

**INFLUENCE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON PUBLIC SERVICES DELIVERY: A
CASE OF THE MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN JONGLEI STATE OF
SOUTH SUDAN**

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Abstract

Bad governance is a major contributor to poor service delivery in Africa. Even though various legal instruments and watchdog institutions have been established to regulate and monitor the ethical conduct of public officials. This study sought to establish the influence of governance on public service delivery in South Sudan. The objectives of the study were to: examine the effect of citizen participation on public services delivery in Jonglei State. To conduct this study, an exploratory design was used. The study targeted ministry of local government officials, citizens, officials from civil society, business community and employees from corporate entities in Jonglei State. Stratified sampling was employed to select 233 respondents that participated in the study. The research instrument that was used to collect data was a semi-structured questionnaire. Analysis of data was through descriptive as well as inferential methods. Study results revealed that public participation had a positive coefficient when used as a predictor of service delivery ($\beta = .226$; $p < 0.05$). This indicates that public participation is a significant factor in determining service delivery in Jonglei State. The study recommended that there is need to develop and implement mechanisms to actively involve citizens in decision-making processes related to public service delivery, to establish platforms for public consultation, feedback, and engagement to ensure that citizens' voices are heard and considered in policy and decision-making. There is a need to develop comprehensive public service delivery policies.

Keywords: *Public Participation, Public Services Delivery, Ministry of Local Government*

INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Local Government in Jonglei Estate, South Sudan plays a crucial role in delivering public services to its citizens. However, effective public service delivery is often hindered by various challenges, including issues related to ethical practices, citizen participation, accountability, transparency, and the regulatory framework. Understanding the background and context of these challenges is essential for addressing the research questions and objectives of this study. South Sudan, as a developing country, has faced significant governance and administrative challenges since gaining independence in 2011. The

Ministry of Local Government is responsible for providing essential public services at the local level, such as healthcare, education, infrastructure, and public safety. However, the delivery of these services has been impeded by factors such as corruption, limited resources, lack of citizen engagement, and weak accountability mechanisms (Kauzya, 2017).

Ethical practices within the public sector are crucial for ensuring integrity, fairness, and professionalism in service delivery. They involve adherence to moral principles, codes of conduct, and ethical standards by public officials (Chênevert & Tremblay, 2019). However, in South Sudan, ethical challenges have been observed, including corruption, nepotism, favoritism, and misuse of public resources (Hegouet, 2019). These unethical practices undermine public trust and impede the effective delivery of public services.

Citizen participation is a vital component of democratic governance and public service delivery. It involves engaging citizens in decision-making processes and empowering them to voice their concerns, needs, and aspirations (Löffler & Kroll, 2017). However, citizen participation in South Sudan has been limited due to factors such as low literacy rates, cultural barriers, political instability, and lack of awareness about participatory processes (Okidi, 2016). Enhancing citizen participation can lead to more responsive and inclusive public services. Understanding the background of citizen participation in the context of the Ministry of Local Government in Jonglei Estate is essential for assessing their impact on public service delivery. By examining these factors, this study aims to provide insights and recommendations for improving service delivery and governance in South Sudan.

Jonglei State is the largest State in South Sudan both by area (estimated at 122,581 Square Kilometers) and by population (1,358,602 People) as per 2008 census result. Jonglei State has 11 counties: Old Fangak, Pigi, Ayod, Duk, Uror, Nyirol, Akobo, Pochalla, Pibor, Twic East and Bor South. Bor is the state Capital and the location of state's public administration.

The people of Jonglei State share a common history together with richly diverse traditions and interests. At the same time, they have suffered the hardships of various cycles of conflict, which have disrupted life in their communities over a long period. At the end of 2011, within months of the country's independence, incidents of violent conflict within the state had sent alarm bells ringing not only nationally, but also internationally. This has led to an intensive mobilization of efforts to identify and address the causes of these conflicts, with a series of nationally and locally led peace and developmental initiatives.

Citizen participation refers to the active involvement and engagement of individuals or groups of citizens in the decision-making processes and activities that affect their lives and the communities in which they live. It is a fundamental aspect of democratic governance and emphasizes the inclusion of diverse perspectives, voices, and experiences in shaping policies, programs, and services (Löffler & Kroll, 2017). Citizen participation can take various forms, ranging from traditional methods such as voting and public hearings to more participatory approaches such as citizen advisory boards, community forums, public consultations, and collaborative decision-making processes (Bryson et al., 2017). It involves empowering citizens to contribute their knowledge, ideas, and concerns, and enabling their active participation in problem-solving, planning, implementation, and evaluation processes.

Citizen participation has several objectives and benefits. Firstly, it enhances democratic legitimacy by ensuring that decisions are informed by the perspectives and interests of the affected individuals and communities (Fung, 2015). Secondly, it promotes transparency, accountability, and trust by making decision-making processes more open, inclusive, and responsive to public needs and aspirations (Warren, 2017). Thirdly, it fosters social cohesion,

civic engagement, and active citizenship by providing opportunities for individuals to develop a sense of ownership and responsibility for public affairs (Hendriks, 2019).

Scholars have highlighted the importance of citizen participation in enhancing governance and public service delivery. For instance, Ostrom (1999) argues that involving citizens in decision-making processes can lead to more effective and sustainable outcomes, particularly in complex policy areas. Similarly, Sørensen and Torfing (2015) emphasize the value of collaborative governance approaches that engage citizens and stakeholders in co-creating public policies and services.

Statement of the Problem

Despite efforts to improve public service delivery in Jonglei State, significant challenges persist, hindering the achievement of desired outcomes. These challenges can be attributed to various factors, including limited citizen participation, inadequate accountability mechanisms, insufficient transparency in decision-making processes, and a weak regulatory framework. Understanding and addressing these issues is crucial for enhancing public service delivery and promoting good governance in the Ministry of Local Government in Jonglei Estate. Citizen participation is a fundamental aspect of democratic governance and public service delivery (Gaventa & Barrett, 2010). It empowers citizens to voice their concerns, participate in decision-making processes, and hold public officials accountable for their actions (Bovens, 2007). However, in Jonglei State, the level of citizen participation in public service delivery processes may be inadequate. Citizens may face barriers such as limited access to information, lack of awareness about their rights and responsibilities, and limited opportunities for meaningful engagement (Ali et al., 2018; Nyikosa & Mavhura, 2018). The low level of citizen participation can lead to a disconnect between the needs and aspirations of the community and the services provided by the Ministry of Local Government.

Addressing these challenges is crucial for improving public service delivery and enhancing the well-being of the citizens in Jonglei State. By investigating the influence of citizen participation, on public service delivery, this study aims to provide insights and recommendations for enhancing service delivery within the Ministry of Local Government and promoting effective governance in the region.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Agency Theory

Agency theory focuses on the principal-agent relationship, where the principal (in this case, the government or citizens) delegates tasks and responsibilities to the agent (public officials) to act on their behalf. The theory examines the inherent conflicts of interest and information asymmetry between principals and agents, and how these can influence behaviour, decision-making, and performance (Eisenhardt, 1989). In the context of this study, agency theory helps to analyze the role of ethical practices in aligning the interests of public officials with the expectations and welfare of citizens. In this theory, shareholders who are the owners or principals of the company, hires the agents to perform work. Principals delegate the running of business to the directors or managers, who are the shareholder's agents (Clarke, 2004). Indeed, Daily et al (2003) argued that two factors can influence the prominence of agency theory. First, the theory is conceptually and simple theory that reduces the corporation to two participants of

managers and shareholders. Second, agency theory suggests that employees or managers in organizations can be self-interested.

The agency theory shareholders expect the agents to act and make decisions in the principal's interest. On the contrary, the agent may not necessarily make decisions in the best interests of the principals (Padilla, 2000). Such a problem was first highlighted by Adam Smith in the 18th century and subsequently explored by Ross (1973) and the first detailed description of agency theory was presented by Jensen and Meckling (1976). In agency theory, the agent may be succumbed to self-interest, opportunistic behavior and falling short of congruence between the aspirations of the principal and the agent's pursuits. Even the understanding of risk defers in its approach. Although with such setbacks, agency theory was introduced basically as a separation of ownership and control (Bhimani, 2008).

Holmstrom and Milgrom (1994) argued that instead of providing fluctuating incentive payments, the agents will only focus on projects that have a high return and have a fixed wage without any incentive component. Although this will provide a fair assessment, but it does not eradicate or even minimize corporate misconduct. Here, the positivist approach is used where the agents are controlled by principal-made rules, with the aim of maximizing shareholders value. Hence, a more individualistic view is applied in this theory (Clarke, 2004). Indeed, agency theory can be employed to explore the relationship between the ownership and management structure

Empirical Review

Citizen participation plays a vital role in shaping public service delivery by involving citizens in decision-making processes, promoting transparency, and enhancing the responsiveness of government agencies (Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2011; Nyikosa & Mavhura, 2018). Understanding the relationship between citizen participation and public service delivery is crucial for improving governance and meeting the needs of the community.

Research by Ali et al. (2018) explored the influence of citizen participation on public service delivery in a developing country context. The study found that active citizen involvement in decision-making processes led to improved service responsiveness, increased accountability of public officials, and enhanced service quality. This highlights the importance of engaging citizens as active partners in the design, implementation, and evaluation of public services.

Similarly, Bovens (2007) emphasized the significance of citizen participation in public service delivery. The study argued that involving citizens in decision-making processes not only increases their sense of ownership and satisfaction but also ensures that services are tailored to their needs and preferences. Active citizen participation contributes to the legitimacy and effectiveness of public service delivery.

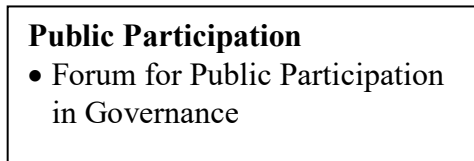
Furthermore, studies have highlighted the role of technology in facilitating citizen participation. For example, the use of digital platforms and e-participation tools can enable broader and more inclusive citizen engagement (Foth et al., 2011; Macintosh, 2012). Digital technologies provide opportunities for citizens to access information, express their opinions, and participate in decision-making processes, thereby enhancing public service delivery.

In the case of the Ministry of Local Government in Jonglei Estate, understanding the level of citizen participation and its impact on public service delivery is crucial. By examining the current practices and barriers to citizen engagement, it is possible to identify strategies for enhancing participation, empowering citizens, and improving the delivery of services that align with the needs and aspirations of the community.

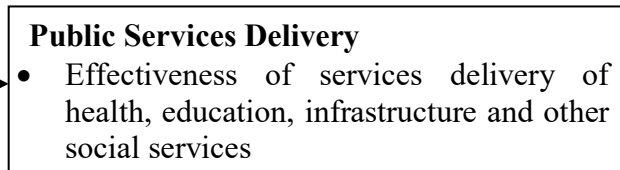
Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature reviewed and the research gaps identified, this study focused on the conceptual framework in Figure 1 depicts the variables that have been included in the study and the suggested relationship. The conceptual framework guides the investigation of the influence of citizen participation on public service delivery, ultimately shaping the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of public service delivery in the Ministry of Local Government in Jonglei Estate, South Sudan.

Independent Variable



Dependent Variable



Source: Researcher, (2024)

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

To conduct this study, a descriptive survey design was used. Descriptive design is an important part of this study to determine the influence of ethical practices on service delivery (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). In this current study, descriptive survey design research was applied since very few studies on governance in South Sudan where feasibility and population is small.

The study was carried out in Jonglei State of South Sudan. The study targeted ministry of local government officials, citizens, officials from civil society, business community and employees from corporate entities in Jonglei State. The estimated population was 685.

Stratified sampling was employed to select the sample that participated in the study. Quota sampling was applied to pick citizen and business community respondents at random in Bor City. However, politicians, local government officials and civil society respondents were sampled from a list that was sourced from the respective organizations. Stratified sampling was applied to select a representative sample from the different groups in the target population (Cooper and Schindler, 2006). A sample was selected from the 685 targeted respondents using the following sample calculation formula.

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

Where:

n = Sample Size

N = Population size

c = significance level, expressed as decimal (0.1)

The sample selected was 233.

The research instrument that was used to collect data was a semi-structured questionnaire developed based on a review of the literature dealing with governance challenges and service delivery by government.

Analysis of data started with sorting out the questionnaires and establishing that they were correctly filled. After sorting, data from the questionnaires was coded into statistical package for

social sciences (SPSS) which aided in analysis. Analysis of data was through descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions, percentages and mean scores. Inferential statistics was also applied (regression) to establish the relationship between the variables and also test the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. The regression model was of the form;

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

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Response Rate

A population of 233 respondents was targeted in Jonglei State, which included Ministry of Local Government officials, the business community in Bor (Medium and large), citizens in Bor, and civil society. Out of these 233 targeted respondents, 141 duly filled out the questionnaires. All 141 questionnaires were found to be adequately filled, and hence they were all considered for analysis. This was a 61 percent response rate. This response rate was adequate according to Babbie (2011), who indicated that a response rate of 50% and above for a paper-based questionnaire survey is considered adequate.

Descriptive Statistics

The analysis presented includes evaluation of the mean and standard deviation of the statements data based on the following Likert scale: 1- Strongly disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Neutral, 4 – Agree and 5 – Strongly agree.

Public Service Delivery Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Public Service Delivery Descriptive Statistics

Statements	Mean	Std.dev
The government educates and informs the public on what it can realistically deliver	3.30	0.974
public services are easily accessible (physical or otherwise)	3.55	0.898
public services are provided in a timely manner	2.35	1.872
Public service staff are competent	3.58	1.431
Public service staff treat customers fairly	2.68	1.175
Public service staff make an extra effort to provide friendly service	2.20	1.632
Problems are adequately dealt with and resolved (where applicable)	3.21	0.965
Average Scores	2.98	1.278

Source: Research (2023)

The descriptive statistics on public service delivery, table 1, provide insights into the perceptions of the respondents regarding various aspects of public service delivery. The mean and standard deviation values for each statement indicate the average score and the level of variability in the responses, respectively. The mean score for this statement is 3.30, indicating a moderate level of agreement among the respondents. The standard deviation of 0.974 suggests that there is some variability in the responses. This finding implies that while there is some level of awareness and information dissemination by the government regarding its service delivery capabilities, there might be room for improvement in effectively educating and informing the public.

The mean score of 3.55 suggests a relatively positive perception of the accessibility of public services among the respondents. The standard deviation of 0.898 indicates a moderate level of agreement and consistency in the responses. This finding indicates that, on average, the public

perceives public services to be relatively accessible, either physically or through alternative means. The mean score of 2.35 indicates a relatively lower agreement among the respondents regarding the timeliness of public service delivery. The high standard deviation of 1.872 suggests a significant level of variability in the responses. This finding suggests that there is a perception among the respondents that public services are not consistently delivered in a timely manner, highlighting a potential area of concern and need for improvement. The mean score of 3.58 suggests a relatively positive perception of the competence of public service staff. The standard deviation of 1.431 indicates a moderate level of agreement and variability in the responses. Overall, the findings indicate that the respondents view public service staff as relatively competent in their roles and responsibilities.

The mean score of 2.68 indicates a moderate level of agreement among the respondents regarding the fairness of public service staff in their interactions with customers. The standard deviation of 1.175 suggests a moderate level of variability in the responses. This finding implies that there may be some inconsistencies in how public service staff treat customers fairly, indicating a potential area for improvement in ensuring equitable treatment. The mean score of 2.20 suggests a relatively lower level of agreement among the respondents regarding the efforts of public service staff to provide friendly service. The high standard deviation of 1.632 indicates a significant level of variability in the responses. This finding suggests that there is a perceived lack of consistent effort from public service staff to deliver friendly service, highlighting an area that may require attention and improvement.

The mean score of 3.21 indicates a moderate level of agreement among the respondents regarding the adequacy of problem resolution in public services. The standard deviation of 0.965 suggests a moderate level of variability in the responses. This finding suggests that while there is some level of satisfaction with problem resolution, there may be room for improvement in ensuring that problems are adequately addressed and resolved. Overall, the average score for all statements combined is 2.98, with a standard deviation of 1.278. These findings provide an overview of the respondents' perceptions of public service delivery in the studied context.

Public Participation Descriptive Statistics

Table 2: Public Participation Descriptive Statistics

Statement	Mean	Std.dev
The government consults with the public in its various initiatives and activities	3.78	1.423
Citizens participate in the budgeting process to ensure that important issues are given priority	2.53	1.151
Enough resources are allocated to various projects based on clear criteria from citizens	2.57	1.213
The government offices and service are accessible to the people	3.55	0.988
Addressing marginalization and inequalities are key concerns in the budgeting process	2.47	1.153
Service to the public is the major mission of the state government	2.64	1.324
Average Scores	2.93	1.209

Source: Research (2023)

The descriptive statistics provided in table 2 offer insights into the perceptions of the respondents regarding public participation in various aspects of governance and decision-making. The mean

and standard deviation values provide an understanding of the average scores and the level of variability in the responses. On whether, the government consults with the public in its various initiatives and activities, the findings returned a mean score of 3.78 indicates a relatively positive perception of public consultation by the government. The standard deviation of 1.423 suggests a moderate level of agreement and variability in the responses. This finding implies that, on average, the respondents believe that the government engages with the public in its initiatives and activities, indicating a degree of participatory governance.

The mean score of 2.53 suggests a relatively lower level of agreement among the respondents regarding citizen participation in the budgeting process. The standard deviation of 1.151 indicates a moderate level of variability in the responses. This finding implies that there may be a perceived lack of active citizen involvement in shaping budget priorities, indicating a potential gap in participatory budgeting processes. The mean score of 2.57 indicates a relatively lower level of agreement among the respondents regarding the allocation of resources based on clear criteria set by citizens. The standard deviation of 1.213 suggests a moderate level of variability in the responses. This finding suggests that there may be a perception among the respondents that resource allocation lacks transparent and citizen-driven criteria, highlighting a potential area for improvement in participatory decision-making processes.

The mean score of 3.55 suggests a relatively positive perception of accessibility to government offices and services. The standard deviation of 0.988 indicates a moderate level of agreement and consistency in the responses. This finding implies that, on average, the respondents view government offices and services as relatively accessible, indicating a degree of responsiveness and inclusivity. The mean score of 2.47 suggests a relatively lower level of agreement among the respondents regarding the inclusion of marginalized groups and addressing inequalities in the budgeting process. The standard deviation of 1.153 indicates a moderate level of variability in the responses. This finding suggests that there may be a perceived lack of focus on addressing societal inequities and ensuring inclusive budgetary allocations.

The mean score of 2.64 indicates a relatively lower level of agreement among the respondents regarding the state government's major mission of serving the public. The standard deviation of 1.324 suggests a moderate level of variability in the responses. This finding implies that there may be a perceived gap in aligning the government's mission with public service delivery, indicating a potential area for strengthening the focus on serving the citizens. Overall, the average score for all statements combined is 2.93, with a standard deviation of 1.209. These findings provide an overview of the respondents' perceptions of public participation in the studied context.

Regression Results

Table 3: Coefficient of Determination

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.648	.420	.402	.874

Source: Research (2023)

The regression summary provides important information about the relationship between the independent variable (citizen participation) and the dependent variable (public service delivery). The coefficient of determination (R-squared) value is 0.420, indicating that approximately 42% of the variance in public service delivery can be explained by the independent variable in the regression model. This suggests that citizen participation has a moderate influence on public

service delivery. The adjusted R-squared value of 0.402 takes into account the number of predictors and the sample size, providing a more conservative estimate of the model's explanatory power. It suggests that approximately 40% of the variance in public service delivery can be attributed to the independent variable, considering the complexity and constraints of the model. The standard error of the estimate is 0.874, which represents the average difference between the actual observed values and the predicted values based on the regression model. A lower standard error indicates a better fit of the model to the data. The obtained R-squared and adjusted R-squared values suggest that citizen participation has a significant impact on public service delivery.

Table 1: Analysis of Variance

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	72.023	1	72.023	96.36	.000
Residual	99.414	133	.7474		
Total	171.437	134			

a. Dependent Variable: Service delivery

b. Predictors: (Constant), Public participation

Source: Research (2023)

The ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) results provide valuable insights into the relationship between the independent variable (citizen participation) and the dependent variable (public service delivery). The F-value associated with the Regression source of variance is 96.36 suggesting a highly significant relationship between the independent variables and public service delivery. The p-value associated with the Regression source of variance is 0.000, which is less than the conventional threshold of 0.05. This indicates that the relationship between the independent variable and public service delivery is statistically significant.

Table 2: Test of Significance of Independent Variables

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.748	.075		36.514	.000
Public participation	.226	.080	.200	2.844	.005

Source: Research (2023)

The regression coefficients results provide insights into the relationship between the independent variables (citizen participation) and the dependent variable (public service delivery).

The constant term, represented as the "Constant" in the table, is 2.748. This indicates the expected value of the dependent variable (public service delivery) when all the independent variable is zero. In this case, it implies that even without any contribution from the independent variable, the expected public service delivery score would be 2.748. The coefficient for public participation is 0.226. This suggests that a one-unit increase in public participation is associated with an expected increase of 0.226 units in public service delivery. The standardized coefficient (Beta) of 0.200 indicates that public participation has a moderate positive impact on public service delivery. The t-value of 2.844 and the associated p-value of 0.005 indicate that the relationship between public participation and public service delivery is statistically significant.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the regression analysis provide valuable insights into the relationship between citizen participation and public service delivery. To better understand the implications of these findings, the results indicate that citizen participation has a significant positive impact on public service delivery. This finding aligns with previous research that emphasizes the importance of involving citizens in decision-making processes and service delivery initiatives (Darchen and Benoit, 2016; Nabatchi, 2012). When citizens are actively engaged and have a voice in public affairs, it fosters a sense of ownership, accountability, and responsiveness in public service delivery.

Several studies have explored the relationship between governance factors and public service delivery, providing further insights and comparisons to the current findings. For example, a study by Kim, Lee, and Kim (2018) investigated the impact of citizen participation and accountability on public service performance, highlighting their positive association. Similarly, a study by Grimmelikhuisen, Porumbescu, and Hong (2016) examined the role of transparency and its influence on citizen trust and satisfaction with public service delivery. It is important to acknowledge that contextual factors, such as cultural, political, and administrative contexts, can influence the relationships between the variables examined. However, the findings of this study suggest that citizen participation significantly contribute to public service delivery.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

This study citizen participation has a significant positive influence on public service delivery in Jonglei State. When citizens actively engage in decision-making processes and have a voice in public affairs, it fosters a sense of ownership, accountability, and responsiveness, leading to improved service delivery outcomes.

Recommendations

To enhance citizen participation, there is need to develop and implement mechanisms to actively involve citizens in decision-making processes related to public service delivery, to establish platforms for public consultation, feedback, and engagement to ensure that citizens' voices are heard and considered in policy and decision-making, to provide accessible and clear information to the public about their rights, entitlements, and responsibilities in relation to public services.

There is a need to a develop comprehensive public service delivery policies, that is, to formulate comprehensive policies that prioritize citizen participation as a key pillar of public service delivery, and to ensure that these policies align with national development goals and international best practices in public administration.

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