



Effects of Accountability on Public Policy Implementation in Marsabit County Government

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Socioeconomic development metrics such as economic growth rates, unemployment levels, corruption levels, and poverty rates in Kenya do not correlate with the country's comprehensive policy framework. It seems that policy design and execution aren't going hand in hand. This has been evidenced in the counties report given by the controller of budgets and continued impeachments of county governors due to poor governance cited by the various county assemblies. This study assessed the effects of accountability on implementation of public policy in Marsabit County, Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive research design which helped to describe governance and public policy implementation in Marsabit County. The study targeted 69158 respondents from various urban centres in Marsabit County with a sample size of 384 respondents selected using stratification and simple random sampling and data collect used questionnaire as the instrument. The data were coded and analyzed using SSP. Descriptive and inferential statistics data analysis results were used to reveal the influence of, accountability on policy implementation in public sector in Kenya. The results indicate that the overall model was satisfactory. This means that items on Accountability explain 28.6% of the variations in public policy implementation in the

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Marsabit county government. It was concluded that accountability practices were major determinants of public policy implementation and that they were the major governance factors that mostly affect effective implementation of policy in the county government. The study recommendations included; that county government should adopt good governance practices in order to improve on policy implementation in their counties.

Keywords: Accountability; governance; public policy; implementation.

1. INTRODUCTION

May (2014) define public policy as "a broad framework of ideas and values within which governments make choices and conduct acts to solve a specific set of challenges." Hence the public policy is the government path to addressing the citizen's needs. Globally there are several world-regional actors actively involved in public policy making with much interest and emphasis on restructuring of social policy-making and delivery [1]. With the lack of a written constitution, the British state has been able to make policy changes more often than in nations where a more formal constitution is in place. This is due to the conventional law in the UK and the absence of a written constitution. Public interest governs the administration of the British state, which means government is seen as open and held to account to the greatest extent possible [2].

In Africa at large it is acknowledged that bribery and corruption has become the stabling block towards public policy implementation. Policymakers, both at the top and in the field, divert financial resources to meet their own needs. Agents and organizations put in place to promote accountability are also compelled to provide amazing reports while investigating the execution of such public policies, weakening the policies and rendering them unable to fulfill their stated purposes [3]. Since 1993, South Africa has been undergoing extensive political, constitutional, and socio-economic transformations, allowing the country to break free from isolation and re-enter the global world. Such reforms result in change and transformation in practically every government sector, and so enhance the procedures for implementing public policies [4].

According to constitutional scholar Dr. Gregory Mann of the College of Charleston, the key to understanding the process of Nigeria's policy-making is the federal supremacy conditionality. According to the plans, from the formulation phases through the implementation and evaluation stages, the federal government is

intended to give clear leadership and direction at all phases of the plan development process [5]. Ministries and divisions of the Ministry of National Planning operate as part of the National Planning Office, which is responsible for implementing policies that originate in the federal government.

Economic forecasting, policy analysis, and research as well as the development of medium and long-term strategic views for economic and social development are used by Kenya to help it realize national development goals. Cities, towns, and counties all have their own Planning Units which report to the Directorate of Economic Planning and which coordinate economic development, planning, policy making, and budgeting. Although there are several difficulties facing the administration of county policies in Kenya, it is the procedures and methods at the formation and execution of such policies that presents the most severe obstacle [6].

The pursuit of public policy Implementation outlines the procedures and capabilities that enable policy to turn into action via the operationalization of strategy in the form of programs. It is of tremendous benefit to the public since it has the power to affect the everyday lives and wellbeing of societies, therefore promoting peace and harmony or bringing about turmoil in the case of inefficient execution [7]. It is consequently vital to preserve the fundamental interests of the public, which means that negative influences on policy execution are especially troubling. Many experts believe that inadequate government management is one of the problems preventing Kenya's policies from being put into practice. The failures and instabilities that occur intermittently, such as political corruption, economic stagnation, inequality, and poverty, might be connected to the quality of governance, according to Kimenyi and Meagher [8].

A state's activities are managed and governed according to a set of principles known as "governance." The International Bureau of

Education (IBE) defines governance as institutions and processes that provide accountability, transparency, responsiveness, rule of law, stability, equality and inclusion, empowerment, and broad-based participation. Political or public governance refers to the method by which a society organizes and conducts its affairs, and it is one of three types of government found in nature. Second, economic governance refers to the rules, procedures, and organizational structures required to generate and distribute products and services. The third kind, which includes individuals and non-profit organizations, is social governance, which refers to a set of values and beliefs that are required for social behavior and public decision-making.

Public policy implementation is the most crucial item in the policy process and is often overlooked. The existing literature, theoretical and practical work has shown that policy implementation links to its outcomes. Thus, the policy implementation process is a complex process that must involve public participation to succeed. The conflict in stakeholders' interest among other factors such as lack of accountability and lack of transparency strategies among policy implementers, often undermines the implementation process [9]. Therefore, the momentum of implementation depends on prioritizing implementation processes. Policy implementers must shift their attention to addressing stakeholders' interests while adopting policies. The policy implementation's primary beneficiaries are stakeholders'; thus, the policy implementation stage must take care of their interest and must be fair to all the stakeholders irrespective of their religion and gender. From this research it can be inferred that despite the much effort put by the government ministries and other agencies in Kenya public policy implementation remains a challenge at many levels and this is evidenced with several government project that has stalled since devolution in 2010 such as Marsabit stadium and Badasa dam in Marsabit County, Kenya News Agency (2019, march 2nd). It is against these background that the study sought to analyze the effect of accountability on public policy implementation in Marsabit County.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

A study by Hudson, Hunter, and Peckham (2019) noted that there exists a notion that public

policies do not succeed or fail dependently. Public Policy implementation is complex, and the intrinsic system surrounding it is messy. Thus, it is unclear how best to ensure effective public policy implementation that guarantees desired outcome. While governments are shifting focus on partial or failure in public policy implementation, scholars are striving to find which policy management components or variables ensure a high policy implementation success rate. Public Policy implementation has continued to gain interest in management since it's the backbone of effective public administration (Heath, 2018). In developing countries, more specific the devolved county governments in Kenya, public policy implementation processes have been operated against lack of accountability from those tasks with the mandate to implement poor policy alignment, lack of public participation and lack of gender parity among others [10-13]. These variables are deemed to help effective implementation of public policies. These variables hold the success of public policy implementation. Therefore, those charged with responsibility in public policy implementation at the county levels must consider all of them during the implementation process.

As presented by many researchers, the concept of policy implementation is farfetched, complex, and no conclusive [14,11]. Public policy Implementation is also linked to many other governance attributes hence continuous research on the topic. The policy management and policy implementation findings depend on the context, and the case study applied. Therefore, in this study, the researcher proposed to determine public policy management's effect on policy implementation in the Marsabit county government.

1.2 Objective of the study

- i. To assess the effects of accountability on public policy implementation in Marsabit County government.

1.3 Research Question

The study sought to answer the following question.

- i. Does accountability affect public policy implementation in Marsabit County government?

2. THEORETICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Stakeholder Theory

According to the stakeholder hypothesis, a company's obligation extends beyond its shareholders to a broader group of stakeholders. Any person or organization that may affect or be impacted by a company's actions is referred to as a stakeholder. It involves employees, consumers, suppliers, creditors, and even the broader public and competitors. Senior management works on behalf of shareholders to maximize returns, whether via dividends or a higher share price, according to stakeholder theory. As a consequence, management owe it to the shareholders to provide significant value. Devolved county government functions require extensive collaboration between the national government and the local public [11]. These require extensive participation and awareness between the national - county government to enable stakeholders to have negotiated plan on how the policies will be implemented. The negotiations also indicated who are the most likely to be affected by policies before they are implemented. This helps alerts the local population so that the implementation process does not receive much resistance. It also helps restructure the policies to reduce the negative effect on the local. Ultimately, the policies receive greater success during implementation.

Stakeholder theory, according to researchers Ogolla and Moronge [15], has merit in the execution of megaprojects. The stakeholder theory brings the internal and external effects of organizational policies and initiatives into perspective. According to Piketty [16], organizations must understand that the activities and programs they implement have a substantial influence on the communities in which they operate, demanding close collaboration. The idea proposes a paradigm for stakeholder management that prioritizes the role of the stakeholder [17]. This allows for the identification of stakeholder roles and their overall impact on project delivery. The stakeholder theory, according to Kathongo [18], emphasizes the use of ethical guidelines in the administration of stakeholder roles throughout project execution.

With the adoption of the Kenyan Constitution of 2010, people now have more power than ever

before. Article 1 of the Kenyan Constitution states that "all sovereign power belongs to the people of Kenya and shall be exercised entirely in conformity with this Constitution". Either directly or via democratically elected authorities, people may demonstrate their sovereign sovereignty." The policy-making process includes input from the general public as well. Policymaking should be seen as an investment in the country and its people, with the premise that they are both stakeholders in the policies that are developed.

2.2 Empirical Review

This section is dedicated to a review of available empirical research on accountability variables and their impacts on public policy implementation.

2.3 Public Policy Implementation

Signe [19] defined policy implementation as the ability to forge causal links in order to obtain the desired outcome. Otungu [11] also noted that policy implementation entails executing the plan or model to achieve the desired objectives. Implementation is also the act of executing statutes policies incorporated in the policy plans to make important executive orders. Implementation is often neglected in the policy procedure since its assumed irrelevant [11]. This is because policy decisions are often carried out by the administration, who assumes policy implementation responsibility. Policy implementation became a subject of research in the late 20th century due to scholars and policy stakeholders' growing concern. Consequently, policy implementation models were formulated as various scholars differ on what constitutes the implementation phase [19].

2.4 Accountability on Public Policy Implementation

Accountability is defined as the need to account to a third party who has an interest in the outcome. It refers to making public office holders accountable for their actions in the context of governance [20]. In health systems, where numerous stakeholders with distinct lines of responsibility complement and compete with one another, questions of lack of accountability often emerge (Bruen, Brugha, Kageni & Wafula, 2014). In Kenya in the ministry of health the ethics and anticorruption commission is dealing with a mega corruption cases in both National level and the

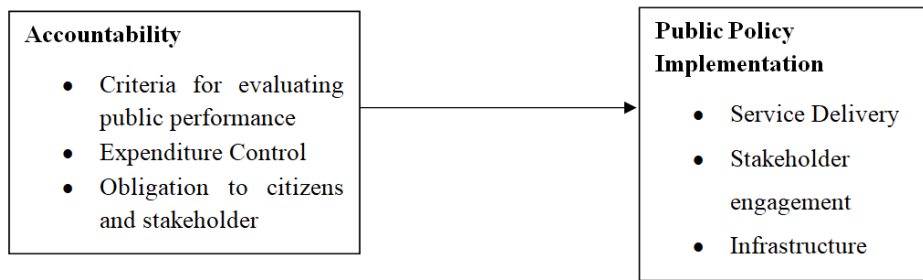


Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework

counties level due to lack of accountability of the funds meant for combating in Covid-19 pandemic with the KEMSA case taking the lead. According to Ndungu [21], top management in Kiambu County was dedicated to improving accountability through several approaches. The study also discovered that employee engagement and gratitude were important factors in improving accountability in the county. The use of penalties such as prosecution increased accountability by holding individuals accountable for their conduct. If there is a strong leadership then the accountability will be good but where the leadership is weak there is no accountability for the staff will take advantage of the management.

Governance accountability, according to the Institute of Economic Affairs (2015), involves answerability and enforcement. Under the idea of answerability, government and public officials must be responsible to the people in the conduct of public affairs. This include managing public monies, delivering public services, as well as making decisions and taking action. An official or institution, as well as the execution of a task or function, is accountable in governance if it is susceptible to scrutiny by another person or organization.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a model hypothesizing the relationship between dependent and independent variables of the study [22]. The dependent variable (public policy implementation) is the predictive variable which is the outcome of the manipulation of the independent variable (accountability).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The research design intends to provide a safe framework for a study (da Silva, 2017). The research approach choice is critical in research design since it helps determine the relevancy of the data obtained for the study. The study adopted a descriptive research design to examine the relationship between governance attributes and public policy implementation.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Response Rate

Three hundred and eighty-four questionnaires (384) were distributed and three hundred and fifteen questionnaires (315) were completed and returned. This represented a response rate of 82% and none response rate of 18%. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2013), a response rate of 50% is considered good and response rate greater than 70% is considered to be very good.

4.2 Reliability Test

Reliability of the instrument was conducted using Cronbach's alpha constant which is a measure of internal consistency and average correlation. According Taber (2018) an alpha coefficient of 0.70 or higher indicated it is reliable as it has a relatively high internal consistency and can be generalized to reflect opinions of all respondents in the target population. Table 1 shows the summary of the finding.

Table 1. Reliability of Instruments

Variables	Cronbach's alpha	Number of items
Accountability	.887	5

Source; Field data (2023)

Based on the results the study observed that all constructs in the study had a reliability coefficient greater than 0.7. Therefore, based on the recommendations of Taber (2018), the research questionnaire was found to be reliable.

4.3 Demographic Information

The study sought to obtain demographic information relating to respondents' gender, academic qualification, and where they reside in Marsabit County. The respondents were required to disclose their gender classified as either male or female, education level in terms of either they hold masters, bachelor graduate, diploma, or certificate and the place of resident as classified as Moyale, Marsabit township, Loiyanalani and Laisamis.

4.4 Descriptive Statistics

The objective of the study sought to assess the effects of accountability on public policy implementation in Marsabit County government. The respondents were asked what they think are the main purposes of obligation of public sector entities to the citizens to account, and be answerable, for their policies, decisions, and actions in the implementation of policy

at their county. The results were as in Table 2.

4.5 Inferential Statistics

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to establish the relationship between accountability and public policy implementation in Marsabit County.

From the Table 3 finding an R-square value of .290 was recorded indicating that 29.0% of Public Policy Implementation is explained by Accountability.

The F-statistics presented in Table 4 indicated that the overall model was significant, that is, the independent variable, Accountability was a good joint explanatory variable for Public Policy Implementation with F-value of 69.947.

From the regression coefficient Table 5, there was positive and significant relationship between Accountability and Public Policy Implementation. The model is given as $Y=1.678+0.751X_2$. The regression coefficient of 1.678 indicates that an increase in Accountability by 1unit leads to an increase in Public Policy Implementation by 0.751units. The results of the current study corroborate with the findings of Alpin-Lardies [23]; Cornwall et al. [20]; Bruen et al. [24].

Table 2. Accountability descriptive analysis

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
To comply with legal standards	315	4.30	.653
To Raising public awareness	315	4.52	.818
To get a sense of what the general population thinks	315	4.26	.788
To choose between many possibilities	315	4.34	.953
To give the county more authority	315	3.99	.933
Aggregate		4.262	.829

Source: Field data (2023)

Table 3. Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.539 ^a	.290	.286	.22598

a. Predictors: (Constant), accountability

Source: field data (2023)

Table 4. Analysis of variance

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3.572	1	3.572	69.947	.000 ^b
	Residual	8.732	314	.052		
	Total	12.304	315			

a. Dependent Variable: public policy implementation

b. Predictors: (Constant), accountability

Source: Field data (2023)

Table 5. Correlation coefficient

Coefficients^a					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.678	.313		5.361	.000
Accountability	.751	.090	.539	8.363	.000

a. Dependent Variable: public policy implementation

Source: Researcher (2023)

5. SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

5.1 Accountability

The study was to assess the effects of accountability on public policy implementation in Marsabit County government. From the descriptive statistics and regression analysis the study found that respondents indicated that there is no criterion for evaluating performance at their county. The study also found that county do not operate according to the budget. The absence of these accountability attributes could suggest the gap in public policy implementation. The model depicts regression coefficient of 1.678 which indicates that an increase in Accountability by 1unit leads to an increase in Public Policy Implementation of by 0.751 units.

5.2 Conclusion

Accountability is an important factor that affects effective public policy implementation in the counties. The optimal model of the study shows that increasing levels of accountability by a unit would increase the levels of effective implementation of public policy by 0.751. This shows that accountability has a positive influence on effective public policy implementation.

5.3 Recommendation

The study recommends that the county government should have effective mechanisms that obligate public sector entities to the citizens and other stakeholders to account, and be answerable, for their policies, decisions, and actions, particularly in relation to public finances.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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