
Leadership Orientation a Missing Ingredient to Women Empowerment in Tanzania

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Abstract: Women constitute more than 50 percent of the world population hence their full participation in the development programmes could contribute significantly to world economic growth. Recognizing the importance of women participation in development programmes countries worldwide including Tanzania have ushered programmes geared to empowering women economically, politically and socially. Tanzania has signed many treaties which are geared to bringing gender equality and ending women discrimination in all spheres of life. More specifically the government is committed to achieving gender equality. According to the World Bank statistics Tanzania has achieved 36 percent of women representation in decision making. While there is still a gap to achieve the intended gender parity in political spheres it is important to understand how women perform as leaders. This study therefore, sought to assess barriers and challenges facing low cadre women leaders in Tanzania. The study involved 125 women leaders of VICOBA, Conservation agriculture, Natural resources management committees and land use groups in Mtwara and Lindi. Overall, the results reveal lack of leadership skills as a fundamental skill and knowledge gap among women group leaders. The study recommends leadership orientation capacity building programmes to low cadre women leaders to enhance their knowledge and leadership skills for them to be able to effectively assume their leadership position and roles in groups and community.

Key words: leadership, women empowerment and gender

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1. Introduction

Women empowerment gained impetus worldwide following the association of gender equality and economic development. The Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development stresses that the empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of their political, social, economic and health status is both a highly important end in itself and necessary for the achievement of sustainable human development. Historically, women have been left out in development spheres due to cultural and socialization processes which did not consider women as equal partners in economic development. Given their percentage in the world population if well integrated in economic activities could contribute significantly to the world development.

While gender inequality is a universal outcry, the situation is worse in developing countries. In efforts to

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address this inequality, gender equality and women empowerment was coined as one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). MDG 3 focuses on parity in education, political participation, and economic empowerment for which Tanzania has ascribed to it. Towards achieving this goal among other measures different initiatives have been marshaled and implemented to empower women economically and politically in the country. These include introduction of microfinance services which are geared to increasing women participation in economic activities through provision of credits. Affirmative action to include special seats for women in parliament, committees and community leadership. Donor community supporting development initiatives in the country is also committed to gender equality.

Following this commitment participation of women in politics and decision making fora in Tanzania has increased significantly. According to the World Bank report (2015) Tanzania has achieved 36 percent on gender parity in parliament.

Historically, women and girls have been marginalized and excluded in many development agenda including education. Girls and women have been excluded in education as the society was not ready to spend resources to support their education as they were not expected to be employed in the formal sector. As a result majority of women in the society are either not educated or less educated than their male counterpart. Arguably, this situation implies that the effort to increase women participation in economy, leadership and decision making could be challenged by education void among women in Tanzania. While this could be a national wide problem the situation is worse in rural areas where education to girls is still a challenge. This study therefore, examines challenges and barriers facing low cadre women leaders in rural areas in Tanzania. The underlying research question is “*What are the barriers and challenges facing women leaders in rural areas in Tanzania?*”

Overall, the study aims at identifying barriers and challenges to low cadre women leadership in Tanzania. To this end specific objectives are to:

- (1) identify barriers and challenges to low cadre women leaders in Tanzania;
- (2) assess the low cadre women leaders prior experience in leadership;
- (3) assess the leadership knowledge and skills of low cadre women leaders.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Women Empowerment

Women empowerment has been defined differently by different people. Drolet (2010) defines women empowerment as a process to enhance women’s capacity for self-determination to meet their practical needs and strategic needs by achieving equal rights, power and authority and resources like men in the society as well as economy. Ashraf et al. (2006) define women’s empowerment as the power for women to make decisions. Rao and Others have defined women empowerment as the capacity of women to become economically self-reliant by engaging in economic activities and control over incomes and decisions affecting their lives and freedom from violence (Kelleher, 1995; Mustafa et al., 1996). Empowerment is regarded as a culture that provides room for women to share control, and the entitlement and ability for them to participate in influencing decisions regarding the allocation of resources (Goetz & Sen Gupta, 1996; Montgomery et al., 1996; Holcombe, 1995).

United Nations Population Information Network defines women’s empowerment based on five components namely Women’s sense of self-worth, women’s right to have access to opportunities and resources, power to control own lives including determining own choices, ability to influence the direction of social changes to create

a better social and economic order, nationally and internationally. Borrowing from this definition Rahman et al. (2009) consider women empowerment to comprise woman's education and knowledge to enhance her understanding about her surroundings, her ability to control her life, freedom from domination by not depending on anyone else's income, her ability to participate in decision-making process, her capability to make independent decisions and finally her independence in terms of mobility. This study considers women empowerment as a process of enhancing knowledge and skills of women to participate in economy, decision making and influence economic, political and social decisions for the betterment of the society. The study considers empowerment to be a continuous process and not a onetime event or action.

2.2 Theoretical Tension

This study uses the Gender Equality and women Empowerment Framework (GEWEF) developed by Sara Longwe to assess the women empowerment process in Tanzania. GEWEF considers women empowerment to be a process involving five levels namely Welfare, Access, Conscientization, Participation and Control. The first level in the women empowerment process is welfare that considers how women practical gender needs such as nutrition, income and medical care are met. Achievement of these practical gender needs does not result into gender equality. The second level in the empowerment process as per GEWEF is Access which looks into women access to resources such as land, credit, labor, training public services and marketing facilities on equal basis with men. Initiatives to change land and customary laws in Tanzania are likely to contribute to improved women access to resources which in long run is likely to contribute to achieving gender equality. Conscientization level involves measures taken by women and men to create awareness that gender roles can be changed and that gender equality is possible. The fourth level is participation which emphasizes on the need for women equal participation in decision making in all programmes and policies. Finally as per GEWE framework is the control level which entails women and men equal control over factors of production and distribution of benefits. At this level there is a balance of power between women and men and gender relations are expected to be based on equal power base. Under ceteris paribus conditions achievement of this level results into gender equality.

The GEWE framework is relevant to this study since the study sought to assess women participation in leadership. The study contributes to this framework as its findings shed lights on the prerequisites to women empowerment.

Tanzania is geared to achieving 50:50 gender equality in decision making at all levels. Towards this end the government coxswained various measures including quota system for women to participate in decision making and leadership at all levels. This study focuses on the participation level of the GEWE framework. More specifically it assesses the participation of Tanzanian women in rural areas in decision making. Leadership knowledge and skills are vital for one to be able to effectively assume leadership roles in whatever position appointed or elected. Given the historical situation in which women and girls were marginalized in the education system, women elected or appointed to be leaders are likely to have leadership knowledge and skill gap which could negatively influence their ability to take up and serve their roles as leaders in the society. The situation could be worse for low cadre leaders in rural areas since training opportunities for women in decision making concentrate more in urban areas and to relatively higher level women leaders. Using GEWEF this study uncovers barriers and challenges facing low cadre women leaders in rural Tanzania

2.3 Empirical Studies on Empowerment

Empowerment studies conducted strongly suggest a link between women empowerment and economic

development. This is due to the fact that women constitute a large part of the world population and that they make rational choices in resource utilization. Empirical studies in the area point out women empowerment as an important factor in addressing poverty (Rahman et al., 2009). Abed (2000) argues that women's economic emancipation is pivotal for alleviating poverty. In another study conducted in Philippines, Ashraf et al. (2006) examined whether access to products leads to an increase in women's decision-making power within household. The findings revealed a positive impact of access to products and women's decision-making power. Other studies have reported increased household consumption as a result of women engagement in income generating activities following access to credits/loans (Khandker, 1998). It is evident from the literature that women empowerment can contribute to national and world economies.

Following the established association between women empowerment and development and further efforts by the government of Tanzania towards achieving gender parity in politics and decision making. This study sought to assess women leaders in rural areas and examine how they cope with leadership roles and identify if there are any barriers and or challenges they face as leaders.

3. Methodology

The study was descriptive in nature. It sought to assess challenges facing low cadre women leaders in Tanzania. Specifically, the study assesses the level of leadership knowledge and skills possessed by women group leaders. The study involved a survey of 125 women group leaders in Mtwara and Lindi. The sample was drawn from VICOBA groups (48.4%), Conservation agriculture groups (32.3%), Village natural resources management committees (9.7%) and sustainable forest land use committees (9.6%) in Liwale, Newala and Nachingwea districts. The groups considered in the study were selected randomly. Focus group discussions, interviews and observations were used to generate data.

A semi structured questionnaire was developed and used to collect data. In addition to use of questionnaires, observation method was used. The researcher attended group meetings and observed ability of women leaders to manage meetings, readiness of women to contribute to discussions, their ability to communicate and convincing power. In addition to generating data from women group leaders, districts gender focal persons were also interviewed to provide their views on gender issues in the districts. Descriptive analyses were conducted in which frequencies were used. The results of the data analyses are presented in the subsequent sections.

4. Empirical findings

4.1 Barriers to Women Group Leaders

The first objective of the study was to identify barriers facing low cadre women leaders in Tanzania. To achieve this objective, women group leaders were asked to list the barriers to their leadership. The frequently mentioned responses are provided in text box 1.

Box 1 Barriers to Women Group Leaders

- Group dynamics with conflicting ideas
- Poor record keeping
- High illiteracy rate make it difficult to educate people on the importance of managing natural resources
- Not knowing leadership roles

4.1.1 Gender Related Barriers to Leadership

The existing literature suggests that there are very few women leaders worldwide and the situation is even worse in Africa particularly in rural areas. Among the asserted reasons for the existing gap between men and women in leadership are gender related barriers. In this study women group leaders were asked if they experience gender related barriers in their leadership roles. The findings in Table 1 indicate that more than half of the women leaders interviewed experience gender related barriers in their leadership within groups, at household and community at large. Interviews with district gender focal persons revealed presence of gender issues worth addressing for example early marriages and pregnancies. Unequal rights for women to participate in making decisions including those affecting their lives such as income utilization even in a situation where a woman has solely generated it.

Table 1 Gender Related Barriers to Women Leadership

Experienced gender related barriers	Frequency	Percent
Yes	98	78.4
No	27	21.6
Total	125	100.0

The following were the frequently mention gender related barriers to leadership:

Box 2 Gender Related Barriers

1. Elder members of the group not wanting to accept advise or suggestion from young leaders
2. Women ideas not easily accepted
3. Women leaders not accepted by men
4. Women not involved in decision making
5. Men not wanting their spouses to engage in group activities including income generating activities because of jealous or insecurity
6. Heavy family workload including caring for families including sick relatives, children and spouses

We further, analyzed the data to find out if gender related barriers would influence women negatively on their willingness to continue to be leaders or vie for leadership position in future.

Table 2 Gender Related Barriers and Future Plans to Become A Leader

Are there gender related barriers	Future plans to become a leader elsewhere		Total
	Yes	No	
Yes	54	44	98
No	21	6	27
Total	75	50	125

Findings indicate that gender related barriers discourage women to aspire future leadership positions. Out of those who experienced gender related barriers in their current leadership roles 44.9 percent do not want to seek leadership position in future while only 22 percent of those women who have not experienced gender related barriers would not consider being leaders in future.

4.1.2 Marital Status and Presence of Children

The existing literature suggest that women who are married are less likely to participate in leadership. The findings indicate that 81 percent of women are married and 80 percent have children.

Table 3 Marital and Family Status

Married/living with a partner?	Presence of children		Total
	Yes	No	
Yes	101	01	102
No	11	12	23
Total	112	13	125

There are two issues of interest to these findings; the fact that about 80 percent of the interviewed women leaders have children and married, from African context it is possible that they face gender related barriers to their leadership without their knowledge. For example, one may not consider having a sick child or husband to take care as a barrier to economic and leadership roles and hence focus only on gender based violence or domestic violence to be the only barriers.

4.2 Women group leaders Previous Experience in Leadership

The second objective of the study was to assess the low cadre women leaders' prior experience in leadership. To achieve this objective, respondents were asked to state their previous experience in leadership. The findings in the Table 4 indicate that more than 60 percent of the women leaders interviewed had no prior leadership experience.

Table 4 Previous Leadership Experience

Previous leadership experience	Frequency	Percent
Yes	43	34.4
No	82	65.6
Total	125	100.0

These findings are not surprising given the historical created inequality in education and leadership. However, they suggest that if women inclusion in leadership and decision making is to generate positive results, enhancing leadership skills of elected women leaders should be considered.

4.3 Women Group Leaders' Leadership Knowledge and Skills

The study also sought to assess leadership knowledge and skills possessed by women who were elected as leaders of the groups in the three districts. Respondents were requested to state their level of education, previous exposure to leadership training, understanding leadership roles and qualities. The findings are presented in the tables below

4.3.1 Women Group Leaders' Level of Education

Respondents' level of education was another aspect that was sought in this study. This is due to the fact that the level of education can give a picture on the skills and ability of women to perform leadership roles. The findings in the Table 5 show that majority of women group leaders interviewed had attained primary school education.

Table 5 Women Group Leaders' Education

Level of education	Frequency	Percent
Primary education	109	87.2
Secondary ordinary level	16	12.8
Total	125	100.0

4.3.2 Women Group Leaders' Previous Exposure to Leadership Training

Respondents were asked if they had attended any leadership training in the past and the content of the course attended. From the findings in Table 6 majority of women group leaders interviewed had no prior leadership training and hence are assumed to use intuition in leading their groups. For those who said they had attended leadership training when probed further about the course they said they attended gender based violence course during which they were also taught on how to form groups.

Table 6 Women Group Leaders' Exposure to Leadership Training

Have you attended any course on leadership?	Frequency	Percent
Yes	15	12
No	110	88
Total	125	100.0

4.3.3 Understanding of Leadership Roles

Women knowledge of the issues around leadership and roles contributes to building women confidence hence determining their effectiveness in leading group as they will perform what they are supposed to perform as leaders confidently knowing that they are doing the right thing. Women leaders were asked to mention leadership roles. Expected roles included planning, decision making, communication, team building problem solving and monitoring and evaluation.

Table 7 Women Group Leaders' Understanding of Leadership Roles

Understanding of leadership roles	Frequency	Percent
Good understanding	32	25.6
Average understanding	36	28.8
No understanding	57	45.6
Total	125	100.0

Findings in Table 7 show that about 45 percent of interviewed women leaders did not have a clear understanding of their leadership roles. This implies that when women are elected to be leaders there is a need to orient them on their leadership roles.

4.3.4 Understanding of Leadership Qualities

In groups and individual interviews respondents were asked to describe qualities of the ideal leader for the group or community. Each individual was asked to list on a piece of paper ten leadership qualities. Thereafter, in a plenary session women were asked to mention the qualities which were written on a flip chart. Thereafter, members of the group were asked to discuss and prioritize the qualities and finally select the first ten qualities. The group priorities were compiled and tallied to select the top ten qualities. The identified qualities are presented in the text box 3.

Women group leaders were also asked to rate themselves in selected leadership qualities (presented in box3). Majority of the respondents rated themselves below average while a few rated themselves on average in the selected leadership qualities.

Box 3 Top Ten Leadership Qualities

1. Knowledge of leadership roles
2. Literate
3. Accept group opinion and work on them
4. Ability to express herself and provide feedback
5. Hard working
6. Should not discriminate group members on the basis of gender/tribe/religion/political party affiliation
7. Integrity
8. Innovative and creative
9. Ability to manage group dynamics
10. Should embrace developmental ideas

4.3.5 Succession Plan

Succession plan is an important aspect in leadership as it determines group success and continuity. This requires leaders to groom individuals within their groups to takeover group leadership. It entails leaders having mentorship programmes and sharing with the group members on how different group activities are conducted. As this was considered an important aspect to women group leaders respondents were asked if they have succession plan. The results in Figure 5 below show that majority of women leaders interviewed do not have succession plan. This is not a very healthy situation as it may jeopardize the continuation and proper functioning of the groups should anything happen to leaders.

Table 8 Women Group Leaders' Succession Plan

Have succession plan in place	Frequency	Percent
Yes	20	16
No	105	84
Total	125	100.0

4.3.6 Vision to Become a Leader

We further sought to tap aspiration of women group leaders to be leaders elsewhere in future and the reasons for the aspiration. Majority of them were willing to be future leaders with reasons mentioned ranging from helping community to women liberation. The reasons for those who said they do not want to be leaders in future include among others the challenges they face in their current leadership positions, notably, gender related roles which are perceived as constraints/barriers and low level of leadership knowledge and skills.

4.3.7 Respondents' Age and Vision to Be a Leader

The study also tried to find out if there was any relationship between respondents' age and future plans to be a leader elsewhere. While results from table 9 indicate that women at the age between 18 to 57 years have a great urge to become leaders elsewhere, the strongest urge for future leadership is observed at the age group 34-41 years where 83 percent said they would like to be leaders in future. This is an interesting finding because this is the age that one can assume leadership positions and when well supported through various women empowerment initiatives could contribute towards achieving gender equality in decision making and leadership.

4.4 Observations

Observation was also used to gather data for the needs assessment. The researcher observed the ability and readiness of the respondents to air their views, engagement in the group discussions, and how they managed their weekly meetings. The following issues were observed:

- Lack of confidence among women leaders

- Inability to express themselves
- Inability to manage group meetings
- Lack of clarity of their roles as leaders
- Lack of basic knowledge of their functional area especially the treasurers

Table 9 Age Group and Future Plans to Become a Leader Elsewhere

Age	Future plans to become a leader		Total
	Yes	No	
18-25	2	1	3
26-33	19	5	24
34-41	64	4	68
42-49	13	5	18
50-57	5	6	11
above 57	0	1	01
Total	103	22	125

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall, on the basis of the findings the study concludes that low cadre women leaders in rural Tanzania have low level of education, majority of them have primary education. The second conclusion is that majority of women elected as leaders neither have prior experience in leadership nor exposed to leadership training. These imply that women leaders at low cadres do not have the necessary skills, and in most cases are left to use their intuition in leading groups and committees. Women fail to pursue their roles as leaders of economic groups and committees due to lack of leadership skills which include planning, decision making and time management. Women also face gender related barriers to their leadership. So conclusively the efforts to achieve gender parity in politics and decision making should be coupled with leadership orientation to women elected leaders for them to effectively assume their leadership roles.

On the basis of these findings the recommends leadership orientation to be the prerequisites for women empowerment in decision making and leadership. Upon their appointment of election low cadre women leaders should be oriented on leadership skills and knowledge for them to effectively and efficiently assume their leadership roles. Planning, decision making and management of group dynamics are among leadership knowledge and skills that need to be inculcated in women leaders at low cadres in Tanzania. This is important given the fact that women in rural Tanzania are less educated.

Given that gender multiple roles have implications to women participation in economic activities and leadership there is a need to think of both short term and long term interventions to address the situation. The long term intervention will require sensitization programmes to men as equal partners to addressing gender equality in the society. This change which is the ultimate solution to the existing gap is a long term and a gradual process. In the short term it is recommended that women who are elected as leaders in low cadres should be trained in soft management skills such as time and stress management for them to be able to handle multiple roles. This is a short term measure to ensure that their participation in income generating activities and leadership in their groups and community at large do not suffer in the expense of multiple roles.

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