

WOMEN'S DECISION MAKING AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND FORMAL EMPLOYMENT IN KAMONYI DISTRICT, RWANDA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the association of women's decision making and access to information with formal employment in public sector in Kamonyi District, Southern Province, Rwanda. The study was carried out and 298 women employed in the public sector of Kamonyi District participated. The research used both quantitative and qualitative methods. Semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect the required data. Key interview guide was used to supplement the main tool. The Chi-Square inferential statistics has been applied to determine the extent of relationship between the two factors and formal employment in public sector. Results show that majority of the respondents were primary teachers and health centers nurses. To access information Radio, Newspapers, TV and internet were used. Findings from the Chi-Square inferential statistics revealed that there was significant association between access to information - women formal employment and women decision-making.

Key words: Decision making, Informal and formal employment

INTRODUCTION

This study sought to assess the relationship between women's access to information, decision making and employment in the public sector in Kamonyi District. The World Bank (2007) indicated that in esteems of women in the work place are lower than those of men to decision making and access to information. Its report further, it was revealed that the biggest gap between men and women participation in the labor force is prevailing in the Middle and East of Africa. Nyirinkwaya (2010) points out that studies conducted in Rwanda between 2002-2008 by NISR, MIFOTRA, PSF, MIGEPROF, MINICOM, CSOs revealed that gender imbalance is still prevailing in various areas especially in formal employment, entrepreneurship, loan access, working conditions and women's right to property in their respective families. Fukamusenge (2008) reveals that the employment situation in Rwanda is

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typified by a deep gendered inequality, where women occupy only 34.6% of jobs in the public sector against 65% for men.

FAO (2016) reported that only few female beneficiaries have accessing commercial loans from SACCOs largely due to their limited income from public works or access to other income-generating activities and limited control of physical assets that could serve as collateral. Women's involvement in decision-making and their attitudes towards negative cultural norms such as domestic violence have been highlighted as the main determinants for the use of maternal healthcare services (Sado et al., 2014).

The research findings by Seytoux and Lalonde (2002) reveal that women knowledge to manipulate different communication devices including computers, radios and others and accessibility to those devices is very limited in Rwanda resulting into a continuous decrease in power, knowledge and effectiveness. This knowledge and easy access to relevant and varied information should considerably enhance women participation in the formal workplace especially in a technology led development, Rwanda.

In the past, women's subordinate status was perceived and accepted as the norm. Women were rarely consulted on household and community-related matters and decision-making rested solely in the hands of men. With the establishment of the current government however, a strong policy commitment to gender equality has underpinned sensitization efforts by local authorities on the importance of women's inclusion and economic empowerment. This is widely perceived as contributing to changes in attitudes of husbands and people more broadly towards gender and economic roles. Across study locations, perceptions of and praise for women's ability to save and manage day-to-day household expenditure allocations more than men were common. There was also a general view that females are capable of engaging in economically productive activities just as their male counterparts (FAO, 2016).

Heidi et al (2010) who found out those female occupations include health, education, and civil service. They are also in agreement with the findings of Conway et al. (1999), who revealed that in USA, one third of all employed women were concentrated in some categories namely: teaching, secretarial, retail sales, banking, insurance and such positions as teller or clerk. Msambichaka et al (2006) who reveal that at household level stiff and formal patriarchal structures and attitudes limit women's voices for decision making.

As the recent studies at the national level sought to scrutinize a gendered gap in public sector employment and produced general data on the employment sector, there has been no empirical study conducted to find out how access to information and women's decision making at household level affect their access to employment in the public sector. Understanding of the association of these factors with women's entry into the workplace can give an indication of where to start from to enhance women employment in Rwanda. The majority of public works employees are women and are likely, but not always able, to retain full or partial control over their own incomes through SACCO accounts (e.g. several beneficiaries reported opening their own individual accounts after the first payment cycle). Joint control was also reported between spouses, reflecting variations in persons in the household working and/or decisions made within the household to open the account in joint names (FAO, 2016)

Women for women (2014) indicated that in rural areas, many women have been left behind from Rwanda. In 2011, 48.7 percent of Rwanda's rural population were living below the nation's rural poverty line. Women living in these areas are often the primary providers for their families and have limited access to services such as water and health. Women for

Women International seeks to help these women to participate in the economic progress and development others are experiencing in Rwanda

Despite evidence of increasingly positive perceptions of women's capabilities and economic roles, deep-rooted sociocultural norms that assign women a subordinate position in the household remain key constraints to women's economic empowerment and gender equality. Even if legally both spouses enjoy equal ownership rights over the family land and house, women reported that claims over those assets, including using them as collateral to access loans, remains on unequal footing to those of men. Intra-household gender hierarchies often result in decisions concerning assets being taken by the husband (FAO, 2016).

Musonera and Heshmati (2016) in recent years reported that a range of organizations have increasingly shown commitment to women's empowerment; they have also realized that empowering women is a win-win situation that benefits both women and society. In recent years, a range of organizations have increasingly shown commitment to women's empowerment; they have also realized that empowering women is a win-win situation that benefits both women and society. A positive association has been found between household decision-making and other factors related to women's economic empowerment (Sado et al., 2014). Household wealth is a strong determinant of resource control but it has a significant negative association with women's overall household decision-making and the association between covariates and different empowerment indicators was not consistent (Mahmud et al., 2012). Factors associated with sources of empowerment (employment, education and wealth status) had higher explanatory powers than factors related to the setting of empowerment.

There are perceptions that women's participation in the public sphere is lagging behind and continues to remain on unequal terms with men. In the qualitative study, people reported that women often lack confidence, and feel "embarrassed and uncomfortable" and too "shy" to intervene during public meetings – seldom voicing their views to convey their interests to the audience.

METHODOLOGY

This study applied a co relational research design to examine the association of women's decision making and access to information with access to formal sector employment. Descriptive analysis was used to analyze responses from participants using percentages and frequencies and Chi-square statistics was used to measure the relationship between independent and dependent variables.

The study involved 300 respondents; representing a of women employed in the public sector in Kamonyi district. As recommends Kothari (2004), semi-structured questionnaire was used as a main research instrument, supplemented by Key Informant Interview.

RESULTS ANALYSIS

Accessibility to Media

Women's accessibility to media included the frequencies on how women accessed information.

Table 1: Accessibility to Media

Access (Frequency per each Media)	Everyday%	Twice a week	Once a Week	Nil
Radio	2	1.7	55.9	40.4
Newspaper		.7	7.9	91.4
TV	.7	1	17.6	80.7
Internet		.3	2.3	97.4

Majority of respondents reported to have accessed information through Radio, TV (17.6%), Newspapers (7.9%), and 2.3% of them used Internet once a week. Whereas majority reported they have never accessed information through internet. Internet was used by few respondents representing only 0.3%. As Tuyizere (2007) points out through access to information, women learn that they cannot only be mothers and homemakers but can also work outside their homes for family, community and national development. The research findings by Seytoux and Lalonde (2002) reveal that women knowledge to manipulate different communication devices including computers, radios and others and accessibility to those devices is very limited in Rwanda resulting into a continuous decrease in power, knowledge and effectiveness. This knowledge and easy access to relevant and varied information should considerably enhance women participation in the formal workplace especially in a technology led development, Rwanda.

Decision Making

As revealed in table 2 majority of the respondents decided on their own on their entry in the work place, whereas others needed to be assisted by relatives, friends, and husband or even needed somebody else to take the decision for them.

Table 2: Decision Making

Decision Making	Frequency	%
Decide on one's own	234	79.3
Friends and Relatives Influence	26	8.8
Spouse Assist/help	35	11.9

As responses gathered from the interview guide showed that women in general do not need to lean on anybody to make decisions regarding their entry in the workplace. This may be a result of advanced literacy among the respondents as opposed to the general literacy situation in Rwanda at large. It is obvious to conclude that decision making at the household level increases relatively with women's educational attainment.

The findings are supported by the report of FAO (2016) indicating that in the past, women's subordinate status was perceived and accepted as the norm. Women were rarely consulted on household and community-related matters and decision-making rested solely in the hands of men. With the establishment of the current government however, a strong

policy commitment to gender equality has underpinned sensitization efforts by local authorities on the importance of women's inclusion and economic empowerment. This is widely perceived as contributing to changes in attitudes of husbands and people more broadly towards gender and economic roles. Across study locations, perceptions of and praise for women's ability to save and manage day-to-day household expenditure allocations more than men were common. There was also a general view that females are capable of engaging in economically productive activities just as their male counterparts. Also, Heidi et al (2010) found out that female occupations include health, education, and civil service. They are also in agreement with the findings of Conway et al. (1999), who revealed that in USA, one third of all employed women were concentrated in some categories namely: teaching, secretarial, retail sales, banking, insurance and such positions as teller or clerk. Msambichaka et al (2006) who reveal that at household level stiff and formal patriarchal structures and attitudes limit women's voices for decision making.

Employment in Kamonyi District

Employment in Kamonyi District includes figures of women employed in all sectors, namely public administration, education and health sector and their job ranking.

Table 3 reveals that majority of the respondents are employed in Education, especially primary schools. This figure is comparatively high than those employed in health, administration and other support jobs. As the study reveals, majority of respondents occupy junior positions. They are not in managerial positions that allow them to be influential in the management of the institutions they work for.

Table 3 : Public Sector Employment in the District

Sector	Frequency	%
Public Administration	17	5.7
Health	57	19.1
Education	224	75.2
Employment Rank		
Super-senior	1	.3
Senior	15	5.4
Junior	280	94.3

These findings support Heidi et al (2010) who found out those female occupations include health, education, and civil service. They are also in agreement with the findings of Conway et al. (1999), who revealed that in USA, one third of all employed women were concentrated in some categories namely: teaching, secretarial, retail sales, banking, insurance and such positions as teller or clerk.

Relationship between Accessibility to Media and Access to Public Sector Employment

As shown in Table 4, p-values for Radio, Newspapers and TV accessibility do not exceed the level of significance in respect to women access to formal employment in the

public sector. This shows that there is significant relationship between respondents' accessibility to media and access to employment. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Hence, a conclusion was drawn that accessibility to media (Radio, Newspapers and TV) is significantly related to access to employment in the study area.

Table 4: Relationship between Accessibility to Media and Formal Employment in Public Sector

Test Statistics (Pearson Chi-Square)			
	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Radio*Employ	38.621(a)	12	.000*
Newsp*Employ	64.608(a)	8	.000*
TV*Employ	24.780(a)	12	.016*
Internet*Employ	8.103(a)	4	.088

*Relationship is significant at 0.05 significance level (α)

The study findings are in agreement with the findings of Tuyizere (2007) who revealed that exposure to employment information through electronic and print media may strongly influence women employment, since women learn that they cannot only be mothers and homemakers but can also rise and work outside their homes and families.

Relationship between Decision Making and Access to Formal Employment

As shown in Table 5, p-values for decision making do not exceed the level of significance in respect to the women access to employment in the public sector ($0.000 < 0.05$) which shows that there is a significant relationship between respondents' decision making and access to employment at Junior level. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Hence, a conclusion was made that women's decision-making influences access to employment at junior level in the study area. The study revealed that there is no relationship between decision making and employment at senior level.

Table 5. Relationship Between Decision Making and Access to Public Sector Employment

	Test Statistics (Pearson Chi-Square)		
	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Dec Making*Formal Employ Jun	27.973(a)	8	.000*
Dec Making* Formal Employ Sen	6.889(a)	6	.331

**Relationship is significant at 0.05 significance level (α)*

The study findings are in disagreement with the findings of Msambichaka et al (2006) who reveal that at household level stiff and formal patriarchal structures and attitudes limit women's voices for decision making.

CONCLUSION

The study ascertained that women's accessibility to media and decision making are strongly related to employment in the study area. This reveals that women in the study area enjoy the right of accessing employment related information and freedom of decision making at the household level in respect to entering the public-sector workplace. Inherent in this study is women's empowerment and right to access formal education at all levels and to pursue various careers in order to be in a position to make a free choice for employment and attain a high level of social status and economic independence. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- Advocate for an attractive work environment by providing child care arrangement at workplace and strengthening the provision of Family Planning services so as to encourage women that can choose to stay at home taking care of children.
- Promote girls' access to education at all levels and eradicate gender division of labor through the creation and promotion of balanced career choice amongst young girls
- Initiate and strengthen gender clubs in primary, secondary schools and higher learning institutions and ensure that members are knowledgeable on gender issues and mainly on women's role in socio-economic transformation.
- To combine efforts to disseminate information to all citizens and mainly focus on women in rural areas and at decentralized administration entities.

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