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Examining the Impact of Human Rights Awareness in Governance: Insights from National Government Administrative Officers (Ngao) in Belgut Sub-County, Kericho

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between human rights awareness and governance practices among National Government Administration Officers (NGAOs) in Belgut Sub-County, Kenya. Despite Kenya's 2010 Constitution enshrining robust human rights protections, a gap persists between constitutional provisions and their practical application in local governance. Using a case study approach, the research focused on Chiefs and Assistant Chiefs as key actors in local policy implementation. Data was collected through self-administered questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS. Results indicate that 73% of NGAOs reported high awareness of human rights, with 62% recognizing the importance of human rights principles in governance. However, only 61% expressed confidence in applying these principles in their daily work. The study also revealed a significant gender imbalance among NGAOs, with 65% male representation. Land disputes (21%), gender-based violence (16%), and child rights violations (14.3%) emerged as the most prevalent human rights issues in the sub-county. These findings highlight the complex interplay between human rights awareness, perceived importance, and practical application in local governance. The study underscores the need for targeted interventions to bridge the gap between constitutional ideals and on-the-ground implementation, particularly in addressing gender representation and building capacity for human rights application among local officials. This research contributes to the development of evidence-based strategies for enhancing human rights integration in Kenyan public administration.

Keywords: Human rights awareness, Governance National Government Administration Officers.

1.0 Introduction

The integration of human rights principles into governance practices has become increasingly crucial in today's world, with governments recognizing that accountability, transparency, and equality are essential for building trust and legitimacy (Beetham, 1999). This shift has profoundly impacted governmental operations, placing human rights at the core of policies, institutions, and practices. The focus on human rights not only lays a strong foundation for democratic governance but also empowers citizens to actively participate in civic life and hold their governments accountable (Howard & Donnelly, 2019). However, the implementation of these principles, particularly at the local level in Kenya, faces significant challenges due to varying levels of awareness and understanding among key stakeholders. Despite Kenya's 2010 Constitution enshrining a robust framework for human rights protection, including a comprehensive Bill of Rights (Constitution of Kenya, 2010, Articles 27-51), there exists a substantial gap between constitutional provisions and their practical application in public administration.

Research has highlighted how the lack of human rights awareness and the failure to integrate these principles into governance frameworks can lead to marginalization, discrimination, and oppression of certain individuals and groups (Banik, 2010; Welch, 2001). Studies on governance in developing countries have shown that concentration of power, misuse of public resources, and suppression of dissent can result in violations of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights (Landman, 2005; Manby, 2016). The absence of transparency, accountability, and inclusive decision-making processes can enable human rights abuses by both state and non-state actors (Gaventa & McGee, 2013; McLoughlin, 2015).

In Kenya, the level of awareness and understanding of human rights provisions varies significantly among different segments of the population. While there is general awareness of the Bill of Rights, the depth of knowledge and ability to effectively utilize these constitutional guarantees is often uneven. Civil society organizations, legal professionals, and government officials working directly on human rights issues tend to have a more comprehensive understanding (Kanyinga, 2014; Odhiambo, 2018). However, awareness among the general public, particularly in marginalized communities, is often limited (Nyanjom, 2011). This disparity in human rights knowledge hinders citizens' ability to claim their rights and hold the government accountable (Barasa & Mwamba, 2017).

National government administration officers, who play a crucial role in translating national policies into local action, often struggle to effectively integrate human rights principles into their governance practices. These officers are responsible for ensuring effective delivery of public services, enforcing human

rights at the local level, facilitating public participation, and promoting transparency and accountability (Odhiambo, 2018; Mutua, 2019; Kanyinga, 2014; Kameri-Mbote, 2013). Research has shown that government officials with a strong understanding of human rights deliver public services more effectively and address the needs of marginalized groups (Mutua, 2019). However, they face challenges in balancing competing priorities and navigating the complexities of human rights in governance (Ndungu & Aloo, 2018). Studies emphasize the need for training and capacity building to enhance human rights awareness and skills among these officials (Barasa & Mwamba, 2017; Kanyinga, 2014).

The problem, therefore, lies in addressing the disconnect between constitutional human rights guarantees and their practical implementation at the local level, particularly focusing on the role of national government administration officers and the impact of their human rights awareness on governance practices. This issue requires thorough investigation to inform evidence-based strategies for enhancing human rights integration in public administration and ultimately improving the protection and promotion of human rights in Kenya's governance landscape (Fukuda-Parr & Murthy, 2013).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Implementing human rights principles in governance, particularly at the local level in Kenya, faces significant challenges due to varying levels of awareness and understanding among key stakeholders. Despite Kenya's 2010 Constitution enshrining a robust framework for human rights protection, a substantial gap exists between the constitutional provisions and their practical application in public administration. National government administration officers, often struggle to integrate human rights principles into their governance practices effectively. This challenge is exacerbated by uneven levels of human rights awareness across different segments of society, with marginalized communities often having limited knowledge of their constitutional rights. The disparity in awareness hinders citizens' ability to claim their rights and hold the government accountable, undermining the transformative potential of the Constitution's human rights provisions. This knowledge gap impedes the development of targeted interventions to improve human rights implementation in local governance.

This issue requires a thorough investigation to inform evidence-based strategies for enhancing human rights integration in public administration and ultimately improving the protection and promotion of human rights in Kenya's governance landscape.

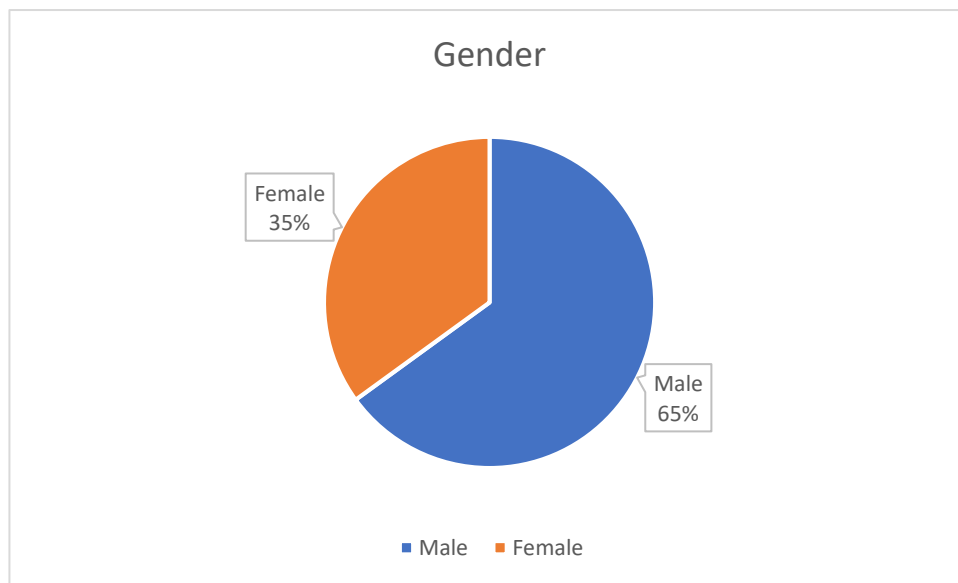
1.3 Specific objectives

1. Assess the extent of human rights awareness among National Government Administrative Officers (NGAOs) in Belgut Sub-County, Kericho County.

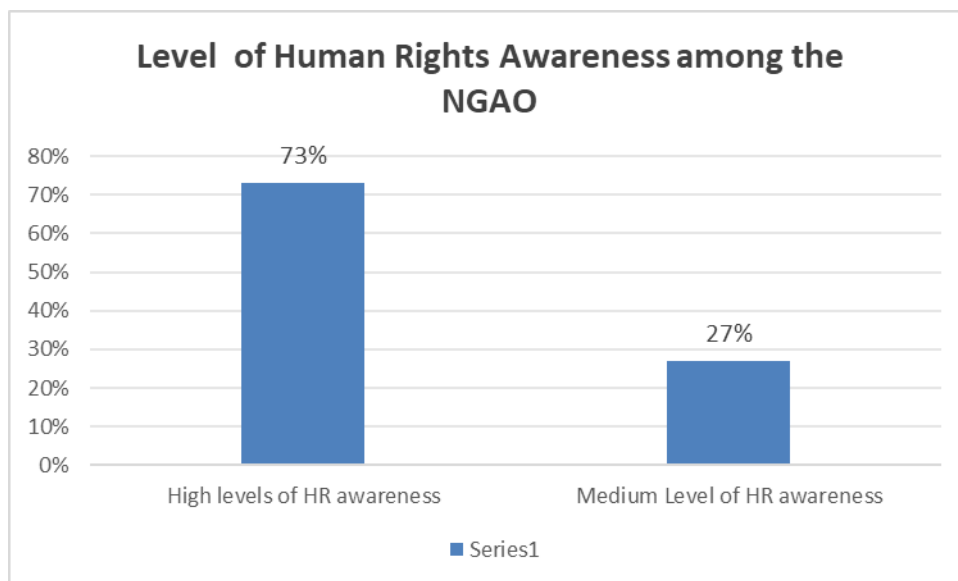
2.0 Methodology

This study adopted a case study design to thoroughly examine the interplay between human rights awareness and governance practices among national government administration officers in Belgut Sub-County, Kenya. The case study approach was selected for its capacity to provide a context-rich exploration of this complex phenomenon (Yin, 2018). The research focused on Chiefs and Assistant Chiefs, key actors in local governance and policy implementation. This strategic selection of participants allowed for a targeted investigation into the frontline application of human rights principles in Kenyan public administration. Data collection primarily utilized a closed-ended questionnaire. The questionnaire was self-administered, accommodating the participants' literacy levels and ensuring comfortable, honest responses (Oso & Owens, 2005; Kasomo, 2007). For data analysis, responses were coded and processed using SPSS. While the methodology was designed for comprehensive insights, it's important to acknowledge the potential for self-reporting bias inherent in questionnaire-based research. This limitation was addressed in the interpretation and discussion of results, ensuring a balanced and critical analysis of the findings.

3.0 Results and Discussion

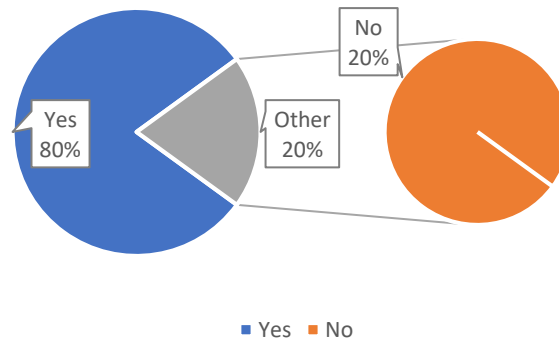


The gender distribution of National Government Administration Officers (NGAO) in Kenya's Belget Sub-County was examined in this study. Based on a sample of 26 officers, the results showed a notable gender imbalance: 9 females (35%) and 17 males (65%). According to this data, there appears to be a high male prevalence in the NGAO in this specific sub-county. The underrepresentation of women in the NGAO may make it more difficult to advance gender equality in Kenyan society. To attain a more balanced workforce, policies that promote women's participation in NGAO recruitment processes should be implemented.



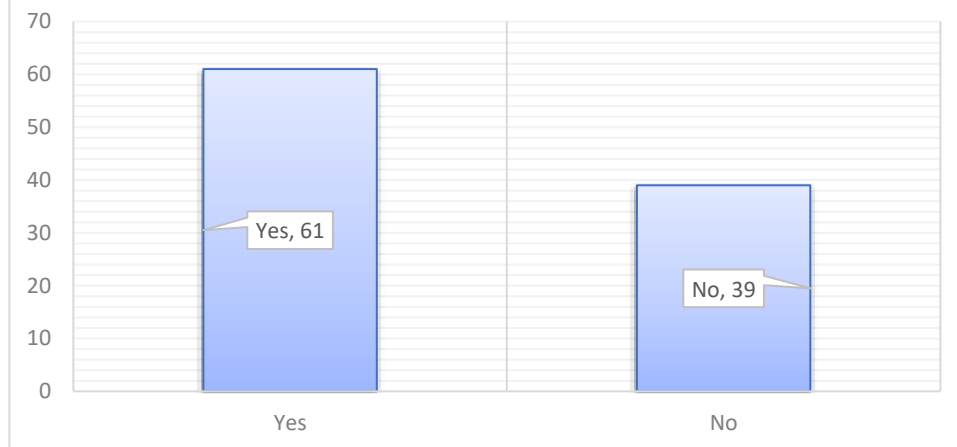
This study investigated Kenyan National Government Administration Officers' (NGAO) knowledge of human rights. The findings show that 73% of respondents had a high awareness of human rights, whereas 27% of those surveyed had a medium level of awareness regarding human rights. The findings show that most NGAO officers are aware of the fundamentals of human rights issues to some extent, though, their expertise might not be translated into a consistent implementation of human rights principles in their job. Additionally, a further observation on perceptions revealed that National Government Administration Officers (NGAO) in Kenya acknowledged the relevance of human rights principles in governance. According to the study, 62% of respondents believed that governance should incorporate human rights principles, while 38% disagreed. These findings suggest that a majority of NGAO officers recognize the importance of human rights in promoting good governance. However, this perception aligns with earlier findings that indicated only a moderate level of human rights awareness among these officers. This suggests that while many may conceptually support the integration of human rights into governance, they may lack the practical knowledge or skills necessary for effective implementation.

Capabilities of Human Rights Legal Framework in Addressing Governance and Social ethical issues

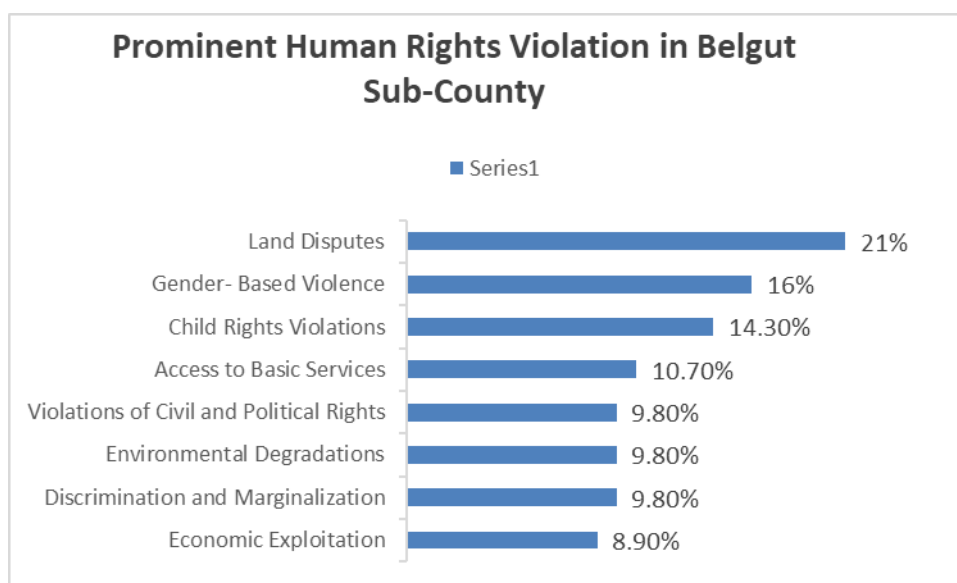


This study examined whether human rights laws in Kenya offer methods for resolving issues with social justice and governance. According to the research, 80% of participants concurred that national and international human rights treaties specify particular rights and responsibilities that serve as models for resolving problems like poverty, discrimination, and environmental degradation. However, 20% of those surveyed disagreed, claiming that the mere existence of human rights laws does not ensure their implementation. Effective implementation can be hampered by weak institutions, corruption, and a lack of funding. The findings suggest that human rights legal frameworks are useful instruments for dealing with matters of social ethics and governance. However, elements like cultural sensitivity, the extent of rights granted, and the capacity to uphold them all affect how effective they are.

Confidence in the application of human rights principles in the daily administrative tasks



This study investigated the degree of confidence Kenyan National Government Administration Officers (NGAO) have in their ability to implement human rights principles in their day-to-day work. The findings demonstrated that 61% of NGAO officers were confident in their ability to apply human rights principles. 39% of NGAO officers expressed a lack of confidence in their ability to apply human rights principles. The majority of NGAO officers, according to the results, think they can incorporate human rights principles into their routine work. Still, a sizable minority lacks confidence. Although 62% of respondents acknowledged the significance of human rights in governance, only 61% were confident about their application in day-to-day work.



This study identified trends in human rights violations within the Belgut sub-county: land disputes (21%) emerged as the most prominent violation. This suggests potential issues with land ownership, access, or use, impacting people's security and livelihoods. Gender-based violence (16%) was a significant concern, highlighting the need for measures to protect women and girls from violence and discrimination. Child Rights Violations (14.3%) raise serious issues about the protection and well-being of children in Belgut. Access to Basic Needs (10.7%) indicates a lack of fulfillment of fundamental human rights such as access to food, water, sanitation, and healthcare.

Other rights identified included violations of civil and political rights (9.8%), limiting freedoms of expression, assembly or participation in political processes. Environmental degradation (9.8%) is a potential harm to the environment and the right of people to a healthy environment. Discrimination and Marginalization (9.8%) highlight unequal treatment based on ethnicity, religion, or socioeconomic status. Economic Exploitation (8.95%) indicates unfair labour practices or economic activities that disadvantage certain groups. These violations are likely to be linked. For example, land disputes could contribute to economic development, while environmental degradation could limit access to basic needs.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined different aspects of human rights and governance in Belgut Sub-County, Kenya, focusing on National Government Administration Officers (NGAO). Some key findings include:

There is a significant gender imbalance in the NGAO, with more men than women. Most NGAO officers have some awareness of human rights but may lack deeper understanding and practical application. While many NGAO officers recognize the importance of human rights in good governance, there is a gap between their perception and actual application. Human rights legal frameworks offer valuable tools but have limitations in terms of enforcement and cultural sensitivity. NGAO officers show varying levels of confidence in applying human rights principles in their daily work. Common human rights violations in Belgut include land disputes, gender-based violence, and limited access to basic needs.

Recommendation

- 1) The Government should promote gender equality by Implementing policies that encourage women's participation in NGAO recruitment to achieve a more balanced workforce.
- 2) Higher education should enhance human rights training by Providing comprehensive training programs to deepen NGAO officers' understanding and practical skills in applying human rights principles.
- 3) The Kenya National Commission on Human Rights should Address limitations in human rights legal frameworks by considering cultural sensitivities ensuring adequate resources for effective enforcement and developing targeted interventions to address prominent human rights issues like land disputes, gender-based violence, and limited access to basic needs in Belgut.

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