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Original Article

The Influence of Public Awareness on the Implementation of County Government Development Projects in Turkana North Sub-County Kenya

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Keywords:

Public Awareness. County Government Funded Projects, County Governments, Project Implementation.

The main focus of this paper was to examine the influence of public awareness on the Implementation of County Government Development Projects in Turkana North Sub County, Kenya. The paper was anchored on the civic voluntarism theory. The study adopted A descriptive research design, which targeted 30,923 people. A sample of 384 public members was arrived at using the Miller & Brewer formula, and stratified randomly was employed. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire. Supervisions, intensive literature review, and pre-testing validated the research instruments. The reliability of the instruments was further verified by a pilot study using 10% of the study's sample. The outcome of the pilot study revealed an internal consistency of Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.8476. this coefficient was considered ideal since it was above the threshold of 0.7. Data were analyzed descriptively using SPSS and presented in percentages, frequencies, and tables. The data analysis findings established a significant positive relationship between public awareness and the implementation of funded development projects in Turkana North sub-county, Kenya (R=0.749). Overall, public awareness influenced the implementation of funded development projects by 88.7% (R2 = 88.7%). Therefore, the study recommends that it is vital for the firms assigned to implementing development projects to consider thoroughly fostering public awareness in any project implementation. This enhances project satisfaction, project completion on time, and completion at scheduled cost. These study findings may benefit policymakers, practitioners, and researchers in forming the basis for new knowledge by identifying the knowledge gap.

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INTRODUCTION

Development projects have become essential in the 21st century for both private and public institutions. These projects help achieve the government's objectives of improving the quality of life, economic activities, and political activities (Gberevbie, et al., 2017). According to the United Nations (2016), development objectives can be achieved only when political and public participation, democracy, and good governance are in place. Du (2018) also highlighted that citizen participation, efficiency, and accountability must be practiced to ensure good governance.

Several techniques can be used to implement the process of public participation. Some of these techniques involve interacting with citizens through workshops and meetings, while others use remote methods. Remote techniques involve no face-to-face interaction, such as the use of websites or written surveys. As a result, there is no single universal technique that can be adopted in public participation exercises (Fares et al., 2018). McComas et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of involving the public in decision-making processes. The inclusion of the public must be meaningful in terms of both numbers and quality.

Engaging the public in decision-making has become crucial for implementing projects and programs. This promotes accountability and transparency in project development at both the national and county levels. It may also lead to the introduction of new initiatives. However, not all areas have equally robust public participation processes in place. Some project managers may avoid public participation due to concerns about loss of authority (Bouzguenda et al., 2019).

A study by Perry and Christensen (2015) emphasized the need for public awareness as a public component of participation implementing government development projects. Public awareness plays a crucial role in enhancing the transparency and accountability of county government-funded projects. This is because when the public is well-informed about the details of a project, including its objectives, timeline, budget, and expected outcomes, it fosters an environment of openness. This transparency enables community members to hold project implementers and government accountable for their actions and decisions. As a the likelihood of mismanagement, result. corruption, and inefficiency is significantly reduced, ensuring that projects are executed as planned and resources are used appropriately. Enhanced accountability, driven by informed citizenry, ultimately leads to more successful and sustainable project outcomes.

According to Adriano and Diamantino (2023), the management of development projects has undergone various changes in Brazil. The public is allowed to participate in the decision-making process and prioritize key projects that could have an impact on their livelihoods. The local government creates awareness of the marked projects through the local media as a form of public participation. This ensures that the perspectives and needs of the community are considered in the project design implementation process. One of the key benefits of creating public awareness of the project implementation is ensuring that the public is wellinformed and actively engaged and can provide valuable insights and suggestions that align the project more closely with local conditions and priorities.

In China, Kuang and Lin (2021) found that the successful implementation and planning of projects required the active involvement of local governments in public participation to ensure efficient and effective outcomes. However, it is essential to assess the extent to which local governments actively implement public participation. Kotwal et al., (2008) pointed out that public awareness through mass media in China has increased public engagement in the project's budget process, leading to an efficient implementation process.

Khatleli (2019) established that protests and delays in some critical projects in South Africa were associated with a lack of public awareness. South Africa needs a consolidated and developed legislative framework to ensure that citizens are involved in the prioritization of the projects to be carried out by the local government or by the state. A study in Uganda by Moses et al. (2023) assessing the role of public awareness in the success of government-funded projects in the Kabala district established that public awareness played an essential role in the performance of the projects. However, the study stated that some factors contributed to the failure of the projects, including a lack of stakeholder engagement, inadequate public support, and the need to be made aware of the projects.

The Kenyan constitution (2010) affirms that public participation is an important principle that must be considered across all political, social, and economic areas. This also applies to development projects where the citizens' suggestions and comments on what the government needs to do for them are critical (Kibet et al., 2021). Encouraging citizens to participate in public activities assists the government in being accountable for all the actions undertaken in line with the public's interests. Therefore, every development project the government may wish to commence should have good support from the citizens. However, it noted that public participation development projects in Kenya is low (Kipyego & Wanjare 2017).

Consultants on devolution and public policies in Kenya affirm that public involvement has indicated an insignificant impact on local government projects, and there is a need to encourage the public to be involved in different levels of public participation (Opiyo, 2017). Mbui (2018) also indicated that in Kenya, funded and those that are not funded projects have been beneficial to the community; however, they have posted a collective worry trend of low rate of public participation. The Kenyan constitution has revolutionized the governance system. According to the Kenyan Constitution 2010, Article 6 indicates that there are two levels of government: the national and the local levels. Article 174 allows citizens to participate in all community projects through public participation. Article 201 further lays down the structure and standards for public funds and emphasizes accountability, transparency, and participation (CoK, 2010).

Problem Statement

One of the world's most robust and progressive constitutions is the Kenyan Constitution 2010. It reinstituted the decentralized form of government and solidified public involvement as one of the tenets of governance. If fully applied, public participation should strengthen locally led, issuedriven strategies and unite people around shared interests. Holding public leaders accountable necessitates an informed public capable of acting in concert. Despite the Kenyan constitution advocating for public participation in good governance, a significant information gap exists on public involvement and devolved structure. Statistics from the Society for International Development (2018) indicated that 1% of Kenyan citizens engaged in public participation and actively participated in local governance. This illustrates that despite the practice of the devolution system, public participation is widely neglected. For instance, Turkana North Sub County was designated to host several development projects in FY 2014/2015; these projects included the Kaikor drug store, the Enforcement Training Center, the Namorotot and Nakinomet ECDs, the Nakebuse and Nalemsekon

water pans, and the Namorotot ECD (Turkana Investment report, 2021). Despite meeting most of the necessary conditions for the projects' implementation, they have yet to be fully realized. Turkana North Sub County has the most significant percentage of unfinished projects, 53 per cent, and halted projects, 43 percent, according to the Turkana County Investment Report 2021. This leads to the study's purpose: to evaluate how public awareness affects the implementation of county government development projects in Turkana North Sub County.

Research Hypothesis

H0₁ Public awareness has no statistically significant influence on the implementation of funded development projects in Turkana North Sub County

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

The study was anchored on Civic Voluntarism Theory. The theory was pioneered by Nie, Verba, Petrocik, (1979) in the USA. It emerged from the concept of civil education's influence on people's involvement in developing their community. This theory enhances the understanding of public participation before or immediately acquiring civil knowledge. It has also been adopted to explain the advantages of public participation in improving the performance of government functions in some countries. The theory presents three main ideas that explain the arguments for lack of or ineffective public participation in county governance. These include the lack of public involvement due to the county's incapacity to facilitate it and limited participation opportunities. Individuals are unable to participate due to poor civic skills, financial resources, and time. And finally, the citizen's perception of the effectiveness of their county governance. However, the level of awareness and education would significantly impact citizens' perceptions of county governance. When people are excluded various government decision-making processes, there is a lack of or restricted public involvement. In relation to the theory, when the public is provided with more resources, they tend to be involved more. These resources can be products of family social structure and education (Baber, 2020).

Nygård and Jakobsson (2013) assert that the theory of civic voluntarism indicates that the socioeconomic status of individuals, such as education, work and income, could influence levels of citizen participation. The theory reveals how the model has developed different modes of citizen participation and thus has been classified into six categories. The classifications depend on different types of participatory functions performed by the citizens. Concerning the classifications, some would be inactive or have little participation in the category, dominated mainly by thin thee in socioeconomic class, women and men. Another classification might contain active citizens who may be middle-aged or newly married couples who might be active in social life, have high incomes and are highly educated.

The theory has some criticisms. For example, it affirms that, to some extent, socioeconomic status can be used to predict the levels of civic participation. The theory argues that in some circumstances, citizens who may have high levels of socioeconomic resources may not have some interest in participating. The theory of civic voluntarism fails to explain why a high percentage categorized of individuals in a high socioeconomic status tend to shy away from getting involved in the political system. This has been supported by a society with a more advanced level of industrialization, good health facilities, and a sound education system, which reveals no correlation between citizen participation and high increases in status (Baber, 2020).

Further, the theory fails to provide a concrete relationship between citizen participation and socioeconomic variables (Delwiche & Henderson, 2012). Thus, this theory has been regarded as significant in mitigating various challenges faced during public participation in the implementation of development projects in

Turkana North in Turkana County, Kenya. It also assisted in explaining citizen participation.

Empirical Review

The research analysed previous studies that examined relationship between public awareness on the implementation of County Government Development Projects. The reviewed studies included scholarly research, journal articles, and other publications.

Public Awareness on the Implementation of County Government Development Projects

Public awareness refers to the level of public understanding of the implication or importance of certain activities or programs. This entails explaining and disseminating issues knowledge to citizens so that they can make independently decisions (Muchiri, 2022). Claassen et al. (2020) argue that public awareness is providing timely and more relevant information that can be accessible to the public in order for them to be aware and get engaged in decisionmaking, which affects them. The public should be informed and get access to opportunities to engage in public participation.

The County Government Act of 2011 states that counties must use efficient communication strategies in order to raise public awareness of issues related to devolution and governance, to foster understanding among the populace in order to promote peace and national unity, and to advocate for development issues about health, education, agriculture, economics, security, media freedom, and sustainable environments. Further, Section 96 delineates the responsibilities of designated offices, primarily focused facilitating convenient access to information. This includes adopting legislation about national laws that govern information access and ease of access. The county governments are mandated to create methods and techniques for promoting the effectiveness of participation of minority and marginalized groups in the political and public domain (CoK, 2010).

The county governments in Kenya have the task of ensuring that all citizens have a right to receive or access information, documents and any other related policy's formulation, policy implementation and monitoring and evaluation (GoK, 2016), where Article 35 guarantees the citizens right of accessing such information. The County Government Acts, Sec 94, 95 and 96 stipulate that county governments should establish some mechanisms to ensure that the citizens can access all the information through media channels with the widest public attention. Therefore, accessing information is essential in ensuring meaningful public participation.

Tan and Taeihagh (2020) researched investigate the impact of public participation on the governance of innovative city projects in Singapore. The study was an empirical review where 56 studies were systematically reviewed. The 56 studies were picked from 3930 studies in the database. Thematic and synthesis analyses were adopted for data collected from the respondents. The findings showed that public awareness helped make the smart city initiative successful. However, the lack of involvement of stakeholders delayed the construction of the project on time as expected. The study concluded that the government must have a supportive system that promotes public and private partnership needs and encourages public participation in project implementation. The study indicates the importance of public awareness. the county Moreover, governments must implement some mechanisms that will allow the citizens to acknowledge the importance of their presence and participation in the development project implementation process.

Khan et al. (2021). conducted research in Bangladesh to understand the role of awareness in the implementation of rural development projects. The study adopted a qualitative research design, which also collected qualitative data using primary data methods. The data was obtained from the local community citizens. The findings indicated that most respondents agreed that they were not well informed on rural development projects, and thus, they did not participate in public participation. There is a need to create public awareness through mass media, notices,

and easily accessible information to help the public be well-equipped with the information and participate in decision-making regarding the development of projects. Therefore, the public needs to be informed when public participation exercises will be conducted, and the government needs to do more in order to sensitize society to its role in the implementation of development projects.

A study by Odoom et al. (2024) examined how public awareness affected the execution of government-funded projects in Africa, specifically focusing on Ghana. Four hundred thirty-one respondents were employed in the cross-sectional research design to gather data for the study. Mann Whitney U-tests, Kruskal Wallis, and Pearson product-moment correlation were used to examine the data. The study found a weak and negative correlation between the degree of public awareness and the execution government-funded initiatives. The study suggested that the government should develop regulatory rules to raise public awareness. The cause of weak and negative correlation may be attributed to poor sensitization on the importance of the public being part of the project through public participation.

Meinich (2011) conducted a study to determine the link between awareness and governance of the Mama Misitu Forest Campaign in Tanzania. An exploratory research design was used in the study. Of the 650 respondents in the target population, 340 respondents comprised the sample size. Primary data were gathered using a structured questionnaire, and secondary data were obtained from Mama Misitu Forest records. Data was descriptively and inferentially analyzed. The results established that villagers spearheaded conservation values because they had a strong sense of project ownership despite experiencing a lack of awareness. The study also found that corruption was the main local problem in project management. It was then concluded that governance had a positive influence on public awareness. The public needs to be fully involved in the project's running, from the initial public participation stage to the last stage of project

evaluation. All the information must be made available for access.

Akall (2021) indicated that the County of Turkana lacked accountability mechanisms enabling citizens to demand accountability from the county government. This hindered the public from exercising their constitutional and legal rights to be involved in public participation. The concerned authority in Turkana County needs a suitable mechanism, such as creating public awareness and enabling them to access information, which will aid in public participation easily. Thus, collecting public opinion and suggestions fosters accountability and effective decision-making.

Marzuki (2009)affirm that project implementation depends on public awareness. When the public has knowledge of the projects, it enables meaningful participation, fostering successful project implementation. **Public** engagement in the project decision-making phase produces a quality decision about project implementation. The legislative structure in Kenya clearly outlines the principles of project participation and proficiency. Despite these rules and principles, the project implementation stage encounters several difficulties in creating an environment that supports the provision of services, including capacities, systems, and regulatory frameworks (World Bank, 2013).

Sumba et al. (2018) aimed to determine how public awareness affected project implementation in the Kakamega County Government. The study aimed to investigate the impact of road shows and electronic media on public participation in the implementation of county government projects. A descriptive research design was used in the study and was informed by 600 respondents selected from 6 sub counties within Kakamega County. The findings revealed that the strategies employed by the county government in creating public awareness were not effective. The respondents also indicated that the county government missed good governance structures that could encourage public participation in projects implemented. It was found that the use of electronic media influenced the involvement of the public project

implementation stage while adopting radio as a means of creating awareness yielded moderate results. Further, the study established that using road shows had a positive outcome and significant effect on the public's involvement in the implementation of development projects. Lastly, it was found that the system did not have room for any feedback after announcing the information. The public is not in a position to access the information and have room to give their opinion or suggestions, which may result in poor decisions on the development of projects.

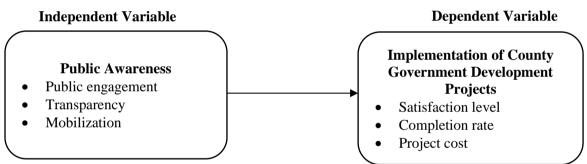
Namano (2015) conducted a study to assess how public involvement affected the planning of urban projects in Nairobi Central Ward. The research design for this study was a cross-sectional survey. The sample of 375 respondents was picked from 13,336 residents of Nairobi Central Ward, who

formed a target population for the study. The researcher obtained 333 questionnaires from the field, which were filled, representing 88 percent. The Alpha coefficient of reliability was 0.79, and this is acceptable. The analyzed data revealed that accessibility did not influence planning, and public participation had a positive but weak relationship with the planning of urban projects and the financial situation.

Conceptual Framework

In Figure 1, public awareness is the independent variable whose parameters are public engagement, transparency, and mobilization. Implementation of county government development projects is the dependent variable measured by satisfaction level, completion rate, and project cost

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study adopted a correlational research design to quantify the relationship between the study variables. This design also helped the researcher establish the direction and strength of the relationship between the variables. In addition, by employing correlation analysis, the study could identify potential patterns, trends, or connections between the efficiency of public participation and the implementation of government development projects (Dubey & Kothari, 2022). The study targeted all the residents of Turkana North Sub County, which, according to KNBS (2019), has a population of 65,218. of this population, 32,810 (50.3%) are male and 32,408 (49.7%) are female. The study used a stratified sampling technique where different wards were considered strata. The county assembly wards were considered because that is where most implemented funded projects are based, and the respondents were regarded to have the required information on the progress of the county-funded development projects. From the strata, the ward development committees, youth leaders, and organizations implementing projects in the wards were randomly selected to participate in the study. This was done because they are officials and members of the organizations implementing development projects for education, health, water, and roads within the wards. A sample of 384 respondents was selected using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) method. Data for the study was obtained using a structured questionnaire, which was self-administered. The obtained data was analyzed using descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies, means and standard deviation. Inferentially, data was

analyzed using correlation and multiple regression.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics

The study administered 384 questionnaires. However, 320 were collected, while 64 were either not collected or not completed as required. This resulted in an 83.3% response rate. From the obtained data, the study established that the majority of the study participants, 189 (59.1%), were men, while 131 (40.9%) were women. The study also revealed that 126(39.4%) respondents were between 26 and 35. 123 (38.4%) respondents were between the age group of 36-45. In addition, 7 (2.2%) respondents were 25 or younger, while those 45 years and above were 64(20%) respondents. This implies a good representation of all age sets in the study. In assessing the respondent's education level, the study found that 105 respondents, accounting for 32.8%, had obtained a KCSE certificate; 96 (30.0%) respondents had a diploma, while 86 (26.9%) had a bachelor's degree. Finally, 33 (10.3%) respondents had a master's degree. On the economic activity and occupation of respondents, the study revealed that 132 (41.3%) of the participants were engaged in business, 111 (34.7%) of the participants were civil servants, 25 (7.8%) participants were engaged in various farming activities while 52 (16.3%) were unspecified activities. The study also indicated that road projects comprised 90 (28.1%) of all projects, and water projects comprised 86 (26.9%). Schools accounted for 45 projects (14.1%), hospital development projects numbered 44 (13.8%), and other development projects amounting to 55 (17.2%). Finally, majority of the respondents 176(55%) indicated that they have never participated in public participation while 144(45%) indicated that they had participated in public participated in public participated in public participation forums.

Descriptive statistics

In this section, participants were asked to provide their views on statements on the influence of public awareness on the implementation of county government development projects in the Turkana North sub county. A five-point Likert scale was used to weigh the respondent's opinions. In the Likert scale, Strongly Disagree is presented by (SD)=1, Disagree(D) =2, Not decided N (3), agree (A)=4, and strongly disagree (SA)=5.

Public Awareness

The study sought to assess the influence of public awareness and the implementation of county-funded projects. The frequencies mean, and standard deviation of the findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Public Awareness

Statements on Public	SD (1)	D (2)	N (3)	(A)4	(SA)5	M	SD
Awareness			. (-)	. ,	()-		
The county government engages the public through social media platforms on project implementation.	10(3.1)	22(6.9)	91(28.4)	149(46.6)	48(15)	3.64	0.92
The county government engages the public through religious groups to get public input on project performance.	0	42(13.1)	140(43.8)	102(31.9)	36(11.3)	3.51	0.85
The project committee often invites the public to <i>barazas'</i> to get public input on project performance.	0	22(6.9)	90(28.1)	206(64.4)	2(0.6)	3.92	0.63
The project committee composition is balanced between	0	10(3.1)	100(31.3)	176(55)	34(10.6)	3.73	0.68

Statements on Public	SD (1)	D (2)	N (3)	(A)4	(SA)5	M	SD
Awareness							
the community members and the							
experts							
Efficient implementation of	10(3.1)	2(0.6)	75(23.4)	159(49.7)	74(23.1)	3.89	0.87
county projects enhances the							
satisfaction level of the public							

The results in Table 1 show that the majority of respondents, 149 (46.6%), agree that the county government engages the public through social media platforms on project implementation, while 48 (15%) strongly agreed, with just 10 (3.1 %) disagree (M 3.64; SD 0.92). The statement on whether the county government engages the public through religious groups to get public input on project performance indicated that most respondents had a neutral opinion: 140(43.8%), 102(31.9%) agreed, and 42(13.1%) disagreed. The respondents 206(64.4%) agreed that the project committee often invites the public to barazas' to get public input on project performance. The survey respondents also agreed that the project committee's composition is balanced between community members and experts, with 176 (55%) expressing this view. Additionally, most respondents, 159 (49.7%), agreed that effective county project implementation enhances public satisfaction.

This study finding has been supported by Marzuki (2009) who indicated that there must be public awareness for effective project implementation. Further, the study asserts that knowledgeable public and meaningful public engagement enables effective participation in the implementation of the project. These findings, however, did not concur with the study findings of Sumba et al. (2018), who conducted a study to establish whether there is an association between public awareness and the implementation development projects. The results revealed that the public awareness practices adopted did not impact the implementation of development projects in Kakamega County.

Implementation of development projects

The study examined the influence of public awareness on the implementation of county-funded projects. The frequencies mean, and standard deviation of the findings are presented in Table 2

Table 2 Implementation of development projects

Statements	SD (1)	D (2)	N (3)	(A)4	(SA)5	M	SD
Public participation enhances	23(7.2)	47(14.7)	164(51.3)	86(26.9)	0	3.91	0.83
the quality of projects in the	` '		, ,	,			
county government.							
Public participation enhances	65(20.3)	49(15.3)	70(21.9)	105(32.8)	31(9.7)	4.23	0.98
the satisfaction level of the							
citizens.							
Public participation enhances	40(12.5)	55(17.2)	102(31.9)	89(27.8)	34(10.6)	3.61	1.12
the chances of completing							
projects on time.							
There are improved living	44(13.8)	4614.4)	58(18.1)	99(30.9)	73(22.8)	3.34	0.93
standards in the community							
after completing the projects.							
The projects are fulfilled under	38(11.9)	40(12.5)	37(11.6)	145(45.3)	60(18.8)	3.65	0.98
the set budgets.							

Table 2 shows that most respondents had a neutral attitude about whether or not public participation improves the quality of county government

initiatives 164(51.3%), while 86(26.9%) agreed with the statement that public participation enhances the quality of projects. The respondents

also concurred that increased public involvement raises residents' satisfaction levels 105(32. 8%). On the other hand, most respondents indicated that public participation enhances the chances of completing projects on time 89(27.8). Further on the statement regarding improved living standards in the community after completing the projects, most respondents agreed with that opinion

99(30.9). Finally, the respondents indicated that the projects are fulfilled under the set budgets (M 3.36; SD 0.98).

4.5 Inferential Statistics

The study examined the nature of the research variables using regression, analysis of variance, and correlation analysis.

Table 3: Correlational analysis

		Public	Implementation of
		awareness	projects
Public Awareness	Pearson Correlation	1	0.749**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	320	320
Implementation of	Pearson Correlation		1
projects	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N		

The correlation analysis in Table 3 established a statistically significant positive relationship between public awareness and implementation of county development projects in Turkana North Sub County, Kenya (R=0.749; p<0.005). This suggests that an increase in public awareness leads to a positive increase in the implementation of county funded development projects.

These study findings concur with those of Marzuki (2009), Sumba et al. (2018), Moses et al. (2023) and Alqaizi (2018) which established a statistically positive significant relationship between public awareness and Implementation of County Government funded development projects

Table 4 Summary of the Regression Model

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
	0.941a	0.887	0.839	0.705

The regression model summary presented in Table 4 revealed a strong positive relationship between public awareness and the implementation of county-funded projects. The study found that public awareness predictor contributed 88.7 variation in the implementation of county-funded projects, while the remaining 11.3% was due to other factors that were not taken into consideration by this study ($R^2 = 88.7\%$).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study established that the county government engaged the public through social media platforms on project implementation. The county government also engaged the public through religious groups to get public input on project performance. The findings also revealed that most project committees often invite the public to barazas to get public information on project performance. Further, the study found that the project committee composition was balanced between the community members and the experts. Finally, the study revealed that efficient implementation of county projects enhances the satisfaction level of the public.

The study concluded that public awareness and implementation of development projects had a positive and statistically significant relationship. Therefore, it was concluded that public awareness through public engagement, transparency and mobilization is essential in enhancing the effective implementation of county-funded

development projects. The study recommends that the county government embrace public engagement, transparency and mobilization because it improves project completion rate, makes the project cost-effective and increases satisfaction. In general, it is recommended that the county government put more emphasis on creating and fostering public awareness to enhance effective efficient the and implementation of county-funded projects.

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