

Environmental Economic, Environmental Cultural Conditions and Political Participation Among Women in Somalia

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate Environmental economic conditions and political participation among women in the Somali Parliament. The manuscript used a mixed method. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview guides with responses from 127 and 6 respectively among female members of federal parliament, women working civil society organization and Staff of parliament. The sample was arrived at using Sloven's formula. Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20 and theme generation. The findings revealed that there exists a significant relationship between environmental economic condition and political participation among women in Somalia since the Pearson chi-square p-value (0.017) was less than the 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that economic environment of women determines their participation in politics. This is an implication that women who are financially stable would have higher possibilities of participating in politics compared to those of low economic status.

Keywords: Economic; Cultural; Political Participation; Parliament; Women; Somalia.

Introduction

Political participation is defined as the degree and form of involvement of citizens in governance and related institutions of society such as Economic, Education, and Religion (Begum, 2015). "It entails the participation of the citizenry in political campaigns and debates, attending strategy meetings of political parties, voting during elections, contesting as aspirants for elections and holding of important government and political party positions (Yimenu, 2016). It is germane to democracy and fundamental to the stability and legitimacy of every political system and a society cannot be truly democratized without the full, active and equal participation of both genders. As well as, the principle of equality men and women were recognized in united nation charter 1945 and the universal declaration of human right 1948" (Kasomo, 2012). Women's participation in politics helps advance gender equality and affects both the range of policy issues that get considered and the types of solutions that are proposed (Begum, 2015). Research indicates that whether a legislator is male or female has a distinct impact on their policy priorities, making it critical that women are present in politics to represent the concerns of women and other marginalized voters and help improve the responsiveness of policy-making and governance (Horst, 2017). Therefore, the composition of legislative bodies may affect the quality of laws and may influence the extent of their application. (Yassin, Ali and Mohamud, 2015).

Despite these facts in the majority of countries of the world, the political arena remains largely dominated by men, and even is an exclusively male bastion in some countries, this has been as a result of culture, socio-economic, education, and type of political systems that are not favorable to women (Kasomo, 2012). Rameez (2018) demonstrates that the possibility for all citizens to participate in the management of public affairs is at the very heart of democracy. At the same time, as mentioned above the full and equitable participation of women in public life is essential to building and sustaining strong, vibrant democracies. Accordingly, the meaningful participation of women in national, local and community leadership roles has become an important focus of global development policy (Latif, Usman, Kataria and Abdullah, 2015). The road ahead of Somalia is still a long one, and as the newly minted political structures continue to unfold and consolidate, women continue to face manifest gender imbalances and multiple challenges in enjoying their rights and achieving equal access to assets and services. The level of women's representation in government is at a national average of 8% for all three regions. While this is a marked improvement from the transition years, women are still disproportionately represented in the new government in spite of a road-map agreement as recent as February 2012 which unequivocally guaranteed women a 30 percent

representation in all political institutions created to end the transition. For example, in the 2012 election, there are only 37 women (14 percent) in the 275-person strong parliament

Although, it is worth noting that the percentage of women parliamentarian has increased, for instance in the 2016 election 66 women (24 percent) in the 275 elected representatives in the House of the People. On the other hand, quotas cannot alone transform underlying distributions of power or discriminatory norms, nor can they equip women with the political skills required to succeed and influence once in office (Farah, 2017). Despite, a strong history of activism on women's political rights, and valued roles in clan activities and local peace building processes, Somali women have not experienced notable increases in their formal political power or status (Horst, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

As women are empowered as political leaders, countries experience higher standards of living. Positive developments can be seen in education, infrastructure, and health, and real steps are taken to make an effective democracy (Lutfi, 2013). The gender Inequality Index for Somalia is 0.776 (with a maximum of denoting complete inequality), assigning Somalia at the fourth highest position globally. Furthermore, the participation and role of women in government and decision-making spheres are tremendously limited, perpetuating narrow gender-based roles and inequalities. The development of women's participation in all part of public activities is therefore important to positive self-identity of women as well as the full development of their capabilities. The absence of female participation in the public sector would also have serious governmental consequences both at the local and national level (Kasomo, 2012). Therefore, this study provides new comprehension into the strategies and environment under which women have gain access to and influenced the political space in Somalia and their involvements.

Research Question

What is the environmental economic condition on political participation among women in Somalia?

Literature Reviews

Feminist theory was adopted for this research was the feminist theory, which is one of the major arms within sociology (Mohamed, 2015). "The term feminism was coined by a French socialist named Charles Fourier in 1837 and was first used in 1872 in France and in the United States in 1910, and it includes a wide range of subjects from political, economic, social, cultural and social, but its central message remains the equality among the sexes, equal opportunities for women and the dissolution of the oppressive practices associated with patriarchy, while also seeking increased access to education, better health care and improved life choices for women (Omar, 2011). The two key terms that are central to the feminist discussion have been 'gender' and 'patriarchy'. In the feminist context, gender is not a replacement word for sex or the biological difference between a man and a woman. Instead, it refers merely to the power relations between men and women, how the relations have been socially and habitually implemented, and how the power is deployed (Onyenwere, 2017). Patriarchy, on the other hand, refers to the system where the female is subordinate to the male (in power and status terms)". Therefore, the feminist theory is aimed at understanding and explaining the intricacies that surround the subject of gender inequality and gender roles, while also trying to explain the blurred lines that exist between men and women within a social construct.

The body of literature avails works done by women in development of Somalia (Forni, 1980) women at the negotiating table (Nakaya, 2003) obstacles to women participation in parliament (Shvedova, 2005) gender equality in the peace processes (Nakaya, 2003) Somalia's economy without a state (Little, 2003) opportunities and constraints Islam and development (Ahmed, 1999) from state collapse to modernity of Somalia (Hagmann, 2005) rebranding Somalia's women rights and civil war (Abdi, 2007) the war through the eyes of Somalia women (Gardner and El Bushra, 2004) current conditions and way forward for total peace in Somalia (Dagne, 2007) female genital cutting (Khaja, Barkdull, Augustine and Cunningham, 2009) women, peace and feminism in Somalia (El- Bushra, 2007) Somalia and refugee women (Robertson

et al., 2006) resettling Somali women (Crosby, 2008) silent voices of women in Somalia (Jama, 1994) strategies for state reconstruction in Somalia (Lyons and Samatar, 2010) rural Somalia focus on women (Declich, 2000) caring for women in Somalia (Declich, 2000) women to organize for peace in Somalia (Timmons and King, 2004). The foregone literature indicates a gap in environmental economic and environmental cultural conditions and political participations of women in Somalia.

Methodology

This study used a mixed research design because, it integrated as well as provides strengths that offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research (Johnson, 2017). Primary data was collected from women and men, aspirants and key informants in order to analyze the environmental conditions and Political Participation among Women. The target population of this study was 186 respondents including; 66 female Member of Parliament, 108 parliamentary staff and 12 Civil Society members since had sufficient information about Environmental conditions and political participation among women in Somalia parliament. Sample size selection followed Sloven’s formula and the sampling technique was purposive.

$$n = \frac{N}{1+n(e)^2}$$

Where:

n= Sample size; N= Population size and e= Level of Precision= 0.05 and n was calculated to be 127

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected using questionnaire and interview guide respectively. 6 civil society members were interviewed.

Analysis of Data and Presentation of Results

This section presents the findings on the effect of Environmental economic condition on political participation among women in Somalia.

Table 1: Environmental economic condition and political participation among women in Somalia

Statement	SD	D	U	A	SA	Total	Mean	Std Dev
The social and economic status of women in society has a direct influence on their participation in political institutions and elected bodies	4 (3.3%)	12 (9.9%)	9 (7.4%)	45 (37.2%)	51 (42.1%)	121 (100%)	4.05	1.094
In Somalia, politicians need huge amounts of cash to campaign for the elective posts	7 (5.8%)	7 (5.8%)	3 (2.5%)	43 (35.5%)	61 (50.4%)	121 (100%)	4.19	1.120
The monetary cost for elective campaigns and the candidate fee affects the participation of Somali women in political life	14 (11.6%)	13 (10.7%)	7 (5.8%)	40 (33.1%)	47 (38.8%)	121 (100%)	3.77	1.371
Eradicating poverty will have a positive impact on women’s increased participation in the democratic process.	10 (8.3%)	13 (10.7%)	9 (7.4%)	35 (28.9%)	54 (44.6%)	121 (100%)	3.91	1.304
lack adequate financial resources, the socio-economic obstacles	6 (5.0%)	18 (14.9%)	4 (3.3%)	44 (36.4%)	49 (40.5%)	121 (100%)	3.93	1.219

impacting on women's participation in parliament								
The economic empowerment of women will take them from the condition of the household to full participation in politics	11 (9.1%)	13 (10.7%)	9 (7.4%)	37 (30.6%)	51 (42.1%)	121 (100%)	3.86	1.318

Source: Primary Data (2019)

Results from Table 1 shows that 42.1% of the majority of the respondents strongly supported that the social and economic status of women in society has a direct influence on their participation in political institutions and elected bodies. This implies that Socio-economic Status of women has a causal effect on women's political participation. The findings concur with Farah (2017) who noted that Poverty and lack of economic security are often regarded as some of the major barriers to women's political participation.

The findings revealed that politicians in Somalia require huge sums of money to campaign for the elective posts since majority of the respondents strongly agreed with the argument (50.4%). This implies that for one to succeed in the political seats of Somalia, the aspirants should be financially stable to fund the campaigns and so on. The findings reflect that of Yassin & Ali (2012) who demonstrated that Financial funds become significant in political participation due to the commercialization of politics as politicians need more and more money to participate and succeed in politics. The study found out that 38.8% of the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that monetary cost for elective campaigns and the candidate fee affect the participation of Somali women in political life. This indicates that the candidate fee and expenditure required to meet the costs of campaigns have hindered women from contesting for political seats in Somalia. The findings are also in agreement with Ochanja, (2013) who mentioned that election fee is one of the major obstacles for women to participate in politics.

In an interview with one of the civil society members of women associations revealed that the link between economic independence and political empowerment is strong; as such the elite enjoy a well-heard voice in comparison to others. "Resources are necessary for gaining access to the decision making the process and achieving individual or group aims. And the reality is that these resources are overwhelmingly controlled by a small male-dominated political elite," CSO member added.

The study findings revealed that Eradicating poverty in Somalia will increase the possibilities for women to participate in democratic politics as argued by most of the respondents (44.6%) in the study. This implies that if emphasis is put on improving the incomes of the women, there will be more chances for them to join politics and would improve on the gender parity in politics in the country. The findings confirm with that of (Cole, Zucker and Ostrove, 1998) who established that Poverty and lack of economic security are often regarded as some of the major barriers to women's political participation. The findings further revealed that inadequate financial resources, the socio-economic obstacles affect women's participation in parliament since 40.5% of the majority of the respondents supported the statement. This indicates that women with limited financial resources are always limited from engaging in politics because lack reliable sources of money to fund their campaigns. The findings are also supported by the argument of (Ali, 2012) that political participation need more money so financial resource play vital role to participate and succeed in politics. Due to the commercialization of politics politician could never overcame the problem without having enough money.

To assess whether there exists a significant relationship between environmental economic condition and political participation among women, Table 2 shows the chi-square test:

Table 2: Relationship between environmental economic condition and political participation among women in Somalia

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	20.100 ^a	9	.017
Likelihood Ratio	24.142	9	.004
Linear-by-Linear Association	11.382	1	.001
N of Valid Cases	121		

Source: Primary Data (2019)

Results from Table 2 reveal that there exists a significant relationship between environmental economic condition and political participation among women in Somalia since the Pearson chi-square p-value (0.017) was less than the 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that economic environment of women determines their participation in politics. This is an implication that women who are financially stable would have higher possibilities of participating in politics compared to those of low economic status. The findings are also in agreement with that of Yassin and Ali (2012) who demonstrated that Financial resources are becoming important in political participation due to the commercialization of politics as politicians need more and more money to participate and succeed in politics.

Environmental economic condition and political participation among women in Somalia

It was evident from the study that economic condition was significantly associated with political participation among women. It is therefore concluded that if the government and partners are interested in improving the political participation of women in Somalia, there should be a lot of focus on the economic status of women especially their sources of income since it plays a pivot role.

Conclusions

There is need for governments to work out quotas to ensure that women participate in politics. To achieve this, stakeholders should pick a lot of interest in ensuring that they up women’s economic status since the study discovered a relationship between economic conditions and political participation.

Recommendations

The study recommends that women should be economically empowered in a way that financial institutions enable women to access loans easily. Islamic sharia and Somali constitutions already allow women to inherit property. The implementation of this law will ensure that women have a property which they can use as collateral to access loans.

The study also recommends that there should be means of democratizing the process of campaigning for political leadership such that it engages females. So far, the Campaigns Bill would be proposed to help regulate the amount of money that should be spent on campaigns. What needs to be done is the formulation of mechanisms of implementation.

Despite NGOs and international community have significantly contributed gender balance in Somalia, the issue is still remaining poor situation so since this problem is recognized as human right issue, NGOs and other organizations which involve Somali humanitarian activities must increase their effort towards women’s political participation and they pay more attention to the factors that were revealed by the study specifically Political and Socio-economic Factors.

To enhance gender equity in Somalia, the civic education must be in place so that to propagate issue of democracy such as rule of law, accountability, people’s participation including women’s political participation and free and fair election. Additionally, the study suggest that Somalia should implements

gender rules like women's seat reserved (Quotas system) in political sphere at both national and local level and to recognize affirmative action is a matter of the rule of law that lies at the heart of democracy.

Lastly the study recommends that the few women who were elected as Members of Parliament as well as cabinet should campaign for the gender equality, representation and inspire other fresh women who want to join political arena this may increase the wiliness of women to participate and get involved in all parts of public live including politics also Somali women should articulate the challenges that they are facing including Social, political and economic environment for their own benefit.

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