

The Role of Training in Harmonizing Views Regarding Traditional Consumptive Uses of Wildlife among Students at the Kenya Wildlife Service Training Institute

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Abstract

A two step study was conducted in October 2021 to determine views of pre-service and in-service students regarding consumptive wildlife utilization in Kenya. Pre-service respondents were fresh school leavers while in-service respondents were rangers employed by the Kenya Wildlife Service. A self-administered, closed ended, drop-and-collect questionnaire was used to obtain data on students' views regarding traditional consumptive uses of wildlife just before and after their 18 month diploma in wildlife management program at the Kenya Wildlife Service Training Institute. Respondents were required to indicate whether they supported or opposed use of wildlife as (i) source of meat for human consumption, (ii) source of ceremonial wear, (iii) source of traditional medicine, (iv) source of ornaments, and (v) a sacrifice in religious ceremonies. A "not sure" option was provided for respondents who were undecided about an item. Questionnaire return rate was 100% for both studies with a respondent number of 30 for the first and 28 for the second study respectively. Before their training, pre-service students strongly supported consumptive wildlife use while in-service students strongly supported non-consumptive use. After their training however, both pre-service and in-service students were strongly supportive of non-consumptive wildlife use. The shift in views of pre-service students was associated with the knowledge, attitudes and values imparted in them during their training. More related studies are recommended.

Keywords: attitude, consumptive use, Kenya, non-consumptive use, training, wildlife.

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Introduction

Wildlife in Kenya is a common property resource owned by all Kenyans and held in trust on their behalf by the government which has in turn delegated the responsibility to a state agency known as the Kenya Wildlife Service (K.WS) (Kassilly, 2000). The Kenya Wildlife Service Training Institute (K.WSTI) is one of the two training arms of the Kenya Wildlife Service. The institute was established in 1985 with support from the World Bank and operated under the name of Naivasha Wildlife and Fisheries Training Institute as an in-service training centre for the departments of Wildlife and Fisheries in the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife. In 1994, Kenya Wildlife Service took over its management and renamed it Kenya Wildlife Service Training Institute (K.WSTI) in 1996. It is located 95 kilometers North-west of Nairobi along the A104 Transafrican Highway.

Currently, the Kenya Wildlife Service Training Institute is registered with Kenya's Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology as a Technical and Industrial Vocational Education Training (TIVET) institution and is authorized to teach, examine and award its certificates and diplomas under the Education Act (CAP 211). It offers Competency Based Training (CBT) at Diploma level in Wildlife Management, Tourism and Hospitality Management, Environmental Management and Fisheries Management to both in-service and pre-service students. The institute's mission is to provide high quality training in a bid to be a centre of excellence in natural resource management in the region. Pre-service students are drawn from high school leavers while in-service students are mostly drawn from KWS rangers.

Objective

This study was conducted to determine how the training influenced students' views regarding traditional consumptive uses of wildlife by comparing their views at the beginning and end of their 18 month Diploma training program.

Study Area and Methods

The study was conducted among students admitted into the Diploma in Wildlife Management program at the Kenya Wildlife Service Training Institute. The first of the two surveys was carried out during the orientation week just before classes began and the second survey was conducted during the week following their last course examination. Thirty (30) of the sixty five students admitted into the program were randomly selected for the study. Fifteen (15) of the respondents were pre-service students straight from school while the other fifteen were in-service students (KWS rangers). Care was taken to ensure that the pre-service students involved in the study had

not been members of the Wildlife Clubs of Kenya during their school days. The two studies involved exactly the same students.

A self-administered, closed ended, drop-and-collect questionnaire was used to obtain data on students' beliefs regarding traditional consumptive uses of wildlife. Respondents were required to indicate their views regarding use of wildlife as (i) source of meat for human consumption, (ii) source of ceremonial wear, (iii) source of traditional medicine, (iv) source of ornaments, and (v) a sacrifice in traditional religious ceremonies.

The response scale comprised a 3-point format (support, not sure, oppose). Responses were compiled for pre-service and in-service respondent categories and compared using chi-square statistics at $P < 0.05$.

Results

Questionnaire return rates were 100% for the two studies with a respondent number of 30 for the first and 28 for the second study respectively. Table 1 shows results from the first study and reveal a clear significant ($P < 0.05$) difference between views of the two respondent categories. Pre-service respondents strongly supported consumptive use while in-service respondents strongly opposed such use. Nearly all (95%) of pre-service respondents supported use of wildlife as source of meat for human consumption whereas 95% of in-service respondents opposed it. Support for use of wildlife as source of ceremonial wear was thirty times higher (60%) in pre-service respondents compared to in-service respondents (2%). Seventy percent of pre-service respondents supported use of wildlife as source of traditional medicine compared to 2% of in-service respondents. Use of wildlife as source of ornaments was more than thirty times higher (65%) among pre-service respondents compared to 2% among in-service respondents. Whereas none (0%) of in-service respondents supported use of wildlife as sacrifices in traditional religious ceremonies, 50% of pre-service respondents.

Overall, opposition to the individual wildlife uses was quite high among in-service respondents. It was highest at 95% for use of wildlife as source of meat for human consumption and lowest at 80% for use of wildlife as source of traditional medicine. Support for individual uses of wildlife was generally quite high among pre-service respondents. It was highest at 95% for use of wildlife as source of meat for human consumption and lowest at 50% for use of wildlife as a sacrifice in traditional religious ceremonies. Percentages of respondents who returned "not sure" responses were higher among pre-service respondents in comparison to in-service respondents on all items.

Table 2 gives results of the study conducted at the end of respondents' training. Study findings reveal a shift from the initial support for consumptive wildlife uses to opposition of the same in among pre-service respondents. Views from in-service respondents remained strongly in favor of non-consumptive wildlife use. Essentially, both pre-service and in-service respondents were strongly in favor of non-consumptive wildlife use. Analysis of the results reveals no significant difference ($P > 0.05$) between responses from the two respondent categories.

Discussion

The decline in respondent numbers during the second part of the study was because two pre-service students dropped out of the Diploma program. The subject of consumptive wildlife use is a controversial and emotive matter in Kenya. Opinion remains divided among Kenyan publics and stake holder groups on whether or not the country should revise its current policy of non-consumptive use and allow consumptive use of its vast wildlife resource (Kassilly, 2000). The glaring divergence in views between pre-service and in-service respondents at the start of their training in a way reflects the enduring national stand-off between supporters and opponents of the country's non-consumptive wildlife use policy.

This study recognizes the possibility that external factors may have influenced pre-training views of respondents. In-service respondents involved in this study were serving employees of the Kenya Wildlife Service engaged in wildlife protection but lacked formal professional training in wildlife management. As protectors of Kenya's wildlife resource, these respondents formed the first line of contact between KWS and the general publics including communities and individuals who interact with the wildlife in diverse ways including poachers and were charged with the responsibility of enforcing the KWS policy of non-consumptive wildlife use. In a way, these group of respondents were in a vantage position to visualize the impact of legalizing consumptive wildlife use on Kenya's conservation agenda. A plausible possibility is that whereas the strong opposition to consumptive wildlife use among in-service respondents before their training was influenced by both their employer's official wildlife use policy and their work experience, the strong support for consumptive wildlife use among pre-service respondents before training was not under such influence.

In explaining the post training shift in views of pre-service respondents from strongly supporting consumptive wildlife use before their training to strongly opposing it after their training, this study borrows heavily from the fact that a putative goal of professional training in a particular discipline is to impart relevant specific knowledge, skills, attitudes and values in the trainees to empower them carry out their professional duties effectively and the Kenya Wildlife Service Training Institute is not an exception. In addition to knowledge on wildlife management, the theoretical and practical training offered to the respondents in this study was aimed at imparting pro-conservation attitudes and ethics to transform them into competent custodians of the country's wildlife. The clear

shift in views of the pre-service respondents from being supporters of consumptive use to being advocates of non-consumptive use of Kenya's wildlife resources is associated with their exposure to the reality of the two sides of the wildlife use debate within the Kenyan context. This study posits that post-training views from pre-service respondents were informed by their course contents. In practical terms, the training acted as an equalizer and harmonized the views of pre-service and in-service respondents regarding the contentious subject of consumptive versus non-consumptive wildlife use.

The wildlife uses described in this study lie at the centre of the controversy on consumptive wildlife use not only in Kenya but also within the rest of the African continent. Although there exists a school of thought among some African conservationists that consumptive use of wildlife as source of meat for subsistence or commercial purposes by local communities is a sure way to win its acceptance by the communities and in turn their support for its conservation, empirical evidence shows that use of wildlife as food is the chief cause of declining wildlife populations in the region (Kassilly, 2000). Evidence shows that commercialization of bush meat promotes poaching, thereby undermining the conservation process (Hofer *et.al.*, 1996). Furthermore, conservation efforts in countries like Kenya, Uganda and Malawi where such consumptive wildlife use is banned are more successful than in west and central African countries where virtually all wildlife species including primates are preyed upon by humans (Kassilly, 2000). Available literature further shows that where local communities have benefitted from wildlife, the income has largely been from non-consumptive uses (tourism and photography) rather than from consumptive uses of the wildlife resource.

On the whole, the post-training view held by both categories of respondents in this study is consistent with available literature. Kassilly (2000) found that Kenyans were opposed to using wildlife either as source of meat for human consumption, as source of traditional medicine and as sacrifices in religious ceremonies. Eltringham (1984) also reports that commercial of wildlife as source of ornaments, ceremonial wear and personal adornment failed due to diminished demand among Kenyans. Based on findings from this study and information available from existing literature, the debate on whether Kenya should adopt a consumptive or non-consumptive wildlife use policy is far from over and requires a purposeful engagement of all wildlife stakeholders on the subject. In this aspect, public education and awareness creation stand out as crucial tools in ensuring that stakeholders understand what it takes to ensure sustainability in the country's wildlife conservation endeavor against the background of the two policy options.

Conclusion

The diploma in wildlife management course at the Kenya Wildlife Service Training Institute appreciably succeeds in harmonizing students' collective views regarding consumptive wildlife use with the national policy and conservation ethic in Kenya.

Recommendation

It is recommended that a more elaborate study be conducted among the various categories of students at the Kenya Wildlife Service Training institute to determine the effectiveness of the training programs in imparting not only the required competencies but also attitudes and perceptions of their respective professions.

References

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Table 1: Views regarding traditional consumptive uses of wildlife among KWSTI wildlife management students at the beginning of their training.

Item	Student Category	Support (%)	Oppose (%)	Not Sure (%)	Chi-square test
Wildlife be used as a source of meat for human consumption	Preservice	95.00	5.00	0.00	P<0.05
	In-service	5.00	95.00	0.00	
Wildlife be used as source of ceremonial wear	Preservice	60.00	20.00	20.00	P<0.05
	In-service	3.00	86.00	11.00	
Wildlife be used as source of traditional medicine	Preservice	70.00	25.00	5.00	P<0.05
	In-service	2.00	80.00	18.00	
Wildlife be used as source of ornaments	Preservice	65.00	15.00	20.00	P<0.05
	In-service	2.00	81.00	17.00	
Wildlife be used in traditional ceremonies	Preservice	50.00	25.00	25.00	P<0.05
	In-service	0.00	94.00	6.00	

Table 2: Views regarding traditional consumptive uses of wildlife among KWSTI wildlife management students at the end of their training.

Item	Student Category	Yes (%)	No (%)	Not Sure (%)	Chi-square test
Wildlife be used as a source of meat for human consumption	Preservice	5.00	95.00	0.00	P>0.05
	In-service	1.00	99.00	0.00	
Wildlife be used as source of ceremonial wear	Preservice	2.00	94.00	4.00	P>0.05
	In-service	0.00	98.00	2.00	
Wildlife be used as source of traditional medicine	Preservice	5.00	90.00	5.00	P>0.05
	In-service	0.00	96.00	4.00	
Wildlife be used as source of ornaments	Preservice	1.00	94.00	4.00	P>0.05
	In-service	0.00	97.00	3.00	
Wildlife be used in traditional ceremonies	Preservice	2.00	96.00	2.00	P>0.05
	In-service	0.00	98.00	2.00	