
Community Action Boards - Knowledge of their dignitaries regarding the scope of their actions.

Juntas de Acción Comunal – Conocimiento de sus dignatarios frente al alcance de sus acciones

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Abstract: This research approaches the community action boards (JAC) of the locality of Suba (Bogota-Colombia) as subjects of study to determine the degree of knowledge that the dignitaries of these boards have regarding the scope that they hold given by Law 743 of 2002. The knowledge of the aforementioned representatives is a variable that, although it does not ensure, is a determining factor for the development of a good management of the JAC, and, therefore, for the achievement of community development in their territories. These organizations become a platform for the micro level to contribute to the achievement of several sustainable development objectives, given their conditions of coverage and proximity to the communities. A quantitative research is developed, with an exploratory and descriptive, non-experimental and cross-sectional scope. The primary data collection instrument is a survey, which is applied to a probabilistic sample. In order to reach the stated objective, an assessment scale was created to evaluate the knowledge of the population under study. The main result is that 71% of the population has a "high degree" of knowledge regarding the scope given by law to the community action boards.

Keywords: community development, management, community leader, social leader, community organization.

Resumen: La presente investigación aborda las juntas de acción comunal (JAC) de la localidad de Suba (Bogotá-Colombia) como sujetos de estudio para determinar el grado de conocimiento que tienen los dignatarios de éstas respecto al alcance que ostentan dado por la Ley 743 de 2002. El conocimiento por parte de los mencionados representantes es una variable que, aunque no asegura, es determinante para el desarrollo de una buena gestión de la JAC, y, por ende, del logro de desarrollo comunitario en sus territorios. Estas organizaciones se convierten en plataforma para que desde lo micro se pueda aportar al logro de varios objetivos de desarrollo sostenible, dadas sus condiciones de cobertura y cercanía con las comunidades. Se desarrolla una investigación cuantitativa, con alcance exploratorio y descriptivo, no experimental y transeccional. Como instrumento de recolección de datos primarios se trabaja con encuesta, la cual se aplica a una muestra probabilística. Para dar alcance al objetivo planteado, se crea una escala valorativa en pro de evaluar el conocimiento de la población objeto de estudio. Como resultado principal se obtiene que el 71% de la población presenta conocimientos en "grado alto" en cuanto al alcance dado por la ley a las juntas de acción comunal.

Palabras clave: desarrollo comunitario, gestión, líder comunal, líder social, organización comunal.

Introduction

The Community Action Boards (JAC) in Colombia are private organizations, institutionalized by Law 19 of 1958. In their more than sixty years of history, the CABs have had a rich regulatory framework, including the Political Constitution, laws, decrees and resolutions, with more than twenty issued, as shown in Figure 1, although there are more than sixty provisions on them (Valencia, 2010a).

Figure 1. History of legislation affecting Community Action Boards

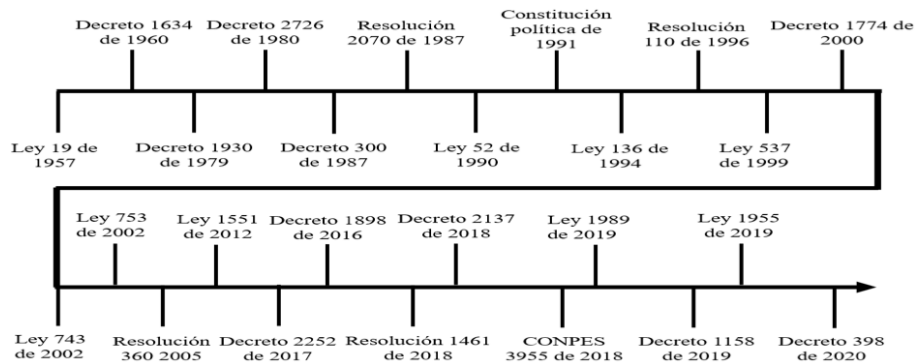


Figure 1

History of legislation affecting Community Action Boards

Note: Own creation

There has been extensive legislation on the JACs, which are characterized, according to the law, as first level communal organizations (Ministry of the Interior, 2014), in a total pyramid of four rungs, as presented in Figure 2, which is nourished, in part, by the representation of the Community Action Boards, which by 2020, totaled around 70 thousand (Unidad para la Atención Integral a las Víctimas, sf).

Figure 2. Community organizations by level



Figure 2
Community organizations by level

Note. Adapted from Ministry of the Interior (2014).

Their importance for the country's development is undeniable. In their beginnings they were promoted (and constituted) in an attempt to promote community work for the construction of infrastructure (Valencia, 2010b), especially in rural areas of the national territory (Valencia, 2009).

However, today they can play a leading role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, given that, as mentioned by the Ministry of the Interior (cited by Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social, 2018) it is the organization with the largest geographical coverage; and if we add to this the scope given by law, it makes them potential platforms to combat poverty, hunger, bring education, fight for gender equality, generate aqueducts, generate new energy systems of local impact, among other activities, which result in community development. It should be kept in mind that, as mentioned by Sánchez et al. (2018) the community action boards are constituted to generate collective, organized efforts to seek the economic, social, cultural, environmental, among others, development of the territories that compose them.

The dimensions of the problems associated with the management of the community action boards, which ultimately fall on the people, their members, and mainly on their dignitaries, transcend the economic, political and social spheres. Among them, and of an internal nature, management capacity is identified, mainly associated with the lack of knowledge of issues associated with communal regulations, the formulation, implementation and monitoring of projects, knowledge in the administrative and financial areas, and the lack of cohesion within these organizations (National Council for Economic and Social Policy, 2018). Another, of an internal and external nature, associated with the violence suffered by their dignitaries, who are characterized by exercising functions as social and community leaders, and who by defending their territories and their communities have become targets to be silenced in the country (Ball et al., 2018).

Given the importance of the community action boards and their role in the development of the communities, the question to be addressed in this research is: How much knowledge do the dignitaries of the community action boards of the locality of Suba (Bogotá DC - Colombia) have about the scope of these organizations given by the law?

Currently, the Suba district in the city of Bogotá is characterized for being the fourth largest district (Bayona, 2009), as of 2020 it had a total of 1,282,978 inhabitants (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá, sf), which makes it one of the most populated in the city.

At the social and economic level, the locality of Suba, according to data from the Veeduría Distrital (2018), in 2017 for this territory, fifteen violent deaths, seven homicides, three suicides, 163 personal injuries, and 154 cases of domestic violence were recorded per 100 thousand inhabitants. In a particular way this locality presents all the socioeconomic strata established in the country, predominantly levels two and three with a participation of more than 70% (National Administrative Department of Statistics, 2018). Regarding the territory's own problems, the local mayor's office of the locality of Suba, in its 2017-2020 development plan outlines the lack of sense of belonging of the inhabitants, inequality and social exclusion, lack of civic culture, coexistence (Alcaldía local de Suba, 2016), among others.

The main objective is to determine the degree of knowledge that the dignitaries of the community action boards of the locality of Suba have regarding the scope of these organizations given by law. The knowledge on the part of the dignitaries is a variable that, although it does not ensure, it does become a determining factor for the development of a good management of the CAB, and, therefore, for the achievement of community development in their territories, hence the relevance of the study.

Development is an eminently political concept that appeared in the social sciences at the end of World War II (Criollo, et al., 2009). In principle, its meaning can be associated with growth, and historically, at least until the last century, with economic growth (World Bank, 2000). However, with the passage of time, the dimension of the meaning of this word came to focus on more qualitative aspects associated with the quality of life of human beings (Mujica & Rincón, 2010).

It is important to result the institutional development that is marked in how the educational process is directed that generates the appropriate impact with an insertion value that strengthens the regional development of work, for Mican, E. O. C., Delgado, J. C. M., & López, J. R. (2021), there is a model focused on the systemic recognition to consolidate the information with its communicational value.

Development can be defined as "the upward movement of a society along a continuum whose extremes would be, on the one hand, the most advanced societies and, on the other, the most backward" (Mallarino, 2004, p. 13). On the other hand, Lois and Alonso (2005) define it as "a social and historical phenomenon, both because its content is exclusively social, as a phenomenon, and because its forms, expressions and perceptions are manifested in a given spatio-temporal dimension, which is reflected by the social conscience" (p. 87). ECLAC, for its part, mentions that development is "a deliberate process that

pursues as its ultimate goal the equalization of social, political and economic opportunities, both at the national level and in relation to societies with higher standards of material well-being" (Paz & Rodríguez, 1968, p. 41).

There are multiple definitions of "development". In fact, as a noun, when searching for it in the Thesaurus database (of UNESCO), more than thirty results appear composed of this noun, with some adjective and/or preposition and adjective.

Materials and Methods

Community development can be called by many names, such as community development, community organization, among others, which should be understood as synonyms or equivalents (Ander-Egg, 1980). The United Nations (UN) understands community development as "the set of procedures by which the inhabitants of a country join their efforts to those of the public authorities in order to improve the economic, social and cultural situation of the communities, to associate these communities to the life of the nation and enable them to contribute unreservedly to the progress of the country" (Carvajal, 2011, p. 41).

Ander-Egg (1987) states that the UN defines community development as "a process aimed at creating conditions of economic and social progress for the entire community, with the active participation of the community and the greatest possible confidence in its initiative" (p. 14). For Diaz (2016) community development is framed in a process that involves the people, who "participate in the planning and implementation of programs aimed at raising their standard of living, for which cooperation between the government and the citizenry is necessary, allowing more autonomous and effective expressions of social change" (p. 532).

Like the concept of "development", the concept of "community development" can also be approached from different approaches (Riera et al., 2018), and enjoys multiple meanings. In fact, by maintaining the same root, it also becomes an eminently political concept, which given the particularity has been addressed by multilateral agencies (case of the UN), but which has its origins in the social intervention that was generated from the field of social work, seeking to address broad international problems (Diaz, 2016).

Law 743 of 2002 defines community development as "the set of economic, political, cultural and social processes that integrate the efforts of the population, its organizations and those of the State to improve the quality of life of the communities" (Article 2), demonstrating the legislator's intention to focus on the actions of the community and its different actors in pursuit of collective well-being.

Based on what has been presented, it can be assured that community development is aimed at the welfare of the community, from different dimensions, which actively involves the actors of the territory, in order to improve the quality of life of its members.

Colombia marked the beginning of the institutionalization of community action in 1958 with the enactment of Law 19 of 1958, due to the content of articles 22 and 24 (Barrera Liévano, 2019). By the time, the country in its context

had high poverty rates, widespread corruption and multiviolence (Valencia, 2009), especially unleashed by the Liberal and Conservative political parties (Rehm, 2014).

We mention institutionalization and not creation since, as Valencia (2009) mentions, this can be located in the past, for example with the communal movement of the conquest period, or pre-colonial associated with collective work activities such as the minga, the convite, the borrowed hand, the faena, the waki, the ayni and the pasanacu.

Inequality has been the main constant in the historical development of community action boards in Colombia. This phenomenon has been a consequence of the country's economic, political and social development. Problems such as the armed conflict (Fundación Ideas Para la Paz, 2013) and the absence of the State (Sierra, 2003) have limited the growth and strengthening of this type of organizations.

The community action boards were initially created with the purpose of bringing public goods and services, which were not managed by the State, directly to their territories. Because of this conjuncture phenomenon, politicians and political candidates became sponsors or financiers of these goods and services, which led, at least until before the 1991 Political Constitution, to clientelistic actions (Borrero, 1989; Leal and Dávila, 1990; Sánchez et al., 2018).

Throughout the history of community action boards in the country, there is evidence of manipulation of the autonomy and independence of these organizations (Valencia, 2009), which is given by individual interests over those that prevail for the community (Moreno, 2014).

In their beginnings, the community action boards were in charge of the Ministry of Education, which, in 1960, with the decree 1634, article 2, changed and passed to the Ministry of Government, today Ministry of the Interior, which meant a change from the instance in charge of education to the one related to political affairs.

Since their institutionalization, community action boards have grown exponentially. Figure 3 presents data on the number of this type of organizations registered in the country, according to information gathered from different sources.

Figure 3. Registered CAB history

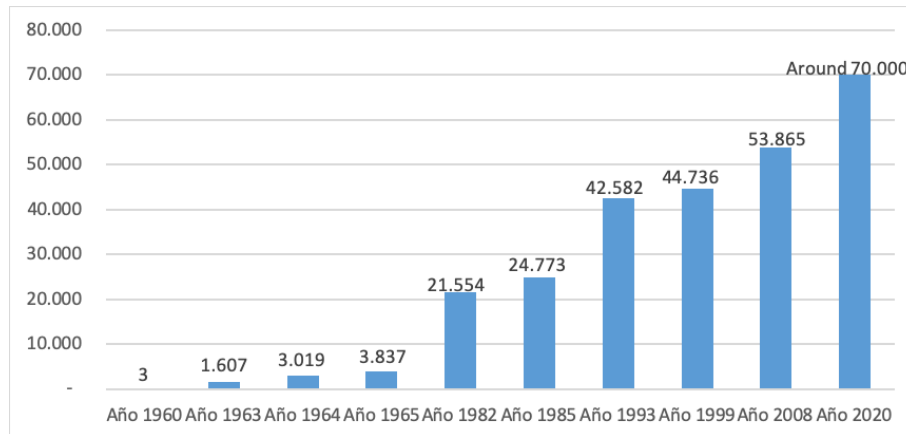


Figure 3
Registered CAB history

Note: Adapted from Valencia (2010a) and Unidad para Atención Integral de las Víctimas (sf).

Currently, as mentioned in Law 743 of 2002, community action "is an organized, autonomous and solidary social expression of civil society, whose purpose is to promote an integral, sustainable and sustainable development built from the exercise of participatory democracy in the management of community development" (Article 6).

The justification for the existence of community action boards in Colombia is given by their role in contributing to generate solutions to the problems of the community (Otero, 2012). A community action board, as mentioned in Law 743 of 2002, (when referring to community organizations), is "a civic, social and community organization for social management, non-profit, of a solidarity nature, with legal status and its own assets, voluntarily integrated by the residents of a place who join efforts and resources to procure an integral, sustainable and sustainable development based on the exercise of participatory democracy" (Article 8).

In terms of their organizational structure, the communal action boards have a general assembly of associates, with its board of directors, its fiscal, delegates to ASOJUNTAS (second level communal organization), the work commissions, the housing and conciliation commission, and the business commissions (Instituto Distrital de Participación y Acción Comunal, 2014), with the board of directors being the administrative body of the organization (Barrera Liévano, 2019).

In order to create a community action board in the city of Bogotá, as mentioned in Decree 2350 of 2003, there must be a minimum of seventy-five members (Article 1), which must comply with the indications specified in Article 5. Each board must have its own bylaws, which must present at least "a) General: name, territory, domicile, objectives, duration; b) Affiliates: qualifications for affiliation, impediments, rights and duties of the affiliates; c) Organs: integration of the organs, convocation regime, periodicity of the ordinary meetings, functions of each one; d) Officers: Qualities, forms of election, period and functions; e) Economic and fiscal regime: assets, budget, dissolution and liquidation; f) Disciplinary regime; g) Composition, competence, grounds for sanctions, penalties and procedures; h) Books: classes, contents, dignitaries in

charge of them; i) Challenges: grounds, procedures" (Ministry of the Interior, 2014, p. 11).

All positions in the community action boards are popularly elected by the members registered in the membership book; they are elected for a period of four years, equal to that of the national and territorial public corporations as stipulated in Law 743 of 2002 (Article 30).

As for its scope, it can be assured that the scope given to them by Law 743 of 2002 is broad, since it addresses the possibility of developing activities for the promotion and strengthening of the individual and his sense of belonging to the community, promoting the processes of training in democracy, community development, the conclusion of contracts with public and private companies, of national and international character, in favor of the development of their territories, requesting credits with national and international entities, promoting cultural, recreational and sports manifestations, respect for diversity, tolerance, disseminating and promoting human rights, the creation of collective and solidary enterprises, among others.

Methodology

In order to address the question and the proposed objective, a quantitative research, with an exploratory and descriptive scope, of a non-experimental and cross-sectional type, was developed. For the collection of information, a survey was designed from which ten questions were extracted that relate, on the one hand, demographic information, and on the other hand, related to the knowledge of the respondents regarding the scope that the law gives to the actions that can be executed by the community action boards in Colombia.

The instrument presents only closed questions and does not request personal information or information that compromises the security or personal integrity of the respondents. The development of the survey is completely anonymous and voluntary. This research considers what is established in the Helsinki declaration on ethical principles, since the research will have as its main axis information to be provided by human beings.

The population under study is the Juntas de Acción Comunal of the Suba locality, having as inclusion criteria, in the study, to have elected dignitaries for the period 2017-2020 and that before the Instituto Distrital para la Participación y Acción Comunal (IDPAC) have data such as address and/or telephone for location. These criteria are validated based on the certificate of communal organization issued by the IDPAC, complying with the space and time standards established by Hernández, Fernández and Baptista (2016).

Although the Suba locality has a total of 188 JACs, according to information registered with the District Institute for Participation and Community Action, only 149 meet the inclusion criteria.

We worked with a probability sample, with simple random sampling, under selection of the sample by tombola. To determine the sample, we work with a heterogeneity, 50%; confidence level, 95%; margin of error of 5%. To calculate the sample, we start from the knowledge of the total population. The formula for calculating the sample presented below is applied, based on Aguilar-Barojas (2005, p. 336):

Where: N = population size; n = sample; z = normal distribution factor based on the confidence level; p = probability that the event occurs; q = probability

that the event does not occur; and, e = sampling error considered. For this case, based on the previously determined, the values for each variable are: $N = 135$; $z = 1.96$; $p = 0.5$; $q = 0.5$; $e = 0.05$. Therefore:

It is proposed as a working hypothesis (H1) that according to the degree of knowledge of the dignitaries representing a community action board of the locality of Suba (Bogotá DC - Colombia) is "low" in more than 70%, according to the value scale proposed in Table 1.

Table 1. *Scoring and weighting of responses to survey questions*

Table 1
Scoring and weighting of responses to survey questions

Ask	Response / scoring	Weighting factor	Weighting
Q1 : To your knowledge, can a community action board enter into contracts with public companies?	Yes: 10 No: 0	1,6	Score multiplication given to the answer, for the weighting value
Q2 : To your knowledge, can a community action board enter into contracts with national private companies?	Yes: 10 No: 0	1,6	Score multiplication given to the answer, for the weighting value
Q3 : To your knowledge, can a community action board enter into contracts with international private companies?	Yes: 10 No: 0	1,6	Score multiplication given to the answer, for the weighting value
Q4 : To your knowledge, can a community action board create a company?	Yes: 10 No: 0	2,0	Score multiplication given to the answer, for the weighting value
Q5 : To your knowledge, can a community action board apply for loans with national entities?	Yes: 10 No: 0	1,6	Score multiplication given to the answer, for the weighting value
Q6 : To your knowledge, can a community action board apply for loans with international entities?	Yes: 10 No: 0	1,6	Score multiplication given to the answer, for the weighting value

Note: Source: Own creation

Based on the related information, the following equation involving the responses and the proposed score for each one is used to determine the result of the individual weighting:

Ponderación individual

$$(PI)=1,6P_1+1,6P_2+1,6P_3+2P_4+1,6P_5+1,6P_6$$

The result of the weighting is placed on the rating scale presented in Table 2, for the total responses given by each respondent:

Table 2. *Rating scale*

Table 2
Rating scale

Qualitative description	Weighting result range (RP)
Ga = High degree of knowledge	69 a 100
Gm = Average degree of knowledge	33 a 68
Gb = Low level of knowledge	0 a 32

To determine the degree of knowledge, by qualitative description (high, medium, low) based on the results evidenced by the study subjects, it is estimated as follows:

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences - SPSS version 23 and MS Excel 365 were used to organize and analyze the data collected.

Results

After applying the data collection instrument to the population under study, it was found that of the total number of respondents, 57% were men and 43% were women; none of them expressed a different gender. Regarding their age ranges, it was identified that of the 100%, 0.93% were between eighteen and twenty-eight years old, 83.18% were between twenty-nine and fifty-nine years old, and 15.89% were over sixty years old. Regarding the level of education completed, 3.74% only completed elementary school, 58.88% completed high school, and the remaining 37.38% completed university studies.

The dignitaries surveyed were asked, before addressing the questions of knowledge regarding the scope of the community action boards given by law, if "Before being elected as a dignitary of the community action board, were you aware of the role of the board with respect to society?" to which 86.9% stated that they were, and the remaining 13.1% that they were not. Likewise, they were asked "When you were elected as a representative of the community action board, did you have training on the function of the board with respect to society?" to which 48.6% said yes, while 51.4% said no.

Regarding the questions posed to determine the degree of knowledge that the dignitaries of the community action boards of the locality of Suba have regarding the scope of the community action boards given by the law, some topics included in Law 743 of 2002 were selected, which is the framework for the development of the actions to be executed by this type of organizations. When the instrument was applied, it was found that all respondents gave answers according to the options provided, so there were no missing cases.

In response to the question "According to your knowledge, can a community action board enter into contracts with public companies?" it was found that

96.3% of the respondents said yes, while 3.7% said no. When asked "To the best of your knowledge, can a community action board enter into contracts with national private companies?", 93.5% of the respondents said yes, while 6.5% said no. When asked if "According to your knowledge, can a community action board enter into contracts with international private companies?" 71% of the respondents said yes, while 29% said no. It is worth noting that article 19 of Law 743 of 2002 explicitly states that it is possible for a community action board to enter into contracts with public and/or private, national and international companies.

Regarding the question "According to your knowledge, can a community action board create a company?" it was found that 96.3% of respondents said yes, while 3.7% said no. In this case, the law states that it is possible, according to Article 70 of Law 743 of 2002. In this case, the law states that it is possible, according to Article 70 of Law 743 of 2002.

Finally, regarding sources of financing, respondents were asked if "To the best of your knowledge, can a community action board request loans from national entities" and if "To the best of your knowledge, can a community action board request loans from international entities", to which 94.4% said yes in the first case and 5.6% said no; while 65.4% said yes in the second case and 34.6% said no in the second case. It should be noted that article 19 of Law 743 of 2002 empowers the CABs to enter into loan contracts with national and international entities.

Regarding the weighting per response to each question and the weighting factor specified in the methodology, the results presented in Table 3 are shown individually.

Table 4. Summary of systematization of responses

Table 4
Summary of systematization of responses

Correct answers	Number of respondents	Percentage
None		2,8%
Only 1	1	0,9%
Only 2		1,9%
Only 3	0	0,0%
Only 4		23,4%
Only 5		7,5%
All		63,6%
Total		100,0%

Note: Own creation

Based on the data collected, after processing, we proceeded to classify the results according to the proposed rating scale, in each qualitative description, according to the quantitative results evidenced. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 5. Summary of results according to rating scale

Table 5
Summary of results according to rating scale

Qualitative description	Formula applied	Range result weighting
High level of knowledge	Importar imagen	71,0%
Average level of knowledge	Importar imagen	25,3%
Low level of knowledge	Importar imagen	3,7%
Total	Importar imagen	100%

Note: Own creation

The results show that, with respect to the community action boards in the Suba locality, more than 70% of the dignitaries surveyed have a high level of knowledge, according to the value scale proposed, regarding the scope of the community action boards given by the law.

Conclusions

Community development has become a platform for improving the quality of life of different communities, not only in Colombia, but worldwide. The difference for the country lies in the existence of grassroots organizations, called "community action boards", which have legal status and legislation for their promotion and control.

The scope of these organizations is broad, as established in Law 743 of 2002, which establishes, among other provisions, the possibility of creating companies, contracting with the public and private sectors, nationally and internationally, and the possibility of accessing resources, for example, via loans, with national and international entities.

The characteristics of the community action boards, such as self-management, democracy and representation, make them a dynamizer of the communities that make them up, which by their very nature are circumscribed to a specific territory.

However, factors intrinsic to the communities, such as academic training, knowledge of the law, use of telecommunications tools, and access to them, among others, become limitations to the development and growth of both the community action boards and the members of their territories.

In addition, the armed conflict, the existence of criminal structures and the pursuit of particular interests of some members of the community have become latent threats to the free exercise of actions by the CABs for the benefit of their communities and in defense of their territories.

In the locality of Suba in the city of Bogota, problems were identified that could surely be worked on or addressed by the actions of the community action boards in each territory, to reduce violence in its different manifestations, and to generate a sense of belonging to the public and community.

Regarding the objective set for this research, based on the score determined, the weighting per question posed and the proposed value scale, it was identified that the degree of knowledge that the dignitaries of the community action boards

of the locality of Suba (Bogotá - Colombia) have regarding the scope of these organizations given by the law, is as follows:

Figure 4. Level of awareness of the scope of the CABs given by law

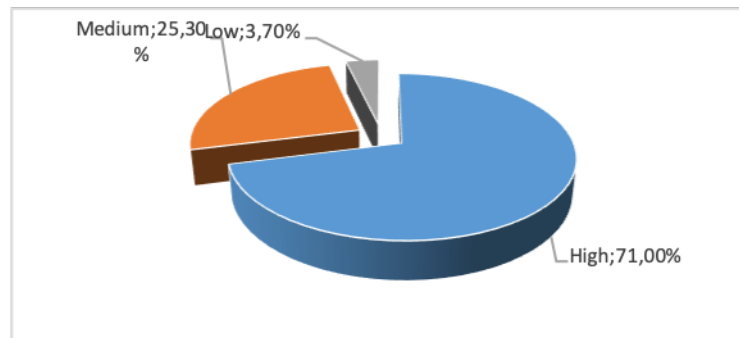


Figure 4

Level of awareness of the scope of the CABs given by law

Note: Own creation

With regard to the research question posed, the primary data collection instrument was applied and the information processed, it was identified that more than 70% of the population under study has a "high degree" of knowledge regarding the scope given by law to the community action boards. This denotes that, at least for the JACs of the Suba locality, their leaders know what can be done from one of these organizations, which surely becomes a variable that impacts the management they can develop, and therefore the possibility of generating common welfare, thus improving the quality of life.

The information evidenced leads to invalidate the research hypothesis, given that more than 70% of the dignitaries surveyed showed a "high" degree of knowledge. It is proposed as future research topics to address the management capacity of the dignitaries of the community action boards, the management tools they use, the capacity for community articulation, and the changes generated in the communities through the management of the CABs, among others.

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