

# Public Participation in the Governance of Busia County – Kenya

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**Abstract:** Public Participation (PP) was inscribed in Kenya's 2010 constitution to facilitate collaborative dialogue in governance. Inclusive governance was meant to sustain citizens' empowerment and wellbeing. This study explored the communicative performance of PP in governance at Busia County. The questions comprised: How does Busia County use Public Participation as a tool of communication with the stakeholders? What are the benefits of Public Participation in County governance? What are some of the challenges of using Public Participation in governance at Busia County? Newcomb's communication model was applied to illustrate the role of PP in governance. The inquiry was carried out through a qualitative approach and case study method. Barnlund's Transactional Model provided the study with functional communication cues inherent in collaborative engagements. Purposive sampling was used to raise 35 participants from seven sub-counties of the county. The participants comprised teachers, traders, farmers, MCAs and County Government staff. The qualitative data was analyzed through a thematic technique. The study established apathy and lack of committed goodwill by the leadership as the major setback to PP in governance. The knowledge of PC on PP functions in governance is significant information to academia. To policymakers, the findings are useful for formulating and sustaining legal and enforceable communication frameworks to improve inclusive governance. To practice, the proposed ideals would empower PREs to be responsible advocates and enforce goodwill for mutual gains of all county stakeholders. The findings would further good governance in CG and facilitate the general publics to have a say in the prioritization and implementation of their development wishes. These ideals would liberate citizens from challenges associated with underdevelopment, thus culminating in sustainable livelihood and happiness.

**Keywords:** Participatory communication, Public participation, Governors, Development

## I. Introduction

The Kenya 2010 constitution enshrined citizens' sovereignty through Public Participation (Uraia, 2010). PP was meant to facilitate them to prioritize their developmental wishes in counties (Omollo, 2015). The performance of County Governments (CG) was pegged on the efficacy of PP. As a sign of acceptance, PP was to facilitate the inclusivity of the citizens in governance (Ronoh et al, 2018). It would double up as an oversight strategy to limit unnecessary dissonance challenges (Hongo, 2022). PP was also to speed up development support and sustain citizens' livelihood and happiness (Chitere & Ngundo 2015). The devolution provided the institution of County Government- led by the governor, executive management team and support staff. County Assembly and Senate were meant to ensure the smooth running of County governance (KLR, 2010).

To this extent, devolution has stimulated plausible development in some counties across the nation (Daily Nation February 29, 2019). However, the 2017 comparative developmental performance placed Busia County among the last, with a poverty rating of about 70% (KNBS, 2017). Resultantly, the study sought to determine the inherent or absent communicative factors limiting the development performance at the county. Functionally, the study placed the communicative performance of PP on the fundamentals of Participatory communication (PC).

PC is a collaborative and dialogic engagement (Rahim, 1994 & Ellinor, 2005). It unites stakeholders through dialogic engagement (Servaes & Malikhao, 2005). The functional performance of PP depends on PC fundamentals (Bingham, 2011). Communication is the primary facet of describing and explaining phenomena (Miller, 2005). The phenomenon is the process of constructing, transferring and sharing meaning (Pearson et al, 2017). Payne (2001) avers that the phenomenon is central to human survival and nobody can do without it whatsoever. Gamble (2002) confers that the phenomenon is natural and taken for granted. Miller (2005) maintains that indeed communication is a controversial phenomenon that attracts infinite debates and arguments. Nevertheless, communication is the only means for reaching out to foster understanding (Oloo, 2017).

The phenomenon is presented as a process, intention, interaction and transaction (Craig, 1999). It also facilitates information sharing for various purposes including social and cultural practices (Ferrante, 2003). From these multiple perspectives, communication is not only imperative but also complex and dynamic. Based on it, whether we communicate or not, we still emit meaningful cues. Above all, communication is a powerful tool that must be applied sensitively and carefully to improve the wellbeing of other people (Gamble, 2002). These multiple perspectives render communication extremely subjective and ambiguous thus making it gullible for misuse by people with negative attitudes (Miller 2005).

Based on the role of communication in linking and uniting people, the study appreciated Communication Competence (CC). CC was considered as deep knowledge about communication, what people do with it and the impacts arising from its application. Gamble (2002) avers CC as a sense of reflexivity, Bryant & Heath (2002) perceive it as consciousness. (Jacobson & Storey, 2004) relates CC to an ideal speech situation. The study presented CC as the reflexive ability of governance stakeholders to engage one another sensitively and carefully. As such, CC was simplified through the cliché of “*doing the right thing- the right way, with the right people, the right time and right place*” (Graham & Bennet, 1998). Stakeholders’ desire for inclusive governance is justifiable with Chambers (2015) referring to it as “*inclusivity rigor*”.

### 1.1 Assumptions & Research Questions

This study sought to determine the efficacy of PC/PP in the governance of Busia County. The inquiry was premised on assumption that citizens’ involvement and participation in governance would empower them in resolving their pressing concerns. Based on this assumption, the study sought answers to three questions; 1) How does Busia County use Public Participation as a tool of communication with the stakeholders? 2) What are the benefits of Public Participation in County governance? 3) What are some of the challenges of using Public Participation in governance at Busia County?

## II. Literature Review

### 2.1 Participatory Communication

PP is an activity of PC. The society at large is embracing the role of participatory governance to meet stakeholders’ expectations (Hongo et al, 2022). Citizens’ participation is the pillar of unity and a sign of democracy (Holmes, 2011). However, participation is not enough if stakeholders are not cordially united and mutually connected to converge on ideology (Etang, 2007). Over the years, human beings have strived to retain unique relationships whether, dyadic, family, society, or organization (Heath & Bryant, 2002). The common factor in any relationship is what members bring on board and what they expect to get from the membership (Handy, 2016). PC has the relational fundamentals that define and unite. The 2010 constitution entrenched PP to be the relational and engagement tool for inclusive governance. The goal of PP was to address stakeholders’ empowerment issues and development concerns (Uraia, 201).

Involving citizens in governance address their common challenges and priorities (Wampler, 2011). In the process, the PC mitigates dissonance fears associated with exclusions. PC is an offshoot of Development Communication (DC). Whereas the two development approaches are not the same, they both contribute to change modernization and change. DC operates on a top down approach, while PC is concerned with holistic change that benefits target stakeholders (Naidoo, 2010). PC embraces diverse strategies to address challenges through dialogic and mutual compromises (Freire, 1999; Okwechime, 2015). Accordingly, PC facilitates future modernization by solving the current problems (Tufté & Mefalopulos, 2009).

PC principles depend majorly on the sovereignty of communication as stipulated under Human Rights (Article 19, 2003). The concept of *last first* champions the rights of stakeholders during interventions (Chamber, 2007; Mefalopulos, 2000). Second is Dialogic Pedagogy - a two-way communication strategy that facilitates quick feedback for decision making (Freire, 1999). Thirdly, the UNESCO declaration underscored human dignity as critical in inclusive governance. (Mc Bride, 1980, p. 254). Fourthly, PC interventions generate good outcome when participation target the community (common) more than individuals. Apart from principles, PC engages strategic forms to address unique situations. For instance, a passive form is the least applied but fits in emergency situations (Naidoo, 2010). In cases where expert services are critical, PC is applied as consultancy with the consent of the stakeholders (Servaes, 2015). Collaboration is mostly applied for favouring teamwork (Freire, 1999). This was the engagement form implied for PP in governance. Empowerment is concerned with education and equitable sharing of resources (Okwechime, 2015)

Context determines the performance of PP/PC interventions. A democratic environment confers unconditional room for compromises (Article 19, 2003; Jacobson & Storey, 2004). Participants’ freedom is basic to honest deliberations by stakeholders (Dahl, 1994). Justice is central in handling all PC functions (Etang, 2007; Cresswell, 2014). The performance of PP depends on the goodwill and competence of facilitators. Facilitators and leaders ought to embrace human values when engaging stakeholders (Arnett, 2001; Lowndes & Paxton, 2017). Mindfulness is critical in interceding for stakeholders (Motley, 1992). Reflexivity facilitates mindfulness through self-awareness (Schwarz, 2002). It also manages the ego that often takes control of human emotions (Brennan & Schungresky, 2017).

#### 2.1.1 Previous Studies on PC

PC has been applied successfully in many interventions. In a political context, Brennan & Schungresky (2017) indicated that President Jefferson applied PC to form the USA. Jefferson linked and advocated inspired Americans through the radio to unite and appreciate ward systems. The wards would be small enough to enable communities to assemble and decide how to be governed.

This desire was achieved and gave rise to the bonded nationhood of the United States of America. In another context of the early industrial days, corporation matters were kept secret. The corporation owners were greatly powerful to speak to subordinates (Jefkin, 1998).

Rockefeller's workers were on strike due to unfavorable labor conditions. However, through PC, Ivy Lee inspired Rockefeller to engage the striking railway and coal mining workers in a dialogue that worked (Baines & Jefkins, 2002). India is profusely dominated by social caste and has proved hard to crack. However, society has benefited from PC activities in rural community intervention (Khampa, 2009). Tsusong of South Africa has successfully applied a collaborative approach to uniting citizens with NG (Naidoo, 2010). Kimeto & Somba (2017) examined the extent PC principles are integrated into Kenya National Slum Upgrading Program KENSUP in Kibera Nairobi. Their study established that PC principles were applied to the programs but citizens were barely involved in upgrading activities.

## 2.2 Public Participation in Governance

Kenya's 2010 constitution placed citizens' sovereignty on public participation (Uraia, 2010). The strategy was intended to get the citizens involved in public debates for collaborative engagements (Ronoh et al, 2018). PP is the reflection and sign of comprehensive democracy (Team, 2015). Narayan et al (2000) point out that PP is motivated primarily to mitigate typical government bureaucracies that limit service delivery to citizens. Holmes (2011) rekindles administrative theory and practice as increasingly interested in incorporating citizens as actors rather than subjects in political debates. Through PC, *people create people* to entrench democracy and practice governance *by the people and for the people* (Hongo et al, 2022).

Devas & Grant (2003) point out that citizens know what they want from the government. All they need is involvement and participation to harmonize their priorities. To participate is to actively contribute personal ideas or resources alongside other stakeholders (Cresswell, 2014). Participation can take place voluntarily or coerce, depending on the situations and context being addressed.

### 2.2.1 Previous studies on PP

CG was accorded all the necessary traditions, resources and mandates to improve the stakeholder's wellbeing. The citizens were accorded the power for developmental decision making now captured as County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP). The CIDP and annual issues form part of budget making process (Chitere & Ngundo 2015). Chitere & Ngundo studied the performance of devolution in poverty reduction in selected Counties in Kenya. They established that CGs are adequately established to empower stakeholders but have done little to attain this objective. Many other researchers have explored the involvement of stakeholders in various projects including the Kenya Slum upgrading Program. They returned a verdict that stakeholders are made aware of the programs but not meaningfully involved in the projects. These exclusions rendered PC function void in such programs. For instance, Hongo et al (2022) conducted a study on PP performance in Bungoma County and established minimal impact on its application in governance. The study recommended a mediator of PP functions in governance.

This study established that developmental provisions in CG are often made without meaningful input from stakeholders. For instance, PP programs are advertised in mainstream media that the common stakeholders could not afford. Additionally owing to lack of empowerment, the stakeholders do not understand how to be involved in PP programs and this ignorance renders them passive and muted participants in PP programs (Wood, 2007). The study, therefore, established the ubiquitous nature of communication as contributing to opaque governance. Functionally, the study identified management apathy as a major stewardship challenge in the performance of PP. Apathy by leadership constrained the committed goodwill for involving stakeholders in governance functions.

Based on this, leaders had a tendency of imposing their ideas on the citizens, thereby causing unnecessary dissonance and unwarranted conflicts. From the study also, leadership incompetence constrained the performance of PP by ignoring the PC fundamentals. By so doing, the citizens were denied chances to be active participants in their government. Based on these PC challenges, Bessette (2006) established that leaders are reluctant to delegate responsibilities to stakeholders in perceived fear of losing power. This situation makes room for the leadership to govern outside of the PP norms. Malan (1998) established that many leaders run PP functions through the traditional DC concepts instead of PC ideals. This omission technically reduces the communicative performance of PC on PP programs.

As such, unilateral governance inhibits the oversight functions of participants (Aye, 1993). Resultantly, the study established that leaders enjoy unchecked governance - since it sets them free to do as they wish. From the study, owing to constrained goodwill in governance, PP functions got moderated by the leadership that it was meant to moderate. As such, PP achieved little in the development of CG as expected of PC fundamentals. This situation culminated in underdevelopment and high poverty situations witnessed in Busia County.

### 2.3 Review of Relevant Theories

Theories are universally accepted sets of ideas or principles for explaining phenomena (Heath & Bryant, 2000). Owing to their ability to clarify, and bring order to complex issues, they are called signposts for directions. Theories are also referred to as nets cast to catch the *world* (Miller, 2005). Functionally, theories simplify complex and difficult issues to ease understanding and effective applications (Croyle, 2005). The study presented the CG of Busia as an organization with multiple functions aiming at strategic goals. The functions are coordinated and synchronized through strategic communication. Failures from goals are caused by conflicting issues and the failed goals also create new conflicts. In this case, the study considered governance as a system within CG and PP was considered one of the functional units of governance in CG.

Given these underpinnings, Newcomb symmetrical model in diagram 2.2 was looped in to illustrate the conceptual framework of the PP in governance. Barnlund's Transactional Communication Model (BTCM) was set out to isolate the transactional communication elements in PP and governance. By extension, BTCM entrenched the concept of Communication Competence that facilitates PC/PP functions in governance. Functional Theory (FT) was applied to illustrate the factors that sustain systematic performance in the organization. Lastly, Conflict Theory (CT) imbued the study with factors that escalate or impede organizational performance. Overall, the study simplified all theoretical concepts in the study as doing the right thing, the right way, with the right people, at the right place and right time courtesy (Graham & Baines, 2002).

#### 2.3.1 Barnlund Transactional Model

BTCM concept was used to anchor PC/PP in governance to the transactional paradigm. Dean Barnlund's propounded the model to illustrate cues responsible for transactional engagements (Miller, 2005). He raised various issues including actors, internal and external behavior, public and environmental cues inherent in transactional engagements. In this study, actors represented the leadership and stakeholders; internal and external cues emanated as behavioral intentions from all actors and stakeholders' engagements. The contexts comprised public or environmental cues that influence decisions making.

The model was critical to this study as the basis of applying PP to collaborate governance. The model recognizes communication challenges and therefore presents the functions of transactional engagements as reciprocal. It also appreciates communication as imperative yet ubiquitous with multiple features. It illustrates transactions as complex owing to stakeholders' unique life predispositions and expectations.

The model aided the study in laying out the necessary communication factors for participatory engagement. The model implied that effective transactional communication takes place within collective dynamics and synchronized commitments in a system. Based on the model, the study established that the leadership applied communication strategically to limit stakeholders' understanding and ability from meaningful PP/ governance. The gap aided the leadership in imposing development programs in the county budget.

#### 2.3.2 Functional Theory

Barnlund's Transactional Model became the overarching framework for PP functions in participatory governance. A function is the working performance of parts and units in organized systems (Chitnis, 2007). Emile Durkheim propagated this theory to explore how society survives the storms of competition from the elite versus ordinary members (Ferrante, 2003). In contributing to this theory, Marxists were concerned about social order and stability maintained in society amid dynamics of domination and alienation between the haves and have-nots. (Miller, 2005).

The Function Theory (FT) informed the study on the role of synchronization and collaborative engagement between all publics in organizational systems. The study perceived CG as an organized system to incorporate stakeholders in generating common goals for sustainable development. The study acknowledged the role of FT in mitigating organizational disorders that result in conflict. The findings from the study, however, established that the leadership encouraged systematic disorder and confusion to impose unsolicited development priorities.

#### 2.3.3 Conflict Theory

Conflict Theory (CT) is at the center of a systematic performance. CT explains critical issues that create organizational tension disorder and heightened emotional energy (Gamble, 2002). The organizational strains occur within inter-relational and interdependent contexts. The major causes of conflict include competition, unfulfilled expectations and incompatible interests (Luthan 2005; Kincki 2004). Competition creates conflict if the actions of one part frustrate the ability of the other (Valentine, 1995). Conflict is “ *Creative confrontation, a struggle between persons who are engaged in a dispute or controversy, and who remain together, face to face, until acceptance, respect for difference, and love emerge; even though the persons may be at odds with the issue, they are no longer at odds with each other*” (Moustakis, 1974; 2.12).

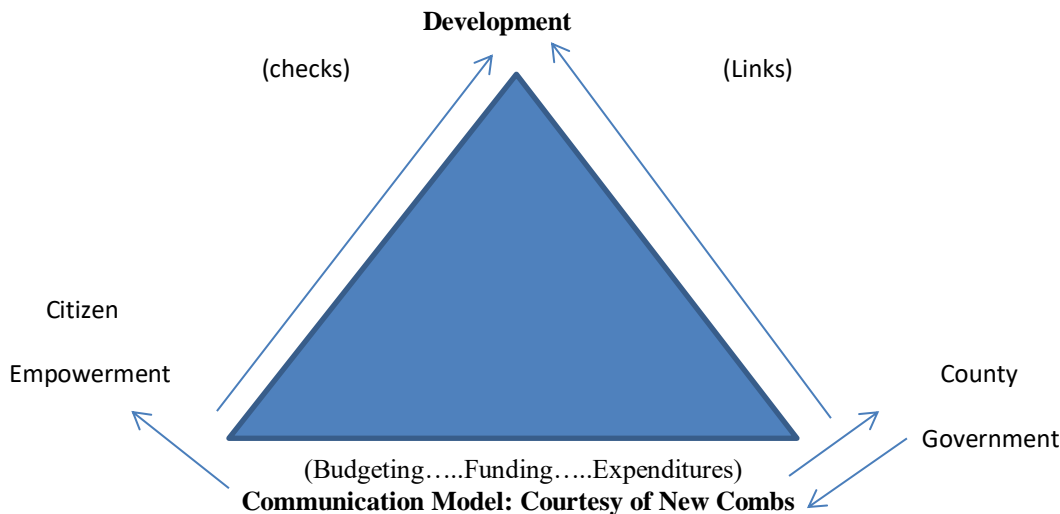
The elements of conflict comprise arguments, beliefs and assumptions, organizational structures, processes, motivation, etc. (Luthans, 2005). Leadership’s incompetence and egocentrism, power imbalance, and ethnocentrism also create organizational conflict. Politically, conflict elements are corruption and hegemony (Hoggs, 2003). Philosophically conflict is considered bad, inevitable and necessary. It is bad for disrupting the status quo of predictability; inevitable due to communication ubiquity; and necessary to entrench desirable change in organizations. However, bearing in mind its devastating effects, the Catholic Church established the concept of devil’s advocate to mitigate it (Miller, 2005)

The devil’s advocate was to mitigate conflict triggers as a way of sustaining organizational balance and positive change (Etang, 2007). In the study context, PP would do the devil’s advocate role by moderating excesses in governance. However, the leadership took over the devil’s advocate role of moderating PP in governance, thus defeating the very functions of PP in governance. In this study, therefore, stakeholders’ views were excluded from strategic development programs. The promoted underdevelopment and poverty situation in the county.

**2.4 Conceptual Framework**

The study, therefore, presented the Newcomb orientation model to illustrate the role of PP in the governance of CG. The model demonstrated that the CG has the mandate and funds to engage stakeholders in PP. The devolution delegated sovereign powers to the citizens to mutually integrate with leadership in deciding how to be governed (KLR 2010). PP provided the citizens with a voice to seek solutions to their pressing concerns (Uraia, 2010). The leadership was to steward and empower the stakeholders in developmental governance functions. The model established a communication gap in the 2010 constitution. The statutes failed to capture the mode of enforcing the citizen’s prioritized decisions upon meaningful PP. This communication gap exposed the stakeholders to the mercy of leadership. This is the case given that the leadership draws the PP calendar with themes for development programs. Diagram 2.2 below illustrates the communication in deciding PP priorities and in implementing them

**Diagram 2.2 Source Researcher**



The CG is the agent of NG & Steward of stakeholders’

- The citizens know their needs but must be empowered by the CG to act
  - The CG imposes development ideas on passive stakeholders
  - The CG is holding citizen’s funds on trust - spends it unilaterally
  - The unilateral development expenditure on projects blurs oversight
  - The leadership actions cause confusion and conflict to stakeholders
- The CG leadership imposes development programs without citizens’ input and spends resources on projects not preferred by the citizens.

### III. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

The study applied a qualitative approach and instrumental case study in the methodology. Busia County was instrumental as the platform to explore the communicative efficacy of PP in governance. The qualitative approach appreciates all situations and contexts surrounding a reality (Mason, 2009). A case study facilitates detailed inquiry of specifics and supports the researcher as the instrument of inquiry (Jwan & Ong’ondo, 2011). The study applied extreme variance technique to sample 35 participants. The participants were drawn from a diverse social stratum of the seven sub-counties of Busia County (See table 3.1). Data analysis was pegged on ideas by (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Lucey & Luff, 2001). Upon transcription, the study applied thematic techniques to analyze and interpret the data. The thematic strategies comprised; open and axial coding, and winnowing ideals (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

#### 3.2 Study area and Target Participants

The study was conducted in Busia County in response to underdevelopment performance reflected through a high poverty rating of about 70% in 2017 (KNBS, 2017). The county has strategic resources capable of mitigating development challenges. The resources comprise the two major international border posts, long frontage to Lake Victoria, rivers and many others. The study sampled participants from all the seven sub-counties comprising Budalangi, Funyula and Matayos. Others were Butula, Nambale, Teso South and Teso North (See table 3.1). The participants were drawn from residents of the county aged 18 years and above. They comprised teachers, traders and farmers. Others were Members of the County Assembly (MCA), County Executive Committee (CEC) and county officials. The purpose of the participants’ diversity was to imbue the study with objectivity.

#### 3.3 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Extreme Variation Sampling was pegged on qualitative ideals (Flick, 2009). The varied sampling focuses on participants’ characteristics including gender, occupation and location. In this study, each participant was drawn from a strategic stratum of the society in Busia County. Ultimately, 35 participants were identified and took part in the study (see table 3.1).

**Table 3.1:** Sampled Participants for the Study

	Teachers	Traders	Farmers	MCAs	CEC	SCA
Butula	1	1	1	1	protected	protected
Nambale	1	2	1			
Matayos	1	1	1	1		
T.South	1	1	1	-		
T.North	1	1	2	1		
Funyula	1	1	1	1		
Budalangi	1	2	1	-		

Source: Research survey (2023)

#### 3.4 Types of data, Sources and Collection tools

Considering Clandin & Connolly (2000) approach to interviews, narrative data was tape recorded from various participants during the interviews. According to Hall (2007), observation data were drawn from nonverbal cues comprising vocalization (paralanguage), facial expressions (oculesics), body gestures (kinesics), touch (haptic), etc. The non-verbal cues express natural emotional outputs. The cues either reinforce, emphasize, or complement narratives. They also contradict or replace verbal communication. Observation techniques were also applied to natural and built environments. The data was used to determine the level of development arising from inclusive governance. Media was largely used to record interview narratives from participants.

**Table 3.2 Observation Data and Generation Techniques**

Researcher	Interviews	Observations	Document	V/Aids	Informal
<b>Interview</b>	question narratives	Listing n/verbal	analysis	Tape recording	participant observer
<b>Observation</b>	participant	cues	analysis	recording	assorted
<b>Document</b>	review	review	analysis	researcher	assorted
<b>V/Aids</b>	recording	assorted	images	recording	recording
<b>Groups</b>	relative	assorted	analysis	recording	researcher

Source: Researcher Data (2023)

#### IV. Data Analysis

According to Lewis (2009), the narrative data from interviews and observation attributions were organized and transcribed into thick data for familiarization and analysis. Subsequently, open coding was applied to relate complementing themes in the document. Axial coding was subjected further to generate patterns (Cresswell, 2014). Finally, winnowing was applied to concentrate the data based on research questions and literature review (Braun Clarke, 2022).

#### 4.1 Study Findings

Using the three questions and emerging issues from the participants, the study generated assorted themes with key issues presented in table 4.1. The study findings revealed that leadership was apathetic to PP and lacked committed goodwill to meaningful engagement with stakeholders. This attitude limited the communicative performance of PP in governance in Busia County. Equally, the leadership withheld communicative empowerment and logistics that rendered stakeholders mute and passive to PP (see table 4.1). Resultantly, stakeholder oversight functions were curtailed leading to unchecked governance and opaque governance. This study, however, did not aim to investigate the leadership of Busia County but to determine the PP's performance in governance.

**Table 4.1 Source Author (2023)**

**Summery of thematic findings from the study**

Communication	PC	Strategy	Issue	Problem	Effect	Impact
Intention	Passive Citizens	Selective and Withholding Information	Irrational & Petty Decisions	Uninformed & Ignorant Citizens	Lack of Standards to Decide	Status quo of Ignorance & Poverty
Interaction	Consultants for Citizens	Divide & Rule Selective Engagements	Disharmony among Citizens	Sustain Citizen's Ignorance	Camps & Instability	Status quo of ignorance & Poverty
Transaction	Collaborative engagements Citizens	Selective Un-procedural Practices	Disorganized Society &	Prejudice between Citizens	Unsolicited un- Prioritized Development	Status quo of ignorance & Poverty
Social	Empowerment of Citizens	Selective empowerment Resources	Hegemony	Apathy among Citizens	Skewed development	Status quo ignorance & Poverty
Culture	Ethnic identity among Citizens	Whip ethnic Emotions	Resource Embezzlement	Deceitful & confusing citizens	Distrust non Accountability	Status quo & Poverty

**Analysis of Communication uses at Busia County**

- As intention: to limit critical information and *mute the citizens to passive* participants
- As *interaction*: to abet unsolicited *consultancy*, cause confusion, *exclude* citizens from PP
- As a *collaboration*, *transact* with associates to *escape oversight* & enjoy unchecked governance
- As *social* for selective empowerments, divide and rule, and cause confusion over PP functions
- As a *culture* for ethnic hegemony & shielding culpable individuals from their irresponsible actions
- The overall theme featured leadership apathy and lack of goodwill to commit PP in good faith

**Table 4.2 Source Author (2023)**

**Empirical Outline of Communication Engagement at Busia County**

Nature of Communication	Purpose of Communication	Benefits of PP From Communication	Challenges of PP From Communication	Emerging issues Of PP From Communication
Communication process as Intention	-S/holders as Passive	-Active leadership  -Leaders impose ideas on S/holders  -No oversight of governance	-critical information withheld  -Ignorant S/holders	-Leadership Apathy  -Emasculate Goodwill  -Underdevelopment
Communication Process as Interaction	Leaders as Consultants	-Active leaders  -engages selected associates  -No oversight	-Muted S/holders -S/holders  Technically excluded from governance	-Leadership Apathy  -Emasculate Goodwill  -Underdevelopment
Communication Process as Transaction	Leaders as Collaborative	-Leaders –Leaders undertake projects with brokers  -Joy ride on S/holders mandate	-S/holders are bystanders  -Rubber stamp cut & paste dev. Programs  -S/holders get handouts	-Leadership Apathy  -Emasculate Goodwill  -Underdevelopment
Communication Process as Social Vehicle	Leadership Empowerment	-Leaders dictate terms  -Selective empowerment  -Leaders decide PP priorities	-S/holders at the mercy of leaders  -S/holders confused  -Abide blindly by imposed preferences	-Leadership Apathy  -Emasculate Goodwill  -Underdevelopment
Communication Process as Cultural Vehicle	Political Hegemony	-Selective empowerment  -Ethnic protection from accountability	-Unbalanced development  -Ethnic profiling & conflicts	-Leadership Apathy  -Emasculate Goodwill  -Underdevelopment



## V. Discussion and Conclusion

Kenya's 2010 constitution delegated citizens' sovereignty through PP and inclusive governance. Chitnis (2005) lauds the potential of attaining development faster by involving citizens in governance. PP was the citizen's tool for legitimate engagement with the government on matters concerning their wellbeing (Hongo et al, 2022). Chitnis calls this strategy "*duality of development*". Hashim (1996) and Mezzana (1996) refer to it as inclusive governance and grass root empowerment. Chamber (1986) and Mefalopulos aver to it as "*last first*", while MacBridge (2004) called it "*many voices one world*".

This study demonstrated that functional performance of PP depends entirely on PC fundamentals. However, for lack of committed goodwill, the study established that the leaders engage PP functions through traditional DC fundamentals. Many studies so far conducted on PP have benchmarked its performance on governance standards. This action limited the communicative challenges performance of PP in governance. Christopher (2018) and Marzuki (2015) underscore the essence of committing goodwill to governance as the basis of genuine development.

A teacher participant's opinion of PP in governance

### Teacher Participant

*Devolution brought a lot of money and tribal ethnicity to our county. It is a political tool for political leaders and elites of the society. They use it to reduce friends but increase their wealth.....nothing common to show for it.....do you see any"*

#### TPI

In ideal governance, PP facilitates linkage for uniting the stakeholders' engagements. Servaes & Malikhao (2005) indicated that PC assists in preparing an efficient framework of actions as a result of stakeholders' better understanding of their situations, needs, and wants. It makes provision for effective resource planning and management (Lowndes & Paxton, 2018). Based on Durose & Richardson (2016), the study findings and committed goodwill would support PP in structuring the prioritized plan to limit bickering between stakeholders and the political wing. Team (2015) points out that PP promotes transparency within its intervention processes to address inequality and power relations. To a greater extent also, it stimulates information exchange between the development stakeholders (Servaes, 2015).

### Farmer Participant had this to say about PP

*... Tunasikia kwa maredio maneno ya participation ...wanainchi kwende kuambiwa miradi ile imepangwa kwa maendeleo ya ma-contractors na wenye kupanga* **FP2**

Translated- we hear about PP through the radio as announcing development plans that benefit the contractors and the project initiators- thus the county leadership.

When stakeholders are ignorant of PP functions in governance, the leadership made themselves consultants. Technically, the leadership excluded stakeholders from active PP programs and engaged strategic partners. The '*cut and paste*' preferences are made through unsolicited consultancy. The provision does not sustain stakeholders but only acts in conformity with the law. Unsolicited consultancy abets opaque dealings with brokers but promotes unchecked oversight.

### Sub-County Administrator on PP challenges in the county

*"Planning clear roles and placing the responsibility on each sub-county administrator make their work more meaningful. Secondly, officials should be trusted with their duties and not micro-managed if they were to be responsible for their actions."* **SCAP3**

#### Question

*Could you explain the meaning of micro-management?*

#### Response

*"We need empowerment to organize sub-county forums which would bring wanainchi together, educate them and stimulate creativity and innovations. Today the leaders condone several brokers and cartels who divert good ideas from our people"*

Participation gives stakeholders a voice used to transform their challenges and needs into opportunities (Bingham 2011). PP is instrumental in governance to guard against abuse of office (Agunga, 1996). PP militates against excessive power vested in civil servants and public procedures (Omolo, 2011; Team 2015). Accordingly, the joint efforts through PP place a buffer against power misuse by leadership (Mefalopulos, 2000). The checks and balances through PP guarantee service delivery by protecting

organizational systems from unnecessary political interferences (Aye, 1993). It also mitigates abuse of professionalism and meritocracy in society (Servae & Milkhao, 2015). The study established that the leadership exploited the gaps in communication systems to intensify exclusive governance.

#### **Trader participant's opinions on PP and governance**

*"Maneno ya public participation ni PR ya abnuasi kutufunga macho yetu ili wakubwa watekeleze mipango yao wenyewe .... politicians are not genuine, they engage sideshows, and whip ethnic emotions to confuse everyone whenever they are subjected to accountability. This action helps them to escape from any responsibilities ....most of these leaders are shameless and protect looters- you know!" TP2*

Translated- PP is a deceitful PR gimmick used to blind stakeholders so that leaders achieve selfish ends.

PC enhances trust and mutuality Glass (1979) and promotes strong and supportive relationships with the public (Pareek, 1986; Cavric, 2011). From the public's point of view, the act of the leadership inviting stakeholders to joint dialogue is a sign of acceptance (Ronoh et al, 2015). However, effective public participation is difficult to achieve if the facilitators engage participants outside the conventional standards of practice (Lowndes & Paxton, 2018). From the study, failure by leadership to commit goodwill of inclusive governance forfeits the trust guaranteed in the PP.

#### **Sub-county Administrator Participant 2 on PP**

*"The wanainchi do not attend the PP forums if they are not assured of (kitu kidogo). They demand payment because they feel these forums are a waste of their time, and for lack of true knowledge about PP, they have never understood what brings them to such meetings..." SCAP2*

-wanainchi are citizens

-Kitu kidogo is handout

When asked if they have a clear understanding of their roles, and whether the functions are supported

**SCAP 2; What roles?"**

The study noted that leaders elected to public positions are assumed to have the commitment of goodwill to initiate inclusive governance. However, the leaders succumbed to their negative attitudes and ignored their duty to empower the citizens who elected them to office. Based on the study, the disempowerment of stakeholders increased their ignorance and confusion about governance roles. This prompted the prevailing poverty situations associated with underdevelopment.

#### **Trader Participant on PP**

*"...because of hopelessness ... quite many citizens here are so ignorant that there is no amount of information or participation that can help them or even change their mindset..... ....nearly all the men and half the women are addicted to chang'aa ...they cannot think well ... these so-called husbands and modern men are so naïve about development that the government should decide everything for them...." TrP2*

Chang'aa is locally made liquor that is very strong yet affordable

This study established that PP was meant to empower the citizens by moderating and enriching good governance. However owing to constrained goodwill to commit to inclusive governance, PP functions got moderated by the very leadership. The study, therefore, established that negative intentions and attitudes in governance are practically invisible, but can be perceived through PC. As such, no amount of coercion can push an apathetic leadership to *do the right thing the right way*. However, enforceable communication structures can facilitate practical and pragmatic inclusive governance. Moustakas (1974) alluded PC to as '*finding yourself, finding others*', while Langer (1989) refers to inclusivity as *mindfulness*.

### **5.1 Contributions of the study**

The findings from the study are crucial for academia in furthering knowledge of communication factors that stand between stakeholders in governance. Secondly, the findings are essential for policymakers to the amendment of devolution statutes to accommodate communication strategists in senior leadership positions. The amendments would expedite the establishment of cordial relations for the mutual and common good of governance. Thirdly to the practitioners, the proposed legal provisions would condition PR practitioners to re-package and rebrand PR standards. This action would enable Public Relations Experts (PREs') to take formal responsibility for their administrative actions and by default increase the reliability of organizational services.

The study, therefore, suggests that the Public Relations Society of Kenya (PRSK) and Communication Management distinguish PR from other communication disciplines. The distinction would promote clarity of PREs as responsible advocates. The PR roles would not only ensure the sustenance of organizational conscience but also see PREs become proactive oversight directors at their relative workplaces. Ultimately, this change would redeem the perception of PR practices in the professional market, then largely perceived as a propagandist and deceitful spin doctors.

Fourth, to the economy and subsequent development, the practice would promote resource management to ensure the timely delivery of planned programs. Re-engineered governance would create annual calendars to celebrate PP accomplishments as a way of evaluating and certifying preferred attainments. On that note, development failures would be evaluated and rated appropriately. The overall PREs would commit goodwill of *doing the right things the right way, with the right people, and at the right time and place*. This would advance the citizens' well-being envisioned through devolution objectives.

Fifth, to the general citizens of Busia County and Kenyans at large, the proposed communication provisions for improvement would facilitate effective and sensitive leadership. This would also help in boosting the sustainability of stakeholders' empowerment for supporting their livelihood and happiness. In essence, proactive and strategic communication measures would have far-reaching gains for counties, rather than waiting to prosecute individuals for resource misallocations.

## 5.2 Suggestions for Further Study

The study was necessary to determine the communicative factors that influence the performance of PP in governance. The findings were basic to determine the communicative factors inhibiting or promoting communication for development. Good communication is responsible for good governance. The study was conducted through a qualitative research approach that is subjective in nature. To generalize the findings across other counties, a quantitative study is necessary to verify the efficacy of committed goodwill in PP and governance. The outcome from a realist's perspective would promote the engagement of PREs to justify the essence of good communication in governance across counties in Kenya.

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