

INFLUENCE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PUBLIC POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN TURKANA COUNTY GOVERNMENT

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<https://doi.org/10.37602/IJREHC.2025.7205>

ABSTRACT

Public participation challenges have significantly hindered the effective implementation of public policy in Kenyan County Governments since their inception in 2013. This has been evidenced in the Report by counties controller of budget and the continued impeachments of county governors due to poor governance cited by various county Assemblies, Turkana being not exceptional. This study aimed to determine the influence of public participation on policy implementation within Turkana County. The Hybrid theory of policy implementation was used as a research guide to the study. A conceptual framework revealing each variable was employed. The study adopted descriptive research design to gather qualitative and quantitative data. The study targeted 300 employees of Turkana County Government from different cadres. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 169 respondents using Krejcie and Morgan 1970 sampling table. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used as data collection instruments. The instruments validity was checked by conducting a pilot study in West Pokot County to test the strengths and weaknesses of the instruments. Reliability of the instruments was ascertained by use of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient $r > 0.7$ and above revealing that the instruments were reliable. Data was analyzed using SPSS Version 28. Descriptive and inferential statistics including Pearson Correlation and ANOVA were used to establish the significance level between independent and dependent variables. The study findings reveal that public participation (0.343, $P=0.000$ less than $\alpha=0.05$) have a substantial impact on the successful implementation of public policy in Turkana County. The study recommends that, introducing inclusive participatory processes, especially for marginalized groups, ensuring they are integrated into the broader policy discussions is ideal for successful implementation of public policy across county governments.

Keywords; Public policy implementation.

1.0 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Public participation is one of the fundamental practices of democratic governance premised on the idea that all citizens are equally entitled to have a say in decisions affecting them. Globally, involvement of the members of public in policy decision-making, creates ownership and improves government-citizen relations (Creighton, 2015). This helps citizens to express their opinions, concerns and ideas that enhances the effectiveness and relevance of public policy. Citizen participation increases their trust towards government activities and acts as a boost to policy implementation.

In India, citizen engagement is an essential element of democracy and its Supreme Court has consistently directed through consultation, inclusion, access and right to information (Oxford University Press, 2024). Nevertheless, there are problems despite the meaningful participation in India, which was observed during the 2020 farm laws reform debate. Inclusive participation guarantees hearing all voices especially the views of the marginalized groups and that the decisions made are in accordance with the diverse needs and aspirations of the population. Edstrom-Kattis (2023) stressed the importance of representation in democratic power relations, cultural sensitivity, respectful communication in fostering an inclusive process of engagement.

In Turkana County, engaging in inclusive participation, allows everyone in the community including women, youth and marginalized groups to have a chance to contribute in decision-making. Lack of real participation of the people in Turkana County has fettered proper implementation of policies especially on issues affecting the local people. A study by Sirite (2016) states that, a number of policies in the Turkana County do not take into sufficient account the needs of vulnerable groups in the county such as the Pastoralist communities, women and the persons living with disabilities. Filling these gaps should be made through an active process of promoting more inclusive participatory frameworks of governance that are truly representational of the needs and interests of the general population especially the groups who have historically been left out of the policy making process.

Hill et al. (2021) examined the positive side of inclusive participation and concluded that such a practice promotes social cohesion, innovation and empowerment. When individuals of different backgrounds are the ones making decisions, they have different views and may produce more creative and balanced policies. Inclusive participation in particular helps to develop trust in the relationships between governmental officials and ordinary persons, contributing to the increase in co-operation and policy effectiveness. When governance is exclusive, policies can be ineffective in the sense that they never meet the needs of the community, thus ineffective implementation.

The participation of the individuals is therefore, an important element of successful implementation of the public policy (Whig, 2018). When the citizens are a critical part of the decision-making process, policies that are made tend to take into consideration their needs and priorities. Nonetheless, in Turkana County, there has been a lack of inclusion in participation, which has affected the performance of public policy. This research proposes to fill this gap by focusing on how to make inclusive participation work in Turkana where marginalized groups have not been integrated into the process of governance and policies. Turkana county can benefit by having a more inclusive system of governance to improve performance in terms of policy implementation and delivering improved results to all its people.

Inclusive participation in Turkana County is expected to provide a chance to restore the eroded trust between people and effectively make policies to truly reflect the needs of every citizenry, where marginalization and exclusion would be a thing of the past. This is especially in light of the political unrest, shortage of access to government services and the history of political instability in the region. Incorporation of inclusive participation in policy implementation will enable Turkana community to establish more communal and effective governance that consider the interest of every citizen.

2.0 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Successful implementation of public policy is dependent on efficient public participation that enhance prudent use of resources, better delivery of public services and socio-economic growth. Public participation is exercised in well-governed systems, where the action by those in office is held accountable resulting in the increased public trust and confidence. Nevertheless, Turkana County has experienced an array of challenges related to exclusion, poor government-citizen relationships, weak governance structures, low administrative capabilities and resource scarcity that has hampered successful policy implementation (Sirite, 2016). The 2019 Report on the Ethics and Anti-corruption Report (EAC) have raised the same concerns, which revealed that, poor governance systems have led to corruption and inefficiency. These failures have been highlighted in the Commission on Revenue Allocation (CRA) Report 2022/2023, which revealed that there has been a lack of community involvement in policy decision-making hence, the ineffective management of public funds which has resulted in failure of many projects. This paper aims to examine how these failures have affected the course of public policy implementation in Turkana County and recommends ways through, which implementation can be improved.

2.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of public participation on public policy implementation in Turkana County government, Kenya.

2.2 Objectives of the study

The study was guided by the following objective;

To examine the influence of public participation on the level of public policy implementation in Turkana County Government.

2.3 Research Hypothesis

The study tested the null hypotheses and determined the relationship between the variables of the study as scientifically significant:

H1: Public participation does not significantly influence public policy Implementation in Turkana County Government.

2.4 Significance of the Study

The information would be beneficial to future researchers, policy actors and government as their reference point on public policy implementation in Turkana County Government as well as other counties in Kenya in putting in place public participation before policy implementation.

2.5 Scope of the Study

This study was conducted in Turkana County at the department of public service, decentralized administration and disaster management. The study concentrated on three variables namely:

transparency, accountability and public participation with focus to determine the effects of governance practices on public policy implementation in Turkana County government.

2.6 Limitations of the Study

The data used in this study was composed of primary data collected by use of questionnaires that were administered to various Government agencies within Turkana County government. The challenges experienced include the unwillingness of respondents to disclose information for fear of unknown intention. An introductory letter obtained from the University and the license from NACOSTI helped to clear.

2.7 Delimitations of the study

This study was only limited to the influence of public participation on public policy implementation in Turkana County government. The choice of Turkana County as location of the study was informed by the fact that, no studies of this nature has been done before in Turkana County, which the current study sought to explore.

2.8 Assumptions of the study

This study assumed that public participation influences public policy implementation in Turkana County government. The study also assumed that truthful and honest answers from respondents will be realized.

3.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was approached through hybrid theory of public policy implementation.

3.1 Hybrid Theory

The hybrid theory is attributed to Ripley Randall's 2010 conceptual model. The model suggests that implementation involves prioritization, uncertainty and the interplay between agency performance, mission and institutional structure. It highlights the connections between policy implementers and various stakeholders such as citizens, interest groups and civil society as the main beneficiaries of public policy. However, policy implementation is too complex to be accounted for by a single theory (Birkland, 2015; Signe, 2017 & Mugambi, 2018). This led to the emergence of separate approaches of public policy implementation such as top-down, bottom-up and hybrid approaches. The hybrid approach aligns to public participation parameters identified in this study thus, can help in predicting the extent to which policy implementation can be relevant, useful and valid, which make it ideal for the current study.

3.2 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a diagrammatical representation that shows the relationship between dependent and independent variables of the study (Young, 2019), The dependent variable (public policy implementation) is the predicting variable which is the outcome of the manipulation of the independent variable (public participation).

Independent variable	Intervening variable	Dependent variable
<p>Public Participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inclusivity ● Accessibility ● Consultative ● Empowerment ● Information 	<p>Constitutional Framework: Moderates factor</p>	<p>Public Policy Implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clear objectives ● Robust Planning ● Stakeholder engagement ● Capacity building ● Flexibility and its adaptability

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The above figure illustrates a conceptual framework showing relationship between variables of the study. Public participation is the independent variable while public policy implementation is the dependent variable. Constitutional Framework is the moderating variable. To achieve maximum effective implementation, public participation parameters such inclusivity, accessibility, consultative, empowerment and information sharing should be fully put in place and the outcome will be proper implementation of policies formulated by government. This observation calls for every Government official to be well conversant with policies to ensure an effective and efficient use of the constitution of Kenya 2010 which has robust principles and values of Legal Framework.

4.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design provides a clear framework for a study (da Silva, 2017). It is a plan, structure and strategy of investigation conceived to obtain answers to research problem. The study adopted descriptive research design. Descriptive research design was used since the study gathered qualitative and quantitative data that describe the nature and characteristics of governance practices influencing public policy implementation in Turkana County government, Kenya.

4.1 Location of the study

This study was conducted in Turkana County, which is located in the Northwest of Kenya and borders Uganda to the west, South Sudan to the North and Ethiopia to the Northeast respectively. Turkana County has a population of 926,976 people according to Kenya Population and Housing Census (KPHC, 2019). The county lies between Longitudes 34o 40oE and Latitudes 10o 30oS and 5o 30oN. It covers an area of 77,000 square kilometers (Km²). The researcher chose Turkana County as an area of the study to find out failures of policy implementation in Turkana County government as highlighted by the CRA report 2022/2023.

4.2 Target Population

Targeted populations are those units for which the findings of the study are meant to be generalized (Gall & Borg, 2017). The target population for this study consisted of 300 employees in the Turkana County government comprising CECs (10), Cos (23), Directors/Deputy Directors (75) and Ward administrators (30), Village administrators (156) and 6 heads of committees of Turkana County Assembly. The choice of the target population was informed by the fact that these are the personnel charged with the responsibility of implementing most of the public policies. Table 1 below presents their distribution.

Table 1: Population distribution

S/No	Type of Agency	Target Population	Sample Size
	County Executive Committee Members	10	6
	Chief officers	23	13
	County Directors/Deputy Directors	75	42
	Ward Administrators	30	17
	Village Administrators	156	88
	Heads of committees of Turkana County Assembly	6	3
	Total	300	169

4.3 Sampling technique and sample size

Stratified random sampling technique was utilized in the study. A stratified random sampling is typically used to determine data from different subgroups or strata. In this study, the respondents in each stratum were determined by sample proportionate to the study population. The sample size of each cadre was selected using Krejcie and Morgan 1970 sampling table, which gave a sample size of 169. Stratified random sampling suited this study as it allowed the researcher to quickly obtain a sample population that best represents the entire population being studied.

4.4 Data Collection Instruments

This study used questionnaire and interview schedule as data collection instruments. The information obtained through a questionnaire is similar to that obtained by an interview, but the questions tend to have less depth (Burns & Grove, 2003). Questionnaires were preferred because they are effective data collection instruments that allow respondents to give much of their opinions pertaining to the researched problem. A questionnaire is a self-report form designed to solicit information that can be obtained through written responses of the subjects (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2013). Both open-ended and closed-ended questions were subjected to the respondents. An interview schedule is a list containing a set of structured questions prepared to serve as guide for interviews in collecting data about a specific topic. Interview schedules were prepared to ascertain information in the questionnaires given by the respondents.

4.5 Validity of Instruments

Validity refers to the accuracy of instrument to measure what it is supposed to measure. A valid measurement is a reliable measurement (Signe, 2020). The content of validity of the data collection instrument was ascertained by the Supervisors and experts from the department of arts of Turkana University College

4.6 Pilot study

A Pilot test was conducted to detect the weaknesses in design and instrument as well as provide proxy data for selection of a probability sample (Cartr & Griffin, 2010). This study conducted a pilot study in West Pokot County to pre-test the questionnaires to ensure elimination of vague questions for ease of understanding. West pokot was chosen because the two counties (Turkana and West Pokot) share similar characteristics in terms of livelihood and development disparities.

4.7 Reliability of the Instrument

Reliability refers to the consistency of research instrument to yield the same results after repeated trials (Cooper & Schindler, 2016). Reliability of instruments for this study was determined using Cronbach's alpha coefficient which measures internal consistency of the instruments. Alpha coefficient of 0.7 or higher indicated that the gathered data was reliable as it has a relatively high internal consistency and can be generalized to reflect opinions of all respondents in the target.

4.8 Data collection procedures

Data collection procedure involves gathering pieces of information necessary for research process (Morris, 2017). The researcher sought permission from the National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) to allow collection of data from the Turkana County government, department of public service and decentralized administration. A total of 169 questionnaires were issued to the respondents out of which only 146 questionnaires were correctly filled and returned.

4.9 Data Analysis and Presentation

Data analysis entails the process of organizing raw data so that useful information can be extracted from it (Lewis & Thombill, 2019). Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 28 software was used to organize, code and analyze data. Inferential statistics was used to ascertain the relationship between governance practices and public policy implementation.

4.10 Ethical Considerations

The researcher observed confidentiality of information provided by the respondents by ensuring that no respondent was allowed to disclose their personal information or coerced to participate in the study thus, none of the respondents was exposed to harm. A good rapport was established between the researcher and respondents for appropriate acquisition of data. Honesty was embraced to ensure that no alteration of data collection for the credibility of findings.

4.11 Study findings, analysis and presentation

The respondents were asked to give their opinion on a set of statements related to public participation’s influence on public policy implementation in Turkana County government. The responses were placed on a five Likert scale; where 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree and 5=strongly agree as presented in Table 4.1

Table 4.1: Public participation Descriptive Analysis

Statement	S.D	D	N	A	S.A	M
County government should involve all segments of society by giving them the opportunity to participate in decision making process.	4.3	3.6	0.1	36.3	55.7	4.36
Participation is not accessible to all regardless of socio-economic status education or other factors	6.7	8.9	0.5	64.0	19.9	4.14
The public does not have access to relevant information to enable informed participation.	2.1	1.5	0.9	73.3	21.2	4.13
Decision-makers should actively seek and consider input from the public before making decisions that affect them	2.3	2.0	0.2	65.0	30.5	4.08
Community forms part of public participation for appropriate policy implementation process	3.2	2.7	0.1	68.2	25.8	3.93

The study findings in table 4.1 indicated that most of the respondents (55.7%) strongly agreed with the statement that county government should involve all segments of the society by giving them the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process; (36.3%) agreed with the statement. While (0.1%) were neutral, (3.6% and 4.3%) disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. This statement had (a mean of 4.36, standard deviation 0.48). Regarding the statement that participation is not accessible to all regardless of socio-economic status, education and other factors, (64.0% and 19.9%) of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed respectively with the statement. While (0.5%) were neutral, (8.9% and 6.7%) disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. The statement had (a mean of 4.14, standard deviation of 0.43). Similarly, a high percentage (73.3%) of the respondents agreed that the public does not access relevant information to enable informed participation, while (21.2%) strongly agreed with the statement, (0.9%) were neutral, while (2.5% and 2.1%) disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. This had (a mean of 4.13, standard deviation 0.49).

Regarding the statement that “decision-makers should actively seek and consider input from the public before making decisions that affect them majority (65%) of the respondents agreed with the statement, 30.5% agreed with the statement. While 0.9%) were neutral, (2.1% and 1.5%) disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. The view of the respondents had (a mean of 4.08, standard deviation 0.37). Lastly, 68.2% of the respondents agreed that community forms part of public participation for appropriate policy implementation process, (25.8%) strongly agreed with the statement. While (0.1%) were neutral, (2.7% and 3.2%) disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. The statement had (a mean of 3.93, standard deviation 0.46) indicating that respondents had similar opinions with the intention of the researcher.

Findings from interview schedule on public participation, respondents were asked to respond to the question: to what extent does Turkana County residents are involved in the development and implementation of public policy? The respondent suggested that; ‘the residents of Turkana County do not participate fully in the development and implementation of public policy. This is due to inefficient engagement of public and selective participation which suppress dissenting opinions.

Turkana County Government should involve everyone in the decision-making by giving them equal chance to contribute in matters policy for better realization of sustainable economic development by so doing; they will feel as part of government activity and programs based on an inclusive formula. Another respondent was asked if there are platforms or mechanisms for the public to give input and whether these inputs are considered during policy implementation. The respondent responded that, ‘low awareness, inadequate communication from local government officials has hindered members of public the chance to incorporate their input despite mechanisms in place, Proper mechanisms need to be embraced to realize sufficient policy implementation in Turkana County Government. Mechanisms such as proper communication using right channels enhance the relationship between citizens and the government.

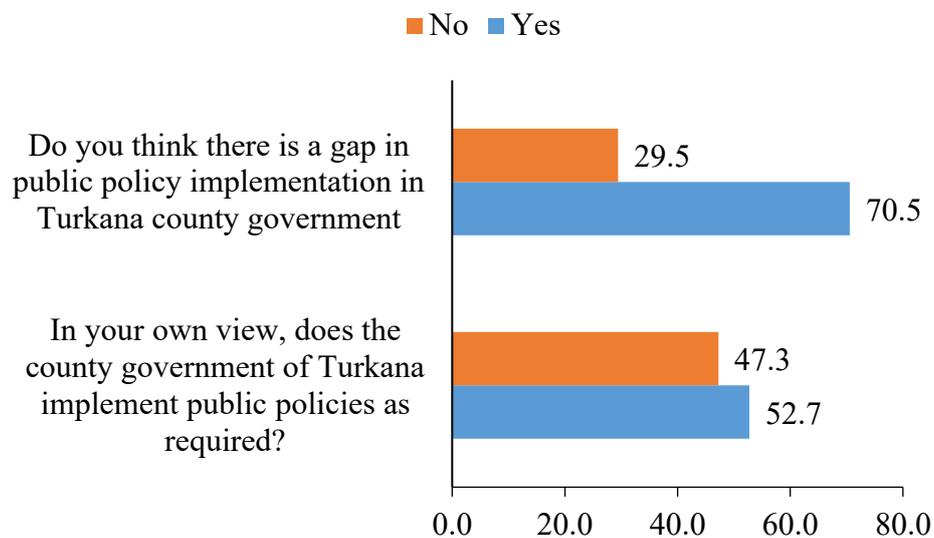
The relationship between public participation and public policy implementation was ascertained using Pearson correlation as revealed in table 4.1. A positive and strong relationship was exhibited between public participation and public policy implementation basing on correlation coefficient value of (0.343, p -value<.01). This denotes that a change in public participation influences public policy implementation change in the same direction.

The study’s findings are congruent with Research in European public institutions Rosa-Costa (2021) who highlighted that public participation in policymaking improves implementation. When citizens have input in policy creation, they are more likely to support and comply with policies, creating a cooperative relationship between public institutions and the public. Smith et al. (2019) comments that engaging local communities helps institutions identify local needs, making policies more relevant in addressing matters of public interest.

4.12 Implementation of public policy in Turkana County Government

Public policy implementation is the dependent variable of the study, which the researcher measured by asking the respondents to respond to various statements that described the level of policy implementation in Turkana County government as illustrated in (figure 2)

Figure2: Policy implementation presentation



The results in figure 2: revealed that, majority (70.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed that there is a gap in public policy implementation in Turkana County government. The findings further established that more than half (52.7%) of the respondents agreed with the statement that Turkana County government implements public policy as required. The findings further suggested that (47.3%) strongly disagreed with the statement that Turkana County government implements public policy has required of them. The findings are in agreement with other similar research findings such as Fung et, al (2012) which emphasizes the importance of providing citizens with highly simplified information. The study's finding is also in agreement with a study on public institutions in Africa, which found that transparency and accountability are crucial for successful policy implementation. Institutions with open reporting systems and strong oversight mechanisms see better compliance with public policy. Transparent governance reduces corruption risks, fostering trust among stakeholders, which is essential for effective policy application (Mawhood, 2018).

Another study by Jordan (2008) examined the impact of governance on sustainable development and environmental policy. The study suggests that countries with structured environmental governance such as environmental ministries and regulatory agencies are more successful in enforcing regulations. Effective governance in environmental policy requires multilevel coordination, involving both national and local authorities, which can be challenging to maintain in less developed regions as in the case of Turkana County.

Findings of the current study are in agreement with the study of Rothstein and Toerell (2008) who analyzed the relationship between governance quality and social policy outcomes.

4.13 Pearson Correlation

The study conducted Pearson correlation analysis whose findings are illustrated in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Pearson's correlation Analysis between public participation and policy implementation

		Public Participation	Policy Implementation	
Public participation	Pearson Correlation	0.147ns	0.049ns	1
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	
	N	146	146	
Policy implementation	Pearson Correlation	0.343**	0.049ns	
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	1
	N	146	146	

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). ns-not significant

The study findings in Table 4.2 indicate that the variable public participation and public policy implementation exhibited a strong and positive relationship indicated by a correlation coefficient value of 0.343**, (p-value=0.000). This suggests that there was a linear positive relationship between public participation and public policy implementation, which means that a change in public participation influences public policy implementation change in the same direction. The findings revealed that, public participation had the greatest influence on public policy implementation based on (0.343, p-value=0.000) which is less than $\alpha=0.05$ hence, public participation has greater influence on public policy implementation in Turkana County government denoting its significance.

The study finding agrees with that of Migchelbrink et, al. (2020) whose findings revealed that, citizens are actively involved in shaping policies. When citizens perceive policies as legitimate, they own them and trust in government institutions by supporting such entities. The findings also concurred with those of Lihua et, al., (2020) who noted that public participation is essential for effective public policy implementation leading to more equitable and sustainable outcomes.

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It was hypothesized that public participation has a positive influence on public policy implementation in Turkana County Government. From the descriptive analysis, the finding indicates that most of the respondents 55.7% strongly agreed with the statement that county government should involve all segments of the society by giving them the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process. A majority of the respondents 64.0% and 19.9% agreed and strongly agreed respectively with the statement that Turkana County Government does not involve all segments of the society to participate in the decision-making process. The

study also revealed that community forms part of public participation for appropriate policy implementation process, an attitude this study found not practiced in Turkana County government. The absence of participative attributes such as inclusive, consultative, accessibility, empowerment and information suggest the gap in public policy implementation in Turkana County government.

The study adopted the Pearson correlation coefficient as shown in Table 4.1 and the results indicates that the variable public participation had a strong positive relationship with public policy implementation as indicated by a correlation coefficient value of 0.343, ($p\text{-value}=0.000 < \alpha=0.05$) hence, public participation was rated first with greater significant influence on public policy implementation in Turkana County Government. This implies that, there was a linear positive relation between public participation and public policy implementation.

5.1 Conclusions

The study concludes that public participation is an important factor that effectively affect public policy implementation in the county governments. The optimal model of the study shows that increasing levels of each factor by 1 unit for instance, public participation would increase the levels of effective implementation of public policy.

5.2 Recommendations

The study further recommends that government should create inclusive platforms for community engagement in the policy-making process. Organize regular consultations and focus groups that encourage diverse stakeholder input, particularly from marginalized groups, to ensure that policies are relevant and responsive to local needs.

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