

## The Impact of Public Awareness and Participation on Kenyan National Assembly Legislative Process

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### Abstract

Public participation is a crucial pillar of democratic governance, ensuring transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness in decision-making. In a functioning democracy, the creation of laws through legislative processes is not merely a technical procedure, it is a collective endeavour that demands the people's voice. Public involvement motivates the government to enhance transparency, engagement, and responsibility. This research investigated how public awareness impacts public engagement and influences the legislative process of bills in Kenya's National Assembly. This paper examines how the process of public participation, the design of public participation, and the literacy levels influence public awareness of the legislative processes in Kenya's National Assembly. The study was based on the notion of good governance and participatory democracy. This study employed a descriptive research design to investigate the role of public awareness in legislative engagement. Data was gathered through structured questionnaires distributed to a targeted group comprising staff of Kenya's National Assembly, stakeholders involved in bill formulation, and public members from Nyandarua County selected using the Slovin Formula to ensure representativeness. The study analysed the quantitative data using the multinomial logistic regression model, a generalised linear model used to check whether the explanatory variables, including the demographic characteristics, were a significant fit to the model and sufficiently explained the passage of Kenyan parliamentary bills. These variables were found to be significant to the model using the Likelihood Ratio Test. Notably, the study revealed that a majority of respondents lacked awareness of both public participation as well as the Children's Bill 2021. This lack of awareness highlights the need for improved strategies to increase public involvement. The study establishes a significant relationship between public awareness, participatory structure, and engagement in discussion using empirical data, theoretical insights, and case studies. The findings underscore the need for enhanced civic education, strategic communication, well-structured public participation processes, and policy reforms to bridge the gap in participation.

**Keywords:** *Public Participation, Awareness, Legislative Processes, Civic Engagement, Stakeholder Satisfaction, Kenya*

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## 1. Introduction

Public engagement involves individuals engaging in government by deliberating and taking collective action within various interests, institutions, and networks to foster civic identity and include people in governance processes (Cooper, 2005: 534). Public participation is crucial in bill legislation. Its importance in constructing democracy is vital as it guarantees inclusion and openness in the governing process, with both people and government institutions having a share of power (Arnstein, 1969). As per the Kenyan Constitution of 2010, public engagement is considered a fundamental national value and concept of governance. This is consistent with the objectives outlined in the preamble of the Constitution, where Kenyans pledge to construct a government based on core concepts such as human rights, equality, freedom, democracy, social justice, and the rule of law.

The Children's Bill 2021, whose aim was to reform and consolidate laws related to children's rights in Kenya, serves as a case study in this research. This bill offers a critical opportunity to examine how public awareness, participatory structure, and literacy level influence citizen involvement in lawmaking. By using the Children's Bill 2021 as a case study, this research explores how well Kenya's public participation works and whether inclusivity is factored into the law-making process.

Awareness plays a significant role in influencing public participation in legislative processes. Research consistently shows that individuals with higher levels of education and better access to information are more inclined to engage in governance and policy development (Imbo, 2019). In a related study, Zellatfanny et al. (2021) examined how awareness influences participation. Their findings revealed that a well-informed population is more likely to engage in policymaking.

Imbo (2019) discovered that despite being a prominent process in the 2010 Kenyan constitution, public engagement had minimal influence on the legislation outcomes approved by the National Assembly. The lack of public awareness was worsened by the National Assembly's faulty approach and design of the participation process. This research aims to determine whether the National Assembly has allocated additional resources to educate the public on various proposals under consideration for public participation. According to Article 118 of the Kenyan Constitution (2010), Parliament is required to conduct its affairs in a manner that allows the public to observe its discussions. Article 119 covers the ability of citizens to present any subject to Parliament. This may involve a petition concerning the enactment, modification, or removal of legislation. The Constitution establishes the necessary underpinnings to facilitate citizen involvement in policymaking.

### 1.1 Problem Statement

The constitution in 2010 emphasizes participation by the public, mandating all government actions to adhere to this objective. Thirteen years later, it is still unclear if the legal framework of public engagement has been implemented, particularly in policy formulation via National Assembly legislation. This is evident through various court battles between the policy formulators and the legislature.

Questions still relate to the process used, the public's interest in public participation, their knowledge of the subject matter, and legislators' willingness to incorporate findings from public participation into the corresponding legislation. Recognising that legislation takes place within a political environment, the political dynamics around the bill are also likely to affect the outcome. Against this backdrop, in the context of Kenya, a young democracy, the extent to

which the National Assembly Committees consider the arguments presented by the various parties (during public participation hearings) in the bills submitted to the House becomes an issue of interest.

A question emerges about what constitutes legitimate and beneficial public engagement and how this process is designed to achieve its objectives. This means that the process should embody the values of democratic involvement and inclusivity, as well as meet legal obligations.

This study focuses on Nyandarua County as the area of research and the Children's Bill 2021 as a case study to explore these concerns. The Bill, which seeks to strengthen the legal framework protecting the rights and welfare of children in Kenya, presents a relevant context to examine the level of public awareness. Its development provides a unique lens through which to evaluate how effectively members of the public are engaged in the law-making process. By examining the awareness of the Bill by the residents of Nyandarua County, this research aims to provide an understanding of how public participation works in practice as compared to what the constitution says should happen.

## **1.2 Research Objectives**

- i. To examine how the process of inviting public participation influences public awareness in the context of Kenyan parliamentary bills.
- ii. To assess how the design and structure of public participation mechanisms impact public awareness during the legislative process.
- iii. To evaluate the influence of literacy levels on public awareness and engagement in parliamentary bill discussions.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Theoretical Review**

This research is supported by the theory of participatory democracy. Public participation has been linked to democratic expansion since the end of the Cold War. The quality of the elections has been questioned, as some believe that citizens' participation alone is not enough. Public involvement in decision-making has been necessary since the 1990s. Cooper et al. (1995) contended that traditional representative democracy has deteriorated into dysfunction, incapable of effectively addressing the decrease in public involvement in political processes. Democracy is ineffective without popular participation. Various theoretical techniques have been developed to address the difficulty mentioned. In 1762, Jean-Jacque Rousseau's concept of the social compact laid the foundation for subsequent participatory government methods. His primary assertion was that laws hold authority only when individuals voluntarily adhere to them. This argument, supported by renowned philosophers John Locke and Thomas Hobbes, forms the basis for creating policies from the grassroots level and involving the public in governing. Pateman (1970) defined participatory democracy theory as the integration of the public's abilities and expertise with bureaucratic procedures through active engagement. Bureaucracies must now prioritise individuals' desires in their operations, rather than being entirely abstract entities. Participation acts as a continuous oversight of bureaucratic procedures by promoting democratisation due to their lack of transparency. Members of Parliament are expected to represent the people, yet the ultimate authority is with the people and can be directly utilised by them. Kenya's Constitution specifies this in Article 1(2).

## **2.2 Empirical Review**

### **2.2.1 The Process of Public Participation and Its Impact on Public Awareness**

Public participation plays a crucial role in ensuring that citizens' views are genuinely incorporated into legislative decision-making. Arnstein's (1969) Ladder of Citizen Participation emphasises that meaningful engagement occurs when citizens exert real influence over policy outcomes, rather than serving as mere symbolic participants. In the Kenyan context, Article 118 of the 2010 constitution underscores this principle by requiring parliament to operate transparently and facilitate public involvement in the legislative process.

Lim (2018) presents a succinct review of citizen participation, which can provide citizens with several benefits. These can be intrinsic to participation (because of the act of participating) or instrumental (due to the opportunity to contribute to public policy). It contended that a well-planned process of public involvement initiatives connects the expectations of both residents and planners. The work was based on Arnstein's "ladder of citizen participation," which they believe can help planners determine their opinions of a plan's aim and compare them to the expected perspectives of citizen responders. According to Lim (2018), in successful citizen involvement programs, the gap between the planner's and the participant's expectations is limited, and conflict is likely if expectations differ. This dispute can harm the planning process (as well as the institution's reputation) as well as the relationship between respondents and the planners. The community engagement approach may increase project expenses and length. Arnstein (1969) also suggests that the public participation approach carries some risk. As stated by Lim (2018), citizen involvement can enhance the design process and planners by reducing their isolation from the public, promoting cooperation and trust, facilitating the dissemination of information, identifying new areas for investigation and research, aiding in the identification of alternative solutions, and lending legitimacy and political credibility to the planning endeavours and the agency involved.

Umoh (2022) studied public involvement in policymaking and proposed democratic innovations as a solution to improve citizens' participation in Parliament operations due to declining faith in Parliament. The study also highlights dilemmas that occur with public engagement. The data was collected by conducting interviews with 16 Members of Parliament, observing plenary discussions, reviewing Parliamentary minutes, Hansard, Select and Standing Committee minutes, and analysing Parliamentary speeches. The data suggest that despite the challenges; South Africa's Parliament has significantly advanced in expanding democratic innovation to facilitate public interaction since 1994. Underprivileged individuals are still marginalised from participating in policy formation. The essay argues that to enhance South Africa's democratic framework, it is essential to educate people about politics and engage the public in governance.

Imbo (2019) examined the level to which the National Assembly fulfills its constitutional obligations regarding the involvement of the public and how the structure of this engagement impacts legislative and policy outcomes. The research was conducted in Nairobi City County using a descriptive research methodology, with a random sample of 204 persons from the general population. The sample size was determined using Slovin's technique with a confidence level of 93%. Based on the latest county statistics abstracted from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, the target population consisted of approximately 4 million individuals, including the 349 Members of the National Assembly. The survey seeks to assess their degrees of awareness and engagement. Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders involved in the legislative process, such as Members and staff of the National Assembly, as well as civil society

organisations with prior involvement. The selected individuals were intentionally picked based on their significance to Kenya's legislative procedure. The study indicated that the level of public participation had a negligible effect on the legislation passed by the National Assembly. The National Assembly's poor methodology and structure of the participation process worsened the lack of public awareness. The research indicates that it is advisable to carry out extensive public awareness campaigns, improve media coverage by the National Assembly, upgrade constituency offices, and allocate ample time for committees to deliberate on Bills.

### **2.2.2 The Design of Public Participation and Its Impact on Public Awareness**

A well-designed public participation process is fundamental to fostering meaningful civic engagement. The OECD (2022) highlights inclusivity, accessibility, and responsiveness as core elements of effective participatory frameworks. However, as noted by Ogunshola and Adeniyi (2017), overly bureaucratic procedures can obstruct participation, especially among marginalised groups, by creating barriers that discourage or exclude their involvement.

Ogunshola and Adeniyi (2017) argue that an overly liberal viewpoint may lead to an exaggerated emphasis on participatory processes, presuming that citizen engagement alone is sufficient to improve policy. Ogunshola and Adeniyi (2017) present a contrasting viewpoint. They contended that the effectiveness of involvement hinges on acknowledging the issue and devising ways to address its intricacy. They examined the potential ways policymakers could utilise technologies to facilitate individuals' active involvement in public policies. Odhiambo and Opiyo (2017), focusing on Kenya, examined how counties such as Mombasa, Kilifi, Taita Taveta, and Kajiado had established technology-driven platforms for communication and information exchange, as well as adhering to regulations such as budget meetings and public forums. They employed word-of-mouth, radio, television networks, newspapers, and social media for communication. The selection of materials was varied and determined by considerations including location and urban surroundings.

Mbiithi (2018) explained that the Kenyan Constitution of 2010 established a framework for allocating public resources to Kenya's forty-seven counties. They were tasked with overseeing level four and below hospitals, C-class and below roads, and the agriculture sector, among other responsibilities. The study employed probit regression to examine the determinants that influence successful citizen involvement in the Counties, using data from the Afrobarometer (2015) survey. Public involvement was positively influenced by the approval of the Governor's performance. The lack of citizen input on County decision-making, unresponsive County Assembly Members, difficulties in getting information on County finances, legislation, and projects, and corruption in the Governor's office all have a detrimental impact on the situation.

Ronoh (2020) investigated methods to improve public involvement in various regions of Kenya. The study took place in the counties of Kericho, Bomet, and Narok. The study employed an analytical survey method with a sample size of 384 chosen from a target population of 1,051,077 individuals using a simple sampling methodology. The paper recommends continuous communication and information sharing regarding county efforts, engaging key stakeholders like opinion leaders and experts, and organising meetings at suitable times to allow critical stakeholders to participate. The study suggests that those with post-secondary education, youth, and high levels of activity are more inclined to participate in public involvement and development activities. The study recommends boosting female involvement in public participation, as men tend to engage more often, even when certain development projects have a greater impact on women. Ronoh concluded that it is essential to change the mindset of both the general population and the leadership. This will improve their views



towards public engagement, boost their readiness to participate, and cultivate positive political sentiments. This can be accomplished through civic education and ongoing information dissemination.

Kamau (2021) studied the influence of public involvement on policy formulation in Mombasa County, Kenya. The study was carried out using the Good Governance Theory as its foundation. The study utilized a descriptive survey research design. The study focused on 560 county government officials and members of civil society, specifically women leaders, youth leaders, and representatives of individuals with disabilities. The investigation included 233 respondents, determined by Yamane methods. The participants were selected via purposive sampling. Primary data were collected through surveys and interviews, while secondary data were obtained from documented sources. The study found that direct benefits, such as financial or material gains, physical or intangible rewards, and immediate or long-lasting advantages, are the main factors that influence citizen participation in public policy development. Community engagement is shaped by factors such as culture, history, government policy, and social, political, and economic institutions. The study found that individuals have a strong grasp of the methods necessary for creating public policy and that well-defined regulations and guidelines set by county governments aid in simplifying these processes. The study's findings demonstrated a distinct correlation between performance and involvement in policy development. Furthermore, consultation simplifies the process of monitoring development. The study found that education is essential for all individuals involved in developing efficient public policies to prevent unnecessary manipulation and problems arising from a lack of comprehension of each party's requirements, as well as a lack of responsibility and openness. The report recommends that the County Government of Mombasa establish a participatory framework for residents to monitor and evaluate development outcomes in the counties to improve decision-making and project implementation.

### **2.2.3 Literacy Level and Its Impact on Public Awareness**

Stakeholders, including civil society organizations, media, and private sector actors, play a vital role in ensuring effective public participation. Razavi et al. (2019) examined the role of different stakeholders in Uganda's health policymaking process and found that donors, NGOs, and technical experts had more influence than the public.

Abbas, et al (2021) conducted a study to identify the causes of the low literacy rate and its impact on the community at the primary level. Two objectives were formulated (a) to explore the causes of low literacy rate and (b) to discover the impact of low literacy rate on the community. All the teachers of primary schools working in the public sector and parents of the students were the population. A sample of 210 (200 teachers and 10 parents) was selected through the convenience sampling method from Tehsil Kamalia district Toba Tek Singh of the Punjab province of Pakistan. An instrument based on a five-point Likert scale for teachers and an interview schedule for parents was used for data collection. Quantitative data revealed that overpopulation, lack of staff at schools, ineffective curriculum, lack of discipline at schools, corporal punishment, poverty, old teaching methods, social constraints/family disputes, and health and safety were the causes of illiteracy. Moreover, the study revealed that there was no political influence on low literacy. Similarly, qualitative data also confirmed that said indicators are the causes of low literacy. Based on the results of the study, it is recommended that the government, as well as concerned authorities, should eradicate said causes to improve the literacy rate.

Education not only informs young citizens about their rights but also develops their political agency, and social and citizenship skills Wallace, C. (2018).. The level of education an individual has attained significantly influences their understanding of political issues, voter turnout, trust, and overall engagement in civic life. However, other factors such as socio-economic status, gender, and immigrant background continue to influence an individual's CSE. Civic education can help mitigate these factors by equipping all individuals with the necessary knowledge and skills to actively participate in diverse aspects of civic life. In contrast, limited access to education or lower educational attainment can result in reduced political literacy and awareness, potentially discouraging individuals from exercising their right to vote and participate in society. Inclusive education ensures that all individuals have equitable access to civic education opportunities.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive research design to better understand the complex aspect of public participation. By blending both qualitative and quantitative aspects, this approach allowed for the collection of detailed information on awareness levels, participation processes, and stakeholder engagement. The design provided a broad view of the issue, showing not just what public involvement looks like, but also how and why it happens in legislative processes.

#### 3.2 Data Collection Methods

To ensure a balanced data set, both primary and secondary sources were employed. Primary data was collected using structured questionnaires and interviews with stakeholders, while secondary data was sourced from government reports, policy documents, and academic literature.

The study made use of three different questionnaires. The first one was for the citizens of Nyandarua County, the second one was for employees of the National Assembly who worked in the Departmental Committee on Labour and Social Welfare, and the final one was for the stakeholders. The survey instructed respondents on how to reply to questions that were crucial to the study.

#### 3.3 Data Analysis Methods

Data analysis was conducted using both descriptive statistics and inferential statistical techniques to assess the relationship between public awareness and participation. The following methods were used:

##### *Chi-Square Test of Independence*

This test was used to examine the relationship between education level and awareness of public participation. The test is suitable for categorical data and helps understand whether there is a statistical significance between two variables. In this case, whether education level is linked to awareness of public participation.

##### *Multinomial Logistic Regression Model*

This model was utilized to explore how variables such as **awareness**, the **participation process**, and **literacy levels** influence the **degree of public participation**. It provided a structured way to predict participation levels based on multiple influencing factors.

This model was appropriate because it allows analysis of multiple predictors and their impact on non-binary outcomes, giving a clear picture of what influences people to take part in public participation.

### 3.4 Statistical Model Specification

Multinomial Logistic regression is a statistical method used to predict the probabilities of the different possible outcomes of a categorically distributed dependent variable, given a set of independent variables (which may be real-valued, binary, or categorical valued). Unlike binary outcomes which outcomes are limited to “Yes” or “No”, Multinomial logistics can handle outcomes with multiple categories such as low, moderate, or high.

The multinomial logistic regression was deemed most appropriate due to the categorical nature of the dependent variable (level of public participation). It allows for the estimation of the probability of different levels of public participation based on multiple independent variables.

Logistic regression assigns a coefficient to each predictor to measure its impact on the variability of the dependent variable the data collected will be considered a covariate class where each class ( $i$ ) or ( $i = 1, 2, \dots, n$ ) represents a unique combination of covariate values shared by observations in this category ( $j = 1, 2, \dots, c$ ) and  $y_{ij}$  Is the count observed in  $cell_{ij}$ . The data was modeled using a Multinomial logistic model.

Let  $\pi_{ij}$  be the probability that an item of covariate class  $i$  will be in the category  $j$  and  $\sum_{j=1}^c \pi_{ij} = 1$ .

This ensures that the sum of probabilities for all outcome categories within each covariate class is 1.

Then, we chose one category to be the reference category, say Category 1. The logit for the category  $j$  for ( $j = 1, 2, \dots, c$ ) of the  $i^{th}$  covariate class is defined as:

$$\log\left(\frac{\pi_{ij}}{\pi_{i1}}\right) = \sum_{k=1}^p x_{ik} \beta_{jk}$$

The regression coefficients ( $\beta_{jk}$ ) depend on  $j$ . The formulation of this formula will ensure that the constraint  $\sum_{j=1}^c \pi_{ij} = 1$  is satisfied.

If  $c = 2$ , we have binomial data, and we end up with the usual logit model, with the loglink function.

When  $c > 2$ , the multinomial logit model does not fit in the Generalized Linear Model (GLM) framework. This is because the distribution is multivariate. Due to this reason, we can estimate the parameters in the model using a Poisson GLM with loglink. This will be achieved by the specification of a linear predictor.

Suppose that  $y_i$ , for  $i = 1, 2, \dots, m$  are independent Poisson Random Variables with means  $\mu_i$ , for  $i = 1, 2, \dots, m$ . The sum  $Y = Y_1 + Y_2 + \dots + Y_m$  Also has a Poisson distribution with a mean:

$$\mu = \mu_1 + \mu_2 + \dots + \mu_m.$$

For simplicity, we assume that we have a  $2 \times 1$  table with  $Y_1$  representing the count in the first cell and  $Y_2$  representing the count in the second cell.

Further, we assume that  $Y_1$  and  $Y_2$  are independent distributions with  $Pois(\mu_1)$  and  $Pois(\mu_2)$  respectively. We are given  $Y_1 + Y_2 = n$  then the:

$$Prob\{Y_1 = y_1, Y_2 = y_2 | Y_1 + Y_2 = n\} = \frac{Prob\{Y_1 = y_1, Y_2 = y_2\}}{Prob\{Y_1 + Y_2 = n\}}$$



$$= \binom{n}{y_1} \left( \frac{\mu_1}{\mu_1 + \mu_2} \right) \left( \frac{\mu_2}{\mu_1 + \mu_2} \right)^{n-y_1}$$

The above equation is binomial with the probability of success given by  $\left( \frac{\mu_1}{\mu_1 + \mu_2} \right)$ .

Generally, if we have  $m$  counts, we will end up with a multinomial distribution, that is:

$$Prob\{Y_1 = y_1, Y_2 = y_2, \dots, Y_m = y_m | \sum_{i=1}^m Y_i = n\} = \frac{n!}{y_1! \dots y_m!} \left( \frac{\mu_1}{\sum_{i=1}^m \mu_i} \right)^{y_1} \dots \left( \frac{\mu_m}{\sum_{i=1}^m \mu_i} \right)^{y_m}$$

There is indeed a relation between the Poisson and Binomial distribution. The likelihood associated with multinomial observation is the same as the likelihood associated with Poisson observations which are constrained by a fixed total.

This result was applied by letting  $\mu_{ij}$  be the expected count in the  $(i, j)$ th cell. Let  $\mu_i = \sum_j \mu_{ij}$ .

The multinomial logit model for category  $j$  for  $(j = 1, 2, \dots, c)$  of the  $i^{th}$  covariate class can be written as:

$$\log \left( \frac{\pi_{ij}}{\pi_{i1}} \right) = \log \left( \frac{\mu_{ij}/\mu_i}{\mu_{i1}/\mu_i} \right) = \log \left( \frac{\mu_{ij}}{\mu_{i1}} \right) = X_i \beta_j, \text{ with } \beta_1 \equiv 0$$

Thus, the effect of the covariates is allowed to depend on the response category.

Equivalently,  $\log \mu_{ij} = \log \mu_{i1} + X_i \beta_j \equiv \mu + \psi_i + X_i \beta_j$ , with  $i, j \geq 1$ ,

Where the  $\log \mu_{i1} = \mu + \psi_i + X_i \beta_1$  and  $\psi_1 = \beta_1 \equiv 0$ .

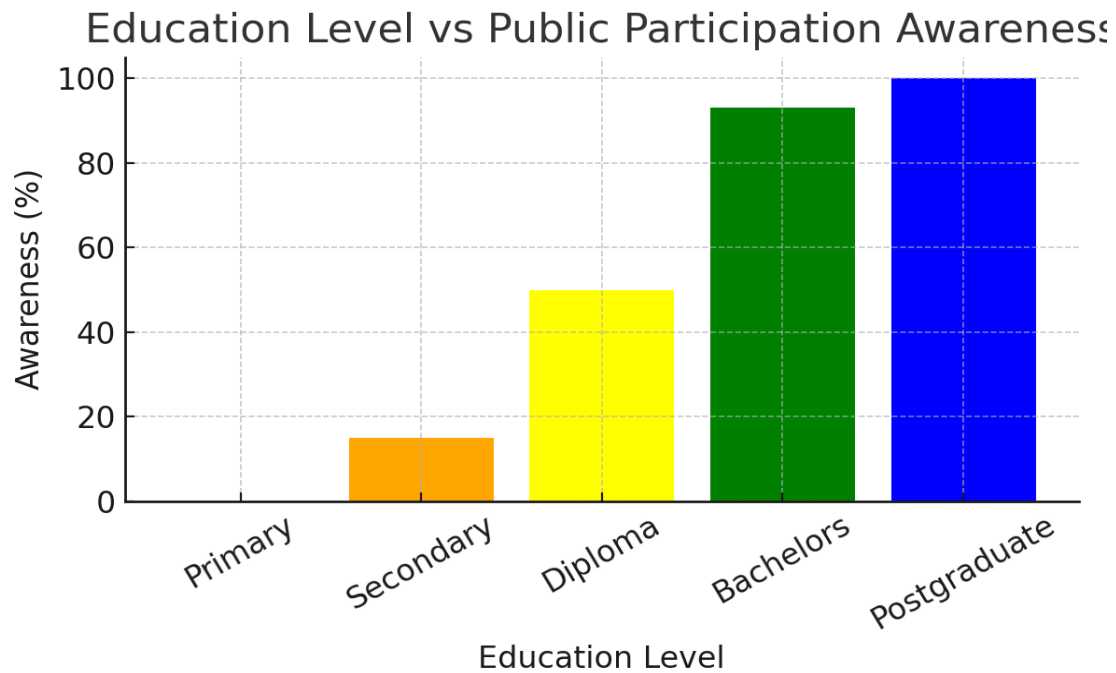
This model was fit by taking each  $Y_{ij}$  as a Poisson Random Variable, then fitting a Poisson GLM with log link function and linear predictor  $\log \mu_{ij} = \mu + \psi_i + X_i \beta_j$

#### 4. Findings and Discussion

The study revealed that 69.48% of respondents in Nyandarua County had never heard about public participation. Awareness levels were positively correlated with education levels; 93% of university graduates knew public participation compared to 0% of those with only primary education.

**Table 1: Demographics of Awareness of Public Participation**

| Category | Sub-Category   | Percentage |
|----------|----------------|------------|
| Gender   | Male           | 66.4%      |
| Gender   | Female         | 33.6%      |
| Age      | 18-35 years    | 58%        |
| Age      | 35-60 years    | 40%        |
| Age      | Above 60 years | 2%         |



**Figure 1: Relationship between Education Level and Awareness of Public Participation**

**Table 2: The Chi-Square Test of Association between Level of Education and Awareness of Public Participation**

| Chi-Square Tests   |                      |    |                       |
|--------------------|----------------------|----|-----------------------|
|                    | Value                | Df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 347.031 <sup>a</sup> | 5  | .000                  |
| Likelihood Ratio   | 303.077              | 5  | .000                  |
| N of Valid Cases   | 292                  |    |                       |

The Pearson Chi-Square Statistic of 347.031 showed that the level of education and awareness of public participation are not independent of each other, and therefore, the level of education affects the awareness of public participation.

**Table 3: The National Assembly Offered Civic Education for Children’s Bill 2021**

| The National Assembly offered civic education for the Children Bill, 2021. | Count      | Percentage  |
|--|------------|-------------|
| Strongly Agree   | 1          | 0.34%       |
| Agree  | 1          | 0.34%       |
| Neutral  | 10         | 3.42%       |
| Disagree   | 80         | 27.40%      |
| Strongly Disagree  | 200        | 68.49%      |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>292</b> | <b>100%</b> |

The majority of the residents felt the National Assembly had not provided adequate civic education regarding the Children’s Bill, 2021, with 68.49% strongly disagreeing and 27.40% disagreeing that sufficient awareness was created during public participation. Similarly, 73.29% strongly disagreed and 12.67% disagreed that their area MPs took time to inform them about various bills, indicating minimal involvement by elected leaders in enhancing public awareness. A resident emphasised the need for MPs to simplify and explain bills to the public and lead awareness efforts. These findings align with Imbo (2019), who noted that the National Assembly minimally fulfills its civic education role, often limited to just calling for public participation.

**Table 4: Stakeholder Opinion on Awareness Creation by National Assembly on Children’s Bill 2021**

| The National Assembly has created enough awareness of the Children’s Bill, 2021 | Count     | Percentage  |
|---|-----------|-------------|
| Strongly Agree  | 1         | 2.94%       |
| Agree   | 1         | 2.94%       |
| Neutral   | 1         | 2.94%       |
| Disagree  | 9         | 26.47%      |
| Strongly Disagree   | 22        | 64.71%      |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>34</b> | <b>100%</b> |

Findings from the study show that a significant majority of stakeholders believe the National Assembly failed to adequately create awareness of the Children’s Bill, 2021, with 64.71% strongly disagreeing and 26.47% disagreeing with the claim that sufficient awareness was created. Only a minimal 5.88% either agreed or strongly agreed, and another 2.94% remained neutral. These results reflect a widespread perception among stakeholders that the National Assembly made limited efforts to inform the public, further reinforcing concerns about ineffective civic engagement in legislative processes.

**Table 5: Stakeholder Opinion on Time Allocation in Submission of Memoranda**

| You were given enough time to submit your memoranda to the National Assembly. | Count     | Percentage  |
|---|-----------|-------------|
| Strongly Agree  | 5         | 14.71%      |
| Agree   | 2         | 5.88%       |
| Neutral   | 3         | 8.82%       |
| Disagree  | 6         | 17.65%      |
| Strongly Disagree   | 18        | 52.94%      |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>34</b> | <b>100%</b> |

A majority of stakeholders felt the National Assembly did not allocate sufficient time for the submission of memoranda regarding the Children's Bill, 2021, with 52.94% strongly disagreeing and 17.65% disagreeing that enough time was given. Only 20.59% agreed or strongly agreed, while 8.82% remained neutral. Stakeholders emphasised the need for early gazettal of bills and timely communication to allow for meaningful public engagement and understanding. These sentiments underscore broader concerns about the limited and ineffective nature of stakeholder involvement during the public participation process facilitated by the National Assembly.

#### 4.1 Statistical Analysis of Awareness and Participation

A multinomial logistic regression model was employed to assess the impact of public awareness on participation levels. The analysis demonstrated a statistically significant relationship ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicating that awareness plays a key role in shaping civic engagement. Respondents with higher awareness levels were more likely to engage in public forums and legislative discussions.

**Table 6: Multinomial Logistic Regression Model Results**

| Variable               | Coefficient (B) | Std. Error | p-value |
|------------------------|-----------------|------------|---------|
| Awareness Level        | 1.78            | 0.32       | 0.000*  |
| Education Level        | 2.12            | 0.41       | 0.000*  |
| Political Influence    | -0.98           | 0.28       | 0.002*  |
| Communication Strategy | 1.25            | 0.36       | 0.001*  |

The model is given by the following formula.

$$\log(\pi_2 / \pi_1) = \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 - \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4$$

Where:

$\beta_1 = 1.78$  = Civic Awareness

$\beta_2=2.12$ = Educational Attainment

$\beta_3=-0.98$ = Perceived Political Control

$\beta_4=1.25$ = Information Accessibility

Awareness has a coefficient of 1.78 and a p-value of 0.000 (statistically significant), indicating that a higher level of awareness significantly increases the likelihood of being in a higher public participation category. This means that awareness is a strong and significant predictor of public engagement. Education Level has a coefficient of 2.12 and a p-value of 0.000 (statistically significant), indicating that higher education levels are associated with increased odds of participating in public matters. This, therefore, means that Education is a critical driver of public participation.

Political Influence with a coefficient level of -0.98 and p-value of 0.002 (statistically significant) indicates that greater political influence is associated with lower odds of public participation. Meaning that political gatekeeping or elite dominance may suppress grassroots participation. Communication Strategy with a Coefficient of 1.25 and p-value of 0.001 (statistically significant) indicates that effective communication strategies are positively associated with higher public participation. Transparent, accessible, and inclusive communication enhances public engagement.

## 5. Conclusion

This study highlights the critical role of awareness in fostering meaningful public participation. Limited knowledge about public participation mechanisms results in low engagement levels, ultimately weakening the foundations of democratic governance. To bridge this gap, a collaborative effort is essential. Government institutions, civil society organisations, and the media must work together to raise awareness and empower citizens to take an active role in shaping legislation.

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