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THE EFFECT OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNITY-BASED PROJECT IN NAROK NORTH SUB COUNTY, NAROK COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of study is to evaluate the effect of institutional capacity on the implementation of community-based projects in Narok North Sub-County, Narok County, Kenya. The research is anchored on the Project Management theory. The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The target population was the 8 employees working at the county department of social services at Narok and the 696 members from various active community-based organizations selected from Narok North Sub County, in Narok County. Both purposive and stratified random sampling was used to select a sample of 249 respondents. The data collection instruments that was used was the questionnaires and the interviews. Primary data was collected using questionnaires and was administered by the researcher. The data was analyzed using qualitative and quantitative analysis. The results indicated that the majority of the respondents agreed that the management of community-based projects is influenced by institutional capacity, project leadership competencies, resource mobilization, and stakeholder participation, the results further showed that all four factors were positively and statistically correlated with the management of community-based projects. It is recommended that project managers and team's leaders should ensure that they enhance institutional capacity to enhance the management of the projects.

Keywords: *Community based Project, Institutional capacity, Project management,*

INTRODUCTION

A study conducted in Russia by Dibella et al. (2023) investigated a development approach called Community-driven development (CDD). They found that CDD empowers local communities by giving their groups control over decision-making. This approach views people in poverty as valuable assets and collaborators, leveraging their existing institutions and resources. The researchers noted that CDD strengthens these communities by providing financial support to inclusive groups, ensuring access to information, and advocating for policy changes that create a favorable environment. Separately, Michael, Kinyua, and Mwamba (2021) highlighted the potential of CDD to improve poverty reduction efforts. They argue that CDD can be more responsive to local needs, inclusive of all community members, sustainable in the long term, and more cost-effective compared to traditional top-down approaches. By delivering results at the local level and working alongside market forces and government programs, CDD has the potential to be

a powerful tool in the fight against poverty.

According to a study by Kamau (2020), a significant change occurred in Kenya's approach to community development after the 2010 Constitution. The document decentralized power and resources, placing county governments at the forefront of designing and carrying out local development initiatives. This shift empowers communities by allowing them to have a greater say in how these projects unfold. It's estimated that a staggering 50,000 projects are now directly or indirectly boosting economic growth in rural areas. The ultimate goal of these community-driven projects is to equip both men and women with the economic and social tools they need to succeed, fostering an environment where everyone can flourish. However, the success of these initiatives hinges entirely on the effectiveness with which these community-based projects are managed.

This study seeks to explore the role of institutional capacity in the management of community-based projects in Narok North Sub-County. Specifically, it examines the influence of local institutions, including government agencies, community-based organizations, and traditional leadership structures, on the planning, execution, and sustainability of these projects. Through this investigation, the study aims to identify the key factors that contribute to effective project management, as well as the challenges that hinder institutional effectiveness in community development.

Institutional Capacity on implementation of community-based projects

Building the ability of institutions to function effectively requires a multi-pronged approach. Hefley and Bottion (2021) highlight those relevant changes within organizations, clear communication channels between involved groups, and appropriate funding mechanisms are all crucial for this development. Importantly, successful and lasting improvements require those involved (stakeholders) to feel invested in the goals and methods of change. The passage goes on to emphasize the role of community-based programs (CBPs) as direct channels for improving people's lives. However, to fully achieve their potential, these programs need a clear sense of purpose (strategic direction), a well-defined organizational framework, and established ways of doing things. Many community-based organizations (CBOs) are effective at raising awareness, providing information and communication channels, and running care and support programs. However, their ability to analyze policies and strengthen institutions needs substantial improvement (Abdelmasseh Bassioni and Gaid, 2022). Instead of just focusing on technical skills, we can improve this area by directly empowering the CBOs themselves. For this study, we'll consider "institutional capacity" to be the sum of abilities, skills, knowledge, attitudes, values, relationships, behaviors, motivations, resources, and overall conditions that allow individuals, organizations, networks/sectors, and broad social systems to perform their functions and achieve their long-term development goals.

Statement of the Problem

Community-based projects are a significant challenge for global, national, NGOs, and grassroots development agencies. In Kenya, the government has increased spending on devolution, with both counties and state governments increasing funds for developmental projects. However, project teams often fail to adhere to budgets, meet timelines, or meet quality standards. For instance, Siaya

County Government had the lowest absorption rate of allocated funds, indicating poor project management and poor planning. Measuring project implementation is crucial for managing projects, as it helps identify challenges related to time, budget, or quality, and develops mechanisms to address emerging issues (World Bank Group, 2019).

Community-based projects are essential for fostering local development, improving living standards, and addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges at the grassroots level. However, the success of these projects often hinges on the capacity of the institutions managing them. Institutional capacity refers to the ability of organizations, especially at the community level, to effectively plan, implement, monitor, and sustain development initiatives.

In many cases, the management of community-based projects faces challenges due to insufficient institutional capacity. These challenges include inadequate resources (financial, human, technical), weak organizational structures, poor coordination among stakeholders, lack of transparency, and limited skills among staff and community members involved in project implementation. As a result, projects may experience delays, poor-quality outcomes, and lack of sustainability, thereby reducing their potential impact on the target communities.

Despite the recognition of the importance of building institutional capacity in the management of community-based projects, there is a significant gap in understanding how local institutions can be strengthened to effectively manage such projects. This problem is particularly pronounced in low-resource settings, where community organizations often lack the expertise, training, and systems necessary for successful project management.

There is a concerning trend in community development projects across Africa, with research by Lockwood (2022) suggesting a 30-60% failure rate in meeting objectives. Similarly, Baumann (2019) found that over half (55%) of Kenyan development projects are at risk of falling short despite adequate funding. Studies by Amoa Abban & Allotey (2020) further emphasize this issue, highlighting common problems like delays, budget overruns, and poor quality, not just in Kenya but globally. Interestingly, as Kithao (2019) points out, limited research has explored the role of project management itself in project success.

Specific Objective

To evaluate the effect of institutional capacity on management of community based projects in Narok North Sub-County, Narok County, Kenya

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Literature Review

The anchor theory for the study is the project Management theory by Whetten's (1989), since it cuts across all the variables of the study.

Project Management Theory

Whetten's (1989) concept of causality in project management highlights the complex web of factors that determine project outcomes, while Koskela (2000) argues that an effective theory of project management should go beyond explanation to serve as a strategic guide for achieving

success. Koskela's framework introduces three core actions for effective project management: designing the system, controlling operations, and promoting continuous improvement. Together, these actions provide a roadmap for project managers to anticipate how their decisions shape project results, thereby minimizing the risks associated with unanticipated challenges. A meticulously planned project with clearly defined goals, skilled personnel, and solid monitoring practices is more resilient to unforeseen issues. This study leverages Koskela's theory as a framework for understanding the interdependencies among planning, resource allocation, and operational oversight, which collectively influence project success. By following Koskela's principles, this research aims to pinpoint actionable insights that can enhance both theoretical and practical aspects of project management, especially within community-based organizations in challenging environments like Narok County. The study proposes that adhering to such a structured approach can substantially improve project outcomes, even when external challenges arise. Ultimately, this research seeks to contribute to a practical project management methodology that builds on existing theories while delivering real-world results that enhance the success rate of community-based projects.

Empirical literature Review

Empirical literature review examined several studies conducted on institutional capacity as a practice in various sectors. The review examined the findings from empirical studies which provided a guide to the study research framework and provided insights in addition to ones captured in the theoretical literature review.

The Effect of Institutional Capacity on the Implementation of the Project

In a recent study by Sila and Gakobo (2021), researchers looked into how staff training affects how well projects are managed. Their findings showed a strong positive connection, meaning that the more training staff received, the better projects were managed. To conduct their study, the researchers used a method known as descriptive research design. This involved picking a group of staff members as a sample and then using a specific questionnaire to gather information. The study argues that organizations that are successful invest in training the right people to become project managers. This ensures that these managers have the skills, knowledge, and experience they need to be successful. Another researcher, Taylor, highlights the importance of project managers who are always looking for ways to teach, train, and improve the skills of their team members. However, the study also acknowledges that some organizations see training as a big expense and might choose to spend that money on other things that seem more urgent at the time. This can hurt the development of their project management abilities.

The study by Magagan and Ngugi (2021), researchers investigated how different management aspects affect the long-term success of programs funded by the World Bank in Kenya. They were particularly interested in understanding the influence of technical expertise, institutional frameworks, economic conditions, and political environments on these programs. The researchers used a combination of two different research methods: explanatory designs, which explore cause-and-effect relationships, and cross-sectional designs, which examine a snapshot of data collected at a single point in time. Their investigation was driven by the observation that even though feasibility studies are conducted before launching these programs, there's no guarantee they will

be sustainable in the long run.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this framework, the independent variables are the factors believed to influence or impact the dependent variables. These independent variables set the starting point for research, guiding the investigation toward a deeper understanding of the factors that may drive change. The dependent variable, on the other hand, is the focal point or outcome the researcher wants to explain or predict. It's the endpoint on the map, shaped by or responding to changes in the independent variables. By testing these relationships within a conceptual framework, researchers gain insight into potential causations, helping to explain complex interactions within their field of study

Independent Variable

Dependent Variable

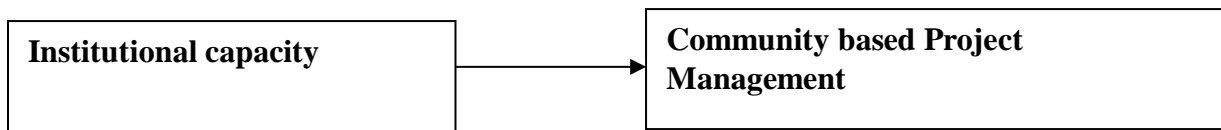


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research design

The researcher chose a descriptive survey design for this investigation. This particular technique is perfect since it enables a thorough analysis of the characteristics defining the target population, with a specific focus on the factors influencing their behavior. While Nassaji (2020) suggests descriptive designs can explore cause-and-effect relationships, the primary goal here, as echoed by Bob-Milliar (2022), is to understand the current state of affairs. This includes describing behaviors, attitudes, values, and inherent traits of the population under study. For this aim, a descriptive design works especially well because it makes it easier to get a lot of detailed information from a lot of participants. The survey format aligns well with this objective, considering the need to gather data from a broad population segment, as noted by Kothari and Dubey (2022). Furthermore, a descriptive design is characterized by well-defined research questions, which is another reason for its selection in this study. Ultimately, this design enabled the researchers to gather both numerical and descriptive data, providing valuable insights into the relationships between the variables of interest.

Target Population

According to Nassaji (2020) defines the study population as the entire group of individuals who are relevant to a research question. In this study, the population is centered on Narok North Sub County, with the Department of Social Services identifying 58 active Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in various regions. Each CBO has an average membership of 12, amounting to a minimum of 696 potential participants. Additionally, 8 officers from the Department of Social Services are included, making the total study population 704 individuals.



Table 1: The Population Distribution

Group	No of CBOs	Population	Percentage
Officers from the Department of Social Services	0	8	1.1
Water Projects	11	149	21.2
Poverty eradication and food security	7	73	10.4
Environmental, Conservation, biodiversity	7	89	12.6
Sustainable agriculture	8	110	15.6
Healthy and sanitation	10	108	15.3
Gender based	6	66	9.5
Sustainable energy	9	101	14.3
Total	58	704	100

Sample size and Sampling Technique

In the field of social research, scholar like Kothari (2023) emphasize the importance of a sufficiently large sample size. This is because a larger sample helps to minimize sampling errors, which can significantly impact the reliability of the study findings.

Table 2: Sample Distribution

Group	No of CBOs	Population	Sample size
Officers from the Department of Social Services	0	8	8
Water Projects	11	149	53
Poverty eradication and food security	7	73	25
Environmental, Conservation, biodiversity	7	89	32
Sustainable agriculture	8	110	38
Healthy and sanitation	10	108	37
Gender based	6	66	22
Sustainable energy	9	101	34
Total	58	704	249



Data Collection Methods and Instruments

The researcher has chosen a descriptive survey design for this investigation. This particular approach is ideal because it allows for a detailed examination of the characteristics defining the target population, with a specific focus on the factors influencing their behavior. While Nassaji (2020) suggests descriptive designs can explore cause-and-effect relationships, the primary goal here, as echoed by Bob-Milliar (2022), is to understand the current state of affairs. This includes describing behaviors, attitudes, values, and inherent traits of the population under study. A descriptive design is particularly well-suited for this purpose as it facilitates the collection of a substantial amount of in-depth information from a large group of participants. The survey format aligns well with this objective, considering the need to gather data from a broad population segment, as noted by Kothari and Dubey (2022). Furthermore, a descriptive design is characterized by well-defined research questions, which is another reason for its selection in this study.

Data Analysis and Presentation

Once all the data has been gathered, we will delve into a two-pronged analysis approach to gain a richer understanding of the information collected. First, we employ thematic analysis employed to qualitatively examine the open-ended questions. This method involves identifying recurring themes within the participants' responses and then crafting narratives that directly reflect their exact wording, providing a deeper look into their experiences. On the quantitative side, the data will be coded and entered into the latest version (version 26) of the statistical software SPSS. Here, we will utilize a combination of descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze the data. As outlined by Nyakundi and Orodho (2020), descriptive statistics will be employed to summarize the findings. This will involve calculating measures of central tendency, such as frequencies, means, and percentages, to provide an overview of the data. Additionally, measures of dispersion, including standard deviation and skewness, will be computed using both SPSS version 26 and Microsoft Excel to assess the variability within the data set.

FINDINGS AND REGRESSIONS

Descriptive Statistics

The respondents were asked how much they agreed with the assertions. Respondents were asked to rate their ideas on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 meant strongly disagree, and 5 strongly agree. The replies were included in this section, and the descriptive analysis is shown in Table 7.

Table 3: Project Institutional Capacity and Community Development Projects

Statements	SD	D	N	A	S A
The organization has a very clear Organizational structure through which operations are done	15 (6.9%)	0	0	0	203 (93.1%)
The institution has clear budget for its activities and projects	15 (6.9%)	0	7 (3.2%)	59 (27.1%)	137 (62.8%)
There are clear Policies and procedures guiding the operations of the organization	0	33 (15.1%)		124 (56.9%)	61 (28.0%)
The institution has the required Facilities and equipment for supporting the projects	0	58 (26.6%)	0	65 (29.8%)	95 (43.6%)
The organization has the required institutional capacity to support the projects	15 (6.9%)	44 (20.2%)	0	77 (35.3%)	82 (37.6%)

The study found that most respondents believe the organization effectively manages community projects due to clear structures, budgets, policies, and sufficient facilities. Specifically, 93.1% agreed the organization has a clear structure for operations, indicating the importance of a strong organizational framework for leadership in community projects. Additionally, 89.9% affirmed that the institution has a clear budget for its activities, emphasizing the need for financial planning in project management. Regarding policies and procedures, 84.9% of respondents agreed that these are clear, suggesting that well-defined guidelines contribute to the effective management of projects. On the availability of facilities and equipment, 73.4% believed the organization has the necessary resources, highlighting the role of adequate infrastructure in supporting community development.

Lastly, 72.9% agreed that the organization has the required institutional capacity to support community-based projects, though a smaller portion disagreed. This indicates that while most respondents believe in the organization's capability, some areas may need improvement. Overall, the study underscores the importance of clear organizational structures, budgets, policies, facilities, and institutional capacity in managing community development projects effectively.



SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings

Institutional Capacity's and Management of Community-Based Projects

The results showed that most respondents agreed with most institutional capability indicators and their impact on project management. The results demonstrated that having an appropriate organizational structure with clear rules and budgets influences the administration of community-based initiatives. Further research showed that institutional capability and community-based project management were significantly positive correlated. This suggests that the administration of community-based initiatives in Narok County is significantly impacted by institutional capability. The findings concur with those of other researchers who have also shown a connection between institutional capability and community-based project management, including Sila and Gakobo (2021), Saleh and Karia (2020), and Magagan and Ngugi (2021). This shows that when an organization has a focus on building the capacity of the institution there is a likelihood that the management of the organization will improve.

Conclusion

An essential factor in determining how well community-based programs are managed is institutional capacity. This means having an efficient organizational structure that facilitates efficient project leadership. In addition, the study finds that improving the administration of community-based initiatives requires the implementation of policies and procedures. The findings provide information that strengthens institutional capacity and shows how it effectively improves the performance of community development initiatives in Narok County's Narok North subcounty.

Recommendations

The study's conclusions offer both theoretical and practical suggestions for enhancing community-based programs' performance. The study suggests, in theory, that community-based projects in the counties should build the necessary institutional capacity, particularly in the areas of leadership, policy and procedures, and organization structure, as these are crucial for improving the management of community-based projects. The study's practical conclusions suggest that the right institutional capability to be adopted and used to support the community projects' success.

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