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Labour Mobility and Deconstruction of Kenya Emigration Streams

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Abstract:

Macro data collected during the 2009 Kenya Population and Housing Census was used for analysis of results in this paper. It establishes emigration levels, trends and patterns, and further establishes similarities and contrasts between Kenya's emigration structure and standard migration schedule (Rogers and Watkins (1987) Age Migration Schedule). The results depict an increase in emigration volumes, with intermittent fluctuations, and a normal distribution migration structure, but heavily-laden at the centre; implying that Kenya's emigration is majorly labour-force driven.

This study established that emigration by distance, place of destination and time (year) of migration vary by individual movers, but are influenced by the household and/or community of origin, past experience and/or relationship with an earlier emigrant, and prior knowledge (information on) place of destination. It plausibly implies that diaspora networks have a positive impact on an emigrant's decision-making process. To that end, it can be inferred that mobility transition theory explains emigration phenomena in Kenya. In general, emigration structure is found to be gender balanced, but shifting from long-distance to predominantly short-distance mobility; with countries of destination being mainly the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK), the East Africa Community partner states, the Middle East countries (United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia), the Republic of South Africa and South Sudan.

Keywords: Labour mobility, migration structures, mobility transition, emigration streams, macro-level analysis.

1. Introduction

Migration issues currently dominate contemporary issues affecting most countries of world. However, the understanding of the magnitude, trends and patterns in most developing countries, such as Kenya have not been well documented. Equally, the migration phase has not been appropriately established, due to either paucity in data or estimating using modern techniques have not been tested. However, existing literature shows that emigration from Kenya to other countries in the period 1980s through 1990s, as established by the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) (2003) study identified several factors that caused emigration: lack of advanced education facilities in the colonial and post-independence periods in Kenya; poor political governance; and economic difficulties brought about by lack of employment due to a slow economy, civil service reform and retrenchment of staff through the Structural Adjustment Programmes which the World Bank initiated in the 1980s.

Courgeau (1985) noted that while most geographers now agree that there is no one-life cycle into which all individuals or families can be fitted, research does still demonstrate regularities, both in the propensity of individuals to migrate at different ages and in the way migration is often associated with other demographic events. A sizeable body of evidence now exists on age migration schedules for inter-region/inter-district moves within affluent mixed economy countries. To the contrary, is the Kenyan case, where no studies have ever been undertaken to affirm or contradict these findings. To say the least, no past study using Kenyan data has ever determined the prevailing age-sex migration schedule among Kenyan emigrants.

This study provides a set of observations, based on the most recent empirical research, dealing with these themes in Kenya. The contribution provides detailed analyses of emigration as a social process, showing how it is structured by counties, age, sex, demographic and socio-economic characteristics, and how migration in turn affects development. The paper is sub-divided into the first section, which gives the background information, comprising mainly of the introduction, problem statement, rationale and objectives, the literature review, the theoretical framework and methodology. On the other hand, section two discusses the results, while section three comprises of the conclusion and recommendations.

1.1. Past Studies on Emigration

Massey (1989) argued that once the number of network connections in an origin area reaches a critical level, migration becomes self-perpetuating, because it creates the social structure to sustain the process (cf. Appleyard 1992). Network effects explain the (often unintended) perpetuation of migration, often over formally closed borders, irrespective of its original causes (Waldorf 1998). The facilitating role of such “family and friends networks” makes migration difficult for governments to control. Network connections are a form of social capital that people draw upon to gain access to employment abroad (Massey et al 1993:448).

Rogers and Watkins (1987) have proposed a model migration schedule, which has a constant migration component augmented by four peaks of migration during different life transitions (early childhood, early participation in the labour force, retirement and late old age). The migration rates follow a pattern, with relatively high rates of mobility shortly after birth, trough of mobility between ages 3 and 13 followed by a steady rising trend towards a mobility peak between 17 and 30. Thereafter, mobility falls steadily with age, although there is an interruption to this trend between 57 and 67 years of age.

Rogers and Castro (1981, 1986) have compiled 500 such schedules, while Roger (1988), Veergoosen and Warnes (1989, 1983a, b) have added others from different parts of the world. On the basis of their own data, Rogers and Watkins (1987) have proposed their own migration schedule, which has a constant migration component augmented by four peaks of migration during different life transitions (early childhood, early participation in the labour force, retirement and late old age). It presents a description of the Age Migration Schedules linking them to stages in development.

Zelinsky (1971:230-1) argued that there has not only been a general and spectacular expansion of individual mobility in modernizing societies, but also that the specific character of migration processes tends to change over the course of this vital transition. Pre-modern societies (phase (a)) are characterised mainly by limited circular migration. In the early stages of the vital transition (phase (b)), in particular, all forms of mobility (circular, rural colonisation frontiers, internal rural-urban, international) do increase. In phase (c), international migration decreases rapidly, rural-to-urban internal migration slackens, but remains at high levels and circular movements further increase and grow in structural complexity. At the end of phase (c), the rural exodus significantly decreases, as the number of those employed in agricultural production approaches the minimum level associated with optimum economic return. In phase (d), residential mobility, urban-to-urban and circular migration become more important and, in this phase countries transform themselves from net emigration to net immigration countries because of mounting immigration of unskilled and semi-skilled workers from developing countries. In phase (e), most internal migration is urban-urban and residential, while immigration of labourers continues.

Zelinsky’s (1971) mobility transition, notes that migration peaks when young people enter the labour force to take up employment as either skilled workers or unskilled workers or businessmen, or those mobile due to educational opportunities in the higher institutions of learning in other countries or domestic workers. The study also observes that migration declines steadily with age, with no distinctive “retirement” phase, since the absence of welfare state means that people must work until death. However, with the onset of modernization and industrialization in Kenya (just as other parts of the world), migration has increased sharply, as people leave the land (or rural homes) for towns (or emigrate) to other countries, either permanently or as temporary migrants.

In more recent studies, the term network migration has often been used to describe the process of what used to be ‘chain migration’. Networks can be defined as sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and nonmigrants in origin and destination areas through bonds of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin (Massey et al 1993:448). These social bonds and the feeling of being part of one (transnational) community also explain why migrants tend to remit substantial amounts of money to nonmigrants—whereas neo-classical, individual-centred approaches towards migration leave no room for remittances (Djajic, 1986; Taylor, 1999). The often transnational character migrants’ identities largely explain why bonds with communities of origin are often maintained over the generations and why settlement and integration at the destination does not automatically coincide with declining propensities to remit or to remain involved in different ways with the society of origin.

2. Methodology

The data and information on emigration compiled for the purposes of this paper comes from 2009 Kenya Population and Housing Census. The dependent variable was the emigrant(s): person(s) who changes his place of residence (origin) to a new place of residence (destination). The analysis noted that there were some deficiencies on data due to inability to merge all the household questionnaires (with a response of having had an emigrant in the last fifteen year) with the respective emigrant’s questionnaires. The anomaly led to a reduction in the number of emigrants and households (i.e. cases) in the analysis. This is because all the households that stated having had an emigrant but could not be merged with their subsequent emigrant’s questionnaires were not included for analysis.

Age-sex emigration patterns, both at national level and from all the 47 counties were generated. Using the observed general pattern of emigration developed, in relation to the Rogers and Watkins (1987) Standard Age Migration Schedules, this study established the prevailing emigration pattern. A migration schedule model was used to determine the prevailing age-sex migration schedules (refer to the model below). The results were used to show the stage of migration in Kenya.

$$M(x) = \alpha \exp(-\alpha_1 x) + \alpha_2 \exp\{-\alpha_2(x - \mu_2) - \exp[-\lambda_2(x - \mu_2)]\} + \alpha_3 \exp\{-\alpha_3(x - \mu_3) - \exp[-\lambda_3(x - \mu_3)]\} + C$$

Where

$$X = 0, 1, 2, \dots, z$$

3. Study Results

3.1. Emigration Levels

Analysis of emigrants by province of origin is shown in Figure 1 indicating that there were 160,351 emigrants, distributed as follows: the majority were from Rift Valley (20.8 percent), followed by Central province (17.8 percent), and Nairobi (17.1 percent). The data also shows that the least number of emigrants were from North Eastern (2.9 percent), followed by Coast (7.5 percent). Yet, both Nyanza and western provinces fall between the two extremes.

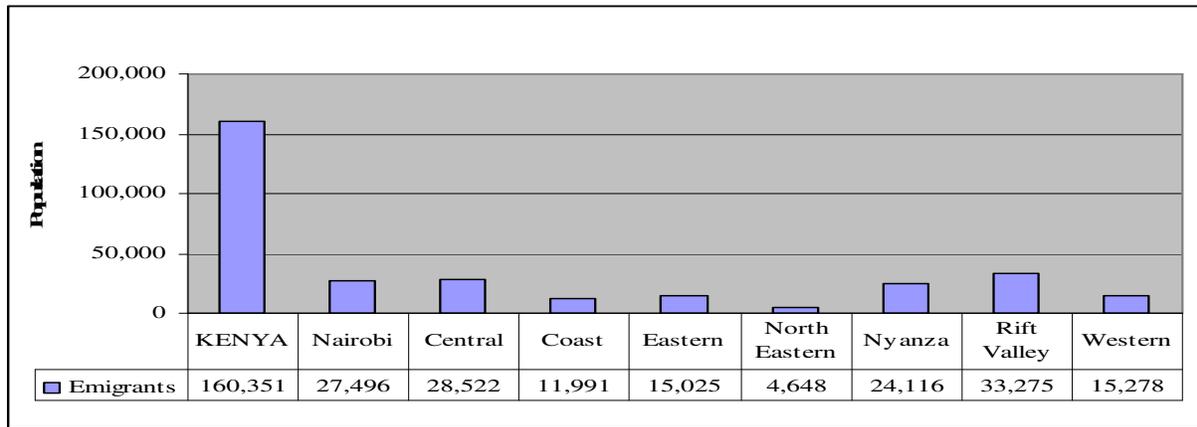


Figure 1: Emigrants by Province and National, using Household Questionnaires (2009)

Source: computed by author

This study was not able to merge all household questionnaires (where there was mention of having had an emigrant) with the respective emigrant’s questionnaires. To that end, only 95,647 emigrants were captured using the emigrant’s questionnaire (Figure 2). Nairobi and Kiambu had over 10,000 emigrants each, which accounts for more than half the total number of emigrants from the ten top leading counties with emigrants.

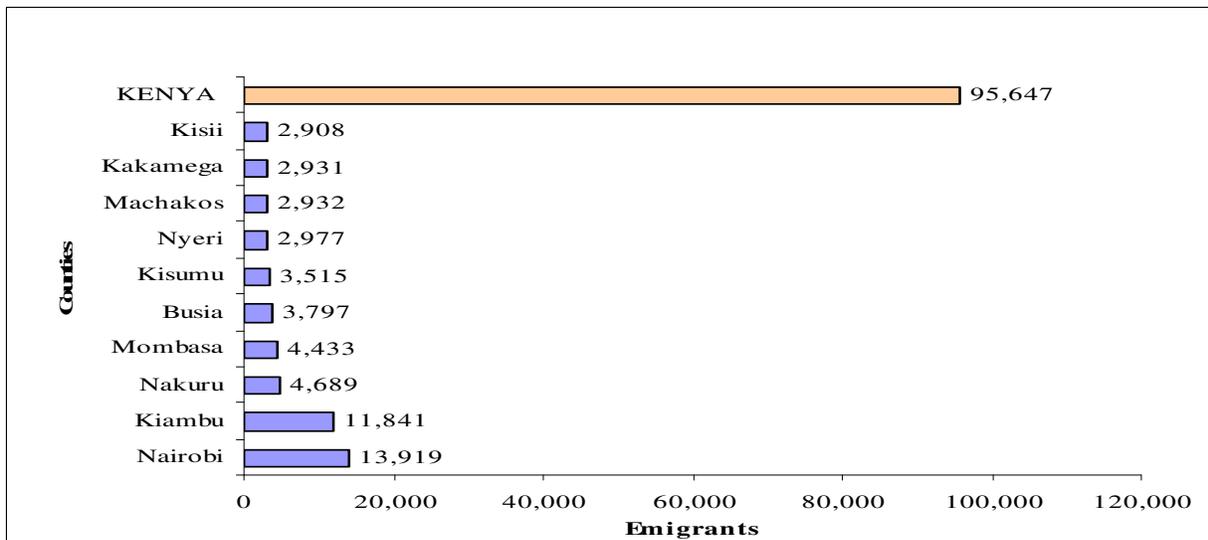


Figure 2: Distribution of Emigrants by Counties using Emigrants Questionnaires (2009)

Source: computed by author

However, a comparative analysis of the household and emigrant’s questionnaire shows that almost half of the emigrants, as captured in the household questionnaires (under the assumption that there was at least one emigrant in a household), is not accounted for because of the inability to adequately merge the two files. By and large, this study uses data generated from the emigrant’s questionnaire as it was used to collect the required variables for analysis, and thereby enable the study achieve its objectives.

3.2. Emigration Trends

The observed migration trajectory confirms Kenya’s emigration trend. There is a general upward trend in the number of emigrants from Kenya (Figure 3). Nonetheless, unlike in other years between 1995 and 2009, in 1996 there was a drop in the number of emigrants from Kenya.

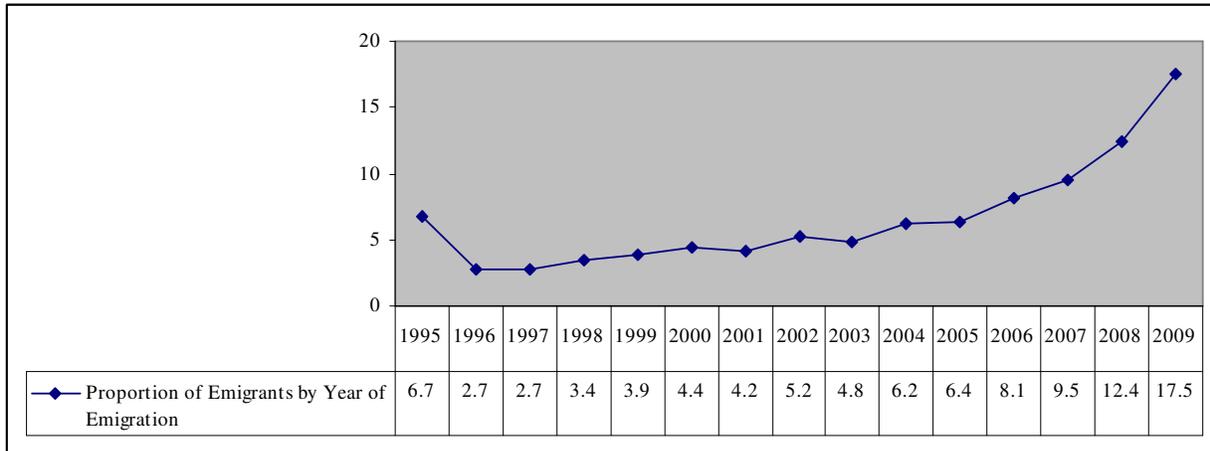


Figure 3: Emigration Trend by Year of Departure, 1995-2009
Source: computed by author

3.3. Age Migration Schedules

The census question about birthplace was asked. Recent migration in Kenya is estimated by a 1-year period, unlike in countries such as Brazil, which is usually a 4-year period. Regardless of migration levels and the place where they take place, migration rates in Kenya have a very similar age pattern across the 47 counties. Figures 4 and 5 show that there were similarities in migration pattern at national and county level. Age-migration rates were established by a one-peaked migration age pattern, rather than the four-peaked Age Migration Schedule (Rogers, 1992b:240).

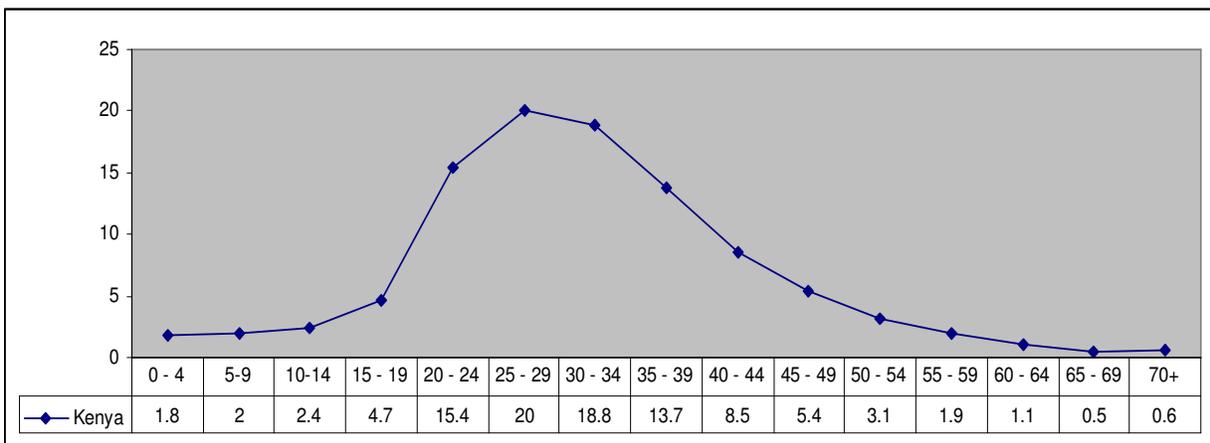


Figure 4: Age Migration Schedule for Kenya, 2009
Source: computed by author

The observed age-migration schedule that is characteristic of the Kenya emigration pattern implies that majority of Kenyans emigrate either because of employment opportunities or moving out in search of educational opportunities in the institutions of higher learning in the developed world. The Rogers’ theoretical model notes that up to age 17, individuals’ mobility parallels that of their parents, that is, that of economically active adults between the ages of 30 and 49 years. Between ages 18 and 30, a sharp increase in mobility is observed, which is attributable to young people entering the labour market, leaving the parental home, moving into first union. That is, the mobility corresponding to the transition to adulthood.

A small rise is observed around retirement (between ages 60 and 70), followed by an increase in mobility in old age, corresponding to moving into care accommodation or to being looked after by one’s children. Figure 5 depicts that majority of emigrants from Kenya are of age 15-39 years, being those who left to seek for education opportunities (37 percent) and employment (35 percent). The 0-4 age group of migrants is depictive of children migrating with their young parents.

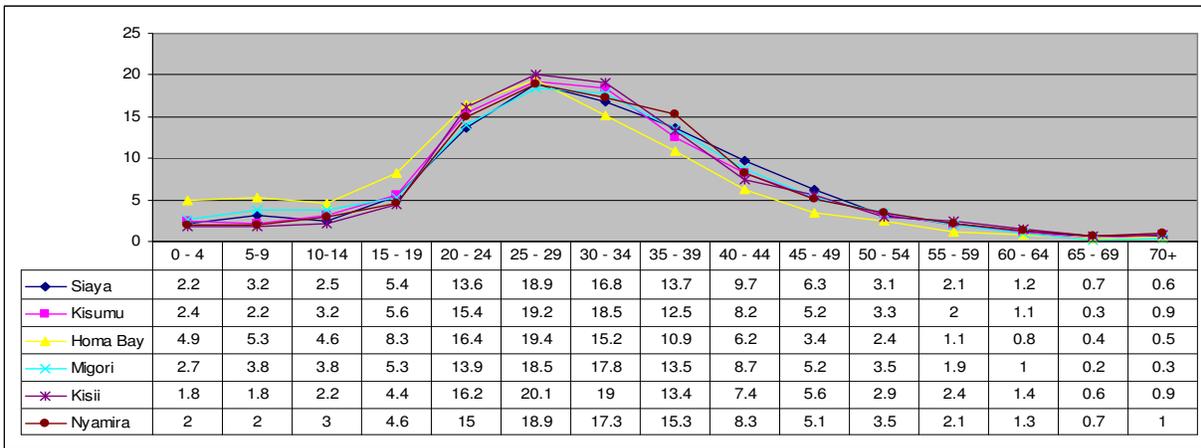


Figure 5: Age Migration Schedules by Counties in the former Nyanza Province, 2009
Source: computed by author

This mobility mirrors adult migration to a large extent, with those aged 15-24 years migrating probably to seek educational opportunities in other countries, particularly in the USA, the United Kingdom, Canada, South Africa and Uganda. On the other hand, those of age 25-39 old are those migrated to seek employment opportunities across frontiers.

3.4. Emigration by Sex

The finding takes cognizance that the policies which were hindering or limiting migration of women in the pre- and colonial Africa were reviewed. Hence, there has been a rekindled migration of women just as are men from rural to urban areas, and to different parts of the world. This could be plausibly be explained by increase in exposure as a result of education, and more so, that family-related reasons appear to dominate, at least for residential mobility, and work-related reasons dominate for longer-distance migration. In the United States, Rossi (1980) found ‘the major functions of mobility to be the process by which families adjust their housing to the housing needs that are generated by shifts in family composition’ (Rossi, 1980, p. 35). This study also establishes that there is a gender balance in the number of emigrants from the 47 counties of Kenya (Figure 6).

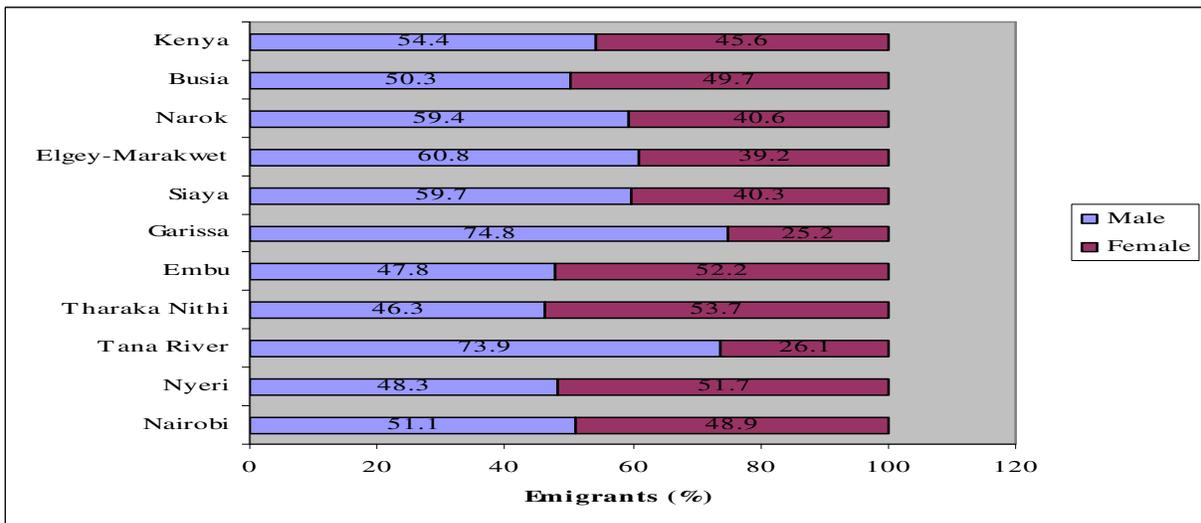


Figure 6: Emigrants by Sex and Counties, 2009
Source: computed by author

The age-sex profile is a compact summary of how migration is actually experienced, a measure of who is most likely to move at what point in their lives and whether and how this differs by gender. The socio-economic forces driving the migration are embedded in the curves, but only age is represented in the profile. Thus, the age-profile can be used to guide investigations into age and gender-specific socio-economic forces underlying migration. It is worth indicating that the migration rates experienced by the Kenyan emigrants follow the classical pattern of the model migration schedule. It has a uni-modal distribution with a peak in the early twenties associated with entry into the labour force, higher education or marriage. This age group depicts a people migrating in their prime, that

is, it is a positively selected sub-group of the population. At older ages the intensity of migration rapidly declines and is near its minimum by ages 45. An exception is male in-migration at older ages, which has a sub-mode at age 55 associated with retirement. The female mode starts at a younger age and, compared to males, women aged 15-19 have a high probability of in- and out-migration. The rates remain high for 20-24-year-olds in both sexes. These young adults are moving for purposes of higher education, working or looking for work and the formation of formal or informal unions. A proportion of the female migration profile is made up of women moving into the husband's household at the time of union formation, but women also enter the labour market or study away from home.

The male peak is from age 20-24 and is associated with young men living for work or education. The in-migration curve for males has a lower peak, which is displaced slightly to the right, that is, the average age for male in-migration is higher than the average age of male out-migration. The displacement is associated with men returning home from work-related migration that took them away earlier. After age 30, the likelihood of return in-migration is higher than out-migration. This effect is more muted, but still present in the female curve, that is, the average age for female in-migrants is higher than out-migrants reflecting an out and return movement for work related migration. This displacement is lower for women, which is a more permanent migration.

The age groups under the mode, that is 0-15 years, show a clear pattern of migration intensity associated with each age. The youngest children are most likely to migrate, and their level of migration identical with the level of adults aged 25-35 years older. These children are dependent migrants and accompany their parents when they migrate. Therefore, household level factors drive the children's migration and not the age of the child, a status commensurate with their dependency level. Children can move unaccompanied, especially in the African context, as in a foster situation where the care of the child is transferred temporarily to a relative living in a more advantageous situation. The age group 5-14 years is the school-going age for children whose primary obligation is to apply themselves to their basic studies. Therefore, levels of migration are at the lowest in this age group. Their migration has not disappeared because there is still some older children migrating with their parents, but this tends to be the least mobile age group.

3.5. Migration Patterns

According to the world system theory, migration is more likely to occur between past colonial powers and their former colonies, facilitated by the cultural, linguistic, administrative, transportation, and communication links existing between the two. Within core destination countries, the management of the world economy is concentrated within a relatively small number of urban centres where banking, finance, professional services, and highly technologically developed infrastructure coalesce. Given the strong demand for services from unskilled workers and the decline of heavy industrial production in those cities coupled with highly developed transportation and communication links with peripheral countries, these countries are likely to attract a large proportion of international migrants (Sassen, 1991).

Emigration from Kenya flows to a number of destination regions, including other parts of Africa, Europe and North America. This study shows that the most preferred countries of destination, in a descending order are: the United States (29%), Uganda (13%) and the United Kingdom (8%), respectively. It is also worth of note that there has been irregular emigration from Kenya, to a large extent provoked by a range of economic, social, political and security factors. Notwithstanding, there are cases of family reunification following male-dominated migration to Uganda, Tanzania, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia and Sudan. In addition, the contracting of formal and informal employment opportunities over the past decade has been a contributing factor (Figure 7).

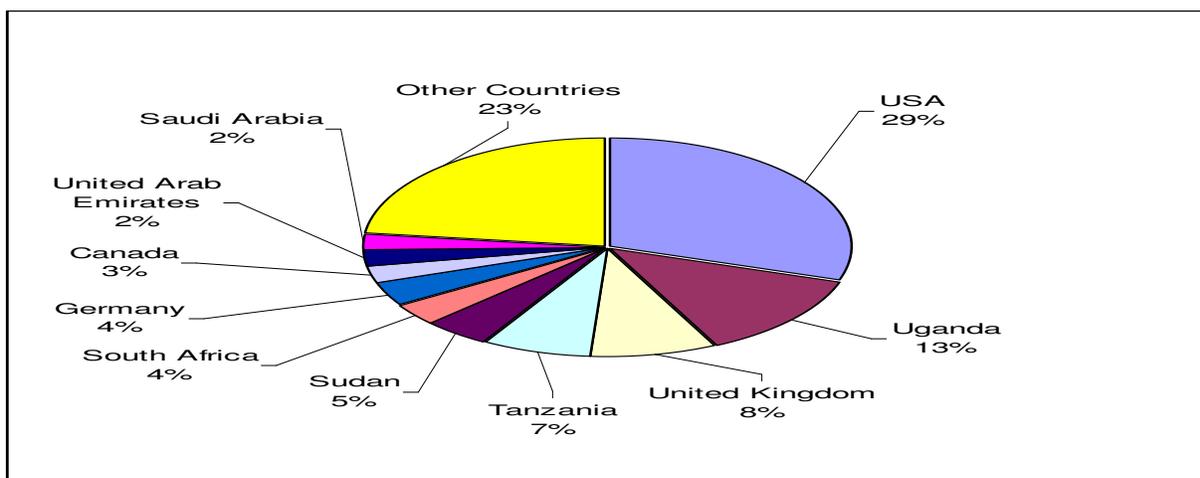


Figure 7: Emigrants by Countries of Destination, 2009

Source: computed by author

A comparative analysis of Figures 6 and 7 reveals a variety of migration processes, namely step-wise and chain migration. Step-wise migration process as a movement of people upward in the urban hierarchy in its purest sense depicts an essentially aspatial

formulation. When analysis was undertaken of emigration by country of destination, there were a total of 4.0 percent of Kenyan immigrants in Germany, compared with 29.0 percent in United States.

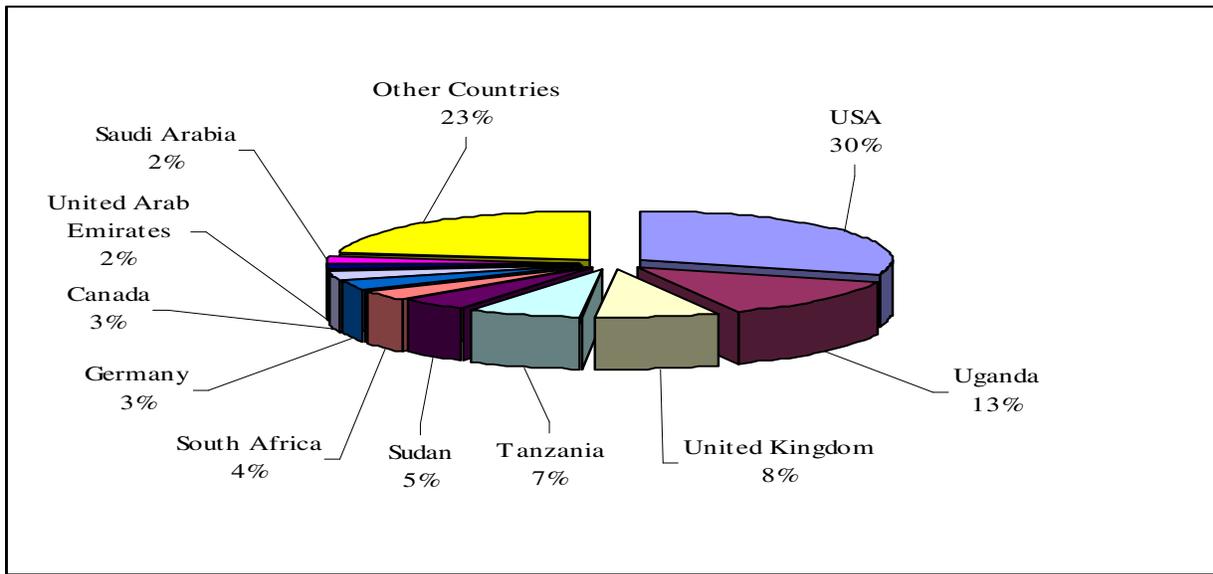


Figure 8: Emigrants by Countries of Residence, 2009
 Source: computed by author) Emigration to the Developed World

However, it is noted that when analysis was by emigration and country of residence, there were 3.0 percent Kenyan immigrants in Germany against 30.0 percent in the United States. This might imply that Kenyan immigrants in Germany later immigrated to the United States, an aspect of stepwise migration. The emerging pattern could also imply that there was mobility of families from particular villages or regions to a new country or to cities in which earlier immigrants had set in motion chain migration by assisting their relatives to migrate or join them. The noted migration pattern could be used to explain “chain-migration” typical of internal migration processes, whereby young people, born and bred in a small urban centers, move farther to bigger urban centres, to be compensated, sometimes insufficiently, and sometimes more than sufficiently, by immigration from smaller centres and rural districts.

3.5.1. United Kingdom (UK)

The longstanding colonial ties between Kenya and the United Kingdom, since the 1880s, have played a significant role on immigration into the United Kingdom. Figure 9 shows that of the counties having the majority of their emigrants having immigrated to the United Kingdom, Nairobi has the majority with 14.7 percent. It is also important to observe that of the 47 forty seven counties in Kenya, the Central Kenya counties of Kirinyaga, Muranga, Kiambu, Embu, Laikipia and Tharaka Nithi favoured the United Kingdom as the most preferred.

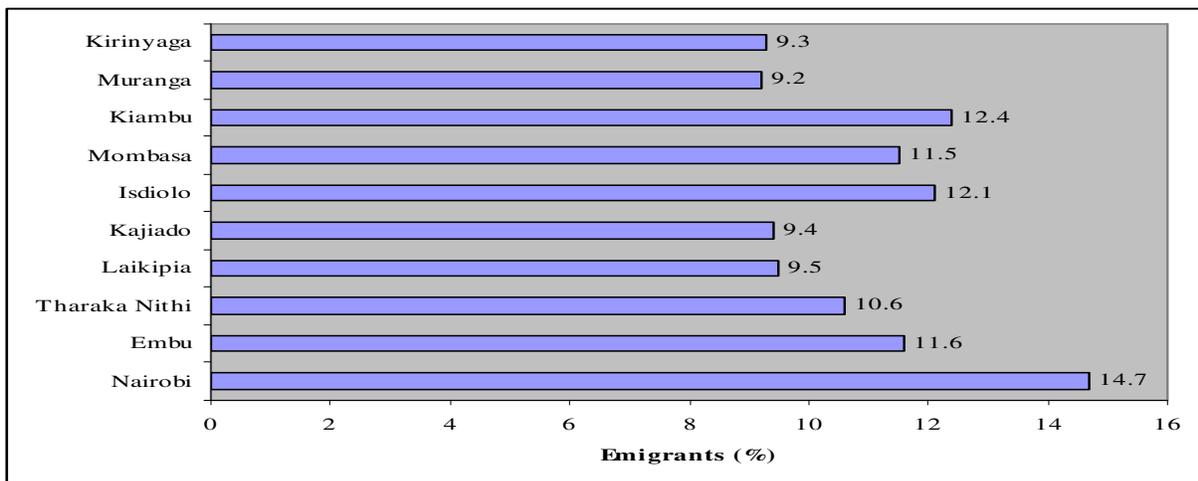


Figure 9: Emigrants to the United Kingdom
 Source: computed by author

This could be explained by the longstanding link the White Settlers and the colonial administrators had in this region of Kenya. Imprints of the White settlement remains are in the form of agricultural plantation crops, dairy and horticultural farming. In addition, it could be explained by the constant and growing need for education, both at tertiary or post-secondary level, and university education in the United Kingdom's prestigious universities. However, the business and commercial links between the two countries also cannot go without mention, as the United Kingdom is the major importer of Kenya's products in Europe.

3.5.2. Emigration to United States of America (USA)

Emigration of Kenyans to the United States goes back to the 1960s, when the US airlift made many Kenyans move to the country for higher studies. Coupled, with the positive image, in terms of pushing for good governance in developing countries, the United States also wooed many professionals and other employment seekers alike due to its open system as "a land of opportunities". With its popular "Green Card", many Kenyan have migrated courtesy of this scheme. Unsurprisingly, Kenya has the highest number of African students in the United States; which means that a large number of emigrants from Kenya migrated there because of education opportunities (The US State Department, 2010).

Figure 10 shows emigration trend, that at county level more than half of emigrants from Kisii, Nyamira and Nandi immigrated to the United States. Comparison at the national level suggests that Kisii County had the highest number of county emigrants having migrated to the USA. Of the ten leading counties with emigrants in that country, Rift Valley Province counties - Nandi, Bomet, Kericho, Nakuru and Uasin Gishu - posted half of them. However, of the three top leading counties with the highest percentage of their emigrants in the country are in Nyanza which had two-third of the share, as evidenced by Kisii (56.2 percent) and Nyamira (54.6 percent) counties.

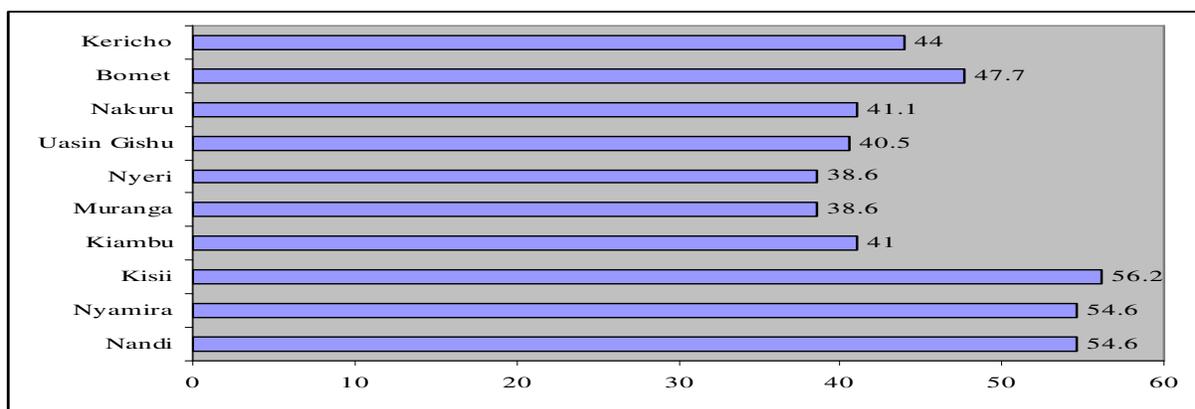


Figure 10: Emigrants to the USA

Source: computed by author

Emigration of Kenyans to the United States through Germany as evidenced by the analysis of the 2009 Kenya Population and Housing Census implies a hierarchical-cum-spatial process of step-wise moves. It further annotates the spatial expression of the socio-cultural transformation of an individual or family moving gradually from a traditional-rural sector to a modern urban sector via intermediate counties. This could be due to high costs of transportation or acquiring some requisite skills at the centres of call, to enable them to move to their final destinations. To that end, this study observes that emigration from Kenya do not follow one simple pattern but exhibits diverse patterns.

3.6. Emigration to other EAC Partner States

3.6.1. Emigration to Uganda

This study notes that the Kenyan counties bordering Uganda had most of their emigrants moving to Uganda than any other counties. For example, Busia County (75.1 percent) had more than three-quarters of its emigrants in Uganda than any other county. It is plausible to note that ethnic groups that inhabit Busia County are also found on the other side of the Kenya-Uganda border. The blood-relationship among the Kenya-Uganda border inhabitants, particularly, among the Samia, Banyala, and Teso, makes it easier for them to cross the border and live in Uganda (legally or illegally). It is further noted that the counties of Siaya (29.9 percent), Kakamega (31.9 percent) and Bungoma (45.0 percent), had almost more than one-third of their emigrants in Uganda, too (Figure 11). This could plausibly be explained by short-distance migration, requiring less time and cost to migrate. Equally, it also provides an opportunity for being in constant touch with family members at places of origin. There are also those who emigrated due to education, businesses and work.

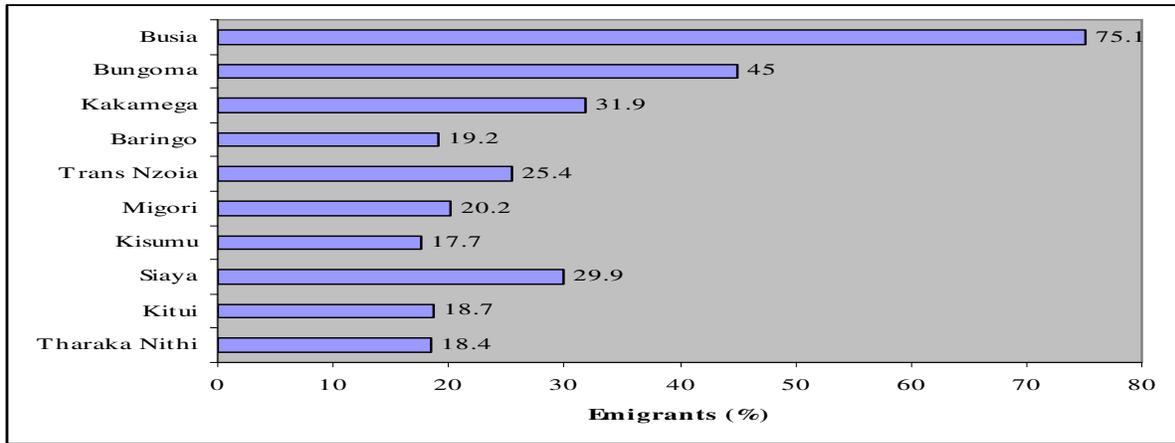


Figure 11: Emigrants to Uganda
Source: computed by author

The high number of Kenya emigrants to Uganda and Tanzania can be traced from the historical links between Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda since the colonial times of the British rule, when there was a lot of close working relationship between the three countries. More so, it can be explained by the high number of Kenya cross-border business activities in the two countries, and more so by the Kenya students studying in the tertiary institutions in Uganda. This is because the cost of education in Uganda is perceived to be cheaper than in Kenya.

3.6.2. Emigration to Tanzania

Emigration of Kenyans to Tanzania could also plausibly be considered as an aspect of cross-border migration, dominated by emigrants from neighbouring counties of Kwale (43.6 percent), Taita Taveta (39.7 percent), Narok (39.6 percent); with Homabay county having over half (60.1 percent) of its emigrants in Tanzania (Figure 12). This phenomenon reflects short-distance migration and cross-border migration. Each migration typology experienced could be explained by high cost of transport and traveling time. The study notes that emigrants from Narok into Tanzania are mainly the Maasai, either having migrated with their cattle into Tanzania in search of pasture and water (i.e. routine migratory phenomenon), or having moved to join family members, or having traveled on account of small-scale business to sell products such as honey, locally made ware (such as, leather-belts laced with beads, knives, arrows and spears) and herbal medicine, among others.

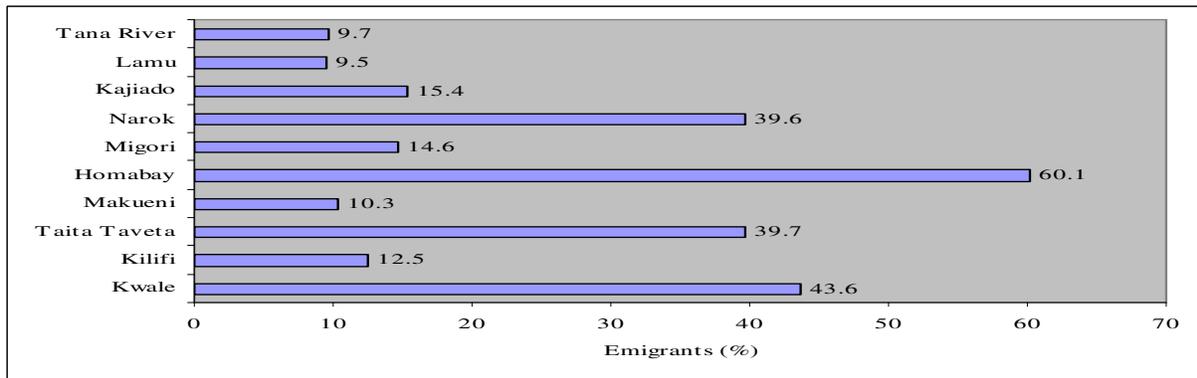


Figure 12: Emigrants to Tanzania, 2009
Source: computed by author

The study notes that those from Kwale (43.6 percent), Homa Bay (60.1 percent) and Taita Taveta (39.7 percent) could have been emigrants who had gone to undertake business and commercial activities, or to join family members. It should be noted that Kenya’s borderline counties are inhabited by ethnic groups that cross the international boundary between Kenya and its neighbouring countries; the case of the Maasai of Narok and Kajiado counties (Kenya and Tanzania), the Samia and Teso of Busia (Uganda and Kenya), the Pokot and Turkana (Uganda and Kenya), the Boran (Ethiopia and Kenya), and the Somali (in Somalia and Kenya), attest to this fact. The observed settlement arrangement at the international borders is a precursor for prominent emigration by the communities involved.

3.6.3. Emigration to South Sudan

Bilateral relations between Kenya and South Sudan continue to flourish, anchored on mutually beneficial co-operative relationships between the two countries. There is a strong partnership between the two countries, which made South Sudan, in whose liberation Kenya played a pivotal role, and continue to rely on Kenya for capacity building, and economic cooperation. This makes South Sudan a new destination of Kenyan emigrants (Figure 13). Analysis of emigration by county shows that Turkana County has about one-third of its emigrants in South Sudan, followed by Trans Nzoia (19.0 percent). This could be plausibly explained by Turkana’s proximity to South Sudan.

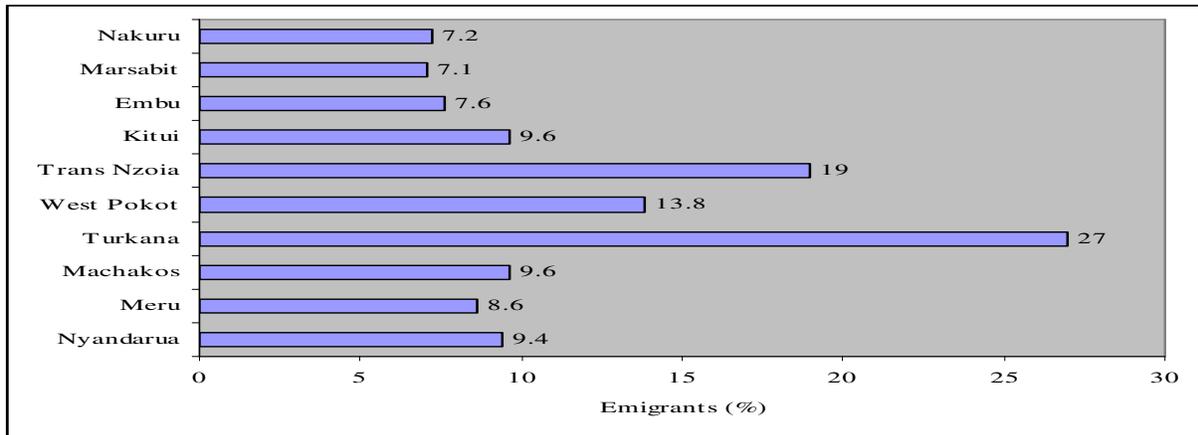


Figure 13: Emigrants to South Sudan

Source: computed by author

Moreover, there might be cordial relations between the Turkana community and Southern Sudanese given that the largest refugee camp (Kakuma Camp in Lodwar), where the Sudanese lived for more than two decades, is located in Turkana County. Following the long stay of the refugees and interaction between the two communities, it is possible that inter-marriages have occurred, resulting in emigration for purposes of family re-unifications and/or marriages.

During the days of the South Sudan liberation struggle, Kenya was not only the hub of the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLA) but also a home for many South Sudanese nationals. Since the post-separation era in July 2011, South Sudan still benefits from Kenya’s assistance in ‘building a stable, prosperous and peaceful state that takes its rightful place among the family of nations. In this context, and as part of the technical co-operation programmes between the two countries, the Kenyan government, through the Foreign Service Institute, provides training for officials of South Sudan Foreign Service. The training focuses on key issues that define the road ahead for the new state, such as peace and security and post-conflict reconstruction, among others.

3.6.4. Emigration to United Arab Emirates (UAE)

Analysis in this study notes that the two counties of Lamu and Mombasa had the highest percentage of their emigrants having immigrated to the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. The longstanding strong links between the Coastal region of Kenya and the Arab world, as Figure 14 shows, is traceable in history.

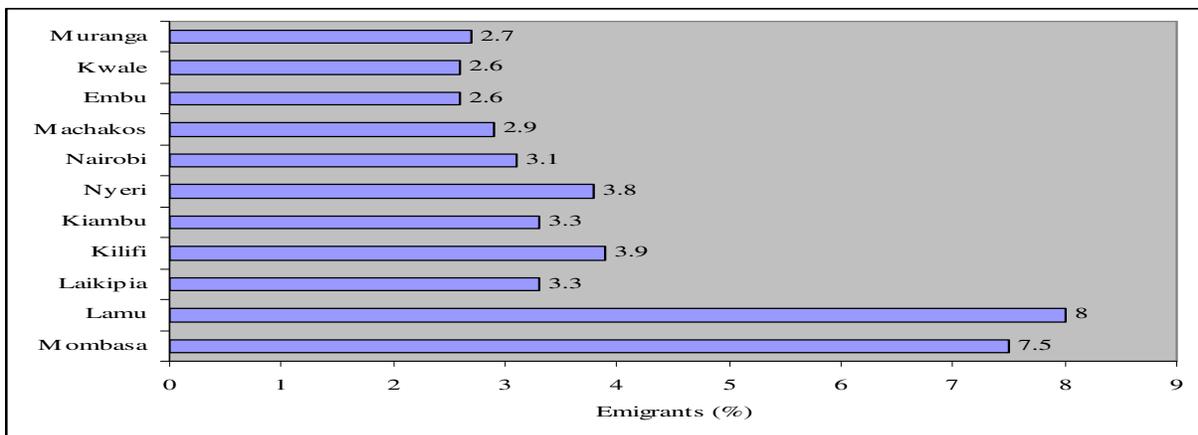


Figure 14: Emigrants to United Arab Emirates (UAE), 2009

Source: computed by author

For instance in the early 19th century, the East African coast was under the control of the Sultan of Oman whose capital was in the city of Muscat on the southern coast of the Arabian peninsula. The interior of East Africa was divided into a number of local states which included the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia, the animist kingdom of Buganda and many smaller states.

3.6.5. Emigration to Saudi Arabia

The relationship between Kenya and Saudi Arabia which was heightened during the early 19th Century seems to have persisted to date. New links are emerging, such as immigrating to the Middle East state in search of formal or informal job opportunities; it is reported that there are approximately over 38,000 Kenyans living in the United Arab Emirates, and about 20,000 in Saudi Arabia. Figure 15 illustrates that Lamu County (22.4 percent), more than double Kilifi County (10.1 percent), leads all the Kenyan counties in the percentage number of migrants by counties who immigrated to Saudi Arabia. On the whole, the counties from Coast Province had the highest share of their emigrants to Saudi Arabia, namely Tana River (9.0 percent), Kwale (9.5 percent), Kilifi (10.1 percent), Mombasa (16.0 percent) and Lamu (22.4 percent).

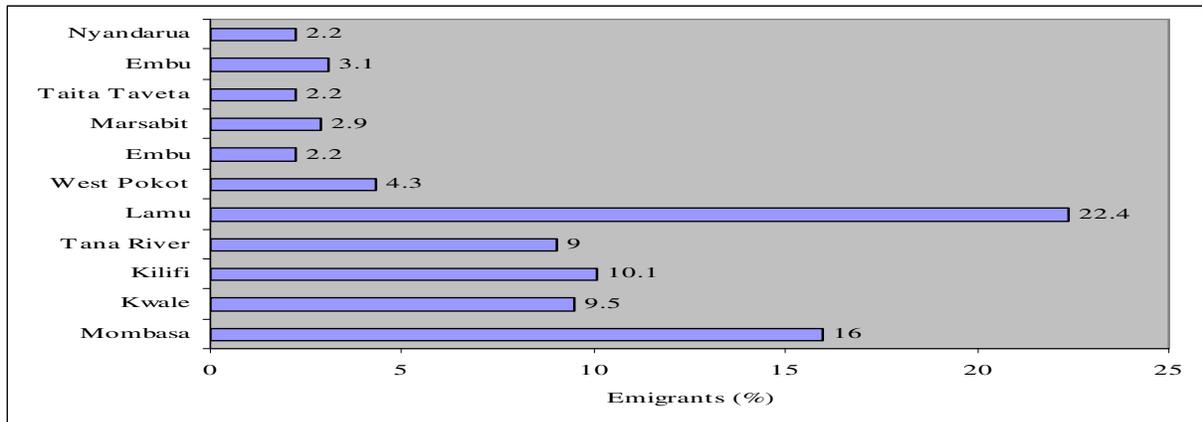


Figure 15: Emigrants to Saudi Arabia, 2009

Source: computed by author

Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates remain key business and commercial trade partners with Kenya in the region. The partnership between Saudi Arabia and the Coastal region of Kenya goes back to the early periods of Arab traders in East Africa, whereby there were frequent movements between the two regions. This also culminated in the Arab dominance and establishment of the Consulates of Oman in the Zanzibar, Mombasa and Malindi towns. To date, there are lots of lands owned by absent farmers who live in the Arab world. It is therefore plausible to infer that such linkages do contribute to the observed migration of the Coastal people to Saudi Arabia.

4. Conclusion

This study reveals that emigration in Kenya is relatively gender balanced, with the majority of the emigrants being averagely younger in age. The emigration trend shows that the volume of migrants has been on the increase year after year; however, with minor fluctuations. The noted emigration pattern can be summarized, as mobility to four main regions: (i) Developed world; with the United States taking the highest proportion of the emigrants, followed by the United Kingdom. (ii) The East African Community (EAC) partner states, of whom the majority went to Uganda. However, a significant proportion was noted in South Sudan (ii) The Middle East region, particularly in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia (iv) Southern Africa, mainly in the republic of South Africa.

Conspicuously, it is noted that irrespective of the emigrants' places of origin, age-sex migration schedules are similar amongst the 47 counties in Kenya. Of interest is that they are all one-peaked, rather than being four-peaked as is the case of standard age migration schedule (Rogers, 1992b:240). This implies that the majority of Kenyans emigrate mainly in search of employment opportunities, and also to a greater extent as a result of search for education opportunities in the institutions of higher learning in the developed world.

It is noted that emigration streams are predominant to specific countries. Thus, policy makers should refocus appropriate migration policies between Kenya and those countries for enhanced mobility of Kenyans and increased development partnerships. For instance, there is increased emigration to the East African Community partner states (mainly to Uganda and Rwanda), the United States, the United Kingdom, and the United Arab Emirates. This could be in the form of negotiating for visa-free movement between Kenya and those countries.

The development of a country of origin needs a concerted effort and partnership with countries of destination and the emigrants. Hence, there is also need to develop legal and policy frameworks that are emigrants-specific, so as to use them as agents of development (at place of origin and destination). However, longitudinal surveys on migration are proposed as it will provide an opportunity to analyse migration histories, rather than one-stop migration events.

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