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Effect of Sociocultural Empowerment on Community Wellbeing in Marsabit County; Kenya

**Anthony Ochieng', Prof. Thomas Cheruiyot & Prof. Daniel
Tarus**

Effect of Sociocultural Empowerment on Community Wellbeing in Marsabit, Kenya

¹* Anthony Ochieng, ²Prof. Thomas Cheruiyot & ³Prof. Daniel Tarus

¹Postgraduate Student, Moi University

²Lecturer, Moi University

³Lecturer, Moi University

*E-mail of corresponding author: nysuter@yahoo.com

Abstract

In Kenya, the ASALs occupy more than 80 percent of the country and are home to over 10 million people. Despite their high development potential, the ASALs have the lowest development indicators and highest poverty incidence amongst all areas in Kenya. More than 60 percent of ASAL inhabitants, for instance, live in conditions of abject poverty subsisting on less than one US dollar per day. The study determined the effect of sociocultural empowerment on community wellbeing in Marsabit, Kenya. Descriptive research design was taken on in the study. The target population of the study was made up of 800 beneficiaries of donor support programmes. A sample of 80 respondents was selected using random sampling. Data was collected using questionnaires. Correlation and multiple regression model was used to establish the relationship between sociocultural empowerment and community wellbeing. The study found that sociocultural empowerment was positively and significantly related with community wellbeing. The study concluded that sociocultural empowerment has a positive effect on the community empowerment. The study recommends for government to understand, and strengthen the community capacities, which are the primary source of solutions to local problems. Governments with the assistance of NGOs need to commit to a long-term process of local organizational development through good governance through partnership and networking.

Keywords: *Sociocultural empowerment, Government, Non-governmental organizations and Community well-being*

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

In Kenya, a dramatic build up in nominal aid flows was experienced in the 1980s, according to OECD-DAC statistics (2004). There was a slackening of donor support in the 1990s but the nominal aid flows increased from US\$ 393.4 million in 1980 to an average peak of US\$1120.5 million in 1989-90, before declining to a low of US\$ 308.85 million in 1999. There was some recovery thereafter in response to a new government in December 2002 such that the net Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) to Kenya accounted for US \$943 million in 2006, ranking it 23rd

among 150 aid recipient in developing countries. The 2006 Kenya Integrated Household and Budget Survey, (KIHBS) found that 46% of the total Kenyan population is absolutely poor, that is below the poverty line, whereas 49% of the rural population is absolutely poor (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2007). Thus, the continued poverty, growing conflicts and the states renegeing on its social responsibilities, create an arena that development NGOs existence have been valuable and that Africa's decline contributes to the continued justification of their work. Official aid agencies have come to expect NGOs to act as a substitute for state welfare programs and a solution to welfare deficiencies at a time when structural adjustment was hugely increasing the extent of welfare needs (O'Coill & Manji, 2002). This is the context in which both Western and local NGOs have explosively grown in Africa yet poverty is on the increase.

A review of Kenya's First Medium Term Plan 2009-2012 provides strong indication that the country has taken the first steps to identify, cost and integrate national social protection programmes in the national annual budgets, medium-term and long-term plans and strategies such as Kenya's Vision 2030 (Ikiara, 2013). These measures have been taken in the last two years as part of the national efforts to fine-tune the Kenya Vision 2030 document and harmonize and incorporate views of the country's main political parties, The finalized Social Protection Strategy, 2009-2012 compelled the government, political parties, NGOs and development partners to take on board medium and long-term issues and strategies and to move the country's social protection to a higher level (Republic of Kenya, 2008).

According to Global Humanitarian Assistance, Kenya received \$537 million in official humanitarian assistance in 2011 (Kragelund, 2011), making it the world's eighth largest recipient of aid. NGOs received over \$95 million in 2011 to be used on development projects throughout the country though to be more specific Northern part of Kenya. Despite their high development potential, the Northern parts of Kenya which include Marsabit have the lowest development indicators and highest poverty incidence amongst all areas in Kenya. From these results the study sought to determine the effect of sociocultural empowerment on community wellbeing in Marsabit, Kenya.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Northern parts of Kenya which has the highest poverty incidence and lowest development indicators amongst all areas in Kenya. Despite the increase in donor funding to government and NGOs towards poverty reduction programs, the state of poverty in Kenya and the ASAL regions in particular has been on the increase (Fitzgibbon, 2012). Contrary to this, development in Kenya has been focused on the main urban centers and the fertile densely populated highlands stretching across the Rift Valley from Mount Kenya to Lake Victoria, which supports the commercial agricultural production of export and domestic crops that form the back bone of Kenya's economy (Fitzgibbon, 2012).

World Bank estimates that between 34 to 42% of the population in Kenya survives on less than \$1 per day and a substantial number of these people are found in ASAL areas which Marsabit County is categorized (KNBS, 2013). Welfare monitoring survey indicates that 60% of the poor reside in the rural areas and more so in conflict zones like Marsabit. To this end, a number of projects and programs through NGOs have been implemented and financed by various donors to improve social and economic welfare conditions for people in this region. This research sought to establish whether there was any relationship existing between sociocultural empowerment and the overall empowerment of community wellbeing of people living in Marsabit County, Kenya.

1.3 Specific Objectives

To determine the effect of sociocultural empowerment on community wellbeing in Marsabit County, Kenya.

1.4 Research Hypothesis

H0. There is no significant effect of sociocultural empowerment on community wellbeing in Marsabit County, Kenya.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

Theoretical which underpinned the current study were sociocultural and institutional theories. These were presented in figure 1.

2.1.1 Sociocultural Empowerment

Socio cultural factor plays a vital role when it comes to the demand of the company's products and services. The focus is on health consciousness, career attitudes, and attitudes of people towards foreign goods and services and impacts of language. Kotler and Armstrong (2004) affirmed that changes in social trends can impact on the demand for a firm's products and the availability and willingness of individuals to work. Social factors include the cultural aspects and include health consciousness, population growth rate, age distribution, career attitudes and emphasis on safety. Some important factors to consider are the availability and cost of skilled labor, age, distribution, labor strikes and crime statistics.

Culture, as defined by Hofstede (1997), is the "collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another". Hofstede (1997) points out that culture shapes a person's patterns of thinking, feeling and potential acting and has many types, i.e. national culture of a country and organizational culture of a company. Whilst culture is shared patterns of behavior that is inherited in a society, it is important to understand the impact of sociocultural effect on community empowerment.

2.1.2 Institutional Theory

Institutional theorists like Meyer and Rowan (1991), DiMaggio and Powell (1983) assert that the institutional environment can powerfully influence the development of formal organizational structures, normally more profoundly than market pressures. The basic premises and concepts of the institutional theory approach provide valuable guidelines for analyzing organization-environment relationships, with emphasis on the social expectations, values, rules and norms as the sources of pressure on organizations. This theory is built on the concept of legitimacy rather than efficiency or influence as the primary organizational goal (Douglas & Aquino, 2004). The environment is conceptualized as the organizational field, represented by institutions like regulatory structures, governmental agencies, courts, professionals, professional norms, interest groups, public opinion, laws, rules, and social values.

The institutional theory assumes that an organization conforms to its environment. There are however, some fundamental aspects of organizational environments and activities not fully addressed by the institutional theory. Thus, it is problematic to understand credit reference bureaus, their environment, the organization being dependent on external resources and the organization's ability to adapt to or change its environment (Douglas & Aquino, 2004). Institutional theory is

relevant to this study since it informs the cultural and social empowerment variables. The institutional environment can strongly influence the development of formal structures in communities. Some of the institutions include norms, interest groups, public opinion, rules, and social values.

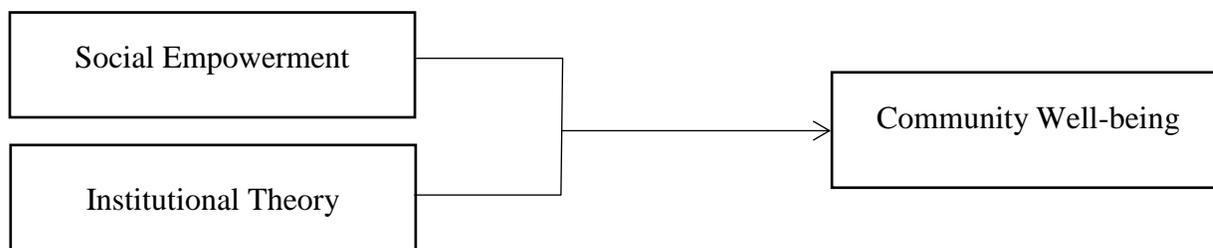


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

2.2 Empirical Review

Nunnenkamp, Weingarth and Weisser, (2009) noted that the enhanced role of NGOs in the development process is their presumed efficiency and effectiveness in terms of program delivery and meeting the needs of the poor. This is compared favorably with the failures of the state, the private sector and multilateral efforts to promote development. Arguably, NGOs possess development capacities and capabilities that states and governments lack and are acceptable as a necessary part of the development process. In fact, NGOs are widely believed to provide better targeted aid than state agencies for their being closer to the poor. Similar positive impact has been experienced in Rwanda where the findings of a study research by (Oehmke, Jayne, Aralas, & Mathenge, 2010) on sustainable poverty reduction, indicated that USAID donor programs have had a significant and cost-effective impact on smallholder income increments and poverty reduction.

Kimani, (2009) in a study purposed to establish the influence of financing on institutional capacity of Early Childhood Education (ECE) centers in Kikuyu District in Kenya using descriptive survey, eighteen identified financing as a major impediment towards the realization of the institutional capacity. In his study, Kasoo (2010) reiterated in his findings that besides community participation, sources and composition of project finance has a bearing on project success as well. This was confirmed by Okafor (2016) when he reported that one major cause of abandonment of construction projects in Nigeria was due to inadequate funding/finance.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

Kothari (2004) defines an independent variable as the presumed cause of the changes of the dependent variable, while a dependent variable refers to the variable which the researcher wishes to explain. The study focused on sociocultural empowerment and community wellbeing together with their indicators. Below was the representation of the variables which was explored by this study.

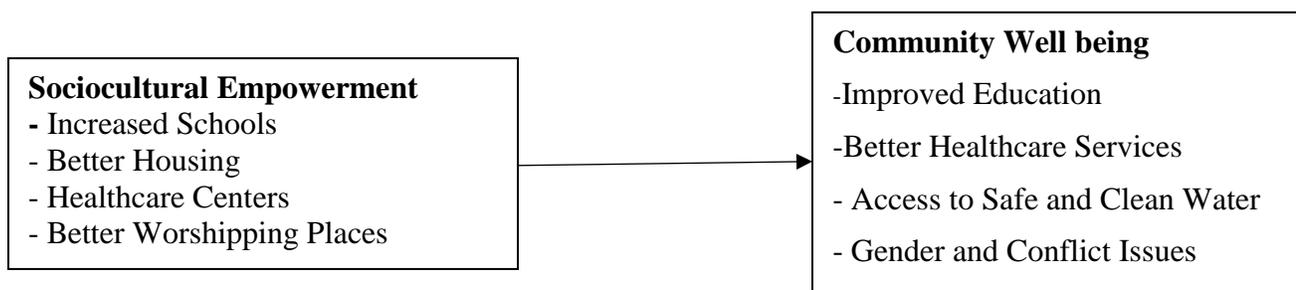


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

3.0 Research Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research design. The study covered the two constituencies of Marsabit County- North Horr and Laisamis which has a population of 800 beneficiaries of donor funded programmes. Therefore the target population of the study was 800 beneficiaries and community leaders. Stratified random sampling technique was used to determine the sample size of 80 respondents. Data was collected through the administration of the questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics (correlation and regression analysis). Multiple regression model was used to test the significance of the influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The Multiple regression model is.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + \mu$$

Where:

Y = Community well being

X= Sociocultural Empowerment

μ is error term and β_0 is constant

4.0 Results and Findings

4.1 Response Analysis

The number of questionnaires that were administered was 80 and a total of 74 questionnaires were properly filled and returned. This represented an overall successful response rate of 92.5% as shown on Table 1. Babbie (2004) also asserted that return rates of above 50% are acceptable to analyze and publish, 60% is good, 70% is very good while above 80% is excellent. Based on these assertions, 92.5% response rate was excellent for the study.

Table 1: Response Rate

Response	Frequency	Percent
Returned	74	92.5%
Unreturned	6	7.5%
Total	80	100%

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

4.2.1 Sociocultural Empowerment

The study established the effect of socio cultural empowerment on community wellbeing. The results were presented in table 2 show 70.2% (29.70%+40.5%) of the respondents agreed that they felt that NGOs and human rights defenders were working to advocate for nondiscrimination of clans in communities within ASAL areas. Similarly results found that NGOs administered systems appreciation to change the situation of different groups in their community for example land ownership as indicated by 68.9 % of the respondents. Results also showed that 72.9% of the respondents agreed that NGOs administered individual advocacy which focused on changing their situation and increasing labor mobility from pure cattle rearing to agriculture. In addition, results show that 68.9% of the respondents agreed that they felt that NGOs had an effective strategy in addressing violence against women and girls which incorporate both practical and policy and systems change activities. Further, 75.6% of the respondents agreed that NGOs encouraged their community to respect diversity, differences and commit to listening and learning from each other. These results implied that socio cultural empowerment influence community wellbeing. The average likert scale of the responses is 3.88 which indicated that majority of the respondents agreed to the statements. The standard deviation was 1.28 which indicates that the responses were varied.

Table 2: Sociocultural Empowerment

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std. Dev
I feel that NGOs and human rights defenders are working to advocate for nondiscrimination of clans in communities within ASAL areas.	6.80%	18.90%	4.10%	29.70%	40.50%	3.78	1.34
I feel that NGOs administer systems appreciation to change the situation of different groups in my community for example land ownership	12.20%	10.80%	8.10%	20.30%	48.60%	3.82	1.45
I feel NGOs administer individual advocacy which focuses on changing my situation and increasing labor mobility from pure cattle rearing to agriculture	6.80%	4.10%	16.20%	35.10%	37.80%	3.93	1.15
I feel that NGOs have an effective strategy in address violence against women and girls which incorporate both practical and policy and systems change activities.	6.80%	8.10%	16.20%	27.00%	41.90%	3.89	1.23
I feel that NGOs encourage my community to respect diversity, differences and commit to listening and learning from each other.	12.20%	4.10%	8.10%	32.40%	43.20%	3.91	1.34
Average						3.86	1.30

4.3 Correlation Analysis

The study established the association between sociocultural empowerment and community well-being in Marsabit County. The results revealed that sociocultural empowerment and community wellbeing were positively and significantly related ($r=0.195$, $p=0.0097$). This implied that an increase in any unit of the sociocultural empowerment led to an improvement in community wellbeing. The results is presented on Table 3.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix

		Well being	Sociocultural Empowerment
Well being Sociocultural Empowerment	Pearson Correlation	1.000	
	Pearson Correlation	0.115	0.143
	Sig. (2-tailed)	Pearson Correlation	0.195
	Sig. (2-tailed)	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.0097**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed),
 *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level(2-tailed)

4.4 Regression Analysis

The study established the relationship between sociocultural empowerment and community well-being in Marsabit County. Sociocultural empowerment were found to be explaining 14.3% of the community well-being in Marsabit County. This was supported by coefficient of determination also known as the adjusted R square of 14.3%. This results further means that the model applied to link the relationship of the variables was satisfactory. The result is presented on Table 4.

Table 4: Model Fitness

Indicator	Coefficient
R	0.378
R Square	0.143
Adjusted R Square	0.106
Std. Error of the Estimate	0.468741

Table 5 provides the results on the analysis of the variance (ANOVA). The results indicate that the overall model was statistically significant. Additionally, the results implied that the sociocultural empowerment was good predictors of performance of NGOs in community empowerment in Marsabit County. This was supported by an F statistic of 3.892 and the reported p value (0.012) which was less than the conventional probability of 0.05 significance level.

Table 5: Analysis of Variance

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	2.566	3	0.855	3.892	.0120
Residual	15.38	70	0.22		
Total	17.946	73			

Regression of coefficients results on Table 6 shows that sociocultural empowerment and community well-being were positively and significant related ($r=0.228$, $p=0.05$). This implies that an increase in any unit of the explanatory variables leads to an improvement in community wellbeing.

Table 6: Regression of Coefficients

Variable	B	Std. Error	t	Sig
(Constant)	2.075	.680	3.050	.003
Sociocultural Empowerment	.228	.115	1.976	.050

Thus, the optimal model for the study is;

$$\text{Community Well-being} = 2.075 + 0.228X_1$$

Where:

X_1 = Sociocultural Empowerment

5.0 Conclusions

The study concluded that sociocultural empowerment had a positive effect on the community empowerment in Marsabit County, Kenya. In addition, the study concluded that NGOs shared a vision for addressing people’s immediate needs and the underlying causes of suffering and cattle rustling, NGOs engaged with civil society, to help transform unjust structures and systems and lastly NGOs do identify, understand, and strengthen community capacities, which were the primary source of solutions to local problems.

6.0 Recommendations

The study recommended for NGOs and human rights defenders to work together to advocate for nondiscrimination of clans in communities within ASAL areas. NGOs were requested to continue to administer individual advocacy which focuses on changing community situation and increasing labor mobility from pure cattle rearing to agriculture. Government needed to develop effective strategy in address violence against women and girls which incorporate both practical and policy and systems change activities. Further, encourage communities to respect diversity, differences and commit to listening and learning from each other.

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