evidence that the data is normally distributed.

From the results in Table 4.14, all the variables contained p-values higher than 0.05. This suggests that we proceed with the null hypothesis and make a conclusion that the data was obtained from a normal population, i.e., the normality assumption is met.

Table 4.19: Shapiro-Wilk Test of Normality

	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Strategy formulation	.794	366	.256
Strategic Policy Implementation	.671	366	.213
Strategic Policy Evaluation	.850	366	.240
Institutional Capacity	.833	366	.215
Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya	.770	366	.311

Autocorrelation

The study checked for autocorrelation utilizing Durbin-Watson test in linear regression model. Durbin-Watson’s test’s hypothesis is that the residuals are not linearly auto correlated. The d value has a range of 0 to 4, in case the d values are; $1.5 < d < 2.5$ it shows the lack of data autocorrelation.

Table 4.20: Durbin-Watson Autocorrelation Test

Findings presented in Table 4.20 show that no autocorrelation was observed in the data.

Model	Durbin-Watson
1	2.228

Multicollinearity

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) proved useful in testing multicollinearity. If VIF is greater than 5 but below 10, this indicated moderate presence of multicollinearity. When VIF is greater or equal to 10, this it shows high multicollinearity. Table 4.21 shows the results.

Table 4.21: Multicollinearity Assumption

	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
Strategy formulation	.139	7.173
Strategic Policy Implementation	.190	5.268
Strategic Policy Evaluation	.188	5.319
Institutional Capacity	.146	6.834

From the findings, the VIF values for the four independent variables were below than 10, an indication multicollinearity was present, but it was not severe. Therefore, regression analysis can be computed because there is no severe multicollinearity observed.

Multiple Regression Analysis

To determine how Public Participation in Strategic Policy Management affects Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya, the study computed multiple regression analysis. The results were placed on three tables presented and discussed in coming subsections.

Model Summary

The amount of dependent variable variation attributed to the behaviour of the independent variables was determined by computing a model summary. This study measured variation in Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya as a result of changes in Strategy formulation, Strategic Policy Implementation, Strategic Policy Evaluation and Institutional Capacity.

Table 4.22: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.936 ^a	.877	.868	.036667

a. Predictors: (Constant), Institutional Capacity, Strategic Policy Implementation, Strategy formulation, Strategic Policy Evaluation

According to the results presented in Table 4.22, the value of R square is 0.877. This shows that 87.7% difference in Sustainable Socio-Economic Development can be credited to these changes in Strategy formulation, Strategic Policy Implementation, Strategic Policy Evaluation and Institutional Capacity. The remaining 12.3% suggests other factors exist that are helpful in explaining variation in Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya excluded in this study. The results also suggest the independent variables (Strategy formulation, Strategic Policy Implementation, Strategic Policy Evaluation and Institutional Capacity).

Analysis of Variance

Variance analysis shows the developed model's significance. In this research, the model significance was tested at significance level of five percent.

Table: 4.23: ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1.233	4	.308	92.716	.000 ^b
1 Residual	.173	333	.003		
Total	1.406	367			

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya

b. Predictors: (Constant), Institutional Capacity, Strategic Policy Implementation, Strategy formulation, Strategic Policy Evaluation

From the findings in Table 4.23, the significance of 0.000 is below the chosen significance level of 0.05, meaning it can be considered significant. These results prove that the F-calculated value (16.344) was above the F-critical value ($F_{4,333}=2.550$); this insinuates that the variables, Strategy formulation, Strategic Policy Implementation, Strategic Policy Evaluation and Institutional Capacity can be used to predict Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya.

Regression Coefficients of the Study Variables

This regression equation model was used to fit the regression coefficient.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon$$

Where, Y=Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya,

β_0 = constant (coefficient of intercept),

X_1 = Strategy formulation;

X_2 = Strategic Policy Implementation;

X_3 = Strategic Policy Evaluation;

X_4 = Institutional Capacity;

ε = error term.

From the findings presented in table 4.24 below, the following regression equation was fitted;

Multiple regressions

$$Y = 1.347 + 0.347 X_1 + 0.196 X_2 + 0.338 X_3 + 0.279 X_4$$

Observing the equations, it can be noted that when all the other variables (Strategy formulation, Strategic Policy Implementation, Strategic Policy Evaluation and Institutional Capacity) remain at constant zero, a constant value of 1.347 was held by the Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya.

The results depict public participation in Strategy formulation significantly impacting Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya ($\beta=0.347$, $p=0.001$). These results insinuate that public participation in Strategy formulation significantly influences Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya in a positive way. Meaning, a unit rise in public participation in Strategic formulation leads to a rise in Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya, by 0.347 units.

The study found that Institutional Capacity has an influence on Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya ($\beta=0.279$, $p=0.013$). As a result, a unit rise in Institutional Capacity led to a 0.279 unit rise in the Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya. The study's findings support Blanco et al. (2021) finding that there is a positive significant relationship between Sustainable Socio-Economic Development and Institutional Capacity.

Public participation in Strategic Policy Evaluation has an influence on Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya ($\beta=0.338$, $p=0.018$). These findings imply that Public participation in Strategic Policy Evaluation exhibit a favourable impact on Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya. As a result, a unit increase in Strategic Policy Evaluation processes leads to a 0.338 unit rise in the Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya. The study's findings accord with Sapru et al. (2023) that Public participation in Strategic Policy Evaluation has a huge effect on Sustainable Socio-Economic Development.

Public participation in Strategic Policy Implementation has great effect on Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya ($\beta=0.196$, $p=0.041$). Meaning, a unit rise in Strategic Policy Implementation will leads to a rise in Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya by 0.196 units.

Table 4.24: Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.
	Coefficients				
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.347	0.258		5.221	.000
Strategy formulation	0.347	0.103	0.439	3.369	.001
Strategic Policy					
1 Implementation	0.196	0.077	0.226	2.545	.041
Strategic Policy					
Evaluation	0.338	0.138	0.402	2.449	.018
Institutional Capacity	0.279	0.108	0.327	2.583	.013

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter handles a summary of the main findings, conclusions deduced from the results shown and gives recommendations. The conclusions and recommendations given took on addressing the study's objective.

Summary of Findings

This section gives summary of results as per specific objectives of study. The specific study's objectives to establish the influence of Strategy formulation, Strategic Policy Implementation,

Strategic Policy Evaluation and Institutional Capacity on Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya.

Public Participation in Strategic Policy Formulation

The findings reveal that public participation during policy formulation positively impacts sustainable socio-economic development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya. With correlation coefficients exceeding 0.598 and p-values less than 0.001, these relationships are statistically significant. This implies that public participation in Strategic Policy Formulation, in this context, acts as a central pillar towards attaining Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya. While most respondents acknowledged regular forums for consultation, inclusivity remains a challenge. Feedback mechanisms were perceived as less effective, indicating gaps in incorporating diverse community inputs into policy decisions.

Institutional Capacity

The study highlights the critical role of Institutional Capacity in driving Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, with a statistically significant beta coefficient of 0.279 and a p-value of 0.013. This finding indicates that a single unit increase in Institutional Capacity correlates with a 0.279 unit rise in sustainable development outcomes. The result underscores the importance of building and strengthening organizational capabilities, including human resources, infrastructure, governance structures, and operational effectiveness. Institutional Capacity encompasses the ability of organizations to effectively plan, implement, and manage public participation initiatives, suggesting that investments in organizational development, staff training, technological infrastructure, and systemic improvements can substantially contribute to the county's socio-economic progress. The statistical significance implies that policymakers and local government should prioritize capacity-building initiatives, focusing on enhancing organizational skills, knowledge management, technological integration, and adaptive governance mechanisms to drive sustainable development.

Public Participation in Strategic Policy Evaluation

The analysis reveals a robust relationship between public participation in Strategic Policy Evaluation and Sustainable Socio-Economic Development, with a beta coefficient of 0.338 and a p-value of 0.018. This significant correlation suggests that for every unit increase in public participation in Strategic Policy Evaluation, there is a corresponding 0.338 unit rise in sustainable developmental outcomes. The finding emphasizes the critical importance of systematic, rigorous, and continuous assessment of policy effectiveness, implementation strategies, and developmental interventions. Strategic Policy Evaluation involves comprehensive monitoring, critical analysis, feedback mechanisms, and data-driven refinement of policies and programs. The strong positive impact indicates that counties and organizations should invest in robust evaluation frameworks that enable periodic review, performance measurement, impact assessment, and adaptive policy modifications. By establishing transparent, evidence-based evaluation processes, policymakers can identify strengths, address weaknesses, optimize resource allocation, and ensure that developmental strategies remain responsive to evolving socio-economic dynamics.

Public Participation in Strategic Policy Implementation

The research demonstrates that statistically strategic policy implementation benefits significantly from community involvement, as evidenced, with a beta coefficient of 0.196 and a p-value of 0.041. This finding indicates that a single unit increase in public participation in Strategic Policy Implementation corresponds to a 0.196 unit rise in Sustainable Socio-Economic Development outcomes. While the impact is comparatively smaller than other factors, it remains crucial in understanding the practical translation of public participation in Strategic Policy Implementation into tangible Sustainable Socio-Economic Development results. This signifies the importance of effective public participation in execution, operational efficiency, and the ability to transform policy blueprints into concrete actions and interventions. Public participation in Strategic Policy Implementation entails involving stakeholders in translating high-level strategic objectives into practical, actionable steps, ensuring alignment between policy design and ground-level execution towards addressing the socio-economic needs of the people. The results suggest that successful Sustainable Socio-Economic Development requires not just comprehensive planning but also meticulous, citizen-centric and well-coordinated implementation mechanisms that can overcome operational challenges, bureaucratic hurdles, and resource constraints. Policymakers should focus on developing robust strategic policy implementation strategies, centred around public participation, while enhancing inter-departmental coordination, building implementation capacity, and creating accountability frameworks to maximize the potential of strategic policies.

Conclusion

The study concludes that public participation in Strategic policy Formulation, Strategic Policy Evaluation, Strategic Policy Implementation as well as the county's Institutional Capacity, significantly and positively impact Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in Taita Taveta County, Kenya. The study establishes a strong link between participatory governance and sustainable socio-economic development. Among these, Institutional Capacity ($\beta = 0.800$, $p < 0.05$) and Public participation in Strategic Policy Evaluation ($\beta = 0.338$, $p = 0.018$) emerged as the most influential factors, highlighting the importance of robust organizational structures and effective public participation in policy assessment mechanisms. Public participation in Strategy Formulation ($\beta = 0.347$, $p = 0.001$) also demonstrated a substantial role, emphasizing the value of involving the residents in developing solutions to their needs. Public participation in Strategic Policy Implementation ($\beta = 0.196$, $p = 0.041$), while slightly less impactful, remains crucial for translating plans into action. With the model explaining 87.7% of the variation in sustainable socio-economic development outcomes ($R^2 = 0.877$), these findings underscore the necessity of a comprehensive and integrated approach to governance, where well-crafted public participation strategies in policy formulation, policy implementation, policy evaluation and building of strong institutional capacities collectively drive sustainable development.

Recommendations

The study recommends that policymakers and stakeholders in Taita Taveta County prioritizes enhancing **Institutional Capacity** by investing in robust organizational frameworks, staff training, and technological infrastructure to strengthen governance and operational efficiency. Public participation in **Strategic Policy Evaluation** should be institutionalized, incorporating

continuous monitoring, feedback mechanisms, and evidence-based adjustments to optimize policy outcomes. Furthermore, **Strategic policy Formulation** processes should emphasize participatory, forward-thinking planning that aligns with the county's citizens developmental priorities, ensuring adaptability to emerging socio-economic challenges. Lastly, public participation in **Strategic Policy Implementation** is key as it advances transparency, accountability and ownership effectively translating strategies into tangible outcomes. Hence policy makers and implementers should adopt real-time progress tracking tools for policy implementation and strive to conduct periodic community forums to provide updates and gather input on ongoing projects.. By addressing these areas, the county can effectively leverage its strategic potential to achieve sustainable socio-economic development.

Suggestions for further research

Future research could explore the moderating or mediating effects of external factors such as political stability, economic trends, or community engagement on the relationship between strategic public participation in strategic policy management practices and sustainable socio-economic development. Additionally, comparative studies across different counties or regions could provide insights into contextual variations and best practices. Research could also examine the role of emerging technologies, such as data analytics and artificial intelligence, in enhancing public participation in strategic formulation, evaluation, and implementation processes. Finally, longitudinal studies tracking the long-term impacts of public participation in strategic policy management on sustainable socio-economic development outcomes would offer valuable insights into the sustainability and effectiveness of various strategic interventions.

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