The Contribution of Participants Representativeness at Citizen Fora on Equity in Resource Allocation by County Governments of Kenya.

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ABSTRACT

Public participation is an essential governance principle and a requirement for sustainable development. It has gained widespread appeal both globally and in Kenya since the passing of the Constitution of Kenya 2010. Some of the goals for conducting public participation in resource allocation include equity, efficiency, and effectiveness amongst other desirable outcomes. However, whether a given public participation forum will achieve any of these outcomes depends in part on whether the participants who attend such forums in terms genuinely represent the voices and concerns of the wider community which was the focus of this study. The study used a survey design with the members of the public who had taken part in public forums organized by county governments forming the study population for the budget making process. 491 respondents who were selected through multi-stage sampling procedure filled questionnaires while 27 county government officers were interviewed using an interview guide. The data was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings show that participants representativeness, has a positive and significant influence on equity in resource allocation by county governments in Kenya. The study recommends that county governments rethink their modes of invitation and mobilization to ensure that the values and priorities of the wider community and its diversity are represented in the consultation fora. This will ensure that views presented at such forums are to be useful in guiding the county authorities to allocate resources in ways that reflect intra county equity.

Key words: Participants Representativeness, Resource allocation, Equity, Citizen fora, County Governments.

Background to the Study

Public participation is considered a key governance principle in democratic societies worldwide (Nabatchi and Leighninger,2015). It is based on the premise that the governed have a democratic right to participate in the way they are governed and how decisions that affect them are made (Hilmer, 2010). According to Ghai (2013), public participation is a vision of democracy in which citizens are active in public affairs and are able to engage with both the executive and legislative arms of government in constructive dialogues. In Kenya, public participation has been promoted as one of the ways of ensuring social accountability and entrenching devolution (Kanyinga, 2016; Ronoh & Kurgat, 2018, Wakhubi and Shiverenje, 2003). This is because, it ensures that the people's voice, interests, and aspirations are reflected in the decisions made and actions taken by their leaders (Muriu, 2013). Public participation has been conducted at both the national and county levels in several aspects including the budget-making process, where the law (County Government Act, 2012) prescribes that citizens must be involved in the entire county budgeting process conducted by the county executive and legislature respectively (GoK 2012). One of the desired results of

this process is the equitable distribution of resources among the various regions and groups to prevent or lessen instances of inequality and marginalization. (IBP, 2018).

Equity is a normative idea and has been conceptualised differently by different scholars (Culyer, 2001). Generally, it refers to fairness, the idea that people who are different should not be treated the same way but that it is often necessary to treat people differently depending on their differing circumstances (Kapiriri and Razavi, 2022). Regarding resource allocation, equity implies that services and benefits should be distributed in such a way that regions or populations with greater needs receive a higher allocation and vice versa (Godwin, 2018). However, it has been widely observed that integrating equity considerations into resource allocation in practice is a challenging endeavour (Guindo, et al., 2012). This is because as is the case with many ethical/moral principles, there are several valid ways of operationalising it and there is no one-size-fits-all formular for translating equity concerns into policy prescriptions by governments.

The relationship between public participation and equity in resource allocation is an important area of study in participatory governance (Fung and Wright, 2001). It has been discussed largely under the broader topic of participatory budgeting and empirical studies on Porto Alegre in Brazil (Touchton and Wamper,2014) and Seoul (Hong and Cho, 2018) have shown that engaging the public in the budgeting process can lead to redistributive outcomes where low-income neighbourhoods receiving a larger allocation of money than high income areas. In Kenya, the principle of equity in resource allocation has been captured in the Constitution of Kenya 2010 and the Public Finance Management Act 2014 and applies to resource sharing both at the national and county levels. Article 201(b) of the Constitution of Kenya 2010 under the principles of public finance, states that "expenditure shall promote the equitable development of the country, including by making special provision for marginalized groups and areas" (GOK, 2010:122). It further stipulates in Article 20b that in allocating resources, the state shall give priority to ensuring the widest possible enjoyment of the rights or fundamental freedoms having regard to prevailing circumstances, including the vulnerability of groups or individuals (GOK, 2010). This indicates that there is appreciation among the policy makers that equity is a critical component to sustainable development in the country. However, studies show that there are still gaps in the implementation of these legal provisions (Okumu, 2020). This study sought to analyse whether participants representativeness at the budget forums conducted by county governments had any significant contribution as to whether the county resources are distributed in manner that reflect equity within the counties of Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

The literature on public participation shows that one of the biggest challenges in participatory engagements is that participants are not often representative of the wider population targeted by the participatory activity (Ebdon, 2006). This is so even though the involvement of appropriate and diverse stakeholders at all stages of a participatory process, is significant factor if the outcome of the process is to reflect the perspectives of the wider public (Bryson et al, 2013). According to Fung (2015), the demographics of those present at public deliberative forums for budget formulation are crucial to achieving successful outcomes of participatory budgeting. Fung (2015) asserts that for participation forums to be considered representative, the planners have to take proactive measures to ensure that there is diversity in terms of age, gender, people living with disabilities as well as ethnic and religious minorities. The more representative a forum is, the more likely it is to influence decision-makers. This requires a deliberate approach to stakeholder mapping as well as effective communication (Quick and Bryson, 2016).

Studies on the role of public participation in ensuring equity in resource allocation are few (Hong and Cho, 2018) and there is need for more empirical studies across the world. In Kenya, several studies on public participation have been carried out targeting various aspects of public participation including how the forums are carried out (Tumpes and Iravo 2018, Ndiege,2020) as well as the outcomes of such participation (Opiyo et al, 2017; Ngeeti and Odhiambo, 2021). There have been a number of studies on public

participation and budgeting in Kenya, for example, on the principles and practices used by counties in allocation of public resources (Lakin 2016; Kinuthia, 2018) as well as effects of public participation on the budget process (Indeche & Ayuma (year??); Okumu (2019). Other studies have explored the determinants of public participation in the budget making process Kituyi (2021) and one by study by Muthomi and Thurmaier (2021) investigated transparency in Kenya's budgeting model focusing on the county governments' budgeting process. However, no study known to the author has sought to examine the contribution of participants representativeness at the public budget forums on equity in resource locations by county governments and this is the gap that this study sought to fill.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The objective of the study was to analyse the contribution of participants representativeness at citizen fora on equity in resource allocation by county governments of Kenya.

Research Hypothesis

$H0_1$: Participants representativeness at citizen fora has no significant contribution on equity in resource allocation by county governments of Kenya.

Understanding Public Participation

Public participation is a complex and even debatable concept (Rowe & Frewer, 2004a), even the concept of "public" itself is open to different interpretations. According to Schneider & Busse (2018, p. 1) it can be defined as "the structured involvement of citizens in planning and policy making process by offering participation instruments". A more comprehensive definition of public participation has been given by Rowe and Frewer (2005) who have defined it as the "practice of involving the members of the public in the agenda-setting, decision-making and policy-forming activities of organizations/institutions that are responsible for policy development (Rowe & Frewer, 2005, p. 253). These definitions underscore the fact that public participation is not an event or activity, but a series of actions meant to seek and implement the input of the public on specific matters that concern them. They also emphasize that citizen engagement processes ought to be structured and not haphazard if they are to be meaningful and effective, producing tangible beneficial outcomes. However, the degree to which it accomplishes these desired results depends, among other things, on how inclusive and representative the attendees of such forums are in comparison to the larger catchment of the relevant stakeholders for the issue at hand.

Participants representativeness has been noted as one of the key determinants of successful public participation forums (Frewer, 2005; Ebdon and Franklin, 2006; Creighton 2005). According to Yang and Pandey (2011), it can be characterised in two ways. The first way is by determining whether the aggregate number of people in attendance at a given public forum is large enough to constitute a representative sample of the wider community they are representing. Secondly, it is defined as the extent to which the various stakeholders that are relevant to the decision being considered are included in the forum, including the poor and the marginalised. Although there is no specific number that is considered representative universally, if only a handful of people attend a public forum, it is doubtful that they will adequately reflect the perspectives of the wider community (Nabatchi and Leighninger, 2015). Generally, participants representative is determined by whether the people in attendance accurately reflect all the concerns, values, priorities, and voices of the people within the targeted community.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws from the insights of both participatory democratic theory and theory of justice. Participatory democratic theory is believed to have been propounded by Kauffman (1969) and emphasises

the maximum participation of the citizens in their self-governance in all spheres of the society-political, economic (workplace) and social (households) (Gould, 1988). According to proponents of this theory, public participation is a central principle (Michels, 2012), given the reality that democratic governance requires much more than indirect representation of the masses by their elected officials and hence the need for direct citizen engagements in policy making, legislation, as well as design and implementation of development programmes (Pateman, 2012; Aragones, 2008) The link between public participation and democracy in this study can be articulated in several ways. Firstly, public participation promotes democracy by giving citizens opportunities to influence decision making by their governments (Cheema and Rodinelli, 2007). In addition, citizen participation lends legitimacy for public decisions as public planners can show that there were extensive input into the decision by the concerned especially if all the relevant stakeholders were involved (Laurian & Shaw, 2009). Finally, it has been shown to be effective in increasing the responsiveness of governments to its citizens (Innes, 2004) which is a key goal in contemporary democratic practice.

John Rawls theory of Justice views equity as fairness and finds its grounding in moral theory which regards justice as the first and universal positive virtue when it comes to social institutions (Rawls, 1971). The theory is based on two principles namely, that each person should have an equal right to basic liberties and that any or all social and economic inequalities are to be distributed equally except where such inequalities will work for everyone's advantage. Rawls argued therefore that when it comes to the distribution of public goods, fairness (justice) should be the foremost consideration and that the distribution of social and economic benefits and burdens should entail equal distribution for all people first and any unequal distribution must benefit all people especially the worst-off in the society.
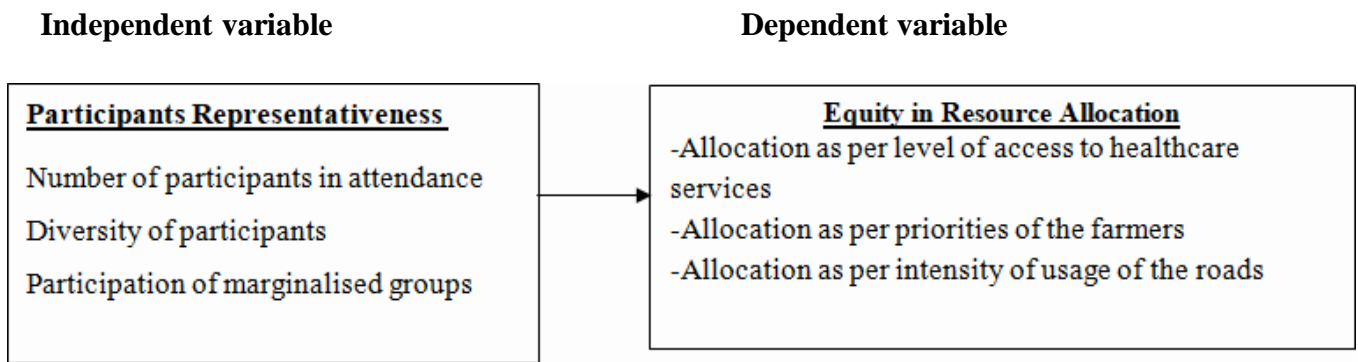
This is what has also been referred to as the *Maximin* theory, which conceives equitable distribution of resources as that which works for the advantage of the least-advantaged person (Culyer, 2001). This principles "gives a particularly high priority to the least well-off group in society, when the advantage of people is evaluated in terms of their holdings of primary goods (Qizilbash, 2007, p. 60). Based on this theory, county governments should be guided by fairness (equity) as one of the key considerations when distributing the county development resources and not distribute equally such resources as this would go against the principle of justice.

Conceptual Framework

The study conceptualized participants representativeness as having a significant contribution on equity in resource allocation by county governments of Kenya as indicated in Figure 1. Participants representativeness in this study was conceptualized as the aggregate number of participants who attended the budget forums, the diversity of such participants in terms of socio-demographic characteristics as well as participation of marginalised groups within the community including, the youth, women, and people with disabilities. It was envisaged in the study that if the members of the public who attend the budget forums are representative of the wider community, then their views would contribute to decisions on allocation of the county budget in manner that reflects equity between the various wards within the county.

Equity in the allocation of resources was broken down into three programmes that are part of devolved functions to county governments in Kenya namely health, agriculture, and roads. Equity in allocation of the health budget was assessed by determining whether the final budget allocations considered the level of access to health services as gauged by distance to the nearest health facility. In addition, equity in distribution of agriculture budget was assessed by whether the needs of the farmers were reflected in the final budget as prioritized by them during the budget forums. Finally, equity in the allocations for the roads budget was evaluated by whether the final budget reflected the priorities of the citizens based on the intensity of usage of the roads within the county.

Independent variable	Dependent variable

Participants Representativeness

Number of participants in attendance

Diversity of participants

Participation of marginalised groups

Equity in Resource Allocation

-Allocation as per level of access to healthcare services

-Allocation as per priorities of the farmers

-Allocation as per intensity of usage of the roads

Figure 1: Conceptual framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a cross-sectional survey design incorporating both qualitative and quantitative aspects. The target population were all the citizens who had participated in the budget forums in nine counties selected for the study (13245 in total). The list of the participants was obtained from the office of the controller of the budget who keeps such records as evidence of public participation having been conducted by the countries nationally. The counties selected for the study included Busia, Elgeyo-Marakwet, Homabay, Kisii, Kwale, Machakos, Makueni, and Nyeri. The study employed a multi-stage sampling technique including stratified sampling to identify the counties to be selected for the study followed by systematic random sampling to identify the individual respondents. The sample size was 491 respondents who filled a structured questionnaire, and the response rate was 99%. The study also involved 27 key informant interviews (three from each county) who were County Government officials involved in county budgeting process namely and who by virtue of their involvement, could provide reliable information about the planning, management of the Budget forums as well as the synthesis and use of public views in the budget making process. These included the County Director of Public Participation, County Director of Budget and the Chairperson of County Budget and Appropriation Committee at the County assembly. Primary data collection was done using structured questionnaires and interview guides and secondary data was obtained from the relevant government publications including the office of the controller of budget. The resulting data, both quantitative and qualitative was cleaned and coded before being analysed. Quantitative data was analysed using the computer software (SPSS) and regression analysis was used to test the relationships between the independent and dependent variables while the qualitative data was analysed using content /thematic analysis and amplified using direct quotations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The response rate for the questionnaires was 99% and for the In-depth Interviews at 100%. This was achieved by having the questionnaires being enumerators administered. The 99% response rate was considered adequate for conducting data analysis as well as making inferences about the relationship between participants representativeness and equity in resource allocation by county governments. The response rate was summarised in the Table below.

Table 1: Response Rate of Respondents

County	Target Sample(N)	Response (N)	Percentage
Homabay	56	56	100
Elgeyo Marakwet	54	52	96
Kisii	54	54	100

Busia	56	56	100
Isiolo	54	54	100
Kwale	56	55	98
Machakos	54	54	100
Makueni	54	54	100
Nyeri	56	56	100
Total	**494**	**491**	**99**
In-depth Interviews	27	27	**100**

Equity in Resource Allocation by County Governments of Kenya

Equity in resource allocation in this study was defined as the distribution of the county's development budget in a manner that resources are allocated according to the needs and challenges faced by the various sub counties/wards within the county. Resource distribution is considered equitable and just when places or groups with greater needs receive a larger share of the resources available (Kapiri and Razavi, 2022). The study focused on investigating fairness in the distribution of county government budget in three programmes that are decentralized functions by county governments namely health, agriculture (both livestock and crop) as well as County roads. On a five-point Likert scale, participants were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with statements on equity in these three programmes and the summary results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Equity in Resource Allocation

Statements on Equity in Resource Allocation	SD	D	NA/ND	A	SA	Mean	Std.
	%	%	%	%	%		Deviation
Allocations for the provision of health services reflects the people's health needs.	9.10	25.10	23.20	23.20	19.40	3.21	1.30
Allocations for the provision of health services addressed the key health challenges facing the people.	7.70	28.70	22.60	25.10	16.00	3.10	1.21
Allocation for the provision of health services targeted regions and social groups that would benefit the most	10.70	26.10	21.40	25.90	16.00	3.12	1.32
The allocation of the health budget reflects the differences in population and geographical size of wards.	7.90	24.10	27.30	22.50	18.20	3.22	1.20
Allocation for projects enhancing crop production reflects the priorities of the crop farmers	10.60	32.30	19.10	24.20	13.80	3.00	1.24
Allocations for projects enhancing livestock production reflects the priorities of the livestock farmers.	11.50	29.10	25.30	22.70	11.30	2.91	1.23
Sub counties/wards that have a higher crop production capacity generally received higher allocation of the agriculture budget.	15.60	28.90	23.90	20.90	10.70	2.80	1.21

Regions that have high agricultural potential but face production constraints e.g poor rainfall/poor roads network generally received higher allocation of the agriculture budget.	16.40	26.60	23.50	19.70	13.80	2.91	1.30
The budgetary allocation for Crop production targeted regions that would benefit most by enhancing their crop production potential.	14.00	28.40	25.40	21.50	10.50	2.90	1.51
Allocation for livestock production targeted areas that would benefit the most.	11.00	28.80	26.60	21.70	11.90	2.90	1.22
Allocation for road projects considered the status of roads as identified by the people.	9.20	22.00	25.90	23.20	19.8	3.20	1.31
Allocation for the Roads budget reflected the number of users of the various roads.	8.70	25.30	25.30	23.50	17.20	3.21	1.22
The allocation of the Roads budget considered the needs of the users of the various roads.	7.70	27.70	18.60	27.90	18.00	3.21	1.21
Generally, budgetary allocations responded positively to the diverse needs of the people.	17.20	19.80	20.40	30.40	12.10	3.00	1.31

Mean: Strongly Disagree (SD)=1.00-1.80, Disagree (D)=1.81-2.60, Neither Disagree nor Agree (ND/NA) 2.61-3.40, Agree (A)=3.41.4-20, Strongly Agree (SA)=4.21-5.0

The results demonstrate that respondents did not dispute or agree with any of the fourteen (14) statements about equity in resource distribution for the three programs because every response was within the range of 2.61-3.40 in mean score. This can be understood in two ways. Firstly, it can mean that equity in the allocation of resources for the three programmes is sometimes realized, and other times not achieved by county governments. This indicates that equity as a criterion for distributing resources may not be consistently applied and that other considerations (political, efficiency and feasibility) may from time to time take priority over equity when allocating resources (Godwin,2018). It could also mean that the respondents lacked sufficient information on how the budget for the three programmes was allocated in the year of study for them to form a specific opinion on the matter. This is a viable explanation as other studies on public participation in budgeting have shown that lack of adequate and user-friendly budget information is one of the challenges faced by members of the public during hearings on the budget (Muchunu, 2015; Kipyegon and Wanjare, 2017; Maika and Iravo, 2018)

Factor Analysis on Equity in Resource Allocation

Factor analysis was conducted on the Likert scale statements using Principal Component Analysis (PCA). Factor analysis is a technique used in multiple-indicator measures to reduce variables which a researcher needs to deal with by determining whether several indicators group together into distinct clusters (Bryman, 2012). The PCA was conducted to reduce the several items in the Likert scale into a few factors while at the same time retaining observed variations from the variables as is presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Total: Variance Explained on Equity in Resource Allocation

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	8.169	58.347	58.347	8.169	58.347	58.347	3.791	27.078	27.078

2	1.248	8.914	67.261	1.248	8.914	67.261	3.503	25.020	52.098
3	1.034	7.388	74.649	1.034	7.388	74.649	3.157	22.551	74.649
4	.625	4.466	79.114						
5	.484	3.457	82.572						
6	.425	3.038	85.609						
7	.363	2.590	88.200						
8	.313	2.237	90.437						
9	.292	2.088	92.524						
10	.272	1.944	94.468						
11	.244	1.742	96.210						
12	.205	1.461	97.671						
13	.176	1.260	98.931						
14	.150	1.069	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

It can be seen from the table that three factors had initial Eigenvalues greater than 1 and accounted for 74.65% of the total variance across all the factors extracted. This means that these three factors explain to a greater extent equity in resource allocation by counties in this study. The three factors extracted include: equity in allocation of resources for agricultural projects, equity in allocation of resources for health projects and equity in allocations for roads projects. Moreover, an analysis on the rotated component matrix of the three extracted components was done and the results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Rotated Component Matrix on Equity in Resource Allocation

Statements on equity in resource allocation	Component		
	Allocation as per level of access to health services	Allocation as per priorities of the farmers	Allocation as per intensity of usage of the roads
Allocations for health services reflects the people's health needs.	.229	**.848**	.231
Allocations for health services addressed the key health challenges facing the people.	.242	**.850**	.280
Allocation for health services targeted regions and social groups that would benefit the most	.260	**.784**	.295
The allocation of the health budget reflects the differences in population and geographical size of wards.	.303	**.753**	.218
Allocation for projects enhancing crop production reflects the priorities of the farmers	**.669**	.262	.175
Allocations for projects enhancing livestock production reflects the priorities of the livestock farmers.	**.700**	.397	.275
Sub counties/wards that have a higher crop production capacity generally received higher allocation of the agriculture budget.	**.778**	.272	.229

Regions that have high agricultural potentialbut face production constraints e,g poor rainfall/poor roads network generally received higher allocation of the agriculture budget.	**.746**	.220	.337
The budgetary allocation for Crop production targeted regions and social groups that would benefit most by enhancing their crop production potential.	**.694**	.107	.285
Allocation for livestock production targeted areas that would benefit the most.	**.703**	.310	.364
Allocation for road projects considered the status of roads as identified by the people.	.312	.321	**.757**
Allocation for the Roads budget reflected the number of users of the various roads.	.292	.196	**.816**
The allocation of the Roads budget considered the needs of the users of the various roads.	.259	.271	**.838**
Generally, budgetary allocations responded positively to the diverse needs of the people.	.352	.254	**.681**

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

According to the criteria for evaluating factor loadings in the rotated component matrix, a loading is considered substantial if the value is 0.4 and above. The results in table 4 above show that all the statements for each component were substantially loaded implying that all the statements for equity on agriculture, heath services and roads measured what was envisaged in the conceptual framework. Moreover, descriptive statistics on the extracted components was undertaken and the results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics on Equity in Resource Allocation Components (N=491)

Component	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach Alpha
Allocation as per level of access to healthcare services	3.2	0.40	0.75
Allocation as per priorities of the farmers	2.8	0.11	0.91
Allocation as per intensity of usage of the roads	3.6	0.60	0.92

Mean: Strongly Disagree (SD)=1.00-1.80, Disagree(D)=1.81-2.60, Neither disagree nor Agree (NDNA) 2.61-3.40, Agree(A)=3.41.4-20, Strongly Agree (SA)=4.21-5.0

Based on the mean scores, the respondents agreed that there was equity in allocation as per intensity of usage of the roads (mean=3.6). This means that respondents perceived that resources for road projects (construction and maintenance) within the counties studied were distributed according to the needs of the road users in various wards. The respondents neither disagreed nor agreed that there was equity in allocations as per priorities of the farmers (Mean=2.8) and allocation as per level of access to health services (Mean=3.2) respectively. This could mean that that the respondents either lacked sufficient information to form a definite opinion on whether equity was achieved in these two programmes or that the allocations for these programmes reflected equity in some cases while in other cases it did not. About agriculture, the declining aggregate budgetary allocation for agricultural programmes over the years, means that equity concerns may not be the most important consideration as opposed to more 'practical' factors such as efficiency, viability and balancing political interests. The reality is that the Kenyan government's investment in agriculture has been declining over the years although it went up slightly in the financial year 2021/2022

(KNBS, 2022). Despite agriculture being the main economic activity and source of livelihoods for more than 75% of Kenyan households and its contribution to more job opportunities especially in the rural areas (KNBS,2019), both at the national and county, the budget for agricultural docket has been relatively low. This has a direct impact on resource allocation as empirical studies have demonstrated that where resources are limited and government officials are operating on a tight budget, equity concerns take a back seat about how the available resources are allocated (Charvel et al,2018)

The subject of equity in the allocation of heath resources has been a subject of research and debate for health policy makers worldwide (Li, et al., 2020). Various criteria have been proposed and implemented in the allocation of health resources including cost effectiveness efficiency, disease burden, severity of disease, equity, and quality amongst others (Liu et al., 2016). It has been shown that equity, though prominently mentioned in literature as an important consideration in health resources allocation, is rarely achieved (WHO,2000). For example, a study by Kaur et al., (2019) about criteria for priority-setting health resource allocation in Low and Middle-income countries drawn from Africa, Asia and Latin America concluded that cost-effectiveness was the most frequently used criteria, followed by health benefits with equity considerations coming in third place. This is partly because equity as Guindo et al., (2012) concedes, is difficult to operationalize in decision-making and priority-setting processes in a pragmatic manner" (Guindo et al, 2012:10).

Participants Representativeness in County Budget forums

The study sought to analyse the contribution of participants' representativeness at citizen fora on equity in resource allocation by county governments. Several questions were posed to the respondents to measure participants' representativeness at citizen forums including aggregate number of participants at the forums as well as representation of various socio-demographic groups within the community.

Number of Participants at the Budget forums.

The aggregate number (size) of participants who attend a public forum is a critical determinant if such a forum is to be considered representative of the wider community targeted by the authorities planning the public forums. Respondents were asked to indicate on average how many people attended the forum they had participated in and the findings are shown in Figure 2
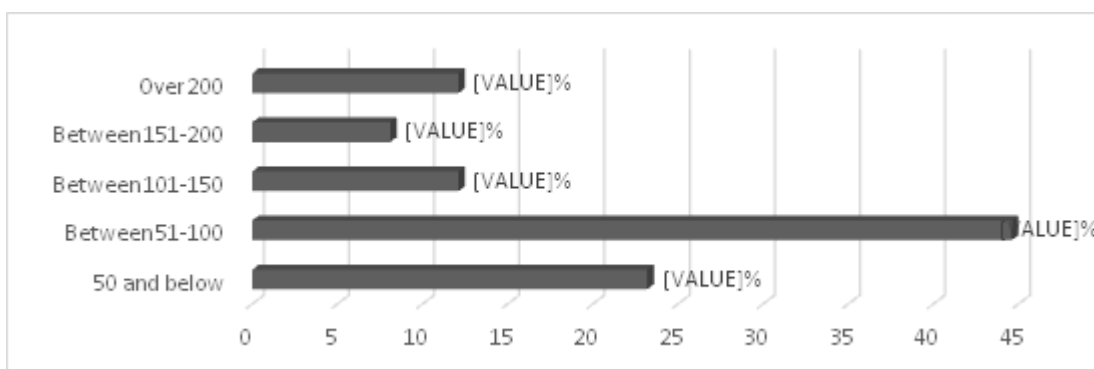
Figure 2: Number of People in attendance at the Budget Forums

The results reveal that 44.6% and 23.2% of the respondents noted that the forums they attended attracted between 50-100 and below 50 attendees respectively. This implies that in the counties studied, most public forums attracted around 100 participants. These numbers are low given that most of the forums were held at the ward level, where it was possible for members of the public to walk to the venue and given the fact that the population of adults who are eligible for attending such forums number in thousands. The total number

of participants in a forum is one of the indicators of representativeness, because the fewer the people, the less likely that they will be a critical mass to fully represent the diversity within the community (Ebdon, 2006).

However, it has been pointed out that this indicator of representativeness has limitations, since it is possible to have a large homogenous group of people from a single region or socio-demographic category in which case the aggregate numbers in themselves do not count regarding representativeness. However, as a beginning point, it is still important consideration because, the fewer the people in attendance relative to the entire community, the less representative they will in most cases be. According to Okumu (2020) "the more the citizens who participate, the wider the scope of ideas and views on policy steps and the greater the legitimacy of government actions and its success" (Okumu, 2020:16) Meaningful participation involves adequate number of people although what is considered 'adequate number' depends on the population of the target community/polity as well as the purpose for having the forums (Moro, 2005)

Representation of the various socio-demographic groups at the forums

Another indicator of representativeness considered in the study was the presence and participation of the socio-demographic groups deemed to be marginalised/disadvantaged including women, the youth and the elderly as well as people living with disabilities (PWDs) as presented in the table below.

Table 6: Representation of Socio-demographic groups in the Budget Forums

Socio-demographic groups	Frequency (N=491)	Percentage
Gender		
Men	**388**	79
Women	**103**	21
Total	**491**	100
Age		
Youth	**49**	10
Middle-aged	**417**	85
The Elderly	**25**	5
Total	**491**	100

In terms of gender representation, majority of the respondents (79%) noted that men formed majority of the participants in the forum they attended indicating that representation of women in most the forums was low. The results also reveal that age wise, most of the respondents (85%) noted that middle-aged people formed the majority of the participants in the forums they attended, followed by the youth were 10% and elderly were 5%. This is an indication that the voices of the youth and the elderly are not adequately represented in most of the forums. The respondents were further asked to comment on whether people with disabilities were represented in the meeting they attended as one way of obtaining information on the diversity in the composition of the participants at the budget forums and the results shown in Table 7 below:

Table 7: People with disabilities at the forums

People with Disability	No	%	Yes	%
The Physically challenged	169	34.1	327	65.9
The Hearing impaired	448	90.3	48	9.7
The Visually impaired	453	91.3	43	8.7

Although 65.9% of the respondents noted that physically challenged people were represented in the forums, there was very minimal representation of the people with hearing and visual impairment given that only 9.7% and 8.7% of the respondents observed that these categories of people living with disabilities represented at the forums they attended. Although, this finding suggests that people with disabilities were few at the budget forums, it is not possible to determine with certainty whether there was lack of inclusivity of people with disabilities in the budget forums. This is because their numbers in the general population are also low according to the Kenya Population and Housing Census figures (2019) where the population of people with disabilities was 918,270 out of the 47 million Kenyans accounting for 1.95% (GOK, 2020).

Descriptive Findings on Participants Representativeness at budget forums

The respondents were further asked to indicate their agreement or otherwise with statements relating to participants representativeness at the budget forums and the findings are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Summary Statistics on Participants Representativeness at the Forum (N=491)

Statements on participants representativeness	SD%	D%	ND/NA%	A%	SA%	Mean	Std. Deviation
The total number of people who attended was adequate for such a forum	10.70	22.60	16.10	36.30	14.30	3.21	1.21
Citizens with different educational levels were fairly represented at the forum	6.70	14.50	24.20	36.30	18.30	3.51	1.10
Citizens with disabilities were fairly represented at the forum	19.40	24.70	19.40	25.50	10.90	2.82	1.33
Citizens from different economic status were fairly represented at the forum	8.10	19.80	20.00	36.00	16.00	3.32	1.20
Women were adequately represented at the forum	5.30	25.30	24.00	31.70	13.70	3.21	1.10
Minority groups (ethnic/religious/) were adequately represented at the forum	12.50	19.20	26.70	28.10	13.50	3.11	1.20
There was adequate representation of the youth during the forum	8.30	24.00	21.30	27.40	18.10	3.21	1.20
Older persons (over 60) years were adequately represented at the forum	15.80	27.90	19.00	26.10	11.10	2.91	1.30
People from the marginalised areas of the subcounty were fairly represented at the forum.	22.20	17.50	19.70	27.80	12.80	2.90	1.40

Mean: Strongly Disagree (SD)=1.00-1.80, Disagree(D)=1.81-2.60, Neither Disagree Nor Agree (NDNA) 2.61-3.40, Agree (A)=3.41.4-20, Strongly Agree (SA)=4.21-5.0

The Mean was used to test the distribution of the responses to the statements. The respondents only agreed with one (1) statement about citizens with different educational levels being fairly represented at the forum(Mean=3.5). However, the respondents neither disagreed nor agreed (Mean 2.61-3.40) with the rest of the statements on participants representativeness. This implies that that although the various groups were present in the forums, the numbers present were not large enough to constitute a fair representation of the various socio-economic and demographic groups found in the community including PWDs, Women, youth, minorities, the elderly, and people from the marginalised areas of the county.

Factor Analysis on Participants' Representativeness at the Forum

Factor analysis was conducted on the variables of participant's representativeness and the results presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Total Variance Explained on Participants' Representativeness at the Forum

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.455	80.495	80.495	4.455	80.495	80.495
2	0.96	10.664	60.16			
3	0.694	7.714	67.873			
4	0.609	6.764	74.638			
5	0.546	6.068	80.706			
6	0.519	5.764	86.47			
7	0.481	5.345	91.815			
8	0.406	4.513	96.328			
9	0.33	3.672	100			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

The total variance explained output shows that one component was extracted during the PCA process which explains 80.50% of the total variance based on the Initial Eigen values. This indicates that all the constructs as captured by the statements account for participants representativeness. Moreover, a rotated component analysis with the extracted component was undertaken and a matrix generated at shown in the Table 10 below:

Table 10: Rotated Component Matrix on Participants' Representativeness

Statements on participants representativeness at the forum	Component
	Participants' Representativeness
The total number of people who attended was adequate for such a forum	.502
Citizens with different educational levels were fairly represented at the forum,	.733
Citizens with disabilities were fairly represented at the forum	.702
Citizens from different economic status were fairly represented at the forum	.790
Women were adequately represented at the forum	.701
Minority groups (ethnic/religious/) were adequately represented at the forum	.672
There was adequate representation of the youth during the forum	.714
Older persons (over 60) years were adequately represented at the forum	.693
People from the marginalised areas of the sub county were fairly represented at the forum.	.784

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

The component matrix shows that all the variables were substantially loaded on the extracted component with all of them having factor loading values of more than 0.4. Additionally, descriptive statistics on participant's representativeness at the budget forums was conducted and the results shown in table 11 below.

Table 11: Descriptive Statistics on Participants' Representativeness Component (N=491)

Component	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach Alpha
Participants representativeness	3.8	0.30	0.70

Mean: Strongly Disagree (SD)=1.00-1.80, Disagree(D)=1.81-2.60, Neither Disagree Nor Agree (NDNA) 2.61-3.40, Agree (A)=3.41.4-20, Strongly Agree (SA)=4.21-5.0

The mean response (Mean=3.8) of the extracted component shows that taken together, participants agreed with the statements on the participants representativeness at the forums which shows that overall, the participants were satisfied with the extent of representation of the various groups within the locality at the budget forums. However, a study in Makueni county by Hassan (2019) about the implementation of county public participation guidelines found that only one county (Makueni) out of the four counties he sampled, had managed to ensure the that the participants that came for the budget forums represented all socio-economic and demographic groups (the youth, women, civil society groups) within the county as compared with other counties. Makueni county has been shown to be a model county in Kenya in the way public participation is organized including the commitment to involve the various groups within the county at all levels of county governance from the village to the county level (Mbithi,2018). Internationally, the youth, women and other cultural minority groups are often under-represented in many public participation forums (Michels, 2012)

Qualitative Findings on enhancing Participants representativeness.

The key informants interviewed were asked to give information about the strategies that planners of the budget forums employed to enhance the representativeness of the participants at the budget forum. A content analysis of their responses was undertaken, and the responses grouped into four thematic areas as captured in Table 12 below:

Table 12: Strategies employed by County Government Officials to enhance Representativeness.

Themes	Strategies for enhancing representation of various groups in the budget forums	Total (N=27)	Percentage (%)
Targeted Invitations	Deliberate direct invitations were sent to representatives from the villages/wards/sub counties	22	81
	Adverts emphasized representation of marginalised groups as important	2	7
	Invitations were sent to stakeholders /interest groups from different sectors through their leaders	12	44
Mobilization	NGAO/county officials were used to mobilize representatives of various socio-demographic groups	16	59
	Involve CSOs/NGOs in the area to mobilize participants	4	15

Facilitation	Give fare to those who cannot pay to get to the venue	3	11
Venues	Hold the meeting where women/others can conveniently attend(market)	4	15

The three most employed strategies were sending direct invitations to representatives of the community, invitations through the national and county government officials as well as sending invitations the various interest groups. Firstly, the planners sent direct invitation to representatives of the community who were mostly local leaders drawn from the villages, locations, or wards to represent various regions. This was highlighted by one interviewee who stated that:

"*...we achieve representativeness by inviting their representatives. In 2019, we did stakeholder mapping to get the community leaders -women, Youth and religious leaders and opinion leaders. We write to them letters or call them personally to attend the forums since we have their contacts. We make sure there is representation from all the villages. The people who come for the ward and Subcounties forums are selected from the village units, and they represent the various villages. We ensure that at each level, there is a representation from each area" R1*

Secondly, mobilization was done through the national and county government officials/employees. The national government officials (NGAO) included the chiefs, assistant chiefs, constituency development fund (CDF) staff, while the County officials include ward managers, ward administrators and member of county assembly. These officials helped to identify and mobilize people from their wards/village/sub counties to attend the budget forums as one respondent observed:

This has been a challenge and sometimes we do not get it right, but we have tried to ensure representation using the NGAO-chiefs and assistant chief. We ask them to invite and ensure that the people who come represent the various villages and sub locations within the ward. We also involve their nominated leaders at the county assembly- women, youth and PLWD members to mobilize their members to attend the forums. R2

Finally, the planners of the forums send invitations to representatives/leaders from different sectors and interest groups as captured by this respondent "…*when we are doing invitations, we insist that representation be achieved for women, youth, PLWD, men. We deliberately send invitations to the representatives of interested parties and key stakeholder groups within the county including, NGO leaders, the business community and the clergy amongst others" R3*

Regression analysis between Equity in resource allocation and participants representativeness.

To determine the effect of participant's representativeness on equity in resource allocation, the study conducted an Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression between the two variables. The results of the regression analysis is presented in table 12 below.

Table 12: Regression Analysis between Equity in Resource Allocation and Participants Representativeness

Independent	Model 1				Model 2				Model 3			
	Beta	Std. Error	T	Sig.	Beta	Std. Error	T	Sig.	Beta	Std. Error	T	Sig.
(Constant)	-.007	.044	-.151	.880	-.044	.044	-.098	.922	-.010	.041	-.243	.808
Participants representativeness	.270	.044	6.095	.000	.298	.044	6.790	.000	.433	.042	10.461	.000

Dependent	Allocations as pe level of access to healthcare services	Allocations as per priorities of the farmers	Allocation as per intensity of usage of the roads
R – squared	0.073	0.089	0.188
Std. Error	0.9638	0.9584	0.9048
F – ratio (1, 475)	37.154	46.107	109.426
Prob. > F	0.000	0.000	0.000
VIF(Average)	4.56	6.124	4.78
Shapiro-Wilk test	Statistic:0.25, Sig.=0.124	Statistic:0.981, Sig.=0.065	Statistic:0.541, Sig.=0.29

The F-statistic (ANOVA Test) for the three models indicate that regression coefficients are all statistically significant given a p-value of less than 0.05 for each model and therefore the conclusions are valid. In addition, the results show that participants representativeness at the budget forums is positively related to and significantly influences equity in allocations of resources by county governments as per level of access to healthcare services, priorities of farmers and intensity of usage of the roads. This indicates that involving a diverse and inclusive range of stakeholders (participants with different socio-economic and demographic characteristics as well those from disadvantaged/marginalised groups) contributes to equity in resource allocation for health, agricultural and road projects by county governments.

This finding is consistent with other studies which found that involving a diverse and representative set of stakeholders in public participation forums results in equity outcomes when allocating resources (Hong and Cho,2018). Moreover, Bryson et al (2013) observed that if stakeholder identification and analysis is not properly done, participatory forums end up with members of the public who are "easily recruited, vocal and reasonably comfortable in public areas" (Bryson et, al, 2013:29).However, other studies have noted that the more diverse the participants are, the more challenging it is to build consensus and achieve convergence on what should be prioritized for resource allocation (Quick and Byson,2016),but there is a general consensus that having participants who fairly represent the relevant stakeholders in any public participation forum leads to positive outcomes, equity included.

Hypothesis Testing

The study hypothesis stated that participants representativeness at citizen fora has no significant influence on equity in resource allocation by county governments as shown in the table below:

Table 13. Results of Hypothesis Testing

No	Hypothesis	P Value	Verdict
H0$_1$	Participants representativeness at citizen fora has no significant contribution on equity in resource allocation by county governments of Kenya.	0.000<0.05	Rejected

The results showed a p-value of 0.000 < 0.05 significance level hence the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that participants' representativeness at budget forums significantly contributes to equity in resource allocation by county governments. Specifically, the results imply that having a diverse representation of the relevant stakeholders at the budget forum increases the likelihood that the outcome will reflect equity in the allocation of health, agriculture as well roads budget by the county government. The findings agree with the findings of Bryson et al (2012) who found that getting different perspectives in public forums improved participants understanding of the different issues and needs of the various stakeholders facilitating negotiated decisions that address equity concerns. This is because involving a diversity of participants gives expression to all the groups within the community (especially the neediest) thereby offering opportunities for their voices to be heard and their needs addressed by public officials (Michels, 2012). By widening the

representation of traditionally neglected and underprivileged groups in the budget forums, decision-making about public resources reflects a community's needs more accurately in which case more resources are distributed to areas/regions with greater needs (No and Hsueh,2020).

Moreover, public input emanating from a representative group of the wider public is more likely to be valued and considered by the governmental authorities when setting priorities. In a nation-wide study of citizen engagement in US local government jurisdictions, Young and Pandey (2011) found that participants representativeness was one of the most critical factors to participation outcomes which includes equity. They concluded that "the more non-representative the participation is, the less likely that change will occur in government decision-making" (Young and Pandey, 2011:888). However, according to No and Hsueh (2020) for such representativeness to be achieved, the way the process of participation is designed should not only be concerned with the numbers present in each forum (the aggregate total number of those have attended) but more importantly, how the forum is representative in terms of gender, disability, age, ethnicity and regional (geographical) distribution.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The objective of the study was to analyse the contribution of participants representativeness on equity in resource allocation by county governments and different indicators were used to gauge the level of representativeness. Firstly, regarding the aggregate number of participants as one of the indicators of representativeness, it was found that majority of forums attracted between 51-100 participants followed by 50 participants and below. Although there are no universally agreed threshold for the aggregate numbers required for a forum to be counted as representative by this indicator, based on the populations of the wards, this number seems to be unsatisfactory. In addition, the study also found that in terms of socio-demographic characteristics of the participants at the forums, men and the middle-aged were more as compared to women the youth and the elderly respectively. Further, it was found that the representation of people with disabilities was varied, with the physically challenged better represented while those with hearing and visual impairment having low representation. These findings agree with the results of other studies which have also noted that women, the youth and the people living with disabilities are often less represented in public forums where there are no proactive measures to enhance their representation.

Finally, the descriptive statistics indicated that most of the respondents agreed with the statements that citizens with different educational levels were fairly represented at the forum, but neither agreed nor disagreed with the statements that citizens with disabilities, older persons (over 60 years), the youth, women were fairly represented at the forum. Also, the respondents were neutral on whether minorities from ethnic and religious and marginalised areas of the counties were fairly represented at the forums. The regression results revealed that participants' representativeness had a positive and statistically significant contribution on equity in resource allocation for health, agriculture, and roads by county governments. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected implying that participants' representativeness significantly contributes to equity in resource allocation by county governments.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that participants representativeness had a positive and statistically significant contribution on equity in resource allocation by county governments of Kenya. The implication is that involving participants from various stakeholders within the locality (including the disadvantaged groups) contributes to equity in resource allocation by county governments. The study identified key aspects of participants' representativeness that are relevant for achieving equity in resource allocation. These are adequate representation of: citizens with different educational levels, people coming from different

geographical locations, elderly citizens; people from the marginalised areas as well as representation of disadvantaged groups (Women, Youth, minorities, and people living with disabilities). Having a representative group of citizens at the budget forums brings out varied perspectives which enrich the quality of deliberations at the budget forums. This in turn leads to better negotiated and broadly agreed resource allocation decisions that reflect the needs of the various regions and groups within the county which is what equity is all about.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

The study was limited to citizen engagement in the county budgeting process only and excluded participation in the national budget making process. Moreover, all the respondents were drawn only from members of the public who had attended the budget forums. This means that the perspectives of the citizens who did not attend the forums were not included in the determination whether there was equity in resource allocation or not. Including the views of the people who did not attend the forums may yield different conclusions on how citizens assess the allocative decisions by county governments. Moreover, the findings that participant representativeness' contribution to whether there was equity in resource allocation across the three programs accounted for only 7% (Heath) 9%(Agriculture) and 19% (Roads), which suggests that there are other variables apart from participants representativeness that influence equity in resource allocation by county governments in Kenya.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study determined that participants' representativeness had a positive and statistically significant contribution on equity in resource allocation by county governments of Kenya. To improve the representation of participants at budget forums, the study suggests that the composition of the participants ought to be given greater attention in terms of age (having more young people in the forums), gender (having at least two thirds gender rule attained), greater diversity in sectoral representation as well deliberately targeting the minority groups (specifically the elderly and people living with disability) within the county. Moreover, there is need to come up with strategies to ensure a larger proportion of the community attends the forums and not just a few selected representatives or those who attend year in year out because they are facilitated by civil society groups, if the views presented in such forums are to sufficiently to represent the aspirations of the community.

For example, they should ensure that the forums are held at the lowest level possible where participants can walk to the venue, hence reducing the time and cost limitations to the participation of many who are willing to attend such forums. They should also be held on a day and time when women are able to attend based on their roles in the households and wider community, either reproductive, productive or community roles. This calls for rethinking the strategies for mobilizing the participants for the budget forums and balancing between sending open invitation to the entire community (self-selection) with targeted invitations to the segments of the community who, left on their own, may not attend such forums due to structural constraints. With regards to recommendations for further studies, a key question that remains unanswered by this study is how to balance the aspect of ensuring that everybody who desires to attend these forums attend (hence self-selection) with whether those who attend have the capacity to clearly articulate and effectively represent the views and concerns of the various groups they represent. Often, the quest to ensure representativeness may work against other important considerations for effective participation, for example whether those who finally come are based placed to effectively participate in the deliberations and negotiations which are an integral part of such forums. This is a matter that requires more studies on how county governments can establish the right balance between having a representative forum but also one that has attendees with the requisite capacity.

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