



The Effect of Women Empowerment on Socio-economic Development in Tanzania: A Case of Selected Groups in Kisarawe District

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Abstract

The study examined the effect of women empowerment on socio-economic development within selected groups in Kisarawe district. The study had a sample of 163 participants who were selected through Slovine's Formula. Quantitative and qualitative research approaches were used. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. Questionnaires were designed for women while interviews were for coordinators. The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics including measures of central tendencies (mean) and measures of dispersion (standard deviation). Thematic analysis was used in qualitative data. Findings from the study revealed that women empowerment was done through provision of education on gender matters, entrepreneurship seminars, workshops as well provision of grants and loans with low interest. They had great effect on women socio-economic development not only in Kisarawe district but also in Tanzania. The study recommends the government in cooperation with non-governmental agents of development to ensure that women are encouraged and supported financially because the economic activities they do contribute to country's development.

Key words: Education, development, empowerment, strategies, gender.

Introduction

Women empowerment is defined as the process through which women acquire the ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them. It is a topic of major concern in global society (Kabeer, 2005; Tandon, 2016). This concern was manifested in the formulation of Millennium Development Goals, the third of which aims to promote gender equality and empower women, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals, the fifth of which was to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (Khan, 2016). It has also been expressed in various international forums such as the 1979 United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the 1995 Beijing Declaration and the Beijing Platform for Action. Thus a strong foundation has been laid for individual countries to champion the rights of the hitherto marginalized gender and tapping on their potential to bring about positive change in the society (Tarr-Whelan, 2010; Ozoya et al., 2017).

The idea of women empowerment emerged in late 1960s and 1970s from the field of the social works and in particular, Paulo Freire's advocacy of popular education to enable oppressed groups to develop critical consciousness. Feminist in the entire world applied the word empowerment to denote women communal reflection on the nature and causes of their oppression (Domingo, O'Neil, & Foresti, 2014).

Women empowerment is an essential tool for socioeconomic improvement (Lohani and Aburaida, 2017). They argued that women empowerment is not only good in itself because it touches on matters of human rights and social justice, but also is a precondition for achieving development as it involves bringing on board half of the population whose participation is required to hasten the process towards achieving socio-economic development which is a desired goal of every society.

The need for women empowerment is pegged on the fact that the socio-economic situation of women in many parts of the world has not been good. For instance, in Papua New Guinea, women have been monumentally discriminated against, abused, expected to meet unrealistic obligations, violated and denied access to appropriate and equitable services on a day after day basis (Hinton & Earnest, 2010). In India many women have been jobless and had to struggle to survive as they battle with health issues, access to education, access to water, resisting sexual harassment from the male members of their community and other challenges affiliated with a disempowered group; a situation that many empowerment agents like cooperatives, NGOs, Self Help Groups and Microcredit programs intervene to rectify the situation (Nath, 2017).

In African countries poverty is the problem for many people and those that bear the brunt of the situation are the women. This shows the need for the various measures to empower women in this continent for them to come out of poverty and pull the society upwards. In many countries in Africa such as Ghana, women empowerment efforts have been set in motion in order to respond to the menace of destitution in the country. This has been done in view of the fact that a number of people live in extreme poverty and are confronted

with household food and nutritional security challenges and the belief that such state of affairs could be largely attributed to a less empowered womenfolk, recognizing the central role they play in the nutritional well-being of the household (Abubakari et al., 2014).

In Malawi, Sambala & Ngoasong (2014) assert that women suffer under the heavy yoke of extreme poverty, disease and violence. While women are less educated and ignorant of their human rights, they also continue to be sufferers of sexual assault and domestic violence in their own homes. In many ways women's status put them off as social actors from articulating their own needs, thus compromising their health and well-being as well as that of their children. This unfortunate state of affairs in Africa has been the reason why various measures have been put in place by governments and nongovernmental bodies to empower women. For instance, a study by Canelas, zuSelhausen and Stam (2018) in Rural Western Uganda showed that poor socio-economic status of women necessitated the programs to enhance participation of women in microfinance to advance their situation both within and without the family. Many women have grouped themselves into Self Help Groups aimed at poverty alleviation and increasing the women's intra-household bargaining power.

In United Republic of Tanzania, the legal and policy framework for women empowerment is in place. The Women and Gender Development Policy of 2000 aimed at bringing about gender equality by offering more chances to women in all areas such as politics, management, economic development and leadership positions. The Sexual Offences (Special Provisions) Act of 1998 was authorized to safeguard the dignity of women and children while the Land Act Number 4 of 1999 and the Village Land Act Number 5 of 1999 give right of land ownership for both women and men. The Land Act No. 4 of 1999 has further been revised in 2004, to make the land economically valuable and allow it to be mortgaged to access financial resources for venture. Furthermore, the NGO Policy offers a platform for meaningful collaboration between the Government and the NGOs who are key implementers of government policies (Mhina, 2007; Kimaro, & Hieronimo, 2014).

Women empowerment in Kisarawe is done against a background of a particular set of customs, traditions and habits that have a monumental sway on the socioeconomic lives of the women in the district. The male members are dominant decision makers in the family as well and in production and income as there are long existing beliefs among the local *Zaramo* people that men are superior to women. This means that the decision about important issues such as land use and resource allocation at family level is in the hands of men while the womenfolk are belittled in essential issues and any decision they make may never be taken with seriousness let alone being executed (Kipobota, 2007). The women who are mostly consigned to the domestic atmosphere and treated as objects of sexual gratification have their lot as teenage pregnancies, early marriage, insufficient education, as well as lack of capital to initiate an income generating activity, hence perpetuating the cycle of poverty and helplessness (Mavura, 2015).

Statement of the problem

Basically, women empowerment taking place globally is meant to facilitate women to contribute towards socio-economic development. The trends of gender mainstreaming assist families to progress economically and move away from the situation in which the male is the sole bread winner. However, in Tanzania some families specifically in the rural areas such as Kisarawe district are mostly affected by gender hierarchies, patriarchal socio-cultural norms, lack of exposure to formal education among women and religious ethics that jeopardize the chances of enhancing women empowerment. The results of that negative situation hinder women from owning small business, engaging in entrepreneurship activities, owning assets such as land, house among others, failure to get good healthcare for children, and the continuation of the cycle of poverty (Mickelwait, 2019).

Swantz (1986) in the study about *Zaramo* tribe, who form the majority of the inhabitants of Kisarawe district, observed that women were marginalized as well as underutilized in their potential due to patriarchal socio-cultural norms like *unyago* (a traditional rite of passage from girlhood to womanhood) and early marriages that derail them from the path of education and deny them a chance to participate in economic activities, hence continuously having to overly depend upon the men in the society. Furthermore, a study by Mavura (2015) for instance showed that half of the population of the women in Kisarawe district did not have more than primary school education because of teenage pregnancies and early marriages due to cultural and traditional practices of *Zaramo* such as *unyago* among others. The objective of the study was to examine the effect of empowering women on socio-economic development in Kisarawe district. It was guided by two questions as follows:

1. What are the strategies used to empower women to enhance socio-economic development in Kisarawe district?
2. What role do the NGOs play in empowering women in Kisarawe district?

Theoretical perspective

The study is based on Capability Approach Theory (CAT). Theory was developed by Sen (1999) whose main argument in this theory is that women empowerment at community and household level can only be achieved when they are given an opportunity to work on socio-economic activities. They should be given freedom and entrepreneurial environment to enable them to contribute towards their socio-economic development. This theory argues that development is freedom that enhances the people's capacities to live the kind of lives they value, a freedom to help them and influence the world. According to this theory, adoption of efforts to empower women done by government and non-governmental organizations enables them to become liberated from all sorts of socio-economic evils such as poverty, starvation, undernourishment, tyranny, poor economic opportunities, systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities, intolerance, and over-activity of

repressive states, lack of political rights, poor healthcare, and lack of functional education, among others (Terjesen, 2004).

The relevance of the capability approach theory to the study is that it provides inputs for proper understanding of issues related to the women as it focuses in areas of human welfare specifically on how best women can be able to address issues of increasing their economic wealth, health and education so as to liberate them from the state of sole dependency on men/husband or guardian. However, a major drawback of this theory is that it does not provide a clear and structured roadmap of the preventive measures to various ‘unfreedoms’ that shackle sections of humanity and deny them a chance to live a life they value, nor does it proffer long-term changes required for its implementation (Terjesen, 2004).

Review of related literature

Various strategies are used to empower women (Nath, 2017). Nath asserts that Non-Governmental Organizations, Self Help Groups, and Microcredit programs and economic agents provide women economic participation, developed leadership qualities, promote inclusion both financially and socially, and eventually lead to women’s empowerment by enhancing their ability to make strategic choices in their lives. In addition to that, women who participate in entrepreneurship activities improve their status and power and are better able to acquire assets and services that are important to them (Katz, et al., 2007). Empowerment also improves household incomes and women’s intra-household decision-making power despite the persistent male dominance especially if the husband is included in the same group (Canelas, et al. 2018).

In another development, Brenyah (2018) found that promoting empowerment dynamics and socioeconomic development with particular focus on relevance to women in developing countries was crucial. However, there were challenges facing most women like gender discrimination, culture and tradition of tribal beliefs and lack of exposure to modern civilization (Abubakari, 2014). In addition to that, factors such as social factors, cultural and education status, health systems and ineffective social protection involvement programs hindered the diverse empowerment processes (Brenyah, 2018).

Poverty alleviation in Pakistan for example, was another strategy used to help women to lead a better life though it did not improve the status of women in the household since they remained victims of violence at homes and exploitation in offices and at workplaces, and were paid lower than men (Khan, 2016). In Tanzania rural and urban women economic empowerment done through productive activities such as agriculture produced positive effect in many areas. Thus, given that women are the majority in agricultural production, it helped them to improve their socio-economic status (Malhotra, 2012).

Strategies used to empower women

Various strategies are used by governments and NGOs to empower women (Shanti, 2019). Enabling participation in productive activities is an empowerment strategy. Productive activities such as agriculture have produced positive effect in many areas. Thus given that women are the majority in agricultural production. It helped them to improve their socio-economic status (Malhotra, 2012). Furthermore, nutritional status of a society is directly proportional to the empowerment of women (Abubakari et al., 2014). Education plays an important role in empowering women because it improves educational status and reduces infant mortality. Additionally, education provided to women empowers them to educate their children by supporting education programmes and projects providing personnel as well as giving moral and financial/material support to the learners, and also to those who need the same in the society Alabi and Nsofor, 2011). Microfinance is another strategy that empowers women. For instance, in Egypt Nisser and Ayedh (2017) found that women empowerment was greater detail in economic items. Women were more authoritative to take purchase decisions related to household items compared to home maintenance decision and possession where the authority generally, rest with men, and played a very important role in enhancing women's economic independence but the societal still prevails that limit the ability of women to fully exercise their potential for betterment of their family.

Research methodology

The study was conducted in Kisarawe district to examine the effect of women empowerment on socio-economic development. The study had a sample of 193 participants who were selected using simple random sampling technique and employing the Slovenes' formula. The study used mixed methods whereby quantitative data were collected through questionnaires and qualitative data were collected through interviews. Quantitative data were analysed through descriptive statistics by measuring central tendencies (mean and standard deviations). Thematic analysis was used in qualitative data. Thematic analysis is the analysis that looks across all data to identify common issues that recur and identify the main themes that summarise all collected views from the study (Bricki and Green, 2007). This analysis allowed the researchers to put together meanings from statements of the informants within their particular perspective, as presented by Joffe and Yardley (2004). One advantage of thematic analysis is that it provides more outcomes when analysing interviews. This is because it is a flexible tool (Mohamed & Rajab, 2016).

Results and discussion

The study investigated the effect of women empowerment on socio-economic development in Kisarawe district. The study had two questions and data were collected through interview and questionnaires. Findings are presented according research questions as follows.

Research question 1: What are the strategies used to empower women to enhance socio-economic development in Kisarawe district?

Data for this question were collected through interview from the coordinators and questionnaires from the empowered women. Findings from the coordinators showed that women in Kisarawe were organized in groups. Education was a tool used to educate them on gender issues, entrepreneurship, self-confidence, risks taking, bookkeeping and business opportunities. The major aim to provide education to the women was to make them financially independent rather than depending on their husbands. During the interview here is what the coordinators from the Intermediary Gender Network (IGN) said:

Coordinator 1: “We organize women into groups and conduct seminars and workshops for them on gender issues and entrepreneurship skills as well as how to acquire loans from the financial institutions?”

Coordinator 2: “Women are empowered through entrepreneurship seminars organized by IGN- Kisarawe that enable them to acquire skills on how to start business.”

Coordinator 3: “Our goal is not just to ensure that women get money. We have to ensure that they know how to use the money to make more money.”

Coordinator 4: “Besides ensuring that the groups are functional, we also educate them on how to obtain loans.”

From the findings one can notice that there were strategies used to empower women in Kisarawe district. With groups in place the women were able to obtain loans and grants from the financial institutions. Education given enabled them to engage in entrepreneurship activities. This finding is online with capability approach theory used in this study because it deals with issues related to women particularly in increasing economic wealth. Further, the results from this study concur with those of Sathiabama’s (2010) study that women are empowered by grouping and enabling them to engage in entrepreneurship activities by obtaining capital from financial institutions for their socio-economic empowerment.

Results on strategies to empower women were also collected through questionnaires. They are summarized in Table 1.

Table1: Strategies to empower women in Kisarawe district

Variables	SA	A	U	A	SD	Mean	Standard Deviations
Gender education was provided to women in Kisarawe.	62	52	9	22	13	2.1899	1.31213
Women in Kisarawe had access to obtain loans.	64	66	0	13	15	2.0255	1.24524
Loans were provided with low interest to women in Kisarawe.	61	64	0	14	19	1.5120	.50187
NGOs provided grants to women in Kisarawe.	66	62	0	20	10	2.0253	1.22578
Average						2.0391	1.1367

Results in Table 1 shows various strategies employed to empower women. Data indicate that women had access to obtain loans. For example, 64 participants strongly agreed while 66 agreed with high mean of 2.0255 and standard deviation of 1.24524 that women had access to obtain loans. This finding indicates that women in groups were able to access loans to start new businesses and others to boost the existing businesses. They were doing different activities that generated income. By so doing they were able to support themselves. This result is almost similar to that of Katz et al., (2007) that women participation in entrepreneurship activities improves their status and power and become better able to acquire assets and services that are important to them.

Furthermore, results revealed that 61 participants strongly agreed while 64 agreed that they were given loans with low interest from financial institutions. This is indicated by a high mean of 1.5120 and standard deviation of .50187. They used the money to buy things and sell. Others cooked foods and sell. The profit they gained supported their families in buying basic needs. To some extent this liberated women from poverty as well as reducing the tendency of depending on men in everything. These results concur with those of Canelas et al., (2018) that women's participation in microfinance strengthens women's intra-household decision-making and raises household savings and income from business.

Different NGOs provided grants to empower women in the selected area whereby 66 women strongly agreed and 62 agreed with a high mean of 2.0253 and standard deviation of 1.22578 respectively. The purpose was to minimize dependence and enhance financial sustainability. In addition to that, NGOs like TNGP and TAMWA provided gender education to women whereby 62 women strongly agreed and 52 agreed with a high mean of 2.1899 and standard deviation of 1.31213. The intention was to raise awareness on gender discrimination against women, to minimize unequal opportunities, gender violence and to provide platform for women to have a say and involvement in decision making. The finding relates to those of Brenyah (2018)

that empowerment is not power granted to an individual or group but the measures taken for a person to acquire knowledge and skills.

Research Question 2: What role do NGOs play in empowering women in Kisarawe district?

Data for this question were collected through questionnaires from empowered women. Summary of the findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: The role played by NGOs to empower women

VARIABLES	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Standard Deviation
Empowerment of women improves decision making power within the family.	59	69	2	21	7	2.0380	1.15039
Empowerment of women helps them to own properties.	70	71	0	13	4	1.7772	.92315
Empowerment of women helps women to participate in economic activities	68	63	4	12	11	1.9177	1.11141
Empowerment of women helps to ensure food security within the family	65	66	5	10	12	1.8987	.99802
Empowerment of women leads to socio-economic development within the society.	63	61	1	16	17	2.0127	1.10001
Average						2.0190	1.12870

Table 2 presents findings on the role played NGO's to empower women in order to promote socio-economic development in Kisarawe district. Results from the study showed that empowerment of women improved decision making power within the family whereby 59 strongly agreed and 69 disagreed by high mean of 2.0380 and a standard deviation of 1.15039. This can be interpreted as when women are empowered, they have a reasonable say in issues of importance to them because of the confidence that comes from knowledge acquisition and ownership of property. With ownership also comes the purchasing power that lets them decide what goods or services to pay for depending on what they value in life. This finding is online with the theory used in the study because education plays a very important role in empowering women.

Contrary to what has traditionally been the case, ownership of property among women is enhanced. Findings revealed that 70 women strongly agree while 71 agreed with a high mean of 1.7722 and a standard deviation of 0.92315. This was achieved through education that raised awareness on ability and rights of possession of

properties. That meant that if women are empowered they are eventually able to acquire the same after engaging in various activities. They will also have ownership rights over something they can own.

Additionally, empowerment of women enhanced their participation in economic activities. Findings showed that 68 participants strongly agreed whereby 63 agreed with a high mean of 1.9177 and a standard deviation of 1.11141. These findings indicate that when women are empowered they are able to participate in economic activities. For example, when women are provided with entrepreneurial skills and have capital obtained from financial institutions as loans or grants they are able to start small businesses. The fact that from businesses they earn profit they can expand the scope of their economic activities and have financial sustainability.

Furthermore, the study revealed that 65 participants strongly agreed and 66 agreed that women empowerment ensured food security in the family with a high mean of 1.8987 and standard deviation of 0.99802. From the results one can find that women were able to buy food for their families because they were empowered and had money compared to the past when they depended on men in all family matters. The finding is almost similar to those of Abubakari et al. (2014) that the nutritional status of a society was directly proportional to the empowerment of women.

Empowerment of women contributed to development in the society. For example, 63 women strongly agreed and 61 agreed with a high mean of 2.0127 and a standard deviation of 1.10001 that empowerment played part in socio-economic development in their society. Indicators of development included domestic expenditure, nutrition, education, health as well as acquisition of property like land and houses. Generally, women empowerment was found useful and important because it contributed to socio-economic development not only in Kisarawe district but also in Tanzania since majority of the respondents agreed with high mean of 2.0190 and standard deviation of 1.12870. This means that empowerment of women decreases financial dependency to men, improves decision making power, allows them to own property such as land and houses expand their economic space by engaging in entrepreneurship activities, enhancing purchasing power and are free to live the kind of lives they value.

Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the research findings the study concludes that women empowerment has a great impact on socio-economic development in Kisarawe district. Education and grouping women were major strategies used to raise women awareness in socio-economic activities. Additionally, seminars and workshops played role in gender issues, knowledge and skills concerning business opportunities. Moreover, access to loans and grants enabled women to start and run their own income generating activities that improved family life as well as minimizing the culture of depending to men. The study recommends many women to join or establish new groups and participate in empowered programmes in order to bring socio-economic development not only to the families but also to the society. Women should also take advantage of the environment created by both the

public and private sector to take part in empowerment programs so that they can participate fully in bringing about socio-economic development in the society.

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