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in Kenya**



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## **The Role of Women in Livestock Decision Making in Agro- Pastoral Systems in Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose:** Today, women represent half of the world's population and one third of the official labor force, but they receive only one percent of the total global income and own less than one percent of the world property. The primary objective of this research was to establish how changes in socio-economic factors affect the participation of women of different economic and educational statuses in livestock management and marketing, particularly in terms of their labor inputs and allocation of productive resources.

**Methodology:** The paper used a desk study review methodology where relevant empirical literature was reviewed to identify main themes and to extract knowledge gaps.

**Results:** The concomitant assumption formulated for this objective was that even as women's labor contribution to the household in the livestock industry has increased, there has not been a corresponding increase in their decision-making ability.

**Unique Contribution to Theory and Practice:** The study recommends that any efforts aimed at empowering women in livestock decision-making should first of all improve women's status through increased education opportunities and participation in formal employment in order to give them independent incomes.

**Keywords:** *Gender, Gender Division, Labor, Decision Making*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

The participation of women in agriculture began when Mesopotamians first domesticated animals and planted food near their homes. Today, women represent half of the world's population and one third of the official labor force, but they receive only one percent of the total global income and own less than one percent of the world property (Zavella, P. 2018). They, therefore, represent a major part of the rural poor, especially, when emigration, marital instability, and economic stress have left them as heads of households. However, they still remain very much on the margins of the access to and participation in public and private services required to meet their own needs. This shows that women have less income and less control of resources than men although the household is also dependent on the products and income generated by women's labor. It is the women who create the economic base of rural settlements by providing farm labor as well as transporting and marketing of farm produce. Women do this also by organizing mutual assistance groups, by manufacturing household goods, clothing and food for their families, and often by developing these into trade goods and therefore, generating income for house-based activities (Blair, C. M. 2018)

Women's involvement in raising livestock is a long-standing tradition in Africa and other countries of the world. Changes in the economic and socio-political conditions have led to increasing participation of women in this industry, although their contributions continue to be unnoticed and the database on their involvement remains limited. This raises problems in knowing where inputs to help women increase their productivity or reduce their labor bottlenecks should be directed. This study aims at establishing how changes in socio-economic conditions affect women's participation in livestock management and marketing in terms of their labor inputs, control and allocation over other productive resources.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

This study investigates community norms, values, attitudes and behaviors of women of varying social status in an agricultural and pastoral areas of Kenya with the aim of understanding the changing roles of women in livestock management and marketing in semi-arid mixed farming systems. Economic and political changes in the global and regional economies have produced

profound changes in local economies and smallholder farming and particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

These changes include a decline in the subsistence base and food security of many households, signaling a "food crisis" for African production systems (Clapp, J., & Moseley, W. G. 2020). Agricultural decline, a growing population and increased cash needs have placed pressure on many African households and their subsistence systems to either increase food production or seek alternate sources of income for survival. This has led to an increase in migration to urban areas, particularly by adult males whose higher potential earning power in wage labor vis-a-vis other household members create a high opportunity cost to their remaining at home in subsistence agricultural production (Low, 1986). The absence of male labor from the household in addition to other continuing changes such as more enrolment of children in schools and privatization of land has resulted in additional demands on women to assume more of the responsibility for agricultural production for both crops and livestock.

With women providing increased amounts of labor to household-based agriculture, changes in traditional gender-based relations of production and control over resources and resource allocation in these systems can be expected. Several studies of agrarian change indicate that as women assume increasing responsibility for contributing labor to crop production, they do not enjoy a similar increase in control over other necessary factors of production (that is, land, inputs), over decisions regarding disposal of the products or over income resulting from crop sales. This is especially true with regard to cash crop production (Guyer, 1986)

By comparison, there has been rather less attention devoted to examining changes in women's labor inputs and control over resources and resource allocation with respect to the livestock component of the farming system. Many development planners have instead used some cultural models for the division of labor in agricultural production. Animal husbandry is an important part of many African farming systems, particularly in semi-arid areas where it diversifies production and reduces the risk of economic losses through crop production. If well integrated into the household economy, it allows more efficient use of family labor and a secure cash income spread over the entire year.

Livestock supply households with many important products for consumption and/or sale, they supply draught power and manure and also provide protein and other dietary supplements for

children. In addition, livestock have important functions in the social life of many African societies, serving as indicators of wealth and status as well as elements of bride-wealth and other forms of social exchange.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The primary objective of this research was to establish how changes in socio-economic factors affect the participation of women of different economic and educational statuses in livestock management and marketing, particularly in terms of their labor inputs and allocation of productive resources.

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

Given the importance of livestock both to the household as well as the country's economy, it is important not only to recognize but also to assist women whose contribution to this industry is invaluable. As earlier indicated, little work has been done on the role of women in livestock production and the results of this study has provided the information necessary for bridging this knowledge gap by adding to the body of knowledge on women's roles in livestock production in mixed farming systems. In addition, this study has also added to the literature on rural development, particularly on farmers' decision-making process and on technology uptake.

The results of this study have contributed to the literature on the anthropology of women and gender studies by examining variations in the roles of women in livestock production and resource allocation in various social contexts in the same society. These results have also contributed to studies of the African household by focusing on the strategies which women as social actors' fashion in order to gain access to resources and to meet social obligations within the domestic unit. By adopting a social actor perspective, the study sought to avoid deterministic models of gender hierarchy in examining the relationship of women to livestock as productive resources and as catalysts for social interaction. The information on who does what in livestock production in this area and its farming systems will guide planners, researchers and development workers in targeting appropriate technology development and extension to women and other client groups and avoid the male bias found in much of the agricultural research and extension.

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Traditional Roles of Women in Agricultural and Pastoral Production Systems**

It is important to make a distinction between the type of responsibilities that women have over livestock: ownership, control over decision-making, use rights and/or provision of labor. Such information will guide projects and programmers on how to allocate the limited resources. Women mostly provide labor for the various tasks related to livestock, but they may or not control the process of decision-making, particularly over the disposal of animals and animal products. Similarly, women may be involved in production but may or may not own the means of production, for example, livestock and land (Alarcon, P. et al 2018). In a household, husbands and the wife or wives usually have a say over the use of resources, although there may be "unequal", often conflicting claims on resources for the satisfaction of basic needs (Santos, C. et al 2013). One of the reasons for this is that men have de jure ownership rights over animals and these are guaranteed by a set of inheritance rules that are gender based and rooted in patriarchal kinship systems.

In general women have less access to the means of production in comparison to the extent of their labor contribution. The division of labor as dictated by the tradition in a given society is not always necessarily followed and women often perform tasks reserved for men because of labor shortages or other socio-political and socio-cultural factors. This makes the roles played by women in livestock production as diverse as their ethnicity. Among the agricultural and pastoral communities, the dominant pattern is the one where women are responsible for the livestock kept at the homestead, for raising small animals for instance poultry and pigs, and for the processing and marketing of milk and other livestock products (Herrero, M. et al 2013). This pattern differs significantly from what is considered "ideal". In reality, however, the actual division of labor is more flexible, and the actual pattern of labor allocation for the household depends upon labor shortages, development phase of the family as well as the number and type of livestock. The irony, however, is that although it is common for women to perform men's tasks, very rarely will men do women's work (Cahusac, E., & Kanji, S. 2014).

### **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

#### **2.2.1 Transactional Approach**

In the spirit of Guyer's (1986) insights on gender relations and African households, this study adopts a transactional approach to examine gender relations and livestock production. By focusing on participation patterns and the diverse interests of women and men, the study obtained a more

realistic picture and since the allocation of inputs and responsibilities among men and women have implications for their relationship to one another and the society, such an approach has helped to improve our understanding of the topic under study. This approach avoided the more deterministic models of gender relations.

The various patterns of control women and men exercise in different spheres of activity do not always translate into concepts of dominance and subordination (Wright, W., & Annes, A. 2016).). While dominance remains an important focus of the proposed research, there are many other important questions we can ask about the relationship between men and women in their society. The transactional approach considers men and women as social actors who utilize social relations and systems to achieve ends. Taking this broad view of the complexity of gender relations allows for a more dynamic view of social systems and as Potash (1989:191) points out "can serve as a corrective to... the normative, sociocentric... and andro-centric orientation of classic literature" (Potash 1989:191).

Guyer (1986) took a similarly broad view of the complexity of gender relations. She points out that men and women and often children "separately control productive resources, make partly independent decisions, manage personal incomes, assume different responsibilities and favor different investments" (Guyer 1986:96). Their dependence on each other's resources, labor and income is so complex that the outcome of a household's decisions is difficult to predict and even to describe systematically. There is, therefore, a need to understand the causes of change in the division of labor, the terms of exchange between men and women and the size and internal structure of the social grouping within which these are organized.

Guyer, therefore, indicates that taking the household as a unit of analysis in decision-making is a complex issue and she argues for an individual approach as an alternative to a household approach. She suggests the importance of finding out how individuals draw on resources and lay claim to incomes. This can be used, for example, to bring out the constraints under which different categories of the population (divided by age, sex, socioeconomic status etcetera's) function. This study, therefore, adopted this individual approach to determine how women as well as men individually make various decisions in the household especially as concerns livestock and also to establish how this shape the decision-making patterns in the community under investigation. According to Guyer, this approach should not be used exclusively as it clearly lacks the means of

tracing network of interdependence and distribution, both within and beyond domestic units. Sociologists have identified three different modes of decisions making in the household. The syncretic mode of decision making is where the husband and wife have discussions on the same issue; the autonomous mode is whereby each makes decisions separately about different issues and the autocratic mode is where one-party dictates decisions to the other (Lorino, P. 2018). Each of these three levels of decision-making affects different households in different ways because these households have multiple objectives, which are most often specific to different members according to their structural position within the household. Decision-making is closely related to the degree of sharing of tasks in the division of labor in the family. The resources of the husband and wife largely determine their relative power in decision-making and their influence over domestic organization.

Bearing in mind the complexity of gender relations, the approach used in this study will help deal with these dynamic view of social systems as well as the internal contradictions that emerges in livestock production systems.

### **2.3 Empirical Review**

Pingua (2014), conducted a study on the factors influencing women empowerment among pastoral communities; a case of Gabra community of Marsabit County in Kenya. Gender equality and women's empowerment, a third Millennium Development Goal is considered to be an essential component of sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction. However, for pastoralist community gender inequality is acute and deep-rooted, much more so than in society at large. The study had sought to address the following objectives: determine influence of gender roles on women empowerment, establish influence of traditional practices on women empowerment, establish influence of property access on women empowerment, determine influence of property ownership on women empowerment and establish influence of formal education on women empowerment. The research design was descriptive where questionnaires were generated on related areas of study and individuals were selected through probability sampling. Sampling for household was carried out through cluster and multi-stage sampling techniques. The study targeted a sample of 91 women from the age of 18 years and above, 4 women leaders and 1 woman Focus Group Discussion. Data collection was done using questionnaires and interviews (focus group discussions and key informant). Quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical Package for



Social science version 21 and qualitative data was analyzed thematically and the findings were presented in tables. The results showed that gender roles, traditional practices, property access, property ownership and formal education have either a negative or positive influence on women empowerment. 90 of the respondents accounting for 99% of the respondents indicated that gender discrimination is the main challenge associated with gender roles, while 80 respondents with an 88% had experienced GBV 79 respondents with an 84% turned to their husbands for permission in order to access property.

Mwangi (2013), conducted a study on challenges facing women in the zero- grazing livestock production system in Kenya; a case of Kiambu County in Kenya. Smallholder dairy production provides self-employment for most of the rural population in the Kenyan highlands. Zero-grazing dairy livestock production has continued to grow over the years as the preferred dairy production system due to such factors as land size. Women participation in dairy production is significant given their role in agricultural production. The study sought to examine the challenges facing women participation in zero-grazing livestock production in Karuri sub-location. The study objectives were to identify factors affecting women participation in the zero - grazing dairy production system in Karuri location, and to establish the level of empowerment of women practicing zero - grazing dairy production system in Karuri location. The study adopted a descriptive research design. The study adopted the convenience and purposive sampling techniques to identify the respondents of the study. The respondents were 51 women and women leaders and livestock production officers as key informants of the study. The primary tools for data collection were the survey technique, key informant interviews and the Focus Group Discussion. The results of the study showed that women are overburdened by productive roles of zero-grazing dairy production and this may have a negative impact on their health status and on their effective participation in reproductive and community roles Access to credit was the major constraining factor among the respondents. Women's lack of control over resources such as land and dairy cattle, cultural attitude towards dairy farming perception that dairy farming is for those who are not well-educated and that it is a lay man's activity due to its intensive nature are all challenges. In regard to measures to improve women participation in zero-grazing dairy farming, majority of the respondents indicated that they were not aware of initiatives to support women participation in zero-grazing dairy production system. The government and the Kiambaa Dairy Cooperative

Society were the most prominent supporters of women efforts in zero-grazing. These included services such as marketing services for the milk produced, value addition processes and education and training in effective dairy production.

Asunta (2019), conducted a study on the influence of gender mainstreaming in livestock management on the socio- economic status of Turkana pastoralists in Turkana County, Kenya. Turkana women have experienced gender discrimination in livestock management for a long time. Male dominance in decision-making, control and access over resources prevent women from participating and benefiting from livestock activities. This is attributed to factors such as cultural beliefs, illiteracy levels, and insecurity among the Turkana pastoralists. These factors cause low livestock productivity and income earning to both men and women. The result is endemic food insecurity among Turkana pastoralists' women and children. This study examined the influence of gender mainstreaming in livestock management on the socio-economic status of Turkana pastoralists, in Turkana County. The respondents who took part in the study are all livestock keepers from the Turkana communities, in Loima district. The district has a total population of 40,278 people. The estimated number of pastoralists fully engaged in Livestock keeping in Turkana County was 3800, a sample of 136 pastoralists were selected using simple random sampling technique, while 5 key informants (livestock officers and community leaders) were selected using purposive sampling. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The data was collected by the use of a questionnaire and an interview schedule. The instruments were piloted using a sub-sample of 11 pastoralists from Loima district who did not participate in the main study. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was 0.704 which was greater than 0.7 and thus adapted. Quantitative data collected was then analyzed with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 21.0. Qualitative was analyzed using textual analysis and presented in narrative form. The results of the study showed that the factors that inhibit gender mainstreaming in livestock management include: lack of technical skills among women, socio cultural beliefs, distant and risky location to water sources and market places for access by women, the traditions governing animal species ownership, unfavorable perception towards control of cash resulting from selling of milk products, and unfavorable perception towards equal participation in livestock production activities. The study also established that Turkana men play a major role in livestock management in their community. They are the key decision makers in regard to livestock

production activities. The findings show that pastoralists' perceptions towards gender roles in livestock production and management are that men continue to dominate the decision making process in production activities, animal species ownership, and insecurity issues.

## **2.4 Research Gaps**

A knowledge gap occurs when desired research findings provide a different perspective on the issue discussed. For instance, Mwangi (2013), conducted a study on challenges facing women in the zero- grazing livestock production system in Kenya; a case of Kiambu County in Kenya. The study objectives were to identify factors affecting women participation in the zero - grazing dairy production system in Karuri location, and to establish the level of empowerment of women practicing zero - grazing dairy production system in Karuri location. The study adopted a descriptive research design. The study adopted the convenience and purposive sampling techniques to identify the respondents of the study. The results of the study showed that women are overburdened by productive roles of zero-grazing dairy production and this may have a negative impact on their health status and on their effective participation in reproductive and community roles. Access to credit was the major constraining factor among the respondents. Women's lack of control over resources such as land and dairy cattle, cultural attitude towards dairy farming perception that dairy farming is for those who are not well-educated and that it is a lay man's activity due to its intensive nature are all challenges. On the other hand, our current study focused on the role of women in livestock decision making in agro- pastoral systems in Kenya.

In addition to that, a methodological gap can be identified as the above researchers for example, Pingua (2014), who conducted a study on the factors influencing women empowerment among pastoral communities; a case of Gabra community of Marsabit County in Kenya. The research design was descriptive where questionnaires were generated on related areas of study and individuals were selected through probability sampling. Sampling for household was carried out through cluster and multi-stage sampling techniques. The results showed that gender roles, traditional practices, property access, property ownership and formal education have either a negative or positive influence on women empowerment. 90 of the respondents accounting for 99% of the respondents indicated that gender discrimination is the main challenge associated with gender roles, while 80 respondents with an 88% had experienced GBV. 79 respondents with an 84% turned to their husbands for permission in order to access property.

### **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a desktop literature review method (desk study). This involved an in-depth review of studies related to the roles of women in livestock decision making in agro- pastoral systems in Kenya. Three sorting stages were implemented on the subject under study in order to determine the viability of the subject for research. This is the first stage that comprised the initial identification of all articles that were based on roles of women in livestock decision making in agro- pastoral systems in Kenya. The search was done generally by searching the articles in the article title, abstract, keywords. A second search involved fully available publications on the subject on the roles of women in livestock decision making in agro- pastoral systems in Kenya. The third step involved the selection of fully accessible publications. Reduction of the literature to only fully accessible publications yielded specificity and allowed the researcher to focus on the articles that related to the impacts roles of women in livestock decision making in agro- pastoral systems in Kenya which was split into top key words. After an in- depth search into the top key words (gender, gender division labour, decision making), the researcher arrived at 3 articles that were suitable for analysis.

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#### **4.0 SUMMARY CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

##### **4.1 Conclusion**

The concomitant assumption formulated for this objective was that even as women's labor contribution to the household in the livestock industry has increased, there has not been a corresponding increase in their decision-making ability. The available literature shows a cultural division of labor in agricultural production. Men traditionally took care of cattle, cleared and

opened new gardens, built structures of granaries and living houses, herded, hunted, and performed military duties. Women, on the other hand, prepared and cooked food, fetched water and firewood, milked cows and goats, dug fields, planted, gathered harvest, threshed, cut and carried home grass for thatching, took care of children among other duties.

This division of labor corresponds to the findings of this study, more so in the livestock sphere where, traditionally, men performed most of the activities. This was especially so because livestock was perceived as a traditional form of wealth, a status symbol, a source of prestige and a source of liquid cash. Its ownership was, therefore, associated with power, wealth and prestige. Men were also the key decision makers in this area and this was in a manner consistent with the cultural definition of gender roles in this community where men dominated decision-making. Women, on the other hand, provided labor for the various tasks related to livestock but did not control the decision-making process. They were involved in the production but did not own the means of production, that is, livestock. Stephens (1990) says that their return was limited to a "reflex glory" in the enhanced status of their husbands.

Urban income remittances were in a number of cases cited by informants as a major input in farm production where the money is used to meet some of the farmers demands such as the hiring of farm labor. Where these remittances are used in the right manner, they become a means of redistribution of surplus resources from urban to rural areas. Most of the money sent by the migrants in this sub-location is, however, used for other household purposes and not necessarily for hiring extra labor. Some of those families with migrant husbands claimed to hire some labor only during the time of land preparation while others did not hire any labor at all. In the livestock sphere, the use of hired labor was very limited and only rarely used in herding.

#### **4.2 Recommendation**

It was expected that the results of this study would contribute to an understanding between women's status and decision-making in livestock production and management issues by providing systematic ethnographic information, which has not been availed before. The study hoped to avail information and recommendations relevant to both academicians and policy makers in their efforts to empowering women.

Education, occupation and also the extent to which women have control over their independent incomes all seem to determine the decision-making ability of women. This study, therefore,

recommends that any efforts aimed at empowering women in livestock decision-making should first of all improve women's status through increased education opportunities and participation in formal employment in order to give them independent incomes. Here, education becomes instrumental in building up women's self-confidence and skills in order for them to participate in the economic systems as well as to press for their unique concerns, needs and interest in certain domestic and public spheres.

The changes that have occurred in the structure of the division of labor have resulted in higher female participation in livestock tasks that does not correspond to their decision-making ability. This is attributed to the cultural attitude of the Akamba people where women are made to undervalue the worth of their work. The study recommended an intensification of public awareness campaigns to educate women to on the need to value their labor.

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