

Role of Gender Equality in the Enhancement of Tea Quality and Quantity in Kenya: A Survey of Farmers Served by Gathuthi Tea Factory of Nyeri County

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Abstract

Studies have shown that gender equality has a crucial part to play in the improvement of any situation that has faced human being. However its role in the tea sector is not well known. This study sought to identify the role of gender equality in enhancement of tea quality and quantity. The study assessed the most important aspects of gender equality, the extent of its use, the factors limiting its use and the relationship between it and tea quality and quantity. The study was a census of all tea farmers served by Gathuthi tea factory in Nyeri County. Primary data was collected using semi-structured questionnaires with the aid of a questionnaire guide. Analysis was done using descriptive statistics and then presented in tables charts, in percentages and frequencies. The research found that Gender equality is an important component in the improvement of tea quality and also quantity. The respondents clearly stated that what was most important is the issue of involving everybody in the family in decision making concerning money and any other resource that are used in process of tea production. The research identified the factors related to gender that limited the production of better quality and also quantity. These included among others, lack of honesty among family members, one person decision, dictatorship in the family, miss use of financial resources and other resources etc. The findings were that there are a direct positive relationship between gender equality and enhancement of tea quality and quantity. The study also made some recommendations that are geared towards improving on tea quality and quantity for future consideration.

Keywords: Gender equality, financial resources, quantity, Dictatorship, Honest

Kenya is the fourth-largest producer of tea worldwide, and is the only country in Africa to produce a substantial amount of tea for the world market. Unlike India and Sri Lanka, where most tea is grown on large plantations, 90% of tea in Kenya is grown on farming operations of 1 acre or less. Tea is central player to Kenya's economy; tea exports represent 26% of total export earnings and about 4% of GDP.[1]

According to Karanja(2009)Tea farmers in Kenya have become strained due to competition; rather than move towards larger operations, Kenya has decided to invest money in research and development of new varieties of tea that have the potential to have higher yield and more resilience to variable climactic conditions .

Most of the tea produced in Kenya is bulk black tea used in blending. However, Kenya's specialty tea industry has been blossoming in recent years, and there are now green teas and white teas being produced in Kenya, including novel styles of tea such as white matcha. Kenya is also the site of development of new varieties of the tea plant, including *purple tea*, a tea plant rich in purple-colored anthocyanins, the same pigments in blueberries and raspberries. Many countries have recognized that agriculture is an engine of growth and poverty reduction in countries where it is the main occupation of the poor the agricultural sector in many developing countries is underperforming, in part because women, who represent a crucial resource in agriculture and the rural economy through their roles as farmers, labourers and entrepreneurs, almost everywhere face more severe constraints than men in access to productive resources. Efforts by national governments and the international community to achieve their goals for agricultural development, economic growth and food security will be strengthened and accelerated if they build on the contributions that women make and take steps to alleviate these constraints.

Women are responsible for 60-80 percent of the agricultural labour supplied on the continent of Africa....” (UNECA, 1972). Women make essential contributions to the agricultural and rural economies in all developing countries. Their roles vary considerably between and within regions and are changing rapidly in many parts of the world, where economic and social forces are transforming the tea sector. Rural women often manage complex households and pursue multiple livelihood strategies. Their activities typically include producing among others tea crops. This paper contributes to the gender debate in agriculture by assessing the empirical evidence in these areas that has received much attention in the literature:

Problem statement

Tea is a major cash crop that is grown in Kenya. In Kenya tea is ranked as the third major foreign exchange earner, behind tourism and horticulture.

Kenya Tea Development Authority's move needs to be seen against the background of a 13.3% decline in the average price of teas exported in 2013 compared to 2012 (export values fell from US\$3.09/kg in 2012 to US\$2.68/kg in 2013). Despite the lower prices, the volume of Kenyan tea exports increased by 20.6%, from 33.5 million kg to 40.4 million kg, reflecting good weather conditions in Kenya. Economic and political instability in major export markets, however, meant that the improved production levels resulted in the country's total export earnings from tea increasing by only 2%.

According to KTDA, “tea prices at the Mombasa auction have suffered a 30 percent decrease since July 2013 as a result of increased supply.” This in part reflects the state of the global tea market, where production exceeds consumption by 200 million kg (4.8 billion kilograms is produced, compared to consumption of 4.6 billion kilograms).

As a result, smallholder farmers have been criticizing KTDA, questioning how multinational tea factories can offer higher basic prices than KTDA (KSh25/kg – approx. €0.21 as at 24 May 2014 – compared to KSh14/kg). However, this neglects end-of-season bonuses paid by KTDA, which in 2013 amounted to KSh31/kg, taking the final payment to KSh45/kg (approx. €0.38). This is unfortunate, since smallholder farmers have increased tea production by one-third since the financial year 2011/12.

Low demand on the international market and the absence of buyers from Egypt and Pakistan has resulted in weaker prices for East African teas in 2014. Rwanda reported a 1.4% decline in earnings from tea exports in February 2014 despite an 11% increase in export volumes. Prices reportedly “fell to \$2.48 in February from \$2.79 in January”. This follows a decline of 15.6% in total export earnings from tea in 2013 compared to 2012. Approximately “60 per cent of Rwandan tea is sold at the Mombasa Auction, while 37 per cent is bought by individual buyers from different countries.” It is from this decline in prices that questions arise whether it emanates from the poor quality and how could the quality be enhanced and what is the role of gender equality in this task?

Literature review

Sylvia Chant (2008) discredited its approach as ‘feminization of responsibility and/or obligation’ where the smart economics intends to spur growth simply by demanding more from women in terms of time, labour, energy, and other resources. She also agrees that “Smart economics seeks to use women and girls to fix the world.” She further goes by clarifying that “It is less welcome to women who are already contributing vast amounts to both production and unpaid reproduction to be romanticized and depicted as the salvation of the world.”

Chant is concerned that “An efficiency-driven focus on young women and girls as smart economics leaves this critical part of the global population out.” Smart economics assumes that all women are at their productive stage and fallaciously neglects lives of the elderly women, or women with handicaps. Thus she calls for recognition of “equal rights of all women and girls -regardless of age, or the extent of nature of their economic contribution.” Also, its approach does not talk about cooperation and collaboration between males and females thus leaving men and boys completely out of picture.

Chant emphasize that “The smart economics approach represents, at best, pragmatism in a time of economic restructuring and austerity.” Smart economics can have a wider acceptance and legitimacy because now is the time when efficiency is most demanded, not because its utilitarianism has universal appeal. She further warns that feminists should be very cautious about “supporting, and working in coalition with, individuals and institutions that approach gender equality through the lens of smart economics. This may have attractions in strategic terms, enabling us to access resources for work focusing on supporting the individual agency of women and girls, but risks aggravating many of the complex problems that gender and development seeks to transform.” Within the liberal paradigm of women and development, various criticisms have emerged. The Basic Needs (BN) approach began to pose questions to the focus on growth and income as indicators of development. It was heavily influenced by Sen and Nussabaum’s (2001) capability approach, which was more gender sensitive than BN and focused on expanding human freedom. The BN particularly proposed a participatory approach to development and challenged the dominant discourse of trickle down effects. These approaches focused on the human freedom led to development of other important concepts such as human development and human security. From a perspective of sustainable development, ecofeminists articulated the direct link between colonialism and environmental degradation, which resulted in degradation of women's lives themselves International organizations, particular UN families, have so far endorsed the approach of smart economics. Examining the relationship between child well-being and gender equality, for example, UNICEF also referred to the “Double Dividend of Gender Equality.” Its explicit link to a wider framework of the Millennium Development Goals (where the Goal 3 is

Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment) claimed a wider legitimacy beyond economic efficiency. In 2007, the Bank proclaimed that "The business case for investing in MDG 3 is strong; it is nothing more than smart economics." In addition, "Development organizations and governments have been joined in this focus on the 'business case' for gender equality and the empowerment of women, by businesses and enterprises which are interested in contributing to social good." A good example is "Girl Effect initiative" taken by Nike Foundation. Its claim for economic imperative and a broader socio-economic impact also met a strategic need of NGOs and community organizations that seeks justification for their program funding. Thus, some NGOs, for example Plan International, captured this trend to further their program. The then-president of the World Bank Robert B. Zoellick (2012) was quoted by Plan International in stating "Investing in adolescent girls is precisely the catalyst poor countries need to break intergenerational poverty and to create a better distribution of income. Investing in them is not only fair, it is a smart economic move." The global financial meltdown and austerity measures taken by major donor countries further supported this approach, since international financial institutions (IFIs) and international NGOs received a greater pressure from donors and from global public to design and implement maximally cost-effective programs.

Theoretical Approaches Advocated chiefly by the World Bank, smart economics is an approach to define gender equality as an integral part of economic development and it aims to spur development through investing more efficiently in women and girls. It stresses that the gap between men and women in human capital, economic opportunities, and voice/agency is a chief obstacle in achieving more efficient development. As an approach, it is a direct descendant of the efficiency approach taken by Women in Development which "rationalizes 'investing' in women and girls for more effective development outcomes." As articulated in the section of WID, the efficiency approach to women in development was chiefly articulated by Caroline Moser (1980) Continued the stream of WID, smart economics' key unit of analysis is women as individual and it particularly focuses on measures that promote to narrow down the gender gap. Its approach identifies women are relatively underinvested source of development and it defines gender equality an opportunity of higher return investment. "Gender equality itself is here depicted as smart economics, in that it enables women to contribute their utmost skills and energies to the project of world economic development. In this term, smart economics champion's neoliberal perspective in seeing business as a vital vehicle for change and it takes a stance of liberal feminism."

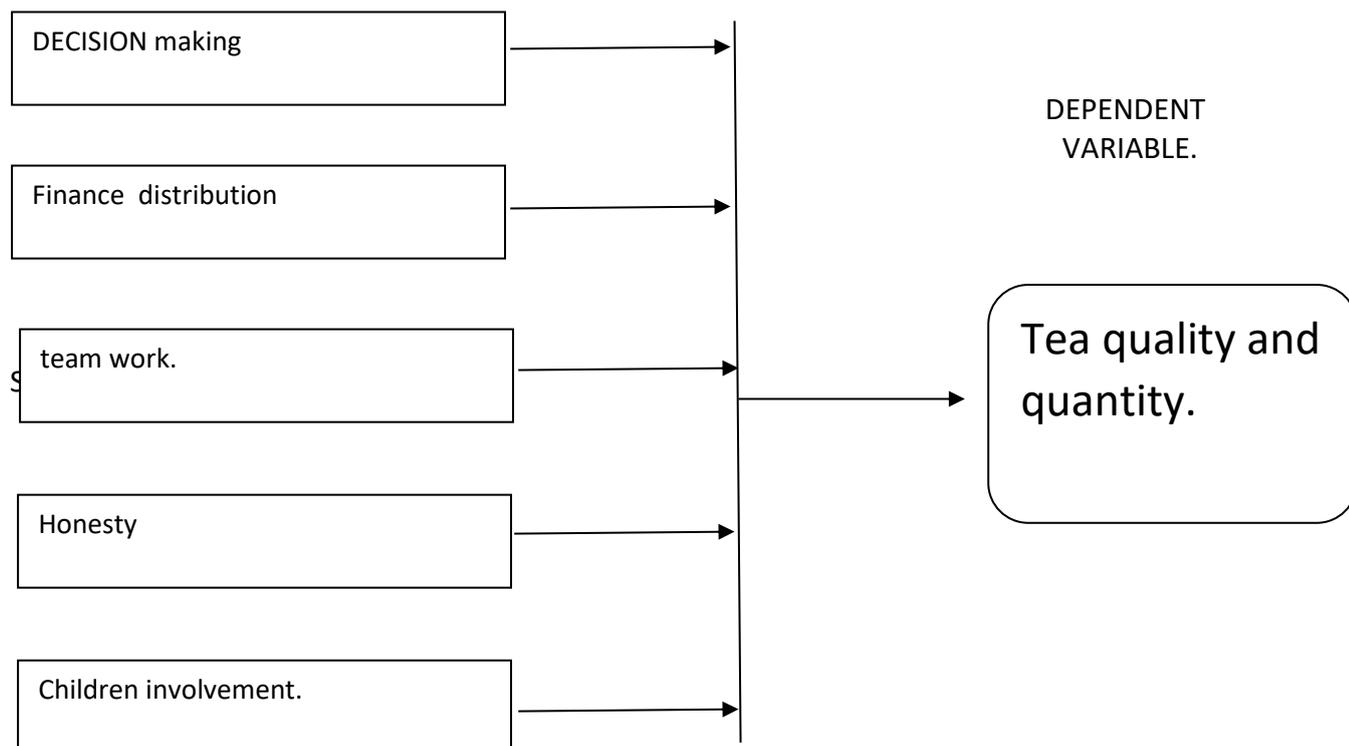


Figure 1; Conceptual framework.

Methodology

This research used exploratory research design because it is flexible, thus it allows the researcher to consider the many different aspects of the problem (Kothari 2004) and mostly because there is no prior data available on similar topic. This enabled in-depth probing to gather more insight on the problem. The study was based on a rural setup in t Tetu constituency of Nyeri County and specifically the targeted population is the farmers who are served by Gathuthi tea factory comprising of 32,465 registered members from six sub-locations.

A combination of stratified sampling and Simple random sampling was used to draw the sample of the study since the population was non-homogeneous and it ensured that every respondent had equal chance of being selected (Mugenda and Mugenda 1999) the population was divided into strata's (sub-locations) from which simple random sampling was used to draw a representative sample of 60 members. ie 10 from each strata. Questionnaires were formulated and administered through face to face interview based on the objective of the study to allow the interviewees to have enough ideas and thoughts to be recorded. This was a kind of an enquiry that was aimed at finding out in details the way respondents managed their tea farming. A pilot study was conducted to test validity and reliability directed to one member each from all the six strata's.

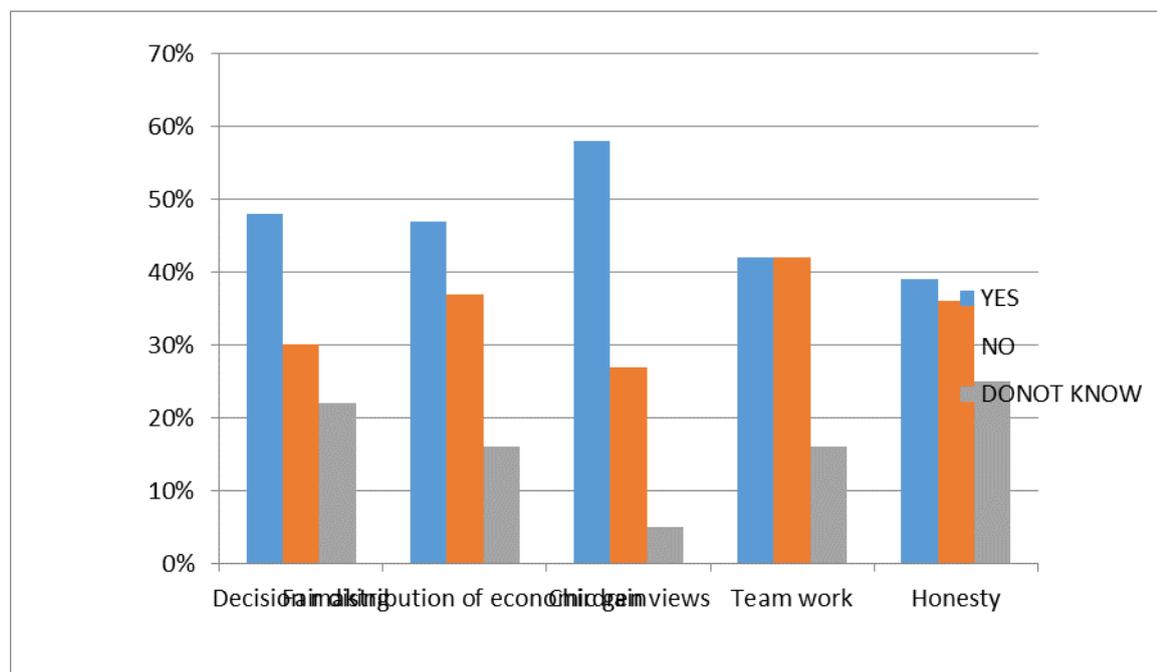
Data collected was analyzed using qualitative (content) and quantitative after having been checked for completeness and accuracy. Statistical analysis tools like percentages, tables, pie charts and frequencies were used to summarize the findings of the study.

Findings And Conclusion

It was found that the tea growing is done manually by the farmers where there is not a single person who uses a machine to help them simplify their work. This is because of the small scale of the piece of land that they own ranging from 0.5 acres to 5 acres per a farmer.

The work of the growing comprise of weeding, putting fertilizer and manure to add the soil nutrient which is done regularly and picking the tea leaves and taking it to the picking center. The research found that about 61% of the work is done by women while 33% by children and only 6% done by men.

It was clear through the findings that the group that performs most of the task is not involved in making decision when it comes to finance utilization..Most of the decisions are formulated and made by men whose role in the farming of the crop is very small. Women only follow orders from men who are the head of the family. This brings discontent in the family which mostly leads to neglect of the tea crop .In most of the cases, manure or fertilizer which is intended for the cash crop is diverted by the women without the knowledge of men to food crops which they fill they have control over. This affects the quality and quantity of the tea crops because they are deprived of the nutrients that make them build quality and even quantity.. Depriving the crop the required nutrients



diverting what is meant for the crop to another crops is a sign of lack of honesty in the family which was also noted to be a factor of poor quality in the farming of tea in that region .Another factor which was noted to have contributed to poor quality is the lack of motivation of the work force. It was noted that when dues (payment) of the crop is paid to men who are the ones controlling the bank accounts are the recipients and thus they use that money without the input of the other family members i.e. wives and children .This kill the morale of the caretakers of the tea with a negative effect to quality and quantity. There was noted from the findings that when lack of teamwork from the family to work as a unit is also a hindrance to good quality of tea production in the region. Female-headed households produce less than their share would predict if resource use and productivity were equal with male-headed households.

Conclusion.

The study revealed that there was positive influence between gender equality and quality and quantity of agricultural product (tea).

The findings also noted that the respondent who had practiced gender equality in their families had better quality of tea than their neighbors who felt not appreciated.

There should be gender equality not only between the Spouses but also to the children for better quality and increase of quantity of tea growing.

Recommendations

There is need of a sensitization of farmers (male) to see the need of involving their spouses on issue of decision making in concerns of finance and any other related issues. The children role should also be noticed by appreciating them through at least giving them small incentives which should make them devoted to the task they are assigned. This can also bring some positive results. It will create morale and motivation to the workforce and this will be a win situation to the crop and the economic benefit to the whole family.

The males (heads) of the family should increase the house hold welfare so as to make their family lead a comfortable life so that they can see the benefit of their labour and reciprocate in return. This will be beneficial to the tea crop in term of quality and quantity in that even the average will be increased. There should be teamwork in the family which is lacking in many households as per the findings. To bring harmony and peace in the family, there should be collective decision making from the man, woman and the children as well so as to Create teamwork and build on the motivation and the morale of the stake holders so that no one feels neglected in the whole affair. This will turn out to be a win to all of them and to the country as well. There is need of the government through the management of the Gathuthi tea farmers association to educate the farmers on the benefits of gender equality

Honesty between both spouses on the utilization of money for tea is also essential because it tends to affect the other spouse if he fills deprived of his share of sweat.

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