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A Study on Public Opinion of Service Delivery by County Government: Case Study of Garissa County

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Abstract:

The Constitution of Kenya 2010 and devolution legal framework enacted by parliament place a strong foundation on public participation, transparency and accountability as means to promote the efficiency, accountability, equity and inclusiveness of government and service delivery. It commits both level of governments to implement that constitutional requirement.

Contrary to the aspirations of the public that devolution will improve service delivery, county governments have faced numerous challenges such as inadequate citizen participation, capacity constraints, corruption, tribalism, lack of adequate funds undermine the expected performance and gains from devolution. Therefore, the objectives of the study include; to evaluate the level of awareness of public on existence of county government, to establish the extent at which the public seek service from county government, to estimate rate of performance of the county government since its inception, to compare the public perception about service delivery before and after devolution. To examine the challenges faced by county government in service delivery, to explore the major areas that need improvement in county level operations, to analysis the extent at which county government has improved the lives of people and to determine the support of the public on the constitutional amendment to reduce the number of counties.

The research findings show that 97% of the public understand the existence of county government out this more than half sought service from county government. It also found that 50% of the respondent believes that service delivery to the public is better after devolution and rate its performance as average. The findings also show that corruption, employment of unqualified staff and nepotism/clannism are major factors affecting service delivery that required urgent solution. More than half of respondents disagree that the devolution has improved their lives hence 50% support constitutional amendment to reduce the number of county government. In conclusion, the county government should address the challenges and implement the recommendations to enhance service delivery.

Keywords: Service delivery, public participation, devolution, legal framework, governance

1. Introduction

The devolved system of governance in Kenya was established by the promulgation of the new constitution of 2010. The operation of the county governments started soon after the March 2013 elections, in turn, these county governments receive a share of national revenues. The county governments are also expected to mobilize resources from other sources within their counties, such as taxes on property and entertainment. The main objectives of decentralization were to devolve power, resources and representation to the local level.

Parliament has enacted several legislations to operationalize the devolved units. Despite the hopes of better governance and service delivery to citizens in the devolved system, Kenya has experienced difficulties ranging from lack of adequate resources, corruption, unskilled manpower and lack of public participation in decision making process. For any county government to succeed, citizen Participation is paramount. This can be done through stake holder's input and share control over development initiatives, decisions and resources which affect the public. Strengthening citizen participation is a key focus of Kenya's devolution under the constitution and legal framework. Decentralization is meant to bring decision making closer to the people, enhances participation and representation of ordinary people at the lowest level of county government administration.

Public involvement will increase accountability and transparency, makes government more responsive to public needs and improves their expectations on delivery of services.

In order to understand, analyze and give recommendations to concerned stakeholders, a study was conducted dubbed 'public opinion of service delivery by county government: A case of Garissa county, Kenya'. The research was conducted in Garissa County which is located in the former north eastern part of Kenya. The county has a population of 923,060, and a land area of

about 45,720.2 km². It is among the arid and semiarid areas in Kenya, which is inhabited by consistent drought and famine, therefore the poverty index is high. The county is facing several other challenges which include poor infrastructure and low level of education, which have negatively impacted on their oversight role.

2. Literature Review

Devolved government is a form of government where services are devolved to the grassroots and bring services closer to the people. Public participation is an important concept in the provision of service delivery. It enhances cooperation and mutual understanding among all sector players. To understand this through other researchers' work, the following literatures were reviewed, analyzed and research gap established.

According to TM Wangari, decision making in county governments operations matters a lot. This is because it directly affects satisfaction of the community concerned. County leaders should be accountable in any decision they make for the people. Public participation is the major factor that can make leaders accountable in their decisions. He says that for any decision to succeed and accepted by the community it should have well-structured public participation.

According to ISSAC VIDOLO, county government staff face many challenges for effective service delivery to the public. The challenges he enumerated includes political interference, corruption, lack of accountability and transparency, lack of public participation in decision making, poor human resource polices and inadequate monitoring and evaluation. In order to enhance effect and quality service to the public the researcher recommends quality staff should recruited and adequate resource be put in place provide capacity building for the staff.

A research conducted by Mathews Onyango for effective service to enhance at county government, there should be no conflict between the operation strategies and service delivery to the public. The conflict may slow down the development process and may create overlapping roles between the national and county government on some of the devolved units. He found that lack adequate resources are affecting the operationalization of some of the devolved units at county government hence negatively impacting on the realization and meeting the expectation of the public needs. He recommended that for the county to mitigate this challenge they should adopt a more cost effective and efficient procurement system.

An article written by GK Kimuti indicates that the essence of devolution was to bring to service closer to the people. To realize this county and national government are mandated to public participation as enshrined in the constitution of Kenya 2010 and county government act 2012. Therefore, the responsibility and operationalization and implementation of this legal requirement lies with both levels of governments. For any government to succeed in its development program public participation play a critical in shaping the destiny. He therefore recommended that county government should subject their activities to public participation, this will create ownership and good governance.

An article titled "community involvement in public service delivery, a challenge for both local authorities and citizens" by Daniel Sebrani indicates that for any project to succeed and achieve its objective, public participation from inception to implementation of the project is vital, this can be attained by dissemination of information to citizen. This can be done in form of surveys, interviews, focus groups, debates, hearings, citizen advisory committees, public meetings and other techniques of citizen participation. he observed that the Government in place is required to analyze and understand people's satisfaction. To achieve this, all government activities and services should be open and transparent to all citizens regardless of their social status.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sampling

Sampling is a vital step in data gathering. It is concerned with the selection of observation with the objective of obtaining a well-planned conclusion. It helps in achieving objectives set for a research. 100 respondents were carefully selected for this study. Sex, age, level of study and experience were the important parameters considered in the sample selection.

3.2. Sources of Data Collection

3.2.1. Primary Sources

A well planned and structured questionnaire was presented to the sample selected. Data confidentiality well considered.

3.2.2. Secondary sources

Relevant information from past records, newspapers, journals, articles and booklets were collected and reviewed.

3.3. Tools and Techniques for Data Collection

Observation, interviews and questionnaire were the main tools used for collecting data. Relevant books, periodicals, reports and articles which were seen vital for the research were studied and reviewed.

3.4. Plan of Analysis

Tabulation was done on the data obtained. Corresponding percentages were also given. Bar Figures were used for analysis and to get accurate interpretation. Wrong, dishonest and in accurate responses were discarded.

3.4.1. Objectives

- To evaluate the level of awareness of public on existence of county government
- To establish the extent at which the public seek service from county government.
- To estimate rate of performance of the county government since its inception
- To compare the public perception about service delivery before and after devolution.
- To examine the challenges faced by county government in service delivery.
- To explore the major areas that need improvement in county level operations.
- To analysis the extent at which county government has improved the lives of people.
- To determine the support of the public on the constitutional amendment to reduce the number of counties.

4. Findings and Discussion

- Are you aware of the existence of county government in Kenya?

Responses	No of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	97	97
No	3	3
Total		

Table 1

4.1. Analysis

When the repondents were asked about the existence of county government 97% responded yes while 3% said No.

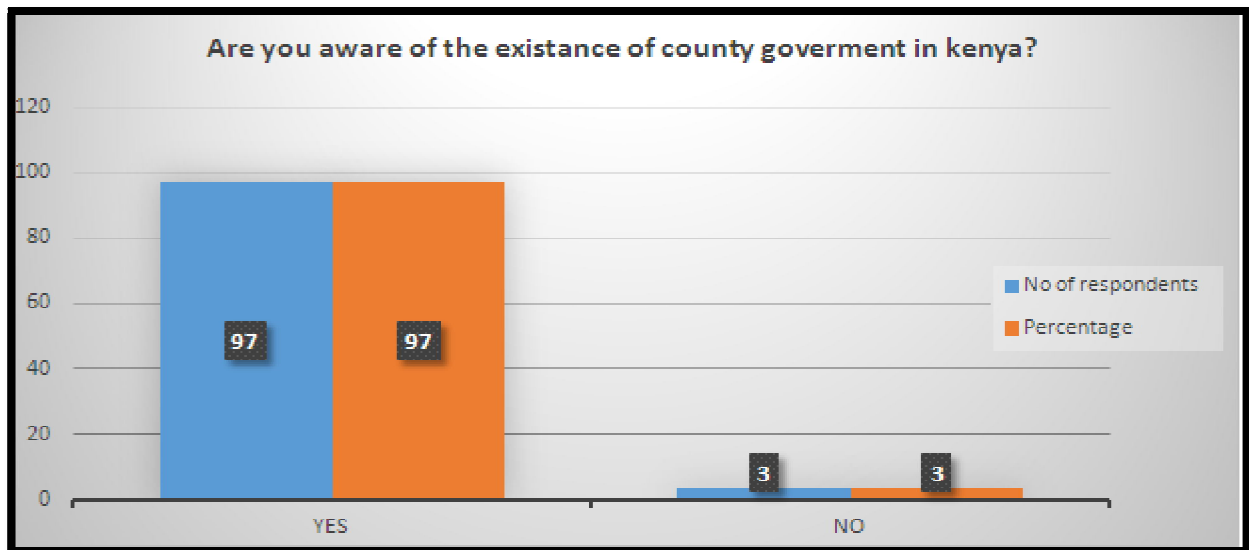


Figure 1

4.2. Interpretation

According to the research findings, the level of awareness on the existence of county government is high while very few have no knoweledge about the existence of the county government due to illetracy.

- Have you ever sought services from county government?

Responses	No of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	57	57
No	43	43
Total		

Table 2

4.3. Analysis

When the respondents were asked about if they ever sought service from county government, more than half of them were affirmative while 43% have never sought any services from the county government.

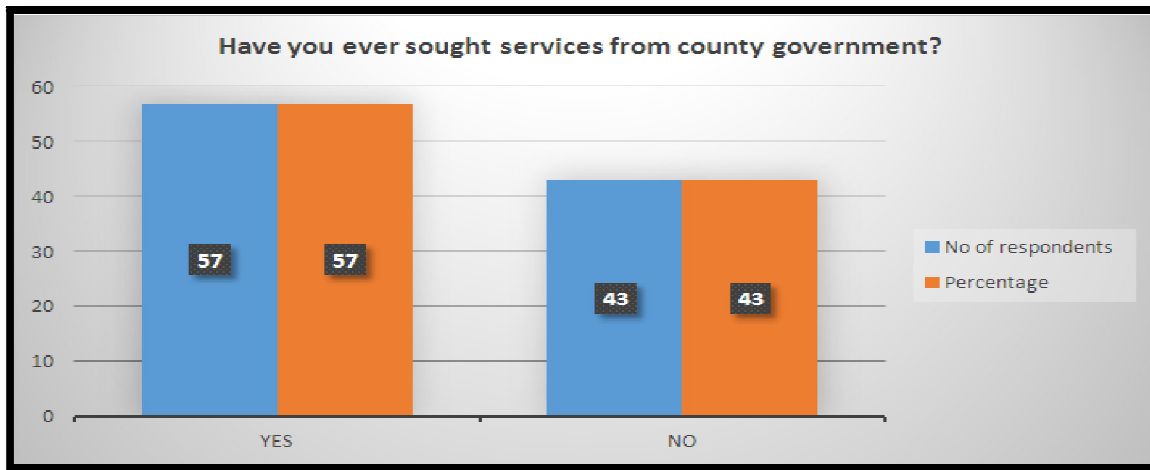


Figure 2

4.4. Interpretation

Due to high number of people not seeking services from the county government, public awareness on the functions and mandate of devolution seems to be low. This will affect public participation. A clear road map of public awareness on the functions and services provided by counties should be made available. This can be done through the media-both visual and print, public gatherings and Barazas etc.

- How do you rate the performance of the county government since its inception?

Responses	No of respondents	Percentage
Excellent	4	4
good	19	19
average	38	38
poor	28	28
I don't know	11	11
Total	100	100

Table 3

4.5. Analysis

When the respondents were asked about the performance of the county government since inception 4% concluded the services were excellent, 19% the services were good, 38% the services were average, 28% the performance was poor and 11% said they don't know.

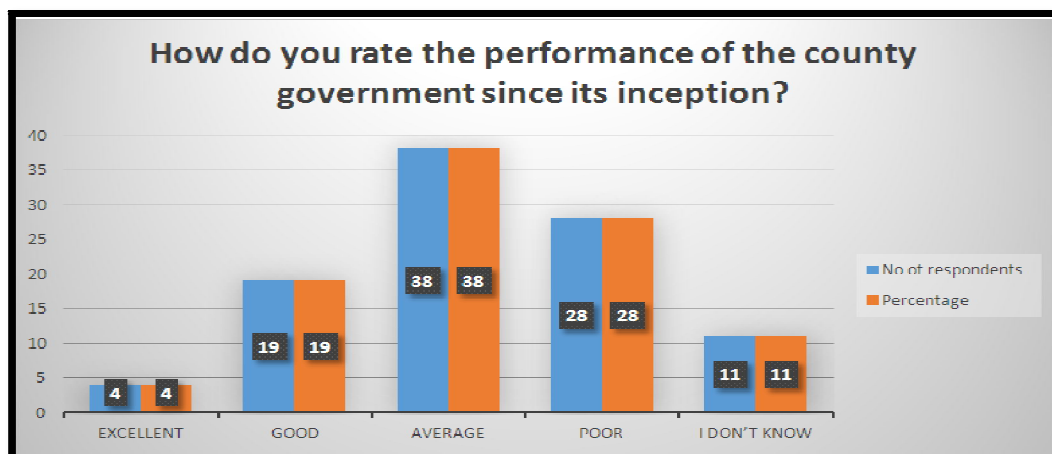


Figure 3

4.6. Interpretation

As the Figure above shows, the performance rating of the county government was below average. This means that public expectations were not met. It is likely because of nepotism/clannism, corruption and lack of skill man power. To enhance service delivery and meet the expectations of the public, the county government has to put mechanisms to mitigate these challenges.

- Compare service delivery before and after devolution.

Responses	No of Respondents	Percentage
Services were better before devolution	24	24
Services are better after devolution	50	50
Nothing has improved`	26	26
Total	100	100

Table 4

4.7. Analysis

When the respondents were asked to compare service delivered before and after devolution 50% said services were better after devolution, 24% said services were better before devolution and 26% said nothing has improved.

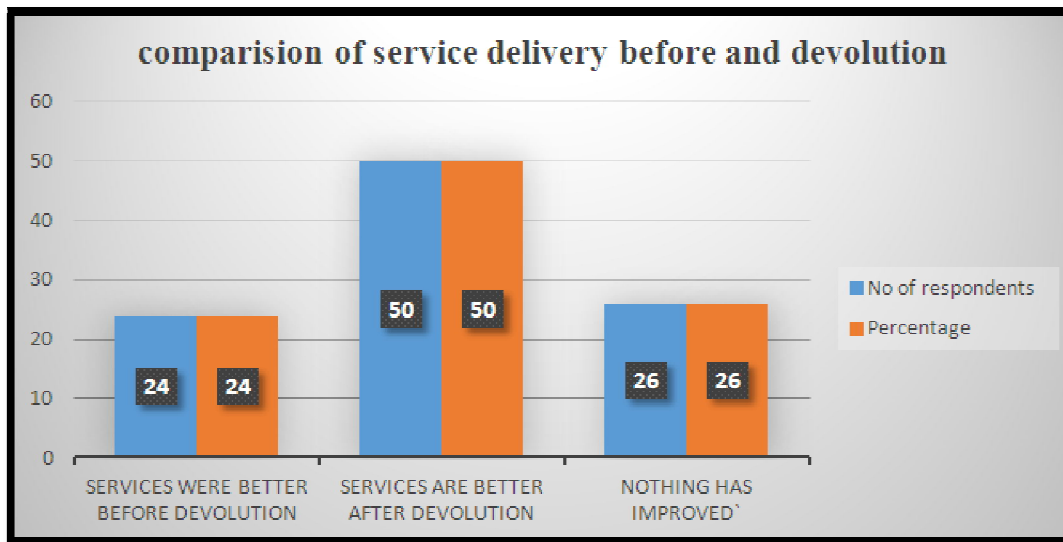


Figure 4

4.8. Interpretation

According to the research finding, relatively most respondents have got better service in the county government due to accessibility. This is commendable; however, more effort is required to improve the efficiency which will in turn improve service delivery to the public.

- 5. What are the major challenges the county is facing in delivery of services?
-

Responses	No of Respondents	Percentage
Corruption	37	37
Tribalism/nepotism	39	39
Lack of community participation	4	4
Employment of unqualified labor	14	14
Lack of commitment	0	0
Lack of funds	4	4
Duplication of services	0	0
Conflict of interest	2	2
Total	100	100

Table 5

4.9. Analysis

When the respondents were questioned on the major challenges the county is facing in delivery of services 39% stated nepotism/tribalism, 37% corruption, 4% lack of community participation and lack of funds, 14% employment of unqualified labor, 2% conflict of interest and 0% duplication of services and lack of commitment.

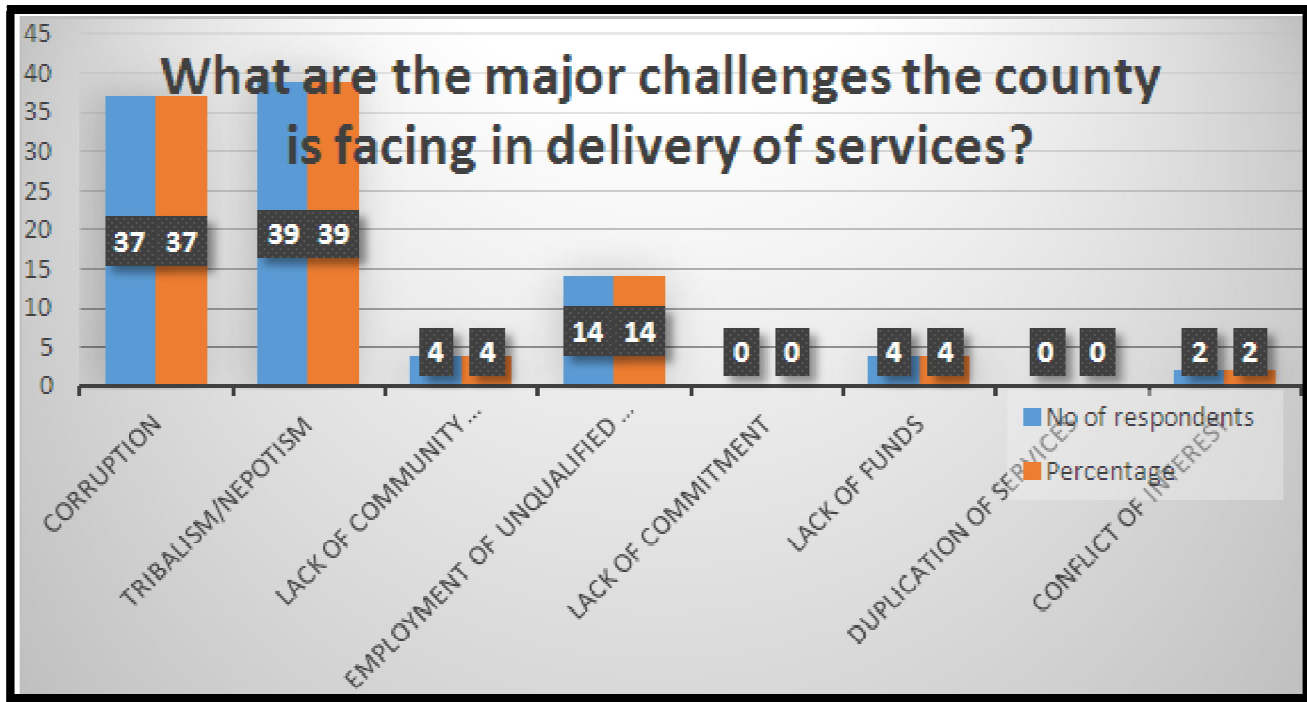


Figure 5

4.10. Interpretation

Most respondents believed that the major challenges affecting service includes corruption, nepotism/tribalism and Employment of unqualified labors. To minimize these challenges national and county governments need to come up with practical solutions to mitigate the vices. If the challenges are addressed it will positively impact on service delivery.

- What is the major area that needs improvement in the county government operations?

Responses	No of Respondents	Percentage
Employment of qualified and skilled staff	27	27
Provision of enough funds	10	10
Fighting of corruption at the grassroots	37	37
Commitment of service delivery	6	6
Avoiding duplication of services	4	4
Fighting tribalism/nepotism	11	11
Enhancement of community participation	5	5
Total	100	100

Table 6

4.11. Analysis

Respondents when questioned on the areas that need improvement in the county government 37% stated the fighting of corruption at the grassroots, 27% employment of qualified and skilled staff, 11% fighting tribalism/nepotism, 10% provision of enough funds, 6% commitment of service delivery, 5% enhancement of community participation and 4% avoiding duplication of services.

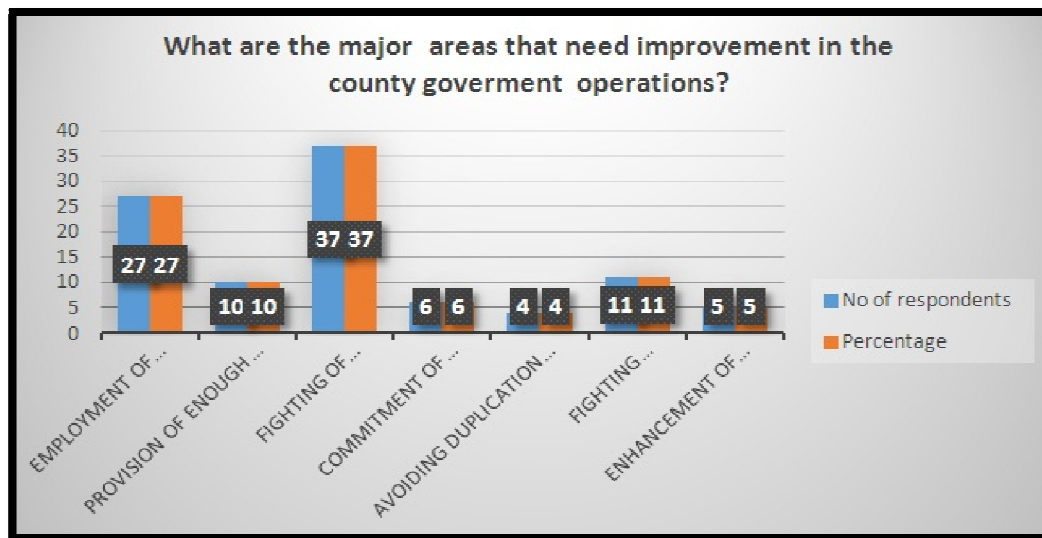


Figure 6

4.12. Interpretation

Approximately two thirds of the respondents believe that fighting of corruption and employment of qualified and skilled staff will lead to the improvement of county government operations.

- My county government has improved the lives of people since inception, do you agree?

Responses	No of Respondents	Percentage
I strongly agree	6	6
I agree	18	18
average	17	17
I disagree	34	34
I strongly disagree	25	25
Total	100	100

Table 7

4.13. Analysis

when the respondents were questioned about the county government improving their lives 34% disagreed with the statement, 25% strongly disagreed, 17% were average, 18% agreed with the statement and 6% strongly agreed. Majority of the respondents believe the county government has not improved the lives of the people.

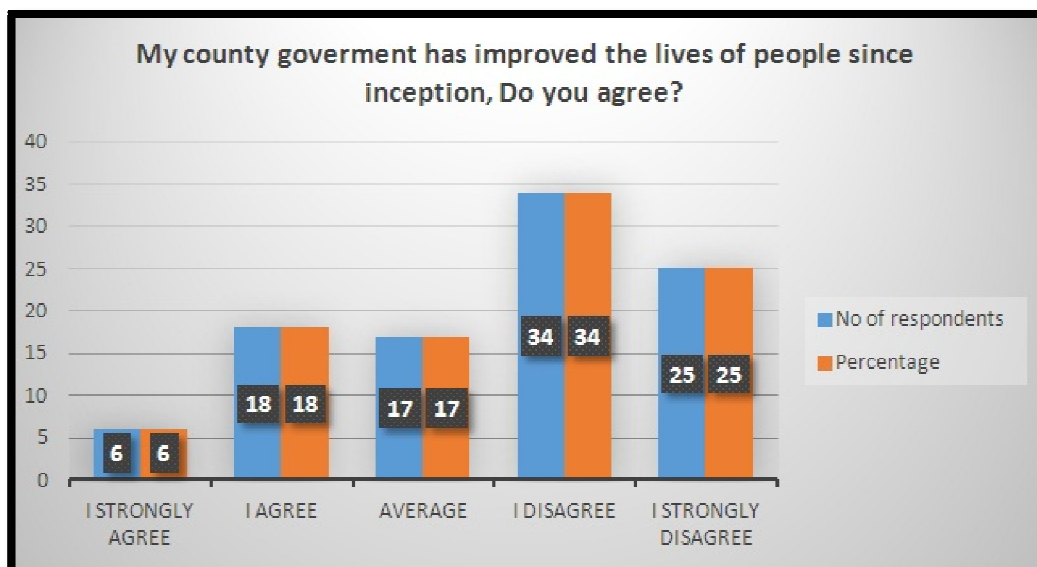


Figure 7

4.14. Interpretations

Given that cumulatively more than half of the respondents have either disagreed or strongly disagreed that county government has not improved their lives, it should initiate project that are beneficial to the public and improve their living standards. This can be done through public involvement before implementation of development projects.

- Do you support the constitutional amendments to reduce the number of county governments in Kenya?

Responses	No of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	50	50
No	45	45
Not Yet Decided	5	5
Total	100	100

Table 8

4.15. Analysis

When respondents were asked if they support the constitutional amendments to reduce the number of county governments, 50% responded yes, while 45% said no and 5% not yet decided

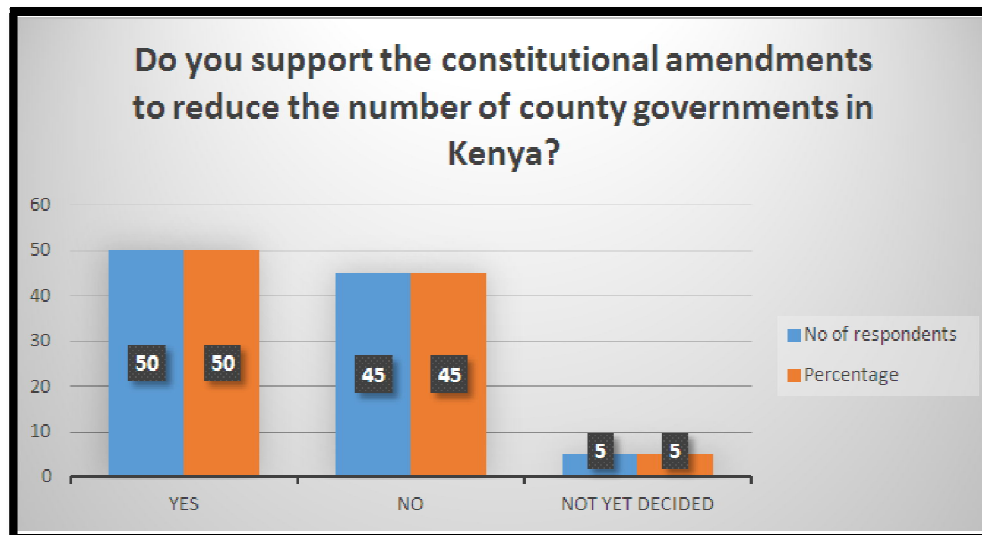


Figure 8

4.16. Interpretations

As the Figure above indicates, overwhelming number of respondent support constitutional amendment to reduce the number of county governments. This is because of high rate of nepotism /clannism, corruption, employment of unskilled manpower and lack of adequate funds may have informed their decision.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusion

The promulgation of the new constitution 2010 and the establishment of county governments, expectations of Kenyans were high. Service delivery at county level is hoped to address the inefficiency in service delivery. Consequently, Kenyans are more enlightened than ever before, expect their county governments to involve them in the initiation and implementation of development projects that will improve their living standard. The public irrespective of their levels of education, have become increasing aware the existence of devolved units and expect them to provide services as enshrined in chapter six of the constitution, which emphasizes on integrity, transparency and accountability. The county government of Garissa should address corruption, tribalism/nepotism, and employment unskilled manpower and ensure effective utilization of resources to enhance service delivery.

5.2. Recommendation

Decentralization is meant to bring decision making closer to the people, enhances participation and representation of ordinary people at the lowest level of county government administration.

Public involvement will increase accountability and transparency, makes government more responsive to public needs and improves their expectations on delivery of services.

In order to enhance good services delivery that meet the needs of the citizens to their satisfaction, this study recommends that; -

- County governments should enhance public participation in decision making process by increasing the stakeholder meetings in every department. Continuous and structured capacity building programs should be developed to mobilize and sensitize the community on their role in safeguarding devolution.
- County governments should enhance their income tax sources and collection innovation to reduce their dependence on capitation of national government allocation.
- County assemblies should develop legal framework and service delivery charters to guide and enable citizens to access information promptly and get better service delivery.
- Anti-corruption steering committee should be formed in every department to safeguard the public funds from misuse. Civil societies and other public watchdogs should be included in the committee.
- Further research should be done on the services provided by county government and their relevance to the needs of the public.

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