

# **DYNAMICS OF INFORMATION FLOWS AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT CONSTITUENCY DEVELOPMENT FUNDED SCHOOL PROJECTS IN DADAAB GARISSA COUNTY, KENYA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

It is undoubtedly that public participation in the delivery of government-funded projects such as National Government Constituency Development Funded projects is low and daunting. Therefore, to ensure that the benefits of public participation in the delivery of government-funded projects such as inclusivity and transparency, government responsiveness to citizen needs as well as successful implementation of the projects and an increase in projects' chances of sustainability are harnessed, there need to understand the contributing factors towards that. According to reports, Kenya lacked both a structure or policy for civic education and public involvement, which contributed to the low turnout at meetings held across the country and that has undoubtedly been a result of poor delivery of NG-CDF projects, a case in point, Dadaab Constituency. This study therefore focused on unearthing the dynamics of information flows on public participation in National Government Constituency Development Funded School Projects in Dadaab Garissa County, Kenya. The research objective was to establish the influence of public awareness on public participation in NG-CDF School Projects in Dadaab Garissa County, Kenya. The theory guiding the study was the Theory of Planned Behavior. A descriptive research design was adopted and

the target response was NG-CDF education projects in Dadaab Constituency including NG-CDF committee members, wards representatives, staff from the education department in the county, project beneficiaries as well as the project managers (school heads) who included all the 45 heads of the public primary and secondary schools in the constituency and parent's teacher association members. In total, 144 respondents were targeted. Semi-structured questionnaires were adopted to collect both qualitative and quantitative data which was analyzed through thematic as well as quantitative techniques. Atlas TI software was use to analyze the qualitative data while SPSS (V.26) was used to extract descriptive and inferential statistics. It was established that public awareness had a positive and significant influence on public participation in NG-CDF School Projects. This implies that an improvement in public awareness leads to a significant improvement in public participation in NGCDF education projects. The study recommends NGCDF board in Dadaab to implement targeted awareness campaigns to improve public participation and community development outcomes.

**Key Words:** Information Flows, Public Awareness and Public Participation

## **INTRODUCTION**

The concept of public participation has largely been embraced across the world (Kituyi & Moi, 2021). In the United Kingdom, in the 1970s, citizen participation in devolution gained prominence as a result of many initiatives requesting control over development agendas for effective and efficient public service delivery. Public participation in decision-making, involving both politicians and government agencies, was something that the public wanted (Mckenna, 2021). Public participation in delivery of government funded projects has also been largely advocated for in the USA where the citizens have gone for participatory budgeting based on the citizen's perceptions of the political environment as well as how professional the facilitators of such meetings are (Fernando, 2019).

In Canada, clear objectives for public participation are created by public participation throughout a project's planning phase, which also makes it possible to identify and communicate concerns to the project proponent and officials right once (Perlaviciute & Squintani, 2020). In Asia, according to Zhang et al. (2019), public participation at the national level in Japan is hampered. Meanwhile, local leaders and mayors guarantee that lobbyists and citizens are included in the local stage.

Regionally in Africa, Aryeh-Adjei, Anang and Osei-Adusah (2022) documented that local participation in developmental projects in Ghana was still low whereby the citizens were mostly not participated in both the planning and execution stages. Education, social cohesiveness, peace, and stability all played a part in this. Similarly, in Nigeria, Badiora, Bako and Olaleye (2020) argued that numerous government initiatives that have been executed well have faced opposition due to the lack of local participation and disregard for the perspectives of the community's history, culture, and social structure.

Locally in Kenya, according to Omar and Moi (2020), public participation is crucial for ensuring inclusivity and openness in the governance process, ensuring government responsiveness to citizen needs, and bolstering the legitimacy of government institutions and choices. Additionally, public engagement fosters a sense of patriotism and institutional trust at the individual level. The new legislative framework and Kenyan Constitution both emphasize how important it is to increase public engagement. Kenya's plan to boost growth and resolve long-standing disparities in access to economic opportunities, investment, and service delivery across the nation includes bolstering public involvement and governance as a key component (Shale, 2020).

The Kenyan people hold complete sovereign power, according to Article 1(1) of the 2010 Kenyan Constitution (Government of Kenya, 2010). The people shall exercise this power either directly through involvement in public affairs or indirectly through their duly elected representatives. Furthermore, the Constitution established a decentralized administration with the main objective of giving local governments more authority, resources, and representation (Ngigi & Busolo, 2019). As a result, 47 Political and Administrative Counties were established, providing the public with the chance to engage in the governance process. As a result, Articles 10(2a) and 232(1) of the Constitution declared citizen participation to be a national value and a fundamental component of public service (Omuse, 2022).

Kenya is well-positioned to increase citizen participation in local and national governance. The government and civil society have gained great expertise in implementing participatory tools and approaches; the media in Kenya is relatively free and outspoken; and the space for citizen-state contact is still growing (Mbithi, Ndambuki & Juma, 2019). However, there have been certain obstacles to public engagement in Kenya, including low levels of civic education and little support from the political class (Kenya School of Government, 2015).

According to Mbithi, Ndambuki, and Juma (2019), there are a number of additional factors that contribute to low public participation, including political will, information access, citizen empowerment, responsive leaders, elected leaders' performance, and the adoption of progressive laws that are linked to the adoption of positive policies. It is necessary to ascertain the dynamics of information flows about public engagement of National Government Constituency Development financed school projects, given the disparately low levels of public participation in government financed projects in Kenya.

### **Statement of the Problem**

It is evident that the involvement of the public in the execution of government-funded initiatives is crucial to guarantee inclusiveness and transparency in the governance procedure. This participation ensures that the government is responsive to the needs of its citizens, enhances the legitimacy of government decisions and institutions, fosters public trust (Omar & Moi, 2020), facilitates successful project implementation (Ngoyoni, 2021), and increases the likelihood of project sustainability (Cardullo & Kitchin, 2019). However, despite these clear benefits of public participation in delivery of government funded projects, the level of public participation in such projects across the country are low.

Muriu (2014) conducted an assessment on the impact of citizen involvement on service delivery in Kenya and found that there was little to no public participation and that its influence on the execution of government-funded projects was minimal. Similar to this, a survey conducted in 2015 by the Institute of Economic Affairs, Kenya examined the state of public participation and the frameworks for information and participation that were available in each of Kenya's counties. The survey discovered that neither a structure nor a policy for civic education existed, which contributed to the low turnout at meetings held in Kenya's counties.

This is surprising despite the strong legal and institutional frameworks created in Kenya to enhance the voice of the people. Despite the fact that the Kenyan people retain complete sovereign power under Article 1(1) of the 2010 Kenyan Constitution (Government of Kenya, 2010), public participation in projects that affect citizen's life remains low across counties including Garissa County. This begs the question of what factors contribute to this low participation.

Even though studies have concentrated on the elements of public participation in Kenya, their focus were on various issues other than NG-CDF projects. The study by Mbithi, Ndambuki and Juma (2019) concentrated on the elements of public participation on Kenya county governments and not necessarily NG-CDF projects which presents a contextual research gap. On the other hand, Muriu (2014) established how citizen participation impact decentralized service delivery and not necessarily NG-CDF projects

which also presents a contextual research gap. Another study by Kituyi and Moi (2021) interrogated the determinants of public participation but their focus was on the budget making process in devolved governments in Kenya and not delivery of government funded projects. To fill these identified research gaps, the study interrogated the dynamics of information flows on public participation on NG-CDF School Projects in Dadaab Garissa County, Kenya.

### ***Objectives of the Study***

To establish the influence of public awareness on public participation in NG-CDF School Projects in Dadaab Garissa County, Kenya

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theoretical Framework**

This research was anchored on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) which explained in detail below. Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) served as the foundation for the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991). The TPB suggests that behavioral intention is influenced by attitude towards the behavior, perceived behavioral control and subjective norm. One of the most significant ideas in social psychology for explaining and forecasting individual behavior is this one. It lists the most important variables that directly affect a person's conduct. Theory of Planned Behavior holds that an individual's behavioral intentions have a positive impact on their behavior, and these intentions are impacted by three things: the individual's attitude toward behavior (the negative or positive evaluation of a behavior); the way an individual perceives the expectations can vary; and the person's understanding of the prerequisites for engaging in successful activity (Xu *et al.* 2020).

The TPB has been used to explain relevant behavior intents in the field of public involvement in the literature that is currently available, and it has shown to be effective in doing so. It makes the case that in order for citizens to take part in a project supported by the government, a number of aspects, including their attitude toward the government, how they perceive their expectations for participating, and how they perceive the conditions necessary for their successful conduct, must all be taken into consideration (Luo *et al.* 2022).

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which offers a thorough framework for comprehending the cognitive elements that influence people's intention to engage in a specific behavior, is extremely pertinent to explaining public participation in this study. TPB suggests that attitudes toward the behavior (positive or negative perceptions), subjective norms (social pressure and perceived expectations of significant others), and perceived behavioral control (the ease or difficulty with which the behavior is perceived to be performed) all have an impact on an individual's intention to participate. By examining these factors, TPB allows researchers and policymakers to identify key determinants of public participation, design targeted interventions to influence attitudes and social norms, and ultimately enhance citizens' engagement in civic activities, decision-making processes, and community initiatives.

## **Empirical Literature**

### **Public Participation in Government Funded Projects**

Researches have interrogated the concept of public participation in government funded projects across the world and its determining factors. In Hungary, Vari (2019) documented the Hungarian incident with participation from the public in government funded water management projects. The study through a mixed approach indicated that effective public participation in water management in Hungary is influenced by civil society organizations, financial support, methodological support, and social learning processes, while hindered by resistance, lack of knowledge, and negative trends in civil society development.

Similarly, in Saudi Arabia, a study by Choueiri (2017) interrogated the degree of public involvement in initiatives involving the operations and infrastructure of public transportation. The qualitative study established that globally, the private sector is now more involved in initiatives involving the operations and infrastructure of public transportation due to factors such as limited government resources and technological efficiencies that warrant a PPP approach. Therefore, the government encourages public participation.

Regionally, in Ghana, Arkorful, Hilton and Awaah (2023) established the degree of participation of the community in development initiatives. The research design utilized in the research was a multiple case study design with a qualitative approach. Semi-structured interview guidelines were used to collect the data, and theme and comparative analysis methods were utilized to analyze it. A number of factors, including low knowledge sharing, a lack of shared ownership, limited information flow, competing interests, unfavorable public attitudes toward change, and political and central government interference, have been cited as reasons for the low level of community engagement in government-funded projects.

Locally, Atieno, Mutui, and Wabwire (2019) examined the elements influencing public involvement in a number of environmental projects in Nairobi City County. It was determined through a mixed methodology using both questionnaires and interviews to gather both quantitative and qualitative data that public participation in government-funded projects is impacted by elements like employment status, education level, and public trust in the government.

### **Public Awareness and Public Participation in Government Funded Projects**

A survey done in Iran by Abtahi et al. (2015) interrogated the relationship between education, public awareness, and public participation in projects related to solid waste management in Tehran. It was documented through a mixed method that the public participation levels in such projects was very low given the low level of public awareness on such projects. Apparently, the study revealed that only 33% of the citizens were aware of such projects nor had any information about them.

Regionally, basing on the projects being run by BRAC International, cutting across 7 countries namely, Uganda, Liberia, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Tanzania and Rwanda, a study by Hasan, Nahiduzzaman and Aldosary (2018) interrogated public participation especially in projects co-financed by both the NGO and the government. While it was established that there was high level public participation for INGO

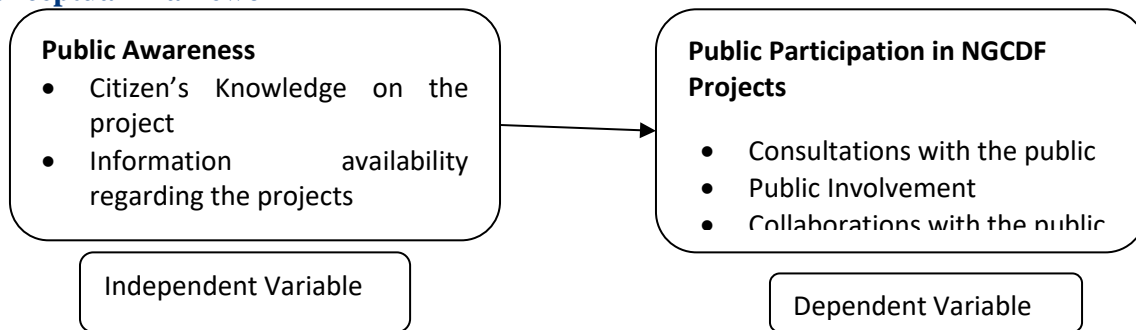


projects, that for government funded demonstrated low level public participation because of pivotal factors such as public awareness and information availability.

Furthermore, Kugonza and Mukobi's (2015) study in Uganda examined public involvement in service delivery initiatives in the Buikwe District Local Government of Uganda. The study found that there has been existent of a lack of uniformity in the engagement of the public in local planning processes and in ensuring the responsibility of local politicians. This has been largely attributed to three main factors: awareness of citizens' rights, roles, and responsibilities; access to information; and ability to use information effectively.

Locally, in Kenya, Papa (2016) established the elements that affect public involvement in project development in Busia, Kenya. Through a descriptive research design focusing on 400 households from the 7 Sub-Counties, it was established that low public participation was demonstrated as a result of lack of information and public awareness.

### Conceptual Framework



### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey design was employed in the investigation. This design was excellent for the study because it reduces interviewer bias when participants complete identically worded self-reported measures and because it uses a questionnaire as the data collection tool, saving time and money and yielding valid amounts of quality information.

The study was carried out in Dadaab Constituency, which is located in Garissa County, Kenya, was the study's area. Dadaab is a semi-arid town in Garissa County, and an electoral constituency in Kenya. The constituency has a population of 148,869 and an Area in Sq. Km (Approx.): 6,781.40. The Constituency hosts both Local community (Kenyan) and Refugees from Somalia, Sudanese and Ethiopians estimated population of 350,000 people in five camps Hagadera, Ifo, Dagahaley and Kambios. The camps are located within an 18-kilometer radius of Dadaab town and span a total area of 50 square kilometers. Just like many other constituencies in Kenya as indicated in the transparency international reports, despite the strong legal and institutional frameworks created in Kenya to enhance the voice of the people, such as Article 1(1) of the Constitution of Kenya 2010 (Government of Kenya, 2010) vesting all sovereign power in the Kenyan people, public participation in projects that affect citizen's life remains low. Therefore, the focus on this constituency was justified.

The study targeted those responsible for NG-CDF education projects in Dadaab Constituency. They included NG-CDF committee members, wards representatives, staff from the education department in the county as

well as the project managers who will included all the 45 heads of the public primary and secondary schools in the constituency. Additionally, the study sought the opinion of the citizens, in this case, the Chair persons of the Parents Teacher Association (PTA) members from schools were considered to contribute to the study on behalf of the parents. In total, 114 respondents were targeted. All the target population members were incorporated in the study hence a census. A questionnaire was used to collect primary data.

Both qualitative and quantitative data was gathered. Qualitative data was analyzed through thematic methods as well as the use of Atlas TI. Mackey and Gass (2015) argues that this method is best in categorizing the main themes that emerge from the opinions. The study findings in this analysis were presented in a narrative format. Conversely, descriptive statistics involving percentages and mean scores were used to examine quantitative data in order to identify different levels of response-concentration with reference to asset disposal strategies.

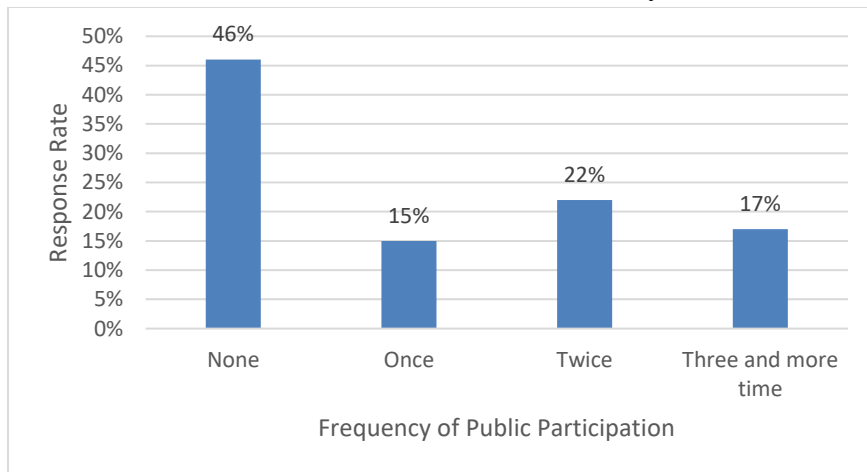
### **Results and Findings**

The study targeted a total of 144 respondents comprising of NG-CDF committee members, wards representatives, staff from the education department in the county as well as the project managers (heads of the public primary and secondary schools in the constituency). Out of this number, 127 responses were obtained which translated to a response rate of 88%.

On demographic characteristics of the respondents, Majority of the respondents (40%) had Bachelor’s degree as their highest level of education to imply high literacy. There was also diversity in the designation of the target respondents as earlier targeted.

### **Descriptive Statistics of Public Participation in NG-CDF Projects**

The study established the frequency of public participation in NGCDF projects by the respondents. As indicated in Figure 1, most of the respondents (46%) had never participated in NG-CDF projects before which implied low participation rates just as justified in previous reports and studies by Omar and Moi (2020), Muriu (2014) and the Institute of Economic Affairs, Kenya (2015).



*Figure 1: Frequency of Respondent’s Public Participation in NGCDF Projects*

*Source: Survey Data (2024)*

The respondents further rated statements on their perception of public participation in NGCDF projects using a five-point likert scale where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree and 5 = Strongly



Agree was adopted. The results in Table 4.4 that generally, there respondents indicated low rate of public participation through an overall level of disagreement (Overall Mean =2.54; SD = 1.14). Overall, the respondents were indifferent on whether NG-CDF ensures there is public consultations and public involvement in implementation of any NG-CDF education projects (Mean = 2.94 and 3.19; SD = 1.42 and 1.41) respectively.

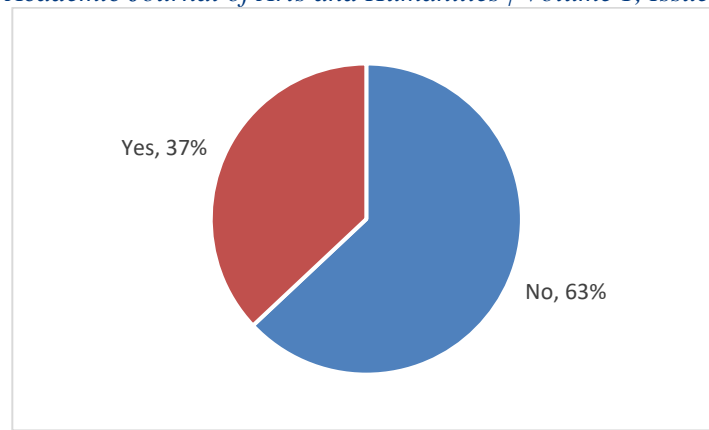
They however disagreed on whether NG-CDF collaborates with the public in implementation of any NG-CDF education projects (Mean = 2.26; SD = 1.11), NG-CDF partners with the public in implementation of any NG-CDF education projects (Mean = 2.19; SD = 0.97) and on whether NG-CDF informs the public before implementation of any NG-CDF education projects (Mean = 2.10; SD = 0.80). The standard deviations were smaller than the mean to imply that the responses across the various respondents were not highly varied. These findings confirm those of a study by Arkorful, Hilton and Awaah (2023) who also demonstrated low level of community engagement in government-funded projects in Ghana as a result of factors such as lack of information and knowledge.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Public Participation in NG-CDF Projects**

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
NG-CDF ensures there is public consultations in implementation of any NG-CDF education projects	2.94	1.42
NG-CDF ensures there is public involvement in implementation of any NG-CDF education projects	3.19	1.41
NG-CDF collaborates with the public in implementation of any NG-CDF education projects	2.26	1.11
NG-CDF partners with the public in implementation of any NG-CDF education projects	2.19	0.97
NG-CDF informs the public before implementation of any NG-CDF education projects	2.10	0.80
<b>Average</b>	<b>2.54</b>	<b>1.14</b>

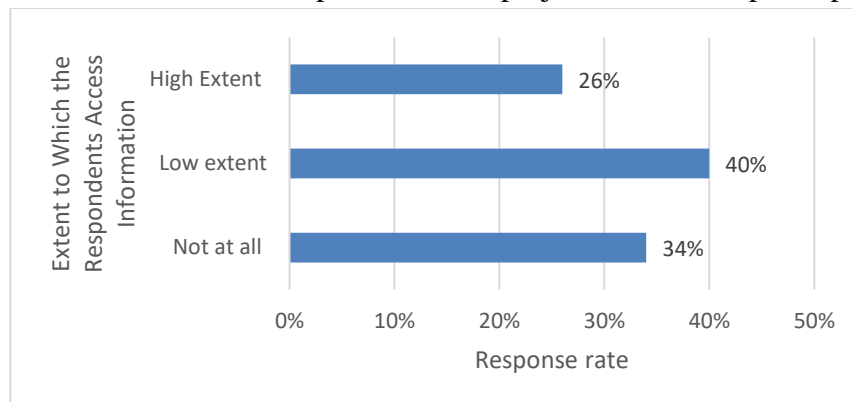
### **Descriptive Statistics of Public Awareness**

The first objective of the study was to establish the influence of public awareness on public participation in NG-CDF School Projects in Dadaab Garissa County, Kenya. The respondents were asked to indicate whether public information on NG-CDF education projects in the constituency were readily available. Majority of the respondents (63%) indicated that the information was not publicly available (Figure 2).



**Figure 2: Whether Public Information on NGCDF Projects was readily available**

The study further sought to establish the extent to which the respondents were able to access reliable and comprehensive information on NG-CDF education projects in the constituency. As presented in Figure 4.3, it can be established that up to 40% of the respondents feel that the information is available to a low extent while a further 34% feel that it is not available at all. This implies that access to NGCDF information faces a challenge which affects public awareness on the same. The findings confirm the study findings by Abtahi et al. (2015) that there exist a low awareness on public funded projects to warrant participation in it.



**Figure 3: Extent to Which Public Information on NGCDF Projects is Readily Accessible**

When asked to explain, most of the respondents stated that the information available was mainly by word of mouth through the politicians or in the strategic plans which were not available online. Some of the qualifying responses are sampled;

*...most of the information about intended projects is only heard in political forums...*

*...the information which is mostly displayed is on the bursaries and not on infrastructure development...*

The respondents further rated statements on public awareness through a perception index of 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree and 5 = Strongly Agree. The results as presented in Table 4.5

indicated an overall low awareness rate on NGCDF projects (Overall Mean = 2.38; SD = 1.18). The respondents were indifferent on whether NG-CDF committee conducts public awareness about the education projects they intend to prioritize (Mean = 2.66; SD = 1.38) nor whether NG-CDF committee readily avails information regarding education projects they intend to prioritize (Mean = 2.70; SD = 1.44).

In addition, majority of the respondents disagreed that NG-CDF committee readily avails information showing its track record and the development plans (Mean = 2.30; SD = 1.16), most citizens are aware of the NG-CDF education projects in the constituency (Mean = 2.22; SD = 1.01) and also disagreed that the NG-CDF committee conducts public awareness about the education projects they intend to prioritize (Mean = 2.02; SD = 0.91). Overall, there was a demonstration of low public awareness confirming the study findings by Hasan, Nahiduzzaman and Aldosary (2018).

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Public Awareness**

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
The NG-CDF committee conducts public awareness about the education projects they intend to prioritize	2.66	1.38
The NG-CDF committee readily avails information regarding education projects they intend to prioritize	2.70	1.44
The NG-CDF committee readily avails information showing its track record and the development plans	2.30	1.16
Most citizens are aware of the NG-CDF education projects in the constituency	2.22	1.01
The NG-CDF committee conducts public awareness about the education projects they intend to prioritize	2.02	0.91
<b>Average</b>	<b>2.38</b>	<b>1.18</b>

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusion**

The study concludes that there exists a notable gap public awareness concerning participation in NG-CDF education initiatives. However, enhancing public awareness appears crucial for fostering increased engagement and involvement in NG-CDF initiatives, thereby potentially enhancing community development outcomes in the region.

The study also concludes that there exists a significant negative attitude towards public participation in NGCDF education projects, with citizens expressing distrust in the responsiveness, transparency, and accountability of the NG-CDF board. Despite these sentiments, there exists a willingness among the majority of citizens to engage in NG-CDF projects, driven by aspirations for a better life and a desire to influence policies and hence improving these attitudes correlates positively and significantly with increased public participation in NG-CDF School Projects.

## **Recommendations for Policy Implications**

The study recommends that the NGCDF board in Dadaab to implement targeted awareness campaigns to bridge the gap in public knowledge and understanding of NG-CDF initiatives. They can utilize various communication channels, including community meetings, social media, and traditional media, to disseminate information about NG-CDF projects, processes, and opportunities for involvement.

The study further recommends that the NGCDF board should invest in capacity-building initiatives to enhance citizens' skills and knowledge for effective participation in NG-CDF initiatives. Offer awareness on advocacy to empower citizens to contribute meaningfully to decision-making processes and project implementation.

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