



**EFFECTIVENESS OF PUBLIC AWARENESS STRATEGIES ON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN IMPLEMENTATION OF DEVOLVED PROJECTS IN KAKAMEGA COUNTY**

**Sumba, J. J., Miroga, J., & Amuhaya, J.**

## EFFECTIVENESS OF PUBLIC AWARENESS STRATEGIES ON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN IMPLEMENTATION OF DEVOLVED PROJECTS IN KAKAMEGA COUNTY

Sumba, J. J.,<sup>\*1</sup> Miroga, J.,<sup>2</sup> & Amuhaya, J.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>\*1</sup>MBA Candidate, Jomo Kenya University of Agriculture & Technology [JKUAT], Kakamega Campus, Kenya

<sup>2</sup> Ph.D, Lecturer, Jomo Kenya University of Agriculture & Technology [JKUAT], Kakamega Campus, Kenya

<sup>3</sup>Lecturer, Jomo Kenya University of Agriculture & Technology [JKUAT], Kakamega Campus, Kenya

Accepted: October 26, 2018

### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of public awareness strategies on public participation in the implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega County. The study used Descriptive method. The study population comprised 600 residents of Kakamega County from six sub counties. SPSS version 22 was used to analyze quantitative data. The study results indicated that the current public awareness strategies used by Kakamega County were ineffective. Most respondents felt that they had low access to information. Participants felt that there was no proper governance structures put in place to help them participate in devolved government projects. Most of the respondents also felt that electronic media did influence citizens' participation in the implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega County, although the use of old media like radio did not yield maximum results. The study also found that roadshows played a big role on citizens' participation in the implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega County. Respondents felt that there was no room for feedback when information was announced. To ensure effective public participation in devolved projects, Kakamega County should: Publicize all its proposed projects in the relevant materials and media that can be quickly and widely accessed; Carry out civic education; set up a desk at every sub county, ward, and village offices with people who can engage the public and keep them informed of all the planned projects; use modern-day media tools such as Facebook to sensitize the public; and come up with new strategies on how to conduct on-ground road shows. Therefore, the ineffectiveness of the current public awareness strategies calls for the adoption of strategic public awareness techniques to increase public participation in devolved projects.*

**Key Words:** Access to Information, Participation, Governance Administrative Structure, Electronic Media, on-ground road shows, Devolved Projects

## INTRODUCTION

Public awareness is one of the cardinal requirements for public participation. Under the County Governments Act, 2011, counties are required to use effective communication tools to create awareness on devolution and governance, promote citizens understanding for purposes of peace and national cohesion, undertake advocacy on core development issues such as agriculture, education, health, security, economics, sustainable environment, among others; and promotion of the freedom of the media (KSG, 2015). Under Section 95(1), counties are required to facilitate public communication and access to information in the form of media with the widest public outreach in the county, which may include television stations; information communication technology centres; websites; community radio stations; public meetings; and traditional media. Additional requirements under Section 96 include the duty of designating an office for purposes of enabling access to information; and, subject to national legislation on access to information, enact legislation on access to information. Further, counties are required to create avenues for promoting effective participation of marginalized and minority groups in public and political life (KSG, 2015).

In Brazil, the most common stated example of effective public participation is the municipal participatory budgeting initiative (Kotwal, 2008). This participatory process is one of the creative programmes developed by the city of Porto Alegre in Brazil. The aim of the participatory budgeting process is to address severe disparities in the living standard of the city residents, by bringing these residents on board during participatory processes. In India, a common stated example of effective public participation is the community and sustainable forest management. Sustainability of forest management comes through community participation at all levels from planning, intervention and monitoring (Kotwal, 2008).

Over the years, Kenya has progressively shifted from a centralized to a decentralized form of governance. This paradigm shift was precipitated by the shortfalls that are often characteristic of highly centralized systems. The shortfalls include administrative bureaucracies and inefficiencies, misappropriation of public resources and the marginalization of local communities in development processes. Consequently, in the late 1990s, the government began the devolvement of specific funds and decision making authority to the districts, local authority and constituency levels (Gitegi & Iravo, 2016). The promulgation of the New Constitution in August 2010 provides a strong legal foundation for the enhancement of participatory governance through devolved structures at county level.

The County Government Act 2012 (CGA), Public Finance Management Act 2012 (PFMA), and Urban Areas and Cities Act (2011) all include measures on public participation for county governments to implement. They require public participation in many aspects of national and county government, including: developing new legislation, setting national and county planning and budget priorities, reviewing public sector performance and expenditures, and submitting grievances (IEA, 2015). Public participation is required throughout all stages of the planning and budget cycle. County governments are required to create structures, mechanisms and guidelines for public participation and establish mechanisms for wide public communication and access to information, and submit an annual report on citizen participation to the county assembly. Non-state actors are also recognized as having an important role in implementation and oversight (CGA Section 87), and in ensuring public participation in county planning processes (CGA Section 104). Still, despite Constitutional provisions on transparency numerous people report difficulty in obtaining even basic government documents.

Information sources, resources, ICT equipment and internet connections should be established, strengthened and updated in all communities so that current and relevant information can be accessed, utilised and updated. Government should simplify technical documents such as budgets, translate important policies into local languages, and rewrite them in popular versions (Hilmer, 2010). The government and other key development partners should develop, implement and monitor a programme to create public awareness about the proposed projects to involve the people in planning and implementation. The procedures and channels for accessing information, and information dissemination schedules, should be clearly and widely publicised. Information on community projects should be frequently publicised in the mass media such as local and FM radio, televisions, newspapers and noticeboards (Hilmer, 2010).

### **Statement of the problem**

Allowing participation in the decision making process from the early stage of related planning procedure encourages citizens' input in the planning process and present the views of the entire community on specific issues to ensure the proposed plan will mirror their aspirations (Pande, 2008). In a broader sense, appropriate public participation is a key towards strategic development given that the proposed development will be structured based on the stakeholders' demands and needs, which include the benefits for future generations (Sithole, 2005). However, at the heart of this matter rests the issue of conditions that might constrain achieving appropriate public participation. Public participation efficiency and effectiveness might be compromised by the difficulties faced by the public when it comes to accessing information early enough before the implementation of the projects (Lubale, 2012). In Kakamega County, the devolved government always uses roadshow announcements and government

administrative system (Sub County and ward administrators' announcements in funeral gatherings) as the main communication strategies for public awareness. However, these are not effective methods to sensitize the public on the crucial projects the government is planning to initiate. For example, the roadshow announcements will only reach those people by the roadside at that particular moment when the announcement is being made. This locks out many people from participating in the planning of the projects. As for the announcements made during funeral gatherings, many people miss out on what the government is planning because funerals are only attended by a handful of relatives, friends, and neighbours. As a result, most of the projects initiated by the county stall, because their implementation was not based on the majority's interests. Hinged on this background, the researcher sought to investigate the effectiveness of public awareness strategies on public participation in the implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega County.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective was to investigate the effectiveness of public awareness strategies on public participation in the implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega County. The specific objectives were:-

- To find out how access to information influences public participation in the implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega County
- To investigate how different age group perceive how governance structures influence public participation in the implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega County
- To find out how use of electronic media influences public participation in the implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega County

- To find out how on-ground road shows influence public participation in the implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega County

### Research Hypotheses

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Access to information does not have a significant influence on public participation in the implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega county.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** Age does not have a significant influence on how the public view the use of governance structures on public participation in the implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega County.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** Use of electronic media does not have a significant influence citizens' participation in the implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega County.

**H<sub>04</sub>:** Use of on-ground roadshows does not have a significant influence citizens' participation in the implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega County.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Review

#### Transactional Model of Communication

From the interpersonal communication field of study, Barnlund in 1970 first proposed the transactional model of communication (Botan, 2017). Barnlund believed that in the transactional model, interpersonal communication was a dynamic process in which the two participants are simultaneously sending and receiving messages. The organization should promote a message influence approach to strategic communication that focuses on benefitting the public. The transactional model calls for the right audience, right message, right time, and right place (Botan, 2017). The message and advancing its goals are paramount. Communication strategy must reach intended audiences through [a] customized message that is relevant to those audiences. The model provides a useful intellectual framework for strategic

communication practice. Transactional model of communication espouses the importance of developing and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and key publics. Both the organization and publics influence the other, and communication activities link the parties (Botan, 2017).

### Theory of Relational Communication

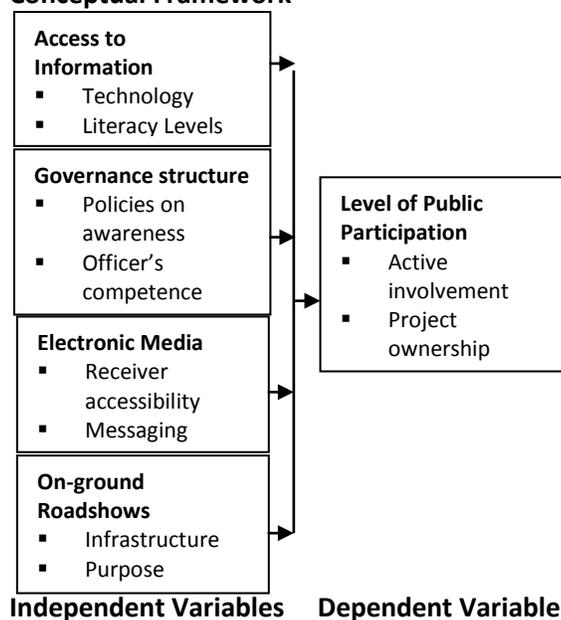
Moving beyond the simple linear message influence model and the transactional model, anthropologist Bateson developed the theory of relational communication (Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2014). The relational communication body of knowledge is the most promising theory to advance the effective practice of strategic communication. Bateson developed two seminal propositions that serve as the foundation for other relational theories. The first proposition is the dual nature of messages. Every communicative exchange has two messages, a report message and a command message. The report message contains the substance or content of the communication, while the command message describes the relationship (Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2014). These two elements are also known as the content message and the relationship message.

Bateson's second proposition is that relationships can be characterized by complementarity or symmetry. In a complementary relationship, if one participant is dominant, the other is submissive. In symmetry, dominance is met by dominance; submissiveness elicits submissiveness (Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2014).

While developing this theory, Bateson explored the complex ways in which persons-in-relationship use communication to manage the naturally opposing forces that impinge on their relationship at any given time. He viewed relationship as a dialogical and dialectical process (Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2014). By describing relationship as both dialogical and dialectical, Bateson meant that the natural tensions of relationships are managed through coordinated talk.

He characterized his theory as dialogic, meaning relationships are defined through dialogue. He viewed dialogue as conversations that define and redefine relationships as they emerge in actual situations over time. He also referred to his theory as dialectical, meaning that contradictions are managed in relationships. For Bateson, dialectic refers to a tension between opposing forces within a system (Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2014). They are sites of struggle among meanings that arise in various and not-always consistent discourses.

### Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

Source: Author (2018)

### Review of Study Variables

#### Access to Information

Daruwala and Nayak (2007) found that access to accurate, clear and relevant information enables disadvantaged people to influence issues that are critical to their lives through claiming basic rights and entitlements, availability of basic services, work opportunities etc. It also helps them to understand government policies and programmes, how participation and decision-making work, their role in

these processes and how to effectively monitor and hold government to account.

An earlier study by Holdar and Zakharchenko (2002) adds that in order to have effective citizen participation, the information disseminated has to be relevant. This information should come from both the general public and the government, and without information effective citizen participation is virtually unattainable. Similarly, Maina (2013) contend that free access to information plays an important role in promoting transparency, participation and good governance. For it to be meaningful, information must be relevant, provided in a timely manner, and with its source clearly evident. He also notes that the cost to citizens of obtaining the information should be reasonable, and that it should be available across social class boundaries.

#### Government Administrative Structure

Although many counties have put in place some of the infrastructure required to enhance public participation, there are differing levels of success in their actual implementation. In its study of public participation in four counties (Makueni, Isiolo, Kisumu and Turkana) the Institute for Economic Affairs (IEA) notes, for example, that Kisumu County has established processes and platforms for effective public participation, which include decentralized structures to the Ward and Sub-County levels and appointment of the administrators. The existence of these platforms has enabled citizens to attend public forums on development projects at these two levels. However, when it comes to mobilization by MCAs of citizens to participate in meetings, a bias was noted against citizens who hold contrary opinions. This weakness undermines public participation.

In regard to Turkana County, it was noted that it had generally succeeded in providing infrastructure for public participation. It has a Public Participation Act in place and has established the offices of Sub-County and Ward Administrators. However, the report noted that the county has not effectively involved citizens in

legislative processes. The county is also yet to establish the offices of the Village Administrators and Village Councils due to lack of a policy to define their operations.

### **Electronic Media**

Radio emerged as a mass medium in the 1920s, thanks to the growing popularity of mass entertainment and technological advancements stemming from the development of the telegraph, telephone and the wireless. McQuail (2010) states that radio seems to have been a technology looking for a use, rather than a response to a demand for a new kind of service. According to McLeish (2005), unlike all previous communications technologies, radio and television were systems primarily designed for transmission and reception as abstract processes, with little or no definition of preceding content. Radio and television both came to borrow from existing media, and most of the popular content forms of both are derivative from film, music, stories, news and sport (McQuail, 2010). Radio holds tremendous potential to transform lives by creating awareness that can reach many people. A significant amount of the public's knowledge of a number of issues is likely to come from the media. Much of what people hear about issues such as water and air pollution, education, and governmental projects among others is likely to come from the media or from others who have heard it from the media. It therefore follows that media can be used as an effective tool for raising awareness on public participation.

### **On-Ground Roadshows**

On-ground roadshows refer to the use of vans with public address systems to broadcast to people important messages along roads. In Kenya, roadshows are mostly employed during the elections campaign periods. They are also used for other purposes, like announcing the dates and venues of certain events. Roadshows influence public

participation for they pass information across, with the hope that those who get the message will spread it to other people. This technique might, however, not be effective if not well implemented. Due to lack of existing literature on this aspect of public awareness, especially in the public participation area, the researcher has included it in the research to deduce its effectiveness in public participation in the implementation of devolved projects.

### **METHODOLOGY**

Research design is the overall plan for connecting the conceptual research problems to the pertinent (and achievable) empirical research (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2009). The descriptive approach was used to describe variables rather than to test a predicted relationship between variables. Kakamega County had a population of 1,660,651 and an area of 3,033.8 km<sup>2</sup> (Kakamega First County Integrated Development Plan, 2013). In total, there were 12 sub counties. The researcher administered interviews across Likuyani, Khwisero, Matungu, Lurambi, Shinyalu, and Mumias East sub counties. These sub counties were selected because they represented the diverse demographics of the Kakamega county citizens. This study examined Kakamega county residents who are eligible voters, that is 18 years and above. Data was collected from Primary sources (primary data) by the administration of questionnaires to the target population. The International Business Machines (IBM) Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 22) was used to analyze data.

### **RESULTS**

#### **Inferential Statistics**

#### **Effect of Access to Information on Citizens' Participation in the Implementation of Devolved Projects in Kakamega County**

The different hypotheses that formulated were analyzed using t-test. The p-value was used to

determine whether the hypotheses were accepted or rejected. After running the T-test and ANOVA on citizens' participation in the implementation of devolved projects, the results were obtained.

Table 1 indicated the effect of access to information on citizens' participation in the implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega County. Generally, most respondents felt that they had low access to information on citizens' participation in the implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega

County. Respondents from Lurambi recorded higher scores (mean 2.44, SD 0.89) compared to those from other sub counties Mumias East (mean 2.42, SD 0.83), Khwisero (mean 2.31, SD 0.91), Shinyalu (mean 2.21, SD 0.81), Matungu (mean 2.15, SD 0.78) and Likuyani (mean 2.08, SD 0.98) (table 1). The findings, therefore, supported that hypothesis that access to information affects citizens' participation in the implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega County.

**Table 1: Effect of Access to Information on Citizens' Participation in the Implementation of Devolved Projects in Kakamega County Mean Scores**

Sub-County	Mean	Std. Deviation
Lurambi	2.44	0.89
Mumias East	2.42	0.83
Khwisero	2.31	0.91
Shinyalu	2.21	0.81
Matungu	2.15	0.78
Likuyani	2.08	0.98

The study assessed the effectiveness of the public awareness strategies on public participation in the implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega County. From the results, most respondents felt that they did not have access to information on various county activities, therefore, hindering their chances of participating in devolved projects. In an earlier study, Holdar and Zakharchenko (2002) found that in order to have effective citizen participation, the information disseminated had to be relevant. This information should come from both the general public and the government, and without information effective citizen participation is virtually unattainable. Similarly, Maina (2013) contend that free access to information plays an important role in promoting transparency, participation and good governance. For it to be meaningful, information must be relevant, provided in a timely manner, and with its source clearly evident. The current results supported earlier findings by Kugonza and Mukobi (2015) who found that information utilisation appeared to have significant influence on public participation. An

increase in information utilisation is associated with increased public participation in planning, monitoring and assessing government projects. Residents from Lurambi recorded the highest scores because they are near the county headquarters, therefore, might receive information faster than people from other sub counties. Although Kakumba and Nsingo (2008) found out that different individuals in the same community may have different interests and may not necessarily want to participate in development projects, this study found out that most of the people in Kakamega County would like to fully participate in the planning and implementation of the devolved projects.

**Effect of Governance Structures on Citizen's Participation in the Implementation of Devolved Projects in Kakamega County**

A one-way between groups analysis of variance was conducted to investigate the effect governance structures on citizens' participation in the implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega

County. Participants were grouped into four categories as per their age groups (18-35, 36-45, 46-55, 56-65). Generally, participants felt that there were no proper governance structures put in place to help them participate in government projects. There was a statistically significant difference (0.01) in scores between the 18-35 group and the 56-65 group. Using Tukey HSD test to carry out post-hoc comparisons, the researcher found mean score for the young respondents (18-35, M=37.3429,

SD=6.29914) to be significantly different from the older respondents (56-65, M=43.4651, SD=8.19683). The p value for the ANOVA was 0.01, which was lower than the  $p=0.05$  significance value. Therefore, the findings supported  $H_{02}$  which stated that, younger citizens believe the use of governance structures do have significant influence on citizens' participation in the implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega county than older participants (table 2).

**Table 2: ANOVA results for effect of Governance Structures on Citizen's Participation in the Implementation of Devolved Projects in Kakamega County**

Age	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	Std. Err	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min.	Max.	F	Sig.
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound				
18-35	234	32.33	5.68	1	0.66	24.55	37.98	12	39	1.44	
36-45	146	37.34	6.30	1	0.83	26.69	38.99	14	44	1.27	
46-55	116	43.47	8.20	1	0.73	39.02	45.91	8	43	2.91	
56-65	84	42.72	7.93	1	0.68	31.93	39.09	9	38	1.98	0.01*
<b>Total</b>	<b>580</b>										

**\* Statistically significant  $p < 0.05$**

A one-way between groups analysis of variance was conducted to investigate the effect governance structures on citizens' participation in the implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega County. By looking at age as a demographic variable, the researcher sought to fill in the gap that was left by the IEA (2015), which sought to review the status of public participation, and county information dissemination frameworks in Isiolo, Kisumu, Makeni, and Turkana Counties without considering age. Participants were grouped into four categories as per their age groups (18-35, 36-45, 46-55, 56-65). There was a statistically significant difference (0.01) in scores between the 18-35 group and the 56-65 group. Using Tukey HSD test to carry out post-hoc comparisons, the researcher found mean score for the young respondents (18-35, M=37.3429, SD=6.29914) to be significantly different from the older respondents (56-65, M=43.4651, SD=8.19683). Therefore, the findings supported  $H_{02}$  which stated

that, younger citizens believe the use of governance structures do have significant influence on citizens' participation in the implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega county. Although the sample was made up of different age groups, 40.34% (234) of the respondents fall in the 18-35 years' age bracket. Individuals with 56-65 years were only 14.48% (84). The differences in terms of age can be said to stem from the higher illiteracy levels among the older participants than the young participants. In an earlier study, the Institute for Economic Affairs (IEA) noted that Kisumu County had established processes and platforms for effective public participation, which include decentralized structures to the Ward and Sub-County levels and appointment of the administrators. Turkana County had also generally succeeded in providing infrastructure for public participation. The IEA (2015) study further show that Isiolo County was found to have established offices of Sub-County and Ward administrators. The current findings show that

Kakamega County does not have the proper subcounty, ward, and community level structures that can increase citizens' participation in devolved projects. Instead, most announcements are normally made during funerals, which locks out many people. IEA (2015) also found that Makueni had some of the best infrastructure of facilitating citizen participation. Its civic education infrastructure was found to be especially well-developed with an elaborate structure operating under the office of the County Executive Committee member in charge of devolution and public service. Although respondents in this study felt that government administrative structures were crucial in increasing public participation, they stated that such programs like civic education were not available in Kakamega County.

#### **Effect of Electronic Media on Citizens' Participation in the Implementation of Devolved Projects in Kakamega County**

The next hypothesis stated that use of electronic media, especially radio stations, did not influence citizens' participation in the implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega County. Generally, most of the respondents felt that electronic media does influence citizens' participation in the implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega County. 65% of the respondents felt that electronic media was very important in increasing awareness about the county projects. Only 35% of the total figure felt that the electronic media did not have an effect on citizens' participation in the implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega County. In terms of owning receivers, 55% of the respondents strongly agreed that they owned a radio and/or a TV and smart phones while 25% disagreed to owning a gadget at all. However, 78% of the respondents disagreed that the language used to sensitize the public, especially radio, was not easily understandable. Only 10% felt that they understood the language. In terms of accuracy, only 27% of the

respondents agreed that the information they received was clear and to the point. 45% disagreed that the information was accurate while 6% were undecided. Therefore, the findings failed to reject H03, which meant that, of electronic media does influence citizens' participation in the implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega County.

#### **Effect of on-ground roadshows on citizens' participation in the implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega County**

The next hypothesis stated that use of on-ground roadshows does not influence citizens' participation in the implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega County. From the findings, this hypothesis was not supported because roadshows played a big role on citizens' participation in the implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega County. 68% of the respondents strongly agreed that roadshows only pass information with no room for feedback while only 17% disagreed with the statement. 45% of the respondents also agreed that a bigger percentage of roadshows play more music at the expense of informing the public the relevant message. 13% of the participants disagreed with this statement while 3% were undecided. A larger percentage of the respondents (51%) also agreed that roadshow dancers commentate on entertaining the public at the expense of informing them; 12% disagreed; while 2% were undecided. From table 3, the p values for participants from Shinyalu, Mumias East, Khwisero, Matungu, Likuyani, and Lurambi were 0.229, 0.321, 0.136, 0.364, 0.283, and 0.234 respectively. These p-values suggest that, while most people felt that the current roadshow programs by the county were not effective, there was no difference in the perceptions of young and older participants. While most of them felt that the current roadshow programs were not effective, they also felt that on-ground roadshows

affect citizens' participation in the implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega County.

**Table 3: T-test for effect of on-ground road shows on citizens' participation in the implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega County**

Sub County	Mean	P-Value	
		Younger Participants	Older Participants
Shinyalu	3.7	3.69	0.229
Mumias East	3.65	3.99	0.321
Khwisero	3.39	3.54	0.136
Matungu	3.54	3.27	0.364
Likuyani	3.45	3.24	0.283
Lurambi	3.89	3.65	0.234

**\* Statistically significant  $p < 0.05$**

After conducting the test to identify if the use of on-ground roadshows influence citizens' participation in the implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega County. From the findings, roadshows were found to play a big role on citizens' participation in the implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega County. Most of the respondents strongly felt that roadshows only pass information with no room for feedback while just a few disagreed with the statement. In most roadshow settings in Kakamega County, the public address vehicle normally passes by the major roads and market centers, with the announcer just making announcement, and not concerned if the public is getting it in the correct way or not. These vehicles make little effort to penetrate the interior parts of the county, which surprisingly, is where many people live. Many respondents also felt that roadshows were more like entertainment shows than public announcement entities. This was because of the fact that, sometimes, the public address vehicles normally have dancers who are meant to attract crowds before an announcement is made. In the case of Kakamega County, however, the vehicles rarely stop; the announcements are made as the vehicle moves forward. This denies people the opportunity to gather what is being said.

**CONCLUSIONS**

From the study, residents in Kakamega County have low access to information on, which limits their participation in the implementation of devolved projects. Unlike other counties like Kisumu and Turkana, Kakamega County lacks proper governance structures that can help citizens to participate in devolved government projects. The use of the old electronic media tools like radio is not effective in increasing citizens' participation in the implementation of devolved projects in the county. Although roadshows play a big role on citizens' participation in the implementation of devolved projects, Kakamega County is yet to come up with the best mechanisms that can penetrate the interior parts.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

To ensure effective public participation in devolved projects, Kakamega County should publicize all its proposed projects in the relevant materials and media that can be quickly and widely accessed. Some of these media and material include the county Facebook and WhatsApp groups, the county twitter handle, and in the county weekly reviews. These media tools will be able to strategically communicate the intended message and increase public participation in devolved projects. The County

government of Kakamega should also carry out civic education to ensure that people are informed of their responsibility to take part in the planning and implementation of the county projects. Educating the public on a regular basis will create a good relationship between the government and the public, which will motivate the public to be actively involved in the planning and implementation of devolved projects.

The County government of Kakamega should also set up a desk at every sub county, ward, and village offices with people who can engage the public and keep them informed of all the planned projects. Through such forums, the public can request for audience with the respective County Executive Committee members under whose portfolio the projects fall and offer their suggestions and opinions. The government should also come up with new strategies on how to conduct on-ground road shows. The strategies should involve using vehicles that can penetrate the most interior roads to reach as many people as possible. Instead of just making announcements on the major roads and market

centres, the vehicles should traverse through the villages to make maximum impact.

The message passed across to people should be clear and accurate. Besides, the language used should be understood by the residents of that particular town/village. Finally, the government should also use modern-day media tools such as Facebook and WhatsApp and Twitter to sensitize the public on how they can participate in devolved projects forums, meetings, and discussions.

#### **Areas of Further Studies**

The study was conducted in Kakamega County; due to social-cultural and socio-economic difference it may be difficult for it to be generalized in other parts of the country especially Nairobi County, therefore, further studies should be conducted in other counties in Kenya so as to compare the findings. The study omitted some other variable type such as household income and government policies and regulation which could be used as moderating and intervening variables respectively. Therefore, further studies should be carried with those inclusions.

#### **REFERENCES**

- Baswony, C. (2014). *How County government communicates with citizens: Opportunities and challenges*. Transparency International Kenya. Nairobi, Kenya.
- Biglang-awa, L. & Bestari, G. (2011). Improving project success through effective communication and participation. ADB. Retrieved from [www.adb.org/evaluation](http://www.adb.org/evaluation)
- Botan, C. (2017). *Strategic communication theory and practice: The cocreational model*. NY: Wiley & Sons.
- Chompunth, C. & Chomphan, S. (2012). Evaluating public participation process in development projects in Thailand: A case of the Hin Krut power plant project. *American Journal of Applied Sciences*, 9(6), 865-873.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research Methods in Education* (6th ed). New York: Routledge.

- Cooke, M. & Jutten, T. (2013). The theory of communicative action after three decades. *Constellations*, 20(4), 516-17.
- CRECO. (2014). *Model Policy Framework for Public Participation in County Governments*. Constitution and Reform Education Consortium, Nairobi Kenya.
- Creswell, J. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches (4th ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Daruwala, M. & Nayak, V. (2007). Our rights, our information: Empowering people to demand rights through knowledge. GSDRC. Retrieved from <http://gsdrc.org/document-library/our-rights-our-information-empowering-people-to-demand-rights-through-knowledge/>
- Gitegi, C. & Iravo, M. (2016). Factors affecting public participation in effective devolved governance in Kenya: A case of Uasin Gishu County. *The Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management*, 3(4), 1303-1324.
- Government of Kenya (2012). *Public Finance Management Act 2012*. The Government Printer. Nairobi
- Habermas, J. (1987). *The Theory of Communicative Action*. NY: Beacon Press.
- Herranz, P. (2010) *Filling the governance gap in disaster risk reduction*. Issue Paper on Accountability and Partnerships in DRR. Manila, The Philippines: United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UN ISDR).
- Hilmer, J.D. (2010). *The state of participatory democratic theory, new political science*. University of British Columbia, Vancouver, England.
- Holdar, G., & Zakharchenko, O. (2002). *Citizen participation handbook*. Kyiv: iMedia Ltd.
- Holtzhausen, D. & Zerfass, A. (2014). *The Routledge handbook of strategic communication*. NY: Routledge.
- IEA. (2014). *First county integrated development planning: experiences and lessons from Laikipia, Nandi, Uasin Gishu, and Meru counties*. Institute of Economic Affairs. Nairobi Kenya.
- IEA. (2015). *Review of status of public participation, and county information dissemination frameworks: A Case Study of Isiolo Kisumu Makueni and Turkana Counties*. Institute of Economic Affairs. Nairobi, Kenya.
- Kakumba, S. & Nsingo, R. (2011), Factors Affecting Public Participation in Services Delivery Projects in Buikwe District Local Government Uganda.

- Kaseya, C. & kihonge, E. (2016). Factors affecting the effectiveness of public participation in county governance in Kenya: A case of Nairobi county. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 6(10), 476-487.
- Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC) & Social and Public Accountability Network (SPAN). (2010). *Harmonization of Decentralized Development in Kenya: Towards Alignment, Citizen Engagement and Accountability*. KHRC & SPAN.
- Kotwal, (2008). *Sustainable Forest Management through Community Participation*. Vol. 95, no 8.
- KSG (2015). Building Public Participation in Kenya's Devolved Government: Overview of key challenges and opportunities for enhancing participation in newly Devolved institutions and systems; Kenya School of Government Working Paper Series 1.
- Kugonza, S. & Mukobi, R. (2015). *Public participation in services delivery projects in Buikwe district local government Uganda*. Retrieved from <http://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/journals/index.php/cjlg/article/view/4846/5213>
- Lubale, G. (2012). *An Introduction to the County Governments of Kenya*. Nairobi: Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology.
- Maina, B. M. (2013). *Influence of stakeholders' participation on the success of the economic stimulus programme: a case of education projects in Nakuru County, Kenya*. Retrieved from <http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke:8080/xmlui/handle/123456789/56416>
- McLeish, R. (2005). *Radio production*. Focal Press, United Kingdom.
- McQuail, D. (2010). *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*. Sage Publication Ltd.
- Mdunyelwa L. (2008). Public participation in Local Government: Its impact on service delivery. *Conference Proceedings. International Research Group Programme, GDRI, South Africa*.
- Mugenda, O.M & Mugenda, A.G. (2009). *Research Methods: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*; Acts Press: Nairobi, Kenya.
- Omollo, A. (2010). *Policy Projects on Citizen Participation in Devolved Governance in Kenya*. The Institute For Social Accountability (TISA). Nairobi, Kenya.
- Oakley, P. (2013). *Projects with people: The practice of participation in rural development*. Geneva: International Labour Office

- Odhiambo, M. & Opiyo, R. (2017). Effective public participation mechanisms in Taita Taveta county. Take Part. 1-42.
- Odhiambo, M. & Opiyo, R. (2017). Effective Public Participation Mechanisms in Mombasa, Kilifi, Taita Taveta and Kajiado Counties. Take Part. 1-144.
- Papa, R. (2016). Factors influencing public participation in project development in Busia County Kenya. Masters Project, University of Nairobi.
- Pande, S. (2008) The rights to information and societal accountability: The case of the Delhi PDS campaign. In: P. Houtzager, A. Joshi and A. Gurza Lavallo (eds) *State reform and social accountability: Brazil, India and Mexico*. IDS Bulletin Vol 38, No 6, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.
- Ronoh, G., Mulongo, L., & Kurgat, A. (2018). Challenges of integrating public participation in the devolved system of governance for sustainable development in Kenya. *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management*, 6(1), 476-491.
- Sithole P. (2005), Decentralising Voice: Women's Participation in Integrated Development Planning Process in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa.
- Streubert, H. J., Speziale, H. S & Carpenter, D. R. (2011). *Qualitative research in nursing: Advancing the humanistic imperative*. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
- Webler, T. & Tuler, S. (2006). Four perspectives on public participation process in environmental assessment and decision making: Combined results from 10 case studies. *Policy Stud. J.*, 3(2), 699-722.