



## ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN COUNTY GOVERNANCE IN KENYA

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### ABSTRACT

Youth participation in county governance in counties across Kenya has not been achieved as expected. Despite the legislative frameworks established to encourage youths to be involved in the leadership and governance in the country, youth participation in county governance is inadequate and still wanting. The general objective of the study was to examine the influence of devolved systems on youth participation in county governance in Kenya. The study was based on the Participatory Democracy Theory. A survey research design was adopted in the study. The study population comprised of the estimated 19,456,356 youths from all the counties in Kenya. The sample size for the study was 400 respondents and they were identified to participate in the research by the use of proportionate stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Questionnaires and interview guides were used in the collection of relevant data. Data was analyzed through descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) and presented in frequency tables. According to the findings of the study, there was a statistically strong, positive, and meaningful significant relationship between Administrative Systems and Youth Participation in Kenyan Counties ( $r_{xy} = 0.732$ ,  $n = 321$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ). The study recommends that counties should develop administrative systems that allocate resources to support youth-led initiatives and projects that address community challenges, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility among young people.

Key words: Devolved System, Youth Participation, County Governance, Administrative Systems

## **1.0 Introduction**

Devolution as a new governance system has played a vital role in restructuring the state to give more power to local governments and empower the citizens to participate in the governance structures of their local areas. Literature review shows that over the last two decades, many countries have embraced decentralization in regions as diverse as the newly independent states of Eastern Europe, Africa, South America, and South East Asia. The implementation process has, however, not been as smooth as envisaged, and most of these countries have had many pitfalls along the way (Olatona & Olamola, 2015). Current trends show that administrative systems should be implemented simultaneously to empower youths to fight poverty effectively.

Meaningful youth participation in governance is a key ingredient for public reforms that were instituted by the Constitution of Kenya (CoK, 2010). Article 1 (1) of the Constitution vests all sovereign power to the people of Kenya. This power can be expressed through direct participation or indirectly through elected representatives. In addition, various pieces of legislations anchoring devolution highlight the principles of citizen participation. Together, these constitutional and legislative provisions avail various platforms for youth participation in devolved governance. Youth participation is one of the national values and is also one of the principles of public service as articulated in the Constitution in Articles 10 (2,a), Article 35(1) and (3) and Article 232 (1).

Devolution is a widely observed phenomenon across various nations, including but not limited to the nations of Singapore, Vietnam, Germany, the Republic of South Africa, the Republic of Korea, and Nigeria. The primary objective of decentralization is to facilitate significant changes such as increased public feedback, engagement and political cohesion, all of which aim to improve the delivery of goods and services to the general population (Nyaranga et al., 2019; Opiyo, 2017). The outcomes of devolution policies exhibit variation across various nations, leading to different outcomes and impacts (Kilonzo, 2020). In evaluating the success of devolution in a particular country, a key indicator can be considered: enhancement of governance quality and engagement, increased citizen engagement and involvement, the establishment of ownership as well as representation in politics, and a heightened sense of government authority among the populace.

For instance, in the UK, the parliamentary bodies of Welsh, Scottish, and Northern Ireland, for instance, now have more authority. The ability to choose how decisions are made is one of these. The government policy in England is to give citizens a much broader voice in governance and, where needed shift oversight of government resources to citizen groups, even though the country is not decentralized. A high degree of civic engagement is also noted in Germany. The nation has included participatory mechanisms in urban development for more than thirty years. In the United States, planning authority is distributed among municipal entities, jurisdictions, educational districts, autonomous districts, municipalities, and the state. After they debate and negotiate, judgments are made. Due to their independence, these units are able to solve problems creatively and innovatively.

Voting, multiparty democracy, as well as the advancement of human rights have collectively transformed African nations, opening the door for citizen involvement in politics and debate in society as well as giving citizens a voice in the process of making decisions. The majority of African governments presently provide security for basic freedoms and rights of humanity. They support the supremacy of law, which suggests that everyone and everything is governed by and answerable to regulations (Rossouw, 2019).

Kenya, like many other countries in Africa countries has made historic transitions. The most recent one is the promulgation of the new constitution in 2010 that ushered in decentralization of powers of governance and other policy development roles to counties. The Constitution provides for participation of citizens in exercise of powers of the state and in making decisions through indirect and direct involvement of the people in the process of policymaking. This would enhance responsible governance and accountability to the people as well as community-based monitoring and advocacy for transparency and accountability. Therefore, youth participation contributes to better projects, development, and collaborative governance. Research has shown that youth participation is advantageous for the speed and quality of implementation of planning decisions (Indeche & Ayuma, 2015). The current study seeks to establish the influence of administrative systems on youth participation in county governance in Kenya.

The youth in Kenya (15-34 years) constitute 35.39% of the country's population. Those aged between 0 and 14 constitute 42.92% of the population, and those aged below 34 years constitute 78.31% of the country's population (IEA, 2015). Kenya's youth have remained at the periphery of the country's affairs for decades since independence, and their needs and aspirations have not been recognized. The youth have not been adequately engaged in the designing, planning, and implementation of programs and policies that affect not only them but also the country at large, and as a result, their knowledge, skills, and energy have not been underutilized. Gitegi and Iravo (2016) opined that, decentralized systems that work well encourage young involvement in Kenyan county administrations. According to the World Bank (2015), industrialized nations, including the United Kingdom, the United States, India, and South Africa, have successfully implemented devolved systems encouraging youth engagement.

Youth participation in devolved governance has been found to positively correlate with devolved systems, according to research by Olatona and Olomola (2015) and the United Nations (2012). Devolved systems and public participation in county administration in Kenya, however, may not be related, according to conflicting data from local research (Gitegi & Iravo (2016); Khaunya et al. 2015). The influence of devolved systems on youth participation in county governance in Kenya needs to be re-evaluated in light of this inconsistency. Examining how youth participation in Kenyan county governance is affected by decentralized systems was the study's main goal. The specific objective was;

- i. To establish the influence of administrative systems on youth participation in county governance in Kenya.

## **2.0 Materials and methods**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The design helped in data collection from a population, or a representative subset, at one specific point in time and have an advantage over other research designs that only seek individuals with a specific characteristic, with a sample, often a tiny minority, of the rest of the population (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

### **2.1 Study population**

The study's unit of analysis was the 47 independent counties integrated under the National government. While the unit of observation was the youths in the different counties in Kenya.

According to the KNBS (2019) on population in Kenya, the number of the total youths (18-34years) in Kenya is 19,456,356 by November, 2019.

## **2.2 Sample size determination**

Simple random sampling was used to select the respondents to the sample to be determined. This was ideal for generalization of the results to the target population. The sample size was calculated using the Slovin's formula given as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N (e)^2}$$

Where: n = Sample size,

N = Total population and

e = Error tolerance (confidence level).

Since the population N = 16,999,910

Error tolerance = 0.05,

The sample size is determined as:

$$n = \frac{19,456,356}{1 + 19,456,356 (0.05)^2} = 400 \text{ respondents}$$

The 400 sampling units were distributed to the conveniently identified population using the proportional stratified sampling and the sample size of each county of respondents (youths) were sampled using simple random sampling. This is to ensure that the sampling unit from each county had an equal chance in the study.

## **2.3 Data collection**

Data was collected using questionnaires to assess participants' experiences with the selected key devolved systems. Questionnaires were chosen because, according to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), they are effective data collection instruments that allow respondents to express many of their opinions about the researched problem. To ensure that the research instruments in the study collected the necessary data, they were discussed with supervisors and other research experts who checked and interrogated them on content and face validity. The questionnaire was subjected to an overall reliability and internal consistency analysis. Cronbach alpha, a coefficient of internal consistency, was used to assess this. Internal consistency measures the correlations between different items on the same test (or the same subscale on a larger test) and whether several items that propose to measure the same general construct produce similar scores.

## **2.4 Data analysis**

Data analysis according to Cooper and Schindler (2016), involves translating the answers on a questionnaire into a form that can be operated to produce statistical results. The data was edited, cleaned and coded in SPSS v23. The data was represented using tables using tables, bar graphs, and pie charts. Inferential statistics included a simple linear regression model and correlational matrix.

### 3.0 Results

The study administered 400 questionnaires to participants, with 308 successfully completed and returned, resulting in a response rate of 77%. The response rate was sufficient, especially since the survey was self-administered.

#### 3.1 Perceived adequacy of administrative systems on Youth Participation

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Administrative Systems**

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>Sd.</b>
The county government has contract services to the youths	0.0	10.3	2.2	66.3	21.2	4.406	.267
The county government has the autonomy to hire youths to enhance service delivery	0.0	16.8	4.8	58.2	20.1	4.285	.532
The county government conduct capacity building to the youths	1.1	7.0	19.0	49.5	23.4	4.089	.902
The county government leaders involve the youths in decision making	11.0	20.9	19.0	36.3	12.8	4.154	.218
The leaders of the county government have delegate roles and responsibilities to the youths	4.4	12.5	20.9	38.5	23.8	4.087	.408

Table 1 shows the results of responses from respondents on how they perceive the county government's involvement with young people across different categories such as delegation of tasks, hiring processes, training opportunities, participation in decision-making, and providing contractual services to young individuals. The general consensus among respondents was that the government does possess the autonomy to recruit youths, with a considerable number agreeing to the statement (M=4.406, SD = 0.267), indicating a high level of agreement that the county government engages in providing contract services to youths. The responses were skewed towards agree (A). On whether the county government has autonomy on hiring the youths, majority of respondents (M=4.285, SD = 0.532) agreed the construct. Implying that the youths are hired in the county government enhancing their participation in county governance.

The construct capacity building initiatives had (M= 4.089, SD = 0.902) implying the county governments have capacity building initiatives for the youths enhancing their participation in county governance. The involvement of youths in decision-making processes had (M=4.154, SD = 0.218), suggesting that the majority of respondents agreed that county government leaders involve youths in decision making. Finally, the data shows that, on average, participants reported a judicious level of agreement (M=4.087, SD = 0.408) that county government leaders delegate tasks and responsibilities to young people. The data show a broad range of responses, indicating a mix of opinions regarding the county government's efforts in conducting capacity building for the youths. In conclusion, the majority of participants expressed favourable views towards the county government's efforts to engage with youth on multiple levels. The highest level of agreement was noted in the provision of contract services. These results shed light on both the county's successes and potential areas for improvement in their youth engagement strategies.

## 4.0 Discussion

### 4.1 Correlational Analysis of administrative systems

Correlation and regression analyses were used to examine the study to establish a correlation between the dependent and other variables.

**Table 2: Correlational Analysis Matrix**

		administrative systems	Youth Participation
<b>Administrative Systems</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	321	
<b>Youth Participation</b>	Pearson Correlation	.732**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	321	321

The findings in Table 2, revealed a statistically strong, positive, and meaningful significant association between Administrative Systems and Youth Participation in Kenyan Counties ( $r_{xy} = 0.732$ ,  $n = 321$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ).

The research utilized regression analysis to evaluate the impact of administrative systems on youth participation in several counties in Kenya.

**Table 3: Regression Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.732 <sup>a</sup>	.536	.535	.550	1.498

Based on the results presented in Table 3, it can be observed that the administrative system of government in Kenya is responsible for 53.6% ( $R^2=0.536$ ) of the observed variances in youth participation in county governance while controlling for other relevant factors. The results also indicated a strong positive relationship between administrative system and youth participation in county governance as shown by  $R=0.732$ .

**Table 4: Regression Coefficients for administrative system and youth participation**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	.742	.166		4.466	.000
	X1	.797	.042	.732	19.202	.000

X1= Administrative Systems

From the findings on table 4 of regression coefficient showed that the unstandardized beta coefficient for administrative system was 0.797. This implies that a unit increase in administrative system accounted for 0.797 units increase in youth participation governance in Kenyan counties. The t value for administrative system was also significant;  $T(321) = 19.202$ ;  $\beta = 0.797$ ;  $P < 0.05$ .

Simple regression model for administrative system and youth participation in county governance in Kenyan Counties was:

$$Y = 0.742 + 0.797X_1 + 0.166 \dots \dots \dots \text{Equation 1}$$

## **5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study findings suggest that administrative play significant role in influencing youth participation in county governance in Kenya. Therefore, the study recommends the establishment of regular feedback mechanisms for young people to provide input on the effectiveness of county programs and services. The county governments should develop and maintenance of digital platforms and apps that facilitate youth engagement in governance processes, such as submitting suggestions, participating in public hearings, and tracking county projects. Also, administrative systems that allocate resources to support youth-led initiatives and projects that address community challenges, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility among young people should be implemented.

## **6.0 Acknowledgement**

### **6.1 General acknowledgement**

None

### **6.2 Funding**

None

### **6.3 Conflict of interest**

None.

### **6.4 Ethical consideration**

Approval for the study was from JKUAT University to allow the researcher to collect data. Also, a research permit was also obtained from NACOSTI. In addition, the researcher sought permission from governor's office in the counties to be sampled in order to be allowed to collect data from respondents. The respondent's confidentiality was adhered to requesting them not to indicate their names on the questionnaires. Also, informed consent and willingness to participate by respondents guaranteed better results.

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