

Members of County Assembly (MCAs) Perception Towards Kakamega County Assembly Library Services, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to find out the perception of Members of County Assembly (MCAs) towards Kakamega County Assembly library and services, find out promotional strategies by Kakamega County Assembly to enhance usage of the library by MCAs and to establish the challenges encountered in enhancing the usage of Kakamega County Assembly library and services. The study was ground upon access, capacity and environment framework and adopted a descriptive research design. The target population was 91 MCAs, 3 library staff and the clerk of the county assembly whereas the sample size was 77 respondents. Simple random sampling technique was used to select MCAs whereas purposive sampling was used to select the library staff and the clerk of the county assembly. Questionnaire were used for data collection from the MCAs and the library staff. Interview technique was used to collect data from the clerk of the county assembly. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences and presented graphically and in tabular form. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically and presented through narrations. The findings established that while the general perception of the MCAs towards library services and resources at Kakamega County Assembly (KCA) was not favorable, they acknowledged the importance of the library. The study recommended that KCA should ensure all services are centrally provided within the same precincts for ease of MCAs to patronize library resources and services. The study also recommended that KCA should engage in rigorous marketing strategies for library services including but not limited to opportunistic approach, presentations, library tours, producing a leaflet or a guide about services in the library and induction programme for new MCAs. Lastly, the study recommend that KCA should consider rolling out remote access services to facilitate the technologically savvy MCAs to patronize library resources and services without necessarily being physically present in the library. This study contributes to the body of knowledge particularly in as far legislative libraries in the county assemblies in Kenya is concerned. Furthermore, the study makes a significant contribution to the literature on parliamentary and legislative libraries that is very limited.

Key Words: *Legislative library, Marketing mix, Perception, Quality, Information resources and services*

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Libraries in legislative settings play a central role in supporting the realization of making informed decisions in democracies. Legislative libraries serve to provide legislators with unbiased and full information meant to aid their core mandate of representation, oversight and legislation (Watt, 2010). Legislative information centers and services are based on the ideals of enlightenment; serving well informed and curious members who use reason and science in contributing to legislative and policy issues as well as holding the executive to accountability. Decision making processes and legislative debates in parliaments ought to be entirely driven by empirical evidence and objective facts rather than abstract political sentiments and personal opinion. Whereas parliamentary libraries have existed for decades, there is scanty independent studies published about them (Al Baghal, 2019). This is a clear indicator that special libraries, particularly legislative or parliamentary libraries have hardly been explored. This revelation is undeniable based on the availability of literature which is much limited.

In Kenya, the contemporary county structures of governance are relatively new having become operational in the year 2013. In fact, some of the offices are still being established. The county government structure comprises of two arms which include the county executive and the county assembly. The county assembly, which is of interest in this study is charged with the responsibility for representation, oversight and legislation. The county assemblies have offices, among them, libraries and secretariat which fall under the office of the clerks of the county assemblies to support their functions (Ishola, 2014). The newness of county government structures and offices could imply that there might be little cognizance of the role of libraries in delivery of information programmes and services crucial in realizing the mandates of the Members of County Assemblies (MCAs). The usage of libraries and associated information services play a principal role in helping members to make objective and informed decisions, hold the executive to account and participating in the legislative and policy issues concerning the county governments. This essentially is a hallmark and a contribution towards good public governance and essence of the MCAs exercising mandate bestowed upon them.

Kenya embraces the devolved system of government in which powers have been delegated to subnational levels referred to as counties from the central government. Devolved system of governments differ in their administration from one country to another. Some of the unitary states with devolved system of governance include China, Colombia, Denmark, France, Finland, Greece, Italy, Indonesia, Japan, Netherland, Portugal, South Africa, Tanzania, Spain and United Kingdom among others. Closely related to devolution is federalism (Smith, 2019). The major difference between these two systems of governments relates to their autonomy and powers. Functionally, devolution and federalism serve the same purpose. Countries with federalism system of governance include United States of America, India, Nigeria, Brazil, Mexico, Australia, Argentina, Switzerland, Canada, Germany and Russia among others. In both devolution and federalism, there are parliaments or assemblies which are bestowed with legislative functions.

Whereas there is a consensus that legislators need access to accurate, up-to-date and timely information in order to facilitate effective decision making, they are nevertheless militated by challenges associated with using the libraries. The differences among the libraries on their usage was considered based on the mitigation measures adopted to address the challenges. The decline and or poor reading culture may also be considered as impacting negatively on the usage of

libraries. However, the decline or poor decline is attributed to myriad reasons varying from one country to another. The decline and or poor reading culture is catastrophic as reading is perceived to foster creating thinking, building inquisitive minds and enhancing an individual lifelong learning abilities (Bulgurcuoglu, 2016). Special libraries, particularly legislative libraries, regardless of any particular subject of investigation, are hardly given dominance in the published literature. This scarcity of literature and information regarding legislative libraries thus calls for dedicated research on them.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the fact that performance rating of county assemblies is based on private members' bills, some county assemblies have passed no bill or legislation raising questions about their ability to perform their core mandate of legislation. In the past two years no single MCA has successfully sponsored legislation or a bill in the county assemblies of Bungoma, Embu, Homa Bay, Isiolo, Kajiado, Kericho, Kiambu, Kisumu, Mandera, Meru, Migori, Mombasa, Nakuru, Nyamira, Nyandarua, Siaya, Tharaka-Nithi, Turkana and Wajir (Gisesa, 2019). Whereas some county assemblies have had ward representatives passing private member bills, concerns have been expressed about the quality and constitutionality of some of these bills (Menya et al., 2015). One of the reasons that has been attributed to the poor quality of these laws is the questionable academic qualifications of some MCAs. It is worth noting that county assemblies have invested in libraries which have resources to enable and enhance the legislators' capacity in delivery of their core mandates.

This state of affairs could be an indicator that ward representatives may hardly be using the county assembly library resources and services. Furthermore, the fact that academic qualifications of some of the legislators are questionable means that they could be skeptical about the role of the libraries and may subsequently develop apathy towards usage of these libraries. Lack or limited usage of libraries may result to poor citizen services by the legislators and unless drastic and urgent measures are taken into account to promote the usage of libraries, implementation of the Constitution of Kenya, 2010, particularly in realization of the vision of devolution would be greatly affected. It is against this background that this study seeks to investigate the perception of MCAs on county assembly library and strategies for promoting and enhancing the usage of county assembly libraries with particular focus on Kakamega County Assembly (KCA) library.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to establish the perception of MCAs towards Kakamega County library services.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study was guided by Access, Capacity and Environment (ACE) framework. The ACE framework was adapted and refined by Gould and Gomez (2010) from Real Access framework that was developed in 2005 in South Africa. The ACE framework is used to look at public access venues such as cybercafés, telecenters and public libraries among others that offer public access to information particularly through information and communication technologies (ICTs). This framework is based on the premise that 3 pillars are key in understanding public access venues. These three pillars are access, capacity and environment. The first pillar of this framework is access. This pillar encompasses four elements which include physical access to the venue,

suitability of the venue, affordability of the venue and technology access. According to this pillar, physical access to the venue relates to the venue location, venue infrastructure and the hours of operation. Suitability of the venue relates to physical safety of the venue, materials and people, venue that is commensurate with the local conditions and needs and its ability to serve all categories of users. Affordability of the venue relates to sustainability of ICT, the venue's financial sustainability, competence of services and cost vis-à-vis daily needs. Technology access relates to the infrastructure that supports the technology as well as the affordability of the technology. Successfully fulfilling all the key dimensions of the access pillar may provide a venue that is suitable to the users and consequently enhance and promote the usage of libraries.

The second pillar of this framework is capacity (Munyoro, 2017). This pillar encompasses three elements which include human capacity and training, meeting local needs and social appropriation. Human capacity and training element lays emphasis on the staff attributes as well as user attributes. Staff attributes relate to digital literacy and their attitude towards supporting information needs. User attributes relate to their perception of venue and user digital literacy. Meeting the local needs for users emphasizes on the relevancy of content and services provided whereas social appropriation relates to the integration of technology into culture in meeting the needs of users. This pillar is useful in understanding how human capacity for both staff of the library as well as the users themselves is important in ensuring that information centers are used as desired. The third pillar of this framework is environment. This pillar encompasses three elements which include socio-cultural factors, political will and popular support. Socio-cultural factors are a combination of various factors such as gender, age, education, religion, socio-economic status and ethnicity which are deemed to influence the usage of ICTs. Political element on the other hand demonstrates the regulatory and legal framework in supporting information centers and consequently their usage. Lastly, popular support is an attribute aimed at demonstrating the support of the information centers as being backed and supported by the users. This pillar is essential as it helps to understand the appropriate and suitable environment that is deemed to support the importance of information centers.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework.

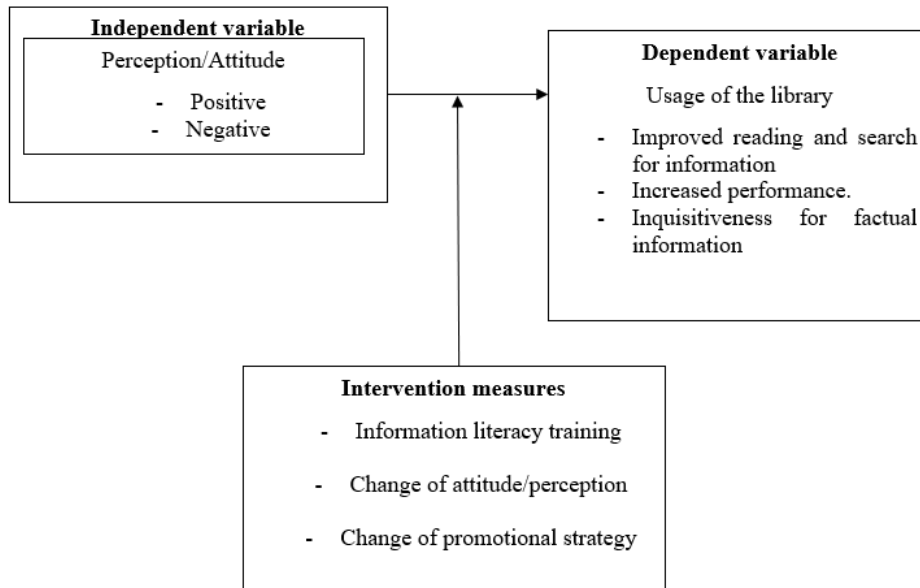


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3.0 Research Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive research design. This research design was suitable for the present study as it examined the perception of MCAs towards KCA library and services with a view of recommending strategies of enhancing the usage of county assembly libraries. Furthermore, the suitability of this research design was due to the choice of the research instrument that was used to collect data for analysis and help in description of practices for improving strategies of enhancing and promoting the usage of county assembly libraries. The study was conducted in Kakamega County Assembly. The choice of this locale was based on the fact that Kakamega County Assembly is among those that have largest representation of MCAs given the numerical strength. The study target population constituted all the MCAs, library staff and the clerk in the County Assembly of Kakamega.

To determine the sample size, the researcher used the formula provided by Yamane (1967) for sample size determination to obtain a sample of 77 respondents who comprised 73 MCAs, 3 library staff and the clerk of the county assembly. The study adopted simple random sampling technique to select MCAs while purposive sampling was used to select all the library staff and the clerk of the county assembly. Questionnaire and interview were used as data collection methods. Questionnaire was used to collect data from the MCAs and library staff whereas interview technique was used to collect data from the clerk of the county assembly. An interview schedule was prepared and used to guide the interview process with the clerk of the county assembly. The collected data was scrutinized for completeness. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. Collected quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and presented graphically as well as in tabular form. On the other hand, qualitative data were thematically analyzed and presented through narrations.

4.0 Data Analysis Results

4.1 Importance of the Library in the County Assembly

The researcher sought to find out the opinion of the MCAs on the importance of the library in the county assembly. Understanding the opinion of the MCAs who are basically the patrons of the library services is an indicator of the role that the library plays in the county assembly. The respondents to this question were the MCAs and the Clerk. The findings are presented in Figure 2.

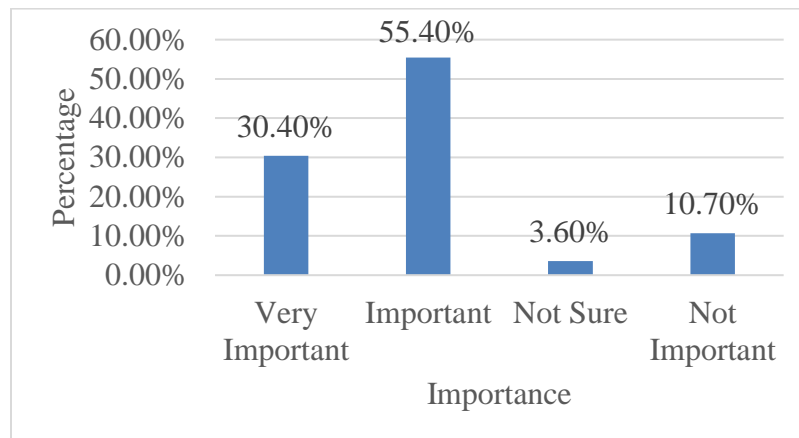


Figure 2: Importance of the Library in the County Assembly

Figure 2 shows that at least 85% of the respondents were of the opinion that library services were either very important or important in the county assembly. It was also revealed that 6 (10.7%) considered the library services in the county assembly as not important whereas 2 (3.6%) of the respondents cited that they were not sure of the importance of the library in the county assembly. It is interesting that respondents who had either undergraduate or postgraduate degrees constituted the majority who indicated that the library was either very important or important. The clerk through the interview noted that the library is very important in the county assembly as it is the library that preserves the history of the county assembly given that the county assembly is a house of records. The finding of the respondents on the importance of the library is akin to endorsing the value of the library in the county assembly.

The findings of this study concur with those of Horrigan (2016) America but conflicts with those of Oyewole and Adetimirin (2015) in Nigeria who established otherwise. This means that the perception and attitude of the MCAs towards library services in the county assembly is favourable. This may also be a demonstration of how the MCAs view the significance of the library and the services offered in the county assembly. The implication of this finding is that the library while acting as a repository of the history of the county assembly may be considered as central to the county assembly particularly for reference and information services. The library could be considered as having a wealth of information on operations of the county assembly as well as information about the county in general and therefore deemed to be a valuable resource center.

4.2 Impact of Closure of Kakamega County Assembly Library

The respondents were asked how they would be impacted by the closure of the KCA library. This was necessary because closure of the library would have an impact on those who patronize the library. The findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Impact of Closure of KCA Library

Impact	Frequency	Percentage
Major Impact	7	12.5
Minor Impact	33	58.9
No Impact	16	28.6
Total	56	100

Table 1 shows that 33 (58.9%) of the respondents indicated that they would experience a minor impact on closure of the county assembly library. Seven (12.5%) stated that closure of the county assembly would impact them heavily whereas 16 (28.6%) indicated that they will experience no impact on closure of the library. Through the interview, it was indicated that closure of the library should be able to largely impact the respondents since their information needs are fulfilled extensively through library services. This finding is interesting when more than three-quarters of the respondents state that closure of the library will have a minor or no impact on them yet 85% of them indicated that the library as being either very important or important. This finding is in tandem with that of Horrigan (2016) who indicated that those that are affected by closure of library are degree holders. However, this finding may not wholly concur as it clearly shows that some of the respondents who are degree holders cited that closure of the library will have either a minor or no impact on them. This finding could imply that the respondents may not be having adequate information or knowledge concerning the usefulness of the library to them as legislators.

4.3 Description of the KCA Library Services and Resources

The respondents were asked to state how they will describe the library services and resources offered at KCA. This was important as the quality of services offered determines how the library is patronized. This question was ostensibly to be answered by the MCAs as they are the primary users of the library. The findings are presented in Figure 3.

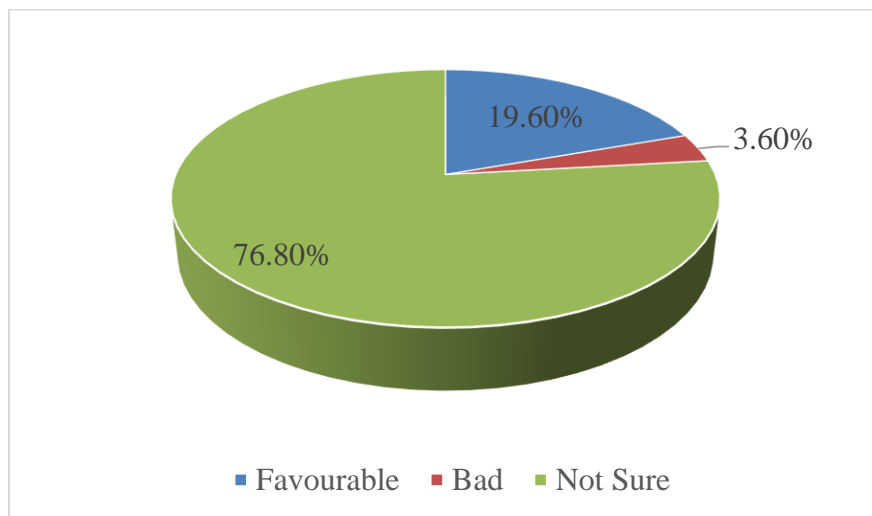


Figure 3: Description of KCA Library Services and Resources

Figure 3 shows that at least three quarters of the respondents who accounted for 76.8% of the respondents cited that they were not sure of how they would describe the services and resources offered in the KCA library. It was also noted that 11 (19.6%) of the respondents cited that the services and resources in the library were favourable whereas 2 (3.6%) of the respondents indicated the services and resources provided as being bad. None of the MCAs described the services and resources offered as either being excellent or worse. The clerk through the interview described the services and resources offered as being favourable citing the conditions that the assembly is encountering as well as the fact that all offices are not centralized. The library is not located within the same precincts as to where the MCAs hold meetings and debates.

A similar finding was revealed by Oyewole and Adetimirin (2015) in Nigeria who noted that the perception towards the library services and resources was generally not favourable. The fact that the library is not located in the same precincts where the main business for the MCAs occurs could perhaps explain why majority of the MCAs cited that they were not sure of the quality of services and resources offered. This essentially means the location of the library could be the primary reason why the respondents are not sure of quality of services and resources offered. The implication of this finding is that majority of the MCAs hardly patronize the library based on their inability to describe the quality of services and resources offered.

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concludes that the general perception of the MCAs towards library services is not favorable although they acknowledge the importance of library services in the county assembly. The study therefore recommends that Kakamega County Assembly should ensure all services are centrally provided within the same precincts in order to enable the MCAs patronize the library for the resources and services with ease. Kakamega County Assembly should engage in rigorous marketing strategies for library services including but not limited to opportunistic approach, presentations, library tours, producing a leaflet or a guide about services in the library and induction programme for new MCAs. The library at KCA should also consider rolling out remote access services to facilitate the technologically savvy MCAs patronize the library resources and services without necessarily being physically present in the library.

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