

Gender Roles and Agribusiness in the Kenyan Communities: The Case of Likuyani District

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Abstract

A gender role is a theoretical construct in the social sciences and humanities that refers to a set of social and behavioral norms that, within a specific culture, are widely considered to be socially appropriate for individuals of a specific gender. Proponents of gender role theory assert that observed gender differences in behavior and personality characteristics are, at least in part, socially constructed, and therefore, the product of socialization experiences; this contrasts with other models of gender that assert that gender differences are "essential" to biological sex. Research supports this theory, finding gender differences in almost all societies, but with differences in the norms adopted, suggesting that gender differences are, at least partly, influenced by culture. Gender has several controversial definitions but it here refers to an individual's inner sex or psychological sense of being a male or female irrespective of one's (outer) sex identity as determined by one's sexual organs. There are two main genders: masculine (male) or feminine (female). Gender identity refers to the options available to members of a society to choose from a set of social identities, based on the combination of one's sex identity on the one hand, and one's natural gender, interests and social experiences on the other. Some ancient tribes have more than five human genders. Some non-Western societies have three human genders – man, woman and third gender. Gender roles refer to the set of attitudes and behaviors socially expected from the members of a particular gender identity. Gender roles are socially constructed which are often politicized and manipulated, which then result in the oppression of people. Androgyny, a term denoting the display of both male and female behavior, also exists. Many terms have been developed to portray sets of behaviors arising in this context. The masculine gender role has become common in the world today. One example is the "sensitive new age gay", which could be described as a traditional male gender role with a more typically "female" empathy and associated emotional responses. Another is the metrosexual, a male who adopts or claims to be born with similarly "female" grooming habits. Some have argued that such new roles are merely rebelling against tradition more so than forming a distinct role. However, traditions regarding male and female appearance have never been concrete, and men in other eras have been equally interested with their appearance. The popular conceptualization of homosexual men, which has become more accepted in recent decades, has traditionally been more androgynous or effeminate, though in actuality homosexual men can also be masculine and even exhibit machismo characteristics. One could argue that since many homosexual men and women fall into one gender role or another or are androgynous, that gender roles are not strictly determined by a person's physical sex. Whether or not this phenomenon is due to social or biological reasons is debated. Many homosexual people find the traditional gender roles to be very restrictive, especially during childhood. Also, the phenomenon of intersex people, which has become more publicly accepted, has caused much debate on the subject of gender roles. Many intersexual people identify with the opposite sex, while others are more androgynous. Some see this as a threat to traditional gender roles, while others see it as a sign that these roles are a social construct, and that a change in gender roles will be liberating. The main concern of this paper is the relevance of these gender roles in agribusiness with the view of attaining food security through innovation in line with Vision 2030.

Keywords: gender, gender roles, agribusiness.

INTRODUCTION

Gender refers to the cultural construction of sexual differences. Male and female are biological sexes that differ in their X and Y chromosomes. Culture takes biological differences and associates it with varied activities and ideas. Gender is culture in nature and cultural construction moves around male and female. Compared to female, men are stronger than female, male are the main bread earner and women are the keeper of household and children. This social

classification distinguishes males and females. This appropriate behavior and attitudes, roles and activities show how people relate to each other and this learned behavior is what makes up gender identity and determine gender roles (Deustch 2007)

Gender roles exhibit social justice and ensure fairness and equity is observed as a right for all in the outcomes of development through process of social transformation. Gender concerns are seen as

important to all aspects of development; for all sectors and areas of activity, and a fundamental part of the planning process. There are a number of different approaches to gender analysis, including the Gender Roles or Harvard framework, and Social Relations Analysis

The Gender Roles framework focuses on describing women's and men's roles and their relative access to and control over resources. The analysis aims to anticipate the impacts of projects on both productive and reproductive roles. It takes the household, rather than the breadth of institutions, as the unit of analysis and tends to assume that women are a homogeneous category (Barash)

In contrast, the Social Relations approach seeks to expose the gender power relations that perpetuate inequities. This analysis moves beyond the household to include the community, market, and state institutions and so involves collecting data at all these levels. It uncovers differences between women, divided by other aspects of social differentiation such as class, race and ethnicity. The aim is to understand the dynamics of gender relations indifferent institutional contexts and thereby to identify women's bargaining position and formulate strategies to improve this. It has proved challenging to adopt this approach in operational work (Deutsch 2007)

According to (Barash 2002), 'Sex' refers to the biological characteristics that categorize someone as either female or male; whereas 'gender' refers to the socially determined ideas. A person's sex is biologically determined as female or male according to certain identifiable physical features which are fixed. Women's marginalization has often been seen as 'natural' and a fact of their biology. However these biological differences cannot explain why women have less access to power and lower status than men. To understand and challenge the cultural value placed on someone's biological sex, and unequal power hierarchies, we need the relational concept of 'gender'.

'Gender refers to how a person's biology is culturally valued and interpreted into locally accepted ideas of what it is to be a woman or man. 'Gender' and the hierarchical power relations between women and men based on this are socially constructed, and not derived directly from biology. Gender roles are a set of social and behavioral norms that are generally considered appropriate for either a man or a woman in a social or interpersonal relationship (Barash et al 2002). Gender roles cannot be seen in isolation, they intersect and are intertwined with other factors such as race, class and ethnicity that affect or even determine the condition of men and women, their opportunities and choice. Agribusiness is the various

businesses that produce, sell and distribute farm products.

This study will focus on the following areas: statement of the problem, significance of the study to scholars and readers, limitations of the study, importance of gender roles, the influence of culture on gender roles, the relevance of gender on agribusiness, the current status of women involvement in agribusiness, the challenges facing women in agribusiness and make recommendations.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Agribusiness is a powerful tool of empowering the rural communities that enable communities to raise the living standards of living. The developed world realized greater heights of development when it sensitized rural folk to embrace agribusiness to curb rural – urban movement of population which carries with it a lot of labour and talent. Studies have also revealed that married and settled women tend to stay in rural areas where a lot of land is available. The demand for food and flora-cultural products can only keep rising. Experience has shown that the nature of crop and animal husbandry practiced in rural Kenya is devoid of any long-term gains since the main purpose of the agricultural activities is immediate consumption. The earlier the gender issues related to agribusiness are made to play in favor of women in rural areas the better.

The fact that gender roles negatively affect involvement of women in agribusiness raises issues that require to be addressed. If the trend continues then the role of women in agribusiness will remain only but a mirage.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY TO SCHOLARS AND TO THE READERS

The findings of this study will open up space for researchers to mount high level studies into this area of gender roles and agribusiness which will eventually increase the involvement of more stakeholders in the industry. The study is meant to reverse the attitude of rural population towards agribusiness as an economic empowerment tool. The study will also enable the economists lay strategies on the suitability of the various market forces that go with agribusiness.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study encountered the following limitations:

- Lack of adequate finances hampered the timely collection of data during the study which heavily slowed down the pace of disseminating the findings.
- The negative attitude of communities towards women as well as the attitude towards agriculture was evident.

- The assumption that the “government” will help farmers was evident which should be addressed lest it contributes to elongated poverty.

IMPORTANCE OF GENDER ROLES

Androgynies perform roles intended for males and females. They exhibit both feminine and masculine capabilities. In Kenya, there are men and women who participate in farming, business and at the same time nurture their families. The ability to meet basic needs of food, shelter, health and security calls for all round men and women who participate in farming and at the same time turn the products into money to ensure food security and economic gain. A basic function of all economic activity is to provide many people as possible with the means of overcoming the helplessness and misery arising from a lack of food, shelter, health, and protection as in agreement with (Michael 2011). Without sustained and continuous economic progress at the individual as well as the societal level, the realization of the human potential would not be possible.

Metrosexual (male who exhibit female roles) ensure that the weaker males who cannot perform duties commonly known as “*masculine*” are involved in nation building by performing roles that the society view as “*feminine*”. Such roles include sale of vegetables and grocery. This fulfills the development objective of increasing the availability and widening the distribution of basic life-sustaining goods such as food, hence achieving one of the goals of vision 2030 of food security.

Intersex persons can perform either male or female roles as they decide. Intersex individuals can decide to perform tough tasks as male or light tasks designed for females. In the light of the foregoing, development scholars view mothers as playing the central role in development drama. Globally, women tend to be poorer than men. They are also more deprived in health, education and in freedoms in all its forms. Moreover women have primary responsibility for child rearing, and the resources that they bring to this task determine whether the cycle of this transmission of poverty from generation to generation will be broken. Children need better health and education, and studies from around developing world (World Bank 1999) confirms that mothers tend to spend a significantly higher fraction of income under their control for the benefit of their children than fathers do. Women also transmit values to the next generation. To make the biggest impact on development, the society must empower and invest in its women. The society view men as security in the home. Men should therefore use their ability to provide food and economic security. This will help realize the vision 2030.

The major objective of agricultural and rural development in developing nations is the progressive improvement in rural levels to be achieved primarily through increases in small-farm incomes, output and productivity and genuine food security. It is therefore important to identify the principal sources of agricultural progress and the basic conditions essential to its achievement (Michael et al 2011)

Gender roles should enable adaptation to new opportunities and new constrains. They should act as a route out of poverty and toward genuine rural development by minimizing dependency. The best opportunities for sales to growing urban areas are generally found in higher value-added activities, particularly horticulture and aquaculture. These products along with organic and perhaps Fair Trade versions of some otherwise developing country exports such as coffee and spices also provide opportunities for higher value exports.

The “classical” farm gender roles in the United States were generally based on a division of labour in which men participated in field tasks such as animal care, ploughing harvesting crops, using farm machinery among others, while most women participate primarily in “farmhouse” tasks such as preparing and preserving food and feed stuffs and maintaining the farm compound. The middle 20th century brought a change in which the centralization of agriculture eliminated many of the tasks considered part of the ‘female’ role. This changed the perception of women from being active house keepers to perceive home maker. Some begun working off the farm, or joined their husbands in field work (Wood 1998)

In the agricultural tradition of central Canada there is an emphasis on husband and wife collaboration. Major decisions are normally made together with each spouse having equal decision power. The gender roles on the farm presumed that the farm and all its contents such as land and livestock belonged to the father and the grandfather. In African setup women are entrusted with the responsibility of carrying large water containers home from the stream or well to water the crops while the men usually lift other heavy loads such as sacks from the farm after harvest (Jonathan Periam 1984)

According to Deere (1982) women perform an intensive role in farm management and are also active in producing goods and services not only for their own consumption but also on a smaller scale for sale and exchange in the local market. The rural woman is an active but unrecognized participant of every economic and social activity inside and outside her home. She performs all the duties of a wife, mother and a daughter in-law and simultaneously shares the burden of field work with the husband. Women are therefore more capable and have more capacity and

efficiency to do all the activities social as well as economic.

In developed nations, Gender equality is based on women and men being equal partners in their home, their community, in local economic development, in governance, in access to decent employment opportunities and conditions of work, to resources, to services and is not influenced by the fact that one is male or female. It is better that women and men contribute to the local economy in various capacities and poses distinct knowledge and skills that correspond to this roles. This are the building blocks for realizing the potential of a locality and country hence move towards attaining vision 2030.

Influence of Culture on Gender Roles

Traditionally, only masculine and feminine roles existed. Boys and girls learn the appropriate behavior and attitudes from the family and overall culture they grow up with, and so non-physical gender differences are a product of socialization. Social role theory proposes that the social structure is the underlying force for the gender differences. Social role theory proposes that the sex-differentiated behavior is driven by the division of labor between two sexes within a society. This creates gender roles and in turn lead to gendered social behavior (Wood 1998)

Men's unique physical advantages in terms of body size and upper body strength provide them an edge over women in those social activities that demanded such physical attributes such as hunting and herding. On the other hand, women's biological capacity for reproduction and child-bearing is proposed to explain their limited involvement in other social activities. Such divided activity arrangement for the purpose of achieving activity-efficiency led to the division of labor between sexes. Social role theorists have explicitly stressed that the labor division is not narrowly defined as that between paid employment and domestic activities, rather, is conceptualized to include all activities performed within a society that are necessary for its existence and sustainability. The characteristics of the activities performed by men and women became people's perceptions and beliefs of the dispositional attributes of men or women themselves. Through the process of *correspondent inference* (Gilbert, 1998), division of labor led to gender roles, or gender stereotype. Ultimately, culture expects men and women who occupy certain position to behave according to these attributes.

In Kenya, socially constructed gender roles are considered to be hierarchical and characterized as a *male-advantaged gender hierarchy*. The activities men are involved in are often those that provide them with more access to or control of resources and decision making power, rendering men not only superior dispositional attributes via *correspondence*

bias (World Bank 2008), but also higher status and authority as society progress. The particular pattern of the labor division within a certain society is a dynamic process and determined by its specific economical and cultural characteristics. Women are confined to reproductive activities and thus less likely to be involved in a wide range of agribusiness activities. The beliefs that people hold about the sexes are derived from observations of the role performances of men and women and thus reflect the sexual division of labor and gender hierarchy of the society (Staudt 1982).

The androgyny Kenyans is the ones who can push the country towards attaining vision 2030 because they have the ability to perform all agribusiness roles against cultural demands. Metrosexual are humiliated because culture does not allow them to carry out female roles yet they are men, whereas the intersexes are torn between two decisions. Culture limits them to either perform feminine roles or masculine, but not both.

Men and women, as social beings, strive to belong and seek for approval by complying and conforming to the social and cultural norms within their society. The conformity to social norms not only shapes the pattern, but also maintains the very existence of *sex-typed social behavior* (Gasper 1998).

Homosexual communities appreciate males performing feminine roles and vice versa. Female people communicate their weaknesses in agribusiness and ask for assistance. Males are conservative and may not enquire.

Relevance of Gender on Agribusiness

Traditionally, extension in developing countries aims at training men, even though women do most of the agricultural work. In sub-Saharan Africa, women are responsible for well over two-thirds of staple food production. They are also active in growing and marketing cash crops, in food processing, and in animal husbandry. In recent years women roles have expanded as men have increasingly migrated to urban areas and taken non agricultural jobs. Where both men and women do agricultural work, there are still tending to be a gender-based division of labour. As a result techniques relevant to the work of men are often not relevant to the work of women. Where they are relevant, men have for various reasons tended to pass on to their wives (Saito 1994). Gender analysis is a tool that development agencies use to find out more precisely the roles and tasks of women in agriculture in relation to those of men. Previously, most agricultural development projects and resources were directed to men on the assumption that men were the principal farmers. Women were assumed to be responsible only for food preparation and so they

became the recipients of nutrition and home economics programmes (Saito 1994)

Gender analysis shows that the men and women in food production vary from place to place. Often they are complementary, with men and women sharing or dividing tasks in the production of certain crops. Sometimes men and women have distinct tasks or responsibilities for different crops or livestock. In Kenya, for instance, men on the whole perform about 90 per cent of clearing the land and 75 per cent of turning the soil. Planting and caring of domestic livestock are shared about equally by men and women. Women are responsible for 60 to 80 per cent of hoeing, weeding, harvesting, transporting, storing and marketing of produce. Women also perform 90 per cent of food processing, fuel and water collection. They are virtually 100 per cent responsible for feeding the family (Food and Agricultural Organization 2008)

Both men and women contribute substantially to poverty alleviation, notably in rural areas. They contribute to economic development of the nation, bringing about improved household food security, thus underscoring the fact that the productivity of men and women farmers must be the centerpiece of agricultural strategy. Boosting the income-earning capability of both gender in farming and empowering them can improve food supply and supplement the staple food need of the farm family while also reducing malnutrition hence realization of vision 2030 of food security, good health and industrialization.

Vision 2030 aims at the availability of food through increased food production, industrialization, self-sufficiency and total environmental utilization. It emphasizes on improving yields and high-potential productive areas to achieve and maintain sufficient food production to feed the growing world population. Research, technology and a “new green revolution” are the main ways toward food security. This is in line with development agencies on commercial agriculture and cash crops for exports.

Current State in Kenya

Activities associated with men are normally given greater value or worth than those by women. Gender analysis has sometimes had the unintended effect of marginalizing women in development programmes. Women’s specific roles and tasks are not identified. Projects are not devised to direct resources and assistance to women. Unfortunately, in most cases, these resources are miniscule and women end up being isolated in small income generating projects, tacked onto larger development programmes. There is no doubt that many of these small-scale projects have provided much needed help to women in their tasks of providing food for their families. However,

in comparison to overall development aid and assistance, resources allotted to women have been small (World Food Programme 2009)

Hunger is a problem of unequal access to food, both within and among communities. The availability of an adequate supply of food to feed the world’s population at the international level does not mean food security at the national level if a country cannot grow, purchase or otherwise obtain food to feed its people. Likewise the availability of food at the national level does not guarantee food security for all people in the country.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) pledged to reduce hunger by 2015. More than halfway towards 2015, Kenya is nowhere near to approaching the targets of the World Food Summit and MDGs. On the contrary, hunger is increasing around the country. By mid-2008, the number of malnourished people in the Kenya had risen to 10, which is a quarter of the country’s population.(FAO 2008). Within households, there are disparities in food security: women and girls get less food than males, both in absolute and nutritional values. The World Food Programme (WFP) revealed: “Gender inequality is a major cause and effect of hunger and poverty: It is estimated that 60 per cent of chronically hungry people are women and girls [and] 20 per cent are children under five.”(WFP 2009)

Women shoulder the primary responsibility for food security in Kenya yet development agencies have devoted minimal resources to researching the impact of their agricultural policies and new techniques on the wellbeing of Kenya’s women farmers (WFP 2009). Now is the time to push for a paradigm shift: the urgent need for a gendered approach to agricultural policy in Africa and Kenya as a country. The supporting argument is that women are an integral part of the African farming structure and that the dominant agricultural policies developed for Africa, with the involvement and influence of external experts, have ignored this gender dimension at a very real cost to Kenya’s agribusiness and to gender equity within the continent country. The institutional reality remains that of operational inattention to gender issues in agriculture and related areas such as transport and microfinance. A disturbing feature of this inattention is that it coexists with public statements that actively promote participation and consultation as part of the development agenda and attainment of vision 2030.

Challenges Facing Women in Agribusiness

- Negative family reaction to plans for self-employment creates doubts and disapproval. Family support is of importance to the decision to start an enterprise because it contributes to self confidence. When this occurs, role conflict

is unresolved and disheartening. Attempts to overcome the conflict between traditional female roles and the needs of businesses sometimes lead to deterioration in family relationships. According to Ngau and Keino (2000) male business owners can expect a great deal of domestic and business support from contributing wife.

- Women cannot access loans using family land as security. This is due to African culture that women do not own land.
- Women have limited time to go out to scout for market of agricultural products because of domestic chores.
- Limited funds towards agribusiness activities
- Rural women and men may not use current technology in agriculture because the better part depends on electricity. Preservation of agricultural products needs power.
- People's different opinion on what they consider masculine and feminine and the interference of culture

RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is need for sensitization on the importance agribusiness in rural areas.
- The stereotyping of gender roles in Kenyan communities on agribusiness should be demystified.
- There is need for Kenyan education planners to include agribusiness in the curriculum from a lower level preferably from primary education or if not, secondary education.
- Technology related to agribusiness should be embraced by all members of Kenyan communities.
- There is need for Promotion of sustainable agriculture and community-based resource management and establishment of local, people-based trade systems and infrastructure.
- Both men and women should be empowered through equal representation in decision-making bodies at local, regional, national and global levels and at the same time be access to credit and other financial support
- Appropriate education, health, recreation, child care and other infrastructure support systems should be designed by and for rural communities with consideration for all genders

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