

## Evaluating the Role of Public Relations in Communicating Legislative Processes to the Public in Embu County

Daizy Wawira Rutere<sup>1</sup>  
Kennedy Njasi Simiyu<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>ruteredaizy@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup>ksimiyu@kibu.ac.ke

<sup>1</sup>Mt Kenya University, <sup>2</sup>Kibabii University, <sup>1,2</sup>Kenya

### ABSTRACT

*This study evaluates the role of public relations (PR) in communicating legislative processes within Embu County, Kenya, focusing on how PR practices influence public awareness. The primary objectives were to identify the communication channels utilized by the PR office, assess public engagement during legislative processes, and evaluate the effectiveness of these PR strategies. The target population included Embu County residents aged 18 and above, encompassing diverse socio-economic and demographic backgrounds to capture varied perspectives on PR effectiveness. A descriptive research approach was employed, utilizing both random and purposive sampling to select participants for questionnaires and interviews, resulting in a sample size of 400 respondents, including county officials and members of the general public. Grounded in Stakeholder Theory and Agenda-Setting Theory, this research analyses the impact of social media and traditional media on public communication efforts. Data collected from questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative insights were derived from the content analysis of interviews. The study revealed a significant gap in awareness regarding legislative processes among stakeholders, with 58% of respondents indicating a lack of information about how and when these processes occur. Additionally, 55.5% of participants reported being only somewhat or moderately aware of legislative activities, with some confessing to limited participation. Factors contributing to this stakeholder ignorance include inadequate communication from the county government and insufficient public sensitization efforts. The findings emphasize the need for enhanced communication strategies to educate the public effectively. This study recommends improving the website's functionality, leveraging traditional media for broader outreach, establishing robust feedback mechanisms, and implementing public sensitization campaigns. Furthermore, capacity building for PR practitioners and comparative analyses with other countries are suggested to identify best practices in fostering public participation in governance.*

**Keywords:** Communication Strategies, Legislative Processes, Public Relations, Public Engagement

### I. INTRODUCTION

Legislation is the process of creating, amending or repealing laws within a governing body such as a legislative assembly or a parliament, in this case, the County Government Assembly (Hayek, 2022). Public relations (PR) is a strategic communication discipline aimed at building mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its various stakeholders, such as government bodies, community groups, the public and the media (Grunig, 2020). In the context of county governments, effective PR practices are essential for developing transparency, accountability and public trust. The process of legislation in the County Assembly involves several stages. The initial stage is the introduction of the bill by a member of the assembly. The bill undergoes evaluation and debate in various committees before being presented for consideration and voting by the whole assembly. Public participation is a vital part of the legislative process. It refers to the active involvement of the people in the decision-making process. It is made up of a spectrum of activities, including public forums and consultations in the legislative process (Quick & Bryson, 2022). It is through PR that the government can educate, engage, and inform the public through strategic communication. According to Pandeya (2015), some of the most common PR strategies in communication include press releases, community outreach, media, and social media posts. Public participation allows community members to provide opinions, express concerns and take part in the development of laws that directly affect their lives.

The research is particularly relevant to county governments, given the diverse governing structures and practices observed across the different counties. Variations in cultural, political and economic factors may lead to differences in public relations practices and legislative effectiveness in counties (Hao et al., 2022). The study seeks to identify trends and best practices that can inform more targeted approaches to public relations within county governments by examining individual county perspectives. Understanding the county dynamics is essential for creating communication strategies that align with local values and governing structures that will complement the general effectiveness of the legislation processes.

This research endeavors to examine the Kenyan context and the role that county-level public relations strategies play in shaping public opinion and promoting legislative engagement. Understanding the nuances of public relations is essential to ensuring accountability, openness, and public trust as the influence of private sector groups on the legislative landscape grows (Lee & Stewart, 2021). The study aims to guide how to coordinate public relations efforts with the goals of suitable legislation and sound governance within the framework of Kenyan counties.

Embu County, located in central Kenya, has a rich agricultural base and a diverse demographic, which includes both rural and urban populations with varying levels of access to information and resources. Within Embu County's governance framework, legislation is a collaborative process that relies heavily on public engagement. The County's unique socio-economic and cultural characteristics necessitate tailored communication strategies to ensure equitable access to legislative information and meaningful participation from all demographics (Ileri, 2024). The County Assembly's legislative process involves multiple stages, beginning with the introduction of the bill by a member of the assembly (Mikva et al., 2022). The bill undergoes evaluation and debate in various committees before being presented for consideration and voting by the whole assembly.

This strategy recognizes the importance of considering the explicit features of each area to develop more focused and effective communication frameworks that assist legislative activities at the county level (Ileri, 2024). The research also acknowledges the possible impact of cultural and traditional values on public relations, corporate communication and legislative processes in Kenya. By taking into account the various local viewpoints, the study aims to contribute to understanding and giving recommendations that are familiar to the Kenyan socio-cultural context. It is expected that the results will inform not only academic discussions but also policy interventions that strengthen the cooperation between public relations practices and legislation effectiveness within Kenya's county governments.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

As Ileri (2024) indicates, effective public relations practice plays a significant role in building transparency, accountability, and public engagement within legislative processes in counties. Lack of proper public participation may lead to poor governance, loss of trust in the government, and protests due to the passing of inappropriate bills that do not address the concerns of the citizens (Campbell, 2023). Nonetheless, with the constantly changing prospect of local governance, there exists a gap in the overall understanding regarding the precise role and effect of public relations during county legislation processes and engagement. Socially, ineffective PR in the county government can erode trust in the legislative process, leading to mistrust and disengagement of the public, which eventually undermines democratic governance (Cantlin, 2022). A case in the review was the skirmishes experienced in Kenya when the Finance Bill 2024 sailed through the Second Reading on 20th June 2024; members of the public took to the streets protesting the lack of involvement (Mulongo, 2024). It led to the destruction of property and loss of lives. Had adequate public participation been carried out, the same would have been avoided. The strategic role of corporate communication in public institutions suggests that effective communication practices contribute to improved organizational performance (Kitonga, 2017). Research demonstrates the importance of effective communication in the public sector by emphasizing that transparent and clear communication is essential for successful policy implementation (Fredriksson & Pallas, 2018).

Academically, there is a notable gap in research on the influence of PR practices within legislative processes in governance, particularly at the county level. While public relations is widely recognized as essential for fostering effective communication, trust, and engagement, specific empirical evidence and theoretical frameworks describing how PR practices shape local legislative processes remain scarce. Christensen and Laegreid (2020) have underscored the importance of targeted communication strategies to enhance public engagement in local governance. However, studies specific to PR's impact on legislative communication in County or decentralized governments, especially in African contexts, are limited. In examining how laws are communicated, Cornelissen (2020) highlights corporate communication as a key tool for enhancing transparency and organizational accountability. Nevertheless, this research does not address how PR can uniquely influence public understanding of legislative processes within local governments, particularly in rural or semi-urban settings. This absence of focused research creates a gap in understanding the dynamics of PR in shaping public perceptions and facilitating meaningful public engagement during county legislation processes.

The role of PR in building public trust is also a critical area that remains underexplored in the legislative context. Studies by Fredriksson and Pallas (2018) emphasize transparency in government communication as a foundation for fostering public trust. However, they do not specifically analyze PR's role in legislative processes, leaving a gap in understanding how PR could enhance transparency and trust in county-level legislative settings. Additionally, while foundational theories like Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984) are applied broadly in PR studies, there is little theoretical groundwork addressing how PR impacts trust-building and transparency, specifically in local legislative processes. In terms of effective communication channels for legislative outreach, agenda-setting research

by McCombs and Shaw (1972) demonstrates the media's influence on public perception but does not examine how communication channels impact public understanding of decentralized legislative processes. Quick and Bryson (2022) highlight the value of public forums in governance but do not discuss how PR practices could be optimized to encourage public participation in legislative processes at the county level. This study analyzes the effectiveness of PR communication channels and practices employed by the Embu County Assembly, seeking to develop recommendations tailored to the unique dynamics of county governance and public engagement in legislative matters.

## 1.2 Research Objectives

- i. To identify the communication channels utilized by the public relations office to inform the people about the legislative processes in Embu County.
- ii. To evaluate the role of public relations practice in the legislative process of Embu County.

## 1.3 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions, which aim to understand the role of public relations in Embu County in sensitizing the public to the legislative process.

- i. Which communication channels does the public relations office utilize to sensitize the people of Embu County to the County's legislative processes?
- ii. What impact does public relations practice have in sensitization of the legislative process in Embu County?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review aims to provide a detailed and inclusive perspective on the changing workings within Kenya's county governments, with a specific view on the legislative processes.

### 2.1 Theoretical Review

A more profound knowledge of the ways in which communication dynamics influence legislative outcomes and public perceptions in county governance can be gained by examining the role of public relations within the theoretical frameworks of agenda-setting theory and stakeholder theory.

#### 2.1.1 Agenda-Setting Theory

Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw founded the agenda-setting theory in 1968 (Efendi et al., 2023). The theory states that communication practices and media can influence which issues gain attention among the public. The agenda-setting theory explains a lot about media and perception. However, it oversimplifies the dynamics of media and the audience by generalizing on the cause-and-effect phenomenon (Coleman et al., 2009). The relationship between media and the audience is not as simple as the agenda-setting theory portrays. On the contrary, the relationship between media and the audience is complex due to the way people interpret and process information. People's pre-existing beliefs, values, and personal experiences have to be taken into consideration in order to view the relationship holistically.

Agenda-setting theory also has strengths that make it a popular theory in media studies. It can point out the significant impact of the media on the public agenda. Various research on the theory has demonstrated that the topics and issues emphasized by the media tend to agree with what the public regards as imperative (Lin, 2024).

The theory is applicable given that it helps understand how communication influences public perceptions of legislation issues. It is often employed to analyze news coverage, framing effects, and the media's role in shaping public discourse since it can help understand how strategic communication efforts influence the prioritization and attention given to legislative matters in Embu County (Wang et al., 2023). The theory is the perfect yardstick for evaluating the effectiveness of the communication channels utilized by the County Government in circulating information regarding participation in legislation processes as well as the methods that are best suited to delivering the information.

#### 2.1.2 Stakeholder Theory

Edward Freeman developed stakeholder theory in 1984, asserting the involvement of all stakeholders in any organization's decision-making process (Freeman et al., 2010). It asserts the need to balance, understand, and manage all the needs of stakeholders influenced by the decisions of the organization. The theory emphasizes the need to be thorough in considering the interests of the various stakeholders affected by a decision in order to make it ethical and sustainable, as Freeman (2023) emphasizes. In this study, it is helpful in understanding the engagement of the various stakeholders in the legislative process in Embu County. It involves learning the interests of the Embu County stakeholders by means of establishing a communication channel that promotes transparency in the legislative process.

Public relations have a huge responsibility to build trust in the legislative process of Embu County. The theory is a blueprint for the management of the interests of various stakeholders, including the press, the public, NGOs, leaders, and county government officials involved in the legislative process in the County. The application of the theory could be an asset to the county PR practitioners in building trust in the legislative process and ensuring the stakeholder's interests are reflected in the legislation.

## 2.2 Empirical Review

According to Hermanto and Aryani (2021), recognizing the potential of legislative reform to establish detailed, efficient and effective legislative drafting frameworks within legally transplanted omnibus legislation, this research seeks to assess the utilization of omnibus legislation as a comparative legal tool in Indonesia, Turkey, and Serbia. The objective is to identify, analyze, and make clear the legislative processes in these countries. In doing so, the research emphasizes the significance of omnibus legislation despite factors driven by possibilities, obstacles, and standard measurements. Developing countries face challenges in transitioning their legislative architecture through proposed legislative reforms. The study aimed to shed light on the importance of omnibus legislation in advancing the legislative reform agenda pursued by developing countries.

Vadlamannati and Cooray (2017) examined the impact of Freedom of Information (FOI) laws on facilitating citizens' access to government information, enhancing transparency, and ensuring government accountability in approximately 90 countries. The research investigated the relationship between the perceived level of government corruption and the application of Freedom of Information laws using quantitative analysis based on panel data spanning 132 countries between 1990 and 2011 (Vadlamannati & Cooray, 2017). Even after adjusting for self-selection bias, the findings indicated that passing FOI laws is associated with an increase in the impression of government corruption, which is fueled by an increased awareness of corrupt practices. Interestingly, this picture is reinforced when FOI laws are combined with more media freedom, active NGO participation, and increased political competitiveness (Vadlamannati & Cooray, 2017). The report does note that popular opinions of government corruption tend to wane over time after FOI laws are passed. Even when endogeneity is considered through the use of different samples, instrumental variables, and estimate techniques, these conclusions hold up well. The research focuses on combining FOI laws with factors like media freedom, NGO engagement, and political competition without delving into the nuanced interactions and potential trade-offs between these elements (Vadlamannati & Cooray, 2017). A more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between FOI laws and contextual factors could enhance the applicability of the findings.

A study by Mailu and Kariuki (2022) investigated the impact of strategic leadership practices on the organizational performance of not-for-profit organizations in Nairobi County, Kenya, utilizing a convergent mixed-method research design targeting not-for-profits; the study focuses on determining the effects of strategic direction, human capital development, ethical practices, and balanced strategic control. Data was collected through survey questionnaires and interviews with 305 strategic leaders selected via simple random sampling. SPSS version 21 was employed for data processing and analysis (Mailu & Kariuki, 2022). Results indicate a significant positive correlation between overall strategic leadership practices.

Further, the results indicated that strategic direction, developing human capital, ethical practices, and strategic control also influence organizational performance. The study recommended adopting strategic leadership practices in not-for-profits to enhance organizational performance. However, the study failed to examine significant concepts such as ethical practices and strategic control that enhance performance.

A study by Cedergren et al. (2022) examines the factors that impact implementation and the outcomes generated by the risk management process. Data gathering involved administering a questionnaire on five occasions throughout the study. Supplementary to the questionnaire outcomes, an interview study was conducted to acquire more profound insights into the factors influencing the evolution of the risk management process. The results highlight a developmental progression over time, notably demonstrating heightened risk awareness among individuals engaged in the process. Nevertheless, the findings also suggest that the impact of the risk management process was somewhat constrained, with limited dissemination of outcomes to the broader organization. Notably, individuals at the management level exhibited a diminishing commitment to the risk management process over the 3.5 years.

Mmene (2021) examines how Kenya's legal framework for public participation works. The study contends that this ambiguity stems from a clear definition of the right in the Constitution, statutes, or judicial decisions. The study employs a doctrinal research methodology to illustrate that the substance, structure, and threshold of the right to public participation in Kenya remain undefined and unresolved. Examining case law, legislative frameworks, and institutional structures reveals significant deficiencies in Kenya's approach to public participation rights. Courts have not articulated a definitive "reasonability" test to determine the threshold, leaving the qualitative and quantitative aspects ambiguous. The Public Participation Bill 2018 needs to address these legal challenges adequately. Additionally, the study adopts a comparative research methodology to draw lessons from South Africa's experience,



particularly from its courts, which have provided clear definitions and guidelines for parliament's duty to facilitate public involvement. The study proposes an ideal correct definition and clarifies the reasonability test for determining the threshold required to fulfill this duty.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Study Area

Embu County, situated in central Kenya and bordered by Kirinyaga, Meru, and Kitui counties, is an agricultural hub distinguished by the Aberdare Mountain Range and fertile lands, with Embu town serving as its administrative and cultural center. Home to a diverse population of around 600,000 residents, primarily Kikuyu and Akamba (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2019), Embu's demographic profile includes varied age groups, educational backgrounds, and socio-economic statuses, all of which influence public participation in governance. Following Kenya's devolution, Embu County has seen significant political and administrative changes, underscoring the need for transparency and public involvement in legislative activities. However, awareness gaps persist, particularly in rural areas, where information about legislative processes remains limited. This study examines the County's public relations practices in enhancing legislative awareness and aims to develop strategies that improve communication and foster active community engagement in governance.

#### 3.2 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive research approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather comprehensive data on the role of public relations in communicating legislative processes within Embu County. Questionnaires were distributed to stakeholders, including residents and local leaders, to assess their awareness and understanding of the legislative process. Additionally, an in-depth interview was conducted with the public relations director from the Embu County Government to gain insights into the strategies employed for public engagement and communication. The approach enabled a thorough analysis of the effectiveness of current communication practices and highlighted areas for improvement in stakeholder engagement.

#### 3.3 Target Population and Sample Size

The target population is the particular group of people that a researcher aims to investigate and collect helpful information (Tabesh et al., 2019). According to the KNBS report, Embu County had a population of 608,599 people as of 2022 (KNBS, 2019). The study considers participants who have attained the age of 18 and above, with purposive sampling employed to select the PR director.

A sample size of 400 listeners was determined using Yamane's formula, ensuring a 95% confidence level.  $n =$

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

Where:

N = Total population;

n = the sample size;

$\epsilon$  = error term.

N = 608599  $\epsilon = 0.05$

$$n = \frac{608599}{1+608599(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{608599}{1+1521} = 399.86$$

The sample size was 400 respondents.

**Table 1**

*Sample Size*

Category	Target population	Sample
Public Relations Director	1	1
Members of the public	608565	399
<b>Total</b>	<b>608599</b>	<b>400</b>

Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2019)

#### 3.4 Data Analysis

The collected information is processed by first cleaning to eliminate redundant and incomplete pieces of records. The cleaning process ensures that the data is consistent. The cleaned data was sorted and checked for

completeness for easy analysis and interpretation. Quantitative data were analyzed thematically, identifying key trends and patterns related to public relations (PR) in communicating legislative processes within Embu County, Kenya.

## IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

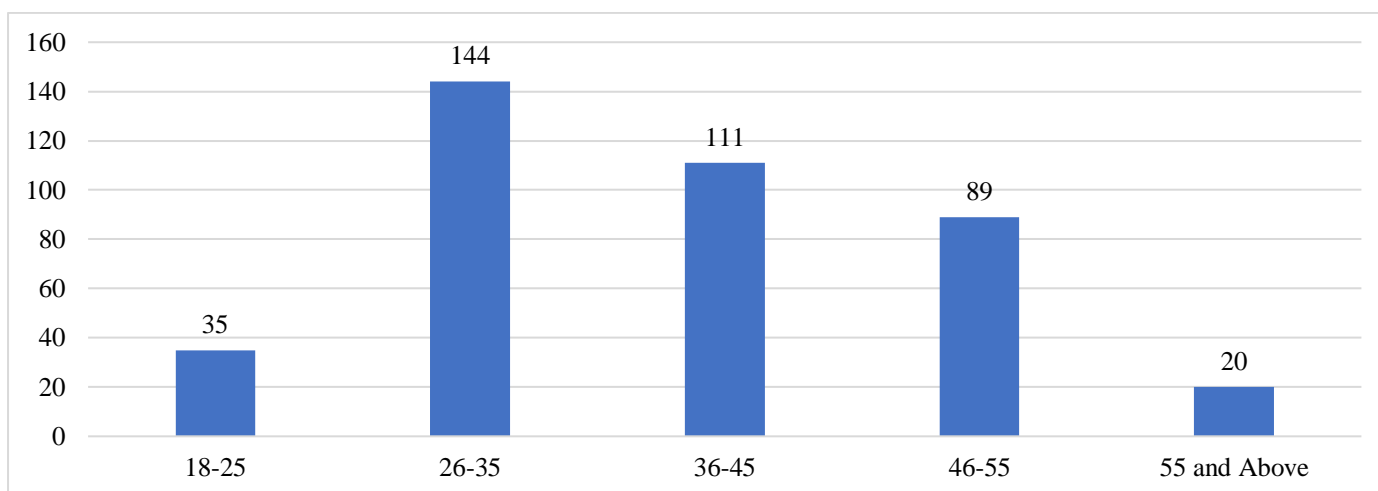
### 4.1 Response Rate

The participation level was satisfactory. A total of 399 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents for data collection. The majority of the respondents who received the questionnaires were members of the public and employees of the County Government of Embu. The questionnaires received a 90% completion rate and were returned to the researcher. Early communication and prior arrangements for interviews enabled the interviewee to find time and attend the interview. The scheduled interview was a success, again accounting for a 100% response rate. The results for the data collection superseded expectations with a 90% delivery and equally satisfying the 50% threshold for a reasonable analysis.

### 4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The participants of the study had varied characteristics, and the diverse nature of the characteristics enriched the responses provided for the study by providing a broader understanding of the area of study.

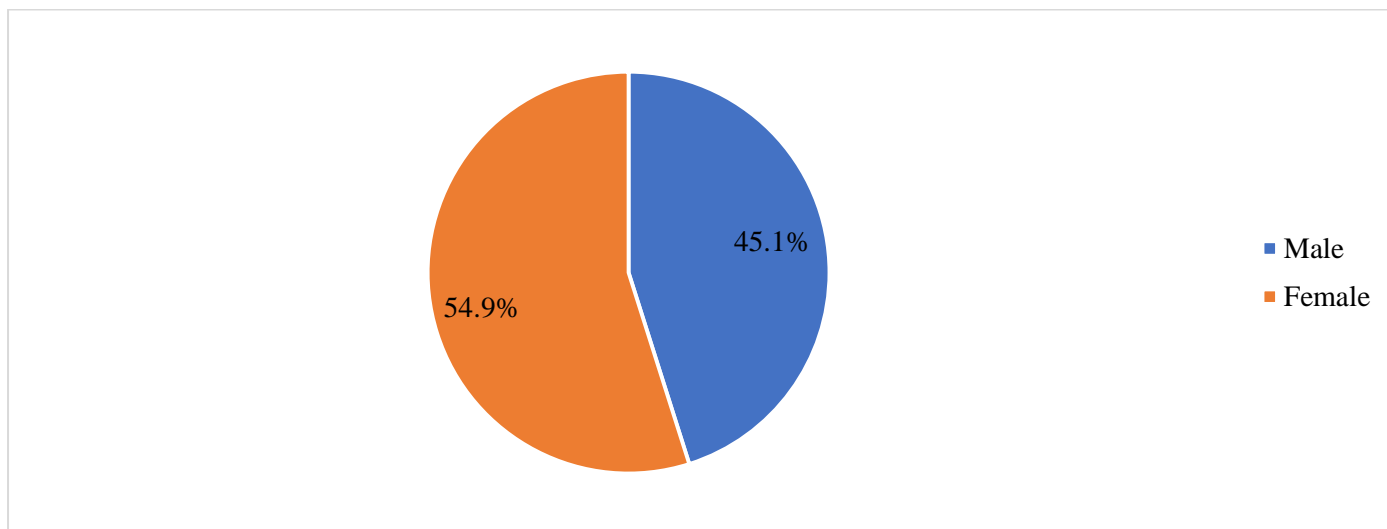
#### 4.2.1 Age Distribution



**Figure 1**  
*Age Distribution*

Figure 1 shows the age distribution of the respondents, indicating that the majority of the respondents are within the age bracket of 26 and 35 years, constituting 36.1% of the total respondents. The age brackets 36 to 45 and 46 to 55 had 22.8% and 22.3% of the total respondents. The three age brackets had the majority of the respondents, with the high numbers being attributed to most people in this section being actively engaged with the current developments of the County Government. Additionally, they are well articulated with the dynamics of the county legislation process. Young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 had a representation of 8.8%. The majority of people in this group have limited knowledge of the legislation process and shy away from participating in the process. Respondents over the age of 56 had the most minor representation, as illustrated in Figure 4.1, with 5% of the total respondents. The section represents a group of older adults who may not have the time to participate in the grueling sessions of public participation.

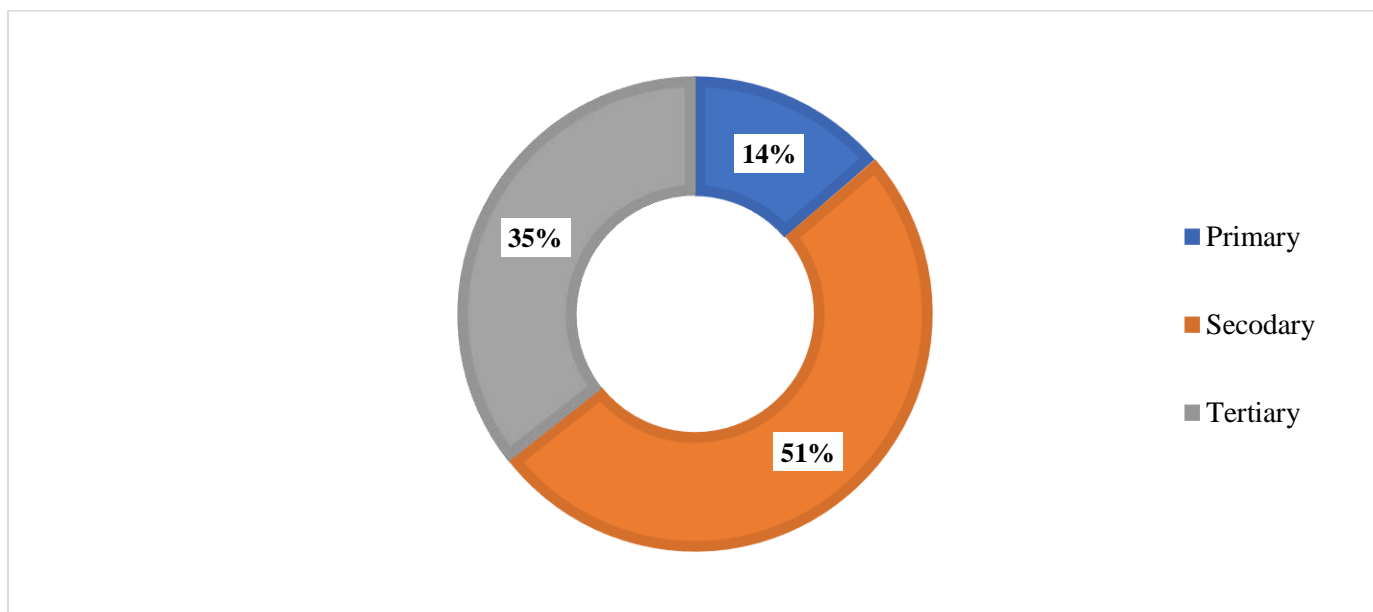
### 4.2.2 Gender



**Figure 2**  
*Gender*

Figure 2 illustrates the male-to-female ratio and gender distribution of the respondents sampled. The population consisted of 180 males and 219 females, translating to 45.1% and 54.9% of the sample size, respectively. The data demonstrates that a large percentage of the female population is actively engaged in the legislation process in the county government compared to the male population. The gender distribution shows a slight difference in the participation levels between the males and females. Despite the slight difference, it is encouraging to see participation from both genders, showing the efforts of public relations in inviting the public to participate in legislation processes equally for both genders. According to Fombad and Jiyane (2019), effective public relations should be modeled to cut across the gender distribution without any form of discrimination.

### 4.2.3 Educational Background



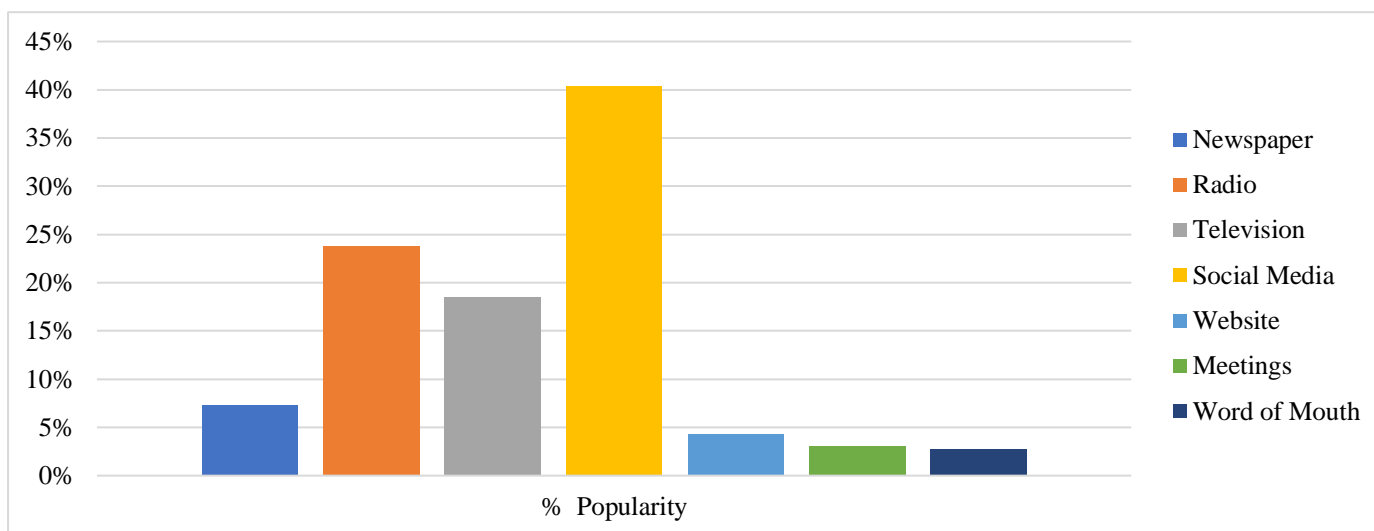
**Figure 3**  
*Educational Background*

Figure 3 above represents the education level of the sample size. According to the figure above, all the respondents have had formal education, with the least educated having undergone primary education. There were only 50 respondents who attended primary education, accounting for 14% of the sample size. The secondary education

level had 185 respondents, which constituted 50.7% of the sample size. One hundred thirty of the respondents had attained a tertiary level of education, accounting for 35.6% of the sample size. The education background distribution indicates that the majority of the residents of Embu County have had some level of formal education and, hence, are capable of consuming information in print and digital media in both English and Kiswahili, which are the formal languages legally recognized. Public relations can, therefore, rely on the educational background of the people of Embu and utilize the necessary public relations strategies to design effective communication for disseminating information on legislation processes.

### 4.3 Presentation of Findings

#### 4.3.1 County Government of Embu's Communication Channels for Legislative Information



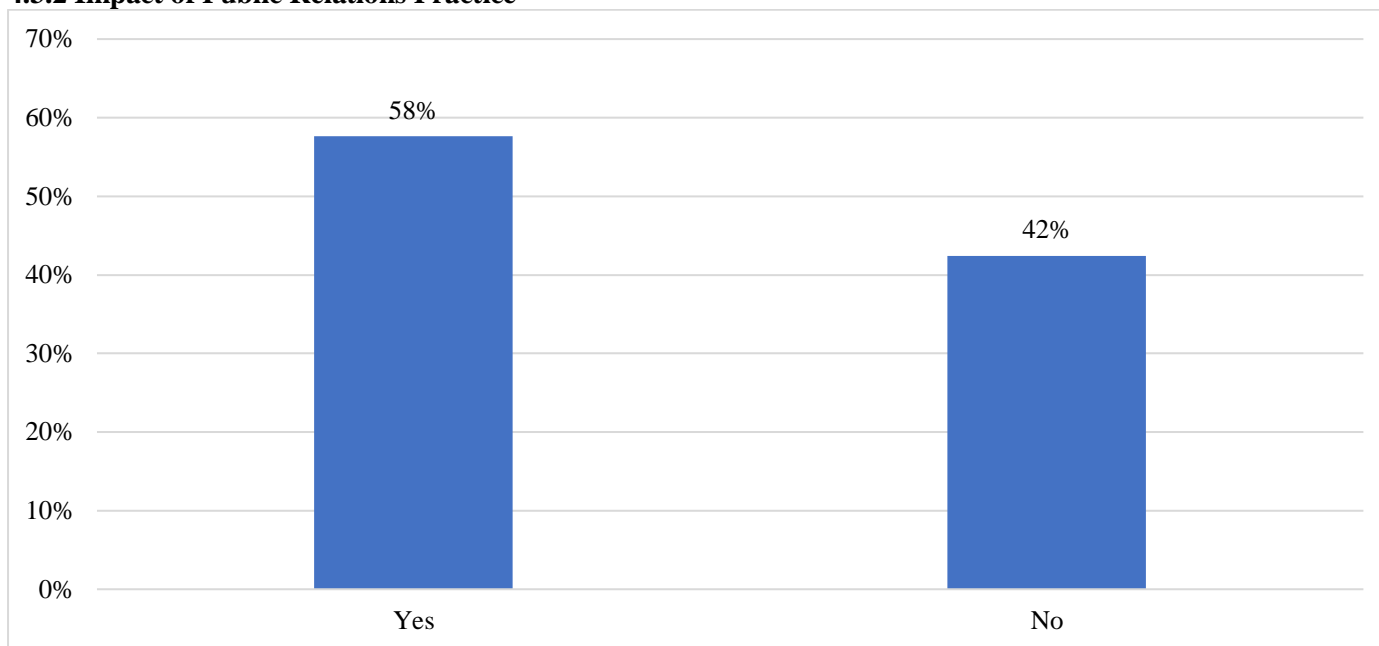
**Figure 4**  
*Channel Popularity*

The responses given by the respondents indicated that mainstream media and social media were the main communication channels used by the county government to pass information to the public. Social media was the leading platform used by the County Government to post notifications for upcoming public participation meetings and other County Government news. Radio and television broadcasting in local languages were also explicitly used to accommodate older adults who may not have a good understanding of English and Kiswahili. Additionally, local dialect is prevalent at the grassroots levels, thereby making local radio and television channels the best mode of communication for the local people. According to Hyland-Wood et al. (2021), the availability and reliability of information are crucial in determining how well the target population receives it. The official communication channel for the County Government is the County website. However, the public rarely visits the website, reducing its effectiveness as a reliable channel for disseminating information.

Interview responses reveal varying levels of satisfaction and concerns regarding the effectiveness of Embu County's communication channels. One public relations officer stated, "Social media has been instrumental in quickly notifying the public about participation meetings and county news, especially for those in urban areas who rely on smartphones and internet access." However, a local community leader from a rural area pointed out that radio is the most effective channel for us. We rely on it to hear about county announcements in our local language, but we still miss many details because broadcasts are often too brief." Several respondents highlighted the role of local dialects in making legislative information more accessible. An elder community member commented, "If announcements are in our language, people pay more attention and discuss them in village meetings." Nonetheless, there were noted gaps, with one rural respondent mentioning, "I have heard of a website, but few people here use it or even know what it contains. It is just not part of our routine to visit websites." These qualitative insights confirm the limited reach of the county website and emphasize the necessity of utilizing local radio and television to connect with rural and older populations.



### 4.3.2 Impact of Public Relations Practice



**Figure 5**  
*Response Rate*

When the respondents were asked about the impact of public relations practices used by the county government to inform the public about the legislative process and public participation, they agreed that there were significant improvements compared to previous terms. The responses were corroborated by the data collected where 58% of the respondents agreed that public relations efforts had made them more aware of legislative processes in the county government and the importance of public participation in the legislative processes. 42% of the respondents did not feel the impact of public relations in increasing their awareness of legislative processes and public participation. The findings indicate that while the efforts of the public relations office to provide information to the public are recommendable, the penetration level of the information to the public is still wanting, and there is room for improvements to make information available and accessible to all the people of Embu County.

Regarding the impact of public relations efforts, respondents acknowledged positive changes but expressed a desire for more transparency and engagement. One respondent from an urban setting mentioned, "I have noticed more updates about county proceedings on social media, which has helped me stay informed. However, sometimes, it feels one-sided – we are informed but do not have channels to give our feedback." This sentiment highlights the need for two-way communication to make the public feel actively involved in the legislative process.

Meanwhile, a local government official remarked, "Public awareness has grown, but we still see low participation in rural areas, as people do not fully trust that their input will make a difference." Another respondent added, "We need more face-to-face forums to explain legislative changes. It is not enough to hear about them; we need to understand how they affect us." This feedback underscores the demand for more interactive engagement strategies, particularly in rural settings, to increase the perceived impact of PR practices and foster greater inclusivity in legislative discussions. These interview responses reflect both progress and ongoing challenges, suggesting that while PR efforts have made strides, there remains substantial room for improvement to ensure equitable and meaningful public engagement across Embu County.

## V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusions

This study sought to evaluate the role of public relations (PR) in communicating legislative processes within Embu County, with a focus on how the PR office disseminates information and engages the public. Based on the findings, PR practices play a critical role in informing the public about legislative processes, but several gaps need to be addressed to improve the effectiveness of communication. The results revealed that the primary communication channels used by the PR office are social media and mainstream media (Radio and television). However, the County's official website is underutilized despite being a key channel for official communication. The findings align with Grunig's (2020) assertion that effective public relations strategies should include a mix of traditional and digital communication channels to reach diverse stakeholders.

In terms of public engagement, the study found that most respondents were satisfied with the current communication strategies, though engagement was moderate, especially in rural areas. Many respondents indicated that they were unaware of the opportunities for public participation in legislative processes. It indicates that while the PR office is making strides in public communication, there is room for improvement in creating more inclusive and accessible platforms for public engagement, particularly for rural and marginalized communities. The study supports Cornelissen's (2020) findings that a lack of accessibility to information for all demographics often limits the effectiveness of public relations in governance. Embu County's reliance on digital platforms, while effective in urban areas, is not as successful in reaching rural populations. This finding underscores the importance of utilizing multiple communication platforms to ensure that all citizens are well-informed and have the opportunity to participate in legislative processes.

## 5.2 Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, several recommendations are proposed to enhance the role of PR in communicating legislative processes and fostering public engagement in Embu County:

The Embu County PR office should enhance the use of its official website as a primary communication tool. The website should be regularly updated with detailed and timely information regarding legislative processes, including opportunities for public participation. The website should feature interactive content such as videos and infographics that make complex legislative information easier to understand and improve accessibility. The website should also include a feedback section where citizens can voice their opinions and ask questions about ongoing legislative activities.

While social media and mainstream media are effective, particularly in urban areas, the county government should increase the use of traditional media, such as local radio stations, to reach rural and marginalized communities. Radio programs in local languages can play a significant role in engaging older adults and those without access to digital platforms. Additionally, organizing regular community meetings and forums in rural areas will foster greater public participation and ensure that no segment of the population is left out.

The PR office should establish robust feedback mechanisms to ensure two-way communication between the government and its citizens. Setting up online forums, suggestion boxes, and community workshops will give citizens the opportunity to provide input on legislative matters. These platforms will also help to build trust between the government and the public, as citizens will feel that their voices are being heard and considered in decision-making processes.

To improve public awareness of legislative processes, the county government should implement public sensitization campaigns through a combination of media platforms. These campaigns should educate citizens on the importance of participating in legislative processes and provide information on how and when they can engage. The campaigns should target both urban and rural populations, ensuring that messaging is tailored to suit the needs and preferences of different demographics.

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