

Relationship between programmatic functional skilling and women's socio-economic empowerment in Malaba Town council

Nafula, Vidah

School of Arts and Social Sciences of Master of arts in Development Studies, Uganda Martyrs University.

*Corresponding Author Email: vidah@gmail.com; Tel: +254 712 608215

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ABSTRACT: The study examined the relationship between programmatic functional skilling and socio-economic empowerment of women in Malaba Municipality. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted as a multi-method approach that can be combined with qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, correlation and descriptive approaches. A total of 281 respondents were selected for the study using the random sampling method. Interview schedules (guides), questionnaires and a focus discussion guide were used in this study. The researcher organized the collected data according to the themes of the study, edited, coded and classified them. Using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software, version 22, the data were also sorted and ordered according to the frequency of similar responses (frequencies) and percentages were calculated, which formed the basis for the correlation analysis used to identify key variables such as women's socio-economic empowerment and functional skilling, thus forming the basis for data analysis, discussion, conclusions and recommendations. Taking the conclusions of the women and the leaders on the subject of skilling, it is obvious that no real attempts have been made to introduce women in Malaba Town Council to skills of any kind. And, because the majority of women attributed their predicament to a lack of knowledge, it is safe to conclude that the lack of efforts to teach women skills is largely to blame for their current socioeconomic situation. In other words, it is reasonable to argue that women lack empowerment because they lack skills. The fact that the women had no livelihoods or skills but were willing to be trained implies that they were yearning to engage in something profitable so that their lives may change for the better; this would occur through functional skilling.

Keywords: Programmatic functional skilling, socio-economic development among women

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INTRODUCTION

Bitten *et al.*, (2017) conducted a study on Functional abilities in aging women with Rett syndrome the Danish cohort in Amec and found out that due to functional skilling, 63% of the women were able to walk outside their homes and only 11% were not able to walk at all. However, 67% could not transfer from sitting to standing position without support. There was profound difficulties communicating, but 85.1% of the women could either consistently point with their hand or eyes to things of their interest. In the middle East and North Africa, Bettina, *et*

al., (2018) view important gaps in the field are lack of theoretical foundations; an over emphasis on macro level indicators, such as culture and religion and an under emphasis on organizational level variables; a lack of studies that analyze female entrepreneurship within ethnic groups, or studies that acknowledge the complex social, cultural and religious diversity of the region; and inattention to particular regional experiences (e.g. refugees crisis) and emerging trends. Akello *et al.*, (2017) study in South Africa on Functional Adult Literacy (FAL)

on 45 participants aimed at examining women's live changes resulting from using their acquired FAL knowledge and skills to participate in Income Generating Activities. The study demonstrates that FAL brings out women's individual and collective agency through "conscientization" concept and dialogue as tools for marginalized people in the act of social and economic change agents. Kasonde (2019)'s study in Lusaka found out that Most of the functional literacy programmes available hinged on capacity building, empowerment, and education. They aimed at building capacity of women by training and community mobilization. They also sought to encourage women to create their own capital by saving.

Malaba is a small town located in the Eastern Region of Uganda, specifically in Tororo District. It is situated on the eastern border of Uganda with Kenya. The town is known for its busy border crossing, which is one of the major entry points into Uganda from Kenya. Malaba is also a busy crossing point between Uganda and Kenya making it the second-busiest border based on the volume of informal exports and imports. In 2013 Malaba had 9.6% share of exports and 21.1% share of imports. However, enhancing economic empowerment of any kind through provision of material and financial resources is an intricate motive that calls for proper solutions, hard work and patience for all stakeholders. Arising from material and finance provision, where several small-scale programs are undertaken as a courtesy of pro-government entrepreneurial policies; success of this are as a result of proper strategic plan interventions which clearly identify the problem, how this problem is to be solved and the likely out come for an individual participant. The focus of this study, therefore, is on something practical, something workable that can be implemented in such a way that can be some immediate benefits for women in the entire Uganda, to wit, programmatic functional skilling. Malaba has a large amount of infrastructure development and resources. Malaba has a substantial middle class population of 8,658 males and 9,566 females totaling 18,224 (according to provisional figures from the National Population and Housing Census-Uganda 2014).

The current and prospective owner houses, automobiles that ply the highways, apartments and business centres such as premium supermarkets, story houses, guest houses, roadways, and a slew of others demonstrate the size of this middle class. Malaba has practically all utilities, including piped water, power, and so on, in addition to a strong road network.

General objective

Our primary goal is to examine the correlation between programmatic functional skilling and the socio-economic empowerment of women within Malaba Town council. This study aims to investigate how participation in skill

development programs can impact the economic and social status of women in the community. By understanding this relationship, we can identify potential areas for intervention and support to further enhance the empowerment of women in Malaba Town council.

Literature review

In most African cultures, a woman is supposed to marry from outside her own clan and traditionally she has no legal rights to inherit properties, thus, a woman has no business deciding or casing on what she does not have (Ngambouk, 2017). A woman should be a wife, a mother, or a grandmother of a family in other clan; children also cannot inherit the land from where she was born because they belong to the clan of the father (Magezi and Matsobane, 2019). The community sees women in terms of industry to manufacture children rather than people who can contribute in decision making and conflict resolutions; the community assigns roles and responsibilities to both men and women (Aravacik, 2018). There are those duties or roles that the community believe women cannot perform. These include decision making, conflict resolutions and community leadership. Sexual division of labor is important particularly because of the subordinating impact it had and it continues to have on women among the Somali community. In this community, women are allocated the job of collecting firewood, fetching water, cooking, watching cloths and caring for the rest of family members (Marloes *et al.*, 2017).

According to a research done by Kenya Women's Bureau on leadership in 1995, in most African communities, women leaders are branded criminals, rude, disobedient, prostitutes and rebellious (Kaba, 2017). This kind of attitudes on women leaders and decision-makers results in stigmatization. Traditions, beliefs and customs affect women leaders more than they do male leaders. Culture can create barriers that prevent people, and especially women, from participating in decision making and conflict resolutions, among other leadership roles. In many cultures, men are expected and accepted as automatic community leaders (Cheryl, 2017).

Despite women suffering gender inequalities – often economic in nature – they are supposed to work double that of men in order for the biased society to recognize them. Community beliefs and attitudes on women's leaders may have many devastating effects. First, because the society does not expect them to be leaders, they are not given the relevant information on leadership (Agwal, 2018). False accusation about their characters and behavior is leveled against them. For example, in West Bengal, a study found that there were places where no woman had ever been the local leader; 86% of parents wanted their daughters to be either a housewife or whatever their in-laws would decide for a woman

(Sheila and Geny, 2018). There is the fundamental exploitative attitude and behaviour that men are free, wilful and powerful, while women are subject to limitations of all kinds, ranging from male-control over their private lives to their position in society (Abdullah and Quayes, 2016). Furthermore, women's deficient level of education contributes to the secondary position they hold in society and in the labour force. Passivity, chastity, marriage and motherhood define the role of women and their circumscribed lives in society. Thus, sheltered from outside influences, women are often kept from even exploring ideas and values beyond the family circle which might awaken concerns for their own situation in particular and for the problems of society in general (Aravacik, 2018).

Women make up more than half of the population of the world. And although on the whole they have greater access to education and jobs, a very big percentage of them are still confined almost exclusively to work at home, either for meagre wages as servants or without compensation as mothers or family members (Krafft, 2017). They are marginalized, excluded from active participation in every major aspect of economic and national life. Further, due to the social, economic, educational and psychological structure of society, women who work generally are hired only for low-paying jobs such as cooks, nannies and store clerks. Moreover, even for the cooking, where it is highly valued such as in big hotels and famous restaurants, it is mostly done by men; few manage to break into managerial circles, and fewer still manage to rise to high positions of political responsibility. During recession, women are the first ones to lose their jobs, and although they are often believed to be better workers than men and can be entrusted with the same degree of responsibility, they are paid less than their male counterparts for identical work or service (Aravacik, 2018). In professional areas, too, most careers for women are as para-professionals or assistants, that is, they can find work only as support staff and in many cases, even to get these jobs, sexual favours are first asked by their male prospective employers. Thus, accustomed to taking passive jobs while leadership positions fall to men, women find themselves in a society that systematically assigns them a secondary and dependent role (Sheila and Geny, 2018).

Housewives, solely devoted to their homes, receive psychological and moral rather than financial compensation, thus, women find their gratification in providing support to their husbands and children, denying their identities and self-expression, and dedicating their lives to creating the conditions to satisfy the aspirations of their loved ones (Jaynice *et al.* 2019). This situation is made even worse because it is in the home that women's rights and dignity are mostly violated by abandonment, battering, abuse, and lack of financial security, among others. Besides, Cheryl (2017) rightly argues that with the

industrial revolution, women, once the centre of productive economic life, became more and more marginalized, as the place of the home shrank to its present proportions of a purely consumer and child-raising unit.

On the whole, it can be said that the place of women in the development enterprise has not been articulated: they are generally kept out of the development-market ring, and yet, given our shallow understanding of development, what can be monetized is what we relate to development (Eeva, 2018). Most of the work of women, on which the household stands, is never valued economically, and it is what is economic that seems to matter, thus, among women in Uganda, poverty is rampant and their health situation is appalling: high maternal mortality rates and little antenatal care, leading to high-risk births (Nutsukpo, 2019).

Rural Women in particular, are not informed about their legal rights concerning land ownership and inheritance; they engage in farming haphazardly because they have no access to professional help and information (Uchendu, 2019). They are un-able to protect their families from preventable diseases and death because they lack knowledge of the simple modern techniques that are now so readily available. All this is due to illiteracy, lack of a radio (poverty), and the state in which they live because of their heavy workloads and the distances involved in visiting neighbours or attending community meetings Naomi, *et al.*, (2019).

It is notable among many African societies that women are always associated with evils such as witch-craft, sorcery and hatred (Aravacik, 2018). Witchcraft is another belief system that affects women participation in decision-making and conflict resolutions. A witch (the one who practices witchcraft) is a person who deliberately tries to harm others through mystical or invisible means, such as burying a bundle containing something harmful under the gate, or putting poison in food or a beer tube (Agwal, 2018).

Among the Benin of West Africa, women are described as "the source of all evils and only our soul saves us from the harm they do". Other evil or bad things said on women are; "Women have no mouth, hence they are associated with the hen, which knows when it is morning, but she looks at the mouth of the cock, then she waits for the cock to crow and announce another morning (Mark and Tetra, 2018). Thus, since witchcraft is usually associated with women among most African communities, they cannot be trusted with leadership, decision making or solving conflicts. They are therefore branded evil, tempered, devils and wizards (Cheryl, 2017).

In most African societies, if a woman does not agree with her husband's behavior, or if they have a quarrel, she communicates to her husband through a proverb because, traditionally, no woman is called upon to speak

to men (Alice, *et al.*, 2016). The society expects women to succumb to the subservient role in the society and they are also painted as agents of indiscipline in the society, thus, women are rarely allowed a chance or space to articulate their thoughts, fears and hopes on the subjects of labor, reproduction, child-bearing and sexuality (Choko *et al.*, 2017). Among the Yoruba of Nigeria, there is a saying which says “A woman is like the earth; everyone sits down on her”. Among the Baganda of Uganda, a woman offended by her husband is soon ready to say “I am going to hang myself”. Among the Luba of Zaire, a woman without a man is likened to a field without seed (Choko *et al.*, 2017).

Oaths and curses are other outdated cultural practices that affect women participation in decision-making and conflict resolutions; a curse is a mystical retaliation with certain conventionalized words and deeds against a person who first did injustice or who might do so in future to the person who is obliged to take the measure (Sandu, 2020). As such, cursing is always associated with a sense of justice or righteousness and with authority and the established order. Among the Somali a parent may curse his or her child but not the reverse. Likewise, a husband can curse a wife or wives but the women cannot. Since a curse is usually made in public or openly, it is used as a mechanism to control women and children for the benefits of men. In order to remove it, the cursed must admit the offence (Kerina, 2019).

In most cases, women are the victims, either mothers cursing children or daughters-in-law. When a curse is performed to find the truth, relatives and family members of the wrong doer are supposed to die one after another until the cursed himself dies (Javier and Abrams, 2016). To make sure that his blood relatives are not affected by the curse, a man usually uses those children of his wife that were sired by another man, another cultural discrimination against women. However, a curse could be lifted if the cursed realizes the meaning of the deaths and ask the clan pardon, with compensation to the wronged, or client and clan (Sandu, 2020). In most African families, the father is the head of the family and all the others, including the wife or wives, have to get instructions from him. If it is a polygamous family, a wife and her children form a property unit belonging not to her but to the husband (Tawakalitu, 2017). Though she may have some autonomy, she has no control over livestock, leadership or family rituals. This means she has to rely on the husband for everything to anything, including her own body. Men among the Somali community, demand that their women cover their bodies completely in black cloths, despite the hot climatic conditions (Abdullah and Quayes, 2016). Bride-wealth, which consists of money and other properties like cattle, goats, sheep, cereals etc, is equated to “buying a wife or a woman. However, in most African societies, some of these are refundable upon divorce where the union did not produce children.

The payment of dowry reduces a woman or wife to a man’s property with no rights, freedom of association or movement or even deciding for the family (Alessandra and Emilie, 2017). Once a girl has been married, she changes her clan from that of her family to that of her husband. In other words, women have no permanent clans. Thus she cannot participate in the clan or community decision making, leadership nor conflict resolutions because she is considered a visitor and lacking in knowledge and experience (Krafft, 2017). Marriage, as an institution, can be responsible for the oppression and exploitation of women in many societies in Africa; among the Somali, Islam religion has been effectively used to camouflage and justify this exploitation and oppression (Magezi and Matsobane 2019). Among the Baganda, a wealthy man can marry several wives. Though each of them is entitled to share his bed in rotation, this creates jealousy and disputes between them. Due to socialization process, majority of women are conditioned to accept marriage as their ultimate goal in life. In most societies, religion is applied in marriage to socialize women into cheap acceptance of their subordination (Ayesha, 2020). Bride-price in marriage is the man’s payment for the wife, the woman, who becomes his property on marriage. The owner-owned master-slave relationship gives way to exploitation, oppression, lack of freedom and abuse of all of her rights. The traditional societies use religion and culture to enable men rule, live in comfort and prosper all at the expense of the women, who strain themselves to satisfy the man’s huge, indulgent appetites (Alice *et al.*, 2016). Regardless the massive interventions which have been focused on communities with the aim of empowering women to have an active role in community; too little positive change is manifested (Alessandra and Emilie, 2017). Women have continuously been holding back their participation even in situations where affirmative actions have been put across to include women in decision making which is highly linked to social cultural limitations. According to the research done across East and Horn African region on the status of women; despite the numerous key tasks women fulfill in society, they face this discrimination two-fold (Ayesha, 2020). They are even less able than men to participate in the decisions that affect their lives and livelihoods. It should be understood that the exclusion of women from decision-making bodies limits the possibilities for entrenching the principles of democracy in a society, hindering economic development and discouraging the attainment of gender equality Therefore this study aims at looking at the social cultural practices affecting women’s socio-economic development (Alice *et al.*, 2016).

Initiation rites

The most particular rite of initiation for girls in Africa is

Female Circumcision, otherwise known as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Generally speaking, female circumcision is a cultural practice among many African communities (Carrine et al., 2017). It has been found to be practiced in more than 26 countries of Africa. In Kenya it is practiced by more than 80% of all the 42 ethnic communities. It is universal in North Eastern Province of Kenya (99%) and least in Western Province (5%) (KDHS 2013). The Sabiny of Uganda also practices FGM despite government outlawing the practice. The Maasai and Kuria of Tanzania circumcise their girls. In addition, all the communities living along the Red Sea Coast, Eritrea, Djibout and Ogaden, who are closely related to the Somali ethnic community, practice a kind of female circumcision known as infibulations. This type involves the removal of part or all the external genitalia and then stitching of the vaginal opening together to prevent any unwanted sexual intercourse (Jurgenand Kevin, 2019).

A study carried out in Malawi shows that initiation brings several problems for girls, such as health complications. It is also related to education and is more prevalent among the uneducated, as it leads to dropping out of school (Sandu, 2020). The schedule for initiation ceremonies conflicts with the school calendar leading to absenteeism from school. Initiated girls also find it difficult to return to school or concentrate on their studies because their next expectation is marriage (Kasonde, 2019).

METHODOLOGY

Research design

McCombes (2019) defines a research design as a framework for planning research and answering research questions. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted because Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010) recommend it as a multimethod approach that can be blended with qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, correlation and descriptive approaches. This kind of design was also adopted because Shantikumar (2018) found it to be relatively quick and easy to conduct and data on all variables were collected once. The qualitative approach was needed because the study looked at improving the lives of women in line with socio-economic empowerment, having an insight into the problem of lack of skilling in none numerical terms, and establishing the factors which impede such empowerment, elements that are basically qualitative (qualities). All this was to be by obtaining opinions and views from the respondents. Moreover, people's lives, behaviors, emotions and feelings as well as organizational functions and social movements, among others, are better studied in ways that generate data which are mainly qualitative in nature. So, the data collected in qualitative form were in terms of views and feelings derived from experience of the

respondents in terms of statements and not numbers. However, the quantitative paradigm was also employed in terms of quantities and measurements of data during analysis and presentation, as well as the form of diagrammatical presentation. All this enabled the researcher to describe the manifestations of lack of women's socio-economic empowerment, its magnitude, and the causes and effects thereof.

Study area

The study was carried out in Tororo District, but more specifically, Malaba Town Council. Tororo District is located in the eastern part of Uganda and up to the Uganda-Kenya border, about 210 kilometres from the capital, Kampala. It borders the following Districts: Butaleja in the West, Mbale in West, Manafwa in the North-east, Busia in the South, and the Uganda-Kenya border in the East. Its inhabitants are mainly Iteso and Jopadhola. Malaba Town Council is the border town in the District, where cross-border trade is rife. This is a border town with the original inhabitants being the Iteso, but being an urban setting, there are other tribes like the Jopadhola, Samia, Gishu, Arabs, Indians and Kenyans, among others. The rural setting surrounding the town has only the Iteso and Jopadhola. The rural communities practice subsistence agriculture.

Study population

The population of study is specifically the group of interest, the target group, whose situation has piqued the researcher's attention. This study focused on women whose socioeconomic status of empowerment was a source of concern. According to the 2014 Population and Housing Census, Malaba has 24, 675 women, representing 52.8% of the population. These women are of many different tribes as already enumerated above, different ages and occupations. Since the main issue is socio-economic empowerment, it is better that the details of the socio-economic activities un-fold at the presentation of data on the objectives, especially the first objective. The study population was categorized as indicated in the (Table 1). Table 1 indicates the different categories of respondents that were considered in the study. From (Table 1), it is clear that the different groups of respondents have different numbers. Majority of the respondents were in the category of individual women (85) with businesses, followed by LCV and councilors at different levels, then Aunyu group, local leaders and others. Altogether, there were 281 respondents in the study.

Sampling

Shantikumar (2018) defines sampling as a method that

Table 1: Study population and sample size.

No.	Category of study population	Number of respondents
1.	Local leaders	23
2.	Individual women with some source of income	85
3.	Amagoro A (Aunyu Group)	24
4.	Amagoro B Muslim	17
5.	Akalodongo Central (Nakocoda Saving (Necko)	15
6.	Akalondongo B-PWDs	17
7.	Asinge A –Upendo (Aminanara Women Group)	20
8.	Malaba A South-Police	10
9.	Malaba A North	8
10.	Malaba B East Customs	11
11.	Obore A	10
12.	Dobby woman	1
13.	School Going Girl	1
14.	Drug sellers	3
15.	Bar maids	5
16.	Akatabo 1 B Lower women entrepreneurs	6
17.	LCV and councilors	25
	Total	281

allows researchers to infer information about a population using results from a sub-set of the general population, without investigating every individual. This section describes the sample size and sampling procedures used in this study.

Sample size

According to Little (2017), a sample size refers to the number of observations from a population through which statistical inferences for whole population are made. Since the study population belonged to various categories and yet almost all responses for the members in each category were important and called for, the researcher created time and obtained responses from each member in each group. Therefore, results from all the 281 respondents were obtained and used in compiling the thesis.

Sampling techniques

Amin (2005) further explains that the process of selecting participants from a specific population is crucial in ensuring that the sample accurately represents the entire population. This can be achieved through the use of both probability and non-probability sampling techniques when determining the appropriate sample size.

Convenience sampling procedure

Convenience sampling, as described by Kempro (2012), is a non-probability sampling method that involves selecting individuals who are readily available and convenient for the study. In this case, the researcher utilized this method to gather data from women groups and individual women with businesses. Over 200 questionnaires were distributed to those who were easily

accessible and willing to participate in the study. This approach allowed for a sample size to be obtained based on the availability of participants, ensuring a practical and efficient data collection process.

Purposive sampling procedure

On the side of probability sampling, purposive sampling technique was adopted to select the Local Councilors at District, parish and village levels. Purposive sampling is a strategy whereby researchers select individuals to include in the study based on personal judgment when choosing members of the population to participate in the study (Foley, 2018). This technique was used basing on a judgment that local councilors represent that government and thus are focal to making sure women receive functional skills.

Data collection methods and instruments

This section presents the methods and the corresponding instruments employed to collect data as per the specifications of Uganda Martyrs University.

Methods

Kathari (2004) states that it is essential for the researcher to state the methods s/he is going to use. Data were from primary sources where the researcher obtained facts as reported by the respondents and observed by the researcher using survey method, Observation, interview and discussion methods.

Direct observation

The researcher judged it necessary to acquire data from the field using only his or her own eyes.

This aided in providing proof or evidence of women's socioeconomic empowerment. The current condition of affairs, as well as the various activities conducted by the respondents, were observed and recorded in a notebook. The key areas observed included, among others, housing, dressing, commercial activity, and social activities. As a result, a list of observables was created, and the researcher saw them wherever she went to collect data. What was witnessed became data to supplement what was learned from interviews and surveys.

Interview

The researcher used semi-structured interviews, which are essentially and verbally administered questionnaires in which a list of predetermined questions is asked with no variation but with some scope for follow-up questions to responses that warrant further elaboration, implying that there was an interview guide designed to elicit data, but with room for probe questions following up on the striking responses of the respondents. Interviews also gave the researcher an opportunity to revisit some of the issues that had been over-looked in other methods and yet they were deemed vital for the study.

Survey

This is a method whereby respondents are contacted to give information using a questionnaire. It is basically meant to collect data to a wide extent by getting both facts and opinions. Survey is good for gathering descriptive data of the study. In a basically qualitative study, it is always preferable to have detailed responses, with the feelings and sentiments brought out as well. For that matter, observation and interview took precedence. However, not everybody can be available for interview. This method, therefore, was reserved for the latter category; these were the political leaders.

Interview

Interviews are discussions, usually one-on-one, between an interviewer and an individual meant to gather information on a specific set of topics. An interview involves the oral or vocal questioning technique or discussion. The researcher used semi-structured interviews, which are essentially and verbally administered questionnaires in which a list of predetermined questions is asked with no variation but with some scope for follow-up questions to responses that warrant further elaboration, implying that there was an interview guide designed to elicit data, but with room for probe questions following up on the striking responses of the respondents. Interviews also gave the researcher an opportunity to revisit some of the issues that had been

over-looked in other methods and yet they were deemed vital for the study.

Instruments

According to Quan-Hoang (2018), data collection refers to the process of gathering and measuring information on target variables to answer relevant research questions and evaluate outcomes. Data collection instruments contain the content that enables a researcher to gather information required to respond to the main questions of the study. This study adopted the use of interview schedules (guides), questionnaire and a focus discussion guide.

Interview guide

This consisted of a list of questions which the researcher and the research assistants followed to interface with the respondents. The latter were mostly the women, from whom detailed information was required regarding their state of socio-economic empowerment. The interview guide had brief questions designed to elicit information from the respondents so as to supplement the data collected using questionnaires. There was probing, in which case the researcher would follow up on some of the responses which the respondents would give. This helped to get details which would have remained hidden. a total of 66 participants were interviewed namely; 23 local leaders, 8 women from Malaba A, North, one (1) woman who does hobby work, one school going girl who was serving in the bar to probe into what prompted her to participate in such a business, 5 bar maids among who were married women, whose responses would help to find out what happens at home and how they catch up with life outside home, and the 25 councilors including the LCV were also interviewed.

Questionnaire

Kothari (2005) argues that a questionnaire is advantageous because it is free from bias of the interviewer since answers are in the respondent's own words and large samples can be used and thus the results can be more valid and Reliable. Here the researcher distributed self-administered questions for selected respondents to answer in writing at their own convenience and to substantiate their opinions. Naturally, this instrument was applied on only those respondents who could read and write, as well as those in the latter category but who were unavailable for interviews. The questionnaire consisted of both close-ended and open-ended questions, with the former limited to a basic minimum since this was a basically qualitative study. The questionnaires were administered to 178 respondents including 85 individual women randomly found with

business, 24 members of Amagoro A (Aunyu Group) of women, 17 members of Amagoro B Muslim group of women, 15 members of Akalondongo central (Necko) saving group of women and girls, 17 members of Akalondongo B-people with Disabilities group, and 20 members of Asinge A-Upendo (Aminanara Women Group).

Focus group discussion guide

A focus Group Discussion Guide is a set of questions that guide an interaction between the researcher/investigator and a group of people whose responses can be easily obtained through oral sharing other than consulting one person at a time. In this study, focus group discussions were held with 37 women including 10 women from Malaba A South Police, 11 women from Malaba B East working with customs and clearance, 10 women from a group in Obore A, and 6 women from Akabo 1 B Lower Women Entrepreneurship group, also in Malaba.

Data quality control

This section is about the validity and reliability of the data collected, but which in turn depend on the validity and the reliability of the instruments of data-collection.

Validity

Validity is defined as the extent to which the instrument measures what it purports to measure Maxwell (1992). Content validity pertains to the degree which the instrument fully assesses or measures the construct of interest. In short, it refers to assured accuracy and correctness of data. The validity of the interview guide and that of the questionnaire were handled in a similar manner given that they both consisted of questions – whose correctness had to be ascertained. After the formulation of the instruments, they were given to the supervisor to check the design, lay-out and relevance to the problem under investigation in line with the objectives. This helped in assessing whether the questions were not vague and leading (pertinent and focused), and to ascertain whether the answers to the open-ended questions followed a logical order.

Reliability

Martyn and Wilson (2019) define reliability as a degree of consistency of a measure to the effect that a test can give the same repeated result under the same conditions. To ensure reliability, the two instruments were piloted, that is, five women were interviewed and five local leaders were given the questionnaire in Bugiri Town Council and Bugiri District respectively. The feed-back which was received guided in the validation, re-adjustment and re-

structuring of the interview guide and the questionnaire. Also, the researcher made sure that the major questions were open-ended; this enabled the respondents to freely express themselves. For the case of the interview guide, since the interviews were semi-structured, the use of probe questions helped not only to gain depth of what was being said but also certainty and consistence regarding what was being said. In cases of variations or contradictions, attention was drawn to the respondents so that the right information was obtained. Besides, the researcher will avoid personal questions; as an attempt to avoid the possibility of insincerity.

Data management and processing

Data recorded during interviews were transcribed at the end of each field day in order to have all the data in a standard format. The transcriptions were compared with the original source in order to keep transcription errors to a minimum. The databases were created and edited and data files created, then the data were organized and summarized. The processing was done manually. For the survey data, a data summary sheet was created whereby a series of columns were created, one for numbering the respondents, one for each question asked, and one for each demographic item. But in order for this to be possible, the elements had first to be coded by assigning them representative numerals. The data were frequently stored on the hard disc, storage disc, printed out as hard copy, with a back-up copy on another disk.

Data analysis

Kothari (2005) explains that analysis is the computation of certain measures along with searching for patterns of relationships that exist among data groups, while Mohajan (2018) adds that data analysis is a dynamic process weaving together recognition of emerging themes, identification of key ideas or units of meaning and material. Analysis was an on-going process which went on during and after the data collection phase until the presentation of the findings was done. Regarding the data for this study, there was both quantitative and qualitative analysis independently.

Quantitative data

To ensure completeness, uniformity and accuracy, the collected data were edited. This was aimed at avoiding the omitting of very important data required for the study. This facilitated in the interpretation and establishing of the value attached to numerical variables. The researcher organized the collected data according to the themes of the study, edited, coded and classified. Using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Software version 22, data were also sorted and arranged

according to the number of times that similar responses had occurred (frequencies) and percentages calculated, which formed the basis for correlation analysis that was used to establish the essential variables like the socio-economic empowerment of women and functional skilling, hence forming the basis for data interpretation, discussion, conclusions and recommendations. The data were then summarized in tables, charts and graphs.

Qualitative data

Qualitative data were analyzed using content and thematic analysis as systematic and well-structured methods. According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), qualitative content analysis is a process designed to condense raw data into categories or themes based on valid inference and interpretation. Specifically, the analysis was guided by Miles and Huberman (1994) concurrent flow of activity of data reduction, display, generation of meaning and drawing conclusions right from the start and throughout the process of conducting the research as outlined in the procedure below: The researcher took time to read through the responses from the interviews. Data reduction involved developing codes to help catalogue key concepts while preserving the context in which these concepts occurred. During the reading of the interview notes, the researcher identified words and phrases which were prominent to develop open codes, that is to say that the researcher read through the data several times and developed tentative labels for chunks of data that summarized the key emerging issues. Then the researcher looked for concepts and categories in the data that formed the basic units in the data analysis. These were later amalgamated into the larger codes called axial or categories codes. These were constructed by identifying relationships among the open codes. It was then easy to appreciate the emerging themes from the data at this stage. During axial coding, the researcher used concepts and categories while re-reading the texts to confirm that the concepts and categories accurately represented interview responses and to explore how the concepts and categories were related.

The axial codes were then merged to a small group of major codes to form themes. Sub-themes were also generated, all relating to the extent of women's socio-economic empowerment, the reality of functional skilling and the other factors which determine women's socio-economic empowerment. In that way, all themes were developed basing on the concepts of the research objectives.

Thematic analysis was then applied. Thematic analysis is a form of pattern-recognition within the data, with emerging themes becoming the categories for analysis (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006) and providing insights about the opinions and perceptions of the

respondents. The process involved a careful, more focused re-reading and review of the data. The goal was to develop a story from the texts of interest. The end-result of the thematic analysis highlighted the salient 'constellations' of meanings present in the text (Joffe, 2012, in Neuendorf, 2019, p. 21). Thus, the emerging themes/patterns were identified because they appeared to illuminate the research questions and the literature reviewed. Then, as the analysis went on, these patterns began to be developed into a number of thematic categories of description. Lastly, some explanations were added that included information from key informants such as the leaders. All the responses raised by the respondents during the interviews in response to the questions asked were noted down, key explanations were also cited and summarized in narratives, tables and figures by way of presentation.

Ethical considerations

First of all, permission was obtained from the Course coordinator, Uganda Martyrs University, where an introduction letter was given to the researcher, addressed to the Town Clerk Malaba Town Council, requesting him to both allow and assist the researcher in carrying out the study. Then, the researcher made sure that the respondents participated in the study voluntarily by explaining to them that they could only be part of it if they so wished, even as they were being requested to be. Further, explanations about the purpose, expected outcomes and benefits of the study were made clear to the respondents in order to ensure that their consent was an informed one, with the assurance that the study was being conducted purely for academic purposes. Furthermore, the respondents were also assured that whatever they said was to be kept with utmost secrecy if they so wished, which took care of confidentiality. Further still, they were assured that if they did not want their identity revealed at all, that would be adhered to, thus taking care of anonymity.

In addition, respect and dignity were put into consideration when setting the questionnaires. All respondents and participants were given equal treatment to enable each of them participating willingly without bias and unrealistic expectations. In addition, all researchers and scholars whose work was referred to in this study were quoted/acknowledged and cited accordingly. The researcher made sure that what was found out would be reported exactly and it was done to avoid fabrication of information through presentation of fraudulent results. Then also, during the interviews the respondents were asked for permission to record what they said. This was as a way of showing them that they were both valued and protected. More to that, the research assistants were not exploited but rather handled with care, given lunch and also remunerated. The researcher made sure that she

Table 2: Relationship Between PFS and Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women.

		livelihood	savings and credit groups	Regular Income	Making Savings	Investment	Owning Property	Accessing loans	Economic Survival
Literacy skills	Correlation	0.164	0.288	-.031	.013	-.008	.197	.316	.276
	p-value	0.029	0.000	.682	.868	.915	.008	.000	.000
	N	178	178	178	178	178	178	178	178
Social grouping	Correlation	0.087	0.131	0.042	.061	-.076	.055	.103	.205
	p-value	0.249	0.082	0.574	.418	.316	.466	.169	.006
	N	178	178	178	178	178	178	178	178
Leadership positions	Correlation	0.074	0.309	0.266	0.169	0.227	0.271	0.243	0.028
	p-value	0.329	0.000	0.000	0.024	0.002	.000	0.001	0.710
	N	178	178	178	178	178	178	178	178
Women groups	Correlation	0.434	0.520	0.059	0.159	-0.017	0.408	0.453	0.311
	p-value	0.000	0.000	0.435	0.034	0.827	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	178	178	178	178	178	178	178	178
Vocational skills	Correlation	-0.044	0.088	-0.137	-0.232	-0.015	0.181	0.164	-0.220
	p-value	0.559	0.244	0.069	0.002	.847	0.016	0.028	0.003
	N	178	178	178	178	178	178	178	178
Life skills	Correlation	0.012	0.164	0.109	-0.100	0.016	0.325	0.232	-0.170
	p-value	0.872	0.028	0.147	0.182	0.835	0.000	0.002	0.023
	N	178	178	178	178	178	178	178	178

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

was strict on following the principles of intellectual honesty by acknowledging all the ideas of other authors and referencing them. Right from the beginning of the data collection process, the researcher continuously sought the consent of the participants and respondents by establishing rapport with them and declaring the intentions of the research project. It was also important to seek permission of the respondents and participants to make recordings, photography or video coverage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Relationship between Programmatic Functional Skilling and Socio-economic Empowerment of Women

The relationship between programmatic functional skilling and socio-economic empowerment of women was established using Pearson Correlation Model from the SPSS software. Results were as indicated in the (Table 2). Table 2 illustrates the clear relationships between items for programmatic functional skilling and items for socio-economic empowerment of women. Under the (Table 2), correlation is significant at either 0.01 level (2-tailed) or 0.05 level (2-tailed). This implies that if the p-value is less than 0.01, the relationship is considered to be significant, just as a p-value which is less than 0.05, though above 0.01. This is a default calculation in SPSS

computer programme. The 2-tailed notion indicates that both positive and negative results can be significant. Below is an examination of how the results can be interpreted.

Literacy skills

Table 2 indicates some existing relationship between acquisition of literacy skills and livelihood of women in Malaba Town Council ($r = .164^*$, $p = 0.02$). Since p-value-0.02 is less than 0.05, the relationship is significant. By implication, knowing how to read and write contributes to 16.4% livelihoods among women in Malaba Town Council results. This is true considering that 62.9% of the women in Malaba Town Council are literate. In addition, a strong significant statistical relationship ($r = .288^{**}$, $p = 0.000$) was identified between literacy skills and a belonging to savings/credit groups. This means that the more women become literate, the more they pick courage to save money and also to access loans from the credit cooperatives where they save money. This is true in such a way that it is very easy for a literate woman to know how to count money and how to plan for the money.

Further still, possession of literacy skills among women has a strong positive and significant statistical relationship ($r = .197^{**}$, $p = 0.008$) with ownership of property among women in Malaba Town Council. The implication here is that 19.7% of the chances to own property as a woman in Malaba Town Council goes to

educated women. This can be explained by the fact that educated women can easily identify and put into practice their rights, and also have a voice in society. More results indicated a strong positive and statistically significant relationship ($r = .316^{**}$, $p = 0.000$) between acquisition of literacy skills and accessing loans. This point has a high correlation, and it implies that 31.6% of the chances to access loans lands in the hands of women who know how to read and write. In real sense, loan application involves writing after clearly reading and understanding the terms and conditions. Besides, planning for a loan normally becomes easier if someone is educated. Understanding it from another angle, since literate women have chances of securing livelihood, they can sustain the saving culture in order to pay off loans. The results presented in (Table 2) demonstrate a robust and statistically significant positive correlation ($r = .276^{**}$, $p = 0.000$) between literacy proficiency and the ability to secure economic stability. Specifically, the findings indicate that 27.6% of economic opportunities are more readily accessible to women with literacy skills, enabling them to pursue roles such as counselor, office secretary, district chairperson, or teacher. Conversely, the data suggests that illiterate women in Malaba Town Council face limited prospects for economic survival. These insights underscore the pivotal role of literacy in empowering women to thrive economically within this context.

Social grouping

Belonging to a social group is another item under programmatic functional skilling. These groups might be of farmers, or Savings and Credit Cooperatives, which if well-handled can boost socio-economic empowerment of women in Malaba Town Council. According to results in (Table 2), there is a strong positive and significant statistical relationship ($r = .205^{**}$, $p = 0.006$) between social grouping and economic survival. By implication, belonging to a social group provides 20.5% chances of securing economic livelihood or survival.

Holding leadership positions

Leadership was found to be a very strong predictor of socio-economic empowerment. Looking at the (Table 2), leadership relates to almost all the aspects of socio-economic empowerment. First, there is a strong positive and significant statistical relationship ($r = .309^{**}$, $p = 0.000$) existing between being in leadership and having opportunities to join saving and credit groups. This way, it is clear that 30.9% of the chances to join saving and credit groups fall in the hands of women leaders. However, low scores of women in leadership to the extent that a whole lot of 71.3% of women do not

participate in leadership. It is no wonder, few women belong to the savings and credit groups.

In addition, results established that a strong positive and significant statistical relationship ($r = .266^{**}$, $p = 0.000$) exists between being in leadership and securing regular income. By implication, 26.6% of the opportunities to have a regular source of income are more likely to be enjoyed up by women in leadership positions. This also means that women in leadership can easily save, due to security of regular income, and also invest. Unfortunately, the percentage of women in leadership positions is very low, thus many have resorted to illegal activities such as commercial sex to soothe their urge for regular income. Further still, findings according to (Table 2) indicates a strong positive and significant statistical relationship ($r = .227^{**}$, $p = 0.002$) between being in leadership and making investments. This means that women who do not participate in leadership lose 22.7% chances of making investments. The chances are that while in leadership, there can be opportunities of getting regular income, and making investments just as already stated.

The study also established that a strong positive and significant statistical relationship ($r = .271^{**}$, $p = 0.000$) exists between being in leadership and owning of property as a woman. By implication, being in leadership opens 27.1% chances for women to own property. Unfortunately, still, few women are active in leadership. Being in leadership is also a determinant for women to access loans. This is because the study established a strong positive and significant statistical relationship ($r = .243^{**}$, $p = 0.001$) between being in leadership and accessing loans. This implies that women who is leadership positions have more chances to secure regular source of income, economic livelihoods and also access loans since they can work and earn sustainably. This is considering women who act as chief executive officers, women councilors who receive month allowances, managers of businesses, and head teachers of schools/institutions.

Women groups

The findings in (Figure 1) reveal a strong positive and significant statistical relationship ($r = .434^{**}$, $p = 0.000$) between women groups and the livelihoods of women in Malaba Town Council, indicating that 43.4% of the livelihood opportunities are open for women in groups. This underscores the importance of women forming groups, as it can significantly impact their economic well-being. For instance, the illustration of one women group demonstrates their ability to save and earn a substantial amount annually. It is worth noting that while there are clear benefits to belonging to women groups, a significant percentage (38.8%) of women did not belong to any group at the time of the study. Furthermore, being



Figure 1: Amagoro A Saving (Aunyu Group) with a box where they save money

part of these groups also correlates with increased savings (52%), ownership of property (40.8%), accessibility to loans (45.3%), and economic livelihoods (31.1%) among women in Malaba Town Council, as indicated in Table 2. These findings align with previous research highlighting the challenges faced by women in accessing resources and making household decisions, emphasizing the need for support mechanisms such as women groups to address these issues. Overall, the data underscores the positive impact of women groups on various aspects of women's economic empowerment and well-being in the region.

Vocational skills

The study conducted by Hughes (2016) delved into the impact of functional skilling on women's empowerment, revealing compelling statistics. The findings demonstrated that a significant majority of women experienced positive outcomes, with 96% reporting sustained or increased business revenue, and 91% noting an increase in profit. Moreover, there was a notable 57% increase in women's confidence in building business relationships, and 26% gained access to formal finance, while 85% felt that a loan had contributed to the development of their business. The study also revealed a 110% improvement in the overall situation of women. The vocational skills pursued by women at the time of the study included handcrafts-making, art and sculpture, knitting, baking, cookery, tailoring, business management, and financial literacy. Notably, the research identified a strong negative and significant statistical relationship between vocational skills and both savings behavior and economic survival among women in Malaba Town Council. The implications of these findings underscore the critical role of vocational skills in enabling

women to save and thrive economically. Local leaders corroborated these findings, highlighting the tragic impact of the lack of vocational skills on women's socio-economic empowerment. It was noted that without such skills, women face significant barriers to sustaining themselves economically, further emphasizing the pivotal role of education and skills acquisition in empowering women to achieve economic independence. Additionally, evidence was presented indicating that the absence of vocational skills can lead some women to engage in illegal activities as a means of survival. These findings underscore the urgent need to prioritize the provision of vocational training and skill development opportunities for women to enhance their economic prospects and overall well-being. The image depicts a woman receiving assistance from a man to illegally transport luggage into Kenya (Figure 2). This practice is facilitated by individuals with extensive experience in the area, as the process of crossing the border with certain items involves significant bureaucratic hurdles and financial expenses. Consequently, women exploit these challenges as a pretext for engaging in illegal transportation. The surrounding river poses significant risks, as individuals often succumb to drowning without their bodies being recovered. Local leaders have highlighted the plight of women who enter marriage without acquiring valuable skills, leading to challenges in utilizing their potential. Many women experience idleness due to the absence of vocational training opportunities in Malaba, consequently turning to activities such as prostitution and alcohol consumption for solace and potential income generation (Figure 3). These observations contrast with findings from Nyen and Kunza's (2017) study on the empowerment of rural individuals through vocational training, which indicated a high level of satisfaction and perceived improvement in quality of life. However, the study also



Figure 2: Illegal crossing of Luggage across the river for just 5000



Figure 3: Women just go drinking due to lack of economic survival, some due to idleness.

highlighted the prohibitive cost of such training, potentially limiting access for rural populations.

Life skills

The findings from (Table 2) demonstrate a strong positive and significant statistical relationship between possession of life skills and ownership of property among women in Malaba Town Council. These life skills, including

planning, self-control, and leadership, have been shown to be instrumental in enabling women to attain property ownership. Leadership skills, for example, influence decision-making and eventual ownership, while planning enables individuals to prioritize effectively and achieve their goals. Additionally, there is a noteworthy correlation between life skills and accessibility to loans among women in Malaba Town Council, emphasizing the importance of women acquiring life skills, including

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Leadership positions	Correlation	0.074	0.309	0.266	0.169	0.227	0.271	0.243	0.028
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** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

entrepreneurship, to enhance their access to financial resources. Local leaders also highlighted the significance of acquiring skills, as it can deter individuals from engaging in risky behaviors such as gambling and prostitution, and instead lead to income-generating activities and self-employment. Furthermore, the benefits of such training were identified as encompassing improved family planning, childcare, income generation, business skills, and overall enhancement of living standards. The evolving trend of professional female construction workers diversifying into vocational occupations is viewed as a positive development that can enhance individual productivity and contribute to economic growth. However, there is a concern that if such diversification leads to a significant exodus of professional female construction workers from the industry, it could pose a threat to the female population in this sector. Nevertheless, the increasing recognition of women's contributions to the national economy, particularly in nation-building professions, reflects a positive shift in acknowledging the valuable role of women in driving economic progress (Tawakalitu, 2017; Cheryl et al., 2017).

Conclusion

The feedback from women and leaders in Malaba Town Council highlights a significant lack of initiatives aimed at equipping women with essential skills. This deficiency has resulted in women feeling unproductive and has contributed to their current socio-economic hardships. It

is evident that the empowerment of women is hindered by their lack of skills. It is imperative to provide women with the necessary skills to enable them to become valuable contributors to society. By doing so, we can empower women and enhance their socio-economic standing. The willingness of women to undergo training, despite their lack of livelihoods and skills, underscores their eagerness to engage in profitable endeavors that could potentially transform their lives for the better through practical skill development. The consensus among local and district leaders is that without skills, women are ill-prepared for any form of employment, whether self-driven or otherwise. This concept can be termed as 'empowerment-through-skilling'. The absence of this empowerment has constrained numerous women in Tororo District, limiting their freedom in terms of capabilities, choices, and developmental contributions. Equipping women with practical skills is essential to liberate them from these constraints. Based on the testimony of both women and leaders, it is evident that the most crucial skills to introduce initially are economic and hands-on, such as tailoring and hairdressing, due to their immediate applicability across various environments within the District.

Recommendations

This study suggests implementing the independent variable, namely the suggested technique for empowering women both socially and economically, namely programmatic functional skilling. This means that

skilling women will be implemented as a national programme with secretariats at all levels: national, district, sub-county, parish, and village, all run by the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development in collaboration, of course, with the Ministry of Finance, which will finance it. There should be a team of trainers of trainers (TOT) at each level of the secretariat, with the exception of the village level, which will be the level of pure consumption. Tailoring, hairdressing, business skills, financial literacy, functional literacy, arts and crafts, cookery, fabrication, and the establishment of a women SACCO should all be included in the overall Skilling Programme. This SACCO should be structured similarly to the secretariats at various levels, but as a separate entity from the functional skilling. This will serve as the intervening variable, assisting in the operationalization of the knowledge gained through skilling. The model below summarizes the potential programme implementation timeline.

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