

The Relationship Between Citizen Perceptions on Government Transparency and Economic Development: A Case of Thika Town Sub-County, in Kiambu County, Kenya

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Abstract:

This study examined the relationship between citizens' perception of government transparency and economic development in Thika Town Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya. The data collected on the first objective are explained in this section. Financial constraints were found to hinder citizens' ability and willingness to access resource allocation information, limiting their capacity to travel to county offices, access the internet, or purchase materials containing the relevant information. Despite this, respondents agreed to a great extent that the county government is transparent about how funds are spent in different sectors (mean = 3.7597, std. deviation = 0.69095), that the process for county resource allocation is clearly communicated to citizens (mean = 3.5581, std. deviation = 0.83128), and that information about how resources are allocated is easily accessible to the public (mean = 3.5116, std. deviation = 0.91101). The study's third objective was to assess whether openness and transparency of the county's contracting and procurement practices influence economic development in Thika Town Sub-County in Kiambu County, Kenya. The findings were as follows. Concerning openness and transparency of county contracting and procurement practices, 63% of respondents indicated that information about county contracts and procurements is private, while 22% said it is available, and 15% were unsure. The majority of respondents (61%) indicated that the county's contracting and procurement processes are somewhat transparent, while 24% said they are very transparent, and 15% said they are not transparent at all. Even when information on county contracts and procurements is available, it may not be easily accessible due to bureaucratic hurdles, outdated or incomplete online resources, and the need for personal visits to county offices. Despite these challenges, respondents greatly agreed that the procurement and tendering process is open and transparent (mean = 3.7907, std. deviation = 0.78735), that increased transparency in contracting/procurement has benefited local businesses (mean = 3.7054, std. deviation = 0.80314), and that award criteria and selection methods are clearly defined and available (mean = 3.6419, std. deviation = 0.93763). The study concludes that while efforts exist to promote transparency in resource allocation, there are still gaps in the adequacy and accessibility of information. Financial constraints can be a barrier to citizens' engagement with government processes and access to information, potentially hindering their ability to hold the government accountable and contribute to economic development. The study concludes that addressing financial barriers and improving the accessibility and comprehensibility of resource allocation information could enhance citizens' participation and, consequently, economic development. The

findings provide valuable insights for policymakers, civil society organizations, and citizens in Thika Town Sub-County and beyond, highlighting the need for a comprehensive and balanced approach to transparency reforms that prioritizes both information disclosure and citizen empowerment. The study concludes that by addressing the identified challenges and strengthening transparency and participation mechanisms, local governments can create a more conducive environment for sustainable economic growth and improve the lives of their citizens.

Key Words; Transparency, Citizen Participation, Budget Process

Introduction:

This study focused on two vital concepts in governance government transparency and economic development. On the one hand, government transparency is the openness of operations, processes, and decision-making in a government (Meijer et al., 2018; Adiputra et al., 2018). It is attained through allowing citizens access to timely and accurate information about policies, decisions, and budgets (Michener et al., 2021). On the other hand, economic development refers to the fiscal well-being of a country or county administrative area. Economic development is attained when employment rates are high, infrastructure is well-maintained, and there is easy access to public services for all (Cook, 2018). The two concepts are interrelated.

Firstly, government transparency is visible to citizens as stakeholders in the governance of a country or county. They may view the government as being less transparent, damaging trust between themselves and the government (Androniceanu, 2021). They may also view the government as being trustworthy owing to the level of transparency achieved. This view can affect the level of economic development. Studies show that higher transparency leads to high public trust in government (Buell et al., 2021; Schmidhuber et al., 2021; Lind, 2018). In such cases, the citizens are encouraged to participate in government projects by doing their civic duty of paying their taxes without being pushed (Kim & Lee, 2019; Wirtz et al., 2019; Neshkova & Kalesnikaite, 2019). They are also likely to invest in local markets and buy from local sellers owing to the view of integrity in how the government regulates the business landscape (Tavares & da Cruz, 2020; Andrews et al., 2020). Hence, higher perceptions of

government transparency generally correlates with improved conditions to enable economic growth and development. Transparency builds public trust and participatory governance.

Globally, there is a growing focus on improving transparency and accountability in governance. International organizations like the United Nations and World Bank advocate for open and transparent governments that empower citizens. They also recognize that open, participatory governments are integral for achieving development goals like poverty reduction. This is why transparency and accountability in governance have increasingly become global priorities (Brusca et al., 2018; Paschke et al., 2018). Studies show a positive correlation between transparency and development indicators across regions. Research from the World Bank finds the most transparent countries tend to have higher GDP per capita. The World Bank (2023) reports that Scandinavian nations scoring highest on transparency indices (93/100 on the Open Budget Index) enjoy GDP per capita over \$50,000. Anheier et al. (2013) study on government transparency in Germany finds that the corruption levels of a government influence its economic activities towards development and growth. Using dynamic models, the study analyzed 48 countries, including Germany, finding a significant adverse effect of corruption on the level and growth of GDP per capita. In France, Canada, Australia, and the UK, Moretti's (2018) study found that budget transparency improves fiscal sustainability. They determined that budget transparency is positively correlated with the financial sustainability of governments. Another study focusing on Greece found that the higher the Open Budget Index (OBI) of a government, as

published by the International Budget Partnership (IBP), the higher the economic development as measured by GDP (Alt et al., 2014; Cuadrado-Ballesteros & Bisogno, 2022).

Governance transparency and economic development are interrelated concepts, with transparency generally building public trust and participation in a way that enables economic growth. However, the relationship is complex, as not all studies find improvements in transparency directly correlate with gains like GDP. Contextual factors can also interfere with and tamper with the relationship. In Kenya, laws and devolution have aimed to enhance transparency and curb corruption, yet these issues continue to dampen economic opportunities, especially at the county level. Thika Town Sub-County in Kiambu County provides an opportunity to examine how increasing transparency could impact residents' welfare and growth. However, questions remain about the effectiveness of transparency so far in Kiambu County, Kenya's governance, as true openness has yet to be achieved. As a result, this study will explore what transparency gaps still exist within Kiambu County, Kenya, governance and how these shortcomings hinder the county's ability to achieve its economic development aspirations and realize greater potential for its people.

Statement of the Problem:

While transparency and open government initiatives have grown globally, challenges remain in fully realizing their development benefits, especially in developing countries. In Kenya, past studies have found inadequate transparency persists as a hindrance to realising key national priorities such as the Vision 2030 development agenda (Kithinji, 2011). Specifically, studies by the EACC have reported ongoing issues of lack of openness, unaccountable use of public funds, and limited citizen participation in governance at the county level (Munyao, 2019; Makokha, 2014). This has compromised oversight and economic opportunities in areas like procurement, infrastructure delivery, and business regulation. Kiambu County in Kenya exemplifies these

challenges. As one of Kenya's fastest urbanizing regions, transparency around land investments, municipal projects, and public-private partnerships is vital for equitable and sustainable growth (Wanjiku, 2019). However, surveys by the county government's own audit department as well as watchdog groups point to deficiencies in access to information, unclear regulatory processes, and unexplained variations in development budgets.

As a result, citizen trust in devolved institutions remains weak, according to recent Afro barometer surveys, potentially discouraging participation and investment needed to unlock the county's full economic potential (Wanderi, 2016). If not addressed, these issues of inadequate transparency threaten to undermine not just accountability but also Kiambu County's progress on national agendas and participation in Vision 2030's projected GDP growth. Therefore, this study aims to provide empirical evidence on the relationship between citizen perceptions of transparency and key economic indicators in Thika Town Sub-County, Kenya. Findings sought to inform ongoing reforms by county authorities to enhance transparency, accountability, and participation for inclusive and sustainable development

Methodology:

The study employed a quantitative-dominant mixed research methodology to examine the relationships between the variables. Vebrianto et al. (2020) define quantitative-dominant mixed research methodology as a mixed methods approach where quantitative methods are emphasized more than qualitative methods. The quantitative methodology is defined by Hirose and Creswell (2023) as the techniques and methods used for obtaining and analyzing numerical data. Quantitative data will be collected using a structured questionnaire survey of residents in Thika Town Sub-County. The survey gathered data to analyze how the accessibility of fiscal and budget information, citizens' participation in budget formulation, and transparency of procurement practices will impact economic development indicators.

The quantitative part of the overall methodology was appropriate as it allowed for the collection of standardized data from a large population sample to statistically test the hypotheses (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). The semi-structured questionnaire ensured all respondents are asked the same questions in a predetermined sequence, minimizing potential bias (Husband, 2020). This provided objectively measurable data, which then was subjected to inferential statistical analysis to determine the strength and direction of associations between the independent and dependent variables. The numeric focus of this study lend itself well to statistical analysis for hypothesis testing. Overall, a quantitative-dominant mixed methodology using questionnaire surveys was best suited to examine numerical relationships between transparency and economic indicators, as hypothesized in the conceptual framework.

While quantitative methods dominated this study, qualitative methods were also employed, but to a lesser extent. Qualitative research uses non-numerical methods such as interviews, focus groups and observations to understand phenomena (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Yarkoni, 2022). Qualitative research has some advantages. It provided an in-depth understanding of people's experiences, views and behaviours through detailed descriptions in people's own words. This uncovered nuanced insights that are not achievable through quantitative data alone. It is also useful for exploring new topics where variables are unknown (Miller et al., 2019). However, qualitative data has some weaknesses. It is time-consuming to analyze, and drawing conclusions can be subjective. Sample sizes are typically small, so findings may need to be more generalizable. There were also privacy and anonymity issues in published quotes (Given, 2008). For this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders to help interpret and explain some of the quantitative findings. They provided context on citizens' experiences of participation and transparency measures. While not the primary focus, this qualitative component helped add depth and complement the statistical analysis. It aimed to fill

any gaps not captured by the survey and give voice to participants directly

Primary data was collected through administered questionnaires. Residents randomly selected from voter registers was visited in their homes for consented participation. Secondary data was supplement primary by providing historical economic trend data to correlate with changes in documented transparency practices over time (Sileyew, 2019). Two weeks was allocated for fieldwork to accommodate respondents' schedules and allow the collection of a representative sample.

Questionnaires were deployed in this case to gather the data. A questionnaire refers to a research instrument consisting of a structured set of questions designed to collect data from respondents (Parfitt, 2013). A semi-structured questionnaire was the most appropriate main research instrument as it allows for the collection of standardized quantitative data needed to address the research objectives (Ahmad et al., 2019). The questionnaires were developed based on gaps identified in the literature review and variables in the conceptual framework. Close-ended questions were primarily used to gather objective, measurable data on indicators like access to information, participation in budgeting, perceptions of transparency, and economic metrics (Taherdoost, 2022). Also, Likert scale questions will also assess attitudes by asking respondents to rate statements (Taherdoost, 2019). The questionnaires were including open-ended questions that will include questions without multiple choice answers. The respondents were free to answer the question as they please and to the best of their knowledge. The merit of such questions is that they help to collect raw, unfiltered opinions of the respondents, helping to provide a nuanced view of the subject matter (Taherdoost, 2022). Again, the questionnaires were pre-tested through a pilot study to ensure all questions were clear and unbiased and systematically elicit the intended information (Lowe, 2019). The structured format and emphasis on close-ended questions also supported reliability by limiting variation due to how questions are understood or interpreted.

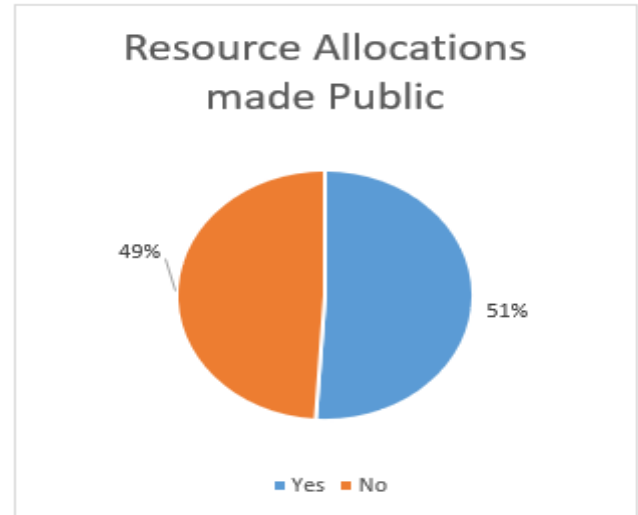
Data collected through questionnaires was coded and entered into IBM's SPSS v.26 for analysis. SPSS provides robust tools for descriptive, correlational, and regression analysis needed to address the research questions (Seeram, 2019). Through it, descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, measures of central tendency, and dispersion, was characterized the sample population (Mishra et al., 2019). Also, inferential statistics was analysed to test the hypotheses. Multiple linear regression decomposes the relationships to quantify the individual predictive power of independent variables on dependent variables while controlling for confounding factors (Etemadi & Khashei, 2021).

Results and Discussions:

Resource Allocations Publicly Disclosed and Accessible:

The respondents were asked to indicate whether Kiambu County resource allocations are publicly disclosed and accessible. Their responses were as shown below.

Figure 4. 1: Resource Allocations Publicly Disclosed and Accessible

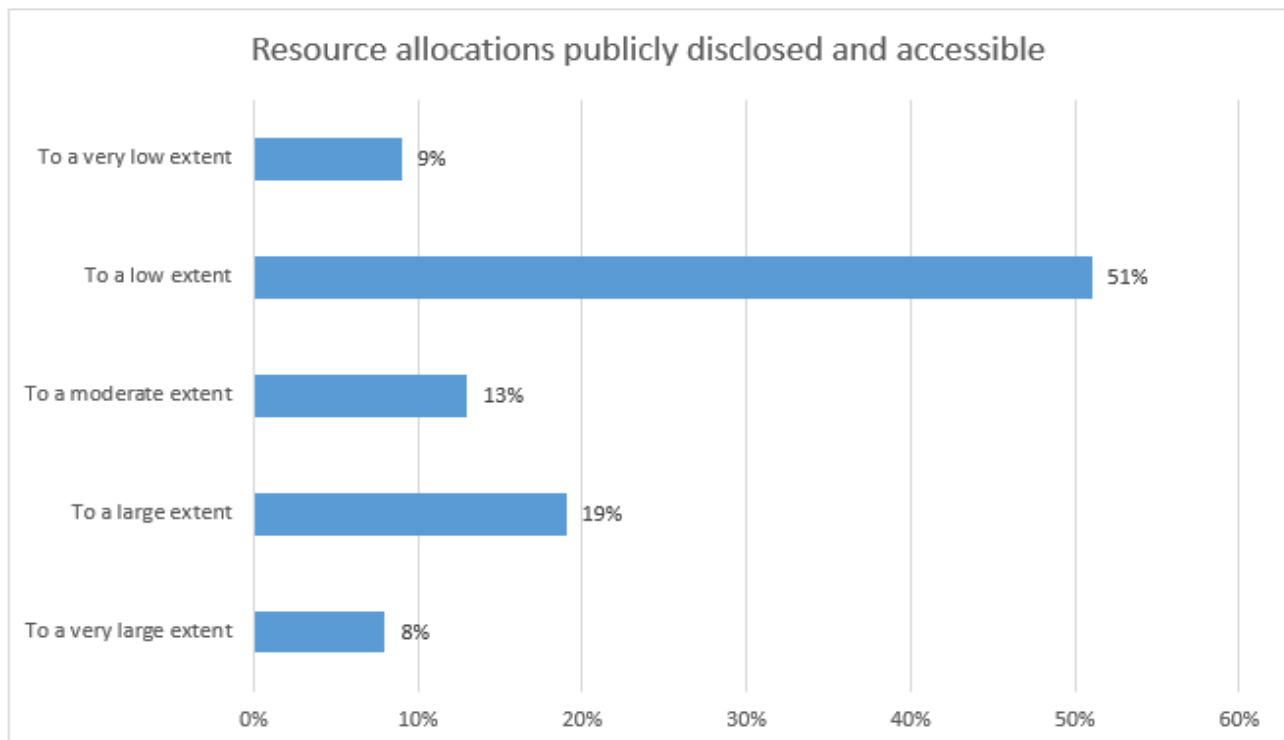


For most of the respondents, their response was the affirmative that Kiambu County resource allocations are publicly disclosed and accessible (51%), while 49% denied it. These results indicate that residents of Kiambu County public find resource allocation information publicly disclosed and accessible.

Extent of Disclosure and Accessibility of Resource Allocations

The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they think Kiambu County resource allocations are publicly disclosed and accessible. Their responses were as shown below.

Figure 4. 2: Extent of Disclosure and Accessibility of Resource Allocations



The majority of the respondents (51%) indicated that Kiambu County resource allocations are publicly disclosed and accessible to a low extent, followed by 19% who said to a large extent, 13% to a moderate extent, 9% to a very low extent, and 8% to a very large extent. These results suggest that most residents of Kiambu County find the public disclosure and accessibility of resource allocation information to be inadequate.

Impact of Financial Constraints on Access to Resource Allocation Information:

The respondents were asked how financial constraints impact their ability or willingness to access information about county resource allocation. Several respondents provided insightful answers to this question. One respondent stated, "Financial constraints limit my ability to travel to the county offices to access the information in person, and I cannot afford the cost of internet access to view the information online." Another respondent mentioned, "Due to financial limitations, I cannot afford to purchase newspapers or other materials that might contain the resource

allocation information." A third respondent commented, "Financial constraints reduce my willingness to spend time and money seeking out this information, as I have to prioritize my limited resources on more pressing needs." These responses indicate that financial constraints can significantly hinder citizens' ability and willingness to access information about county resource allocation. Limited financial resources may restrict their capacity to travel to county offices, access the internet, or purchase materials containing the relevant information. Moreover, financial limitations may force citizens to prioritize their resources on more immediate needs, reducing their willingness to invest time and money in seeking out resource allocation information.

Statements on Transparency and Resource Allocation:

In this case, the respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with these statements on transparency and resource allocation. Their responses are as tabled below.

Table 4. 1: Statements on Transparency and Resource Allocation

Statements on Transparency and Resource Allocation	Mean	Std. Deviation
The process for county resource allocation is clearly communicated to citizens.	3.5581	0.83128
Information about how resources are allocated is easily accessible to the public.	3.5116	0.91101
The county government is transparent about how funds are spent in different sectors.	3.7597	0.69095
Public participation in budgeting helps ensure resources are allocated transparently.	3.1938	0.76644

The balanced growth theory emphasizes the importance of proportional advancement across interconnected sectors for sustainable long-term growth (Prabhu et al., 2019). The survey results show that respondents agreed to a great extent that the county government is transparent about how

funds are spent in different sectors (mean = 3.7597, std. deviation = 0.69095) and that the process for county resource allocation is clearly communicated to citizens (mean = 3.5581, std. deviation = 0.83128). These findings align with the balanced growth theory, which suggests that transparency in

resource allocation is crucial for promoting balanced and inclusive growth across various sectors of the economy. However, the survey results also indicate that respondents only moderately agreed that public participation in budgeting helps ensure resources are allocated transparently (mean = 3.1938, std. deviation = 0.76644). This finding suggests that there may be some imbalances in the implementation of transparency initiatives in resource allocation. As the balanced growth theory posits, reforms focused on information disclosure alone may not yield optimal results unless accompanied by capacity development and participatory opportunities that empower citizens (Mooror Prabhu et al., 2019). The survey results highlight the need for the County government of Kiambu to strengthen public participation mechanisms in the budgeting process to ensure more transparent and inclusive resource allocation.

The attribution theory of perception provides a framework for understanding how citizens' perceptions of government transparency can influence their engagement and sense of empowerment (Weiner, 2014). The survey results show that respondents agreed to a great extent that information about how resources are allocated is easily accessible to the public (mean = 3.5116, std. deviation = 0.91101). This finding aligns with the attribution theory, which suggests that when information about government actions, decisions, and outcomes is readily available, citizens are better equipped to make informed judgments and attributions (Bauhr & Grimes, 2014). The availability and accessibility of information on resource allocation, as indicated by the survey results, can foster a sense of empowerment and ownership among citizens. When citizens have access to information about how resources are allocated, they are more likely to attribute positive outcomes to their own actions as engaged stakeholders, such as through public participation in the budgeting process (Weiner, 2014). This sense of empowerment can encourage further engagement and help realize the long-term

developmental benefits of transparency, as suggested by the attribution theory.

However, the moderate agreement on the role of public participation in ensuring transparent resource allocation (mean = 3.1938, std. deviation = 0.76644) suggests that there may be some challenges in fostering a strong sense of empowerment and engagement among citizens. As the attribution theory recognizes, if citizens perceive that their participation does not effectively influence resource allocation decisions, they may attribute lack of transparency to external factors, such as government inefficiency or lack of political will (Weiner, 2010). This can lead to a sense of disempowerment and reduced engagement. Therefore, it is crucial for the County government of Kiambu to continue strengthening public participation mechanisms and ensuring that citizen input is meaningfully considered in resource allocation decisions. The findings on transparency in resource allocation in Thika Town Sub-County generally align with the balanced growth theory and the attribution theory of perception. The results suggest that the County government of Kiambu has made efforts to promote transparency in how funds are spent across different sectors and in communicating the resource allocation process to citizens. However, the moderate agreement on the role of public participation in ensuring transparent resource allocation highlights the need for further strengthening participatory mechanisms to foster a stronger sense of empowerment and engagement among citizens, as suggested by the theories.

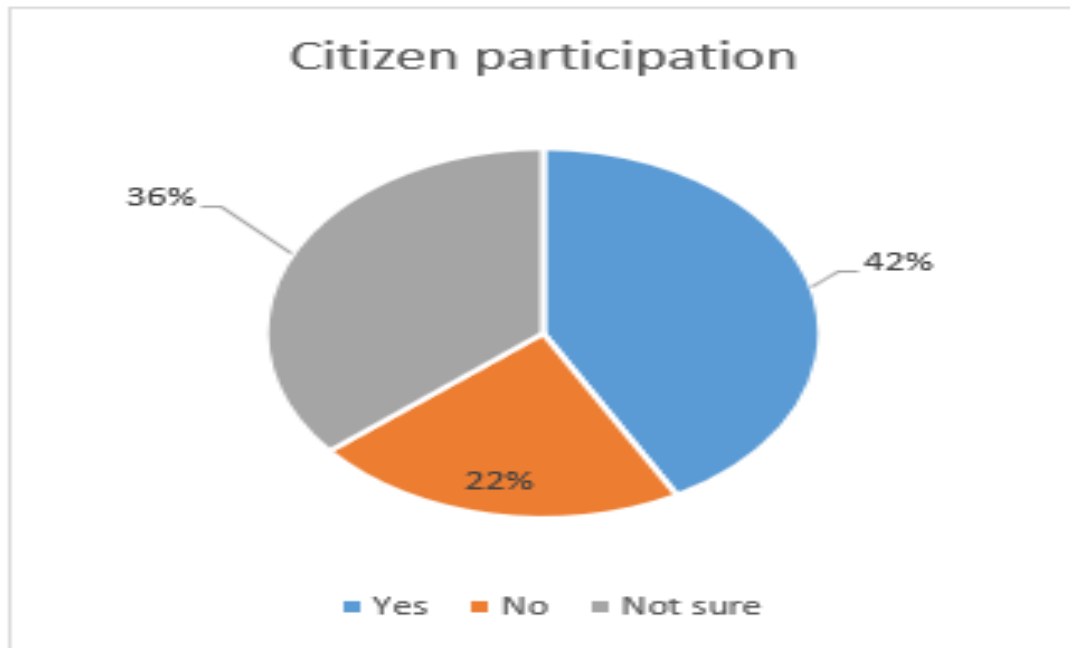
Objective 2

The second objective to be covered was to evaluate the effect of citizens' participation in the county's budgeting processes on economic development in Thika Town Sub-County in Kiambu County, Kenya. Data collected on this objective was as follows.

Citizen Participation in Budgeting Process:

The respondents were also asked to indicate the citizen participation in budgeting process in Kiambu County. The results are shown below.

Figure 4. 3: Citizen Participation in Budgeting Process



The results show that 42% of the respondents affirmed that citizens participate in the Kiambu county budgeting process, while 22% denied it, and 36% were not sure. This indicates that a significant portion of the respondents believe that citizens are involved in the county's budgeting process, although a considerable percentage still determine citizen participation.

Modes of Citizen Participation in the Budgeting Process;

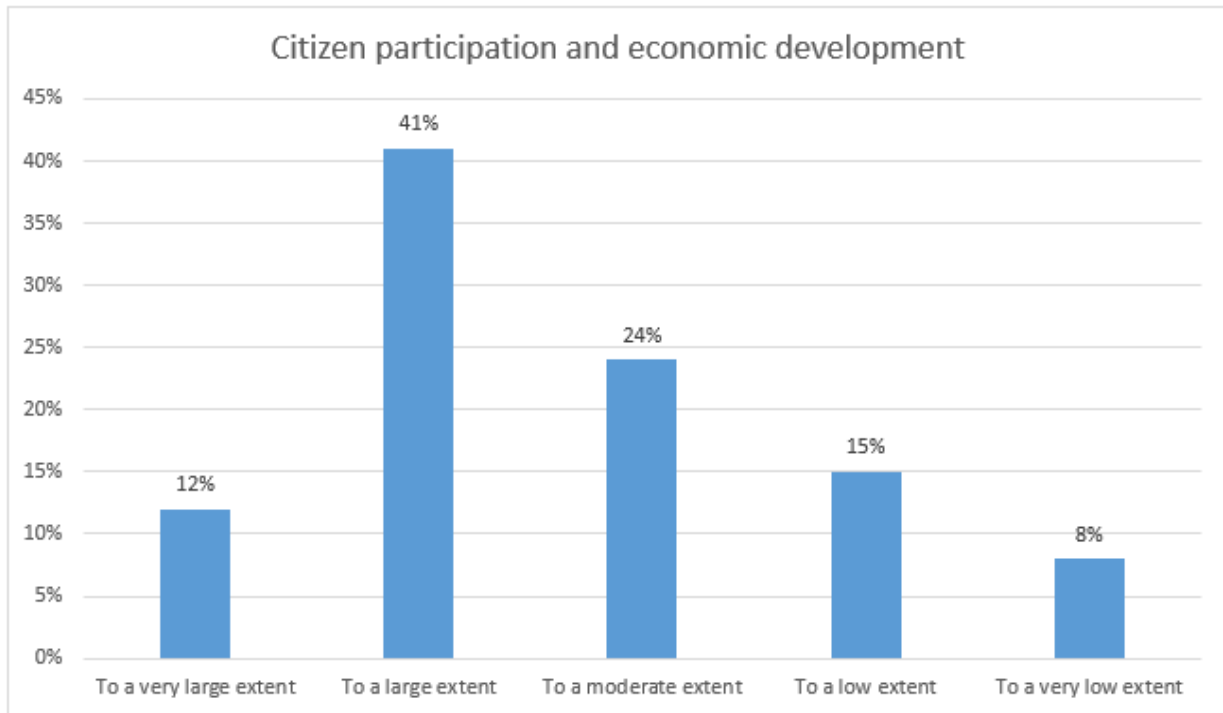
The respondents who affirmed that citizens participate in the Kiambu county budgeting process were asked to indicate how they participate. Several respondents provided insightful answers to this question. One respondent stated, "I participate in the budgeting process through public forums organized by the county government, where citizens can provide input and feedback on the proposed budget allocations." Another respondent mentioned, "I engage in the budgeting process by attending town hall meetings and providing my perception on the county's development priorities and how resources should be allocated." A third respondent commented, "I participate in the

budgeting process by submitting written proposals and recommendations to the county government through the designated channels, such as email or physical drop boxes." These responses indicate that citizens in Kiambu County participate in the budgeting process through various means, including public forums, town hall meetings, and written submissions. These participation mechanisms allow citizens to provide input, feedback, and recommendations on the proposed budget allocations and the county's development priorities. By engaging in these processes, citizens can contribute to ensuring that resources are allocated transparently and in line with the community's needs.

Citizen Participation and Economic Development:

The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which citizen participation has impacted economic development in Thika Town Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya. Their responses were as follows.

Figure 4. 4: Citizen Participation and Economic Development



The majority of the respondents (41%) indicated that citizen participation had impacted economic development to a large extent, followed by 24% who said to a moderate extent, 15% to a low extent, 12% to a very large extent, and 8% to a very low extent. These results suggest that most respondents believe that citizen participation has had a significant positive impact on economic

development in the Thika Town Sub-County in Kiambu County, Kenya.

Statements on Citizens' Participation in the County's Budgeting:

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with various statements related to citizen participation in budgeting. Their responses are as follows.

Table 4. 2: Statements on Citizens' Participation in the County's Budgeting

Statements on Citizens' Participation in the County's Budgeting	Mean	Std. Deviation
Citizen participation helps ensure resources are allocated to priority public needs.	3.6589	0.98024
Public participation mechanisms (e.g. forums, reperception) enable meaningful citizen input.	3.6124	0.1202
Citizens are adequately informed about budget processes and how to participate.	3.5504	0.86037
County government of Kiambu is responsive to feedback received through public engagement.	3.9287	0.78074

The balanced growth theory emphasizes the importance of proportional advancement across interconnected sectors for sustainable long-term growth (Prabhu et al., 2019). The survey results show that respondents greatly agree that citizen participation helps ensure resources are allocated to priority public needs (mean = 3.6589, std. deviation = 0.98024). This finding aligns with the balanced growth theory, which suggests that transparency and participatory opportunities that empower citizens should grow in balance with enhanced availability of open data (Prabhu et al., 2019). By engaging citizens in the budgeting process and ensuring that their input is meaningfully considered, the County government of Kiambu can promote more balanced and inclusive growth that addresses the needs of various sectors and communities. The survey results also indicate that respondents greatly agree that public participation mechanisms enable meaningful citizen input (mean = 3.6124, std. deviation = 0.1202) and that citizens are adequately informed about budget processes and how to participate (mean = 3.5504, std. deviation = 0.86037). These findings suggest that the County government of Kiambu has made efforts to create an enabling environment for citizen participation, which is crucial for fostering balanced growth. As the literature review highlights, transparency initiatives should be accompanied by efforts to improve public financial management systems, strengthen institutions, and enhance citizen engagement (Khagram et al., 2013).

The attribution theory of perception provides a framework for understanding how citizens' perceptions of government responsiveness can influence their engagement and sense of empowerment (Weiner, 2014). The survey results show that respondents greatly agree that the County government of Kiambu is responsive to feedback received through public engagement (mean = 3.9287, std. deviation = 0.78074). This finding aligns with the attribution theory, which suggests that when citizens perceive the government as responsive to their demands and concerns, they are more likely to attribute positive

outcomes to their own actions and engagement (Weiner, 2014). The positive perceptions of government responsiveness, as indicated by the survey results, can foster a sense of empowerment and ownership among citizens. When citizens see a responsive relationship between their participation, government accountability, and development outcomes, they are more likely to remain engaged in the budgeting process and other participatory mechanisms (Weiner, 1972). This virtuous cycle of empowerment and engagement can help realize the long-term developmental benefits of transparency and participatory governance, as suggested by the attribution theory.

However, it is important to note that the attribution theory also recognizes the existence of biases that can influence people's perceptions and judgments (Weiner, 2014). For example, if citizens perceive that their input is not adequately considered or that the government is not responsive to their needs, they may attribute lack of progress to external factors, such as government inefficiency or lack of political will. This can lead to a sense of disempowerment and reduced engagement. Therefore, it is crucial for the County government of Kiambu to continue strengthening its responsiveness to citizen feedback and ensuring that participatory mechanisms are inclusive and meaningful. The survey findings on citizen participation in the budgeting process in Thika Town Sub-County align with the balanced growth theory and the attribution theory of perception. The results suggest that the County government of Kiambu has made efforts to promote citizen engagement and responsiveness, which can foster more balanced and inclusive growth, as well as a sense of empowerment and ownership among citizens. However, it is important to continue strengthening these efforts to maintain a virtuous cycle of participation and development, as suggested by the theories.

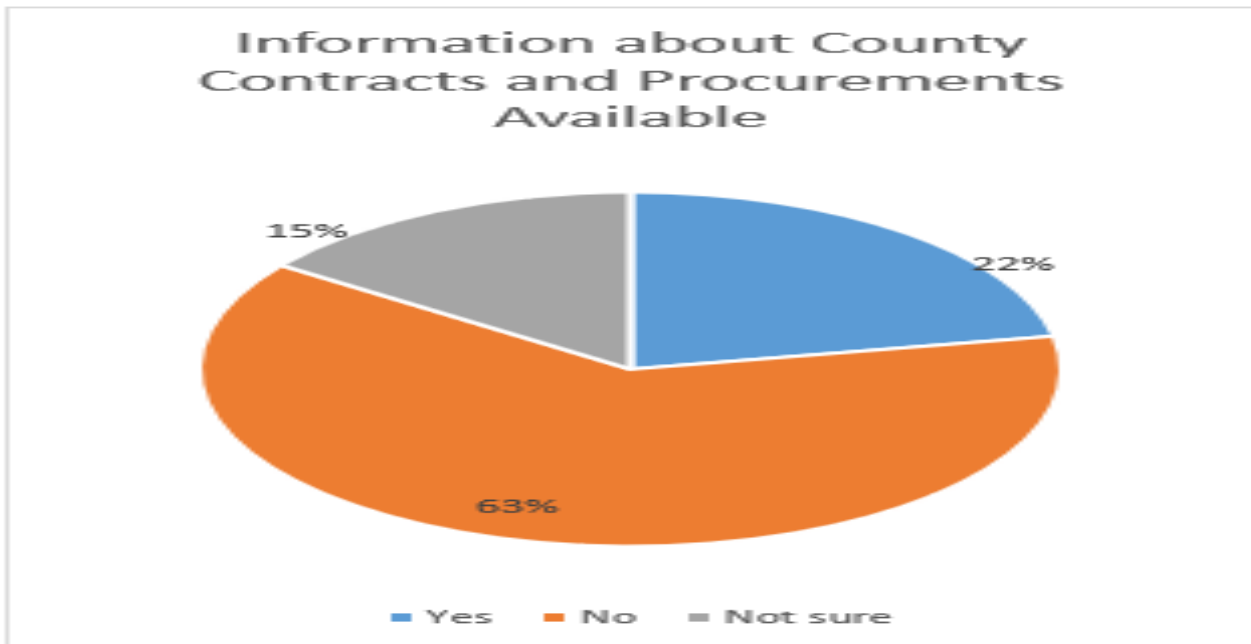
Objective 3

The researcher asked questions related to the third objective. The third objective was to assess the effect of openness and transparency of the county's contracting and procurement practices on

economic development in Thika Town Sub-County in Kiambu County, Kenya. The responses obtained were as presented below. Information about County Contracts and Procurements Available The

respondents were asked whether information about county contracts and procurements is publicly available. Their responses were as follows.

Figure 4. 5: Information about County Contracts and Procurements Available

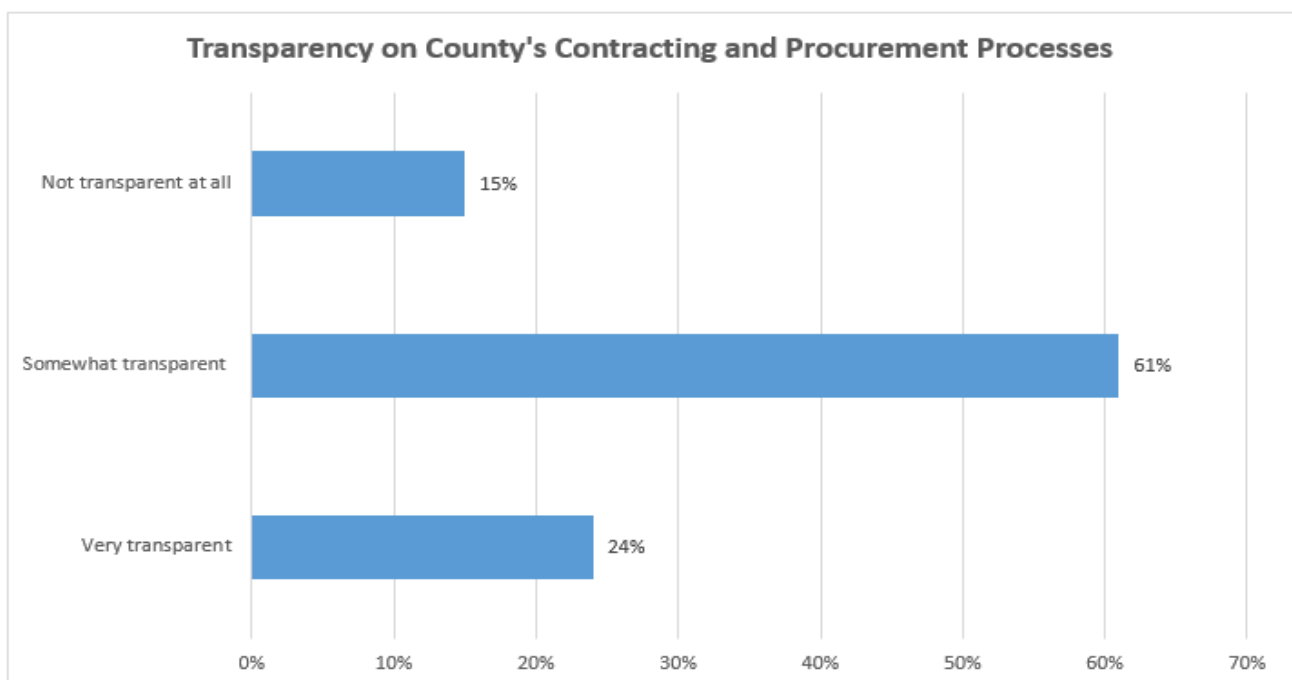


The results show that a majority of the respondents (63%) indicated that information about county contracts and procurements is not publicly available, while 22% said it is available, and 15% were not sure. This suggests that there is a perceived lack of transparency in the county's contracting and procurement processes, with most respondents believing that relevant information is not easily accessible to the public.

Transparency on County's Contracting and Procurement Processes

The respondents were asked to indicate how transparent the county's contracting and procurement processes are. Their responses were as follows.

Figure 4. 6: Transparency on County's Contracting and Procurement Processes



The majority of the respondents (61%) indicated that the county's contracting and procurement processes are somewhat transparent, while 24% said they are very transparent, and 15% said they are not transparent at all. This suggests that while there is some level of transparency in the county's contracting and procurement processes, there is still significant room for improvement. The fact that only 24% of the respondents consider the processes to be very transparent indicates that there are concerns about the overall level of openness and accountability in the county's contracting and procurement activities. The 15% who believe that the processes are not transparent at all further underscores the need for greater efforts to promote transparency and public access to information related to these processes. These results align with the findings from the previous question, where a majority of the respondents indicated that information about county contracts and procurements is not publicly available. The perceived lack of transparency in the contracting and procurement processes may be a contributing factor to the difficulty in accessing relevant information.

Ease of Access to Information on County Contracts and Procurements

The respondents who indicated that information about county contracts and procurements is

available were asked to describe how easy it is to access this information. Several respondents provided insightful answers to this question. One respondent stated, "Although the information is available, it is not easily accessible. One has to go through a lengthy and bureaucratic process to obtain the relevant documents." Another respondent mentioned, "The information is available on the county government's website, but it is not always up to date and can be difficult to navigate." A third respondent commented, "Accessing the information often requires personal visits to county offices, which can be time-consuming and inconvenient for many citizens." These responses suggest that even when information on county contracts and procurements is available, it may not be easily accessible to the public. Citizens may face bureaucratic hurdles, outdated or incomplete online resources, and the need for personal visits to county offices to obtain the relevant information.

Statements Transparency on County's Contracting and Procurement Processes

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with various statements related to transparency in contracting and procurement. Their responses are as follows.

Table 4. 3: Statements Transparency on County's Contracting and Procurement Processes

Statements Transparency on County's Contracting and Procurement Processes	Mean	Std. Deviation
Information about county contracts and awardees is publicly accessible	3.531	0.87484
The procurement and tendering process is open and transparent.	3.7907	0.78735
Award criteria and selection methods are clearly defined and available.	3.6419	0.93763
Oversight mechanisms help ensure contracting integrity and value for money.	3.5039	0.95419
Increased transparency in contracting/procurement has benefited local businesses	3.7054	0.80314

The findings from the survey on transparency in procurement and contracting processes in Thika Town Sub-County can be linked to the balanced growth theory and the attribution theory of perception. The balanced growth theory emphasizes the importance of proportional advancement across interconnected sectors for sustainable long-term growth (Prabhu et al., 2019). The survey results show that respondents generally agree that the procurement and tendering process is open and transparent (mean = 3.7907, std. deviation = 0.78735) and that increased transparency in contracting/procurement has benefited local businesses (mean = 3.7054, std. deviation = 0.80314). These findings align with the balanced growth theory, which suggests that transparency reforms should be accompanied by measures that promote inclusive growth and benefit various sectors of the economy, such as local businesses.

However, the relatively lower agreement on the public accessibility of information about county contracts and awardees (mean = 3.531, std. deviation = 0.87484) and the effectiveness of oversight mechanisms in ensuring contracting integrity and value for money (mean = 3.5039, std. deviation = 0.95419) indicates that there may be some imbalances in the implementation of transparency initiatives. As the balanced growth theory posits, reforms focused on information disclosure alone may not yield optimal results unless accompanied by capacity development and participatory opportunities that empower citizens (Mooror Prabhu et al., 2019). The survey results suggest that while there are efforts to promote transparency, more work may be needed to ensure that information is easily accessible to the public and that oversight mechanisms are effective in fostering accountability.

Further, the attribution theory of perception provides a framework for understanding how citizens' perceptions of government transparency can influence their engagement and sense of empowerment (Weiner, 2014). The survey results show that respondents generally agree that award criteria and selection methods are clearly defined

and available (mean = 3.6419, std. deviation = 0.93763), which can contribute to citizens' perceptions of fairness and transparency in the procurement process. According to the attribution theory, when citizens observe positive changes resulting from enhanced transparency, they are more likely to attribute progress to their own actions as engaged stakeholders, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility (Weiner, 2014).

However, the survey results also indicate that there is room for improvement in terms of public accessibility of information and the effectiveness of oversight mechanisms. If citizens perceive that information is not easily accessible or that oversight mechanisms are not effective, they may attribute any lack of progress or accountability to external factors, such as government inefficiency or lack of political will. This can lead to a sense of disempowerment and reduced engagement, as suggested by the attribution theory (Weiner, 1972). To foster a virtuous cycle of empowerment and engagement, as proposed by the attribution theory, it is important for the county government to continue improving the accessibility of information and strengthening oversight mechanisms. By doing so, citizens may be more likely to attribute positive changes to their own actions as engaged stakeholders, leading to sustained partnerships between the government and the public in promoting transparency and inclusive development. Essentially, the survey findings on transparency in procurement and contracting processes in Thika Town Sub-County generally align with the balanced growth theory and the attribution theory of perception. However, the results also highlight areas where improvements can be made to ensure more balanced and inclusive growth, as well as to foster a sense of empowerment and engagement among citizens through enhanced transparency and accountability measures.

Regression Analysis:

To determine the influence of transparency in county resource allocation, citizens' participation in the county's budgeting processes, and openness

and transparency of the county's contracting and procurement practices on economic development in Thika Town Sub-County in Kiambu County,

Kenya, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. The results of the regression analysis are presented in the following tables.

Table 4. 4: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5583.522	2	2791.761	368.456	1.96E-31
	Residual	394	52	7.577		
	Total	5977.522	54			

a. **Predictors:** Transparency in county resource allocation, Citizens' participation in the county's budgeting processes, Openness and transparency of the county's contracting and procurement practices

b. **Dependent Variable:** Economic development in Thika Town Sub-County in Kiambu County, Kenya.

The ANOVA table (Table 4.5) shows that the regression model is statistically significant ($F(2, 52) = 368.456, p < 0.05$). This indicates that the independent variables (transparency in county resource allocation, citizens' participation in the county's budgeting processes, and openness and

transparency of the county's contracting and procurement practices) have a significant impact on the dependent variable (economic development in Thika Town Sub-County in Kiambu County, Kenya).

Table 4. 5: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.966	0.934	0.932	2.727

a. Predictors: Transparency in county resource allocation, Citizens' participation in the county's budgeting processes, Openness and transparency of the county's contracting and procurement practices

The model summary table (Table 4.6) provides information about the goodness of fit of the regression model. The R-squared value (0.934) indicates that 93.4% of the variance in economic development can be explained by the independent

variables. The adjusted R-squared value (0.932) takes into account the number of independent variables and provides a more conservative estimate of the model's explanatory power.

Table 4. 6: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.353	0.523		2.587	1.25E-02
	Transparency in county resource Citizens' participation in the county's budgeting processes,	0.832	0.312	0.671	2.667	1.02E-02
	Openness and transparency of the county's contracting and procurement practices	0.764	0.303	0.548	2.521	1.48E-02
	Openness and transparency of the county's contracting and procurement practices	0.836	0.261	0.577	3.203	2.32E-03

The coefficients table (Table 4.7) presents the unstandardized and standardized coefficients for each independent variable. The unstandardized coefficients (B) indicate the change in the dependent variable for a one-unit change in the independent variable, while the standardized coefficients (Beta) allow for comparison of the relative importance of each independent variable in predicting the dependent variable. All three independent variables have positive and statistically significant coefficients ($p < 0.05$), indicating that they positively influence economic development in Thika Town Sub-County. Openness and transparency of the county's contracting and procurement practices (Beta = 0.577) has the strongest impact, followed by transparency in county resource allocation (Beta = 0.671) and citizens' participation in the county's budgeting processes (Beta = 0.548). The regression analysis demonstrates that transparency in county resource allocation, citizens' participation in the county's budgeting processes, and openness and transparency of the county's contracting and procurement practices are significant predictors of economic development in Thika Town Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya. The high R-squared value suggests that these factors account for a substantial portion of the variation in economic development. The findings underscore

the importance of promoting transparency, citizen participation, and open procurement practices to foster economic growth and development in the Thika Town Sub-County.

Summary of Findings

This section will detail the findings obtained in Chapter Four. The summary is done based on the objectives of the study, one to three.

Objective 1

The data collected on the first objective are explained in this section. The objective was to analyse the influence of transparency in county resource allocation on levels of poverty reduction in Thika Town Sub-County in Kiambu County, Kenya. In this case, the study examined the influence of transparency in county resource allocation on economic development in Thika Town Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya. 51% of respondents indicated that Kiambu County resource allocations are publicly disclosed and accessible. However, the same percentage of respondents found the public disclosure and accessibility of resource allocation information to be inadequate, with most indicating it was disclosed to a low extent. Financial constraints were found to hinder citizens' ability and willingness to access resource allocation

information, limiting their capacity to travel to county offices, access the internet, or purchase materials containing the relevant information. Despite this, respondents agreed to a great extent that the county government is transparent about how funds are spent in different sectors (mean = 3.7597, std. deviation = 0.69095), that the process for county resource allocation is clearly communicated to citizens (mean = 3.5581, std. deviation = 0.83128), and that information about how resources are allocated is easily accessible to the public (mean = 3.5116, std. deviation = 0.91101).

Objective 2

In this section, the key findings of the second objective are presented. The objective was to evaluate the effect of citizens' participation in the county's budgeting processes on economic development in Thika Town Sub-County in Kiambu County, Kenya. In terms of citizens' participation in county budgeting processes, 42% of respondents affirmed that citizens participate in the Kiambu county budgeting process, while 22% denied it, and 36% were unsure. Citizens participate in the budgeting process through public forums, town hall meetings, and written submissions. A significant portion of respondents (41%) believed that citizen participation had impacted economic development to a large extent, while 24% said it to a moderate extent. Respondents greatly agreed that the County government of Kiambu is responsive to feedback received through public engagement (mean = 3.9287, std. deviation = 0.78074), that citizen participation helps ensure resources are allocated to priority public needs (mean = 3.6589, std. deviation = 0.98024), and that public participation mechanisms enable meaningful citizen input (mean = 3.6124, std. deviation = 0.1202).

Objective 3

The study's third objective was to assess whether openness and transparency of the county's contracting and procurement practices influence economic development in Thika Town Sub-County in Kiambu County, Kenya. The findings were as

follows. Concerning openness and transparency of county contracting and procurement practices, 63% of respondents indicated that information about county contracts and procurements is private, while 22% said it is available, and 15% were unsure. The majority of respondents (61%) indicated that the county's contracting and procurement processes are somewhat transparent, while 24% said they are very transparent, and 15% said they are not transparent at all. Even when information on county contracts and procurements is available, it may not be easily accessible due to bureaucratic hurdles, outdated or incomplete online resources, and the need for personal visits to county offices. Despite these challenges, respondents greatly agreed that the procurement and tendering process is open and transparent (mean = 3.7907, std. deviation = 0.78735), that increased transparency in contracting/procurement has benefited local businesses (mean = 3.7054, std. deviation = 0.80314), and that award criteria and selection methods are clearly defined and available (mean = 3.6419, std. deviation = 0.93763).

Regression Analysis Findings:

The regression analysis revealed that transparency in county resource allocation, citizens' participation in the county's budgeting processes, and openness and transparency of the county's contracting and procurement practices are significant predictors of economic development in Thika Town Sub-County, accounting for 93.4% of the variance in economic development. All three independent variables have positive and statistically significant coefficients ($p < 0.05$), indicating that they positively influence economic development in Thika Town Sub-County. Openness and transparency of the county's contracting and procurement practices (Beta = 0.577) have the strongest impact, followed by transparency in county resource allocation (Beta = 0.671) and citizens' participation in the county's budgeting processes (Beta = 0.548).

Conclusions:

The study concludes that the findings have significant implications for understanding the

relationship between government transparency and economic development in Thika Town Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya. The results demonstrate that transparency in county resource allocation, citizens' participation in the county's budgeting processes, and openness and transparency of the county's contracting and procurement practices are crucial factors influencing economic development in the region. The study concludes that while efforts exist to promote transparency in resource allocation, there are still gaps in the adequacy and accessibility of information. Financial constraints can be a barrier to citizens' engagement with government processes and access to information, potentially hindering their ability to hold the government accountable and contribute to economic development. The study concludes that addressing financial barriers and improving the accessibility and comprehensibility of resource allocation information could enhance citizens' participation and, consequently, economic development.

Similarly, the study concludes that citizen participation in county budgeting processes is essential for promoting economic development. Although mechanisms for citizen participation exist, there is room for improvement in ensuring broader and more meaningful engagement. The study concludes that strengthening and diversifying citizen participation mechanisms could lead to more inclusive and effective budgeting processes, ultimately fostering economic growth. Regarding openness and transparency of county contracting and procurement practices, the study concludes that while efforts exist to promote transparency, there are still challenges in the public accessibility of information and the effectiveness of oversight mechanisms. The study concludes that prioritizing greater transparency in contracting and procurement practices, along with improving public access to information and strengthening oversight, could contribute to a more conducive environment for economic development.

Further, the study concludes that the regression analysis further emphasizes the significance of

these three factors in predicting economic development in Thika Town Sub-County. The strong positive influence of transparency in resource allocation, citizen participation in budgeting, and openness and transparency in contracting and procurement practices on economic development underscores the need for a comprehensive approach to promoting transparency and accountability in local governance. Again, the study concludes that the balanced growth theory, as applied in this research, suggests that transparency reforms should be accompanied by capacity development and participatory opportunities that empower citizens. The findings align with this theory, as they highlight the importance of not only promoting transparency in resource allocation, budgeting, and procurement practices but also strengthening citizen participation mechanisms and addressing barriers to engagement. The study concludes that a balanced approach, which focuses on both information disclosure and citizen empowerment, is crucial for fostering sustainable economic development in Thika Town Sub-County.

Moreover, the study concludes that the attribution theory of perception, which was also applied in this research, emphasizes the role of citizens' perceptions of government transparency and responsiveness in shaping their engagement and sense of empowerment. The findings support this theory, as they demonstrate that citizens' perceptions of the county government's transparency efforts and their ability to participate in governance processes meaningfully can influence their attribution of positive outcomes to their own actions as engaged stakeholders. The study concludes that fostering positive perceptions of government transparency and responsiveness, along with providing meaningful opportunities for citizen participation, can create a virtuous cycle of empowerment and engagement that contributes to economic development. Lastly, the study concludes that government transparency and citizen participation play a critical role in promoting economic development at the local level. The findings provide valuable insights for

policymakers, civil society organizations, and citizens in Thika Town Sub-County and beyond, highlighting the need for a comprehensive and balanced approach to transparency reforms that prioritizes both information disclosure and citizen empowerment. The study concludes that by addressing the identified challenges and strengthening transparency and participation mechanisms, local governments can create a more conducive environment for sustainable economic growth and improve the lives of their citizens.

Recommendations:

Based on the findings of this study and the insights provided by the balanced growth theory and the attribution theory of perception, the following recommendations are proposed for the County government of Kiambu, academia, citizen participation groups, and the general society:

For the County Government of Kiambu:

1. Develop a comprehensive transparency and public participation policy: The County government should develop a policy that outlines its commitment to transparency, accountability, and public participation in governance processes. This policy should be developed in consultation with citizens, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to ensure it reflects the needs and priorities of the community.
2. Establish a dedicated transparency and public participation unit: To ensure effective implementation of the transparency and public participation policy, the County government should establish a dedicated unit within its structure. This unit should be adequately resourced and staffed with qualified personnel to oversee the implementation of transparency initiatives, coordinate public participation activities, and monitor compliance with the policy.
3. Leverage technology to enhance transparency and accessibility of information: The County government should invest in technology-based solutions to improve the accessibility and dissemination

of information related to resource allocation, budgeting, and procurement processes. This could include developing user-friendly online platforms, mobile applications, and SMS-based services that enable citizens to easily access and understand relevant information.

4. Strengthen capacity building for county officials and staff: The County government should prioritize capacity building and training for officials and staff involved in resource allocation, budgeting, and procurement processes. This training should focus on enhancing their understanding of transparency and accountability principles, as well as equipping them with the skills to facilitate meaningful citizen engagement.

For Academia:

- 1) Conduct further research on best practices and innovative approaches: Academia should undertake further research to identify best practices and innovative approaches for promoting transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in local governance. This research should involve comparative studies of successful initiatives in other counties or countries, as well as pilot projects to test the effectiveness of new strategies in the context of Kiambu County.
- 2) Develop training programs for county officials and civil society organizations: Academia should collaborate with the County government and civil society organizations to develop training programs that build the capacity of county officials and civil society actors in promoting transparency, accountability, and public participation. These training programs should be based on the latest research findings and best practices in the field.

For Citizen Participation Groups:

- 1) Advocate for the implementation of the transparency and public participation policy: Citizen participation groups should

actively engage with the County government to advocate for the effective implementation of the transparency and public participation policy. They should monitor the government's compliance with the policy and provide feedback on areas where improvements are needed.

- 2) Mobilize and educate citizens on their rights and responsibilities: Citizen participation groups should undertake initiatives to mobilize and educate citizens on their rights and responsibilities in relation to transparency, accountability, and public participation. This could include conducting civic education campaigns, workshops, and community forums to raise awareness and build the capacity of citizens to effectively engage in governance processes.

For the General Society:

- 1) Actively participate in public participation opportunities: Citizens should actively participate in the public participation opportunities provided by the County government, such as public hearings, budget forums, and consultative meetings. They should provide constructive feedback and input on the government's policies, plans, and programs to ensure they reflect the needs and priorities of the community.
- 2) Hold the government accountable through social accountability mechanisms: Citizens should utilize social accountability mechanisms, such as citizen report cards, social audits, and community score cards, to hold the government accountable for its performance in promoting transparency, accountability, and public participation. They should also engage with the media and other stakeholders to raise awareness of any issues or concerns related to transparency and accountability in the county.
- 3) By implementing these recommendations, the County government of Kiambu, academia, citizen participation groups, and

the general society can work together to create a more transparent, accountable, and participatory governance environment that fosters sustainable economic development in the county. The balanced growth theory and the attribution theory of perception provide a strong foundation for these recommendations, highlighting the importance of proportional advancement across interconnected sectors and the role of citizen perceptions in shaping their engagement and sense of empowerment. Through a collaborative and inclusive approach, Kiambu County can become a model for transparent and participatory governance in Kenya and beyond.

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