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An Analysis of Staff Ethical Practices on Poverty Reduction in Laikipia County, Kenya

By

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Abstract

Unethical practices contribute a lot to poverty in Africa and in the world at large. In Kenya, the level of poverty is worrying and this is in spite of effort by the government and non-governmental organizations to reduce it. It is becoming obvious nowadays for analysts to focus on ethical concerns in their analysis of poverty to connect poverty with human behavior. Hence, the purpose of the study was to analyze if staff ethical practices play any role on reducing poverty in Laikipia County, in order to connect staff behavior in Laikipia County with poverty reduction. The specific objective of the study was to; assess to which extent staff accountability affects poverty reduction in Laikipia County. The theoretical framework focused on structural-functional theory in relation to the role it plays in a Society which is not economically and socially equal. The researcher applied quantitative research method in order to measure data and to generalize results from a sample of the desired population. The researcher used primary and secondary sources of information to gather data from the respondents. The study adopted descriptive research design to collect a representative sample from a larger population, Stratified sampling was used to select a sample size of 163 from total population of 1632 derived from homogenous subgroups, which consist of County secretaries, elected leaders, management personnel, county chiefs, and subordinate staff. The researcher conducted the study in Laikipia County. Expert opinion and suggestions by Mt. Kenya University and the institute of security studies validated the content of the instruments. The researcher analyzed data using cumulative frequency tables. The researcher used the Cronbach's alpha coefficient as a method of measuring reliability in the study. The estimates of independent variables was 0.7041 while the dependent variables was 0.7071 both were extremely reliable with overall alpha coefficient greater than the minimum of 0.70. The researcher found-out that the relationship between staff accountability and poverty reduction in Laikipia County was positive and significant since $R^2 = 0.228$ (22.8%) and had a p-value less than 0.05. The researcher recommends that the County government should strive to improve on staff accountability in service delivery.

Key words: Ethical Practices, Development, Poverty, Kenya, Laikipia County

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Background to the Study and Introduction

This study adopts an ethical approach in exploring the role of staff ethical practices in reducing poverty in Laikipia County since no past research was conducted on staff ethical practices in the county. It attempts to argue that poverty reduction can't be achieved without paying serious attention to the role staff ethical practices play in reducing poverty. It further argues that successful poverty reduction requires sustained wealth creation with a mix of various motivations geared towards its reduction.

Increased interest in poverty reduction picked up in the 1990,s and consolidated in the 2000's, propelled largely by the need for alternative ways to deal with poverty (Chetwynd, Chetwynd & Spector, 2007). A wide range of commitments, policies, programs, and poverty studies, with global and national scope, have been developed concluded or implemented. Arguably, the adoption of the MDGs framework transformed the fight against poverty in to a collective global endeavor anchored on a new social norm that treated poverty as morally unacceptable (Hulme, 2010). The principal goals of poverty reduction are to mitigate the conditions of the poor people in order to enable them to escape from the poverty trap and to strengthen institutions and societies that hinder people from becoming poor or sliding further into poverty (Luyt, 2008).

In more than half a century, a number of people in the development sector in Kenya have worked at reducing the highest level of poverty so that the poorest people in the society can have the financial ability to afford basic goods and services for survival. According to the 2020 comprehensive poverty report by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics 15.9 million out of 44.2 Million Kenyans are poor where adults in the rural and urban areas respectively earn less than kenya shillings 3,252 and 5, 995 per month. According to the Society for International Development statistics (SID) in exploring Kenya`s inequality report (SID, 2009), there are significant inequalities in Laikipia County which cause poverty. The statistics provided show that 47.9% of the population in Laikipia lives in abject poverty despite government`s and Non-Governmental Organizations efforts to reduce it.

According to SID report in 2004, Kenya was rated among the highly unequal countries in the world, ranked number ten worldwide and fifth in Africa. Kenya`s poverty is majorly concentrated in the rural areas where the richest 20% of the rural and urban population earn 62% and 51% respectively. The bottom 20% earn 3.5% of rural income and 5.4% of urban income according to World Socialist Website, 2008. The major problem Kenya is facing today is to eradicate corruption in public sector and to reduce poverty to manageable levels, which can be achieved through sustainable economic growth to a level of raising the standards of living of its people.

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The background information of the study indicates that poverty levels in Laikipia County are substantially high despite the past studies conducted to reduce it in the area. Poverty reduction can be challenged by lack of accountability in the county resource management and allocation of funds, lack of transparency, integrity and loyalty by civil servants. The high level of poverty over the years has a negative repercussion on livelihoods in the county. Poverty reduction requires change of ethical behavior in order for it to have an impact. Past studies has not been conducted on ethical practices on poverty reduction despite other studies conducted on social, economic, political and cultural effects on poverty reduction that still has achieved very little in the study area due to the high levels of poverty as indicated in the (SID 2004) report. Therefore, the background study informed the researcher to study on ethical practices on poverty reduction in Laikipia County

Statement of the Problem

There is no clear- cut reason why poverty exist from generation to generation. Further, poor people are identified in the society and ranked according to socio-economic status

The most important goals of poverty reduction are to improve income levels, housing and education levels among other conditions affecting the poor in order to enable them to escape from the poverty trap and to strengthen institutions and societies that hinder people from becoming poor or sliding further into poverty (Luyt, 2008). For more than half a Century, a number of people in the development sector in Kenya have worked hard to reduce high levels of poverty so that the poor people can afford basic goods and services for survival. According to the Society for International Development statistics (SID) in exploring Kenya`s inequality report (2009), there are significant inequalities which cause poverty in Laikipia County, statistics provided show that 47.9% of the population in Laikipia County live below one dollar per day despite the government`s efforts to reduce poverty levels in kenya. Therefore, poverty reduction in Laikipia county requires various approaches and strategies towards improving people`s livelihood. The background information indicates that poverty levels in Laikipia County are substantially high despite past studies on social, economic, political and cultural effects on poverty. Therefore, this research paper seeks to analyze staff ethical practices on poverty reduction in Laikipia

Research Objectives

The key objective of the study was to:

1. Assess the extent to which staff accountability reduce poverty in Laikipia County.

Review of Related Literature

Ntuthuko (2008) carried out a research on poverty reduction strategies in South Africa. The purpose of the study was to examine South Africa`s poverty reduction strategies, aiming to investigate it`s consistency in terms of principal universal best enactments. The survey found that the South African government has increased effort in trying to reduce the extent of poverty in the country. The research concludes that poverty in South Africa exist majorly due to inadequate pro-poor economic development, weak implementation of policies or lack of administration

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skills at the grass-root level, slow resource distribution, inadequate income, low job creation by SME's, high rate of HIV/AIDS infections, unethical practices in the public sector and insufficient monitoring strategies of poverty in the country. Thus, if reasonable headway to reduce poverty will be realized the government has to deal with the previously mentioned constraints appropriately.

A study was conducted by Gosa (2014) on the role played by micro finance institutions in poverty reduction and women's empowerment in Ethiopia which found that Dedibit microfinance and saving institution has enhanced the standards of living of the poor people in Ethiopia. The study concluded that micro finance institutions boosted economic development directly and indirectly and enhanced households' happiness. Dedibit microfinance plays a critical part in reducing poverty by giving loans and mobilizing savings. In addition, it is creating employment for the unemployed people of the society by way of offering systematic financial services. The study concluded that dedibit microfinance institution is promising and optimistic in assisting the poor entrepreneurs emerge out of poverty in Mekelle City.

Eboreimen (2014) conducted a study on evaluating poverty reduction in development interventions in Nigeria. The purpose of the study was to examine the role of the national poverty reduction program on the welfare of project beneficiaries in Nigeria. The study found out that the influence of national poverty reduction programme on the welfare of project participants was not statistically significant. Therefore, the interventions have not led to significant reduction in poverty among its beneficiaries in Nigeria.

Mukaila (2012) conducted a study on social Capital and poverty reduction in Nigeria, Minna Metropolis. The conclusion of the study was that, social capital had notable influence on poverty reduction in Minna Metropolis and it summarizes that there is a need for the government in the area to recognize the importance of social capital. This study was conducted in Nigeria and it was on social capital and poverty reduction while the current study was conducted in Kenya specifically in Laikipia County.

Duggu (2013) conducted a study on strategic approach to reducing poverty and corruption in Nigeria. The findings were that entrepreneurship and small business enterprises are fundamental movers of economic growth and development. Therefore, considering the high rate of unemployment in the country, high levels of poverty and low incomes in relation to the available human resource and natural resources, levels of poverty and unemployment would be lower if the government embraced good governance, puts adequate measures to fight corruption. The government should also implement employment programs effectively in order to create more job opportunities. Ultimately, the number of those living below \$156 per day would increase substantially. This study was conducted in Nigeria on strategic approach to poverty reduction and corruption while the current study was carried out specifically in Laikipia County in Kenya.

Kretzschmar conducted a research (2014) on ethical analysis of the implementation of poverty reduction policies in South Africa and Chile and their implications for the church. The conclusion of the study on Chile was that poverty could be reduced substantially and lives of many ordinary people could be transformed. The conclusion of the study on South Africa was that a combination of economic growth and social policies with a focus on health, family,

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education, creating jobs, developing skills and tax policy reforms, significantly and positively influenced the people. This study was conducted on South Africa and Chile on ethical analysis of the implementation of poverty reduction policies while the current study was conducted in Kenya specifically in Laikipia County.

Njagi (2014) carried out a study on the political economy of poverty reduction in Kenya: a comparative analysis of two counties in the rural area. The results showed that regardless of poverty reduction being a post-independence policy objective, worrying high level of poverty have sustained predominantly in the rural Kenya. The study ends by concluding that in order for Kenya to succeed in rural poverty reduction it has to majorly hinge on adequate decision-making, planning, quality development, good leadership, capacity and the good will of institutions and citizens at the grassroots to track and maintain good levels of development under takings.

Otieno, (2015) conducted a study on determinants of poverty in Kenya and the findings showed that household size, gender, marital status, education levels per household, occupation, residing either in the rural or urban areas, sources of water and travel hours to the place of work all of them determined of poverty in Kenya.

Gitonga (2011) conducted a research on linking conservation, tourism and poverty alleviation an analysis of Laikipia Wildlife Forum. The study show that the three previously independent issues of Conservation, Tourism and Poverty have been converging in Laikipia wildlife forum. The temporally stabilization of this policy arrangements has had positive influence on the areas it was set to address. The study also revealed that the architectural dimensions of a policy arrangements support each other, and that the collaborative process is successful does not always assure equally proportional outcomes.

Theoretical Framework

Structural functionalism or functionalism theory is a structure used for building theory that views the society as complicated system whose parts function together to boost unity and solidarity. Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) was among the key founding fathers of Sociology, views structural functionalism as a framework consensus theory, which is a key sociological theory. The Functionalist theory views the society as a very large complicated system of intertwined social institutions that is in continuous harmony. Functionalists are persuaded that the entire society work together to sustain the functional equilibrium. Functionalism is comparable to a human body, which has various parts where each part works in harmony with other parts for the body to function properly. As we analyze the role of ethical practices in this study, we will realize the theories used generally have an effect on poverty that affects the society. Functionalism views individuals as decision makers in the larger society hence their decisions, values and actions can reduce poverty in the society. Durkheim advances the view that, values, rules and collective consciousness, are important to a functional society and this resonates with the role of staff ethical practices on poverty reduction in Laikipia County. The lack of the general social standards in the society leads to a state of breakdown of social norms and guidance for the citizens of society (Brady, 2003). There are various ways that Durkheim's work remains relevant, useful and important to scholars and sociologists today (Cole, 2020)

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Research Methodology

In order to collect data in this study, the researcher used quantitative research method. The researcher used the method to measure data and to generalize results from a sample to the desired population. The quantitative data presents a summary of data which can be observed but cannot be calculated. For the data to be quantifiable, it was arranged in specific patterns and was allocated numbers. Research according to Kothari (2004) is the original contribution to the existing knowledge in pursuit of the truth of knowledge through study, observation, experiment and comparison and he describes research methodology as a systematic way to solve a research problem.

The researcher used descriptive survey design in the study. The aim of using the descriptive research design was to provide clear understanding into the research problem by describing in detail the variables of interest and also for providing answers to questions like when, what, who, where and how. The main purpose of using this research method is to describe the state of affairs, as they exist at the time of research. The descriptive survey design also referred to as the explanatory survey design is applied in research to collect a representative sample from a larger population that is used in the sample to know the characteristics of the entire population according to Cooper and Schindler (2006). The research design was user friendly and was not expensive.

Stratified sampling was applied to select a representative sample from the subgroups in the target population. The stratified sampling method was put in place in selecting a sample size from the target population. It was not possible and necessary to collect data from the entire population in the county in order to get valid findings. In a quantitative research it is a population sample that is selected for a specific research.

Staff Accountability on Poverty Reduction

To assess the role of staff accountability on poverty reduction, respondents filled in questionnaires indicating their view on staff accountability effect on poverty reduction on a ranking of 1 to 5, (where 5 is the highest score and 1 the lowest score). Overall, the intensity of staff accountability on poverty reduction in Laikipia County is low with the mean of 2.190 since the overall score is less than 2.5 that is half of the maximum score of 5. The study finding disagrees with Ntuthuko (2008) who conducted a study on poverty reduction strategies in South Africa and the study found out that staff accountability had an influence on poverty reduction in South Africa.

In order to assess the extent which staff accountability affect poverty reduction in Laikipia County, the researcher considered the following null hypothesis.

H_{01} : Staff accountability has no statistically significant effect on poverty reduction in Laikipia County

Regression Coefficient (beta β) was used to test the hypothesis of staff accountability and the mean score of staff accountability was regressed against the mean score of poverty reduction. According to the hypothesis, the null hypothesis H_{02} should be declined if p-value < 0.05

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otherwise do not decline if $p\text{-value} > 0.05$. From the above regression results, p – value was 0.006, the study declines the null hypothesis and concludes that the relationship between staff accountability and poverty reduction in Laikipia County was positive and significant because R was 0.251 and the P -value was less than 0.05 ($P = 0.006$).

According to the regression results, 22.8% of poverty reduction in Laikipia County was described by staff accountability ($R^2 = 0.228$). The study findings concur with Ntuthuko (2008) who conducted a study in South Africa on poverty reduction strategies. The study purposed to review poverty reduction strategies in South Africa in order to examine consistency of the most noticeable international best practices. The study found that there was collective effort by the government to inhibit the extent of poverty in the country. The study concludes that poverty is predominantly caused by inadequate economic growth for the poor, poor strategy implementation at the grass-root, high income imbalances, low job opportunities by SME's, high rate of HIV/AIDS infections, corruption in the public sector and unsatisfactory ways of monitoring poverty. Hence, for the government to reduce poverty substantially it has to deal with the above constraints promptly.

Summary of Findings

This sub-section presents the summary of findings of staff accountability. This study is a quantitative study, which was designed to analyze ethical practices on poverty reduction. The f -test and t -test were conducted to establish the significance of the arising regression model and for establishing the relevance of each independent variable to explain poverty reduction. Coefficient of determination (R^2) from the regression model specifies the extent of contribution of the independent variables on the dependent variables. The (R^2) coefficient of determination is a statistical benchmark used to scrutinize how discrepancies in one variable can be explained by a disparity in another variable.

The objective was to assess the extent, which staff accountability affect poverty reduction in Laikipia County. The study results shows that 22.8 % of the poverty reduction in Laikipia County could be rationalized by staff accountability (R squared = 0.228). This implies that staff accountability helps improve poverty reduction by 22.8%. The study results revealed that staff accountability effect on poverty reduction in Laikipia County was statistically significant. The finding of the study concurs with Ntuthuko (2008) who conducted a study in South Africa on poverty reduction strategies with a view of examining consistency in relation to the primary international set standards. The findings show that the government had put collective effort to inhibit poverty in the country. The study concludes that poverty exist majorly because of inadequate economic growth for the poor, poor implementation of policies at the grass-root level, income inequalities, unemployment by SME's, high rate of HIV/AIDS infections, corruption in the public sector and inadequate means of monitoring poverty. Hence, in order to reduce poverty substantially, there is need for the government to deal with the aforementioned challenges appropriately.

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Conclusions

The regression results show that 22.8 % of the poverty reduction in Laikipia County was explained by staff accountability ($R^2 = 0.228$). The study concludes that staff accountability can help to improve poverty reduction in Laikipia County. The County staff should therefore make efforts to improve on the staff accountability since it has positive effect on poverty reduction in Laikipia County.

Recommendations

The researcher recommends that Laikipia County government should strive to improve on staff accountability in its effort to reduce poverty since according to the findings of the study it has positive and significant effect on poverty reduction in the County.

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