

**GENDER EMPOWERMENT AND SEAWEED VALUE CHAIN IN
MWAZARO AND KIBUYUNI VILLAGES, SOUTH COAST OF
KENYA**

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree award in any other university.

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DEDICATION

I am dedicated to the Almighty God for his enablement and serene health throughout my research. I want to acknowledge my supervisors' valuable guidance and corrections throughout the project. Additionally, I thank Dr. Godfrey Nato and Dr. Mwangi Muhoro for their input in moving the study forward. I am equally grateful to my spouse, Gideon Ndambuki, for his encouragement and sacrifices to enable me to undertake my studies in a conducive environment. I appreciate my brother Chris Kimanga's support and my father David Kimanga for holding my hand throughout. Equally, my son Israel Baraka, whom I sometimes sacrificed my time to be with, could sit on my lap quietly while I extended my writing at night. Finally, I am also thankful to my colleagues, whom I frequently consulted on matters related to the study.

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ABSTRACT

Gender plays a crucial role in seaweed farming in East Africa, though the aspect across different value chain stages has been overlooked in Kenyan research. This research focuses on assessing the role of gender empowerment in the seaweed production value chain on the south coast of Kenya. As a result, specific objectives that served as a basis for the study were, among others, to examine the nature of gender empowerment in the seaweed value chain, document various gender empowerment activities in the nodes of the seaweed value chain of Kenya, establish the various gender empowerment opportunities at various seaweed value chain villages along the south coast of Kenya and to establish the various gender empowerment associated challenges embedded in the seaweed. The study took place in Mwazaro and Kibuyuni in Kwale County on the south coast of Kenya. A study employed a mixed research design involving exploratory and explanatory methods, using qualitative and quantitative approaches based on the research problem's comprehension issues. Social Package for Social Science and Excel 2016 were utilized for data computation. The study was carried out following a brief pilot study, which allowed the feasibility of the research design to be tested. In the interviews, 155 active farmers were sampled along with 3 key informants well-versed in the connection between gender empowerment and seaweed value chain production. The simplified formula proposed by Yamene and Israel was utilized to calculate the target sample size n . The results revealed that there are other influences of income other than gender in the seaweed value chain, including training, which has disparities between men and women. Further, the study revealed the perceived gender empowerment, including autonomy in decision-making over using income (90%) and participation in seaweed production. A smaller but notable portion (10%) of respondents (17) need their husband's permission to manage and budget the income from seaweed farming. This suggests that for some individuals, there are cultural or household power dynamics that limit their financial independence. Additionally, it would identify areas where gender discrepancies exist between women and men. Their roles could guide development efforts to achieve gender parity in the seaweed value chain. These results will be applied academically in faculties for students researching the seaweed value chain and gender dynamics at the graduate and undergraduate levels and in other fields of study. Additionally, it will help governments, agencies, businesses, and non-profit organizations formulate gender-based policies for Seaweed Value Chain Production.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
ABSTRACT	v
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS.....	xiii
DEFINITION OF TERMS.....	xiv
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of the Study.....	1
1.1.1 Global Perspective.....	2
1.1.2 Regional Perspective.....	5
1.1.3 Kenyan Perspective	8
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	11
1.3 Objectives of the Study	13
1.3.1 General Objective.....	13
1.3.2 Specific Objectives	13
1.4 Research Questions	13
1.5 Scope of the Study	14
1.6 Justification and Significance of the Study.....	14
1.7 Limitations of the Study.....	15
CHAPTER TWO	17
LITERATURE REVIEW	17
2.1 Introduction.....	17
2.2 Theoretical Framework.....	17
2.2.1 Kabeer's Theory of Empowerment.....	17
2.2.2 Feminist Political Ecology Theory	20
2.2.3 Porter's Value Chain Model.....	22
2.3 Conceptual Framework	27
2.3 Concept of Gender Empowerment.....	28

2.5. The Role of Gender Empowerment on the Nodes of the Seaweed Value Chain	29
2.6 Gender Empowerment Activities in the Seaweed Value Chain.....	33
2.6.1 Economic Independence.....	33
2.6.2 Decision-Making Over Income Use	33
2.6.3 Decision-Making on Participation.....	34
2.6.4 Decision-Making Over Workload	34
2.6.5 Skills Acquisition and Capacity Building	34
2.6.6 Access to Resources.....	35
2.6.7 Social Resources	35
2.7 Gender Opportunities in the Seaweed Value Chain.....	36
2.8 Gender Challenges in the Seaweed Value Chain	38
2.9 Critique of Literature	41
2.10 Research Gap.....	43
2.11 Seaweed Value Chain	44
2.12 Relationships of Study Variables	47
2.14 Summary of the Literature	48
CHAPTER THREE	50
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	50
3.1 Introduction.....	50
3.2 Research Design.....	50
3.3 Study Site	51
3.4 Study population	52
3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Technique	53
3.5 Data Collection Instruments.....	55
3.5.1 Secondary Data Collection	55
3.5.2 Primary Data Collection.....	55
3.5.2.1 Semi-Structured Interview	55
3.5.2.2 Key-Informant Interviews (KIIs)	56
3.5.2.3 Participant Observation Method	56
3.6 Data Collection Procedures.....	56
3.6.1 Semi-Structured Interview	56
3.6.2 Key Informant Interview	57
3.6.3 Participant Observation Method.....	57

3.7 Pilot Study.....	57
3.8 Reliability and Validity	58
3.8.1 Reliability.....	58
3.8.2 Validity	58
3.9 Data Analysis and Presentation	59
3.10 Logistical and Ethical Considerations	61
3.10.1 Logistical Considerations	61
3.10.2 Ethical Considerations	61
CHAPTER FOUR.....	63
FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION.....	63
4.1 Introduction	63
4.2 Response Rate	63
4.3 Demographic Characteristics.....	64
4.3.1 Age Group of the Seaweed Farmers	66
4.3.2 Marital Status	67
4.3.3 Education Level.....	67
4.3.4 Position in the Household of the Respondent	68
4.3.5 Main Occupation of the Respondents	69
4.3.6 Religion of the Respondents.....	69
4.4 The Role of Gender Empowerment on the Nodes of the Seaweed Value Chain	70
4.5 The gender empowerment activities in the seaweed value chain.....	76
4.5.1 Economic Independence.....	76
4.5.1.1 Level of income	76
4.5.1.2 Household Size Influence on the Income of Seaweed Farmers.....	83
4.5.1.3 Decision-Making Control Over Incomes use in the Household	84
4.5.1.4 Decision-Making Participation in Seaweed Production in the Household	86
4.5.1.5 Decision-Making Over Workload in Seaweed Farming ..	88
4.5.1.6 Skills Acquisition in the Seaweed Value Chain.....	89
4.5.2 Resource Access by Seaweed Farmers	91
4.5.3 Social Resources	93
4.6 Gendered empowerment opportunities in the seaweed value chain.....	98
4.7 Gendered Empowerment Challenges in the Seaweed Value Chain	101

CHAPTER FIVE.....	104
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS...	104
5.1 Introduction.....	104
5.2. Summary of major findings	104
5.2.1 The Role of Gender Empowerment on the Seaweed Value Chain.....	104
5.2.2 Gender Empowerment Activities in the Seaweed Value Chain Production along the South Coast of Kenya.....	107
5.2.3 Gendered Empowerment Opportunities in the Seaweed Value Chain.....	108
5.2.4 Gendered Challenges in the Seaweed Value Chain	108
5.3 Conclusion.....	108
5.3.1 The Role of Gender Empowerment on the Nodes in the Seaweed Value	109
5.3.2 Gender Empowerment Activities in the Seaweed Value Chain.....	109
5.3.3 Gender Empowerment Opportunities in the Seaweed Value Chain.....	109
5.3.4 Gender Empowerment Challenges in the Seaweed Value Chain....	110
5.4 Implications of the Research Findings	110
5.4.1 Addressing Income Disparities and Market Access to Enhance Economic Empowerment.....	110
5.4.2 Improving Training and Skill Development for Gender-Equitable Opportunities.....	111
5.4.3 Promoting Mechanization and Labor Balance to Enhance Productivity and Inclusivity	111
5.5.4 Strengthening Gender-Focused Empowerment Programs in Decision-Making Roles.....	111
5.5.5 Investing in Community Support and Education to Overcome Challenges in Productivity	112
5.5 Theoretical Implication	112
5.6 Practical Implication	114
5.6.1 Enhancing Access to Resources and Market Opportunities for Gender Empowerment.....	114
5.6.2 Fostering Financial Autonomy and Decision-Making for Women...	115
5.6.3 Providing Gender-Focused Training and Skill Development Programs.....	115

5.6.4 Promoting Equal Participation in Market-Facing Roles	115
5.6.5 Mechanization to Reduce Labor Burden and Boost Productivity	116
5.6.6 Supporting Community Empowerment and Cooperative Structures.....	116
5.6.7 Addressing Gender-Specific Barriers through Inclusive Policies	116
5.6.8 Overcoming Technical and Psychological Challenges in Seaweed Farming	117
5.7 Contribution to Knowledge.....	117
5.8 Recommendations	118
REFERENCES	120
APPENDICES.....	139
Appendix I Introduction Letter	139
Appendix II Semi-Structured Interview.....	140
Appendix III Key Informant (KI).....	144
Appendix IV Observation Checklist	146
Appendix V Map of the Area of Study	147
Appendix VI Ethical Review Approval	148
Appendix VII NACOSTI Research permit	149
Appendix VIII Plate I: Seaweed Production.....	150
Appendix IX Plate II: Seaweed Value Addition Products	151

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1 Seaweed Farmers Respondent Response Rate	63
Table 4.2 Key Informant, Respondent and Response Rate	64
Table 4.3: Demographic characteristics of the respondents by gender	65
Table 4.4: The Role of Gender Empowerment Activities in the Seaweed Value Chain	71
Table 4.5: Income level of the respondents.....	77
Table 4.6: ANOVA for gender on the income in the seaweed value chain	78
Table 4.7: Variable Coefficients for gender on income	79
Table 4.8: Model summary.....	80
Table 4.9: Comparing income means by sex	80
Table 4.10: Regression models analyzing the impact of various independent variables on the logarithm of income.....	82
Table 4.11 Decision-making control over income use by farmers	85
Table 4.12: Decision-making on seaweed production by farmers	87
Table 4.13: decision making on workload in the seaweed production	88
Table 4.14: skills acquisition through training in the seaweed value chain	89
Table 4.15: Social Resources on gender empowerment in the seaweed value chain	94
Table 4.16: Gender empowerment opportunities in the seaweed value chain	99
Table 4.17: Challenges encountered in seaweed farming	101

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 Porter Value Chain Analysis model of a manufacturing industry”	23
Figure 2.2 Conceptual Framework Source: Researcher Model, 2022.....	27
Figure 4.1 Activities undertaken in the seaweed value chain by gender.....	74
Figure 4.2 Comparison of household sizes to income amongst seaweed farmers in the study sites.....	84
Figure 4.3 Access to resources in the seaweed value chain.....	91

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

FAO	Food Agricultural Organization
KMFRI	Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute
KCDP	Kenya Coastal Development Project
SD	Sustainable Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations
UN	United Nations
WIO	Western Indian Ocean
VC	Value Chain
VCA	Value Chain Analysis

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Empowerment:	The process of attaining independence and autonomy to do as you like or to manage your own destiny.
Gender Empowerment:	A rise in power for individuals of any gender typically relates to the empowerment of gender-based minority groups. A good illustration Women take ownership of their life, reclaim control, and gain the ability to make wise decisions” (McDougall <i>et al.</i> , 2021).
Gender Equality:	It’s a condition where “both men and women have equal opportunity to benefit from and contribute to economic, social, cultural, and political development; enjoy socially valued resources and rewards; and realize their human rights.
Gender Dimensions:	Research incorporating sex and gender analysis is said to have a gender dimension. The gender balance can be just as important to research as the gender component (McDougall <i>et al.</i> , 2021).
Seaweed:	A variety of multicellular marine algae found in salt marshes, brackish water, the ocean, and the beach.
Seaweed Farming:	Seaweed cultivation and harvesting is known as ‘seaweed farming’ or ‘kelp farming.’ Farmers gather from natural beds in their most basic form.

Farmers have total control over the life cycle (Msuya *et al.*, 2022).

Value Chain: Refers to “the entire lifecycle of a product or process, which encompasses all actions required for obtaining raw materials, producing the product, utilizing it, discarding it, and recycling it” (Simatupang *et al.*, 2017).

Value Chain Nodes: A value chain node is any step of a product's value production examined in a value chain analysis. These elements include the procurement of raw materials and the costs associated with manufacturing, storage, selling, distribution, and customer service.

Seaweed Farm: Seaweed is grown in Lagoons or protected bays, where currents that flush the area where the seaweeds are planted are essential because seaweeds get their nutrients directly from the ocean. Short strings connect little cuttings to a line (De San, 2012).

Gender Equity: Ensure fairness and justice in allocating advantages and obligations between men and women