
Effect of Social Action on Women Empowerment in Mandera County

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Abstract:

Purpose. The current study general objective was to determine the effect of social action on women empowerment in Mandera County. The study was informed by Feminist theory, Empowerment theory, classical modernization theory and social learning theory.

Material/methods: The study used a descriptive research design to help in indicating trends in attitudes and behaviors and enable generalization of the findings of the research study to be done. This study targeted 82 women groups with social enterprises in Mandera County. Simple random sampling was used to obtain 45 women groups, while purposive sampling was used to select three members from each women group giving a total sample size of 132 respondents. Structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data. The study adopted both quantitative and qualitative approaches, employing both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics.

Findings: Study findings revealed that social action has a positive influence on women empowerment in Mandera County. Specifically, social enterprises have afforded women access to opportunities that have contributed to their empowerment.

Conclusion: In a rather patriarchal society, women now are actively involved in development issues. Their lives have, therefore transformed since the social enterprises see to it that women participate in development projects and are also assisted in running their businesses.

Recommendations: The study recommended for social enterprises to facilitate women's access to income-generating activities and ensuring they actively participate in development issues in the County.

Keywords: Social Action, Women, Empowerment, Social enterprise

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1. Introduction

Women social economic empowerment contributes extensively to the economies of their communities globally (Mungumi 2011; World Bank 2012). De Brauwet *et al.* (2014) further establishes that enhancing social economic empowerment cannot simply be improved by adjustments to social customs and legal directives, but additionally through economic determinants and aspects. Santos, (2012) asserts that this suggests that ordinarily social entrepreneurs often develop methods and instruments that lessen stakeholder's dependence on the institution in addition to enhancing the stakeholder's capacity to raise the solution as well as their individual wellbeing.

Santos (2016), stated that social action through social enterprise plays an advancing part in championing women's empowerment mainly; as a sponsorship source for women's rights, as a means of socially and economically capacitating women and a way of implementing training and creating employment. Social action emerges from social enterprises as enterprises that apply business concepts in their effort to attain social goals (Zahra, Gedajlovic, Nussbaum, and Shulman, 2009). Social actions are seen as options to tackle social and environmental problems. Social action is described as a novel solution to a social problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just existing solutions and for which the value created accrues primarily to society at large rather than private individuals (Phills, Deiglmeier, and Miller, 2008).

Social action has further provided economic prosperity, prompting female wellbeing and local development. The major methods for this attainment are job stability (zero layoff policy), low interest productive micro credits (2% monthly rate), social benefits (interest-free loans, infrastructure in the community, free timber), and encouraging entrepreneurial activity (preference for local suppliers, access to credit, training on managerial skills) (Giovannini, 2012). The creation of the social enterprise has allowed the community to flourish and enhance its general wellbeing. Women have largely benefitted as the organization has provided them the chance to work, empowering them to establish micro-enterprises and adjusting the existing culture towards a more equalitarian society.

Women's willingness to participate in political and managerial decision-making has been improved by raising control of their income source and this has inspired more women in the community to work (Bugg-Levine, *et al.*, 2012). Social action, in this study, is understood as a process that generates a tangible or intangible effect that eventually generates wellbeing in the community. This implies that women empowerment and social action strengthen each other in a virtuous circle. Social actions empower women to improve on their productivity and growth in social enterprises. However, there are also questions over if social action in social enterprise models can efficiently reach the poorest, if they are sustainable, and whether they are a suitable approach to fill the gap where governments are failing. Haugh and Talwar (2016) question the extent to which women can reap the benefits of social enterprise programmes and their outcomes due to existing cultural and gender norms.

1.2. Problem of the Study

Despite the introduction of social action in social enterprise was introduced among women in Mandera County in order to boost their empowerment. However, their impact on women empowerment is unknown since not much has been done in this area in terms of research.

Studies on Social enterprise in Kenya are not only scanty or have either focused on highlighting the insufficiency of governmental programs but not their impact on empowerment of women generally (Chege, 2009; KSIX, 2011). Thus, there exists a knowledge gap on other role played by social action on women empowerment and hence need for this study. This research contributes to the long-term success and continuity of social action and influence the way they function in order to improve performance while meeting the social goals intended for women in Mandera County. To bridge the knowledge gap on practical and scalable means by which the social action can benefit the society, this research sought to assess the relationship between social action and women empowerment in Mandera County.

2. Literature and Theoretical Review

2.1. Classical development theory

The study was informed by classical development theory (Rostow, 1960; Deutsch, 1964). Accordingly, different studies show a positive relationship between economic development and equitable distribution of educational, occupational and agricultural resources (Bell, 1999; Inkeles and Smith, 1974). Economic development empowers women by increasing social services to society and according women more time for child rearing and domestic work (Kenworthy and Malami, 1999; Reynolds, 1999).

Accordingly, classical modernization model looks at human choice as a direct outcome of economic development (Bell 1999). In relation to gender equality, economic development is central to increasing the pool of women eligible for positions of social power in the society. These scholars note that increased economic development is associated with a more broad based distribution of occupational resources. Greater access to occupational resources increases women's chances of professional development, creating a larger pool of women eligible for power positions such as political offices. More studies establish that higher levels of economic development bring more social services to societies.

According to Rahman and Sultana (2012), governmental organizations should come up with projects that give women the power to make decisions that influence positive change on their lives. Women who are allowed to participate in government managed projects have access to resources which they can use to alleviate poverty in their families (Khan and Bibi, 2011). Scholars worldwide argue that the modern state is characterized by the secularization of the public and this trend has enabled women to free themselves from the oppressive nature of the church and the family, to the extent that greater emphasis is now placed on rationality and individualism (Inglehart and Norris, 2003; Inglehart and Wezel, 2005). Thus, this theory is relevant to the study in discussing social action by social enterprises participating in governments' project in empowering women in Mandera County. This theory is directly linked at making women to access a myriad of opportunities, building alliances for themselves and their families and capacity building initiatives for themselves.

2.2. Social Action

There is a growing body of literature which knows the social action and economic significance of engaging women in the development process. In this case, the six dimensions recommended by Tardif and Harrison (2005) contribute to the understanding of the nature of social actions within Ixtlán Group. In the change dimension, the context of crisis and marginalization in Ixtlán encouraged a reconstruction of the mechanisms to create and distribute wealth (construction of a social enterprise). The inventive character of the social action was majorly through creating new policies and programs within the organization. The innovation was mainly social local, and entailed cooperation from different actors, mainly workers and managers, but frequently also involved people from the community. Lastly, the process was developed through active participation, empowerment, and commitment from all the actors towards the crucial goal: improving community wellbeing.

Generally, social action requires several actors working jointly or separately – to actually get actual actions and impact (Westley, 2008). Taking into account that social action is a concept related to the resolution of social problems, certain issues, such as opportunity, market and political demands, besides the cultural context, must be put into consideration. Some obstacles are found considering the scaling-up of social action, such as lack of a clear and shared view of innovation amongst stakeholders, inadequate funding models, staff instability and discontinuity regarding its work, lack of leadership and commitment, professional resistance and risk-adverse governments and organizations (Brown, 2003; Kohli and Mulgan, 2010; Baginsky et al., 2011 apud Brown, 2015). It is understood therefore that communication with stakeholders, funding, staff, leadership and the environment are important to cause and develop social action.

Social businesses have got more attention from both academic and executive areas. It is a new business form that can be placed somewhere between a profit-maximizing organization and a non-profit one, but differs from profit-maximizing enterprises in its objectives (Yunus and Weber 2007; Yunus, Moingeon & Lehmann-Ortega 2010). Contrasting a profit organization, a social business is related to the conformity that a social enterprise should join profitability and socio-environmental objectives (Doherty et al., 2014). Hence, the core business is related to schemes, such as the sale of goods or services; concurrently; it seeks for social impact through its activities.

Choi and Majumdar (2014) noted a connection among these concepts: social action, creation of social value, social entrepreneur, social enterprise organization and market orientation. They are some of the basic characteristics of Social enterprise. Therefore, there is an inherent relation among social entrepreneur, social business and social action. Tardif and Harrison (2005) examined 49 studies performed by members of Centre de Recherches sur les Innovations Sociales (Crises) and found six main dimensions of social action: transformation (context in which the social action is developed), innovative character (social action that leads to the formation, implementation, and dissemination), innovation (type of innovation, its scale and its purposes), actors (actors involved in generation and implementation), and process (modes of coordination, the means involved and the restrictions to its implementation).

3. Material and methods

The study used a descriptive research design to help in indicating trends in attitudes and behaviors and enable generalization of the findings of the research study to be done. This study targets 82 women groups with social enterprises located in Mandera County (Mandera County, ministry of trade, 2010). Simple random sampling was used to obtain a sample population from a target population of 45 Social enterprises located in Mandera County where 3 members of each group were purposively sampled giving a total sample size of 135 respondents. The study used likert scale questionnaires were used to collect data which had Cronbach's coefficient, having a value of more than 0.6 and was considered adequate for such explanatory work (Hair *et al.*, 2010). Results in this study showed reliability for women empowerment at $\alpha=0.717$ and social action at $\alpha=0.655$.

3.1. Data Analysis and model specification

The study adopted both quantitative, implying that both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were employed with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Scientist (SPSS version 24). This regression model was used to test the relationship between social action and women empowerment at 95% confidence level. The regression equation was expressed as:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + e$$

Where,

Y = represents Women Empowerment

β_0 = represents constant (coefficient of intercept)

X_1 = represents social action

4. Findings and Discussions

The study distributed 132 questionnaires to women groups with social enterprises in Mandera County. Out of which 110 questionnaires from 132 were returned representing approximately 83.3% response rate. This response rate falls within the confines of a large sample ($n \geq 30$). Additionally, the response rate was deemed satisfactory as suggested by Fowler (1993) who recommends 75% as a rule of the thumb for minimum responses.

4.1. Descriptive statistics

This section of the study sought to investigate effect of social action on women empowerment in Mandera County. The findings are as presented in table 4.4. As evidenced in the table, the social enterprise has changed women welfare by providing them with energy saving jikos (mean = 4.36, SD = 0.93). Besides, it involves women in development issues in Mandera County (mean = 4.29, SD = 0.76). As well, the social enterprises have created endless opportunities for women in Mandera County (mean = 4.13, SD = 0.85). Also, the social enterprise has projects which have transformed women in the community through drilling of boreholes (mean = 4.08, SD = 0.80). Moreover, the social enterprise prioritizes on improving women lives in order to empower them (mean = 4.03, SD = 1.06). Besides, women are assisted

in learning their business (mean = 3.82, SD = 0.95). Finally, the social enterprises enhance women participation in development projects in Mandera County (mean = 3.73, SD = 1.01). In a nutshell, the findings on social action summed up to a mean of 4.06 and standard deviation of 0.80. It implies that the social enterprises have created endless opportunities for women, transformed women in the community through drilling of boreholes, changed women welfare by providing them with energy saving jikos, assisted women in learning their business, enhanced women participation in development projects and prioritized on improving women lives.

Table 1: Social Action

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social enterprises have created access endless opportunities for themselves in Mandera County	4.13	0.85
social enterprise has project which have transformed women in our community through drilling of boreholes	4.08	0.80
social enterprise have changed women welfare by providing them with energy saving jikos	4.36	0.93
social enterprise assist women in learning their business	3.82	0.95
social enterprise involve women development issues of mandera county	4.29	0.76
social enterprise enhance women participation development project of Mandera County	3.73	1.01
social enterprise prioritize on improving women lives in order to empower themselves	4.03	1.06
social action	4.06	0.80

Source: Research Data (2021)

This section of the analysis highlights the results on the empowerment of women in Mandera County. Basing on the findings in Table 4.8, most women are able to own property like land and houses in Mandera county as a result of empowerment (mean = 4.12, SD = 0.87). Also, women in the social enterprise can now gain both financial and non-financial assets for their wellbeing (mean = 4.12, SD = 0.87). Besides, women in Mandera County are now cognizant of their own lives in the County (mean = 3.80, SD = 0.87). As well, there has been improvement on the living standards of women in Mandera County (mean = 3.80, SD = 0.87). Besides, women in the social enterprise are now able to make decisions at the household level in Mandera County (mean = 3.57, SD = 1.18). Other than that, they are able to provide basic needs for themselves due to the empowerment they get (mean = 3.57, SD = 1.18). The findings on the empowerment of women in Mandera County summed up to a mean of 3.83 and standard deviation of 0.82.

Table 2: Empowerment of Women in Mandera County

	Mean	Std. Deviation
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women in the social enterprise are now able to make decisions at the household level in Mandera County	3.57	1.18
There has been improvement on the living standards of women in Mandera County	3.80	0.87
Most women are able to own property like land and houses in Mandera county as a result of empowerment	4.12	0.87
Women are able to provide basic needs for themselves due to the empowerment they get	3.57	1.18
women in Mandera County are now cognizant of their own lives in the County	3.80	0.87
women in the social enterprise can now gain both financial and non-financial assets for their well being	4.12	0.87
Empowerment of Women in Mandera County	3.83	0.82

Source: Research Data (2021)

4.2. Inferential Analysis

The study used Pearson correlation and regression analysis. The findings revealed that social action was positively and significantly correlated with women empowerment in Mandera County ($r = 0.765$ $p < 0.01$). Table 3 illustrates the model summary of multiple regression model; the results showed that social action explained 70.4 per cent variation of women empowerment. This showed that considering the four study independent variables, there is a probability of predicting women empowerment by 70.4% (R squared = 0.704). Study findings in table 4.11 indicated that the above-discussed coefficient of determination was significant as evidence of F ratio of 55.22 with a p-value of 0.000 < 0.05 (level of significance). Thus, the model was fit to predict women empowerment using social action.

The first objective of the study sought to establish the effect of social action on women empowerment in Mandera County. Findings showed that social action had coefficients of the estimate which was significant basing on $\beta_1 = 0.294$ (p -value = 0.005 which is less than $\alpha = 0.05$). The implication is that social action had a significant effect on women empowerment. This suggested that there was up to 0.294 unit increase in women empowerment for each unit increase in social action. The effect of social action was more than the effect attributed to the error; this was indicated by the t-test value = 2.903. Consistent with the results, Bugg-Levine, *et al.*, (2012) noted that by raising control of their income, women in the community have been inspired to work and are more willing to participate in political and managerial decisionmaking.

Table 3: Inferential Statistics

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order
(Constant)	0.946	0.232		4.072	0.000	
Social action	0.789	0.068	0.765	11.650	0.000	0.765
Model Summary						
R Square		0.59				

Adjusted R Square	0.58
F	135.73
Sig.	0.00

a Dependent Variable: Empowerment

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study is indicative of a positive relationship between social action and women empowerment in Mandera County. The implication is that social enterprises have afforded women access to opportunities that have contributed to their empowerment. Other than, in a rather patriarchal society, women now are actively involved in development issues. Their lives have, therefore transformed since the social enterprises see to it that women participate in development projects and are also assisted in running their businesses. Consequently, social action has contributed to women empowerment in Mandera County.

The study is indicative of a positive link between social action and women empowerment in Mandera County. It is, therefore, crucial for social enterprises to be at the forefront of enhancing women's access to opportunities within the County. The focus should be on facilitating women's access to income-generating activities and ensuring they actively participate in development issues in the County. Besides, social enterprises need to be at the forefront of assisting women in running their businesses. In so doing, there will be the empowerment of women through social action.

5.1. Recommendations for Further Research

The study sought to analyze the effect of social enterprise on women empowerment in Mandera County. There are gaps in the study that offer great prospects for further studies. First, the study targeted social enterprises within Mandera County, Kenya. Therefore, future scholars need to enquire from social enterprises within an informal settlement with a focus on women. Secondly, the study has only relied on questionnaires to gather information on women empowerment, a more specific instrument such as an interview schedule might be desirable. Finally, future scholars can conduct a longitudinal study to give a better overview of how social enterprises have contributed to women empowerment. Nonetheless, the research has contributed to the knowledge that is needed for this kind of research.

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