EFFECTS OF GENDER STEREOTYPING ON WOMEN'S SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: A CASE OF URBANIZED TURKANA WOMEN IN ELDORET TOWN-KENYA

[1]Odette Nahayo [2]Billiah Gisore [3]Aloys Ojore

[1]Tangaza University College [2]Kisii University [3]Tangaza University College
Corresponding email: nyamogisore@gmail.com

Abstract

This study investigated the effects of gender stereotyping on urbanized Turkana women's social development in Eldoret, Kenya. It identified the cultural factors that influence their involvement in social development. It also examined the role of local leaders in addressing gender stereotyping, while suggesting strategies that would address it and improve urbanized Turkana women's participation in social development. The study utilized the Convergent Parallel Research Design. Consciousness Raising and Radical Feminist theories guided the study. The sample size was 549 respondents. Questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions were used to collect data. Findings revealed that gender stereotyping has a negative moderate relationship with women's social development with "r" value of -0.337. Results also demonstrate that there is a negative weak relationship between cultural factors and women's social development with "r" = -0.131, and statistically influence it since "p" = 0.015, less than 0.05. Similarly, findings indicate that there is a negative weak relationship between local leaders and women's social development with "r" = -0.201, and that they have a statistical influence on women's social development since "p" = 0.000 which was less than the ideal value. Based on these results, the researcher proposes an action plan as a way forward. One of the proposed activities is the sensitization of Eldoret local leaders and the community on effects of gender stereotyping, creation of support groups for women to helps them to work together and have their voices heard. The researcher believes that the findings in this study will contribute to the fight against gender stereotyping and have more inclusiveness.

Key words: gender stereotyping, women's social development, urbanized Turkana women

Introduction

Gender stereotyping is seen as overgeneralization of characteristics, differences and

attributes of a certain group based on their gender. It creates a widely accepted judgment or

bias about certain characteristics or traits that apply to each gender (Werner, 2016). Gender

bias is one of more varieties of stereotyping and discrimination. It stigmatizes the individual

being discriminated against. Stereotyping can be descriptive which consists of beliefs about

characteristics that each gender possesses (e.g. all women are emotional) or prescriptive

whereby there are beliefs about characteristics that each gender should possess (e.g. all women

should be submissive).

According to Matsumoto (2001), there are four basic common categories of gender

stereotypes. The first is personality traits in which women are supposed to be shy, passive,

submissive, clean and organized, while men are expected to be tough, aggressive, dominant and self-confident. The second is domestic behaviour which states that women are supposed to cook and do house work, that they are better at raising children. For this type, it is said that "Stay-at home mothers" are better than working mothers. This type highlights that men are better at household repairs; they cannot cook, nor care for their children. Domestic behaviour dictates that men should tell women what to do, how and when to do it. The third type is the occupational category, where women are supposed to have clean jobs such as teaching, nursing, secretariat and librarianship. This category confirms that women are not good at technical things and that they are supposed to make less money than men. They should not, for example, be politicians and competing with men. The fourth and last kind is the physical appearance whereby women are perceived to be short and slender, small and delicate, while men are tall and have broad shoulders. This type states that women are weaker, less competitive and adaptable to harsh environment than men.

In almost every society, boys are encouraged to venture outside while young girls are encouraged to stay home and do chores (Oldfield, 2013). While there is nothing wrong with protecting young girls or encouraging boys to be brave, these expectations become restrictive gender constraints that can have negative consequences, particularly on girls. What starts as "protection" becomes an expectation that girls should accede to the demands of others rather than making their own choices or taking risks. In China for instance, women assumed a relatively subordinate position to men. The Global Gender Gap Report (2017) women were refused jobs simply for being women. Such gender discrimination was widespread and typical of stereotypical views on gender roles which often permeated the workplace. In Bolivia, Cook and Cusack (2011) concluded that adolescence expands the world for boys and shrinks it for girls. Children grow up knowing that women are inferior to men. According to Lombard (2013), countries with strong patriarchal cultures subordinate girls and women. Boys expand their social space and are given much more freedom and independence while girls are encouraged to remain in the house in order to make good wives in the future excluding them participating in public life. Nugent (2013) opines that the thing about gender stereotypes is that they create justification for gender discrimination in the owner's mind, taking root so firmly as to make women and girls unlikely to perceive the discrimination in the context.

Nauert (2011) observes that inequalities undermine effectiveness of development policies in fundamental ways. The Kenya constitution 2010 is clear about equality and non-discrimination. Article 27 states that there should be equality and freedom from discrimination and every person is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit

of the law. It further states that women and men have the right to equal treatment, including the right to equal opportunities in political, economic, cultural and social spheres.

Akoth (2004) adds that gender stereotypes have been passed on from one generation to the next and women have since been excluded, ignored and made invisible.

However, according to UNDHR (1989), our society needs to respect human dignity as one of human basic needs and some countries are already making efforts to make this a reality.

According to The Global Gender Gap Report (2017), Rwanda is ahead of many developed countries. It has the highest rates of female labour force participation in the world at 86 % while in the United States that figure stands at 56%. Its wage gap is also narrower than most countries. Women earn 88 cents for every dollar men sign while it is 74 cents in the US.

Although Article 81(b) of the Kenyan Constitution (2010) states that not more than two thirds of the members of elective public bodies shall be of the same gender, the reality is far different. Ndeda (2010) suggests that Kenya needs to put more efforts on women's right of equality and freedom from discrimination in order to apply that rule. The challenge is to ensure that improving the status of women in both social and economic terms is harmonized across country programs. It should be aligned with the development strategies of recipients, and closely monitored. For more effective poverty reduction, differential gender impacts should be considered in the entire package of development activities to enhance women's opportunities.

Nyanchoga and Amutabi (2014) confirm that some professions in Kenya are still classified as masculine or feminine oriented. On the one hand, mechanics, technicians, masons, public transportation drivers, and occupations involving science, technology and political leadership, among others, are considered as masculine. On the other hand, feminine occupations typically include nurses, childcare workers, hair stylists, secretaries, administrative assistants and office receptionists.

The study focused on urbanized Turkana women living in Eldoret. They are called urbanized because the common definition of rural and urban relies on residence outside or inside metropolitan statistical areas. Historically, Turkana men went to Eldoret in 1918, and brought with them their animals and their wives and both are qualified as properties (Lokuruka & Lokuruka, 1918). Men care for the animals while women take care of domestic activities. According to Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2009), the last census that was done in Kenya indicates that the population of Turkana in Eldoret town is 386, with 174 men and 212 women. Among these, only those whose age is 18 years and above were part of the study as respondents because they are old enough to understand the concept of stereotyping better than the young ones. According to Good (1998), Turkanas' incursions into their neighbours' land

were no more than a peaceful penetration of pastoralists looking for food and water for their animals. However, an aggressive spirit was a dominant factor. They are assumed aggressors and this made them to be feared and hated by the surrounding tribes.

Turkana people do not only live in difficult conditions, but also many of their children are not in school. Cook and Cusack (2011) inform us that Turkana people were affected negatively as any other colonized people. According to Mattern (2014), the most significant negative effect on the social structure would be the treatment of the indigenous people. Most of them were treated inequitably. In Turkana County, women were often denied education and were forced to get married at an early age according to Awuondo (1990).

Development in Turkana District has been slow. During the 1970s, major efforts were made to integrate the Turkana with its neighbours, and by the early 1980s the entire district was considered highly insecure. Insecurity combined with two severe droughts in the early 1980s slowed down development efforts and increased the exodus to other towns such as Eldoret town. Despite the growth of settlements, the area remained remote, insecure, and relatively underdeveloped. Oral sources highlight that some of the Turkanas arrived in Eldoret while pursuing disobedient bulls. Like in any other African culture, Turkana women go through a lot of stereotyping both from their own families and their neighbourhood and their social development is limited (Sand, 2001).

Barrow (1996) points out the difference between rural Turkana women and urbanized Turkana women. For him, women living in rural areas have lower levels of educational attainment and higher levels of poverty than urban women. They carried this status with them and did not improve their condition due to gender stereotyping. In terms of decision making at the household level, important decisions such affecting the family can only be made by men. In order to abolish all forms of discrimination against women, priority needs to be given to the elimination of gender stereotypes.

There are negative effects that gender stereotyping causes in people, such as low self-esteem, hatred, conflicts, poor performance in various activities and even health problem. There must be gender balance in leadership in order to support and empower the often-marginalized groups (women, youths, and children). This also includes monitoring and evaluating projects for proper implementation, and raising funds. This is where citizens are most likely to come into contact with services and support mechanisms to improve their lives. There is enormous potential, therefore, for local authorities to influence the wellbeing of its population. In most cases, policies and programs are made, but their implementation and enactment are limited. To

address this, study was anchored on the Consciousness raising theory and the Radical Feminist Theory.

Materials and Methods

The research was based on a mixed methods approach, which is a procedure to inquiry involving both qualitative and quantitative data. Greene, Caracelli and Graham (2008) describe mixed methods as a research plan where the researcher includes at least one quantitative method to gather numbers and one qualitative method to collect words. Data were collected by means of questionnaires, interview guides and focused group discussion group guides. The population of the study consisted of 54 212 participants who included Turkana and non-Turkanas in Eldoret town. Purposive sampling was used to select all the 150 urbanized Turkana men and women adults. Cluster sampling was use to select 399 Non-Turkana people living in Eldoret town. The items were validated after piloting was done using five Turkana and to five non- Turkana women and their reliability index ascertained by the use of the Cronbach alpha. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the quantitative data while qualitative data were coded, categories generated and then thematic analysis done.

Results

The first research question sought to establish the effects of gender stereotyping on urbanized Turkana women's social development in Eldoret town. Table 1 shows the responses given.

Table 1: Effects of gender stereotyping

statement	Frequency	Percent
Urbanized Turkana women have low self – Esteem	343	98.8
Urbanized Turkana women lack freedom of expression	344	99.1
Urbanized Turkana women have poor Health	342	98.5
Urbanized Turkana women live in Isolation	342	98.5

Data on Table 1 shows that the Turkana women lack freedom of expression which could be leading to low self-esteem. This might be causing them to live in isolation as well as struggle with poor health.

Research question two looked at the cultural factors that influence the involvement of the urbanized Turkana women in social development in Eldoret town. Three hundred and thirty-

eight (97.4 %) participants indicated that the patriarchal systems hindered women from participating. One hundred and eighty-eight (54.2 %) said that urbanized Turkana women were stereotyped due to traditional beliefs. Two hundred and six respondents (59.4%) indicated that Turkana women are unwilling to work in public places.

Research question three sought to find out how the urbanized Turkana women can influence their own social development. Respondents. He respondents indicated that Turkana women are willing to learn new skills as said by 336 (96.8 %) respondents. Three hundred and thirty-two (95.6 %) participants said that the urbanized Turkana women can be able to work while 331 (95.3 %) indicated that the urbanized Turkana women were afraid to take risks.

An additional item sought to find out if the Turkana women preferred to be fed. The responses indicated that they could like to be fed as indicated by 347 (100 %) respondents. This they said was because the urbanized Turkana women depended totally on their husband, and therefore, they are not used to work. But on asking if they are ready to accept social change, 125 (36.0 %) of them said yes as they were aware of their responsibility both in family and society.

Research question four sought for the strategies could help address gender stereotyping and improve the lives of the urbanized Turkana women. results showed that the significant percentage of 52.1 % said that urbanized Turkana women are unaware of their rights.

Findings showed that there is no collaboration between urbanized Turkana women and local leaders, and that even the community has no collaboration with those women. There is need for sensitization for both leaders, community and urbanized Turkanas, while emphasizing on the importance of women's inclusiveness and involvement.

Conclusion

Gender stereotyping had been perceived as a temporal problem but responses exposed how harmful stereotyping can be on human growth and social development. The respondents called for the challenge of some cultural factors such as traditional beliefs and patriarchal systems that create gender imbalance. Based on the foregoing, there is need for women's support group creation; second, raising awareness of local leaders and community at large; and third, integration of gender stereotyping in schools' curriculum.

References

Awuondo, O. C. (1990). *Life in the balance: Ecological sociology of Turkana nomads.* Hampshire: African Centre for Technology Studies Press.

Akoth, O. M. (2004). *Gender stereotypes.* Retrieved from http:// www.effects of Gender equality on humanitarian outcomessingle.pgsweb.pdf.

Barrow, G. C. (1996). *The Dry Lands in Africa:Local Participation in Tree Managment.*

Cook, R. J., & Cusack, S. (2011.) *Stereotyping.* Retrieved fromhttp://www.upenn.edu/ Penn press/book/14658.htmlon.

Greene, C. J., Caracelli, J. V., & Graham, F. W. (2008). Towards a conceptual framework for mixed-method. Evaluation Designs in Clark & Creswell (eds). *The mixed methods reader.* Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2009). *Census 2009.* Niorobi.

Kenya National Civic Education Program. National Council of Law Reporting (2010). *The Constitution of Kenya.* Nairobi: Uraia Trust.

Lokuruka. N. M., & Lokuruka P.A. (1918). Ramifications of the 1918 Turkana Patrol: Narratives by Ngturkana. Retrieved from ttp://ethnohistory.dukejournals.org/content/ 53/1/121.abstract.

Lombard, N. (2013). *Violence against women.* Retrieved from http://www.newstatesman.com/.../ Violence-against-women-starts-school.

Mattern, J. (2014). *Goals and Planning.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Matsumoto, D. (2001). *The Handbook of Culture & Psychology.* Oxford: University Press.

Nauert, R. (2011) Long-Term effects of stereotypes. Retrieved from https://psychcentral.com/news/2010/08/.../long-term-effects-of-stereotyping.

Ndeda, M. A. J. (2010). Towards Gendered governance Approach in Africa: Prospects and Challenges.

Nugent, P.M.S. (2013). Negative stereotypes. Retrieved from https://psychologydictionary.org/ Negative-stereotype.

Nyanchoga, S. A., & Amutabi, M. N. (2014). *Contemporary issues in Kenya history and the challenges of Nationahood* (eds). Nairobi: Kolbe Press.

Oldfield, F. E. (2013). *Transgressing Boundaries. Gender, Identity, Culture and the other in Post colocial Women's narratives in East Africa.* Amsterdam: New York.

Sand, E. (2001). *Women ruler. Women rule.* San Jose: New York.

UNDHR, (1989). *The concept of Human Dignity*. Retrieved from
http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1179/1743291X13Y.0000000064? src=
recsys &journalCode=yppc20.

Werner, A. (2016). *Organisational Behaviour,* (4th Ed.). Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.