

## **Citizen Participation and Service Delivery in Switzerland: A Case of Healthcare Sector in Luzern Canton**

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### **Abstract**

Citizen participation in Switzerland is deeply ingrained in the nation's democratic culture, where individuals actively engage in shaping policies and service delivery. The Swiss model combines direct democracy with decentralized governance, allowing citizens to influence decision-making at both the federal and local levels. This robust participation extends to various sectors, including healthcare, education, and infrastructure, leading to enhanced transparency, accountability, and tailored service delivery. Switzerland's approach to citizen participation serves as an exemplar of how active engagement can positively impact service delivery, fostering a sense of ownership and responsiveness within public institutions. The study found that citizen engagement is highly active, fostering transparency and accountability within the healthcare system. This active participation has led to more patient-centered care, with services tailored to the unique needs and preferences of the local population. However, challenges regarding the representativeness of citizen participation and the evolving role of digital technology in healthcare governance require ongoing attention to ensure inclusivity and efficiency. In conclusion, the case of Luzern Canton in Switzerland highlights the transformative impact of citizen participation on healthcare service delivery. The active involvement of citizens has resulted in a healthcare system that is more transparent, responsive, and aligned with the diverse needs of the community, serving as a compelling example of how democratic principles can enhance service delivery in the healthcare sector. It was recommended that authorities should implement targeted outreach programs to engage underrepresented communities and ensure inclusivity, while also providing digital literacy support to bridge the digital divide and maximize online participation. Establishing collaborative forums that facilitate meaningful interaction between citizens and healthcare experts can promote the balanced incorporation of community insights and specialized knowledge, contributing to more informed and effective healthcare decision-making.

**Keywords:** *Citizen Participation, Service Delivery, Healthcare, Switzerland*

## 1.1 Background of the Study

Citizen participation is the active involvement of individuals in the decision-making processes of their communities, regions, or nations. It encompasses a wide range of activities, from voting in elections and engaging in public forums to joining advocacy groups and volunteering for community projects (Li, Zhang, Hui & Lang, 2020). Citizen participation is fundamental to the functioning of democratic societies, as it empowers individuals to have a voice in shaping policies, programs, and services that directly impact their lives. It promotes transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in governance, fosters a sense of ownership and civic responsibility, and contributes to the overall well-being and vibrancy of a society by harnessing the collective wisdom and energy of its citizens. Service delivery refers to the process through which organizations, institutions, or governments provide essential services, such as healthcare, education, public safety, and utilities, to the individuals and communities they serve (Giest & Samuels, 2023). It encompasses a range of activities, from planning and resource allocation to implementation and evaluation, with the primary goal of efficiently and effectively meeting the needs and expectations of service recipients. High-quality service delivery is characterized by accessibility, timeliness, responsiveness, and a focus on customer satisfaction. It plays a crucial role in enhancing the overall well-being and quality of life of a society's members, fostering economic development, and strengthening social cohesion. Effective service delivery is often a key indicator of the performance and effectiveness of public and private organizations, and it is central to achieving positive outcomes in areas like healthcare, education, and infrastructure development.

Citizen participation is a cornerstone of Switzerland's unique political system, known for its direct democracy and decentralized governance (Slaev, Kovachev, Nozharova, Daskalova, Nikolov & Petrov 2019). Switzerland's political culture places a strong emphasis on local governance, allowing citizens to influence policy decisions directly. Switzerland's political landscape is marked by a strong commitment to direct democracy. Citizens are frequently invited to participate in referendums and initiatives, enabling them to have a say in the policies that govern their lives. Switzerland's cantonal structure grants significant autonomy to individual regions. Luzern Canton exemplifies this system, with considerable control over its healthcare policies, funding, and service delivery. Switzerland boasts a highly regarded healthcare system characterized by universal coverage, high quality of care, and an intricate network of public and private providers. Citizen participation in healthcare is encouraged through public forums, patient advocacy groups, and town hall meetings (Tindana, Singh, Tracy, Upshur, Daar, Singer & Lavery, 2020). These channels empower citizens to voice their concerns and contribute to healthcare policymaking. Luzern Canton's healthcare policies are determined at the local level, allowing citizens to have a direct impact on service delivery through their elected representatives.

Citizen participation fosters transparency in healthcare administration, with publicly available information on budgets, performance, and service quality, enabling informed decision-making (Gagliardi, Schina, Sarcinella, Mangialardi, Niglia & Corallo, 2021). With citizens actively engaged in healthcare governance, there is greater accountability among healthcare providers and policymakers, ensuring that the sector meets the needs of the population. Citizen input helps shape healthcare services to align with the unique needs and preferences of the community, resulting in more patient-centered care. Through their participation, citizens influence budget allocation,

prioritizing healthcare initiatives that resonate with their priorities and concerns. Citizen participation is a vital tool in addressing health inequities by highlighting disparities and advocating for targeted interventions (De Weger, Van Vooren, Luijkx, Baan & Drewes, 2018). Engaging citizens in the decision-making process streamlines the development and implementation of healthcare policies, reducing bureaucratic delays. Despite its many benefits, citizen participation can be challenging, as it requires time, resources, and informed citizens (Teasell, Salbach, Foley, Mountain, Cameron, Jong & Lindsay, 2020). Additionally, it may not always represent the diverse voices within a community. Digital platforms and e-participation tools have expanded opportunities for citizen engagement, making it more accessible and inclusive. Luzern Canton's experience demonstrates the potential benefits of decentralized governance and citizen participation in healthcare service delivery, offering valuable lessons for other nations and regions. In Luzern Canton and Switzerland at large, citizen participation is a catalyst for improved healthcare service delivery. It fosters transparency, accountability, and citizen-centric care, illustrating the transformative power of democracy in shaping the healthcare sector for the benefit of all.

## **1.2 Statement of The Problem**

Citizen participation is a fundamental aspect of Switzerland's democratic governance, and the country's decentralized political system empowers citizens to influence policy decisions at the local level. In Luzern Canton, this system offers unique opportunities for citizens to engage in shaping healthcare service delivery. However, it also presents challenges and raises important questions regarding the effectiveness and equity of service delivery in the healthcare sector. The problem of unequal participation arises, as not all citizens may have equal access or ability to engage in healthcare decision-making processes. While Switzerland boasts high levels of political participation, there may be disparities in who participates and whose voices are heard, potentially leading to service delivery outcomes that do not adequately address the needs of marginalized or underrepresented communities. There is the challenge of balancing citizen input with expert knowledge. While involving citizens in healthcare decision-making is important, it must be done in a way that complements and enhances the expertise of healthcare professionals and policymakers, rather than undermining the efficiency and quality of service delivery.

The impact of citizen participation on resource allocation within the healthcare sector is a pertinent issue. Switzerland's decentralized system allows for localized decision-making, but this could result in competing interests and potentially inequitable distribution of resources, affecting the overall quality and accessibility of healthcare services. The question of accountability arises. With citizen participation, there is a need to establish mechanisms for holding both healthcare providers and elected representatives accountable for service delivery outcomes. Ensuring that the system is transparent and responsive to citizen input while maintaining efficiency and effectiveness poses a complex challenge. The potential tension between short-term and long-term goals in healthcare service delivery requires examination. Citizen participation may lead to demands for immediate changes, but healthcare planning often requires a more extended timeframe. Striking a balance between responsiveness to citizen input and maintaining a sustainable healthcare system is crucial. The impact of digital technologies on citizen participation and service delivery in the healthcare sector needs to be addressed. As technology continues to evolve, its role in facilitating or hindering

citizen engagement and its implications for service delivery efficiency and privacy must be thoroughly understood.

### **1.3 Objective of The Study**

The study aimed to determine the effect of citizen participation on service delivery in Switzerland: a case of healthcare sector in Luzern Canton

### **2.0 Literature Review**

Leiss and Larkin (2019) mentioned that citizens' input towards government and the provision of services is thought of as public involvement. This research focuses on the public's involvement in the provision of services in Alberta Province, Canada. Constant litigation and concerns that the Alberta Province was not taking public opinion into account before improving its services served as inspiration for the research. The goals are to investigate the extent to which people in Alberta are aware of public participation, the effectiveness of various public participation initiatives, the depths to which people engage in such activities, and the connection between such activities and the provision of services. The research will provide context by drawing on the Civic Activism Model and the Communication Action Theory. The methodological approach of this investigation will be descriptive. Jasper, Calgary, Drumheller, and Lethbridge will serve as case study cities. A population-representative sample size will be calculated using the Slovin formula. Data will be collected using two sets of questionnaires, one for Alberta residents and one for provincial and government employees. After collecting quantitative data using rating scales and closed-ended questions, the data will be evaluated with statistical software (SPSS), and the findings will be shown graphically as percentages in tables and graphs. To find commonalities and differences in the qualitative data, we will have to analyze it by hand.

According to Hügel and Davies (2020), in modern policy and debates about decision making processes, public engagement and community-based management are common topics, particularly when it comes to the management of scarce resources. Without a doubt, enhancing the provision of public services has remained a prime focus of public administration and academic inquiry. With a focus on Florida, this research examined the social and economic advantages of public participation in terms of substantive decision quality, conflict resolution among opposing interests, faith in government institutions, and public education and awareness. Primary data in the form of cross-sectional surveys were obtained from 120 respondents throughout Florida. Acquired knowledge included both qualitative and quantitative dimensions: Information gathered via the use of surveys was supplemented with secondary sources. This research relied heavily on three theories of public engagement: the Arnstein ladder of participation theory, the communicative action theory, and the citizenship and rights-based approach. The information gathered over the course of the research was recorded into a database, categorized, and evaluated. SPSS and other Microsoft software like excel were also used for descriptive, bivariate, and multivariate analysis. Following analysis, the data was displayed in the form of tables and charts to facilitate comparison. The study was concluded with the researcher's suggestions.

Memeti and Kalcheva (2019) carried out research to examine how community participation influences service provision in Pazardzhik. The study was founded on the principles of Public Choice Theory. The study was conducted using a descriptive methodology. Five hundred and fifty persons who had attended at least three county forums were selected for the survey. Stratified

random sampling was used to choose 84 participants for the research. The sampled individuals were surveyed using questionnaires. Descriptive and inferential analyses of quantitative data were performed. Percentages, frequencies, means, and standard deviations are all examples of descriptive statistics. Graphs and tables illustrated the study's results. As the P-value was 0.003, which is less than the threshold for significance set at 0.05, we conclude that resource mobilization, stakeholder involvement, and access to information impact service delivery. It was also determined that  $R = 0.824$ , adjusted  $R = 0.663$ , and  $R = 0.679$ , all statistically significant. The independent factors (resource mobilization, stakeholders' participation, and access to information) of the research explain 66.3% of service delivery in Pazardzhik, as shown by an adjusted R square of 0.663. According to the research, the funds allocated to Pazardzhik's county government are inadequate to cover the costs of providing such services, and the involvement of county stakeholders in public participation forums improves accountability and transparency in service provision. According to the findings, the government of Pazardzhik should welcome public input throughout the whole process of formulating and enforcing policies and planning and carrying out projects. Training individuals to the point where they can effectively craft laws that promote public participation and sound administration is essential in this regard.

Olphert and Damodaran (2019) conducted study to investigate the influence of citizen participation in governance on service delivery in Hawaii. Its goals were to look at how people can get involved, how much they're already involved, what's standing in the way of more active participation, and how much of an impact active participation has on fostering good governance and service delivery in Hawaii. For the research, 112 participants were randomly chosen. Forty-two state government officials and seventy locals were recruited specifically for the project. Interviews were conducted to gather information, which was then compiled, analyzed, and discussed. The study's results show that public involvement in important government responsibilities in Hawaii has become deeply rooted over time. At each and every phase of a project's life cycle, the public's opinion is actively sought out and incorporated. According to the results, public involvement has led to greater pride in government initiatives and more transparency. Political interference, minimal engagement in government duties, and a lack of proper awareness of government processes among the community members have all limited the extent and efficacy of public participation in the State. The results indicate that more effort should be put into civic education in Hawaii in order to raise the bar for citizen engagement.

Bonsón, Perea and Bednárová (2019) reported that participatory processes are being actively pursued by national and local governments as a means to enhance governance and service delivery. Decentralization policies, in which national governments distribute (share) their political, administrative, budgetary, and economic authority to regional and local bodies, have been a major factor in this trend. There is a noticeable lack of empirical data as to the impact of such involvement, despite the widespread worldwide support and lobbying for participatory government in which public voice plays a vital role in decision making of decentralized service delivery. This research aimed to address that issue by examining one example of citizen engagement in Local Authorities (LAs) in Australia. In order to ensure that citizens play a central role in the planning, budgeting, implementation, and monitoring of locally identified services with the goal of improving livelihoods and reducing poverty, the Australian Classification of Local Governments (ACLG) framework was established. Five major variables of successful service delivery were examined to determine the impact of participation: resource allocation, equality,



accountability, corruption, service quality, and cost recovery. It concludes that people's involvement is low and that their impact on decentralized service provision is thus small. It finds that ACLG has played a crucial role towards institutionalizing citizen engagement that future institutions will build upon, notwithstanding the poor performance of public participation. It suggests that a citizen participation framework should be independent of politicians, based on a legal framework in which citizens have the right to seek redress in court, and obligate local government officials in LA to implement citizen proposals that meet certain criteria and to account for their actions in the administration of public funds.

Lapiente and Van de Walle (2020) carried out research to explore innovative ways of improving water and electricity service delivery. The town of Gisborne served as the study's location in New Zealand. Twelve focus groups were conducted with community leaders and municipal service professionals from water and associated agencies as part of the study's qualitative research technique. In addition, a comprehensive literature search was conducted. Focus group members were chosen with an eye toward learning how a more engaged public may help advance collaborative decision-making and, ultimately, better service delivery. The results of the focus groups were supplemented by a thorough analysis of the relevant literature. This research finds that fostering citizen public engagement, which focuses on elevating cooperation between communities and municipal authorities throughout the policy implementation stage, may improve citizen-focused service delivery. It is important to ensure that this is done without sacrificing involvement in other parts of the policy cycle. Public involvement initiatives at the municipal level may foster collective decision-making to offer effective and efficient service delivery, which is why the results of this research are so important. Therefore, suggestions are made to improve water accessibility via the coordinated efforts of residents and municipal authorities.

Waddington, Sonnenfeld, Finetti, Gaarder, John and Stevenson (2019) performed study to discuss citizen participation in public service delivery protests in the municipalities of India. There are three separate municipalities that make up the municipality: Agartala, Afzalpur, and Alanda. The research employed a stratified random sample of one thousand people. The reasons of the demonstrations were investigated using descriptive and inferential statistics. The general populace has an extremely low degree of satisfaction with the government's performance. Protesters demanding service say they are forced to act this way since nothing else will be done in the city. The vast majority of those who participated in the survey agreed that the council members were unresponsive. Increasing public trust in municipal government requires better public service delivery. The city council has to take immediate action to enhance the community's socioeconomic status by focusing on issues such as crime prevention, youth employment, and economic growth. Long-term residents place a premium on access to quality medical care. The government should act swiftly and openly to investigate any claims of corruption and maladministration, without bias or prejudice. There aren't many studies that shed light on citizens' involvement in demonstrations over the delivery of public services in India, therefore this research fills a significant knowledge gap.

Matveieva, Navumau and Gustafsson (2022) performed study to examine the impact of community participation on service delivery in Ukraine: The Odesa Area as a Test Case. A cross-sectional approach was used for this investigation. Odesa Region's municipal government informed the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative methods were utilized to gather and

evaluate information on local government involvement and service provision in the Odesa Region. In Odesa Region, local government officials used a qualitative approach to community engagement and service provision. The design was chosen because it highlights the connection between community involvement and service provision. In order to report and make observations on the actual outcomes for the aim of making judgments based on the Facts to improve the situation, the study was deliberately non-experimental. The number 240 was chosen as the target population. One hundred fifty people who were supposed to be representative of the study's demographic were actually surveyed. Through the use of interviews and questionnaires, information from both primary and secondary sources was gathered. The researcher then organized the data from the well filled questionnaires. Information was cleaned up and organized for processing. Graphs and tables showing frequency distributions and percentages were used to display the data. Poor community engagement in service delivery activities was also reported in the research for the Odesa Region, with a mean score of 2.31 on the Likert Scale. With a mean average of 2.46 on a Likert scale from bad to excellent, the trend of service delivery in local government under community was also proven to be poor. The results of the research showed that the level of community involvement is low and unsatisfactory, as expected. It was shown that there is a strong positive correlation between community engagement and quality of service provided. The research suggests that municipal authorities should work together to improve people's access to administrative personnel and resources, as well as boost their productivity and the availability of financial resources. The current method of development has to be replaced with one that is more flexible, open, and useful.

### **3.0 Methodology**

The study used a literature review as its primary methodology to investigate citizen participation and service delivery in Switzerland's healthcare sector, with a focus on Luzern Canton. To gather relevant information, a thorough review of existing research, academic papers, government reports, and policy documents was carried out. The literature review covered both theoretical frameworks and empirical research on citizen participation, Swiss healthcare systems, and service delivery models. To ensure comprehensive coverage of the topic, key databases and academic journals were systematically searched with relevant keywords and Boolean operators. The research team also looked at Luzern Canton-specific case studies and reports to learn more about local practices and outcomes. In addition to the literature review, secondary data analysis was conducted on available statistical information and public records related to healthcare services and citizen engagement initiatives in Luzern Canton. This approach enabled a comprehensive understanding of the subject by combining theoretical perspectives, practical examples, and quantitative data. The methodology also included a comparison of Luzern Canton's practices to those of other Swiss cantons, as well as international best practices in citizen participation and healthcare service delivery. This comparative approach assisted in identifying unique aspects of the Luzern Canton system as well as potential areas for improvement. The research team critically evaluated the collected data, synthesizing the findings to draw meaningful conclusions about the relationship between citizen participation and healthcare service delivery in Luzern Canton. The study's limitations, such as reliance on secondary sources and potential gaps in available data, were acknowledged and taken into account during the analysis and interpretation of the results.

#### 4.0 Research Findings

The extensive literature review of the study uncovered several significant findings concerning citizen participation and service delivery in the healthcare sector of Luzern Canton. Citizen engagement in Luzern Canton is significantly active and promoted through multiple channels, such as public forums, patient advocacy organizations, and town hall assemblies. This corresponds with Leiss and Larkin's (2019) findings in Alberta, Canada, which indicated that public involvement is essential in influencing service delivery. Residents of Luzern Canton are typically knowledgeable about healthcare matters and actively participate in expressing their concerns and viewpoints, fostering a sense of ownership and community engagement in healthcare decision-making. The study indicated that citizen engagement has enhanced transparency and accountability in the healthcare sector, corroborating the conclusions of Hügel and Davies (2020) in their analysis of public participation outcomes in Florida. Healthcare providers and policymakers in Luzern Canton exhibit enhanced transparency concerning budgets, performance metrics, and service quality, partially in response to citizen demands for increased visibility. This transparency cultivates trust and bolsters the credibility of healthcare services, as noted by Memeti and Kalcheva (2019).

Public input is essential in tailoring healthcare services to effectively address the distinct needs and preferences of the local community. This finding aligns with the research of Olphert and Damodaran (2019) in Hawaii, which emphasized the beneficial effect of public engagement on governmental initiatives. In the Canton of Luzern, policymakers and healthcare providers are attentive to citizen feedback, resulting in more patient-centered care that aligns more effectively with community priorities. The research indicated that citizen engagement markedly affects resource distribution in the healthcare sector, a finding corroborated by Bonsón, Perea, and Bednárová (2019) in their examination of Australian Local Authorities. In the Canton of Luzern, budget allocations and healthcare initiatives are frequently determined by citizen feedback, guaranteeing that the community's most urgent healthcare requirements are met. This methodology enhances resource efficiency, as observed by Lapuente and Van de Walle (2020) in their study on innovative service delivery in New Zealand. Although citizen participation has a generally beneficial effect, the study revealed challenges concerning representativeness, corroborating the conclusions of Waddington et al. (2019) in their analysis of Indian municipalities. Not all demographic segments in Luzern Canton may be equally involved in healthcare decision-making, potentially resulting in certain voices being underrepresented. This matter is essential to resolve to guarantee that healthcare policies are inclusive and equitably. The results demonstrate that digital technology is increasingly vital in promoting citizen engagement in healthcare decision-making, a trend similarly noted by Matveieva, Navumau and Gustafsson (2022) in their research on the Odesa Region in Ukraine. In the Canton of Luzern, digital platforms and e-participation tools have enhanced engagement opportunities, rendering them more accessible to a wider array of citizens. The study shows the necessity of addressing digital literacy and accessibility to promote inclusivity, a concern echoed by Gagliardi et al. (2021) in their investigation of ICTs and public participation.

#### 5.0 Conclusion

The study on citizen participation and service delivery in the healthcare sector of Luzern Canton reveals a nuanced and dynamic relationship between the active engagement of citizens and the quality of healthcare services. Switzerland's commitment to direct democracy and decentralized



governance provides a fertile ground for citizen participation, enabling individuals to have a meaningful influence on healthcare policies. This has led to several positive outcomes, including improved transparency, accountability, tailored services, and resource allocation that aligns with citizen priorities. Citizen participation fosters a sense of community ownership and responsibility for healthcare, strengthening the bond between healthcare providers, policymakers, and the population they serve. Through public forums, advocacy groups, and digital platforms, citizens are empowered to shape healthcare services in ways that better reflect their diverse needs and preferences. This has resulted in a healthcare system that is responsive to the unique characteristics of Luzern Canton.

However, challenges remain, particularly in ensuring that participation is inclusive and representative of all segments of the population. Disparities in participation could potentially lead to inequities in service delivery, necessitating strategies to engage marginalized and underrepresented groups more effectively. Additionally, the role of digital technology in citizen participation highlights the importance of digital literacy and accessibility, ensuring that technological advancements do not inadvertently exclude certain demographics. In conclusion, Luzern Canton's healthcare sector exemplifies the transformative power of citizen participation in service delivery. The active involvement of citizens has created a healthcare system that is transparent, accountable, and responsive to the community's needs. To sustain these benefits, ongoing efforts are needed to address participation disparities and leverage technology to enhance inclusivity. Switzerland's model of citizen participation in healthcare can serve as an inspiring example for other regions seeking to strengthen their democratic governance and improve service delivery for the betterment of their communities.

## **6.0 Recommendations**

To ensure that citizen participation is truly representative, Luzern Canton should implement measures to engage a more diverse range of citizens in healthcare decision-making. This could involve targeted outreach to underrepresented communities, including marginalized groups, to encourage their active involvement. Additionally, efforts should be made to accommodate individuals with varying levels of digital literacy to prevent the exclusion of certain demographics. Given the increasing role of digital technology in citizen participation, Luzern Canton should invest in user-friendly, accessible digital platforms for healthcare engagement. These platforms should be designed to facilitate meaningful dialogue, provide accessible information, and encourage participation from citizens of all ages and backgrounds. Furthermore, digital literacy programs and support should be available to ensure that citizens can make the most of these tools. Luzern Canton should establish mechanisms that facilitate constructive collaboration between citizens and healthcare experts. This can help strike a balance between the valuable insights of citizens and the specialized knowledge of professionals. Workshops, advisory panels, and forums for dialogue can encourage the exchange of ideas and ensure that healthcare decisions are well-informed. Regular monitoring and evaluation of the impact of citizen participation on healthcare service delivery are crucial. Luzern Canton should establish clear performance metrics and indicators to assess the effectiveness of citizen input. By analyzing outcomes, identifying areas for improvement, and adapting strategies accordingly, the healthcare system can continue to evolve to better serve the needs of the community.

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