



INFLUENCE OF MEDIA INFORMATION ON COUNTY ASSEMBLY POLICY DEVELOPMENT

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Accepted: September 6, 2021

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of stakeholders' information on county assembly policy development in Kenya. The objectives of the study were to establish: influence of media information, think tanks information, traditional knowledge information, and academic information on policy development in the county governments in Kenya. The target population of the study was five (5) counties with 236 both elected and nominated member of County assemblies, the study adopted the Taro Yamane formula to sample MCAs where 148 MCAs were sampled for the study and Census for Speakers of county assemblies because the number is small and manageable, therefore all five speakers of the county assemblies will be considered. Data collection tools were questionnaire and interview schedule for MCAs and speakers of county assemblies respectively. The collection of the data was both the drop-and-pick method and the face-to-face interviews with the respondents for questionnaires and interviews respectively. The study used SPSS version 24 for both descriptive and inferential analysis. Besides content analysis was used on the interviews qualitative data. The results were presented narratively and in tables. The study concluded that media information had a positive and significant influence on policy development in the county government in Kenya. Think tanks' information had a positive and significant influence on policy development in the county government in Kenya. Traditional Knowledge information had a positive and significant influence on policy development in county governments in Kenya. Academic Information had a positive but insignificant influence on policy development in the county governments in Kenya. The study recommended the use of newspapers and also television and radio as the major source of information for policy development because major events are reported through print and television. The study also recommended for the use of political analysts, legal experts experienced and professional consultants and directors with a better understanding of policies; the utilization of traditional knowledge including use of traditional education, traditional sites and traditional use of medicine, traditional knowledge on the ecosystem because they positively and significantly influenced policy development. Finally, the study recommended the utilization of more academic research to see whether better policy development would be revealed because there was low uptake of academic information in the county government.

Key Words: Media information, County, Assembly, Policy, Development

CITATION: Aidi, J. K. M., & Omwenga, J. Q. (2021). Influence of media information on county assembly policy development. *The Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management*, 8 (3), 784 – 793.

INTRODUCTION

Countries around the world are guided by the policies that are created by the body in charge and the term policy is a system of concepts that are created to guide decisions and achieve rational outcomes for the development of a country, organization, or firm. A policy normally refers to the statement of intent that is implemented in a procedural or protocol manner to give direction. Policies are generally adopted by the ruling body within an organization that is the management, governors, members of parliament, state heads, or legislative bodies. Policies are created or developed to help both subjective and objective decision-making for the running of the organization. Policies assisting in subjective decision-making are used by senior management with decisions that must be based on the relative merits of several factors (McGann et al., 2018).

The policy is normally used and created by government, public sector organizations and groups, as well as individuals. The policy entails presidential executive orders, parliamentary rules, and corporate privacy rules among others. Policy differs from rules or law but is normally used interchangeably to mean the same thing. The difference existing is that law can compel or prohibit behaviors like a law requiring the payment of taxes on income while policy merely are guides or actions toward those that are most likely to achieve the desired outcome (Ansell et al., 2017).

Devolution in Kenya was introduced by the 2010 constitution which saw some of the roles of the national government being delegated to county governments. The 2010 constitution saw the introduction of a total of 47 counties with the Independent and Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) being involved in the formulation of the counties according to the population of the different regions. Corporate governance practices have been adopted to enhance devolution in the country with accountability being maintained in managing public funds, therefore, encouraging development. The

2010 constitution under chapter six indicates a well-formulated code of corporate governance; developments of corporate governance being coordinated in Kenya with other projects and developing a national institution with the responsibility of promoting corporate governance (Ngigi & Busolo, 2019).

According to the World Bank Report (2015), Kenya experienced marginalization as well as underdevelopment following the concentration of power in one center for a long period. During this period access to resources and services was unequal in all regions with some regions accessing more resources and services than others. The unequal access to services and resources was a result of poor corporate governance practices which include a lack of factors such as accountability in public expenditure, transparency, democracy, and participatory governance (Waikenda, 2019).

Engaging stakeholders and the general public is a crucial aspect of good governance since it encourages transparency and accountability. It also promotes the accountability and openness of political decision-makers. With the introduction of devolution, county governments have the responsibility to formulate their budgets as well as policies governing their operations that have a long-term effect on both the financial futures and the citizens' outcomes. It is, therefore, crucial for policymakers to consider evidence to make informed decisions. Consequently, it will enable the governments to make the right choice on funds and operate public programs more strategically (Mugambi & Theuri, 2014).

Objectives of the Study

The general objective was to determine the influence of Stakeholders' information on county assembly policy development in Kenya and specifically, to establish the influence of media information on County assembly policy development

Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing presence of assembly policies in devolved units in Kenya, there is a significant lack of robust critique and examination of the work by the county legislation members to develop policies that are of significance to the growth of the County in general and the potential implications of such work in the development of the assembly policies. This is particularly the case regarding the role of the County Assembly, which remains remarkably under-theorized contributions in Kenya and the entire world. This is in contrast to the United States of America (USA), where there has been a stronger system guiding the role of any legislatures in using any source for the development of assembly policies through the aid of civil society (Landini & Malerba, 2017). There is also a need for tracing the sources informing information and how they are useful for the development of policies (Farazmand, 2019).

The special issue represents a 'first step' in tackling this gap in identifying the sources of the information and try to determine how the sources are of influence to the development of the assembly policies in Kenya, the research is contextualized concerning how counties can utilize the sources to developed their policies. Collectively, the study in this issue engaged four key concerns: that is how media, think tank and academic and community traditional knowledge contributes to assembly policy development, hence the researcher was prompted to conduct a study on determining the influence of Stakeholders' information on county assembly policy development in Kenya and how effective the stakeholders' information are to the county assembly.

Scope of the Study

The research was carried out in Five (5) different counties in Kenya purposeful selected. The research focused on the five counties namely (Taita Taveta, Vihiga, Migori, Kiambu, and Kericho). The study topic was to determine the Influence of Stakeholders' information on county assembly

policy development in Kenya. The time scope was from the years 2020 and 2021.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Incremental Theory

The theory was developed by Charles Lindblom (1950), the Theory posits that policies result from a process of interaction and mutual adaptation among a multiplicity of actors advocating different values, representing different interests, and possessing different information. Incrementalism emphasizes the plurality of actors involved in the policy-making process and predicts that policymakers will build on past policies, focusing on incremental rather than wholesale changes. Incrementalism has been fruitfully applied to explain domestic policymaking, public policymaking, and foreign policymaking. For most policy issues, the rational method provides no guidance whatsoever for policymakers. Incrementalism circumvents these problems, producing defensible policies where the rational method is paralyzed (Hoppe, 2018).

Incrementalism emphasizes the amelioration of concrete problems rather than the pursuit of abstract ideals such as social justice. Affected publics bring problems to government through a process and termed the social fragmentation of analysis. No single actor possesses information sufficient to make a rational policy decision, and problems are often addressed without ever being fully defined (Dunn, 2018).

Rational Choice Theory

The theory was developed by Adams Smith and asserts that aggregate social behavior results from the behavior of individual actors, each of whom is making their individual decision. And it is upon the individual to come up with the policy that will gain them in their productive life. The rational choice theory states that individuals use rational calculations to make rational choices and achieve outcomes that are aligned with their objectives. Using rational choice theory is expected to result in outcomes that provide people with the greatest

benefit and satisfaction, given the limited option they have available (Burns & Roszkowska, 2016).

Rational choice theory is based on the assumption of involvement from rational actors. Rational actors are the individuals in an economy who make rational choices based on calculations and the information that is available to them. Rational actors form the basis of rational choice theory. The rational choice theory assumes that individuals, or rational actors, try to actively maximize their advantage in any situation and, therefore, consistently try to minimize their losses (Foy et al., 2018).

Power Elite Theory

The theory was established by Wright (1956) to describe and explain the power relationships in contemporary society. This theory proposes that governance is by a class of people who occupy dominant and top positions of influence and power in society and that many policies and decisions are made by three groups of people who include leaders in the corporate arena, senior officers in the military, and a not many of notable leaders in the political arena. What these three groups agree upon is largely what becomes law or guides to the way industries and sectors are managed hence selfish and partisan interests in their decisions or guidelines. These groups ensure that most of the policies benefit cartels outside government (Davies, 2017). Under this arrangement, policies are designed to benefit the elite, and as such majority of small players are left out to bear the burdens of heavy regulations while a few dodge state supervisions (Nwokolo & Aghedo, 2018). The power of the elite can be felt in all sectors because they seek to control all activities for the benefit of their political and business interests. They can resist and frustrate any effort to bring order if that order is going to disorganize their interests even if it is meant to be a benefit to the masses (Davies, 2017).

Media as a stakeholder on County assembly Policy Development

All media including print media, Social Media, and the digital medial (Visual, print or audio) exist

primarily to deliver message content entertainment, information, and advertisements to a vast and mass audience. The media act as a fourth pillar of the state. Hence, the channel (Platforms) delivers the message to a mass audience is called mass media or primary mean of communication. Thus, Mass media is communication whether written, broadcast, or spoken that reaches a large audience However at the international level, particularly in developed countries, people depend on the neutrality of media and freedom of expression but the revolution of France in 1968 reshaped the role of media. Goldstein and Keohane (2019) assert that critics of the revolution of France noticed that during the revolution media played an important and vital role and according to their expression it paved the way towards the revolution and brainwashed common people. Besides this media has also played a significant role on the issues of Watergate and Richard Nicolson. Since the media act as channels of communication, it is important to determine whether they are politically biased in their presentation of information. If they are biased they may distort the concept of Democracy. Because they may, in such cases, only serve to manipulate rather than illuminate social problems. Media should be thought of as both carriers and delivery systems. They carry advertisements and deliver them to individuals who buy or choose media first based on the kind and quality of entertainment and information and second on the kinds of advertisements they deliver.

Media can influence political elites and policymakers directly. Zaller (1991) argues that public opinion is heavily influenced by exposure to elite and media discourse, policymakers are also affected by media discourse. The relationship is reciprocal, however. For the media to have a direct influence on policymaking, a few conditions are necessary: politicians have to receive and internalize the media's message, politicians' preferences have to be subject to change, and media have to put out conflicting, dissenting, or alternative information to the policy status quo.

Certainly, in any modern liberal democracy, it is accepted that politicians and policymakers are avid consumers of media content if for no other reason than to receive information on their performance. The second criterion, whether politicians' preferences are subject to change, is well established in the policy opinion responsiveness literature (discussed below). The third criterion, the presence of conflicting, dissenting, or alternative information to the current status of policy, has been documented by the work of Schatt Schneider, Cobb, and Elder. Why and under which circumstances do politicians react to the media's input on policy? Robinson (2005) notes that, in most cases, media affects individual politicians in the same way as ordinary citizens; they act on media cues to communicate with one another and with the public. This is to some degree tempered by the personal traits of political actors and the specialization or prominence of political actors. The more generalist a political actor, for instance, the more they will be driven by the media; specialized political actors, on the other hand, tend to focus more on their policy subfield, and are often neglected by general media coverage. Nevertheless, policymakers, in general, are some of the top consumers of media for the same reasons as the politically interested citizen; media can provide the most thorough and reliable coverage of political issues across policy domains and national contexts. Despite this, there have been few attempts to understand how media help to shape the policy decisions of policymakers. The policy sciences community has been able to point out that media may directly influence public policy, though the empirical links largely point to correlation rather than causation. Some scholars argue that media impact the policy process through an "insider" relationship with politicians. Even within these accounts, there is some uncertainty whether media

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey approach. The research target population was 47 counties in Kenya with 2,222 MCAs (1450 elected and 772 Nominated) (Ministry of devolution and planning, 2020). The study considered 5 counties in Kenya as the sampling frame that included; Taita Taveta with 44 MCAs, Kericho with 33 MCAs, Migori with 25 MCAs, Vihiga with 47 MCAs, and Kiambu with 87 MCAs which sums up to 236 MCs. The sample for the study was 148 MCAs sampled through Taro Yamane (1967). Data collection tools for this study were questionnaires and interview guides. A pilot study was carried out from a representative sample to determine and improve the validity and reliability of the questionnaires. Reliability was estimated in several ways, Cronbach alpha being a test of internal consistency and frequency were used to calculate the correlation values among the answers on an assessment tool. From Cronbach, a score above 0.7 was viewed to be critical because it indicated that the instrument is reliable (Tarakal & Dennick, 2011). Data was analyzed through both descriptive and inferential analysis.

FINDINGS

The study sought to establish to what extent media information has been adopted by MCAs as a stakeholder in decision making in terms of their major media source of information as well as media information practices. The results were presented in the following subheadings.

Major Media Source of Information

This section sought to establish the major media source of information among the respondents. The results of the study are shown in Table 1

Table 1: Major Media Source of Information among the respondents

Media Information	Frequency	Percent
Newspapers	51	41.5
Television and radio	40	32.5
Social media e.g., Twitter or Facebook	15	12.2

magazines	17	13.8
Total	123	100.0

Source: Research (2021)

Table 1 above indicated that newspapers were the major media source of information among the respondents as shown by 41.5%; followed by mainstream media (radio and television) as shown by 32.5%; followed by magazines as shown by 13.0%. Only 12.2% of the respondents considered social media e.g., Twitter and Facebook as their major source of information. The results of the study indicate that majority of the respondents use print media (e.g., newspapers) as their major media source of information. Anonymous 2' 'Anonymous 3' revealed that print and radio, mainly local radio stations served as an important source of

information in the development of policies in the county governments in Kenya. What was reported by the radios and print media served as important sources of information in the development of policies in the county government such as matters that touch on weather, disasters, and catastrophes to offer disaster management policies. Sagheer (2017) who conducted a study on sources of news and journalism and the importance of news concurs with the results of the study that newspapers and magazines are considered as the main sources that provide important information on national and international levels.

Table 2: Media Information Practices

Statement	SD		D		N		A		SA		M	Std
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Most of the policy sources are from Print media (newspaper)	9	7.3	13	10.6	16	13.0	56	45.5	29	23.6	3.67	1.163
Assembly policies are normally influenced by the public outcry retrieved from the social media	1	0.8	7	5.7	13	10.6	69	56.1	33	26.8	4.02	0.824
Digital media normally outlines ways of developing assembly policies	2	1.6	9	7.3	8	6.5	64	52.0	40	32.5	4.07	0.912

Source: Research (2021)

As shown by Table 2 above, it was agreed on the statement that most of the policy sources are from print media (newspaper) as shown by a mean of 3.67 (A=45.5%); it was also agreed that assembly policies are normally influenced by the public outcry retrieved from the social media as shown by a mean of 4.02 (A=56.1%) and finally, it was agreed that digital media normally outlines ways of developing assembly policies as shown by a mean of 4.07 (A=52.0%). 'Anonymous 1' Anonymous 2' and 'Anonymous 3' noted that print media, television, and radio news were mainly considered as the most relevant source of information in the policy development in the county governments in Kenya.

Bou-Karroum et al. (2017) who conducted a study on using media to impact health policy-making concurs with the results of this study that interventions by the media have positive impacts when they are used as tools that influence policy formulation when used as tools that can improve compliance with laws and regulations as well as when used as tools of awareness that lead to policy adoption. In addition, Bekkers and Edwards (2017) who studied the role of social media in policy processes indicates that individuals in a community are key stakeholders in the policy formulation process and they participate in this process by expressing their opinions through media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study concluded that media information had a positive and significant influence on policy development in the county government in Kenya. The study conclusions support the Systems theory that effects on the subsystems affect the overall system, media information is a stakeholder source of information in policy development in the county government in Kenya.

The study recommended the use of newspapers and also television and radio as the major source of information because major events are reported through print and the TVs and radios which acts as a major source of information for policy development in the county government.

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