

**FACTORS INFLUENCING PERCEPTION OF DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL
KENYA: A STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELING APPROACH**

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ABSTRACT

Data from 275 individuals, collected at the individual and household levels were analyzed using structural equation modeling techniques to examine relationships between perception of development and observed socio-economic, demographic and wellbeing variables. Perception of development was computed using 6 development-progressive statements administered in a survey, most of which relate to the future development of the respondent's community and on satisfaction with participation in development activities. The relationship between perception of development and other perceived factors such as perceived importance of electricity in development, perceived household wellbeing and perceived health were examined, after controlling for demographic and socio-economic factors such as age, gender, education, household wealth, parity and health risk factors including alcohol use and smoking. Significant relationships were found between perception of development and gender, age, perceived household wellbeing and health risk factors (alcohol use and cigarette smoking). Women and younger people had more positive perceptions of development than men and older people respectively. Perceived household wellbeing, alcohol use and smoking were also positively associated with positive perceptions of development. These results indicate that even within the same community, people's perceptions will vary depending on their age, gender, perceived household wellbeing and health risk factors including alcohol use and having ever smoked tobacco products. The study, conducted in an ethnically, culturally and economically homogenous rural poor community however did not find significant effects between perception of development and objective household wealth, level of education, parity and perceived health. Further studies need to be conducted that can study perceived development separately for males and females and also in a community that shows some economic, cultural and social variations. This would help tease out the differences in perceptions of development, which could not be adequately established in this study.

Keywords: Development, Perceptions, Structural Equation Modeling, Rural poor, sub-Saharan Africa, Kenya.