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(IJHSS) **Influence of Women's Collective Action in the Informal
Hospitality Services on Socioeconomic Wellbeing: A Qualitative
Study from Kenya**



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Influence of Women’s Collective Action in the Informal Hospitality Services on Socioeconomic Wellbeing: A Qualitative Study from Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study's primary goal was to investigate the extent to which collective behaviour of women providing hospitality services affects their socioeconomic well-being in selected counties in Kenya. Specifically, the study establishes the role of collective action among women in informal hospitality services; and analyses the socioeconomic wellbeing of women in informal hospitality services

Methodology: Basing on the social capital theory, the study adopted a qualitative research approach in which data was collected and analysed qualitatively. Focus group discussions (FGDs) and interviews were used to collect data from women entrepreneurs providing informal hospitality services in four selected counties namely Muranga, Kisumu, Kakamega and Nakuru. Purposive sampling was used to select 8 discussants for interviews and 8 participants for FGD. Data from the interviews and FGDs were analysed using framework analysis.

Findings: The study results showed that, women were able to improve their socioeconomic wellbeing in various aspects. Specifically, collective action of women enabled them improve their decision-making ability; marketing of their business and getting referrals among others. Even though government policy on small and medium enterprises (SMEs) enabled them to obtain credit, cases of many and high taxes in both the national and county governments remained unresolved which affected their hospitality businesses negatively.

Unique Contribution to Policy, Theory and Practice: The study provides scholarly information for women led informal hospitality services and women led collective actions in the context of social capital theory. It offers a framework for the Kenyan government's SMEs program, especially for women's organisations, to plan and develop strategies for providing structured cost-effective hospitality services.

Keywords: *Socio-Economic Wellbeing of Women, Informal Hospitality Services, Collective Action of Women*

JEL Codes: *I31, E26, D71*

INTRODUCTION

Globally, women are essential to all forms of development at both the household and community levels. The same can be said for the Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in Kenya where support for women initiatives has been reported to enhance their wellbeing. In an effort to improve their socioeconomic well-being, women have banded together in groups to offer informal hospitality services, such as outside food, housekeeping, and event planning, whose demand has been on the rise. This banding together has been labelled as collective action.

1.1 Collective Action

Collective action can be understood as targeted, oriented and joint efforts of individuals for the purpose of improving their current status (Kaya, 2024). It is a coordinated activities by individuals to meet their desired objectives (Kaya, 2024; Pineda, 2021). Such groups are grassroots associations, formed by the community, managed by the community, and with a specific objective (Reimer *et al.*, 2017; Hässler *et al.*, 2020). These groups may succeed in business within the vulnerable and marginalized communities, where members feel they are the only associations they can trust and rely upon. The collective action groups are as a result of community driven development, a concept that began and has continued to be supported by the World Bank (Mansuri & Rao, 2013). The groups are part of a larger paradigm reacting to the criticisms of top-down development policies (World Economic Forum, 2025; Matthews *et al.*, 2023). According to extant research (e.g., Matthews *et al.* 2023; Curnow & Jurow, 2021; Kann *et al.* 2023), there is ample evidence to support the idea, and the group is considered more successful among women who belong to vulnerable populations. As a result, a substantial number of women have joined groups in order to reap the benefits that come with being a part of a group.

Collective action groups are informed by a set of proposals. First is that they are centralized and state-controlled development policies which are marred with increasing inefficiencies (Pineda, 2021; World Economic Forum, 2025). The second which is solely related to the first is the promotion of community decision making and democracy in any given state (World Economic Forum, 2025). Lastly, the results of the first two should be mainstreamed because they are likely to boost community members' collective action (Pineda, 2021).

The likelihood for collective action organisations to effectively address the growing development and socioeconomic issues in communities was heavily criticised in early sociological research (Reimer *et al.*, 2017; Hässler *et al.*, 2020). Critiques theorized that any group of individuals formed to pursue a common objective is likely to fail, because members of the group always seek to maximize their personal welfare, and only work when they are forced to do so (Reimer *et al.*, 2017). According to Kann *et al.* (2023) and Kaya (2024), each group member would instead prefer that someone else bear all the costs and do all the work, hence collective action groups are destined to fail. Conversely, women have developed structures and demonstrate strong leadership that

assure success of their initiatives. Many women have come out in large numbers to join groups in order to achieve the benefits for being in a group, including financial and social gains. Kenya's government equally favours group entrepreneurship over individual entrepreneurship.

Women typically behave in an organised way, which requires formalising their activities through representatives in positions of leadership within their particular groups. In such position's women are known to be responsible, which builds confidence in the team. This is a strength that can sustain institutions (Curnow & Jurow, 2021) such as hospitality services if well formulated and managed. According to such scholars, individuals advocate for women's empowerment as a means of maintaining socioeconomic well-being in communities where women have not been given opportunities.

According to Ngelechei (2014), women's socioeconomic well-being is a topic that has drawn a lot of researchers' attention. The author found that the benefits from the Women Enterprise Fund (WEF) was influenced by factors such as: low WEF credit access; WEF saving services; improved socio-economic status of rural women by generating savings revenue; improving employee quality of life; expanding business and being able to continue business operations. Other similar studies (e.g., Engel, 2017; Pineda, 2021; Hässler *et al.*, 2020; Matthews *et al.*, 2023; Kann *et al.*, 2023; Kaya, 2024) also found that entrepreneurship contributed to groups well-being. Limited research of this nature exists in the Kenyan context. The current study, therefore, focused on how collective action of women in the informal hospitality services influences women's socio-economic wellbeing in selected counties in Kenya.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Women in Kenya, particularly in the informal sector are struggling with socio-economic issues. Recent trends in the hospitality sector indicate that the number of women entrepreneurs in the informal hospitality industry is increasing. According to the Kenyan Social Service records about 1,618 women entrepreneurs from different groups in the respective sub-counties of selected counties are engaged in some sort of informal hospitality services. This has been made possible due to the enabling environment created by the government in providing women with resources and opportunities through the various channels including the Uwezo Fund and Women Enterprise Fund. Few researches have been done to show how this support from the government have made women to achieve some level of socioeconomic wellbeing in other contexts. However, the link between such women initiatives and their social economic wellbeing has not been established in the Kenyan context. This has necessitated the current study examine the extent to which collective action of women in the informal hospitality services influences impacts Women's socio-economic wellbeing in selected counties in Kenya

1.3 Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study was to qualitatively investigate the influence of women's collective action in the informal hospitality services on socioeconomic wellbeing. Specifically, the study set out to

1. Establish the role of collective action among women in informal hospitality services
2. Analyse the socioeconomic wellbeing of women in informal hospitality services

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Theoretical Review

The current study adopted social capital theory, which suggests that social networks, relationships, and the trust and reciprocity within them hold tangible value. It is about "who you know" and how you interact with them is key to facilitate cooperation, improve well-being, and generate collective action (Tsounis & Xanthopoulou, 2026). The theory is defined by three major sociological frameworks. First, Pierre Bourdieu who focused on the individual. He argues that social capital is the actual or potential resources an individual achieves by forming part of the network of existing relationships. Second is James Coleman who concentrated on functionality. He argued social capital is a community good that happens within social structures, creating a conducive environment for group members to achieve their desired goals. Lastly is Robert Putnam who focused on communities. He argued that the idea that broad community commitment, shared conviction, and rules of mutual benefit build a strong, highly functional society.

The social capital theory entails two core tenets namely social networks, and trust and reciprocity. Social networks relate to real network of friends one possesses who offers access to information, inspiration, and openings. Trust and reciprocity are the unwritten anticipations rule that if someone helps today, they expect you to help them later, this is done on trust and which avoids the need for official agreements and policing.

As women formed groups to start the informal hospitality services, social capital theory defines how they build trust and create a safety net among themselves leading to internal strength. This is depicted in how they are able to share responsibilities as well as financial gains from their group initiatives. Within the groupings, they become friends who are willing and able to help each other. Their social capital also helped them to network and do marketing for their services. Social network also helped to connects the groups to other outside markets, new customers and other better supply chains. Last but not least linking capital connects the women to formal institutions, finances, and legal protections, which assist them to perform their businesses more effectively because of the support they get from these institutions.

2.2 Empirical Review

Through the provision of numerous and required help to women, in particular to the vulnerable, women have shown that they can perform well in any kind of enterprise in which they undertake. In a study conducted in Rwanda on the AGASEKE initiative, it was reported that women could be self-employed. As a result, they have continued to increase their income and boost their socio-economic well-being. According to Liliane and Mbabazi (2015), women's decision-making skills have been crucial, and their basic requirements have grown at household and community levels.

According to Avornyo's (2013) research, women in Ghana meaningfully contribute to the socioeconomic progress and well-being of their community in a variety of socioeconomic domains. The author specifically focused on the role of women in socioeconomic development and wellbeing of their families and the challenges they face in the informal sector. As a sign of their socioeconomic well-being, the survey revealed that some women had constructed their own homes and provided financial assistance to others. This study was, however, conducted in Ghana, a contextual gap that the current research would resolve by examining the contribution of women entrepreneurs to the socio-economic well-being Kenyan context. Additionally, Avornyo (2013) did not examine the contribution of women entrepreneurs in the hospitality industry. On the other hand, current study focused on the extent to which collective action of women in the informal hospitality services influences Women's socio-economic wellbeing in selected counties in Kenya, which is very scanty in extant literature.

In Tanzania, Urio (2016) examined the contribution of entrepreneurship on women's wellbeing. The objectives of the research were to evaluate the entrepreneurial initiatives of women, explore the obstacles that women entrepreneurs face, determine the degree of women entrepreneurs' well-being based on women's characteristics and determine the effect of entrepreneurship on women's well-being. The author found out that through entrepreneurship women can improve their personal well-being in the field of investigation, which can also apply to other. This research demonstrated that through entrepreneurship women can improve their socio-economic well-being given opportunity. In a related study, Liliane and Mbabazi (2015) examined political participation of women and what it means for gender equality. The study established that women were able to be self-employed thus improving their socio-economic well-being. In addition, they have the potential to sustain their businesses and therefore continue to increase their income and boost their socio-economic well-being. While their study did not focus on hospitality services, similar findings can be achieved in a number of socio-economic fields including hospitality services which is under represented in the existing body of knowledge. By the foregoing, the current study focused on exploring the influence of collective action of women on the relationship between hospitality services and the women entrepreneurs' socio-economic well-being in Kenya.

Gaetano (2015) in another study identified that rural women are often restricted in terms of the independence that culture offers them. This lack of independence restricts the opportunity and the willingness to pursue creativity of some sort. Secondly, women in rural areas are not only less educated but they also lack the access to training required to make them competitive in business. Finally, women often lack the means to secure funding and resources for enterprises, including jobs and access to collateral. Women in rural areas are more likely to participate in a business venture and do well if sponsored through empowerment. The Gaetano (2015) study on women entrepreneurs in rural areas compared to the current study that was carried out in urban and rural settings and examined the influence of collective action of women entrepreneurs in the hospitality industry on their socioeconomic wellbeing.

According to Matthews et al. (2023) groups are part of a larger paradigm reacting to the criticisms of top-down development policies. Further, extant researchers (Matthews et al. 2023; Curnow & Jurow, 2021; Kann et al. 2023) have established that people, specifically women, have come out in large numbers to join groups in order to achieve the benefits attainable only when they are in groups. Torre *et al.* (2019), researched about Women's empowerment, collective actions, and sustainable fisheries in Mexico. The results showed that women were empowered in a variety of ways, including the acquisition of resources and decision-making authority, the facilitation of project advances, and the promotion of sustainable fishing. In the current study the role of collective action of women in informal hospitality services towards their socioeconomic wellbeing was investigated in the Kenyan context.

Fitsum (2017) states that affirmative action leads to socio-economic growth as well as to the expansion of the capacity of women to engage in their income-generating activities. Affirmative action as one of government's policies has made it possible for women to benefit from government support programmes and promote SMEs such as hospitality services. This allows women to achieve a multi-faceted chance for socio-economic advancement without discrimination. The Fitsum (2017) study was conducted in Sweden which is in an environment different with different policies from that where the current study was conducted, namely Kenya.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach

The study adopted qualitative research approach. This was suitable because the researcher wanted to explore more on the study topic since not much has not been done on the subject in question. Qualitative research is an approach that involves collecting and analysing non-numerical data to understand concepts, opinions or experiences.

3.2 Study Location

This study was conducted in four selected counties namely; Nakuru, Muranga, Kisumu and Kakamega. Four Counties were selected for the study to represent the four regions in Kenya from

the former eight administrative provinces namely; Central, Western, Rift valley and Nyanza Provinces. These counties were considered because they host many hospitality services run by women entrepreneurs thus the needed data was readily available. Two towns and two cities were chosen for the study, with two sub-counties in towns or metropolitan regions and one sub-county in rural areas being considered for the study.

3.3 Target Population

The target population for this study were women engaged in providing informal hospitality services run by women entrepreneurs in the four selected counties in Kenya, namely Nakuru, Kisumu, Kakamega and Muranga Counties. The information on women groups was collected from the Department of Social Services in each county. Accordingly, a total of 1618 women had been registered by the department of social services in the four counties. The unit of analysis for the current study was the women entrepreneurs in the hospitality services in the selected Counties in Kenya. The justification of women as the unit of analysis in the current study was based on the fact that women are marginalized as far as the running of enterprises is involved. The Government of the Republic of Kenya has come up with much support specifically supporting women enterprises including the Women Enterprise Fund and Uwezo Fund that targeted women and the youth. The current study, therefore, intended to establish whether the provision of informal hospitality services by women has any significant bearing on their socioeconomic well-being.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

This study employed both probability and non-probability sampling techniques. In non-probability, purposive sampling was used while in the probabilistic approach, simple random sampling was used to select the study participants.

Eight key informants participated in the interviews. Two respondents were drawn from each of the four counties. At the county level, one woman from rural and one from urban sub-counties were purposively selected for interviews. In situations where there was more than one urban sub-county in one county, simple random sampling was used to select one. Table 1 provides the summary of the sampled key informants.

Table 1: Sample size for Interviews

S/no.	County	Sub- Counties		Total		
		Selected Urban	No.		Selected Rural	No.
1	Nakuru	Nakuru East	1	Rongai	1	2
2	Kisumu	Kisumu Central	1	Nyakach	1	2
3	Kakamega	Lurambi	1	Mumias West	1	2
4	Muranga	Kandara	1	Kigumo	1	2
	Total					8

For FGD, eight participants as shown in Table 2 were purposively selected from the four counties to participate in the FGD. The number of participants was guided by the recommendations of Dawson et al. (2014) that a group of 6 to 12 persons is adequate for Focus Group Discussion. This was done to ensure diversity in respondents in terms of socioeconomic backgrounds. The justification for the choice of both urban and rural Sub-County was that the women entrepreneurs in both setups face different factors that affect the provision of hospitality services, a comparison of which was of great interest to the researcher.

Table 2: Sample size for Focus Group Discussions

S/no.	County	Sub- Counties		No.	Rural	No.	Total
		Urban	No.				
1	Nakuru	Nakuru West	1	Rongai	1	2	
2	Kisumu	Kisumu East	1	Nyakach	1	2	
3	Kakamega	Mumias East	1	Mumias West	1	2	
4	Muranga	Gatanga	1	Kigumo	1	2	
	Total					8	

3.5 Data Collection Methods

Interviews and focus group discussions (FGD) were used to collect data. This process involved the use of face-to-face interviews, telephone/video call interviews with respondents and organized FGDs.

3.5.1 Interviews

Data was collected using an in-depth interview guide. This augmented the understanding of the phenomena that were being investigated (Christensen et al., 2015). Accordingly, the researcher interviewed 8 key informants from the four counties to assess the various types of hospitality services that women entrepreneurs offered. In Nakuru County, the participants were drawn from Nakuru East and Rongai, in Muranga they were from Kandara and Kigumo, in Kisumu County, the participants were drawn from Kisumu Central and Nyakach and in Kakamega County they were from Lurambi and Mumias East. One participant was drawn from each sub-county making a total of two participants from each county and thus the total participants of in the study was eight. The justification for picking participants both from rural and urban sub-counties was to get information from diverse socioeconomic setups on the types of hospitality services. The key informant interviews were considered crucial in gaining insights into informal hospitality service provision by women entrepreneurs from the selected counties.

The semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions for interviews was developed as

per the research objectives and with guidance from experts in the area of women and hospitality. This was done to ensure that the researcher collected comprehensive information that improved the quantitative data that were collected in the later stages of the research. Before the interviews started, introductions were done and the purpose of the study was explained. The researcher also sought consent from the respondents to record the audio for further analysis. Opening questions were mainly an introduction to set the pace for the real concerns or questions. The information that was mainly sought was: the provision of hospitality services run by women entrepreneurs offered, by women entrepreneurs. The researcher recorded the audio for all the interviews. In addition, field notes were taken by research assistants to ensure that all the points and themes were well captured. At the end of the interview, the researcher filled in the interview guide with a summary of key points on every question asked. The two research assistants ensured that all the information from respondents was recorded.

3.5.2 Focus Group Discussions

Wong (2008) describes a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) as a renowned qualitative analysis method for collecting large volumes of narrative or explorative data. Focus group discussion added meaning and understanding to the initial data collected through interviews. The fact that Focus Group Discussions provided a platform for self-reflection among the women, some respondents felt motivated to talk after discovering what their fellow women were doing. This made them to express their opinions freely within the group. The researcher used questions in the interview guide and probing questions to cover the objectives of the study. This was to be analysed in the form of outside catering services, housekeeping services and events management and how these have affected them. As the respondents continued to provide information on the themes, the research assistants took notes on the content of the discussion.

FGDs were used for generating information on types of hospitality services run by women entrepreneurs. Focused Group Discussion was done with eight (8) participants drawn from the four selected counties with the participants assembled in Nakuru City. Nakuru was chosen because of its centrality. All the participants gathered in a restaurant for FGD. Each participant was given time to introduce herself and the purpose of the study and confidentiality of information were explained to them before the discussion commenced. The researcher led the discussion and the two research assistants took notes and audio recording the discussions. The transcription of the audio was done later for analysis. The researcher encouraged the participants to openly express their beliefs and feelings on the types of hospitality services run by women entrepreneurs they offer. The participants opened up and freely shared their experiences concerning the services they offer and how these services have helped them in their socioeconomic well-being.

Focus Group Discussion was used to gather information related to participant perceptions, feelings, behaviour, reactions and other relevant information that were not captured during the interviews. Moreover, FGDs provided a platform for verifying information collected through the

interviews for comparison and triangulation with the qualitative interviews during analysis. To achieve consistency on the FGD, the same themes as in the interviews were used. The respondents were coded as follows KFGD1 represents Kisumu County, Nyakach sub-county, KKFGD2 in Kakamega County, Mumias East sub-county, KKFGD3 Mumias West sub-county, MFGD4 represents Muranga county, Gatanga sub-county, NFGD5 represents Nakuru county, Nakuru east sub-county, KFGD6 represents Kisumu County, Kisumu east sub-county, NFGD7 represents Nakuru county, Rongai sub-county and lastly MFGD8 represents Muranga county Kigumo sub-county.

3.6 Reliability and Validity

Creswell (2014) defined validity as a procedural benchmark for measuring the accuracy of a study the conclusions made from such investigation and the reason for such conclusion. Further to this, Bryman (2004) stated that validity is the framework that makes the research findings to be accurate and acceptable. The content validity was established during wide reading, discussions and deliberations with peers and supervisors at Maseno University. To achieve content validity, the researcher conducted in-depth reading, discussions and deliberations with peers and supervisors at Maseno University. The experts in hospitality at the department and school levels were consulted to provide guidance on the content of the instruments and to ensure that all the research objectives were addressed. According to Cypress (2017), the scientific aspect of reliability adopts the repetitive measures of a phenomenon which produces the same findings when different methodologies are applied.

3.7 Qualitative Data Analysis

The researcher used Framework Analysis (FA) to analyse data. In the case of the framework analysis technique, the collected data from interviews and FGD through print interview guide and audio were organized into themes based on the objectives of the study. The audio records were transcribed into written form to come up with themes which were used during analysis (McMullin, 2021). Themes were analysed for similarities and differences, for classification into broader thematic areas. Five steps of review of data in the system method adapted from Pope, Ziebland and Mays (2000) were used. Step one of familiarization is where the researcher gets acquainted with raw data by listening to recordings, reading notes taken during interviews, and noting key ideas and various themes as they follow. In step two; the researcher identified themes and defined all topics of interest, and principles and analysed and referenced themes from the data. These were derived from research questions and objectives, as well as from issues that occurred repeatedly in the data. In step three, indexing was done where the researcher systematically or numerically used a thematic framework or index to group data into an index code cluster, typically accompanied by index names or headings, to prevent data loss. In step four, the researcher organized the data according to the relevant part of the thematic framework to which it contributed to the development of an order. In step five, mapping and interpreting were done where the

researcher visually or graphically presented the data using charts to identify definitions, map the spectrum and the phenomena, establish typologies and find correlations between the variables of the analysis.

The researcher created a casebook for each of the themes on; types of hospitality business; and socioeconomic benefits to women. An appropriate data source was linked to each case from the casebook. The casebook was created based on the framework analysis cycle and followed through five interrelated stages: familiarization, identifying a thematic framework, indexing, charting, mapping and interpretation.

The respondents from interview casebooks were appropriately coded as per the county and sub-county they were drawn from. MRP1 represented the respondent from Muranga County, Kandara Sub-County representing urban setup. MRP2 represented respondents from Muranga County, Kigumo Sub-County representing rural setup. KRP1 represented respondents from Kisumu County, Kisumu Central Sub-County representing urban setup. KRP2 represented respondents from Kisumu County, Nyakach Sub-County representing rural setup. ERP1 represented respondents from Kakamega County, Lurambi Sub-County representing urban setup. ERP2 represented respondents from Kakamega County, Mumias Sub-County representing rural setup. NRP1 represented respondents from Nakuru County, Nakuru Town East Sub-County representing urban setup. NRP2 represented respondents from Nakuru County, Rongai Sub-County representing rural setup.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Demographic Information

The demographic profile of the participants is summarised in Table 3. Results revealed that majority of the participants were aged (44%) between 41-50 years and a few (19%) were above 50 years.

Table 3: Demographic characteristics of interviews and FGDs' participants

Characteristic	Measure	Frequency	Percent
Age Bracket	30-40 years	6	38
	41-50 years	7	44
	50 and above years	3	19
	Total	16	100
Marital Status	Married	11	69
	Single	2	13
	Widowed	3	19
	Total	16	100
No of Children	Less than 3 children	3	19
	3-5 children	8	50
	6-8 children	2	13
	Total	16	100
Highest Education Level	Primary	3	19
	Secondary	4	25
	College	8	50
	University	1	6
	Total	16	100
Profession	Hospitality	3	19
	Farmer	2	13
	Education	2	13
	Accountants	1	6
	No Profession	8	50
	Total	16	100
Years in Business	Less than 5 years	3	19
	5-10 years	9	56
	More than 10 years	4	25
	Total	16	100

Most of them (69%) were married, and majority of them (50%) had 3-5 children. Most of them (50%) had attained college and secondary qualification (25%) while only a few had university education (6%) level. Most of the women had no professional training (50%) apart from a few who were trained in Hospitality Management (19%). Majority of the respondents (56%) had been in the catering business between 5-10 years with very a few (25%) having 3 years' experience.

4.2 Effect of Women Collective Action in Informal Hospitality Services

This section presents results of effect of women collective action in the provision of informal hospitality services. The thematic framework analysis under this section was the effect of women collective action on the provision of hospitality services. The researcher coded the respondents as per the county and sub-county they came from. The main sub-themes included; whether women collective action has empowered the women under the study to obtain finances, improve their decision-making ability, helped in marketing of business, benefited the groups in getting referrals, helped in building positive perception and also obtained approval from their spouses.

Interviews and FGDs results on role of collective actions in informal hospitality services

Role of Collective Action	KI									FGDs							
	MRP1	MRP2	KRP1	ERP1	ERP2	NRP1	KRP2	NRP2		NFGD1	NFGD2	NFGD3	NFGD4	NFGD5	NFGD6	NFGD7	NFGD8
Government finances																	
Decision making																	
Marketing of business																	
Group getting referrals																	
Improved group perception																	
Approval by spouses																	

4.2.1 Government Finances

As for the interview participants, there were still challenges in the women leveraging on their collective actions in such areas as obtaining the finances they need in running their business as was observed by majority of the women in the sub-counties. However, the majority participants of the FGD also observed that women collective action helped the women helped membership in obtaining finances from both national and county governments. Majority of participants respectively observed that women collective action helped the women improve their perception on their group activities and also helped in approval by spouses. Further, FGD captured more information on spouse approval compared to interviews conducted, the researcher therefore observes in carrying out qualitative research on hospitality services and women socioeconomic welling, FGD discussion looks more preferred data collection tool compared to interviews. One of the participants observed that they were able to obtain loans due to collective action.

“Through the group we were able to get WEF for the first time a few months ago. When it comes to decision making, we usually discuss issues, voting is done and the majority wins. We have also been able to market our business by branding our items; tell friend to tell a friend. Group membership has enabled members to be self-reliant, freedom of speech, psychological development; learning skills from each other among other benefits. Many people admire our group and would like to join.” (NFGD5).

Financing of the hospitality services offered by women in Nakuru County is dependent on accesses to loans. From a rural setup, collective actions by the women have enabled them to access these loans to support the hospitality businesses from a different source compared to the groups in the urban setup as was observed by one of the participants in the FGD.

“Group membership has helped us get funds through a fundraising, three WEF loans and a NGAAF grant.” (NFGD1).

4.2.2 Decision Making

Results of both the interviews and FGDs suggests that the women collective action improved their decision-making ability as indicated by all the interview and FGD participants. One of the participants observed that they were able to make their own decisions.

“... When it comes to decision making, we usually discuss issues, voting is done and the majority wins. ... Group membership has enabled members to be self-reliant, freedom of speech, psychological development; learning skills from each other among other benefits. Many people admire our group and would like to join.” (NFGD5).

Another participant commented that:

“Being in a group has helped us improve the decision-making process. Normally we discuss as a group and officials make the decisions. From our table-banking project, we were also able to get dividends last year. Boosters were also given. Also, individual members can decide to contribute more money and be given back at the end of the year. The perception from community members is mixed. Some women are bitter because they.” (NFGD8).

Decision making is crucial in enterprise development among women. The study established that the women improved on their decision making due to their collective actions. The finding on all women entrepreneurs’ observation on the benefit collective action on decision making is supported by Ardakani & Avorgani (2021) who observes that it is obvious that decisions is the major element of entrepreneurships activities and its inseparable component, and it shows itself in entrepreneur behaviour. Generally, decision making is the main factor in all of the entrepreneurship activities, goals, direction, performance and entrepreneurship activities. The observation by participant (NFGD5) is supported by Isalam & Hoque (2020) who established that the development of entrepreneurship helps developing decision making abilities of the women entrepreneurs. The

entrepreneurial factors that help to improve the abilities of decision making of the women entrepreneurs are concerned with cognitive, affective and psychomotor factors. This study suggests that the policy makers of this sector should emphasize the enhancement of the decision-making abilities of the women in formulating the SME policy for the sustainable economic development of Bangladesh. Similarly, it corroborates the works of Gachemi (2018) who found out that leadership and decision-making processes in the groups equally impacted negatively on the economic activities undertaken.

4.2.3 Marketing of Business

Women collective action also enabled the women in marketing their products and services as was observed by the majority of the women interviewed.

Marketing of informal hospitality services is one of the challenges established from the study under customer management sub theme. The results from collective action sub theme confirms this case where all the women interviewed observed that the groups have helped them in marketing their hospitality services. As for the FGD, half of the participants observed that women collective action helped the women in marketing their businesses.

The finding on marketing is supported by Kaua (2021) established that although marketing innovation had a strong association with performance of women SMEs in Kenya, the process of marketing innovations were largely not common features among Kenyan women-owned SMEs.

4.2.4 Getting Referrals and Improved Group Perception

Both interview and FGD results suggest that although majority of the participants observed that women collective action helped the women in getting referrals, it's still an issue in some sub-counties. Business referrals are very key in the success of women business initiatives particularly in the informal sector such as provision of hospitality services. It's through referrals that such business gets clients and if referral levels are down, it means that the revenue expected will also diminish which in turn would have an implication on the socio-economic wellbeing of women and their families. Although more than half of the participants in either case observed that women collective action has benefited the groups in getting referrals, much needs to be done in making the women in making their social network effective to a level that such networks can generate various referrals to create and make more supplies to their businesses.

“We market our business by doing free community services, client referrals, we tell the community about our services during Barazas and group members telling their Church members in Church.” (MRP2).

The findings although suggests that all the interview participants believed that collective action improved their group perception, it was still an issue for some of the FGD participants. Positive perception will mean that more members would want to join the group resulting in benefits derived from the group synergy.

4.2.5 Spouse Approvals

Majority of the women interviewed strongly felt that women collective action increased their spouse's approval. Women support in running hospitality services is supported by Nesa (2015) who observes that women are given sufficient support from family and society then it can lead to the economic empowerment of women in true sense. To that purpose women should also be much more concerned and be aware of the necessity of their empowerment and there is no alternative to have proper education in this regard.

“As a group we are perceived differently by different people. Some people were not for the idea in the beginning but they now want to join the group after seeing how well we are doing and the trainings we have received from the government. Approval of our activities by our spouses used to be a problem in the beginning. An official and a male member would have to go to a member's spouse and request for their approval. The spouses finally saw the benefits of the group and relaxed and now no approval is needed.” (NRP2).

Spouse approval is still a challenge some of the women in the four counties and therefore the women should use their collective actions as a platform in enhancing hospitality services as was observed by one of the women interviewed. Spouse approval challenge is supported by Nikina, Shelton, & LeLoarne (2015) who established that the husband has a traditional gender role ideology, which leads him to expect for the wife to take care of the household. Husbands are more effective in serving as a business advisor, but his own company remains his priority in part because it is his, and in part because he is still the primary provider for the household. The negative impact of the husband on the psychological contract arises from the lack of emotional support to the wife and her entrepreneurship, causing her feel more like a stay-at-home mom and results in a breach in the otherwise fulfilled relational psychological contract with her business.

“Some members of the group have issues with their spouses. Some are denied permission by their husbands but after seeing the benefits of group, some have changed their minds.” (ERP2).

Spouse approval and support is key in empowering women entrepreneurs in hospitality services as is supported by Kirkwood (2009) who found out that spousal support was more important to women than men with a greater proportion of women cofounding firms with their spouses and none starting a venture without the support of her spouse. By contrast, six of the men became entrepreneurs with no support from their wives. Notably, these two typologies are very similar, with roughly equivalent categories (counterproductive and unsupportive/ ambivalent; determining and co-founder; supporting, instrumental, flexible and supportive), which tends to suggest similarities between employed and entrepreneurial women.

4.4 Socioeconomic Wellbeing of Women in Hospitality Services

This section presents the results of effect of socioeconomic wellbeing of women in hospitality services. The thematic framework analysis under this research question was the socioeconomic wellbeing of women in hospitality services. The researcher coded the respondents as per the county and sub-county they came from. The main sub-themes for the socioeconomic wellbeing included; whether the women achieved any benefit from hospitality services, improved income, food as basic needs, housing for the family, improved healthcare, access to education, clothing for the family, belonging to a social network, socio-psychological support, social bonding, supporting the poor in the society and ability to start other business. The study established that all the women interviewed observed that the hospitality services they offer enabled them to achieve many socioeconomic benefits.

Interviews and FGDs results on Socioeconomic Wellbeing of Women in Hospitality Services

Socioeconomic Wellbeing Subthemes'	KI								FGD								
	MRP1	MRP2	KRP1	ERP1	ERP2	NRP1	KRP2	NRP2	NFGD1	NFGD2	NFGD3	NFGD4	NFGD5	NFGD6	NFGD7	NFGD8	
Beneficial outcome																	
Improved income																	
Food as basic need																	
Housing family																	
Improved health																	
Access to education																	
Clothing																	
Social network																	
psychosocial support																	
Social Bonding																	
Support to the poor																	
Start other businesses																	

All the women interviewed in the four counties observed that the women had achieved the following socioeconomic wellbeing; the women had improved income from outside catering and

events management, the women were able to provide food for their families, the women and family had improved health care, the women and their families were able to access education and the hospitality services was able to provide to them a social network belonging. When women participate in hospitality businesses, they diversify their income resources to boost their socio-economic well-being. This is supported by the findings of (Rehman et al., 2015) who examined the impact of interest free micro credit loans on the lives and business of the female borrowers found that women's businesses were expanding after borrowing, resulting in a huge improvement in their socio-economic status.

The women from urban setup observed specific socioeconomic wellbeing;

“The income we get from the business has helped members in many ways. For example, I used to live in a bedsitter and now am living well in one bedroomed house. The increased income has also contributed towards health care by helping members pay for NHIF and meeting other medical bills by paying cash for medication or treatment. The business has also made contributions towards paying school fees for members’ education. Some of our members have used income from the business to support children’s education by paying school fees and buying school uniform. The income of the business has also enabled group members to feed the family, pay rent and dress well. Our group is engaged in social networking by interacting with friends for moral support. We also belong to a group named young mothers.” (MRP2).

Findings on women engagement on social network is supported by Borgen, Von Fredrich & Widding (2013) who found out that that personal networks are seen as a more supportive asset than business networks; that personal contacts with other entrepreneurs are regarded as valuable; and that women entrepreneurs who are positive towards new networks already have a more heterogenic network than those who do not express this willingness. Women from rural setup also had unique experience as far as their socioeconomic wellbeing was concerned.

As a result of this catering business, we have been able to open other businesses, feed our families, improve our standards of living, improve our self-esteem, improve our financial status, be self-reliant, support the poor within the community and create employment for community members. We have improved our health situation as we can now be able to pay our NHIF monthly, buy medication and even be able to go for medical check-ups. We have experienced improved access to education by being able to pay school fees for our children and also some of our members have been able to pay their own fees. Some of the other benefits we get from the business are increased knowledge and members are given free services by fellow members in good or bad times. To continue networking, we have subscribed to a social network where we interact with other groups.” (NRP2).

Observation by (NRP2) is supported by Obiero, Njeri & Murithi (2018) who established that women use social network strength mostly for strategy analysis, objectives analysis, and problem

analysis. It was also concluded that member's religiously assist any of their own when they are in serious problems. From the study it was concluded that structure describes level of closeness or ties existing within a social group among the members; which could be assessed by the frequency of their meetings or interactions. Social network diversity is positively correlated with performance of women owned small and medium enterprises. It was further concluded that social network diversity allowed for consultation with members from different regions in the county. The study concluded that women used social network strength mostly for strategy analysis, objectives analysis, and problem analysis. It was also concluded that members religiously assisted any of their own when they were in serious problems.

Another woman interviewed from Lurambi Sub County in Kakamega observed that their group's socioeconomic status tremendously improved ever since they started the informal hospitality services.

“As a result of this catering business, we have improved our standard of living, been able to bond as members, and able to buy clothing and feed family. Healthwise, we are now able to afford medication, pay NHIF monthly and go for wellness check-ups. Also, we have been able to pay school fees for our children and for ourselves. We also belong to other social network groups that have helped us make more connections.”(ERPI).

Although the women interviewed observed that their socioeconomic wellbeing had improved in terms of their income, access to education, improved health care, and the provision of food to their families and belonging to social network, performance in other key socioeconomic indicators like psychosocial support, social bonding, support to the poor in the community and ability to start other businesses were relatively low. The socioeconomic wellbeing include; providing clothing to their families, providing psycho-social support to the group members, social bonding, provision of support to the poor in the community and ability to start other business in which at a few interviewed women observed were experienced among their groups.

“We normally share profits together and help each other in times of need enhancing the psychosocial support for members.” (MRPI).

The study established that all participants in the FGD agreed that the hospitality services that they provided had helped them achieve their socioeconomic wellbeing and had particularly helped them improve their income. The expressed socioeconomic wellbeing is supported by Gachemi (2018) who established that when women band together in women groups, they were able to improve their economic status through the economic activity (ies) that they carried out. Majority of the participants in the FGD were able to provide food to their families as basic need. Majority of the participants were able to use the proceed from the hospitality services to pay for their medical care including NHIF insurance compared to the all participants who were able to housing to their family and pay for their family health care. Majority of the participants in the FGD were able to pay for their family education and also provide clothing for his family. Other socioeconomic wellbeing

that was adequately achieved by the women providing hospitality services in Nakuru County included; belonging to social network where only a few participants were able to achieve. Some of the socioeconomic wellbeing that the women also achieved included starting other businesses where majority of the participants observed that their groups achieved. The researcher also noted that in probing the participants through FGD revealed that the women were able to start other business from the proceeds obtained from FGD compared to fewer respondents observed while conducting interviews. The researcher therefore established that FGD probing is more useful in obtaining information related to starting new business compared to using interviews as a data collection tool. Clothing is another achieve socioeconomic wellbeing of which half of participants observed that their group members were able to provide for their families.

One of the members of the participants in the FGD identified several socio-economic wellbeing that their group achieved from the proceeds obtain in the provision of the services.

“We have been able to get a source of income for school fees, furnish our houses by buying seats, blankets, cups, gas cookers and have upgraded from grass thatched housed to brick houses. We have also been able to feed and clothe our families, learn a high degree of hygiene, buy fertilizers, to pay for NHIF, buy medication and pay hospital bills. The group has brought discipline among members, we have been exposed and our knowledge has increased. Sometimes one of our members trains us on how to cook and this makes us be better at our job. We also belong to other developed social groups in which we increase our networking.” (NFGD2).

Group bond dynamics is one of the socioeconomic achievements of the groups. The level of the group bonding is one of the benefits achieved by some of the groups as observed by one of the participants.

“Our friendship has grown. We are there for one another in times of need and have also grown spiritually. Our networks have grown immensely. We have been able to grow from each other through members of our churches and relatives. We are able to network and tell them to market the services we offer (snowballing).” (NFGD4).

Another participant during FGD observed salient benefits as networks and bonding, wellness clinics to benefit the members of the groups.

“This business is everything to us. Our levels of networks have grown as we bond and support each other. Again, through referrals our networks have improved a great deal and this has made our business to expand.” (NFGD5).

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The main objective of this study was to qualitatively investigate the influence of women's collective action in the informal hospitality services on socioeconomic wellbeing. Specifically, the study set out to establish the role of collective action among women in informal hospitality services; and analyse the socioeconomic wellbeing of women in informal hospitality services. Qualitative analysis of the data revealed that collective action supports women entrepreneurial initiatives through obtaining government funding, facilitates business marketing, group business referrals, enhances members decision making ability, improves group perception and enhances spouse approvals.

The study also analysed socioeconomic wellbeing of women group involved in provision of informal hospitality services realised beneficial outcomes such as improved income, food security, improved health, access to education and social networks enhancement. It also contributed to some extent towards housing, clothing, support to the poor and ability to start other businesses.

Collective action of women in informal business should therefore be encouraged as it translates to numerous socioeconomic advantages not only to the women but their families and society at large.

5.2 Recommendation Based on Findings

First, the researcher suggests that policies supporting informal hospitality services among Kenyan women entrepreneurs be developed by the Ministry of Public Service, Youth & Gender Affairs, which houses the Women Enterprise Fund (WEF), a women-specific stimulus fund. Second, since current research has shown that women benefit much from working in groups, Kenyan women entrepreneurs that provide hospitality services should implement additional ways to encourage collective action activities.

Recommendation for Further Research

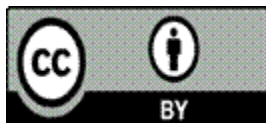
1. To compare their results, more research can be conducted on privately held organisations that provide the same services but are not affiliated with women's organisations.
2. To determine whether comparable outcomes will be established, the study should be repeated in other Kenyan counties that were not considered in this study.

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