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Fiscal Systems and Youth Participation in County Governance in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The general objective of the study was to examine the influence of fiscal systems on youth participation in county governance in Kenya. The study was based on the Souffle Theory.

Methodology: A survey research design was adopted in the study. The study population comprised of the estimated 19,456,356 youths from all the counties in Kenya. The sample size for the study was 400 respondents and they were identified to participate in the research using proportionate stratified and simple sampling techniques respondents. Questionnaires and interview guides were used in the collection of relevant data. Data was analysed and presented using the SPSS software and spread sheets. The study collected both qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data was analysed using content analysis. The study adopted a descriptive and inferential statistics to analyse quantitative data to establish the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variables. The findings were presented in tables, figures and charts.

Findings: The study found that fiscal systems had a positive and significant effect on youth participation in county governance in Kenya.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Based on the findings, the study recommends that counties to allocate a portion of the county budget towards programs and initiatives that specifically target youth development and participation. This could include youth empowerment programs, educational opportunities, and mentorship initiatives. County governments should eencourage the active involvement of youth in the county budgeting and planning processes. This can be achieved through consultations, focus groups, and workshops to solicit their input and ideas.

Key Words: *Fiscal Systems, Youth Participation, County Governance*

Background of the Study

Devolution as a new governance system has played a vital role in restructuring the state to give more power to local governments and empower the citizens to participate in the governance structures of their local areas. Literature review shows that over the last two decades, many countries have embraced decentralization in regions as diverse as the newly independent states of Eastern Europe, Africa, South America, and Southeast Asia. The implementation process has, however, not been as smooth as envisaged, and most of these countries have had many pitfalls along the way (Olatona & Olamola, 2015). Current trends show that fiscal, economic, political, and administrative systems should be implemented simultaneously to empower youths to fight poverty effectively. However, there needs to be conclusive evidence to show that devolved systems would lead uniformly to poverty reduction in all countries. Nevertheless, it would be more successful in countries with the political will to move it forward (CIC, 2014).

Meaningful youth participation in governance is a key ingredient for public reforms that were instituted by the Constitution of Kenya (CoK, 2010). Article 1 (1) of the Constitution vests all sovereign power to the people of Kenya. This power can be expressed through direct participation or indirectly through elected representatives. In addition, various pieces of legislations anchoring devolution highlight the principles of citizen participation. Together, these constitutional and legislative provisions avail various platforms for youth participation in devolved governance. Youth participation is one of the national values and is also one of the principles of public service as articulated in the Constitution in Articles 10 (2,a), Article 35(1) and (3) and Article 232 (1)

The World Bank (2015) and the Institute of Economic Affairs (2015) looked at youth participation as the process by which an organization consults with interested or affected youths, organizations, and government entities before deciding. They further view youth participation as two-way communication and collaborative problem-solving to achieve better and more acceptable decisions (WB, 2015). Youth participation contributes to better projects, development, and collaborative governance. Research has shown that youth participation is advantageous for the speed and quality of implementation of planning decisions (Indeche & Ayuma, 2015). The current study sought to establish the influence of fiscal systems on youth participation in county governance in Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

Globally, there is a growing push for devolved systems to increase youth involvement in the devolved states (Olatona & Olomola, 2015). According to the Institute of Economic Affairs (2015), there is a direct correlation between youth engagement in devolved governance and devolved systems. The World Development Report (2017) provided further evidence that devolved institutions acknowledge the contributions of youth and successfully enforce devolved states' performance. According to Gitegi and Iravo (2016), decentralized systems that work well encourage young involvement in Kenyan county administrations. According to the World Bank (2015), industrialized nations, including the United Kingdom, the United

States, India, and South Africa, have successfully implemented devolved systems encouraging youth engagement.

However, there needs to be more young involvement in county governance in Kenyan counties (World Bank, 2015). Transparency International's (2016) research shows that more than 53% of people are unhappy with devolved administration, particularly with Kenya's low youth participation rate in county governance. The 2016 report by the Society for International Development demonstrates that youth participation in county governance needs to be improved despite several issues resulting in inefficient devolved systems. Despite excellent devolved institutions, Gitegi and Iravo (2016) found that youth engagement in county governments still needs to be improved.

Based on the studies mentioned above by Olatona and Olomola (2015) and the United Nations (2012), a positive correlation has been established between devolved systems and youth involvement in devolved governance. However, contrasting evidence from local studies (Gitegi & Iravo (2016); Khaunya et al. (2015) suggests that there is no association between devolved systems and public participation in county governance in Kenya. This contradiction necessitates re-evaluating the impact of fiscal systems on youth participation in county governance in Kenya.

General Objective

The general objective of the study was to examine the influence of fiscal systems on youth participation in county governance in Kenya.

Theoretical Review

Souffle Theory

The Soufflé theory was proposed by Parker (1995) who argued that fiscal systems are one of the major elements of devolution. Parker (1995) emphasized that devolution is a multi-dimensional process that proceeds with successes and setbacks. The theory argues like a Souffle that needs just the right combination of milk, eggs, and heat to rise. Thus, a successful program of decentralization must include fiscal elements in improving rural development outcomes (Farooq, Shamail, & Awais, 2008; Laryea-Adjei, 2006). Decentralization initiatives will, therefore, be subject to a continuous process of modification which reflects changes in the social, political, and economic conditions (Laryea-Adjei, 2006). There is, therefore, the need to include all dimensions of fiscal systems.

Parker (1995) suggested a conceptual model, the soufflé theory, which incorporates the fiscal relations as one of the essential elements of decentralization to enhance service delivery. This is because it’s combined to realize desired outcomes. According to Nzimakwe and Ntshakala (2015), political decentralization transfers policy and legislative powers from the central government to the elected local authorities. However, the allocation of the power of decision making to local authorities is not enough to create successful decentralization if local officials are not accountable to the local population (Ahmad & Mbwambo, 2004). Local accountability might be promoted through various appropriate fiscal relations mechanisms

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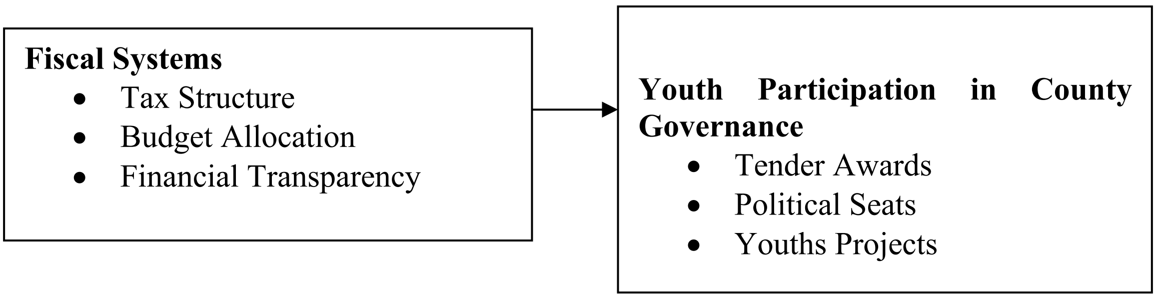
such as third-party monitoring by media and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), extensive participation, and central government oversight of local governments (Nduta et al, 2014).

Despite the propositions of the Soufflé theory that are in favour of decentralization, devolved governance has been criticized due to several limitations. Wachira (2010) posits that decentralization may foster more local royalty to regional identities than the national identity. Therefore, this may encourage more autonomy from the central government and even a territorial secession in multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies, particularly in Africa. This puts the national integrity itself at risk. Secondly, decentralization may increase corruption at local level and thus this would not improve accountability. Lastly, the increased efficiency and effectiveness of public resources may not be realized, since resources (capital, human, and even social) available at the local level in low-income countries are very limited. These scarce resources are more effectively utilized when they are concentrated at the national level. Therefore, decentralization may also jeopardize equity among different localities regarding the existing fiscal relations (Uchimura, 2018). In Kenya, the Soufflé theory is at the centre of devolution. The devolution process of the powers (fiscal) proposed by the Souffle theory were achieved at once with the ratification of the constitution. This theory guided the study to explain the relationship between fiscal systems and youth participation in county governance in Kenya.

Conceptual Framework

Brown-Jeffy & Cooper (2018) define a conceptual framework a hypothesized model identifying the model under study and the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. The theoretical base of this paper is founded by reviewing the literature. In the literature, causal linkages have been identified among youth participation, and fiscal systems. The conceptual framework is as shown in Figure 1.



Independent Variable

Dependent Variable

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Fiscal Systems

Fiscal systems refer to a set of policies designed to increase the revenues or fiscal autonomy of sub-national governments (Akorsu, 2015). The fiscal systems are meant to promote higher efficiency, better public service, greater transparency and, eventually, economic growth. It is often argued that decentralization increases economic efficiency because local governments are better positioned than the national government to deliver public services because of proximity and informational advantage (Andrews & Van de, 2013). Fiscal systems policies can assume different institutional forms. An increase of transfers from the central government, the creation of new sub-national taxes, and the delegation of tax authority that was previously national are all examples of fiscal systems (Shen & Zou, 2014).

Financial systems enhance authority to lower levels of government reduces central government's control over public expenditure. It involves the transfer of power to local authorities to make autonomous decisions about revenue collection strategies and expenditures decisions. With such autonomy comes local responsibility such as that of cost recovery through user charges and property taxes (Kenya, 2012). Fiscal decentralization may confer power on locally elected officials to collect and spend own revenue. In the most fulsome application of fiscal decentralization, local government is awarded substantial taxing powers and the freedom to determine the extent of public service delivery (Gumede&Dipholo, 2014). By distributing authority and responsibility for fiscal management and public service delivery, minorities are given a stake in the system, and this helps in conflict management (Miller & Cox, 2015; Muriu, 2014).

This study will focus on four dimensions of fiscal systems namely revenue decision making, expenditure decision making, local revenue generating capacity and national borrowing (Elhiraika, 2017). These dimensions are chosen as the study postulated; they would have closer relationships with youth participation in county governance (Finch & Omolo, 2015). There is limited research that has empirically tested the relationship between fiscal systems and public participation in good governance in the decentralized systems in developing countries. Existing studies have largely been drawn from developed countries and may not be generalized in local context due to different institutional, regulatory, and cultural factors.

Empirical Literature

Fiscal Systems

Gemmell, Kneller, and Sanz (2013) investigated whether the efficiency gains accompanying fiscal decentralization generate higher growth in more decentralized economies, applying pooled-mean group techniques to a panel dataset of 23 OECD countries, 1972 – 2005. The study found that spending decentralization tends to be associated with lower economic growth while revenue decentralization is associated with higher growth.

Halaskova and Halaskova (2014) established that the measurement of fiscal decentralization includes expenditures of lower levels of government as a percentage of total expenditures or Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Secondly, it also includes revenues of lower tiers of government as a percentage of total revenues or GDP; division of tax revenues between central and local governments. Lastly, the level and extent of tax authority and share of expenditures in selected public sector areas such as education, health, social security as a share of total expenditures of lower levels of government. The efficiency of a decentralization framework is high when the fiscal systems are welfare enhancing, incorporates incentives to encourage prudent fiscal management at all government levels and responsibilities to tax and spend at the sub-national levels is accompanied by adequate political authority (Ndung'u, 2014).

In Uganda Kayima (2009) found out that fiscal decentralization policy and practice has enabled local governments to access more funds to deliver services to the citizenry. He also observed that local government effectiveness under decentralization has improved over time though affected by challenges of less flexibility on the conditional grants, less involvement of stakeholders in the planning and budgeting process, the limited capacity of the local government officials to handle reports from the local governments as required by law.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Research design is a plan that guides the research in the process of collecting, analysing and interpreting observations; the researcher's blueprint for the methods and instruments used to gather information and to evaluate it, to respond to the research questions of the study (Mugenda &Mugenda, 2012). A research design is a roadmap of how one goes about answering the research questions.

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Descriptive surveys involve data collection from a population, or a representative subset, at one specific point in time and have an advantage over other research designs that only seek individuals with a specific characteristic, with a sample, often a tiny minority, of the rest of the population (Bryman, 2016).Creswell and Creswell (2017) argues that a flexible research design which provides opportunity for considering many different aspects of a problem is considered if the purpose of the research study is that of exploration.

Research Philosophy

Research philosophy relates to the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge and contains important assumptions about the way in which researchers view the world (Yin, 2017). There are two extreme philosophical views regarding knowledge and reality (schools of thought). These are Positivism (sometimes referred to as deduction research) and Phenomenology (also known as induction research). The study was guided by the positivist philosophy where scientific processes are followed in hypothesizing fundamental laws then deducing the observations to determine the truth or falsify the said hypothesis about the relationship that exists between fiscal systems and the youth participation in county governance in Kenya

Population of the Study

Target population is the total collection of elements about which inferences are made and it refers to all possible cases which are of interest for the study Bryman (2013). It is the total of all the individuals who have certain characteristics and are of interest to a researcher (Lewis, 2015; Glaser & Strauss, 2017). For this study, the unit of analysis was the county government in Kenya which is totaling 47 independent counties integrated under the National government and the unit of observation was the youths in the different counties in Kenya. According to the constitution of Kenya, youths were citizens aged 18-34 years which is further defined by the unique national identification number. According to the KNBS (2019) on population in Kenya, the number of the total youths in Kenya is 19,456,356 by November 2019. The number of youths (aged 18-34 years) per counties is presented Appendix V.

Sampling Frame

A sampling frame is the source material or device from which a sample is drawn. It is a list of all those within a population who can be sampled, and may include individuals, households or institutions (Särndal, Swensson & Wretman, 2013). The sampling frame for this study is the entire list of youths in Kenya sourced from the KNBS (2019) census report website and is displayed in the Appendix V.

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

According to Neumann, (2013) and Zikmund et al. (2013), an optimum sample for large population of above 10,000 should be supported by sample size determination formula which is further supported by Brickmann (2012) that a sample size determination formula is statistically viable in any population. Simple random sampling was used to select the respondents to the sample to be determined. To determine the sample size for the unit of observation (youths) a formular by Slovins was used. The Slovin's Formula is quite popularly used for determining the sample size for research, especially in thesis in social sciences, where the computation is based almost solely on the population size that is more than 10,000. The sample size of this study is calculated from the Slovin's formula given as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where: n = Sample size,

N = Total population and

e = Error tolerance (confidence level).

Since the population N = 16,999,910

Error tolerance = 0.05,

The sample size is determined as:

$$n = \frac{19{,}456{,}356}{1 + 19{,}456{,}356(0..05)^2} = 400$$

The sample size therefore becomes 400. The 400 sampling units were distributed to the conveniently identified population using the proportional stratified sampling and the sample size of each county of respondents (youths) were sampled using simple random sampling. This is to ensure that the sampling unit from each county had an equal chance in the study.

Data Collection Instruments

The study collected both primary and secondary data. According to Brymann (2016), data collection procedure is the process of gathering pieces of information that are necessary for research process. Primary data present the actual information that is obtained for the purpose of the research study. A questionnaire was chosen as data collection instrument. The information obtained through a questionnaire is like that obtained by an interview, but the questions tend to have less depth (Marshall & Rossmann, 2014). Data was collected with the aid of questionnaires to evaluate the participants experience on the selected key devolved systems.

Questionnaires are preferred because according to Mugenda and Mugenda (2012) they are effective data collection instruments that allow respondents to give much of their opinions pertaining to the researched problem. According to Neumann (2013), the information obtained from questionnaires is free from bias and researchers influence and thus accurate and valid data is gathered. A questionnaire was administered to the youths who were involved in the mobilization and lead the youth programmes and activities in the various counties in Kenya. A total of 400 questionnaires were administered to the youth leaders in the counties in the country.

Pilot Study

According to Brymann (2016) a pre-test is a small-scale kind of research projects that collects data from respondents similar to those that will be used in the future survey. The aim of a pre-test is to act as a guide to examine specific aspects of research to see if the selected procedures will work as intended. A pre-test is meant to test for clarity and understanding of questions to test if the questions yield as expected. Cooper and Schindler (2011) concur that the purpose of pilot test is to detect weaknesses in design and implementation and to provide proxy for data collection of a probability sample.

Mayring (2014) reinforces that pilot test is necessary for testing the reliability of instruments and the validity of a study. In this study, data collection instrument was tested on 10% of the sample of the questionnaires to ensure that it is relevant and effective. It is a way of pre-testing the questionnaire and it is done to obtain feedback, to confirm if the questionnaire is effective and well understood by the respondents. In this study, 40 of respondents from the selected population across the country was given the questionnaire to test their validity and reliability. These respondents were not included in the final study sample to control for response biasness.

Data Analysis and Presentation

According to Brymann (2016), data analysis refers to the application of reasoning to understand the data that has been gathered with the aim of determining consistent patterns and summarizing the relevant details revealed in the investigation. According to Cooper and Schindler (2016), data processing involves translating the answers on a questionnaire into a form that can be manipulated to produce statistics. This involves coding, editing, data entry, and monitoring the whole data processing procedure. To determine the patterns revealed in the data collected regarding the selected variables, data analysis was guided by the aims and objectives of the research and the measurement of the data collected.

After quantitative data was obtained through questionnaires, it is prepared in readiness for analysis by editing, handling blank responses, coding, categorizing and keyed into statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) computer software for analysis. The choice of SPSS version 24 to other statistical software is that it is user friendly. The statistics generated were descriptive and inferential statistics. The specific descriptive statistics included the percentages and frequencies while the inferential statistics include a multiple linear regression model. Microsoft excel was used to complement SPSS especially in production of diagrams and tables. Additionally, the study conducted diagnostic tests. The data was represented using tables using tables, bar graphs, and pie charts. Frequency distribution tables were used to summarize categorical or numerical data. According to Schreirer (2012) and Garg and Kothari (2014) a frequency table is a table showing how often each value of the variable occurs in a data set. Frequencies and percentages were also used to present the data. Frequency distribution tables are the devices that were used to present the data in a simple form.

The study adopted a regression analysis to further determine the strength of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables (Stevens, 2012). Regression analysis used to infer causal relationship between the independent and the dependent variable (Kuckartz, 2014). The R^2 will be used to measure the goodness of fit of the model being assessed. F –test will be carried out to evaluate the significance of the model and to define the relationship between the dependent variable and independent variables at .05 level of significance. According to Anderson (2011) bivariate models consider the relationship between two variables at a time without considering the combined joint relationships. The study adopted the models proposed below to examine how they determine the independent variable on youth participation in county governance;

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon.$$

Where Y is Youth Participation (Dependent variable), 1 X is fiscal systems,

RESEARCH FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

Response Rate

The study administered 400 questionnaires to participants, with 308 successfully completed and returned, resulting in a response rate of 77%. The response rate was sufficient, especially since the survey was self-administered. In addition, participants were promised confidentiality. As per Babbie (2018) and Chen (2016), a response rate of 50% is sufficient for analysis, while 60% is deemed suitable, and 70% or higher is considered excellent. With higher response rates resulting in decreased non-response errors, the data analysis for the 77% response rate was appropriate. The response rate is as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Response Rate

Questionnaires	Frequency	Percent
Returned Questionnaires	308	77.00
Non-returned questionnaires	92	23.00
Total	**400**	**100**

Descriptive Analysis Results

Descriptive Statistics for the Construct Fiscal Systems

Respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement with various statements on aspects of fiscal systems.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Construct Fiscal Systems

Constructs	SD	D	N	A	SA	M	Sd.
Both levels of government consults youths on new taxation measures	0.9	2.1	12.8	21.3	59.9	4.498	.321
County government's local taxes meet the youths' enterprises local generated revenue targets.	7.4	0.8	11.8	22.1	57.9	4.355	.387
Youths participate in approving the public financial management budget.	2.0	3.8	5.3	24.5	64.4	4.213	.486
There's freedom for the youth on how to spend their allocated county expenditure	5.4	4.5	9.1	18.2	62.8	4.465	.172
The county government has in place avenues for the youth borrowing and loans for business start –up capital	5.8	2.1	8.9	17.4	65.8	4.278	.903

The results are as shown in Table 2. According to the findings, the respondents agreed that both levels of government consults youths on new taxation measures (M=4.498, Sd=0.321). The respondents agreed that the county government's local taxes meet the youth's enterprises local generated revenue targets (M=4.355, Sd=0.387). The respondents agreed that yyouths participate in approving the public financial management budget (M=4.213, Sd=0.486). The respondents also agreed that there's freedom for the youth on how to spend their allocated county expenditure (M=4.465, Sd=0.172). In addition, the respondents agreed that the county government has in place avenues for the youth borrowing and loans for business start –up capital (M=4.278, Sd=0.903).

Descriptive Statistics for the Youth Participation in County Governance

Respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement with various statements on aspects of youth participation in county governance in Kenya. It was posited as a one-dimensional construct measured by the five items.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Youth Participation

	SD	D	N	A	SA	M	Sd.
The county government does award tenders to the youths	4.5	4.6	8.7	23.6	58.8	4.098	.436
The county government has enhanced number of youths nominated and elected in the county assembly	12.8	15.8	16.6	20.9	54.8	4.278	.928
The county government enhanced amount of loans given to youth entrepreneurs	3.2	0.0	53.6	43.2	43.6	4.324	.593
The county government enhanced sports events participated by the youths in the county	12.8	15.8	16.6	20.9	54.8	4.278	.928
The county government enhanced number of roles taken by the youths in county leadership	3.2	0.0	53.6	43.2	43.6	4.324	.593
The county government does award tenders to the youths	9.6	10.0	9.0	58.6	12.8	3.987	.627

According to the findings in Table 3, the respondents agreed that the county government does award tenders to the youths (M=4.098, Sd=0.436). The respondents also agreed that the county government has enhanced number of youths nominated and elected in the county assembly (M=4.278, Sd=0.928). The respondents agreed the county government enhanced amount of loans given to youth entrepreneurs (M=4.324, Sd=0.593). The respondents also agreed that the county government enhanced sports events participated by the youths in the county (M=4.278, Sd=0.928). In addition, the respondents agreed that the county government enhanced number of roles taken by the youths in county leadership (M=4.324, Sd=0.593). Finally, most respondents agreed that the county government awards tenders to the youths (M=3.987, Sd=0.627).

4.7.2 Regression Analysis

The research utilized regression analysis to evaluate the impact of fiscal, political on youth participation in several counties in Kenya. The present study used a statistical approach to estimate the correlation between variable and youth participation in Kenyan Counties.

Regression Analysis on Fiscal System and Youth Participation in County Governance in Kenya

Regression analysis was run to determine the statistical significance relationship between fiscal system and youth participation in county governance in Kenya (dependent variable).

Table 4: Regression Model Summary on fiscal system and youth participation in county governance in Kenya

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.677[a]	.459	.457	.594	1.646

According to the results shown in Table 4, the correlation coefficient of R=0.677 reveals a positive linear relationship between fiscal system and youth participation in county governance in Kenya. The results also indicate that fiscal system accounts for 45.9% (R^2=0.459) of the variance in youth participation in county governance in Kenya. The findings imply that the model does not include other devolved systems, explaining the remaining 44.1% variance.

An ANOVA was used to determine the significance of the model in simplifying predictions that involve fiscal system and youth participation. The outcomes are displayed in Table 4 below;

Table 5: ANOVA[a] Statistics for fiscal system and youth participation in county governance in Kenya

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	95.241	1	95.241	270.200	.000[b]
Residual	112.443	319	.352		
Total	207.684	320			

The results presented in the ANOVA table 5, indicates that the fiscal system had a significant impact on youth involvement in Kenyan county governance. This means that the fiscal system is a significant indicator of the success of youth participation Kenyan Counties, F (1,319) = 270.20 p<0.05.

Table 6: Regression Coefficients for Fiscal System and Youth Participation

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.980	.179		2.462	.000
	X1	.787	.048	.677	6.438	.000

From the findings on table 6 of regression coefficient showed that the unstandardised beta coefficient for fiscal system was 0.787. This implies that a unit increase in fiscal system accounted for 0.797 units increase in youth participation governance in Kenyan counties. The T value for fiscal system is also significant; T (321) = 6.438; β= 0.787.; P<0.05.

$$Y = 0.980 + 0.787X_1 + 0.179$$

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The first null hypothesis test was 'Fiscal systems has no statistically significant influence on youth participation in county governance in Kenya. The study found that fiscal systems are statistically significant in explaining youth participation in county governance in Kenya. The influence was found to be positive. This means that unit improvement in fiscal systems would lead to an increase in youth participation in county governance in Kenya. Based on the findings, the study concluded that fiscal systems positively and significantly influence youth participation in county governance in Kenya.

Recommendations

The study recommends that counties to allocate a portion of the county budget towards programs and initiatives that specifically target youth development and participation. This could include youth empowerment programs, educational opportunities, and mentorship initiatives. County governments should eencourage the active involvement of youth in the county budgeting and planning processes. This can be achieved through consultations, focus groups, and workshops to solicit their input and ideas.

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