المعوقات الاجتماعية والثقافية لمشاركة المرأة في مشاريع تنمية المجتمع في جنوب السودان: دراسة حالة مقاطعة إيكوتو بولاية شرق الاستوائية

Socio-Cultural Barriers to Women's Participation in Community Development Projects in South Sudan: A Case Study of Ikwoto County, Eastern Equatoria State˄

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الملخص:

يعد انخراط المرأة الفعال شرطا أساسيا لتحقيق تنمية ريفية فعالة ومستدامة، غير أن مشاركتهن ما تزال محدودة في جنوب السودان في مرحلة ما بعد النزاع. تتناول هذه الدراسة المعوقات الاجتماعية والثقافية التي تقيد مشاركة المرأة في مشاريع تنمية المجتمع عبر الإداريات الستة (البيامات) في مقاطعة إيكوتو. اعتمد البحث تصميما متعدد المناهج، إذ جمعت بيانات من خلال مسح شمل 398 امرأة، إلى جانب مناقشة مجموعة تركيز ومقابلات. واسترشد الباحث في التحليل بنظريات النوع والتنمية، وتمكين المرأة، والنظريات النسوية، ورأس المال الاجتماعي، ومقاربة القدرات. وتبين النتائج أن الأعراف الاجتماعية والثقافية، والقيود التعليمية، وضعف الوصول إلى المعلومات ووسائل الاتصال والتكنولوجيا والشبكات، إضافة إلى المعوقات المؤسسية ونقص التدريب وتنمية المهارات، جميعها تقلل بدرجة كبيرة قدرة المرأة على المبادرة أو التأثير في أنشطة التنمية. كما أثبتت الاختبارات الإحصائية وجود ارتباط قوي بين هذه العوامل الاجتماعية–الثقافية وانخفاض مستوى المشاركة (p<0.05). وتظهر المقارنات مع التجارب الريفية في الهند وبنغلاديش ورواندا أن الإصلاحات القانونية والحوكمة المستجيبة للنوع الاجتماعي يمكن أن تسهم في تجاوز مثل هذه التحديات. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن تفكيك المعوقات الاجتماعية والثقافية ليس مجرد استحقاق لتحقيق المساواة بين الجنسين، بل يعد استراتيجية محورية لإنجاز تنمية ريفية شاملة وقادرة على الصمود في جنوب السودان.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تمكين المرأة اقتصاديا، أهداف التنمية المستدامة (SDGs)، تنمية المجتمع، مقاطعة إيكوتو، جنوب السودان.

Abstract

Women's active engagement is widely recognized as a prerequisite for effective and sustainable rural development, yet in post–conflict South Sudan their participation remains limited. This study examines the socio–cultural barriers that constrain women's involvement in community development projects across the six payams of Ikwoto County. Using a mixed–methods design, the research combined a household survey of 398 women with focus group discussions and interviews. Guided by gender and development theory, empowerment theory, feminist theory, social capital theory, and the capability approach, the analysis reveals that socio–cultural norms, educational constraints, limited access to information, communication and technologies, networks, institutional barriers, and a lack of training and skills development significantly reduce women's ability to initiate or influence development activities. A statistical test confirms a strong association between these socio–cultural factors and low participation levels ($p<0.05$). Comparative insights from rural India, Bangladesh, and Rwanda show that legal reforms and gender–responsive governance can help overcome such challenges. The study concludes that dismantling socio–cultural barriers is not merely a gender–equality imperative but a critical strategy for achieving inclusive and resilient rural development in South Sudan.

Keywords: Women's Economic Empowerment, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Community Development, Ikwoto County, South Sudan.

1. Introduction:

Women's participation in community development projects is widely recognized as a cornerstone of sustainable rural transformation. Inclusive development processes not only strengthen local governance but also improve the efficiency and durability of rural projects. Yet in many post-conflict African settings, and particularly in South Sudan, women continue to face entrenched barriers that limit their involvement in community development projects and collective action. Ikwoto County, located in Eastern Eqautoria State, offers a salient case: despite numerous externally funded projects in agriculture, natural resource management, and basic infrastructure, women's presence in planning committees and implementation teams remains low.

Existing literature highlights a constellation of factors– socio-cultural norms such as cultural attitudes and traditions, gender norms, roles and perceptions, discrimination, violence and harassment, self-confidence and women's self-limiting behaviors, education constraints such as lower level of education and literacy among women, lack of training and skills development opportunities, and limited access to information, communication technologies and networks. Studies from Self-Employed Women's Association, The Barefoot College, and Kudumbashree in India, Grameen Bank, in Bangladesh, Rwanda Women's Network in Rwanda, and other post-conflict contexts demonstrate that these socio-cultural dynamics can significantly undermine development outcomes. However, systematic empirical evidence from South Sudan is sparse. This study addresses that gap by investigating the primary social and cultural barriers to women's participation in community development projects across the six payams of Ikwoto County. Using a mixed-methods design and guided by the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework and Gender Development theory, the

paper provides new empirical data and situates the findings within broader debates on gender equality and rural development.

2. Statement of the Problem:

Despite the critical role of women play in the socio-cultural development of communities globally, their participation in community development projects in IKC, South Sudan, remains significantly constrained. In a country where community development is vital for post-conflict reconstruction and economic stability, understanding and addressing the barriers that prevent women from fully participating in these initiatives is critical. The specific issues hindering women's involvement include deep-seated cultural norms, pervasive gender-based violence, lack of access to education and economic resources, and political exclusion (Japan International Cooperation Agency , 2017). These barriers not only limited women's contributions to community development projects in the country. Therefore, there is an urgent need to identify, analyze, and address these barriers to enhance women's participation and thereby improve community development outcomes in IKC.

Women and girls in IKC have limited access to education due to cultural biases, economic constraint, and infrastructural challenges. This educational gap restricts their ability to participate in and benefit from development projects. Coupled with a high level of illiteracy among women limit their capacity to engage effectively in training, leadership roles, and decision-making processes within community projects (Edward, 2014).

Women underrepresented in political and traditional leadership structures, leading to their exclusion from key decision-making processes that affect community development, coupled with inadequate policies and implementation mechanisms to promote gender equality and women's participation in community development (United Nation Human Rights, 2016).

addressing these barriers would have enhanced development outcomes, economic growth, social stability and cohesion, health education benefits, and policy and government improvements.

Previous studies on gender and rural development in South Sudan have been limited in scope, often focusing on conflict and humanitarian assistance rather than local governance and community projects. This gap in empirical evidence constrains the design of context-specific interventions capable of addressing the socio-cultural barriers that imped women's full engagement.

3. Research Questions:

1. What specific socio-cultural norms and practices limit women's participation in community development projects across the six payams of Ikwoto County?
2. How do these norms vary among payams with differing levels of NGO presence and market access?
3. What strategies can effectively challenge patriarchal decision-making and enhance women's agency in community development?

4. Significance of the Study:

This paper contributes new empirical data to the spares literature on women's participation in community development projects in South Sudan's rural development sector. By disaggregating findings across six payams, it highlighted intra-county heterogeneity that is often overlooked in national policy. The results provide evidence to Development Agencies, NGOs, and community organizations can use the study's findings to design and implement more effective programs that address the specific barriers to women's participation in community development. The study also provided data that can help in the efficient allocation of resources to initiatives that aim to empower women and enhance their role in community development. As well as highlighted the need for capacity-building initiatives that equip

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women with the skills, knowledge, and resources needed to participate effectively in community development projects, moreover, the study raised awareness among stakeholders about the importance of women's participation in community development and the barriers they face. This can lead to greater community support for gender equality initiatives. The findings used to advocate for changes in cultural norms and practices that hinder women's participation. Advocacy efforts can focus on promoting gender equality and women's rights.

5. Literature Review:

Inclusive community development depends on the active engagement of women as both decision-makers and beneficiaries, yet their participation in community initiatives remains uneven across the Global South. A substantial body of research demonstrates project sustainability, improve household welfare, and accelerates progress toward the sustainable development goals (SDGs 1, 5,8, and 16) However, empirical Study on "Challenges and opportunities for Education in South Sudan" (2017) demonstrated that, barriers to education include cultural attitudes, especially towards girls' education, lack of infrastructure, and displacement due to conflict. Community involvement is key to overcoming these barriers (Berke, 2018).

According to study on "Assessing the Effectiveness of Educational Interventions in South Sudan: A Randomized Control Trial" (2019) finds that educational interventions, such as teacher training materials, have led to significant improvements in student attendance and learning outcomes. Teacher training and adequate resources are essential for enhancing educational quality (UNICEF, 2019).

Another Study on "The Effectiveness of Community-Based Peacebuilding Initiatives in South Sudan" (2018), outlined that community-based peacebuilding initiatives, such as dialogue forums and reconciliation

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processes, effectively reduce local conflicts and foster social cohesion. Local ownership and participation are crucial for the success of peacebuilding processes (UNDP, A mapping of Community-based peacebuilding and Reconciliation Mechanisms in South Sudan, 2018).

One Gender Equality and Women's Participation, Study on "Examining Barriers to Women's Participation in Community Development in South Sudan" (2017). Identified that cultural norms, limited access to education and economic resources, and security concerns are major barriers to women's participation. Targeted interventions, such as community sensitization programs and economic empowerment initiatives, are needed to address these barriers (C. L. Martin, 2001).

According to study on "Evaluating Gender Equality Programs in Post-Conflict Settings, the case of South Sudan" (2019), proved that gender equality programs have increased women's participation in community-decision-making and improved economic and social outcomes for women. Sustained support for gender equality initiatives and addressing deeply rooted cultural norms are important (Silva, 2020).

Feminist theory is an extension of feminism into theoretical, fictional, or philosophical discourse. It aims to understand the nature of gender inequality and focuses on analyzing gender relations and promoting gender equality (Renzetti, 2008). Feminist theory explores the ways in which power relations are structured around gender and other intersecting identities like race, class, sexuality, and age. It advocates for the dismantling of patriarchal structures and the empowerment of women and marginalized groups (Fallaize, 2001).

According to Kimberle Crenshaw, intersectionality examines how different forms of discrimination such as; racism, sexism, and classism, overlap and intersect. Understanding how multiple social identities impact individuals' experiences of oppression and privilege (Crenshaw, 1989).

Patriarchy according to him is a system of social structures and practices that maintain male dominance over women and other marginalized gender. Analyzing how patriarchal system operate and affect social, economic, and political institutions (Crenshaw, 1989).

Feminist theory posits that gender is not an innate biological characteristic but a socially constructed identity shaped by cultural, social, and historical contexts. Challenging traditional gender roles and norms and advocating for more fluid and inclusive understandings of gender (Tong, 2001). The theory is also seeking equity and social justice by addressing systematic inequalities and advocating for the rights and well-being of marginalized groups, striving for equitable access to resources, opportunities, and representation (Painter, 2015). Feminist theory encourages critical self-reflection and questioning of one's own assumptions, biases, and position of power.

Despite growing comparative evidence from India, Bangladesh, and Rwanda, systematic analysis from South Sudan remains scare, leaving a critical gap in understanding the socio-cultural determinants of women's participation in community development projects.

6. Global Perspective on Women's Participation in Community Development:

Women's participation in community development is crucial for achieving sustainable and inclusive growth. Across the globe, women play significant roles in various aspects of community development, including economic activities, social initiatives, education, health, and governance (Jones, 2014). However, their participation is often constrained by socio-cultural norms, economic barriers, and institutional biases. Despite these challenges, numerous case studies from different countries highlight successful strategies and programs that have empowered women and enhanced their roles in community development (Mehra, 1993).

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7. Evidence from Community development projects in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa (India, Bangladesh, Rwanda):

Self-Employed Women's Association is a trade union for women working in the informal sector in India, founded in 1972. It aims to organize women worker to achieve full employment and self-reliance. SEWA provides access to financial services, healthcare, childcare, and legal aid (Datta, 2003). It also offers capacity-building programs and support women entrepreneurship. It has empowered over 1.9 million women by improving their economic status, enhancing their skills, and increasing their participation in community decision-making (Spodek, 1994).

The Barefoot College established in 1972 in Rajasthan, India, the College trains rural women, particularly grandmothers, to become solar engineers, educators, and healthcare workers. It focuses on sustainable development by empowering women with skills in solar energy, water management, education, and healthcare (Roy, 2011). The Barefoot College has trained over 3,000 women from 93 countries, bringing sustainable energy solutions to their communities and enhancing their socio-economic status (Roy, 2011).

Kudumbashree is a poverty eradication and women's empowerment program initiated by the Government of Kerala in 1998. It includes microfinance, entrepreneurship, and support groups. women are organized into neighborhood groups, area development societies, and community development societies (Shaji, 2023). Kudumbashree has become one of the largest women's networks in the world, significantly contributing to poverty reduction, women's empowerment, and community development in Kerala (Shaji, 2023).

Grameen Bank, founded by Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus in 1983, Grammeen Bank provides microcredit to poor women in rural Bangladesh. The bank offers small loans without collateral to women for

income-generating activities, along with training and support services (Zulfaqar, 2024). Grameen Bank has enabled millions of women to start and expand businesses, improving their livelihoods and contributing to community development (Zulfaqar, 2024).

Rwanda Women's Network, established in 1997, the organization focuses on the empowerment of women through health, socio-economic, and advocacy programs. The network provides healthcare services, economic empowerment programs, and advocacy for women's rights (Balikungeri, 2022). It has significantly improved the health, economic well-being, and social status of women in Rwanda, contributing to post-genocide recovery and development (Balikungeri, 2022).

8. Socio-Cultural Barriers to Women's Participation in Community Development:

1. Socio-Cultural Norms: Traditional gender roles often prioritize men's participation in public and community life while relegating women to domestic roles. In some societies, cultural practices and norms limit women's mobility, visibility, and engagement in public activities (Abate G. & Woldie A., 2022).

2. Educational Constraints: Women may have less access to education and training, limiting their skills and capacity for participation. Insufficient vocational training opportunities can prevent women from acquiring the skills needed for community development projects (Gyan C. Malik M. & Siddique A., 2021).

3. Institutional Barriers: Institutional policies and practices may not be gender-sensitive, leading to exclusion and marginalization of women. Women are often underrepresented in decision-making bodies and leadership positions, reducing their influence on community development initiatives (Chiloane Tsoka, 2010).

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4. Access to Information and Technology: Limited access to information and communication technologies can hinder women's ability to engage in modern community development processes. Women may have less access to information about opportunities, resources, and rights (UN, 2003).

9. Specific Challenges in Conflict and Post- Conflict Settings:

1. Insecurity and Violence: Ongoing violence and insecurity can severely limit women's mobility and participation in public life. Women in conflict and post-conflict settings are at increased risk of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, which can have long-lasting impacts on their physical and mental health (Waki, 2002).

2. Displacement and Migration: Displacement disrupts social networks and community structures, making it harder for women to participate in community development. Displaced women often face extreme poverty and lack access to basic services, further constraining their participation (Ortiz, 2022)

3. Trauma and Psychological Impact: Women affected by conflict may suffer from trauma, stress, and other mental health issues that hinder their ability to engage in community activities. Survivors of violence and trauma may face social stigmatization, further isolating them from community participation.

4. Weak Institutional Frameworks: Conflict can lead to the collapse of institutional frameworks and governance structures, making it difficult to implement community development initiatives. Post-conflict reconstruction efforts may be hampered by corruption, inefficiency, and lack of accountability, further limiting women's participation (Kirai & Mukulu, 2012).

5. Rebuilding Trust and Social Cohesion: Conflict often leaves communities deeply divided, making it challenging to rebuild trust and

social cohesion necessary for collaborative community development. Effective participation requires reconciliation efforts that address grievances and promote social healing (Fletcher D. Cox, 2023).

6. Access to Resources and Services: Conflict often results in the destruction of infrastructure, including schools, healthcare facilities, and community centers, limiting access to essential services. Competition for scarce resources in post-conflict settings can exacerbate gender inequalities and marginalize women's participation (Mojumder, 2020).

10. Gaps in the Existing Literature on Barriers to Women's Participation in Community Development Projects in IKC, South Sudan:

While significant research has been conducted on barriers to women's participation in community development projects in IKC, there are several gaps that still need to be addressed. Identifying these gaps is crucial for guiding future research and policy interventions to better support women's involvement in community development. Below are the key gaps in the existing literature:

1. Lack of Comprehensive Data on Specific Barriers: Many studies provide a general overview of barriers but lack of detailed, comprehensive data on the specific barriers women face in different payams within IKC. There is need for more granular data to understand the unique challenges in each area.

2. Limited Longitudinal Studies: There is a scarcity of longitudinal studies that track the impact of barriers on women's participation over time. Most existing studies are cross-sectional, providing a snapshot rather than a long-term perspective.

3. Insufficient Focus on Intersectionality: Many studies fail to consider intersectional factors such as age, disability, ethnicity, and socio-

economic status, which can compound barriers to women's participation.

4. Underrepresentation of Women's Voices: Women's perspectives are often underrepresented in the literature, with many studies focusing more on external observations rather than direct accounts from women themselves.

5. Limited Evaluation of Intervention Effectiveness: There is a lack of rigorous evaluation of the effectiveness of interventions designed to reduce barriers to women's participation. many studies describe interventions but do not systematically assess their impact.

6. Inadequate Exploration of Cultural Change Mechanisms: While cultural norms are recognized as some significant barriers, there is limited exploration of active mechanisms for cultural change that can support women's participation in community development.

7. Overlooking Informal Community Structures: The role of informal community structures and a network in supporting or hindering women's participation is often overlooked. Informal networks can play a critical role in community development but are not sufficiently studied.

8. Gender-Specific Impacts of Conflict and Displacement: While the impact of conflict and displacement on women's participation is acknowledged, there is limited research on the gender-specific effects and coping strategies employed by women in these contexts.

9. Integration of Technology and Innovation: The is minimal research on the potential of technology and innovation to overcome barriers to women's participation in community development. This includes the use of mobile technology, digital literacy, and online platforms.

10. Policy and Legal Framework Analysis: The analysis of existing policy and legal frameworks and their effectiveness in promoting women's participation in community development is often insufficient.

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The existing literature on barriers to women's participation in community development projects in South Sudan, particularly in IKC and its Payams, reveals several significant gaps. Addressing these gaps through targeted research and policy interventions is essential for creating an enabling environment for women active involvement in community development. Future research should focus on detailed, localized data collection, longitudinal studies, intersectional analysis, participatory methods, rigorous intervention evaluation, cultural change mechanisms, the role of informal community structures, gender-specific impacts of conflict, the integration of technology, and comprehensive policy analysis. By filing these gaps, stakeholders can develop more effective strategies to support women's participation and drive sustainable community development in South Sudan and similar contexts.

11. Research Methodology:

11.1 Research Design:

The study adopts mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative research methods. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the barriers faced by women, providing both statistical data and in-depth insights into personal experiences and perceptions (Crewell, Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches, 2009).

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). Research design is the major foundation within which research is carried along, it conveys a clear picture that is reflected in gathering, measuring and analyzing data (Kothari, 2004).

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This study embraced a case study design which involved an empirical enquiry, that is aimed at investigating a particular phenomenon within its real-life setting. Therefore, in line with the nature of the study objectives relate with the case study design, the researcher embraced the case study design (Kothari, 2004).

Yin (2009) contends that the case study enables researcher to investigate people or institutions, simple intervention relationships and communities and that facts are collected through various sources, for example focus group discussion, documentary review, interview and organization records (Yin, 2009).

11.2 Study Area:

This Study was conducted in IKC, located in Eastern Equatoria State, South Sudan. IKC comprises of six payams: Ikwoto central, Hatire, Losite, Imatong, Lomohidang south and North. The County is predominantly rural, with livelihoods primarily based on agriculture, petty trade, and informal labor. Community development projects in the area have been initiated by both governmental and non-governmental actors, yet women's participation in these projects remains low, making the county an appropriate setting for the study (UNHCR, 2011).

11.3 Target Population:

The target population consisted exclusively of women residing in the six payams of IKC. This included:

1. Working women engaged in formal employment (such as teaching, healthcare, and government services) and formal sectors (such as market trading, tailoring, and small-scale agriculture).

2. non-working women, including homemakers and those without a permanent source of income.

3. Educated women, ranging from those with basic literacy to those with advance education.

4. Illiterate women, with no formal schooling or literacy skills.

This inclusive target population ensured that the study captured a diverse range of experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives, thereby enhancing the validity of the findings.

11.4 Sampling Method:

A stratified random sampling method and simple random sampling were used to ensure representation from all six payams. The strata are based on geographic location (payam) and demographic characteristics (age, occupation, education level and others).

11.5 Stratified Random Sampling Method:

Stratified random sampling was used. This technique involves the division of population into smaller groups know as strata which formed based on members shared attributes. A random sampling from each stratum is taken in a proportional allocation. these sub sets of the strata are then pooled to form a random sample. The main advantage with stratified sampling is how it captures key population characteristics in the sample. Stratified sampling works well for populations with a variety of attributes. A sample size corresponding to a population obtained from population census of 22/04/2008, which shows that the population in IKC is 84,649. Males constitute 42,106 and Female 42,543. the size of the sample for each stratum is therefore obtained from 42,543.

11.6 Simple Random Sampling:

This sampling technique was used in selecting 398 respondents form the six payams. The researcher was used this sampling technique for this group in light of the fact that any respondent chosen from the group might

give similar information which could be given by another respondent. In this manner chosen any respondent from this group could enable the researcher have appropriate information. This sampling was used to give equal chances of the respondents to be incorporated into the sample

For the propositional allocation for the six payams, researcher used the below formula;

$$\frac{N}{T} \times \frac{100}{1} \times 398$$

Where,

N= The number of respondents

T= The total number of respondents $\frac{100}{1}$ = The percentage

11.7 Sample Size:

Kothari (2004) defines sample size to mean the number of items to be selected from the universe (or population) to constitute a sample. Based on literature which says that regardless of the population size a sample or subsample of the 30 cases is the bore minimum for studies in which statistical data analysis is to be done (Bailey, 1998). The size of the sample should neither too big nor too small. It should be optimum to fulfil the requirements of efficiency, representativeness, reliability and flexibility. Also, Babbie (1990) points out that a sample of at least thirty respondents is satisfactory and can allow statistical analyses to be carried out. So, a sample of 398 respondents was selected and included in the sample. These include 12 key informants for group discussion, and educated and uneducated women based on their stratum.

The sample size is determined using Slovin's formula for sample size calculation, ensuring statistical validity and reliability. The sample includes:

- 398 Women (proportionately with the payam population)

- 06 Community leaders (One from each payam)

− 03 NGOs workers and government officials

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

$$n = \frac{42,543}{1 + 42,543 * 0.0025}$$

n=398

The parameters used in the above formula have the following explanations;

n= Sample Size

N= total population

e= margin of error

11.8 Data Collection Methods:

Data was mainly collected from two sources, primary and secondary sources

Primary Data: was collected using structured questionnaire and focus group discussion to collect information from mainly women who have residing in the payams under the study, and they are above 17 years old.

1. Questionnaire:

Structured questionnaires are administered to women to collect quantitative data on their participation in community development projects, barriers they face. The questionnaires were collected from the respondents of IKC's Payams with the responses that had been captured. After coding, the data was tabulated and presented in frequencies, percentages and charts. The data collected using both descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of Specialized Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS).

Kothari (2004) defines questionnaire as a document that consists of a number of questions printed or typed in a definite order on a form or a set

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of forms designed to implore information for analysis. The questionnaire consists of five (5) sections; section I, explored the socio-cultural, economic and demographic information such as; marital status, age, level of education, individual income, among others. Section II, covered constraints of women participation such as; time for participation, physical disability, women satisfaction, etc. Section III, investigated the social barriers facing women participation, such as; marriage, literacy/illiteracy, girls' education, etc. Section IV, covered economic barriers facing women participation, such as; working outside the home, other economic conditions, among others, and section V, focused on the cultural barriers facing women participation such as; cultural norms and practices and others.

A pilot study conducted so as to pre-test them to ensure that there were no ambiguous or un necessary questions. Krishnaswani (2002) argues that testing the questionnaire is important to see whether the instrument is appropriate and suitable to test, whether the wording of questions is clear and suit understanding of the respondent and to develop appropriate formula for administrating the instrument with reference to filed conditions or not. This technique gave respondent freedom and enough time to digest/think on questions provided to be useful for required answers.

Researcher trained enumerators from the community concerned, for the respondents whom do not understand English language very well, in order to give the right answer for each question in the questionnaire. In some cases, where respondent speaks English yet could not pick the meaning, the enumerators provide clarification in their dialect to ease the understanding of the questionnaire.

2. Focus Group:

Focus group discussions (FGDs) are held with women from different payams to gain deeper insights into their experiences and to identify common themes and challenges. Focus group is a form of survey designed

to identify and solve problems. Surveys help communities determine a course of action once a problem/issue has been identified; focus group help communities find what problems/issues actually exist and how they should be defined. Focus group is in-depth, specific interview with people representing a cross-section of the community based on ethnicity, race, age, socio-economic status, perspective, and so forth.

Secondary Data: obtained from documents sources such as textbooks, internet, journals, presented papers which was used to prove information on the barriers facing women participation in community development projects under the study areas

1. Interviews: Semi-structured interviews are conducted with community leaders, NGOs workers, and government officials to gather qualitative data on their perspectives regarding barriers to women's participation.

2. Participatory Observation: The researcher engages in participatory observation to observe community meetings and development projects activities, noting the level and nature of women's participation.

11.9 Data Analysis Methods:

Patton (2007) defines data analysis to the process that involves working with data, organizing it, breaking into manageable units, synthesizing it, and deciding what you should tell others.

Kothari and Gang, (2014) argues that data collection has to be processed, analyzed and presented in accordance with the outlines laid down for the purpose at the time of developing the research plan. Data analysis involves the transformation of data into meaningful information for decision making. It involves editing, error correction, rectification of omission and finally putting together or consolidating information gathered (Miles,M. B., Huberman, A.M. and Saldana, J. , 2014).

11.9.1 Qualitative Data Analysis:

Qualitative data from interviews and FGDs are analyzed using thematic analysis. This involves coding the data and participatory observation to capture the nuanced experiences and to identify recurring themes and patterns related to barriers to women's participation (Crewell, Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches, 2009).

Qualitative data analysis, is a process through which the data collected through interviews and other related methods are subjected to assessment or evaluation. Thus, for the purpose of effectively analyzing the qualitative data, the researcher had to go through a process called content analysis (Crewell, Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches, 2009).

11.9.2 Quantitative Data Analysis:

Descriptive Statistic:

Quantitative data from structured questionnaires are analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize the data and present the frequency, mean, and standard deviation of responses.

Inferential Statistics:

Inferential statistical methods, such as chi-square test and regression analysis, are used to examine relationships between variables and to test hypothesis about barriers to women's participation.

Data representing characteristics of respondents and information collected through the questionnaire survey from Ikwoto payams, coded from text into numerals and clean to remove errors in terms of accuracy, consistence, and responses. Each possible answer is assigned number to ease the determination of corrections of data during the whole process of data entry and cleaning.

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The data for the respondents entered into a computer and shelled for errors before being analyzed using the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) computer program. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages and regression were determined and the information is presented in form of tables and charts (Filed, 2018).

11.10 Validity of Data:

Punch (2000) asserts that validity as the instrument`s ability to measure what is supposed to measure accurately, effectively, and efficiently. Mixed methods approach is adopted in this study to enhance validity. The mixed−methods approach leads to triangulation. Triangulation was allied with construct validity (Crewell, Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches, 2009).

A variable was measured with a particular instrument (Cooper and Schindler (2003). Krishnaswami (2002) add that, triangulation ensures interpretive validity and establishes data trustworthiness. When multiple techniques are applied, the validity of the investigation is heightened (Mason and Bramble,1997).

11.11 Reliability of Data:

Babbie (1990) defined reliability as a condition in which similar results are produced whenever the same techniques are repeated to do the same in the study. Reliability was ensured by matching the finding from the research instrument with previous similar study.

To ensure reliability, the research tool were pre−test tow times through pilot study and the feedback of each trial was compared to approve if the results from the trials are reliable as Punch (2000) opine that pre−testing assess whether the questions are clear, specific, answerable, interconnected and substantially relevant.

According to Dempsey (2003), pre-testing the questionnaire proves practicability of the planed procedure for coding data. It as well shows if there exist any flows and/or ambiguities in the instrument of data collection.

11.12 Ethical Considerations:

Participants are informed about the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw at any time, and assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. Written informed consent is obtained from all participants.

Cooper and Schindler (2003) express that the objective of ethics in research is to guarantee that nobody is hurt or experiences unfavorable effects from research activities. In conducting this study, the researcher kept into account that ethical consideration such as guarding the rights of respondents is observed, there were no direct or indirectly physical harm to respondents.

The researcher had no biasness, protected anonymity and the researcher definitely report what was observed during the study. The researcher notified the respondents that the research was for the study purposes only. Mason and Bramble (1997) noted that the consideration of ethics and values in research reminds the researcher duty regarding acknowledging keeping the public informed and protecting the privacy and welfare of human objects.

In preparation for data collection, the researcher obtained a research permit from Gezira University and also from the government authority in both State level and County level. moreover, permission also sought from Payam's administration. confidentiality of the information collected from each individual respondent was strictly observed and respondents were informed of the same through a letter attached with the questionnaires.

12. Summary of Key Findings:

This is a concise summary of the key findings from the study in barriers to women's participation in community development projects in IKC, South Sudan.

Payams:

26% respondents were from Ikwoto Central. 18% respondents from Lomohidang North. Likewise,18% respondents were from Lomohidang South. As well, 18% respondents were from Losite. Meanwhile, 7% respondents were from Kateire. Finally, 14% respondents were from Imotong. This shows that the women population are many in Ikwoto Central according to the projection assessment of 2015 as a result the proportion of 25% respondents were allocated to Ikwoto Central Payam.

Marital Status:

43% of the respondents were married. 27% were unmarried, and 11% Divorced. The same 11% respondents were widowed. Meanwhile, 8% respondents were separated. This shows the readiness of married women to respond to answer questionnaires that can address barriers facing women in community development projects, particularly in IKC.

Age:

45% of the respondents were from the age Less than 18 years old when they get the first child. Meanwhile, 51% of the respondents were from the age between 18-30 years old. 3% of the respondents were from the age between 31-43 years old. And only 1% of the respondents were from the age 44 years and above. This shows that most of the respondents were at the early age of maturity, and they cannot understand life better when they are married or delivered their first child.

Respondents' Number of Children:

50% of the respondents have between 0-3 children. Followed by 43% of the respondents who have between 4-7 children. Lastly, 7% of the respondents have 8 children and above. This shows that most of women in various Payams of IKC are breadwinners in the absence of their husbands.

Respondents' Educational Level:

44% responding to these questionnaires show that respondents with secondary school level of education. Follow by 39% of respondents who dropped out of primary school level. Moreover, 9% of respondents represents both illiterates and undergraduates. Meanwhile, 0.3% constitute both graduates and others. This shows that in IKC, majority of women are married when they reach secondary school's level as such they engage in the family.

Husband's Educational Level:

Secondary school level has taken the lead in responding to these questionnaires with 35%. Follow by those who married to husband with Primary school level, which constitute 26% respondents. Meanwhile, women married to husband with undergraduate level constitute 16% respondents. And 9% represents women whom married husband with other level of education; these could be spiritual education or non-formal education. Women married to illiterate and graduate are both constitute 7% respondents who responses to the questionnaires. This shows that secondary school graduates are the ones getting married most and university graduates and illiterates are less to marry in IKC.

Language Spoken:

28% of the respondents can speak mother tongue and English fluently. In addition, 26% of the respondents can speak English and Arabic. Follow by 12% of the respondents can speak mother tongue, English, and Arabic.

Meanwhile, 9% of the respondents can speak only mother tongue. 8% of the respondents can speak only English. Also 2% of the respondents only speaks Arabic. Finally, 1% speaks Swahili language. This is to demonstrate that the respondents understood the questions in the questionnaires; as such, they answered it accordingly.

Respondent's Working Status:

50% of the respondents were working class, and 50% were non-working class, which mean the questionnaires distributed equally to the respondents who were selected randomly form the six Payams of IKC.

Respondents Working Sector:

18% of the husbands of respondents (49%) were working in public sector and 13% were working in private sector and NGOs. while 5% were working in other sectors. that mean the majority of men were employed in private establishment in the six Payams of IKC.

Reasons for Not Working:

49% of the respondent's husbands are working. 20% of the respondents do not know the where about of their spouses. 11% of the respondents' partners are students. While 10% of the respondents' spouses have passed on. And 4% of the respondents' partners are disable. Moreover, 5% of the respondents' husbands are retired or elderly.

Individual Level of Income Per Month:

45% of the respondents' level of income per month, is less than 10,000 SSP. 40% of the respondents' income level per month, is between 10,000-20,000 SSP. Moreover, 14% of the respondents' income level per month is between 210,000-30,000 SSP. Meanwhile, 1% only of the respondents' income level per month is between 310,000 and above SSP.

Household Level of Income Per Year:

12% of the respondents' level of income per a year, is less than 10,000 SSP. 31% of the respondents' income level per a year, is between 10,000–20,000 SSP. In addition, the same, 31% of the respondents' income level per a year, is between 210,000–30,000 SSP. Moreover, 26% only of the respondents' income level per a year is between 310,000 and above SSP.

Respondents' Self-Consideration:

59% responding to these questionnaires show that respondents place themselves in a moderate level. Follow by 39% of respondents who consider themselves poor. While 2% of respondents considered they are rich.

Community Development Project Operating in the Respondents' Areas:

92% of the respondents agreed on the operational of community development projects in their areas, and 8% of the respondents responded negatively, which mean some respondents do not know what community development projects are?

Project's Types:

28% of respondents identified schools as the primary project in their area, while 27% selected Primary Health Centers (PHCs). Additionally, 19% chose farming as a key project, 7% identified other projects, and 6% selected water points. Only 5% of respondents viewed microfinance as a community development project in their area. This indicates that there are numerous community development projects available in the study area, yet women's participation remains low.

Respondents' Interest in Participation:

74% of respondents indicated a willingness to participate, while 26% responded that they were not interested. This distribution suggests that a majority are eager to engage in community initiatives, but there is still a significant minority who are not inclined to participate. The reasons behind the lack of interest could include factors such as limited awareness, insufficient resources, or doubts about the effectiveness of their involvement.

Reasons for Lack of Interest to Participate:

9% of respondents provided other reasons for the lack of interest to participate, and 6% cited studies as a reason for not getting involved. 4% of the respondents mentioned that they are being too busy, and another 4% expressed dissatisfaction with the projects, and 3% of the respondents stated that they are disabled, which may limit their ability to participate. Interestingly, 75% of respondents between have interest to participate already participated. These factors highlight the diverse challenges that can affect community engagement.

Training Acquired by the Respondents:

47% of the respondents reported that they had not received any training in community development projects, while 53% of the respondents indicated that they had undergone such training. This finding underscores the importance of expanding training programs to ensure broader participation and enhance the overall impact of community development projects.

Participation in Community Development Projects:

57% of the respondents have ever participated in community development projects, while 43% of the respondents indicated that they had never ever participated in community development projects. This finding

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illustrates that there is a need to encourage others to engage in training for effective participation.

Reasons for Non-Participation:

29% reported that they were not given the opportunity to participate. This suggest that access to community development initiatives may be limited or not well-communicated, preventing some individuals from getting involved. About 6% of respondents indicated that they were too busy to participate. This point competing priorities or obligations that may hinder their ability to engage in community development activities. A small group 7% mentioned that they did not know about the projects in the area needs participation indicating a potential lack of information or awareness about these initiatives, which could be a barrier to participation.

Prospects of Participation for Any Upcoming Projects:

72% of the respondents expressed interest in participating in future community development projects, while 28% were not interested in participating in any upcoming projects. This indicates that a portion of the respondents are hesitant or reluctant to engage in such initiatives.

Experience of Any Instability that can Hinder Respondents' Participation:

36% did not face any such instability. The instability likely created barriers, such as safety concerns or disrupted communication, that made it difficult for the affected individuals to engage in these initiatives.

Experience Physical Disability that can Hinder Respondents from Participation:

26% of respondents faced physical disabilities that limited their participation in community development projects, while 74% did not encounter such challenges. These physical disabilities likely posed

obstacles that made it difficult for the affected individuals to take part in these initiatives.

Time Available for Respondents to Participate:

67% of respondents have enough time to participate in community development projects, while 33% of the respondents do not. The lack of time for some respondents may be due to other commitments or responsibilities that limit their ability to engage in community development initiatives.

Guardians Permission to Participate in Community Development Projects:

81% of guardians would allow respondents to participate in community development projects, while 19% would not. Those who wouldn't allow participation may have concerns regarding safety, time constraints, or the value of such activities.

Number of Women Who Participating in Community Development Projects is Low?

45% of respondents agree that the number of women participating in community development projects in their areas is low, while 19% disagree, and 36% are unsure. This uncertainty and disagreement may stem from a lack of clear information or visibility regarding women's involvement in these projects.

Respondents' Satisfaction with Their Status Quo:

31% of the respondents' responses were satisfied. And, 47% of the respondents were responding neutral. While, 21% of the respondents were non-satisfied with their status in the community. This mean there are numerous of respondents don't really want to assess their status in the

community they are in. enough time to participate in community development projects, 67% of them responded positively.

13. Interpretation of Results:

Social Barriers:

The coefficient for social barriers ((β_3)) is 0.52, indicating a positive impact on women's participation. The p-value (<0.001) demonstrates that less working load is significantly associated with increased participation in community projects.

Cultural Barriers:

The coefficient for cultural barriers ((β_1)) is -0.45, indicating a significant negative impact on women's participation in community development projects. The p-value (<0.001) suggests that this relationship is statistically significant.

Overall Model:

The R-squared value of 0.49 indicates that approximately 49% of the variability in women's participation in community development projects can be explained by the independent variables in the model. The F-statistic (44.21, $p<0.001$) confirms that the overall model is statistically significant. The regression analysis is therefore supporting all the three hypotheses:

1. Social barriers have a strong effect on women participation in community development projects in IKC.

2. Cultural barriers constitute impediment to effective participation of women in community development projects in IKC.

Addressing these barriers requires targeted interventions that promote social and cultural change, and economic empowerment, to enhance women's participation in community development in IKC.

14. Recommendations:

Based on the findings of the study on berries to women's participation in community development projects in IKC, South Sudan. The following recommendations are proposed:

1- Initiate community-wide gender sensitization programs to challenge traditional gender norms and encourage a more inclusive environment where women are seen as equal contributors to community development.

2- Invest in educational programs specifically targeted at women and girls, focusing on both formal education and vocational training, to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary for active participation in development projects.

3- Support the formation and strengthening of women's groups and networks within the community. These groups can serve as platforms for collective action, peer support, and advocacy for women's rights and participation in development projects.

4- Collaborate with local leaders, including traditional and religious leaders, to advocate for women's inclusion in decision-making processes and to model gender-equitable behavior within the community.

5- Advocate for and implement legal reforms that protect women's rights and ensure their participation in community development. This includes enforcing laws that prevent gender-based violence and discrimination.

6- Use media campaigns, community meetings, and educational materials to raise awareness about the importance of women's participation in development projects and the positive impacts it can have on the broader community.

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