

Contribution of Power Dynamics and Women's Perceptions to Girls' Education among Pastoral Communities in Tanzania

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Abstract

This paper explored power relations, women's perceptions and their contribution to girls' formal education among pastoral communities in Tanzania. Post-colonial feminist theory underpinned the theoretical discussion of the findings. The study adopted qualitative research approach and a case study design. Purposive and opportunistic sampling techniques were used to select twenty women who participated in the study. Data was collected using in-depth interviews and field observations and then analysed thematically. The findings indicate women's positive perceptions towards girls' education. Findings also revealed persistent unequal power relations, which hinder equal decision making about girls' participation in education. The study recommends policy maker to consider women's voices in developing education programmes which cater for women's well-being.

Keywords: *formal education, maasai, pastoralists, perceptions, power relations*

Introduction

Achieving gender equality in education constitutes the basic human rights and a means of achieving other social and economic outcomes (UNESCO, 2012). This is a global concern, as it is connected to promoting development and reducing poverty at the global and local levels. United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) called for gender equality by 2015, not only by focusing on achieving gender equality within education, but also expecting that education itself would promote gender equality in education and in other sectors (Arnot & Fennell, 2008). In the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), UNESCO (2016) posits that, educating women is at the heart of social development. Paddison (2017) particularly explains that the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) call

for gender equality in education. Nonetheless, this has far been realised among pastoral communities.

Various countries in Africa have embarked on educating their citizens including girls and women as noted in Uganda (Ahirike, 2013), Kenya (Warrington & Kiragu, 2011) and Namibia (Hoilambe, 2011). In Tanzania, there has been a particular support for promoting girls' education in pastoral communities (Bhalalusesa, 2003; Woods, 2009; Temba, Warioba and Msabila, 2013; Raymond, 2017).

Various countries have taken initiatives to provide education to pastoral communities, for example, India (Dyer, 2006; Sharma, 2011), Djibouti and Ethiopia (Carr-hill, 2005), England (O'hanlon, 2011), Uganda (Carr-Hill & Peart, 2005), Namibia (Hoilambe, 2011), Botswana (Pansiri, 2008) and Kenya (Warrington & Kiragu, 2011; Ayiro & Sang, 2016). Despite various efforts of providing education to pastoral communities the marginalisation of indigenous women and girls in pastoral communities remains acute. Women and girls in pastoral communities have generally formed a category of marginalised group for a considerable period of time all over the world. They have been continually underrepresented in social service provision particularly education, and gender barriers have constrained many girls from enrolling in school (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2007). Various cultural practices are attributed to marginalization and discrimination against women and girl children (Young, 2012). Pastoralist women and girls are the most educationally disadvantaged group (Kratli & Dyer, 2009; Temba *et al.*, 2013). They have been discriminated in many ways, and their contribution to national development has been undermined (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2007; UNGEI, 2008). This has been the case in the South Pacific and Asia (UNDP, 2010), the Arab states and Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2007; UNESCO, 2010). Women, therefore, have had limited chances to acquire formal education. This situation results in high illiteracy rates, low enrolment rates, low retention and completion rates at all levels of education compared to boys. Similarly, most women and girls are out of schools and some of them do not hope to enroll in basic education at all (UNESCO, 2010).

Shao (2010), Temba *et al.* (2013), and Raymond (2015) further indicate that, formal education among pastoralists is provided with no consideration of their life situations, the challenges they encounter and the kind of education they value. Raymond (2015) suggests that, girls' participation in education will only be successful when the strategies are based on a profound understanding of the pastoral communities' perspectives on formal education. This situation underscores the need for understanding the pastoral communities' culture, power structure, economy

and their life experiences in relation to the provision of basic education for girls. On the same line, Bishop (2007), Kateri (2008) and Allay (2008) emphasise that efforts to educate pastoral communities are general and there are no specific strategies for educating girls. Temba et al. (2013) explored the challenges that girls face in their efforts to acquire formal education. Raymond (2015), through ethnographic study, explored the community understanding of girl's education in Monduli district Tanzania. Moreover, Raymond (2017) specifically explored the social cultural constraints facing girls' education aspirations in Tanzania. There is still, however, shortage of specific studies that have explored the contribution of women perceptions and power dynamics in girls' education. This study, therefore, intended to answer the following two specific questions:

- i. What are the women's perceptions of provision of formal education for girls among the Maasai?
- ii. In what ways do power relations and decisions made among the Maasai influence education provision for girls?

Gendered power relations among pastoral communities

The attainment of gender equality has currently been a concern on international agenda as it is thought of in connection with promoting development and reducing poverty at the global and local levels. Kangas, Haider and Fraser (2014, p. 5) particularly insist that "Understanding gender relations and the power dynamics are prerequisite for understanding individuals' access to and distribution of resources, their ability to make decisions and the ways in which women and men, boys and girls are affected by political processes and social development."

Gender is particularly considered to be a lens through which people look at the way social norms and power structures influence the life opportunities available for various groups of men and women (Kangas, et al., 2014). This implies, therefore, that understanding that men and women, boys and girls face different barriers in accessing services, economic resources and political opportunities helps to target interventions. Gender relation in particular is an important consideration in development discourse in various societies including pastoral communities. Such relations determine power relations, decision making and the development levels of a household or community. While women are generally considered to be the most vulnerable group in most societies, those from pastoral communities face double marginalisation. This is because they are the members of the largely marginalised community and they are further marginalised by their life systems within their communities (Katushabe, 2012). On top of that, gender inequality and the unequal

power relations prevent the societies from realising the potentials women have in social, economic and political transformations of the society.

The unequal gender and power relations among pastoralists are a historical phenomenon. Even before colonial invasion, gender relations among pastoral communities were unequal. However, it was further intensified by the practices adopted from colonialists (Hodgson, 1999). This has been defining their roles within the community and their access to properties and various services and their power to make various decisions within the households. Such relations have always defined the subordinate position women hold in the community (Raymond, 2015) and their decisions and aspirations for girls' education (Raymond, 2017). Mackay (2014) argue that, gender and other social relations are sticky. This means that women are unable to exercise power on similar terms as men, even after reforms of various discriminatory laws.

Various scholars have investigated issues of gender and power inequality among pastoral communities in the world, for example, Warrington and Kiragu (2011) among Kajiado pastoralists in Kenya, Dyer (2012) among the pastoralists in India, and Hodgson (2001) and Shao (2010) among the Maasai pastoralists in Tanzania. These authors centrally argue that there is persistent gender inequality among pastoralists. This has deprived women and girls of various opportunities including education for girls. In addition, Flintan (2011) supports that gender determines the roles that men and women play in pastoral societies, as well as the power relations in the households. In such cases, households apply customary rules and regulations on a day-to-day basis that continue to disadvantage women.

Empirical studies, for example, Khadka (2016) who studied on gender and pastoralism among the Hindu in India, observed that understanding gender and power dynamics is important in conceptualising responsive policies and programmes. Young (2012) and Raymond (2017) observed that cultural practices such as female genital mutilation, early marriage and *esoto* are harmful and reduce girls' access to education and, therefore, entrench women's poverty. This in turn continues to weaken women's power in decision-making. Flintan (2011) explored the changing gender roles in the dryland of the Horn of East Africa and observed that, as sedentary life increases, women responsibilities and workload increase, hence causing more problems to them. In fact, although men and women have various responsibilities with regard to animal keeping, they benefit differently from the animals and animal products in which men are always benefiting more than women (Katushabe, 2012). Women are not entitled to own properties and continue to be excluded from decision-making processes in the society (Young,

2012). O'Neil and Domingo (2015) support this assertion by arguing that women from marginalised social groups have less asserts. As such women are constrained to take new life opportunities.

With regard to decision-making on girls' education, low levels of education among pastoralist women also present a major challenge (Young, 2012). In an ethnographic study among the Maasai, Raymond (2015) observed that pastoral communities maintain gendered dynamic traditions and customs which influence the decisions and consideration of girls' education, enrolment, attendance and performance. It was further observed that, Maasai society is highly patriarchal with women placed at the bottom of the hierarchy. This is why the researcher found it imperative to study women perceptions and how the power relations influence the provision of formal education for girls in pastoral communities.

Pastoral communities' perceptions of formal education

Indigenous pastoral communities have been thought to be less interested in formal education for a considerably long time (Mlekwa, 1996; Ndagala, 2004). For pastoralists, formal education has been regarded as unappealing to the majority of nomads due to its irrelevance to their lives (Carr-Hill, 2005), and it is considered to undermine the young people's sense of identity and independence. Studies on formal education provision for pastoral communities reveal that there has been an increased demand for formal education by various indigenous pastoralist groups. Education is considered one of the key factors for supporting the pastoralist production system, eradicating poverty, enhancing economic diversification and reducing conflicts (Leggett, 2005; Kariuki & Puja, 2008). Parents would wish to see their children attending school because they believe education offers knowledge and skills they will be able to use and improve their animal husbandry and help them with their claims for rights to land (Aikman, 2011; Raymond, 2009). Although Dyer (2001) in her study on the Rabaris in India had a different observation that education in this group was in no way related to the pastoralist economy and not regarded as a way of improving livestock production, they still considered it important in connection with wider society. This argument is also supported by (Kratli, 2006; Siele, Swift & Kratli, 2011).

In her anthropological study among the Maasai, Hodgson (2001, p. 33) advocated "education is perceived as a hope for the future, one of the only means to political power and economic prosperity." Maasai parents believe that educated children will help when they get sick and need to go to a hospital outside their locality (Hodgson, 2004; Raymond, 2015). Bonini (2006) in exploring the kind of education found

among the Kisongo Maasai in Tanzania also supports the change in the perception of the Maasai with regard to formal education.

Women roles and responsibilities within and outside the community have also changed so compelling them to seek for formal education for them and their daughters (Katushabe, 2012; Raymond, 2015). Notwithstanding this positive outlook, there is limited research concerning women perceptions and contributions to provision of education for girls and the way power relations influence decisions to educate girls. This jeopardises the opportunity for indigenous communities' adaption to those benefits in future. At the same time, such studies do not show what women think of girls' participation in education. Shao (2010) explored the contribution of boarding schools to girls' participation in primary education and had similar observation of the parents' change of attitude to girls' education. Temba et al.'s (2013) analysis of the efforts to address the constraints to girls' access to education indicates some improvement with regard to girls' enrolment in schools in Monduli. Raymond (2015) studied pastoralist community perceptions of formal education for girls and indicated the general change of attitude among community members with regard to education provision for girls. However, these are still general studies. There are still limited studies that have specifically explored what women think of formal education for girls and the way power dynamics among community members influence decisions about education provision for girls. This study is a contribution to bridge this gap.

Theoretical underpinning

Postcolonial feminist theory underpins the theoretical understanding and discussion of this study. Post-colonial feminism or post-colonial feminist theory is a form of feminism that developed as a response to feminism focusing on women of the western culture. Post-colonial feminism is described as a theory which has evolved against the concept of universalizing women issues in western feminist agendas and the lack of attention to gender issues in postcolonial countries. Such women have been particularly concerned that the relationship between white western feminism and 'other' feminisms has often been antagonistic to non-western women's concerns. The issues in which feminist theory in the West focus on are sometimes not applicable to black women and that white women have failed to recognise that they stand in power relationship with black women (Hooks, 1984; Mohanty, 1988).

The postcolonial feminist theory asserts that colonial oppression resulted in the glorification of the pre-colonial cultures in which traditions of power stratification,

along with the gender lines, denoted the acceptance and perpetuation of gender inequality in the postcolonial societies (Mohanty, 1988; Tong, 2009). The postcolonial feminist arguments are constructed on the premise that oppression relating to the colonial experiences has marginalised women in the post-colonial patriarchy. These include patriarchal, racial, class and ethnic oppressions. The theory also examines how social inequalities are inscribed within the historical, political, cultural and economic context and influence social service provision, such as education (Racine, 2011). The theory, therefore, entails the analysis of various ways in which structures of power reproduce social divisions in everyday lives of women including educating girls (Marchad, 2009; Mirza, 2009). It thus requires attending to women's lived realities and understanding the specific, historical, spatial and social contexts in which women live and work (Marchand & Parpart, 1995).

The post-colonial feminist theory was deemed appropriate for this study as it sheds light on gender inequalities that exist in the community through analysing the life realities and experiences that shape women's position in the Maasai community. The researcher analysed the roles, relations, identities and experiences of the pastoral community members that create and perpetuate inequalities in the provision of formal education for girls. The post-colonial feminist theory provided an understanding of the existing structures in the pastoral community that perpetuate unequal power relations and gender inequality in Maasai society and their influence on decisions to educate girls.

The issue of women's voices is essential to post-colonial feminist theory. The theory gives a voice for women who would wish to be heard rather than having western women speaking for them. Scholars such as Mohanty (1988) and Spivak (1988) emphasise on how third world women have been perceived to be silent, oppressed victims who can only be heard in the discussion about the third world difference; the '*subaltern*,' who are denied voices and experiences. Spivak (1988) particularly emphasises the notion of letting the subaltern speak for themselves as well as the strategy of having the radical critique speak for them. This study ensured that Maasai women voices are not silenced both in data collection and analysis and writing the report. Representation of women's voices is embedded in the entire research guided by feminist perspective.

Methodology

The study adopted qualitative research approach and a case study design. Qualitative research approach was preferred for the reason that the researcher sought to understand subjective experiences and the meaning of social actions within the

context in which the participants live. It also facilitated the understanding of meanings that participants ascribe to social phenomena and how socio-cultural context influences individuals' experiences and interpretations of reality (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Hennink, Inge and Ajay, 2011). Qualitative approach was appropriate in exploring and generating peoples' views and perceptions about girls' education based on their contexts and experiences. It helped to understand the way culture, power relations, identity, inequality and other lived experiences in the Maasai community exclude or include girls in formal education. This motive resonates with post-colonial feminist theory which believes that construction of knowledge begins from the world of those who have been marginalised (Khan, McDonald, Baumbusch and Krikham, 2007; Schwandt, 2004).

Case study design was used in this research because the researcher wanted to conduct an in-depth exploration of women's perceptions on girls' education, and the way power relations and decision making within the community affected girls' acquisition of formal education. This design was deemed appropriate because the researcher intended to scrutinise in-depth women circumstances in relation to girls' education (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2009; Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2011). The case in the study was defined with regard to experiences selected women shared in terms of their daily lives and the efforts to educate girls.

Selection of participants

The researcher purposively used various categories of women from diverse groups of people in the community. These participants include elders, parents and school and out - of - school girls. The researcher then selected twenty participants from all groups of women using opportunistic sampling procedure (Onwuegbuzie, 2007). This is a sampling procedure in which a sample is taken from the people that are easy to reach and willing to participate in the research. The researcher, therefore, obtained twenty women who were available and willing to participate in the study. These include ten mothers, five elders and three school girls and two out - of - school girls.

Data collection

Data was collected using in-depth interviews and field observations. In some instances, informal conversation was used especially when women were engaged in their daily routines. Such methods allowed interaction between research participants and the researcher (Hennink *et al.*, 2011). Myers (2009) asserts that, when the researcher interacts with participants it helps study the social reality from the perspectives of the participants themselves. In-depth interviews were conducted

to ascertain how people make decisions and what meanings they attach to their lived experiences. Interviews further helped to investigate people's beliefs and perceptions, feelings and emotions and context surrounding their lives in relation to girls' education (Hennink, 2011). All interviews and conversations were audio recorded and, thereafter, transcribed before the analysis.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse stories from the in-depth interviews, informal conversations and notes on the observation of participants. The study adopted the analysis steps provided by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 87-93). Data was first transcribed and then translated from Maasai language to Kiswahili using the research assistants and finally to English. Codes were then manually developed from the data. Similar codes were combined to form major themes and in some instances, individual codes formed themes. Thematic analysis enabled patterns, themes and accounts of events arising from interviews and other data sources to be identified. Since the study used various categories of participants, thematic analysis helped and supported the development of a holistic understanding of women perceptions and how power relations and decision-making affected girls in acquiring formal education.

Findings and Discussion

Women perceptions of formal education for girls

Women were asked to express their views on the subject. Their views are thus presented in the subsequent subsections.

Women's changing roles and life experiences

New life experiences of the pastoralist community members in the research area were revealed to be among the issues behind some members' support for girls' formal education. Elder women and mothers revealed that girls needed to be educated to help them cope with the changes which take place in and out of the community. Women further disclosed that, because of being illiterate and dependent on men, women have remained men's subordinates. They pointed out that they needed girls to acquire formal education to enable them support their own lives and the lives of their families. One elder exposed her concerns:

Life has really changed nowadays which is the reason we want our grandchildren to go to school. The life we lived in the past was quite different from today's life. For instance; our grandchildren can no longer live relying on cattle. It is very difficult. Animals are attacked

by so many diseases and the number of cattle we have is decreasing nowadays compared to the past. Our grandchildren have, therefore, to look for a new kind of life.

Another woman emphasized the rationale for girls' education as following:

I really want my daughter to get education; I know she will help me. Do you see, (pointing to a nearby homestead) that *mama yoyo* (an elderly woman) is lucky, When her daughter went to school, people said a lot of bad things about her and her daughter, but she kept silent. Now her daughter is a nurse in Arusha and she is helping them a lot. You see! She has built a house and a toilet for them. Who else has those things around here?"

These statements suggest the level of women's change in attitude towards the value of girls' education. Although they did not receive any formal education, they realised the importance of educating their granddaughters. Unlike the past when women assumed domestic responsibilities alone, these women were now aware that changes in life meant that women had a greater role in supporting their families. Girls, therefore, needed to be educated to increase their capacity to undertake new responsibilities. This is in line with the post-colonial feminist argument that daily life experiences open up new roles for women which facilitate the understanding of people's contribution to the well-being of the family and the community (Khan, McDonald, Baumbusch, and Krikham, 2007). They also support the findings that pastoralist parents have positively changed their outlook and were willing to send their children to school (Allay, 2008; Raymond, 2015). Although Raynor (2008) found out that girls' schooling in Bangladesh is perceived important mainly for them to become better wives, women in Maasai community felt that girls needed to acquire formal education to enable them carry out new emerging responsibilities more effectively. Temba et al. (2013), however, caution that these are just minor improvements in the pastoralist community's attitude towards girls' education because the majority of Maasai parents still have a negative attitude towards educating girls.

Women's desire for better life

The desire for better life was another aspect which motivated parents to value their daughters' education. Observations revealed that Maasai mothers were always able to see what is good ahead of them even if they did not know when or how they would get it. They were hopeful about their daughters' education in helping them change. It was further revealed that women perceived their daughters' education as a way of living a better life and giving them the ability to change their future

life. They commented '*we want them to live a different life*' better than the one they are living at present. During interviews, mothers appreciated the way some parents received support from their educated daughters. Some of the mothers said:

When our daughters get educated, they will not be the same. They will know a good life; they will not live the kind of life we are living now. Life full of scars (while pointing to a mark on her hand) and they will live a different life. Had I been educated, I would not have stayed in this marriage.

For us women, there is no Maasai woman who would not want her daughter to go to school. Most of them are living in very difficult conditions and have witnessed the advantage of educating their daughters. The only problem is that most men in our society never want their daughters to go to school.

Mothers' voices show their understanding of the way in which their girls' agency may be enhanced through formal education. They are aware that education helps the coming generation to challenge the gendered oppression that mothers currently experience. Walker (2006) argues that education can have empowering role in facilitating the ability of the disadvantaged, excluded and marginalised. This suggests that education is associated with changing girls and bringing about better life and gender equality. Observations indicate that based on mothers' desire for better life, they were intrinsically motivated to ensure that their daughters participated in formal education and achieved their aspirations. This is revealed in their struggle to earn some money in order to support their families and to obtain their daughters' school needs. Mothers believe that educated girls can stand on their own feet and take care of themselves and the family. They also believed that education would give their daughters freedom to choose what they value in their lives (Walker, 2006). Warrington and Kiragu (2011) had similar findings in their study involving Kajiado girls where mothers took charge of educating girls while fathers and other members did not support girls' participation in education.

The question is whether Tanzania primary education curriculum offers the kind of education that will help children get jobs and improve their well-being and meet their mothers' expectations. Mbelle's (2008) establishes that, owing to the major influence of globalisation, the content of primary education curriculum is insufficient to equip citizens with the necessary knowledge to respond to the competitiveness of the 21st century and beyond. In essence, if these girls end up in standard seven only, which has been the case among the Maasai (Bonini, 2006), it will be difficult

for them to meet their mother's expectations and may hinder them from joining formal education institutions at higher levels.

Power relations and decision making among the Maasai

Power relations

Field observation shows that there is huge difference between men and women among Maasai community members in issues relating to power, decision making, ownership of property and identity. During fieldwork, gendered power relations were evident with respect to various issues. Women are equated to children. For instance, women in the research area were not allowed to speak to visitors like the researcher without permission from their husbands. When women shared their views, they did not want to be heard by men. That is why in all conversations with women the researcher made sure no man was around. Women have a specific way of behaving before men especially those of their husband's age. This is the way some women described their relationship with men in the community:

This is what I was telling you that women have no voice before men ...they have to keep quiet and obey everything" (Nengila); "But for us women we are under the rule (*tuko chini ya sheria*), even if you have something to talk about on an occasion, they will never give you that opportunity because they never want women to talk" (Mbakai); and "Our men don't involve us in anything, they don't cooperate with us and the village leaders are just supporting them. What can we then do, we cannot do anything unless you help us.

Maasai society is highly patriarchal with women consistently positioned at the bottom of the social hierarchy of the elders. Men speak for women and make decisions on all family and community matters. While some scholars such as Mlekwa (1996) and Ndagala (1982) believe that this is due to the nature of the pastoralist economy, a post-colonial feminist researcher Hodgson (2001) asserts that the patriarchal gender relations among pastoralists are not integral part of pastoralism as a mode of production. It is rather an outcome of the historical interaction between the British and Maasai ideas and practices. She further posits that before the colonial intrusion women were regarded as equal to men, but such relations changed after the colonial intrusion. During colonialism, Maasai males' powers expanded to hold new modes of control and authority which resulted in dominating women politically and economically. Hodgson (1999) further maintains that, among the Maasai, gender is produced, maintained and transformed through cultural and social relations of power between men and women.

In relation to women being regarded as children, Hodgson (2001) argues along with being regarded as children they are also regarded as a men's property. This relates to Bangladeshi women who also have little power before men, and this is possibly because of age differences between husbands and wives where normally husbands are much older than their wives (Raynor, 2008). This age difference is believed to affect the power, status and autonomy of women within the household (Jensen & Thornton, 2003). However, the researcher discovered that, even when age difference between the wife and husband is one or two years, men treat women in the same manner. This supports the post-colonial feminist argument that structures of power within the society reproduce social divisions in everyday lives of women, including educating girls (Marchad, 2009; Mirza, 2009). Cultural, historical, social and economic factors intersect to shape different oppressive contexts that affect women's lives among the Maasai (Racine, 2011). In this case, it is easier to maintain this kind of relationship because a substantial proportion of women are married when they are still young girls. It is, thus, not necessarily about age, but how men regard women in society. It can, therefore, be argued that the existing structures in the pastoral community perpetuate unequal power relations and gender inequalities and, therefore, negatively influence girls' participation in formal education. Such issues are inscribed within the cultural and economic contexts that influence the provision of education for girls in the community (McEwan, 2001; Racine, 2011).

Decision-making

The research observations further revealed that Maasai women are not allowed or involved in making any decisions in the family or community. They are not allowed to make decisions even about their own lives, bodies or well-being. For example, when a woman is sick, she cannot decide to go to hospital or a nearby clinic without permission of her husband. On various occasions, women claimed they were beaten by their husbands. Most women the researcher came into contact with showed some scars from the injuries they had sustained from such violence. At times, a woman is not allowed to correct her children in the presence of her husband. This indicates the severity of the violence men practice against their wives. Everything about women's lives is decided by men. One of my female assistants explained that whenever I gave her the allowance, she surrendered it to her husband to decide how the money should be spent. Regarding decision-making and the position women take in the community women made these comments, among other:

You just look at these men; they even don't allow us to vote on our own. Even for us who know how to read and write, on that day (voting day) they will say you don't know so that he can choose for

you the candidate he wants and you cannot say anything otherwise you will feel the consequences thereafter. We just keep quiet for our safety. (a woman during informal conversation)

The above statements indicate the way women are dominated by men. They have no power to make any significant decisions. Such women's powerlessness can be attributed to the failure of girls to attain formal education. Although their understanding and perception of girls' education is positive, they are squeezed in a way that they cannot manage to speak for girls. This, in turn, silences the girls' voices too and the marginalisation becomes more pervasive.

Moreover, the researcher observed that women are not allowed to go out of the compound at any time. Many of them know very little about formal education and other issues outside their community. As Hodgson (2001) also reports, women among the Maasai understand little about events beyond their local area and never have the confidence to give their opinions on various matters. Similarly, women in the study were unaware of what the government is doing or could do to support their lives. They do not see the importance of local/village government, and therefore, they have remained helpless.

Maasai women's expressions show that they developed an awareness of the gendered norms of their community and how these norms deprive them of various rights. They understand the power of their voices to challenge some of the cultural norms they feel are not being fair to them. They need to speak out, but there is no opportunity to express their views. One of them requested: 'go and tell everybody about what you are seeing about our lives, we need them to know because we cannot speak for ourselves...maybe you can speak on our behalf'. Women need their voices heard, and they know they need some skills to enable them speak. This supports post-colonial feminism (Spivak, 1988) that the subalterns do not need to be represented, but rather they need to be on their own voice and speak for themselves so as to enable them not to continue being subalterns. It also confirms the views that capabilities are situated (Sen, 1999) and that they can be constrained or enhanced by the physical and social environment. There is, therefore, a need to consider that pastoralist women in particular are given opportunity to voice what they consider valuable. Particular attention needs to be paid to women's voices because they contain strong messages of what can be done to change or rectify their situation, for they know it is possible for things to change.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The paper has articulated important issues regarding the contribution of women in girls' education among the pastoralist community. The study shows that there has been discrimination among the pastoralist community. Moreover, literature has indicated the gendered power relations among pastoralist communities and the way it influences various decisions made within the family and the community, which hinder women's decisions to send girls to school. Literature has further indicated a general change of attitudes towards formal education. Nonetheless, the consideration is still for boys at the expense of girls. This is because the sex of a child is still a significant criterion in choosing which child to enroll in school.

Findings have revealed that women have positive attitudes and perceptions towards educating girls. Such a positive change has been triggered by their current life experiences, the changing roles of women in the society, the desire for their daughters to live a different life style and the quest to know Kiswahili as a means of expanding other capabilities. Decision-making among the Maasai, however, is dominated by men at the expense of women, henceforth, decisions to send children to school is always in favour of boys. Furthermore, power relations between men and women have rendered women powerless so they only receive orders and decisions that are made by men. Their voices are, therefore, silenced and their situation remains unchanged. Although women value the kind of education that helps them stand against the oppression, improve their economies and generally change their lives, their voices are far from being heard.

In practice, girls' and women's role in tackling the situation has not yet been fully recognised. The findings revealed that mothers play a critical role not only in bringing up their children but also in ensuring that girls acquire formal education. Mothers provide girls with material and psychological support. However, bias against women and girls persists, and the power men hold has an enormous negative influence on women's lives and on girls' participation in education. This study, therefore, recommends that policy-makers need to listen to women's voices and consider what they articulate as important to them in policy and curriculum development. To hear the subaltern voices, educators need to question their everyday practices and understand how education provision or education programmes impact women's lives. Improving women's literacy may improve their capacity of voicing their views. Accordingly, providing opportunities for girls and women to participate in school governance and management is important not only for ensuring a supportive school environment for girls but also for providing girls and women with skills and opportunities for their own empowerment.

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