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Assessment of Employment Opportunity Effects on Subjective Well-Being of Women Employees in the County Government of Kakamega, Kenya

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Abstract:

The Kenyan Constitution in Articles 27(8) and (81) (b) promises to increase space for women's representation and provide for a minimum of one third of either gender representation in all public employment and appointments. This study sought to assess employment opportunity effects on subjective well-being of women employees in the County Government of Kakamega. The study adopted descriptive survey design, which ensured ease in understanding the insight about the problem under study. Primary data from a sample size of 291 respondents was used to represent women employees of the County Government of Kakamega. Data was analyzed using inferential as well as descriptive statistics. The study applied chi-square technique to assess employment opportunity effects on subjective well-being among women employees in the County Government of Kakamega. The study findings showed a significant relationship between employment opportunities on subjective well-being. It was thus recommended that the County Government of Kakamega needs to enhance women access to employment opportunities so as to realize heightened well-being among its female employees.

Keywords: *Employment opportunities, subjective well-being, female employees, household diet*

1. Background to the Study

Gender equality including women access to employment opportunities was first declared a development issue in the United Nations Charter of 1945, and was subsequently addressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of 2000 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of 2015 agreed upon by 193 countries in September 2015 (Kivoi, 2014). Women experience multiple forms of deprivations such as longer working days, women specific ill health, low levels of education relative to men, and lack of adequate representation in leadership and decision making positions (Ogato, 2013).

Although a number of policies are emerging that support and encourage women's participation in development, women's access to and control of productive resources, information, training and education, employment and in decision-making is limited (Ogato, 2013). One of the areas of disparity between males and females is related to the difference in their employment status which is manifested by occupational segregation, gender-based wage gaps, and women's disproportionate representation in informal employment, unpaid work and higher unemployment rates (UNFPA, 2005).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, 84% of women's non-agricultural employment is informal compared to 63% of men's. The figure is found to be 58% and 48% for women and men, respectively in Latin America (UNFPA, 2005). Studies generally show that women are more likely to be engaged in work and also work for longer hours than men. For instance, in 18 of the 25 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, more than 50% of women were employed and even in six of these countries the percentage of employed women was greater than 75% (Mukuria et al., 2005). However, as most of the employed women work in agricultural and other activities which are mostly considered to be having limited or no financial returns, their employment does not contribute much to their status and empowerment. Thus, women in those countries have no or little autonomy and they are dependent on their partners in most aspects of their life (UNFPA, 2005). In-depth analysis by Hindin (2005) showed that only 17% of women in Zimbabwe, 12% in Zambia and 4% in Malawi have higher status job than their partners. The respective percentages of women whose partners have higher status jobs are 52%, 43% and 53%. In the 2012 Gender Inequality Index, Kenya was ranked at position 145 out of 186 countries (Human Development Report, 2013). Available data indicate that gender inequity is still prevalent in the country (Ouma & Maina, 2010). According to Nyanjom (2011), lack of political will is partly to blame for the 10th Parliament's failure to legislate constitutional guarantees of affirmative action. The skewed inequality picture in Kakamega County is painted in Table 1 which shows gender representation in positions filled by the County Government for the period 2013-2017.

Rank/Position	Men	Women	Total	% of Women
CEC Members	7	3	10	30
Chief Officers	4	8	12	33
Heads of Departments	6	0	6	0
Sub-county Administrators	11	1	12	8
Ward Administrators	45	15	60	25

Table 1: Gender Representation in Positions Filled by County Government of Kakamega

Source: Department of Economic Planning, CGKK (2017)

1.1. Statement of the Problem

A number of policies are emerging that support and encourage women's participation in development. However, women's access to and control of productive resources, employment opportunities and decision-making is limited (Ogato, 2013). The Constitution of Kenya 2010, guarantees equal rights and freedom for women and men, and upholds the principles of non-discrimination and equality and provides for no more than two thirds representation of one gender in employment positions as a way of bridging the gender gap (Government of Kenya, 2010). Previous studies (Balk, 1997; Blumberg, 1994; Morgan & Niraula, 1995; Hashemi, Schuler & Riley, 1996; Jejeebhoy, 2000; Jejeebhoy & Sathar, 2001) on well-being have used material and interactive dimensions as measures of wellbeing resulting from gender equality practices. There is inadequate research relating to women access to employment opportunities in key decision making positions as measures to subjective wellbeing in Kakamega County Government. This study sought to fill this knowledge gap.

1.2. Objective of the Study

To assess employment opportunity effects on subjective well-being of women employees in the County Government of Kakamega.

1.3. Research Hypotheses

- H_a : There is a significant relationship between employment opportunities and subjective wellbeing of women employees in the County Government Kakamega.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The validity of any research work may be realized in the linkages between academic, theoretical and socio-economic policy issues that the research findings and recommendations seek to address (Akanchalabey, 2015). This study was partly motivated by the fact that very little has been researched and written about women access to employment opportunities effects on subjective well-being of female employees with specific reference to the County Government of Kakamega. The study could thus bring new insights and understanding of the continued inequalities between the female and male gender and not the general picture painted of Kenya in previous studies. The results of this study adds to the limited empirical literature available in Kenya and the findings are useful to researchers and scholars and members of the public interested in the area of study or its implications.

The study communicates directly to Sustainable Development Goal (5) on gender equality, and similarly to the post-2015 development agenda, which seeks to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by 2030. This study also makes a scholarly contribution towards the understanding by providing insights based on empirical evidence from areas affected by high gender inequality levels. These insights could inform Kenya and other low and medium income countries pursuing gender equality and women well-being.

2. Theoretical Literature Review

This study borrows from sustainable livelihoods theory (Chambers and Conway, 1992) to explain employment opportunity effects on subjective wellbeing among women. Based on this theory, employment opportunities were assumed to have a positive impact on women subjective wellbeing.

2.1. Sustainable Livelihoods Theory

The origin of sustainable livelihood as a concept is widely attributed to Chambers and Conway (1992) in their efforts to respond to diverse realities of most rural life. Chambers and Conway presented the Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA) as a link of the three existing concepts of capability, equity and sustainability. The heart of sustainable livelihood in all agencies has been a link between asset – livelihood, strategies - livelihood outcomes (Small, 2007).

The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) can be used to examine the wellbeing of people and communities through measuring of capitals (e.g. financial, social, human, natural, and physical) and explore how these capitals relate to sustainable practices of living (Flora & Flora, 2013). Physical capital comprises the basic infrastructure such as transportation, shelter, water, energy, sanitation, communication, technology and tools (equipment) for production in which community or people enable to hunt their livelihood (Carney, 1998). To have secure livelihoods, households or individuals need to have secure access and ownership of resources and income earning activities such as reserves and assets, to balance risks, alleviate shocks and meet contingencies (Frankenberger & McCaston, 1998).

The SLA considers that different Livelihood Strategies (LS) have different asset requirements but the general principle is that those sufficiently endowed with assets are more likely to be able to make positive livelihood choices (Carney, 1998). This implies that they can choose from a range of options in order to maximize their achievement of well-being rather than being forced into any given strategy as the only option (IFAD, 2012). Further to the above, through gender equality practices, a woman's social status is dignified enabling them to benefit from greater social capital (Worku & Mekonnen, 2012).

This study assumes that women access to employment opportunities have a high influence on their ability to pursue meaningful livelihood strategies, to access other assets and consequently to attain well-being (Lee et al., 2009). In that view the study puts access to employment opportunities at the core of livelihood assets. Moreover, the ability of a woman to pursue a meaningful diversity of livelihood strategies depends on asset endowment and ability (in terms of socio-demographic characteristics) to combine them (Borras et al., 2011).

2.2. Employment Opportunities

Studies have shown that in many ways there is now greater symmetry between women's and men's lives, but the convergence has been principally one sided, with women being partially assimilated into the largely unmodified masculinized model of working to a greater extent than men have been assimilated into the feminized world of domestic reproduction and care (Diani, 2009). This asymmetric convergence together with continuing gender segregation and a gender pay gap especially in part time work, contributes to enduring disadvantages to women in the labor force, in their life time earnings and in retirement incomes (Jerry, 2014). The extent of both gender inequality and disadvantage vary by social class and ethnicity but effectively the costs of reconciling paid work and family life continue to be borne by women (Diani, 2009). Githinji, (2010) in his review of Kenya's Vision 2030 found out that persisting gender neutrality has kept women in lower paying jobs even as their share of the labor force has increased from 18% in 1966 to 30% in 2006, and a likely 55% by 2016. He further cautions that achieving gender equality as stipulated in Vision 2030 will not be easy.

In Liberia, the number of women involved in paid jobs is still less than those of men. About 25.5 % of men are involved in jobs paid on wages while only 0.8% of women are employed on paid wages. This is because of lack of education, training and discriminatory acts against women which hinders them from having access to paid jobs. In addition, the limited numbers of women engaged in paid jobs are hardly promoted as their men colleagues. More so, most women in Liberia are engaged in the informal sector like the subsistence agricultural sector. Women make up about 90% of the agricultural sector especially working as family unpaid workers, just to sustain their homes. They therefore have no access to social labor benefits like maternity protection and others (Jerry, 2014).

Women's economic empowerment has gained increasing attention in recent years. Corporations, donors and NGOs alike have focused on improving women's access to paid work as a fundamental driver of empowerment. National surveys in Bangladesh, Egypt and Ghana show that paid work is most likely to empower women if it offers them a regular, dependable income over which they are able to exercise control (Kabeer, 2011).

Where women had employment that gave them a sense of esteem, connection and recognition, there were further empowering effects. Understanding generic and localized gender-related constraints is important, Kabeer (2011) argues, in exploring possibilities for women-to-women benefit from employment opportunities. The results from the work theme survey stress the quality of paid work as a key factor in achieving positive outcomes in other areas of their lives (Kabeer, 2011).

In Sub-Saharan Africa Women almost always face worse constraints and more difficult choices in the use of their time than men. This difference is made worse by the harsh and changing economic climate. Throughout the continent, with a few exceptions, the economic recession has reduced employment opportunities for both women and men. But women are further disadvantaged as gender relations, family demands and power relations within the family negatively affect their access to the job market (Mvududu & McFadden, 2001).

3. Research Design

Descriptive research design was used in this study. Descriptive research studies are those studies which are concerned with describing the characteristics of a particular individual or groups for instance women employees (Kothari & Garg, 2014). This design is appropriate for this study since Zikmund (2003) note that descriptive research design is intended to produce statistical information about the aspects of the research issue (in this case subjective well-being) that may interest policy makers.

3.1. Target Population

According to Kothari and Garg (2014) population refers to all the items under consideration in any field of inquiry. The target population for this study included 1078 female employees in the county government of Kakamega drawn from different Departments.

3.2. Sampling Frame

Sekaran and Bougie (2011) defines sampling frame as a physical representation of all the elements in the population from which the sample is drawn. The sampling frame of this study consisted of 1,078 women employees in the County Government of Kakamega as shown in Table 2

Job Group	Population(Women Employees)	Sample(Women Employees)	Percentage
Q & above	47	13	27.6
N-P	44	12	27.3
L-M	89	24	26.9
J-K	176	48	27.3
G-H	201	54	26.8
E-F	234	63	26.9
A-D	287	77	26.8
Total	1,078	291	27.0

Table 2: Population Sampling Frame
Source: Department of Economic Planning, Cgk (2017)

3.3. Sample and Sampling Technique

Sampling technique is the process of selecting respondents that constitute a sample (Kothari & Garg, 2014). In deriving the sample from the sample frame, Yamane (1967) statistical formula was employed as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where;

n: Sample size

N: Population under study

e: Margin error (0.05)

1: Constant

A margin error of 0.05 was used to compute the sample size, which according to Yamane (1967) gives the largest sample size at a given confidence level. Substituting the margin error of 0.05 and the target population of 1,078 in the formula above gives a sample size of 291. The proportionate sample sizes for each stratum were computed on the basis of the size of the stratum and the target population. This study therefore used a sample population of 291 respondents for data collection. This sample size was considered sufficient since Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) proposes that a sample of 10 percent of population is considered the minimum for a descriptive research.

3.4. Data Collection Instruments

Data collection instrument refers to the device used to collect data such as a paper questionnaire or computer assisted interviewing system (Sekara & Bougie, 2010). The instrument that was used for data collection was a structured questionnaire. This provided respondents with a fixed set of choices commonly referred to as closed questions. The closed-ended questions consist alternative answers expressed in a Likert scale style. Each item here is evaluated between respondents whose total score is high and those whose score is low (Kothari, 2004).

3.5. Data Collection Procedure

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010) people are also more truthful while responding to the questionnaires due to the fact that their responses are anonymous. Self-administered questionnaires were used for primary data. Questionnaires were preferred as they can be sent to a larger number of people saving the researcher resources. The respondents were introduced to the questionnaires and a period of a week given to allow respondents answer questions.

3.5.1. Test of Reliability

To test the reliability of the instruments a test-retest method was used. Test-retest estimates of reliability are obtained by correlating data collected with those from the same questionnaire collected under as near equivalent conditions as possible (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007). The questionnaire was therefore administered twice to respondents. The instruments were also piloted using a small representative sample identical to, but not including the group going to be surveyed (Orodho, 2005). The results obtained, were coded and entered into a computer program (Statistical Package for Social Sciences - version 25) after which a reliability index was calculated using the Cronbach's alpha.

$$KR_{20} = \frac{K(S^2 - \sum S^2)}{(\sum S^2)(K-1)}$$

(S²) (K-1)

Where;

KR₂₀ is reliability coefficient of internal consistency

K is the number of items used to measure the concept

S² is the variance of all scores

A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.7 and above is considered high enough to judge the instrument as reliable. A high Cronbach's alpha coefficient implies that the items correlate highly among themselves i.e. there is consistency among the items in measuring the concept of interest (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

3.6. Data Processing and Analysis

Qualitative data was converted to quantifiable forms by coding using SPSS text editor (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). According to Saunders, et al. (2007), quantifying qualitative data means converting it into numerical codes so that it can be analyzed statistically. Data collected was sorted, cleaned and coded and then analyzed using

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 25).

Following Ijaiya et al. (2009), descriptive statistics was used in this study to describe the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The most commonly used tool to measure well-being is a proxy variable such as real income or resource availability (OECD, 2013). However, well-being is a multidimensional concept and therefore can be better understood while looking at multiple indicators. OECD (2013) advises use of income, consumption and wealth as indicators for wellbeing. This study therefore used the possession of household assets and the seven-day food expenditures per household as quantitative indicators of subjective wellbeing.

To measure the level of well-being of the households, a welfare index where wellbeing is explained as the amount of consumption expenditure per adult equivalent was used.

Descriptive statistics was calculated and tabulated using frequency distribution tables. To test for the strength of the model and the relationship between access to employment opportunities and subjective wellbeing, the researcher conducted an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The study was tested at 95% confidence level and 5% significance levels.

4. Findings

A chi-square test of independence was used to compare access to employment opportunities by women and the quality of their household diet. The researcher established access to employment opportunities by examining whether; Women have equal chances as men on appointment of CEC members and Chief officers, women get equal opportunities in employment as the males with the same qualification, employment opportunities reserved for women meets the two-thirds gender requirement, satisfaction with current employment position, women head soft departments in the county, women get equal promotion opportunities as their male counterparts and women have more right to a job in case of scarcity.

Women having equal chances as men on appointment of CEC members and chief officers was significantly related to better quality of household diets ($\chi^2(1) = 22.187^a$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that women who access better employment opportunities experience better quality household diets than women not exposed to better employment opportunities. Therefore, this leads to rejection of the first null hypothesis as employment opportunities positively affects subjective wellbeing of women employees. Chi-Square test of independence also indicated a significant relationship between women getting equal opportunities in employment as the males with the same qualification and the quality of household diets ($\chi^2(1) = 86.314^a$, $p = 0.003$), as well as satisfaction with their current employment position and quality of household diet ($\chi^2(1) = 97.939^a$, $p = 0.00$), Women getting equal promotion opportunities as their male counterparts and quality of household diet ($\chi^2(1) = 168.827$, $p = 0.001$) and Women having more right to a job in case of scarcity and quality of household diet ($\chi^2(1) = 168.827$, $p = 0.004$). However, the study found no significant relationship between employment opportunities reserved for women meeting the two-thirds gender requirement and the quality of household diet ($\chi^2(1) = 10.885^a$, $p = .817$) as well as women heading soft departments in the county and the quality of their household diet ($\chi^2(1) = 18.544^a$, $p = .293$).

5. Conclusions

The chi-square results were significant implying that there is significant relationship between access to employment opportunities and subjective well-being of women employees in the County Government of Kakamega. Access to employment opportunities results to increase in asset possession as well as the quality of food consumed by households implying enhanced subjective well-being of women employees in the county.

5.1. Implications of the Study

The research findings present a number of issues that have implications for the theory, policy and the practice of subjective well-being. The results from the analysis indicated that access to employment opportunities is important in realizing subjective well-being of women employees in the county. Therefore this forms the basis for policy proposition from this study. To begin with the government of Kenya has put in place measures to ensure women inclusion in development. This has been cascaded down to the county governments with the county government of Kakamega trying its best in ensuring gender equality as seen in the study results. To foster women economic empowerment that subsequently affect their subjective well-being, policy makers should come up with measures to ensure such is sustained in the County Government of Kakamega.

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