

## **Youth Empowerment through Participation in Community-Based Projects in Kenya: (A Case of Mombasa County)**

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**Abstract:** Quite often youth are not listened to and treated as passive victims of circumstances in their transition to adult life. Since the implementation of affirmative action in support of the disadvantaged group; the youth, women, and persons with a disability, little has been seen to have benefited the group especially the youth as they are still seen leading a poverty life. Empowered youth tend to take risks, are free to innovate and ready to take up the responsibility of action taken without showing any form of cowardice syndrome. It is, for this reason, the study looked at youth empowerment through participation in the community-based projects in Kenya, a case for Mombasa County. Four objectives that were studied included; youth involvement in project monitoring and evaluation, youth involvement in decision making, youth and education as well as youth individual factors influencing their participation in community based projects. The study was justified because there has not been a previous study and documentation on youth empowerment through participation in community-based projects in the area of study. The study was guided by two theories; participatory communication theory and stakeholder theory. The relationship between the dependent and independent variables was conceptualized. The study adopted a descriptive research design and focused on 350 youths who are active in youth registered groups by the ministry of social services as its target population. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the officials of the group while simple random sampling was used to select 30 percent that is 105 of the youth who participated in the study. The study used both primary and secondary data. Secondary data was obtained from existing literature while primary data was collected using the questionnaires. The study was expected to shed light on the importance of youth empowerment through participation to encourage them to take part in projects within their communities to improve their livelihoods. Additionally, it was established that there was a significant relationship between all the four independent variables with the dependent variable with p values of  $r = 0.510$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ,  $r = 0.546$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ,  $r = 0.369$ ;  $p < 0.05$  and  $r = 0.334$ ;  $p < 0.05$  for youth participation in Project monitoring and evaluation, Youth education, Youth and decision making, Individual factors among the youth respectively. All the four hypotheses tested in the study were therefore not rejected.

### **Chapter One**

The world will be prosperous, happier and safe when the minds of the younger generation are strongly empowered through participation in various projects around them. It has been statistically documented in the worldwide data sheet that amid 7.7 billion people 1.2 billion falls in the age brackets of 15 to 24 years. This implies that the youth own incredible energy to transform the world and make it a better place to live. The young generation is a key asset to the world and to experience economic growth, development, and stability in the future they need to go through training and be equipped with the right skills. Youth initiative programs require a favorable and growing environment for them to flourish and influence youth positively as noted by Haslinda&Sulaiman (2013). A positive evolving environment promotes confidence, competence, and networking among the youth which enhances their liveliness and becomes helpful in effecting change within their communities.

According to De, Warner, and Pitter (2013), youth participation through empowerment allows them to develop skills and key competencies to enable their absorption into the community-related endeavors or job market. Dungumaro and Madulu, 2011, noted that a community-based youth project is documented as an indispensable element to eradicate poverty among the community members as it acts as a platform where they get to benefit from the knowledge acquired on the job that contributes to their economic development. In developing countries, such projects are a major steering power for the buoyancy of the economy, employment opportunities, and reduction of crime among the youth who are the future generation.

According to the commission president Jean Claude Juncker his government targeted to enroll at least 100,000 youth in projects by the end of 2020. The European unions' youth strategy aims at increasing the number of youth who participated in projects within the country through empowerment and creating learning opportunities to enable them to acquire the necessary required skill ( Henn& Foard, 2014). The Council of European's Youth Agenda has its main focus on developing policies that shall promote equal opportunities for all the young generations in all aspects of their lives.

In Africa, the young people population is growing at a startling proportion and miserably enough this group is correlated with violence. It is estimated that the entire African population is more than a billion and with over 60 percent in the youthful category below 35 years (Schwartz, &Khanna, 2013) A sad note is that majority of the population are not employed, less educated due to challenges of accessing education, inaccessibility of capital, and lack of information regarding their health matters especially those in the rural areas (Zepeda, Leigh, Ndirangu, Omolo, 2013). As a consequence of their marginalized, social and economic exclusion, most youths have turned to substance abuse, violence, gangs, and predatory activities to try to find something for survival. As a result, the greater proportion of youth in Africa do not have the opportunity to fully develop their potential and contribute effectively to the realization of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena, as envisioned in the forthcoming African Agenda 2063.

The youth bulge globally has posed serious problems as earlier noted and Kenya is no exception to this trend. About 75 percent of the Kenyan population is youthful falling between the ages of 18 and 35. Kenyan youth population is still facing unemployment challenges and living a poverty-stricken life with the few getting jobs that do not match their career path. Many graduates are still tarmacking to date with many forced to start small businesses which do not survive to experience their maturity due to harsh economic factors, high tax rates, unstable revenue flow to boost the business and high-interest rates attached to loans. The government of Kenya has been devising means to assist the youth through the National Government Affirmative Action Fund (NGAAF) to address the plight of unemployment among the disadvantaged group of youth, women and person with disability Youth represent the most abundant asset Kenya has or will have over the near future. Nonetheless, from several surveys conducted, the youth bulge in Kenya possess many challenges to the group, from being harassed by those who should be protecting them, marginalization, impediment to access better services in terms of education and health due to their financial status which renders them vulnerable to be used by those in power for their self-gain interest (Muiya,2014).

Much has been done by various institutions to provide training programs, education and entrepreneurial skills conversely majority are not empowered and lack the necessary skills needed in the job market. The Government of Kenya (GoK) directed Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA) to implement Kenya Youth Empowerment Projects (KYEP) to facilitate relevant training and internship to enable them, acquire skills and experience to increase their level of employability. These empowerment programmes are there to help the government expand and enhance the effectiveness of the KaziKwaVijana Initiative (KKV) targeting those between ages 18-35.

Mombasa city is the second largest town in Kenya and home of the largest port in the region is challenged by the high rates of unemployment among the young generation. The rate of unemployment is at 44 percent with the employed category earning less than USD 100 per month. Despite the region being a tourist destination with a lot more potential to absorb the majority of the youth into the job market, joblessness continues to haunt the youth of Mombasa ( Mkutu&Otieno). Kuza projects in conjunction with the Rift valley forum and Adam Smith International held a forum regarding the high rates of youth unemployment and solutions to the crisis in 2016. It has been noted that barriers created by the need for "kujuana" meaning to know each other was viewed as the major block for youths to get employed as one must know the right people in organizations to secure jobs.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

From the global perspective, youth unemployment is the topmost challenge and unless commitment and resources are assigned to manage the menace, in good time, it would be like a bomb waiting to explode. A youthful country is a pool of vibrant, creative and energetic minds however it might be very strenuous to the country in terms of resources needed to provide for them. In most countries, the majority of the young people are leading a stressful life due to the detachment of income-generating income schemes leading them to engage in substance abuse and violence, social instability, although every youth has a right to social, economic, political

and cultural inclusion. Further research by Effiong (2012) indicated that inadequate funding, poor leadership, lack of interest by community members and lack of training hamper the execution of major developmental projects in the community. The most affected youths are those who are from marginalized regions, where services are offered without consulting them to what levels of satisfaction such services would render to them. Needless to say, when the youths are absorbed in activities that are generally preordained to involve adults or experienced people, it brings about positive youth development which later produces reliable citizens who will make better leaders. Scholars have it that youths will only participate in their community-based undertakings when there is a balance between three dimensions of their triangular model commonly known as, challenges, capacity, and connection. This is to say, there has to be a challenge, a need that pushes them to take part in solving that particular need (Bradbury & Taylor, 2015). This need may be a personal need or a community need where they live that affects them in one way or another. They can work towards solving the challenging situation that compels them to fully want to participate. But for this to happen successfully there is a need for the youths to feel connected to the people around them, the society, the leadership of the community, organizations as well as the nation at large.

According to youth policy and practices, three types of participation are considered to be the right way of involving the youths actively. They are; participation in –this is where proper education and training is provided to the youths, participation at –this is where youths are allowed to take part in various activities and participation with –which is being incorporated in some form of partnership or working with others as a group or as a team. From the definition of the term youth, it is noticed that these are individuals between different ages from 18-35 in the most nation-state. This is to say, youth participation is not a one size fit all and this calls for different approaches when dealing with youths as different age bracket think differently and have different expectations concerning life (Petersen, 2013). A deliberated plan by the GoK targeting the youths of Kenya was released in March 2007 to map out the future of the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs (MOYA) through the proper definition of goals, objectives, and strategies the ministry ought to follow for its success in improving youth ministries. The main aims were to create opportunities for the youths in all sectors and are absorbed to make positive contributions to society. This strategic plan was meant to assist MOYA to achieve its vision which included; youth education, youth empowerment, and training, youth employment, youth participation and involvement, youth and ICT, youth and crime, youth and drugs, youth community service. Although the GoK has pulled resources to empower the youth to fight joblessness, a good percentage of idle youths in major cities in the country are evident.

As much as the young generation wishes to be involved in projects meant to solve their problems, many are times when the youth show little or no interest in participating in projects meant to solve their problems especially due to the mentality of the white-collar jobs. In Mombasa County and its environs, for example, the majority of youth are so much into substance abuse rendering them hopeless members of the community since they cannot participate in development projects due to the effects of drugs (Nyaoke, 2013). The study will, therefore, focus on youth empowerment through participation in the community-based project in Mombasa County.

### **1.3 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study will be the focus on youth empowerment through participation in community-based projects in Mombasa County.

### **1.4 Objectives of the study**

This study will be guided by the following objectives:-

- i. To assess how youth involvement in the monitoring & Evaluation of projects influences their participation in community-based projects in Mombasa County.
- ii. To establish how education levels influence their participation in community-based projects in Mombasa County
- iii. To determine how involvement in decision making influences youth participation in community-based projects in Mombasa county
- iv. To assess how individual factors influence youth participation in community-based youth projects in Mombasa County.

### **1.7 Significance of the study**

The study will be of significant help to stakeholders both at the community and national levels. These stakeholders include; the researcher, the youths, the ministry of youths at Mombasa County, the government and NGOs. The study will add to already analyzed findings by other scholars on the determinants of youth empowerment through participation in community-based projects. The youths will benefit greatly from this study as they will be motivated and get empowered which will change their way of perceiving life and motivate them in taking the lead in matters on development. As a result, they will learn to appreciate their involvement in community development projects and this will, in turn, make them better persons in the community who can be relied upon as future leaders.

The ministry of youths Mombasa will be able to bridge the gap between the current situation of lowest youth participation in development projects to what a maximum level of participation both at community and county level for project sustainability under the leadership of youths. The government and NGOs, on the other hand, will eventually have a huge workforce that comprises young, vibrant, energetic, smart, technologically updated people who can be entrusted with development projects both at the county and national levels as a result of maximum youth participation in development projects.

### **1.12 Organization of the study**

The study will be organized into five chapters. Chapter one discusses the background of the study and giving direction for the study by stating the objectives of the study, its significance, delimitation, and limitations. Chapter two will cover the empirical and theoretical literature on youth empowerment through participation in community-based projects. The chapter shall provide a base in which the study findings are discussed and conclusions are drawn. The chapter shall also identify the knowledge gap from the literature studied. Chapter three will cover research methodology to be applied for the study, research design, target population, sampling procedure, description of research instruments, validity and reliability of research instruments, methods of data collection, procedures for data analysis, operational definition of variables and ethical considerations. Chapter four will cover the data analysis, data presentation and interpretation of study findings while chapter five summarises the study findings, discusses the research findings, draw conclusions and recommendations and suggests areas of further research.

## **Chapter Two Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The focus in this chapter will be the literature review and the source of information will be from libraries and the internet.

### **2.2 Youth empowerment through participation**

The efforts applied by most countries to lift off their members off poverty are by initiating projects at the community level where participation is encouraged for most community members especially young people (Kolawole&Ajila, 2015). The challenge of youth bulge is experienced across the globe and Kenya has not been exempted from this challenge. In Kenya, the youths are a great asset and when empowered through participation in the economic, social and political forums, they can develop desirable skills and knowledge to enable them to perform more sustainably in projects left under their watch. Nonetheless, there have been a significant number of studies and reports that invariably conclude that there are persistent risks and challenges faced by Kenyan youth (Muiya, 2014).

The GoK has set aside resources for the disadvantaged group in the country but the same challenges of unemployment are still experienced. This means the priority to solve these challenges should be considered with high levels of commitment than it has been in the past by formulating and implementing policies and strategies to mitigate the threat of unemployment rate scaling even higher. Any form of sluggishness in attending to the issue may prove to have economic, political, cultural, and social consequences. Engaging the youth population fully is therefore no longer a choice but an imperative move in the development process (Barber et al, 2014). According to Hart (2013), suitable pieces of training, and spot-on skills, necessary amenities ought to be made available to them to enable them to execute assigned duties without much strain and to boost their level of confidentiality. This will generally uplift their self-confidence in making sound decisions whenever called upon to do so.

According to Earl, Maher & Elliot (2017), it is key to understand that youth participation is not a one-off project but an approach that requires proper planning and strategies to ensure its sustainability. A proper system that supports youth participation should allow the youths decide on matters affecting them, give them time to act on issues at hand as well as give them a listening ear whenever they carry out campaigns to be heard and understood. Some have argued that participation in a community starts exactly after one is born and discovers that he or she can influence situations through crying or some form of movement. To some extent, this is true because it is through such negotiations at such a tender age seemed to influence the course of events in their lives.

KaziKwaVijana translated in English as Jobs or work for the youths. The initial objective for KKV was to deal with the dilemma of poverty and unemployment among the young generation through job creation in government projects both at the National and Community level (Mutuku, 2014). The initiative came through in the time where the nation undergoing the “F” predicament which consisted of food, fuel, and finance.

### **2.2.1 Influence of youth involvement in project monitoring and evaluation and their empowerment**

Participation in M&E ensures there is a common understanding of the problem facing a particular community, its causes, its magnitude, its effects as well as its implication at large. This facilitates the identification of solutions to the underlying problems and this comes as a result of involving those who are faced with that problem. When the planned project activities have deviated from the initial plan, performance improvement can only be witnessed through the participation of various project stakeholders since they carry with them the solutions to the problem they experience.

According to Otieno (2019), the county of Mombasa is weighed down with a conspicuous high rate of youth unemployment that has rendered them vulnerable to engaging with violence and misconduct within the county between 2007 and 2017.

### **2.2.2 Influence of youth education on empowerment**

For young people to be considered in positions either at the community level or private sector and even in public organizations, education level, and skills attained during pieces of training is a major concern. In the 2010 constitution of Kenya, it is clearly stated that every young person has a right to education and more so to free and compulsory education. This is to say, beyond building human capital to raise worker productivity, another institutional function of education and training is to provide young people with what they need to become effective agents of change (Alden, Hazenburg&Bajwa, 2015).

Globally, the TVET model remains an effective means of empowering the youth to engage in productive and sustainable livelihoods and is quite familiar to Kenyans. TVET is also an important element in support of capacity development activities that also have a strong consideration for the national labor market (Pavlova, 2014).

The ever talked about gender gap has contributed to most youths not attending schools especially the female as opposed to their male counterparts. Inequality in education is generally delineated by, high school dropout among the girls, inadequate education facilities, inefficient training programmes, inappropriate dissemination of learning materials; traditional practices especially early marriages among other issues (Ombati, 2013). Within the education sector, the policy of user charges and the attainment of education for all (EFA) imply the involvement and commitment of all the stakeholders including parents.

### **2.2.3 Influence of youth involvement in decision making and their empowerment**

When youths are involved in decision making, they feel recognized and appreciated which in turn motivates them to the extent of devoting themselves in ensuring the sustainability of projects given to them. Therefore there is a great need to recognize the benefits that come with involving the youths in community development projects since their contribution to an array of activities promotes better life within the community. Taking the youths onboard has been seen to motivate the youths as the sole owners of projects assigned to them and tend to behave as long-term participants to such undertakings (Abiona& Bello, 2013).

### **2.2.4 Impact of individual factors among the youths and their empowerment**

In many instances, how an individual approaches a situation and their behavior in his environment is impacted by their age. The young people though not as patient as the older generation, are risk-takers, very aggressive, creative which would make them great business people having been guided and provided with

finances to support their endeavors. Ward, (2016) noted that individuals are socialized to behave in ways that meet with the approval of their role set, for example, a young person with business-owning parents may well be expected to join the family business and not to do so would create a vacuum in the business. In Kenya, youth is a male or female individual who is in the age brackets of 18-35 years (Awiti & Scott, 2016).

In most studies carried by different scholars, there still exists gender diversity in community-related projects especially in the participation of community members. Women were found to be less involved in such projects meant for both women and men (Johnson et al, 2016). This was as a result of women not attending the meetings before the projects kicking off. In most cases, they did not attend intentionally but due to the balance, they must maintain between family duties and community duties. Gender roles tend to contribute to the imbalance between men and women participation in community-related agendas.

Whether the youths are empowered through participation or not, whether they have passed through school and training or not, they will still need to find means of achieving an honest income through their adult life. Youth unemployment means a loss to the economy, foregone potential income tax and a loss of return on government investment in education (NISR, 2014). The GoK has tried to fight the unemployment menace among its youths through the KKV initiative among other youth-targeted projects within their communities.

Gender inequality is also another contributing factor to the gap between those employed and the unemployed among the male and female youths. In Mombasa county, it is manifested in all spheres of life where women in the coast region are less involved in development activities and if they are, major key positions are assigned to the male counterparts. The gender gap has been seen also in schools where the number of girls enrolled for a program is low below that of boys as well as in decision making organs. For example, the enrolment rate in schools indicates that 49 percent, 51 percent, and 48 percent of those enrolled in pre-primary, primary, and secondary schools respectively are girls respectively. In government institutions more than 80 percent of all the departmental heads and their deputies are men. The government institutions and private sectors including the tourism sector are also suffering from gender disparity as more than 80 percent of key positions are headed by men as well as deputized by men.

## **2.3 Theoretical framework**

The study was supported by the following theories.

### **2.3.1 Participatory communication theory**

This theory discusses the influence of effective communication among people in making decisions on issues impacting their lives. Participatory communication is paramount among projects to increase their sustainability and ensure genuine ownership by the beneficiaries. Proper use of communication channels in development projects helps people participate in identifying and implementing technologies and policies to promote the sustainability of such projects. Participatory communication is a word that has been used to mean the theory and practice of communication that an organization uses to make sure people are involved in decision making in the development ventures and undertakings.

According to a report by (Agunga 1997), communication means, creating, and stimulating understanding as to the basis for development rather than information transmission. That is to say, people should not be forced to adopt new practices no matter how much they are going to benefit but instead, people ought to be taken on board and encouraged to participate rather than just accepting and adapting to new practices based on information. A Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1970) developed ideas on communication through his writings and experiences which became a significant strand in participatory communication. Freire made it so clear why development projects and programs failed a result of persuading people to adopt certain innovations rather than involving them in decision making on arriving at such kinds of innovation.

### **2.3.2 Stakeholder theory**

The theory emphasizes the importance of taking every involved party on board for the success and sustainability of the project. In other words, the participation of all concerned individuals and institutions will ensure proper utilization of project resources, better decision making, and efficiency in all project phases which will help in delivering the desired output.

In many community-based projects, the majority of participants are the adults and elders of the community leaving out the majority of youth who are meant to possibly benefit from the project. Since the theory suggests that all beneficiaries of the project should participate in various phases of the project, the youth

should be considered to take some of the roles under the leadership of their mentors. But also it does not mean, the youth should only be allowed to be part of the project and watch what is being done, it means they should go to the ground and have a hand in the project undertakings.

**2.4 Conceptual Framework**

**Independent Variables**

- Project monitoring and evaluation**
- Formative survey
  - Midterm reviews
  - Summative evaluation

- Level of education**
- No education at all
  - Primary level
  - Secondary level
  - University level/TVET

- Decision making**
- Respect for youth views
  - Consultations
  - Sharing ideas

- Individual factors**
- Career engagement
  - Peer influence
  - Gender gap

**Dependent Variable**

- Youth empowerment**
- Poverty reduction
  - Crime reduction
  - Improved social skills
  - Improved self-efficacy

Government support and funding

M.V

**2.6 Summary of the chapter**

This Chapter discussed the influence of youth empowerment through participation in community-based projects. Youth participation is alleged to having relation to citizenship ideas, youth engagement, active involvement, and personal development for an individual. According to United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, (UNICEF), the objective of youth participation in community programs is to ensure those between the ages 18-35 have the opportunities, supportive environment, and right skills necessary to participate effectively and meaningfully in a large space as possible. Participation in M&E ensures there is a common understanding of the problem facing a particular community, its causes, its magnitude, its effects as well as its implication at large. According to a report by the Republic of Kenya, 2008 Kenya Vision 2030, learning institutions should offer the right skills matching the labor market requirement to increase the chances of those graduating secure employment and participate in building the economy of Kenya. Education is not only valued at a national level but globally and this can be confirmed by the internally agreed development goal as well as Millennium Development Goals and the World Programme of action for youths. In a community set-up, effective decision making will call for experience, skills, and inputs by the youths implying that proper training and early involvement in projects are of the essence. Youths are known to be vibrant, full of energy and life, and for this reason, they tend to transfer the same energy, fresh and well-thought ideas, creativity, new knowledge which enhances the decision making process. Kenya like any other country still facing unemployment challenges among the youth and it has been a challenge to the nation since the majority who belong to the labor force category have not been absorbed into the job market. Due to this, there are so many idle youths in all towns across the nation and this can be supported by the post-election violence in 2008. Those who were involved in causing chaos were among the youth who are so idle and easy to manipulate and entice to anything. Much needs to be considered and an enabling environment created for young and upcoming entrepreneurs to

fight the unemployment menace among the youths (World Bank, 2009). A similar study had been conducted in a different county in Kenya and the current study was conducted in Mombasa County to compare the results.

### **Chapter Three Research and Methodology**

#### **3.2 Research Design**

This study adopted a descriptive survey design to explore youth empowerment through participation in community development projects in Mombasa County. A descriptive survey involves collecting information by administering a questionnaire or using an interview schedule for a sample of individuals (Orodho, 2003).

#### **3.3 Target Population**

In this study, the target population included all the youth in Mombasa County within the age bracket 18-35 years. The accessible population constituted the youth who are members of the 8 active youth groups in the county with a total membership of 350.

#### **3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure**

To establish the sample size the study employed Kasomo's (2006) argument that a sample size of 10% and above of the accessible population is enough for a descriptive survey study. For this study, a sample size equivalent to 30% was considered to give a sample size of 105 respondents out of the 350 accessible populations. Purposive sampling technique to select the group leaders of the 8 active youth groups in this division. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) recommend purposive sampling to allow the researcher to select cases of subjects that have the required information in this study were the youth. Simple random sampling was used to select the respondents among the group members.

#### **3.5 Data Collection Instruments**

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. A questionnaire was the most appropriate as the respondents were required to fill them at their convenience, respond to the items in any order, or even take more than one sitting to complete it (Meredith, 1996). The questionnaire was self-administered (SAQ) and it addressed the following areas; respondents background information, education, participation in project Monitoring and Evaluation, participation in decision making, and youth individual factors.

### **Summary of Findings**

This section presents the findings from the study on the influence of youth empowerment through their participation in community-based projects in Kenya, a case of Mombasa County. It was established that youth empowerment contributes to the increase of the number of youths being involved in community-based projects within their community and that this influence was statistically significant at 0.05 level of significance.

#### **Findings on involving youth in Project Monitoring and Evaluation and their empowerment**

Following the response from the participating youths, 30% of the respondents strongly disagreed that youths were actively involved in project monitoring and evaluation. 28.9% disagreed with the statement while 11.1% opted to remain neutral. Among those who felt otherwise, 20% agreed that youths were indeed involved in project M&E while only 10% strongly agreed on the same. From the findings, it can be concluded that the youth are not actively involved in project monitoring and evaluation within their communities in Mombasa County.

The study established that there exists a significant relationship between youth empowerment and their involvement in project Monitoring and Evaluation with  $r = 0.510$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). It means that that higher involvement in project monitoring and evaluation is associated with increased Youth empowerment in Mombasa County and less involvement in project monitoring and evaluation is associated with decreased Youth empowerment in Mombasa County.

#### **5.2.2 Findings on level of education and youth empowerment**

The study established that the majority of the respondents agreed that it is important to have the youths go through school to empower them to take up challenges of life and willingly participate in projects within their communities to solve their issues and those of their communities. The study shows that 24.4% strongly



disagreed with the statement that empowered youths were educated youths and we prompted to participate in projects while 17.8% also disagreed with the same statement. However, 8.9% of the respondents opted to remain neutral and say nothing about the statement. On the other hand, 32.2% agreed that empowered youths were educated and had the desired skills and knowhow to participate in projects within their locality while 16.7% strongly agreed on the same. The study findings indicate that there is a positive and significant relationship between the level of education and Youth empowerment in Mombasa County ( $r = 0.546$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). It means that improving the level of education is associated with improved Youth empowerment in Mombasa County and vice-versa.

### **5.2.3 Findings on youth involvement in decision making promote to their empowerment**

The majority of the respondents in the study at 38.9% concluded that youths were not involved in decision making at all while 23.3% claimed that their level of involvement in decision making was the least extent. 14.4% said there was a little extent to the level at which the youths were involved in the decision-making process for project implementation. On the other hand, 16.7% claimed there was a great extent of youth involvement in decision making during project implementation with only 6% claiming there was a very great extent of involvement. This is to say, from the summary above, the youths are not actively involved in the decision making processes thus their inputs for the community projects are not considered. It was noted that there is a positive and significant relationship between decision making and Youth empowerment in Mombasa County ( $r = 0.369$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). It means that improved decision making is associated with increased Youth empowerment in Mombasa County and vice-versa. It also means that less involvement in decision making is associated with decrease Youth empowerment in Mombasa County

### **5.2.4 Findings on individual factors and their empowerment**

According to the study, a mode of 1 denotes that some respondents strongly disagreed with the statement that gender equality was considered while involving the youths in community projects. A mode of 4 shows that the skills attained during training influenced youth empowerment that influenced their participation in community projects. A mode of 5 denoted strongly agreed to the statement that age, youth empowerment, and youth attitude and peer pressure influenced their level of participation in community-based projects. 22.2% strongly disagreed that age was a determinant for those to be involved in the projects 15.6% also disagreed with the statement while 12.2% opted to remain neutral. However, 20% agreed that age indeed played a major role in deciding who was to be considered for the projects while 30% strongly agreed to the same statement. This means that indeed the age element was key when selecting those youths to involve in such projects. The study established that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between individual factors and youth empowerment in Mombasa County ( $r = 0.334$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). This implies that improving individual factors is associated with improved youth empowerment in Mombasa County and vice-versa.

## **Discussion of Findings**

The findings showed a positive correlation between all four variables of the study in Mombasa County. These findings however did not explain why joblessness among the youth is still experienced in Mombasa County despite efforts by major stakeholders to fight this dilemma among the young generation. The discussion of findings from this study is presented as follows;

### **5.3.1 Youth involvement in project monitoring and evaluation and their empowerment**

The study has established that involving youth in project monitoring and evaluation empowered them to take projects seriously to ensure their sustainability. The study shows that the youth are not quite involved in project monitoring and evaluation as compared to other key stakeholders in the community. It also established that other than M&E involvement very few are involved during project implementation which is a key consideration for the success and sustainability of projects meant to solve youth problems. As noted by Conallin, 2018, bringing stakeholders on board in M&E has many benefits which are not limited to, a common undertaking, enhancing accountability, access to more information, performance improvement, improved design as well as better decisions.

### **5.3.2 Level of education and youth empowerment**

The study established that youth empowerment through education contributed to their participation in community-based projects. The study concluded that it is important to have the youths go through either formal

or informal education to hone their skills to enable them to take up challenges of life and willingly participate in projects within their communities to solve their issues and those of their communities and better their lives. This is to say, improving the level of education is associated with improved Youth empowerment in Mombasa County and vice-versa. In agreement with this, Alden, Hazenburg&Bajwa, 2015, noted that beyond building human capital to raise worker productivity, another institutional function of education and training is to provide young people with what they need to become effective agents of change.

### **5.3.3 Youth involvement in decision making promote to their empowerment**

The study established that youth involvement in decision making influences their levels of empowerment that prompt them to participate fully in community-based projects. The study also established that youth participation in the decision-making process in community-based projects was vital as it is at this point when the youths are allowed to voice their concerns and get listened to. Other than being listened to, implementations of their views were seen to be given priority as compared to other partners of the projects. The study also established the importance of the involvement of other stakeholders in community-based projects such as the community elders, faith organizations, the government, institutions of learning as well as the youth themselves. Their involvement is perceived to ensure project sustainability and delivery of the desired services as intended from the initiation phase. This resonates with Abiona& Bello (2013) who posits that taking the youths onboard has been seen to motivate the youths as the sole owners of projects assigned to them and tend to behave as long-term participants to such undertakings. Omar *et al* (2016) concur with this assertion through their findings that since this kind of partnership does not just happen, proper planning and pieces of training must be done to develop skills and competencies required for harmonious kind of relationship whereby people's ideas, opinions, views are listened to and highly valued without favoritism.

### **5.3.4 Individual factors among the youth and their empowerment**

The study established that individual youth factors such as gender equality, level of training, age, and peer pressure determined their levels of motivation in matters of projects within their communities. The study has established a relationship of these factors and youth empowerment where the majority of the youths felt that gender equality was still not considered when it came to their participation in community-based projects. Johnson *et al* (2016) found out that most women were found to be less involved in such projects meant for both women and men as a result of women not attending the meetings before the projects kicking off due to the balance, they must maintain between family duties and community duties.

Peer pressure was viewed as a key contributor to decreased levels of participation in community projects which resulted in youth being less empowered to be in charge of their lives. Peer influence has led the majority into drug and substance abuse, hooliganism, and high instances of being manipulated by those in power as witnessed in Kenya during the 2007 post-election violence. It was also established that few youths have acquired hands-on skills even after passing through classroom learning which has forced many to remain jobless despite their excellent academic qualification. This can be supported by a recent survey of youth on their expectations and priorities where 45% of them ranked job opportunities as their top priority (Njonjo, 2010) compared to starting their own business to create employment for others.

## **Conclusions**

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are made on the influence of youth empowerment through participation in community-based projects in Mombasa County. All the four studied variables show their influence on youth empowerment in Mombasa County which determines their levels of participation in Community based projects in Mombasa County. The involvement of the youth who are key stakeholders in M&E for community-based projects tends to have many benefits which are not limited to, a common undertaking, enhancing accountability, access to more information, performance improvement, improved design as well as better decisions. On the other hand, involving external expertise and professionals is also considered a great approach for assuring accountability for such endeavors. Participation in M&E ensures there is a common understanding of the problem facing a particular community, its causes, its magnitude, its effects as well as its implication at large. This facilitates the identification of solutions to the underlying problems and this comes as a result of involving those who are faced with that problem. On the other hand, project accountability helps safeguard misappropriation of resources which makes the project implementation less expensive. When the planned project activities have deviated from the initial plan, performance

improvement can only be witnessed through the participation of various project stakeholders since they carry with them the solutions to the problem they experience.

Youth are greatly empowered when they pass through school and receive desirable skills but in most cases, a young Kenyan youth is supposed to demonstrate that apart from going through school, he has the necessary skills needed for the job he is pursuing which is always not favorable to the young and fresh graduate. The labor market tends to ask too much for young people especially those fresh from school with no or minimal experience in the job market. The relationship between the level of education and training, on one hand, and opportunity and inclusion, on the other, is statistically significant and that upholds the fact that better educated and trained people enjoy better access to opportunities than others. Therefore it is important to ensure relevant education and hands-on skill training are offered to young people to increase their chance for consideration in developmental projects. With the right skills, young people are confident to have access to job opportunities and for some are motivated to start their ventures while creating more employment opportunities for their fellow youths. According to Onjoro et al (2014) literacy levels in Mombasa County and its neighboring county are still low standing at 86.3 percent compared to cities like Nairobi. This is still experienced even after the introduction of free primary and affordable secondary education. This is to say, youth are less empowered in Mombasa County as compared to cities such as Nairobi.

Youth involvement in decision making for projects meant to solve their problems empowers them to take charge of those projects and by so doing it promotes project success and sustainability. The study shows that their involvement tends to promote skill improvement, developmental self-confidence, and ownership that make them stress-free as they find their way to adulthood. As much as youth are considered to be an asset to the country, they also are the future leaders, workers, parents, and professionals thus need to be well prepared for both current and future roles and duties at different capacities. With maximum support and suitable opportunities given to them, they will be in a position to improve their lives, those of others in the community, and play a big role in improving the economy of their nation.

Empowered youths are in a better position to fight peer pressure which is a key contributor to their loss of focus in their development. The study shows that an empowered youth is far able to make the right decisions and is ready to accept responsibilities for their actions unlike those who are controlled or are under an influence of something. As much as youth empowerment contributed to positivism among them youths, gender equality while involving the youth in community-based projects within Mombasa county is of equal importance despite the coastal beliefs on the girl child and her responsibilities for the family chores. Gender roles tend to contribute to the imbalance between men and women participation in community-related agendas. Women are expected to fend for the family, work where the husband has allowed them to work at the same time find time to be part of the community activities. When those in leadership understand the importance of gender equality among the youth while allocating resources or even while involving them in activities meant to help them, is the only time we shall experience a positive impact among the young generation and close the gender gap.

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