

INFLUENCE OF MEN'S PERCEPTIONS ON WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITIES IN ILALA MUNICIPALITY, TANZANIA: AN EXPLORATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This explorative study investigates the influence of men's perceptions on women's participation in income-generating activities in Ilala Municipality, Tanzania. Despite the increasing economic involvement of women, traditional gender norms continue to shape men's attitudes towards their partners' financial independence. This study aims to understand how these perceptions impact women's economic empowerment and household dynamics. Data were collected through focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with both men and women in the community. The findings revealed that while some men appreciated the additional income and recognized the benefits of shared financial responsibilities, others felt threatened by the potential shift in traditional power dynamics. Concerns about the neglect of domestic duties and the perceived erosion of male authority were significant barriers to men's support for women's economic activities. The study highlights the need for targeted educational and policy interventions to address these gendered perceptions and promote a more supportive environment for women's economic participation. These insights contribute to the broader discourse on gender equality and the socio-economic development of Tanzanian communities.

Keywords: Income-generating activities, gender, perceptions, advocacy, Tanzania.

1. INTRODUCTION

The participation of women in income-generating activities is a crucial element in promoting economic development and gender equality. In many societies, women's contributions to household income and community prosperity are increasingly recognized and valued. However, the perceptions and attitudes of men towards these activities significantly influence the extent to which women engage in and benefit from such opportunities (Varghese, 2021). This dynamic is particularly relevant in regions where traditional gender roles and cultural norms shape the social and economic landscape (Ashraf, 2022).

Women's involvement in income-generating activities has been steadily rising, reflecting broader global trends towards economic empowerment and gender inclusivity (Malick, 2018). Despite these positive developments, the perceptions of men within the community play a pivotal role in either facilitating or hindering women's economic participation. Men's support, or lack thereof, affects women's access to resources, their decision-making power within households, and their ability to balance economic activities with domestic responsibilities (Choudhary, Kirman & Farooq, 2017).

Economic empowerment of women is recognized globally as a fundamental aspect of achieving sustainable development and gender equality (Biswas & Mukhopadhyay, 2018). According to Rahman, Khanam and Nghiem (2017), women's economic empowerment is not just a goal in itself; it is also essential for broader economic growth and poverty reduction. In

this regard, various initiatives worldwide have been implemented to address the economic disparities faced by women and to foster environments where they can thrive. Microfinance and microcredit programmes have been instrumental in empowering women economically, particularly in developing countries. These programmes provide small loans and financial services to women who are often excluded from traditional banking systems due to a lack of collateral or credit history (Mukherjee, 2015). Moreover, education and skill development are critical components of economic empowerment. Initiatives such as the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) focus on increasing access to quality education for girls and women. Vocational training programmes and adult education initiatives also equip women with the skills to enter and succeed in the workforce (Zafarullah & Nawaz, 2019).

Similarly, legal and policy reforms are essential to creating an enabling environment for women's economic empowerment. Many countries have enacted laws to protect women's rights to work, own property and access financial services. Legal reforms ensure that women have equal opportunities and protections under the law, reducing discrimination and barriers to economic participation. Such reforms are foundational in achieving long-term, sustainable changes in women's economic status (Onyebu, 2016). Mukherjee (2015) maintains that supporting women entrepreneurs is a key strategy for economic empowerment. Initiatives like the Women's Entrepreneurship Development Program (WEDP) by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi) provide funding, mentorship and networking opportunities for women entrepreneurs. These programmes help women overcome challenges such as access to capital, market opportunities and business skills (Malick, 2018). In this regard, women entrepreneurs contribute to economic diversification and innovation, create jobs, and drive inclusive economic growth. Moreover, support for women-led businesses also challenges stereotypes and inspires future generations of women entrepreneurs.

The digital economy offers new opportunities for women's economic empowerment. Initiatives like the GSMA Connected Women programme aim to reduce the gender gap in mobile internet and mobile money services (Bishoge, Zhang & Suntu, 2017). By providing women with access to technology, these programmes enable them to engage in e-commerce, access information, and connect with markets and networks. Thus, technological inclusion significantly enhances women's productivity and economic opportunities. It also provides women with platforms for advocacy, education and social engagement (Dimitri, Oberholtzer, & Pressman, 2016). Moreover, social protection programmes, including cash transfers, childcare support and maternity benefits, play a vital role in supporting women's economic activities. As a result, social protection programmes reduce economic vulnerability and enable women to participate more fully in economic activities. They also contribute to better health, education and nutrition outcomes for families, creating a positive cycle of development (Zafarullah & Nawaz, 2019).

Women's participation in income-generating activities is not just a matter of gender equality; it is a cornerstone of economic development and societal progress. Thus, empowering women to engage in economic activities brings numerous benefits, from reducing poverty to fostering sustainable growth (Erwin, Gert-Jan & Leo, 2018). Women constitute half of the world's population, and their active participation in the economy significantly boosts economic growth. This is because when women work, they contribute to the production of goods and services, increase household incomes, and drive demand in the economy (Qing, 2020). Consequently, increased household incomes from women's participation in economic activities lead to

improved living standards and reduced poverty. This is because women's earnings are often reinvested in their families, leading to better education, health and nutrition for their children, thus breaking the cycle of poverty. In the same realm, women's economic participation directly impacts the well-being of their families (Mukherjee, 2015). Women tend to spend a significant portion of their income on their children's education, healthcare and nutrition. Thus, by contributing financially, women ensure that their families have access to essential services and a higher quality of life. This leads to a healthier, more educated next generation, which is crucial for long-term societal development (Madiha, Izhar, Ashfaq & Babar, 2020).

Participating in income-generating activities empowers women by increasing their financial independence and decision-making power within their households and communities (Onyebu, 2016). Economic empowerment enables women to assert their rights, challenge gender norms and participate more fully in societal and political processes. In this regard, empowered women are more likely to advocate for their rights and the rights of others, leading to more equitable societies. Gender equality in economic participation transforms power dynamics, promotes fairness and inspires social change (Onyebu, 2016).

When women engage in economic activities, they contribute to community development. Women's involvement in local businesses, cooperatives and other economic ventures stimulates local economies, creates jobs, and promotes social cohesion. Women are often key players in community development initiatives, using their earnings and influence to support communal projects (Zafarullah & Nawaz, 2019). Active participation of women in the economy helps build stronger and more resilient communities. Women's economic activities create networks of support and cooperation, fostering a sense of community and shared purpose (Zafarullah & Nawaz, 2019).

Many economies face labour shortages and productivity challenges. Women's participation in the labour force addresses these issues by filling gaps in various sectors and enhancing overall productivity (Montanari & Bergh, 2019). Diverse teams, including women, are known to bring different perspectives and skills, leading to more innovative and effective problem-solving as a result, the inclusion of women in the workforce leads to higher productivity and innovation, driving economic competitiveness. Industries benefit from a broader talent pool and diverse viewpoints, which are critical for sustainable growth (Montanari & Bergh, 2019). Moreover, women's economic participation is essential for achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs). Goals such as ending poverty, ensuring quality education, promoting gender equality and fostering economic growth are directly linked to women's empowerment. Women's involvement in income-generating activities supports these goals by creating inclusive and sustainable economic growth (Endalew, 2020). In this regard, achieving the SDGs requires the full participation of women in economic activities. Their contributions are vital for creating inclusive economies that sustain long-term development and environmental sustainability.

Numerous studies in various contexts support the notion that women are not supported by men in their income-generating activities in both developed and developing countries (Endalew, 2020; Montanari & Bergh, 2019). The study conducted by Desai (2022) found that traditional gender norms and patriarchal attitudes significantly hinder women's economic participation in India. Men often view women's income-generating activities as a threat to their status and authority within the household. Additionally, societal expectations that women should prioritize household duties over work further discourage women's economic engagement. Khattak (2021) maintains that men often do not support women's economic activities due to deeply entrenched patriarchal norms and religious interpretations that emphasize gender

segregation. Men perceive women's involvement in work outside the home as inappropriate and against cultural and religious values, leading to resistance and lack of support for women's economic endeavours. Moreover, Kabeer (2024) views that men are reluctant to support women's income-generating activities because of concerns about their wives' mobility and interaction with men outside the family. This is compounded by societal norms that dictate women's primary role as homemakers and caregivers, leading to restrictions on their economic activities. Furthermore, Azali (2015) purports that traditional gender roles and the perception that men should be the primary breadwinners discourage men from supporting women's economic activities. Men often feel that women's work is secondary and should not interfere with their domestic responsibilities, leading to limited support for women seeking to engage in income-generating activities. Acharya (2013) notes that cultural norms and the patriarchal structure of society restrict women's economic participation. Men often do not support women's economic activities because they believe that women's primary responsibilities are household chores and childcare. This perception is reinforced by a lack of legal and institutional support for gender equality in economic activities. On a similar note, Ganesh (2023) argues that men's lack of support for women's economic activities is deeply rooted in traditional and religious beliefs that emphasize gender roles and segregation. Women face significant barriers in accessing the labour market due to restrictions on their movement and interaction with men, leading to limited support from male family members for their economic pursuits.

A study conducted in Japan by Ono (2013) on the reasons why women work concerning the structural equation approach revealed that societal expectations and traditional gender roles significantly impact men's support for women's work. Men often view their primary role as the breadwinner and expect women to prioritize household duties and childcare. This leads to a lack of support for women's economic activities, as men believe that women's work should not interfere with their domestic responsibilities. Similarly, the study by Jang (2016) on cultural attitudes and gender inequality in the Korean labour market, showcased that cultural attitudes and deep-seated gender norms contribute to men's lack of support for women's economic participation. The Confucian heritage emphasizes male dominance and female submissiveness, leading to societal expectations that women should focus on family care. This cultural backdrop discourages men from supporting women's career aspirations and economic activities.

In Singapore, Yenn (2017) found that while there was formal equality in the labour market, cultural dynamics still play a crucial role in shaping men's support for women's economic activities. The persistent belief that women should be the primary caregivers and homemakers means that men often do not support women's participation in the workforce. This lack of support is further reinforced by societal norms that prioritize men's careers over women's. In Taiwan, Hsiao (2014) found that traditional gender roles continue to influence men's support for women's economic activities. Men often expect women to manage household chores and childcare, leading to limited support for their participation in income-generating activities. Despite Taiwan's economic development, these traditional expectations persist, making it difficult for women to balance work and family responsibilities.

In South Africa, Hassim (2016) found that patriarchal attitudes and traditional gender roles significantly limit men's support for women's economic activities. Men often perceive women's economic empowerment as a threat to their traditional roles as breadwinners and heads of households. Additionally, societal norms and expectations reinforce the idea that women should prioritize domestic responsibilities over work. In Nigeria, the study by Olonisakin (2017) reported that cultural and religious beliefs contribute to men's lack of support for women's economic participation. Patriarchal norms dictate that women should remain in

subordinate roles, primarily focusing on home and family care. Men often resist changes that would allow women to engage more fully in income-generating activities, fearing a loss of control and authority within the household. In Kenya, Mitullah (2023) found that men's lack of support for women's economic activities is rooted in traditional gender roles and societal expectations. Women engaged in street vending and other informal economic activities often face resistance from their male counterparts, who believe that women's primary responsibilities lie within the home. This resistance is further exacerbated by a lack of institutional support for gender equality in economic activities. In Ghana Tsikata (2019) found that women's economic activities are often not supported by men due to entrenched patriarchal structures and customary laws. These norms dictate that men are the primary landowners and decision-makers, limiting women's access to resources and economic opportunities. Men's support is often withheld because women's economic independence is seen as a challenge to traditional gender hierarchies.

In general, from the literature, it has been shown that traditional gender roles, cultural and religious beliefs and patriarchal structures significantly hinder men's support for women's participation in income-generating activities. These studies underscore the need for comprehensive strategies that include legal reforms, cultural change initiatives and policies promoting gender equality. By addressing these deep-rooted issues, these countries can better support women's economic empowerment and contribute to broader economic and social development. In Tanzania, little is known about the influence of men's perceptions of women's participation in income-generating activities. This paper therefore aims to fill the gap in the literature by addressing the following questions: What are the men's perceptions on women's engagement in income-generating activities?

2. Methodology

The study was designed to explore the men's perceptions of women's engagement in income-generating activities in Ilala Municipality, Tanzania. The study employed the qualitative approach as a method of inquiry. Specifically, data were collected through focus group discussions and interviews. The decision to utilize a qualitative methodology was made due to its ability to offer an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of intricate phenomena, enabling researchers to delve into the underlying causes, motivations and contexts that influence human behaviour and decision-making. Additionally, qualitative research provides flexibility for the researcher to adapt their methods in response to emerging data, unforeseen patterns or novel research inquiries, facilitating a more thorough examination of the subject matter. Furthermore, qualitative research underscores the importance of comprehending phenomena within their natural settings, allowing the researcher to capture the subtle nuances and complexities of social and cultural influences on human experiences and behaviours related to the topics being studied.

The utilization of focus group discussions as a means of data collection by the businesswomen was motivated by its ability to foster interaction and facilitate the exchange of ideas, experiences and perspectives among participants. This collaborative environment promotes the emergence of novel insights through group synergy. Additionally, focus group discussions offer a wealth of detailed data, encompassing not only participants' verbal responses but also their non-verbal cues, emotions and group dynamics. This comprehensive approach provides a nuanced understanding of the subject matter being investigated. Furthermore, focus groups enable an in-depth exploration of topics through the utilization of probing questions, follow-up inquiries and the opportunity for participants to elaborate on their responses. This multifaceted approach ensures a comprehensive and insightful analysis of the research subject

(Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The data for this study were collected from businessmen and women located in Ilala market within the Ilala Municipality of the Dar es Salaam region, spanning from March to May 2024. The selection of the Ilala market was purposeful, as it boasts a significant presence of businessmen and women, making it an ideal location for data collection.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen to engage with businessmen due to their ability to strike a balance between structure and flexibility. This approach involves a set list of questions or topics to guide the conversation, while also allowing the interviewer the freedom to delve into interesting points raised by the interviewee. This flexibility enables a deeper exploration of specific areas of interest or the adaptation of the interview based on responses received, resulting in a more comprehensive dataset and valuable insights. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews encourage participants to provide detailed and nuanced responses, offering a richer understanding of their experiences, perspectives and attitudes. Additionally, this method captures unexpected information that may not surface in more rigidly structured interview styles. Lastly, semi-structured interviews often foster greater participant engagement compared to highly structured formats, as the conversational nature of these interviews allows participants to feel more at ease expressing their thoughts, experiences and opinions on the subject matter. This increased engagement leads to more candid responses and a more thorough exploration of the topic, ultimately enhancing the quality and validity of the data collected.

The sample for this study was selected from a single market located in Ilala Municipality. Two focus group discussions were carried out, with each group consisting of six participants. Additionally, five individual businessmen were interviewed. The discussions and interviews were recorded using audio equipment and later transcribed verbatim. The collected data were analyzed using the thematic approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2021), which involved identifying, describing, and illustrating appropriate themes using participant quotes. Before data collection, the researcher obtained a research permit from the Municipal Executive Director. Furthermore, informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring the confidentiality of the gathered information and the anonymity of the participants.

3. Results

Several issues emerged from the focus group discussions and interviews regarding the influence of men's perceptions of women's participation in income-generating activities in Ilala Municipality, Tanzania. These are organised into four themes, which include threats to traditional gender roles, loss of authority and control, and concerns about women's role in domestic duties. These are discussed below.

3.1 Threats to traditional gender roles

The findings revealed that some men perceived women's economic activities as a challenge to traditional gender roles, where men were seen as the primary breadwinners and women as homemakers. This perception led to resistance to supporting women's economic participation. During the focus group discussions and interviews, participants were quoted as:

Well, to be honest, it is not that I don't want women to work or earn money, but I believe that it disrupts the natural order of things. Traditionally, men have always been the providers and protectors of the family. When women start taking on these roles, it blurs the lines and creates confusion in the household. It challenges our authority and can lead to a lack of respect from our children. They might start questioning our decisions and looking up to their mothers as the primary decision-makers, which is not how it's supposed to be. Our culture

has defined clear roles for men and women, and deviating from that can lead to chaos and instability within the family structure. I'm not saying women shouldn't work at all, but there needs to be a balance that respects these traditional roles (Interview with a Businessman, Ilala Market).

This excerpt illustrates how some men perceive women's economic activities as a threat to traditional gender roles and the established family hierarchy. It reflects a deep-seated belief in traditional gender roles where men are seen as the primary providers and protectors of the family. The participant acknowledges the potential for women to work and earn money but expresses concern that this disrupts the "natural order," leading to confusion and instability within the household. The emphasis on maintaining authority and respect suggests a fear of losing control and traditional hierarchical status. This perspective is rooted in cultural norms that delineate specific roles for men and women, implying that any deviation from these roles could result in a breakdown of family structure and social order.

3.2 Loss of authority and control

The findings revealed that engagement in income-generating activities by women was seen as a threat to men's authority and control within the households. Participants disclosed that men feared losing their dominant position and decision-making power if women became economically independent. The following testimony was provided by one of the participants who was quoted as:

Honestly, it's a matter of maintaining balance and respect in the household. If my wife starts earning her own money, I worry that it will shift the dynamics between us. Traditionally, men have always been the decision-makers and the ones providing for the family. If she becomes economically independent, I fear losing that dominant position and the authority that comes with it. It could lead to her making decisions without consulting me or challenging my choices. This shift could disrupt the harmony and respect we have always had. It is not that I don't want her to succeed, but I believe these roles are important for keeping our family structure stable (Interview with a Businessman, Ilala Market).

During the focus group discussions with businesswomen, it was found that most of their husbands feared to support them on the ground that women might become the decision makers hence making men being outshined by their women something men were not ready to accept. Women asserted the following:

In my case, my husband is not supportive at all. He believes that if I start earning my own money, I might become more independent and start making decisions for the family. He is afraid that this will make him look weak or outshined. He is not ready to accept a situation where I could be the one making major decisions (FGD with Businesswomen, Ilala Market).

On a similar note, another woman alleged the following:

I face a similar issue. My husband thinks that if I become the breadwinner, he will lose his authority in the house. He is worried that our traditional roles will be reversed and that others will see him as less capable. It is really hard to balance because he wants to maintain his position as the head of the household (FGD with Businesswomen, Ilala Market).

The quoted texts highlight the tension between traditional gender roles and women's economic empowerment. The participants' husbands feared that if women became the breadwinners would undermine their authority and disrupt the established family hierarchy, reflecting deeply ingrained patriarchal values. Their concern about being perceived as less capable by others underscores the societal pressure to conform to traditional roles, where men are seen as primary providers and decision-makers. The participants struggled to find a balance, indicating that

while there was an awareness of the potential benefits of women's economic activities, the resistance was rooted in fear of losing status and control.

3.3 Concerns about women's role in domestic duties

The findings revealed that one of the reasons why women who engaged in economic activities were not supported by their husbands was the concern about women's role in domestic duties. Participants disclosed that traditionally, women were expected to prioritise household responsibilities such as childcare, cooking and home maintenance. When women participated in income-generating activities, husbands often feared that these domestic duties would be neglected or inadequately performed. This perception was rooted in the belief that women's primary responsibilities lay within the home, and any diversion of their time and energy towards economic activities might disrupt the smooth functioning of the household. During the focus group discussions, participants affirmed that:

When I started my small business, my husband was worried that I wouldn't be able to keep up with the housework. He often said that my primary responsibility should be taking care of the home and the children. He feared that if I focused too much on my business, the household duties would be neglected, which he believed would disrupt the smooth running of our home (FGD with Businesswomen, Ilala Market).

In a similar vein, another participant was quoted as:

Yes, that is very common. My husband always says that while it is good for me to help with finances, it should not come at the cost of our home's well-being. He fears that if I am too focused on making money, I won't be able to properly take care of our children or manage the household effectively. This makes it hard for him to fully support my efforts in earning an income (FGD with Businesswomen, Ilala Market).

The recited phrases reflect men's concern that women's income-generating activities will compromise their traditional domestic roles. The husband believes that women's primary responsibilities are household management and childcare. They feared that economic engagement would disrupt the household's smooth functioning. This created a barrier to fully supporting women's economic efforts, revealing a conflict between evolving gender roles and entrenched societal expectations.

3.4 Perception of increased independence

The findings revealed that women's economic engagement was often seen as leading to greater independence, which was perceived positively or negatively. While some men valued their partners' independence and self-sufficiency, others felt threatened by it. During the focus group discussions, the following quotes were captured:

My husband sees my economic independence as a positive thing. He values my ability to contribute financially and appreciates that I can support myself. He says it takes some of the pressure off him as the sole provider and gives us more financial stability. He respects my self-sufficiency and encourages me to keep growing my business (FGD with Businesswomen, Ilala Market).

On a similar note, other participants were quoted as:

In my case, my husband feels threatened by my independence. He thinks that my earning money and being self-sufficient challenges his role as the head of the household. He is worried that I might not respect him as much or that others will see him as less of a man because I am also providing for the family. This makes him uncomfortable and less supportive of my work (FGD with Businesswomen, Ilala Market).

The literal quotes illustrate a common dynamic where husbands perceived their wives' economic independence as a threat to their traditional role as the heads of the household and primary providers. The husband's concern about their status and respect within the family and society reflected deep-seated gender norms and expectations. Their discomfort and lack of support for their wives' economic activities stemmed from fear that their financial contributions could diminish their perceived authority and masculinity. This internal conflict highlighted the complexity of gender dynamics within relationships, where evolving roles clashed with ingrained societal expectations.

4.0 Discussions

This study found that men's perceptions of women's engagement in income-generating activities are shaped by a complex interplay of traditional beliefs, economic considerations, and evolving social norms. One of the men's perceptions of women's engagement in the participation of income-generating activities was the threats to traditional gender roles. The findings align with Salma et al. (2020) who found that men's perceptions of women's economic activities are tied to their own identities and status within the community. In societies where male status is closely linked to providing for the family financially, women's economic activities may be seen as diminishing men's roles or status. This perception can lead to resistance or hostility towards women's economic empowerment initiatives. Moreover, Stokes et al. (2015) state that changes, particularly in social roles and dynamics, can be unsettling for some individuals and communities. Women's increased participation in income-generating activities represents a shift in societal norms and may challenge the status quo. Fear of this change can manifest as resistance to women's economic empowerment efforts and a desire to maintain traditional gender roles as a way to preserve familiar social structures. Furthermore, Qing (2020) claims that men's perceptions of women's economic activities are tied to their own identities and status within the community. In societies where male status is closely linked to providing for the family financially, women's economic activities may be seen as diminishing men's roles or status. This perception leads to resistance or hostility towards women's economic empowerment initiatives.

The findings revealed that engagement in income-generating activities by women was seen as a threat to men's authority and control within the household. Paul et al. (2029) found that deep-seated social and cultural norms often dictate gender roles and expectations within families and communities. These norms prescribe specific behaviours and responsibilities based on gender, reinforcing the idea that men should have authority over financial matters. Women's economic activities that challenge these norms can be seen as disrupting the established order and may face resistance from men who adhere to these cultural expectations. Onyebu (2016) adds that change, particularly in roles and power dynamics within the household, can be unsettling for individuals and communities accustomed to traditional gender roles. Men may fear the unknown consequences of women's increased economic empowerment, such as changes in family dynamics or social perceptions. This fear of change manifests as resistance to women's economic activities as a means of preserving familiar social structures and maintaining control.

The findings also revealed concerns about women's role in domestic duties as one of the factors for women not to be supported by their husbands in the participation of income-generating activities. Kamunyu and Theuri (2017) found that some husbands fear that their wives' economic independence or empowerment through income-generating activities could lead to shifts in power dynamics within the household. They perceive economic independence as a threat to their authority or control over household decisions, particularly if they are accustomed to being the primary decision-makers regarding financial matters. In a similar vein, Montanari

and Bergh (2019) contend that in cultures where traditional gender roles are strongly enforced, there is social pressure for women to conform to domestic roles rather than pursue careers or income-generating activities outside the home. Husbands may align their support or lack thereof with these prevailing norms to avoid social stigma or criticism. Madiha et al. (2020) opine that if husbands perceive that their wives' earnings will not significantly contribute to the household income or if they fear instability in household finances due to irregular income from entrepreneurial ventures or seasonal work, they may prefer their wives to focus on more stable domestic roles that ensure consistent care and support for the family. In a similar vein, Khan et al. (2021) assert that in many households, the burden of domestic duties disproportionately falls on women, even when they are engaged in income-generating activities. This unequal distribution of labour creates tension and resentment if husbands perceive that they are shouldering a greater share of household responsibilities in addition to their work responsibilities. As a result, husbands may resist or discourage their wives from participating in income-generating activities to maintain the status quo of household duties.

Lastly, the findings revealed that women's economic engagement was often seen as leading to greater independence, which was perceived positively or negatively. Huis, Hansen, Otten and Lensink (2017) found that women's economic engagement is often viewed positively because it enhances their independence and autonomy. Economic independence enables women to make decisions about their lives, finances, and well-being without depending solely on others, particularly men. This empowerment can lead to increased self-confidence and assertiveness in various aspects of life. Similarly, Getu (2015) adds that when women engage in economic activities, they often contribute to household income and economic stability. This contribution is seen positively as it supports the financial well-being of the family, improves living standards, and provides better opportunities for children's education and healthcare. Furthermore, Gashaw (2015) argues that women who are economically engaged serve as role models for other women and girls in their communities. Their success inspires others to pursue education, career aspirations, and economic independence, thereby challenging traditional gender norms and promoting gender equality. Conversely, Asfaw, Simane, Hassen and Bantider (2017) found that in societies where traditional gender roles are deeply ingrained, women's economic engagement may be viewed negatively because it challenges the status quo. Some perceive it as a threat to traditional values and expectations that prescribe women's primary roles as caregivers and homemakers. Moreover, Endalew (2020) purports that economic independence sometimes leads to tensions in relationships, especially if men perceive it as a loss of control or dominance over household decisions. This perception leads to resistance or opposition to women's economic activities, particularly in patriarchal societies where male authority is paramount.

5. Conclusion

Generally, the influence of men's perceptions on women's participation in income-generating activities in Ilala Municipality, Tanzania, as explored in this study, reveals multifaceted dynamics that impacted gender roles, authority and domestic responsibilities. Findings underscore significant challenges stemming from traditional beliefs and societal expectations, where women's economic empowerment is perceived as a threat to established gender norms. The study highlights concern over men's loss of authority and control within households, exacerbated by shifts in women's roles from traditional domestic duties to economic engagement. These perceptions reflect deep-seated cultural attitudes that often hindered women's full participation in economic activities, despite the potential benefits of increased household income and empowerment.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made; First, local NGOs, community leaders and gender equality advocates should establish community-based gender sensitization workshops and awareness campaigns aimed at challenging traditional gender roles and promoting women's economic empowerment. Second, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, local schools and community organizations should develop and implement targeted educational programmes in schools and community centers to promote gender equality and challenge stereotypes about women's roles. Third, government agencies, legal authorities and civil society organizations should strengthen legal protections and enforcement mechanisms to combat gender discrimination in the workplace and economic sphere. Fourth, microfinance institutions, local banks, and business development organizations should establish support mechanisms for women entrepreneurs and workers, including access to financial resources, business training, and mentorship programmes. Fifth, government agencies, NGOs, and academic institutions should conduct regular monitoring and evaluation of gender equality initiatives and policies to track progress and identify areas for improvement.

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