

THE EMERGENCE OF VERNACULAR TELEVISION STATIONS IN THE ERA OF DECENTRALISATION OF GOVERNANCE IN KENYA: THE ROLE OF VERNACULAR TV STATIONS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF COUNTIES

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Abstract

This paper sought to highlight the economic, social and political impacts of the vernacular television stations in Kenyan following the decentralization of governance. The study focused on the three counties found in formerly Eastern Province of Kenya. Functionalism theory as propounded by Harrold Lasswell was used as we sought to examine the role that the media plays in the society especially its role in stimulating development of the devolved systems of governance in the region. The researcher used a multiplicity of approaches including one on one interviews with the viewers, local television journalists, managers of such stations and reporters. Purposive sampling was used to select the three counties of Embu, Meru and Tharaka-Nithi as they have common social and cultural practices especially the linguistic intelligibility. The same approach was used to select the television stations under study. From the research it was found out that the decentralization of services to the grassroots has stimulated various forms of development in the rural areas. It was noted that the county residents have reaped big economically by way of new employments in the media houses, increased trade activities and promotion of agriculture. Socially, it was realized that since the advent of free media and the emergence of county governments, local talents on music, drama and cultural festivals have flourished. Besides, the vernacular TV stations have enabled the vernacular languages to grow by enriching their lexical base. Political awareness was also reported to be on the rise due to the fertile ground provided by the vernacular media especially through campaign rallies, sensitization forums and the mobilization ability accorded by the local media.

Key Words: Vernacular media, Counties, Development, Devolution, Governance

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The liberation of the airwaves by the Communications Authority of Kenya (CAK) has led to the unprecedented growth of the vernacular TV and radio stations in Kenya. Kenya being a signatory of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) signed the Geneva Agreement of 2006 that set the deadline for the migration from the analogue to digital platform as 2015. As a consequence, Kenya began the digital migration process in 2009 by launching the digital broadcasting in Nairobi with the deadline for national wide migration set as 2012. However, this deadline was revised as Kenya set her own deadline as 17th June 2015. According to the ITU report of 2017 the government hoped to use the freeing of the frequencies to spur development by improving audio-visual quality, diversity of content and by utilizing the freed up spectrum for other economic developments such as mobile services and setting up of more radio and TV stations. According to the Communications Authority of Kenya 2017 report, digital migration has increased the population under television coverage to 86% by 2018. This is partly due to the emergence of vernacular television stations occasioned by the freed frequencies. This is a great development compared to the pre-migration population coverage of 55% as can be seen below:

| <u>Pre-Migration</u> | <u>Post-Migration</u> |
|--|-----------------------|
| 1 Population covered by TV (55%)..... | 86% (by 2018) |
| 2 Number of Broadcasters (14)..... | 66 (by 2016) |
| 3 Number of broadcasters reaching multiple cities (05).... | 22 (by 2016) |
| 4 Spectrum from TV broadcasting (448MHs)..... | 224 MHs |
| 5 Households with TVs (3million)..... | 5.4 million (2017) |

Source: Communications Authority of Kenya (2017)

The liberalization of the spectrum almost coincided with the promulgation of the new constitution in 2010 that ushered in the devolved governance by creating 47 counties. Kibet (2015) argues that this liberalization has been boosted by the new rights guaranteed by the new constitution especially the freedom to seek, receive and impart information. Besides this right, the constitution also guarantees the freedom of the media, both electronic and print. Counties are meant to accelerate development in the rural areas by bringing services closer to the people and ensuring public participation in development. For counties to communicate their mandates well to the residents, the use of indigenous languages in communication is paramount as this will ensure people driven development, minimize conflicts and promote cohesive existence.

According to the 2010 Kenyan constitution fourth schedule (article 186 & 187), the counties are expected to inter alia perform the following functions; (a) Promotion of agriculture in the counties in areas such as crop and animal husbandry, maintenance of animal sale yards, development of fisheries and county abattoirs (b) Provision of county health services by establishing and regulating health facilities, pharmacies, ambulance services, refuse and solid waste disposal and vet services (c) Provision of basic education by maintaining preschools and village polytechnics (d) Putting in place mechanisms for promotion of culture by establishing entertainment facilities, museums, sporting facilities, betting casinos and recreation facilities (e) To enhance development of trade by encouraging local tourism, creation of local cooperative societies and trade licensing (f) To promote economic development through natural resource exploitation, land survey and mapping, mining, soil and environmental conservation including soil, water and forestry.

This paper thus sought to find out how the establishment of the vernacular television stations has promoted development of the counties as agents of mobilization of the local people for public participation.

2.0 Theoretical Framework

The research is based on the functionalism model, also known as the functional approach to mass communication theory. The model was developed by an American political scientist and a communication theorist, Harrold Lasswell in 1948. Lasswell (1948:37-51) identified three main functions of the media in the society. These are surveillance of the environment, correlation of the components of the society and the transmission of the social heritage from one generation to another. Drawing from the theoretical orientation of Merton (1957), Wright attempted a functional perspective for the study of the mass communication. Together with the earlier ideas of Lasswell (1948) as mentioned above, functionalism as a theory of mass communication became more useful in analyzing the role of the media in the society (both at macro analysis and micro analysis level). According to Merton (ibid) functions of the mass media in a society can either be latent or manifest. Manifest functions are easily observable and are often the intended effects of the media whereas latent effects are those ones that are not easily observable and are often the unintended effects. Consequently, according to Lasswell and Wright, mass communication serves the following functions: (a) surveillance of the environment- Media has to keep up a surveillance of all that happens around the world by providing information to the society. Provision of in depth news and through other programs, the media not only teaches the public but also ensures social order. For instance, during calamities such as flooding, war and outbreak of diseases the media teaches the public what to do and what not to do. (b) Correlation of parts of the society- this refers to how the media shapes the society's attitudes towards various issues. The manner of selection and interpretation of various issues by the media affects people's attitudes consequently shaping their reaction. This is a key pillar to this paper as it

seeks to illuminate how the broadcasts made in vernacular languages have a big impact in affecting and changing the local people's lives socially, economically and politically thereby contributing to the development of counties in Kenya. (d) Cultural transmission- the media plays a significant role in archiving, maintaining and transmitting a people's cultural values and norms. Various programs are put in place by the media in Kenya, focusing on ethnic music, dances, narration, cultural and religious practices serves to orient the young generations to their pasts and this leads to the appreciation of multiculturalism brought about by the diversity of the people living in the three counties under review. This is a crucial plank of the functionalism theory as it applies in this research. The paper highlights how social developments in the devolved units of governance can be accelerated through the use of the vernacular media.(e) Entertainment-the media as a leisure instrument offers people an opportunity to escape from the harsh realities of life albeit momentarily. It thus offers relaxation by stimulating emotions or reducing them through comic reliefs. This function is also called the diversion function. Other functions of the media include instructive and bonding. In depth coverage of events educates the masses. Media outlets enhance bonding by bringing people closer especially if they share common values and interests. This paper agrees with this view in that the vernacular T.V stations mostly broadcast to the people who have common values, common language, aspirations and similar traditional and economic practices. Therefore the local media serves to unite them further as it speaks in a language they all understand.

3.0 Research Methodology And Design

This research focused on three counties found in the former Eastern Province of Kenya; Meru, Embu and Tharaka Nithi counties. The predominant communities living in these counties are the Ameru, Aembu, Tharaka, Mbeere and pockets of other ethnic groups especially those living in the towns. The researcher was interested in the TV stations that either utilize the language of the catchment areas in their broadcast in the county concerned or those stations whose focus audience is drawn from the counties whose communities have mutual linguistic intelligibility. The three counties were thus selected on the basis of their shared linguistic similarity, geographical neighbourliness and cultural closeness. Therefore the vernacular TV stations found in any of the three counties would receive reliable audience in the rest of the two counties.

The research was carried using a multiplicity of approaches, namely; (a) the researcher carried out interviews between the listeners of the vernacular television programs in the selected counties, television presenters and the managers/directors of such establishments. Therefore three types of questionnaires were prepared; those to be used by the listeners, directors and owners of local media houses and lastly, those to be used by the presenters and reporters. The interviewees were required to give their views on how the emergency of the vernacular TV stations has impacted on development in their counties. Secondly, a few questionnaires were issued to the presenters, reporters and station managers whereupon the researcher collected them back after one month, collated and analyzed the data as seen in the following sub sections. The researcher also used own observation by actively watching various TV programs, especially talk shows and interviews, that addressed developmental issues such as public education, political accountability, environmental conservation and general information. The selected stations are either geographically established in the three counties or located in the capital, Nairobi but uses one of the languages of the catchment areas (Kimeru, Kiambu or Kitharaka). A few programs were selected from each local vernacular TV station depending on the suitability of the program to address and focus on developmental issues in the three counties.

4.0 Discussion and Results

Proper and efficient communication is of paramount significance to the county governments of Kenya for a number of reasons. Firstly, many county residents do not typically differentiate between services that are supposed to be offered by the county governments and those that are predominantly within the province of the national government since devolution is relatively a new concept to many. For this reason, county residents are likely to demand national government services from county authorities. Secondly, apart from communicating their mandate to the people, counties need to explain to the common man the need to raise finances by imposing various fines and levies contrary to what they have been accustomed to. It thus follows that the catchment area languages be used to convey to the locals this dichotomy of responsibilities between the two levels of government. This places the vernacular TV and radio broadcasts at the centre of county communications.

At the end of the survey that was carried out between August 2019 and February 2020, it was realized that the vernacular TV stations have accelerated the development of the counties socially, economically and politically. It was realized that various TV stations have programs targeting certain sections of the population in the counties. For instance some TV stations run empowerment programs for the youth, women, traders, farmers and organized groups. The following is a list of vernacular TV stations and selected programs that target public participation and dissemination of information for development of the counties.

| Programs Targeting county development | English Translation of the Program | Topics Discussed | TV Station |
|--|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| Riitho ria Ithaga | The watchdogs of our time | Land adjudication, land grabbing, state of county markets, state of county rural roads and management of county funds | Mwariama TV 9:40-10:20 pm Wednesday |
| Romuri | The Floodlight | Public participation on building bridges initiative, Party defections, cattle rustling, unity of mount Kenya counties | Meru TV 9:40-10:20 pm Sunday |
| Ugima ni Utonga | Health is Wealth | A weekly show that highlights and demystifies some myths behind health issues. It features a doctor who debunks all health issues and teaches on health living | Weru TV 6:40 pm Monday |
| Nteto cia Baite | News Feature | Focus on Community led initiatives-women groups, collective fund raisings for the schools, churches and marginalized groups and financial help to the less fortunate society members | Baite TV 8:00-9:00 daily |

| | | | |
|----------------------|----------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| Nkatha Cietu | Our Heroines | Focus on women who have rendered exemplary services to the society. Offers advocacy against rapes, gender based violence. Teaches on family planning, gender inequalities and family health | Weru TV 8:15-8:50 pm Wed |
| Murimi Caruruku | The informed Farmer | The show focuses Solely on rural agriculture development.it enlightens the audience on best conditions for various crops and livestock and marketing | Weru TV 8:50 pm Thursday |
| Kiviaviano Mashinani | Debates in the rural areas | Involved in public participation on political issues. e.g pros and cons of amending the constitution through county assemblies, performance of counties, selection of priority areas of development and county budgeting. | Meru TV Sunday 8:30 pm |
| Tuthunkume | Let's Strive | A show that focuses on small and medium business enterprises and their impacts on economic life of their owners. It also offers a comparison of prices of various items across several markets | Mwariama TV Monday 7:00-8:00 pm |

4.1 Political developments

Harkness (2014) argues that indicators of political development includes measures of political participation, civil liberties, human and labour rights. The Human Development Report (HDR) released by UNDP (2002) however notes that there is no single unambiguous and uncontroversial yardstick for gauging the achievement of the political developments by countries. It reports that there is a wide range of subjective and objective measures of political rights which includes indices on civil rights, political rights, press freedom, voice and accountability, political stability, law and order, rule of law and indices on corruption. To facilitate rapid acquisition of these political rights and liberties, nations need functional democracies that allow media to thrive and diversify its audience. The vernacular TV stations comes in handy to fill in this gap. The findings of this research indicates that the local media has spurred political development through a multi-pronged approach, namely: First, public education has been promoted on many political issues. The media has heightened public sensitization and participation on issues of the day such as voting rights. On this, most respondents acknowledged to have been informed about voter registration exercises, voting qualifications, voting dates, voting procedures and the declaration of election results by the vernacular TV stations. Meru TV for instance, through the program, *Kiviaviano Mashinani/Grass root debates*, has been organizing

interactive forums between the elected leaders and their citizens at ward and constituency office where elected leaders respond to various development matters. This also helps to sensitize the residents on issues such as human rights, the contents of the constitution that need amendments, roles of the central government and those of the county governments. Through such engagements, the vernacular TVs are facilitating good governance at the county level. Several researches done across Africa have pointed out to how powerful the vernacular media has been in electoral matters. Myers (2008), cited in Mwangi et al (2017) shows how the community radio has been influential in Mali. He argues that the community radio for instance has enhanced transparency and accountability by exposing corruption. Mali. A similar thesis is found in a research done by Dunu (2013) in Nigeria which shows that the media is a key cog in the wheel of good governance both at the national level and in the federal states. In this paper, the researcher found out that residents of the three counties, have also been given an opportunity to air their views on constitutional amendments through the popular initiative by the same media. This has been made possible through the public platforms organized by the people's representatives at the grass root level in conjunction with the vernacular TVs. Discussions too are held by the local experts using the languages of the catchment area to facilitate more understanding.

Secondly, this media is actively involved in political campaigns where it offers unfettered interaction between the residents and political parties on one hand and with politicians on the other hand. This is done through talk shows such as those listed in the above table, and through news feature that are not only normally comprehensive but also repetitive. However, at times as it does this, the media risks being abused by some politicians to spread propaganda. This is especially so where some media houses are owned by politicians. Thirdly, the vernacular TV stations have helped advance political accountability and transparency thereby enhancing good governance at the county level. Through this media, citizens have been able to know the successes and failures of their local leaders such as governors and ward representatives. The media not only empowers people to ask questions but it also criticizes on its own behalf and on behalf of the people. This is in concordance with the functionalism theory of the media which holds that one of the key functions of the media is surveillance of the environment. Just like media at the national level overlooks the central government, the vernacular media overlooks the decentralized governments. That is, it criticizes, it questions but it also does praise. However, there is a caveat to this. As it flatters, it risks working to advance parochial partisan interests of the select few.

4.2 Economic Developments

The inability of the central government to ensure equitable development across all the regions of the country has led to feelings of marginalization among the minority groups in Kenya. To address this, the government has since the year 2010, decentralized key economic activities together with increased funding to the counties. This is with a view to achieving uniform human development for all the sections of the country in the areas of agriculture, trade, tourism and infrastructural development.

4.2.1 Agricultural Developments in the Counties

The Kenyan constitution (2010) has devolved many economic activities hoping to spur the rural economies. Promotion of Agricultural activities is one of the devolved functions. The vernacular TVs have facilitated the development of these economic sectors through a number of ways; First, agricultural growth has been boosted partly due to the dissemination of information, sensitization and public participation by the said media. According to a research done by Niang (2002) in Netherlands, he found out that knowledge and information generated from research remains locked from the rural

farmers since that information is often in English. This has remained to be even a bigger problem in least developed countries such as Kenya due to higher levels of illiteracy. Thus the era of decentralization has created an opportunity for rural growth especially through the use of the local languages in mass media.

The vernacular media has been at the core of agricultural developments by educating the people on the best animal breeds suitable for various parts of the counties and where to acquire them. Weru TV, was reported by our respondents as having played this role quite effectively through the program, *Murimi Caruruku* /The Active Farmer, an interactive platform where experts are invited to teach the local farmers on modern methods of farming. The program presenters takes viewers to various farms to expose them to real time farming activities ranging from land preparation to harvesting and storage. Baite TV, too in collaboration with the county officials has carried out public demonstrations on how to treat livestock suffering from Zebu Flies infestations and other maladies. These demonstrations are aired live for several hours and repeated during prime time as news for emphasis. County agricultural shows also provides a good learning experience for the local farmers. These are annual, highly publicized events attended by farmers, school children and their teachers, businessmen and companies wishing to showcase their products to the local people. Such events are highly covered by the vernacular TVs and radios. Thus farmers who are unable to attend, are able to view the animal breeds, feeds, tools, seeds, fertilizers and farming methods on their TVs. This information, which was hitherto inaccessible to farmers, promotes development of the rural economies.

With increased access to information, it was revealed, farmers have moved from the traditional model of food crop farming to agribusiness. The vernacular media in Kenya and in particular the three counties surveyed has accelerated this change by bringing to the farmer reliable information on marketing and the emerging technologies on modern farming. According to the research done by Girard (2001) on the challenges of ICTs and the rural radio, farmers need information on production technologies, market prices, access to credit facilities, post harvesting processing systems, implications of changing agricultural policies and how to cope with climate change. Most of the farmers interviewed by this researcher also reported to have benefited from the local media by getting interpretations on weather patterns especially on the expected intensity of the rainfall and the dates/days for the rains. Because of the illiteracy with some rural farmers, use of vernacular by the media was found to be influential in decision making.

Environmental conservation is within the corpus of the county government functions. Media being a powerful tool of mobilization of the people is at the centre of voluntary communal activities. It has mobilized them to participate in repair of local roads and planting of seedlings in government protected areas such as mountains so as to increase the forest cover in line with the millennium development goals. Knowledge on environmental conservation has enabled the farmers to contain soil erosion not only in the protected areas but also to transfer the same knowledge in their farms.

4.2.2 Trade Development

Apart from agriculture, other decentralized economic activities include trade and mining. The Kenyan constitution (2010) envisioned to stimulate economic developments in the rural areas by decentralizing manufacturing industries especially those that are agricultural based, assisting counties through grants to set up new ones and ensuring value addition to locally produced goods before exportation. The counties surveyed by this researcher indicated that in Embu and Meru counties, small scale manufacturing factories have been set up on dairy and Macadamia processing. The vernacular media

has played a key role in sensitizing the county residents on the need to embrace dairy and macadamia farming as the market is now provided by the new factories. Counties have exploited the opportunity given by the vernacular media to teach their residents on the available trade options especially the small scale traders. This is by maintaining conducive marketing facilities besides offering them favourable licensing and advertising terms. On the news feature program, it was noted that all the TV stations under study, have a section on business news where viewers are informed on market prices of various products across many towns and markets in the three counties. It shows price variations of similar goods and packages and this is vital to the residents as they can determine where the demand is more for their produce. The Televisions using indigenous languages have boosted trade too by offering cheap and affordable advertisements. Some residents also told the researcher that the vernacular televisions have given them information on how to access cheap loans from cooperative societies, how to form small and medium enterprises and how to tap into the mobile phone technology to facilitate buying and selling services. The advertisements done using the indigenous languages have the ability to reach majority of the residents neglected by the national television in the rural areas. This therefore promotes economic growth as they benefit both the media houses by giving them additional incomes and the local entrepreneurs who too reap big on the sales.

4.2.3 Development of Tourism

Promotion of local tourism is another area of concern between the counties and the vernacular media. The Mount Kenya counties under the study, Meru, Embu and Tharaka Nithi, boasts of rich tourist attraction sites such as Meru national park, Mount Kenya National park and Africa's second highest maountain. Mt.Kenya stretches to Meru, Embu, Tharaka Nithi, Kirinyaga, Nyeri and parts of Laikipia counties. Tourism being a devolved function is, albeit, slowly being embraced as a tool to stimulate local economies. Mt.Kenya as a world heritage site is used by the neighbouring counties to boost their tourism opportunities. It is the only snowcapped mountain in the entire globe that lies along the equator. Tharaka Nithi county provides the easiest route to the mountain top for the hikers. The respondents interviewed by this researcher indicated that the vernacular media especially, Baite TV, Weru TV, Mwariama TV, Meru TV and the local radio stations have helped to enlighten the locals on how to tap into the benefits of local tourism. For instance, some are now selling sculpture works, fruits and artworks along the routes to Mt.Kenya. These reports are also corroborated by the Kenya News Agency (KNA) which reports that the local media has enabled Samburu county to popularize 'The Camel Derby' which has now become an international event. It mobilizes the county residents especially the less educated ones using their own language, to attend the event. Mwariama TV was particularly commended by the respondents for running a wildlife documentary which featured some of the local tourist attraction sites such as indigenous trees, waterfalls and the endangered animal species. The above mentioned TVs have also promoted cultural tourism by showcasing cultural dances, shrines and cultural ceremonies such as circumcision. The Tharaka and Chuka people of Tharaka Nithi county for example have one of the most undiluted cultural festivals in the region. Uragate cultural festival is one such tourist attraction that is famed for its drummers. Besides, the tallest tree in Africa and the shrine associated with it are to be found in Karingani location, in Chuka within Tharaka Nithi county. The tree towers at 84 metres and is estimated to be 200 years according to two interviews; one between this researcher and the locals and another one between Kenya News Agency and the original owner of the land where the tree is found.

4.3 Social Cultural Developments

According to the Functionalism theory of the mass media, the media transmits the cultural values of a people from one generation to the next and also offers entertainment. The media that uses vernacular language can act as a people's cultural repository since languages are carriers of culture. Mazrui and Mazrui (2002) notes that native language use is an effective tool for the advancement of the communities by citing how native languages have been used to accelerate development in such countries as Russia, Japan and England. Thus counties can use the opportunity provided by emergence of vernacular TVs to promote social cohesiveness, peaceful co-existence among the neighbouring communities and inclusivity especially by bringing on board those monolingual sections of the society. This form of media, faced with the arduous task of translating new ideas from news sources, are bound to bring new lexical items either through borrowings or adaptations thereby enriching itself. Languages focused by this researcher, Kimeru, Kiambu, Kimbeere and Kitharaka have benefited greatly from the process consequently enabling their users to be more creative socially. Ideas that were inexpressible before the introduction of the vernacular media have now become part of the normal lexical and syntactical usage. The TVs under this study have borrowed words from the more advanced Kikuyu language, Kiswahili and English and adapted them into local usages. This has contributed to social cultural development. Sawe et al (ibid) stresses that development is better understood and realized by a people if it is communicated in a language which they understand better. Thus, use of mother tongue for communicating development ideas is bound to generate people led initiatives. To further developments, some counties have taken some concerted efforts to promote internal patriotism and unity of the people by incorporating the teaching of vernacular languages in the early years of study. Meru county for example, in collaboration with the vernacular TV stations has developed a dictionary towards this goal. As Orao (2012:82) notes at such times when the Kenyan youth is ignoring the use of their mother tongue, usage of such languages by the media serves to elevate their status by giving them some prestige.

Besides language development, the vernacular media also has a critical role of harnessing cultural diversity in the form of traditional dances, cultural festivals, traditional foods, dress, ceremonies and artifacts. The people of Tharaka Nithi county for instance have been able to showcase their cultural customs and values through the local TV channels. By availing opportunities for the budding artists to showcase their creative works, the local media has not only created employment but also buttressed the growth of talents. This researcher was informed by some residents that some artists' economic fortunes have improved as they now sell more of their albums, CDs and videos due the popularization done by the local media. As mentioned elsewhere in this paper, the annual Uragate cultural festival in Tharaka Nithi county not only serves to conserve cultural values but also acts as tourist attraction thus earning the county government foreign income. Meru TV, while covering one such cultural shows quotes the county governor as saying, "These traditional dances, instruments and other artifacts are not found anywhere else in the world and should be patented for the commercial benefits of the community.

It is noteworthy that the vernacular media not only contributes to social cultural development but also it is aggressively campaigning against harmful, outdated and retrogressive cultural practices such as female genital mutilation. According to the viewers interviewed by this researcher, Baite TV has helped to sensitize the residents of the three counties against this practice. This is in line with the governments' policy of promoting human rights agenda especially those of the girl child. This campaign has now borne fruits as evidenced by the depressed cases of this practice.

The vernacular TVs have catalyzed the removal of social, economic and political bottlenecks that have traditionally hindered gender equality. Weru TV has a program tailored specifically for this purpose. Through the program called *Nkatha Cietu/ Our Heroines*, the channel educates people on family planning methods and its importance, the need to formalize marriage and the need to obtain marriage certificates, how to deal with gender violence, children's rights and the rights on matrimonial properties. Promotion of gender equality and women empowerment is one of the millennium development goals whose attainment by the developing countries is a measure of human progress. Regarding women empowerment as tool for social development, Sen (1997) says that expansion of education opportunities for girls is correlated with reduced gender inequalities, declining fertility and reductions in child mortality. Such findings are also recorded by Levine et al (2003) cited in Harkness (2004). They argue that child health and educational outcomes are related while mother's education is associated with improved child health. According to human development report of 2010, gender equality is measured by three dimensions; reproductive health, empowerment and economic activity. Indicators of reproductive health are maternal mortality and adolescent birth rates, empowerment is indicated by share of parliamentary seats held by women relative to those held by men and education attainment by each gender while economic activity's indicators are labour market participation rates by both men and women. Since health is a function of the decentralized governments, counties under focus have worked in collaboration with the Vernacular TVs to sensitize the people on the need to embrace immunization, public health measures and family programs.

Moral education has been boosted by the local media through its fervent campaigns against anti-social behavior such as crime and drug abuse. Weru TV, Meru TV, Baite TV and Mwariama TV all have religious education programs that broadcasts every Sunday and sometimes hosting live church services that teaches on morality. This is in tandem with one of the tenets of this theory which holds that one function of the media is to teach on moral values. The inculcation of religious values by the media is beneficial to not only the individual but it also changes the general welfare of the society since moral uprightness results to more cohesive living.

5.0 Conclusions

It has been proven that since the advent of decentralization of governance in Kenya from the year 2010 much growth has been witnessed in the rural economies. One of the main results of this is the emergence of the vernacular media especially the vernacular television stations. The researcher discovered that vernacular TV stations have changed peoples' lives tremendously through creation of employments, stimulating trade within the counties and boosting domestic tourism especially through sensitization of the public on the available natural and cultural attractions. Besides, it has also been made manifest that the local media has impacted greatly to the agricultural revival by providing a forum for interaction between the county residents and the agricultural extension officers, public health officers and vets. All this has stimulated economic growth. Politically, the vernacular TV stations have enhanced public awareness on political rights such as qualifications for voting, vying and the expectations of the electorate from the political office holders. These stations have provided a forum for the residents to air their grievances concerning the underperformance of leaders thereby promoting accountability and enhancing good governance. However, some residents especially the elites expressed some reservations regarding the quality of some programs. Poorly produced programs were seen to be emanating from inadequate professionalism and lack of synergy like that associated with the national televisions coupled with poor equipment. Secondly, most of these stations are owned by wealthy politicians who at times use them for self-aggrandizement. Some residents also expressed

their dissatisfaction with the lack of national and international news coverage thus putting them at the risk of having a parochial world view. Use of indigenous languages in the broadcasts also reverses some gains made on national integration. As Sawe et al (2015), have noted use of indigenous languages is associated with tribalism. However, we feel that use of the vernacular media also enhances cohesion and patriotism within an ethnic group. The researcher also found that the inadequacies of the vernacular language to extrapolate new ideas also hampers the local TV stations from advancing new developments especially those related to scientific discoveries. The theory of functionalism that guided this research is therefore very apt in the current paper as it has shown how vital the media has been in influencing development at the county level.

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