

Experience 101; The Network of Dynasties in Kenya-A Social Network Approach

Joram Ngugi Kamau¹✉

1.Department of Agricultural Economics
Egerton University-Kenya.

✉ **Corresponding author:**

Joram Ngugi Kamau
Department of Agricultural Economics
Egerton University-Kenya.
Email: ngugij88@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Equal access to employment opportunities both in private and public sectors in Kenya by the youths is a complete fallacy. Despite efforts by the government to ensure that all employment opportunities are made available to the public, the human resource departments at respective institutions are always cognitive of various allotments in their networks. This study targeted unemployed youths at the country's capital city, Nairobi. Sampling was also done to those youths employed both in private and public sectors at the central business district. Through the structural analysis of employment network, the study revealed that the employment pattern in the country's capital is based on the philosophy of whom you know and not what you know. The study also revealed that employment opportunities in the informal sector have been hindered by inaccessibility to capital and credit facilities by the youths since they have no collateral to secure loans. Corruption in securing any opportunity in the country has been normalized and therefore inhibiting fair competition in various platforms. The government should therefore introduce punitive measures to deter predetermined recruitments which are skewed towards network godfathers in both public and private sectors.

Key words: Unemployment; Youths; Social Networks; Predetermined Recruitment

INTRODUCTION

Unemployment exists where a willing person, at the existing wage rate is unable to get a job (Piore, 2017). Due to advancement in technology in Kenya, the transaction cost of job search has been reduced significantly. (Odhiambo & Waiganjo, 2014). Various platforms for job alerts have been developed and all what the job seeker needs is just to subscribe and the notifications are timely in boxed to the subscriber.

Youths in Kenya are categorized among the young adults between the ages of 18-35 years. They constitute 60% of the country's population. Unemployment among these youths constitutes 70%. In a country of over 45 million people, over 10 million youths are unemployed (Muiya, 2014). The government has however tried to curb this alarming rate of youth unemployment through introduction of various platforms. These include; National Youth Service (NYS), Youth Fund, Youth Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (YAGPO) among others which have turned to be cash cow among actors with the highest centrality measure.

Nairobi County is the heart of the country. 60% of the country's GDP is generated solely from this County (Achar, 2015). It's this importance that informed this study to purposively target the dynamics involving employment opportunities across this County.

Social network analysis involves the identification of the social capital in people. It helps to identify the key actors in the net and how other actors utilize the social capital in the key actors in a network (Kwon & Adler 2014). This study conceptualized social network as a platform where youths identify the actors in the employment sectors and connects so as to secure opportunities in the national and county governments. The study concentrated on access to government employment, tenders and youth funds.

METHODOLOGY

Nairobi county was purposively selected since it the highest absorption county in the country in terms of employment. The study narrowed to the central business district where there is high concentration of government and private institutions. A sample size of 100 respondents was sampled randomly to target both the employed and the unemployed. The sample size strictly sampled those youths between 22 years and 35 years. The assumption was that this formed a cohort of youths who have completed their respective certificates and qualify for employment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A regression analysis on the drivers to employment revealed that the information contacts identified by the sampled youths contributed significantly towards employment as indicated in table 1.

Table 1: Regression Analysis on Employment Contacts

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.506	.073		6.973	.000
RELATIVE	.222	.080	.215	2.781	.007
FRIEND	.278	.084	.253	3.314	.001
FAMILY_FRIEND	.236	.078	.228	3.015	.003
COLLEAGUE	-.108	.079	-.103	-1.366	.175
MASS_MEDIA	-.642	.087	-.566	-7.375	.000

The sampled individuals were asked to list the information contacts whom they rely or/and relied on in search for employment opportunities. Among the list was relatives in employment, family friends in employment, friends, colleagues in employment and the mass media. From table 1, relatives, friends and family friends were found to have a positive impact on securing job opportunities in the country. Mass media as information contact was found to have a negative implication on employment access.

The above revelation has a serious impact on the policy aspects in the country. First, the recruitment process and access to government opportunities is marred by cartels who ensures that government opportunities are reserved for certain dynasties. The other issue portrayed by the study shows that merits in a country is no longer a priority. To be specific, there was a case in which a respondent; 42 in figure 1, holds a diploma in plant breeding yet was found to be a banker without any basics in either accounting or finance. The interesting thing from this respondent was the massive network depicted from relatives, friends and family friends who are in various government positions as depicted in figure 1.

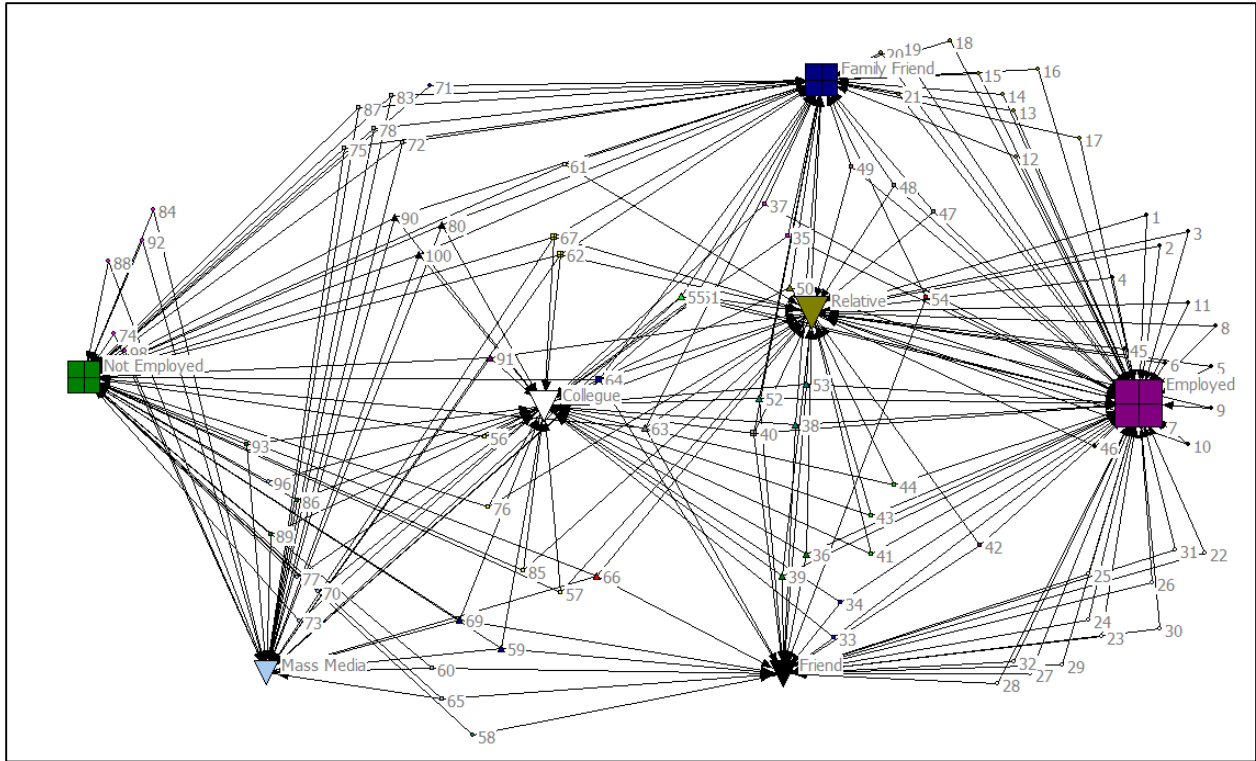


Figure 1: Information contacts

Figure 1 above illustrates the structural networks depicted by the youths from Nairobi County. The respondents were asked to name the various sources of information on which they rely on to outsource information pertaining job opportunities. Open ended questionnaires were administered to the sampled population both in the employment sectors and the unemployed.

From the socio graph above, the size of the node is synonymous to the number of in degree ties that identified it as an information contact. Specifically, the analysis meant to identify the correlation between the unemployed and the employed based on their employment contacts.

The graph shows that reliance on mass media like internet and newspaper adverts to access government opportunities has little impact. Those who accessed government opportunities through their respective networks had positive responses in the sense that they actually got tenders or employment opportunities.

The argument that youth lacks experience and therefore warrant employment of senior citizens who are past their retirement age is a complete blasphemous act. Why then not introduce 'Experience Units' at the universities and colleges? Should there be 'Experience Grades' in the academic transcripts? Why then not introduce experience lectures! It's immoral to condemn the youths on these ungrounded bases since most of them are isolate nodes in the networks of these retrogressive dynasties. The time is ripe for a 25 years old bank manager and a 91 years teller!

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Moral hazard is a phenomenon that arises due to information asymmetry (Xiang *et al.*, 2015). It's a legal requirement that all institution; both public and private, to make public their recruitment and tendering process. However, due to market failures ensuring that there is perfect information in the recruitment and tendering processes, these posts are reserved pre advertising. Advertisements are just blanket formalities meant to portray transparency and professionalism but the bitter fact is that the verdict is made even before the first application is received. In fact, these

positions are auctioned among the cartels of networks which ensure that the whole process is a monarchy of recurring process.

The study revealed that corruption in the access of government opportunities is the order of the day. During the administration of the questionnaires, one youth noted; *“If a bathing towel in the National Youth Service can be tendered at \$1,000 per single piece and a pair of bus tyre at \$10,000, employment and tenders are just a phone call away if you have the right people in your network.”* To get a government tender, youth funds or employment in the country, investment in networks as opposed to skills development has been evident in the study. Access to government opportunities is a function of your network. The more one is connected to actors with a high eigenvector, the higher is the probability of accessing government opportunities.

Punitive measures should be imposed to deter those exercising corruption and office abuse. Irregularities and illegalities in government positions has become chronic in the country where merits is no longer a priority. Prosecution of corrupt officials should not be dragged for decades in the name of investigation. A time ceiling of 3 months should be legislated to ensure all corruption cases are brought to logical conclusions. As a deterrent measure, no bond should be issued to the convicts of corruption cases since ordinarily, that’s a factor they always consider when executing rooting of public coffers and abuse of offices.

To restore sanity and transparency in government opportunities, a data base of all the youths with their respective qualifications should be established by the government. An independent body should be established to update, manage, tender and offer employments strictly from the established data base which should be open to public access.

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