

Paternalistic dominance: a system of social relations that controls women in Tanzania

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Abstract: Participatory narrative inquiry (PNI) was used to a group of six young women to create a space to recount their lived experiences. This was import given that women in some societies in Tanzania are socialized to accept a lesser status than their counterparts in exchange for protection and privilege, forming a relationship that is likened to paternalistic dominance. Regrettably, such gendered relations dominate and diminish women's opportunities for self-actualization and wellbeing. At the end, a call is made to effectively challenge and dismantle a system that controls and dominates women and nature.

Key terms: Paternalistic, gender relations, gender inequality, women, livelihoods

I. INTRODUCTION

While cautions are made against a single-cause explanation, patriarchy is generally described as a system that creates gender inequality and allows subordination of women (Lerner, 1986: 53; Walby, 1990). In this regard, Christ (2016: 214) provides a multipronged definition of patriarchy as:

A system of male dominance, rooted in the ethos of war which legitimates violence, sanctified by religious symbols, in which men dominate women through the control of female sexuality, with the intent of passing property to male heirs, and in which men who are heroes of war are told to kill men, and are permitted to rape women, to seize land and treasures, to exploit resources, and to own or otherwise dominate conquered people.

What is important in this definition is that patriarchy is a system that controls and dominates women and nature. This outlook of patriarchy departs from the usual value-laden, monolithic and ideologically determined discourses that focus on individual men who dominate women and nature (Kandiyoti, 1988: 274–275; Walby, 1990: 20).¹ It rather anchors the control and domination of women in social contexts, relations or conditions (a set of structured and institutionalized social relations²) than in individual attributes

1 I am aware that some men – for example those whose societies are arranged along maternal lines (sometimes referred to as matriarchal societies), or whose education and socialization emphasize love and care for creation – have resisted the subjugation of women throughout the history of humanity, and that there are some cultures that never became patriarchal or would not be categorized as such (Christ, 2016: 216–217).

2 A set of structured and institutionalized social relations in which certain men dominate, oppress and exploit women (Walby, 1990: 20). As Walby points out, her use of the idea of social relations implies a rejection of both

designed by individual men (Hunnicut, 2009: 553). Thus the patriarchy that is depicted here is less as a single structure and more as an event which unfolds within a much wider realm embedded in social relations, in human societies (Kandiyoti, 1988; Joseph, 1996). It is a human vproduct of social inequality in which individuals either forcefully or manipulatively seize and access power, capabilities, prestige and autonomy differently in moment-to-moment lived experiences (Niraula & Morgan, 1996: 36; Szoltysek et al., 2016: 139).

II. THE PROBLEM

Women in some societies in Tanzania have been socialized to believe that it is their obligation to be chaste, modest, submissive and obedient to their male counterparts in order to uphold family honour (Gill, 2011).³ As a result, a man's status as head of the household entitles him an unquestioned obedience from the rest of the family, and the differences between the genders are legitimized from there onwards to other institutions of society such as religions, workplaces, education, judicial systems, the market, mass media, politics, social welfare and healthcare, to mention but a few examples (Ellenor et al., 2009). In such a text, Sewpaul (2013a: 116) contends that the ideology of family honour has led to androcentric and patriarchal thinking in such a way that gender discrimination is now inscribed in our blood – it is in the nature of things. This ideology obfuscates rather than reveals men's subordination of womenfolk

In the above contest, UNICEF (2006) has observed a lack of qualitative research which allows women to recount their situations in their own voices and from their own perspectives. Most of the existing information about women in Tanzania often comes from 'outsiders', whether those be powerful men, policymakers or other privileged commentators. This shortcoming perpetuates skewed perceptions and connotations, but also stereotypes, often categorizing women as deviant and vicious for the purposes

biological determinism and the notion that all women are oppressed and all men are oppressors.

3 Some women have consented to maintain patriarchal relations of power and have themselves become efficient gatekeepers of oppressive and violent structures – hegemony masculinity. Hearn (2004: 52) explains: "hegemony involves both the consent of some men, and, in a very different way, the consent of some women to maintain patriarchal relations of power. At least some powerful men are dominant in the construction of women's consent and the reproduction of men's consent."

of creating an ‘other’ to be controlled (Quinn & Macrae, 2005; Quinn & Rosenthal, 2012). While the existing information and perspectives about women in Tanzania might be entirely true, however, to insist only on other people’s perspectives or narratives risks voicing only part of the story, with the result that our understanding of women’s situations might be curtailed. Adichie (2016: 87) warns that partial stories often lead to stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are blind and incomplete.

This current study, therefore, is sought to purposefully provide a platform on which young women would recount their situations in their own voices and from their own perspectives. It attempts to explore how young women in Tanzania optimize their life options within the contexts and dynamics embedded in patriarchy, both as unique individuals and as social beings. The conviction is that it is hard to justly comprehend women’s situations unless they are placed within the system that controls women and nature (Janeway, 1980: 582). If unfair social relations are not comprehended and disrupted, there remains the danger of perpetuating stereotypes and the culture of blaming the ill-treated women (Singer, 2004: 438).

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

As elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, women in Tanzania are often treated and rated as a dependent sex or second sex (De Beauvoir, 1974) in need of protection from men (Buberwa, 2016). In that context, some women accept a lesser status in exchange for protection and privilege, forming a relationship that is likened to paternalistic dominance⁴ and/or benevolent patriarchy.⁵ I present here some aspects of paternalistic dominance in Tanzania by discussing four illustrative practices and their implications for women, including son preference, early marriage, widow-cleansing rituals, and rights for women. These practices vary in different societies in Tanzania, and must be fleshed out with systematic, comparative and empirical content for further discussion.

3.1 Son preference

Preferring a boy child over a girl is a common practice in Tanzania. Boys are socialized to view themselves as future breadwinners and heads of household, whilst girls are taught to be gentle, obedient, passive and submissive housekeepers (Haram, 2005; Osorio et al., 2014). A male child is also seen

as a ruler of the family by right of birth even when he is not the firstborn; he is automatically considered a potential heir and is charged with the responsibility of protecting his sisters and/or entire family (Swantz, 1985; Buberwa, 2016). In this way boys are turned into family providers from a very early age and are encouraged to seek attention at home and in the community (Benninger-Budel & Lacroix, 1999). In return, boys grow up expecting to do as they please while girls and young women shape their behaviour to suit men’s desires and whims (Osorio et al., 2014; Buberwa, 2016). Such perceptions – even those that are seemingly non-violent in nature – impact on the status, health and education prospects of girls and women (Banda & Agyapong, 2016).

3.2 Early marriage

Girls and young women in Tanzania are pushed to marry as early as possible (Iongwa, 2011; Myers & Harvey, 2011). Stark (2017: 1) explains that “poverty and gendered economic disparities motivate girls to begin transactional sexual activity at an early age, leading parents to favour early marriage as a risk-reduction measure.” In this context, early marriage is treated with impunity, even if it is illegal (Myers & Harvey, 2011; Maswikwa et al., 2015). The immaturity associated with early marriage leads to, among other things, trauma and reproductive complications, particularly fistula⁶ (Myers & Harvey, 2011). Early marriage also reinforces domestic violence, especially in polygamous arrangements (Meyer & Pain, 2012). This is because girls or young women are likely to marry men who are many years their senior, and this is often encouraged by senior wives who use younger co-wives as source of labour for domestic and agricultural tasks (Opoku, 2017).

On the other hand, early marriage is spearheaded by bride price payment⁷ which turns girls and young women into commodities on the market, leading families to treat daughters as sources of income (Wight et al., 2006; Hague et al., 2011). Now bride price consists a lengthy list of demands, ranging from huge sums of money, animals and land to clothing, to mention but a few examples. This is especially true under the oppressive and destructive forces of capitalism and neoliberal economy where everything, including human being, is a commodity waiting to be bought and sold (Parker et al., 2000; Preston-Whyte et al., 2000). In some societies, because of bride price, girls and young

⁴ This concept denotes a relation which encompasses other relations, and it has the advantage of being neutral as to the causes of subordination. Although on the surface it may appear that men control women and nature (everything in society, from the political, economic and legal to marital spheres), the concept of paternalistic dominance somewhat neutralizes this control and accepts it as a way of protecting women, who are considered to be incapable of doing anything on their own without men’s leadership.

⁵ This concept refers to the notion that women are willing to sacrifice their legal, religious, political or marital rights, as long as they can expect deferential and loving protection from male husbands, teachers and government leaders. It also idealizes motherhood as women’s only important role in society (Radke-Moss, 2014).

⁶ Fistula often occurs when girls and/or young women who are not at the proper stage of physical maturity, usually due to early marriage, try to give birth to a child and experience a prolonged obstructed labour. This results in the formation of an opening through which urine and/or faeces pass freely.

⁷ Conventionally, bride price is a form of reward in which the bride’s family receives goods, money or livestock as compensation for the ‘loss’ of a young woman and for the children that she will bear (Benninger-Budel & Lacroix, 1999). Traditionally, bridal gifts were meant to unite two families through the new marriage (Benninger-Budel & Lacroix, 1999; Hagues & Parker, 2014). Such gifts were symbolic tokens of appreciation from the prospective husband. There was no price tag attached to asking a girl to marry you (Hague et al., 2011). This traditional practice has existed variously for centuries among communities in Tanzania and across sub-Saharan Africa (Haram, 2005; Opoku, 2017).

women have been removed from school to be married off so that the families can get a few cows or sacks of rice – the younger the bride, the higher the bride price is paid (Wighta et al., 2006; Hagues & Parker, 2014). This is also because some parents who cannot afford tuition for their sons marry off their daughters, in order to raise the sons' tuition fees through the bride price (Wighta et al., 2006; Hagues & Parker, 2014). Because of the practice of bride price, some girls and young women are sometimes forced to accept marriages and be exposed to violence, with no right to refuse their husbands' demands for sex even in the face of obvious illness or irresponsibility (Wighta et al. 2006; Meyer & Pain, 2012; Hagues & Parker, 2014), and some women regrettably feel obliged to remain in these situations as they are unable to repay the bride price (Benninger-Budel & Lacroix, 1999). This is especially true in the context where some husbands claim greater control in the household, thereby reinforcing the idea of the wife as owned (Benninger-Budel & Lacroix, 1999).

3.3 Widow-cleansing rituals

In some societies in Tanzania, a widow-cleansing ritual is performed after the death of the husband (Opoku, 2017). The practice requires a widow to have sex with one of the deceased husband's relatives or a 'community cleanser' in order to ward off the ghost of her late husband (Agot et al., 2010). Apart from warding off the ghost of the deceased husband, the ritual is also intended to protect the widow from adverse consequences and welcome her into the community anew (Benninger-Budel & Lacroix, 1999). In some families, the ritual is also connected to the re-establishment of lost purity (Opoku, 2017: 224). While this ritual may be thought to have some social and physiological values (renewal after death of husband, re-establishment of purity, protection for the widow), there remains a question as to whether it genuinely exists to benefit the widow, particularly in a patriarchal society (Manala, 2015: 4). This is especially critical in the context where it involves the 'grabbing' of property as widows, for example, are often blocked from working on and accessing resources on the land that was 'theirs' before the death of their husband (White et al., 2002; Meyer & Pain, 2012: 78).

In the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, widow-cleansing has also disastrous social consequences (Ewelukwa, 2002). As the ritual implies sexual intercourse, the risk of spreading HIV is high (Agot et al., 2010). An uninfected widow, for example, may become vulnerable or infected through the practice, and an infected widow is likely to pass on the virus to her inheritors, who may in turn infect their wives and other sexual partners, a practice which can decimate a whole community (Agot et al., 2010). These few observations suggest that widow-cleansing rites may not accord with human dignity and respect, and therefore constitute violence against women (Meyer & Pain, 2012: 78).

3.4 Rights for women

Women in Tanzania have fewer rights compared with their male counterparts (TAWLA, 2013; Osorio et al., 2014). Customary practices that favour men over women in land matters, for example, have rendered many women landless, and women's access to land is dependent on the goodwill of men (Osorio et al., 2014).⁸ Even though some legislations in Tanzania protect women's property rights, lack of legal knowledge restricts women's ability to realize those rights (TAWLA, 2013). As a result, nearly three quarters of all landholders in Tanzania are men, and when women are owners, they tend to own only smaller plots (Osorio et al., 2014: viii). Women's lack of land entitlements feeds into the thinking that they are not proper farmers, which also limits their access to credit, extension services and other inputs. This results in an endless vicious circle of justifications, where women are not given land because they are thought to be unproductive, and they are unproductive because they have limited access to land and other inputs (Meyer & Pain, 2012: 76–77).

IV. METHODOLOGY

Kurtz's (2014) participatory narrative inquiry (PNI) was found a very pertinent approach for this study. It afforded a space for a group of six women in Mwanza town to recount their own experiences of patriarchy. I purposefully recruited six participants for several reasons. First, a relatively small number of participants would foster trust more easily during our PNI process. Second, a small number of participants would keep the process personal and active, and would make our contact more direct and consistent (see also Ospina, 2004). Third, with a small number of participants, we could access thick and rich data, which is an important aspect of qualitative research (Langdrige, 2007). In selecting the six participants, I made sure that women from the main ethnic groups in Mwanza region (Sukuma, Zinza, Nyamwezi, Luo, Kurya, and Jita) were represented in the sample. I targeted women aged between 18 and 25 years, an age group that I thought would articulate their lived experiences well, but also would make our contact more direct and consistent.

PNI was particularly sought to help them to think critically and explore world views, values, concerns and feelings in relation to their own situations. The aim was to allow them perspectives, voices and agency in articulating their stories so as to counteract the abundant dominant prejudices in discourses about women in Tanzania. PNI is an inductive approach, blending participatory and narrative approaches (see Figure 1), in which groups of people gather and work

⁸ Why land matter? This is because Tanzania is among many African countries whose people are mainly small-scale farmers. About 73% of its people living in rural areas, their main source of livelihood depends solely on subsistence farming where land becomes the most important commodity (Kimaro & Hieronimo, 2014: 91).

through stories of personal experiences so as to unravel their complex situations (Kurtz, 2014: 85). PNI takes seriously social contexts, beliefs, feelings and perspectives in obtaining new knowledge (Kurtz, 2014: 86). It emphasizes that 'meaning' is given as human beings interact and interpret their conditions in a particular social context (Schwandt, 1994; O'Leary, 2004). In other words, PNI process provides a narrative mode through which the participants make a sensible reading of the 'world' based on authentic experiences (Abbott, 2008: 6). This is because narrative can be, and often is, an instrument that provokes affective thinking about events through talking about them and hearing them being told (Abbott 2008: 11). For Abbott (2008: 3), 'memory itself is dependent on the capacity for narratives,' for 'we do not have any mental records of who we are until narrative is present as a kind of armature, giving shape to the records that are in our minds.' Without the told narrative, opinions might be formed, but the magic and value embedded in storytelling for shaping memories disappears (Kurtz 2014: 87). In this way, PNI is also rooted in humility, open-mindedness and patience. Indeed, inquiring and casting out the known demands humility.

Figure 1. Blending participatory and narrative approaches to form PNI



Source: Kurtz (2014: 87).

I largely became captivated by PNI because it is founded on the ideas that "to understand this world of meaning one must interpret it" and that reality manifests itself through multiple and intangible mental constructions which are socially and experientially based (Schwandt, 1994: 118). A researcher using the PNI process collects stories, asks questions, and lets the participants look at, think and talk about the patterns themselves (Blumer, 1954: 7). He/she does not decide for the participants what the stories might mean (Schwandt, 1994: 118; Kurtz 2014: 87). In this vein, I collected stories and asked questions which would help the women to speak about things that they would never have had a chance to speak about, to reflect upon issues that would have belonged to the realm of taboo, and to talk about subjects that they would not have been willing or able to speak about directly without the process of participatory narrative inquiry, including sex work

(see also Dickson-Swift et al., 2006; Johnson, 2009: 200). The PNI process took a total of three months: two months for sense-making sessions, and one month for return phase.

Keeping a field diary was important in this process of narrative inquiry which took a total of three months. In it, I documented almost everything that I heard, observed and found. My field diary contains the evidence on which my research is based. I always took notes during the sessions so that I could focus on the person, using journal records (pondering) (see Savin-Baden and van Niekerk, 2007; Ellett, 2011: 8). I also conducted unstructured open-ended interviews that were dyadic or one-to-one (see also Hofmann et al., 1998: 1; Polkinghorne, 2005: 142; Ellett, 2011: 8). Written or visual documents such as personal text messages, photos of the participants or artworks, for example, were also collected as important pieces of information. The process of narrative inquiry revealed that statements became more meaningful within the context of a story (see also Polkinghorne, 1988, 2005; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin 2006; Reissman, 2008). Therefore, taking notes on where and when the narrative emerged, and the circumstances surrounding it, was very important (see also Ellett 2011: 8).

Attention was paid to ensure that all the participants were provided with the opportunity to use their own words when sharing their stories, and the exact words were transcribed verbatim in the field diary (see Cordero, 2014: 41). On some occasions I transcribed texts immediately after the meeting, to avoid accumulating a backlog or forgetting the material. The process of transcription confirmed the importance of accessing and understanding the contexts so as to correctly situate the lived experiences of the participants (see also Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Some of the stories and statements were repeated and paraphrased several times to make sure that the interpretations of the participants' words were made correctly. The moral was, no matter how trivial an observation or piece of information seemed, it was to be written down and transcribed in order not to leave out any important information for the research (see also Clayton & Thorne, 2000). This enabled me to also document my personal biases and frustrations, and to think critically about the process of my study (see also Watt, 2007; Cordero 2014: 31).

My research included a process of reflexivity, not only to account for any power imbalances, but also out of consideration for the validity and reliability of the data (see also Hertz, 1997; Koch & Harrington, 1998; Maxey, 1999). With reflexivity, I was made aware of gender stereotypes, and I was often reminded to act only as a catalyst to promote inquiry into issues that affected the participants (see also Shacklock & Smyth, 1998; May, 2000). I should also say here that although it has been claimed that most researchers have organizational and institutional power (Henry, 2003; Grenz, 2005: 2110), this was not strongly the case in this study. Quite often, I experienced varying levels of power in

different phases of my research. At some stages, I felt that power was fluid and possessed by nobody – neither the participants nor I – an idea also noted by Tang (2002). At the beginning of the study, for example, I felt powerless while trying to recruit the participants, afraid that they would lose interest in the PNI process. I struggled several times to enhance the sense of rapport between the participants and me, or among the participants themselves, so as to build a considerate relationship – a sense of mutual trust (see also Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009: 283).

V. FINDING

While it is the participants' authentic voices that I aim to bring out, I am also aware that I carry my own personal baggage and perspectives, which might influence how I infer meanings from their voices (from the data) – a temptation to intrude and take over the voices of the participants in my research for my own purposes (see also DeVault, 1999: 34; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; Ashby, 2011: 27). With this in mind, I try to refrain from overriding the voices of the participants. In other words, I assume the role of a passenger rather than a driver behind the steering wheel so as to allow the participants' authentic voices to take the lead (see also Ellsworth, 1989: 99; Mazzei & Jackson, 2009: 1; Ashby, 2011: 27). In this way, the participants' agenda becomes the central feature in the process of data analysis (see also Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009: 283).

In recounting their lived experiences of patriarchy, the participants repeatedly narrated how gender inequality and oppression were interwoven into the social fabric of their rural family and society. They underlined how girls were socialized to accept lower status, not only in the family itself but also in the community at large, and also how the social and cultural notions about 'real men' loaded all the heavy domestic tasks and chores onto girls' and women's shoulders. These tasks, unfortunately, limited their opportunities for education and other productive prospects. Consequently, this put them under pressure to leave home in search of a more 'equal' life in urban centres. But since they lacked the qualifications and abilities that are needed for employment in the formal sector in the urban centre, they were relegated to the informal sector, which offered little pay and exposed them to unconventional and dehumanizing livelihood strategies, including sex work, for their livelihoods:

The boys in my family did not do much of the housework. I did most of it on my own, because I was the only girl in the family, and it was expected of me. The belief was that why should a boy do it if he has a sister? (Atupele,⁹ 21 years old)

I hated the fact that, as a girl, you were not allowed to get whatever you wanted, cycling, shopping, and going out of your own accord. Overall, girls do more housework compared with the boys, I did not like it when it limited my

opportunities, including education and training. (Adama, 22 years old)

All of us would wake up at 5 a.m. My grandmother and I would go to the fields, first thing in the morning. On our way home, we would carry foodstuff, firewood and water to wash ourselves. Upon our return, my grandmother would go looking for drinking water while I swept the house. Then I would prepare *ugali* or rice with vegetable gravy for the family. In the evenings, I would wash many clothes, as we were five of us in the home. It was not easy for me to do it all alone, quite unbearable to continue with this kind of life. (Atupele, 21 years old)

Almost all the participants felt that they had been brought up to view themselves as less human and less valuable because they were female. They were generally considered economic and social liabilities (lacking income-earning capabilities) that only drained the household wealth with no hope of return, as narrated below:

I will never forget the day when my father told me that he was not going to spend money on me anymore, for anything, including my education. He yelled at me with lots of anger that I was soon going to be married and become a 'property' of somebody else. (Kibibi, 19 years old)

My parents claimed that I had grown up and wanted me out to start a life of my own. In short, they wanted me out of the family to be married as soon as possible. Since I did not want to get married at a very young age, I decided to leave and came to Mwanza town. (Chiku, 18 years old)

They also spoke of how the lives of rural women in Tanzania were constantly threatened because discriminatory social norms cause gender-based violence, which is subtly but surely engrained in the social, psychological and cultural fabric of their society. A vivid picture is painted below:

Going to school one dull morning, I met a man who pushed me into the bush and raped me. I went to the victim support unit at Kiomboi to report the case. Unfortunately, nobody there believed me, and the man who raped me was not apprehended. (Kibibi, 19 years old)

In the hope of escaping onerous gender restrictions and parental control, some young rural women imagine the 'freedom' they would obtain by living away from home. The participants particularly narrated their deeply held wishes to be independent and free from patriarchal constraints, as expressed here:

Each time when my friend came back home from the city, she seemed to be so free, speaking her mind without any fear. She would also make decisions regarding where she wanted to go and where she wanted to live, and lived the way she pleased. (Adama, 22 years old)

Then in using unconventional strategies for their livelihoods in Mwanza town, including sex work, the participants experienced different forms of violence which had much in

⁹ The names given here are fictitious, but the ages and occupations are real.

common with other kinds of violence against women (gendered violence). However, they were reluctant to report those dehumanizing and perilous acts done to them for fear of being mocked, and also for fear of provoking punishment from law enforcement agencies. Even when they managed to report, the police tended not to take them seriously simply because they were women:

If we go to the police to report abuse, we are made fun of, and we are sometimes told, 'you deserved it,' 'you are lucky you survived.' We are then chased away. If you insist, you are beaten or forced to have sex. When you report the abuse to government officials, we are warned of harassment in retaliation. (Atupele, 21 years old).

In some of their narratives, sex work was described as a 'constrained choice' in the context of limited choices for women. They related it to context of sexual abuse as children and/or teenagers, well before reaching a reasonable age of personal judgement, sometimes by their own family members and/or acquaintances. In this respect, abuse became a 'norm' and a mode of life, and trading sex had an objectivity in itself:

When I moved here, the only available jobs were in bars. It was so tough to work there at first; I did not know how to get enough money for myself and for my siblings. I gradually learned to get cash from sex for myself and my family back home. (Bahati, 25 years old)

Some of the sex workers that you see around were sexually abused as children, even before they moved here, sometimes by their own people, the people they trusted so much, they ran away from that... in fact nothing worse would ever happen to you than being raped by your own people. (Siti, 24 years old)

From their childhood, they had learned to harden their hearts in order to deal with any sort of horrific experience, as described in the following stories:

For me, having sex for money is not worse than being raped by my own relative. It feels the same as it did when my cousin had sex with me when I was still very young, sometimes by force. Or when my boyfriend did that by force, or that businessman, or the man in the bar even when I did not like it. It is all the same. I did not feel any of them. (Bahati, 25 years old)

The above narratives suggest that, in Tanzania, particularly in rural areas, girls and young women experience increased hardship due to oppressive and violent structures embedded in social relations within patriarchy. From a tender age, girls are taught to be gentle, obedient, passive and submissive housekeepers, a process which leads to gender inequality in the family and in society at large. The division of labour in the household, for example, means that girls and women must work much longer hours than men. As a result, women are far less able to sell their labour in comparison with men, and remain of lower social status, culturally inhibited from

asserting their interests in public. Not only that but also girls and young women in rural areas lack opportunities for self-actualization (e.g., education, healthcare and salaried jobs) which leads to their being vulnerable and often subjected to oppressive and abusive relationships. This state of affairs obliges young rural women to leave their home villages for better livelihoods elsewhere. The decision to relocate to urban centres, therefore, is influenced by the desire for freedom (or independence), both socially and economically. However, lack of the qualifications that are needed for employment in the formal sector in the urban centre leave some young rural women feeling hardened against future abuse, which contributes to their decision to engage in unconventional livelihood strategies, including sex work, for their livelihoods.

VI. DISCUSSION

The above narratives have disclosed patriarchal attitudes and practices which violate, oppress, subordinate, humiliate and dominate women in Tanzania. In relocating to urban centres, young rural women hope to become economically independent and therefore live a liberal lifestyle, as also supported by in previous studies in Tanzania (Beckham, 2013; Stark, 2013), and in sub-Saharan Africa (Silberschmidt, 2004; Swidler & Watkins, 2007). What is central to all of these studies is that in the context of limited choice in rural areas, both relocation to urban centres and entry into sex work are 'constrained' choices made by those who have no alternatives for social and economic independence, and for self-actualization (Farley, 2006: 102).

Some scholars have suggested that sex work, in the context of limited choices, is somehow cathartic, in the sense that it helps women who have no choices in patriarchal society to deal with the negative effects of exploitation and violence (Hunter, 2002; Silberschmidt, 2004; Swidler & Watkins, 2007). Bindel (2017: 59), for example, explains that sex work is "a job that women – particularly women doubly and triply disadvantaged by poverty and racism – engage in only under duress or when no other possible option appears to present itself." Similarly, Summer (1987: 38), a former sex worker herself, writes that in sex work, a person's situation is subject to "severe prior constraints' such that sex work presents the single realistic chance of alleviating her needs." Then Mappes (1987: 261) remarks that sex work is a "coercive offer" in the sense that the life circumstances of women who enter sex work seem to be such that sex work is the only possible way out of impoverishment and lack of opportunity (see also Delacoste & Alexander, 1987). Bass (2015: 75) summarizes it all: "just as sex work can be an avenue for some women to take control in a situation where they had none, some sex workers and psychologists see it as a way to triumph over tragedy."

While it is true that women, in contexts of limited choices in Tanzania, are compelled to have sex with wealthier men to meet their basic needs, it is also true that some women engage in sex work so as to obtain luxury

consumer goods in order to enhance their socio-economic status (Stark, 2013: 15). This is especially true under the oppressive and destructive forces of capitalism and the neoliberal economy where everything, including sex, is a commodity waiting to be bought and sold (Parker et al., 2000; Preston-Whyte et al., 2000). This seems even truer in sub-Saharan Africa, where neoliberalism has indiscriminately devastated lives and communities (Sewpaul & Hölscher, 2004; Sewpaul, 2005). In this regard, Sewpaul (2013b: 17) explains that the neoliberal economy in sub-Saharan Africa entails massive imports which undermine local creativity, production and prices. Consequently, unemployment rises, which places enormous strain on the poor rural women who become targets for trafficking to feed the clandestine sex industry in urban centres. Within capitalist patriarchy, the female body can be used as a way to get money for economic survival (Preston-Whyte et al., 2000), for a trip abroad (Brennan, 2007), or for love and attention (Padilla et al., 2007).

It can be discerned that the relationship between patriarchy and (neoliberal) capitalism is one of relatedness (Parker & Easton, 1998). The two are not the same, but they work together and adapt to one another in propagating gender and economic inequalities, and in obscuring poverty and driving marginalized women further into dangerous lives. In this context, Setel (1999) has found in northern Tanzania that some rich men use their wealth to pursue and have sex with poor young women who need money to survive. In the same vein, Maganja et al. (2007) have found that married and unmarried women in Tanzania consider themselves lucky to have bodies as 'goods' to be traded for both pleasure and financial gain. It is in this context that some women who trade sex in urban centres claim to have a deep sense of comfort, especially when they adopt proactive behaviours which make them feel part of society again.

VII. CONCLUSION

It is important to qualitatively understand the situations of women within the contexts and dynamics embedded in patriarchy in Tanzania. What has been missing as result of this lack of studies is the authentic voices of young women talking about themselves and their situations from their own perspectives. This absence has resulted in skewed perceptions and connotations which reduce women to numbers for the purpose of creating an 'other' to be controlled and/or blamed. While the women in this study can be considered adults – independent, autonomous, and able to make decisions, to defend and protect themselves and those in their care – it is crucial for social science scholars, particularly social workers,¹⁰ to be aware of the oppressive and abusive

relationships which plague many young rural women in patriarchal society. There is a need, therefore, to explore and comprehend the factors or even structures that prevent freedom and independence for women, especially in rural areas in Tanzania. The logic behind is that if unfair structures are not comprehended enough and/or disrupted and broken, there remains the danger of perpetuating stereotypes and the culture of blaming ill-treated and weak individuals. Social scientists are therefore encouraged to be actively present and engaged with affected (ill-treated and weak) individuals, letting their voices be heard and assisting them in attaining self-actualization and wellbeing. This is akin to the notion of partnership between social worker and client (Green et al., 2006: 450).

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¹⁰ It is especially important for social workers who uses perspectives such 'person-in-situations' or 'person-in-environments' to view their clients within their physical and social environments (Barker, 2014; Clark, 2018; Thompson & Stepney, 2018).

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