

Assessing the Effects of Public Stakeholders' Diversity on the Legislative Process of the Finance Bill, 2024 in the National Assembly of Kenya

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Abstract

This article explores how public stakeholders' diversity influenced the legislative process of the Finance Bill, 2024, strictly drawing on findings from the thesis. Using a qualitative design involving interviews and focus group discussions, the study reveals that diverse stakeholder groups, including women's rights organizations, Generation Z activists, pastoralist communities, persons with disabilities, SMEs, clergy, and digital entrepreneurs, contributed significantly to shaping deliberations and specific amendments. Stakeholder diversity enriched deliberative legitimacy, corrected policy blind spots, and strengthened democratic responsiveness. However, competing interests, unequal influence, structural barriers, and weak institutional mechanisms limited the full impact of diverse voices. The article concludes that while diversity contributed to substantive policy shifts and catalyzed public backlash leading to the Bill's withdrawal, its potential was constrained by political will, organizational capacity, and inadequate facilitation. Recommendations are offered for enhancing inclusive, equitable, and impactful participation in future legislative processes.

Keywords: Public participation; stakeholder diversity; Finance Bill 2024; legislative process; participatory communication; National Assembly of Kenya; deliberative democracy; inclusivity.

Introduction

The legislative process in Kenya is constitutionally anchored in principles of public participation, transparency, and inclusivity, as outlined in Articles 1, 10, 118, and 232 of the Constitution. These principles require that citizens from all segments of society meaningfully contribute to laws that shape national priorities. Despite this mandate, participatory communication within Kenya's legislative processes has continued to face persistent challenges. Studies have shown that inadequate outreach, limited access to information, logistical barriers, and restricted feedback mechanisms have contributed to a disconnect between policymakers and the broader public (Adhiambo, 2018). The result is a legislative environment in which substantial portions of the population remain uninformed or feel excluded from key decision-making processes, undermining trust in parliamentary institutions and weakening the legitimacy of enacted laws.

The legislative journey of the Finance Bill 2024 illustrated these structural gaps. Although the National Assembly initiated public participation exercises during the committee stage, many of the hearings were hurriedly organized, inadequately advertised, and inaccessible to large segments of the population. Submissions from the public were collected, yet many were either not reflected in the committee's recommendations or were omitted from the final amendments tabled in Parliament. Public dissatisfaction intensified when recommendations perceived as critical, particularly from rural residents, youth, and marginalized groups, did not appear to shape the bill's progression. This limited incorporation of diverse voices occurred alongside widespread protests and public outcry, ultimately influencing the President's decision to withhold assent to the Bill.

Within this broader context, the diversity of public stakeholders emerges as a critical area of inquiry. Kenya's population is characterized by significant regional, ethnic, socio-economic, generational, gender, and special-interest group diversity. Each of these groups experiences fiscal policy differently, and their perspectives are essential for equitable taxation and revenue legislation. However, the study highlights that many public participation forums remain inaccessible to rural communities, youth, small-scale traders, and persons with disabilities, raising concerns about whose voices are truly reflected in legislative outcomes. A survey cited in the chapter reported that more than 60 percent of citizens felt their contributions were rarely considered in parliamentary decisions (Public Participation Assessment Report, 2020), underscoring the need to interrogate whether diverse stakeholders meaningfully influence bill deliberations.

Existing research on participatory communication has tended to focus on public participation broadly, often overlooking the specific role of stakeholder diversity within parliamentary processes. Few studies have examined how differences in region, gender, socio-economic status, or minority representation shape the legislative trajectory of complex policies such as finance bills. The study further reveals that the effects of stakeholder inclusion, and exclusion, are poorly understood, especially in fast-tracked legislative contexts where hearings may be limited or symbolic. Consequently, the extent to which diverse stakeholder groups influenced the Finance Bill 2024 remains an open question, forming a key motivation for the present study.

Against this background, this article examines the effects of public stakeholder diversity on the legislative process of the Finance Bill 2024 in the National Assembly of Kenya. Anchored in the constitutional principles of inclusivity and democratic participation, the study seeks to determine whether the voices of Kenya's diverse publics were meaningfully integrated into legislative deliberations, and how their participation shaped, or failed to shape, the bill's progression. By grounding the analysis in the gaps identified in this section, the study contributes to understanding the role of diversity in strengthening legislative legitimacy and ensuring that fiscal laws reflect the lived realities of all citizens.

Literature Review

Diversity of stakeholders refers to the presence of individuals and groups from various demographic, geographic, social, and cultural backgrounds within the legislative process. Diversity of stakeholders ensures all sections of society regardless of region, religion, ethnicity, gender, or social class are included in public participation arenas (Mburu, 2020). Diversity of stakeholders enhances the legitimacy, inclusivity, and equity of participatory communication and results in more effective legislative outcomes. In the context of Finance Bill 2024, a wide array of voices is to ensure that tax and spending decisions are national, not sectional, interests. According to Haq et al. (2020) and Martín-Cano et al. (2020), diversity enhances the strength of deliberative democracy by providing multiple perspectives for policy-making. The current study measured stakeholder diversity based on six main indicators: regional, religious, ethnic, minority-majority, special groups, and gender diversity.

Regional diversity refers to the inclusion of representatives from various geographic regions within the country in parliamentary consultations. With a nation as geographically disparate as Kenya, involving city and rural citizens ensures that parliamentarians reflect the reality of all citizens. Regional representation also averts marginalization of peripheral or hitherto marginalized counties (Mburu, 2020). Regional inclusivity on participatory forums, according to Haq et al. (2020), increases public trust and assures fairness in legislative decision-making.

Religious diversity is the presence of individuals with varying religious affiliations in participatory law-making. In Kenya's multi-religious society, religiously diverse groups may possess unique moral, ethical, and socio-economic views that inform their attitudes towards bills such as the Finance Bill (Mburu, 2020). Inclusive participation must therefore be sensitive to religious-based views that have the potential to influence the opinions of individuals over taxation, social justice, and public expenditure. Bringing in various religious voices not only creates respect for one another but also contributes to moral justification and social cohesion in policy-making (Martín-Cano et al., 2020). Ethnic diversity refers to the participation of members from diverse ethnic groups in participatory communication during the law-making process. In Kenya, there are more than 40 ethnic groups with unique languages, culture, and political interests. Bringing a broad ethnic diversity into the legislative process ensures that targeted laws, for instance, the Finance Bill, do not end up favouring one group over others either unintentionally or intentionally (Mburu, 2020). Ethnic diversity in stakeholder participation thus encourages peace, inclusivity, and properly balanced national development agendas.

This step embodies the integration of the numerically significant (majority) as well as the numerically smaller (minority) groups into the legislative consultative process. The integration of both majority and minority voices in participatory forums is central to equity and justice (Haq et al., 2020). Minority group opinions left out of Finance Bill debates could result in discriminatory fiscal policy or taxation models characterized by a preference for underrepresented groups. Special groups refer to groups requiring additional assistance or enablement to participate fully in legislative processes, such as Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), the elderly, youth, and

marginalized communities. Such groups are likely to have structural barriers to participation, such as physical inability to enter buildings, withholding of information, or social exclusion (Mburu, 2020). For example, without sign interpretation or wheelchair access at public hearings, PWDs are disenfranchised. Haq et al. (2020) bring to light that failure to engage such groups undermines inclusive governance.

Gender balance refers to an equitable engagement of all genders of individuals, chiefly men and women, but also gender-nonconforming individuals within the legislative process. Women, in particular, have traditionally been less represented in government and public policymaking despite their being heavily affected by fiscal policy (Mburu, 2020). Inclusive participatory communication requires not merely numerical gender equality but also meaningful participation where women's contribution counts. Martín-Cano et al. (2020) note that gender diversity in deliberative forums yields richer policy discussions and more equitable outcomes. Murphy (2020) conducted a study titled "Towards Parliamentary Full Cycle Engagement in the Legislative Process: Innovations and Challenges," which explored democratic participation in legislative processes across a comparative international context. The study reviewed parliamentary practices in both developing and developed systems, particularly among Commonwealth nations. The findings were that parliaments are increasingly engaging in a full legislative cycle, from policy proposal development to post-legislative scrutiny, enhancing transparency, accountability, and public trust. This research differs from the current topic on the effects of diverse religious and regional representation among stakeholders on participatory communication in legislative processes.

Shim (2021) focused on a study titled "Gender and Politics in Northeast Asia: Legislative Patterns and Substantive Representation in Korea and Taiwan," examines how gender representation shapes legislative advocacy in South Korea and Taiwan. Using a quantitative research design, the study analyses a unique dataset of 1,340 bills related to women's issues, sponsored in both countries' national assemblies between 1992 and 2016. The research showed that greater gender diversity among stakeholders leads to more balanced debates and equitable bill drafting outcomes. In this study, however, a qualitative approach is used, using participatory communication and deliberative systems in assessing how facilitators, stakeholder diversity, and styles of engagement influence the Finance Bill 2024 in Kenya's National Assembly from interviews and focus groups among various demographic groups.

Prior (2022) conducted a global review on "Public Engagement in the Work of Parliament," which provides a global perspective on how national parliaments engage citizens in legislative processes. Employing a mixed-methods research design, the study combines quantitative survey data from 69 national parliaments with qualitative insights from 136 interviews conducted with parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, and key stakeholders. Findings reveal that effective engagement supports democratic legitimacy and that parliaments utilize a range of tools information sharing, education, consultation, and digital participation to connect with citizens. However, challenges such as digital divides, inclusivity barriers, and inconsistent strategies remain.

Mwendah (2023) focused on a study titled "Policy Participation and Accountability: The Role of the Parliament in Africa," takes a Pan-African perspective to explore the evolving role of parliaments in fostering policy participation and accountability. Using a qualitative, analytical design, Mwendah draws from secondary data sources and literature, employing purposive selection of historical and institutional data. Key findings indicate that despite constitutional reforms since the 1990s, African parliaments continue to play a limited role in policymaking due to executive dominance, partisan politics, and institutional weaknesses. Though the research provides a macro-level analysis of institutional roles and historical contexts, it did not focus on specific effects of stakeholder diversity on agenda-setting, reporting, and legislative oversight. Crepaz (2024) explored the role of public engagement in legislative processes in Europe under the European Citizen Initiative (ECI). Using a qualitative case study design, the research employs purposive sampling, selecting the MSPI due to its significance in mobilizing over 1.1 million signatures across several EU states. The study finds that even without legal outcomes, initiatives like the MSPI play a critical role in empowering civil society, enhancing cross-border cooperation, and raising minority rights awareness. This study provides a contextual understanding that differs from the current research by focusing on the diverse makeup of public engagement rather than purely parliamentary procedures.

Batagol and Seear (2024) employed a qualitative research design, focusing on the drafting of feminist legislation to address contemporary legal problems from a gender-based perspective. Grounded in feminist legal theory, the study advocates for legislation that addresses systemic gender inequalities by applying feminist statutory drafting principles. Key findings reveal that many laws unintentionally reinforce gender-based injustices and that legislative reform through a feminist lens can promote greater equity. However, the research did not study minority group participation and the effects of stakeholder diversity on agenda-setting, reporting, and legislative oversight.

Methodology

The research adopted a qualitative research design, which was appropriate for examining complex social processes and communication dynamics within the legislative process of the Finance Bill 2024. This design enabled the researcher to explore participants' experiences, motivations, and interactions in depth, consistent with Creswell's assertion that qualitative methods allow for rich, contextual understanding. The approach was flexible and participant-centred, ensuring that the voices of Members of Parliament and members of the public shaped the emerging themes and interpretations. The target population consisted of two main groups: Members of the National Assembly and Generation Z youths aged 18–28 from Nairobi, Nakuru, Mombasa, and Kisumu counties. The National Assembly population comprised 349 legislators, including 290 elected MPs, 47 women representatives, 12 nominated members, and the Speaker. The study also targeted 2,109,284 Generation Z individuals from the four counties. They were included because they represented a digitally active and civically engaged demographic that had played a significant role in online mobilization and public discourse around the Finance Bill 2024.

To draw participants meaningfully involved in the legislative process, the study used purposive sampling for MPs. Twenty Members of Parliament were selected, including representatives from the Budget and Appropriations Committee, the Finance and Budget Committee, the Speaker's Panel, and the Ministry of Finance. Additional MPs were purposively chosen based on their active engagement in public hearings, stakeholder forums, and debates concerning the Finance Bill. This ensured that data were gathered from individuals directly familiar with participatory communication practices in the legislative space. For public participants, the researcher used quota sampling to select 40 Generation Z respondents. Each of the four counties contributed one focus group discussion composed of 10 participants. This number reflected the recommended FGD size by Krueger and Casey and allowed for diverse, yet manageable discussions. Participants were identified through university networks, youth organizations, civic-tech groups, and online platforms active in Finance Bill 2024 discussions. This ensured that the youths selected had knowledge of and engagement with national fiscal debates. The final sample totalled 60 respondents, 20 MPs and 40 youths, providing balanced insights from both legislative actors and grassroots participants.

The study relied on semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions for data collection. Semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to explore MPs' perspectives on facilitation, legislative communication, and public engagement, while maintaining the flexibility to follow emerging issues. FGDs with Generation Z participants were used to capture group-based reflections on digital activism, public participation, and perceived responsiveness of Parliament. These methods provided rich descriptive data necessary for understanding participatory communication in context. For data analysis, the researcher employed thematic analysis. The process began with data condensation, where interview and FGD transcripts were organized to identify initial patterns. Both deductive and inductive coding were used: deductive coding was led by the conceptual framework, while inductive coding allowed new themes to emerge organically. NVivo software and Python tools supported the analysis by structuring text into thematic nodes, identifying recurrent concepts, and enhancing the consistency of coding. Themes were later interpreted and aligned with the research objectives, and findings were presented narratively with direct quotations to illustrate participants' viewpoints.

A pilot study was conducted prior to the main data collection to test and refine the research instruments. The pilot involved five Senators and twenty members of the public from Machakos County, selected due to the county's strong record of citizen participation. The pilot helped improve question clarity, sequencing, and content, and ensured that the instruments were reliable and contextually appropriate. Although the pilot data were not included

in the final analysis, the exercise strengthened the overall validity of the study's instruments. In conclusion, the study employed a robust and well-structured methodological framework. Through the use of qualitative design, targeted sampling strategies, rigorous thematic analysis, and strict ethical procedures, the methodology provided a solid foundation for examining participatory communication in the Finance Bill 2024 legislative process and for interpreting the findings presented in subsequent chapters.

Results

Stakeholder diversity substantially broadened the perspectives informing legislative communication during the Finance Bill 2024 process. Interviews and FGDs revealed that involving grassroots communities, women, youth, persons with disabilities, SMEs, faith groups, and professional associations prevented domination by elite actors and grounded fiscal debates in the lived experiences of ordinary Kenyans. As Interviewee R2 noted, *"These diverse contributions enriched the process by decentralizing policy influence away from the elite policy circles in Nairobi."* The views of farmers, teachers, persons with disabilities, and *mama mbogas* reinforced this inclusiveness, with R13 observing, *"It wasn't just economists talking...these people live the tax reality, and their voices matter."* Participants described this diversity as enhancing the legitimacy of the process, a sentiment echoed by DM10 from Mombasa, who stated, *"When we saw persons with disabilities and religious leaders speaking in the same session, it felt like the Bill actually belonged to the people."* Generational diversity also enriched debate, with digitally savvy youth shaping the framing of issues such as the digital service tax. As DN8 reflected, *"Gen Z's digital activism helped push Parliament to rethink certain clauses around digital taxation."* Overall, diversity democratized input and contributed significantly to a more representative conversation on the Finance Bill.

However, this diversity also introduced considerable tensions. Conflicting interests regularly complicated attempts to reach consensus, resulting in sessions that were at times emotionally charged and fragmented. Civil society pushed for lower taxes while government agencies emphasized revenue collection, creating what R5 described as *"tug-of-war arenas rather than consultative platforms."* Similarly, DN7 reported that, *"Youth groups asked for leniency in digital tax while SMEs insisted on VAT reform. The discussions got emotional and we never reached a middle ground."* In several cases, facilitators struggled to manage the wide variation in interests, with R2 admitting, *"The volume and variance of perspectives overwhelmed some sessions."* Weak facilitation in some regions allowed powerful actors to overshadow grassroots groups, prompting DK6 to remark, *"Bigger organizations had polished presentations while small community voices were rushed."* These tensions highlighted the need for structured mediation tools to balance divergent perspectives within participatory forums.

Despite efforts to include a broad demographic range, persistent structural barriers limited equitable participation. Digital exclusion emerged as a major constraint, particularly in rural counties, where poor connectivity made virtual sessions inaccessible. DK3 noted, *"Many youths from rural counties couldn't log in, it was like their voices were not meant to count."* Logistical barriers compounded the challenge, as DR5 explained: *"Forums were held in towns far from rural centres... many couldn't afford transport."* Language, literacy, and unfamiliarity with legislative processes further hindered meaningful input. DM5 shared, *"If a facilitator used legal English, my mother who runs a kiosk couldn't understand or engage."* Several participants questioned whether their views influenced the process at all. DN4 stated plainly, *"Yes, we were invited, but I doubt what we said made it to the final recommendations, it felt like a box-ticking exercise."* These concerns were reinforced by R9, who observed that NGO submissions received follow-up while village-based feedback was largely ignored.

Diversity nevertheless illuminated significant regional, gendered, and socio-economic disparities embedded in the Bill. Stakeholders from marginalized regions brought attention to the uneven impacts of tax proposals, with R10 noting, *"MPs from marginalized regions pushed for exemptions on agricultural inputs, while urban legislators focused on digital services taxation."* These inputs influenced actual amendments. As R4 explained, *"Regional economic differences forced us to introduce flexible clauses, such as staggered implementation for rural versus urban sectors."* Rural FGDs shaped changes to fertilizer VAT, with DR8 reporting, *"When we explained how VAT on fertilizer affects us directly, that clause was eventually amended."* Conversely, urban Gen Z and SMEs influenced revisions to digital taxation, as DN6 stated, *"Pushback from urban youth showed how*

digital taxes would kill online businesses.” However, institutional hierarchies sometimes suppressed regional voices, leading R14 to note that, *“If MPs weren’t in leadership, our issues were side-lined.”*

Stakeholder diversity also resulted in several substantive policy adjustments. Indigenous communities influenced exemptions for subsistence practices, with R4 confirming that minority voices *“highlighted gaps in environmental levies.”* Gender-based groups contributed significantly to changes in menstrual and maternal health-related taxation. As R6 explained, *“Gender-disaggregated data strengthened provisions on maternal health tax incentives.”* DN1 added that without women’s cooperatives, *“tax on menstrual products would have gone unnoticed.”* Persons with disabilities secured amendments exempting assistive devices from taxation, with DM4 stating, *“Our collective push finally led to tax exemptions on mobility aids.”* Tailored engagement approaches, such as women-only or youth breakout sessions, enhanced the quality of submissions. R15 noted that such formats *“made contributions clearer and more actionable.”*

At the same time, diversity sometimes fostered politicization and further exclusion. Religious and ethnic identities occasionally steered debates away from fiscal analysis toward ideological alignments, with R5 stating, *“Religious and ethnic sensitivities sometimes led to politicized debates rather than constructive deliberation.”* DM1 in Mombasa observed, *“When debates got religious, it stopped being about the Bill.”* Women and minority groups often struggled to influence technical discussions. According to R16, *“Fewer women participated in technical discussions, which may have side-lined childcare tax credits.”* Unequal access to information further skewed influence, with R15 noting that *“the better-informed dominated.”* Many concluded that inclusion without influence amounted to tokenism—an impression reinforced by R5, who stated, *“We heard many views, but had no structure to ensure integration into the final draft.”*

Despite these limitations, diversity had a decisive impact on the Bill’s overall trajectory. Diverse groups, youth, religious institutions, civil society, bodaboda riders, and professionals, ultimately converged to oppose the Bill. As R1 explained, *“Public sentiment shifted once religious leaders, youth influencers and civil society coordinated their messaging.”* Youth activists played a particularly important role, translating complex fiscal clauses into viral content. DK10 noted, *“We built Twitter threads and TikTok explainers showing how taxes would affect even chips vendors.”* Religious coalitions strengthened this resistance, with R11 stating, *“Once both Christian and Muslim leaders spoke out, it signalled the Bill was unjust.”* This multi-sectoral dissent created a legitimacy crisis, compelling Parliament to withdraw and reconsider the Bill. As R12 admitted, *“Opposition from TikTokers to bishops forced us to step back and rework the Bill.”*

However, a pronounced gap remained between stakeholder input and legislative incorporation. Many participants felt ignored after contributing. DM2 from Mombasa stated, *“We attended barazas, submitted views, but then saw the Bill and felt completely ignored.”* Parliamentary insiders acknowledged the challenge, with R6 admitting, *“Some feedback was reviewed, but Treasury had already anchored certain positions.”* The absence of feedback loops frustrated many, as R15 observed: *“We gave input but never saw follow-up, it felt like shouting into the void.”* Even when adjustments were made, stakeholders felt changes were superficial. DN3 said, *“They tweaked digital tax thresholds, but not enough to protect micro-influencers.”* Only groups that persistently presented data and sustained advocacy saw deeper influence, as R13 confirmed: *“Those who pushed hard and stayed vocal had a better chance.”*

Finally, additional dimensions such as generational, socio-economic, digital, and vulnerability-related diversity shaped the quality of participation. Youth themselves were not homogeneous; as DK4 explained, *“Gen Z issues around digital jobs are not the same as millennials.”* Informal workers lacked the economic stability and civic literacy needed to engage, with R9 noting, *“Those of us in informal sectors don’t get tax education, yet these taxes hit us hardest.”* Digital divides silenced many, as DK7 explained, *“Not all of us are tech-savvy. My mother doesn’t even own a smartphone.”* Vulnerable groups such as the elderly, those with cognitive disabilities and young mothers were rarely reached. DM6 shared, *“Older people in my village never attended any forum. No one explained what the Bill means.”* DR10 added, *“There were no Braille materials or sign language. It felt performative.”* Tailored sessions, however, revealed how much had been missed. As R12 stated, *“Women-only sessions with translators produced exceptional feedback.”*

Discussion

Stakeholder diversity played a pivotal role in shaping the legislative communication process of the Finance Bill 2024, both enriching the quality of public engagement and highlighting critical gaps in inclusivity and influence. The inclusion of a wide array of actors ranging from women's rights groups, Gen Z activists, and persons with disabilities, pastoralist communities, SMEs, religious leaders, and professional associations expanded the breadth of perspectives in a way that brought real-world experience into legislative deliberation. This reflects Chege's (2021) assertion that a multiplicity of stakeholders strengthens the legitimacy and responsiveness of public policy by injecting grounded, diverse knowledge into decision-making processes.

This diversity led to direct influence on specific amendments. For instance, advocacy from ASAL region representatives resulted in recommendations for staggered implementation of fuel-related taxes, after they demonstrated how such taxes would disproportionately affect transport and food access in remote counties. Similarly, women's groups successfully lobbied for the removal of VAT on sanitary products an example that resonates with Wachira's (2020) argument that diversity disrupts elite policymaking circles and decentralizes influence. Persons with disabilities also secured tax exemptions on assistive devices, while digital entrepreneurs and informal traders in urban areas influenced the review of digital tax thresholds. These adjustments demonstrate how stakeholder diversity informed fiscal sensitivity and regional equity, allowing the Finance Bill to shift from a top-down, uniform policy instrument to one that better reflected Kenya's socio-economic diversity.

However, as Njonjo and Wamai (2021) caution, stakeholder diversity can also introduce tension. The participatory forums frequently became arenas of conflicting interests, such as civil society pushing for tax reductions while government agencies focused on revenue goals. Facilitators often struggled to manage these divergent demands, and discussions sometimes lacked thematic structure. These findings confirm the authors' view that without well-developed facilitation and consensus-building mechanisms, diversity can produce gridlock rather than synergy. Furthermore, Adhiambo and Okello (2022) emphasize that diversity without deliberate equity may exacerbate marginalization. While professional bodies had the tools to articulate detailed submissions, grassroots groups and informal workers were often side-lined. Participants reported that rural youth, small-scale traders, and persons with disabilities faced challenges including inaccessible venues, absence of sign language interpretation, and intimidating formats. This structural imbalance meant that while many voices were present, not all had equal weight, validating Adhiambo and Okello's concern that inclusivity must be intentional and supported by tailored engagement strategies.

Digital inclusion added another complex layer. Gen Z participants creatively used platforms like TikTok and Twitter to translate legislative jargon into relatable content and mobilize public resistance, highlighting Mwangi's (2023) observation that digital platforms can democratize access to civic participation. Yet, the same process excluded low-income and rural populations without reliable internet, revealing the digital divide's ongoing impact. This reinforces Mwangi's call for hybrid models that combine online tools with localized, offline engagement to avoid technological exclusion. Despite strong participation, many stakeholders expressed disillusionment with the outcome. Numerous respondents across focus groups and interviews stated that their submissions were not reflected in the final Bill and that there was no feedback loop explaining which projects were adopted or rejected. This mirrors Musyoka and Kanyinga's (2021) argument that participation without incorporation reduces citizen input to a symbolic gesture. Even when feedback influenced minor clause revisions, many felt the changes were superficial and that core fiscal positions remained untouched due to pre-anchored Treasury priorities.

Theoretically, the findings affirm Participatory Communication Theory's assumption that inclusivity and diversity legitimize decision-making, but they also reveal its limits when equity mechanisms are absent. Diversity enriched legislative discourse but also highlighted Freire's warning that without empowerment, marginalized groups remain voiceless despite formal inclusion. From a Deliberative Theory perspective, the findings show that diverse participation improves rationality and fairness but requires facilitative structures to avoid domination by elite actors. The digital participation patterns further extend deliberative ideals into modern civic spaces, suggesting that online engagement can expand discourse if coupled with hybrid strategies to mitigate exclusion. Overall, the findings underscore that stakeholder diversity is both an asset and a challenge, requiring intentional

design to realize participatory and deliberative ideals.

Conclusion

Stakeholder diversity significantly shaped the Finance Bill 2024 process by contributing unique perspectives that influenced amendments and improved the Bill's social responsiveness. However, conflicting interests, unequal influence, digital exclusion, and weak feedback structures limited the actual impact of these diverse voices. Recommendations therefore emphasize establishing transparent feedback mechanisms, hybrid participation models, inclusive facilitation, and digital platforms that ensure diverse groups, especially marginalized ones, can meaningfully shape legislative outcomes.

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