

**EFFECT OF FOCUS GROUPS MONITORING TOOLS ON PERFORMANCE OF
WOMEN ENTERPRISE FUNDED PROJECTS IN WAJIR NORTH
CONSTITUENCY, WAJIR COUNTY, KENYA**

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Abstract

The use of monitoring tools is one area of improvement that helps address the issue of measuring performance and success of projects. The purpose of this study was to find out the the impact of focus groups monitoring tool on performance of Women Enterprise Funded projects in Wajir North Constituency. The target population for this study was the 82 women groups who have benefited from Women Enterprise Funded and 1 sub-county Gender, Social and Development Officer. This study used census sampling to select all 82 groups. This study used the questionnaires as the tool for data collection. Data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics used frequency tabulation and the mean while inferential statistics used the Pearson correlation coefficient. The study concluded that small focus groups are efficient and measurable, but should be controlled to prevent informal debates and false conclusions resulting from the influence of dominant speakers. The study recommends that women-owned enterprises should use small focus groups that are controlled to prevent informal debates and false conclusions.

Keywords: *Focus Groups, Monitoring Tools, Enterprise Performance*

INTRODUCTION

Impoverishment is the primary characteristic that distinguishes those who live in developing nations from those who live in developed ones. It is a multi-dimensional idea incorporating economic, social political and cultural elements (Nyika, 2012). It refers to a state in which one does not have access to basic necessities such as food, clothing, or a roof over their head (Scott et.al, 2009). Many of the world's economies have struggled to pull their respective people out of poverty, but they have encountered a variety of roadblocks along the way. In several countries, like the United States of America, the government doled out grants to women in 2010 amounting to a total of 20 billion US dollars (Kimonyi, 2010). Every year, more than 500,000 new companies are started up in the United States, and women own or control approximately half of those companies (Kizlik, 2010). It's not true that males make the vast majority of business choices in Kenya, despite the stereotype. The enactment of the Local Government Act of 2007 in Ghana in the same year made it feasible for the resources of the nation to be distributed around the country in a more decentralized manner. The program put a strong focus on microfinancing, economic development in rural areas, the promotion of effective government, and the building of harmonious communities. These

funds confront challenges such as a lack of microfinance, poor roads, low education, especially among girls, insufficient women's empowerment, and poor reproductive health care practices. Other challenges include a lack of women's empowerment and inadequate health care practices.

It has been reported in the Kenya Economic survey (2015) many women do more of agricultural farming, thus producing the greatest percentage of food consumed in the country. According to the survey, only 30 percent women have permanent and pensionable jobs while majority (70%) are unemployed and have opened small scale businesses while others generally rely on agriculture as a source of income thus making most of them to lack adequate income for their families (Economic survey, 2015). Most women today are not as educated as men, thus making majority of them to rely on men for provision of the family needs. Unlike men in Kenya, most of the country's women do not own any real estate (Mwangi, 2015). In August 2007, the Women's Enterprise Fund was started with the goal of closing the economic gap between men and women that had grown because men had more access to economic empowerment (Republic of Kenya, 2015). Women-owned businesses can get money from the money that is given to them every year. Residents of the sub county can get these funds through financial intermediaries at an interest rate of 8% and through the sub county with the help of sub county committees. In this case, a 5% administrative fee is taken out of the total amount up front. The goal of the fund is to help fight poverty by giving women and the businesses they own more economic power (Centre for Governance and Development, 2017). Most of its money goes to programs called Income Generating Activities, or IGAs, which help people and make money at the same time.

Community groups that have signed up with sub-county committees get both the C-WEF and the PECRF. Funds for the PEC are kept in the sub-county bank account, but they can't be spent until the Commission says so. On the other hand, C-WEF funds are kept in the Ministry's bank account at the head office, but proposals are reviewed at the sub-county level. This is the only thing that makes them different. PEC funds are kept in the sub-county bank account, but they can only be spent after the Commission says so (Centre for Governance and Development, 2017). When trying to figure out how much devolved funds have helped the fight against poverty, it is important to do regular checks on how C-WEF and PEC-sponsored projects are being carried out. It was decided to make a Monitoring directorate so that people in the community could learn monitoring skills.

Problem Statement

It has been argued that most NGOs are not achieving their planned objective in finances enterprises in many countries today. Monitoring of projects help in addressing the issue of measuring the achievement of projects (Mulwa, 2013). Nowadays, monitoring has become a must for all projects under donations, in such a way that no single donor country funding projects would proceed without a planned monitoring tool (Mwangi, 2015). Several studies concerning monitoring done focused on monitoring methods. For example, Barasa (2014) examined assessments carried out in a variety of nations and shown that using rigorous research methodologies is the most effective approach to find out how donor monies are being used. According to the findings of the research, further effort has to be done to establish assessment methodologies so that we may learn more about the factors that contribute to the success of initiatives. The evaluation office of the UNDP said in 2008 at a regional workshop on result-oriented monitoring held in Cape Town that monitoring has to be taken more seriously by governments in order for companies to be able to do their jobs more effectively.

It is abundantly obvious that the majority of monitoring studies have not investigated the ways in which monitoring technologies impact the performance of enterprises that are owned by women. It is interesting that the majority of the women who are intended to profit from these initiatives have not heard about them and have not felt the consequences of them, despite the fact that the constituency grant money to women to start enterprises that would help them become more independent. The failure of many companies that are led by women results in the loss of a significant amount of capital. The subject at hand is as follows: What methods does Wajir County utilize to keep a watch on the enterprises that are operated by women, and how do such tools contribute to the firms' overall success? The purpose of this research is to investigate the ways in which monitoring tools influence the success of enterprises run by women in the Wajir North Constituency in Wajir County. The purpose of this effort is to avert the failure of companies that are owned and operated by women.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A focus group is a gathering of individuals who share specific characteristics and provide valuable information and data. These groups are typically led by a facilitator who uses a discussion guide to encourage diverse perspectives and opinions, ultimately aiming to reach a consensus or understanding. A typical focus group comprises 8 to 10 participants who are presented with a series of progressively related questions, often tied to an evaluation. The size of the group can vary depending on the desired outcomes, with smaller groups ensuring active participation from all members and larger groups offering a more diverse representation from different areas (Chikati, 2009).

In European countries, as noted by Mwinamo (2015), effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in focus group discussions is crucial. It's essential to carefully select the topics for monitoring and maintain control over the session to prevent it from evolving into an informal debate. Without proper control, some participants may dominate the discussion while others remain passive observers, potentially leading to biased or false conclusions influenced by dominant speakers. To ensure the quality of focus group discussions, they should be well-structured and not devolve into platforms for exchanging prejudices or arguments rather than factual information. Well-trained observers or content experts can play a vital role in maintaining control over the discussion and ensuring that it remains focused and productive.

Focus group monitoring has been applied in various sectors, including healthcare, education, and the social sciences. In a study on the attitudes of public health nurses towards disaster preparedness, conducted by Yoo and Lee (2017), focus group monitoring proved to be a valuable strategy for gathering insights into the experiences and perspectives of nurses involved in disaster response. The research revealed that public health nurses faced numerous challenges when responding to natural disasters, including limited training and resources. The use of focus group monitoring allowed researchers to gain a deeper understanding of these challenges and their impact on nurses' roles in disaster preparedness.

(Yuan et al., 2018) conducted a research that investigated the use of focus group monitoring as a method for assessing the efficacy of a nutrition education program intended for college students. The researchers discovered that monitoring the program via the use of focus groups was helpful in identifying both the program's strengths and limitations, as well as providing vital input for enhancing the program in subsequent iterations.

However, there are several constraints involved with the monitoring of focus groups. According to the findings of one research (Datta et al., 2016), dominating speakers in a focus group have the ability to influence the thoughts and views of other members, which may lead to inaccurate inferences being drawn. As a result, it is essential to make certain that monitoring of focus groups is carried out in an atmosphere that is under strict supervision,

with the presence of an experienced moderator who can both stimulate discourse and stop any one person from taking over the topic.

In African countries, as highlighted by Khalid (Nyika, 2012), the primary focus of monitoring is to achieve specific objectives that can be measured in terms of cost. This approach underscores the importance of cost-effectiveness in monitoring efforts. Additionally, Kizlik (2010) notes that in Kenya, monitoring is characterized by democratic, permissive, and collaborative features. When individuals participate in group discussions, their concentration tends to increase, which can lead to more accurate judgments and assessments. Moreover, the divergent views that emerge from focus group discussions can serve as a catalyst for critical thinking and new explorations. Group discussions have the ability to bring forth the opinions and attitudes of members regarding their projects, as emphasized by Mulwa (2013).

Managing a small group is often more manageable and cost-effective than dealing with a larger one, as pointed out by Mulwa (2013). To ensure productive focus group discussions, Mulwa recommends several key principles: participants should remain focused on the topic, avoid sidetracking, be encouraged to express their thoughts, facilitators should avoid being judgmental or overly critical, and everyone should strive to develop the discipline of active listening while accommodating individual differences. These principles can contribute to more effective and fruitful monitoring and evaluation processes in various contexts.

Theoretical framework

Rock's (1968) goal-setting theory posits that people are motivated to work towards goals they set for themselves. This theory asserts that individuals are driven and committed when they receive feedback on their performance (Lock and Latham, 1988). The strength of this theory lies in its applicability to a wide range of individuals and its ability to motivate workers to achieve their specified objectives. However, a weakness of this theory is that not everyone may be proficient at setting SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) objectives. Additionally, in many organizations, top management formulates objectives that employees strive to achieve, making this theory less applicable. Negative feedback can also have a demotivating effect on workers. In the context of this study, the contribution of goal theory is more significant than its weaknesses. It is suitable because it aligns with the objectives set by individual women's enterprise groups, aiding them in their goal attainment.

METHODOLOGY

The study area was Wajir North Constituency. This is one of the six constituencies that make up Wajir County. In this study, the population under investigation consisted of 82 chairpersons of women's groups that have received support from the Constituency Women Enterprise Scheme, as indicated in the NG-CDF office report for the year 2019. A census sampling approach was employed. In this research, the primary data collection tools employed was a questionnaire. SPSS version 21 was used in order to conduct the analysis on the revised data. The data analysis process for this study incorporated both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. In the descriptive statistics phase of the analysis, frequency tabulations were employed to provide a clear overview of the distribution of responses for various variables. Additionally, the mean was calculated to assess the central tendency of certain data points. For the inferential statistics component the Pearson correlation coefficient test was conducted at a significance level of 0.05.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Responds Rate

A total 82 women group chairpersons and include them in the study sample size. From a total of 82 participants, 78 of them responded while 4 of them did not participate. This shows that 95.12% was the responds rate.

Focus Groups Monitoring Tools on Women Enterprise Performance

The study conducted a descriptive analysis of the data, employing a rating scale with values ranging from 1 to 5. In this scale, 1 indicated "strongly disagreed," while 5 represented "strongly agreed." The analysis yielded several key findings.

Table 1: Focus Groups Monitoring Tools on Women Enterprise Performance

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
A small group is better because every member will get a chance to participate.	78	1.00	5.00	3.8846	1.37681
Focus group should be controlled so that the discussion does not degenerate into an informal debate	78	1.00	5.00	3.8846	1.33855
Focus group can lead to false conclusion to be made due to influence of dominant speakers.	78	1.00	5.00	3.6923	1.50590
Focus tool of Monitoring is efficient and measurable	78	1.00	5.00	3.9487	1.26796

Participants' opinions on the effectiveness of small focus groups: The analysis found that participants, on average, leaned towards agreement (mean = 3.8846) with the statement that a small group is preferable because it allows every member to participate. This was accompanied by a moderate standard deviation of 1.37681, indicating some variability in responses. Controlling focus group discussions: Respondents, on average, indicated agreement (mean = 3.8846) with the idea that focus group discussions should be controlled to prevent them from becoming informal debates. The standard deviation of 1.33855 suggests a moderate degree of variability in opinions on this aspect. Risk of false conclusions due to dominant speakers: The analysis revealed that, on average, participants expressed some concern (mean = 3.6923) about the potential for focus groups to lead to false conclusions due to the influence of dominant speakers. The standard deviation of 1.50590 indicates variability in respondents' perceptions regarding this issue. Efficiency and measurability of focus group monitoring tools: The study found that, on average, participants viewed focus group monitoring tools as efficient and measurable (mean = 3.9487). The standard deviation of 1.26796 suggests some variability in how respondents perceived the effectiveness of these tools.

Overall, the analysis provides insights into participants' perspectives on focus group monitoring tools and their implications for women's enterprise performance. These findings align with the study's objective of examining the role of focus groups in monitoring women's enterprise performance.

Correlations

Table 2: Correlations

		Performance	Focus Groups Monitoring
Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.619**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	78	78
Focus Groups Monitoring	Pearson Correlation	.619**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	78	78

There is a correlation between Focus Groups Monitoring, and performance as shown by a correlation coefficient of .619 and a significant p-value of .000 (less than .05). This is indicated by the fact that the p-value is less than .05.

Discussions

According to Mwinamo (2015), M&E is a subject monitoring should be properly picked and the session should be well managed so that the marked inclination of the conversation does not degenerate into an informal argument. This is important since M&E is a topic that is prevalent in European countries.

"The discussions have provided me with fresh information and different points of view, both of which have aided me in developing more effective business plans and choices."

"The focus groups have provided a secure and encouraging environment for me to talk about sensitive topics related to gender and entrepreneurship," the speaker said."

"Through participation in the focus group discussions, I was able to cultivate beneficial contacts and networks, which in turn led to the emergence of brand-new commercial chances for me."

This might result in some individuals taking over the conversation while others become passive onlookers, which would negate the goal of having a focus group discussion in the first place. Because of this, one could jump to an incorrect judgment as a result of the effect of dominating speakers. A discussion group has to be carefully moderated so that it does not degenerate into a platform for the sharing of biases or a platform for the process of argumentation rather than the presentation of facts. The focus group discussion has to be led by an experienced observer or subject matter specialists, and the investigation could not have much influence on the circumstances (Mwinamo, 2015).

"The discussions in the focus groups have provided me with a fantastic chance to learn from the experiences of other women entrepreneurs while also sharing some of my own."

"I am grateful to the facilitators for the support and guidance that they have provided throughout this process. They are very knowledgeable and helpful."

"The discussions have helped me identify common challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in my industry, and they have prompted me to brainstorm potential solutions."

People that fit a given profile are selected to participate in the focus group, which then gives information and statistics. A facilitator leads a conversation by asking questions designed to elicit a variety of perspectives and perceptions in order to arrive at a consensus while utilizing a discussion guide. In the context of research, the term "focus group" refers to a gathering of eight to ten persons who are questioned in a series of steps leading up to an assessment. It is preferable to work in a small group so that each individual may have an opportunity to

contribute. On the other hand, according to Chikati (2009), it is best to have a big group in order to accommodate for the variety that comes from their region of representation.

"Because of the tools, I've been able to connect with other female business owners who are navigating a terrain that is familiar to me and draw motivation from their experiences."

"By participating in the focus group discussions, I've picked up a number of useful new skills and pieces of information that I can apply to the expansion and operation of my company."

"By participating in the focus group discussions, I was able to build up my self-assurance and become more assertive in my business dealings and negotiations."

"I would recommend these tools to other women entrepreneurs who are looking for a supportive community as well as opportunities to learn and grow their businesses."

According to Khalid (Nyika, 2012), the primary goal of monitoring in African nations is to ensure that particular goals are met, and these objectives may be measured in terms of their associated costs. According to Kizlik (2010), the nature of the tool in Kenya is such that it is democratic, permissive, and collaborative. When people are in groups, they have a greater tendency to focus, which also increases the correctness of their judgment. In addition, different points of view that emerge during a conversation with a focus group may serve as a jumping off point for critical reflection and more investigation. In addition, the thoughts and attitudes of participants on their project are brought to light via group debate. Mulwa (2013). When compared to managing a whole group, a smaller group is far simpler to work with, not to mention more cost-effective. Participants should resist becoming sidetracked, keep focused, be encouraged to talk, facilitators should avoid being judgemental or critical, participants should have the discipline to listen, and participants and facilitators should be willing to accept individual variations.

Conclusions

Small focus groups are preferred as every member gets a chance to participate, but they should be controlled to avoid the discussion degenerating into an informal debate. Focus groups can lead to false conclusions due to the influence of dominant speakers. The focus tool of monitoring is efficient and measurable.

Recommendations

Women enterprises should adopt a small group approach to ensure that every member gets a chance to participate. However, the focus group should be controlled to prevent the discussion from degenerating into an informal debate. The study found a total mean of 3.8846 with a standard deviation of 1.33855 and 1.50590 that focused groups can lead to false conclusions and that dominant speakers may influence the outcome.

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