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Factors influencing women participation in church leadership in Tanzania: A case study of evangelical Lutheran church, pare diocese

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Abstract

Women participation is important aspect in leadership despite that the number of women participating in church leadership is still low. However, the goal of the church is to ensure full women's inclusion in the ordained ministry. Therefore, many churches have adopted some policies and frameworks to empower women and to increase the number of women participating in church leadership. The main purpose of the study was to examine the factors influencing women participation in church leadership in Evangelical Lutheran Church, Pare Diocese of Tanzania. The study adopted a case study design to collect data from a sample of 154 respondents from a target population of 309. The population comprised of the diocese management team, executive committee, church elders, pastors, and evangelists. The study collected both qualitative and quantitative data using questionnaires and unstructured interviews. Quantitative data was analyzed using both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics through SPSS version 20 whereas thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data. Descriptive statistics such as measures of central tendency and measures of spread was used to describe and summarize data in a meaningful way which allowed data presentation through descriptive tools such as percentage and mean. Further, correlation analysis was used to analyze the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The study achieved a response rate of 84%. On the factors influencing women participation in church leadership; the study found that the relationship between educational qualification and participation was low. To some extent, organizational culture influences women participation in church leadership. Further, gender-sensitive policies play an important role in women participation in church leadership. The study recommends that the theocratic structures and policies that govern the Evangelical Lutheran Church should be revised so as to create a suitable environment for women participation in church leadership.

Keywords: Women participation, church leadership, organizational culture, gender-sensitive policies

Introduction

Women in every part of the world continue to be largely marginalized from leadership, often as a result of discriminatory laws, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes, low level of education, lack of access to health care and the disproportionate effect of poverty on women (UN, 2011) [12]. However, the Global Gender Gap Report (2016) indicates that there is a wide gap in incorporating women in different levels of decision making and leadership and due to this situation, the World Economic Forum decided to promote women agenda and gender equality across the world. This initiative has improved the participation of women in leadership across the globe. Regardless of the initiatives of international organizations to empower women and promoting gender equity and equality, the number of women participating in church leadership is still low. For example, in the United Kingdom (UK), there are only 6,146 ordained women out of 36,636 ordained pastors (UK Church Statistics, 2005-2015). According to Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church (2019), women have been supported to be part of the ordained ministry but it is not smooth because their pastoral role can be seen as a threat to their male counterparts. In Nigeria, the Lutheran Church of Christ need to look into women development with deliberate and strategic steps to end discrimination and oppose culture that limits women to be involved in church leadership (Lutheran World Information, 2018).

In Tanzania, according to ELCT Pare Diocese statistics (2020), from 1975 to 2016 the management team had only one woman, and the diocese had no woman

Evangelist until the year 2000. This situation increases gender gap and exclusion of women in church leadership (Mbilinyi, 2013).

Problem Statement

Women participation in church leadership is not a foreign idea to be adopted by Pare Diocese of ELCT. However, the church teaches on how men and women are equally created by God to have dominion over creation. It is unfortunate that women are not in higher positions of leadership though ideally one is not given the position based on his or her gender (ELCT, 2021). According to ELCT (2021), women participation in church leadership is still low regardless the number of women who attend church services is greater than the number of men. For example, from 1975 to 2016, the Pare diocese had only one woman in management team, and the diocese had no woman in evangelist department until the year 2000 where women started to participate in church's departmental functions including evangelism, multimedia, radio, disaster response, health care, and social services (Pare Diocese, 2021).

Despite this situation, the faith-based organizations in Tanzania are working with various international organizations to ensure full implementation of policies that empower women and eliminate gender inequality (UN, 2011). Further, the government of Tanzania is committed to the issues of gender and implementation of the sustainable development goals which has brought progress on the issues of women representation in decision making space (Equal Measures, 2030, 2019). Nevertheless, many studies on women participation and leadership have not emphasized on the factors influencing women participation in church leadership in Tanzania. Also, many studies on the women participation have not focused on church leadership especially Pare Diocese of Evangelical Lutheran church of Tanzania. Therefore, the study was designed to examine the factors that influence women participation in church leadership, with the case of Pare Dioceses of Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania.

Research Purpose

The aim of the study was to assess the factors that influence women participation in church leadership in Pare Diocese of Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania. Specifically, the study sought to establish the influence of gender sensitive policies, organizational culture, and educational qualifications in women participation in church leadership in Tanzania.

Research Methods

The study adopted a case study design covering a sample of 154 respondents drawn from a target population of 309 comprising of management, pastors, evangelists, church elders, and executive committee members in Pare Diocese of Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania. Primary data was collected using questionnaires and interviews. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics; frequencies, percentages, mean and correlation.

Results and Analysis

The major objective of this study was to assess the factors that influence women participation namely educational qualification, gender sensitive policies, and organizational culture, and their mean score was computed and presented

where the highest was 5 for strongly agree and the lowest was 1 for strongly disagree as explained below.

Contribution of Educational Qualification in Women Participation

On the Contribution of Educational Qualification in Women Participation the study found that majority of women have completed CSE and theology course was rated the mean score of 1.79 signifying that majority of women have not completed CSE and theology courses. Most of women have intellectual ability to perform leadership tasks rated at the mean score of 3.25 indicating that to some extent most of the women have intellectual ability to perform leadership tasks in the church management. Educational qualifications contribute to women participation in church leadership was rated at the mean score of 3.64 indicating that educational qualification effectively contribute to women participation in the church leadership. However, educational qualification had the overall mean score of 2.89 indicating an above-average on contribution to women participation in church leadership.

Table 1: Contribution of education qualifications

Attributes	Mean (N=120)
Majority of women have completed CSE and theology course	1.79
Most of women have intellectual ability to perform leadership tasks	3.25
Educational qualification contribute to women participation	3.64
Overall mean of the contribution of educational qualification	2.89

Furthermore, the study conducted correlation analysis and the findings indicate that educational qualification had positive but weak relationship with all indicators of women participation namely women are able to find and solve problems (.005), every woman is able to compete on equal term (.018), Women matter are given priorities in church management (.002), Every woman feels confident to introduce new ideas (.150), and women are inspired by common purpose of serving the Lord in the ministry (.047). These findings indicate the presence of positive and weak relationship between educational qualification and women participation in church leadership.

Influence of Organizational Culture in Women Participation:

On the influence of organizational culture in women participation in church leadership, the study found that women are normally introduce new ideas on management issues was rated at the mean score of 2.39 indicating that women are not frequently introducing new ideas on management issues. Men and women are equally called to serve the Lord in His ministry was rated at the mean score of 3.71 indicating that both women and men are equally called to serve the Lord in His ministry. The organizational culture of ELCT support women participation had a mean score of 3.58 implying that the organizational culture of ELCT supports women participation in church leadership. However, the overall mean of the influence of organizational culture was 3.23 indicating that to some extent the organizational culture influence women participation in church leadership at Pare Diocese.

Table 2: Influence of Organizational culture in women participation

Attributes	Mean(N=120)
Women are normally introduce new ideas on management issues	2.39
Men and women are equally called to serve the Lord in His Ministry	3.71
Organizational culture of ELCT support women participation	3.58
Overall Mean of the influence of organizational culture	3.23

The study conducted Pearson Correlation analysis between organizational culture and the indicators of women participation in church leadership and the results found that the organizational culture had positive and significant correlation with women are able to find and solve problems (.438), every woman is able to compete on equal terms (.407), women matter are given priorities in church management (.318), women are inspired by common purpose of serving the lord in the ministry (.285), and every woman feels confident to introduce new ideas (.239). Overall, the results indicate the presence of positive and significant relationship between organizational culture and women participation in church leadership.

Role of Gender Sensitive Policies in Women Participation

On the role of gender-sensitive policies in women participation in church leadership, the study found that both women and men have equal chances on leadership opportunities with a mean score of 3.63 indicating that men and women have equal chances on leadership opportunities at Pare Diocese. The presence of non-discriminatory approach in all projects was rated with the mean score of 3.25 signifying that a non-discriminatory approach is used to improve women participation in church projects. Gender-sensitive policies play a great role in women participation as was rated at the mean score of 3.24 implying that to some extent gender sensitive policies play a great role in women participation. Further, the overall mean score of the role of gender-sensitive policies was rated at the mean score of 3.37 indicating that gender-sensitive policies plays an important role in women participation in church leadership.

Table 3: Role of gender Sensitive policies

Attributes	Mean(N=120)
Both women and men have equal chances on leadership opportunities	3.63
Is there non-discriminatory approach in all projects	3.25
Gender sensitive policies play a great role in women participation	3.24
Overall mean of the role of gender sensitive policies	3.37

Further, the study conducted Pearson Correlation analysis between gender sensitive policies and the indicators of women participation in church leadership. The results found that gender sensitive policies had positive and strong significant relations with women are inspired by common purpose of serving the lord in the ministry (.431), women are able to find and solve problems (.344), every woman is able to compete on equal terms (.329), and every woman feels confident to introduce new ideas (.266). Also, gender-sensitive policies had positive but weak relationship with

women issues being given priority in church management (.231). Generally, the findings indicate the presence of positive and significant relationship between gender sensitive policies and women participation in church leadership.

Indicators of Women Participation in Church Leadership

The study assessed the indicators of women participation in church leadership and found out that women are inspired to work by common purpose of serving the Lord in ordered ministry was rated at the mean score of 3.29 indicating that to some extent women are inspired to work by the common purpose of serving the Lord in ordained ministry. Women are able to find and solve problems was rated at the mean score of 3.68 indicating that women at Pare Diocese are able to find ad solve problems. Women are able to compete on equal term was rated at the mean score of 3.61 indicating that women can compete with men for any leadership position. Women matters are given priorities was rated at the mean score of 3.58 indicating that women matter are given priorities in the management of Pare Diocese of ELCT. Women feeling confident to introduce new ideas was rated at the mean score of 3.66 implying that women who participate in daily management of Pare Diocese are confident to introduce new ideas. However, the overall mean of the indicators of women participation was 3.56; implying that women participation in church leadership is high. Women are inspired to work by a common purpose, are able to find and solve problems, and to compete on equal terms with men. Further, women matters are given priorities, and women feel confident to introduce new ideas.

Table 4: Indicators of Women participation in Church Leadership

Attributes	Mean (N=120)
Women are inspired to work by common purpose	3.29
Women are able to find and solve problems	3.68
Women are able to compete on equal term	3.61
Women matters are given priorities	3.58
Women feels confident to introduce new ideas	3.66
Overall mean of the indicators of women participation	3.56

Conclusions

The contribution of educational qualification in women participation is very low and there is positive and weak relationship between educational qualification and women participation in church leadership. Also, the influence of organizational culture in women participation in church leadership is somehow high and there is strong and significant relationship between organizational culture and women participation in church leadership. Furthermore, gender sensitive policies were found to play an important role in women participation in church leadership and there is positive and significant relationship between gender sensitive policies and women participation in church leadership. In addition, the study concluded that women participation in church leadership is high. Women are inspired to work by common purpose, able to find and solve problems, ready to compete on equal terms and their issues matters are given priorities. Further, they feel confident to introduce new ideas in management.

Recommendations

In order to improve women participation in church leadership, the study recommends that the constitution and policies that govern the Evangelical Lutheran Church should be revised so as to create suitable environment for women participation in church leadership. This will eliminate the shortage of ordained women in ministry which has facilitated the problem of gender discrimination and poor social services in Pare diocese of Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania. In line to this, the church management should allocate and provide adequate budgetary resources to the gender department in order to promote the status of women through different women programs including gender training, financial assistance, and emergence response to vulnerable members. Furthermore, the gender department at Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania should monitor and evaluate effectively all church activities to ensure that women participation in church leadership is increasing. This will enhance evaluation of the church management's performance and contribute to the improvement of the accountability, participation, and transparency in church and monitor the daily performance of church departments in order to ensure full participation of women in church leadership.

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