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Sociology is defined as the study of a society scientifically (Browne, 1992). In essence, it entails making use of various empirical methods of investigation and in depth analysis to help develop knowledge concerning the social activities of human beings (Bilton et al., 1987). Majorly, its focal point is the influence of people’s relationships and how developed relationships influence attitudes and behaviors. In Kenya, sociology began in 1961 in the Royal College, presently known as University of Nairobi. At the turn of independence of the country in Kenya, the Royal College was named the University of Nairobi after the country’s capital city since independence. The current paper is therefore devoted to the development of sociology in Kenya. For instance, it encompasses the description of the major social factors that led to the sociological developments, when it began as well as the primary focus of sociology in the country among other aspects.

Kenya gained independence in 1963. It attained her independence in a period of global economic expansion and stability. The period was characterized by higher commodity prices. In fact, economic factors had direct influence on people’s behaviors, attitudes and values. It is from these values, behaviors and attitudes that led to social development. Sociological factors quite often take various forms. In Kenya, educating setting, family, religion, university setting, exposure to violence, multicultural and Multilanguage exposure, and administration are some of the social factors that led to the development of Sociology in the Kenya.

During the colonial times, social structure which grew in Kenya laid a lot of emphasis on class and race. The blacks were highly suppressed by the whites. This was reinforced through the separation of races, and in the population of Africa, different ethnic groups with different languages and cultures. In effect, Kenya as a country is now recognized by its multicultural and multi-language status.

There are varied language groupings in Kenya. For instance, there is Dholuo, Agikuyu, Kikale, Kikamba and e. t. c. Each language is a repository of a unique facet of the cultures of Kenya (Ndege, 2008). In effect, researchers found it essential to making use of various empirical methods of investigation and in depth analysis to help develop knowledge concerning multi-languages and multi-culture. Research developed interest to study the relationships among the diverse languages. For instance, an individual could investigate why people of a given social group litter as opposed to a different language speaking group. This in effect led to the development of sociology to help understand the society better.

As well, the country has diverse cultures. There is the Kikuyu culture the Luo culture, the Luhya culture, the Kalenjin, the Kamba, the Masai and many smaller cultures like the Ogiek. Each culture presented researchers with a store of unique facet of Kenya. For instance, researchers could conduct investigations as to why a given culture was numerically stronger in population than the other or why the cultures had different staples. Or as well, an investigative research could be conducted as to why the Luo culture believes that a child belongs to the father and not the mother, or as to why wife inheritance is common among the Luo as opposed to other tribes. In general, the diverse cultures present researchers with wider areas where knowledge can be easily empirically investigated and analyzed. In effect, the endless desire to investigate every culture’s uniqueness is what has led to the development of sociology in the country.

## Exposure to periodic clashes

The periodic clashes witnessed in Kenya between the country’s ethnic groups, specifically between Kikuyu and Kalenjin in the 1990’s led to the development of sociology in the country. The clashes offered an avenue for conducting empirical investigative studies by researchers to gain knowledge, may be on the causes of the clashes. The empirical documentation of the varieties of violence and their religion-related contexts constitutes a meaningful and urgent field of research, not only from an analytical but also from a humanitarian point of view. Quite often Kenya has failed to extend economic and physical security to her citizens (Ndege, 2008).

For instance, clashes raised apprehension and fear in both Kenya’s urban and rural population. Wave of conflicts in Nyanza province, Rift Valley province, Central province and some parts of Western and Coast provinces were recorded as Kenya’s worst moments. In 2007, the country again experienced its darkest moments due to the post election violence. Thus to help identify the forces behind the periodic clashes, empirical documentation of the varieties of violence had to be recorded. Empirical documentation of the varieties of violence and their related contexts thus constituted a meaningful and urgent field of research. In depth investigations into the causes of the menace had to be conducted after the victims were left homeless, dead, injured, abused, landless to mention but a few. This was only possible via studying the society scientifically to come up behavioral knowledge. Consequently, these numerous empirical documentations resulted in the development of sociology in the country. Researchers thus studied the society holistically to come up with knowledge that explains periodic clashes in Kenya.

## Natural disasters

The persistent natural disasters in Kenya are also viewed as major contributors to the development of sociology in the country. Kenya constantly experience unreliable rainfall it certain regions like North Eastern and Eastern provinces. These result in cyclic shortages of food in the country. Also, the country in the recent past has experienced natural disasters relating to fire breakouts that leave hundreds dead and unknown number injured or traumatized. In 2009, for instance, the country lost more than twenty nine in the Nakumatt supermarket fire tragedy. Same year, there occurred the Molo fire which left not less than 113 people dead and more than 200 people critically injured. Same year in June, same incident occurred at Kapokyek, around Kericho killing four on the spot and leaving more than 50 people injured. In September 2011, the Nairobi pipeline fire left at least 100 people dead, more than 116 injured and countless traumatized. Other disasters the country has experienced include the Garissa massacre, Hola massacre, Wagalla massacre, Mathira and Turbi massacres. The empirical documentation of the varieties of natural disaster and their related contexts constitutes a meaningful and urgent field of research, not only from an analytical but also from a humanitarian point of view.

In essence, the natural disasters prompted researchers to carry out empirical research aimed at studying the society, human behavior and their interaction with one another. For instance, commissions were put in place aimed at establishing common knowledge on the disasters. They had to look at the social lives of the affected families or that of the entire society. This could be taken by the analysis of the social behaviors that led to the natural disasters, for instance. Typically, researchers studied social aggregations. At the end, they presented a common knowledge on the country’s disasters. As can be seen, the occurrence of natural disasters in Kenya led to the empirical documentation of the varieties of disaters. From this perspective, it thus follows that the periodical occurrence of natural disasters in Kenya leads to the development of sociology in the country.

## As a social science, education encompasses the learning and teaching of specific skills

The excess literature in the education field show that the Kenyan education system, more so in higher levels, address behaviour management and instructional strategies. One major objective of the Kenyan education system is to grow students to become very productive citizens of ever changing, productive and dynamic in the society. Essentially, education imparts culture from one generation to another, and thus promotes responsiveness and awareness via making the students to be socially mature. This help nurture their behaviors and relationships as well as how they interrelate.

A feature of Kenya's formal education and training systems since the attainment of Independence has been the rapid development of sociology in Kenya. For instance, the establishment of Royal College in 1961, currently known as the University of Nairobi depicts the starting point of sociology in Kenya. At the particular time in 1961, the then Royal College had special arrangement and collaborated with the University of London to have social sciences and Arts introduced into its education system. In academic year 1966/1967, the University of Nairobi created sociology as a sub-department of the Economic department. In academic year 1967/1968 saw the creation of an independent, fully fledged and separate sociology department at the University. The creation of fully fledged sociology department presents the first development of sociology in Kenya.

Equally, multiple establishment of Universities in Kenya like the establishment of Kenyatta University, Moi University and Maseno University helped further in the development of sociology in the country. All the Universities have introduced sociology in their education systems. The sociological education mold students. Besides, students were able to conduct various techniques of empirical investigations as well as in depth analysis of the county’s social activities. In general, the introduction of sociology as a subject in universities’ education systems has resulted in tremendous development of sociology in the country.

Sociology began in Kenya in 1961 in the then Royal College, currently known as the University of Nairobi. The University of Nairobi is the oldest Kenyan university. It is the successor to what used to be Royal Technical College of East Africa that started enrolling students into its faculty in the year 1956. In the year 1961, it evolved and became the Royal College of Nairobi which started teaching sociology among other disciplines including economics. At the turn of independence of the country in Kenya, it was named the University of Nairobi after the country’s capital city.

At that particular time in 1961, the Royal College, Nairobi collaborated in a special arrangement with the University of London so as to start offering courses in the social sciences and Arts. The department of Economics in the university that had also been created in the year 1962 was fully functional and offering degree courses in BA. In 1966/1967 in the University of Nairobi academic year witnessed the creation of sociology, a sub-department from the larger Economic department by the university. The sociology sub-department continued to operate as a sub-department of the bigger department with limited flexibility in that academic year until the following year.

In the 1968/1969 academic year, what started as a sub-department in the Economic department was promoted to stand alone as the department of sociology. Therefore, an autonomous, separate and full-fledged sociology department was created in the university in academic year 1968/1969. Other social sciences and related disciplines such as those of History and geography had by 1956/1957 been promoted to full departments. This was about 10 years before the department of sociology had been created and given enough resources to operate on its own. Government Department, just like the Department of sociology was created and distinguished from the department of law and government in 1965/1966 almost at the same time when the Sociology Department was created. The major founder of sociology in Kenya was Pierre L. van den Berghe, who was sent by the Rockefeller Foundation to Kenya. The major effort he made was the establishment of the sociology department at the University of Nairobi (Berger, 1990).

There were different primary foci of the early sociology. The primary focus of sociology was to study the social behaviour of human, particularly the study of organizations, origins, and the development of human society. It focused on studying the society holistically. This implies that it was used as an effort to account for the structure, growth, origin and the societal activities by operation of psychical, physical and vital causes of working together in the evolution process. In fact, the focus is derived from the definition of sociology which is the systematic explanation and description of the society holistically. In essence, the focus was on the behaviour of human. The second focus was on the social relationships. It focused at studying the social relationships. In Kenya, most sociologists advocate for the study of social relationships as the major focus of sociology. Arguments are that the subject concerns social relationships and that the understanding of the established networks of relationships helps understand the society.

Third, the subject’s focus was on how people interacted. It focused on human interaction. Available literatures define sociology as a science of the types of human relations. It is scientific in nature and attempts to facilitate the understanding and the interpretation of the human actions. From this perspective, it is believed that its primary focus was to help in understanding and in interpretation of human activities. This is simply because it the scientific study of interaction. Lastly, its primary focus was on the social groups. It is understood as the study of social groups and thus could focus on studying social groups scientifically. This was of importance as could help understand the organization and structure of different social groups in the country.

The research areas included, for instance, deviant behavior, public opinion, family, social change, social stratification, social mobility, public opinion and certain more specific social issues like crimes, substance addiction, divorce as well as child abuse. For instance, study areas included family relations and their effect on the society, the effect of law on the family or on the development of a community. Also, researchers scientifically studied the ancient history to establish how the Kenyan settlements and towns were built to help on the reflection of the society.

Almost all the studies conducted emphasized on pure sociology. For instance, study areas included family relations and their effect on the society. Basically, such study areas aimed at finding out what is the effect of family relations on the development of a society. Other studies included the study of the ancient history to establish the reasons why Kenyan settlements and towns were built. From these two examples of study areas, it is clear that most studies conducted emphasized on pure sociology.

While the date of introducing sociology in Kenya comes back to 50 years ago, still it faces many inadequacies, problems and challenges. Among these problems, one can refer to as a major challenge is the low theoretical production. Generally, theoretical production is quite low. This is due to the fact there is no sufficient theories to help in the explanation of the various problems of Kenya’s different sociological areas raised purely on experiments or analysis. Kenyan sociologists thus find it challenging to support their empirical data with relevant social theories as little theories available to explain the Kenya’s periodic clashes, natural disasters and many more.

Similarly, Kenyan lecturers and teachers not often adopt theoretical backgrounds when carrying out research or while supervising thesis of graduate and post graduate students. There is thus a challenge of methodological underestimates and methodological inefficiencies in the Kenyan sociology (van Binsbergen, 2003). Lectures majorly use descriptive methods as opposed to the explanative ones, a few lecturers and researchers follow scientific methods, there are inefficiencies in methodological analysis as well as the insufficient time arrangements while carrying out social studies. The methodological inefficiencies not only fail the researchers but also fail to correct understanding and interpretation of the country’s social problems. Educating and graduating of well-taught sociology students is still not sufficiently done in the country. This is because diverse research interests are not in line with the demands of the work market and research requirements. As a result, the universities lack students at the higher or post graduate levels; nevertheless, a good number of students who graduate with sociology as their areas of specialization end up working in very irrelevant fields. This slows down the pace of development of sociology in the country (van Binsbergen, 2003).

Also, the sensitivity of the topics Kenyan sociologists study appears as a challenge to the sociological development. Their topic’s sensitivity tends to conflict the political systems of the country. It thus demands an association to help defend the rights of a sociologist while undertaking such topics. This is a gap that is not yet filled in Kenya. As well, it forms a challenge in the development of sociology in the country.

There are now, just like before in the University of Nairobi separate Economics. The department of sociology is one of the constitute units making up the Humanities and Social Sciences College in the University of Nairobi. It offers a four-year degree course that ultimately is awarded by an undergraduate Bachelor of Arts degree (BA). Also offered by the College of Humanities and Social Sciences following the undergraduate degree is Master of Arts (MA) in the program and a doctorate of the same (PhD) in the university.

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