

## **EFFECTS OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN DEVOLVED SYSTEM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN KENYA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Public participation has been applied globally in developmental projects for purposes of achieving sustainability. This study aims to examine effects of public participation in the devolved system of governance for sustainable development in Kenya. The study was conducted through analytical survey approach. Questionnaires were used to collect data which was analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented in tables. It emerged from the findings that, for the instances where public participation was used by county governments; it led to: increased quantity and quality of projects, friendly and acceptable projects, projects longevity, efficient service delivery, sound policies and quality legislation.

**Keywords:** Public Participation, Sustainable Development, Devolution, Devolved Governance, Project Sustainability

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Poverty eradication and efficient delivery of public services in Kenya and other developing countries has for long been hindered by highly centralized governments. Recognizing the need to achieve high economic growth and reduce poverty-related inequalities, Kenyans persistently pushed for enhanced decentralization of governance and development (Wanjohi, 2003). At independence in 1963, Kenya was a constitutionally devolved state with various regions (*majimbo* in Kiswahili) vested with responsibilities of collection of taxes and provision and maintenance of basic social services (health and education) and minor roads. But by December 1964, the country had reverted to a centralized system of government with the regions becoming provinces as had been the case earlier. In the subsequent year, the government formulated a premier policy paper, *Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965 on African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya*, (Republic of Kenya, 1965) in which it was stated that the power to control

resource use resided with the state but planning was to be extended to the provinces and local authorities.

Over the years, Kenya has progressively shifted from a centralized to a decentralized form of governance. This paradigm shift was due to the shortfalls that are often characteristic of highly centralized government systems. The shortfalls include administrative bureaucracies and inefficiencies, misappropriation of public resources, lack of public participation and the marginalization of local communities in development processes (The Institute for Social Accountability - TISA, 2010). Consequently in the late 1990s, the government began the devolvement of specific funds and decision making authority to the districts, local authority and constituency levels (Legal Resources Foundation Trust, 2009). The above devolvement of funds and decision making was policies of the government of the day which could change any time depending on their policies or manifestos. Therefore, there was a need to make devolution a permanent feature in Kenya by anchoring it in the constitution.

According to International Commission of Jurists, ICJ (2013) devolution is simply defined as the process of transferring decision-making and implementation powers, functions, responsibilities and resources to legally constituted, and popularly elected local governments. Devolution in Kenya is based on the supremacy of the Constitution, sovereignty of the people and the principle of public participation.

The adoption of the new constitution in 2010, in Kenya, marked the beginning of a new dispensation where there are two levels of government: central government and county governments. Article 176 (1) of the Constitution of Kenya, Republic of Kenya (2010), state that there shall be a county government for each county, consisting of a county assembly and a county executive and article 174 states that the objects of the devolution of government is (a) to promote democratic and accountable exercise of power; (b) to foster national unity by recognizing diversity; (c) to give powers of self-governance to the people and enhance the participation of the people in the exercise of the powers of the State and in making decisions affecting them; (d) to recognize the right of communities to manage their own affairs and to further their development.

Public participation is a political principle, which has been recognized as a right – the right to public participation. Article 10(2) of the Constitution of Kenya, holds that the national values and principles of governance include (a) patriotism, national unity, sharing and devolution of power, rule of law, democracy and participation of the people (d) sustainable development. Other constitutional provisions that provide for public participation in the Constitution of Kenya 2010, include: Article 69(1) d which provides for public participation in the management,

protection and conservation of the environment, Article 118 which mandates parliament to facilitate public participation in the legislative and other business of parliament, Article 174 (c) which provides for public participation as an object of devolution, Article 201(a) which provides for openness and accountability including public participation in financial matters as a principle of public finance and others related to the right of recall and in constitutional amendment processes, Republic of Kenya (2010).

Participation has captured the imagination and hopes of politicians, policy makers and practitioners alike. Across the globe –from Brazil to India to the United States - we have witnessed ‘an explosion’ of interest in participation over the past decade; this is particularly true for public participation (Dunn, 2007). In keeping with efforts to promote good governance, many African countries have also identified public participation as a key principle to promote and uphold good governance. For example, in adopting the African charter on democracy, elections and governance in 2007, the 53 member states of the African Union committed themselves to, amongst others; promote the conditions that are necessary to foster citizen participation and transparency.

The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2, 2007) has identified core values of participation. The IAP2 core values are: Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process; Public participation includes the promise that the public’s contribution will influence the decision; Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers; public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision; Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate; Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way; and public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

According to Cornwall (2008), there are some primary and interconnected, reasons why advocates of participation in national and local governance see it as a ‘good thing’. Firstly, by involving individuals more directly in decisions that affect their lives, participation is seen as a way of strengthening the legitimacy and accountability of democratic institutions. Secondly, there is a belief that involving people in local decision-making processes and bringing them together around a common cause or interest can empower communities and help build social cohesion Thirdly, participation is considered a tool for reforming public services and for providing services that are better suited to people’s needs and that are more efficient. Finally, participation has been associated with personal benefits for individual participants ranging from increased political efficacy and satisfaction gained from influencing change to personal

development and growth in self-esteem from learning new skills such as public speaking. Participation is thus associated with 'greater social justice, more effective public services and a society of self-confident citizens' as well as being an expression of active citizenship.

### **1.1 Research Objective**

The objective of this study was to examine the effects of public participation in the devolved system for sustainable development.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Sustainable Development**

Sustainable development is a continuous, guided process of economic, environmental and social development aimed at promoting wellbeing of citizens now and in the future. According to Robert, Thomas & Anthony (2005) the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development marked a further expansion of the standard definition with the widely used three pillars of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. The Johannesburg Declaration created a collective responsibility to advance and strengthen the interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development—economic development, social development and environmental protection—at local, national, regional and global levels. The concept of sustainable development has to be holistic in nature as the economic, environmental and social aspects of human behaviour and quality of life are closely linked.

According to Cashmore (2007) it is widely accepted that sustainable development involves harmonising social, economic and environmental concerns in development process and project planning. He maintains that for the development project to be sustainable, the community needs to be involved early on in terms of planning, designing, implementing and evaluating (monitoring). Sustainable development is economic and social development that meets the needs of the current generation without undermining the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Melnick, Mcneely, Navarro, Schmidt-Traub & Sears (2005) suggest that if the governments are more transparent and sensitive to needs of the public, participation can improve the quality of economic, social and environmental decisions, and therefore increasing long-term sustainability. Doelle and Sinclair (2006), has also argued that it is the consensus of the interested and affected parties that provides the best indicator to measure the development and project sustainability rather than the use of predetermined rules or goals.

### **2.2 Devolution in Kenya**

Devolution is considered a form of political decentralization, involving a full transfer of responsibility, decision-making, resources and revenue generation to a local level of public authority that is autonomous and fully independent from the devolving authority. Decentralization is often linked to concepts of public participation in decision-making, democracy, equality and liberty from higher authority (Dutta, 2009). According to ICJ (2013) devolution in Kenya is based on the supremacy of the Constitution, sovereignty of the people and the principle of public participation.

Devolution is one of the concepts in the Constitution that has brought about a complete overhaul in Kenya's system of governance. This is because it is a new aspect in the Kenyan governance. The need for Devolution has been seen in many countries and it is informed by the need to have power sharing, checks and balances in governance and the decentralization of resources. According to Ndege and Brooks (2013) the writers of Kenya's constitution were bold in their quest to devolve public governance and resources to the grassroots. Previously, the "national cake" was exclusively shared from Nairobi, with the presidency having an inordinate say in who got what. Political cronyism and corruption meant that resources were diverted to areas that were politically favoured, with the rest lining the pockets of senior government officials and their acolytes. Devolution was thus seen as the panacea – a mechanism to inject equity in the distribution of resources.

The Constitution of Kenya, 2010 seeks to ensure effective citizen participation in all facets of governance, to which the county governments must respond. According to Report of the Task Force for Devolved Government, TFDG (2011) the new constitution seeks to reverse the centralized non participatory governance paradigm by institutionalizing an embracing governance system and a leadership with integrity. It does this primarily by: establishing an enabling normative framework; creating relevant governance institutions; creating checks and balances on the exercise of executive power; providing for facilitative legislation; enhancing public participation in governance as a bulwark against abuse of power and tightening the process of recruitment, and retention of critical public officers. The system combines self-governance and shared governance at the local and national levels respectively. The essence of this is that at the local level the people are allowed a certain flexibility within which they can make decisions that are unique to themselves and their locality.

### **2.3 Public Participation**

Participation is the highest order of public engagement. The term participation conceptually refers to 'being part of' and 'taking part in' and carries an active component within it. Public participation may be advanced as part of a "people first" paradigm shift, that public participation

can sustain productive and durable change (Mdunyelwa, 2008). Public participation is the involvement of all parties who may potentially have an interest in a development or project, or be affected by it. Public participation is the deliberative process by which interested or affected citizens, civil society organizations, and government actors are involved in policy-making before a political decision is taken. According to International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) (2007), Public participation implies that the public's contribution will influence the decision. Public participation is viewed as a tool, intended to inform planning, organizing or funding of activities.

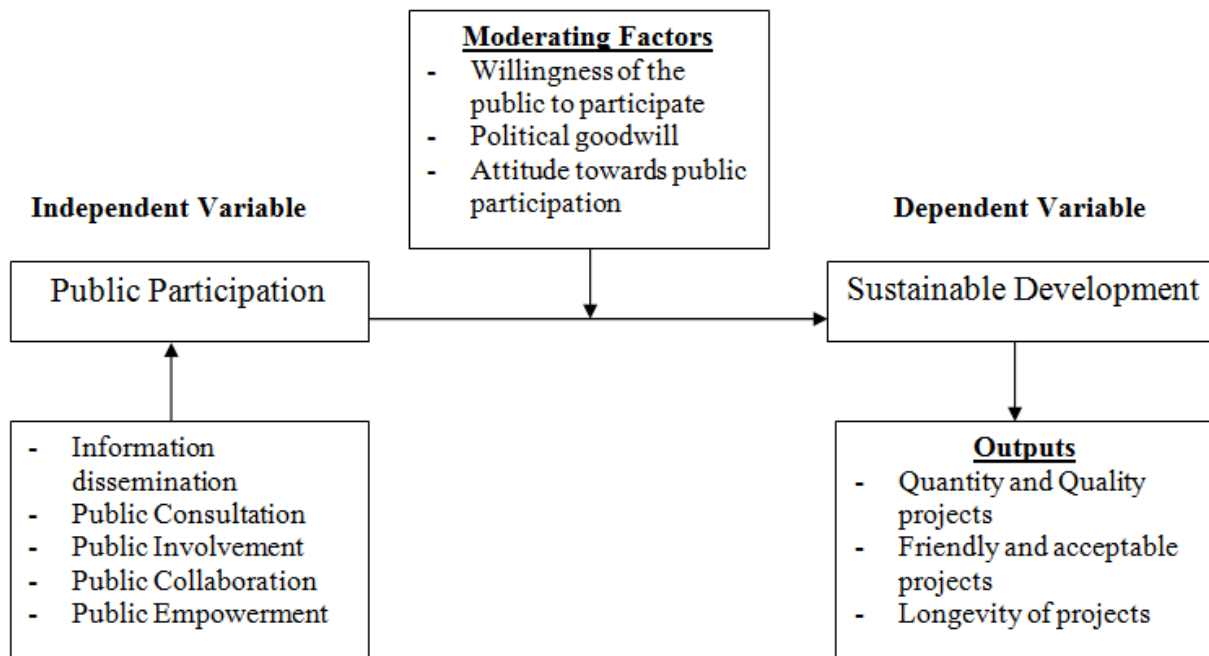
The objective behind public participation is to facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision made by government. Participation is the process through which stakeholders' input and share control over development initiatives, decisions and resources which affect them, (Odhiambo and Taifa, 2009). Okello, Oenga and Chege (2008) further define it as a process whereby stakeholders influence policy formulation, alternative designs, investment choices and management decisions affecting their communities. Public participation is seen as a form of empowerment and is a vital part of democratic governance. It is part of a 'people first' or 'people centered' methods of management, which avoids centralized, hierarchical decision-making. Participation is important because practical experience on the ground shows that it establishes the necessary sense of ownership. Generally people tend to resist new ideas if these are imposed on them. Participation has greatly contributed to the sustainability of development initiatives, strengthened local capacity, given a voice to the poor and marginalized and linked development to the people's needs (Odhiambo and Taifa, 2009).

"Public participation" and "sustainable development" have become central and interconnected terms in present day development discourse. According to Economic Commission of Africa, ECA (2004), "public participation" has been proposed as an essential pre-condition for sustainable development. "One of the fundamental prerequisites of the achievement of sustainable development", states Chapter 23 of Agenda 21 (the declaration emerging from the 1992 Rio de Janeiro UN Conference on Environment and Development), "is broad public participation in decision-making." Public participation in decisions about development is fundamental to achieving lasting and sustainable solutions. Modern democratic life requires an active role from the members of the public. Participation transforms the democratic system, energizing it, by creating a permanent connection between the governed and those who govern. Public participation allows government actions to become transparent, effectively avoiding corrupt behaviors. In developing countries, the need for public participation is particularly important because it fosters good governance and leads to increased social justice by involving the poor and providing genuine discourse between the government and its citizens.

**2.4 Conceptual framework**

This is a diagrammatical representation showing how variables in this study will inter relate with each other. It shows the relationship between independent and dependent variables.

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**



*Source: Author (2018)*

From the figure above it is conceptualized that sustainable development is the dependent variable and it is influenced by public participation which is independent variable. In this study public participation is about information dissemination to the public, public consultation, public involvement, collaboration with the public and public empowerment. The outputs of sustainable development include; increased quantity and quality of development projects, friendly and acceptable projects and long lasting /longevity of development projects. Moderating factors in this study are: willingness of the public to participate, political goodwill of the leaders and attitude of the stakeholders towards public participation which can be controlled through civic education and election of good political leaders.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted through analytical survey approach. The analytical research usually concerns itself with cause-effect relationships in this case public participation- sustainable development. The target population for this study was 1,051,077; derived from Kenya Population and Housing Census of 2009 of adults who are 18 years old and above residents of the three counties i.e. Kericho, Bomet and Narok Counties. This study employed simple random sampling technique for members of the public who responded to questionnaire. The respondents to questionnaires were the residents of the three counties who were 18 years and above.

The sample size was determined by the formula suggested by Fisher, *et al* (1983) from Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) for estimating sample sizes in social surveys as shown below;

$$n = \frac{Z^2 pq}{d^2}$$

n - The desired sample size (when the population is more than 10, 000).

Z – Standard normal deviation at the required confidence level (1.96 at 95% confidence level)

p – Proportion in the target population estimated to have the characteristics (assume 50% if unknown) = 0.5

q = 1 – p = 0.5

d – Level of statistical significance (tolerable error = 5% = 0.05).

$$n = \frac{Z^2 pq}{d^2} = \frac{(1.96)^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{(0.05)^2} = 384$$

The total population of persons who are 18 years and above in the three counties are 1,051, 077, this are more than 10,000, therefore according to Fisher, *et al* (1983) the sample size will be 384. The sample size per county was distributed proportionately as shown in the table 1 below.



**Table 1: Sample Size per County**

County		Adult Population (18 years & above)	Percentage (%)	Sample Size	Percentage (%)
1	Kericho	350,767	33.4%	128	33.3%
2	Bomet	330,992	31.5%	121	31.5%
3	Narok	369,318	35.1%	135	35.2%
Total		1,051,077	100%	384	100%

The Table 1 above shows, a sample size of 128 was picked from Kericho County, 121 from Bomet County and 135 from Narok County for purposes of answering questionnaires.

Questionnaires and document analysis were used as the main tools for collecting data. The quantitative data was obtained through closed-ended questionnaires. Data analysis for this study was done using the SPSS. Quantitative data was analyzed through descriptive statistics and presented in tables and bar charts.

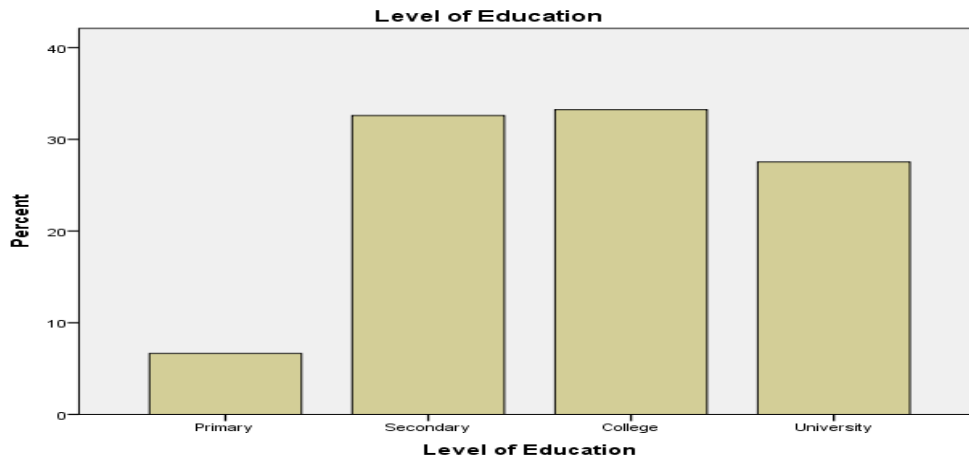
#### **4. DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

##### **4.1 Demographic characteristics of the respondent**

Various studies have shown that demographic characteristics of the respondents influence greatly their involvement in public participation. Therefore demographic characteristics of the respondents is of great significance to this study. The demographic characteristics discussed include level of education and age bracket.

The researcher established the level of education of the public that responded to the questionnaire and the findings are presented in figure 2 below.

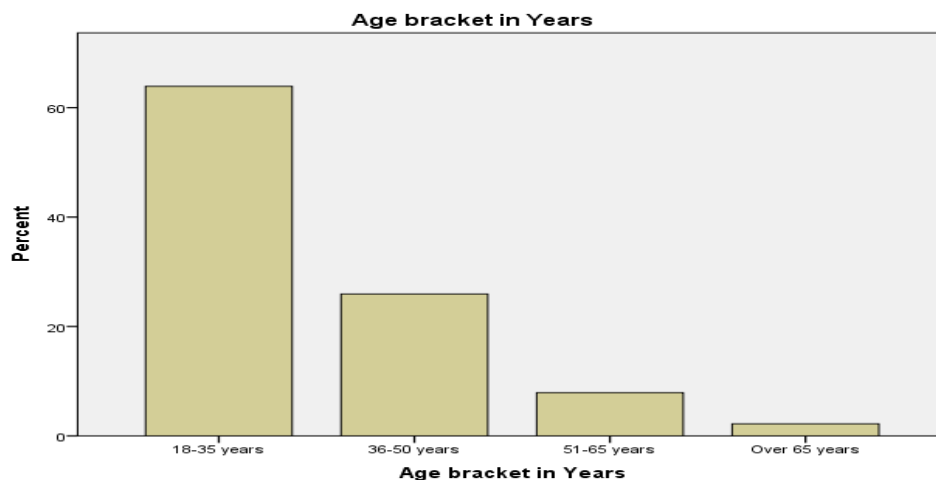
**Figure 2: Bar chart on respondents' level of education**



The figure 2 above shows that majority of the respondents, 60.7%, had college or university education. College and university students have a lot of information on what is happening in the county in terms of development and public participation activities; due to their level of education; they are keener and get information through media such as county websites, social media and mainstream media. Therefore majority of the public are in a position to participate in all processes of public participation.

The researcher established the age bracket of the public that responded to the questionnaire and the findings are presented in figure 3 below.

**Figure 3: Bar chart on age bracket of the respondents**



The figure 3 above shows that majority of the respondents, 63.9%, were youth, age bracket 18-35 years. The youth are the most energetic and active group of the adult population who tend to be involved more in development activities such as public participation. Therefore this is an opportunity that the government can utilize to ensure as many people as possible participate in development activities.

**4.2 Effects of Public Participation**

The respondents were asked to respond to several statements and give their opinions or information intended to describe effects of public participation in relation to sustainable development in the devolved system of governance in Kenya. The results are presented in the tables below; findings were also analyzed, interpreted and discussed.

The respondents to the questionnaire were asked to respond to the question, “To what extent do you agree with the following statements on development projects and programs in the county when public participation is undertaken? They were given choices to tick; Strongly Disagree-1, Disagree-2, Undecided-3, Agree-4 and Strongly Agree-5. The findings are as shown in the table 2 below.

**Table 2: Effects of public participation on development in the county**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
There will be inclusive/better ownership of the project by those it intended to serve and it will be accepted by all	316	1.0	5.0	3.484	0.9839
Citizens will be involved in implementation of the projects and community's projects will be implemented	316	1.0	5.0	3.506	0.9102
The Project will be put to maximum use and benefit most if not all members of the community/public	316	1.0	5.0	3.589	0.8592
Improves county/local governance, accountability and transparency on expenditures by providing checks and balances.	316	1.0	5.0	3.576	1.0160

The quality of the projects will be high and therefore will last longer after the support from the county has stopped.	316	1.0	5.0	3.668	0.8946
Leads to efficient service delivery by county government	316	1.0	5.0	3.693	0.8931
Leads to effective planning, budgeting, development of sound policies and quality legislation	316	1.0	5.0	3.674	1.0133

The table 2 above shows responses to the seven statements on effects of public participation on development in the county.

First; public participation will leads to inclusivity, acceptance and better ownership of the projects; has a mean of 3.484 and standard deviation of 0.9839; which means majority of the respondents agrees with the statement and their responses are not so dispersed from the mean. Majority of the respondents believe that when people are involved in projects, they tend to feel that they own the projects because their input is implemented and the project is done as per their wishes. This will make them protect this projects from mismanagement and utilize it efficiently and effectively for their benefit; leading to sustainability of the project. Participation is important because practical experience on the ground shows that it establishes the necessary sense of ownership. Generally people tend to resist new ideas if these are imposed on them. Participation has greatly contributed to the sustainability of development initiatives, strengthened local capacity, given a voice to the poor and marginalized and linked development to the people’s needs (Odhiambo and Taifa, 2009).

Secondly: public participation citizens will be involved in prioritization and implementation of projects; has a mean of 3.506 and standard deviation of 0.9102; which means majority of the respondents agrees with the statement and their responses are not so dispersed from the mean. When people are involved in projects, they tend to feel that they own the projects because their input is implemented and the project is done as per their wishes. Public participation gives the community an opportunity to prioritize projects that are most urgent and of great importance to their lives. Without public participation, county governments will initiate and implement projects that are needed urgently or of little importance to the community.

Thirdly: public participation projects will put to maximum use and benefit most members of the community/public; has a mean of 3.589 and standard deviation of 0.8592; which means majority of the respondents agrees with the statement and their responses are not so dispersed from the mean. When the public is involved they will own the projects, the projects will be of great importance to them and therefore they will be able to put them to maximum use because they are proud of the project they have initiated and participated in its implementation; this also means that many members of the community will benefit from it because it was their priority project. This will make them protect this projects from mismanagement and utilize it efficiently and effectively for their benefit; leading to sustainability of the project.

Fourth: public participation improves county/local governance, accountability and transparency on expenditures by providing checks and balances; has a mean of 3.576 and standard deviation of 1.0160; which means majority of the respondents agrees with the statement and their responses are not so dispersed from the mean. When the public participate in project initiation and its implementation they will be aware of everything that is happening in terms of the resource mobilisation and its utilization; therefore the county government will be more keen and diligent in their dealings. Public participation therefore; improves county governance, accountability and transparency on expenditures by providing checks and balances.

Fifth: public participation the quality of the projects will be high and therefore will last longer after the support from the county government has stopped; has a mean of 3.668 and standard deviation of 0.8946; which means majority of the respondents disagrees with the statement and their responses are not so dispersed from the mean. With public participation; the quality of the projects implemented will be high because they were able to put together their ideas and come up with the best for implementation. The project will also last longer after the financial and technical support from the county government has stopped because the public who are the greatest beneficiaries and users of projects have been part of the project from the start therefore they understand the project very well; hence they will be able to operate and manage the project on their own. This will lead to sustainability of the project.

Sixth: public participation leads to efficient service delivery by county government; has a mean of 3.693 and standard deviation of 0.8931; which means majority of the respondents disagrees with the statement and their responses are not so dispersed from the mean. Majority of the respondents believe that public participation leads to efficient service delivery by county government because the services offered will be as per the needs and priority of the public. When public is involved they will be more keen to demand for their rights because they pay taxes and other levies to the county governments. When public participation is implemented the

public tend to understand their constitutional rights and therefore they tend to demand for efficient and quality services from the county government.

Finally: public participation leads to effective planning, budgeting, development of sound policies and quality legislation; has a mean of 3.674 and standard deviation of 1.0133; which means majority of the respondents disagrees with the statement and their responses are not so dispersed from the mean. Public participation leads to effective planning, budgeting, development of sound policies and quality legislation because they are 'wearer of the shoes who knows where it pinches'; therefore they will be able to give accurate information to the county government concerning their needs. County governments will be able to come up with effective planning of development projects that will be as per the needs of the public; budgeting and allocation of resources will be equitable and as per priority of the public; and development of policies and legislations will be agreeable to all the stakeholders especially the public who are the primary users or consumers. Lack of public participation will lead to defective plans, poor budgeting leading to under or over allocation of resources in certain areas leading to wastage, unsound policies and legislations which may lead to court cases and even mass actions such as demonstrations against the said laws.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

In view of the above findings, the study concludes that:

Majority of the public are in a better position to participate in public participation because of their level of education which is above secondary education and majority of them are youthful hence there are energetic and active; therefore they can participate more in development activities. The study also concludes that, there is need to involve more women in public participation because more men tend to be involved than women yet some development projects affects women more than men.

The study concludes that if public participation process is fully implemented by the county governments then it will; leads to inclusivity, acceptance and better ownership of the projects; prioritizing projects; improves governance, accountability and transparency on expenditures by providing checks and balances; quality of the projects will be high and therefore will last longer; leads to efficient service delivery; and leads to effective planning, budgeting, development of sound policies and quality legislation.

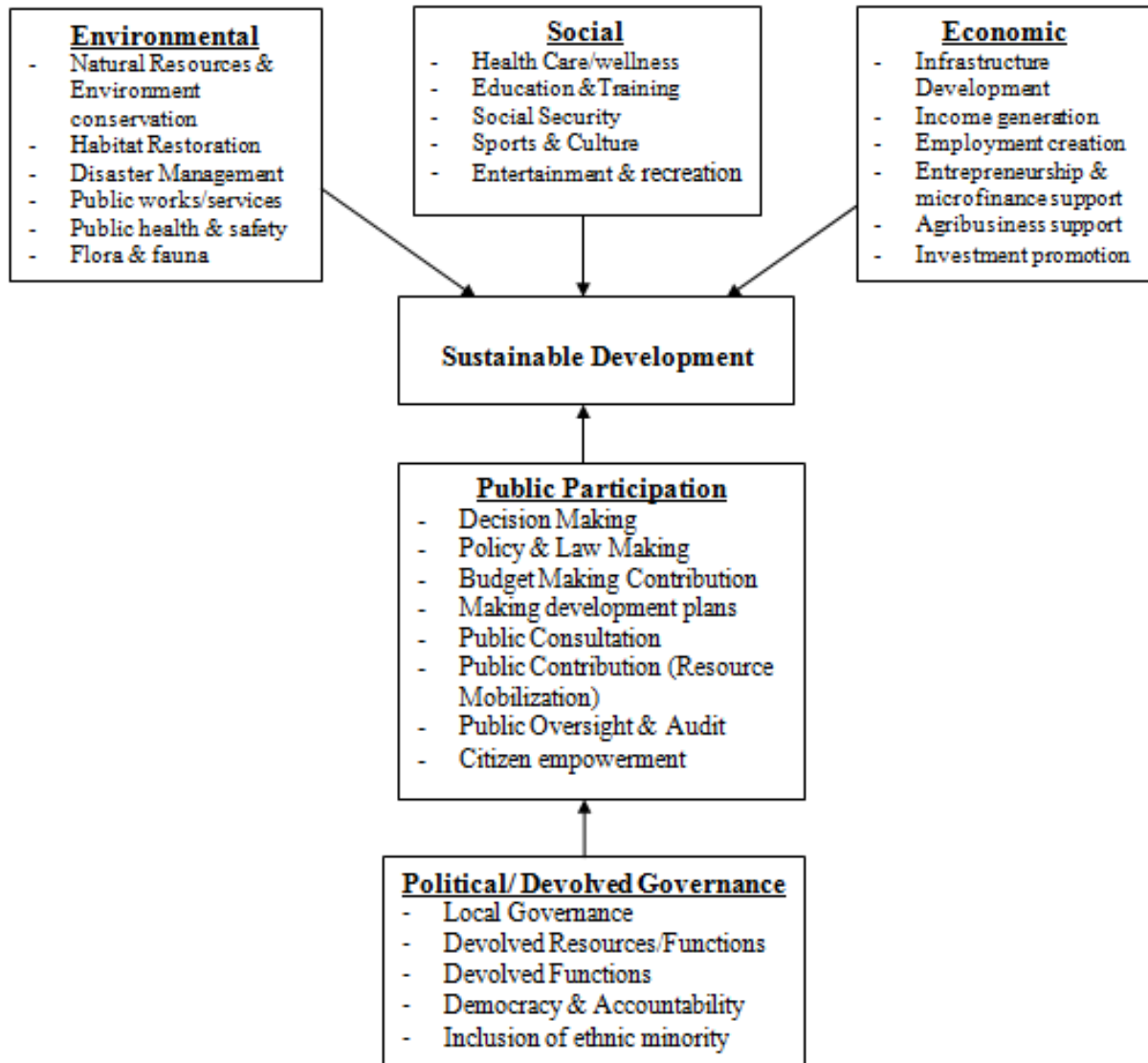
## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Basing generalizations on these findings of this study, the researcher recommends that: Public participation should be implemented fully by county governments because it has the following benefits: It leads to inclusivity, acceptance and ownership of projects; prioritization of development projects; improves governance, accountability and transparency; quality projects and improved longevity; efficient service delivery; effective planning, budgeting, development of sound policies and quality legislation.

### **6.1 Contribution to the Body of Knowledge**

From the literature reviewed and the study findings, a model can be developed. A model was developed by the author (figure 4 below) which shows clearly the relationship between public participation, sustainable development and its pillars; and the devolved governance which is a political factor.

**Figure 4: Sustainable Development-Public Participation Model**



Source: Author (2018)

From the model above, it is conceived that for sustainable development to be achieved in the three components must be achieved; that is environmental, social and economic sustainability. Environmental sustainability is about natural resources and environment conservation, habitat restoration, disaster management, public works and services, public health and safety and conservation of flora and fauna. Social is sustainability about health care/wellness, education and training, social security, sports and culture and entertainment and recreation. Economic



sustainability is about infrastructure development, income generation, employment creation, entrepreneurship and microfinance support, and agribusiness support and investment promotion. The Political factor/devolved governance provides the base or foundation for public participation to take place and when public participation takes place, sustainable development will be achieved. Devolved governance is about local governance, devolved resources and functions, enhanced democracy and accountability and inclusion of ethnic minority and marginalized group and gender balance in the county appointments. Public participation, which is part of political process, in this model is about the decision making, policy and law making, budget making contribution, making development plans, public consultation, public contribution (resource mobilization), public oversight and audit and citizen empowerment.

Therefore the devolved governance provides the basis for public participation to happen in the development process which leads to sustainable development.

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