

Influence of Demography And Levels Of Formal Education And Training On Leaders And Members Of Informal Women Groups In Vihiga Sub-County, Vihiga County, Kenya.

Opiayo Peter Mabubi

School of Education and Human resource development, Kisii University
Corresponding Author: Opiayo Peter Mabubi

Abstract: The purpose of this study was to assess the influence of demography and levels of formal education and training on leaders and members of informal women groups in Vihiga Sub-County, Vihiga County, Kenya. The study was necessitated by the fact that there lacks adequate evidence on the influence of formal education and training on resource mobilization for sustainability of informal women groups found in rural areas. Informal women groups found in rural areas are useful to women as they help cater for their socio-economic welfare. To effectively meet this need and enhance the sustenance and growth of their groups resource mobilization and utilization is vital. However, available literature reveal that support from the Government and donors often concentrate on the urban elitist women groups living out rural informal women groups whose members have no or little formal education. Such informal group are locally based in villages and do not have employed staff or offices. Consequently, many of these groups engage in income generating activities as a way of mobilizing resources for economic empowerment. Unfortunately many of the rural groups are unable to mobilize adequate resources hence become dormant or collapse. In many studies the influence of formal education and training of leaders and members of these groups has not been addressed. This study was conducted in Vihiga Division. The study adopted ethnographic research design, which commits to study on-going events in socio-cultural context without affecting their process and context. Three informal women groups were studied without affecting their process and context. Three informal women groups were cluster-sampled for the study. The names of the sample groups were Elementary Women Group, Muungano Women Group and Mkulima Woimen Group. Data was collected from sixty eight respondents, through interviews, oral questioning, participant observation and content analysis. Collected data was organized in frequency counts and converted to percentages. The study found out that a majority of leaders and members of informal women groups had primary education, few had secondary education and some were illiterate. Secondly, the study established that the level of formal training of leaders and members of informal groups influenced the choice of income generating activities. In groups where members had formal education, there were diversified income generating activities well managed to benefit the members. The study recommends that strategies should be put in place to facilitate and provide training and education for informal women groups that are commonly found in rural areas

Key words: demography, levels, formal, education, training, leaders, members, informal

Date of Submission: 28-10-2018

Date of acceptance: 14-11-2018

I. INTRODUCTION

In developing countries, the very condition of under development imposes the double burden of exploitation of women due to effects of their countries poverty and gender discrimination. Consequently, a more equitable system of International life are pre-conditions for the progress of societies (Sydney, 1995). To look into ways of women involvement in development, an international conference for women was held in Mexico. Participation at the International year of Women held in Mexico in 1975 highlighted ways in which women could access the available resources. This could be achieved through political participation, education and training, employment, health, nutrition family life among others (Brydon, 1989). Of the listed aspects, education and training was identified as one that could enhance opportunities by empowering and imparting skills, knowledge and attitudes that would benefit women and increase their participation in development.

Education and training both formal and informal are among the most important determinants of women's involvement in development. Though the law in most countries gives boys and girls equal access, boys are more given preference over girls for many cultural and economic reasons. Illiteracy rates are, therefore, understandably higher among women than men, particularly in rural areas (Subarrao & Ronney, 1983). This

scenario hinders the rural woman from full participation in economic, political and social activities within their societies. To count this, it is vital to educate the girls particularly through formal schooling.

Educating girls lifts their earning potential and their nation's economic growth. It increases the duration of girls' own lives and the human potential. It also has environmental effects and getting more girls to school is critical for reducing poverty (World Bank, 1996). The interaction of cultural, institutional, environmental and political factors underlying gender disparities in education makes it difficult to identify one single approach to counteract this. However, some factors and processes attempt to equalize access to education. One such factor is the governments' role, which streamlines the policies of access (Bellow, 1993). Due to resource constraints and competing interests, the government could work in partnership with others. FAWE has spearheaded such an interaction to boost girl education access in Kenya (FAWE, 1994). The involvement of the community is also crucial. According to World Bank (1996) report that in Balochistan and Bangladesh on the contribution of parents in monitoring school attendance and student appearance and performance reduce the government burden to apply to these efforts. The community granting of land, provision of furniture and other factors reduce government capital cost. Data for community schools in Bangladesh show that community mobilization and monitoring contribute to less absenteeism, less repeating and better academic performance. Females are notably also more supportive to community educational initiative.

To reduce these disparities in girls education, World Bank (1996), recommends that there should be a package of "girl-friendly" measures which include locating schools to communities, waiving fees, and having locally based, preferably female teachers and flexible school calendars that cater for girls domestic duties and responsibilities. Effective implementation requires staff with a significant number of women. The greater the involvement of women in planning process, the more likely that girl friendly measures will be introduced and the more likely that barriers to the participation will be identified early. The underlying concept in the literature is that women are and should be on the forefront in tackling problems that subordinate their position particularly in education.

Illiteracy is a serious handicap, if not a barrier to the participation in the modernization of traditional activities (Boserup, 1975). Consequently the fact that factor limiting women's contribution to the economic and social development. It is further argued that women's integration in rural development concerns first of all the education and training of women and girls in improved methods of farming and modern production. As long as both formal education programs and extension services in agriculture fail to include women, as they usually do, women will not only remain ignorant and incapable of applying new and more productive techniques of cultivation, as they will become a hindrance to progress. It seems highly desirable then to teach certain crafts and skills and simple organization methods to girls. This will assist in the diversification of rural economy.

Rural programs in communities have the advantage that they have an effect on local living standards. Programs and efforts to train and fully utilize the entire male and female labor force is clearly visible to the members of the community. This is the basic idea behind community development programs. However, when it comes to women, training efforts have suffered from the weakness of being focused exclusively on women's domestic responsibilities. Meanwhile nothing has been done to improve the earning power or to integrate them in the effort to modernize the rural economy.

One factor that has been consistently shown in the literature to influence women's capacities within their informal association to mobilize resources and empower themselves (socially and economically) is their level of education and training. Literature on this has however; tended to focus more on the elite patronized formal women associations in urban areas (Sydney, 1998). This leaves a gap in knowledge about processes of resource mobilization, sustainability and processes of group self-advancement by women in the rural areas. This despite the fact that a majority of women who live in the rural areas, are illiterate and semi-illiterate. In view of this literature that this study specifically focused on how women in the rural areas have mobilized themselves in groups to participate and benefit from economic activities and how they perform in relation to their levels of formal schooling and training.

II. THEORETICAL REVIEW

This study was guided by Neo-liberal theory. The theory holds that women as individuals can engage in collective action for their own good. The theory encompasses forms of extra domestic and extra familiar relationships that shape women experiences (Candida and Mailtrayee 1999). This study specifically utilized the empowerment approach. The approach holds that persons potential as an individual agent can be actualized through collectivity action and hence that collective is a necessary subject of research and policy (Stamp, 1989). This position was relevant to make visible women's informal associations and their capacity to network and forge collective links at the grass root level. In social science discourse, the concept of empowerment refers to a processes whereby people take control over their own lives, gaining the ability to do things, set their own agenda, change events in ways previously lacking (Young, 1993). As development theory, empowerment is the

most recent approach dealing with women's issues. The aim of the approach is to empower women through greater self-reliance.

The origins of empowerment is Western feminism which has advocated the change of the processes and structures which reproduce women's sub-ordination as gender (Scott, 1095). This approach acknowledges inequalities between men and women and the origin of women sub-ordination in the family, but that women experience this oppression differently according to race, class colonial history and the present economic order (Moser,1993).

Marginalized groups in the society, women inclusive, see education as the means to improve their socio-economic status in the society. The acquisition of education leads to the fulfillment of the basic needs such as health, clothing, shelter and employment. Thus education is related to socio-cultural, political and economic dimensions of society (Fagerlind and Saha 1983).

The marginalization of women has given rise to much talk about integration of women in development as a solution. This concept of marginalization on the assumption that a majority of women are housewives, they do not participate in production and is one therefore marginal to economy. This is mainly because majority of women lack formal education (MacCalm, 1985).

Through the use of grass root women's organizations, the empowerment approach entails a situation where bottom-up approaches can be used to con-scientize women to challenge their sub-ordination. The grass root organizations also assist women to satisfy their practical needs. Attempt by women in locally based collectivities in form of informal associations enable women to gain greater sense of self-worth, and common purpose, which inspires them to other activities which have more clearly directed objective of collective empowerment (Young, 1993).

Women, therefore need not be characterized as needy beneficiaries, but productive members of the society. Failure to acknowledge and utilize women's productive roles within and beyond the household have been planning errors leading to inefficient use of resources. This helped to legitimize 'women-only' focus in research and in the accumulation of resources via women's projects. By improving women's access to education and training. Women's productivity increase and has a positive impact on national development.

Women's power is thus promised on a collective notion of empowerment targeting in particular the poorest and least privileged of the group. Forming a locally based group can provide the conditions for an empowering experience if space is provided for discussion and exchange of experiences and an examination of the roots of women poverty and powerlessness.

The study approach can thus be understood to underlie the research on informal women groups which have evolved as coping mechanism through which women try to escape some of the constraints of their economic circumstances. These groups entail similar circumstances as they are rural, deprived and informally organized. They give women a voice and forum to share their experiences and unite for common goals that enhance their empowerment.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study population for this study was the composition of all rural informal women groups found in the administrative Vihiga Sub County. Vihiga has 30 registered women informal groups spread in five locations. These groups membership is purely women. They are engaged in income generating activities. A majority of the members in these groups are elderly married women.

This study utilized the ethnographic design. Ethnography gives account of behavior, beliefs, attitudes and values of people under study. It combines different methodological techniques, some which are devised personally in such a way to facilitate data collection. It is a design that emphasizes three aspects. First, it emphasizes the integration of particular events into a coherent and qualitative meaningful pattern where the relationship of events is established. Secondly, its epistemological assumption is that the perspective of people under study is crucial to understanding their behavior. Attention is given to how they define their reality often called 'emic' (a coinage of Pike, 1954), classification of objects and the definition of their situation in which they act.

Thirdly, the focus on the on-going settings in socio-cultural contexts such as communities, educational institutions and classroom where events occur as human interactions, take place. These situations are natural, as they are not contrived by the researcher. The three aspects that are core to this design formed the backbone of the relevance of the design to the present study. First it was important to integrate the events of the women group into a coherent and qualitative meaningful pattern to draw a relationship. This was necessary to capture the general functioning of women groups and to particularly identify the income generating activities they undertake, the amount of resources they mobilize and the factors that sustain such groups in relation to the levels of formal education for both leaders and members. Secondly, the design was appropriate to note the perspective of women in the groups. It was crucial to this study to understand how women view themselves as members of

these groups and what, in their own views prompted them to be members. This was to capture their perspective on the importance of their groups, good leadership and the effects of formal education.

Thirdly, the ethnographic focus on the ongoing setting in social cultural context such as communities also enhance the relevance and choice of design for this study. Women groups were regarded as small communities with own set out rules, regulations and functioning paradigms where sharing of information, networking for common purposes and investing occur as they interact. The general essence of social-cultural context was maintained as they share language, churches, market and culture in a proximal physical environment.

The research design adopts the participant observations as key technique. Others used in the study are questioning, interviewing and analyzing the content of the group. On participant observation, Berreman (1968) writes that researchers remain detached, intense observers of inquiry into phenomenon. Their role is to observe events at which they are physically present but refrain from participating from those events so that they will not affect the activity being studied. Interviewing was also used in the study. This helped to get the deep perspectives of the women group leaders in the general functioning of their groups. It helped capture information on structure, organization and aims of the group. It was also useful to yield information on the factors of group sustainability and the strategies employed in resource mobilization.

Content analyzing was the other technique used in the study. Bogdan (1975) described content analysis as a systematic process of evaluating written documents to establish, clarify or justify issues. This technique was relevant to the present study to enable a scrutiny of bank transactions, minutes of meetings, members' registers and other documents held by the groups under study.

Procedure Methodology

Cluster sampling was considered relevant to this study so that all members of the groups falling the sample would be used in the study. The 3 groups selected for the study formed 10% of the sampled study population. Slavin (1984) proposes that in social science discourse a sample of convenience may be drawn so long as clear description of the district and respondents is made so that others may reasonably assess the relevance of the findings to other settings. This is particularly relevant to this study which was carried out in a rural setting and was interested in a relationship between variables. The 3 groups, set in similar socio-economic, cultural and political circumstances enabled an in-depth study and close interaction to yield data that has been generalized on other groups on the area. The researcher thus collected information from a total of 68 respondents which included 6 women group leaders.

Statistical Analysis

Qualitative procedures of data analysis are used in this study. This had entailed an effort to formally categorize data to be able to answer the specific research questions. There is also an attempt to demonstrate support for those themes so as to answer research objectives. Data have therefore been organized according to the research questions to draw relations between the variables under study. Qualitative data was coded and fitted into specific analytical categories by use of inductive procedures of analysis according to the study objectives. It has then been interpreted, co-ordinated and qualitatively reported. Words of some key informants have been reported directly to capture their deep thoughts. Quantitative data yielded in this study has been converted into frequency counts and percentages. This data has been presented in tables and percentages.

IV. RESULTS

The demography and level of formal education and training of leaders and members of informal women groups

The first research question of this study affected through questionnaire dealt with the demography and the level of formal education and training of leaders and members of informal women groups. The respondents were to ask to provide information about their age, marital status, occupation, and duration of their membership in the groups and the level of education. The purpose of gathering demographic details was to portray the characteristics of the respondents and show that the sample used was fairly representative and also give the study findings validity. Demographic details were also vital to reveal the level of formal schooling of the respondents, a core variable of this study. Age was the first personal characteristics to be sought. The classification in a 5 year range began at an age 20 up above 50 years range. The least age classified was therefore 20 years. The results are presented in the Table 1.

Table 1 (a) Age distribution of Respondents

Group Name	Age distribution in years							Totals
	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-59	50+	
	No %							
Elementary	2(10%)			2(10%)	4(20%)	2(10%)	10(50%)	20(100%)
Mkulima						2(9.1%)	20(90.9%)	22(100%)
Muongano			3(11.5%)	6(23/1)	3(11.5%)	4(15.4%)	10(38.5%)	26(100%)
TOTALS	2(3%)		3(4%)	8(12%)	7(10%)	40(59%)	40(59%)	26(100%)

The distribution in Table 1 (a) indicates that the majority of respondents in each of the groups were above 40 years of age. Elementary groups had 80 percent, Mukulima 100 percent and Muungano 65.4 percent. From the findings 59 percent of all respondents were above 50 years of age only 3 percent were below 30 years of age. This shows that they are mature women capable of articulating issues raised by the researcher.

Table 1 (b) Marital status of respondents

	Single Unmarried	Single widowed	Married	Totals
Elementary		5(25%)	15(75%)	20(100%)
Mkulima		2(9.1%)	20(90.9%)	22(100%)
Muongano		3(11.5)	23(88.5%)	26(100%)
TOTALS		10(15%)	58(85%)	68(1001%)

The distribution in Table 1(b) shows a summary of the marital status of respondents. Three categories emerge from the summary. These are single unmarried single widowed and married. The distribution shows that majority of respondents in each group were married. Of the total respondents, 85 percent were married, specifically, elementary women group respondents 75 per cent, Mukulima women groups respondents 90.9 percent, and Muungano 88.5 percent. Married women face similar responsibilities occasioned by family life. The 15 per cent of respondents were single widowed. It was evident that all members of women groups had families to cater for.

The third demographic aspect captured was occupation of respondent. Occupation was an important element since it is an indicator of levels of schooling and personal income. The results are presented in table 1(c)

Table 1 (c) Occupation of the respondents

Occupation	Business	Peasants	Housewife	Professional	Others	Totals
Elementary	14(70%)	3(15%)	3(15%)	-	-	20(100%)
Mkulima	2(9%)	8(36.4%)	6(27.3%)	-	6(27.3%)	22(100%)
Muongano	16(61.53%)	6(23.07%)	-	-	4(15.40%)	26(100%)
TOTALS	32(47%)	17(25%)	9(13%)	-	10(15%)	68(100%)

The distribution in table 1 (c) above indicates that majority of the respondents are involved in small business. Of all the respondents, 47 percents are involved in small business for livelihood, with Elementary women group respondents 70 percent, Muungano women group respondents 61.53 percent and Mukulima women group respondents 9 percent. None of the respondents was a professional or formerly employed. At least 13 percent were housewives and 17 percent peasant. This implies meager income among the individuals of the groups studied. The fourth personal characteristic that was investigated was member's literacy by levels of formal schooling. This was central to this study which sought to establish the influence of formal education on resource mobilization and sustainability of women group in rural areas. The results are presented in Table 1(d)

Table 1(d) Members literacy by levels of formal school

Group name	Levels of schooling			Total
	None	Primary	Secondary	
Elementary	2(10%)	12(60%)	6(30%)	20(100%)
Mkulima	2(9.09%)	18(81.2%)	2(9.09%)	22(100%)
Muungano		22(84.62%)	4(15.38%)	26(100%)
Total	4(6%)	52(76%)	12(18%)	68(100%)

The distribution in Table 1 (d) above shows that a majority of the respondents acquired primary education. Elementary women group respondents showed 60 percent, Mkulima 81.82 percent and Muungano 84.62 percent. Of all the respondents, 76 percent acquired primary education. This implies that they have the basic literacy. On the other hand 6 percent are illiterate. Only 18 percent acquired secondary education. The varied levels of formal schooling have worked for or against the women. Their perspective on the importance of education is important to this study.

The fifth personal characteristic captured was duration of membership in the groups. This was put in a 3 year range with the shortest period being less than 3 years and the longest period being over 12 years. The duration of membership was important because the respondents needed to explain factors that prompted them for form of join the groups. The results are presented in Table 4.1 (e)

Table: 1(e) duration of membership in the groups

Period (years)	Less than3	3-6	6-9	9-12	Over 12	Totals
Elementary	-	6(30%)	14(70%)	-	-	20(100%)
Mkulima	-	-	-	20(90.9%)	2(9.1%)	22(100%)
Muungano	4(15.4%)	14(53.8%)	4(15.4%)	4(15.4%)	-	26(100%)
Totals	4(6%)	20(29%)	18(27%)	24(35%)	2(3%)	68(100%)

The distribution in Table 4.1 (e) above indicate that a majority of the respondents have been members of their groups for a total period of between nine and 12 years (35 percent). Only in one group-Muungano, are members was important because the duration of membership is likely to have afforded the members time to see the group grow or retard. They have thus experienced the functioning of their groups and can thus conclude if the groups are beneficial or not. Of the total respondents, 6 per cent were illiterate, 76 percent acquired primary schooling and 18 percent had secondary education. For those who had secondary education, none of them had completed the cycle. Factors that worked against completing the secondary cycle were cited as pregnancy, lack of school fees and preferences that saw the boys take precedence over the girls. From the findings only one group-Muungano did not have illiterate members. Elementary and Mkulima groups had two members each.

V. CONCLUSION

This conclusion arising out of this finding reveals one similarity with the Clason (1998) study, where women with basic education organized group activities. However, in the present study, women with basic education did not teach others leadership roles in fact those without formal education were reluctant to take up leadership roles. Again, systematic education programs were not initiated by Members with formal schooling.

The present study findings also fits into the UNECA (1983) report that lack of education hampers Africa's Women's ability to increase resources since they embrace only traditional methods, systems and activities for production. On the other hand, it is notable from field data that women in Vihiga division are gradually changing from this by engaging in modern investment activities, for example, the loaning scheme, as an income-generating venture.

VI. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the above conclusions the study makes the following recommendations for purposes of policy implementation regarding women's informal groups.

- (a) Government policy on support for women groups should focus on the rural women groups.
- (b) The government and its partners should facilitate training and skill development courses for the women group leaders and members to increase their production.

REFERENCE

- [1]. Abagi, O (1998) Baseline survey: A tool for policy formulation and Planning Special Report. Nairobi: IPAR

- [2]. AED (1994) The primary Education Development Programme, Pakistan. Washington DC: Academy for Education for Education Development
- [3]. Aubrey, L. (1997) The Politics of Development Co-operation: NGO's Gender and Partnership in Kenya London: Rout ledge.
- [4]. Berreman,G.D. (1968) Ethnography: Method and Product, In Clifton, J. A. (Eds), Introduction to culture Anthropology: Essays in the scope and Methods of the science of man. Boston M.A. Houghton Mifflin.
- [5]. Bogdan R. Tolyor, SJ. (1975) Introduction to Qualitative Research methods. A Phenomenological Approach to the Social Sciences. New York: Wiley.
- [6]. Boeserup, E. (1970). Integration of Women in development. Why ,When, How. New York: UNDP.
- [7]. Candida, M. and Mailtrayee, M (1999) Aguide to gender analysis Oxform.
- [8]. Caplem, BR (1981) The village Polytechnic scheme in Kenya: Education for Stagnation or Development? Addis Ababa: ILO (JASPA)
- [9]. Gataru T. and Musyoki R.N. (1985) "Women Group Activities in Kenya" An Evaluation Report for women Bureau Nairobi. Women Bureau, Ministry of Culture and Social Services GOK seasonal Paper No.2 small enterprise and Jua Kali Development in Kenya Nairobi: Government Printers
- [10]. Glasser B. G. and Straus A.L (1967) The Discovery of Grounded Theory Strategies for Qualitative Research Chigago: Aldine.
- [11]. Haan H,C.(1994) "Guide for decision makers: Community Based Skills Training for Employment Creation and Income Generation. ILO: Geneva.
- [12]. Karega R.G.M. (1995) Rural Women in small Business Enterprenual Group activities in Kitui District. Kenya. Nairobi Unpublished PHD thesis. University of Reading.
- [13]. Kabira, W (1993) Celebrating Women Resistance. A case study of Women groups Movement in Kenya. Nairobi: African women Perspective
- [14]. Khan, H (1993) "The Pak-German Technical Training programme": Paper presented at the Conference on out -of- school Education, work and sustainability in the South: Berlin.
- [15]. MacGrath S; king K; Fiona Car-Hill (1993). Education and Training for the InformalSector. ODA Research Project, London: ODA.
- [16]. Mackenzie F. (1986) Land and Labour. Women and men in Agriculture change. Murang'a District-Kenya. (1980-1984) Ottawa: PhD dissertation
- [17]. Monsted, M (1976) Women groups in Rural Kenya and their role in Development Research. Copenhagen: Centre for Development Research
- [18]. Mugenda, O.M. and Mugenda A.G (1999) Research Methods: Quantitative and Qualitative approaches. Nairobi: Act press.
- [19]. Ndumbu A. (1985) A view of women Development, Nairobi: Development Horizon Press.
- [20]. Neitztert M.C. (1997) "Education and income among poor urban households" Research Report. Canada: Lauventran University,.
- [21]. Wax,M.L and Wax R.H. (1980) Fieldwork and the Research process. Anthropology and Education quarterly. II spring.
- [22]. Webbb,B.and Sheman R. (1988) Qualitative Research in Education. Focus and Methods. London: Falmer Press.
- [23]. Wipper A. (1975) Maendoleo Ya wanawake Organization. The African studies Review Vol. XVIII,No. 3. Nairobi: University of Nairobi Press.
- [24]. World Bank (1996). Leveling the playing field: Giving girls an equal chance for basic Education. Three country effort. Washington DC. World Bank.
- [25]. Young K. (1993) Planning Development with Women: Making a world of difference London: Macmillan.

Opiayo Peter Mabubi. "Influence of Demography And Levels Of Formal Education And Training On Leaders And Members Of Informal Women Groups In Vihiga Sub-County, Vihiga County, Kenya." IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS). vol. 23 no. 11, 2018, pp. 46-52.