Gender Equity as The Determinant of Poverty Eradication: A Case of Narok South Constituency, Narok County in Kenya

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Abstract:
Poverty is a challenge that the globe faces, and it is a recurring one in its efforts to grow. It is a multi-faceted feature characterized by malnutrition, high mortality rates, poor life expectancy, and equity in access to socioeconomic resources, as well as minimal prospects for revenue generation. Women play a significant role in creating families, strengthening communities, and maintaining family ties. To tackle poverty challenges, numerous methods have been taken; gender equality, as one of the sustainable objectives, is intended to be a mechanism for the alleviation of poverty. It is a key development goal that must be achieved for women and men to take part in socio-economic development. The purpose of this research is to look into gender equity as a predictor of alleviation of poverty in Narok County and to explain how the role of women, gender equity, the credit market, and governmental policies affect poverty alleviation. The research is focused on the following specific goals: to look at the impact of gender roles on poverty reduction, the effects of gender equity on eradicating poverty, the effect of credit facilities, and the role of state policies in poverty eradication in Narok South Constituency. The research focused on the Capability Approach and the Right-Based Development Approach. Quantitative research methodologies were used in the investigation. The study was conducted using a descriptive survey design. The study target comprises 90,870 adults in Narok South who are at least 20 years old and were included in this study. The research population also included representatives of the local, state, and federal governments, as well as NGOs and members of civil society. The study reached a sample of 385 participants. The sample was chosen using stratified random sampling. The questionnaire was used to gather data. An un-sampled group from the study population was used in a pilot study to check the validity and dependability of the questionnaire. The study used the SPSS tool version 21 in the data analysis. Charts and tables were used to present study findings to facilitate comparisons and conclusions. A majority (72.5%) view women's empowerment positively as a pathway to poverty alleviation, emphasizing the crucial role of education and the need for targeted support. The study found that there are strong and significant links between gender roles, gender empowerment, credit facilities, and empowerment policies for poverty eradication. Gender roles, in particular, demonstrated a strong positive connection (r =.722), showing their importance in poverty reduction. Women empowerment (r =.688) and Credit Facilities (r =.707) both demonstrated strong positive associations with poverty eradication, emphasizing the significance of female empowerment and credit access in poverty reduction. Empowerment Policies showed the strongest association (r =.761), implying that well-designed policies are critical for successful poverty eradication initiatives. These findings highlight the need to tackle these characteristics to make substantial progress against poverty.

Keywords: *poverty, poverty eradication, gender roles, gender empowerment, gender empowerment policies*

Introduction

Globally, poverty remains a significant issue, disproportionately affecting women and marginalized communities (Munoz Boudet et al., 2018). Women experience higher poverty rates due to systemic inequalities in labour markets, education, and social policies. The World Bank highlights that gender differences in household composition and life-cycle events influence economic vulnerabilities (Munoz Boudet et al., 2018). Gender-responsive social programs have been effective in alleviating poverty, as seen in Latin American initiatives that integrate labour inclusion strategies (Abramo, Cecchini, & Morales, 2019). Sustainable Development Goal 1 (No Poverty) recognizes that gender equality is essential for eradicating poverty (Roy et al., 2018). Policies aimed at reducing gender disparities in education, healthcare, and employment contribute to economic growth and social development. Higher education institutions also play a role in fostering sustainability and gender-sensitive policies globally (Žalėnienė & Pereira, 2021).

Poverty hinders economic and social growth across nations. It is a multidimensional issue characterized by malnutrition, high mortality rates, poor life expectancy, and inequitable access to socioeconomic resources, along with minimal prospects for income generation (Diwakar & Shepherd, 2018). Poverty is one of the most pressing issues confronting global civilization (Blunt, 2020). It is broadly defined as a state of deprivation where individuals lack access to essential needs such as food, housing, clothing, and self-respect due to financial constraints. Many scholars view poverty as a condition reinforced by interconnected factors, including limited resources, ineffective governance, and political instability. Poverty is often measured by income levels that fall below an internationally recognized threshold, such as the World Bank's global poverty line. However, the necessities required to maintain an adequate standard of living vary across societies and periods. Each nation defines poverty according to its economic development, cultural norms, and social expectations. Despite these variations, common indicators of poverty include inadequate nutrition, lack of shelter, and restricted access to healthcare and education. It manifests in various forms, such as being unable to afford medical care, lacking stable employment, or experiencing uncertainty about the future. When a child dies from contaminated water, poverty is at play. It is a state of social invisibility, disempowerment, and lack of opportunity (Mukherjee & Ivancic, 2024).

Women’s economic participation in Africa is hindered by socio-cultural norms that limit their access to credit, markets, and technology. Gender-based violence, early marriages, and unpaid domestic labour further exacerbate economic inequalities. Policies aimed at addressing these issues include land ownership reforms and gender-sensitive budget allocations. For example, microfinance initiatives have been introduced in Kenya, Nigeria, and Uganda to empower women financially, providing them with the resources necessary to start businesses and sustain their households. However, the success of these programs is often limited by high interest rates and inadequate financial literacy (Ndinda & Ndhlovu, 2018).

Educational disparities also contribute to gender inequity in Africa. Girls are more likely to drop out of school due to early pregnancies, child marriage, or household responsibilities. Efforts such as free primary education programs and scholarship schemes for girls have been implemented to bridge this gap, with varying levels of success. Governments and NGOs continue to advocate for policies that ensure equal educational opportunities for both genders, recognizing education as a key driver of poverty eradication. Additionally, Africa's informal labour sector has a majority of women work who lacks social security and protection, leading to economic vulnerabilities. Strengthening labour rights and providing training programs tailored to women’s needs can help bridge this gap and promote economic stability.

Poverty in Narok County, particularly in Narok East and Narok South, is driven by land use patterns, food insecurity, and gender disparities**.** Despite food security initiatives, rural poverty persists due to inequitable land ownership, climate variability, and limited agricultural resources **(**Lawrence & Rotich, 2021). Large-scale commercial farming and conservation efforts have restricted smallholder farmers and pastoralists’ access to productive land**,** worsening food insecurity and economic hardships (Lawrence & Omuse, 2023). Climate change-induced droughts and floods further disrupt agricultural activities, deepening economic vulnerability (Onyango, 2021). According to the Narok County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) 2018-2022**,** 22.6% of the country's population—approximately 243,628 people—live in poverty, with Narok South among the most affected regions. Although pastoralism, farming, tourism, and trade are key economic activities, they are hindered by infrastructure gaps, land constraints, and socio-cultural barriers, limiting economic participation and deepening poverty.

Gender inequality further deepens poverty in Narok, as women have limited access to land, financial resources, and decision-making power**,** reducing their ability to participate in commercial farming or agribusiness (Takai, 2024). Despite women playing a crucial role in household food production, their contributions remain undervalued, and they often lack the necessary support systems for financial independence. The feminization of poverty is evident, with many female-headed households struggling to meet basic needs due to unfair land inheritance practices, low education levels, and gender-based exclusion from economic opportunities (Elizabeth, Zeddy & Joseph, 2024). Addressing land tenure reforms, promoting gender-inclusive agricultural policies, and strengthening women’s economic empowerment programs are critical for breaking the cycle of poverty and enhancing food security in Narok County.

Aim of the study

The primary aim of this study is to explore how gender equality influences poverty reduction in Narok South Constituency.

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Methodology

The research employed a quantitative research approach, allowing for the collection of numerical data to reveal patterns and correlations. This approach provides statistical evidence regarding the impact of gender equity and financial facilities on poverty outcomes, which is crucial for identifying measurable trends that inform policymakers about effective strategies for poverty reduction. The study utilized a descriptive survey design due to its ability to capture diverse perspectives on complex social issues such as poverty and gender dynamics. By reaching a large and varied group of respondents, the design facilitated the collection of both quantitative data and qualitative insights, providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing poverty alleviation efforts. The study was conducted in Narok South Constituency, an electoral district in Kenya with a population of 90,870 adults aged 20 years and above. The region was chosen due to its deeply ingrained patriarchal family structure and gender norms, which have been less influenced by Western education and cultural shifts. The study's sampling frame was based on the 2009 census report, and a total of 385 respondents were selected using stratified random sampling techniques. The Cochran formula was employed to determine the sample size, ensuring statistical representativeness.

Data collection instruments included structured questionnaires composed primarily of closed-ended questions, supplemented by interviews to validate responses and explore underlying causes of poverty. Secondary data was obtained from sources such as books, journals, and online publications. A pilot study was conducted at Ole Lulunga market to test the research tools, ensuring their reliability and validity. Reliability was assessed through pre-testing, while validity was confirmed through expert review to determine whether the research tools effectively captured the intended variables. The researcher engaged key stakeholders, including the county commissioner and community representatives, before administering the questionnaire in person. Ethical considerations were upheld throughout the study, with participants receiving clear explanations of the study's objectives, potential risks, and benefits. Written consent was obtained before participation, ensuring voluntary and informed engagement in the research.

For data analysis, the collected data was checked for accuracy, coherence, and tabulation. Descriptive statistical analysis was used, including frequency tables and proportions, to present the findings. Statistical tools such as MS Excel and SPSS facilitated the analysis, with regression analysis applied at a 5% significance level to assess relationships between variables. The study employed a simple linear regression model to determine how predictor variables—gender roles, gender empowerment, credit facilities, and government policies—influenced poverty eradication. The regression equation used was $Y = \beta0 + \beta1X1 + \beta2X2 + \beta3X3 + \beta4X4 + \varepsilon$, where Y represented poverty eradication as the dependent variable. The National Council for Science, Technology, and Innovation approved the study, ensuring compliance with ethical standards. The researcher also engaged community representatives before data collection to build rapport and clarify the study's objectives to participants.

Results

Respondent's basic information

Table 1: Respondents' basic information

		n	%
Gender	Male	133	48.0
	Female	144	52.0
	Total	277	100.0
Age	18 - 25 years	31	11.2
	26 - 33 years	72	26.0
	34 - 41 years	100	36.1
	42 - 49 years	47	17.0
	50 years and above	27	9.7
	Total	277	100.0
Highest education attained	University degree	15	5.4
	College certificate/diploma	57	20.6
	Secondary school	75	27.1
	Primary school	130	46.9
	Total	277	100.0
Marital Status	Single	64	23.1
	Married	202	72.9
	Widowed	11	4.0

	Total	277	100.0
Family type	Nuclear	132	49.3
	Polygamous	133	49.6
	Single parent	3	1.1
	Total	268	100.0
	Farming	68	24.5
	Livestock	178	64.3
	Business	31	11.2
The main source of your family income	Total	277	100.0
Family income per month	Below Kshs.1000	101	36.5
	Kshs. 1001-5,000	121	43.7
	Kshs. 5001-10,000	32	11.6
	Kshs. 10,001- 50,000	10	3.6
	50,001 Kshs and above	13	4.7
	Total	277	100.0

The gender distribution is almost equal, with 48% of respondents being male and 52% female, indicating a balanced representation of both genders in the survey. The age distribution shows that the largest age group is 34-41 years, comprising 36.1% of the respondents. This suggests that most respondents are in their mid-career or mature working age. The smallest age group is those aged 50 and above, making up only 9.7%. The education levels among the respondents are relatively low, with 46.9% having attained primary school education, 27.1% secondary school education, 20.6% college certificates or diplomas, and only 5.4% having university degrees. This trend mirrors findings from studies on rural education levels in developing regions (Mwangi, Chitere & Kariuki, 2023), which emphasize the challenges of higher education access in rural communities due to financial constraints and infrastructural limitations. The limited progression to tertiary education often correlates with economic barriers and the necessity for early workforce entry.

Most respondents are married (72.9%), with single respondents making up 23.1%, and a small percentage being widowed (4.0%). The family types are almost equally divided between nuclear (49.3%) and polygamous (49.6%) families, with a very small percentage (1.1%) being single parents, a pattern commonly observed in traditional agrarian communities (Harrell, 2018). In terms of income sources, most families rely on livestock (64.3%) as their main source of income, followed by farming (24.5%), and a smaller portion depends on business (11.2%). This highlights the predominant role of agriculture and livestock in the local economy. This finding aligns with research by Delgado and Siamwalla, A. (2018), which notes the predominance of livestock and subsistence farming in semi-arid regions, where climatic conditions dictate economic activities.

Regarding family income per month, a significant portion of the respondents (43.7%) has a monthly family income between Kshs. 1001-5,000, and 36.5% earn below Kshs. 1000. Only a small percentage have higher incomes, with 11.6% earning between Kshs. 5001-10,000, 3.6% between Kshs. 10,001-50,000, and 4.7% above Kshs. 50,001. This indicates that most respondents are in the lower income brackets. These figures reflect the widespread issue of rural poverty, corroborated by studies such as Castañeda et al. (2018), which highlight that a majority of rural households in developing nations subsist on minimal incomes, often below international poverty lines.

The relative contribution of Gender Roles, Gender Empowerment, Credit Facilities, and Empowerment Policies to the poverty erudition

The provided model summary gives an overview of a regression analysis examining the relative contribution of gender roles, gender empowerment, credit facilities, and empowerment policies to poverty eradication.

Table 2: Contribution of Gender Roles, Gender Empowerment, Credit Facilities, and Empowerment Policies to the poverty erudition

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.881[a]	.776	.772	1.48738

a. Predictors: (Constant), empowerment policies, credit facilities, gender roles, Gender Empowerment

The R Square indicates the proportion of the variance in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables. In this case, 77.6% of the variation in poverty eradication was explained by empowerment policies, credit facilities, gender roles, and gender empowerment.

The ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) table provided for the model examining the contribution of Gender Roles, Gender Empowerment, Credit Facilities, and Empowerment Policies to poverty eradication offers critical insights into the model's overall significance and the extent to which the predictors collectively explain the variance in the dependent variable.

Table 3: Ability of *Gender Roles, Gender Empowerment, Credit Facilities, and Empowerment Policies to the poverty eradication*

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2080.387	4	520.097	235.094	.000[b]
	Residual	601.743	272	2.212		
	Total	2682.130	276			

a. Dependent Variable: poverty eradication

b. Predictors: (Constant), empowerment policies, credit facilities, gender roles, Gender Empowerment

This p-value represents the likelihood of observing an F statistic as extreme as, or more extreme than, the one obtained, assuming the null hypothesis is correct. A p-value of .000 (often reported as $p < .001$) provides strong evidence against the null hypothesis, indicating that the predictors, as a group, have a statistically significant impact on poverty eradication.

The table presents the coefficients derived from a model analyzing the impact of various factors on poverty eradication. The coefficient reflects the strength and direction of the association between the predictor variables and the reduction of poverty. The model incorporates three key predictors: Gender Roles, Gender Empowerment, and two additional factors, Credit Facilities, and Empowerment Policies.

Table 4: Significance of Gender Roles, Gender Empowerment, Credit Facilities, and Empowerment Policies in the poverty eradication

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.936	.681		1.374	.171
	Gender roles	.050	.037	.074	1.365	.173
	Gender Empowerment	.178	.039	.289	4.549	.000
	credit facilities	.226	.045	.311	5.038	.000
	empowerment policies	.495	.073	.295	6.811	.000

a. Dependent Variable: poverty eradication

The analysis presents the impact of Gender Empowerment, Credit Facilities, and Empowerment Policies on poverty eradication. The t-value for Gender Empowerment is 4.549 (Sig. =0.000), for Credit Facilities is 5.038 (Sig. =0.000), and for Empowerment Policies is 6.811 (Sig. =0.000), all indicating highly significant effects. This aligns with Jamil and Bukhari, (2020)**,** who found that women's empowerment improves household income, decision-making, and intergenerational wealth accumulation**. A s**tudy by Nkamnebe (2023) suggests that microfinance programs enhance women's ability to start businesses, invest in education, and improve household stability**.** Shetty's (2021) study emphasizes that countries with strong gender-inclusive policies experience higher GDP growth and lower poverty rates**.** These results reveal that gender empowerment, credit facilities, and empowerment policies each play a crucial role in reducing poverty, as their p-values are well below the conventional threshold of .05. Although Gender Roles have a positive coefficient, their t-value of 1.365 (Sig. =0.173) shows that their impact is not statistically significant within this model. This highlights the importance of enhancing gender empowerment and credit facilities and implementing effective empowerment policies in the promotion of poverty reduction. For example, Heymann et al., (2019) emphasize that changing gender roles alone is insufficient without structural interventions such as improved access to education, financial resources, and policy support. These findings are denoted by;

$$\text{Poverty eradication}(Y) = 0.936 + 0.05\,\text{Gender roles}(X_1) + 0.178\,\text{Gender Empowerment}(X_2) + 0.226\,\text{credit facilities}(X_3) + 0.495\,\text{empowerment policies}(X_4)$$

Conclusion

The study concludes that entrenched traditional views on gender roles, predominantly shaped by male authority, significantly impede women's empowerment and perpetuate gender inequalities. There is strong acknowledgment of the importance of financial assistance and business mentoring for women entrepreneurs. However, accessibility issues and systemic challenges remain significant barriers. There is robust support for gender equity policies and economic inclusion of women; significant gaps in educational opportunities persist. Effective implementation of gender empowerment policies, alongside enhanced capacity-building efforts and advocacy, is crucial for achieving comprehensive gender equality. The study concludes that positive trends in women's economic empowerment and household welfare are evident, with increased involvement in economic activities and asset building.

Recommendations

Initiate community-based programs and dialogues to challenge traditional gender roles and promote gender equality. Engage male community leaders in discussions about the benefits of shared decision-making and the importance of women's contributions. Capitalize on the predominantly positive attitudes towards women's empowerment by launching campaigns that showcase success stories and the benefits of gender equality for communities. Work with financial institutions to create more accessible and women-customized credit facilities. This includes reducing collateral requirements and simplifying application processes. Prioritize policies and programs that ensure favourable education opportunities for women. This can include financial support, mentorship, and addressing socio-cultural barriers to education. Enhance programs aimed at ensuring food security for all families. This includes support for sustainable agricultural practices, improved storage facilities, and access to markets.

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