

# Factors Influencing Women Participation in Politics in Tanzania: A Case Study of Arusha Region

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**Abstract:** *The paper examines the factors that influence women participation in politics in Tanzania. The paper dwells on gender inequality, legal framework and economic status. The study adopted case study research design under both qualitative and quantitative approaches. A sample of 30 respondents are used. The study finds that gender inequality is a strong influence that limits women from participating in politics. The other factors such as legal framework and economic status were also found affecting the women participation in politics in Tanzania. Furthermore, the study revealed that, the level of education and employment status of women have great contribution in the women participation in politics. The study recommends that gender equity should be considered very much within the political parties. Civic education should be enhanced by both the government and other stakeholders so as to continue enlightening the society on the inclusive politics.*

**Keywords:** women in politics, gender inequality, economic status, legal framework, and the level of education

## 1. Introduction

More than half of the world's population is female but only 21 percent of national parliamentarians are women (Ohizzy, 2016). It is also stated that while gender equality in political participation has intrinsic value, instrumental value also plays an important role. The composition of legislative bodies may affect the quality of laws and may influence the extent of their application (Ohizzy, 2016). Women's participation in politics is a global agenda whereby many stakeholders have been discussing the issue at different platforms. For example, Semakafu (2010) in her critique of challenges facing women participation in Tanzanian politics observed that there are three different levels: from individual women point: culture, education, and poverty; from political system, that is, the government (electoral systems and procedures) and political party (intra-party democracy) and corruption; as well as from the election partners point.

Similar observation was also noted by Shayo (2005) as very few women belong to formalized political groupings; this means that most women are left out. Likewise, the Political Act of 1992, which plays an important role in promoting intra party democracy, is silent on many critical areas relating to female participation in political parties. In supporting this remark, Mmuya and Chaligha (1994) argued, "although many parties have been formed they have not been able to mobilize people, especially women to take an active role in supporting the future of this country, that is, political parties are considered to be weak because they do not have clear policies for promoting women participation." Essentially, these observations indicate that women participation in political life is far due to many aspects not only cultural ones but also legal frameworks have been enacted without a clear focus on promoting women's rights.

It is also argued that women are left out in politics due to their major reproductive roles (and in particular household chores including child and family care that women are unable to find adequate time to engage in active politics, including leadership positions (Shayo, 2005). For example,

by the year 2000, seven countries: Rwanda, Mozambique, Botswana, Angola, Senegal, Djibouti, and Namibia had achieved between 20-30 percent of female representation in Parliament except South Africa which reached the 30 percent critical mass as it is stressed in Commonwealth (2003).

In light of women participation in politics, it is evident that even after the Beijing Conference in 1995, yet many countries are still far reaching reasonable number of women representation in Parliament which is a sole organ to enact laws affecting the livelihood of citizens. Data from some National Parliaments by Inter Parliament Union (2017) indicate that Rwanda has reached 61.3 percent for women representation, Bolivia 53.1 percent, Cuba 48.9 percent, Iceland 47.6 percent, Nicaragua 45.7 percent Sweden 43.6 percent, Senegal 42.7 percent while Tanzania has only 36.4 percent. These data are purported by the remark of the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (2005) that the absence of women from political decision-making has a negative impact on the entire process of democratization.

The above statistics show that Tanzania is not faring well on women participation in politics. Yet, there are very studies which have examined the factors that have contributed to that situation. This study contributes to the body of literature by examining the factors that influence women participation in politics in Tanzania.

## 2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

The paper adopts three theories of the Feminist theory, Descriptive Representation Theory, and Substantive Representation Theory on explaining the women participation in politics in Tanzania. The Feminist Theory asserts that the gender-power-order is always present in any society; it shapes structures and sets current power relations. According to Zalewski (2000), it appears that all feminists share the notion that different social benefits and burdens

follows depending on what sex you are born as. A central feature of feminist political theory is the notion that women and their situation are central to political analysis.

The Descriptive Representation Theory advocates representation on the basis of common characteristics and share experience; for instance, representing some one based on gender or class can be categorized as descriptive representation of women (Awotash, 2010). These practices can easily be noted in aspects of special seats for female members of parliament whereby each party nominates its women for special seats according to number of seats each party has in the parliament. However, in research focusing on descriptive representation, the theoretical reasoning behind this assumption is not well elaborated (Wangnerud, 2009) because not all women contest for parliament seats but they may like to run for other political positions.

Finally, the Substantive Representation Theory deals with women's interests, gender equality and rational behind women representation. A core idea in this ideal of research is that there are certain interests and concerns that arise from women's experiences and that these will be inadequately addressed in politics that is dominated by men (Wangnerud, 2009). In research on substantive representation of women, an aspect of politicization is introduced. It is commonly argued that societies will not achieve equality between women and men by simply disregarding gender-related differences as it is stressed in Phillips (2007). This is again another point which is of great concern because international and national legal instruments gauge all human beings on equal basis; for instance,

### 2.1 Conceptual Framework

Assessment of factors influencing women participation in politics can be viewed through both dependent variable (women participation in politics) and independent variables (economic status, gender inequality and legal frameworks). The main issue of analyzing factors influencing women participation in politics is observed to what extent women are participating in politics of their countries by competing with men and climb the ladder of political leadership.

A gender inequality dwells on those factors that negatively impact on women include: male resistance to women in leadership positions, absence of policies and legislation to ensure equal participation of women, discriminatory appointment and promotion practices, and limited opportunities for gender mainstreaming (Smulders, 1998). On one hand, cultural factors are linked to stereotypical views about women's abilities within the cultural context.

An economic status addresses the role of women in economic activities within the society. This goes back to the colonial era where men would leave their home areas and migrate to the plantation and mining sites, as well as look for employment in urban areas. Men were looked at as the cash custodians, as cash was the new means of exchange (Mallya, 2005). This attitude attributed to many marginalized women because during this era, a few women managed to have access to education. This also caused women to lag behind in politics of their countries, Tanzania in particular.

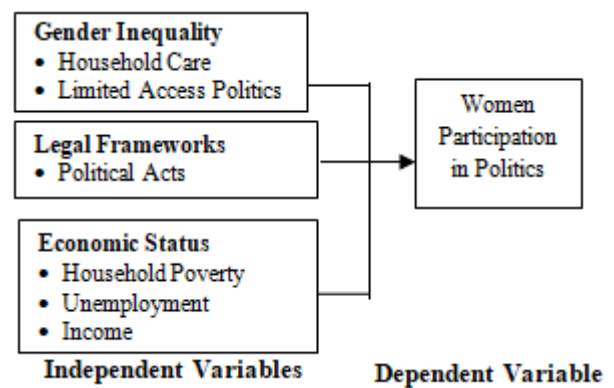


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

On legal frameworks, one would see that several obstacles have been identified that generally prevent women from advancing to political spheres. Adhiambo-Oduol (2003) identifies socio-cultural beliefs, attitudes, biases and stereotypes as major barriers. These emphasize the superiority of men and the inferiority of women. Also they form the integral part of socialization process in form of gender education and training that men and women are exposed to from childhood. Another formidable barrier is the institutional framework guiding gender division of labour, recruitment, and vertical mobility.

### 2.2 Empirical Literature Review

A study on achieving gender parity in political participation in Tanzania by Mushi (2010) reveals that the work on electoral processes began in 1994/95 during the preparations for the first multi-party elections. There were two aspects of engagement, first creating gender awareness within the existing political structures and second, changing the existing political structures to recognize the role of citizens in order in turn to increase the participation of women. However, it also points out that the environment in which elections take place is still retrogressive and male dominated. The revised Election Act of 2010, for example, still shows male bias and class bias in the language, composition of electoral commission, and exorbitant expenses required for contesting seats. In a context where marginalized women own few resources, everything to do with money has a gender and class implication.

The issue of election deposits, for example, is a barrier for many women candidates. Women candidates are more likely to be unable to raise the required sum, and therefore unable to go forward, than their male counterparts (TGNP, 2005).

The Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania provides for equal participation of women and men in all aspects of the political process. It requires government and all institutions to provide for equal opportunity for both women and men. Para 21 affirms that every citizen of the United Republic of Tanzania has a right to participate in the governance of the country directly or through their elected representative. Para 22 provides for equality of opportunity and equal rights through equal terms and conditions to hold public office. Furthermore, the Constitution, after various amendments, provides for affirmative action to rectify

historical gender imbalances in women’s access to representative organs of state, such as parliament and local council, through the provision of “special seats” for women in addition to the constituency seats. However, the same constitution under article 51 (2) marginalizes special seats by providing that members of parliament to be appointed Prime Minister shall only come from amongst constituency members of parliament as it is presented in FemAct Women Voter’s Manifesto’s (2000, 2005 and 2010)

Meena (2009) points out that to take the example of Rwanda, for example, women in Rwanda now top the world rankings of women in national parliaments. This did not happen by chance, there was a lot of mobilization of women across Rwanda by the Ministry of Gender and Promotion of Women. Most importantly from the early stages of post genocide, women were involved in the drawing up of a new Constitution for Rwanda that guaranteed them a minimum of 30% of National Assembly seats. Hence, women’s high level of participation and leadership in post-genocide politics in both government and civil society helped to provide the foundation for their successful efforts in the elections. In the Tanzanian context, the Ministry of Community Development Gender and Children lacks the human and financial resources and political mandate to spearhead such change.

### 2.3 Research Gaps

Many studies have been conducted on the women participation in politics, and the international community has been showing a great concern on empowering women; however, much is noted in the attitude of men against women in political activities by loathing women participation in politics. That is, it is noted that inadequate spaces have been created in political affairs/ leadership for women. For example, Tanzania is a member of the United Nations and she signed the Convention on all forms of Discrimination against Women, and also she is a signatory to the Beijing Platform of Action which prescribes 30% seats for women in elective office but the entire attitude of men in the politics still loathe women leadership/ positions making women lagging behind in politics of their country.

Similarly, both men and women are blessed with leadership qualities and the society need both sexes to work together for the good of the society because both men and women are interdependent and that the empowerment of women benefits everyone. It is said that political participation is the key ingredient of every political system, be it traditional or modern, democratic or totalitarian (Ohizzy, 2016). He further asserts that it means that in every political system there must be somebody in a position to take political decisions and perform other political actions like appointment of officials but factors like age, sex (gender), financial status, level of education, political and economic experience, geo-political zoning, primordial factors (religion, ethnicity), and nature of government, affect political participation of women as it is evident that limits set by political parties (society) are man -made and not by nature.

### 3. Sample and Methodology

#### 3.1 Sample

The entire population for this study encompasses both women and men aged above 18 years old, who are living in Arusha region. The study sampling frame conducted in Arusha region from six (6) different districts. The sample was picked from the entire targeted population. Both women and men who have been living in Arusha was considered in the sample, whereby five (5) respondents were drawn from each district, making a total of 30 respondents. Out of the total sample of 30 respondents, 24 respondents were women and remained 6 respondents were men. The five districts where sampling conducted are Ngorongoro, Karatu, Arumeru, Longido, Arusha and Meru. Tables 1 – 3 show distribution of respondents for a sample of 30 respondents who participated in the survey in 2018 in age, employment and level of education, respectively.

**Table 1: Age of Respondents**

Age Interval	Frequency	Valid Percent
18-24	11	36.7
25-34	6	20.0
35-44	8	26.7
45-54	3	10.0
>=55	2	6.7
Total	30	100.0

The table shows distribution of respondents for a sample of 30 respondents who participated in the survey in 2018.

*Source: Data collected from the field*

**Table 2: Employment of the Respondents**

Types of Respondents	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Private sector	18	60.0	60.0
Public sector	8	26.7	26.7
Not employed	4	13.3	13.3
Total	30	100.0	100.0

The table shows employment of respondents for a sample of 30 respondents who participated in the survey in 2018.

*Source: Data collected from the field*

**Table 3: Educational Level**

The table shows education level of respondents for a sample of 30 respondents who participated in the survey in 2018.

Level of Education	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Primary school	4	13.3	13.3
Secondary school	5	16.7	16.7
Technical or Vocational training	14	46.7	46.7
Diploma	2	6.7	6.7
Bachelor degree	3	10.0	10.0
Masters	2	6.7	6.7
Total	30	100.0	100.0

*Source: Data collected from the field*

#### 3.2 Data Collection Methods

The study used such methods like documentary review, interview, and questionnaire in collecting data. These methods signify that, both primary and secondary data have been used. Primary data mainly collected through



questionnaires, interview and observation while secondary data basically collected from library and documentary reviews.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

In this study both qualitative and quantitative techniques have been used in analyzing data. The qualitative technique have used for description and interpretation of data through logical reasoning, while quantitative approach have used in the analysis. The quantitative techniques have used to analyze data through graphical presentation such as charts, percentages and tables.

## 4. Empirical Results

### 4.1 Influence of Gender Inequality on Women Participation in Politics

It was hypothesized that, gender inequality influences women participation in politics in Tanzania. On this assertion, Pearson's product of moment correlation coefficient was used and the results indicate that women participation in politics is strongly influenced by gender inequality. The gender role ideology is used as an ideological tool by patriarchy to place women within the private arena of home as mothers and wives and men in the public sphere (Adamu and Mekonnen, 2009; Tenthani, 2014; Adhiambo-Oduol, 2003).

In Nigeria, about half of the population is made up of the female gender having distinguished themselves in their chosen careers. According to Ojo (2011) women in politics form bulk of the electorate and campaign mobilizers. Despite the significant role of women in Nigeria before and after independence, the development correspondence, economic, social and political power is nothing to write home with (Anifowose, 2004).

### 4.2 Influence of Economic Status on Women Participation in Politics

It was hypothesized that economic status influences women participation in politics in Tanzania. The statistical results indicate that there is a significant association between influence of economic status and women participation in politics. In Tanzania this implies that there is a strong positive relationship between economic status and women participation in politics in the Arusha region. Essentially, lack of support for female party members from the party leadership, women's lack of political networks, gender-biased social and cultural norms, women's lack of political experience, and financial constraints (Seppänen & Virtanen, 2008) attribute to low participation in politics by women in many countries. It is also argued that financial constraints are often used to garner support during elections and that as women tend to have a weaker financial base than their male counterparts they find it harder to mobilize resources required to win elections (Babeiya, 2011; Grabe, 2015; Ojo, 2011).

### 4.3 Effect of Education on Women Participation in Politics

The third objective of this paper is examine whether the level of education influences the women participation in politics in Tanzania. The results indicated that there was a correlation between the level of education and women participation in politics. This means that education affect women participation in politics in the sense that access to education widens understanding of women in politics. Africa has been possible through access to education by men and women, the use of some form of gender affirmative action plans, multiparty democracy, concerted efforts of civil organization both local and international levels and pressures from women's organizations are all contributory factors to the improvement made by women in political decision making (Ocran, 2014).

### 4.4 Compliance with Legal Framework on Women Participation in Politics

The fourth objective of the study is to determine how legal framework undermine women participation in politics. The results indicate that there is a significant relationship between legal framework and women participation in politics. Thus non-compliance with legal framework affects women participation in politics in Arusha region and by extension in Tanzania.

These findings suggest that despite reforms undertaken by the Government to ensure that there is equality among citizens; still many women lag behind because of inherited history which makes women to remain inferior in terms of education, economy and participation in decisions making organs. In light of Tanzania general elections, figures show that after the 2010 election, women represented 36 percent of parliamentarians, or 126 out of 350 seats, up from 30 percent in 2005. However, obstacles remain to full gender equality in government, and some challenges are a direct result of the quota system in which women are either directly elected or are nominated for the special quota seats. One challenge is the very small portion of directly elected MPs who are women. For instance, from 1985 to 2000, 95 percent of female MPs entered parliament through special seats rather than being directly elected to constituency seats. In the 2010-2015 parliaments, only 21 out of the 126 total female MPs or 16.6 percent were directly elected into office. Out of the total number of directly elected constituency seats, women represented just 8.8 percent in the 2010-2015 parliaments.

The table reports statistical results for a sample of 30 respondents who participated in the survey in 2018. The significance of changes is measured using a two-tailed *Wilcoxon signed rank test*. \*, \*\*, and \*\*\* denote statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% respectively.

**Table 4: Statistical Findings**

S/N	FACTORS	N	r	p - value
1	Gender Inequality	30	0.25	0.003*
2	Economic Status	30	0.25	0.002*
3.	Level of Education	30	0.21	0.003*
4.	Legal Framework	30	0.22	0.000*

## 5. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

### 5.1 Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine factors influencing women participation in politics in Tanzania with a case of the Arusha region. The study specifically looked at the influence of gender inequality on women participation in politics, influence of economic status on women participation in politics, effect of education on women participation in politics and effect of legal frameworks on women participation in politics. Data were collected from 30 respondents.

The study finds that there is strong influence of gender inequality on women participation in politics. It was established that economic status positively influences women participation in politics. Thus, employment and education are essentially playing a significant role on women participation in politics. It was further revealed that education strongly affects women participation in politics as it has been empowering educated women to be active in politics and contest against men. Finally, study revealed that legal framework positively affects women participation in politics as non-compliance of the legislation undermines women participation in politics.

### 5.2 Conclusions

This study concludes that gender inequality limits women from participating in politics. That economic status positively influences women participation in politics. Thus, employment and education are essentially playing a significant role on women participation in politics. Finally, legal framework positively affect women participation in politics as non-compliance of the legislation undermines women participation in politics.

### 5.3 Recommendations

The study recommends that there should be a continuous improvement on gender impartiality within the political parties for a sustainable political empowerment among women. Women should learn to stand by themselves and contest for the political posts they wish to contest for. Furthermore, the government should promote additional spaces for women participation in effective governance and policy formulation. However it's also crucial for the political parties to include women in their policy formulation to enable them to contribute on indispensable aspects for their empowerment.

Government should develop and implement training programs to educate women especially uneducated ones, on various factors that hindering their political participation. It should let women know that, to involve in politics is their right and not the obligation. Majority of women in Tanzania they don't understand if they have rights to engage in politics. It's also important to openly explain the legislative system of the country on how it works and how it's important to the citizen in general.

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