Effect of Gender Norms on Utilisation of Loans Borrowed from Micro Finance Bank and Livelihood Outcome in Kitui Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at investigating the intervening effect of gender norms on utilisation of loans borrowed from Sidian bank and livelihood outcome. The study specifically set out to assess the effects of the borrowed money on the household livelihoods of the women and men who borrowed money from Sidian Bank. It used a convergent research design and a mixed-technique approach. It focused on borrowers who had taken loans from Sidian Bank along with their spouses, government officials, and Sidian Bank. There were 324 borrowers, consisting of 51 men and 273 women. Systematic and purposive samplings were used. Data was collected through a hybrid questionnaire, including open and close-ended questions, an observation schedule, and interview guides. Additionally, secondary data was gathered from various sources such as literature, articles, newspapers, and microfinance bank websites. Quantitative data was coded and analyzed using the Statistical Program for Social Scientists (SPSS), while qualitative data was presented in narrative form. The research revealed a gender dimension in the effects of the loans. The effect of the loans on women's household livelihoods differed from that of men. The study concluded that due to the differences in utilisation of loans the effects were gendered. This was mainly because they didn't invest in income-generating projects and faced difficulties in loan repayments, sometimes leading to the loss of household items. Considering these findings, the study proposed that microfinance trainers modify their training methods to address the issue of utilization, considering gender differentials and ensuring more effective utilization of loans for all borrowers.

Key words: Gender Norms, effects, utilisation, loans, livelihood outcomes

INTRODUCTION

When Microfinance institutions (MFIs) were founded, they were meant to assist the poor access credit and improve their livelihoods. The origin of microfinance is generally traced to the Grameen Bank, founded in Bangladesh in 1975 by Professor Mohamed Yunus, who characterized the mission of microfinance organizations as providing the poor—whom he describes as "natural entrepreneurs''—with working capital with which they can realize their entrepreneurial instincts (Pollinger, Outhwaite and Guzman, 2007). This was prompted by the complications surrounding borrowing from commercial banks. Zeller (2001) notes that the banks' limited outreach was because of fear of default, high costs, and rigid organizational structures inadaptable to high volume, small size loans (de Haan and Lakwo, 2010). The promise of microfinance is that it spurs entrepreneurship and empowers borrowers to help themselves (Khavul, 2010).

Caste system for example, poses a big challenge to the empowerment of people even with the introduction of microfinance lending hence very difficult for the people to change their livelihoods. For instance, the financial freedom reported of the south India study was influenced by a number of socio-economic factors including the caste system (Guerin & Kumar, 2016). A caste system is a class structure that is determined by birth. Loosely, it means that in some societies, the opportunities you have access to depend on the family you happened to be born into (Yuval H., 2018).

Patriarchy on the other hand challenges the growth of a woman borrower as she has no control of the money that she borrows. A paper that reflected on the strengths and weaknesses of approaches taken by three NGOs in Bangladesh and one NGO based in Bihar in India considered the provision of microfinance to women to be a major strategy for empowering the women (Hunt & Kasynathan, 2001). Another example is where study findings in a research conducted in Rwanda, showed that the gendered division of labour of the patriarchal societies created gender inequality in the ways women and men participated in the running of their businesses as women were puzzled by sharing their time between productive and reproductive responsibilities (Mukamana et al., 2017).

According to Streeten in Todaro (2011), development must be redefined as a measure to address the chief evils of the world today malnutrition, disease, illiteracy, slums, unemployment and inequality. In investigating the gender differences in utilisation of loans borrowed from Sidian Bank, the study focused on any economic development measured in terms of aggregate growth rates, equal development measured in terms of jobs, justice, alleviation of poverty and the chief evils listed above. There, however, is a close relationship between poverty alleviation and livelihood improvement as the former leads to the later. This study focused on the effects of loans borrowed from Sidian Bank in relation to livelihood improvement in Kitui, Kenya and very importantly from a gender perspective.

A sustainable microfinance institution can affect social change by offering customers loans to launch and expand microenterprises that generate income for customers' and their families' improvement (Mphaka, 2017). The microfinance community, however, is becoming increasingly critical of MFIs for prioritizing profits over attempts to eradicate poverty (Asnake, 2015). Their main objective being to reduce poverty, microfinance actors placed little emphasis on sustainability in the second part of the 1990s (Charitonenko & Rahman, 2002). However, MFIs have progressively pushed the sustainability issue forward and tested various strategies for enhancing institutional sustainability (Asnake, 2015). Five categories of assets or capital are employed in development to examine the numerous facets of well-being and ways to achieve this.

Another school of thought views MFIs' strategy as a means of making borrowers even destitute than they were before borrowing. According to Ledger Wood (1999; 205), microfinance institutions assess sustainability using a variety of performance metrics, including "portfolio quality, productivity, efficiency, financial viability, profitability, productivity, leverage, capital adequacy, scale, outreach, and growth." All of these signs, however, can only ensure the viability of the clients. According to social visionaries, pursuing institutional sustainability has obscured MFIs social goal (Charitonenko & Rahman, 2002). They contest the overabundance of 'profit' and 'commercial' orientation (Asnake, 2015). With such a focus, MFIs frequently 'unserve' the poorest of the poor and limit their lending to clients with strong repayment prospects and accessible locations. To establish operational and financial viability, MFIs would also demand high lending rates (Charitonenko & Rahman, 2002). These exorbitant fees fail to achieve the original goal of beginning micro-lending.

On the other hand, there are good accounts of use of microloans to boost one's standard of living. According to a study done in Bangladesh, the micro-credit acquired by the borrowers significantly increased their household income (Husain et al., 2015). 28 of the 31 countries with low levels of human development are located in Africa south of the Sahara, which is considered to be the world's poorest region (UNDP, 2006: 265). Nevertheless, there are global gender issues in improving livelihoods that share some commonalities and some distinctions. By means of a distinguished approach to granting credit, microcredit programs stand out as a socioeconomic alternative of social insertion and the fight against poverty (Arbolino, Carlucci, Cirà, Yigitcanlar, & Ioppolo, 2018; Bezboruah & Pillai, 2017; Dutta & Banerjee, 2018), placing the credit granted as a propellant for formal and informal microenterprises (Alves & Camargos, 2014). According to Erdmann et al. (2012), a livelihood comprises access to education, financial resources, social networks, and natural resources (such as land). It also includes technologies, skills, knowledge, and ability. The type of economic activities and level of education determine people's livelihood improvement including the type of investments people make.

Poverty on the other hand, has a social, political and economic aspect. It is one of the greatest drawbacks of development. Poverty is general scarcity, or the state of one who lacks a certain amount of material possessions or money. It is a multifaceted concept, which includes social, economic, and political elements. Also, poverty may be defined as either absolute or relative. Absolute poverty or destitution refers to the lack of means necessary to meet basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. While relative poverty takes into consideration individual social and economic status compared to the rest of society (Amartya Sen, 1973:389). Different economies take different perspectives in dealing with poverty eradication, Japan and the Asian Tigers worked on it from a Loan Based Foundation (Robinson, 2001).

It might be tricky to compare poverty alleviation with development but the level of development might determine poverty eradication strategies. The UNDP measure of development HDI is based on literacy level, life expectancy and economic development. In pure economic terms, income poverty is when a family's income fails to meet a federally established threshold that differs across countries. About 1.3 million people of the world live with less than one dollar a day (World Bank, 2005). One-dollar day seems to be a very low level of assessment as the Kenya shilling has depreciated against the dollar over the years. Measuring the level of livelihood against this measure could be deceiving. Households in the region could be operating above the one dollar a day level and yet they are poor considering the inflation in the country. This is due to the low Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) of the Kenya shilling. In order for a household to save in microfinance institutions then they have to fulfil the basic needs first as Maslow, (1943) states that physiological needs are the physical requirements for human survival.

Since gaining independence from colonial rule in 1963, eradicating poverty has been a priority on Kenya's national agenda. Although efforts have been made to solve the issue, several gender issues have emerged because obtaining any credit from financial institutions necessitates the ownership of some property to serve as collateral. Women have suffered in their attempts to eradicate poverty because of the patriarchal nature of African civilization. There are socio-economic and politically related drivers of poverty such as: Risk vulnerability; Harvest failure; Market failure and volatility; Conflicts; Low capabilities; Health shocks; Limited livelihood capabilities; Corruption; weak nations weak state; Weak civil society-lack of a shared national identity; Human rights violation and Resources curse (Robinson et al., 2005). These drivers of poverty can affect microfinance programmes directly or indirectly. They could lead to failure or low performance of the sector. Being a semi-arid area, Kitui is affected by a number of them.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The improvement of livelihood for any household depends among other things on Indebtedness. It is worse if there is over-indebtedness. Borrowers' most significant causes of over indebtedness include societal pressures, cognitive and psychological biases, and predispositions to poor financial judgment (Schicks, 2010). Overindebtedness can be brought on by borrower behaviour, lender behaviour, and external factors, including household shocks. According to Schicks (2014), microfinance customer is over-indebted if they consistently struggle to satisfy their loan repayment commitments and are systematically forced to make excessively significant sacrifices. There is therefore need to for governments to come up with strategies of dealing with indebtedness and over indebtedness in order to improve the livelihood of their people.

According to Ahmed Ziya Uddin et al., (2004) house hold livelihood, one of the critical categories of household livelihood security in Bangladesh is the status of women. Livelihood can also be improved through empowerment. Empowerment has multiple dimensions. The first dimension is the economic stability– they are competent to participate in the economy and make better decisions for their economic position (Mayoux, 2005; Gola et al., 2011). Microfinance lending is supposed to empower individual borrows including making the right financial decisions. As a market tool microcredit is expected to promote individual freedom (Guerin & Kumar, 2016).

The second aspect of empowerment is with the living level, which can be raised if men and women make significant financial contributions and share financial responsibility. The third factor in this context is social empowerment, which gives women the ability to make decisions, maintain their independence and selfassurance, and run their homes independently. Through these factors, they can connect with others in society and are empowered by having a certain percentage of seats in assemblies reserved for women (Lemire, Pearson, & Campbell, 2001; Mayoux, 2005). All three dimensions relate to the role of women in livelihood improvement. Empowerment is also concerned with the availability of choice and power of choosing among the alternatives (Mayoux, 2005). Culture influences women's lack of decision-making power at household levels in some communities. Asset acquisition can be used as a measure of livelihood improvement.

Gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment must be central to rural finance interventions if rural microfinance supports the pro-poor development and economic growth goal of empowering impoverished women and men (Mayoux and Haiti, 2009). According to Nasir (2013) and Qazi (2013), women's empowerment is the expansion of personal independence and achievement. According to the authors' analysis of women's economic empowerment in Pakistan, 36% of women had low levels of empowerment while just 8% had high levels (Sheikh & Sadaqat, 2015). While the rural poor's standard of living may be improved through financial access. Many women do not hold significant assets. Since women have historically been cloistered and have had very limited social mobility, gender status in Bangladesh is a part of the livelihood focus on fundamental rights and justice (Ahmed Ziya Uddin et al., 2004).

A study conducted in Ghana found that banks provided financial services that satisfied the urban population's needs and neglected the rural poor's needs (Akpandjar, Quartey, & Abor, 2013). On the other hand another study conducted on table banking in Rongai Kenya, concluded that group cohesion was of utmost importance in economic empowerment and also inferred that group guarantee was an important factor in enhancing economic empowerment of group members (Lambisia et al., 2016).

Sometimes in some countries, borrowing has damaged the existing livelihood improvement strategies already in place (Jain & Mansuri 2003; Mallick, 2009). This is believed to be partly because many MFIs have severe weekly repayment requirements, which make repayments due before project returns. When this occurs, the borrower may decide to take out loans from both the moneylender and the MFI, using the latter to pay off the former (Jain & Mansuri, 2003). In southwest Uganda, where clients of moneylenders frequently borrowed from them to pay back an MFI loan, Oswald (2014) discovered evidence. This means that the loan was not used for the intended purposes. Utilisation of a loan to repay another, therefore, the loan became a retrogressive practice for individuals and for households. Borrowing, therefore, might not be a remedy to livelihood improvement. The findings of a study that looked into how microfinance affected household wellbeing in Botswana suggested that there was no discernible impact of microfinance on household welfare. This is in line with the findings of Okurut and Bategeka (2006), Banerjee et al. (2013), and Coleman (1999), who claimed that household wellbeing was significantly and favourably influenced by household assets, education level, and employment in the public and private sectors. The same study, however, demonstrated that women's access to microfinance had resulted in their empowerment through involvement in household expenditure decisions, respect from family and the community, and increased level of participation in local leadership activities that addressed the strategic needs of women. Training has been identified as a strategy of empowering borrowers. A study conducted in Uganda, (Mugabi, 2010) revealed that Micro Credit Institutions (MCIs) empower clients with some elementary skills through training in credit utilization and management and this has enabled many Micro Credit (MC) borrowers to use the facility. However, ―a lot has to be done in terms of building the capacity of household to use

MC facility, given the level of education where majority of the citizens have no business qualification and experience. Micro-credit institutions and other lending institutions need to tailor trainings to the learning capacity of the majority poor who have low education ‖ (Mugabi, 2010). Livelihoods in rural areas can be improved funding of agricultural projects. Central to achieving agricultural oriented livelihood development is credit and the need for productive resources such as land, information and education (World Bank, 2001). When there is a lot of pressure on repayment, then it becomes difficult to commit the loans to long term investments like land. A literature review in secondary research on Impact of Rural and Agricultural Finance on Clients in Sub-Saharan Africa focused on how rural and agricultural financial solutions contribute to poverty reduction and improved livelihoods for rural households confirmed that cultural norms pose a challenge (Chris Clark et al., 2015). This research stated that it is cultural norms that assign different roles and responsibilities to women and men continue to shape the division of labour in the loan-funded activity (Chris Clark et al., 2015).

In this study the effects of the loan on livelihood improvement, were assessed by investigating on the situation before and after the acquisition of the loans for men and women.

METHODOLOGY

The study used mixed research approach and convergent research design. Convergent design is one of the specific mixed methods designs, others include; Explanatory Sequential Design and Exploratory Sequential Design (Creswell, J.W., & Creswell, J.D. (2018). Mixed methods approach helped collect comprehensive and in-depth information that helped unearth gendered dimensions of borrowing and utilization. A Combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was used. The study was conducted in Kitui County in the South Eastern region of Kenya. Most parts of the County are semi-arid experiencing low rainfalls and frequent droughts. The study population was drawn from three sub counties which is 42.9% of the total number of sub counties of Kitui County. The study population included men and women who had loans from the micro finance banking branch of Sidian Bank, staff members of the bank and spouses of the borrowers. The population of the study was sampled from the total population of 2100 women and men microfinance borrowers of Sidian Bank and the spouses of the married ones. The percentage of women borrowers was at 56%. So as to get a reasonable sample size, a 95% level of confidence and a 6.5% confidence interval was used to select a sample. Purposive sampling technique was used.

RESULTS

The study sought to determine the intervening effect of gender norms on utilisation of loans borrowed from Sidian Bank and livelihood outcome. Gender norms work to construct ideas of what is “normal” for a man or woman, and in turn, what is considered “abnormal”. Thus, gender norms are often considered to be damaging to individual liberty. Examples of gender norms include and are not limited to house chores for women, cooking food, fetching water and household fuel arrangements while men are supposed to provide shelter, education and own land and livestock.

Effects of loans were investigated against livelihood measures. The study categorised as livelihood measure; Sources of Water, Physical Assets, form of dwelling and financial assets. The effects were also assessed by investigating on the situation before and after the acquisition of the loans for men and women. Hypothesis testing on the Livelihood Measure was done through The Mann Whitney U test comparing the situation of men and women before and after borrowing.

A big number of respondents noted that the rise of microfinance borrowing has changed the patterns created by society norms of their community. It is evident from their policy that Sidian bank through its microfinance arm purposes to facilitate and help households overcome financial barriers by offering

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financial reprieve. These findings have however shown mixed results of success. In some cases positive livelihood outcomes were recorded as short lived, the loan enabled a woman pay school fees for her child and eventually she lost a television set. On one hand there are borrowers who have managed to improve their livelihoods but on the other hand a lot of families have lost household property due to defaulting of loans. The study has also given clear gender differentials on the extent to which these initiatives have succeeded in addressing the livelihood improvement and challenges faced by Sidian bank borrowers‘ households especially from a gender perspective. Effects of good utilisation include better homes as stated above and an increase in literacy levels as more children are educated using the loan money. Some of these effects are measurable but others are not, for example one cannot measure the extent of lifestyle improvement like stated above where some women are accused of changing lifestyle after acquiring loans.

Livelihood Measure

To assess the effects of the borrowed money on the household, the study carried out an assessment per gender.

The study found that there were no men borrowers who utilized their borrowing to paying for house even though 9.5% of the women borrowers did so. The results also revealed that 3.9% of the men borrowers stopped working as compared to 6.2% of the women borrowers. The loans therefore affected men and women differently; according to the findings there were more men who changed their forms of trade than women while there were more women who quit employment to own businesses after acquiring the loans.

The study sought to establish whether there exists any significant difference on clients' livelihood measures across categories of gender. It was noted that there was a significant difference on the renting status, borrowing status and trade or occupational change between men and women. This meant that, renting status, borrowing status and trade or occupational change between men and women was different.

Sources of Water

The borrowers were asked to state their current source of water before borrowing money from Sidian Bank.

Before borrowing money from Sidian bank only 2.0% of the men respondents' fetched water from the wells while no women respondent indicated the same. On the other hand 51.0% of the men and 71.1% women sourced their water from the rivers. The study also showed that 34.0% of the men borrowers sourced their water from public water system while 16.0% of the women respondents indicated the same; 36.0% of the male respondents sourced their water from water tankers and so to 40.5% of the women respondents and finally 14.0% of the men responded that they sourced their water from their neighbours as compared to 0% of their women counterparts before borrowing money from Sidian bank.

The study sought to establish whether there exists any significant difference on borrowers 'water source before borrowing loan across categories of gender. There was a significant difference on the utilization of wells, rivers, public water system, water tankers and neighbours' water as source of water between men and women before loan borrowing. This meant that, the utilization of wells, rivers, public water system, water tankers and neighbours' water as source of water between men and women was different before the clients borrowed loan.

The borrowers were also asked to state their current source of water after borrowing money. The study also showed a shift of both men and women to public water system after obtaining the loan as compared to before obtaining the loans, men at (42.0%) and women (16.0%). After obtaining loans, there was also increased water sourcing from water tanks from both men (36.0%) and women (40.5%) as compared to source of water before borrowing money from Sidian bank. There was low sourcing of water from the

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neighbours by men (14.0%) and none at all from women respondents. This could be attributed to having some money in their pockets after borrowing from Sidian bank thereby necessitating different options of water sourcing particularly with money. The loans therefore improved water provision for both men and women but had greater impact on women than men. This can be attributed to gender roles in the local community with the role of fetching water being assigned to women.

There was a significant difference on the utilization of wells, public water system and neighbours' water as source of water between men and women after loan borrowing. This meant that, the utilization of wells, public water system and neighbours' water as source of water between men and women was different after they borrowed loan. This implied that there was no significant difference on the utilization of rivers and water tankers as source of water between men and women after loan borrowing. This meant that, the utilization of rivers and water tankers source of water between men and women was the same after they borrowed loan.

Physical Assets

The borrower respondents were asked to state the status of their physical assets before borrowing money from Sidian bank and Table 1 presents the findings.

Table 1: Physical Assets before Borrowing

	Men		Women	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Own House	7	14.0	131	71.6
Motor Vehicle	5	10	0	0
Motor Cycle	14	28	4	2.2
Bicycle	4	8	13	7.1
Mobile Phones	14	28	8	4.4
Television	3	6	40	21.9
Others	12	24	20	10.9

As presented in Table 2, majority (71.6%) of the women respondents owned houses as compared to 14.0% of men respondents who reported the same while 10.0% of the men had motor vehicles while women had none. The study also reported that both men at 2.0% and women at 2.2% had motorcycles, likewise 8.0% men and 7.1% women borrowers had bicycles; a higher percentage 21.9% of women borrowers had mobile phones as compared to men respondents at only 6.0%. On the other hand, the study findings revealed that 28.0% of the men respondents had bought television sets as compared to only 4.4% women respondents who reported the same. This meant that, motor vehicle ownership, motor cycle ownership and television ownership between men and women had slight differences before the clients borrowed loan. The borrower respondents were asked to state the status of their physical assets after borrowing money from Sidian bank and Table 3 presents the findings.

Table 2: Physical Assets after Borrowing

	Men		Women	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Own House	7	14	154	84.1
Motor Vehicle	15	30	16	8.7

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Motor Cycle	29	58	14	9.8
Bicycle	5	10	79	37.1
Mobile Phones	31	62	57	31.1
Television	19	38	39	21.3
Others	13	26	24	13.1

The study (Table 3) shows that status of men respondents (14.0%) in terms of house ownership still remained the same however there was increase of the houses built by women to (84.1%,) after borrowing there was increase in motor vehicle ownership by men respondents to (30.0%) as well as ownership by women respondents to (8.7%) from zero before borrowing. However the houses that women build sit on their husbands‘or fathers‘land in most cases. This gives a sense of insecurity for women. There was an increase of up to (58.0%) of men respondents in the purchase of motor cycles as well as women respondents increasing to (9.8%); the study further revealed an up surge of women respondents on the purchase of bicycle to (37.7%) as compared to men respondents at (10.0%). After borrowing, there was high increase in the purchase of mobile phones by men respondents up to (62.0%) and a slight increase by women respondents as well to (31.1%), same to television sets to (38.0%) for men respondents and (21.3%) for women respondents respectively. The findings therefore imply that there was complete change of physical assets ownership after borrowing loans from Sidian banks indicating a positive effect. From the statistics of the above table, the change has a gender perspective for example women house ownership increases from 70% to 84%

This implied that there was a significant difference on house ownership, motor vehicle ownership, motor cycle ownership, mobile phone ownership and television ownership between men and women after loan borrowing. This meant that, house ownership, motor vehicle ownership, motor cycle ownership, mobile phone ownership and television ownership between men and women were different after the clients borrowed loan.

In conclusion disparities were noted in acquisition of assets with men having higher improvement in majority of the categories especially in areas of modern high technology that is mobile phones and motor cycles. Therefore it was noted that there was a positive effect where the loans were used to buy assets.

Form of Dwelling

There are different types of housing: permanent brick iron sheet houses, semi permanent iron sheet houses and temporary houses. There was a comparison between types of houses before and after acquisition of loans. The results however showed that (30.0%) of the men and (19.4%) women were dwelling in iron sheet brick houses.

Gender Difference in Form of Dwellings

The statistics of the study showed that there was no significant difference on Sidian Bank clients living a temporary thatched house and in an iron sheet mud walled house between males and females before loan borrowing. This meant that, Sidian Bank clients living a temporary thatched house and in an iron sheet mud walled house between men and women were the same before the clients borrowed loan.

The respondents were also asked to state the current form of their dwelling places after borrowing loans from Sidian bank.

It was noted that there were no changes as well for men respondents who were dwelling in iron brick mud

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blocks but as the study recorded zero for all the women respondents living in the same form of dwellings.

This could imply that women respondents may have shifted to a different form of dwelling after obtaining loans from Sidian bank. The study further showed an increase in percentage of both men (32.0%) and women (56.0%) of the respondents who had shifted to iron sheet bricked houses; there was also a slight increase and shift to iron sheet mud wall form of dwelling for both men (6.0%) and women (8.8%); these increases were also recorded in iron sheet brick houses where men respondents increased to (32.0%) and women to (26.3%). It can therefore be deduced that there was a general shift from one form of dwelling to the other after obtaining loans and slight gender differentials regarding the shift from one form of dwelling to another. That means that the shift from one level of dwelling to the next has disparities between men and women. A number of women clarified that the change in dwelling places was not directly connected to loans borrowed from Sidian Bank some said that their adult children a had assisted them while others said that their husbands working in urban areas had built the new houses. Some however connected the improvement of housing to the loans they borrowed since they had educated their children using the loans.

Table 3: The effects of forms of housing by loans

Forms of Housing	Men		Women	
	Before%	After %	Before %	After %
Temporary thatched house	0	0	0.9	0.9
Iron brick mud block	28	28	12.8	0
Iron sheet bricked (home -made) house	22	32	52.9	56.2
Iron sheet mud walled	0	6	6.6	8.8
Iron sheet (quarry) brick house	30	32	19.4	26.3

Table 4 shows the effects of forms of housing by loans by indicating the form before and after loans and at the same time compares the same between men and women

Financial Assets

The increase in financial assets for women respondents compared to men was also displayed in business proceeds where men respondents increased to 56.0% and female 64.5%, in Agriculture men respondents rose to 18.0% and women respondents to 24.0%. All these gender differentials on the three items in favour of women respondents could be attributed to proper utilization of the borrowed money as compared to their men respondents. Interestingly the men respondents increased in individual savings 42.0% as compared to only 11.3% of the woman respondents; however it was opposite for group savings where men respondents reduced to 6.0% but women respondents increased to 24.0%. This could be attributed to change in preference of the mode of keeping financial assets after receiving loan from Sidian where men respondents preferring individual savings while women respondents preferring group savings.

The men borrowers (52.3%) informed this study that they thought both men and women benefited equally from the savings and borrowings as compared to (34.5%) of the women respondents. The study however noted the consequences of gender disparities between men and women in microfinance borrowing. Women borrowers accused their husbands of enticing them to take loans and spend on the family matters promising to help in repayment but when the time comes to repay, they renege. They also reported that women who use their money well got more empowered and had support mostly from their children. They indicated that

women‘s money was well planned for and helped households more as compared to men who would use part of the money to buy alcohol. These loans therefore had positive effects on women.

Men and women should be trained on utilisation and investing on income generating projects while couples should work in agreement in order for the loans to be of maximum benefit the household.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Every community has its own defined norms. Sometimes these norms have a gender perspective; they assign roles to men and women in the society. A big number of respondents in the study noted that the rise of microfinance borrowing has changed the patterns created by society norms of their community.

It is evident from their policy that Sidian bank through its microfinance arm purposes to facilitate and help households overcome financial barriers by offering financial reprieve. These findings have however shown mixed results of success. In some cases positive livelihood outcomes were recorded as short lived. The loan enabled a woman pay school fees managed to improve their livelihoods. However, a lot of families lost household property due to defaulting of loans. The study also gives clear gender differentials on the extent to which these initiatives have succeeded in addressing the livelihood improvement and challenges faced by Sidian bank borrowers' households especially from a gender perspective. Effects of good utilisation include better homes and an increase in literacy levels as more children are educated using the loan money. Some of these effects are measurable but others are not, for example, one may not measure the extent of lifestyle improvement like where some women are accused of changing lifestyle after acquiring loans.

The loans therefore affected men and women differently; according to the findings, there were more men who changed their forms of trade than women while there were more women who quit employment to start their own businesses after acquiring the loans. The effects were gauged using different livelihood measure such as sources of water, types of shelter, other physical assets and forms of trade/occupation. The loans improved water provision for both men and women but had greater impact on women than men. This can be attributed to gender roles in the local community with the role of fetching water being assigned to women. The status of men respondents (14.0%) in terms of house ownership still remained the same even after borrowing loans. However, there was increase in houses built by women to (84.1 %,). After borrowing, there was an increase in motor vehicle ownership by men respondents to (30.0%) as well as ownership by women respondents to (8.7%) from zero before borrowing. However the houses that women built sat on their husbands' or fathers' land in most cases. This gives a sense of insecurity for women. There was an increase of up to (58.0%) of men respondents in the purchase of motor cycles as well as women respondents increasing to (9.8%) from?; the study further revealed an up surge of women respondents on the purchase of bicycle to (37.7%) as compared to men respondents at (10.0%). After borrowing, there was high increase in the purchase of mobile phones by men respondents up to (62.0%) and a slight increase by women respondents as well to (31.1%), same to television sets to (38.0%) for men respondents and (21.3%) for women respondents respectively. The findings therefore imply that there was complete change of physical assets ownership after borrowing loans from Sidian banks indicating a positive effect.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion the study found out that there were both positive and negative effects of loans on livelihood improvement for both men and women. Men used their money differently from women. Women reported that they spent their loans on household basic improvement for example educating their children, buying clothes and food. Therefore the literacy level was raised. Others solved the problem of water by buying water tanks, water barrels or digging wells. They also bought donkeys to ease transportation of water and farm produce. This helped not only in provision of water in the households but also saved time for women to do other work. Women bought seeds for food crops such as maize, beans and cow peas. This too improved the livelihood of households by providing food which is a basic need. There was improvement on housing but at different levels for men and women. There were mixed reactions on the effects of some men moving to urban areas after they acquired loans in order to set up their businesses. Some succeeded and supported their families and kept on saving, borrowing loans and repaying while others changed their lifestyles and deserted their families.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is necessary for lending institutions, different government organs and other stake holders to work together to support borrowers especially women to overcome the obstacles they face which prevent them from achieving their goals.

There is need to carry out more qualitative studies on the implications of family responsibilities on women borrowers' utilization. Such studies will have the potential of unearthing challenges that women borrowers face in financial management. Women are the majority of borrowers yet they are taken for granted.

The negative effect of gender based violence sometimes leading to family breakups due to poor utilisation of loans kept coming up. It is important to investigate this further and offer social support to families.

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