Social-Cultural Factors Affecting Maasai Women Participation In Decision Making In Tanzania. A Case Study Of Longido District

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Abstract: Throughout history, participation in decision making through processes like voting, vying for leadership position and participation in decision making meetings; has been blinded by discrimination to certain groups of community members including women. This study assessed the social cultural factors affecting Maasai women's participation in decision making a case of Longido district. Purposive sampling was used to select the districts under the study. Decision to select Longido was based on the inhabitance of pastoral community. A total of 115 respondents were obtained through simple random selection. Data were collected through a questionnaire and analyzed using SPSS. Simple descriptive statistics and cross tabulation were used in the analysis. The results show that majority would you vote for a woman to be an MP/ Councilor/ Village Chairman in your community. A considerable proportion of men refused to be led by a woman. Furthermore, women were found not to effectively participate in politics through vying for leadership positions as many respondents voted for male contestant, main reasons being no female contestant. Situations in which women are involved in decision making were found mainly to be on issues pertaining women development and family matters. Findings show that women are allowed to vote in the community but often the decision for a woman to vote was found to be determined by men. The study further found that women are not regarded elders and female's ideas were not taken into account as male ideas in village meetings. The main barriers for women participation in leadership were found that men do not want women to compete in leadership and women ideas not accepted by most men. The study concluded that Maasai women' participation in decision making is limited by social cultural factors like social identity, social acceptance, social roles and limiting cultural practices. It is recommended that civic education strategy and appropriate programs should be designed and implemented to raise the level of knowledge and understanding of women rights and potentials in leadership and decision making. Continuous and effective sensitization of Maasai men and women on changing of their mindsets to accept the ability of women and their leadership potentials is paramount in influencing men's decision making to accepting women in leadership and decision making organs.

Index Terms: Social Identity, Social Acceptance, Social Roles, Culture, Women's participation in decision making.

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1 INTRODUCTION

In social sciences participation in decision making refers to different mechanisms for the public to express opinions and ideally exert influence. Participatory decision making can take place along any realm of human social activities including economics i.e. participatory economics, political i.e. participatory democracy, management i.e. participatory management to mention just a few. In governance and leadership context; participation in decision making is a concept which aims to ensure that citizens have a direct voice in public decision. Throughout the history, participation in decision making through processes like voting and vying for leadership positions has been blinded by discrimination and limitation to some members of community specifically women. It is up to the 19th century when New Zealand became the first country to give women the right to vote, in 1893; and Finland was the first to adopt both fundamental democratic rights in 1906. There are still a few countries that deny women both the right to vote and the right to stand for elections (IPU, 2004).

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Traditional and persistent social cultural barriers have been shown to hinder the active pursuit of women to obtain positions of leadership (i.e. Bartol et al., 2003; Hoyt, 2005; Powell et al., 2002). It is proposed here that with the globalization of business practices, opportunities, technologies, and cultures, women face new and different challenges that vary depending on the context of the environment in which they operate. According to Hora (2004) most patriarchic societies, females are regarded as the inferior of the species. Because of this, women are denied access to both honored and utilitarian role open only to males. Such roles as administration and disposal of property, leader ship roles in societal affairs including religion and governance are exclusively belong to males. While it is known that such discriminatory practices exist in these countries, their prevalence and cultural value systems and norms that perpetuate them are not adequately understood. According to WB (1998), although women constitutes two third of the world's working hours, produce half of the world's food and above all, bear and rear children, women continue to suffer from all forms of discrimination and from the absence of adequate protection against violence (WB,1998:137). Sustainable and all around developments of a society cannot be brought about without the full and unreserved participation of both woman and man in the development process, and such a balanced development should also call for the elimination of all forms of discrimination, and the protection against all forms of violence against women Since 1985 Tanzania has been implementing CEDAW (Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women) which is an international agreement where countries have agreed to end all forms of discrimination against women. The Convention provides the basis for realizing equality between women and men through ensuring women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life -- including

the right to vote and to stand for election -- as well as education, health and employment. States parties agree to take all appropriate measures, including legislation and temporary special measures, so that women can enjoy all their human rights and fundamental freedoms (UN-Women 2009). In implementing CEDAW and the Beijing Platform of Action, Tanzania came up with a constitutional requirement that Women members must not make up less than 30% in the National Assembly. The special seats for women are distributed among the political parties in proportion to the number of seats awarded to them in parliament. (Constitution, Articles 66 (1:b) and 78 (1))The constitutional provision in backed up by the law which indicates that The National Assembly consists of 350 members. Of these, 102 are reserved for women, 239 members are elected in single member constituencies, 7 are appointed by the President, 5 represent Zanzibar (2 of whom are women) and 1 mandate belongs to the attorney general: 'Every Political Party which contests Parliamentary elections may propose and submit the Commission names of eligible women candidates for nomination of Members of Parliament for Women Special Seats' (Elections Regulations 2010, Article 86A (2)). So far the Tanzania parliament has a total of 126 Women which is 36% of the parliament. Among the 126 only one woman comes for the Maasai community which is a manifestation of how the number of Maasai women is limited in the parliament as a major organ for decision making. In communities, women turn up in large numbers in every political election whereby they constitute more than half of the population in many countries including Tanzania, yet they are visibly absent in positions in the Government, parastatals organizations and private companies (Akaro et al 2010) Maasai is an indigenous community whom practice pastoralism as a core livelihood system. This community is increasingly excluded and vulnerable as a result of lack of recognition in the government system as a viable livelihood, agriculture expansion, nature conservancy, population pressure and climate change (MRG ,2011). In this already marginalized and unrecognized community; women are further excluded and vulnerable to harmful customs and unequal opportunity in decision making and the vulnerability is spearheaded by the community itself (Kipuri and Ridgwell, 2008). Maasai women are minors in their culture and have to be always represented by their father or husband in sensitive matters and in decision making on those issues. A Maasai woman is by birth a member of her father's family line, which means she cannot own land etc. This practice is against human rights because it denies women of their basic rights (Mbogo Expeditions). The research therefore aimed at looking at the internal social factors that are hindering women's participation in decision making regardless the ongoing efforts which have been put by the governments and development partners.

1.1 Statement of the problem
Regardless the massive interventions which have been focused on pastoral communities with the aim of empowering women to have an active role in community; too little positive change is manifested. Hardly can you find a woman in leadership position in Maasai community which is a patriarchal system. Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights explicitly says everyone has the right to take part in elections and government. Crucially, participation also means that the voices of people who are often excluded should be

heard and heeded, especially when we are marginalized or discriminated against because of our disability, race, religion, gender, descent, age or on other grounds. For the case of Maasai women; they are limited to issues like attending community meetings or voting which at large affect the decisions which are made in the community. Women have continuously been holding back their participation even in situations where affirmative actions have been put across to include women in decision making which is highly linked to social cultural limitations. According to the research done across East and Horn African region on the status of pastoralists; Naomi Kipuri and Ridgewell (2008) have stated that; despite the numerous key tasks women fulfill in pastoralist society, they face this discrimination two-fold. They are even less able than pastoralist men to participate in the decisions that affect their lives and livelihoods. Very few women have succeeded in campaigning for an open parliamentary seat (Kipuri & Ridgewell, 2008). It should be understood that the exclusion of women from decision-making bodies limits the possibilities for entrenching the principles of democracy in a society, hindering economic development and discouraging the attainment of gender equality Therefore this study aimed at looking at the social cultural limitations that Maasai women face in relation to decision making i.e. participating in vying for leadership, voting or active attendance in community decision making meetings and the findings will influence the right approaches to ensure women participation.

1.2 Objectives
The general objective of this study was to investigate social cultural factors that affect Maasai women's participation in decision making in Tanzania. A case study of Longido District.

1.3 Specific objectives
1. To determine the effect of social identity on women's participation in decision making in Longido District.
2. To assess the effect of social acceptance on women's participation in decision making in Longido District.
3. To examine the effect of social roles on women's participation in decision making in Longido District.
4. To determine the effect of culture on women's participation in decision making in Longido District.
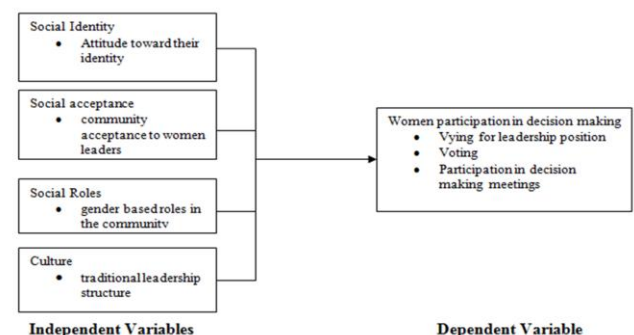
1.4 Conceptual framework

Fig 1: Conceptual framework

2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design
Research design provides the glue that holds the research project together. A design is used to structure the research, to show how all of the major parts of the research project work together to address the central research questions (Trochim et al,2015). This study used a case study research design which provides an in-depth study in a specific individual or phenomena in its existing context. It gives an insight of the phenomenon of the population what the reality is. It described in detail what actually exists within a community, such as current practices, situations, etc. Since the research study is concerned with investigating social cultural factors that affect Maasai women's participation in decision making in Tanzania, the researcher assumed that using case study approach the objectives of the research will be achieved

2.2 Data Analysis
In order to realize successful accomplishment of the study, data collected from different primary sources were recorded, edited, organized, analyzed, interpreted and presented in relation to research questions. Data collected from the filled questionnaires were quantitatively analyzed using SPSS 20.0 version data analysis software whereby simple descriptive statistics and cross tabulation were also used in the analysis. Descriptive statistical methods such as percentage, frequency and tabulation to test the reliability and validity of data describing the social cultural factors effecting women's participation in decision making was employed. Results were presented in tables, figures, graphs and charts. The Likert scale was used to obtain qualitative data which depicts attitudes and behaviors. The researcher also took time to clearly elaborate the questions in Likert Scale to ensure that respondent gave best of their view and attitude towards the research questions administered. The qualitative data was also included in the descriptive tables and figures used for analysis.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Social Identity
Social acceptance and identity in this research refers to the extent through which the Maasai women decide to uphold the limiting factors to participation in order to be identified and accepted by the community. According to Turner et al (1986) he defines social identity as a person's sense of who they are based on their group membership. It is through social identity that someone gets a sense of belonging. The research found regardless of having 79% of correspondents agreeing that can vote for women to be a village chair, councilor and MP; but during the last local government elections no woman vied for the above leadership positions. This is a sign of lack of women's readiness to participate among other factors 56% of female respondents are comfortable in meetings with men and women while 44% prefer meetings with women only. Though 81.8% actively contribute ideas to the meetings, 46.2% of respondents say that women ideas are not taken into account. The researchers concluded that such scenarios discourage women to identify themselves as equals in decision making process**.**

3.2 Social Acceptance
In order to fulfil the objectives of the research, social acceptance is referred to the fact that most people, in order to fit in with the others, look and act like them. It stops (mostly) everyone from truly being themselves. On the other hand the variable will be looked from the angle of what the society requires for one to be accepted as diligent member of the community. In assessing the effect of social acceptance on women's participation in decision making overall findings show increased participation of women in decision making i.e. village committee, special seats. However the community acceptance of women in decision making positions especially vying for leadership positions is still shadowed with negative attitudes. Main reasons given by men for not choosing women in leadership were found to be psychological and the male dominancy notion that men can't be led by a woman (41.7%), and the believe that women are weak (29.2%). Other male respondents reported that women are incapable of leading (20.8%); women disrespecting men when chosen and those women are liars 4.2% respectively. This is similar to the findings by Hora (2004) who reported that most patriarchic societies, females are regarded as the inferior of the species. Because of this, women are denied access to both honored and utilitarian role open only to males. This implies that male supremacy and dominancy has a great influence on accepting women for leadership in the community. Women in the study area are considered incapable of leading, and the cultural ties still hinders women social acceptance in leadership positions.
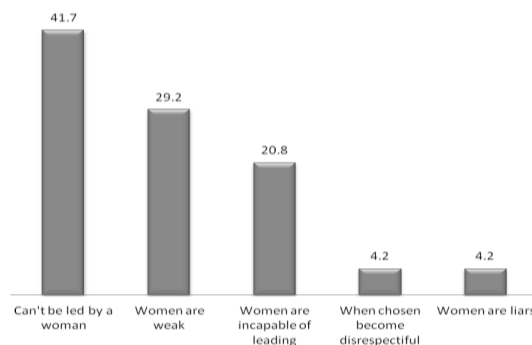

Fig. 2: Reasons for not choosing women in leadership positions

3.3 Social roles
In this research social roles refers to the roles assigned to a certain group of people in a community i.e. men, women, youth etc. Most of these roles are socialized and passed over from generation to generation and often limit the particular group to what is expected of them (Butler 1990). Often social roles are constructed involving a set of social and behavioral norms that, within a specific culture, are widely considered to be socially appropriate for individuals of a specific grouping. Therefore in this research Maasai women's social roles looked out for indicators like traditional roles between men and women in the community and how they can affect the later. Social roles, specifically family responsibilities present a minor barrier to women's participation in decision making at 37%. Education status has also been identified as a barrier because in Maasai communities, education opportunity is labeled as not a female role.

17

3.4 Culture

As an independent variable in this study, culture refers to the ideas, customs, and social behavior of a particular people or society. This variable was measured by looking at existing Maasai ideas, customs, norms and behaviors and how they influence women's participation in decision making. With notable history of strong traditional leadership structure that the Maasai community has; researchers focused on looking at women's roles and level of participation in traditional leadership structures Finding show that 80.3% of respondents believe that leadership roles is the responsibility of elder men the community. Traditional leadership is acquired through appointment with respect of certain age set where by age set structure is only determined by male members of the community. Traditionally women are mainly leaders in women development groups and not community.

3.4 Women participation in decision making

In this study; the dependent variable i.e. women participation in decision making was measured mainly by looking at the key indicators of decision making within the community which include vying for leadership positions, voting for leaders as well as participating in decision making meetings . Women's participations in decision making has been clouded with a number of challenging factors that affect women's' full participations. In this study the independent variables was tasted to see if at all they affect the ability or disability of Maasai women participation in decision making. Vying for leadership refers to contenting for leadership position often carried out through election where people content for a particular position (Free Dictionary); for the purpose of this study is any leadership position in village government or central government. Voting in the scope of this study is a formal indication of a choice between two or more candidates or courses of action, expressed typically through a ballot or a show of hands (Oxford Dictionary). Finding shows in voting, a considerable proportion of 46.6 percent female respondents informed researchers that the decision of whom to vote to was done by the head of families who are men. 22.2% of women who did not vote, link voting with mere political affiliation whereby they simply do not like politics and labeling it as a male dominated field which is reflected by the fact that in 2014 no woman vied in the local government elections

4 CONCLUSION

The research revealed that male supremacy and dominancy has a greatly influenced on accepting women for leadership in the community. Women in the researched area are considered incapable of leading, the in doctrine has gone too deep in the community to the extent that women do not consider that community decision making organs is an area that they can participate. It was also realized that women ideas are perceived as inferior to men and hence not given much consideration as useful contribution in the community. Likewise, women were found not seeing the benefits of getting involved in politics. Cultural ties still hinders women social acceptance in leadership positions. The study also shows that women are not participating effectively in politics and are not well accepted by the community to participate in politics. Stereotyping was found existing in the community regarding women abilities that assumes women incapable of leading and that the leadership role is accrued to men only. A reasonable number of men and women do not accept the fact of being led by women These findings reveal that challenges facing women participation in leadership and decision making are much more extrinsic than intrinsic to women. The cultural setup and men dominancy syndrome is the main problem for women participation in the researched area.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. For the Maasai women, there is a need to promote mentorship and confidence building to women and girls in developing their courage to participate in social, economic and political spheres. Women champions in the respective communities can be used as agents for change and mentors to other women with less confidence and exposure. Women have to change their attitudes that they are less than men when it comes to participating decision making levels especially in vying for leadership positions. There is also a need to encourage behavior change among men with regard to accepting women in leadership positions thus encouraging women towards realizing their leadership capability regardless their gender.

2. A civic education strategy and appropriate programs should be designed and implemented to raise the level of knowledge and understanding of women rights and potentials in leadership and decision making on matter affecting community development. In civic education more emphasis should be on human rights, resource distribution, social roles, and democracy to mention just a few. Increased awareness of their rights will fuel up their involvement in to decision making processes.

3. The ministry responsible for gender and development as well as civil societies working on democracy and civil rights should review and enforce the strategies and programs such that more efforts are concentrated in addressing men and women equal right in participation in leadership and provide more capacity building to women on their role and rights in politics in Maasai community and other similar communities. Continuous and effective sensitization of men on changing of their mindsets to accept the ability of women and their leadership potentials is paramount in influencing men perception and behavior towards women in leadership and decision making organs.

4. Formal education should be given priority to women and girl child so as to influence their confidence and self-esteem to come out and actively contest in politics and other decision making organs. Essential information about women and their capabilities have to be effectively communicated to the men and the community at large

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