



## Influence of community participation on community based water projects for rural community development in Mwingi, Kenya

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### Abstract

In rural community development, community participation is a vital element that ensures and speeds the socio-economic transformation of people and rural areas. Although, over the years, community participation has received little attention from the governments in developing countries, NGOs, United Nations and CBOs have actively advocated and supported community participation, especially in development planning and developing poverty alleviation strategies. This study examined influence of community participation of CBOs on rural community development in Mwingi, Kenya. The study adopted a mixed-method research design. The target population of this study comprised of 54 registered water CBOs appearing on the CBO register of District Development Officer (DDO), Mwingi, Kenya. It adopted stratified random sampling and purposive sampling to include a sample of 327 respondents. The data collection instrument adopted were questionnaire surveys and interviews to acquire quantitative and qualitative data. Descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies, percentages, mean, standard deviation and correlation were adopted to analyze quantitative data. Inferential statistics employed simple linear regression to test the strength of the relationship between the variables based on observed data and to predict the value of the dependent variable based on the independent variable. This study established that community participation in community based water projects had a significant influence on the success of these projects with  $R=0.549$ ,  $R^2=0.301$ ,  $\beta=4.704$ ,  $t=6.686$ ,  $F(1,325) = 41.714$ ,  $p<0.05$ . These results implied that community participation in community based water projects had a positive significant influence on the implementation of rural community development in Mwingi. The study concluded that the role of community participation in community development water projects had positively influenced the implementation of rural community development in Mwingi, Kitui County, Kenya.

**Keywords:** Community participation, rural community development, community-based organizations, Kitui County

### Introduction

According to Kibire (2015), community participation is a debated and discussed topic among researchers and scholars. It involves the involvement of human effort in the developmental process where they are the least considered stakeholders in this process by the government (Kungu *et al*, 2023) <sup>[19]</sup>. Community participation is a precondition for development as it maximizes the success rates of projects executed in the communities. Many times, lesser community participation has led to the failure of community projects (Mulwa, 2009) <sup>[32]</sup>. Development of rural areas is achieved through various activities, including the local people's active participation, the communities' natural environment, outsources Subject Matter Experts and practitioners, and any other involved developmental institution.

Community involvement enables community members to have full control of the development projects, decision-making, and resources developed by CBOs, as they are the beneficiaries of these projects. Therefore, in order to attain full development of the entire rural communities, it is recommended for the members to actively participate in choosing the development projects that they prioritize most and would meet their needs rather than having government agencies selecting the projects for them and they may not be pressing at all (Lawrence & Letoya, 2020) <sup>[20, 22]</sup>. Moreover, opportunities should be given to the poor and the less privileged to participate fully in the development initiatives and the decisions affecting them (Kibire, 2015). Many rural areas in the African society mostly have higher poverty levels, poor health care services, and high illiteracy levels,

among others, due to geographical isolation as well as socio-economic and political inequalities (Ekong, 2013).

Community participation is an ingredient to rural community development (Kungu *et al*, 2023) <sup>[19]</sup>. Although, over the (CDF, 2018) years, community participation has received little attention from the governments in developing countries, NGOs, the United Nations Organization, as well as the CBOs have actively advocated and supported community participation, most especially in development planning and developing poverty alleviation strategies (Gitonga, 2010) <sup>[9]</sup>. Rural community development cannot be achieved without the people's active involvement, specifically in decision-making, execution of essential projects, monitoring and evaluation of these projects to determine their success levels and loopholes, and finally sharing developmental benefits (Gitonga, 2010) <sup>[9]</sup>.

Other than increasing the livelihood of people and rural community development, community participation promotes awareness among all involved stakeholders on the required funds, the utilization of these funds, and are able to make wise decisions on the prioritization of the projects (Lawrence & Rotich, 2021) <sup>[23, 24, 25]</sup>. Moreover, through this constant monitoring of the projects, community participation enhances values of transparency and accountability among their leaders, as they would keep them on check to work openly and inclusively (Gitonga, 2010) <sup>[9]</sup>. This inclusivity would require the local people to participate in decision-making, which is emphasized by the World Bank, which describes participation as the involvement of all stakeholders in taking full control of resources and developmental incentives (Lawrence, 2020) <sup>[20, 22]</sup>.

## Statement of the Problem

CBOs are effective tools and imperative vehicles used to enhance people's living standards in promoting sustainable development. This is because they use developmental approaches such as integrated approaches, people-centered approaches, and participatory development approaches. Through these approaches, they can organize and create awareness among the communities to take actions aimed at exploiting the rich social capital asset for the public good process (Nyamori, 2009). There is inequality in the development levels whereby most of the development is mostly centered in urban areas while the rural areas are largely neglected (Mayberry, 2010) <sup>[27]</sup>. Like most regions in Kenya, Mwingi has been experiencing continuous and increasing poverty levels, which calls for constant humanitarian intervention in terms of relief food supply.

Mwingi North is among some of the poorest districts in Kenya, and about 58% of its population lives below the poverty line (Mwingi District Development Plan 2012). Most parts of Mwingi rural areas lack basic amenities such as clean and piped - water, good road networks, schools, electricity, health facilities. It also experiences poor rainfall, inaccessible markets among others making rural areas to be grossly underdeveloped and as a result, the rural people have low purchasing and standard of living (UNDP, 2010). A survey done in March 2012, in Mwingi, showed that 47.7% of people were using drinking water from sand scooped well, 13.7% from boreholes and 10.2% from the household connection. 70% of the residence took 1 hour to get water from the main water source. 65% used donkeys to ferry water, while 26.5% used their back to carry water from the source (CDF, 2018).

The challenges outlined above form the basis for the evolution of CBOs as an alternative developmental framework (Lawrence, *et.al*, 2023) <sup>[21]</sup>. This has defined some of the mandates of the CBOs to adequately address the pressures and challenges in the community; to table their needs; assemble local resources, both monetary and nonmonetary; and seek external financial support, all in the bid to execute possible developmental activities effectively and successfully. In other words, the CBOs can be termed as institutions developed to address the challenges of inadequate resources in the community through their participation in community development projects. This action is geared to enhancing and supporting efforts of communities that have minimal capacities to fully meet their needs as well as cover all needs that the government may have neglected due to marginalization.

Based on the studies conducted globally, regionally, and locally the positive influence of community participation of CBOs in the rural development process has been identified. However, there is a need for more studies to be conducted to clarify and ascertain this alternative development framework in other rural areas, such as Mwingi, Kitui County which is the focus of this study.

### 1.2 The objective of the Study

To examine influence of community participation on community based water projects on rural community development in Mwingi, Kenya.

### 1.3 Research Hypothesis

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between community participation in community based water projects and rural community development in Mwingi, Kenya.

## Literature Review

### 2.1 Participatory Development Theory

Participatory development theory is essential in the development of this study as it defines and describes participation as an integral approach to community development. According to Campbell, participatory development theory describes the process among communities or people living in a shared location and the need to pursue these needs collectively (Campbell, 2003). They actively develop mitigation strategies and make decisions that will help them address their needs. On the other hand, Richard argues that participation is an approach that enables the development of communities. Through popular participation, people and communities are empowered as they collectively work together to create structures and develop policies that work to their benefit and development. Community participation is an ingredient to rural community development (Richard, 2014).

CBOs provide the channel and platform for community members to come together and address their issues exhaustively. Campbell outlines four main elements and aspects that define community participation, namely cognitive, political, instrumental, and social participation. Cognitive participation ensures that people are equipped with knowledge and skills that help them acquire skills to develop creative roles and systems meant to enhance community development (Campbell, 2003). Secondly, political participation is essential in development as the poor and powerless people and communities are legit and can easily achieve development. Instrumental participation, on the other hand, describes the projects and developmental activities communities develop to increase their economic livelihood as well as empowerment and development (Lawrence, 2021) <sup>[23, 24, 25]</sup>. Finally, social participation measures the degree and extent to which an individual is present in social groups and commits to collective responsibilities. These types of participation are present in CBOs as they provide a platform that communities can engage in them effectively (Richard, 2014) <sup>[37]</sup>.

According to the World Bank (2020), community participation is a necessity that enables both public and private corporations to attain development. Moreover, the WB identifies the importance of genuine participation among community members in the quest to achieve development. Genuine participation involves joint decision-making, shared control, and collaborative empowerment (Lawrence & Omuse, 2021) <sup>[23, 24, 25]</sup>. Thus, for high and substantial rural community development, communities must work together. Community members should be actors and drivers of the projects and developmental activities rather than playing the beneficiary role, which is passive participation. The World Bank thus, recommends that community members must participate actively rather than passively for substantial development to be realized (World Bank, 2020).

### 2.3 Community participation on community based water projects

A study done in 2010 by Caledon Institute of social policy on community-based organizations poverty reduction in Canada revealed important interventions in the CBOs in poverty reduction, including meeting basic needs, building skills, removing barriers, and promoting economic development. The study had activities that CBOs focused on

rural development. The activities aimed at poverty alleviation, which includes business improvement activities, recruitment of new industries, community reinvestment strategies, credit unions, local investment funds, to mention a few.

Moreover, a study carried out in Bangladesh found that some of the developmental programs facilitated through CBOs have enhanced access to service delivery, management of natural resources, community empowerment, and the development of rural infrastructure. (Thompson, 2013) [40]. CBOs contribute to the economic development of many developing countries. A study carried out in India found that CBOs were engaged in economic activities that improved the level of disposable income in local areas (Khatak, 2008). Another study on the role of CBOs in transforming the lives of the people found that recommendable efforts were made in local resource mobilization. Through that, CBOs have a significant effect on the attainment of sustainable development of the rural people (Miriti, 2009).

A study done to access the effects of CBOs in Mwatate Kenya 2018 found that CBOs provide a forum where groups or communities decide and act on an issue, which can best be solved through collective action. CBOs provided collaborative learning and sharing experiences, and confidence-building. The process of community empowerment was found that it was only possible through CBOs as they consolidated collective capacity (Mulwa, 2010). Further, more politically, the CBOs provide a fertile ground for the consolidation of democratic civil society. Economically, CBOs can be a base for launching economic empowerment of a community as members pull meager resources together for the common good. This had been demonstrated in the findings as most of the CBOs pulled their meager income through table banking and the merry-go-round concept and benefitted from this through loans and savings.

**Research Methodology**

The study used a cross-sectional survey. The target population of this study comprised of 54 registered water CBOs appearing on the CBO register of District Development Officer (DDO), Mwingi, Kenya. During the time of the study, the CBOs had a total of 3270 members. It

adopted stratified random sampling and purposive sampling to obtain a sample of 327 respondents. All the water CBO projects were sampled. Among the respondents selected purposively, included 3 administrators of the CBOs from the Sub-County. The study used a questionnaire as the main method of data collection. Once the data was collected, qualitative data underwent the transcription process to determine whether there were potential omissions or any incompleteness and ensure the data was consistent (Miles, 2014) [28]. Various processes were used to analyze the quantitative data, namely the editing to eliminate marginal errors, cleaning the information to ensure completeness, transformation and tabulation of the information and data collected. There was the coding of open-ended questions where responses were sorted as per emerging themes. When presenting the data, the study used descriptive statistics of averages and median and presented data in charts, tables and figures. Inferential statistics of Correlation, Regression and ANOVA were also used to analyse the data.

**Results and Findings**

**1. Response Rate**

The sample size drawn from the target population was 327 who were issued with questionnaires for the study. All the questionnaires were duly filled in correctly and returned. The results of the questionnaire return rate are presented in Table 1.

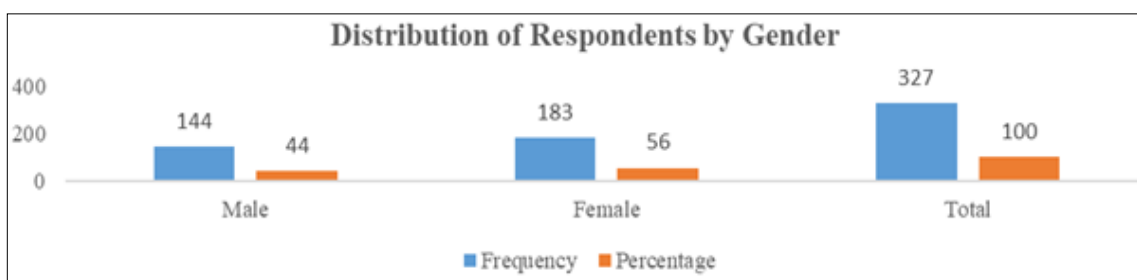
**Table 1:** Instrument Return Rate

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Returned Responses	327	100
Non-Responses	0	0
Total	327	100

The questionnaire return rate in table 4.1 achieved was 100%. This was sufficient as supported by Kothari (2019) suggest that response rates above 70% are considered appropriate for data analysis. Therefore, the response rate of 100% in this study was deemed suitable for analysis and generalization of the findings.

**2. Distribution of Respondents by Gender**

In this section, the researcher sought to establish the gender of the respondents. The responses are shown in Fig 1.



**Fig 2:** Gender distribution of respondents

The study results in fig 2 on gender indicated that 44% of the respondents were male, with 56% of the respondents being female. These findings show that majority of the respondents were female and were involved most of the community water projects in the study area. This finding

implies that women engage more in rural community development than men in Mwingi North constituency.

**3. Distribution of Respondents by Age**

The respondents' age bracket was also explored in this study, where the respondents were asked to indicate their ages. The study findings are as indicated in figure 4.2.

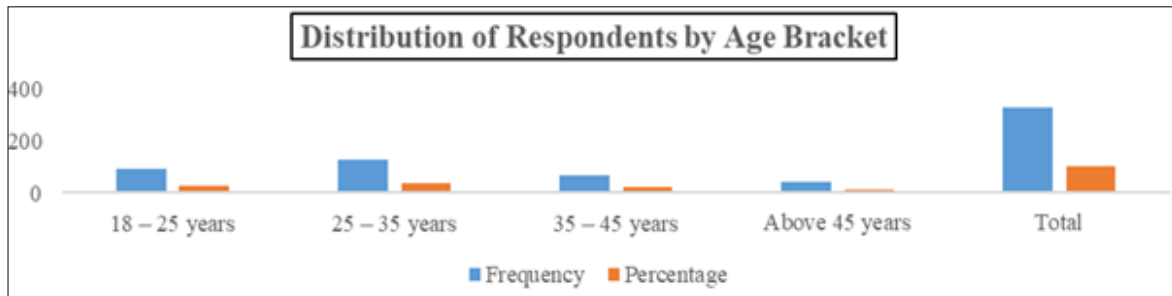


Fig 3: Distribution of respondents by Age

The study findings indicated that out of the 327 respondents who participated in the study, those below 25 years were 27.8%, between 25 – 35 years 39.1%, between 35 – 45 years were 20.8% and finally above 45 years was 12.2%. The findings indicate that rural community development and implementation of water projects attracted respondents of different ages but specifically those heavily involved were between the ages of 18 – 35 years. This implies that the

majority of those involved are the youthful population who involved in constructive community development in the study area.

**4.4 Distribution of Respondents by Level of Education**

The researcher asked the respondents to indicate their level of education. Table 2 shows the summary of the responses.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Highest Level of Education

Highest level of Education	Frequency	Percentage
Below Primary	1	0.3
Primary level education	35	10.7
Secondary level education	136	41.6
College	125	38.2
University	30	9.2
Total	327	100.0

On the distribution of respondents by their level of education, the findings indicated that a most of the respondents had attained secondary school level of education as the highest level of education at 42.5%, followed by college level by 38.2%. The primary level attracted only one respondent which was represented by 0.3%. About 9.2% of the respondents, had attained university education, indicating that a majority who are the youth are knowledgeable and aware about issues pertaining rural community development and implementation of water

projects. This implies that education is a very important tool in shaping social change and community development.

**5. Distribution of Respondents by Name of Group Affiliation**

The fourth demographic characteristic of respondents sought to obtain information of the distribution of respondents by the name of the group they subscribe to in their respective communities.

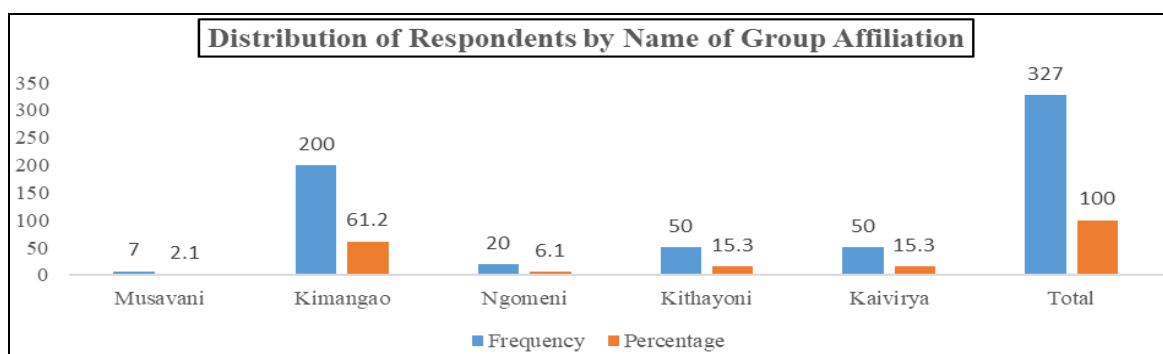


Fig 3: Distribution of respondents by group affiliation

Respondents from Musavani Community Based Organization were represented by 2.1% of the total number of respondents whereas Kimangao had the majority of the respondents at 61.2%. Further analysis revealed that Ngomeni had 6.1% of the respondents while Kithayoni and Kaivirya had 15.3% representation respectively. The findings indicate that most of the respondents were from the Kimangao area, which could imply that they were more

engaged in issues of rural community development and the implementation of water projects.

**6. Distribution of Respondents by Length and Duration of Membership**

The last demographic characteristic focused on the respondents' length and duration of membership in their respective community-based organizations.

**Table 3:** Distribution of Respondents by Length and Duration of Membership

Duration of Membership	Frequency	Percentage
0 – 2 years	51	15.6
2 – 5 years	138	42.2
5 – 10 years	118	36.1
Over 10 years	20	6.1
Total	327	100.0

The results from Table 3 indicated that respondents with less than two years of the membership represented 15.6% and 2-5 years had been represented by 42.2% The study further noted that 5 –10 years were represented 36.1% and finally over 10 years membership were represented 6.1% of the total respondents. The findings imply that majority of the respondents had a membership duration of between 2 - 10 years. This indicates that respondents’ value membership and representation in the community-based organizations as

supported by 78.3% of the respondents in community based water projects in the study area.

**7. Descriptive Statistics**

**Community Participation of CBOs on Rural Community Development**

Descriptive analysis for community participation on rural community development in Mwingi North constituency was conducted to obtain the frequency distribution, percentages, mean and standard deviation. Table 4 below summarizes the descriptive statistics.

**Table 4:** Community Participation and Rural Community Development

Statements	5	4	3	2	1	Mean	SDV
You are well versed with all the projects in your CBOs	193 (59.0)	87 (26.6)	17 (5.2)	14 (4.3)	16 (4.9)	3.94	0.877
The problem being addressed by the CBO is among the major problems in this community	194 (59.3)	94 (28.7)	18 (5.5)	15 (4.6)	6 (1.8)	4.01	0.732
You took part in the pinpointing of problems facing the community	195 (59.6)	93 (28.4)	22 (6.7)	9 (2.8)	8 (2.4)	3.95	0.825
Some of the community members are employed in the projects	189 (57.8)	94 (28.7)	13 (4.0)	16 (4.9)	15 (4.6)	3.87	0.899
You have contributed some of the resources towards the project	194 (59.3)	84 (25.7)	24 (7.3)	21 (6.4)	4 (1.2)	3.94	0.821
Community ideas are highly recognized	189 (57.8)	92 (28.1)	24 (7.3)	15 (4.6)	7 (2.1)	3.94	0.609
Ideas from community members are accepted and utilized	193 (59.0)	92 (28.1)	22 (6.7)	11 (3.4)	9 (2.8)	4.03	0.608
Composite Mean						3.93	0.738

The study sought to determine whether community members are well versed with all the projects in your CBOs. The results from Table 4.4 indicate that 59% strongly agreed, 26.6% agreed, 17(5.2%) were neutral, 14(4.3%) disagreed and 16(4.9%) strongly disagreed with a mean and a standard deviation of 3.94 and 0.877 respectively. When compared to the composite mean (3.93), this implies that the line item of the variable has a positive contribution to the predictor variable, as supported by 85.6% who agreed with the statement above.

The study also sought to examine whether the problem being addressed by the CBO is among the major problems in this community. The study results established that 59.3% strongly agreed, while 28.7% agreed. Further analysis revealed that 5.5% of the respondents were neutral while 4.6% disagreed. The study also established that 1.8% of the respondents strongly disagreed with a mean and standard deviation of 4.01 and 0.732 respectively. This shows that the problem being addressed by community based water projects is among the major problems in this community. This implies that the statement contributes positively to the variable and influences the predictor variable being supported by 88.0% of the respondents.

The study also sought to establish whether members of the community established their priority areas in the project. The study results established that 59.6% strongly agreed while 28.4% agreed with the statement above. The study results further revealed that 6.7% of the respondents were neutral while 2.8% of the respondents disagreed. The study also revealed that 2.4% of the respondents strongly

disagreed with a mean and standard deviation of 3.95 and 0.825 respectively. The findings indicate that partaking in pointing out the issues and problems facing the community contributes to community participation. This is evidenced by the line item positively contributing to the predictor variable compared to the composite mean of 3.93.

The findings of the study also revealed that some of the community members are employed in the projects. The mean of 3.87 with a standard deviation of 0.899 was established respectively. The findings, however, show that the majority of the respondents were of the opinion that many of the respondents were employed in some of the projects. The results indicated that 57.8% strongly agreed while 28.7% agreed with the statement above. The study further revealed that 4 % were neutral while 4.9% disagreed and 4.6% strongly disagreed with a mean and a standard deviation of 3.87 and 0.899 respectively.

The study also sought to examine whether members contributed some of the resources towards the development of community water project. The descriptive statistics obtained was; 194(59.3%) strongly agreed, 84(25.7%) agreed, 24(7.3%) were neutral, 21(6.4%) disagreed and 4(1.2%) strongly disagreed with a mean and a standard deviation of 3.94 and 0.821 respectively. The findings indicate that the line item positively influences the predictor variable, as supported by 84.4% of the respondents.

The study also established that community ideas are highly recognized in the study area. The results indicate that 57.8% strongly agreed while 28.1% of the respondents agreed with the statement above. 7.3% were neutral while 4.6%

disagreed and 2.1% strongly disagreed with a mean and a standard deviation of 3.94 and 0.609 respectively. When compared to the composite mean of 3.93, the statement implies that there were convergent views on community ideas being taken into consideration by the project team. The statement has a positive contribution on the variable since the statement mean is greater than the composite mean and as supported by 85.9% of the respondents who agreed.

**8. Correlation Analysis of Community Participation of CBOs and Rural Community Development**

**Table 5:** Correlation Analysis between Role of Community Participation and Rural Community Development

Variable		Community Participation	Rural Community Development
Community Participation	Pearson Correlation	1	0.549**
	Sig. (2-Tailed)		0.000
	N	3.27	327

The results in Table 5 revealed that there is a moderate positive correlation of 0.549 between the role of community participation community based water projects and rural community development, which indicates a significant relationship with a p-value of 0.000. This indicates that role of community participation has a significant relationship with the response variable rural community development in Mwingi, Kenya

**Table 6:** Model Summary for Role of Community Participation and Rural Community Development

Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.549 <sup>a</sup>	0.301	0.298	1.85496

a. Predictors (Constant), Role of Community Participation

The model summary for the results on community participation and rural community development presented in Table 6 explains the extent to which the predictor variable accounts for the overall variability of the model. The R Square is given as 0.301, indicating that role of community participation contributes to 30.1% of the variations of the dependent variable rural community development in Mwingi, Kenya. This indicates that other factors which were not considered in this study accounted for 69.9%. The study concluded that role of community participation has a significant influence on rural community development in Mwingi, Kenya especially when applied in community water projects.

**Table 7:** ANOVA for Community Participation and Rural Community Development

Factor	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	719.405	1	719.405	41.714	0.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	5604.950	325	17.246		

a. Dependent Variable: Rural Community Development.  
 b. Predictors: (Constant) Community Participation

Analysis of variance was used to establish the goodness of fit of the regression model in Table 7. It was established that the F-significance value of 0.000 was less than 0.05 (p<0.05). The F-ratio was significant,  $F(1, 325) = 41.714$  was significantly larger than the critical value of  $F=3.86$ . This shows that the model was significant.

**Summary, Conclusions and recommendations**

**1. Demographic summary**

The study established that the demographic characteristics of the respondents contributed to rural community development. Distribution of respondents by gender established that majority of the respondents 183(56%) who were of the female gender were involved in community and especially water projects. On the distribution of respondents by gender, the findings indicate that those who were involved in rural community development were between the ages of 18 – 35 years. Similarly, distribution of respondents by level of education, a majority of the respondents indicated they had attained secondary education level and above.

**2. Conclusions**

The results from the study concluded that there was a moderate positive correlation between community participation in community based water projects and rural community development in Mwingi, Kenya. It was concluded that community participation of CBOs explained 30.1% of the variations in rural community development in Mwingi, Kenya. This implied that involvement of stakeholders in community based water projects had significant project problems concerning the community, addressing problems and allocation of resources; involvement in consultation processes in the community and idea generation and utilization in the community which were concluded to be significant ingredients for rural community development. The study concluded that community participation has a significant influence on rural community development.

**3. Recommendations**

1. The study also established that community participation of CBOs significantly influences rural community development in Kenya. The community participation component is very vital and should never be ignored. It is a powerful tool that should not be overlooked but should be prudently applied whenever a community project is being carried out. It creates a sense of ownership of the projects. One will be responsible for what they have been involved in.
2. It is imperative for the CBOs to involve the community members in all community projects. CBOs board ought to ensure that there is thorough participation by all stakeholders covering the identification, screening and selection of the project for implementation. Community participation of CBOs ought also to be carried out when developing baseline plans for the budget and schedule as well as in implementation and control.

**4. Suggestions for Further Studies**

The study made the following suggestions for further studies;

1. Factors influencing sustainability of ground water management in the ASAL regions in Kenya.
2. Influence of stakeholder participation in community water resources management in Kitui County, Kenya

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