Transparency Practices and Sustainability of Water Projects in Turkana County, Kenya

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Abstract

The existing evidence in the literature reveals a lack of a compelling vision of governance practices in the sustainability of water projects. It is against this background that this research is founded. Turkana County rates among the poorest and the largest in Kenya despite a considerable infusion of capital to enhance water accessibility. This study sought to explore the effects of transparency practices on the sustainability of water projects in the Turkana South sub-county. The study adopted a descriptive design and the sample size comprised 279 individuals from various departments of Turkana County Government and 13 key informants. The study found that transparency practices are not fully utilized in water projects. Findings further indicated that transparency practices had a moderate positive and significant relationship with the sustainability of water projects. The study concludes that the authorities and management have suitable policies and frameworks that cover audit, oversight, participation, and information sharing. But these transparency practices are not fully utilized in the water projects which therefore affects the sustainability of water projects. The ministry/department of the government needs to use the findings from the study to formulate suitable frameworks, strategies, and policies that ensure transparency practices are enforced in the projects. These frameworks should ensure oversight, audit, feedback, and monitoring of the projects take place effectively.

Keywords: *Transparency Practices, Water Project Sustainability, Turkana County*

1.0 Introduction

Jean-Jacques Rousseau believed that it is fundamental for politicians to be transparent but he was skeptical that the lack of honesty in the public officials could be rectified through audits, oversights, participation, and information (Taylor &Kelsey, 2016). Auditing is a process of bringing in an externally qualified auditor up to the understanding and the documentation of policy implementation of an organization. This implies that an organization may have a high level of transparency with documented procedures and processes, but it has to undergo internal and external auditing processes, which is time-consuming. The purpose of the audit is to verify the truth of transparency (Hood & David, 2006). Therefore, the auditor meets with the employees of an organization to understand how the processes of policies, as well as the workflows, are being executed. Although auditing is time-consuming, it is necessary to verify the level of transparency.

Oversight entails the process of practicing the act of inspection and supervision (Christopher Hood, 2006). The assertion is that an organization should seek to appoint people who are watchful of the processes of governing practices in an organization to attain the goal of transparency. However, oversight may verify transparency. Oversight is a valuable process in which transparency is measured. Therefore, it involves determination to do what is right no matter what. An organization may have transparent employees, but this transparency has to be verified with an oversight role (Taylor & Kelsey, 2016).

Participation is a process of involvement of the people in decision-making in an organization (Christopher Hood, 2006). Therefore, transparent decisions cannot be made in a vacuum without considering a specific context whereby people are involved. Christopher Hood, a Gladson professor of the government at All Souls University, came out with two contrasting political theories that are associated with the ideas of transparency and participation (Christopher Hood, 2006). The first idea examines transparency as an aspect of human rights, which is enacted through institutions and laws. This tradition is dominant in the practice of government policies of today. The second aspect he analyses is in line with the value of participation as a virtue, which is enacted through the behaviour of the individuals (Christopher, 2006). Handling important information through a participatory approach entail hearing multiple voices. This will highly depend on the behaviours of the individuals in an organization. Participation entails a consultative process, which presupposes time, education, and explanation to the concerned parties of the organization.

Information is how governments have at times persuaded themselves that transparency could cause people in public office to stop being defensive and enable the public to trust them if they recognize how hard it is to govern by giving the right information (Hood & David, 2006). The transparent relationship between the government and the people is based on accessibility to the right information. The government may not avail all the information to the citizens, although the public debate can protect the government than restricting access to information that is relevant (Taylor & Kelsey, 2016). Sensitive information that may discredit the government/ organization may not be publicly shared. Transparency is an effort to share the right information. This has to happen within the proper context and framing.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The literature review presents the various aspects of transparency and sustainability of water projects. The issues tackled lacked a compelling vision of transparency practices and sustainability of water projects. it is against this background that this research proposal will establish the study. A compelling vision means there are no long-term planning in policy formulation in the water sector, weak systems, and Institutions in water resource management, and an unclear vision to promote sustainable groundwater resources for the present and future generations.

According to the literature review of Slovakia (Rahul Kumar, 2015), Atlanta (Votre Roseau, 2017), Ethiopia (Webede Kebele, 2014), Tanzania (Thea Bongetman, 2014), Malawi (Baltimore Raven), and Burkina Faso (Hibler Michelle, 2016), on water projects sustainability, the aspects highlighted, are procurement reform, participatory approach, oversight, access to information and feedback. These aspects are important but incomplete because they lack a compelling vision of governance practices. This study explored the effects of transparency practices on the sustainability of water projects in the Turkana South sub-county.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on Stewardship Theory. This theory states that the managers of an organization are stewards of the owners, and both groups have to share the same goals (Davis et al., 1997). Jensen and Mackling elaborated the theory in the year 1976, and later on, reintroduced it in the research in the year 1997 by putting more emphasis on the area of Governance. The steward in an organization will work towards the goal and therefore, this is the person to be trusted accordingly. The principal does not control the steward thus lowering the cost of monitoring. The board is not too controlling as compared to the Agency theory. The Board plays a supportive role by empowering the executive thus increasing the performance (Hendry, 2002; Shen, 2003). From the above definition, this theory argues for the relationship between the Board and the Executives. This relationship entails training, mentoring, and shared decision-making.

The principal does not control the steward thus lowering the cost of monitoring. The board is not too controlling as compared to the Agency theory. The Board plays a supportive role by empowering the executive thus increasing the performance. Due to this relationship as outlined above, the theory is more standardized as compared to the agency and stakeholders' theory. For this reason, this research adopted the stewardship theory. The theory sustains the transparency practices. The theory underpins the link between transparency practices and project sustainability.

2.2 Sustainability of Water Projects

The territory of India is approximately 328 million hectares. It receives an average rainfall of 120 per annum. Droughts and famines are common in many parts of the country despite the vast water resource. This paper presents brief surveys of India's river-basin systems, drought-prone areas, hydrogeological systems, groundwater potential, and utilization in light of water quality constraints, and environmental pollution in India (Searcy & Buslovich, 2014). Sustainable catchment area and reservoir management, Surface water supply schemes based on solar power, Arsenic removal (including monitoring using UFZ's field-tested Arsolux arsenic sensor), Disinfection treatment for potable water based on Trust water's CE-certified mixed oxidant generation systems, Water distribution network, sewerage, and wastewater treatment together with online/offline water quality monitoring programmes (Harry Spaling et al., 2014).

The Improving Water Supply Sustainability in Northern Uganda is a three-year project that SNV has been implementing since 2015 with funding from the Coordination Office for Development Cooperation of the Austrian Embassy in Uganda. The project objective was to enhance the functionality and sustainability of rural water supplies in 600 communities in the districts of Apac, Lira, Alebtong, and Dokolo in Northern Uganda. The project results are that water and sanitation committees have been formed in 622 water sources and sensitized on their role in operation and maintenance. There is improved collection and remittance of O&M fees to sub-county water supply and sanitation boards (SWSSBs), with remittances currently standing at 55%. Preventive maintenance contracts were signed between the HPMAs and 12 sub-counties in Lira, Alebtong, and Dokolo districts. As a result, 435 water sources underwent preventive maintenance giving 130,000 people sustainable access to clean water. WSCs were also encouraged to open bank accounts for their operation and management funds. To date, 58 WSCs in Apac have opened accounts with Centenary Bank (Chang et al., 2014).

In Kenya, different donors Rukunga et al. (2016) have funded water. According to the Kenyan budget, it emerges that the Government of Kenya is the major financing entity for the water projects. Other entities apart from the government are local authorities, and Nongovernmental

Organizations that implement water projects either directly or indirectly through community participation. The service providers are local utilities; Community based organizations and Private small-scale providers. The income is used for repairing and maintenance of the water facilities or expanding the existing ones, and money is paid to small-scale water vendors, and water kiosk operators (Rukunga et al., 2016). One of the financing avenues in the new Water act is the Water Services Trust Fund (WSTF). It is financed by the government and its development partners. Resources are mobilised to support communities that are not in a position to afford water service due to poverty. Rukunga et al. (2016) argue that self-help groups fund water projects by mobilizing their resources, approximately thirty percent of the Kenyan population who lives in rural areas have access to safe water.

2.3 Transparency and Sustainability of Water Projects

The case study in Slovakia carried out by Sunlight in support of google.org is based on the effects of technology on transparency policy around the world. It attempts to analyse how transparency functions, when, how, and why as well as identify the areas of improvement. The field of technology about transparency is still in the initial steps (Alexander, 2013). The study has widened and diversified a comprehensive picture of the transparency in relation to the public procurement reform enacted by the Slovakian government. The significant findings from these studies are: Transparency entails the publication of the data online, which exposes corruption cases because the public has access to information, lowering the barriers to an oversight role, Effective transparency requires enforcement (Georgia Fredrick, 2016). The challenge remains; data not released in machines readable in bulk formats, institutional means of sanction are not effective leading to informal enforcement mechanisms, namely public pressure. Transparency can only highlight the problem but may not change deeply ingrained corrupt practices.

In India, the citizens of Parivartan in Delhi have been under the legislation, which was enacted in the year 2001 by the Indian government to seek improvement in water and sanitation services. The role of the media was to make the government information available to the people. Access to the information may shed light on the performance of the water sector in government agencies. It was concluded that the support from both the government and the other agencies is fundamental to the sustainability of the water supply (Schouten 2003). A participatory approach is fundamental to bringing onboard communities. Access to information improves transparency and can limit the opportunities for corruption.

In Ethiopia, the government among the communities of Kebele and Worede carried out the contextual factors of water management schemes. These communities are next to Addis Ababa. The result of the study demonstrated that, compared to other African countries, Ethiopia has a lower level of petty bureaucratic corruption in basic services (Schouten, 2003), but corruption in other sectors, like land and mining, is higher leading to diminished trust in public institutions. The goal of the research was to ameliorate water shortage and low sanitation coverage by responding to the community demand and to ensure sustainability by institutionalizing a participatory budget system (Schouten, 2003). Transparency and a participatory approach are fundamental.

3.0 Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive design and the sample size comprised 279 individuals from various departments of Turkana County Government and 13 key informants. The sample of the population was grouped as per ministries or departments thus cluster sampling techniques were used to select the representative of the target population while key informants were selected

through the purposive sampling techniques. Semi-structured questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data was analysed through content analysis. The relationship between independent and dependent variables was established using correlation analysis.

4.0 Results and Discussion

The study sought to explore the effects of transparency practices on the sustainability of water projects in Turkana South Sub-County. The objective was measured using indicators namely audit, oversight, participation, and information. Both qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed through descriptive statistics, and thematic analysis to provide information to answer the objective.

4.1 Management of water projects and resources

The study qualitative sought to find the role in which the respondents have in the management of their respective water projects. this question was analyzed qualitatively and presented as follows:

> 'The roles include; allocation of resources, conducting periodic reviews, scrutinizing budgets, approval of budgets, organizing implementation process, communicating with the beneficiaries, collecting of field data, and report writing.' (Respondents, 18th July 2021)

The qualitative findings show that a greater number of the respondents participate in the management of the water projects in the -sub-county. The findings are similar to findings obtained by Taylor & Francis (2010) who found that local communities participate in water projects.

The study further did ask the respondents if they fully participate in the management of the water project resources. Findings to the question were illustrated using Figure 1.
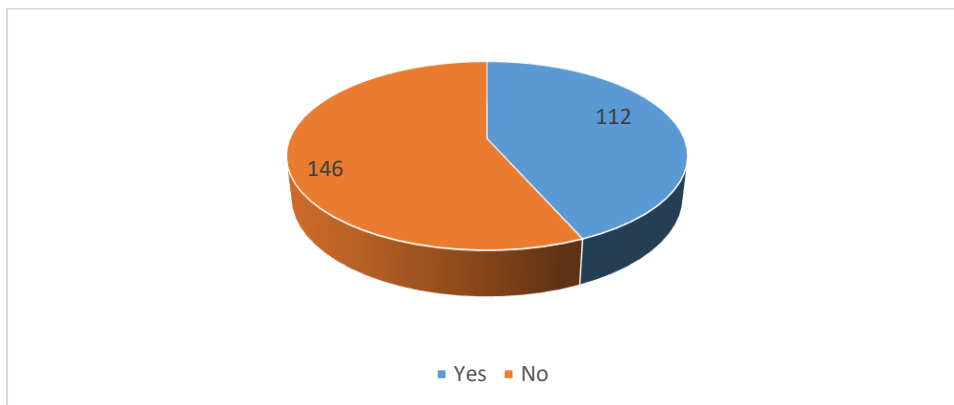

Figure 1: Management of water project resources

Findings (Figure 1) show that more of the respondents 57% do not participate in the management of water project resources while 43% of the respondents participate in the management of water project resources. Barbosa (2007) contradicts the findings by arguing that transparency might be compromised if those given the mandate of management of resources do not do so, this is indicated by the majority of the respondents who do not participate in the management of water projects resources. Whereas those who participate only are involved with budgeting allocating and reviews which is not sufficient in the transparency process.

Furthermore, the study sought to find out whether the respondents get access to information regarding the use and management of water systems in their respective projects. Findings to this question was presented using Figure 2.
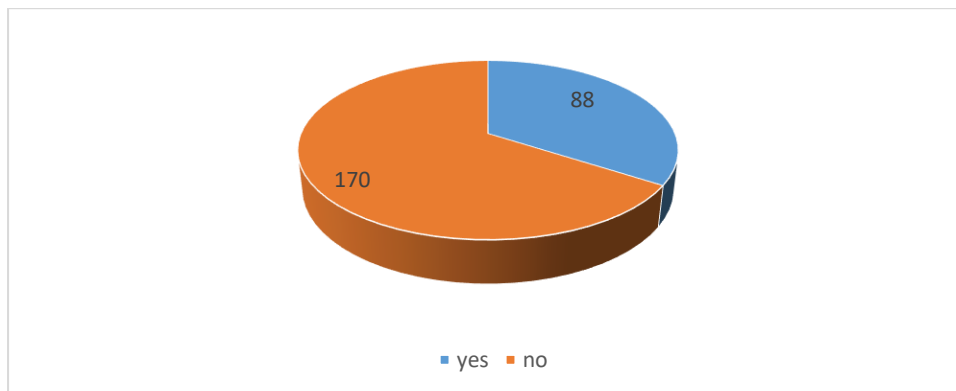

Figure 2: Water systems information accessibility

The findings in Figure 2 show that a greater number of respondents (66%) are not accessible to information regarding the use and management of water systems in their respective projects while only a few (34%) are accessible to this information. In support of this, Eberhard (2014) states that information sharing is one of the principles of transparency in any water project. This shows that the water projects lack transparency due to inaccessibility to information regarding the use and management of water systems.

4.2 Audit transparency system and oversight role

The study sought to establish from the respondents whether an audit transparency system initiated in the water projects by the relevant ministry is useful in management. The finding to this question was presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Usefulness of audit transparency system

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	74	28.7
No	184	71.3
Total	258	100

Table 1 shows that a greater number of respondents (71.3%) do not agree that the audit transparency system initiated in the ministry is useful in the management of water projects while a small number of (28.7%) respondents agree that it is useful. Those who agreed qualitatively that it acts as a control measure in which every party involved is required to follow and comply with the various standards and guidelines provided. This is contrary to what Georgia Fredrick (2016) mentions that effective transparency requires enforcement either using an audit system or a follow-up. This finding clearly shows that the audit transparency system initiated by the ministry is not effective in ensuring transparency of the water projects. This is because an audit transparency system is a control measure in the management of water projects.

The respondents were further asked qualitatively if the oversight promotes transparency in the management of water in Turkana South Sub-County. The findings were thematically presented as follows;

'Yes, oversight is essential in the management of water projects in the sub-county because it aids to curb wastages, reduces manipulation of prices, ensures completion of

projects, improves quality delivery, and avoids theft of water project resources.' (75 Respondents, 18th July 2021).

'No, Oversight is currently not effective in the management of water projects in the sub-county because nobody sees the results of it. More resources are being wasted and nobody is being prosecuted when found guilty.' (183 Respondents, 18th July 2021)

The findings showed that a large number of respondents did not agree that oversight is effective in the management of water projects. The finding is different from the study by Walter (2011), which found that oversight is a key component that enhances efficiency in the management of water projects.

4.3 Level of agreement on transparency practices and sustainability of water projects

The study sought to establish descriptively the extent to which transparency practices have contributed to the sustainability of water projects. Respondents were provided with a scale to indicate their level of agreement with this association which was then presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Transparency practices and sustainability of water projects

Level	Frequency	Percent
Very great extent	32	12.4
Moderate extent	63	24.4
Low extent	88	34.1
Very low extent	75	29.1
Total	**258**	**100**

Responses as indicated in Table 2 show that a great number of respondents 34.1% and 29.1% did state that a low extent and very low extent respectively has transparency practices contributed to the sustainability of water projects. While 12.4% and 24.4% of the respondents did state to a very great extent and moderate extent respectively has transparency practices contributed to the sustainability of water projects. This contradicts findings by Schouten (2003) who states that transparency in projects is essential in ensuring that projects are sustainable and meet the intended goals or objectives. From the finding, the study can denote that transparency practices have not contributed to the sustainability of water projects in the region according to majority of the respondents.

4.4 Qualitative findings on transparency practices

The study sought to establish from the key informants the extent to which transparency practices affect the sustainability of water projects. The qualitative findings were analyzed according to thematic analysis and presented as follows;

'The ministry is guided by the public finance act that ensures activities are performed according to the constitution of Kenya. The act out outline issues of audit, oversight, and public participation in any public initiated projects. Therefore, water projects initiated in the sub-county must comply with the public finance act requirements.' (Director, 6th July 2021).

'Under the Turkana County Government development policy of 2014, it makes it possible for every committee member to organize members of the public to participate in development project oversight and social audits.' (MCA 1, 12th July 2021).

'Periodically the county assembly members require the CEOs of relevant ministries to provide detail information concerning the projects implemented within their region, especially on the public participation and oversight issues.' (MCA 2, 15TH July 2021).

'The Office of the Governor gives priority that members of the public participate in social audits and be provided with the necessary information regarding the development of the projects. This includes detailed budgets and progress reports.' (CEO 1, 19th July 2021).

'Frequent social audits and oversight are expected to be conducted and final reports presented to the Office of the Governor and County assemblies.' (Chief Officer1, 21st July 2021). 'Part of the budget provided to the ministry includes for conducting audits and oversight aspects with the various projects found within the county.' (Chief Officer2, 21st July 2021).

The qualitative findings clearly show the availability of a policy framework that ensures transparency aspects to be achieved within initiated projects. The findings are similar to the finding that was found by Gregory and Michener (2012) which shows that majority of public projects have a policy framework that guides the management of the projects. The policy frameworks cover social audits, oversights, and public participation. Therefore, project implementers are expected to follow these transparency practices to the latter and ensure that policy frameworks are used to manage projects.

4.5 Correlation Analysis

Table 3 shows the correlation between transparency practices and the sustainability of water projects.

Table 3: Correlation Results

		Transparency practices
Sustainability of water projects	Pearson Correlation	425**
	Sig. (2- tailed)	.000
	N	258

Findings (Table 3) indicate that transparency practices have a moderate positive and significant relationship with the sustainability of water projects. The findings supported Baltimore (2011) study that showed that sustainability aspects in projects are achieved through transparent and efficient practices in projects.

5.0 Conclusion

The study explored the effects of transparency practices on the sustainability of water projects. The study concludes that the authorities and management have suitable policies and frameworks that cover audit, oversight, participation, and information sharing. But these transparency practices are not fully utilized in the water projects which therefore affects the sustainability of water projects. Water projects suffer sustainability problems because inadequate oversight and social audits are not conducted

6.0 Recommendations

The ministry/department of the government needs to use the findings from the study to formulate suitable frameworks, strategies, and policies that ensure transparency practices are enforced in the projects. These frameworks should ensure oversight, audit, feedback, and monitoring of the projects take place effectively. They need to formulate strategies that would

ensure information regarding projects are shared with the relevant stakeholders at required time intervals and means that ensure everyone participates in the monitoring process.

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