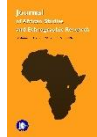




An evaluation of social and psychological effect of empowerment of women in Uganda through Technical and Vocational Education and Training participation



Research article



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Abstract

The article examines the effect of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) on women's social and psychological wellbeing in Uganda. It reports on the findings of a larger study that was conducted 2021 in Kampala on the role of TIVET on empowering women in, Uganda. Structured interviews were conducted with 369 female TVET graduates to establish the effect of TVET skills on their social and psychological wellbeing. Data was analysed through frequency and percentage evaluation. Findings of this study show that, TVET played a major role in the social and psychological empowerment of women through improvement in their decision-making capacity, autonomy, mobility, and self-confidence. The findings of this will form basis in empowering women through skills acquisition. It sensitizes various stakeholders and policy makers on the need for relevant skills for women and how skills change their life perception.

Keywords: autonomy, decisions making, empowerment, skills, social and psychological

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1. Introduction

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is an avenue through which a society creates a pool of skilled manpower that can increase industrial output. It is a process of education that readies people to participate in various jobs including trades and crafts or even as technicians. Technical and vocational education happens at the post-secondary, and higher education levels. Some also happen as youth polytechnics which admit primary school leavers. Alternatively, it can be pursued as an apprenticeship without prior education. In the past, people who were masons, iron smiths and carpenters passed down their knowledge to several apprentices. It is from these apprentices that their way of doing things grew and later combined with TVET knowledge. TVET leads to improved quality of life for both men and women since it equips them with the skills of carpentry, masonry and other technical skills that helps them become economically productive by giving them opportunities in business and employment and thus escape poverty and marginalization. When individuals are equipped with TVET skills, they become entrepreneurial, employable, and informed citizens and thereby contribute to the economic development of a nation (Anaele, Isiorhovoja, Dele & Asoluka, 2014). Therefore, human resource development through TVET not only contributes to economic development and reduction in unemployment but also leads to the enhancement of social inclusion.

Despite the significance of TVET, internationally, there are huge gaps between women and men in TVET participation. Globally, the level of female participation in TVET is approximately 6 million (UNESCO 2010). Uganda releases approximately 500000 TVET graduates every year. The welfare of the TVET female graduates is more enhanced than those females without TVET certificates because most of them are equipped with skills that enable them to generate their own income. When women are equipped with skills, they become entrepreneurs, employable and informed citizens thereby contributing to economic development of the women through generation of their own income (UNESCO 2010). A study in Egypt by the British council on women in STEM found that;

“While there are gaps in the educational attainment of women (predominately outside the metropolitan areas), when provided with opportunities, the women we surveyed have excelled in their studies to get to the top of the class and into the prestigious programmes in the STEM arena. This access opens paths to the labour market. It is not solely a matter of increasing numbers, it is imperative to sustain and maintain women’s presence and thus reduce gender disparity by working to improve the direct conditions; including working hours, safety of the workplace, childcare and the indirect conditions in the private sphere such as unpaid household work, lack of support or cases of gender-based violence.” STEM in Egypt Case Study Presented to British Council in Egypt, April 2021)

Studies in Uganda show that female TVET graduates, like all women, continue to lag behind men in all aspects of life. Statistics show that women do not earn the same wages for the same work (Backhans, 2007). At the same time, there are some sectors that are male dominated meaning the male numbers effectively shuts out female participation out. Occupational gender segregation has been identified as one of the reasons why women earn much less compared to their male counterparts (Morrison et al., 2007). When women crossover into male dominated fields of employment they stand to benefit more than those who don't. Women who crossover make three times higher profits and earning than those who do not. TVET provides women with an opportunity to crossover into jobs that were the exclusive preserve of males (Morrison et al., 2007).

UNESCO (2010) revealed that male students outnumber the female students in 91 per cent of countries globally, this is despite increased parity in enrolment in higher education and in Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics disciplines. Moreover, in the developed world, countries such as United Kingdom experience low rates of female participation in STEM related subjects and occupational choice (National Academies Press, 2007). This gap is attributed to gender bias in the curriculum, classroom pedagogy and failure by the education system to offer support for development of self-esteem, confidence, and aspiration of female learners at the formative stage (Johnsen& Kendrick, 2005 cited in Watermeyer, and Stevenson, n.d.). Female underrepresentation in TVET is therefore an issue both in developed and developing countries, including Uganda.

2. Dimensions of Women's Empowerment

The term empowerment, as a result, is a complicated idea because it focusses on various dimensions depending on the context that its used. It implies the gradual shift of power in each dynamic over a period of time to create a more balanced structure. Women's economic empowerment can be defined as the process of achieving women's equal access to and control over economic resources so that they can be empowered to control various areas of their lives (Taylor and Perezniето, 2014). Women's economic empowerment is an important aspect of the SDGs with its focus on decent work, poverty reduction, and human development. Some studies show that gender parity could boost global gross domestic product (GDP) by between \$12 trillion and \$28 trillion by 2025 (Woetzel et al., 2015). "National economies lose out when a substantial part of the population cannot compete equitably or realize its full potential" (Golla et al., 2011,). Women's empowerment falls into the following categories;

Social Empowerment refers to the enabling force that strengthens women's social relations and their position in social structures. Social empowerment addresses the social discriminations existing in the society based on disability, race, ethnicity, religion, or gender.

Educational Empowerment indicates that, without proper education for all children including girls, gender empowerment is not possible. This maxim - if one male child is literate

personally, he alone becomes educated but if one girl child is educated the whole family stands to benefit – this has been realized by the national political leaders, policymakers, administrators, and bureaucrats. In this regard, (Sethumadaya Rao, 2001) considers that, “The most important thing is that they (the women) need to be given free and compulsory education so as to make them aware of the rights and duties and possible free legal aid so that they can fight their cases without spending money.”

Economic empowerment is the crying need of this hour. “Wage employment means economic power” (Elliott, 2008, p. 86). Through employment women earn money and it enables women and girls to become ‘bread earners’, contributing members of households with a strong sense of their own economic independence. “Economic empowerment is a powerful tool against poverty” (Biswas, 2010, p. 27). The Djakarta Declaration (1994) critically examines that, “empowerment of women is not only equal consideration; it was a necessary precondition for sustainable economic and social development.” Without economic self-sufficiency, other rights and scopes remain meaningless to the people. In the literature of both labour economics and organizational sciences, there is substantial evidence that individuals’ training attainments are associated with positive career outcomes, including salary level, number of promotions, development opportunities, and job mobility (Cappelli, 2010). Since most organizations use education as an indicator of a person’s skill levels or productivity (Benson, Finegold & Mohrman, 2014), they frequently employ it as a prerequisite in hiring decisions.

Political empowerment or political participation is a complex issue that should in principle ensure equal treatment of social groups, whose characteristics may vary according to ethnicity, class, age, gender, and location. Given this innate complexity, the level of women’s representation in national parliaments has been the usual measurement of women’s equality in the discourse on gender equality in political participation and politics (Make Every Woman Count, 2018). Social structures are rules that govern and guide people through their daily interactions. The rules can be formalised into laws or can be informal beliefs, such as cognitive schemas (Giddens, 2006). Patriarchal social norms contribute greatly to women’s disempowerment and lack of agency. Women cannot gain greater freedom and choice without changing the structures that affect women’s access, control, and use of resources (Oppenheim Mason, 2005; Malhotra & Schuler, 2005).

There have been international policies in place to encourage greater female participation in leadership roles. For examples, countries in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and Organization of American States are encouraged to have women represented in 30 percent of elected positions (Krook, 2006; Towns, 2010). Policy statements such as the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) are based on the understanding that women’s empowerment carries inherent worth and can help economic growth (Malhotra et al. 2002). Research has observed a link between women’s political empowerment and outcomes for women, for children, and for

society (e.g., Sen, 1997, Bratton & Ray, 2002, Chattopadhyay & Duflo, 2004, Gerrity, Osborn, & Mendez, 2007, Swiss et al., 2012, Beaman et al., 2012).

In terms of Cultural Empowerment, women remain underrepresented in the fields of science, culture, and the arts, even in countries with relatively long histories of formal equality. A large part of the transformative aspect of cultural rights is being able to overturn presumed female and male characteristics and capabilities, which, to a large extent, determine the scope of activities that a man or a woman can undertake in each society. The realization of equal cultural rights for women would help to reconstruct gender in ways that transcend notions of women's inferiority and subordination, thereby improving conditions for the full and equal enjoyment of their human rights in general. "This requires a shift in perspective," said Shaheed, "from seeing culture as an obstacle to women's human rights to ensuring women's equal cultural rights.

The transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 saw the emergence of Target 5 which aims to "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" A major SDG indicator supporting attainment of women's empowerment is "enhancing the use of enabling technology by increasing the proportion of women and girls who have access"

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have catalysed communication and networking between and among people on a global scale. Women's empowerment and ICTs have been the subject of global goals, discussions, and debates for many decades. Global discussions, such as the 1995 World Conference on Women: Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, deliberated and advocated for the inclusion of women in the information society to fully achieve women's empowerment in connection with ICT. In 2013, 200 million more men had access to the internet than women. Women use ICTs much less frequently and intensely than men. In 2016, the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) stated that the percentage of women gaining access to ICT is decreasing—with women utilizing ICTs 11% less than men in 2013 and 12% less than men in 2016. The most recent 2018 report indicated that the overall proportion of internet usage for women was 12% lower than men.

3. TVET in the Global Perspective

TVET has had both success and challenges in Asia. Countries such as Japan, Korea and Singapore are well known for having invested into TVET systems that have supported their economic development (ADB, 2004). These countries have highly skilled populations and have managed to keep unemployment rates low. On the other hand, many of the South Asian countries have not been as successful or well-developed. TVET in South Asia has low enrolment and poor funding.

Participation in technical and vocational education (TVET) worldwide is a small percentage of secondary enrolments, remaining at 11% from 1999 to 2014. More worrying is that the low-income countries have the smallest share of TVET enrolments at 5% in 2012. Most regions have remained consistent in their TVET enrolments with the Arab States seeing a significant increase

from 1% in 1999 to 8% in 2010, Central Asia seeing a significant increase from 6% to 19%, and East Asia and the Pacific seeing a slight increase from 14% to 17% (WB, 2012). However, the Sub-Saharan African countries have consistently registered a low rate of 2% over the period with less than 20% of the registered students in the TVET courses being women. According to the World Bank report (2012), only in Latin America and the Caribbean do women make up more than half of TVET enrolments. Most other regions fall between 40-45% of female enrolments in TVET with sub-Saharan Africa reporting the lowest percentage around 30%. I think countries are doing poorly with TVET because the certificate offered in the institutions is usually undermined. Most people in different countries still prefer university degrees.

TVET programs are diverse in Africa, and this is reinforced by poor regulation that allows private TVET providers to have more control over programme design. Pre-VET programmes in Africa often focus on “light” vocational skills in business services and commercial fields rather than industrial training, which are more expensive to provide – this is illustrated by evidence from Senegal, Mali, Zimbabwe, and Botswana (Johanson & Adams, 2014, p. 55). For example, Swaziland’s private providers offer courses that are 45.1 percent business and 23.4 percent IT (World Bank, 2010, p. 66). In Seychelles, six of the 14 private registered providers were in occupational skills such as ICT and human resources, while in Mauritius, private providers run programmes that “require limited equipment, for cost reasons.” (ILO, 2010, p. 7). In Botswana, much of the vocational training, such as for customer service, takes place in the service industry (SADC/UNESCO, 2011). In Ghana, apprenticeships are integrated into the family business or community structure (Botchie & Ahadzie, 2014), and includes moral development as well as the transfer of practical skills (Haan, 2011, p. 120). Apprentices are often self-employed or work in small firm in the informal sector (Monk, Sandefur, & Teal, 2018).

Understanding TVET in Uganda

The vocational schools in Uganda are post-secondary educational institutions that provide technical and vocational skills training required to perform tasks of a particular job. The first TVET institution in Uganda was established in 1974. The number of TVET institutions expanded in the 1990s and early 2000s. Many private technical institutions were put up between 1992 and 2005 because of the government policy issued in the Government White Paper on Education (1992). The aim of the white paper was to eradicate illiteracy and equip the individual with basic skills and knowledge to exploit the environment for self-development. Most TVET courses in Uganda, like shoemaking, carpentry, and tailoring, used to end at the certificate level until Kyambogo University initiated some diploma and degree programs in some of the fields (Denjor, 2011). TVET still struggles with prestige because it is often assumed that someone with a degree, even if they are unemployed, is at a higher status than a certificate holder with a job (Kafka, 2013). Some parents believed technical education would prevent their children from progressing further (Okello, 2014).

In 1901, Lansdowne, the secretary to the foreign office in London, stated the following regarding the role of the colonial government in education “Education is certainly our business in the last resort, but if the missionaries will do the work for us, it would be better to give them facilities in the form of tax rebate” (Ssekamwa 1997, p. 4). This position of the British colonialist in Uganda could have emanated from the popular notion inherent during the colonial epoch as further noted by Ssekamwa (1997). Currently, TVET system is an ecosystem of several technical institutions. Uganda Technical School enrolls around 5000 students, where only 1 out of 10 are females. 30 government aided technical institutes offer 2 years’ craft courses such as carpentry and joinery and block-laying. Polytechnics and the Uganda Technical Colleges also train around 6000 craftsmen. 4 Technician Training colleges awards Ordinary Diplomas in Engineering.

Women’s Participation in TVET in Uganda

Female underrepresentation in TVET is an issue of consideration in Uganda. Despite progress made over the years, many gaps, barriers, and inequalities persist. The government is trying to put measures in place to ensure the effective implementation and strengthening of policies related to education, gender, and coordination between various ministries. By so doing, this will ensure that both human and social capital is taken care of in relation to support for equal opportunity for both male and female participation in TVET education and subsequently, in economic growth and development. Various scholars have in the recent years generated substantial data on female participation in educational administration (Jutta, 2000; Mjelde, 2006; Nzomo, 1995; Oplatka, 2006; Osumbah, 2010; Shakeshaft, 2006; UNESCO, 2010; Wanda, 2005). However, the literature has not focused on the factors influencing participation of women in administration of TVET institutions, more so in Uganda. Overall, the consensus in the literature gives the impression that there is no single factor which can be used to adequately explain the absence of women in administrative positions, especially in TVET institutions. The Uganda Gender Ministry Report (2008) cited some of the factors limiting the productivity of the girl child. These include the insensitivity to the education of girls by the public, as evident in inadequate resource allocation to the needs of girls’ education at all levels, and lack of protection for the girl child, as evident in defilement/assault cases. In addition, there are lack of gender-disaggregated data and information and limited choices by parents due to poverty. Gender imbalances are reflected in literacy rates: the adult literacy rate for Ugandan women is at 71%, while that of men is at 83% (World Bank, 2018).

Women’s Social Empowerment and TVET

Social empowerment refers to a situation in which a community’s sense of cohesion and integrity has been strengthened by an activity such as ecotourism. Strong community groups, including youth groups and women’s groups and good participation in community meetings may all be signs of an empowered community. Social empowerment, as another form of women empowerment, means according to women the equality of opportunity and removing obstacles that hinder

women from participating fully in commerce, education, politics, and culture (Backhans, 2007). As Manuere and Phiri (2018) explain:

According to the World Bank, women and men are not equal in any region of the world. Studies have shown that gender equality is addressed by giving women more access to land, credit market and labour opportunities (Morrison et al., 2007). Several studies have revealed that gender equality correlates highly with economic growth.

According to Kishor (1997), there is a positive relationship between gender inequality and low per capita income. It is also argued that there is an inverse relationship between gender inequality and low government expenditure on education (Morris et al., 2007). Dollar and Gatti (1999) argue that cases of gender inequality are more numerous in the poorer countries of Africa, Latin America, and Asia. According to Rahman (2013), gender inequality is a product of the power relationships that exist between women and men in society. Rowland (1997) argues that every human society has a way of rewarding one sex with more power to the extent that the other sex that has no power over the control of resources and becomes the oppressed. According to Luke (1974), the concept of power in women empowerment helps researchers, academics, and policymakers to examine the underlying social and cultural structures that define gender relations.

Several studies have shown that sustainable development is impossible without women's empowerment and gender equality. Consequently, it is asserted that gender equality is a human rights issue, a precondition, and an indicator of sustainable development (Alvarez & Lopez, 2013). It is also affirmed that gender disparity is prevalent across the cultures of the world and that without serious steps to tackle it, sustainable development cannot be achieved (Stevens, 2010). Furthermore, UN Women (2014) rightly outlined that to create a just and sustainable world and to enhance women's roles in sustaining their families and communities, achieving gender equality is paramount. On the other hand, if gender equality is not maintained, it will retard the country's development. In conservative societies, intra-household decision-making practices and attitudes towards the role of women in society generally are usually much more deep-seated and are not easily influenced by empowerment interventions (Beath et al., 2013). Economically empowered women through TVET are more likely to become socially independent, based on the literature that finds a link between women's earnings and intra-household decision-making (e.g., Majlesi, 2016).

Study objective

The main objective of this study was to evaluate social and psychological effects of empowerment of women in Uganda through TVET participation.

3. Study Methodology

The study used a mixed method to examine the role of TVET on women's empowerment in Kampala, Uganda. Data for this article were collected between January and July 2021 from 369 female graduates of TVET using a structured interview. Additional data was obtained from key informant interviews and supplemented by information from secondary sources including published and unpublished studies, journal articles, and online resources. The study was conducted in Kampala District in the Central Region of Uganda. The study area was chosen because it has a high concentration of TVET institutions as well as opportunities for TVET graduates. Many of the graduates reside in the surrounding districts and move to the city almost daily to conduct various economic activities. A convenient sampling procedure was used to recruit 369 women aged 19 years and above who had received training at TVET institutions in Uganda. The interviews, which lasted between 40 and 60 minutes, took place in a location and time determined by the interviewees. Interviews were conducted in the English language. All the interviews were auto recorded and transcribed, with any information capable of identifying the participant's identity removed from the final transcripts. The data were analysed using thematic analysis. This technique has been utilized in other qualitative studies (Draucker & Petrovic, 1996) and involves the identification of recurring themes to organize data into categories and sub-categories.

4. Study findings and Discussion

Considering empowerment from the social and psychological point of view, the researcher adopted the framework advanced by Golla et. al (2011). The framework identifies important indicators of social empowerment such as Agency and Decision making, Autonomy and Mobility, and Self-confidence/ Self-efficacy.

4.1 Characteristics of Respondents

Most of the participants (78 %) were between 16 and 35 years of age, and 74.3% had obtained a TVET certificate while 25.7 % obtained a diploma. Table 1 presents the characteristics of the study participants.

Table 4.1: Respondent Characteristics

| Characteristic | | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Age | 16-25 Years | 128 | 34.69 |
| | 26-35 Years | 162 | 43.90 |
| | 36-45 Years | 56 | 15.18 |
| | 46-55 Years | 19 | 5.15 |
| | Above 55 Years | 4 | 1.08 |
| Total | | 369 | 100% |
| Marital Status | Single | 178 | 48.24 |
| | Married | 168 | 45.53 |
| | Divorced | 20 | 5.42 |
| | Widowed | 3 | 0.81 |
| Level of education before joining TVET | Primary seven | 4 | 1.08 |
| | Ordinary Level | 266 | 72.08 |
| | Advanced Level | 99 | 26.83 |
| Qualification After First TVET | Certificate | 274 | 74.25 |
| | Diploma | 95 | 25.75 |
| Current Level of Education | Certificate | 135 | 36.59 |
| | Diploma | 168 | 45.53 |
| | University Degree | 66 | 17.89 |
| Course/Programme Attended | Engineering | 39 | 10.57 |
| | Catering and Hotel Management | 63 | 17.07 |
| | MV Mechanics | 17 | 4.61 |
| | Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy | 36 | 9.75 |
| | Graphics Design | 23 | 6.23 |
| | Labtech, Nursing, and Midwifery | 39 | 10.57 |
| | Fashion and Design | 86 | 23.31 |
| | Plumbing | 13 | 3.52 |
| | Information Tech | 20 | 5.42 |
| | Secretarial Studies | 20 | 5.42 |

Educational Attainment

The current education level of the respondents was taken as the best indicator for measurement of productivity skills of the respondents given that it reflects their work competencies. Table 4.2 shows the frequencies on the educational attainment of the respondents.

Table 4.2: Respondent’s Current Education Level

| | | Frequency | Percent |
|--------------|-------------------|-----------|---------|
| Valid | Certificate | 135 | 36.6 |
| | Diploma | 168 | 45.5 |
| | University Degree | 66 | 17.9 |
| | Total | 369 | 100.0 |

The findings of the study showed that the respondents had advanced in their educational attainment with 36.6%, 45.5%, and 17.9% at Certificate, Diploma, and University levels respectively. This shows that most of the respondents pursued further education after their TVET program.

Employment Status of Respondents

Table 4.3 shows the differences in employment status of the respondents before TVET and their current positions and levels after TVET.

Table 4.3: Respondents’ levels before TVET and current levels after TVET

| | Respondent's Position at Workplace Before TVET | | Respondent's Position at Workplace After TVET | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------|------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------|
| | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage |
| Management | 47 | 12.7 | 107 | 29 |
| Non-Management | 113 | 30.6 | 228 | 61.8 |
| Unemployed | 209 | 56.6 | 34 | 9.2 |
| Total | 369 | 100 | 369 | 100 |

4.2 Women’s Social Empowerment and TVET

Table 4.4: Do you use have any say in deciding any family planning method to use?

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--------------|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Yes | 338 | 91.6 | 91.6 | 91.6 |
| | No | 31 | 8.4 | 8.4 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 369 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

From the responses, 91.6% stated that they were using some method of family planning. This was both for the married and unmarried. Further probing indicated that for those in relationships, their spouses were in complete support of their application of family planning. This is a deviation from the traditional norm where husbands associated the use of family planning with extramarital sexual encounters (Kabagenyi, 2014).

Table 4.5: If yes, who determines what method to use?

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------------|------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Me | 294 | 79.7 | 79.9 | 79.9 |
| | My husband | 5 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 81.3 |
| | Both of us | 39 | 10.6 | 10.6 | 91.8 |
| | N/A | 30 | 8.1 | 8.2 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 368 | 99.7 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | .3 | | |
| Total | | 369 | 100.0 | | |

About 79% of the respondents chose the family planning method without their spouses. This is a very high level of self-determination to take control over their bodies. Only 10.6% jointly decided the family planning method in consultation with their spouses. That is still a high level of empowerment given that they can have a conversation and choose something that works for them. Only 1.4% stated that the choice of family planning method was made by their spouses.

Table 4.6: TVET training has-reduced my susceptibility to GBV

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------------|-------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Strongly disagree | 345 | 93.2 | 93.5 | 93.5 |
| | Disagree | 21 | 5.7 | 5.7 | 99.2 |
| | Agree | 3 | .8 | .8 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 369 | 99.7 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | .3 | | |
| Total | | 370 | 100.0 | | |

The study findings indicated that 93.5% of the respondents agreed to the fact that acquisition of TVET reduced their susceptibility to GBV especially at the household level where it was more likely

to occur. I think this is because men respected the women because of the newly acquired social status and their participation in income generation.

Table 4.7: When I encounter a female being subjected to GBV, I endeavour to stop it

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------------|-------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Strongly disagree | 20 | 5.4 | 5.4 | 5.4 |
| | Disagree | 77 | 20.8 | 21.0 | 26.4 |
| | Agree | 231 | 62.4 | 62.9 | 89.4 |
| | Strongly agree | 1 | .3 | .3 | 89.6 |
| | 5 | 38 | 10.3 | 10.4 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 367 | 99.2 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 3 | .8 | | |
| Total | | 370 | 100.0 | | |

Several studies (Adelakun, Oviawe, & Barfa, 2015, Kafka, 2013) have looked at women’s economic and social empowerment as the enchanted bullet, one that can respond to and mitigate violence by increasing the bargaining power women have within their households, communities, and beyond. It is noteworthy that GBV in the society may be normalized and reproduced due to structural inequalities, such as societal norms, attitude, and stereotypes around gender generally and violence against women specifically (Guruge S, 2012).

Participation in self-help groups/ Social Networking

Table 4.8: Is the respondent in self-help social networking groups

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--------------|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Yes | 304 | 82.4 | 82.4 | 82.4 |
| | No | 65 | 17.6 | 17.6 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 369 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

From the table above, 82.4% of the respondents belonged to social groups after completing TVET. The high number of members in the social networks was due to the perceived benefits of belonging to the social groups. The outlined benefits included networking opportunities, support to cope with problems and stress through sharing experiences, creating networks for joint work

opportunities and mobilization of funds for productive ventures. The findings resonate with the study by Davis and Negash (2005) which established that women groups provide a means of collective action used in communities worldwide as safety nets to cope with risks and for mutual assistance. One respondent a former student of Lugogo Technical Institute stated that:

“Before I joined TVET, the only person I could reach out to for help to sort out my problems was my mother. But when I went to college, I met a number of people with whom I bonded. They invited me to Scripture Union where we met regularly for fellowships. Most of those with whom I fellowshiped remained very close to me and we now meet at different places for meetings and fellowships. Beyond fellowship, we created business ideas which matured and have changed our lives.”

These sentiments about the role of social networks in fostering group action are in tandem with the works of Loiseau et al. (2015) who observed that social networks can amplify women’s voices and identify strategies to better facilitate their impact on decision making processes. In that way, individuals expand their businesses and social contacts and can reap economic, social, and psychological benefits out of mutual help, solidarity, and joint responsibility. The respondents acknowledged that because of the training they received, they can fit within the group dynamics of the social networks to establish and maintain social relations. They add that TVET institutions instilled certain values among the graduates.

“I fully understand the benefit of being a member of social groups and I would love to join but I am constrained by money. Participating in a social group means attending their meetings and contributing financially to their cause. Attending these meetings involves travel to venues as well as refreshments which are all expenses and beyond that if a financial decision is reached, everyone is required to contribute. Without regular income I am challenged in meeting such costs and the same applies to my husband who is already overburdened with all family expenses to which he is not willing to add on more responsibility and costs. When I secure paid work, I will join one as I have seen the benefits accruing to those who are members of some.”

Table 4.9: Is the group a women’s only or includes men?

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--------------|--------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Women’s only group | 32 | 8.7 | 8.7 | 8.7 |
| | Women and Men | 271 | 73.4 | 73.4 | 82.1 |
| | N/A | 66 | 17.9 | 17.9 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 369 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

From the study findings, it was established that only 8.7% of the respondents belonged to women only groups, and 73.4% belonged to unisex groups. The respondents found mixed groups well balanced and a better avenue for understanding gender issues.

Table 4.10: Has the group met your expectations?

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--------------|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Yes | 289 | 78.3 | 78.3 | 78.3 |
| | No | 18 | 4.9 | 4.9 | 83.2 |
| | N/A | 62 | 16.8 | 16.8 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 369 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

From the responses, 78.3% felt that the social groups met their expectations as they could identify with the anticipated benefits while 4.9% felt that some of their expectations were not met. One respondent whose expectations were met advanced the following argument:

"I am a member of two very active social groups. In fact, I am the chairperson of one and vice chairperson of the other. The one of which I am chairperson is for "women Engineers". And we are proud to be called Engineers because it boosts our ego and professional career aspirations. The one of which I am Vice chairperson owns a hardware shop in Gayaza, one of the busy peri-urban areas of this city that was set up from cash contributions from the members. We chose hardware because we knew we would be in position to generate business from the contracts we undertake. We meet monthly to discuss business and annually to share proceeds and plan for the next year. Through the business we are able to earn additional income that enables us to earn supplementary income to meet personal and development needs. All group members are happy, and others want to join but we prefer having manageable numbers."

Through such social networks, members have achieved economic empowerment, skills, creation of awareness, social interaction and moral support. Another respondent had this to say:

"I emerged from a very humble family to become a graduate of my institution. What is important is that I learnt a lot from my college. The girls' population was just about one quarter of the school population. The delivery, however, was very good as it emphasised both professional and social skill as a necessity for survival beyond college. Before leaving college, we formed a group of eight people to keep us connected. Later, we admitted twenty-five (25) more girls, some of whom had finished college before us and some others after us from the various academic disciplines. In this group we share

so many issues especially business such that if anyone in the circles requires a service or knows someone that requires a service, we usually look within the group before anywhere else. That way we keep all the group members engaged in income generation. We meet every month at different places, discuss a wide range of issues in life, share money for the month in the merry go rounds savings group. We have planned our meetings in such a way that at least once in three months, our husbands join us for dinner and a drink. This gives all of us comfort and satisfaction because we use our social capital to grow economically” (Repondent 10).

Respondents indicated that because of these social networks, their social capital had translated into economic opportunities from the pooling of savings that enables members to acquire assets or invest in business ventures. Leadership opportunities are also created as the groups require leaders. This finding echoes the works of Makokha (2008), who holds that when resources are invested in income-generating activities, personal development is attained, social positions elevated, and generally social esteem and psychological wellness rises.

Table 4.11: What is your husband’s position on your membership in the Group/s?

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--------------|----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | supportive | 136 | 36.9 | 36.9 | 36.9 |
| | Not supportive | 13 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 40.4 |
| | Indifferent | 18 | 4.9 | 4.9 | 45.3 |
| | NA | 202 | 54.7 | 54.7 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 369 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

From the research findings, 54.7% of the respondents found the question inapplicable as they were either single, divorced or widowed. For the marrieds however, about 81% of the respondents stated that their husbands were supportive of their participation in the social networks. This was more so for the financial related groups where the husbands were able to borrow through their wives in times of need. 10.7% of the married respondents stated that their husbands did not mind their membership in social networks, while 7.7% did not want their wives engaged in social networks. One respondent, a graduate of catering and hotel management now operating a small food kiosk in Lungujja, had this to say:

“My husband disregards social groups. He imagines that they will spoil me (basically that they will “teach me bad manners”). What he thinks is that such groups will be a form of liberation for me to ask some questions. So, he has been reluctant to support me. Unfortunately, he has the backing of his family. His parents are happy to come

home and find me there to welcome them, cook for them and generally entertain them. They hold the view that if he can provide me with food, clothes and shelter, I should be comfortable enough to keep at home and bear and rear their children hence no need of joining groups.”

Another respondent, a graduate of fashion and design who is now a housewife stated:

“Before I got married I had very many friends who supported me in different ways when we were at school and college. I thought I would keep close with them in future. However, when I got married, I was told that everything I needed was available and my duty as per our religion is to keep home and bring up the family. My husband promised to provide for all my requirements and asked me to cut ties with the two groups I belonged to, which I did as my friends moved on. As of today, all of them are employed and doing well while my husband’s business is dwindling after he married a second wife who, just like me, has three children. So, we are all struggling financially and socially isolated but even in these circumstances, and yet my husband still cannot allow me to re-join the social networks regardless of the known benefits.”

Decision making powers

At the group and community level, the study was interested in establishing the respondents’ ability to influence decision making, engage group members and leaders on decisions taken and convincing them otherwise, and challenge authority if they felt decisions taken by those in authority did not represent their interests. One of the indicators of social empowerment is participation in decision making, especially on matters that influence the individual. Being a member of a social group especially by choice may be an indication of a level of social empowerment, but participation in decision making is a manifestation of an even higher level of empowerment. To establish the respondents’ role in specific decision-making processes and ability to challenge authority, respondents were asked a set of questions whose responses are summarised in the table below.

Table 4.12: Who makes decisions about group activities in the self-help group?

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Leaders | 1 | 0.3 | 0.3 | 0.3 |
| | members | 2 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.8 |
| | leaders with consultation of members | 299 | 81.0 | 81.0 | 81.8 |
| | NA | 67 | 18.2 | 18.2 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 369 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

From the responses obtained, it was established that the decision-making process was very consultative. This means that the members' views were considered. Only 0.3% of the respondents stated that the decisions were taken by the leaders only while 0.5% stated that the decisions were taken by the members alone. Most of the members of social networks (81%) agreed that members participated in the decision-making process with more serious issues calling for voting to decide on the course of action. Only execution of the decisions and less serious decisions were left for the leadership. By joining social groups, the TVET graduates have gained collective strength. They have obtained the power to influence happenings at home and at the community level.

Table 4.13: Are there situations where you have had to engage authorities over things you were not satisfied with?

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------------|--------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Yes | 37 | 10.0 | 10.4 | 10.4 |
| | No | 319 | 86.4 | 89.6 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 356 | 96.5 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 13 | 3.5 | | |
| Total | | 369 | 100.0 | | |

From the research findings, it was established that only 10% of the respondents had been able to engage authorities over decisions that they were not satisfied with. Much as the percentages appear low, there is a significant shift from the traditional setup where females were obedient to all decisions made regardless of how they were affected by them.

Table 4.14: Has the respondent been in a position where they did not agree to a decision by other members and managed to convince them otherwise?

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--------------|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Yes | 265 | 71.8 | 71.8 | 71.8 |
| | No | 37 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 81.8 |
| | NA | 67 | 18.2 | 18.2 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 369 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

From the table it is evident that 71.8% of the respondents had been able to speak up when they did not agree to a decision reached and successfully convinced the other members otherwise. When discussing the contributions to their savings group one respondent now working with a private solar system distribution company stated as follows:

“The group leaders came up with a proposal for members to contribute twenty thousand shillings (shs. 20,000) per week which was quite unrealistic based on the variations in financial capacity. I was able to convince group members that individuals had different financial capacities and aspirations therefore the group could set a minimum contribution but no maximum limit. successfully.”

In the same vein, another respondent stated that:

“While choosing the leaders of their group, it turned out that most of them were males, yet the group had about 75% females. After the selection of the leaders initially, I realised that most of the leaders were males who constituted just 25% of the group members. While my colleagues were shying away, I proposed that some positions be ring-fenced for females. The idea was improved to the extent that two of the top three positions were reserved for females unless the membership composition changes.”

Mobility

Mobility, in the context of the research, is understood as the ability to move or be moved freely and easily. By this definition, given the social construction and care responsibilities, females are perceived to be less mobile in comparison to their male counterparts. This immobility denies women numerous opportunities such as entrepreneurship, employment and education/learning opportunities that exist in areas outside their usual environment. From the framework of women’s economic empowerment by Golla et al. (2011), autonomy and mobility are indicators of social and psychological empowerment for women.

Table 4.15: I can leave my home to go to the market, visit friends or even work without my husband’s permission

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------------|----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Strongly Agree | 66 | 17.8 | 17.9 | 17.9 |
| | Agree | 216 | 58.4 | 58.5 | 76.4 |
| | somewhat Agree | 85 | 23.0 | 23.0 | 99.5 |
| | Disagree | 2 | .5 | .5 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 369 | 99.7 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | .3 | | |
| Total | | 370 | 100.0 | | |

From the table above, 76.4% of the respondents affirmed that they were able to freely move out of their homes without seeking consent from their spouses. The women considered it ideal to inform their spouses of their whereabouts, so that in case anything went wrong, the husbands would know where to start searching. About 23% somewhat agreed to the statement stating that in some cases it was possible, and in other cases they had to seek some form of consent from their spouses, especially when they had to spend a night or more. Only 0.5% stated that they had to seek permission from their husbands before they could leave home for unusual work assignments or any other reasons. To further explore the aspect of mobility, respondents were asked if they had a say in determining where they settle if they got work opportunities away from each other.

Psychological empowerment

Self Confidence

Table 4.16: Self-confidence computed

| | | |
|---------------------------|---------|---------|
| N | Valid | 368 |
| | Missing | 2 |
| Mean | | 24.1250 |
| Std. Error of Mean | | .11371 |
| Mode | | 25.00 |
| Std. Deviation | | 2.18132 |
| Variance | | 4.758 |
| Minimum | | 18.00 |
| Maximum | | 30.00 |
| Percentiles | 25 | 23.0000 |
| | 50 | 24.0000 |
| | 75 | 26.0000 |

From the analysis in the table above, the individual scores for all the variable measuring self-confidence when computed per respondent ranged from 18 to 30 with a mean of 24.1, standard deviation of 2.18, and a standard error of 0.113. This standard error indicates that we can be 95% sure that true mean lies between 23.874 and 24.3. The standard deviation of 2.18 also indicates that the respondents' views did not differ much and were concentrated around the mean. The analysis also reveals that whereas the maximum possible score per individual respondent was 45 if they strongly disagreed to all the statements, the actual maximum score as computed was 30.

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that TVET has contributed to the social and psychological empowerment of women. Women in Uganda live in a society where they are expected to be subordinate to men. Psychological and social empowerment is determined by whether women, as independent human beings in social relationships, can achieve their objectives despite resistance from male counterparts and societal frameworks that put women in subordinate positions. In this study, economic empowerment was found to be a strong foundation for social empowerment. This is because when women are empowered economically, there is also a higher probability of them being empowered socially because financial stability boosts confidence of decision making. The researcher used four important indicators to measure social and psychological empowerment: choice, participation, power and agency. Social empowerment in the study was viewed as reflected in the power relations between men and women at the group or individual level as each seeks to maximise their interests. The study sought to assess social and psychological effect of empowerment of women in Uganda through TVET participation. The study findings reflect a high degree of empowerment of women among the graduates both at an individual and group level.

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