

The Influence of Non-Governmental Organizations' Character-Building Education Interventions on Community Empowerment

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Abstract: Adoption of Sustainable Development Goal number one (1) by 193 member states in New York was aimed at eradicating poverty. This prompted different development actors and agencies to work together. Non-governmental organizations are one of the key development actors through support of various interventions in different sectors such as agriculture, health, gender, family planning, environment and education. However, education support is one of the main strategies used to transform social-economic status of communities. Non-governmental organizations support character-building education with the aim of equipping community members with moral values and virtues that enable them live and function well in society. Non-governmental organizations have been supporting education interventions with the aim of empowering communities. However, they have been measuring the success of character-building interventions using indicators of individual empowerment, as a result the influence on community empowerment is not known. Hence, the study sought to explore the influence of non-governmental organizations' education character-building interventions on community empowerment in Nakuru County, Kenya. The research design adopted was ex-post facto research design and correlational research design. The study sample size was 114, which comprised of social workers and beneficiaries of those education programs. Stratified random sampling and purposive sampling were used. Data was collected using questionnaires and analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation and linear regression analysis). Character-building construct was measured in two parameters: social skills and ethical skills. The parameters of community empowerment were social capital, human capital and financial capital development. The F statistic was 17.749, with a corresponding p-value of 0.000, meaning that the education character-building interventions supported by non-governmental organizations significant influence on community empowerment. The study recommends that all non-governmental organizations supporting education interventions as one the strategies for community empowerment need to include character-building education, in order to achieve community empowerment.

Keywords: Non-governmental organizations, education, character-building education interventions, influence, community empowerment

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background Information

Achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is a global challenge which prompted different states and

development agencies to work together (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organizations, 2015). Non-governmental organizations are key actors of development (Abiddin et al., 2022). They play a major role in working towards the realization of the sustainable development goals through various interventions such as agriculture, health, climate change, gender, family planning, water and sanitation and education. However, education intervention (SDG 4) is an integral part in achievement of all the other 16 sustainable development goals (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organizations, 2015). Education enhances upward socioeconomic mobility and is key towards eradicating poverty which is the main hindrance to achieving community development.

Non-governmental organizations support education as a vital tool for sustainable development through various education interventions such as financial interventions, basic needs, capacity development and character-building interventions. Each of these education interventions play a key role towards realization of community empowerment. However, character-building education interventions play a key role in shaping the moral values and abilities of an individual which help define one's character and the way they interact and function in the society. Character-building interventions enhance the development of social and ethical skills.

Character is a way of thinking and conduct that distinguishes every individual. Character of a person appears as a habit manifested in attitude and behavior of an individual, making it possible to become a habit continuously done and practiced in every aspect of human environment (Lee, 2014). Character building interventions are aimed at implementing and improving moral values and ability, as well as to manifest them in their daily life (Nurhasanah & Nida, 2016).

Character-building education interventions equip individuals and communities with moral values that shape their character. Incorporation of character-building education interventions in the basic education supported by non-government organizations helps in developing the beneficially in a holistic manner. Holistic education is a comprehensive approach that is aimed at developing areas such as emotional, social, ethical and not just focusing on academic success as the main goal. This education approach aims at developing an all-round

person. According to Schiro (2012), effective education interventions lead to; intellectual, social, emotional, physical and spiritual growth of the learners not just academic growth.

Achievement of character building is reflected in the knowledge, attitude and behavior of individuals based on virtues which are universal moral values in the form acceptable in any given environment. The impact of character building focus on strengthening ethical and social skills (Kristjansson, 2013). Development of both social and ethical skills enable individuals and communities to work together hence promoting development of key community capitals namely social capital, human capital and financial capitals which are vital towards the realization of community empowerment. According to Flora and Flora (2013), community empowerment is a process that enable community members to gain control over their lives through realization of the seven forms of community capitals namely; human capital, social capital, financial capital, political capital, natural capital, cultural capital and built capital which are key pillars of community development. However, non-governmental organizations measure success of character-building education interventions on community development using indicators of individual empowerment. Studies have shown that the impact of education as an empowerment tool has majorly been measured using individual empowerment indicators (Batool et al., 2018). As a result, there exists an empirical gap in knowledge on the influence of non-governmental organizations' character-building education interventions on community empowerment, a prerequisite for community development.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Character-building is a key component for non-governmental organizations working towards empowering communities using education. Character-building involves the development of habits and practices that are needed to live and function well in a world of differences. Character-building education interventions are aimed at implementing and improving moral values and ability of individuals and communities, as well as to manifest them in their daily lives (Nurhasanah & Nida, 2016). Acquisition of social skills, and ethical skills helps develop capacities of individuals and communities to acquire key capitals namely social capital, human capital and financial capital that are crucial towards achievement of community empowerment (Flora & Flora, 2013).

Non-governmental organizations offer holistic education in effort to develop the whole person equipping them with knowledge, skills, abilities, and capabilities that they need to transform their lives leading to sustainable community development (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2014). In order for non-governmental organizations' education interventions to have an impact on community development, it is necessary that character-building education interventions contribute to community empowerment which is a prerequisite for community

development, the overall aim of non-governmental organizations and other development agencies.

In Nakuru County, non-governmental organizations support character-building education interventions to enable poor communities access holistic education that is aimed at developing an all-round person. Studies have shown that education is a human right and foundation for community development (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organizations, 2015). However, non-governmental organizations measure success of character-building education interventions on community development using indicators of individual empowerment. As a result, there exists an empirical gap in knowledge on the influence of non-governmental organizations' character-building education interventions on community empowerment, a prerequisite for community development. Through this study the influence of character-building education interventions on community empowerment will be determined which may inform policy makers on adoption of holistic education in effort to realize sustainable development

1.3. Objective of the Study

- i. To determine the influence of non-governmental organizations' education character-building interventions on community empowerment in Nakuru County, Kenya.

1.4. Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: Non-governmental organizations' education character-building interventions have no statistically significant influence on community empowerment in Nakuru County, Kenya.

H₁: Non-governmental organizations' education character-building interventions have statistically significant influence on community empowerment in Nakuru County, Kenya.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

II.1. Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by three theories namely social capital theory, empowerment theory, and general systems theory.

II.1.1. Social Capital Theory

This theory was propounded by French social theorist Pierre Bourdieu and two American social scientists James Coleman and Robert Putman in 2000. The theory of social capital is rooted on the notion of trust, norms and informal networks. Social capital foster cooperation and collective actions for mutual benefits, contributing to economic and social development (Putnam, 2000).

This theory was useful in this study since community empowerment largely depends on the social capital among empowered individuals and their groups leading to empowered communities. Character-building education interventions by non-governmental organizations are empowerment strategies aimed at empowering both

individuals and communities with moral values, abilities and skills that they can apply in their daily lives as they work towards transforming their lives (Nurhasanah & Nida, 2016). Individual empowerment takes individual effort while community empowerment requires collective action of empowered individuals. It is through trust, norms of reciprocity and social networks that empowered individuals are able to come together and pursue a joint venture which leads to formation of empowered communities that is able to solve issues affecting their lives through a joint action. Social capital enables communities to take collective action through which they are able to identify their problems, prioritize them, set goals and objectives, mobilize resources and generate solutions to issues affecting their lives.

In this respect, application of social capital theory in this study was used to enforce the importance of trust, norms of reciprocity and social networks among beneficiaries of non-governmental organizations' character-building education interventions in order to achieve community empowerment. However, use of this theory does not explain how non-governmental organizations' character-building education interventions foster community empowerment hence the need to bridge the gap by use of empowerment theory.

II.1.2. Empowerment Theory

This theory was propounded by Paulo Freire, Julian Rappaport and Robert Chambers (1983). Empowerment is the process through which individuals and communities attain power, access resources and gain control over their lives. The core concept of empowerment is the idea of power which occurs at individual level, group of individuals level and at community level. These three levels of empowerment are interactive and dependent on each other (Perkins, 2010).

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2014), education is an empowerment tool that equip people with knowledge, skills and abilities that they can use for their own development. The empowerment theory was relevant in this study as it helps depict the conditions that an effective empowerment strategy should fulfill in order to realize community development. Character-building education interventions empowering individuals and communities with moral values, abilities and skills that enable them develop key community capitals through which community empowerment is realized.

In this respect, application of empowerment theory was used to enforce the adoption of character-building education interventions as an empowerment tool for community empowerment. However, use of this theory does not explain how factors in the internal environment (non-governmental organizations' character-building education interventions) influence each other and also the effect of factors in the external environment which is made of the moderating variables (non-governmental organizations community engagement, non-governmental organization funding sources and non-governmental organization leadership styles) on

community empowerment, hence the need to bridge the gap by use of general systems theory.

II.1.3. General Systems Theory

This theory was propounded by Von Bertalanffy in 1968. This theory maintains that a system is a set of interconnected components that make a unified whole. Each of the individual components interact with each other in divergent ways. The individual components are referred to as subsystems and each has a boundary that separates it from other sub systems and the external environment. A system has energy that helps it to function and through which it makes exchanges with the environment. This flow of energy in and out of the system only happens with open boundaries. This energy can be in form of physical energy, social power, psychological energy and information which is the main form of energy in human relationships. In order for a system to function properly, the force inside the system should be appropriate.

Systems theory assumes that a social system functions in its entirety and has its own characteristics and not a sum of the characteristics of individual components. The individual components of a system are interconnected and there exists a relationship between them and the system. A system exists in both internal and external environments which have either a destructive or helpful influence on it. The change that occurs in a system depends on the direction of influence. The components in a system are a cause and effect on each other as a result of energy exchange, feedback loop and communication through the open boundaries. A change in one of the components affects the entire system. The dynamic balance concept in a system enables the system to adjust itself based on the nature of both the internal and external influences. The flexibility of a system enables it to address the needs that arise and to counter environmental influence (Bertalanffy, 1968).

In this study, the community empowerment process is a system made up of interconnected components joined together by a network of relationships. These components include; independent variable, moderating variables and dependent variable. Non-governmental organizations' character-building education interventions form the internal environment and is the main source of energy that gets into the system which is exchanged with the environment.

Application of general systems theory in this study aspired to divulge the importance of a functional system in pursuit of community empowerment using non-governmental organizations' character-building education interventions. This has been omitted in the previous studies that mainly focused on the non-governmental organizations investment that goes into education as a way of empowering the community and the success measured using individual empowerment indicators. The aim of this study was to assess the influence of non-governmental organizations' character-building education interventions on community empowerment.

II.2. Non-Governmental Organizations' Education Character-Building Interventions and Community Empowerment.

Character is a way of thinking and conduct that distinguishes every individual. Character of a person appear as a habit manifested in attitude and behavior of an individual, making it possible to become a habit continuously done and practiced in every aspect of human environment (Lee, 2014). Character building interventions are aimed at implementing and improving moral values and ability, as well as to manifest them in their daily lives (Nurhasanah & Nida, 2016).

Character building and learning of ethical and moral values are regarded as the main goal of education (Khanam, 2008). The achievement of character building is reflected in the knowledge, attitude and behavior of individuals based on virtues which are universal moral values in the form acceptable in any given environment. The impact of character building focus on strengthening ethical skills and social skills (Kristjansson, 2013). Value based education which emphasis on character development is key towards realization of sustainable community development (Otieno, 2019).

Non-governmental organizations support character-building education interventions to equip values, abilities and skills that they can use to develop key community capital that are pillars of community empowerment. Character-building education interventions enable individuals and communities to effectively participate in community activities promoting joint action. According to (World Bank, 2010), community development is a process where community members come together to take collective action to generate solutions to their problems. Collective action builds assets that help increase the capacity of community members to improve their quality of life (Green & Haines, 2008). Character-building education interventions motivate community members to participate in community projects and help them improve their living standards through transformation of their socio-economic status. Through this way, non-governmental organizations contribute towards sustainable community development.

III. METHODOLOGY

III.1. Research Design

The study adopted an *ex-post facto* and correlational research design. Ex-post facto research design allowed a systematic empirical enquiry in which the researcher had no direct control of independent variables since their manifestation had already occurred (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009).

Correlational research design was used to explore relationship between independent variable (non-governmental organizations' character-building education interventions) and the dependent variable (community empowerment) and also determine the strength of the relationship and make prediction. In addition, *ex-post facto* research design was used to assess the influence of non-governmental organizations' character-building education interventions on community empowerment.

III.2. Target Population

The study target population was 1254 non-governmental organizations that support education in Nakuru County. The accessible population was 116 non-governmental organizations that support education and are registered under the Ministry of Labour Social Security Services. The subjects involved in the study were the social workers in charge of education and the beneficiaries of non-governmental organizations character-building education interventions.

III.3. Sampling and Sample Size

Stratified random sampling technique was utilized to categorize all the 116 non-governmental organizations that support education in sub counties. Categorization ensured homogenous subsets that shared same characteristics were represented in the sample (Taherdoost, 2016). Ten percent of each stratum were randomly selected, leading to 13 organizations from which the sample was obtained. Gall, Gall and Borg (2007) indicate that, ten percent of the accessible population is appropriate for a study. The total number of beneficiaries of the 13 selected organizations was estimated at 1217 out of a total accessible beneficiary population of 11,176.

The study subjects were beneficiaries of the education interventions and social workers in charge of education programs. The sample size of the beneficiaries was obtained using the coefficient of variation formula (Nassiuma, 2000). The social workers in charge of education interventions from the selected organizations were purposively selected. This method of sampling is ideal as it allows for selection of a sample that suits the study (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). Purposive sampling and snowball sampling were used to select the beneficiaries that were involved in the study. A sample size of 101 beneficiaries and 13 social workers were involved in the study.

III.4. Data Collection

Data was collected using two questionnaires developed by the researcher and were based on the objectives of the study. The questionnaires are advantageous in that they save on time, are confidential, and help eliminate researcher bias (Kombo & Tromp, 2011). The instruments were checked for both validity and reliability to ensure suitability (Heale & Twycross, 2015). Data collection procedures were followed and a research permit obtained from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation and also introductory letters from Nakuru County Commissioner and County Director of Education. The ethical considerations done were anonymity and confidentiality.

III.5. Data Analysis

The data was coded and analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics involved percentage and standard deviation. Pearson correlation was used to assess the relationship between non-governmental organizations character-building education interventions and community

empowerment. Linear regression analysis was used to assess the influence of non-governmental organizations' character-building education interventions on community empowerment in Nakuru County, Kenya at 95% level of significance. The Regression model is illustrated as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$$

Where;

Y= Community Empowerment

β_0 = Constant

β_1 = Coefficients of X1

X1= Non-Governmental Organizations' Education Character-Building Interventions

ε =Error term

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

IV.1. Descriptive Statistics for Non-Governmental Organizations' Education Character-Building Interventions

Character-building education interventions are aimed at implementing and improving moral values and ability, as well as to manifest them in their daily lives (Nurhasanah & Nida, 2016). Non-governmental organizations support character-building education interventions to equip individuals and communities with social skills and ethical skills to develop moral values, abilities and skills that define the character of the individual beneficiaries and their communities. The study results on the number of beneficiaries that acquired social skills and ethical skills are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Non-Governmental Organizations' Education Character Building Interventions Offered to Beneficiaries

| Non-Governmental Organizations' Education Character Building Interventions | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| Social skills development training | 95 | 94.1 |
| Ethical skills development training | 70 | 69.3 |

The study results indicate that most of the beneficiaries undertook social skills and ethical skills trainings with a representation of 94.1% and 69.3% respectively. Character development skills are the building blocks of personality that help in building the moral values of an individual and the community (Mohammah, 2016).

Further, descriptive statistics for the mean factor score for the variable non-governmental organizations' education character-building interventions (social skills and ethical skills) in terms of mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis were computed. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Non-Governmental Organizations' Education Character Building Interventions

| Descriptive Statistics | Mean | Std. Deviation | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|----------------------------------|--------|----------------|----------|----------|
| Character Building Interventions | 2.8545 | .48710 | .691 | .466 |

The study findings indicate that the variable non-governmental organizations' character-building interventions was significantly positively skewed at $p < 0.05$. The mean of character-building education interventions was 2.8545. The findings of the study indicate that the character-building education interventions influence community empowerment.

IV.2. Regression Analysis of Non-Governmental Organizations' Character-Building Education Interventions

Non-governmental organizations' education character-building interventions data was run through factor analysis in order to obtain factor scores since the initial data was in ordinal level. To determine the influence of non-governmental organizations' character-building education interventions on community empowerment, a linear regression was fit to the data, with the dependent variable being the mean of the factor scores of community empowerment and the independent variable being the mean of the factor scores of non-governmental organizations' education character-building interventions. The results presented in Table 3 summarizes the model fit of the linear regression.

Table 3: Model Summary of Non-governmental Organizations' Education Character Building Interventions and Community Empowerment

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Durbin-Watson |
|---|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|---------------|
| 1 | .390 ^a | .152 | .143 | .59484 | 1.944 |
| a. Predictors: Non-governmental organizations' education character-building interventions | | | | | |
| b. Dependent Variable: Community empowerment | | | | | |

The study results indicate that R Square of 0.152 was achieved. This means that the linear regression model explains 18.1% of the data, that is, non-governmental organizations' education character-building interventions contribute 15.2% variation in community empowerment. As a result, the remaining 84.8% is attributed to the error term and other variables not examined in this study.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test the null hypothesis that the model with non-governmental organizations' education character building interventions as the independent variable explains zero variance in community empowerment. Table 4 presents the results of ANOVA test for non-governmental organizations' education character-building interventions and community empowerment.

Table 4: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of Non-Governmental Organizations' Education Character Building Interventions and Community Empowerment

| Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|-------------------|
| Regression | 6.280 | 1 | 6.280 | 17.749 | .000 ^b |
| Residual | 35.029 | 99 | .354 | | |
| Total | 41.309 | 100 | | | |
| a. Dependent Variable: Community empowerment (CE) | | | | | |
| b. Predictors: (Constant), Non-governmental organizations' education character building interventions (CBI) | | | | | |

The F-Statistic from ANOVA test explains the overall significance of the linear regression model at 95% confidence interval. The criteria for rejecting the null hypothesis, is to reject the null hypothesis if the *p*-value of the F-Statistic is less than the *p*-value at 95% confidence interval at 0.05. The study findings show that the calculated F-Statistic = 17,749 and a *p*-value=0.000<0.05. Hence, we fail to accept the null hypothesis and the model with non-governmental organizations’ education character-building interventions as an independent variable explains some variance in community empowerment. Table 5 presents the coefficient of variation of non-governmental organizations’ character-building education interventions and community empowerment.

Table 5: Regression Coefficient of Non-Governmental Organizations’ Education Character-Building Interventions and Community Empowerment

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. | Collinearity Statistics | |
|-------|----------------------------------|------------|---------------------------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | | Tolerance | VIF |
| 1 | (Constant) | 1.954 | .354 | | 5.526 | .000 | |
| | Character Building Interventions | .514 | .122 | .390 | 4.213 | .000 | 1.000 1.000 |

The study results in Table 5, indicate that the unstandardized coefficient of non-governmental organizations’ education capacity development interventions is 0.514 and *p*-value is 0.000. The study used linear regression model to test the influence of non-governmental organizations’ education character-building interventions and community empowerment in Nakuru County, Kenya. The linear regression model is indicated as:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \epsilon$$

Where;

Y= Community Empowerment

β_0 = Constant value

β_1 =Regression coefficient of non-governmental organizations’ education character-building interventions

X1=Nongovernmental organizations’ education character-building interventions (CBI)

ϵ =Error term

Thus, the regression model connecting non-governmental organizations’ education character-building interventions and community empowerment is:

$$\text{Community Empowerment} = 1.954 + 0.514 (\text{non-governmental organizations’ education character-building interventions}) + \epsilon$$

Therefore, the regression model means that a unit change in non-governmental organizations’ education character-building interventions causes a change of 0.514 in community empowerment in Nakuru County, Kenya with a *p*-value at 0.000. As a result, we fail to accept the null hypothesis: non-

governmental organizations’ education character-building interventions have no statistically significant influence on community empowerment in Nakuru County, Kenya. Thus, there is statistically significant evidence that non-governmental organizations’ education character-building interventions statistically significantly influence community empowerment in Nakuru County, Kenya.

V. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

V.1. Discussion

The study examined the influence of non-governmental organizations’ education character-building interventions on community empowerment in Nakuru County, Kenya. The results indicate that non-governmental organizations’ education character-building interventions statistically significantly influence community empowerment. This result was achieved using analysis of variance (ANOVA). The regression coefficient indicate that non-governmental organizations’ education character-building interventions positively and significantly influence community empowerment.

The factors tested under character-building were; ethical skills for resource mobilization, social skills for personal savings, ethical skills for employment, and social skills for employment. The findings in this study echoes(Nurhasanah & Nida, 2016), which asserts that character building interventions are aimed at implementing and improving moral values and ability, as well as to manifest them in their daily life.

The study results indicate that non-governmental organizations’ education character-building interventions influence community empowerment through impacting individuals and community members with social and ethical skills. This concurs with the findings that the impact of character-building focus on strengthening ethical skills and social skills (Kristjansson, 2013). The study findings indicate that character-building interventions helps community members to become employable, promote personal savings and resource mobilization which can be anchored to the three key capital of community development; social capital, human capital and financial capital. This resonates with Berkowitz (2011) who asserts that character-building involves the development of habits and practices that are needed in order to live and function well in a world of difference.

V.2. Conclusion

From the study findings the researcher concludes that the research explains the nature of the relationship between non-governmental organizations’ education character-building interventions and community empowerment. It is concluded that non-governmental organizations’ character-building education interventions significantly influence community empowerment, a study finding that is supported using analysis of variance (ANOVA). The regression coefficient shows that non-governmental organizations’ character-building

interventions positively and significantly influence community empowerment. This research established that, for education to be used as an effective tool for community development, there is need to offer ethical skill and social skills trainings in order to equip individuals and communities with knowledge, skills and abilities which they can use to achieve development. As a result, we fail to accept null hypothesis that non-governmental organizations' education character building interventions do not have statistically significant influence on community empowerment in Nakuru County, Kenya.

V.3. Recommendation

The study recommends that non-governmental organizations support character-building education to develop social skills and ethical skills of the beneficiaries to enhance empowerment of both individuals and communities. Based on the findings of this study, other community development theories should be examined to increase the parameters of non-governmental organizations education character-building interventions studied, since this study examined only three. There is also a need for further studies to determine the effect of non-governmental organizations funding sources as a mediator variable, given its effect on the realization of community empowerment.

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