

INFLUENCE OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND THE PERFORMANCE OF COUNTY GOVERNANCE; CASE STUDY OF VIHIGA COUNTY

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Abstract: In most cases, devolution is concerned with sharing of natural resources as well as decentralization of power within the county. Even though people participate in guaranteeing good governance, there exists an information gap on what comprises citizen participation and its role in efficient management of counties in Kenya. The aim of this research was to evaluate the influence of citizen participation and performance of county governance in Kenya. Specific objectives that were guided by the study where: to find out the technological factors that affect citizen participation in Vihiga county governance, to establish socio-cultural factors influencing citizen participation in Vihiga county, to determine institutional factors influencing citizen participation in the governance of Vihiga county, and to find out individual determinants of citizen participation in the governance of Vihiga county. The study was guided by two theories namely; the civic voluntarism theory and the public value theory. The study adopted Simple random and purposive research design targeting 530 respondents from the county of Vihiga. This comprised of Vihiga county Ministries, The Public service board, constituencies, Sub-county wards. For the 10 County Ministries, 10 respondents was sampled from each ministry. For the Public service board, a sample of 5 respondents was selected for the study. For the 6 constituencies, a sample of 100 citizens was selected for the study. The constituencies included Emuhaya, Hamisi, Luanda, Sabatia and Vihiga constituencies. A sample of 10 respondents from each of the 25 sub-county ward were interviewed. The findings were: The study recommended that more awareness be created among the members of the public. This will encourage their participation in governance as they will know the importance of participation and ways by which they can participate. The study also recommended that County government should be accountable for the County resources by eliminating corruption, tribalism and nepotism. This will change the attitude of the people towards participating in governance as it will reflect true and fair allocation of resources and job opportunities. The study further recommended that members of the public should change their attitude towards participation in governance and create time within their busy schedules. Their participation will allow the incorporation of their views for the betterment of lives. The study finally recommended that members of the public should be allowed to participate in governance without discrimination based on gender. This will encourage general public participation thus ensuring effective governance and development aimed at improving the lives of the public.

Keywords: Citizen, participation and the performance.

1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The government shifted from the national government being the source of citizen participation in service delivery and policy formulation as well as decentralized policy in the quest to improve operations and success of governance. As said by Robinson (2007), administrators and researchers see citizen participation in county governance as a remedy to

improving problems encountered in the acceptance and delivery of centralized service. Devolution refers to transferring of political, administrative, and financial powers from the central government to the local authority (Azfar, 1999). Decentralization is turning out to be the trend in government administration as expressed in the ever rising number of states applying devolution across the world within the past 30 years. In the period ranging 1980 to 2005, more than seventy-five countries have tried to implement decentralization (Ahmad, 2005; Steiner, 2005).

Governance is a wider concept even though its components may differ from one state to another. It has been conceptualized in two various ways. An instrumental concept is developed by classical supporters. Governance is seen as a tool to implement government policies (UNESCAP, 2008; Brown, 2007). A contemporary perspective is wide, rewarding, and more inclusive. The supporters of contemporary theory perceive it as the process of implementing citizen and government's decisions. As a result, mechanisms that are people-centered in social, political and economic objectives are achieved including employment creation and poverty alleviation (Shelly, 2007). Langlands (2004) equates governance to effective management that leads to proper management of public funds and good performance.

Odhiambo (2009) contends that participation is the engagement of all the stakeholders in the utilization of public resources, planning initiatives, and decision making processes on matters affecting them. Decentralized systems empower citizen to manage policy formulation, planning, and selecting best development projects. The concept of decentralization is entrenched in legal frameworks at county governance in most developed economies (Oenga, Chege, & Okelo, 2008). Some of the benefits of participation are the development of ownership feeling, guards against political interference and corruption, and poverty alleviation at local levels (Holzer & Kolby, 2005; Barten, 2002; Odhiambo & Taifa, 2009; Blair, 2002).

"Representation of the People" is the title of chapter seven of the New Kenyan Constitution. Handled in this chapter is how citizens are represented in all areas of government in Kenya. There is an obligation to the Kenyan government to building capacity for citizens to allow them to fully engage in governance. The areas of the capacity building may be the consequences of not being involved in governance, electoral processes, and rights and responsibilities of public involvement. The general public should know that they are owed an explanation in the event their participation right is restricted. Basing on this study background, I undertook to carry out a study on the influence of public participation in Kenyan governance; a case study of Vihiga County government.

❑ **Statement of the Problem**

Devolution is concerned with sharing of natural resources as well as decentralization of power within the county. Even though citizens participate in guaranteeing governance, there exists an information gap on what comprises citizen participation, operations, and devolved structures in the Kenyan framework. As a result in Vihiga county they suffer from basic problems such as poor service delivery, lack of adequate water and stalled development projects that do not have the support and input of the citizens. A large percentage population is still less informed in regards to their civic duties, rights and responsibilities and duties of the county government. This current study will, therefore, seek to establish the most effective technological platforms that can be used by citizens to participate as well as structures for rolling out Civic education across the county continuously and consistently. Also, the study will bring out how the county governments can build public officers 'capacities on matters of social accountability as participatory methodologies and decision-making processes. According to Society for International development (2012), voting is the key participation process commonly used by most people in absolute neglect of all the rest. Apart from information that gets disseminated through technology like electronic media; a huge gap exists in the prints and internet based platforms since they are inaccessible to most rural and poor communities within the county .Citizen participation is still ignored even with great efforts to adopt devolution system. Therefore, this study purposes to examine the factors that influence citizen participation in Vihiga County.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

▪ **The Civic Voluntarism Theory**

The civic voluntarism theory can be used to explain the importance of citizen participation in improving the performance of governments. The theory would be summarized into three major ideas as citizens not participating since due to various inabilities, not finding opportunities and since they have not been involved. The initial aspects of inability would be defined in regards to money, civic skills and time; the second aspect of not finding opportunity would be in regards to the citizen perceptions about the effectiveness of the political systems. The third aspects of having not been involved asked, refer to been totally left out during the participation in organizations and government processes. In regards to the theory,

citizens having more resources would participate more; the resources would be the products of education and family social structures as opined by Cornelissen & Cornelissen (2017). The theory model indicates that the socioeconomic status of citizens as income, work and education would determine the citizen participation levels. The empirical typology of the theoretical model would show how developed the different modes of every participating citizen and classification done into six various categories depending on the types of participatory activities performed. In regards to the classification, we would have inactive people with little participation within the categories that are dominated by the elderly, women and those with low socioeconomic status. However, among active citizens, there is a substantial presence of the middle age married men, with very high education levels of education income and active social life.

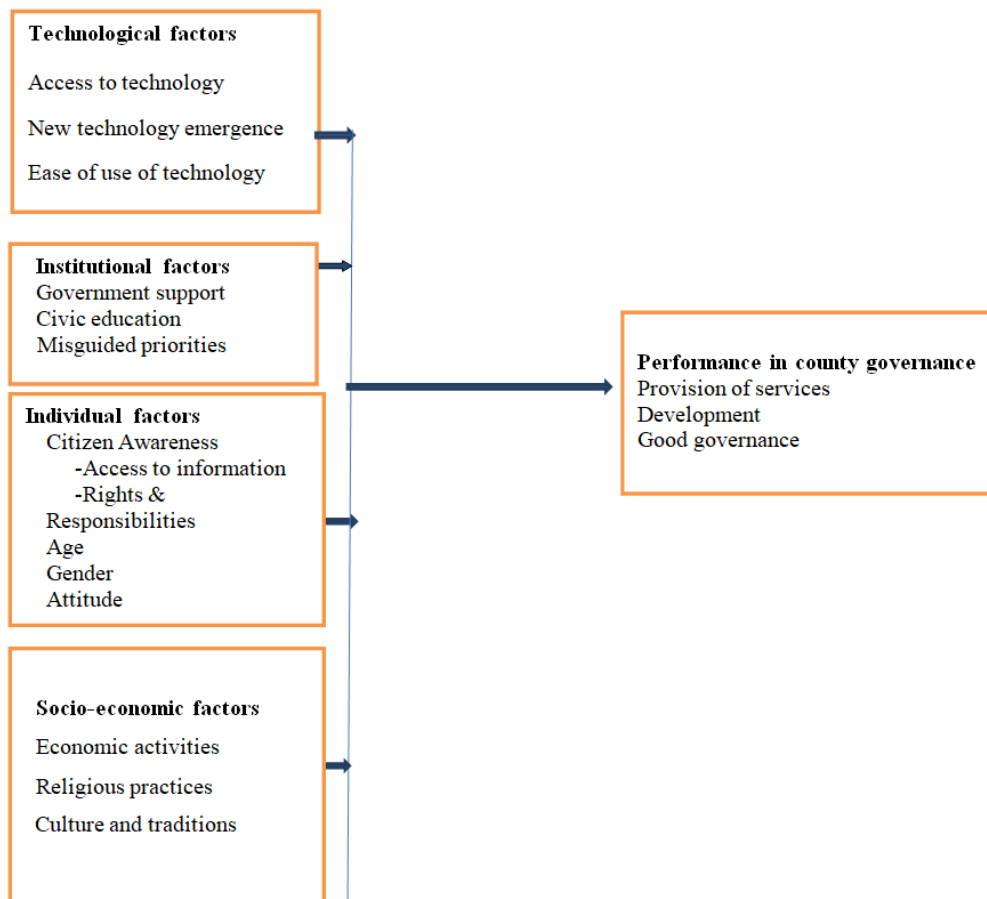
▪ **Public Value Theory**

Bozeman (2002) contends that PVT presumes services are provided in accordance with the people's interest. The decision a knowledgeable individual makes for the good of the society is referred to as public interest. PVT can be used to present the benefits the citizens will gain if they are educated on the importance of being involved in governance and given the opportunity to make informed decisions for the best interest of the entire community. Lippman (1955) and Bozeman (2002) point out that this model can be employed by public bodies to have respect for the important role played by the public and provide them with elite services

Currently, all the strives and efforts are well planned for and geared towards meeting the public interest as opposed to the previous years where public interests were unclear and in the event of attempting to utilize it conspired with other public policies (Stoker, 2006; Dalrymple & Staples, 2008). The idea of respecting people's interests has seen more citizens benefit in governance. Good governance that fosters transparency and citizen participation has come into play.

Therefore, the theory of Public Value in public participation and governance could be explained that the performance of the citizens can be effective via utilization of quality management actions. The philosophy of the Public Value can be seen as the main cause in the shift from the traditional public service provision belief to the new inclusion of people's idea and choices (Moore, 2005)

□ **Conceptual Framework**



❑ **Research Gap**

Since a number of existing literatures on citizen participation especially on financial management, public budgeting, policy formulation, and voting mostly focus on national government participatory issues, I feel that there is a knowledge gap on the influence of public involvement in most counties in Kenya. Following this reason, I, the researcher, will seek to evaluate the determinants of citizen participation in Vihiga county governance by trying to respond to the question; what factors influence citizen participation in devolved governance in Vihiga County.

3. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Table: Participants demographic representation of the study

Characteristics	Description	public	MCAs	Ministers
Gender	Female	51	4	3
	Male	45	4	3
Age	18- 35 years	20	2	1
	36 & Above	76	6	5
Location	Urban	36	4	3
	Rural	60	4	3
Education	Primary	9	0	0
	Secondary	90	1	0
	College & Above	8	7	6
voted in 2013	Female	48	4	3

❑ **Institutional Factors Influencing Citizen Participation in Devolved Governance**

Findings on institutional related factors influencing the participation of the members of the public in governance. For citizens to effectively participate in county governance, citizens need to be aware of their rights and responsibilities and acquiring knowhow on how to implement these responsibilities. To achieve these goals, Capacity building needs to be done.

▪ **Initiatives by the County Government to ensure Public participation**

We sought to establish the initiatives by the County government aimed at creating awareness on public participation from the MCAs and Ministers. From the interviews they mentioned the following: six of the Ministers and four of the MCAs mentioned having organized at least 5-7 civic education forums for the last three years since their election, and which they rated as being very effective in positively improving public participation in Governance. Probed why few forums were organized, all the MCAs and Ministers pointed to lack of enough finance to support the exercises. One female minister mentioned that they had not yet customized the National curriculum to the County level to easily use in civic education in the county. She pointed out that the new constitutions requirements were on the foundation stage with so many areas to set up. And that the available resources were being directed to wanting situations like hospitals, schools and infrastructure.

On strengthening communication networks, All the Ministers and MCAs interviewed indicated to having employed the use of local radio stations/media for awareness campaign especially to create awareness to the general public on their responsibility of participation on the County governance. In all the FGDs, the participants responded positively to frequently listening and acquiring county information from the local Lughya radio stations. However only one minister and one MCA had attempted to employed proper processing and tracking of information generated by public. Both rated it as not an effective mode of raising and encouraging participation in governance. All the MCAs and Ministers acknowledged that most of these methods of encouraging public participation are very effective but the impeding factor was finances.

I find it important to mention this at this juncture. While enjoying a light moment with the MCAs after the interview process, one of the MCA said that the county government and specifically the Governor may not have interest in awareness creation which may have negative effects thus jeopardizing his future re-election but allocated all the finances available to visible development projects like roads, classrooms and lighting. This will serve as campaigning come the next election.

▪ **Effectiveness of awareness creation strategies by the County government**

In interviews with MCAs on the effectiveness of the awareness creation strategies employed by the County government, majority of the respondents 17 mentioned that they were fairly effective, 6 mentioned that they were very effective while 2 mentioned that they were less effective.

Those who mentioned that the strategies were fairly effective explained that the strategy had created awareness among citizen on the importance of their participation, that members of the public have come to know and participate in governance through seminars and training programmes organized by the County government, creation of awareness has improved turn up by the members of the public during meetings, many members of the public are now well acquainted with their rights and that it has improved coordination of activities within the County. On the other hand, those who mentioned that awareness creation was less effective explained that the exercise has not been properly and effectively done to make more members of the public become aware of their role in governance. They were of the opinion that more appropriate ways should be adopted in the creation of public awareness.

In interviews with the members of the public on the effectiveness of awareness creation strategies by the County government, the general view by the FGDs was that the seminars and trainings called by the County government are few in number in a year, short and they are not publicized thus majority of the citizens are not informed.

In all the FGDs, the participants agreed that the use of vernacular radios is an effective means of promoting awareness citizens. The citizens feel that the county government was not committed to awareness creation, or building their capacity due the vested interests. That an ignorant population will easy to control. In case of a forum for creation of awareness, the official employ technical language making the all process vague, that not much information delivered to the public domain. Those who mentioned that they were effective explained that many people have become more aware of their role in governance, keeping the public abreast on the development projects within the County and that opinion and views of the members of the public are heard.

▪ **Institutional factors influencing public participation in Governance**

Walking down memory time, a time when the “rule of 210” not long ago, when a chief had powers to arrest you, trial you through „a Kangaroo court“. Those rules and Laws were ruled out by the new constitution. The big question lingering in my mind is, Has the Citizens mindset moved from when the government institution had those iron fist powers, to the citizens having powers to hold them accountable? On the other hand, the institutional factors enhancing the participation of the members of the public included: Transparency which improves public confidence hence willing to participate in governance, use of constituency/ward offices for purposes of channeling information relating to governance services and legislation policies, enhanced collaboration structures between MCAs and public, improved system structures for proper public participation, Government involve NGOs and other civil activists to reach the public.

In FGDs with the members of the public on the institutional factors hindering the public participation, the participants mentioned the following as the factors hindering their participation in Governance. The public participants felt that some institutional arrangement/formats should be updated to allow public participation at all levels. In all the FGDs the participants mentioned that they were confused on which office addresses what in the county.

Of great concern was the corruption levels and its great negative effect to the participation of citizens in governance. This rages from misappropriation of funds, Nepotism to favoritism in development of some areas. Corruption was mentioned as the greatest hindrance to participation. In the FGDs the participants felt that most of the forums organized by the county government were money eating channels. One male participant at first FGD agitate tone remarked „ We don’t want to be used as rubber stamps for people to „eat“ money, all these leaders are the same, they promise so much during election but deliver nothing later when elected, the leaders are elected poor but grow very rich overnight“. To the participants their participation was not for their benefit but for the leaders organizing. In second FGD in tone a hush, a member pointed that all the people appointed to the development committees were friends and relatives of the leader.

One common issue raised in almost all the FGDs we interviewed, was that the leaders had no time addressing serious matters affecting citizen but serving their own interest. Thus the leaders prefer the use of channels that benefit them directly and neglect those which would be beneficial to citizens. The citizens were of the opinion that they would prefer if the government would set up formal procedures to host public views, set up proper channels for feedback, and involve/ seek the citizens’ views. Furthermore the leaders in County government were inaccessibility to the public.

I encouraged further discussion with the citizen participants to establish their understanding on the topic and to get suggestions of further ways of strengthening citizen and county government cooperation. Though without a specific point, the participants believed there should be varied mechanisms for cooperation between public participation units and MCAs. They feel that institutions should be flexible to accept divergent opinions, providing space for involvement of their views/inputs and more importantly accord them powers to be consulted before implementation of issues affecting them. Civic Education though still not widely used by the county government was mentioned in all the FGDs as the most effective tool enabling them to be aware and participate in governance matters.

The FGD in Matungulu pointed that close cooperation between some MCAs and them has enhanced their participation in the county governance. They gave the example of Katine MCA who they praised for consulting members in identifying development projects, encouraged democratic electing of representatives to development committees and was available for consultation by citizens.

▪ **Individual Factors Influencing Participation in Devolved Governance Members of the Public**

In interviews with FGDs on the factors influencing their participation in governance, the following factors were established: Poverty was mentioned as a major hindering factor to individual's participation in County governance. A participant mentioned that they even lack money to travel to where meetings are being held, and moreover they live from hand to mouth which requires they work for food every day. In the FGD in the county Market a participant expressed fear in even attending meetings because they may be political party „Kamukujis“ (illegal Meetings) which may be dispersed by GSUs police leading to them being beaten senseless and tear gassed. This implies that they are not aware of the change of government regimes and the new constitution.

Communication barriers were also a factor which was mainly presented by many of the participants. When citizens attend many of the forums, they are required to express themselves in Lugha ya Taifa (Kiswahili) which they are not confident in expressing themselves in. Moreover most of the documents are written in English which not all can read and comprehend, thus they opt not to attend. The first FGD a participant pointed that county organized seminars are conducted during the weekdays when majority of the citizens are in the places of employment. Only a few people can find a gap in their busy schedules to attend. There was a general view that participating in any of the awareness forums was a way of enhancing political careers of the people in power rather than for the citizens own good. This is a strong indicator of the citizens' lack of confidence on the county leadership, inconsistency in attending vital meetings and low level of education.

I had low expectations on getting a meaningful feedback on the County representative's individual factors hindering them from encouraging public participation. Would they freely talk about their underbelly? Apparently, they proved me wrong. In interviews with MCAs and Ministers, they mentioned the following factors as individual factors hindering them from encouraging public participation: An MCA pointed that some of his colleagues are driven by self-interest but not service to the people. They dedicatedly pursue what directly benefits them. A Minister pointed that political differences pose a challenge whereby some leaders only respect decisions or act on that which benefits or emanates from their clan leaders, political parties.

▪ **Socio-Cultural Factors Influencing Participation in Devolved Governance**

General belief and expectation is that regions which encompassed white man ways of life especially education had less demeaning cultural burdens while the levels of illiteracy are to be low. Against the grain of the afore stated myth, the socio-cultural factors influencing public participation, members of the public mentioned the following of the influencing participation in county governance: That a sizeable number of the citizens were illiterate thus they are unable to read the bulletins, notices, handed by the County government. That the aged experience challenges of either travelling to the county offices or attending government organized meetings. A woman participant at Machakos town FGD, whose honest and knowledgeable contribution was supported and echoed by many other participants had this to say“ „ most of us women who are married and not formally employed have to seek permission and funding from our husbands to attend any meeting whether political, social or economic in nature. Furthermore most of these meetings county government forums are conducted in Either English or Swahili which we understand but are unable to talk fluently. This makes us to shy away. If a forum has financial benefit, the leaders and organizers only inform and invite their family members, friends and their political supporters“.

One of the participants pointed that she only attends the meetings approved by the husband. Another participant in mentioned that most of the men are working in the major cities leaving only women, children and the elderly in the rural

areas. This she says is a reason why there is a gender imbalance in attendance in county forums. She further pointed that majority of the elderly are sickly and weak to effectively participate in county matters. In the entire FGDs language barrier was pointed out as a barrier. English and Kiswahili are mainly used in conducting county matters. Yet majority of the citizens are not confident using them.

MCA's and Ministers participants mentioned the following: Men hinder their wives from not participating. They argue that it's a waste of time which could be spend doing other beneficial chores for the family. They decried the illiteracy levels in the citizens. A Minister participant pointed out that many people have the educational certificates but they have run out of practice that they are illiterate; they are unable to effectively communicate especially where English and Kiswahili are applied. He painted a grim picture of the poverty levels among majority of the citizens. The citizens earn very little just to enable them to live from hand to mouth. In some cases they rely on government and NGOs food handouts .Their daily priority is to get food for the day on the table.

The participants were requested to suggest ways of improving public participation in governance in the county. The following suggestions were identified: eradication of poverty through initiation of development projects and creation of jobs, encouraging public participation on governance by incorporating their views, community policing to enhance security especially during the night, holding more of public awareness campaigns and seminars and the use of local language or interpreters, ensuring efficient flow of information from MCAs office to grassroots, proper processing and tracking of information, introduction of more independent bodies for evaluation of public participation such as through assessments, the leaders to stem out tribalism and nepotism educate the society on social barriers like sexual discrimination, sensitize public on importance of all inclusive views, employing human resource required for effective delivery of services, creation of awareness through the local language media, enhancing checks and balances and separation of powers for proper accountability to public, facilitation of public workshops and civic education

MCA's and Ministers recommended that: accountability on the side of County Officers should be improved which will lead to participation of both the officers and citizens in government activities, the public members should be encouraged to make use of local media channels to get information, improvement of County development programmes hence creation of jobs, inclusion of other educative and informative ways like use of bill boards advertisements to capture more citizens, involving the public in decision making during participation, organizing for outreach programs where the concerns of the members of the public could be sought for and solved not swept under the table, introduction of a more aggressive approach to seminars, and encouraging more NGOs, CBOs in the community, closing the gaps between the leaders and public to function as one entity.

▪ **Description, and Rating of the Constituencies in Vihiga County on Public Participation in the County Governance.**

Vihiga County is made of five constituencies which have varied and different geographical location, economic and climatically conditions. This study covered all the five constituencies. Basing the rating on the interview experience, the author thus seeks to compare the constituencies in terms of participation in Governance matters of the County. In all the five constituencies of the Vihiga County a great distinction was evident in the levels of participation; the variation was also evident in the varied factors influencing participation played in every constituency.

Below is Table below: shows the authors rating on her view of the performance of each county consideration on the levels of participation on the county Governance.

Table: Comparison and Ranking of the 8 Constituencies

Constituency	Ranking
Emuhaya	1
Hamisi	2
Sabatia	3
Vihiga	4
Luanda	5

➤ **Emuhaya-** It possesses a large cosmopolitan urban population, and an equally large rural population. The climatic condition is cool and wetter on the mountainous western region and hot and dry on the other regions thus support varied economic activities like both large and small scale farming, tourism and trade among others. The road network

is better developed than all the other constituencies. Poverty level is low in comparison to others and has a history of an educated and politically enlightened population.

During the study it was evidently that they were aware of their responsibility in and indicated more participation in County governance.

- **Hamisi-** This constituency is situated to the west of the larger Vihiga County. It has several urban area. It possesses both rural and a cosmopolitan urban population. It has rich soils and higher rainfall thus support farming of food stuff and coffee. However the region is engaged in varied economic activities among them farming both large and small scale, mining of building stones and trade. Its road network is averagely developed. The poverty level in this area is average in comparison to the other constituencies; consequently the area has a large population which is historically politically enlightened. The levels of participation were deemed to be higher in comparison to the other five constituencies.
- **Sabatia** – This constituency is centrally situated in the larger Vihiga County and its major economic activity is Macadamia farming thanks to its rich red soils and higher rain fall than all the other constituencies. Poverty level is average and the education levels are high and the population is politically enlightened thus their levels of participation is comparatively good.
- **Vihiga-** it is situated to the south of the county and mainly a cosmopolitan urban population but a rural population is also available. The road network is more developed compared to the rest of the county. Its economic activities include, mining of building materials, has many industries and processing Zone. Though the majority of the population is politically aware, they lack the time due to employment to get involved in Governance matters.
- **Luanda:-** Its centrally located in the larger Vihiga County. With it's mainly mountainous area, the region engages in farming. It has remarkably small urban population around. The road network is below average developed and the poverty levels notably higher than the other four mentioned. Evidently from the study, half of its population is averagely aware of its responsibilities to the governance matters, thus participation to the County government is also average.

4. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

▪ Summary of the Findings of the Study

This section dedicates to present the outcome of the study and they are presented below:

➤ Nature of Citizen Participation in Devolved County Governance

On the participation on devolved governance, the study found that all the 14 FGDs interviewed had participated in County Governance activities in varied ways among them; participated in development meetings, consultative forums and building committees spearheading improvement on acquisition of social facilities and in Barazas which were used to pass information concerning the county; electing members of development committees; participating in national elections; taken part in seminars and clinics touching on county government awareness and had heard messages educating them on the County through the local vernacular radio stations.

They gave the following reason which hinder them not to fully participate in the county Governance; lack of information on occurrences of these forums like seminars, lack of finances to travelling to the headquarters to attend settings, lack of time as they are involved in employment and fear borne out of ignorance of brutality by security forces like in yester years, Basically, members of the public in Vihiga County participate in governance through: giving their views and opinions, electing and presence of representatives of the members of the public in ward governance committees, they are part and parcel of the development teams spearheading governance in the ward, they form part of the independent bodies who foster the views of the public, holding regular seminars/meetings to understand the issues affecting the members of the public and through participation in budgeting and formulation of policies.

➤ Institutional factors influencing citizen participation in devolved governance

On the creation of awareness among the public, the Ministers and the MCAs mentioned that there were initiatives for making the public aware of ways to engage in County Governance such as: Organizing civic education, strengthening communication networks, use of local stations/media for awareness campaign, holding regular assemblies to enlighten the members of the public, proper processing and tracking of information generated by public, ministers adopt tailor

approaches to public participation to suit different stakeholders, new legislation to bridge gap between ministers, MCAs and public and initiation of governance council to facilitate public involvement on affairs of governance. Even though these initiatives were there for creating awareness, many of them were found to be fairly ineffective as indicated by 2/3rds of the participants.

The institutional factors enhancing the participation of the members of the public in governance included: Transparency in conducting County matters which improves public confidence hence willing to participate in governance, use of constituency/ward offices for purposes of channeling information relating to governance services and legislation policies, enhanced collaboration structures between MCAs and public, improved system structures for proper public participation, Government involve NGOs to reach the public and the constitution provide for public participation. On the other hand, the institutions hindering public participation of the public included: Ignorance, outdated structures in government, poor security in the County, playing politics in County matters, some institutional arrangement/formats should be updated to allow public participation at all levels, some institutional arrangements do not embrace public involvement in access of information and decision making, those in authority favoring their individuals/ corruption, leaders have no time addressing serious matters affecting citizen, lacking formal procedures to host public views, lack of proper channels for feedback and association of public inputs, institutions do not take into account issues related to diversity and lack of principles of democracy/transparency and accountability.

➤ **Individual factors influencing participation by citizens in devolved governance as presented by Members of the Public**

Individual factors influencing the participation of members of the public in governance included: poverty, insecurity, lack of time and interest, communication barriers, lack of confidence to participate in the development of the county, lack of sufficient time to attend seminars due to the fact that seminars are conducted during weekdays when most of them are in employment stations, being left out on decision making, those who are not part of the elected teams keep off important meetings, lack of confidence on the county leadership, inconsistency in attending vital meetings and low level of education.

The individual factors of MCAs and Ministers hindering public participation on governance, they mentioned the following: self-interest because they do not want to serve citizens instead they want to serve themselves, political differences results whereby some only respect decisions that emulates from their clan leaders, a perception that they are being sidelined on decision making on important issues creates a room for little concern on participation, Leaders do not involve the public in decision making, members of the public feel that they are being used as rubber stamp for political agendas, lack of trust from leaders especially in handling County finances, politicizing leadership, inaccessibility to leaders and political alienation.

➤ **5.2.4 Socio-Cultural Factors Influencing Participation in Devolved Governance**

The socio-cultural factors influencing public participation included: poor distribution of resources, poverty, illiteracy, age barriers, public awareness, lack of time to participate, corruption/inefficiency among some stakeholders, political biasness and improper coordination, evaluation and monitoring of activities. Other factors included: unaccountable leadership, inaccessibility to leaders when faced with challenges, selfish leaders who only cheer politicking not performing, women not allowed to participate by husbands, illiteracy, language barrier, too much clanism and nepotism hindering participation, poor health, insecurity, poverty, gender imbalance in the representation in forums, insufficient number of NGOs standing in the gap for the public, pursuing own interest by leaders and unemployment.

5. CONCLUSIONS

From the information gathered in the study, the following conclusions can be presented. that members of the public in Vihiga County participate in County governance in the following ways: participating in development meetings, consultative forums and building committees spearheading improvement on acquisition of health facilities. The study also concludes that institutional factors such as outdated structures, poor security, corruption, tribalism and nepotism, bad governance, continuous development issues, leaders have no time addressing serious matters affecting citizen, lacking formal procedures to host public views and lack of proper channels for feedback and association of public inputs. The study further concludes that individual related factors such as poverty, lack of time and interest, communication barriers and lack of confidence on the county leadership hinder their participation in governance. The study finally concludes that

socio-cultural factors such as: poor distribution of resources, poverty, illiteracy and age barriers influence the participation of the public in public governance.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher has come up with the following recommendations drawn from the findings:

- The study recommended that more awareness be created among the members of the public. This will encourage their participation in governance as they will know the importance of participation and ways by which they can participate.
- The study also recommends that County government should be accountable for the County resources by eliminating corruption, tribalism and nepotism. This will change the attitude of the people towards participating in governance as it will reflect true and fair allocation of resources and job opportunities.
- The study further recommends that members of the public should change their attitude towards participation in governance and create time within their busy schedules. Their participation will allow the incorporation of their views for the betterment of lives.
- The study finally recommends that members of the public should be allowed to participate in governance without discrimination based on gender. This will encourage general public participation thus ensuring effective governance and development aimed at improving the lives of the public.

Recommendations for Areas of Further Research

The study only limited to one county of Vihiga and to only assess the determinants of citizen participation in governance. The researcher therefore recommends that another study be done to assess the challenges facing the County government in involving members of the public in governance which was not the concern of this study.

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