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Gender Relations in the Management of Community-Based Water Projects: A Case of Mbiuni Location, Machakos County, Kenya

Dr. Titus Mutia

Lecturer

Kiriri Women's University of Science and Technology, Kenya

ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of gender relations in the management of community-based water projects in Mbiuni Location, Machakos County, Kenya. Given the centrality of water projects in addressing rural water scarcity, it is vital to examine how gender dynamics influence the effectiveness and sustainability of such projects. The research adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of gender roles and participation in water project management. Quantitative data were gathered through surveys with 111 community members to assess their involvement, perceptions, and roles within water project initiatives. Qualitative data were collected from 10 key informants through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders, including project managers, community leaders, and local women's groups. The findings reveal that while both men and women are involved in decision-making and management processes, significant gender disparities persist in leadership roles. Women, though central to the operation and maintenance of water resources, often lack decision-making power, particularly in planning and financial management. Additionally, cultural norms, limited education, and unequal access to resources have hindered the full participation of women in leadership positions within water projects. The study results also highlight how gendered power structures and socio-economic factors, such as land ownership and access to education, shape the distribution of roles and responsibilities in water management. The research recommends that empowering women through capacity-building initiatives, promoting gender-sensitive policies, and encouraging greater female representation in leadership roles could enhance the success and sustainability of water projects. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on gender and development by offering insights into the ways in which gender relations intersect with local water management efforts. The study findings, conclusions and recommendations have implications for policy-making and project design, advocating for gender-inclusive strategies that ensure equitable access to water resources and enhance community well-being in rural Kenya.

Key Words:

Gender Relations, Water Managements, Resource Access And Control

