Factors Influencing Women Participation in Local Councils in Puntland State of Somalia: A Case of Galkacyo District

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Abstract

Woman in Somalia are largely the breadwinners and caretakers of their families and manage all house chores. This is a clear manifestation of Somali women's capabilities and credibility since society treasures the valuable services they provide. Globally, Somalia ranks the fourth lowest in the Gender Inequality Index (GII) on internationally comparable indices, scoring 0.776 out of 1.0 for complete gender inequality (Cerise, S.; Francavilla, F., 2012). In Puntland, a federal member state in north-eastern Somalia, the women participation in local councils and other decision-making arenas is quite negligible. According to a report issued by the Puntland Ministry of Women in 2016, women in Puntland have done quite well in getting elected into local councils thus making 14% of the incumbent 478 local councillors. Nonetheless, this study sought to explore the factors influencing women participation in local councils, taking into prospective a combination of four variables; culture, education, income and clan-based political system and their influence on women's participation in local councils. Pursuing a stratified sampling technique a cross section of the study population was drawn and engaged in the subsequent data collection process. A combination of structured questionnaire and a focus group discussion were used to garner first-hand information and expert opinions from a total of 80 respondents including 29 local councillors, 22 representatives of women groups, 10 traditional elders, 2 civil society members and 2 officials from the Ministry of Interior, 3 representatives of the Ministry of Women Development and Family Affairs and 2 members from the Parliament's Sub-committee on Local Government. Nonetheless, the study found the existence of persistent patriarchy with 90% of respondents believing that clan elders deliberately avoid nomination of women to local council candidacy and other leadership positions simply due to the commonly held perception that woman cannot represent the clan. The study also found a strong correlation between education and women's participation in local councils. A spectacular percentage of respondents (97%) agreed the importance of education for local council aspirants. In addition, the study revealed that educated women are disinterested to vie for local council positions despite having the necessary educational credentials. This is due to the prevailing culture which discourages women and thwarts their attempts to seek political and leadership positions in society. Furthermore, the study found that strong relationship between women's income levels and their opportunities to participate in local councils. Another interesting finding of the study was the fact that an overwhelming majority of respondents (95.7%) agreed that women do not tend to manipulate or intervene local council selection processes unlike men contestants. Moreover, the study found that the currently pursued clan-based political system categorically favours men whilst undermining women's participation in local councils. Notwithstanding with the above, the study recommends a number of actionable recommendations to address the key impediments to women's participation in local councils. These recommendations include among others the implementation of massive

awareness raising and engagement programmes to redress the century-long cultural misconceptions and negative stereotypes, implementation of women empowerment, capacity-building and development programmes, review of existing women and gender related policies and local council regulations, creating an enabling environment for increased participation of women, exemption of candidacy fees from women and adoption of a credible multi-party system to ensure fair representation of women and lastly reinforce the implementation of the existing 30% quota for women in local councils.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Basically, participatory development is the most important recipe to ensure inclusive and sustainable development across the world. According to the current trends, women are no longer perceived as beneficiaries of development programmes, rather they are critical stakeholders that have a pivotal role to play in development programming and delivery in their constituencies. It's also imperative to underline that the implementation of inclusive development programs has become the major means through which various communities mobilize local and external resources to streamline development and redress inter-generational development problems in their localities. Inclusive developmental programs also have inherent capacity of attracting development assistance to an area (Batrol, K. ; Martin, D. ; Kromkowski, J., 2003).

However, in spite of the substantial benefits that could come through these means, development experts still question whether imperatives of genuine and meaningful engagement of societies in development are actually met, specifically in fragile and undemocratic contexts. These lead too many programs for some communities are either abandoned or poorly executed because of either low participation or non-participation of its citizens as well as their negative attitudes (Angella, 2009).

Nonetheless, localized and inclusive approaches to development quickly evolved throughout the 1980s and into the early 1990s with the introduction of methods such as Rapid Rural Appraisal, Participatory Action Research and, particularly, Participatory Rural Appraisal. Development of the latter approach spawned the emergence of a myriad of new tools and principles for implementing and understanding participatory development. Throughout this period, researchers and community organizers sought to improve their understanding of "insider/local knowledge as a balance to the dominance of outsider/western scientific knowledge" (Emmanuel, 2009).

Specifically, women inclusion in decision-making has been on the forefront of global development agenda since the United Nations organized the first women's conference in Mexico in 1975 (Morris, 1995). Despite the global efforts to empower and engage women in development and local government processes, women are still unable to participate fully in the development process and policy-making in many countries in the world. Due to the systematic exclusion of women in development arena, more women are poor, illiterate, exposed to bad health conditions and, are victims of violence such as rape, abuse as well as neglect, denied basic rights, discriminated against and suffer other forms of social and economic inequality thereby exacerbating the pervasive disparity between men and women in the aspects of education, health, employment, legal matters, leadership and ownership of resources (Weil, M. ; Gamble, D., 1995).

However, there are still actionable initiatives that need to be taken to ensure that women are placed in the heart of local development, and strategies that need to be formulated to ensure that women are able to contribute fully to the development trajectory in their countries (WB, 2000).

> Participation implies "empowering people to mobilize their own capacities, be social actors, rather than passive subjects, manage the resources, make decisions, and control the activities that affect their lives." (Batrol, K. ; Martin, D. ; Kromkowski, J., 2003).

In addition, women's involvement in local governance has been the focus of various discourses at most international forums in the past years. Among those forums that recognised the plight of the Third World women's involvement in development process are the 1995 Nairobi "Forward Looking Strategies for Advancement of Women" conference, the 1995 Beijing Declaration and the United Nations Development Fund for Women. These forums expressed that each member state was expected to promote women's economic independence, including the creation of employment, access to resources and credit, participation in political processes, the eradication of the persistent and increasing burdens of poverty, malnutrition, poor health and illiteracy (Blair, S. ; Lichter, D., 1991).

While such declarations increased an awareness and understanding of the problems facing women and their needs, it has not yet resulted in significant development priorities in terms of their expectations and aspirations. Women's involvement in development dates for long time as suggested by the literature, however, this involvement has not been recognised by other people, especially men (Rai, 2000).

In the Somali context, there is inequality between men and women in terms of power-sharing and access to resources and decision-making. Somali women hold a tiny percentage of government and are not afforded the same opportunities as men to engage in politics and deliberate on key issues. Additionally, in spite of their traditional and valued role as peace builders, and their peace activism, women have been consistently excluded from peace talks, other than as observers (Musse, F. ; Gardner, J., 2013).

Data from a study on Somali women's participation in politics and public life found that the negative attitudes and behaviour of clan leaders towards women is a key barrier to women seeking political leadership (Samah, 2016). However, there have been positive changes. The rise of the Sixth Clan Somali women's political movement, the first ever organised movement funded and led by Somali women has inspired Somali women to seek their rights and participation in decision making at local, state and federal levels. Despite these achievements women in politics continue to face a lot of stigma, and numerous barriers.

2016 was a year of political construction in Somalia, with the Somali women's political participation receiving much needed attention. On 28th January 2016, the Federal Government announced an electoral model with 30% seats reserved for women in both Houses of Parliament. Women also received a 50% deduction in the registration fee to stand for political office. An advocacy campaign was conducted to increase women's representation in the federal Parliament. The results were significant: In 2016, 24% of elected MPs were women in marked contrast to 2012, when only 14% of MPs were women. This is a significant increase, but still below the proposed target of 30% (Samah, 2016).

A recent UNDP report on women's leadership in public administration indicate that in Somalia there are 13 female senators out of 52 (25%), in the lower house, there are 65 females out of 275 (24%); in Puntland, there are 2 women parliamentarians out of 66 (3%), in Galmudug, there are 8 women parliamentarians out of 89 (9%), in Southwest state there are 32 women parliamentarians out of 149 (21%), in Jubaland there are 2 women parliamentarians out of 74 (2%) and in Hirshabelle state there are 5 women parliamentarians out of 98 (5%). In Somaliland, there is 1 woman out of 82 MPs in the House of Representatives, and no women in the upper house.

At the level of district councils, there is less information available. In Puntland there are 66 women councillors (14%) and in Somaliland 10 women were elected out of 375 local council seats (2.7%) in the 2012 local district elections. In Somaliland's district council there are a total of 234 females on staff, compared to 2087 males; most of these positions are also at staff level, with no female majors or deputy majors.

In ministerial federal government positions, there is 1 women minister, 2 deputy ministers out of 25 ministries. In Puntland, there is 1-woman minister and 2 deputy ministers. In Somaliland, in 2015, 4 women were nominated for ministries out of 50-member cabinet (8%). In all zones, there is a lack of inter-ministerial gender focal points and coordination mechanisms, which are important to ensure consistent policies on gender and gender mainstreaming throughout the Government.

Notwithstanding with the above, both federal and state governments are geared towards adopting gender responsive policies that support the implementation of Resolutions 1820, 1888, 1889 and 1960 which identify concrete areas and additional obligations for the implementation of Resolution 1325. Furthermore, although Somalia is not a signatory to the International Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Somali civil society, and especially women's organizations are heavily engaged in global dialogues on its implementation.

In Puntland, even though the current participation of women in politics and local government is low compared to for example neighboring countries such as Kenya or Uganda, women in Puntland are now more than ever before politically active and engaged. Women in Puntland are organizing themselves in networks and forums and collaborating closely across geographic divides. They are also organizing themselves in NGOs and political and social movements in Puntland.

Nevertheless, this study was conducted to explore the factors influencing women participation in local government in Puntland, with special focus on Galkacyo district. The study adopted robust research approaches to engage key stakeholders at grassroots, district and state levels thereby unpacking impediments to women participation in local councils. The study specifically targeted traditional elders, women groups, local councilors, civil society and officials from relevant state authorities with the view to seek their prospective and understanding of barriers to women inclusion in local councils and possible strategies to improve women participation in local councils.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Women constitute 49.3 per cent of Somalia population according to the 2014 Somalia Population Estimation Survey. Despite being half of Somalia's population, women are highly marginalized and severely under-represented in local councils thereby impeding their access to policy making and development opportunities at the local level. In Puntland, there are only two female parliamentarians in the Puntland's 66-member-house, four women ministers out of the 46-member-cabinet and 66 women councilors (14%) out of 478 total councilors in Puntland (MOWDAFA, 2016).

At the national level, Somalia scored 0.8 out of 1 for complete gender inequality in 2012, therefore ranking 4th in terms of countries with extreme gender inequality. The consequences are far-reaching; persistent marginalization, political underrepresentation, economic and social exclusion, systemic oppression and inability to influence the various policy and decision-making processes impacting their daily lives.

Nonetheless, most of women related studies conducted in Somalia overwhelmingly stressed the role of tradition and male-dominated culture in obstructing women's participation in local councils and overall political processes. However, this study looked into a different prospective, taking into account a combination of factors (culture, education, income and political system) that affect women participation and inclusion in local councils in Puntland.

1.3 Objective of the Study

General Objective: the general objective of the study was to examine factors influencing women participation in local councils in Puntland.

Specific Objectives:

1. To explore the influence of culture on women participation in local councils in Puntland.
2. To determine the influence of education on women participation in local councils in Puntland.
3. To examine the influence of income on women participation in local councils in Puntland.
4. To assess the influence of clan-based political system on women participation in local councils in Puntland.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What is the influence of culture on women participation in local councils in Puntland?
2. What is the influence of education on women participation in local councils in Puntland?
3. What is the influence of income on women participation in local councils in Puntland?
4. How clan-based political system influences women participation in local councils in Puntland?

1.5 Significance of the Study

With its 20 years of existence, the Puntland state government has felt short of adequately mainstreaming women in local government and overall political processes at state level. In 2007, the then president of Puntland Gen. Adde Muse issued a presidential decree allocating 30 per cent of local council seats to women. However, this affirmative action was never materialized with the

current women representation in local councils being only at 14 per cent. This study, nevertheless, was conducted against the backdrop of understanding the main barriers to women's inclusion in local councils in Puntland. The evolving democratization and decentralization reforms also make this study both timely and significant, thereby unpacking the key impediments to women's participation in local government and available strategies to address them.

In addition, the findings of this study and the pertinent analysis are framed to contribute to the sparse of knowledge and awareness around women's participation in local government which in turn will help trigger an informed discourse and policy reform to streamline women participation and inclusion in local councils. The study also provides a thoughtful prospective for the policy-makers to re-examine national polices and laws thereby allowing a greater space for women to involve in policy-making and development planning at the local and state levels.

Equally important, this study establishes a number of learning and knowledge processes that are not necessarily reflected in other women related studies conducted in Puntland. And more importantly, this study suggests concrete policy recommendations and actionable steps to address women participation and inclusion in local councils and overall political processes in Puntland. Last but not least, it's envisaged that this study would be beneficial to academicians and researchers as well as development actors involved in exploring and mainstreaming women issues in development planning and policy-making.

1.6. Scope of the Study

The study was conducted in Galkacyo district being the second largest district in Puntland with good track record in mainstreaming women in local government processes. The preparatory and field works and subsequent data analysis and consolidation took nearly six weeks (early March - mid April 2018). Moreover, the study reached out to 80 respondents who are knowledgeable to the subject "women in local councils" including women themselves, local councillors, civil society, traditional elders and relevant government officials from the Ministries of Interior and Woman Development and the Parliament Sub-committee on Local Government.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

Robust research designing facilitates the research operations, thus making the research process efficient, while also minimizing the possible risks and deviations that could derail the research process. According to Dempsey, the research design plans and attempts to find answers to respondent's questions (Dempsey, 2003).

Nevertheless, this study adopted both qualitative and quantitative approaches to reach out relevant groups and collate the necessary data from their various sources. A qualitative approach was used to review the available literature and a focus group discussion of key informants was conducted to substantiate research findings and deliberations. Equally important, quantitative approach around structured questionnaire with close ended questions of Likert scale was used to obtain first-hand quantitative data from primary target groups.

2.2 Population and Sampling

Population is the entire set of units for which the study data are to be used to make inferences (Kothari, 2003). It was against this backdrop that the study focused on reaching out to key primary stakeholders of women participation in local councils which include traditional elders, women groups, civil society, local councillors and representatives from relevant state institutions, primarily the Ministries of Interior and Women Development and the Parliament Sub-committee on Local Governance. Basically, the sampling frame allows the researcher to reasonably draw a cross section of the population whereby all categories of the population of interest are represented in the sample size. Nonetheless, this study employed a stratified sampling technique due to the diverse nature and characteristics of envisaged study population.

The study adopted a purposive sampling technique in order to get cross-sectional information from all strata. Being the primary target group of the study, the researcher interviewed 29 members of Galkacyo local council which in total consists of 31 members - the remaining 2 members were not available at the time of field work. The study also reached out to 14 key informants from women groups (2), traditional leadership (10) and civil society groups (2) as well as 7 government officials from the Ministries of Interior (2) and Women Development (3) and the Parliament Sub-committee on Local Governance (2). The study also engaged 20 ordinary women from four quarters/neighbourhoods of Galkacyo to seek their prospectives on women participation in local councils in Galkacyo. To complement and further substantiate the analysis from the key informant interviews, the researcher also convened a focus group discussion for 10 prominent personalities from women groups, traditional elders, civil society, local councils and relevant government officials who are knowledge to the issue of women participation in local councils.

3. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS
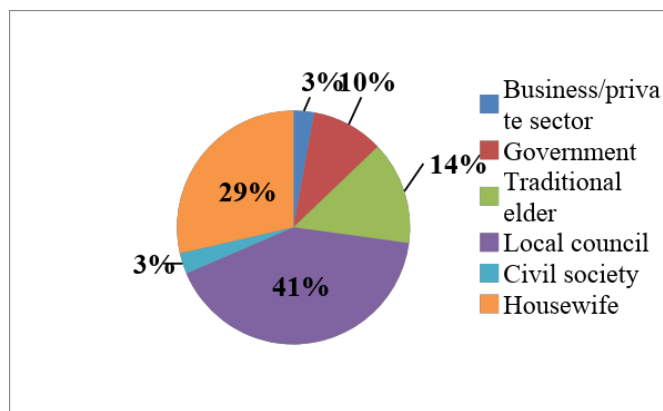
3.1 General Information of the Respondents

The study sought to identify the gender composition of 70 respondents who participated in the study. According to the findings, majority of respondents 40 (57%) were male while remaining 30 respondents (43%) were female. This is due to the fact the Galkacyo local council, a primary target group of the study, consisted of 31 members of whom 28 are men.

The study also sought the age distribution of respondents. Out of the 70 respondents 16 (23%) were aged between 20-30 years. 20 (29%) were between the age of 30-40 years. 22 (31%) were between the age of 40-50 years while 8 (11%) respondents were aged between 50-60 years. The remaining 4 (6%) respondents were age above 60 years. Therefore, the study found that the majority of respondents are between 30-40 and 40-50 years of age. Figure 4.2 features the respondents' age distribution and composition in %.

Respondents were also asked about their educational level. According to the responses, 3 (4%) out of the 70 respondents were illiterate, 7 (10%) had non-formal education, 4 (6%) completed elementary school, 10 (14%) completed intermediate school, 28 (40%) completed secondary school while the remaining 18 (26%) graduated from university. In summary, majority of respondents either had secondary level education or first degree from university. This makes the

study more convincing since majority of respondents are well educated which enables them to provide thoughtful insights and expert opinion on barriers to women participation in local councils in Puntland.

Occupation of the respondents was also sought in the study. According to the analysis, 20 (29%) out of the 70 respondents were ordinary women selected from different neighbourhoods of Galkacyo, 2 (3%) were civil society representatives, 29 (41%) were members of Galkacyo district council, 10 (14%) were traditional elders/clan leaders, 7 (10%) were government officials from the Ministry of Interior (3), Ministry of Women (4) and the Parliament Sub-committee on Local Governance (2) whilst the remaining 2 (3%) were representatives of private sector/business community.

3.2 Women Participation in Local Councils

The first section of the questionnaire comprised three subsequent questions pertaining to the level of participation of women in local councils in Puntland. As shown in the below analysis, respondents were firstly asked about their opinion on current women's participation in local councils in Puntland. Of the 70 participants, 26 (37%) were of the opinion that women participation is very low while 34 (40%) consider that women participation in local council is low. 8 (11%) out of the 70 respondents thought that women participation in local councils is sufficient while the remaining 2 (3%) respondents believe that the current participation of women is high.

In addition, a combined 86% of respondents were of the opinion that women participation in local council is low. This confirms with a study of the Ministry of Women Development and Family Affairs of Puntland which indicates that women constitute only 14% of Puntland's 478 incumbent local councillors at the time of the study (2016). Responding to the second question of the first section of the questionnaire, 33% of respondents strongly agreed that male councillors represent women's interest albeit the low participation of women in local councils. 34% of respondents have agreed the notion that male councillors represent women's interest while 29% of respondents disagreed. And only 4% strongly disagreed that male councillors represent women's interest in local council affairs. In addition, 40% of respondents strongly agreed that the

low participation of women in local councils hinders their ability to influence decision-making and development programming.
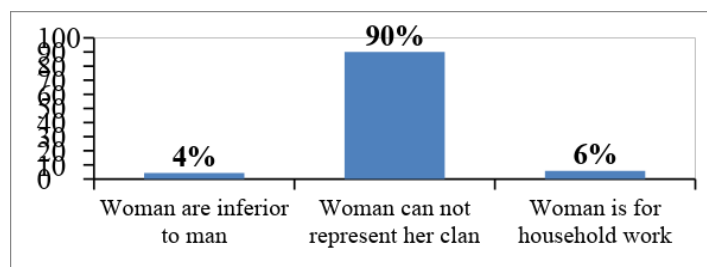
This notion was also agreed by 34% of respondents while 23% of respondents rejected this narrative, hence believing that women's development priorities are not necessarily undermined by their current participation in local councils. Respondents were also asked the need to introduce/reinforce an affirmative action to enhance women's participation in local councils. Of the 70 respondents, 40% strongly agreed to have a specific quota for women. 50% of respondents also agreed the same while 9% disagreed and 1% abstained from answering the questions.

Moreover, respondents of the study were asked to envisage a feasible quota for women in local councils. Of the 70 respondents, however, 40% suggested that a quota between 30%-40% will suffice to represent women in local councils while 33% suggested a quota of 20% to 30% for women. 16% of respondents also assigned a quota of 10% to 20% to women while only 1% of respondents suggested less than 10% allocation for women contrary to 10% of respondents who proposed a quota of 40% to 50% for women to ensure equal participation and representation of women and men in local councils.

3.3 Influence of Culture on Women's Participation in Local Councils

In an effort to measure the effect of culture on women's participation in local councils, respondents were asked if the Somali culture limits women participation in local councils. Responding to this, the participants of the study unanimously (100%) agreed that the culture affects women participation in local councils. In this question, both gender also responded alike, meaning that that culture is key factor influencing women participation in local councils. Moreover, participants of the study were inquired to indicate the commonly held cultural perceptions that relate to women's participation in local councils and overall public spheres.

Of the 70 respondents, 90% were of the opinion that "woman cannot represent her clan" narrative is pervasive hence clan elders deliberately avoid appointment of women to political and leadership positions at local, state and federal levels. 4% of respondents believe that women are still perceived to be inferior to men hence unable to compete with them while 6% of respondents thought that the notion of "women are for household duties" is still persistent among the Somali community hence affecting their participation in local councils.

The study also sought to establish respondent's views on whether the commonly held cultural practices and perceptions exclude women from decision-making forums. Of the 70 respondents,

40% of respondent strongly agreed that cultural practices do not allow women to participate in decision-making or join political processes. This is due to the prevalent patriarchal system which inhibits women from participating in public discourse and decision-making even at grassroots level.

This was also seconded by 46% of respondents who agreed that culture excludes women from decision-making at all levels. Only 14% of respondents disagreed with this narrative. Therefore, the study is in line with Kamau findings which primarily indicate that women are excluded from political process due to the fear of tribal communities that it will bring embarrassment and disgrace to them (Kamua, 2010).

In a related question, 57% of respondents strongly agreed that traditional elders rarely nominate women to local council members. The same views were also held by 39% of respondents who agreed that elders rarely nominate women to local council's seats, meaning that 96% of respondent share the same view in regard to elders' deliberate exclusion of women from local council membership. According to focus group outcomes, elders perceive that women are not well positioned to represent her clan.

Nevertheless, the study is in line with Carolyn Kandusi findings that according to Masai culture, elders are the ones with the final say in all decision-making process in communities thereby downgrading the participation of women in decision-making and other aspects of political processes (Carolyn, 2015). The study also meshes with the findings of Kabira's findings which articulate that women movements, primarily in tribal communities in Kenya, felt short in challenging the traditional leadership of male elders which systematically oppresses them (Kabira & Nzioki, 1995).

3.4 Influence of Education on Women's Participation in Local Councils

Another equally important aspect that the study sought to establish was the effect of education status on women's participation in local councils. Responding to question of "do you think that women's education level has influence on their participation in local councils", 68 (97%) out of the 70 respondents agreed that education status of women matters when it comes to women's participation in local councils. Only 2 (3%) respondents disagreed that education levels of women have an impact on their participation in local councils. A follow-up question was also asked to those agreed that education has an influence on women participation in local councils. This time they were asked to identify the common drivers of women's low education level so as to devise strategies to combat them. Responding to this, 35 (50%) out of the 70 respondents were of the of the opinion that boys are preferred their girls when it comes to sending them to school. 22 respondents (31%) thought that practices of early marriage hinder women's participation in education while 11 respondents (16%) perceive that lack of school fees by parents is the main driver of low educational levels of women. 2 respondents (3%) also thought that confinement to household duties also cause low participation of girls in education.

Analysis from the data also shows that experience, specifically political, does not matter when it comes to the selection of local councillors. A steady 60% of respondents disagreed that women are left out during local council selection due to their political inexperience. An overwhelming majority of respondents (84%) also agreed that educated women are disinterested to join local

councils. This is due to the prevailing culture which thwarts their attempts to seek political and leadership positions as agreed by 82% of respondents.

Nevertheless, these findings are in line with Kipuri and Righewell's findings which indicate that education is a mere pretext which men use to exclude women from participating in decision-making and political processes at all levels (Kipuri, N. ; Ridgewell, A., 2008). In a different note, respondents of the study were asked to suggest actionable strategies that could boost women's participation in local councils from education prospective.

Moreover, 35 (50%) of respondents suggested that lowering the educational requirement of women from intermediate school to elementary school completion will considerably improve women participation in local councils while 21% of respondents thought that the free primary education for girls would inevitably contribute to higher women participation in local councils. 19% of respondents were of the opinion that sensitization and awareness raising of women would increase their participation in local councils whilst 10% of respondents believe that "girl child educational programmes" is the best approach to enhance women's opportunities in participating in local councils.

3.5 Influence of Income on Women's Participation in Local Councils

In addition to the effect of culture and education, the study also sought to establish respondents' view on the effect of income on women's participation in local councils. Unanimously, respondents of the study have agreed (100%) that the income has an influence on women's participation in local councils. Respondents of the study were also asked about a set of Likert type questions pertaining to the nexus between income and women's participation in local councils. Responding to a question whether women's low participation in local councils is due to their unemployment/low income, an aggregate 60% of respondents disagreed with this statement, implying that unemployment doesn't necessarily contribute to low participation of women in local councils. The remaining 40% of respondents agreed that unemployment effects women's participation in local councils. Another interesting query was whether women with financial capabilities are tending to manipulate selection of local councils to win local council seats.

According to the analysis an overwhelming majority of respondents (95.7%) either strongly agreed or agreed that women do not tend to manipulate local council selection processes. Focus group participants also had the same thinking. They argued that men, unlike women, usually tend to use their influence and resources to manipulate selection or collude with elders who ultimately decide the nomination of local council candidates. Respondents were also asked whether women aspirant to local council seats receive financial backing from their clans to finance their political campaign similar to male contestants. However, 34.3% and 55.7% which make up 90% of respondents strongly agreed and agreed, respectively, that women candidates are not supported by their clans unlike their men counterparts who receive financial backing to run their electioneering. Only 10% of respondents opposed the notion that women candidates for local council seats do not receive support from their clans.

Findings from the focus group discussion also show a growing practice where male aspirants are heavily financed nowadays by their clans' businessmen who aim to promote clans' agenda and achieve individual interests by conferring one of his clan members as a councillor and eventually as a mayor if conditions allow. In relation to the effect of income on women's participation in

local councils, respondents were asked to suggest strategies that could improve women participation in local councils, primarily from income prospective. 36 (51%) out of the 70 respondents suggested that exemption of candidacy fee from women would encourage women and inevitably promote their participation in local councils. 34% of respondents also thought that establishment of support fund to finance women political aspirations would increase their participation in local councils.

10% of the respondents were also of the opinion that creation of employment programme for women would increase their income and subsequently their chances to participate in local councils while 4% of respondents thought that adoption of transparent and bribe-free selection of local councils would enhance women's opportunities to participate in local councils.

3.6 Influence of Clan-based Political System on Women's Participation in Local Councils

In addition to the effect of culture, education and income on women's participation in local councils, the study also sought to explore the effect of clan-based political system on women's participation in local councils. With the absence of multi-party political system, Puntland pursues a clan-based political system whereby all public officers and members of local councils, state parliament and cabinet are selected through clan power-sharing arrangements. However, respondents of the study unanimously (100%) agreed that the current clan-based political system affects women participation in local councils.

As shown in the below analysis (figure 3), a combined 93% of respondents agreed that the current clan-based political system categorically favours men while limiting women's participation and inclusion in local councils. Participants of the focus group also concur the same view, attributing this favouritism to the fact that the clan-based political system itself is driven by the same traditional authority who deliberately avoid to nominate women for local council candidacy. Nonetheless, only 7% of respondents disagreed with the statement that the clan-based political system favours men at the expense of women.

In addition, 50% and 46% of respondents strongly agreed and agreed, respectively, that the absence of one-person-one-vote local election also impedes women's participation in local councils while only 4% of respondents disagreed with the notion.
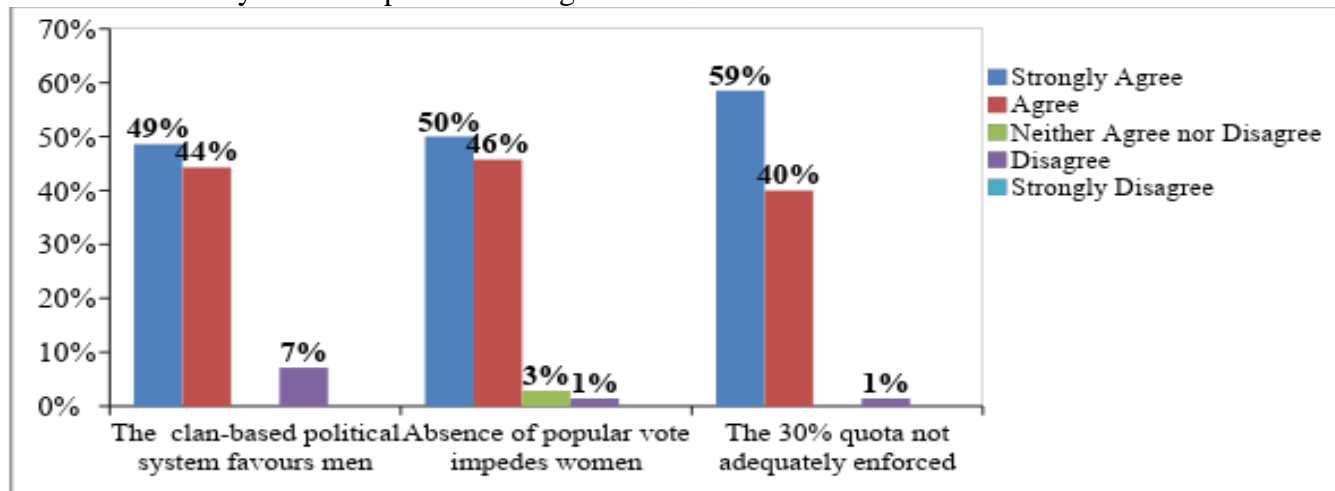
Figure 3: Influence of Clan-based Political System on Women's Participation in Local Councils

Finally, respondents of the study were asked to explore actionable strategies through could improve women's participation in local councils, primarily from political prospective. 38 (54%) out of the 70 respondents, however, felt that adoption of fully-fledged democratization programme and a multi-party political system would significantly promote women participation and representation in local councils while 23 respondents (33%) thought that the reinforcement and implementation of the existing quota system would increase women's participation in local councils.

6 respondents (9%) were of the of the opinion that identification of women champions to advocate for women's cause and inclusion in local councils would enhance women's participation in local councils whilst the remaining 3 respondents (4%) suggested that implementation of massive awareness raising to address the inter-general cultural misconceptions, persistent discrimination and negative stereotypes against women thereby improving their participation in local councils in Puntland. Nevertheless, the findings of this study are in line with Mukhtar's conclusions which indicate that the 4.5 clan power-sharing arrangements undermine women's participation in politics at all levels (Mukhtar, 2007). Furthermore, the study findings confirm that traditional elders prefer men over women for political positions due to their belief that men are always superior to female and more importantly to preserve the clan ego and pride.

4. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Summary

Despite being half of the population, Somali women are politically marginalized and severely under-represented in political and decision-making arenas. This undermines their ability to influence policy-making and development programmes whilst also downplaying their development priorities. In Puntland, there are only two female parliamentarians in the 66-member-house, four women ministers out of 46-member-cabinet and 66 women councilors (14%) out of 478 district councilors in Puntland (MOWDAFA, 2016).

Nonetheless, this study was meant to explore the factors influencing women participation in local councils, taking into prospective a combination of four variables; culture, education, income and clan-based political system and their influence on women participation in local councils. Specifically, this study aims to determine the influence of culture, education, income and clan-based political system on women's participation in local councils in Puntland, with special focus on Galkacyo district.

Overall, the target population of the study composed of Galkacyo district council, traditional elders, women groups, civil society and Ministries of Interior and Women and the Parliament. Using a stratified sampling technique a cross section of the study population was drawn and engaged in the subsequent data collection process including 29 local councillors, 22 representatives of women groups, 10 traditional elders, 2 civil society members and 2 officials from the Ministry of Interior, 3 representatives of the Ministry of Women Development and Family Affairs and 2 members from the Parliament's Sub-committee on Local Government.

A combination of structured questionnaire featuring 15 different questions pertaining to the objectives and variables of the study and a focus group discussion was used to garner first-hand information and expert opinions from a total of 80 respondents (questionnaire respondents 70 + FGD participants 10). Following the data collection exercise, SPSS and Excel sheet were used to consolidate, analyse and visualize data from primary respondents of the study. Nonetheless, the following section summarises the key findings of the study which are aligned to the four objectives of the study:

4.2 Influence of culture on women participation in local councils in Puntland

Based on the analysis in chapter 4, the study found that all respondents unanimously (100%) agreed that culture influences women participation in local councils. The study also found the existence of persistent patriarchy with 90% of respondents believing that clan elders deliberately avoid nomination of women to local council candidacy and other leadership positions simply due to the prevailing notion that "woman cannot represent the clan".
The study also found that an overwhelming majority of respondents (86%) blame culture for being the number one barrier to women's inclusion in local councils. In addition, the study found that negative stereotypes and cultural fallacies exist pervasively in the Somali society with 4% of respondents thinking that "woman are inferior to man" narrative is still existent while 6% of respondents felt that women are usually attached to household duties hence not suitable to involve in public affairs. In a nutshell, this study reaffirms that culture negatively affects women participation in local councils.

4.3 Influence of education on women participation in local councils in Puntland

Pursuing this objective, the study found a strong correlation between education and women's participation in local councils. A spectacular percentage of respondents (97%) agreed the importance of education for local council aspirants. According them, women who completed their intermediate school (primary education) are eligible to run for local council seats according to the Puntland's Local Government Act No. 7. Considering the high illiteracy among Somali women (74.2%), this means that a large portion of women are legally deprived from being members of local councils due to their lack of education.

In addition, the study found that culture is the lead driver of women's low participation in education which in turn limits their opportunities to participate in local councils. A steady 50% of respondents were of the opinion that boys are preferred than girls hence the low enrolment of girls in education. Moreover, the study found that experience, specifically political, does not matter when it comes to selection of local councillors. According to this, a considerable majority of 60% of respondents disagreed that women are left out during local council selection due to their political inexperience.

The study also found that educated women are disinterested to vie for local council positions despite having the necessary educational credentials. According to the analysis, an overwhelming majority of respondents (84%) agreed that educated women are not interested to compete for local council seats. This is due to the prevailing culture which discourages women and thwarts their attempts to seek political and leadership positions in society.

4.4 Influence of income on women participation in local councils in Puntland

In relation to this objective, the study found that strong relationship between women's income levels and their opportunities to participate in local councils. According to this, almost all respondents agreed that incomes influences women's participation in local councils which entails constituency mobilization, stiff electioneering and payment of candidacy fee.

Another interesting finding of the study was the fact that an overwhelming majority of respondents (95.7%) agreed that women do not tend to manipulate or intervene local council selection processes unlike men contestants. This was also confirmed by outcomes of the focus group discussion which also did indicate that men aspirants to local council seats are usually tend to collude with elders and use their influence and resources to win local council positions.

Furthermore, the study found that women aspirants to local council seats don't usually receive support from their constituencies unlike men aspirants. According to the analysis, 90% of respondents agreed that women candidates are not supported by their clans unlike their men counterparts who receive financial backing to run their election campaigns. Findings from the focus group discussion also indicated a growing practice where male aspirants are heavily invested by their clans' businessmen in an attempt to pursue individual interests and promote clan agenda.

4.5 Influence of clan-based political system on women participation in local councils in Puntland

With the regard to this objective, the study found that the currently pursued clan-based political system influences women participation in local councils as agreed by 100% of respondents. In addition, an overwhelming majority of respondents (93%) agreed that the current clan-based political system categorically favours men whilst undermining women's participation in local councils. This notion was concurred by the focus group discussion participants who attribute this favouritism to the fact that the clan-based political system is based on persistent patriarchal norms and clan power sharing arrangements which deprive women from their basic political rights.

In addition, the study found that the introduction of one-person-one-vote election is the best approach to improve women's political participation and representation in local councils. This was primarily suggested by 96% of respondents who thought that a multi-party political system is the only recipe for successful inclusion of women in local councils and other elective political and leadership positions. Last but not least, the study found that the Puntland government has fell short in implementing the 30% quota for women in local council which was adopted in 2007. According to the Ministry of Women statistics (2016), there is only 14% women representation in local councils contrary to the terms of the quota which allocated 30% of local council seats for women.

4.6 CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of findings, this study concludes that culture has an adverse knockdown effect on women's participation in local councils. The study also reiterates the existence of persistent patriarchal system, pervasive cultural misconceptions and negative stereotypes against women which in turn undermine their opportunities to participate in local councils and other political processes. These inter-generational cultural fallacies also pre-empt women capabilities

and potential to pursue public responsibilities and engage in political dialogue and decision-making at the local level.

In addition to the above deliberations, the study also concludes that education has direct effect on women's participation in local councils since aspirants to local council positions are required to have completed their primary education. The study also concludes that educated women have better understanding of their civic rights and responsibilities compared to uneducated women. Further, the study concludes that educated women are discouraged by the persistent cultural practices hence unwilling to participate in local councils. The study also concludes that lowering women's educational requirement during local council selection (from intermediate to elementary) could possibly enhance their opportunities to participate in local councils.

Equally important, the study concludes that income levels of women influence their participation in local councils. Economically, women tend to be highly marginalized hence unable to invest in achieving their political aspirations which at times entail mobilization of entire constituencies, political campaigning and payment of candidacy fees. The study also concludes that women aspirants to local councils are not willing to rig elections compared to their male counterparts who persistently strive to collude with clan elders so as to win local council positions. Last but not least, the study concludes that the clan-based political system, currently pursued in Puntland, strongly affects women participation in local councils. Being an extension of the culture, the clan-based political system categorically favours men whilst undermining women's participation in local councils. The study finally concludes that the introduction of one-person-one-vote election is the best recipe to improve women's political participation and representation in local councils.

4.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above conclusion, the study recommends the following actionable steps to address the low participation and representation of women in local councils in Puntland:

- First and foremost, it's imperative to unleash massive civic education, awareness raising and outreach to dispel the cultural misconceptions and negative stereotypes against women's participation in local councils and overall political and decision-making process. These sensitization and awareness-raising programmes should primarily target traditional elders, grassroots and women themselves. Women-to-women and women-to-elders dialogue is to be initiated to forge linkages between women and elders to showcase women's potential to participate in politics.
- Women empowerment and educational programmes are to be initiated to capacitate women and enhance their ability to compete with men. The Puntland government is to revisit its local government act and the annexed selection criteria of local councillors thereby lowering the educational requirement of female aspirants from intermediate to elementary school completion. This would inevitably qualify a large portion of women to vie for local council positions. The Puntland government is also to create an enabling environment for educated women to participate in local councils and other political processes.
- The Puntland government to consider exemption of candidacy fees from women aspirants to local council seats and to explore establishment of women support fund to finance women's political campaign. The Puntland government is also to introduce strong safeguards to avert

practices of fraud during local council selection and to ensure transparent and fair selection of local councillors.

▪ The Puntland government should prioritize the adoption of a credible multi-party system to ensure that citizens elect their representatives and leaders democratically. Meanwhile, the Puntland government should duly reinforce the implementation of the existing 30% quota for women in local councils and further consider the introduction of affirmative action to empower women and hence their participation in decision-making and development processes at all levels.

4.8 Suggestions for Further Research

Women participation in local councils and overall political and decision-making processes has been at the forefront of Somalia's development and re-construction agenda. However, fewer studies were made to explore the genesis and drivers of women's low participation in local councils and political processes. These studies overwhelmingly overstressed the role of culture in impeding women participation and inclusion in decision-making and public discourse whilst downplaying the influence of other factors at play including education, income and prevalent political system.

Nevertheless, this study primarily meant to shed the light on the interplay between culture, education, income and governance and women's participation in local councils. It also unpacked a number of under-researched issues which include women perceptions and possible strategies to address the persistent inter-generational cultural fallacies and negative stereotypes against women. More importantly, the study explored a menu of options that could underpin efforts to mainstream gender into political and decision-making processes at the local level.

Nonetheless, the study recognises the imperative to explore other equally important variables that could also influence women's participation in local councils. To this regard, the study suggests that future research endeavours should look at the influence of government policies, political commitment, women's awareness and international community's efforts toward empowering women's political participation and inclusion in decision-making and development programming.

Future studies should also focus on unveiling the religious prescriptions pertaining to women's political participation and their cultural interpretations in the Somali context. Last but not least, future studies should examine the fault lines of Puntland and other Somali government efforts' to enhance women's political participation and representation and should also document the experiences and successes of Somali governments in regard to women's engagement and inclusion in political processes at the local, state and federal level.

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