

CITIZEN PETITION AND PARTICIPATION ACT 2016 EFFECT ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The structure of the county directorate and budget allocation affects citizen petitions and participation in the county's development. With the increasing population, development planning is informed by the community's needs. However, this takes time to happen due to the existing structures and mechanisms. This study aimed to explore the effects of the Citizen Petition and Participation Act, of 2016 on economic development in Kiambu County, Kenya. The study objectives were; to examine the specific provisions and components of the Citizen Petition and Participation Act, 2016 in Kenya, to investigate how the Citizen Petition and Participation Act has been implemented since its enactment, focusing on economic development decisions, and to determine the impact of the Act on citizen participation in the governance of Kiambu County. The research adopted agency and stakeholder theories to illustrate the relationship between the right holders and duty bearers. The study employed a mixed research design. The study targeted residents living in Kiambu County. However, a sample size of 120 respondents was drawn from the twelve sub-counties with a balanced sex and gender representation through, a sampling of key informants. The study also engaged the directorate of public participation and, the budget and implementation committee of the county assembly. Data collection was done through the administration of questionnaires and focused group discussions. Data collected was coded, analyzed, and presented through tables and charts. The findings revealed that the

Citizen Petition and Participation Act of 2016 in Kenya encompasses several specific provisions and components aimed at promoting citizen engagement in governance processes. The Act establishes formal mechanisms for citizens to petition the government on matters of public concern. These petitions address a wide range of issues, including economic development, social welfare, environmental protection, and governance reform. From the findings, the study concluded that the Citizen Petition and Participation Act has served as a valuable tool for promoting citizen engagement in economic development processes within Kiambu County. The Act has empowered citizens to voice their concerns, advocate for their economic priorities, and participate in decision-making on matters related to economic development. The County Government of Kiambu should implement targeted awareness campaigns and educational programs to inform citizens about their rights and the mechanisms available under the Citizen Petition and Participation Act. This includes workshops, community forums, and information sessions aimed at educating citizens about how they can use the Act to influence economic development policies and decisions.

Key Words: Citizen Petition, Participation Act 2016 Effect and Economic Development

INTRODUCTION

According to United Nations (2020) asserts that no meaningful governance and development can take place minus public participation. In 2013, Ms. Elia Armstrong, Chief of the Development Management Branch (CDMB) made a presentation to the UN arguing that proper public participation brings about legitimacy, accountability, competence, and respect for the law and human rights.

Globally, people are realizing that democracy necessitates far greater citizen participation in government than can typically be achieved through elected officials' representation (Isaac, 2021). Modern democracies require active citizen participation in the formulation of laws, policies, and development initiatives. Because of this realization, the majority of countries have adopted a number of structures, procedures, and methods to improve public involvement in governance, especially in the decision-making processes. Devolution and decentralization of government responsibilities, laws and policies requiring public input, more inclusive electoral representation, and easier access to public information are some of these approaches (Andrew, 2018).

In South Korea, a study by Kim, Lee and Lee (2018) revealed that leaders and citizens have bemoaned the lack of openness in their governments and the waning public confidence in them. In an attempt to guarantee accountability, enhance transparency, and foster public trust in the government, the Korean government has expended significant energy in adopting and advancing a range of citizen engagement initiatives at all governmental levels.

A study in Bangladesh and Nepal found no linear causal relationship between increased public participation and economic development. It established that public participation to have an influence on economic development of the country, while those holding positions of power should have the will and capacity to respond. Therefore, engaging citizens in matters related to economic policies and development plans could bring diverse perspectives to the table, potentially leading to more comprehensive and equitable strategies (Sharma, 2018).

According to the article concerning governance in Africa by Nathalie Delapalme, there has been an overall improvement in governance in most African countries comparing the progress as of 2019 to the governance in 2010 (Delapalme, 2021). However, the article states that according to Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG), citizens exhibit dissatisfaction in their involvement with the governance and its performance.

As of September 2021, 9 out of 47 counties had enacted Public Participation Acts to promote citizen engagement and involvement in county governance while, others had put in place a public participation framework, policy or act to guide on citizen engagement in decision making processes. With the absence of a national public participation policy or act, counties with frameworks in place did customized the engagement to suit their population. Kenya draft policy on public participation, 2018 has continued laying at the Senate leading to uncentralized framework in guiding county's public participation frameworks.

The 2010 Kenyan Constitution officially recognized and institutionalized citizen participation for the first time in Kenyan history. The Constitution defines the essential institutions for public participation, sets the normative foundation for it, mandates its inclusion in policy and legislative processes, and instructs the creation of statutory organizations and the passing of laws to ensure effective participation. With varying degrees of success, some state agencies at the federal and local levels of government have attempted to adhere to the constitutional mandates on public participation. Public participation is nevertheless hampered by a number of issues, such as a lack of supportive institutional, legal, and regulatory frameworks; inadequate civic education; insufficient funds; and unfavorable cultural attitudes and customs (Thuku, 2020).

The Constitution's Article 201 mandates transparency and accountability, including public involvement in financial decisions. According to Article 196, county assemblies must enable public participation and involvement of the people in the legislative process as well as any other activity that the assembly and its committees may undertake.

In Kiambu county, reports indicate that before the implementation of the Act, Kiambu county experienced approximately 10 protests monthly, a situation that discouraged local investments and growth due to the destruction of property and uncertainty of economic status (Maarifa Centre staff, n.d.). The Citizen Participation and petition act was developed with a focus on understanding the public grievances to help minimize the protests.

Statement of the problem

The right to information is critical to public involvement and the proper functioning of a democracy. It is a constitutional right (Article 35 (1)), which is enforced by the Access to Information Act of 2016. The Constitution ensures citizens' access to information kept by the state and relevant private companies. Other legislation also addresses access to information, which is critical for achieving meaningful and effective public engagement (Pamba, 2018). The Kenyan government constitution advises that the public need to be included in decision making that affects them whether directly or indirectly (Cok Art.10). Kiambu county as a result has had to face several cases against it in court accusing it for the lack of public participation.

Different countries have approached the Constitution's concept of public involvement in different ways. Kiambu County Publicity and Public Participation Act, 2016 is one of the county-specific acts pertaining to public involvement. Although the concept of public participation is stated in the Constitution, it is not made clear how this notion would be put into practice. The implementation of the Act should also target development of the county using the opinions from the public to influence change and steer development. However, it is crucial to assess that the implementation of citizen participation strategies, are practical measures that are impacting the county. In terms of research, there are few studies that have focused in monitoring how the citizen petition and participation act is contributing to economic development. The studies have also failed to link the Act to development of the county. Therefore, this research sought to determine the effect of citizen petition and participation Act, 2016 on economic development in Kiambu County, Kenya

Research Objectives

- i. To examine the effects of county government structure on economic development in Kiambu county.
- ii. To assess how the budget implications on economic development in Kiambu county.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

This proposal will rely heavily on theories that have been tested in public policy and governance spectrum. Well, it is perhaps prudent to state that a theory is a supposition that is used to explain ideas in an independent way. Theories can also be used to justify the course of action. In regard to this study, two theories or suppositions will be at play and these are the agency and the stakeholders' theories.

Agency Theory

This is a theory that defines the interaction between an agent and the principal. In essence the agent has a duty to act on behalf of the principal having been empowered by the. At all times the agent is expected to act in such a manner that will benefit the principal, but many are the times that this does not happen. If the aforementioned be the case, then there is it then results in agent-principal conflict.

When it comes to government policy formulation and implementation, the citizens are supreme and thus act as the principal while the political leaders who govern the public administrations are considered agents who act on behalf of the citizens (Allison, 1979). The residents of Kiambu County thus become principals while the leadership of the county then become the agents. The residual claimants of the benefits accrued from the county government due to the implementation of the policies are thus the citizens and the administrators. The voters are the sovereign owners and any spending or action/s that affects the county demands that they be involved through parliamentary vote which is exercised through the people they vote in as well as public participation emanating from the act. The vote and the public administration are thus validation by the principals to allow the agents to act even on matters budgeting as it were in this project proposal. The promise to implement policies is the contract between the political leaders and the citizens and this is basically the relationship between the agent and the principal in this project proposal (Pallesen, 2004).

Stakeholders Theory

This theory holds that individuals who are either affected or they themselves affect the running of organizations or policies or actions or even activities of the said organization have interests be they procedural or substantive and this interest is legitimate (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). These individuals can be employees, owners or even customers.

In terms of Kiambu County, there are many stakeholders from the leadership of the county to the partners as well as the citizens who in one way or the other have interests in the county. Public participation act allows all these interests to be merged into one formidable approach that sees to it that everyone is catered for. This theory is thus very useful in strengthening the place of public participation and in ensuring that development as well as the use of budget allocation in the county meet the interest of all stakeholders. The expectation is that duty bearers treat their positions as those of stakeholders and as those holding forte for fellow stakeholders

(Freeman et. Al., 2010). Unless stakeholders participate in county matters, implementation of programs may face challenges.

County government structure

The International Association for Public Participation defines public participation as involving individuals who will be impacted by a decision in the decision-making process. A variety of public involvement is included in public participation, ranging from merely informing people about what Parliament is doing to giving the public decision-making authority.¹ Democracy is based on the fundamental premise of public participation. The fundamental tenet of democracy is that every person has an equal right to participate in decisions that impact their life. As stated in chapter one of the 2010 Kenyan Constitution, citizen participation in government decision-making is essential to a democratic system of governance's operation. A cornerstone of the constitution is the right of the public to participate in legislative proceedings in Parliament. The purpose of this fact sheet is to help with the planning and comprehension of public participation in the legislative process, namely in the National Assembly. Under the terms of the Kenyan Constitution's Articles 1, 10, 35, 118, 119, 124, 201, 221, and 232, the Petitions to Parliament (Procedure) Act, No. 22 of 2012, and the National Assembly Standing Orders defines public participation.

The 2010 Constitution created two levels of government: a national government and 47 county governments, drastically changing the organization of government. Additionally, the executive's authority was greatly curtailed. More significantly, marginalized counties that had been passed over for development since independence can now apply for additional grants to redress this disparity, thanks to the 2010 Constitution's resolution of grievances relating to exclusion. Currently, counties elect their own senator to represent the county in the national senate, a governor, members of the county legislative assemblies, and a woman to serve in the national assembly. In order to assist overcome the development distortions and imbalances of the past, devolution created provisions for the decentralization of both resources (financial and human) and political power (autonomy) (Kanyinga 2019). The 2010 Constitution places a strong emphasis on public engagement, as do all the supplemental legislation that provide Kenyan devolution its foundation, including the Intergovernmental Relations Act (2012), the County Governments Act (2012), and the Public Finance Management Act (2012).

Budgeting on economic development

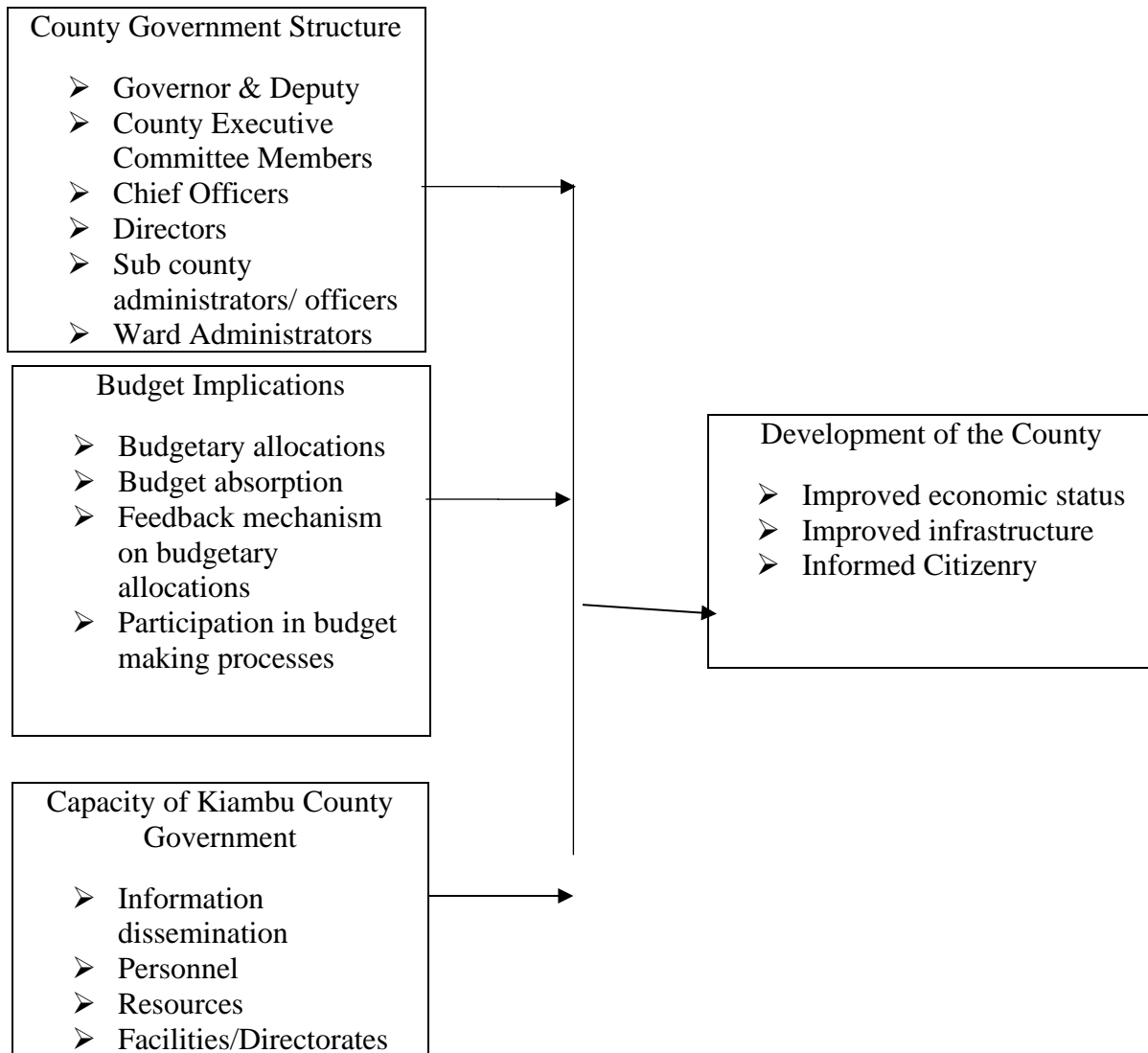
Every county had various public engagement procedures in place, it was discovered. These tools include public forums and meetings; town hall meetings mandated by the Public Finance Management Act of 2012 and the County Governments Act of 2012; citizen forums mandated by the Urban Areas and Cities Act of 2011; and budget preparation and validation meetings. Counties have also established platforms based on information and communication technologies, particularly for organizing public gatherings and disseminating information. Every county had a working website. In their public relations efforts, counties extended their reach beyond social media. Newspapers, radio, and television stations, as well as word-of-mouth, were also utilized. The most prominent social media outlets in use were found to be WhatsApp, Twitter and Facebook. Public input is required throughout the creation of a county development plan, which must include integrated economic, physical, environmental, and spatial planning (Songole, 2019). Even if the assembly and executive branch accept the plan, the county is not allowed to appropriate any monies that are not related to the objectives and goals of the integrated development plan. These plans, while they represent long-term planning, serve as

the foundation for all budgeting. As a result, it needs to have precise objectives, aims, and ways to carry out the stated goals. A government can be assessed at the conclusion of five years based on how well it accomplished its goals and whether it was a success or not. In the long run, the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) will determine the county's taxes, license fees, and development projects and activities that the county government either undertakes or does not, depending on the circumstances, making public participation a crucial component in the development plan.

Budgeting processes at the county level are integral to the effective delivery of public services and the promotion of economic development (Nyamweya & Wambua, 2018). Research underscores the importance of public participation in budget formulation and implementation, emphasizing its role in enhancing accountability and transparency in resource allocation (Kanyinga, 2018). The Kenyan Constitution of 2010 mandates citizen involvement in county affairs, including budgetary processes, as a means of promoting democratic governance and ensuring the responsiveness of public policies (Kaburu & Kibet, 2015).

Transparency and accountability are recurring themes in the literature on county budgeting in Kenya. Studies have shown that budget transparency fosters public trust in government institutions and improves the efficiency of resource allocation (Gitau, 2017). However, challenges persist in achieving optimal transparency levels, with concerns raised over the complexity of budget documents and the accessibility of budget information to the general public (Chege & Nyangena, 2016). Efforts to enhance transparency often involve capacity building among county officials and the adoption of technology-driven platforms for budget dissemination and public engagement (Owiti & Mukirae, 2017).

Conceptual Framework



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research employed a mixed research design. This involves the use of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. The study collected qualitative data by interviewing and quantitative data by administering a semi-structured questionnaire to a sample of individuals. In addition, the study utilized empirical data, which will be acquired by reviewing books, reports, journals, documentaries, and articles to complement the raw data.

The study variables are categorical and continuous. Categorical variables include the County Government Structure and Capacity of Kiambu County Government which were analyzed through mean, frequency, and charts. Continuous variables include budget implications and the development of the County which were analyzed through descriptive statistics like mean, median, and standard deviation.

The research was done in Kiambu County, one of the 47 counties (022) in Kenya. The county is 2,543.5 km² in size and is located in the center region. The county is bordered to the south by Nairobi and Kajiado Counties,

to the east by Machakos, to the north and east by Murang'a, to the north-west by Nyandarua, and to the west by Nakuru.

The county comprises of twelve (12) sub-counties namely Kikuyu, Limuru, Lari, Kabete, Gatundu North, Gatundu South, Kiambu, Githunguri, Kiambaa, Juja, Ruiru, and Thika Town. The 12 sub-counties are further broken down into 60 wards. According to the 2019 KNBS census report, the county has a total of 2.4 million people or 795,241 households. The county has 1,187,146 males and 1,230,454 females as well as 135 intersexes according to the said report. Kikuyu and Ruiru towns have the high concentration of urban population followed by Thika and Karuri in that order.

The target population in this research are the residents of Kiambu who have attained 18 years of age and are able to understand what public participation is all about and how the same affects development. The target population for this study comprises of women, men, youths and persons with disability who have at least stayed in Kiambu county for at least the last six months. In total this research has a total of 120 persons from all the 12 sub counties in the county as a form of representing all spheres and sectors as well as corners of the county. The county employees were targeted as well as other professionals in the county.

The research sample size was 120 all of whom were from Kiambu County decided on a purposive manner. However, since the population was small, the study utilized census sampling technique. There were at least 10 respondents from each sub county representing the 2/3 gender rule, 20% persons with disability, 30% youths and 30% women with the rest being men. The study also included representation from the committee on budget implementation as well as the directorate of public participation. In terms of gender, there was a 50-50 balance in regards to youths and PWDs unless in sub counties where the same was not achievable the research made exceptions.

The study utilized semi-structured questionnaires and interview schedules. The semi-structured questionnaires were administered to members of the public through focused group discussions organized by the research team. The questionnaires were also administered to individual members of the public thus cutting across the women, men, youths and people with disabilities. The interview schedule was administered to employees of the county in the public participation directorate and members of the budget implementation committee from the county. Also forming part of those interviewed will be the sub-county administrative officers.

To ensure that the tools bring out the desired information and data that was admissible in the research, an online version of the tools were developed and sent virtually to 12 respondents who were not part of the data collected. The tools were then reviewed and information received was analyzed if they were consistent with the study's objectives. The tools were pre-tested.

Content validity to determine the accuracy of the tools. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) argues that this is one of the best professional judgments of the tools when it comes to conducting research. In this research, the researcher demonstrated content validity by soliciting expert assessments from the supervisor in the development and revision of the tools in accordance to the laid down regulations.

Reliability looks at the consistency as well as the stability of the instrument or tool of research. The average correlation or internal consistency of the survey instrument's items were determined using Cronbach's alpha to gauge how reliable it is at evaluating and enhancing the reliability of variables derived from summated scales. The research utilized the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which has a range of 0 to 1. The research tools were deemed reliable if, upon computation, a coefficient of 0.7 or greater was obtained.

The study entailed both qualitative and quantitative data. Quantitative data was gathered through semi-structured questionnaires for the women, youths, men and people with disability as well as employees of the county. On the other hand, qualitative data was collected through interviews for all the respective groups but with a bias towards the budget committee members and the sub-county administrative officers. The questionnaires were distributed to the sampled population and filled in with the guidance of the researcher.

Complete questionnaires were edited for consistency and accuracy. Descriptive analysis especially the standard deviation and the means were used to interpret retorts in the questionnaire. Also, it was used to sum up data such as tables, frequencies, and percentages to present data for the simplicity of analyzing and comprehension. The data was analyzed using procedures within SPSS version 26 (Statistical Package for Social Science). Qualitative data analysis was used to make overall reports on the relationship of the categories by use of content analysis.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The researcher dispatched 120 questionnaires to selected respondents. However, 108 questionnaires were dully filled and returned to the researcher. This gave a response rate of 90% which is deemed sufficient for the study. Mugenda and Mugenda (2008) contend that a response rate of 50% is acceptable for analysis, response rate of over half is good while over 70% is very good.

Data on respondents' profile showed that 64 (59.3%) of respondents are male and 44 (40.7%) are female. This suggests that the findings of the study did not adversely affect gender stigma, as both male and female respondents in this review showed decent involvement. Age distribution data showed that 42(38.9%) were aged between 36 and 45 years, 34(31.5%) were aged between 26 and 35 years, 20(18.5%) were aged above 46 years while 12(11.1%) were aged between 18 and 25 years. With a potentially diverse range of age groups represented, the Act could have fostered greater youth engagement in governance processes, offering a platform for their voices to be heard in decisions shaping economic policies and initiatives. This increased participation might have led to the creation of targeted programs to address youth unemployment, entrepreneurship opportunities, and skills development, thereby contributing to more inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

County Government Structure

The objective one of the study was to examine the effect of county government structure on economic development. Participants were requested to specify their level of agreement with each statement regarding to effect of county government structure on economic development. The research embraced a 5-likert scale from 5-strongly agreed to 1-strongly disagreed. The responses from the participants were presented in Table 1.

Table 1: County Government Structure and Economic Development

| Statements | n | Mean | Std. Dev |
|---|----------|-------------|-----------------|
| Citizens of Kiambu County are aware of the provisions and mechanisms outlined in the Citizen Petition and Participation Act of 2016. | 108 | 3.67 | 0.679 |
| Active engagement with the Citizen Petition and Participation Act, 2016, enhances the citizens' understanding of economic development matters in Kiambu County. | 108 | 3.62 | 0.689 |
| Citizen petitions have been effective in influencing economic policies and decision-making processes in Kiambu County since the enactment of the Citizen Petition and Participation Act 2016. | 108 | 3.47 | 0.672 |
| Utilizing the petition and participation mechanisms provided by the Act for expressing economic development concerns is a straightforward process for citizens. | 108 | 3.52 | 0.655 |
| Average scores | | 3.57 | 0.674 |

Source: Field Data (2024)

The results presented in Table 1 established that the majority of the respondents agreed that citizens of Kiambu County are aware of the provisions and mechanisms outlined in the Citizen Petition and Participation Act (mean = 3.67; standard deviation = 0.679). The Citizen Petition and Participation Act of 2016 likely establishes procedures and frameworks for citizens to actively participate in the decision-making processes of their local government. By being aware of this act, citizens of Kiambu County can understand their rights and responsibilities in engaging with their local government. They may know how to initiate petitions, voice their concerns, and actively participate in various civic activities. This awareness fosters a culture of transparency, accountability, and citizen empowerment within the county. The findings are supported by Delapalme (2021) who established that citizen petitions serve as advocacy tools for attracting investment and promoting economic development in Kiambu County. Petitions calling for infrastructure improvements, investment incentives, or support for local businesses can demonstrate community support and interest in economic growth, encouraging government authorities to take action. The implementation of the Act has significantly influenced these areas, shaping the county's governance framework and economic development strategies (Ondieki & Mwenda, 2021).

The findings also revealed that most participants agreed that active engagement with the Citizen Petition and Participation Act, 2016, enhances the citizens' understanding of economic development matters in Kiambu County (mean =3.62; Standard deviation = 0.689). Through active engagement with the Act, citizens gain access to information about government activities, budgets, policies, and economic development initiatives. By participating in public consultations, town hall meetings, and other engagement platforms, citizens can learn about ongoing economic development projects, investment opportunities, and policies affecting the county's economy.

Further, the findings revealed that most participants agreed that citizen petitions have been effective in influencing economic policies and decision-making processes in Kiambu County since the enactment of the Citizen Petition and Participation Act (mean = 3.47; standard deviation = 0.672). Citizen petitions influence budget allocation decisions by bringing attention to specific economic priorities and pressing needs within the county. By mobilizing support and gathering signatures for petitions focused on economic development, citizens can exert pressure on policymakers to allocate resources towards key initiatives and projects. The findings are supported by the findings of a study by Thuku (2020) who established that Citizen petitions provide a direct avenue for residents of Kiambu County to voice their economic concerns and advocate for policies that address their specific needs. Through petitions, citizens can highlight issues such as unemployment, lack of infrastructure, or disparities in economic opportunities between different regions within the county.

Additionally, the result show that most respondents agreed that utilizing the petition and participation mechanisms provided by the Act for expressing economic development concerns is a straightforward process for citizens (mean = 3.52; standard deviation = 0.655). Citizen petitions promote inclusive governance by ensuring that the voices of all residents, including those from marginalized or underserved communities, are heard and considered in economic decision-making processes. This is supported by Nancy (2018) who established that availability of the petition mechanism under the Citizen Petition and Participation Act encourages citizen engagement in economic issues. By providing a formal process for citizens to participate in decision-making, the Act empowers individuals to take an active role in shaping the economic future of their county. In terms of county government structure, the Act has fostered a more inclusive and participatory governance system in Kiambu County. Research indicates that the Act has strengthened mechanisms for citizen engagement in decision-making processes, particularly in budget formulation and prioritization of development projects (Mwangi & Gathogo, 2018). This increased involvement of citizens in county affairs has contributed to more responsive and accountable governance practices, aligning budget allocations more closely with community needs and development priorities (Nderitu & Maina, 2019).

Budgeting

Objective two of the study was to assess the effect of budgeting on economic development. Participants were requested to specify their level of agreement with each statement regarding to how the budgeting affect the economic development. The research embraced a 5-likert scale from 5-strongly agreed to 1-strongly disagreed. The responses are tabulated in Table 2.

Table 2: Budgeting and Economic Development

| Statements | n | Mean | Std. Dev |
|--|----------|-------------|-----------------|
| The Kiambu County government is responsive to citizen petitions, leading to tangible changes in economic development plans and resource allocation. | 108 | 3.57 | 0.657 |
| The Citizen Petition and Participation Act has contributed to addressing economic disparities among different regions within Kiambu County. | 108 | 3.64 | 0.639 |
| Citizen participation, facilitated by the Act, promotes transparency and accountability in economic development initiatives undertaken by the Kiambu County government. | 108 | 3.61 | 0.617 |
| Citizens face significant challenges in the process of utilizing the petition and participation mechanisms provided by the Act for expressing their economic development concerns. | 108 | 3.72 | 0.673 |
| The Citizen Petition and Participation Act has fostered a sense of ownership and responsibility among citizens towards local economic development initiatives. | 108 | 3.69 | 0.648 |
| The outcomes of economic development initiatives in Kiambu County align with the expressed concerns and recommendations raised through citizen petitions under the Act. | 108 | 3.55 | 0.642 |
| Average scores | | 3.63 | 0.646 |

Source: Field Data (2024)

The results displayed in Table 2 showed that most participants agreed that the Kiambu County government is responsive to citizen petitions, leading to tangible changes in economic development plans and resource allocation (mean =3.57; standard deviation = 0.657). Participants agreed that the Citizen Petition and Participation Act has contributed to addressing economic disparities among different regions within Kiambu County (mean = 3.64; standard deviation = 0.639). The act may empower citizens to initiate development projects and advocate for their communities' economic interests. Communities in underserved regions could use the petition mechanisms provided by the act to request infrastructure development, access to basic services, or support for local businesses and industries. The findings are supported by Songole (2019) who established that the Act provides mechanisms for citizens to petition their government for resources and development projects in their respective regions. This allows communities in economically disadvantaged areas to advocate for their needs and priorities, leading to more equitable resource allocation across the county. Regarding budgeting processes, the Act has had a transformative impact on budget transparency and accountability within Kiambu County. Studies demonstrate that the Act has enhanced the disclosure of budget information to the public and promoted greater fiscal transparency in resource allocation (Gichira & Kinyua, 2017).

Further, the findings revealed that most respondents agreed that citizen participation, facilitated by the Act, promotes transparency and accountability in economic development initiatives undertaken by the Kiambu County government (mean = 3.61; standard deviation = 0.617). The respondents also agreed that citizens face significant challenges in the process of utilizing the petition and participation mechanisms provided by the Act for expressing their economic development concerns (mean = 3.72; standard deviation = 0.673). The act

emphasizes transparency in decision-making processes and mandates public access to information. This transparency helps to expose disparities in resource allocation and highlight areas where certain regions within the county may be underserved or neglected economically. This is supported by Andrew (2018) who established that the Act promotes transparency and accountability in the allocation and utilization of resources for economic development. By requiring government authorities to respond to citizen petitions and justify their decisions, the Act ensures that resources are distributed fairly and used effectively to address economic disparities.

Also, most participants agreed that the Citizen Petition and Participation Act has fostered a sense of ownership and responsibility among citizens towards local economic development initiatives (mean = 3.69; standard deviation = 0.648). The respondents agreed that the outcomes of economic development initiatives in Kiambu County align with the expressed concerns and recommendations raised through citizen petitions under the Act (mean = 3.55; standard deviation = 0.642). The act empowers citizens by providing them with mechanisms to actively participate in local governance and decision-making processes related to economic development. The act encourages citizens to take initiative in identifying local economic development needs and mobilizing resources to address them. Through petitions and participatory processes outlined in the act, communities can propose and advocate for specific development projects tailored to their unique economic challenges and opportunities. This fosters a sense of responsibility among citizens to actively contribute to the development of their local economies. This is supported by a study by Pamba (2018) who established that through the Act, citizens can petition for infrastructure development projects that improve connectivity and access to essential services in underserved regions. These projects, such as roads, water supply systems, and healthcare facilities, not only address immediate economic disparities but also lay the foundation for long-term economic growth and development. The Act's provisions for citizen petitions and participation have empowered local communities to demand accountability from county officials, thereby promoting prudent financial management and reducing instances of misappropriation or misuse of public funds (Kinyanjui & Wanjiru, 2020).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

From the findings, the study concluded that the Citizen Petition and Participation Act has served as a valuable tool for promoting citizen engagement in economic development processes within Kiambu County. The Act has empowered citizens to voice their concerns, advocate for their economic priorities, and participate in decision-making on matters related to economic development. Through mechanisms such as public consultations, town hall meetings, and petition submissions, citizens have been able to contribute to shaping economic policies and initiatives that directly affect their communities.

The Act has contributed to enhancing transparency and accountability in economic decision-making processes within the county. By requiring government authorities to respond to citizen petitions and justify their decisions, the Act has helped to ensure that economic development initiatives are implemented in a transparent and accountable manner. This increased transparency has fostered public trust in government institutions and has encouraged greater citizen participation in economic governance.

Recommendation

From the findings, the following recommendations are deduced;

The County Government of Kiambu should implement targeted awareness campaigns and educational programs to inform citizens about their rights and the mechanisms available under the Citizen Petition and Participation Act. This includes workshops, community forums, and information sessions aimed at educating citizens about how they can use the Act to influence economic development policies and decisions. The County government should also strengthen information dissemination channels to ensure that citizens have access to accurate and up-to-date information about economic development initiatives, government budgets, and decision-making processes. This may involve improving government websites, establishing information centers, and providing regular updates through various media channels.

The County government of Kiambu should strengthen mechanisms for transparency and accountability in economic decision-making processes. This involves ensuring that government authorities respond to citizen petitions promptly, provide clear justifications for their decisions, and are held accountable for the allocation and utilization of resources earmarked for economic development initiatives.

Comparable research can be conducted in other areas in Kenya to ascertain if consistent results can be achieved. Therefore, further research on the role of civil society organizations in facilitating citizen participation in economic development should be done.

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