

Influence of Community Support on the Performance of the Wildlife Enterprises of Northern Rangeland Trust

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Abstract

Northern Rangeland Trust (NRT) is a wildlife-linked community enterprise that aims to alleviate poverty and improve environmental wellbeing. However, performance issues have hindered NRT's ability to form long-term alliances with donors and enterprises. The study aimed to determine how community support influences the performance of wildlife community enterprises within NRT. Guided by commitment-trust theory, this research employed a descriptive survey design. Using a census method for selection, the study targeted all 78 management employees of the Northern Rangeland wildlife community enterprises. Data was collected via questionnaires, and internal consistency was assessed using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient. Linear regression analysis revealed a significant statistical link among the factors. A pilot test of eight questionnaires at Buffalo Springs wildlife community enterprises in Isiolo County showed a Pearson correlation coefficient for community support of r=0.616** at $\alpha < 0.01$ with a 95% confidence level. Results indicated that a unit increase in community support led to a performance increase in wildlife-linked community enterprises by a magnitude of 0.887. The study concluded that community support, which is underutilized by the management, is essential for the performance of wildlife community enterprises. It recommends that the managers incorporate full community support in order to enhance the performance of NRT.

Keywords: Community Support, Performance, Wildlife Community Enterprises, Northern Rangelands Trust

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1.0 Introduction

The success of small enterprises is crucial to economic and social wellbeing of a community and the nation at large. As a result, the performance of small enterprises has enjoyed significant scholarly interest because it is a predictor of failure or sustainability (Amankwah-Amoah, 2016; Bhaduri & Fogarty, 2016; Halab & Lussier, 2014). Therefore, models of performance are the standard of excellence in the academic evaluation of SMEs' economic output. However, there are substantial limitations to performance models, such as covariate choice (Gupta and Gregoriou, 2018) an emphasis on the "negative" aspect of performance (failure) and the removal of a significant number of elements that may impact SMEs' good performance.

Globally, the performance of wildlife community enterprises has faced issues related to poor financial management, and lack of adequate and qualified staff (Adamba et al., 2020; Bristow et al., 2020; Ivanic et al., 2020). Regionally, these enterprises have faced limitations like low managerial support, low sales and poor quality of commodities (Chidakel, 2017). Locally, these enterprises are battling increased competition from other larger enterprises and high taxation measures (Sifuna, 2010).

It is thus obvious that local populations must be a part of sustainable wildlife conservation initiatives (Chidakel, 2017). Many contend that when people profit from protected areas and ecotourism, they are more likely to support preservation as a form of land utilization and to uphold care of the local natural assets (Nicholas & Steyn, 2012). Local communities can profit from conservation through community conservation, both directly, via salaries and wages, and indirectly by serving as providers of services and goods. Community support, according to a number of experts, is essential for the long-term viability of wildlife conservation efforts and the protected areas that go along with it (Villafiorita, 2014). Sifuna (2010) observes that controlling community expectations of ecotourism in South Africa necessitates a grasp of the variables influencing community attitudes. Understanding of societal attitudes is also beneficial for educational and awarenessraising initiatives. For residents to get involved in wildlife conservation, incentivesharing is a required, though not a sufficient prerequisite (Snyman, 2012).

Community conservation in East African nations strives to encourage sustainable management of biodiversity resources by connecting their success to advantages for local residents' livelihoods or poverty reduction initiatives (Salafsky & Wollenberg, 2000). This is often accomplished via wildlife-related businesses, like tourism, or resource gathering in the wild (Soundaian, 2019). Community conservation in Kenya came about as a result of the realization that strictly protected areas frequently fail to take local people' interests into account, thereby decreasing the community's desire to support adhere to conservation legislation or (Adamba et al., 2020). Notably, in some areas, strict protection has led to overt residents antagonism of local with conservation officials (Gerhart et al., 2019). The acknowledgement that biodiversity assets are impacted by and are reliant on



procedures of Wildlife related community activities can have national and global ramifications, and increase the need to involve communities in conservation (Chandran, 2004). As a result, it was recognized that a strategy that can balance the demands of biodiversity protection and economic development is essential, especially in developing countries.

In the dry and semiarid rangelands of northern Kenya, The Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT) is a community-based conservation program with the mission to enhance community livelihoods via animal protection (NRT. 2008). Since its establishment in 2004, it has aided in the creation of community-led organizations that combine rangeland management, large animal conservation, and community poverty reduction. By 2009, the link of enterprises helped by NRT had covers protection organization exceeding 8,300 km2 of land of Kenya's prescribed endangered land system, having expanded hugely since 2004 (Turner, 2014).

Statement of the Problem

The Northern Rangeland Trust (NRT) was created to alleviate poverty and enhance well-being within environmental the communities living around wildlife conservancies. This co-existence has resulted to success in commercial and conservation activities in the early years of the trust. establishment of Indeed, the three conservancies, namely Sera, Namunyak, and West Gate conservancies resulted in tranquility between communities that had previously been hostile to each other. Most of the employees of the community enterprises are Kenyan residing in the area where the Wildlife Community Enterprises are located. Most of the conservation initiatives are funded by foreign sources, such as USAID, Fauna and Flora International, St. Louis Zoo, and Zoos Victoria (Northern Rangeland Trust [NRT], 2016).

> "The study concluded that the performance of wildlife enterprises is founded on the philosophy of community support although, it was incorporated on minimal scale"

However, from 2018, there have been performance issues with wildlife-related community enterprises, which has prevented the NRT from forging long-term alliances with donors and specific enterprises to provide sustainable financing for community businesses and conservation management. The objective of NRT is to establish multiple conservancies within a year (NRT, 2016). This objective has been difficult to achieve. thereby occasioning loss of economic gains for the communities benefiting from the enterprises. Previous studies have focused on the benefit and models of community linked enterprise (Ismael, 2021). This implies little research has been done on the performance of these enterprises, thus a gap for an academic inquiry into the influence of community support on the performance of wildlife enterprises community of Northern



Rangeland Trust, which this study seeks to fill.

Purpose of the Study

To determine the influence of community support on the performance of wildlife community enterprises of Northern Rangeland Trust.

Research Hypothesis

Ho1 There is no relationship between community support and the performance of wildlife community enterprises of Northern Rangeland Trust.

Theoretical Review

This study is based on Morgan and Hunt's (1994) commitment-trust theory. According to the commitment-trust theory, commitment and trust are important concepts that help an organization run smoothly. Trust is faith in a partner's dependability and morality. The theory contends that communication and similar values between partners might increase trust. When partners are thought to act opportunistically, trust is reduced. Shared values are a prerequisite to commitment, and trust. The capacity of partners to foresee the intentions and conduct of the other, raises or diminishes the level of trust.

The relevance of this theory to this investigation is founded on the precept that cooperation is required for two parties to work together toward a common objective. According to Morgan and Hunt (1994), relationships in which partners do not cooperate produce outcomes that are superior to those that would be obtained through cooperation. Conflict that improves a relationship is referred to as functional conflict. Relationships can be strengthened by disagreements since they present chances for communication and readjusting expectations. In this study, it is important for social enterprises connected to wildlife to guarantee confidence so that partners can begin to view disagreements as constructive challenges that should be resolved with mutual benefit.

Empirical Review

The travel, hospitality, and visitor services sectors are just a few of the many subsectors that make up the industry for wildlife-linked community enterprises. Within each of these sectors, there are numerous independent businesses that offer a variety of services to customers who are traveling outside of their immediate surroundings. Traveling could be done for a number of different purposes, such as for fun, to visit friends and family, to work temporarily, to attend conferences, to engage in business operations, or for any other number of particular reasons. Convention dictates that all of these short-term travelers are referred to as "tourists," despite the fact that the industry makes distinctions between the different groups based on their purpose for visiting (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020).

It is too simple to believe that the results of tourism activities are exclusively the invention of the travel industry or tour operators by drawing on consumer literature. However, adopting a "transactional approach," as described in the literature on recreation, may be more illuminating. In this situation, the visitor "actively produces the recreation (tourist) experience through a transaction with the physical and social context, including what the visitor brings to the process in respect of history, perceptions, associates, skills, equipment, identities, hopes, and desires" (Hassan & Bhat, 2022). With this viewpoint, the individual's actions and their part in influencing the experience are given more weight. Therefore, the service provider does not bear sole responsibility for generating high levels of satisfaction.

The habit of tying conservation and development together has a long history, notably in sub-Saharan Africa, notwithstanding the lack of agreement in the policy discussion. Community conservation to encourage strives the sustainable management of bioresources by connecting their upkeep with advantages for local residents' lives or efforts to reduce poverty (Salafsky & Wollenberg, 2019). Typically, this has been accomplished through wildliferelated businesses, such tourism or resource in the wild. Community gathering conservation is more frequently linked with territory outside of the formal protected area network, while it has occasionally constituted a part of protected area outreach.

Local communities were less willing to accept or abide by conservation legislation when strictly protected areas frequently failed to take their interests into account. This led to the development of community conservation. In fact, in some places, tight protection led to overt antagonism between local residents and conservation officials (Robbins et al., 2020). The awareness that biodiversity resources are both subject to and depend on processes and Wildlife-related community activities that act at a national and global scale increased the need to involve communities in conservation (Ancrenaz et al., 2007). As a result, it was recognized that a strategy that can balance the demands of biodiversity protection and economic development is essential, especially in developing countries.

In the 1980s, community-based natural management, integrated resource conservation and development, and community-based conservation gained popularity as methods for achieving what were perceived to be win-win conservation and development objectives (Wells & McShane, 2019). In places outside of the statutory protected area network, these efforts in sub-Saharan Africa augmented traditional "fines and fences" conservation with an emphasis on participation and prosperity (Cloe, 2020).

The desired win-win result proved difficult to achieve. Even in the flagship programs in southern Africa that were deliberately created to promote community benefit, results tended to be unclear, nuanced, and regionally specific in practice (Mutanga, 2022). In their report on an integrated conservation and development project in Cameroon. Andersson (2019) came to the conclusion that by influencing community attitudes and behaviors, the inclusion of rural development initiatives promoting alternative livelihoods can enhance the sustainability of conservation in a region. Even this partnership, though, was not simple. Even though community engagement in the livelihoods program made community "predisposed" members biodiversitv to conservation, it did not foretell an individual's attitude or behavior with regard



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to the conservation project (Andersson, 2019).

The socioeconomic complexity of conservation outcomes in underdeveloped countries were studied by Bertaccini (2008). Although the protected areas under study had costs and benefits, these went to various stakeholders and took place at various spatial scales. The supply of ecosystem services and the preservation of biodiversity were often shown to result in benefits at the global level, with relatively low per capita costs to the international community. At the local level, opportunity costs brought on by livelihood constraints were greater than direct benefits.

These expenses approached US\$200 per home per year in the nearby hamlet of Bwindi Impenetrable National Park in Uganda, where they were primarily borne by the lowest members of society (Bertaccini, 2008). Wealthy community members were less negatively impacted, with costs per household of less than US\$150 annually. The latter, however, gained more than the members of their less fortunate neighborhood (Bertaccini, 2008). Similar to this, Upton et al., (2020) presented an investigation of the size and spatial structure of protected area networks and discovered that conservation and poverty relationships are "dynamic and locally distinctive."

While a win-win answer to biodiversity loss and poverty may be achievable, Upton et al. (2008) found that it is more likely to be uncommon than circumstances when a tradeoff between these goals is necessary. These findings were supported by a global assessment by Ivanic et al. (2020) which emphasized the unequal distribution of the

costs and benefits of conservation based on geography and demographics. Therefore, it that there would seem are several demographic and other socioeconomic aspects that influence the relationship among poverty and conservation in addition to location. The relationship between poverty and conservation has been imagined on a larger scale as a correlation between the prevalence of poverty, often at the national level, and the number, size, and location of protected areas. De Sherbinin et al. (2008) discovered negligible evidence for either a positive or negative association among poverty and protected areas in an analysis spanning 119 nations.

2.0 Materials and Methods

This study employed a descriptive research design. The investigation targeted all the 78 management employees of the Northern Rangeland wildlife community-linked enterprises. The research used a census sampling technique Data was collected through questionnaires. Internal consistency of the data collection tool was assessed through Cronbach Alpha coefficient. Validity was affirmed through experts in the field of tourism and lecturers of Kenya Methodist University. Linear regression was utilized to establish the link among the factors. A pilot test was carried out in Buffalo Springs wildlife related community enterprises in Isiolo County. Data was presented in tables and figures. The ethical standards were upheld throughout the study. An authorization letter from KeMU Research Ethics Department and a permit from NACOSTI were obtained.



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3.0 Results and Discussions

Response rate

The study had 78 respondents, comprising all the management staff of the businesses connected to the Northern Rangeland wildlife community, all of whom were given questionnaires. The response rate is indicated in Table 1.

Table 1

Response Rate

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Issued	78	
Returned	72	92%

72 out of the 78 questionnaires that were distributed were returned, accounting for a 92 percent return rate. The high response rate was ascribed to the respondents' interest in the subject and the advantages of managing wildlife-related community-based businesses. Sekaran and Bougie (2016) observe that a response rate of more than 50% is sufficient. The response rate for this study was therefore appropriate.

Reliability Results

The study conducted a pre-test. Eight questionnaires were distributed at Buffalo Springs wildlife related community enterprises in Isiolo County as shown in Table 2

Table 2

Reliability Analysis

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
Community Support	0.797	8
Performance of wildlife linked		
community enterprises	0.869	8

Community support had a Cronbach alpha of 0.797 and performance of wildlife-linked community enterprises 0.869. According to Anchal (2019), a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.7 and above is acceptable for

making accurate assumptions in social science investigations.

Results of Community Support

The respondents were asked to evaluate their respective businesses' performance and



community participation. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Community Participation and Performance Wildlife Linked Community Enterprises

Level of Agreement	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	03	04
Agree	11	15
Neutral	05	07
Disagree	14	19
Strongly Disagree	39	54
Total	72	100

As displayed in Table 3, many of the respondents (54%) disagreed that their wildlife community enterprises give community participation; 15% agreed that their wildlife community enterprises offer community participation, while 07% were neutral. This implies that the extent of community participation in wildlife community enterprises was on a small extent. These findings agree with the Ancrenaz et al. (2019)who found out community

participation is very minimal in the management of wildlife community enterprises in Africa.

Satisfaction Level of the Community Support

The study's respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the community's support in the operations of wildlife linked enterprises. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Satisfaction	<i>Level of the</i>	<i>Community</i>	Support
~	~	-	

Level of Agreement	Frequency	Percentage
Highly Satisfied	13	18
Satisfied	03	04
Neutral	05	07
Dissatisfied	41	57
Highly Dissatisfied	10	14
Total	72	100

As represented in Table 4, the study revealed that majority of the participants (57%) were

dissatisfied with community support in the operations of wildlife linked enterprises,



while only 18% of the respondents were highly satisfied. These results are consistent with those of De Sherbinin et al. (2020) who discovered that there is little proof of good association between communities and wildlife protected areas.

Correlation Results

The null hypothesis of the study stated that there was no relationship between community support and the performance of wildlife community enterprises of Northern Rangeland Trust. Pearson Correlation was used to test the hypothesis, as described in Table 5.

Table 5

		Performance	Community Support
Performance	Correlation	1	.616**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.01
	N	72	72
Community Support	Correlation	.616**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.01	
	Ν	72	72

Correlation Results

The Pearson correlation coefficient for community support was $r=0.616^{**}$ at $\alpha < 0.01$ and 95% confidence level. The results mean that community support had a statistically significant impact on the success of community wildlife-connected firms and that the null hypothesis was not accepted at a 95% confidence level. These results are in line with those by Kumar and Sharma (2008) who found a strong correlation between local activities and the effectiveness of wildlife conservancies.

Linear Regression Analysis

In order to identify factors influencing the performance of community enterprises in Kenya that are related to wildlife, the researcher carried out a linear regression analysis, as shown in Table 6.



Table 6

Linear Regression Analysis

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R	Standard	
			Square	Error of the	
				Estimate	_
1	0.923	0.852	0.789	0.6273	
Anova					
Model	Sum of	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
	Squares		1		0
Regression Residual	0.003	7	0.001	3.867	0.015
	0.068	182	0.021		
	0.071	189			
Regression Coefficien	ts				
Model	Unstandardiz	zed	Standardized	Т	Sig
	Coefficients		Coefficients		
			В		
	Beta	Standard			
		Error			
Constant	1.139	1.2235	-	1.515	0.000
Community Support	0.887	0.1032	0.152	4.223	0.000
(CS)					

Table 6 demonstrates that only 85.2% of community support affect the performance of wildlife-related community enterprises in NRT. Data in Table 6 yielded a F statistic of 3.867 and a p-value of 0.015, which is less than 0.05; indicating that community support had a positive influence on the performance of wildlife community enterprises of Northern Rangeland Trust.

The performance of wildlife-related community enterprises in Kenya is the dependent variable, and community support (CS) was the independent variable. In order to identify characteristics affecting the performance of community enterprises in NRT that are related to wildlife, linear regression analysis was used. $(Y = \beta 0 + \beta_1 X_1)$ becomes: Performance of Wildlife Linked Community Enterprises (PWLCE) = 1.139+ 0.887CS, where PWLCE represents Performance of Wildlife Linked Community Enterprises; CS represents community support.

The results of the analysis of the data demonstrated that setting all other independent variables to zero, a unit rise in community support will lead to performance of wildlife linked community enterprises by a magnitude of 0.887. It was noted that community support had a critical value of



0.00 at the 5% level of significance, and 95% level of confidence; suggesting that there was a statistically significant positive relationship between the community support and the performance.

4.0 Conclusion

It was concluded that performance of community wildlife-linked enterprise is founded on the philosophy of community support. That notwithstanding, the study concluded that community support was incorporated on minimal scale by the management of wildlife conservancies.

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Additionally, it was noted that there was high non-involvement of key stakeholders, lack of donor support, and lack of necessary resources needed to sustain performance of the wildlife-linked community enterprises.

5.0 Recommendations

The study recommends sensitization of wildlife-linked community enterprises managers on the need to incorporate fully the support of communities in the operations of their conservancies. This will help them to encourage local tourism, especially from the community surrounding their enterprises.

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