

**OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FACING WOMEN
EMPLOYED IN THE FORMAL WAGE SECTOR IN
TANZANIA**

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Abstract

This study was conducted in Dodoma urban district, Dodoma region to examine the opportunities women have as employees and challenges they meet in work places. The study specifically intended to find out about women empowerment at work place in Tanzania; opportunities and the challenges faced by women at various levels of organizations when doing their job. A total of 100 women who were employed in several government and private organizations were interviewed to collect the information required.

The paper indicated that women have a large contribution and important positions within the society and at work places in particular. They have the opportunities like training, education and career development opportunity, opportunities of becoming leaders, promotion to different job positions; participate in trade unions and availability of women-friendly policies and laws. The findings of this study indicated that, although there were different measures undertaken to ensure women empowerment at workplaces, there were challenges women face including; poor involvement of women in decision making, poor working conditions, African tradition and culture, poor representations at trade unions, gender bias in recruitment and sexual harassment at workplace.

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It was recommended that employment policy and procedures to put more emphasis on the empowerment of women and develop different strategies to eliminate all problems affecting women at work places. Employers and leaders at workplaces must ensure that women are treated and given equal rights and chances; and remove all sorts of discrimination, inequality and sexual harassment. Also, women should be educated and sensitized on their rights and responsibilities at work places.

Keywords: Obstacles, opportunities, discrimination, policy, gender

1.0 Introduction

Women constitute half of the world population, but only 3% are employed in the formal wage sector, earn a mere 10% of the world's income and own only 1% of properties (ILO, 2012). In Tanzania, a total of 933,358 were in paid employment among which females were only 230,423 (25%) indicating how females were not given equal opportunities as males in terms of paid employment. *Women are segregated when it comes to jobs of higher status, majority are found in fairly inferior jobs* (URT, 2009). Employment opportunities are limited for women worldwide and the majorities are employed in the service sector like teaching and clerical occupations, health sector, catering, tourism and commerce at the lowest and worst-paid levels. In many countries, the jobs done predominantly by women are the least well paid and have the lowest status. Those who are employed in industries are employed to do simple, unskilled, labour-intensive jobs which require minimum capital or production tools. According to Tanzania Labor Survey of 2012, the unemployment rate was higher among women by 15% compared to 10% of men.

Different studies indicate that many women fail to enter into the best-paid jobs due to their low level of education. The study done by Meena (2010) in various areas in Tanzania revealed that, there is a wide and significant disparity between male and female in terms of access and benefits from the formal education system. It shows that women have and still continue to have limited access to education due to a number of obstacles, including traditional roles, beliefs and values, unsupportive educational policies and women's own attitudes.

For the organization to be successful and able to meet its goals, the knowledge, ideas, energy and creativity of every employee from all levels is required. In empowering women at workplaces, they are given the chance to share power, knowledge, information and rewards. It is argued that when women experience empowerment at work, they are less likely to leave the workplace, brings higher quality products/services and more customer satisfaction. Many educated women now days have an opportunity of being employed in a formal wage sector. The recruitment of women in different disciplines has expanded significantly in Tanzania during the past 20 years. There are different efforts done for increasing the representation of women in employment at diverse occupational categories, disciplines and levels (Temba, 2004).

2.0 Methodology

This study used cross-sectional design because it involves gathering of information to a representative population sample at a single point in time. Both Probability and Non probability sampling procedures were used to select the respondents. Stratified sampling and simple random sampling methods were used to get 100 respondents from five institutions in the Dodoma urban district, including the institute of rural development planning, TANESCO, university of Dodoma, Dodoma general Hospital and Dodoma high school.

The data collected from this study were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data collection methods used were interviews, Focus group discussion and observation while secondary data collection methods included review of diverse source of professional reports/documents in hard copies and electronic forms. Data were systematically analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The results for analyzed data were presented by using figures, tables, charts and word text.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Opportunities women have in work places

The study results detected that employed women have several opportunities such as Training, education and career development (97%), Promotion (91%), Leadership (42%), supporting Policies and laws (75%), retention in job (63%), social security schemes (82%) and the chance to participate in Trade unions (50%) as indicated in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Opportunities women have in work places

Variable	Description	Respondents (%)
Opportunities	Training, education & career development	97
	Leadership	42
	Formal Policies and laws	75
	Promotion	91
	Participate in Trade unions	50
	Retention	63
	Social security schemes	82

Source: Fieldwork Survey, 2012

3.1.1 Training, Education and Career Development Opportunities

The majority of respondents (93%) mentioned that workplace training, education and career development was one of the main opportunity women have when employed. Education and training not only provides women with the capacity and skills necessary to achieve a favorable balance of power between male and female, but also it encourages independence, self-confidence and self-esteem (Presser *et al*, 2003)

Equal access to education for women at work place is very important, it improves their capacities as it was emphasized in 2000 at Beijing Conference “*education is a key aspect of human right and it is an important element for achieving any progress*” Training and allowing women to go for further education is also supported by the National constitution in Article 2 (f)...“*ensure full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men*”

3.1.2 Leadership

The study revealed that women who are employed have the opportunity of becoming leaders at different levels in organizations. A total of 70% of respondents argued that employed women have the chance of promoted into senior, middle or even higher management positions and provided with the support required for their success in their positions. This implies that now days some institution values women and men equally and accept women to become leaders.

3.1.3 Promotion and retention in work places

Women at the workplace have an opportunity for promotion; they can be promoted to high paying jobs and receive an annual promotion as men, supported by 91% of total respondents. It was also mentioned by 80% of respondents interviewed that, once working hard and meet the organization's expectations, women have an opportunity to be retained in their jobs. Retention of high quality female staff depends significantly on the work environment. This implies that when the environment is hospitable and supportive, it stimulates them to achieve their fullest potential; provides opportunities for professional growth; increase commitment to the organization; and allows them to integrate their work and personal lives in a satisfactory and meaningful way.

3.1.4 Formal policies and laws

The study revealed that National laws, policies and institutional rules provide important opportunities to address the issue of women empowerment at the workplace. About 75% of respondents argued that women-friendly policies and procedures play a critical role in recruiting and retaining high-quality women professionals this encourage them to participate effectively in the development of organizations. Policies, including promotion, maternity benefits, unbiased performance evaluation, protection from sexual harassment and discrimination; provides the best environment for women to perform their duties well.

Tanzania employment policy (1997) in section 9 talk about women as one of the group to be considered and in section 10, the policy explains employment promotion strategy for women and promise to give priority to women by providing them more opportunities in employment, removing discriminatory and more opportunity in training. Both the National Employment Services Act (1999) and the Employment and Labour Relations Act (2003), promote equal opportunities for women and men by providing equal access to employment services and prohibit discriminatory practices at work places. The current Constitution in Article 13 (1) states that all persons are equal before the law and are entitled, without any discrimination, to protection and equality before the law and in Articles 11 (1) and 22 (1) it is well stated that every person has the right to work and earn the living.

The Ministry of Community Development, Gender, and Children (MoCDGC) worked to ensure that sexual abuse and violence is eliminated by drafting a National Plan of Action for the

Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women and Children, increase gender awareness and sensitization through training. Several NGOs work for legal reform from outside the government system to care for women rights and empowerment such as Tanzania Women Lawyers Association (TAWLA), Women's Legal Aid Centre (WLAC), Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC) and the Tanzania Media Women Association (TAMWA). Internationally, woman's position is also considered. Women issues were categorized under human rights and several UN Conventions were developed to address gender relations and development of women in particular. Conventions like UN convention on human rights 1945, sub convention on the status of women-1946, 1951 equal enumeration for women workers for work of equal value.

3.1.5 Social security schemes

Women working in the formal employment enjoy the benefits provided by different social schemes; which provides social protection services like health care, maternity support, injury support and old-age pension

3.2 Challenges women face in work places

Women interview identified a number of challenges they face at work places, including violence and discrimination (97%), poor working conditions (50%), ignorant of their rights (88%), having triple work (90%), not well involved in decision making (78%), poor representation in trade unions (40%), and low salaries (60%). These were supported by Luthans (2005) who argued that women in the employment sector face a number of serious obstacles such as low pay, poor working conditions with poor instruments as well as lack of opportunities for education and training.

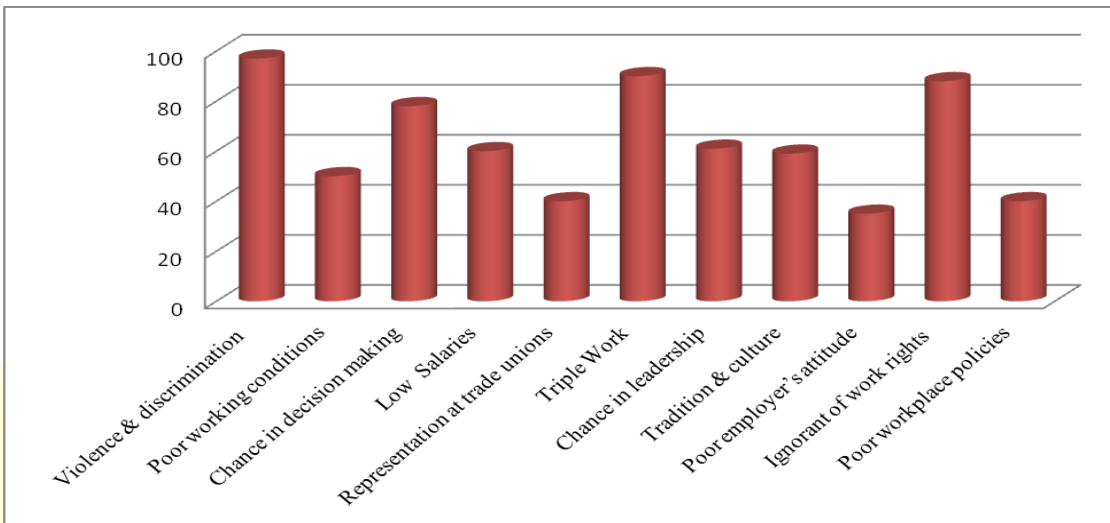


Figure 1: Challenges women face in work places

3.2.1 Poor working conditions

Like in all developing countries, many areas of work lack: good and modern working instruments, clean and attractive surroundings, lights, good building and other working facilities to enable women worker to exert skills and efforts to achieve organizational goals as pointed out by 50% of respondents. The Tanzania legislation gives the Ministry of Labor the authority to standardize and enforce prevention of accidents and ensure safe working conditions, but the reported rates of work accidents are comparatively high in the mining and construction activities (patron *et al*, 2006).

3.2.2 Women violence and discrimination at workplace

The majority of respondents (97%) mentioned gender-based violence, including sexual, physical or psychological violence as one of the most common problems facing women at work. As admitted by Ngaiza (2002) that sexual harassment and violence against women in some places of work still persist. Women discrimination at work is one among innumerable disparities that women comes across, they are discriminated from the time of recruitment and in the allocation of organizational resources and opportunities such as promotions, pay and job responsibilities. Women have constantly been subjected to harassment at the workplaces by their bosses and other co-workers.

The respondents argued that when women's rights were violated in many cases, victims were often afraid to confront and report the issue. The reasons provided were women being ashamed,

discouraged from taking action by relatives and friends, fear of being abandoned by their spouses and community, lack of awareness of laws protecting them and lack resources to engage in legal process. URT (1999) argued that '*victims of sexual harassment are embarrassed by the episode and feel dirty, isolated, angry and deeply ashamed and those who wish to report abusive situations have few places to go where they can get support*'

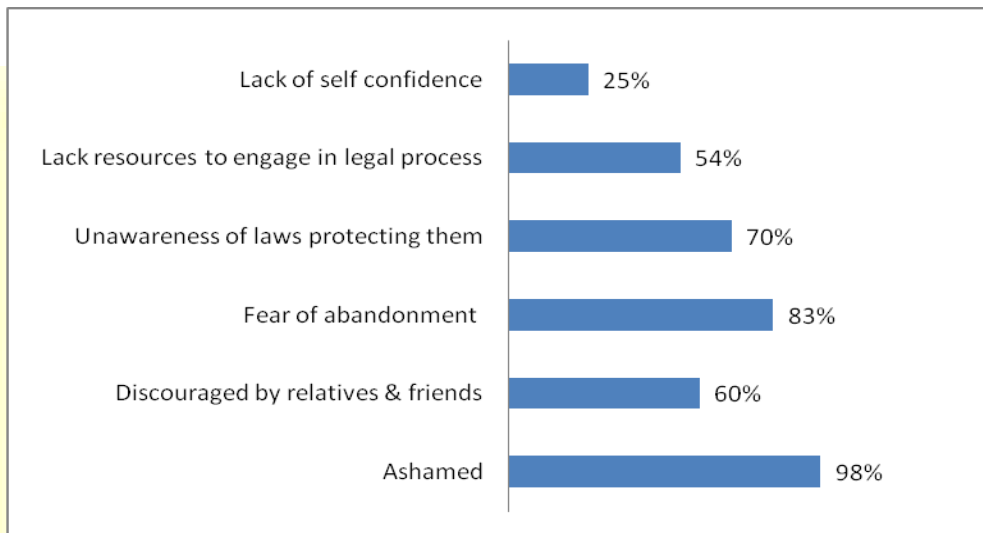


Figure 2: Reasons why sexual harassment and violence were not reported by women

3.2.3 Poor representations at trade unions

The study reveals that women were underrepresented in trade unions and they do not generally hold positions in those trade unions, so it is not surprising that issues concerning women such as training, working hours, hiring and firing practices, maternity leave, promotion systems and other fringe benefits are not well presented and rarely taken up for considerations. *Despite efforts made to ensure that female representation is achieved at all levels, women are still underrepresented in many decision making bodies (De la Rey, 2005).*

3.2.4 Ignorant of their rights

About 88% of respondents argued that women were not aware of their legal rights despite being educated and holding a number of degrees. The majority of women interviewed agreed to have inadequate knowledge of labor legislation and work rights mainly due to lack of information training and compelling programs to address the problem.

3.2.5 Triple Work

Everywhere in the world women have two jobs-in the home and outside, they perform 'double shift' They carry a triple work; besides being employed; they must cope with housework, childcare and producing food for the family, they face greater difficulties when trying to balance work and family. *The employment pattern of women is affected by the burden of family and related responsibilities* (Presser et al, 2003). Women have multiple roles as producers, reproducers and providers of family care as a result, they are limited in accessing and performing their job. Family and care responsibilities are not equally shared by parents, and sometimes women cannot afford to employ childcare workers or daycare facilities. For women to perform better in job they must hand over their burden of housework and childcare to lower-class women or girls who are paid low wages. Women are expected to take responsibility for bringing up their children, but less parental responsibility is expected of men (Polly, 1988). Women are less likely to secure higher paying jobs because they are less available for full-time work due to greater family responsibilities (UNFPA, 2005).

3.2.6 Poor involvement in decision making

Women are usually ignored in making decisions on important matters concerning planning and development of the organization. They are usually the implementers of decisions that are made by men and their ideas, though important, are usually ignored or sometimes are not given the chance to contribute. Tanzania like other African countries is a male dominated and strongly patriarchal society. This implies that the less women are represented in decision making bodies, the less the impact they can make on issues of their concern. Although numbers are not the criterion for judging the justice done to the decision making, the presence of women in decision making bodies would mean more women participation in these bodies.

Among 100 respondents interviewed about their involvement in decision making, only 5% agreed that were always involved, 64% rarely involved and 31% were not involved at all they were just implementers of decision made by others.

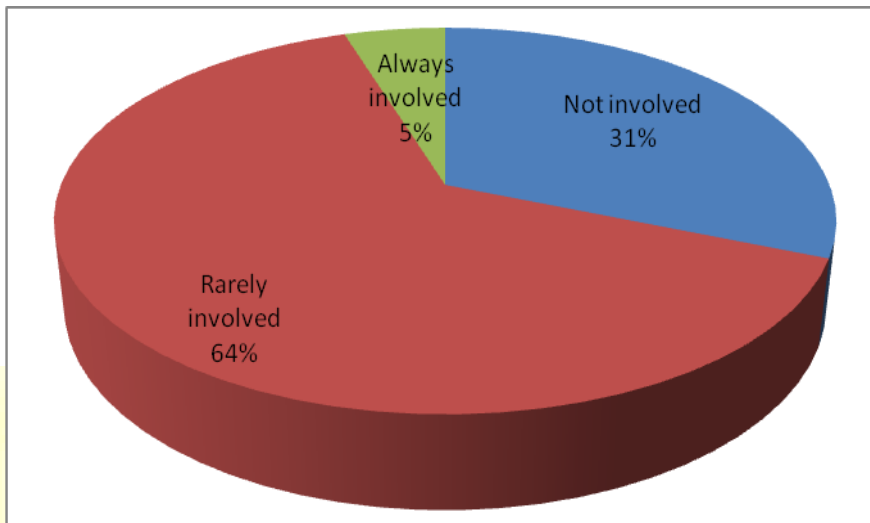


Figure 3: Involvement of women in decision-making

The study indicated that, although most women have knowledge and experience, they were not confident to contribute their ideas when it comes to decision making. Their lack of confidence is due to the thought that men cannot accept their opinions since traditionally, men have always been decision makers, and women, the implementers of what has been decided by men.

3.2.7 Tradition and Culture

The study found out that traditional beliefs and cultural attitudes regarding the role and status of women in society still prevalent them to participate well in employing jobs. Despite women's education and entry into the job market, the woman's role is typically one of homemaker, while man is regarded as bread winner, head of household and has a right to public life (Sadie, 2005). The assumption that men are the main providers for the family means that where there is high unemployment, jobs will be found for men before women and where there is recession women were the first to lose their jobs (Momsen, 2004).

3.2.8 Leadership

In many African societies, women have been socialized to be submissive to men and the existence of the perception that women 'cannot manage' or are 'not competent' enough to handle managerial posts put women in a bad position as a result they are underrepresented in managerial or senior positions. The fact is that, men have monopolized and dominated strategic decision-making positions and put women in the lower levels of the administrative hierarchy. Growe *et al.*, (2000) said that compared to men; women receive little or no encouragement to seek leadership

positions and gets little support. Administrative/leadership positions require hard work and long hours which many women, according to family responsibilities, they don't have therefore those in few in managerial positions often need to make a painful choice between a successful career and family (Ofei-Aboagye, 2000). Women have made slow and uneven progress in obtaining a share of managerial positions, which according to 2011 statistics of the ILO ranged between 20-40% in 48 out of 63 countries researched.

3.2.9 Low salaries

After long discussion with respondents the study realized that women earn less than men, even for similar kinds of work they perform. Although the law prohibits discrimination based on gender in employment and wages, significant wage disparities between men and women remain. According to Malhotra *et al*, (2002), women are often paid less than men in the same functions they perform.

3.2.10 Poor employment policies

The respondents argued that although there were many policies and laws related to women's employment and working situation, most of them were not well implemented, and don't meet the needs and requirements of women. Women's abilities, rights and needs were not taken into account. There is no law against violence of women at the workplace, specifically as supported by Momsen (2004) that 56% of the companies surveyed did not have any formal policies in place to counter sexual harassment. Many of the policies were gender insensitive or gender-blind, not supportive to women's employment; prevent them from entering certain types of jobs due to physical weakness, moral danger or lack of facilities for women workers. A good example is Tanzania's Employment Ordinance, which restricted the employment of women in *underground mining*.

3.2.11 Employer's attitude

There is considerable evidence of employer discrimination against women as justified by the employers on the grounds of perceived lack of physical strength, higher absenteeism and turnover of women. Employers also think women are most suited to jobs related to household skills, this stereotyped view limit employment opportunities for women. *In some countries, there are also legal restrictions or prohibitions against women engaging in certain types of work (UNFPA, 2005)*

4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Significantly, the studies suggest that employment policy and procedures should put more emphasis on the empowerment of women. Taking an example of National employment policy of Tanzania issues of women was too generalized and rights of employed women were not touched at all. It is recommended that equal employment opportunities and strategies to ensure that women are developed, should be prepared. Equitable distribution of women throughout all levels in the administrative hierarchy should be very much adhered to and more positions for females should be deliberately created to ensure that they effectively participate in decision making.

Women are central to development, they control most of non-monetary economy through bearing and raising children, providing much of the labour for household and contributing to a money economy by their work in both formal and informal sectors, so development plans must take into account women's abilities, rights and needs. There is still significant work that needs to be done to achieve the goal of a discrimination-free workplace, fight against increased gender inequality and unsafe working environment. Awareness-raising among the women workers is *important* on the problems they are facing, including inequality and engage men in efforts to mobilize communities against all the discrimination done to women.

It is evident that there is a need for re-framing policies for access to employment and quality of employment. Concentrated efforts are required to ensure that benefits of training, extension and various programs reach them in proportion to their numbers. The improvement of women's status and the assurance of their rights can benefit the entire country and lead to increased productivity, better family well-being, and personal confidence. Through cooperation and resource-sharing, social transformation can occur and allow for the full realization of women's empowerment, while also positively affecting the economic, political, and social development of an organization and a country in general. Women should not lose sight of the fact that the policy makers, state bureaucrats and political parties that implement present reforms are still male dominated. Until women take full charge and responsibility for issues that concern them, changes will remain superficial and slow; there is a need for continued lobbying by women for women's issues.

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