

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLANNING AND SERVICE DELIVERY IN COUNTY GOVERNMENTS IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Public engagement is widely promoted in devolved systems as a pathway for aligning public services with citizen priorities, but outcomes depend heavily on whether participation processes are deliberately planned rather than treated as compliance rituals. This study examined the effect of public engagement planning on service delivery in county governments in Kenya, focusing on counties reported as having not fully operationalized public participation frameworks. Guided by Community Action Planning (CAP) Theory, the study adopted a positivist philosophy and a correlational research design. The target population comprised 2,037 respondents (291 ward public participation facilitators and 1,746 public representatives). Using Yamane's (1967) formula, a sample of 334 respondents was selected through stratified random sampling, and 301 valid questionnaires were returned (90.1% response rate). Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires measured on a 5-point Likert scale; validity was supported through content/face review and construct validation, while reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha with coefficients meeting acceptable thresholds.

Descriptive results indicated strong respondent agreement that engagement planning practices were present (aggregate $M = 4.058$, $SD = 0.850$), while service delivery was also positively perceived (aggregate $M = 4.129$, $SD = 0.849$). Simple linear regression results showed a strong positive relationship between engagement planning and service delivery ($R = 0.682$; $R^2 = 0.465$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.463$), with the model statistically significant ($F = 259.777$, $p < .001$). Engagement planning significantly predicted service delivery ($B = 0.575$; $\beta = 0.682$; $t = 15.972$, $p < .001$), implying that improvements in structured planning translate into measurable gains in perceived service delivery. The findings demonstrate that county forums alone are insufficient; counties must institutionalize engagement planning, through clear objectives, stakeholder mapping, timelines, defined roles, and adequate resourcing, to convert participation into service outcomes.

Keywords: Public Engagement Planning; Service Delivery; Devolution; County Governments; Kenya; Citizen Participation.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Public engagement has become a central feature of modern governance, particularly in decentralized systems where service delivery responsibilities are devolved to sub-national governments. While participation is widely promoted as a means of aligning services with citizen priorities, its effectiveness depends largely on how engagement processes are planned and structured. Public engagement planning, encompassing stakeholder identification, objective setting, resource allocation, scheduling, and role definition, has therefore gained prominence as a key determinant of whether participation improves service delivery outcomes (Adhikari & Cheah, 2020).

Internationally, structured engagement planning has been associated with improved service coordination, reduced implementation delays, and enhanced accountability. Governments in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Sweden have institutionalized engagement planning frameworks that define participation stages, responsibilities, and expected outputs (Guziana, 2021; Sloam, 2023). Frameworks such as the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum emphasize that meaningful engagement requires deliberate progression from information sharing to collaboration and empowerment, a process that is heavily dependent on systematic planning (UNDP, 2022). Where planning is weak, engagement activities tend to be ad hoc, poorly attended, and disconnected from decision-making processes. In African contexts, deficiencies in engagement planning have been widely documented as a major barrier to effective service delivery. Studies from Nigeria and Ghana show that inadequate stakeholder mapping, unclear objectives, and poor resource allocation undermine the legitimacy and impact of public participation initiatives (Echendu, 2023; Naaikuur et al., 2022). Weak planning often results in limited inclusivity, late communication of forums, and poor integration of citizen input into policy and service decisions. These challenges are compounded by institutional capacity constraints and politicization of participation processes. In Kenya, devolution has significantly expanded opportunities for citizen participation in county governance. The Constitution of Kenya (2010) and subsequent legislation require counties to involve citizens in planning and budgeting processes. However, evidence suggests that engagement planning remains inconsistent across counties, with many forums conducted as compliance exercises rather than as structured decision-support mechanisms (Kabue et al., 2022). Poor planning manifests in unclear engagement objectives, inadequate mobilization, exclusion of marginalized groups, and weak linkage between participation outcomes and service delivery decisions. As a result, public dissatisfaction with county services persists despite frequent engagement activities.

While existing studies recognize the importance of public participation, few have empirically examined how engagement planning specifically influences service delivery performance in devolved governments. Most research focuses on participation frequency or communication methods, leaving a critical gap regarding the structural role of planning in translating citizen input into service outcomes. This study addresses this gap by analyzing the effect of public engagement planning on service delivery in county governments in Kenya, thereby

contributing evidence on how structured planning can enhance the effectiveness of participatory governance in decentralized service delivery systems.

Statement of the Problem

Kenya's devolved system of governance was established to enhance service delivery through citizen involvement in planning, budgeting, and decision-making processes. However, more than a decade after devolution, service delivery performance across county governments remains uneven and often below public expectations. Audit reports show recurring project delays, misaligned development priorities, and weak integration of citizen input into county planning processes (Auditor-General, 2022; Controller of Budget, 2022). These challenges persist despite counties conducting regular public participation forums.

One major but under-examined cause of weak service delivery is inadequate public engagement planning. Evidence suggests that many counties organize participation forums without clear objectives, stakeholder mapping, timelines, or feedback mechanisms. The Status of Public Participation Report (2023) found that several counties lacked standardized engagement frameworks, resulting in late notices, poor attendance, exclusion of marginalized groups, and weak linkage between public input and development decisions. Studies by Migwi and Atikiya (2021) further show that public engagement in Kenya is often concentrated at early project stages, with minimal involvement during implementation and monitoring due to weak planning structures.

Although the literature on public participation in Kenya is growing, most studies focus on participation frequency, communication channels, or sector-specific outcomes, leaving a significant empirical gap regarding the structural role of engagement planning. International evidence suggests that structured planning is critical for translating participation into service outcomes (Adhikari & Cheah, 2020; UNDP, 2022), yet few Kenyan studies have empirically tested the effect of public engagement planning on service delivery performance across counties. Without such evidence, counties risk perpetuating ad hoc participation practices that satisfy legal requirements but fail to improve service delivery. This study therefore seeks to address this gap by examining the effect of public engagement planning on service delivery in county governments in Kenya.

Specific Objectives of the Study

To determine the relationship between public engagement planning and service delivery in county governments in Kenya

Research Hypothesis

H₀₁ There is no significant relationship between public engagement planning and service delivery in county governments in Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Community Action Planning (CAP) Theory

The Community Action Planning (CAP) Theory was created by Hamdi and Goethert (1997) and focuses on the individuals and levels of participation in different initiatives. Since inviting everyone is difficult to manage, effective development plans must specify who will participate. (Kuei & Lu, 2013). The theory's major principle is that development projects in their settings should be initiated, planned, designed, implemented, and maintained by communities and their groups. A community-driven approach consisting of five steps, Community Action Planning (CAP) aims to increase communities' ability to mobilize and confront inequalities. A critical examination that pinpoints the underlying social, economic, and environmental factors that produce inequalities in a society is essential to the idea. The objective is to give communities the framework they need to get the knowledge and tools needed to organize, carry out, and assess project directives and actions. 2014's Bank & Fund. This idea is relevant to planning public involvement because planners need to have specific objectives and plan how to choose which members of the public to ask for their comments on county management and development initiatives.

Conceptual Framework

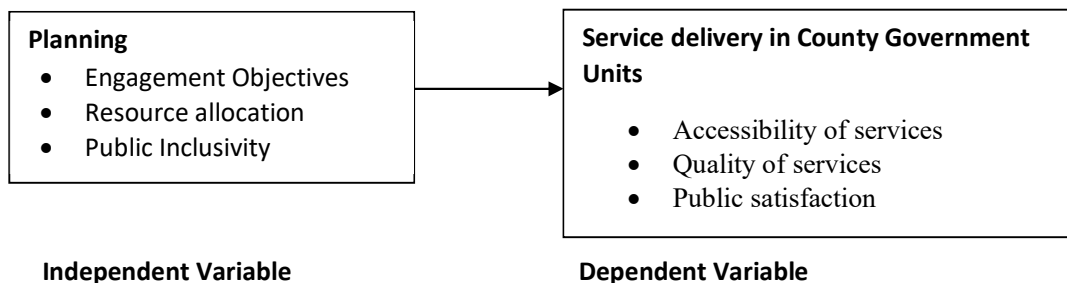


Figure 2. 1: Conceptual Framework

Public Engagement Planning

An engagement plan delineates a series of targeted outreach and public engagement tactics, together with designated responsibilities and a schedule for novel or ongoing initiatives that will have an impact on the community at the county or national level. According to Adhikari and Cheah (2020), a community engagement plan should cover the following topics: how to engage marginalized community members in an inclusive manner with a range of backgrounds and experiences; engagement methods to be used; leadership for the engagement and related activities; potential contributions from partner organizations; and important ethical considerations for engaging marginalized community members. According to Quick and Bryson (2022), communities are not adequately ready to take part in planning sessions. If citizens are organized into groups to promote their priorities collectively, their voice in various planning forums will be more effective. The high project failure rates, especially when

technical expertise is not deployed, are frequently caused by poor planning, especially within government systems.

Service Delivery

Kiambati (2020) aimed to investigate the role that different levels of transparency play in the provision of county government services. The research employed a mixed-methods technique. Questionnaires and interview schedules were employed as data gathering tools in the study. The results demonstrated that the counties' low degree of transparency had an impact on service delivery. Roba, Mwenda, and Wachira (2024) investigated how Kenyan county governments' service delivery was affected by strategic human resource planning. The study's design was descriptive. Findings indicated that while devolution in Kenya has greatly increased the levels and accessibility of services in health, early childhood education, and water, it has not resulted in a large redistribution of services. Immunization rates have increased as a result of improvements in healthcare infrastructure, whereas agricultural extension programs have decreased. Notable advancements have been made in the availability and accessibility of input subsidies. Manwari and Muturi (2022) investigated the impact of political decentralization on Kenyan county governments' service performance. 1,020 employees of Kenyan County Governments made up the target population. The findings indicated that the services were of a high caliber, provided on schedule, and that concerns and feedback were acknowledged and promptly addressed. Additionally, the services were completed in a way that ensured the client received what they had requested or anticipated.

Empirical Review

Sonnenfeld, Stevenson, and Waddington (2022) sought to find out whether citizen engagement plans improve development outcomes. This study used statistical meta-analysis to analyze data that was collected from secondary sources. The findings indicated that efforts to increase citizen involvement in service delivery and achieve improvements in service accessibility are frequently achieved by implementing strategies such as participatory priority setting or accountability systems. A well-crafted citizen engagement plan makes it easier for the general public and front-line service providers, particularly in the health care industry, to interact.

Madumo (2021) examined the role of ward committees in facilitating public participation in South Africa. The results demonstrated that ward committees face a variety of difficulties that can impair their ability to perform. Although ward councillors confer with ward committee members regarding matters to be discussed at committee meetings, occasionally their egotism and inconsideracy lead them to choose to impose topics for discussion at committee meetings instead of consulting the members.

Mpabanga (2022) studied nexus between public engagement and service quality in local governments in South Africa. Key informants were ward municipal officials. Findings indicated that while public involvement mechanisms were in place, such as outreach programs for integrated development planning and ward committee meetings, coordination of meetings and public mobilization remained difficult. Ndei, Iravo, and Ombui (2021) examined impact of community participation on leadership in Kenya. The researchers targeted 680 respondents

from 85 wards in Nairobi County. Results showed that Nairobi county had a clearly planned public engagement schedule and resources were available to actualize public engagement. Community participation on leadership was significantly related to approachable and accountable leadership.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a correlational research design under a positivist philosophical orientation to examine the effect of public engagement planning on service delivery in county governments in Kenya. The design was suitable for determining the nature and strength of the relationship between engagement planning practices and service delivery outcomes without manipulating the independent variable (Kabir, 2016). The positivist approach enabled the use of quantitative techniques to test hypotheses and draw generalizable conclusions.

The study focused on nine county governments that had not fully operationalized public participation legislation, as reported in the *Status of Public Participation in National and County Governments (2023)*. These counties were Vihiga, Tharaka Nithi, Kisumu, Mombasa, Bomet, Nyeri, Nairobi, Samburu, and Wajir. The unit of observation comprised ward-level public participation facilitators and public representatives from various community segments. The total target population consisted of 2,037 respondents, including 291 ward public participation facilitators and 1,746 public representatives.

A stratified random sampling technique was used to categorize respondents based on their roles in public engagement, ensuring balanced representation. The sample size of 334 respondents was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula at a 5% margin of error, representing 16.4% of the total population. The final sample included 48 public participation facilitators and 286 public representatives. Stratification improved the precision and representativeness of the sample across counties and respondent categories.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire containing closed-ended and open-ended items measured on a five-point Likert scale. The instrument captured key aspects of public engagement planning, including clarity of objectives, stakeholder identification, resource allocation, engagement timelines, and coordination mechanisms, alongside service delivery indicators. Data collection followed established ethical procedures, including institutional approval, NACOSTI clearance, and county-level authorization. Research assistants were trained to support questionnaire administration and ensure consistency.

Instrument validity was ensured through content and face validation by subject experts, while construct validity was tested using principal component analysis, with factor loadings of 0.7 and above retained for analysis (Shrestha, 2021). Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with all constructs achieving coefficients above the acceptable threshold of 0.70 (Yin, 2018). A pilot study involving 33 respondents was conducted to refine the questionnaire prior to the main survey.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS Version 28. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize engagement planning and service delivery variables. Inferential analysis involved correlation and simple regression analysis to test the relationship between public engagement planning and service delivery. Regression diagnostics, including tests for normality, multicollinearity, linearity, and heteroscedasticity, were performed to confirm model validity. Results were presented in tables and figures, and qualitative responses were analyzed thematically to enrich interpretation of the quantitative findings.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Out of the 334 questionnaires distributed, 301 were successfully completed and returned, representing a high response rate of 90.1%. Only 33 questionnaires were either not returned or were deemed unusable due to incomplete information, accounting for 9.9% of the total distributed. A response rate of 90.1% is considered excellent in survey-based research and exceeds the minimum acceptable threshold of 60% recommended by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) for social sciences. This high response rate enhances the credibility, generalizability, and validity of the research findings. It reflects a strong level of engagement from the participants, likely due to the relevance of the topic to their roles in county public participation processes.

Descriptive Analysis of Public Engagement Planning

The objective of the study was to determine the relationship between public engagement planning and service delivery in county governments in Kenya. Respondents were therefore asked to tick on the degree to which they agree/disagree with listed statements on public engagement planning. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the statements measuring public engagement planning. The analysis was based on responses from 301 participants, and it reveals the extent to which respondents perceived that counties are effectively planning for public participation in governance processes.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Public Engagement Planning

Statement	SD F(%)	D F(%)	NS F(%)	A F(%)	SA F(%)	Mean	Std. Dev.
Meeting coordination and mobilization of the public are conducted effectively	2 (0.7%)	5 (1.7%)	33 (11.0%)	170 (56.5%)	91 (30.2%)	4.140	0.720
The county government uses forums, social media, newsletters, or media to engage the public	4 (1.3%)	6 (2.0%)	28 (9.3%)	175 (58.1%)	88 (29.2%)	4.120	0.755
Engagement goals are clearly stated in the engagement plans	3 (1.0%)	8 (2.7%)	42 (14.0%)	155 (51.5%)	93 (30.9%)	4.086	0.798
The most appropriate engagement approach is employed	6 (2.0%)	10 (3.3%)	40 (13.3%)	150 (49.8%)	95 (31.6%)	4.056	0.870
The public engagement meetings are adequately planned	5 (1.7%)	12 (4.0%)	38 (12.6%)	148 (49.2%)	98 (32.6%)	4.070	0.869
Engagement timelines are well stipulated in the engagement plans	4 (1.3%)	11 (3.7%)	39 (13.0%)	145 (48.2%)	102 (33.9%)	4.086	0.849
Adequate resources are allocated for public engagement	7 (2.3%)	14 (4.7%)	45 (15.0%)	140 (46.5%)	95 (31.6%)	4.000	0.884
The county government considers public groups likely to be interested	6 (2.0%)	12 (4.0%)	44 (14.6%)	138 (45.8%)	101 (33.6%)	4.058	0.874
The roles of every group represented in the meeting are clearly defined	8 (2.7%)	15 (5.0%)	47 (15.6%)	130 (43.2%)	101 (33.6%)	3.997	0.927
All members of the public are well represented in the forums	9 (3.0%)	18 (6.0%)	49 (16.3%)	125 (41.5%)	100 (33.2%)	3.962	0.951
Aggregate Score						4.058	0.850

(n = 301)

The highest-rated item was ‘Meeting coordination and mobilization of the public are conducted effectively’, with a mean score of 4.140 and a standard deviation of 0.720. This indicates strong agreement among respondents that counties are making significant efforts to coordinate and mobilize citizens during engagement activities. Effective coordination is critical in ensuring inclusivity and comprehensive representation, a finding echoed by Mpabanga (2022), who identified mobilization as a common challenge in public engagement in South African local governments. The high agreement here reflects progress and commitment in counties, potentially tied to evolving public engagement frameworks.

The statement ‘The county government uses forums, social media, newsletters, or media to engage the public’ followed closely, with a mean of 4.120 (SD = 0.755). This implies that counties are increasingly leveraging diverse communication channels to involve citizens. This aligns with Mahama (2020) and Tagi (2019), who found that using multiple media platforms enhances accessibility and community involvement in government affairs. It also resonates

with the Communication Development Theory, which posits that effective, respectful communication empowers citizens to engage meaningfully in governance processes.

Engagement goals are clearly stated in the engagement plans had a mean of 4.086 (SD = 0.798), indicating high agreement. Clear objectives help both planners and the public understand the purpose of engagement forums. This finding supports Adhikari and Cheah (2020) who emphasize that a good engagement plan should articulate goals, leadership, and target participants. Similarly, Quick and Bryson (2022) noted that poorly defined engagement goals can hinder participation and lead to superficial outcomes. The next two items, 'Engagement timelines are well stipulated' (M = 4.086, SD = 0.849) and 'The public engagement meetings are adequately planned' (M = 4.070, SD = 0.869), reflect agreement that counties are making visible efforts in structuring the timing and preparation of their engagement efforts. This supports the principle of CAP Theory, which calls for clear timelines and stakeholder targeting in community-driven planning initiatives.

Moderately high ratings were also observed for 'The most appropriate engagement approach is employed' (M = 4.056, SD = 0.870) and 'The county government considers public groups likely to be interested' (M = 4.058, SD = 0.874). These results show counties are moderately successful in selecting suitable engagement formats and considering relevant stakeholder groups. However, some variation in responses (relatively higher standard deviations) indicates that the effectiveness of these strategies may differ across counties. The statement 'Adequate resources are allocated for public engagement' had a slightly lower mean of 4.000 (SD = 0.884), suggesting that while respondents generally agree, there is variation in perception, possibly due to disparities in funding between counties. This finding aligns with Ndei, Iravo, and Ombui (2021), who found that while Nairobi County had a public engagement budget, execution remained inconsistent.

The two lowest-rated items were 'The roles of every group represented in the meeting are clearly defined' (M = 3.997, SD = 0.927) and 'All members of the public are well represented in the forums' (M = 3.962, SD = 0.951). These items had higher standard deviations and hover just above the 3.5 threshold, indicating room for improvement in inclusivity and clarity of stakeholder roles. These findings are echoed by Madumo (2021), who observed that public meetings often lack genuine representativeness due to elite capture or unclear role definitions. From a theoretical standpoint, the CAP Theory emphasizes that participation should not only be widespread but also well-structured, ensuring all voices are organized and heard meaningfully.

The overall mean scores (M= 4.058, SD= 0.850) for public engagement planning suggest that respondents generally agree that planning structures are in place and functional across counties. However, challenges persist in ensuring adequate representation and clearly defining roles within forums. This has critical implications: without inclusive planning and clarity in stakeholder involvement, public engagement risks becoming symbolic rather than transformative. From a theoretical lens, the findings reinforce the Community Action Planning (CAP) Theory, which posits that structured, participatory, and community-led planning is central to achieving developmental goals (Kuei & Lu, 2013). Moreover, the empirical alignment with studies like those of Sonnenfeld et al. (2022) and Mpabanga (2022) confirms that citizen engagement plans significantly influence service accessibility, especially when backed by inclusive design, adequate resources, and effective mobilization.

Descriptive Analysis of Service Delivery

The general objective of this study was to determine the relationship between public engagement dimensions and service delivery in county governments in Kenya. This section analyzes how respondents perceive the effectiveness and quality of service delivery by county governments. Table 2 presents summary of findings obtained.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Service Delivery

Statement	SD F(%)	D F(%)	NS F(%)	A F(%)	SA F(%)	Mean	Std. Dev.
The provided services are guaranteed (they are carried out so that the client receives what they requested or anticipated)	4 (1.3%)	8 (2.7%)	33 (11.0%)	148 (49.2%)	108 (35.9%)	4.156	0.819
The services are tangible (they provide the anticipated advantages in a way that is satisfactory)	5 (1.7%)	9 (3.0%)	34 (11.3%)	150 (49.8%)	103 (34.2%)	4.120	0.843
The services are dependable (completed on schedule and with excellent quality)	5 (1.7%)	9 (3.0%)	35 (11.6%)	145 (48.2%)	107 (35.5%)	4.130	0.851
The services are responsive (comments and complaints are acknowledged and addressed far too promptly)	6 (2.0%)	10 (3.3%)	37 (12.3%)	140 (46.5%)	108 (35.9%)	4.110	0.884
Aggregate Score						4.129	0.849

(n = 301)

The findings reflect a generally positive assessment across all four service delivery dimensions, dependability, responsiveness, assurance (guarantee), and tangibility, with all items recording mean scores above 4.1 and an aggregate mean of 4.129 (SD= 0.849). These results point to widespread agreement that counties are providing timely, reliable, and outcome-oriented services. The highest-rated statement was “The provided services are guaranteed (they are carried out so that the client receives what they requested or anticipated),” with a mean of 4.156 (SD = 0.819). Respondents strongly agreed that counties are committed to delivering services that align with public expectations. This suggests that service delivery in many counties has become more results-oriented and client-centered. According to Manwari and Muturi (2022), perceived service guarantee, ensuring that citizens receive the services as planned, is a key factor in building public trust and institutional credibility. Their findings also indicated that such assurance is associated with improved accountability and citizen satisfaction.

The statement “The services are dependable (completed on schedule and with excellent quality)” recorded a high mean of 4.130 (SD = 0.851), indicating that most services are being delivered as planned. Dependability is essential in public service delivery because it reflects adherence to timelines, resource allocation efficiency, and administrative capacity. This supports Mbau (2019), who highlighted that efficient service structures, especially in health, education, and water, are tied to institutional planning and reliability of county-level delivery

systems. The statement “The services are tangible (they provide the anticipated advantages in a way that is satisfactory)” received a mean of 4.120 (SD = 0.843), suggesting that services are yielding visible and measurable benefits for the public. Tangibility here refers to infrastructure development, access to utilities, and the physical presence of government interventions. This observation aligns with the findings of Roba, Mwenda, and Wachira (2024), who noted that increased investment in infrastructure and subsidies, particularly in agriculture and healthcare, contributed significantly to public satisfaction in Kenyan counties.

“The services are responsive (comments and complaints are acknowledged and addressed far too promptly)” had the lowest mean score of 4.110 (SD = 0.884), though it still falls within the high agreement range. Responsiveness is vital for inclusive governance, as it reflects how quickly and effectively government responds to feedback, grievances, and emerging needs. The slightly lower score suggests that while many counties are responsive, others may still face capacity limitations in managing public feedback systems. Nasieku, Cherono, and Muriiki (2021) observed that unresponsiveness in service delivery leads to public dissatisfaction, especially when complaints are recurrently ignored or follow-up mechanisms are weak.

The overall results show strong public satisfaction with service delivery across counties. Services are largely perceived as reliable, responsive, and impactful. These findings affirm the objectives of devolution in Kenya, which sought to bring services closer to the people and improve governance through citizen engagement. From a theoretical standpoint, these findings can be linked to Institutional Theory, which emphasizes how structures, norms, and routines, such as performance management systems and legal frameworks, enhance organizational legitimacy and effectiveness (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). Counties that have adopted institutionalized service standards, feedback channels, and accountability procedures are better positioned to meet public expectations and sustain high service quality. Moreover, the consistency of high ratings across the four service quality indicators reflects positively on the outcomes of participatory governance structures implemented through legal and policy reforms. When public engagement is meaningful and well-integrated with planning and implementation cycles, it results in better alignment between services offered and citizen needs.

Simple Regression Analysis

The objective of the study was to determine the nature and significance of the relationship between public engagement planning and service delivery in county governments in Kenya. Public engagement planning is defined as the deliberate and structured process of designing participation mechanisms, setting clear goals, allocating resources, and establishing timelines and methods through which citizens are included in public decision-making. Effective planning goes beyond mere consultations, it ensures that public input is strategically integrated into the design, implementation, and evaluation of service delivery initiatives. The corresponding null hypothesis (H_{01}) tested in the study was:

H_{01} : There is no significant relationship between public engagement planning and service delivery in county governments in Kenya.

To evaluate this hypothesis, a simple linear regression analysis was employed, where public engagement planning was the independent variable and service delivery was the dependent

variable. The model was tested at a 95% confidence level, with p-values below 0.05 considered statistically significant.

Table 3: Model Summary – Public Engagement Planning and Service Delivery

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.682 ^a	0.465	0.463	0.423

a. Predictors: (Constant), Public Engagement Planning

b. Dependent Variable: Service Delivery

The correlation coefficient (R) of 0.682 indicates a strong positive association between public engagement planning and service delivery. This suggests that counties which have better-structured engagement planning processes are more likely to deliver public services effectively. The R Square (R²) value of 0.465 further indicates that approximately 46.5% of the variation in service delivery can be explained by engagement planning practices alone, an impressively high figure in social science research, where contextual and human factors often yield modest R² values. The adjusted R² of 0.463 confirms the model’s generalizability by accounting for degrees of freedom and model complexity. These results corroborate the work of Nyongesa and Wanyonyi (2021), who concluded that systematic public participation planning was instrumental in aligning service delivery with public expectations in devolved units.

Table 4: ANOVA – Public Engagement Planning and Service Delivery

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	46.500	1	46.500	259.777	0.000 ^b
Residual	53.500	299	0.179		
Total	100.000	300			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Public Engagement Planning

b. Dependent Variable: Service Delivery

The ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) results reveal an F-statistic of 259.777, which is far greater than the critical F-value of 3.873, at a 5% significance level. This indicates that the regression model is statistically significant, and the variation in service delivery explained by engagement planning is not due to random chance. The p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) supports the rejection of the null hypothesis, confirming that the linear relationship between the two variables is statistically robust. This outcome aligns with findings by OECD (2020), which emphasized that institutionalized participatory planning frameworks, especially when backed by legislation and dedicated funding, consistently yield higher levels of efficiency, public trust, and accountability in government services.

Table 5: Coefficients – Public Engagement Planning and Service Delivery

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.250	0.090		13.889	0.000
Public Engagement Planning	0.575	0.036	0.682	15.972	0.000

From the coefficients table, the following regression equation was fitted;

$$\text{Service Delivery} = 1.250 + 0.575 (\text{Public Engagement Planning})$$

This means that when engagement planning is at its lowest (zero), the baseline service delivery score is 1.250. The unstandardized coefficient ($B=0.575$) indicates a strong, statistically significant positive relationship between public engagement planning and service delivery ($p<0.05$). For every one-unit increase in engagement planning, service delivery is expected to improve by 0.575 units on the measurement scale. These findings align with UNDP (2022), which emphasizes that clear objectives, adequate resources, and inclusive processes in planning directly enhance public service quality. They also echo Ndei, Iravo, and Ombui (2021), who found that participatory planning fosters better alignment between citizen needs and county government actions, resulting in higher satisfaction and trust.

The regression results provide strong evidence to reject the null hypothesis (H_{01}). Public engagement planning has a significant and positive impact on service delivery in county governments. Given that almost half of the variation in service delivery is explained by planning alone, county governments should prioritize strengthening their engagement planning frameworks. This includes formalizing planning procedures, ensuring inclusivity, and allocating adequate resources to the planning process to achieve measurable improvements in service quality and citizen satisfaction.

Conclusions

The study concludes that public engagement planning is a fundamental driver of service delivery performance in county governments, operating as the structural mechanism through which citizen participation influences development outcomes. Effective service delivery is not achieved merely by convening public forums, but through deliberate planning processes that define objectives, allocate resources, map stakeholders, and clarify roles and timelines. Where planning is weak or ad hoc, engagement becomes fragmented and exclusionary, undermining its ability to inform service prioritization and implementation. The study therefore establishes that strengthening planning is essential for converting public participation from a procedural requirement into a functional governance tool that directly enhances service delivery.

Recommendations

Policy Recommendations

National and county governments should institutionalize public engagement planning as a mandatory component of county development management systems. Counties should be required to develop formal public engagement plans that clearly specify engagement objectives, stakeholder categories, timelines, resource allocations, and expected outputs prior to implementation of development projects. These plans should be integrated into County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs) and Annual Development Plans (ADPs) to ensure that public engagement directly informs budgeting, prioritization, and service delivery decisions. Institutionalizing planning will reduce ad hoc participation and improve alignment between citizen input and service outcomes.

Practice Recommendations for County Governments

County governments should operationalize public engagement planning by developing standardized engagement calendars and stakeholder mapping tools at ward and county levels. Engagement plans should clearly define roles of facilitators, public representatives, and county officials, as well as expected outputs from each forum. Counties should also ensure that adequate resources, financial, logistical, and human, are allocated to engagement activities to prevent rushed, poorly attended, or exclusionary forums that undermine service delivery outcomes.

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