

Assessment Of Special Interest Groups in Public Policy Formulation In The National Gender And Equality Commission.

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Abstract: This report evaluates the role of Special Interest Groups in public policy formulation, focusing on the National Gender and Equality Commission. Special interest organizations play a crucial role in shaping public policy by raising awareness and championing their ideologies. They help vulnerable and minority members of society voice their concerns, share their ideas with policy-making institutions, and act as a link between citizens and government institutions by providing information on government actions.

The system analysis approach served as the study's foundation for elucidating the variables' relationships. The National Gender and Equality Commission employed 64 people as the target group for the descriptive study design. For the unit of analysis, the study used the census technique. The primary means of gathering data were questionnaires, which underwent validity and reliability pretesting as part of a pilot project. The respondents were given the questionnaire by the researcher using the drop and pick approach. To facilitate analysis using SPSS, the gathered data was transformed into a quantitative format. Descriptive data, such as mean and standard deviation, and inferential statistics, such as correlation analysis and ordinal regression, were produced by the study. A 0.05 factor represents a unit progress in the part that special interest organizations play in the creation of public policy. The study found that special interest groups should be more involved in the creation of public policy.

Keywords: special interest groups, public policy formulation

INTRODUCTION

Special interest groups are often seen as the citizen's watchdog, influencing administration and law within national governments. They encompass individuals with shared interests in political, economic, cultural, and educational sectors. These groups have played a crucial role in democracy by lobbying for public policy formations.

The impact of special interest organizations is difficult to evaluate without identifying a policy or research context. Between 1960-1980, special interest groups created fragmentation lines and opportunities for government systems to respond to their interests while effectively representing electoral and public interests. In Kenya, special interest groups have lobbied the national government for policies that would uplift communities and societies around them.

In Kenya, special interest groups represent a subset of members in organizations, communities, or society, organizing meetings and forums focused on mutual interest and shared characteristics. They advocate for flexible collaboration across intellectual topics or professional concerns.

Special interest groups work on influencing governmental policies by supporting their candidates and providing them with information on policy proposals and constituents' perceptions. They also actively work to influence budgetary procedures to increase their own organization's financial gain. For example, when the government formulates a policy on welfare programs, special interest groups may oppose the government and advocate for the reduction of certain government programs to support welfare programs. Once the policy has passed the required stages and been implemented into law, these groups will be required to lobby relevant government arms for approval.

Special interest groups are organizations that champion specific interests and causes, such as economic, social, or ideological, and influence government policy. They play a crucial role in educating the public and government officials about the problems at hand and providing a forum for citizens to have a say in policymaking. Research shows that interest groups have a positive contribution in decision-making unless they prioritize self-interest over the public good. They can participate in public policy formulation through advocacy, policy formulation, and capacity building, such as examining new laws, sending comments to Parliament committees, lobbying government ministers, and affecting public opinion.

Interest groups also educate the public on policy issues, raising awareness, and championing their ideologies. They act as a link between citizens and government institutions by passing information on government actions. Policy formulation is crucial for governance as it drives social and economic development. Globally, special interest groups lobby for public policy formations through international bodies like the UN and International Labor Organization. Regionally, in Africa, special interest groups are organized through regional institutions like the African Union. Examples of such groups include the Access to Information Network (ATINA), African Interest Groups (AIG), and Facility of Public Health Special Interest Group.

The research aims to evaluate the impact of public policy and the effectiveness of direct and indirect lobbying strategies employed by special interest organizations.

Statement of the Problem

Kenya's Special Interest Groups (SIGs), including women, people with disabilities, youth, minorities, and marginalized populations, face significant challenges in achieving inclusivity and transparency in public affairs. Women have struggled in elective politics since Kenya gained independence in 1963, and their performance has been constrained in higher office positions. The government is currently facing a governance crisis due to SIGs' inadequate inclusion in public affairs. Citizens, particularly those from minority groups, perceive that only those with strong economic standing or ties to political authority can access the government.

SIGs are often driven to exclusion and marginalization due to poverty, historical biases, political exclusion, cultural attrition, under representation in decision-making, negative stereotypes, and limited access to educational and work opportunities. The 2010 constitution promises the participation of the youth and SIGs in decision-making, but many are unaware of this right. To ensure their inclusion, special interest groups should be adequately informed and actively involved in decision-making processes, particularly in social policy.

Challenges have been addressed by proper capacity building of policy makers and institutions, civic education, public participation forums, budgeting for policy formulation costs, and setting up liaison offices or call centres for citizens to raise their issues. Understanding how SIGs influence policy outcomes is crucial, and it is essential to articulate the challenges and strides made to ensure their inclusion in the National Gender and Equality Commission.

Research Objective

The study aims to investigate the impact of information sharing on public policy formulation, assess public support's role in policy development, evaluate advocacy's influence on policy creation, and determine problem identification and solution generation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical literature review

System analysis approach focuses on input, process, and output in a feedback loop. It emphasizes the importance of addressing the needs of the public and advocating for specific policies. The quality of results determines whether policy shifts are implemented. Interest groups lobby for change in the political system, and this theory can help the National Gender and Equality Commission understand their role in the institution's input, processes, and outcomes.

Group theory posits that public policy is shaped by power struggles between different groups, with the equilibrium at any given time known as public policy. The viability of a group depends on its ability to influence resource allocation and its ability to influence policy. Factors such as wealth, organizing skills, leadership quality, negotiation skills, access to decision-makers, and luck all contribute to a group's capacity to influence policy. This theory can be used to analyse how special interest group lobbying and public support influence government social policy decisions.

Special Interest Groups and Public Policy Formulation

Cullerton et al. (2018) developed a conceptual model to understand how to influence government nutrition policy, focusing on advocates with limited resources and political clout. They found that influencing public policy is difficult and complex, especially for those with limited resources and political clout. Advocacy coalitions are groups of people working towards a common political goal, and their success can endure for years or decades. Smith's (2000) work highlights the need for studies on lobbying effectiveness and public opinion influence at the level of specific policy concerns.

Tchamyou (2019) investigated the impact of wealth on inequality, finding that private credit bureaus and public credit registries serve as information sharing middlemen. The study called for more use of ICT to improve information-sharing offices and increase their moderating effect on finance for inclusive growth. Hall and Saygin (2012) examined

the effect of data sharing on supply chain efficiency, finding that capacity constraints, resource dependability, and information sharing strategies perform well. D'Amours et al. (1999) found that businesses that place a premium on close relationship contacts are more likely to benefit from a range of price-time possibilities provided by their networks, leading to better scheduling performance.

Fan (2013) conducted an operational study of emergency event management systems, examining how information sharing and redesigned government processes affected performance. They found that interactions between information sharing and government process redesign positively predicted flexibility response and delivery efficiency. Geographic information systems (GIS) and/or global positioning systems (GPS) should be the key information technology used to coordinate the responses of many local departments during an emergency.

Public support is crucial for implementing obesity prevention programs and reducing resistance. Strategies to increase public demand include creating a receptive political environment, streamlining public information, identifying effective frames for each population, strengthening media advocacy, developing citizen protest and engagement, and building an engaged citizenry. Investments and long-term support for cross-sector collaboration are also vital. To move from a top-down to a combined bottom-up and top-down approach, it will be required to reevaluate present methods and readjust resource allocations.

Public support should coexist with the influence of support among the advocate community, as advocates have a better chance of having their demands granted if they enjoy widespread public support and the backing of a substantial segment of the lobbying community. However, the lobbying industry's power may not be independent of public opinion, and high advocacy action likely raises the policy issue's profile in the public sphere, making it easier for the general public to form an opinion and find out if their demands are being taken seriously and implemented.

Olyae (2018) assessed policy analysis, problem identification, and policy option proposals for Iran's health insurance benefit package. The framework for mission-oriented innovation policy was developed by Wanzenböck et al. (2020) and consists of alternate routes through the problem-solution space. However, mission-oriented innovation policies face the non-trivial challenges of identifying a societal challenge and the attendant problem framings, as well as the choosing and translation of these framings into a precise problem formulation. Finding solutions to social problems often necessitates departing from the standard scientific and technological methods used by academia, industry, and government.

Methodology of the study

Research technique refers to the specific procedures and methods used to collect, screen, organize, and evaluate data for a study. Readers can evaluate the general validity and reliability of a study by examining its methods (Gupta, 2022). This study will use a quantitative approach, which will involve gathering and analysing data using SPSS software.

Research Design

The study will adopt a descriptive research design. Primary data will be obtained from questionnaires with officials of the National Gender and Equality Commission as well as members and officials of special interest groups. Observation and analysis of existent data will also be applied to obtain data. The data will be analysed using SPSS software to derive findings and conclusions from the study.

Target Population

This study targets all the 4 heads of departments and 60 officials from each of the four departments. The study will draw the officials from the departments of: Women and Gender department, Youth and Children's department, Persons with Disabilities (PWD) department, Minorities and Marginalized groups department.

Sample size

Due to the small number of the target population, the census approach will be adopted. The sample will be comprised of 64 individuals. The sample size will include 4 heads of department and 60 officials drawn from each of the four special group departments in the Commission.

Data Analysis Techniques and Procedures

Response Rate

The data collection tool was administered to 62 official cutting across four departments of youth, women, persons with disabilities, minority and marginalized groups. This shows that the response rate from the target population was

96.875% which is very high and dependable for getting proper results (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2008, Shende & Upagade, 2013).

Response rate	Sample Size	Percentage (%)
Returned questionnaires	62	96.875
Un-returned questionnaires	2	3.125
Total	64	100

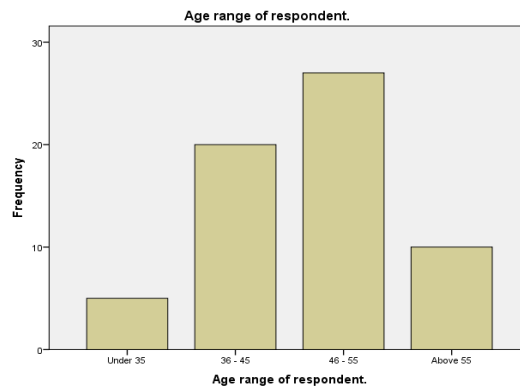
Gender Distribution of Informants

A frequency table was generated to describe the distribution of gender in the sample. As shown in the table, majority were Male with 37 respondents (59.7%), while 25 respondents (40.3%) were Female.

Gender of Respondent.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	37	59.7	59.7	59.7
	Female	25	40.3	40.3	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Age Distribution of Informants

Descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize the distribution of age group in the sample. The largest age group was 46 – 55 years (n = 27, 43.5%), followed by 36 - 45 years (n = 20, 32.3%), and Above 50 years (n = 10, 16.1%). The smallest age group was Under 35 years (n = 5, 8.1%).



Any form of disability

Out of the 62 respondents, 10 (16.1%) reported having a disability, while 52 (83.9%) did not report any disability.

Any form of disability.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	10	16.1	16.1	16.1
	No	52	83.9	83.9	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	100.0	

Descriptive analysis of ordinal data

The variables examined include: Advocacy, Information sharing, building public support, Issue identification & developing solutions as well as public policy formulation.

Findings:

Test of Normality

Test of normality used for the data is the Shapiro-Wilk test (N < 100), where;

H₍₀₎: The data is normally distributed ($\alpha = 0.05$)

H₍₁₎: The data is not normally distributed ($\alpha = 0.05$)

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Advocacy	.176	62	.000	.935	62	.003
Info_sharing	.200	62	.000	.916	62	.000
Public_support	.233	62	.000	.908	62	.000
Issues_solutions	.210	62	.000	.914	62	.000
Policy	.215	62	.000	.916	62	.000

Note: **Advocacy** = Advocacy, **Info_sharing** = Information sharing, **Public_support** = Building public support, **Issues_solutions** = Issue identification & developing solutions, **Policy** = Public policy Formulation.

The null hypotheses are rejected (p-value < 0.05, df = 62) for all variables, concluding that the data is **NOT** normally distributed.

Note: The data was transformed into logarithms and re-tested in order to ascertain the data cannot be normalized.

Non-parametric tests will be used in further analysis of the data.

Advocacy and public policy formulation

The research used descriptive analysis to analyse responses and frequencies, revealing that 61.3% of respondents agreed that organizations mobilize towards the inclusion of special interest groups in policy making, while 35.5% strongly agreed. Lobbying was also a significant factor, with 58.1% of officials agreeing and 38.7% strongly disagreeing, indicating the organization’s seriousness in lobbying for inclusion.

This report utilizes Spearman's rho to analyse the nonparametric correlations among these variables, providing insights into their interconnections.

Correlations Analysis

Correlations					
			Advocacy	Info_sharing	Public_support
Spearman's rho	Advocacy	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.410**	.260*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.001	.041
		N	62	62	62
	Info_sharing	Correlation Coefficient	.410**	1.000	.312*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.	.014
		N	62	62	62

	Public_support	Correlation Coefficient	.260*	.312*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.041	.014	.
		N	62	62	62
	Issues_solutions	Correlation Coefficient	.403**	.474**	.268*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	.035
		N	62	62	62
	Policy	Correlation Coefficient	.231	.292*	.112
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.071	.021	.386
		N	62	62	62
Correlations					
			Issues_solutions	Policy	
Spearman's rho	Advocacy	Correlation Coefficient	.403	.231**	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.071	
		N	62	62	
	Info_sharing	Correlation Coefficient	.474**	.292	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.021	
		N	62	62	
	Public_support	Correlation Coefficient	.268*	.112*	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.035	.386	
		N	62	62	
	Issues_solutions	Correlation Coefficient	1.000**	.352**	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.005	
		N	62	62	
	Policy	Correlation Coefficient	.352	1.000*	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.	
		N	62	62	

Note: Advocacy = Advocacy, Info_sharing = Information sharing, Public_support = Building public support, Issues_solutions = Issue identification & developing solutions, Policy = Public policy Formulation.

Significance Levels

- *p < .05

○ **p < .01

Interpretation

Advocacy and Public policy Formulation: The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.231, p = 0.071$) indicates a positive but not statistically significant relationship between advocacy and policy formulation.

The Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare responses from male and female respondents regarding policy formulation and the involvement of special interest groups. The results showed no significant difference in views on inclusion of special interest groups during policy formulation, incorporation of minority groups' views in social policy formulation, or lobbying and platform for special interest groups. The findings suggest that gender does not significantly influence perceptions in these areas. Variables such as age range, disability, ethnic community, and disadvantaged group status also showed no significant differences in responses across various statements regarding policy formulation and the involvement of special interest groups.

Information sharing and public policy Formulation:

A weak positive correlation ($\rho = 0.292, P = 0.021$) signifies a significant relationship between information sharing and policy formulation, suggesting that increased information sharing is associated with better policy formulation.

Officials agree that information sharing is crucial for public policy formulation, particularly with interest groups. The commission uses websites and social media to network with these groups, obtaining their input on social welfare decisions. The majority of 55% agree with this approach, with a slight deviation of 0.682.

The report examines the relationship between information sharing and public policy formulation using Spearman's Rho. A weak positive correlation was found, indicating that increased information sharing is associated with better policy formulation. The Mann-Whitney U test was used to examine gender differences in views on social networking with interest groups through websites, information sharing for policy feedback, and the use of mainstream and social media for policy contributions. No significant differences were found between genders in views on building relationships with interest groups. The findings suggest that gender does not significantly influence perceptions in these areas, suggesting that gender does not significantly influence perceptions in these areas.

Building public support and public policy Formulation:

The correlation coefficient ($\rho = 0.112, P = 0.386$) shows a positive but non-significant relationship between public support and policy formulation.

The study found that 47% of respondents agreed with the commission's efforts to build relationships with interest groups for social development, 40% agreed with campaign forums for better policies, and 55% supported social development initiatives promoting inclusivity of special interest groups in decision-making, with a small standard deviation.

The report examines the relationship between building public support and public policy formulation using Spearman's Rho. A weak positive correlation was found, suggesting that increased information sharing is associated with better policy formulation. The Mann-Whitney U test was used to examine differences in responses between male and female respondents regarding policy formulation and the involvement of special interest groups. Results showed no significant difference between genders in perceptions of exchanging ideas and information through the commission, social networking with interest groups through websites, information sharing for policy feedback, and the use of mainstream and social media for policy contributions. The findings suggest that gender does not significantly influence perceptions in these areas. Variables such as age range, disability, ethnic community, and disadvantaged group status were also tested using the Mann-Whitney U test.

Issue identification & developing solutions and public policy Formulation:

A moderate positive correlation ($\rho = 0.352, P = 0.005$) indicates a significant relationship, implying that effective solutions to issues are strongly associated with better policy formulation.

Descriptive analysis revealed that 51% agree with comma in public policy formulation, while 6% doubt all facts are gathered. Most believe the national gender inequality commission collaborates with other institutions, and 34% agree on thorough research to prevent special interest group disadvantage.

The study found a positive but non-significant relationship between public support and policy formulation. The Mann-Whitney U test was used to examine differences in responses between male and female respondents regarding policy formulation and special interest group involvement. Results showed no significant differences in views on policy

understanding, brainstorming with the National Gender and Equality Commission, research ensuring non-disadvantaged policies, or investigation to ensure satisfaction with policies. The findings suggest that gender differences in policy formulation and special interest group involvement are not significant.

Ordinal Regression Analysis

This test is used when the dependent variable is ordinal, meaning the categories have a natural order but the intervals between the categories are not necessarily equal.

***Note:** **Advocacy** = Advocacy, **Information_Sharing** = Information sharing, **Public_support** = Building public support, **Issues_solutions** = Issue identification & developing solutions, **Policy_formulation** = Public policy Formulation, $H_{(0)}$ = Null Hypothesis, $H_{(1)}$ = Alternative Hypothesis

Hypothesis

$H_{(0)}$: Information sharing has no impact on the creation of public policies

$H_{(1)}$: Information sharing has a significant impact on the creation of public policies

$H_{(0)}$: Developing public support has no influence on the development of public policies

$H_{(1)}$: Developing public support has a significant influence on the development of public policies

$H_{(0)}$: Advocacy has no impact on the formulation of public policies

$H_{(1)}$: Advocacy has a significant impact on the formulation of public policies

$H_{(0)}$: Problem identification and solution development have no role in the development of public policies

$H_{(1)}$: Problem identification and solution development have a significant role in the development of public policies

Significance Level

- **$p < 0.05$**

Findings:

1. In the first model, of the predictor variables, only Information Sharing has a significant positive effect. This means that higher levels of information sharing are associated with a greater likelihood of more positive agreement with the policy statement. The other predictors (Advocacy, Public support, Issue identification and developing solutions) do not have statistically significant effects in this model.
2. In the second model, no predictors significantly accounted for perceptions of well-financed policy changes.
3. In the third model, of the predictor variables, only Issues identification and providing solutions has a significant positive effect, meaning that policies that address issues and provide solutions are more likely to be perceived as aligned with societal norms and values. The other predictors (Advocacy, Information Sharing, Public support) do not have statistically significant effects in this model.

These results inform strategic priorities: fostering information sharing and providing clear issue resolutions can positively influence perceptions of policy inclusivity and harmony with societal norms and laws.

Summary of the Results

The study used Spearman's rho to analyse nonparametric correlations among variables, revealing a positive but not statistically significant relationship between advocacy and policy formulation. A weak positive correlation was found between information sharing and policy formulation, suggesting increased information sharing is associated with better policy formulation. A moderate positive correlation was found between effective solutions to issues and better policy formulation. The study also found a moderate positive correlation between issue identification and developing solutions and public policy formulation. The Ordinal Regression test was used to examine the impact of information sharing on public policy creation. The model explained 14.5% to 25.1% of the variance. The study also found that most respondents disagreed with policy decisions made in harmony with societal norms and values. The results suggest that fostering information sharing and providing clear issue resolutions can positively influence perceptions of policy

inclusivity and harmony with societal norms. The findings align with research by NGEN (2017), which suggests that special interest groups play a central role in policy formulation through public participation.

Conclusions

The study shows that as much as the national gender and equality Commission engages in advocacy, information sharing, building public support and identifying solutions for policy formulation, most of these efforts do not reflect when it comes to policymaking. However, some of these variables such as identifying problems and developing solutions have led to better policy formulation. When it comes to policy comprehensiveness, information sharing has shown positive effect when there is negative effect on all variables when it comes to well financed policy formulation.

However, fostering information sharing, identifying issues and providing solutions show positive effect on ensuring all policies conformed with the country's laws, norms and beliefs. Overall assessment indicates, advocacy information sharing, building public support, identifying of issues and developing solutions determine the quality of policies formed in the policy formulation process.

Recommendations

Special interest groups have attempted to participate in the policy making process in various ways. However, special interest groups have to do more advocacy and information sharing to ensure better policymaking by policymaking institutions. Positive relation has been shown between identifying problems and developing solutions in relation to public policy formulation. The special interest groups can exploit this more to ensure their views are represented in the policy making process. Also, poor policy financing has stood on the findings thus requiring more effort to be channelled on that aspect to ensure policies made are sustainable to achieve its desired outcome.

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