

**PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD
DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION POLICY IN LAIKIPIA COUNTY, KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

Early childhood education is recognized as a fundamental human right and important in setting a foundation for holistic learning and development. But data shows almost half of all children do not attend early schooling and especially in developing nations. To increase enrolment and early learning, this paper concentrated on public involvement. This paper sought to understand how public involvement affects early childhood development and education policy in Laikipia County, Kenya. The public policy, and democratic governance theories formed the theoretical foundation. Through descriptive survey research approaches, 210 respondents were targeted and 152 took part in the study, such that 72.4% was the response rate. The conducted descriptive, correlation and regression analyses revealed means of 3.72, $r = 0.424$ and $\beta = 0.372$; indicating that public involvement had a positive but moderate effect to ECDE policy implementation. At the same time, ECDE policy implementation improved by 64.5% variation linked to the effects of public involvement. Thus, concluding that public involvement greatly influenced the successful implementation of ECDE policy in Laikipia County. The paper also suggests formation of consultative forums that will incorporate the feedback and views of the general public towards formulation and implementation of the ECDE policy.

Keywords: Public Involvement, Public Representation, Citizen Engagement, ECDE Policy Implementation, Access, Equity and Inclusivity

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood care and education or Early childhood development and education (ECCE/ECDE) is recognized as an important phase in human development, since it affects the wellbeing of humans. ECDE influences the cognitive, relational, social, emotional and physical wellbeing of the children (Osegbue, 2025). Amukune (2021) stated that successes in education are largely influenced by the foundation at the initial stages, while Ulferts, Wolf and Anders (2019) postulated that early schooling stages dictates education outcomes in later phases. This infers that early childhood care and developmental education, is crucial in preparing children for lifelong learning and academic success.

At the same time, the 2025 UNESCO report, records that 16 percent or 272 million children (6 -18 years of age) are out of school and do not have access to any formal education. Global Education Monitoring (GEM) 2025 report shows that children from the poorest families and conflict-prone regions are most affected and rarely attend early childhood education (ECE). The impact of lack/limited education is few opportunities for growth and economic mobility for these children. In addition, the Sub-Saharan African region records the highest number for out-of-school children and those not enrolling in any learning institution, with the numbers increasing.

Investments in early childhood programs have been shown to yield high social and economic returns, contributing to improved school readiness, reduced inequalities, and stronger human capital development (UNESCO, 2021). Overtime, nations have committed to ensure all children access quality education and meeting the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) under section 4.2. However, records show many nations have accessibility gaps and unable to fully implement ECDE program. Raikes, et al. (2023) mention that limited investment and resources, and inadequate policy framework undermine universal access. Thereby advocating for public engagement and participation in an effort to meet the goal of universal access to education.

In Malaysia, researchers Tang et al. (2022) found that most of the parents were unaware on government policy on early childhood care, hence the need for mass awareness campaigns targeted at parents. On the other hand, Rahmatullah, Yassin and Omar (2020) share that parents and community involvement in ECCE centers in Malaysia enhanced collaborative efforts in monitoring and resource mobilization. According to Ndijuye, Mligo and Machumu (2020) ECE in Tanzania has not been given the importance it deserves. In Uganda, Ejuu (2021) argument is that ECE implementation cannot work with involvement of parents. The Ugandan government created awareness programs to enlighten the masses on ECE programs as a solid foundation for children's education. However, the parental involvement is disjointed and taken as a cultural practice as opposed to being guided by the ECE policy framework.

For Sigilai, Ungaya and Okeche (2024) noting that successes in ECDE policy implementation in Kenya were reliant on public participation. Alternatively, Murundu (2019) reported ECDE policy implementation in Emuhaya Sub-County in Vihiga County was low as inhibited by limited teaching and learning resources. Similarly, Okullo (2023) argues that implementation of ECDE program in Kisumu County was largely dependent on participation and involvement of different stakeholders. In Laikipia County, the enrolment rate shows a declining trend, where in 2017 it was 89% with 34, 781 children joining ECD centers compared to only 66% in 2021 with 27,760 pupils (Laikipia County Statistical Data, 2022). The enrolment is hampered by cultural practices and socio-economic activities like pastoralism meaning that ECDE policy implementation in Laikipia is rated lowly. The solution lies in involvement of the public and stakeholders including parents, community members, sponsors and administrative units.

In essence, public involvement is a component of democracy, highlighting the extent to which citizens actively participate during the processes in decision-making that shape their society (Jager & Newig, 2024). This can take the form of town hall meetings, online platforms, or other means that offers a basis for assessing the accessibility and inclusivity of public involvement initiatives (Cho, et al., 2021). At the same time, Okullo

(2023) noted a use of traditional approaches including public forums and town-hall meetings, and non-traditional approaches including online platforms and participatory initiatives; to encourage involvement of the general public in development programs.

In terms of quality of public involvement, the focus is on evaluation of the depth, relevance, and substance of the input provided by citizens during public engagement activities. These dimensions assess the extent to which the public offers informed perspectives, constructive ideas, and well-founded recommendations. Vargas-Barón (2019) state that involvement of the public encompasses these four dimensions; information sharing; decision-making, consultation and monitoring and oversight. Akinrimisi, Adeyemi and Iroegbu (2020) viewed participation in terms of engaging all the citizens, and when unable to reach all citizens, then a representative is chosen to represent the views of the majority. Since, effective policy implementation is about incorporating the views and suggestions of the general public, which creates a sense of ownership of the policy framework (Nyongesa, 2020). Factors such as disparities in participation across demographic groups, and challenges in communication may impede citizens from engaging meaningfully. Addressing these barriers is crucial for enhancing the inclusivity and equity of public participation initiatives.

Thus, public involvement is anchored in the Kenyan constitution, and the quest to deliver devolved functions to the people. Since, ECDE is a devolved function, then effective implementation is a public concern. Mwaura and Nyambura (2020) realized there some challenges including include budget cuts, disparities in access, equity and inclusivity, lowly trained teachers and weak monitoring systems, that hinder effective implementation of the ECDE policy. The situation is bad in Laikipia County, with data showing decline in enrolment rates from 89% to 71% in the years 2017 and 2018; and further decline to 68% in 2020 and low of 66% in 2021. Implementation is also hampered by the high teacher-pupil ratio that rose for 1:29 in 2017 to 1:32 in 2021. At the same time, Piper, et al. (2018) shared that quality of learning, resourcing and in-service training can be improved involvement of the public. This paper focuses on assessing the effect of public involvement in enhancing implementation of ECDE policy in Laikipia County.

Research Question

- What is the effect of public involvement on implementation of ECDE policy in Laikipia County?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The section provides in-depth discussion from empirical evidence, theoretical perspectives and conceptual framework that highlights the relationship between the variables.

Empirical Literature Review

Falanga and Ferrão (2021) evaluated the "Portugal Participa: Caminhos para a Inovação Societal" project, implemented from 2015 to 2016, aimed at enhancing citizen involvement in policymaking. The evaluation, conducted through a mixed-method approach that involved collection and analysis of data from assessments, interviews, surveys and discussions at both local and national levels. The findings, derived from various stakeholders including political class, the civil and NGO sector, general public, academic body and project sponsors, who highlighted three items. These findings addressed convergence and connecting of all stakeholders, a governing system where citizen involvement is structured and pursuing the inclusion of social systems.

In Ireland, a study by Cardullo and Kitchin (2019) addresses the transformation of smart city initiatives from technocratic and instrumental approaches to ostensibly 'citizen-centric' paradigms. Acknowledging the lack of clarity on what 'citizen-centric' entails in practice, the researchers, employed Sherry Arnstein's participation framework to construct the 'Scaffold of Smart Citizen Participation.' This conceptual tool was designed to unravel how the smart cities frame citizen contribution. The study focused on Dublin, Ireland, using the scaffold tool to determine the participation of citizens, contribution and empowering individuals to improve

the city. The findings reveal that many 'citizen-centric' initiatives predominantly aligned with citizenship role as stewards, neo-liberals and civic duty. This interpretation focuses on choices of consumers, and autonomy at individual level, sharing a framework anchored on market-based solutions as opposed to state-based framework that considers the civil and socio-political aspects.

In another study by O'Connor et al. (2016), a systematic review study aimed to identify and synthesize qualitative literature addressing barriers and public engagement contribution during recruitment in digital health interventions (DHIs). The review explored factors influencing patient and public involvement contribution in various DHIs such as tele-medicine, social networks and mobile apps and health records. The framework was useful in synthesizing information from both normalization process and burden treatment theories. 19 publications were analyzed, that led to the identity of four overarching themes: 1) personal agency and motivation; 2) personal life and value contribution; 3) the engagement and recruitment approach; and 4) the quality of the DHI. The study proposed a preliminary Digital Health Engagement Model (DIEGO) to illustrate key processes. The findings underscored the complexities in digital health engagement and recruitment processes, emphasizing the need for personalized, clinically endorsed, and accessible digital solutions.

Longhurst, Jolly and Luckham (2017) investigated the evolving landscape of public engagement in governance, particularly in a newly formed democratic experiments intersect with transformational governance structures worldwide. The widening political space for public participation contribution were examined with a renewed focus on the institutions that mediate interactions among the public, service providers, and policy makers. The study recognizes diverse perspectives on these institutions, acknowledging exciting prospects for vibrant and deliberative democracy while also raising concerns about potential co-option and the diversion of social energy from traditional political participation. The contributors, through case studies spanning Brazil, India, Bangladesh, Mexico, South Africa, UK, and the US, explored various perspectives of public engagement. Further findings show that representation, inclusion, voice, and political efficacy enhanced citizen engagement and deepened democracy.

A study by Boaz, Biri and Mckeivitt (2016) investigated whether there is a notable shift in researchers' attitudes toward Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) and Public Engagement contribution in Science (PES). Conducted within a cluster of three National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) supported Biomedical Research Centres in United Kingdom, the research involved in-depth interviews with 19 researchers. Participants in the study differentiated between PPI, care givers and patients in PES, with the aim being assessing public engagement in the broad aspects of scientific policies. Despite a range of attitudes toward these practices, the researchers collectively expressed struggles experienced in power, authority and control sharing methods throughout the research process; between the general public and patients. While they acknowledged the benefits of engagement, the study revealed a persistent reluctance among researchers to relinquish control over the research process.

Coelho et al. (2022) focused on the examination of power function in a formal setting within the e-participation platforms controlled by governments, specifically exploring its impact on citizen involvement. Despite the proliferation of such platforms globally, there is criticism suggesting a potential decrease in citizen involvement. The study introduces a relational view, emphasizing the interplay of power and resources in practice, termed as "resourcing." The investigation centers on citizens' involvement urban e-mobility platforms across large cities in Brazil. The findings elucidate on how a relational view of power and resourcing enhances the understanding of citizen involvement in public policy-making.

In a study by Marango et al. (2018), the focus was on citizen involvement in Zimbabwe, deeply rooted in the indigenous and traditional practice known as "MATARE". "Matare" serves as a community platform where members come together for discussions and making decisions collectively on matters that are of mutual interest. Despite the significance of these platforms, the study finds that local authorities, particularly the

Council of Chimanimani Rural District, are failing to leverage them for rural development. The specific context of assessment was the citizen involvement in the adoption of the council's budget. The findings indicate that a majority of citizens lacked exposure on how the budget processes, and the Council lacked a clear strategy to encourage citizen involvement.

In a study conducted in Botswana, Molokwane and Lukamba (2018) investigated citizen involvement and public policy formulation. The desk review indicated that some governments inadequately involve citizens in the public policy formulation process, creating uncertainty about the reasons behind this lack of engagement. The Botswana case, however, demonstrates citizens' substantial contributions to the country's public policy formulation, emphasizing the importance of considering citizens as significant stakeholders. This study examines selected instances of citizen engagement in Botswana and recognizes that policy implementation failures can be attributed to lapses in following recommended procedures by civil servants. Consequently, the success of public policies hinges on robust involvement by public officials to mitigate the risk of implementation failures.

Gberevbie et al. (2018) investigated the effectiveness of electronic governance platforms in addressing the historical exclusion of citizenry in developing and implementing policies in Nigeria. The research analyzed secondary sourced data from books, published journals and websites of 20 states to assess the existence of avenues for citizen-government interaction in forming policies and creating avenues to promote participation in governance. The findings indicate that, while e-governance presents a potential solution to the challenge of citizen non-inclusion in public policy formulation, its adoption faces hindrances such as low literacy rates and insufficient government infrastructure. As a recommendation, the study suggests that the Nigerian government should develop a comprehensive guideline for the adoption of e-governance in policy formulation. This entails increasing budgetary allocations for infrastructural development and implementing widespread educational initiatives to enhance citizen literacy and engagement.

Nabafu et al. (2022) investigated the citizen involvement in policy formulation through e-participation at both national and local levels, highlighting the adverse effects on policy quality and implementation due to low compliance levels. With a sample size of 377 academic staff members from Makerere University, the research aimed to identify factors influencing citizens' involvement in policy formulation. Utilizing quantitative survey data and employing Hierarchical Regression, the study unveiled presence of worthwhile and positive linkage in the association that e-participation channels, perceived ease of use of the system and trust in the government with citizens' engagement. This engagement was conceptualized as voluntarily involvement in community activities, democratic representation, and democratic values as led by e-participation. But it was revealed the linkage between the variables was not significant for e-participation sensitization and usefulness in citizen involvement in e-participation.

Kiplimo and Amisi (2018) focused on citizen participation in governance, particularly within the context of Kenya's constitutional and legal frameworks. The research specifically investigated the influence of variables in impacting service delivery in the county of Kisumu City. The study underscored that citizen involvement encompassed stakeholders providing input and sharing control over decision making, taking initiatives and contributing resources. There were 112 respondents consisting of county government officials and local residents. The findings reveal that public involvement was well-entrenched in the main functions of the county government, with the public's input actively sought and incorporated throughout the project cycle. This involvement, the study indicated that, it has contributed to enhancing ownership of public projects which promotes accountability measures. It suggests that conducting civic education must be enhanced to improve the extent and quality in public involvement within the Kisumu City County.

Ochieng' (2019) research was on determinants of successful ECDE policy implementation in counties. The focus was on the perspective of partners and involvement in capacity building, management of the learning, availing resource and physical facilities. 70 respondents took part in the research drawn from 10 partner

organizations and provided qualitative and quantitative data. Findings showed ECDE policy was successfully implemented in the counties, however there were some challenges including insufficient budget allocation and the need for more resources for training teachers, constructing ECDE centers and providing teaching-learning resources.

Theoretical Literature Review

The paper is enriched by public policy theory and democratic governance theory.

Public Policy Theory

Public policy theory is associated with scholars Lasswell (1956) who set the foundation of public policies in the book “*The decision process: Seven categories of functional analysis*” and later advancements made by researchers Wildavsky, Lowi, Dye and Anderson who introduced new models and framework. Public policy theory explores how policies are conceived and developed. It delves into the roles of various actors, including government officials, interest groups, and experts, in shaping policy proposals (Ingram, DeLeon & Schneider, 2016). Public policy theory focuses on the processes and dynamics of policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. It examines the role of various actors, the decision-making process, and the impact of policies on society. This theory provides a framework for understanding the complexities of policy-making, including the influence of different stakeholders and the factors that shape policy outcomes. The key concepts of the theory cover setting the agenda, formulating the policy, implementation and evaluation and all decisions made encompassing the theory (Anyebe, 2018).

The theory’s link in participation of the general public and the formulation and implementation of ECDE policy in Laikipia County; as forms the foundational framework. The study may draw on various elements of policy theory to understand how public participation intersects with various phases and processes in the policy including is development, implementation, feedback mechanisms and evaluation. By employing public policy theory, the research can contextualize the role of public participation within broader policy dynamics and contribute to the theoretical understanding of policy processes in a devolved governance setting (Birkland, 2019). Additionally, the theory highlights how inclusive participation can strengthen each phase in policy formulation. It shows that participation by the general public and key stakeholders can align the policy to needs of the communities and provide solutions to identified gaps. Wagner, Vogt and Kabst (2016) shared that the aim of the policy is fostering accountable, equity and sustainable implementation of policies.

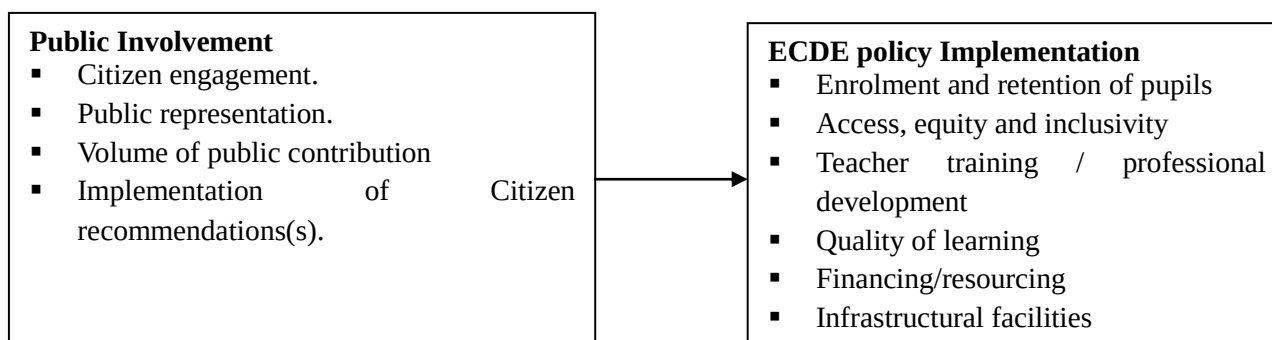
Democratic Governance Theory

Democratic governance theory emphasizes the principles and practices of democratic governance, including citizen engagement, transparency, and accountability in governance processes. Democratic governance theory is associated with scholars Dahl, Nye, and Verba (1963), as noted by Eisfeld (2019). This theory highlighted the value in participation of citizens in policy-making, and it provides a normative framework for assessing the quality of democratic governance. The concept of democracy has features of equity, equality and freedoms. In the traditional aspect, democracy is about having a democratic society, political system, administration and governance formats, and democracy in monitoring, consultation and maintaining the rights of each person and entity

At its core, this theoretical perspective emphasizes the foundational values inherent in democracy, including political equality, protecting the rule of law and individual rights, and the authority of the people (Ross, 2016). One key aspect explored by democratic governance theory is the institutional design of democratic systems. This involves an examination of representative bodies, electoral systems, and mechanisms that ensure checks and balances within the government. The theory underscores how the design and functioning of institutions, such as parliaments, courts, and independent electoral commissions, contribute to the overall effectiveness of democratic governance (Ansell, Sørensen & Torfing, 2021).

Citizen participation stands out as a central theme within democratic governance theory. This aspect scrutinizes how individuals engage in political processes, encompassing activities such as voting, advocacy, and public deliberation (Biegelbauer & Hansen, 2011). Deliberative democracy, as part of this theory, places particular emphasis on the informed and inclusive participation of citizens in decision-making, promoting a deeper level of engagement. In this study, democratic governance theory guided the evaluating the alignment of public participation practices with democratic values. Through the incorporation of democratic governance theory, this paper analyzed how democratic principles manifest in the context of policy formulation and implementation processes within the county.

Conceptual Framework



Independent Variable

Dependent Variable

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Author (2026)

METHODOLOGY

In this study, descriptive survey research design was applied in assessing the relationship between the variables. The research design is the overall framework that guides the study, shaping the approach to data collection, analysis, and interpretation. It involves making decisions about the type of study, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques (Leavy, 2022).

The targeted population covers specific group of elements or entities that the researcher is interested in (Chu & Ke, 2017) and takes part in providing data that responds to the research questions (Mohajan, 2018). The paper targeted ECDE managers across the 443 public ECDE centers in Laikipia County and 5 chair -persons of ECDE sub-county committees in-charge of early childhood education and the Chief Officer who oversees ECDE initiatives under the Department of Education, Youth, Sports & Social Services in Laikipia County. By adopting the Yamane's 1967 formula, a sample size of 210 respondents was reached and placed in groups making stratum. Additionally, 152 filled the research instruments, making a response rate of 72.4%

The structured questionnaires were distributed to the ECDE centers and filled by the ECDE managers. At the same time, in-depth interviews were conducted on the key informants who were the chief officer and chair of sub-county committees handling ECDE implementation. Document analysis supplemented and validated the data collected through questionnaires and interviews.

Content analysis was also applied to examine and interpret patterns within documents, reports, and text for the qualitative data. For quantitative data, descriptive analysis and inferential statistics, including multiple regression and correlation analyses. Tables and charts were used to display quantitative results, while qualitative findings were presented through thematic summaries and selected quotes.

FINDINGS

Descriptive Analysis Results

Table 1: Public Involvement

STATEMENT	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
The Laikipia County government encourages citizens to actively participate in all processes linked to ECDE policy	5.3%	5.3%	12.5%	55.9%	21.1%	3.82	.997
Citizens in Laikipia County are regularly consulted on the implementation phases of ECDE policy matters.	5.9%	5.9%	17.8%	44.1%	26.3%	3.79	1.083
The Laikipia County government seeks feedback from citizens during the policy implementation process	1.3%	3.9%	23%	48.7%	23%	3.88	.852
Information about ECDE policy is readily accessible to the public.	5.3%	3.3%	23%	42.1%	25.7%	3.78	1.054
The Laikipia County government provides comprehensive information about ECDE policy operational guidelines	4.6%	3.3%	15.1%	45.4%	31.6%	3.96	1.009
Citizens have easy access to the information needed to understand the ECDE policy implementation process.	2.6%	7.2%	26.3%	40.8%	23%	3.74	0.979
There are mechanisms in place to ensure diverse public representation in policy discussions.	3.9%	11.2%	37.5%	28.3%	19.1%	3.47	1.048
The Laikipia County government considers the views of different demographic groups is incorporated in the ECDE policy	2.6%	7.2%	23%	50%	17.1%	3.71	0.923
Citizens are proportionately represented in implementation of the ECDE policy	7.2%	30.3%	17.8%	30.3%	14.5%	3.14	1.209
Citizens are encouraged to contribute their ideas and suggestions about the ECDE policy for young pupils	5.3%	17.8%	32.2%	33.6%	11.2%	3.28	1.049
The Laikipia County government values the quantity of input received from the public.	7.2%	17.1%	23%	39.5%	13.2%	3.34	1.128
There are opportunities for citizens to make contributions to the policy discussions.	2.6%	19.1%	17.1%	43.4%	17.8%	3.55	1.072
Recommendations made by citizens are taken into account when implementing the ECDE	5.3%	18.4%	33.6%	28.3%	14.5%	3.28	1.088
The Laikipia County government has a track record of implementing citizen suggestions.	3.3%	1.9%	21.7%	44.7%	28.3%	3.93	.939
Citizens feel that their recommendations have a direct impact on ECDE policy outcomes.	0.7%	5.3%	14.5%	51.3%	28.3%	4.01	0.837
Aggregate Scores						3.65	1.018

In general, the respondents agreed that public involvement helped in ECDE policy implementation, based on aggregate scores of 3.65 and 1.018 for the means and standard deviation respectively. These results concur with Cardullo and Kitchin (2019) who revealed that citizen-centric initiatives aligned with the roles of citizens as stewards and civic duty in the transformation and development of initiatives. Furthermore, Ochieng' (2019) recorded that ECDE policy was successfully implemented in counties.

Table 2: ECDE Policy Implementation

STATEMENT	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
The Laikipia County government is pushing for 100% enrolment of ECDE pupils	5.9%	3.3%	19.7%	36.8%	33.6%	3.89	1.096
The county has set measures that ensure retention of all pupils in the ECDE program for the three years	5.2%	4.6%	13.2%	35.5%	40.8%	4.03	1.101
There is transition of all ECDE pupils to the next academic class -Grade One	5.2%	2.6%	20.4%	42.1%	28.9%	3.87	1.034
All the children can easily access ECDE centres across the county	7.2%	7.2%	17.7%	47.4%	19.7%	3.65	1.102
The Laikipia County government actively seeks to provide equitable ECDE programs for all children	4.6%	10.5%	22.4%	39.5%	23%	3.66	1.086
The ECDE curriculum is comprehensive to include all young learners	5.2%	10.5%	19.1%	46.7%	18.4%	3.63	1.066
The ECDE policy ensures all teachers are trained by recognized institutions	5.2%	8.6%	21.7%	51.3%	13.1%	3.59	0.999
The Laikipia County government has programs for professional development of ECDE teachers	5.2%	6.6%	32.9%	35.5%	19.7%	3.57	1.045
The county has employed sufficient number of ECDE teachers for low teacher-pupil ratio	2.6%	9.2%	20.4%	35.5%	32.2%	3.85	1.057
ECDE curriculum delivery in the county meets education standards	1.3%	10.5%	23.7%	40.8%	23.7%	3.75	.978
Learning institutions employed in the ECDE centers abide by the National Pre-Primary Education Policy	0.7%	8.6%	21%	45.4%	24.3%	3.84	.914
The county often evaluates the learning processes for quality learning outcomes in the ECDE centers	2.6%	15.1%	25%	37.5%	19.7%	3.56	1.052
Laikipia county sets sufficient budget allocating to implementing ECDE policy	3.9%	2.6%	17.7%	48.7%	26.9%	3.92	.952
The funds are sufficient to construct child-friendly institutions	4.6%	7.9%	20.4%	36.2%	30.9%	3.81	1.102
The community members contribute resources to support ECDE initiatives.	1.3%	3.3%	21%	46.7%	27.6%	3.96	.860
The Laikipia County Government ensures provision of adequate infrastructure	1.9%	7.2%	19.7%	45.4%	25.7%	3.85	.951
The ECDE centers have sanitary facilities for use for the young learners	4.6%	5.2%	23%	38.8%	28.3%	3.80	1.053
The facilities cater for the holistic learning by having classrooms and play areas	1.9%	5.2%	19.1%	46.7%	26.9%	3.91	.920
Aggregate Scores						3.79	1.020

Source: Research Data (2026)

Results in Table 2 show an aggregate mean score of 3.79 and standard deviation of 1.020 on respondent's view on ECDE policy implementation. This infers that many of the respondents agreed that ECDE policy implementation has been successfully done within the Laikipia County Government. From the interviews, it was shared as interviewee 1 said *“there is high enrolment rates due to access and equity, with specific focus on marginalized and pastoralist communities”*, while interviewee 6 noted that success entailed *“smooth transitions from ECDE to Grade one, with high transition rates recorded in all wards across the Laikipia County.”*

Multiple Regression Analysis Results

Pearson Moment Correlation Analysis

Table 3: Correlation Analysis

		ECDE Implementation	Policy	Public Involvement
ECDE Implementation	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000		
	N	152		
Public Involvement	Pearson Correlation	.424*		1
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000		.000

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation results show a positive and moderate relationship between the aspects of public involvement and ECDE policy implementation, based on $r = 0.424$. This implies that increased public involvement moderately affects ECDE policy implementation in Laikipia County.

Regression Analysis

Model analysis, analysis of variance and beta coefficient were conducted, with results shown herein:

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.803 ^a	.645	.638	.36924

The results in Table 4 indicate that there was a close relationship between the public involvement and ECDE policy implementation in Laikipia County, based on r value of 0.803. Further results indicate that variation in ECDE policy implementation in Laikipia County was influenced by public involvement. The overall effect of 0.645 explained 64.5% changes in ECDE policy implementation was due to effects of public involvement and there is a residual effect of 35.5% that accounts for other components that affect ECDE policy implementation, but excluded from the present research.

Table 5: Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	104.336	1	104.336	186.423	.000 ^b
	Residual	83.951	150	.559		
	Total	188.287	151			

a. Dependent Variable: ECDE Policy Implementation

b. Predictors: (Constant), Public Involvement

The researcher conducted an analysis of variance (ANOVA) test to determine if the regression model is statistically significant in predicting the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. The results in Table 5 are as ($F(1, 150) = 186.423$ and $p = 0.000 < 0.05$), which implies that the adopted regression model is fit in determining the effect between the study variables of public involvement and implementation of ECDE policy in Laikipia County.

Table 6: Beta Regression Coefficient

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	.466	.203		2.295	.023
Public Involvement	.372	.186	.284	2.000	.000

The beta regression coefficient was carried out to show how each individual variable affected ECDE policy implementation in Laikipia County.

The results in Table 6 are such that at constant level, ECDE policy implementation was at 0.466 without the influence of any aspect of public participation. The results also showed that public involvement at ($\beta = 0.372$, $t = 2.000$ and $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$), infers that when all other dimensions are held at constant level, then public involvement enhanced ECDE policy implementation by 0.372 units.

As such, the resultant regression equation is as

$$Y = 0.466 + 0.372X_1$$

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ECDE policy implementation set to reverse the declining pupil enrolment rates in Laikipia County that had dropped from 89% in 2017 to 66% in 2021 and the teacher-pupil ratio increased from 1:29 in 2021 to 1:32 in 2021, showing there were fewer teachers to handle the young learners, which equally impacted quality of learning. To resolve these challenges, the study envisioned that improved public involvement in ECDE policy would lead to its successful implementation, while meeting its agenda. From the views of the respondents, they largely agreed that the county encouraged their active participation in matters early education, since their suggestions had a direct impact on educational outcomes for the young learners.

Furthermore, results showed that public involvement had the had a strong predictor effect to ECDE policy implementation. Thus, drawing the conclusion that public involvement is an important concept when implementing the ECDE policy. Public involvement entails engaging the citizens, representing the interests of the people, sharing information on the policy initiatives, checking the contribution of the public and considering the suggestions and recommendations from the people. Hence, this study concluding that public involvement resulted in improved ECDE policy implementation in terms of enrolment and retention of learners, resource mobilization and delivering quality learning materials and curriculum to the young learners.

In seeking the successful implementation of ECDE policy as high enrolment and retention rates, quality learning, resourcing, infrastructural facilities, access, equity and inclusivity and capacity building for the teachers; this study makes the following recommendations: the Laikipia County and other county governments to develop structures and initiate forums that demand representation from all education stakeholders especially parents and local communities. These stakeholders must be fully engaged in reviewing the policy, budget approval, implementing and monitoring the ECDE policy. Additionally, the study suggests that the county educational officials organize regular meetings in a rotational manner from one ward to encourage involvement of the public in ECDE educational program and initiatives.

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