



# **Role of Conflict Management as an Essential Element of Public Participation in Enhancing Performance of Devolved Governance Systems in Kenya**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Public participation is the process through which citizens influence and share control over priority setting, policy-making, resource allocations and access to public goods and services. The study examined the role of public participation on performance of devolved governance systems in Kenya with a specific focus on citizen empowerment, policy and decision making, service delivery, conflict management and feedback mechanisms. A survey research design was adopted. The study population comprised of all the counties in Kenya. Cluster and purposive sampling techniques were used; and 400 respondents were involved in the study. Questionnaires and interview guides were used in the collection of relevant data. Data was analysed using the SPSS software and spreadsheets. A response rate of 84% was achieved. The study found out that effective handling of all forms of conflicts and their root causes among stakeholders is critical for enhanced performance of devolved governance systems in Kenya. The study also revealed that establishing effective stakeholder identification processes ensures inclusivity and equity in planning and implementation thus avoiding unnecessary conflicts likely to stifle performance. The study emphasised on the importance of effective feedback mechanisms by counties to ensure implementation of decisions reached through citizen participation. Participation of citizens during the development of clear indicators of progress and performance and the attendant means of verification was also considered critical during project planning processes. The study also found out that communication from counties should be through sub-counties for interpretation and dissemination in a language understood by all citizens in order to stimulate performance. It was also established that all county governance structures should ensure that decisions reached through public participation and consensus building forums are strictly implemented all the time. Instituting appropriate and adequate engagement forums for inclusivity, equality and effective citizen participation in management and development matters was emphasised for the development of policy that promotes performance. These findings will significantly contribute to the understanding of the role of public participation on performance of devolved governance systems in Kenya. The study makes two recommendations for future studies.

**Keywords:** Public Participation, Public, Citizen, Devolved Systems, Governance, Organizational performance

## **INTRODUCTION**

Participation is the process through which stakeholders influence and share control over priority setting, policy-making, resource allocations and access to public goods and services (World Bank, 2011). Participation is widely considered to improve performance, the quality and effectiveness of

decision making as it widens the knowledge base, stimulates creativity and creates social support for policies (Monnikhof & Edelenbos, 2001; Burby, 2003; Leeuwis, 2004). Andre, Enserink, Connor & Craol (2006) assert that participation is the involvement in a decision making process, of individuals and groups that are either positively or negatively affected by a planned intervention (e.g. a project, a program, a plan, a policy) or are interested in it.

The World Bank (2015) and the Institute of Economic Affairs (2015) look at public participation as the process by which an organization consults with interested or affected individuals, organizations, and government entities before making a decision. They further view public participation as a two-way communication and collaborative problem solving with the goal of achieving better and more acceptable decisions (WB, 2015). It is widely believed that public participation contributes to better projects, better development and collaborative governance. Research has shown that public participation is, indeed, advantageous for the speed and quality of implementation of planning decisions (Davies, 2001; Klijn & Koppenjan, 2003; Enserink & Monnikhof, 2003; Pahl-Wostl, 2002). Governance experts argue that well planned and structured public participation should be initiated very early into the life-cycle of a planned intervention, and sustained during its entire life. All actors should know the aims, rules, organization, procedure and expected outcomes of the public participation process undertaken. In routine institutional management practises (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2003; Enserink & Monnikhof, 2003) the public participation process should follow some rules of ethics, professional behavior or moral obligations; focus on negotiable issues relevant to the decision making as well as the values and interests of participants. Public participation (Finch, 2015) is thought to generate ownership and agency, which contribute to social sustainability, community building, and creation of a harmonious society, thus contributing to overall improved performance of institutions or state.

#### **Global Perspective of Public Participation and Performance**

Major political, social and economic reforms coupled with technological transformation have been witnessed in the last three decades in most regions around the world. Renewed governance reforms that lay emphasis on devolution of power as a way of promoting ideal democracy has also been experienced across many nations in the world (World Bank, 2013). This renewed clamour for good governance reforms is largely attributable to the failures of centralized command and control systems and the inefficiencies of centralised states (Lodiaga, 2012). Consequently, the abuse of centralized authorities and systems have led to a search for a more responsive form of governance in order to ensure that policies and public institutions do respond to the needs of all citizens; hence, the relationship between public participation and good governance has become a focus of devolved governance.

Public Participation (WB, 2015) is critical for the successful performance of governments as it enables the public to determine their development objectives, a fact that has been realized by countries such as, UK, USA, Brazil, India and South Africa. A study on demand responsiveness of decentralised water service delivery in Central Java, Indonesia (Isham & Kahkonen, 1999) found that only 'if users were directly involved in some design and selection, services were likely to match users' preferences'. A study in Colombia by Fiszbein (1997) found that community participation increased demands for effective local governments and also opened the window for building the capacity of citizens. A study on Italian regional governments by Putnam (1993) cited in Azfar, Kahkonen, Meagher and Rutherford (1999) found that the governments that were more open to constituent pressure, managed and delivered services more efficiently.

Another internationally recognised successful case of public participation (Cabannes, 2014; Fox, 2014) is that of the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre where structured budget participation resulted in more pro-poor expenditures, increased access to public services, and greater local government accountability. The adoption of participatory budgeting led to a substantive increase in tax revenues, as immediate visibility of the work and services that resulted from their engagement motivated citizens to improve their taxpaying habits (Cabannes, 2014; Fox, 2014). In Gujarat, India, the training of elected representatives by a local non-governmental organization (NGO) on budget information improved the ability of members of the local assembly to understand local budgets and track unspent amounts. Implementation of citizen report cards in Pakistan resulted in increased enrolment and learning, better-quality education as parents demanded better performance from schools, and increases

in school-level investments, such as textbooks (Fiszbein & Ringold, 2011). In South Africa, new opportunities for participation on hospital boards led to a switch from a curative approach to one that is primary and holistic, addressing the impacts of socio economic issues such as unemployment and poverty on the well-being of the community (Gaventa & Gregory, 2010).

The Institute of Economic Affairs (2015) and the WB (2015) view public participation as a governance approach that has many benefits: namely, citizen empowerment; the generation of new, diverse and innovative ideas and actions on performance; enhancement of citizen governments relations; appropriate prioritization of development projects; improved delivery of public services and; promotion of governments responsiveness. Extensive public participation processes also serve several objectives like enhancing transparency and legitimacy, using skills and resources of the population, reducing corruption and clientelism, fighting against poverty and inequality and strengthening democracy (Stivers, 2010).

### **Study Problem**

Public participation is increasingly being pursued across the world as a means to improve the performance of devolved states (Finch, 2015). The Institute of Economic Affairs (2015) views Public Participation as a governance approach that has many benefits: namely, citizen empowerment; the generation of new, diverse and innovative ideas and actions on performance; enhancement of citizen-governments relations; prioritization of development projects; improved delivery of public service and governments' responsiveness. According to WB (2015), public participation is critical for the successful performance of governments as it enables the public to determine and own their development objectives, a fact that has been realized by countries such as UK, USA, India and South Africa that have embraced this approach. Despite the fact that efforts have been made in fostering Public Participation through legal frameworks in Kenya in the dawn of the 2010 Constitution (IEA, 2015), and whereas a study by the WB (2015) suggests a positive correlation between public participation and enhanced performance of states, actual performance of counties across Kenya has been dismal. A study by Khaunya, Wawire and Chepngeno (2015) supports this view and notes that there has been escalating unemployment in recent years, inadequate performance in infrastructure development and service delivery in many counties in Kenya. Besides there has been massive misappropriation of resources reported in many counties in Kenya, resulting to persistent demonstrations and strikes across the nation. This has led to loss of trust and confidence in the county governments. Earlier studies conducted by Cheema (2007) and Muriu (2012) noted this same contradiction.

Consequently, this weak state of county performance has led to deteriorating public goodwill characterized by poor citizen-government relations in the counties (TI, 2015). Further, even though there has been intensification of public participation across counties in Kenya, the performance of devolved governments is still dismal. The implication of this state of affairs is that the public, development partners and prospective investors are beginning to lose trust and confidence in the devolved governance systems, thus negatively affecting investment and growth of counties in Kenya (IEA, 2015; WB, 2015). This study sought to address this gap by examining the role of public participation on performance of devolved governance systems in Kenya, In particular the study examined the role of; citizen empowerment, policy and decision making, service delivery, conflict management and feedback mechanisms on performance of devolved governance systems in Kenya.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of this study was to determine the role of public participation on performance of devolved governance systems in Kenya. Specifically, the study examined the role of conflict management as an essential element of public participation on the performance of devolved governance systems in Kenya.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **The Constitution and Public Participation in Kenya**

Conceptually, public participation is an appealing model that promotes the ideals of shared governance of institutions. Public participation, transparency, and accountability in decision-making processes are key to public service delivery and efficiency (WB, 2015). Kenya's constitution and legal framework on devolution place strong emphasis on public participation, transparency, and accountability as

means of improving the efficiency, equity, and inclusiveness of government and service delivery. Multiple studies have documented how governance weaknesses limit Kenya's economic and social development and impede its progress toward national goals for economic growth, job creation, social inclusion, equity, and poverty reduction. Devolution creates a new opportunity, as well as new challenges, for addressing governance challenges that limit the efficiency and equity of service delivery. Evidence is mounting that strengthening public participation is critical for effective service delivery. However, devolution alone does not necessarily improve the accountability and responsiveness of service delivery, unless proper accountability mechanisms, such as public participation are instituted.

Based on the 2010 Kenyan constitution, there are six key benefits of engaging in public participation process; namely, it Strengthens democracy and governance; by engaging in public participation in policy, law and development of policy processes, the public exercise their constitutional rights, as a result, the decision making process becomes more representative. Openness to the public provides a platform in which the public presents their concerns and engages with government. Insufficient public engagement limits the power of the people to participate in democratic governance; public participation increases accountability; it improves transparency and accountability of the social, political, cultural, economic, and environmental impacts of policies, laws and development plans and of how the costs and benefits will impact on different segments of society. Public participation helps to ensure that governments are accountable for their actions and responsive to public interests. By linking the public with decision-makers, public confidence and support of decision making processes is enhanced.

Public participation also improves process quality; it enables governments to understand different opinions and concerns and ensures that policies, laws and development plans are more robust because they have been tested through a comprehensive process of review and revision before being approved. It also provides additional skills, knowledge, concerns, and ideas that might not have otherwise been considered. Public participation manages and helps alleviate social conflicts by bringing different stakeholders and interests together. It also helps in assessing the impact of conflict in reaching a consensus. Investment in public participation at an early stage helps minimize both the number and the magnitude of social conflicts arising over the course of the implementation of policies, laws and development plans. Public participation enhances process legitimacy: public participation in the policy, law and development plans and development will legitimises implementation processes. Without significant public participation, the public may feel manipulated and suspicious, which may undermine effective dialogue and create distrust. Participation also protects public interests: active public participation can protect public interests, by reducing public conflict and safeguards against future risks.

Public or Citizen Participation, as a process provides private individuals an opportunity to influence public decisions and has long been a component of the democratic decision-making process. The roots of citizen participation can be traced to ancient Greece and Colonial New England. Before the 1960s, governmental processes and procedures were designed to facilitate "external" participation. Citizen participation was institutionalized in the mid 1960s with President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs (Cogan & Sharpe, 1986). Public involvement is a means to ensuring that citizens have a direct voice in public decisions. The terms "citizen" and "public," and "involvement" and "participation" are often used interchangeably. While both are generally used to indicate a process through which citizens have a voice in public policy decisions, both have distinctively different meanings and convey little insight into the process they seek to describe. Other scholars assert that the term "citizen participation" and its relationship to public decision-making has evolved without a general consensus regarding either its meaning nor its consequences (Innes & Booher, 2004).

Many government agencies or individuals choose to exclude or minimize public participation in planning efforts claiming citizen participation is too expensive and time consuming. Yet, many citizen participation programs are initiated in response to public reaction to a proposed project or action. However, there are tangible benefits that can be derived from an effective citizen involvement program. Cogan and Sharpe (1986) identify five benefits of citizen participation to the planning process as information and ideas on public issues giving; public support for planning decisions; avoidance of protracted conflicts and costly delays; reservoir of good will which can carry over to

future decisions; and spirit of cooperation and trust between the agency and the public. All of these benefits are important to any government in its planning efforts, particularly the last three.

### **Public Participation and Performance**

Buccus (2011) pointed out that demand for public consultation in policy and decision making is part of a larger movement that evolved from the 1960s. The initial question he raises is: who is the public? He categorizes publics into five groups including: the organized public; the general public; politicians; public interest groups; and the local experts Buccus (2011). A study by Backoff, Wechsler and Crew (1993) pointed out that the shift from the traditional model of tight central control, separation of functions and diffusion of responsibility towards a model based around strategic goal setting, decentralization, effective management systems, greater responsibility and accountability and ensuring quality customer service presents a number of significant challenges to those in management positions within the public sector. Coram and Burns (2001) maintain that it is the emphasis on public accountability, demonstrating value for money and meeting increasing expectations of the general public and politicians in regard to service levels and quality that sets public sector managers apart from the private sector counterparts.

According to Shaw, Nadler and Wason (1995) public sector organizations need to move far beyond the machine-like, bureaucratic, and rigid control model of organization that has been part of our heritage for so many years. In order to enhance performance (Irvin and John, 2004) through the public sector reforms such as devolution, there is a powerful case for empowering 'front-line employees, as part of a shift to a culture based on trust, openness, encouragement and support. A study by Marchington and Wilkinson (2000), suggested that direct participation practices are among the solutions to enhancing public sector performance and this approach takes four forms; namely; downward communications; upwards problem solving; task participation; team-working and self-management. In the recent years, therefore, the focus for development in governments across the world, and particularly in the developing world has moved from economic efficiency to the promotion of human wellbeing and performance (Eversole & Martin, 2005). Consequently, the roles of different actors, such as government officials, public leaders, private sectors and citizens have also shifted during implementation of country development programmes (Cornwall, 2002; Eversole & Martin, 2005). Researchers have argued that citizen engagement is critical to transform public sector performance and service delivery, and thus they suggest the need to put emphasis on the 'notions of citizen, community and neighbourhood' for effective service delivery (Jones, Clench & Harris, 2014). Effective people's participation can ensure accountability, transparency, and legitimacy, that is, good governance during implementation of any development programmes that have an effect on local people (Sinker & Cosic, 2007). According to Khwaja (2004) and Santiso (2001), establishing good governance in devolved systems is a pre-requisite for enhanced performance and therefore fast development.

Empirical studies conducted by Grindle (2004), Jones et al., (2014) and O'Flynn (2007) argue that the traditional approaches towards people's engagement need to be changed to achieve good performance from any devolved governance reform initiatives. This means managers and public representatives working in the devolved institutions need to develop a customer-oriented approach for delivering services (Jones, et al., 2014; Navarra & Cornford, 2005). They need a clear idea about the intention of new governance (O'Flynn, 2007) and what they are doing in achieving greater performance of that new governance (Hope, 2009; Jones et al., 2014). A study by the World Bank revealed that where there is participatory governance, an additional 1 per cent of gross domestic product in aid translates into a 1 per cent decline in poverty and a similar decline in infant mortality (World Bank, 1998), thus leading to better performance for citizens.

### **Role of Conflict Management in Facilitating Performance of Devolved Systems**

Public involvement is a fundamental principle of good governance systems in terms of conflict management. The inclusion of the views of the governed citizens or the affected and interested public helps to ensure the decision making process is equitable and fair and leads to more informed choice and enhanced performance outcomes. The effectiveness of direct public participation as a change strategy (Thornhill, Lewis, Millmore & Saunders, 2000) is based on the assumption that it will not give rise to conflict with other organizations or personal goals within a system. Conflict has been advanced as a result of each person having certain goals and aspirations (Robert, 2014). According to

Okumbe (1998), conflict is a “process in which individuals or groups feel that other individuals or groups have frustrated or are about to frustrate their plans, goals, beliefs or activities.”

A study by Macharia, Wambua and Mwangulu (2014) observed that conflict is a struggle over values and claim to scarce status, power and resources. These authors further observed that conflict, between inter groups and intra groups are part of social life and is part of relationship building and not necessarily a sign of instability. It is worth noting at this point that all cases that involve people from diverse backgrounds, social and political beliefs necessarily witness levels of conflict. However, there are positive effects of conflict which include; the development of a sense of identity, priority setting and provision of legitimate ground for organizing and seeking preventive measures, management and conflict resolution approaches. In this context, conflict serves as a lens to monitor institutional and government activities whose target beneficiaries are the citizens. Conflict is the main feature of partnership experienced between the government, private sector and non-profit centres.

Conflict theorists postulate that conflict is often multidimensional even though distinctions can be drawn to different sources. As a result, the need for conflict management must be adopted with a focus on collaboration and resolution management in order to mitigate unintended negative consequences through the promotion of consensus building (Mills, 1991). Conflict theorists identify five preconditions to successful conflict management (Gray, 1989); stakeholders recognize interdependence, solutions result from dealing with differences openly and creatively, joint ownership of decisions exists, stakeholders accept collective responsibility, and collaboration is an emergent process (Macharia *et al.*, 2014) and Cogan and Sharpe, 1986). The theorists caution that these preconditions may not, necessarily, be easy to adopt due to the diverse nature of conflicts arising out of the diversities and the needs of those in conflict (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Well-planned citizen involvement programs (Cogan & Sharpe, 1986) should carefully relate to the expectations of both the citizens and the devolved governance systems. For most decentralised states (Robert, 1987), conflict among citizens is a major source of concern because it can stifle government decision-making processes due to personal vested interests.

**METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted and relied on a positivist research philosophy. A survey research design was adopted. The study population comprised of all the counties in Kenya. Cluster and purposive sampling techniques were used; and 400 respondents were involved in the study. Questionnaires and interview guides were used in the collection of relevant data. Data was analysed using the SPSS software and spreadsheets.

The researcher distributed a sample of 400 questionnaires out of which 336 were duly filled and returned, making a response rate of 84.0%. Nachmias and Nachmias (2004) poised that survey researches face a challenge of low response rate that rarely goes above 50%. They further argued that a response rate of 50% and above is satisfactory and represents a good basis for data analysis. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) a 50% response rate is adequate, 60% is good and above 70% is very good. This also concurs with Kothari (2011) who asserted that a response rate of 50% is adequate, while a response rate greater than 70% is very good. Using the arguments of these authors, the response rate achieved by this study of 84% was very good and therefore allowed the researcher to proceed with data analysis. Table 1 presents the response rate results.

**Table 1: Response Rate**

<b>Details</b>	<b>Response</b>
Questionnaires distributed	400
Questionnaires correctly filled and returned	336
<b>Response Rate</b>	<b>84%</b>

**RESEARCH RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

**Testing for Multicollinearity between the Study Variables**

According to Besley, Kuh and Roy (1980) cited in Keraro (2014), identification of multicollinearity in a model is important and is tested by examining the tolerance and the variance inflation factor (VIF) diagnostic factors. The variance inflation factor (VIF) measures the impact of multicollinearity among

the variables in a regression model. Green (1998), also cited in Keraro (2014) argued that even though there is no formal criterion for determining the bottom line of the tolerance value or VIF, tolerance values that are less than 0.1 and VIF greater than 10 roughly indicates significant multicollinearity. This same conclusion is supported by Tavakol and Dennick (2011) and Gujarat (2009). The study sought to find out if multicollinearity existed between dependent variable and the independent variable. According to Cohen *et al.*, (2003), the suggested cut-off point for multicollinearity is tolerance level of 0.8. Also, Hair *et al.* (2006) and Leech *et al.*, (2014) proposed a cut-off point for determining presence of multicollinearity at a tolerance value of less than 0.10, or a VIF of above 10. From Table 2, the study concluded that there was no case of multicollinearity between the dependent and independent variable.

**Table 2: Multicollinearity Test between Study Variables**

Model	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
Conflict Management and Performance	.514	1.947

### THE PERFORMANCE OF DEVOLVED SYSTEMS

This section presents the findings and discussion on the dependent variable, the Performance of devolved governance systems. Literature reviewed revealed that public participation is an appealing model that promotes the ideals of shared governance of institutions. According to the World Bank (2015), public participation, transparency, and accountability in decision-making processes are key to public service delivery and efficiency. Kenya’s 2010 constitution and legal frameworks on devolution place strong emphasis on public participation, transparency, and accountability as means of improving the efficiency, equity, and inclusiveness of government and service delivery. The constitution identified six main benefits of engaging in public participation process and these are; it strengthens democracy and governance; by engaging in public participation in policy, law and development of policy processes, the public exercise their constitutional rights, as a result, the decision making process becomes more representative.

Openness to the public provides a platform in which the public presents their concerns and engages with government. Insufficient public engagement limits the power of the people to participate in democratic governance; public participation increases accountability: It improves transparency and accountability of the social, political, cultural, economic, and environmental impacts of policies, laws and development plans and of how the costs and benefits will impact on different segments of society. Public participation helps to ensure that governments are accountable for their actions and responsive to public interests. By linking the public with decision-makers, public confidence and support of decision making processes is enhanced.

#### Reliability Test on Performance of Devolved Governance Systems

Reliability refers to the repeatability, stability or internal consistency of a questionnaire (Jack & Clarke, 1998). According to Sekaran (2008), Cooper and Schindler (2011), Cronbach’s alpha which has the most utility for multi-item scales at the interval level of measurement, requires only a single administration and provides a unique, quantitative estimate of the internal consistency of a scale. The study carried out a reliability test on the dependent variable, Performance of devolved governance systems. Results from this test are summarized in Table 4.4. According to Iacobucci and Duhachek (2003) and Cooper and Schinder (2011), a Cronbach alpha of 0.7 is an acceptable reliability. A result that is below the .5 threshold is considered unreliable. From Table 3, Performance of devolved governance systems was found to be reliable at a Cronbach’s Alpha of .7 which was equal to the recommended .7 threshold.

**Table 3: Reliability Results of Performance of Devolved Governance Systems**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.70	3

**DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR PERFORMANCE OF DEVOLVED GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS**

Descriptive statistics is important because it enables us to present data in a meaningful way, and therefore allows for a simpler interpretation of the data in any form of research (Cooper and Schindler, 2011; Sekaran, 2008; and Kothari, 2011). An analysis of the descriptive statistics on the dependent variable (Performance of devolved governance systems) was carried out. Findings from the study were expressed as percentages and are summarized in Table 4.

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Performance of Devolved Governance Systems**

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
As a result of effective public participation, my county has witnessed improved performance and growth in all sectors	5.7%	24.1%	34.8%	26.8%	8.6%
The problem of unemployment and social ills in my county have reduced due to the improved performance of my county influenced by public participation in all governances systems and processes	11.9%	33.9%	28.6%	19.9%	5.7%
People's livelihoods in my county have improved due to the good performance of my county influenced by public participation in all governances systems and processes	8.0%	31.5%	28.0%	23.2%	9.2%

The study enquired to establish whether as a result of effective participation, counties had witnessed improved performance and growth in all sectors. A majority of 34.8% were neutral on this question, 26.8% of the respondents agreed, 8.6% strongly agreed while 5.7% and 24.1% of the respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed. On the statement about whether the problem of unemployment and social ills in counties had reduced due to improved performance of counties influenced by public participation in all governance systems and processes, 33.9% of the respondents disagreed, 11.9% strongly disagreed, 28.6% were neutral, 19.9% agreed only 5.7% strongly agreed. On the statement that 'people's livelihoods in counties had improved due to the good performance of counties influenced by public participation in all governances systems and processes, a majority of 31.5% of the respondents disagreed, 8.0% strongly disagreed, 28.0% were neutral, 23.2% agreed while a paltry 9.2% strongly agreed.

In addition to the results obtained from the likert scale questions asked during data collection, the researcher asked a number of open ended questions whose responses helped clarify some of the key issues in this study area. Respondents were asked whether citizens in their counties felt that their contributions were always considered in making county decisions and a majority (80%) responded by saying that they did not know while there were equal responses in the both the affirmative and the negative. The small number that responded in the affirmative were asked to justify their responses and they said that they had noted positive county approval ratings by residents in the areas of general infrastructural development, including street lighting, garbage collection, budgeting processes, among others. Those who responded by saying that they did not know as well as those who said no were further asked to suggest ways in which citizens' contributions could be considered in county decision making and their answers were as many as they were varied. Among the key responses to this question were that; proper sensitization should be done by county managers on what is happening and any intended development so that contributions can be made by citizens; the county management and decision makers should ensure that wananchi participate in decision making through regular barazas; the county leaders should randomly seek for citizens' views and take proper statistics which should be used in decision making; consider citizens' contributions and compare them with those of experts for best ideas on the best option and give feedback; involve opinion leaders, church leaders, the youth and persons with disabilities asking them for their opinions because they are the consumers of the services; hold public barazas at all levels of government as they sought their views; need to talk to development partners like NGOs, FBOs, CBOs and other groups; once citizens' views have been



collected, they should be sent back in draft form for endorsement through a robust county assembly; there should be meaningful involvement of citizens in decision making right from planning through to implementation; use print, electronic and social media to seek for citizen’s feedback; consider citizen views in resource allocation; involve citizens in monitoring and evaluation; and develop effective communication strategy.

To an extent, the results from this study contradict the literature by the WB (2015) that public participation, transparency, and accountability in decision-making processes are critical to public service delivery and efficiency (WB, 2015). The results further challenge views held by a number of other researchers such as Jones, et al., (2014) who argued that citizen engagement is critical in transforming public sector performance and service delivery, and thus suggested the need to put emphasis on the ‘notions of citizen, community and neighbourhood’ for effective service delivery. Sinker and Cosic (2007) whose extensive literature was reviewed argued that effective people’s participation could ensure accountability, transparency, and legitimacy, that is, good governance during the implementation of any development programmes that have an effect on local people. Khwaja (2004) and Santiso (2001) argued that establishing good governance in devolved systems, such as the engagement of the public is a pre-requisite for enhanced performance and therefore fast development, arguments that does not seem to be supported by these results.

Critical examination of the results obtained from this study area would lead to a possible conclusion that a majority of the responses fell between neutral (the don’t responses) and strongly disagreed. This conclusion is confirmed by the responses to the open ended questions asked by the researcher to clarify issues. One obvious inference that could be drawn from these results is that it is perhaps too early in the newly devolved governance continuum to have made any significant realizations of the real benefits of public participation as envisaged in the Kenyan constitution. Some of the envisioned constitutional benefits include; the strengthening of democracy and governance; enabling the public to exercise their constitutional rights, decision making process becoming more representative, the provision of a platform for the public to present their concerns and engages with government; improved transparency and accountability of the social, political, cultural, economic, and environmental impacts of policies and helping to ensure that governments are accountable for their actions and responsive to public interests.

**CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE**

Literature reviewed relevant to this study area demonstrated that the effectiveness of direct public participation as a change strategy (Thornhill, Lewis, Millmore & Saunders, 2000) is based on the assumption that it will not give rise to conflict with other institutions or personal goals within any system or a devolved governance system in the case of this study. Robert (2014) argued that conflict is often advanced as a result of each person having certain goals and aspirations. According to Okumbe (1998), conflict is a “process in which individuals or groups feel that other individuals or groups have frustrated or are about to frustrate their plans, goals, beliefs or activities.” Thus, the inclusion of the views of the governed citizens or the affected and interested public helps to ensure the decision making process is equitable and fair and leads to more informed choice and enhanced performance outcomes as well as reduced inter-personal and inter-institutional conflicts.

**Reliability Test on Conflict Management and Performance**

As posited by Jack and Clarke (1980), Cooper and Schindler (2011) and Kothari (2011), reliability refers to the repeatability, stability or internal consistency of a questionnaire. Cronbach’s alpha has the most utility for multi-item scales at the interval level of measurement (Sekaran, 2008), thus, it requires only a single administration and provides a unique, quantitative estimate of the internal consistency of a scale. A reliability test on conflict management and performance of devolved governance systems was carried out and the findings are summarized in Table 5. These results show that conflict management and performance was found to be reliable at a Cronbach’s Alpha of .745 (above the threshold of .7).

**Table 5: Reliability Check on Conflict Management and Performance**

Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
.745	3

**Factor Analysis on Conflict Management and Performance**

In research, factor analysis helps to describe variability among observed, correlated variables in terms of a potentially lower number of unobserved variables called factors (Kothari, 2011; Cooper & Schindler, 2011). Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) set the inter-correlations among items at values of 0.5 and above. The study carried out a factor analysis to establish how different factors loaded on conflict management and the dependent variable, performance of devolved governance systems. From the findings presented in Table 6, all the factors loaded highly as none had a score below 0.5.

**Table 6: Factor Analysis on Conflict Management and Performance**

Item	Component
My county has developed good conflict resolutions mechanisms to address any forms of divergent views in the interest of performance and development	.837
Conflict in my county among diverse groups of citizens though viewed as inevitable and healthy is closely monitored to ensure that it does not stifle performance	.811
My county has developed good stakeholder identification processes to ensure inclusivity and equity in representation in planning and implementation forums to avoid conflicts for faster development of our county	.796

**DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE**

Descriptive statistics is important because it enables us to present data in a meaningful way, and therefore allows for a simpler interpretation of the data in any form of research (Cooper & Schindler, 2011; Sekaran, 2008; Kothari, 2011). The researcher generated a descriptive statistics table for conflict management and performance. The results were tabulated in Table 7. From the results, over 41.6% (32.7%+8.9%) of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that conflict in their county among diverse groups of citizens though viewed as inevitable and healthy was closely monitored to ensure that it does not stifle performance, over 60.2% (30.4%+29.8%) of the respondents either disagreed or remained neutral with the statement that their county had developed good conflict resolutions mechanisms to address any forms of divergent views in the interest of performance and development, while 36.9% (27.1%+9.8%) either agreed or strongly agreed that their counties had developed good stakeholder identification processes to ensure inclusivity and equity in representation in planning and implementation forums to avoid conflicts for faster development of their counties.

**Table 7: Descriptive Statistics for Conflict Management and Performance**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Conflict in my county among diverse groups is closely monitored to ensure that it does not stifle performance	7.7%	23.5%	27.1%	32.7%	8.9%
My county has developed good conflict resolutions mechanisms to address any forms of divergent views in the interest of performance and development	7.4%	30.4%	29.8%	26.2%	6.3%
My county has developed good stakeholder identification processes to ensure inclusivity and equity in representation in planning and implementation forums	7.7%	27.7%	27.7%	27.1%	9.8%

The researcher asked qualitative questions in this study area and the responses helped enhance the understanding of the results from the likert scale questions. Asked whether their counties had experienced any forms of conflict in terms of prioritizing use of county resources, about 50% responded in the positive while the other 50% said that they did not know. Respondents who gave the ‘yes’ answers were then asked for the possible root causes of the conflict experienced in their counties and their answers included; poor management skills, failure by MCAs to pass bills on time;

misappropriation of funds; power wrangles by county leaders; poor leadership; tyranny of numbers (meaning that those in government outweigh those in the opposition, thus leading to skewed leadership and management of the counties); lack of agreement on priorities; divergent political interests; land grabbing; poor waste disposal, uneven distribution of resources, skewed provision of services; failure to pay off contractors and service providers; lack of consultations between government and stakeholders; overlapping mandates within county governments and national government; tribalism; inadequate resources; low levels of education; nepotism, greed, favouritism and patronage – some politicians want to reward their own; wrong policies in regards to development projects; lack of understanding of county governments mandate. Other responses included; inadequate consultation amongst all stakeholders involved governors being afraid of impeachment by MCAs; poor implementation of policies; delayed information; lack of citizen awareness on issues to be addressed; impunity and non sharing of crucial information.

Asked to suggest ways to address root causes of conflicts, respondents gave a number of suggestions including; clearly stating how funds are used; involvement of all parties in decision making; corrupt officers in government to be apprehended and prosecuted; county managers should define rules to guard the use of funds; negotiate through dialogue and consultations; frequent planning forums; proper representation in all spheres of development; information and sensitization for all; and use of strategic approaches to local issues and challenges.

The results obtained from this study area concur with a study by Thornhill, Lewis, Millmore and Saunders (2000) who concluded that effectiveness of direct public participation as a change strategy is based on the assumption that it will not give rise to conflict with other institutions or personal goals within any system or a devolved governance system in the case of this study. The results also support the conclusions by Okumbe (1998) who argued that the inclusion of the views of the governed citizens or the affected and interested public helps to ensure the decision making process is equitable and fair and leads to more informed choice and enhanced performance outcomes as well as reduced inter-personal and inter-institutional conflicts. The majority of over 41.6% agreement or strong agreement on the statement that ‘conflict in my county among diverse groups of citizens though viewed as inevitable and healthy is closely monitored to ensure that it does not stifle performance’ concur with conclusions reached by Macharia, Wambua and Mwangulu (2014) that conflict between inter-groups and intra-groups are part of social life and is part of relationship building and not necessarily a sign of instability.

Based on the results obtained from this study, it is worth noting that conflict isn’t necessarily a hindrance to development if well managed. As established by Okumbe (1998), inclusion of the divergent views of the governed citizens or the affected and interested public could be seen as a case of courting conflict but from a bigger picture. This move helps to ensure the decision making process is equitable and fair and leads to more informed choice and enhanced performance outcomes as well as reduce anti-performance conflicts. In the words of conflict theorists, successful conflict management calls for; stakeholders’ recognition of interdependence, handling of differences in opinions and perceptions openly and creatively, existence of joint ownership of decisions exists, stakeholders’ acceptance of collective responsibility, and recognizing the fact that collaboration is an emergent process. According to Cogan and Sharpe (1986) well planned citizen involvement programs should carefully relate to the expectations of both the citizens and the devolved governance systems.

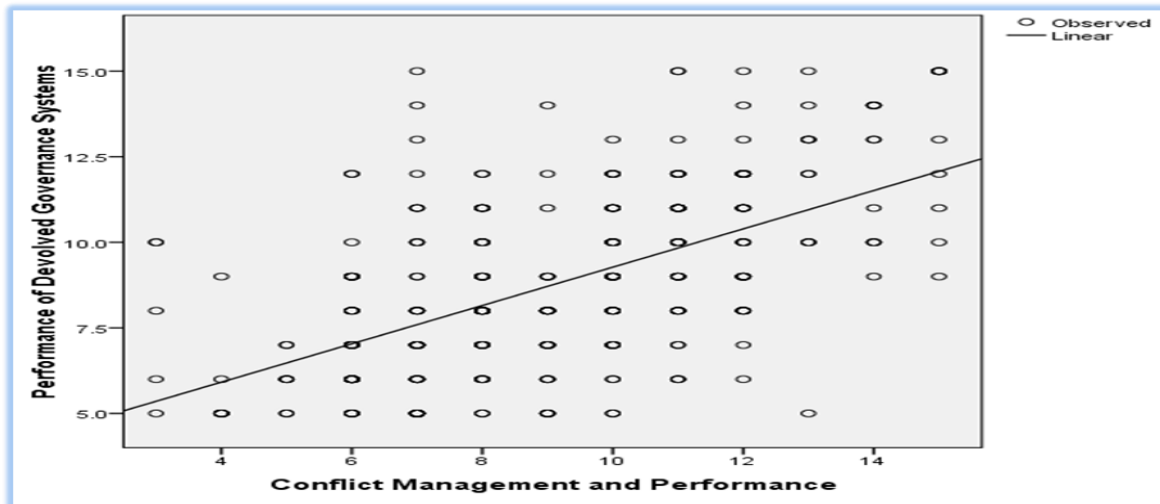
## **INFERENCE STATISTICS FOR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE**

### **Linearity Test between Conflict Management and Performance**

According to Osborne & Waters (2002), inferential statistical tests rely upon certain assumptions about the variables used in an analysis. A test of linearity is one such crucial test as it directly relates to the bias of the results of the whole analysis (Keith, 2006). Linearity defines the dependent variable as a linear function of the predictor (independent) variables (Darlington, 1968). Multiple regressions can accurately estimate the relationship between dependent and independent variables when the relationship is linear in nature (Osborne & Waters, 2002). The chance of non-linear relationships is high in the social sciences, therefore it is essential to examine analyses for linearity (Osborne & Waters, 2002). If linearity is violated all the estimates of the regression including regression coefficients, standard errors, and tests of statistical significance may be biased (Keith,

2006). If the relationship between the dependent and independent variables is not linear, the results of the regression analysis will under- or over- estimate the true relationship and increase the risk of Type I and Type II errors (Osborne & Waters, 2002). When bias occurs it is likely that it does not reproduce the true population values (Keith, 2006). Violation of this assumption threatens the meaning of the parameters estimated in the analysis (Keith, 2006).

The research sought to establish whether conflict management and performance of devolved governance systems had a linear relationship between them. A scatter plot was generated from SPSS software using the research data and the results are presented in Figure 1. The figure shows that the scatter dots fall within the curvilinear line of best fit which implies that a positive linear relationship exists between conflict management and performance and performance of devolved governance systems in Kenya.



**Figure 1: Scatter plot between Conflict Management and Performance**

**Correlation between Conflict Management and Performance**

Pearson's correlation is used when working with two quantitative variables in a population. The possible research hypotheses are that the variables will show a positive linear relationship, a negative linear relationship, or no linear relationship at all (Keith, 2006; Stevens, 2009; Osborne & Waters, 2002). These authors argue that Pearson's correlation coefficients indicate the extent of interdependence between two variables. The Pearson correlation coefficient, *r*, can take a range of values from +1 to -1. A value of 0 indicates that there is no association between the two variables. A value greater than 0 indicates a positive association; that is, as the value of one variable increases, so does the value of the other variable (Stevens, 2009). A value less than 0 indicates a negative association; that is, as the value of one variable increases, the value of the other variable decreases. The study sought to establish whether there was correlation between conflict management and performance of devolved governance systems. The findings are summarized in Table 8.

**Table 8: Correlation coefficient between Conflict Management and Performance**

		Performance of Devolved Governance Systems	Conflict Management and Performance
Performance of Devolved Governance Systems	of Pearson Correlation	1	.587**
Devolved Governance Systems	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	336	336
Conflict Management and Performance	Pearson Correlation	.587**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	336	336

From the table, a positive correlation coefficient of .587 (or 58.7%) existed between conflict management and performance devolved governance systems in Kenya.

**Regression Analysis between Conflict Management and Performance**

Linear regression refers to a linear estimation of the relationship between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables. According to Jaccard *et al.*, (2006), regression analyses are usually driven by a theoretical or a conceptual model that can be drawn in the form of a path diagram. The path diagram provides the model for setting the regression and what statistics to examine. Multiple regressions is widely used to estimate the size and significance of the effects of a number of independent variables on a dependent variable (Osborne & Waters, 2002). The study carried out a regression analysis between conflict management and performance of devolved governance systems in Kenya. The findings were presented Table 9. This Model Summary Table 9 presents an R<sup>2</sup> result of .344 or 34.4%, meaning that the independent variable, conflict management alone can explain up to a total of 34.4% of the total variability in the dependent variable, performance of devolved governance systems in Kenya.

**Table 9: Model Summary of Conflict Management and Performance**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.587 <sup>a</sup>	.344	.342	2.066

**ANOVA for Conflict Management and Performance**

Analysis of Variance, ANOVA is a statistical procedure used to test the degree to which two or more groups vary or differ in an experiment. ANOVA tests splits the aggregate variability found inside a data set into two parts: systematic factors and random factors (Jaccard *et al.*, 2006). Analysts use the analysis of the variance test to determine the result independent variables have on the dependent variable amid a regression study (Keith, 2006). An ANOVA test was performed on the variable, conflict management and the results obtained are presented in Table 10. From the ANOVA Table 10, the model is statistically significant as the p-value is less than .05. This means that, the null hypothesis that conflict management does not have a statistically significant influence on performance of devolved governance systems in Kenya is rejected and instead the alternative hypothesis that conflict management has a statistically significant influence on performance of devolved governance systems in Kenya is accepted.

**Table 10: ANOVA for Conflict Management and Performance**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	747.808	1	747.808	175.258	.000
	Residual	1425.144	334	4.267		
	Total	2172.952	335			

To compliment the ANOVA findings on conflict management and performance of developed governance systems in Kenya presented in the Table 10, Person’s correlation coefficients were also generated. The results of the person’s correlation are presented in Table 11. These results show that conflict management contribute a statistically significant value (p-value = .000) of .560 to the regression model. From the coefficient Table 11, conflict management contributes a statistically significant value (p-value = .000) of .560.

**Table 11: Coefficients of Conflict Management and Performance**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	
1	(Constant)	3.676	.400		9.180	.000
	Conflict Management and Performance	.560	.042	.587	13.239	.000

Using the summary presented in Table 11, a linear regression model of the form,  $y = \alpha + \beta x_i$  can be fitted as:  $Y = 3.676 + 0.560X_4 + e$ .

## SUMMARY OF RESULTS

This study examined role of conflict management on performance of devolved governance systems in Kenya. The study established that; over 41.6% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that conflict in their county among diverse groups of citizens though viewed as inevitable and healthy was closely monitored to ensure that it does not stifle performance, over 60.2% of the respondents either disagreed or remained neutral with the statement that their county had developed good conflict resolutions mechanisms to address any forms of divergent views in the interest of performance and development, while 36.9% either agreed or strongly agreed that their counties had developed good stakeholder identification processes to ensure inclusivity and equity in representation in planning and implementation forums to avoid conflicts for faster development of their counties. The study further established that about 50% of the citizens had experienced conflicts related to the prioritizing use of resources in their counties, while an equal number were unaware of any form of conflicts. The study also established that most of the root causes of the conflicts experienced in counties related to; poor management skills; failure by MCAs to pass bills on time; misappropriation of funds; power wrangles by county leaders; poor leadership; tyranny of numbers (meaning that those in government outweigh those in the opposition, thus leading to skewed leadership and management of the counties); lack of agreement on priorities; divergent political interests; land grabbing; poor waste disposal dumping sites; uneven distribution of resources, skewed provision of services; failure to pay off contractors and service providers; lack of consultations between government and stakeholders; overlapping mandates within county governments and national government; tribalism; nepotism; inadequate allocation of resources; level of education among MCA's; greed, favouritism and patronage; wrong policies in regards to development projects; lack of understanding of county governments mandate; inadequate consultation amongst all stakeholders involved; Governors being afraid of impeachment by MCAs; poor implementation of policies; delayed information; lack of citizen awareness on issues to be addressed; impunity and non sharing of crucial information. A reliability test carried out established that conflict management as a predictor variable of the performance of devolved governance systems was found to be reliable at a Cronbach's Alpha of .745. The results also established that there existed a positive linear relationship between conflict management and the performance of the devolved governance systems in Kenya with a correlation coefficient of 58.7%. The results further established that conflict management could explain up to 34.4% of the total variability in the dependent variable, the performance of the devolved governance systems in Kenya. The Analysis of variance (ANOVA) confirmed that conflict management was statistically significant in explaining the change in the dependent variable considering that its P-Value result was less than 0.05 at 95% level of significance. This means that the null hypothesis that conflict management does not have a statistically significant influence on performance of devolved governance systems in Kenya was rejected and instead the alternative hypothesis that conflict management has a statistically significant influence on performance of devolved governance systems in Kenya is accepted.

## CONCLUSION

With regards to examining the role of conflict management on performance of devolved governance systems in Kenya, the study concluded that; there is need to closely monitor conflict among diverse groups in counties in order to ensure that it does not stifle performance; that counties develop good conflict resolution mechanisms to address any forms of divergent views in the interest of performance and development and that counties develop effective stakeholder identification processes to ensure inclusivity and equity in representation in planning and implementation forums to avoid stifling performance due to conflicts.

The study further concluded that in order to address root causes of conflicts; counties need to clearly state and publish revenue sources and how the same public resources have been used and involvement of all parties in decision making need to be a rule rather than an exception; corrupt officers in government have to be apprehended and prosecuted. Additionally county managers require to develop strong internal controls to guard against the use of public resources; that negotiations and inclusivity of the public need to be given a chance through dialogue and consultations; the need for frequent and transparent planning forums; the need for proper representation in all spheres of development;

provision of all vital information and ensuring sensitization for all citizens and establishment of strategic approaches to address local issues and challenges.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

With regards to conflict and its effects on the performance of devolved governance systems, county management across the country should ensure close monitoring of conflicts among diverse groups in order to ensure that this does not stifle performance. Further, the study recommends that counties should develop good conflict resolutions mechanisms to address conflicts that may arise from all forms of divergent views in the interest of performance and development. County management should also develop effective stakeholder identification processes to ensure inclusivity and equity in representation in planning and implementation forums to avoid stifling performance due to conflicts based on tribe, race, gender, or any other root causes. In order to address the root causes of conflicts, the study recommends that counties should clearly publish all county sources of revenue and how the same have been used and as well as involving all parties at all times in decision making as a rule rather than as an exception. Finally, the study recommends that county managers should develop strong internal controls to guard against misuse of public resources.

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