



Gendered Differential Barriers Facing Male and Female Handcraft Entrepreneurs in Tanzania: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract: *The aim of this study was to examine the gendered differential barriers facing male and female handcraft entrepreneurs. In order to gather the data, the study used a cross-sectional research design whereby structured questionnaires were distributed to male and female entrepreneurs in handcraft industry in Dar es Salaam and Arusha regions, involving a total of 135 respondents. Convenience sampling was used. With this method, the researcher used respondents that were available to reach. The data were analysed using inferential statistics and T-test. The findings revealed that there is significant difference between male and female respondents in product knowledge development, market accessibility and gender roles whereby female respondents seem to be the most affected gender more than male. The study concluded that handcraft industry is one of the sectors which is recently growing, therefore the gendered barriers between male and female need to be resolved. Finally, the study recommends that both NGOs and the government institutions should work out on how best they can support both male and female entrepreneurs in the handcraft industry in Tanzania so as to enable it to contribute to the economic growth of the country.*

Keywords: Africa, Gender, Barriers, Handcraft Entrepreneurs, Small and Medium Enterprises

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1. Introduction

The handcraft Industry is a creative sector producing traditional craft and functional wares for the informal and formal retail market. According to (UNESCO, 1997; Makyao, 2013) handcraft are those products produced by artisans, completely by hand or with the help of hand-tools and sometimes using mechanical means as long as the direct manual contribution of the artisan remains the

most substantial component of the finished product. Their special nature derives from their distinctive features, which can be utilitarian, aesthetic, artistic, creative, culturally attached, decorative, functional, traditional and religiously and socially symbolic and significant. GEMET (2012) stated that handcraft business is the profession, commercial firm or trade involving the production and distribution of articles that are made through the skilled use of one's hands.

Today there are many pressures on farmers to diversify their livelihood beyond reliance on agriculture. Kemal (2020) indicated that in recent years farmers have tended to diversify their livelihood beyond the reliance on agriculture due to climatic challenges, which affect production. Diversification is a matter of survival for most poor farmers, whereas for the relatively wealthy farmers, it is a strategy of accumulation or investment (Fiona, 2007). Both men and women participate in income generating activities. However, their participation in income generation activities is compounded with many constraints. The major challenges include lack of necessary skills and knowledge to make the right choices and identify the most successful income generating activity; lack of access to capital for starting up a business; lack of access to appropriate technology; and lack of access to markets.

Although there is considerable potential that can be maximized, the sector continues to struggle to realize that potential and establish itself as a viable and vibrant economic activity for prospective entrepreneurs (Barbados Investment and Development Corporation (BIDC), 2008). The craft industry has evolved over the years; shifting from the traditional cottage industry structure of artisans producing practical products for individual domestic use and later souvenir items for the tourist market to factory-based operations producing goods for both the export and local markets. Today, tourists still remain the principal target market but the emphasis and focus of craft operators has extended beyond that traditional segment to include prospective clients in the domestic market and farther abroad. Local craft operators have, however, failed to achieve the level of success in the export arena as they have enjoyed at home (BIDC, 2008).

The available evidence shows that handcraft industry has created employment opportunities to both men and women and it has increased countries' economy. According to Shushma (2012), the handcraft sector can have a major impact on national economies through foreign exchange earnings, employment creation, and sustained economic growth. Money spent on crafts spread instantly and undiluted into the local community. In India, for instance, the handcraft industry contributes about US\$5.6 billion to the national economy and employs close to 20 million individuals on a full-time basis (Shushma, 2012). The handcraft industry in Tanzania is rich and diverse in terms of the products portfolio, volume, quality, and variety but it is largely dependent on the foreign tourism market (Ipsos, 2012).

Two broad categories of handicrafts dominate this industry in Tanzania; home decoration/house ware and fashion accessories within which we have a huge variety of products. Utensils made of wood, table mats and decoration items are the most traded home decoration handicrafts while the most traded fashion accessories are Kikoi, bags and purses, shawls, neck and beachwear (Ipsos, 2012). Even though the priority market has been the foreign nationals/ expatriates working in Tanzania or coming for holiday, interest in handicrafts has grown amongst the locals with most of them going for fashion accessories compared to house ware/home decorations. Kamuzora (2003) argues that Tanzanian handcraft entrepreneurs still are not able to compete with neighboring countries, specifically Kenya, in the global market. It has been pointed out in the literature that some of the reasons advanced as to why these competitors have an edge over the local handicrafts' traders in Tanzania. These include having better marketing strategies with a focus on outside markets, they have more defined chains of distribution, they are more advanced technologically e.g., selling their products online and they get assistance from their governments (Ipsos, 2012). Baum and McGahan (2004) emphasize that, in order to survive the dynamic environment and remain competitive, it is necessary to measure the intensity of competition, assess the causes of decline and single out a variable strategy to combat decline. Tanzanian traders are inhibited with professional and business development training programmes, network linkages, awareness of fair-trade practices, level of equipment application, production capacity and quality and standards (Ipsos, 2012). Other barriers to traders are limited marketing, information and communication skills (Walonzi, 2014), lack of supporting institutions, promotional and preservation policies, low craft quality, inability of craft producers to access the opportunities to up-grade their managerial skills and to access business information, along with lack of capable craft development coordinators and designers (Makyao, 2013). According to Gamba (2010), firms need marketing support services which will enable them to be more effective than their competitors in creating, delivering and communicating superior customer value to their chosen target market to perform well in export market, satisfy customers' objectives and achieve its goals. Entrepreneurs need therefore to have a clear understanding of their actual and potential customers, identify their needs, wants and demands and then develop, price, promote and deliver their products to customers in a more convenient way that will meet both current and future customer needs (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012).

To address the challenges faced by handicraft businesses in Tanzania, the government, through the Ministry of Tourism and Natural Resources (MTNR), Tanzania Tourism Board (TTB) collaborates with other stakeholders such as the Tanzania Confederation of Tourism (TCT), to provide capacity building training to cultural tourism businesses to make their marketing strategies more effective (TTB, 2008). However, despite the effort taken by the government and other stakeholders to make handicraft businesses more competitive, handicraft businesses struggle to find markets for their products. They lack creativity, knowledge, skills and financial support. Thus, many of them fail to grow and compete with neighboring countries. In the handicraft business, women are historically disadvantaged compared to men.

Women participation in income generation activities can be limited by a range of factors, including level of mobility and resources, education, cultural and religious constraints and the type of tasks in the chain activities. From this background, it is of interest to analyze what barriers can affect the growth of men and women involved in handicraft industry in Tanzania. The rise of digital technology has significantly transformed the marketing and sales strategies within the handicraft industry. E-commerce platforms and social media have become vital tools for artisans to reach both local and international markets. According to Njau and Ngowi (2021), Tanzanian artisans are increasingly utilizing online market places and social media to showcase their products, which allows them to bypass traditional distribution channels and directly engage with customers. This direct engagement not only increases their profit margins but also enhances their control over product branding and customer relationships.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift towards digital platforms as physical markets were disrupted. A study by Msemu (2019) highlighted how artisans adapted to lockdown measures by enhancing their online presence and using mobile payment systems, which are widely adopted across East Africa. This shift not only sustained their businesses during the pandemic but also opened up new entrepreneurial opportunities and innovations in product design and marketing.

The Tanzanian handicraft industry, traditionally reliant on tourism, faced significant challenges during the global decline in travel caused by the pandemic. As global travel resumes, there is an opportunity to diversify the market beyond traditional tourist souvenirs. This diversification can involve targeting ethical consumers and diaspora

communities interested in cultural goods. Participating in international craft fairs physically and virtually can help Tanzanian artisans access new markets and align with trends favoring authentic and culturally rich products (Yang et al., 2018; Kazungu & Mchopa, 2022). Efforts to expand the market can lead to better wages for artisans and the promotion of handicraft heritage (Yang et al., 2018). Developing sustainable livelihood frameworks for handicraft producers can aid in the industry's growth and sustainability (Dalal, 2023).

Additionally, engaging in social media marketing strategies can enhance brand equity and consumer intention to purchase handicraft products (Guha et al., 2021). The handicraft industry, being environmentally friendly and reflecting local culture and identity, offers a quick monetary cycle and is crucial for preserving and promoting cultural heritage (Anssary, 2024). Moreover, the industry serves as a significant source of livelihood for many unskilled laborers and artisans (Choudhary, 2022). To ensure the sustainability and resilience of the Tanzanian handicraft industry post-pandemic, it is essential to consider factors such as market orientation, management commitment, and internal resources (Munawar et al., 2019). By embracing digital and innovative entrepreneurship, the industry can adapt to economic challenges and leverage opportunities presented by new digital platforms (Yadav et al., 2023).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In the handicraft industry in Tanzania, women entrepreneurs face a constellation of challenges that differ markedly from those encountered by their male counterparts, which often leads to higher rates of business failure among women. These challenges include a limited understanding of international business norms and protocols, inadequate advertising strategies, and a significant lack of capital necessary for investment in their enterprises (Njau & Ngowi, 2021). Additionally, women frequently grapple with restricted access to markets, insufficient storage and production facilities, financial constraints in acquiring high-quality raw materials and essential equipment, and a deficit in skills necessary for enhancing production efficiency (Msemu, 2019). Such disparities underscore the need for targeted interventions that address these specific barriers to support and empower women in the handicraft sector effectively.

Recent studies corroborate the challenges identified by Mkenda and Aikaeli (2014) regarding women in the

Tanzanian handicraft industry. Firstly, inadequate marketing remains a significant barrier, leading to low mean incomes for rural women, as their primary marketing method is word of mouth, which has limited reach and results in minimal advertisement and earnings (Njau & Ngowi, 2021). Secondly, the low levels of education among many women in the sector contribute to lower profits due to limited business management and operational skills (Msemo, 2019). Lastly, access to loans and capital continues to be a critical challenge, hindering women's ability to expand and improve their production capabilities (Mwakipesile & Maliti, 2020).

In addition, Redzuam and Aref (2011) conducted a study on constraints and potentials of handicraft industry in underdeveloped region of Malaysia. Their study identified two groups of constraints of development of handicraft industry; demand and supply constraints. Demand constraints include restrictions of the size and pattern of the markets that the crafts cater for. Supply constraints include unavailability of skilled labour, difficulty in obtaining raw materials, reluctance to adopt modern methods of production or technology, the lack of credit facilities, inadequacy of quality control measures in the production process constraints.

Despite the increasing engagement of both men and women in the handicraft business, most previous studies have not focused on comparing the gendered differential barriers faced by men and women in this sector. Given the societal differences between males and females, it is likely that their experiences in entrepreneurship differ significantly (Njau & Ngowi, 2021; Msemo, 2019). The question of whether females face different barriers than males in the handicraft industry has not been thoroughly studied, highlighting a critical research gap. Addressing this gap is crucial for correcting the shortcomings and biases in the current development of the handicraft business. This information gap underscores the importance of gaining insights into the unique challenges and dynamics experienced by Tanzanian men and women in the handicraft industry (Mwakipesile & Maliti, 2020).

1.3 Objectives of the study

1.3.1 Main Objective

The general objective of this study is to examine the gendered differential barriers facing entrepreneurs involved in handicraft industry.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

This study was designed to address the following specific objectives:

1. To identify and analyze gender roles of male and female entrepreneurs and how they affect their involvement in handicraft industry.
2. To examine the gendered disparity on product knowledge development between male and female entrepreneurs in handicraft industry.
3. To assess the gendered disparity on market accessibility between male and female entrepreneurs in handicraft industry.

2. Review Literature

ILO (2002) conducted research whereby its main focus was Tanzanian Women Entrepreneurs. The research covered 128 women entrepreneurs from Arusha, Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar using structured questionnaires, and other 15 entrepreneurs who were reached through face-to-face in-depth interviews. A number of challenges were identified. The study found that women have difficulties in accessing appropriate amounts of finance to enable them to establish and expand their enterprises coupled together with the lack of awareness about women associations as their reason for not being members.

At the micro-level, the main challenges were women entrepreneurs' limited education, skills and business experience. At the meso-level, the main constraints identified were limited access to support services, including loan levels suited to their business needs, technical and management training, advice and marketing. In the case of micro-finance, the problem was mainly limited to lack of access to substantial loans despite the fact that, to some extent, micro-credits providers are now widely available, especially in urban areas. The study concluded that women entrepreneurs seem to be aware of the importance of job quality in managing mediations based on outcomes from field research and the national conference organized by the ILO.

While the study by ILO (2002) only focused on the general challenges facing women entrepreneurs, this one focuses specifically, on handicraft industries by looking at both women and men entrepreneurs to fill the gap on male side. Kamuzora (2003) in investigating how women entrepreneurs produce the naturally patented Makonde sculptures for the tourist domestic and foreign markets and challenges facing them observe that, Tanzanian entrepreneurs were handicapped with marketing

knowledge. The study found that women entrepreneurs in the industry were carrying out their businesses in such a way that they acted as they were protected. Nevertheless, it was found that women entrepreneurs in the tourist industry had high potentials to grow and become the employers of many Tanzanians. The study concluded that with or without international business skills, women entrepreneurs in the ebony tree products tourist industry had a market niche, which leveraged their businesses since the ebony tree is the gift of nature, which is not found in many countries, and the Makonde artisanship is very special in it and not easy to learn. Contrarily to this study, the study by Kamuzora (2003) only focused on women exclusively. This study fills the gap by examining the challenges faced by both men and women in the handicraft industry in Tanzania.

Apart from Kamuzora, another empirical study was conducted by Ipsos (2012) on market research to explore the potential of handicraft products in East Africa. The study used cross sectional research design and covered Dar es Salaam Region, Arusha Region and Zanzibar, while the sample size comprised 98 respondents. The study found that handicraft industry in Tanzania is not well structured and awareness of fair-trade practices amongst the traders and the consumers is very low. The study suggested that there is need to increase capacity building to the handicraft traders since most of them have only up to secondary school education and as such, majority do not have any professional training in business. Handicraft industry in Tanzania has witnessed huge competition from other markets like Kenya and China. To ensure a competitive edge from this market; Tanzanians will require to innovate more on their product offerings and also diversify their products. In the recent past, the industry has experienced significant changes, some of which can be attributed to the growth of the middle class in Tanzania, product development and increased competition. Product originality and quality are key considerations that customers of handicrafts consider when purchasing these works of art and in order to meet customer satisfaction, quality should be the key. The study by Ipsos (2012) only focused on marketing of the products while this study focuses on different variables, market being one of them.

Mwobobia (2012) conducted research to identify the challenges facing small scale women entrepreneurs in Kenya and the initiatives put in place to counter the challenges. The study used desktop research in which the MSEs baseline survey recorded that 612,848 of women were in micro and small enterprises (MSEs) in Kenya, accounting for 47.4 per cent of all those in MSEs. The

findings showed that women tended to operate enterprises associated with traditional women's roles, such as hairstyling. The findings also showed that small and micro-enterprises (SMEs) run by women play an important role in the Kenyan economy such as creating jobs although they face serious challenges such as lack of finance, discrimination, problems with the city council, multiple duties, poor access to justice, and lack of education among others.

The study by Mwobobia (2012) established that many stakeholders from both public and private sector are helping to empower women entrepreneurs in Kenya through formation of women enterprise fund, establishment of women's university of science and technology, formal and informal financial support, and donor initiatives, among others, have been put in place. The study recommends that women in entrepreneurs need to be accepted and supported financially, legally and more capacity building should be made available. This study by Mwobobia (2012) focused only on MSEs' women and did not consider the men side and specific industry. In this regard, therefore, the current study fills this gap by exploring and comparing the challenges facing women and men in handicraft industry.

Narzary (2012) also conducted a study to find out the marketing problems and prospects of the handlooms and handicrafts industry in B.T.A.D area. The sample size of the study comprised 200 respondents who were producers and retailers of handloom and handicraft products. The findings of the study showed different marketing problems faced by producers and retailers in the area such as lack of accessibility to market information, lack of awareness among the customers about product features, and inadequate promotion and advertisement of handlooms and quality control. Other problems identified by Narzary (2012) study were the lack of logistics management, insufficient raw material supply and increasing competition.

However, the study concluded that the government should encourage new investments and entrepreneurs in the handloom sector by providing better sops like any other new economy industry. Also, provision of training and development to enhance the skills of weavers in manufacturing and marketing aspects in changing business environment should be emphasized. Effective implementation of various policies and programmes could be successful when there is proper integration, cooperation and coordination from all government agencies, cooperative societies, NGOs, weavers, traders and retailers of handloom products. The study showed

that the challenges facing handicraft industry in general do not go specifically to men or women, but the current study fills this gap by pointing out the challenges facing both women and men.

Redzuam and Aref (2011) conducted a study aimed at identifying the constraints and potentials faced by handicraft industry in a peripheral and underdeveloped region of Malaysia. The study was carried out in the districts of Kota, Bharu, and Tumpat in the state of Kelantan, Malaysia. The study grouped the constraints of development of handicraft into two groups: the demand constraints and the supply constraints. Demand constraints included restrictions of the size and pattern of the markets that the crafts cater for. Meanwhile the supply constraints included the unavailability of skilled labour, the difficulty in obtaining raw materials, the reluctance to adopt modern methods of production or technology, the lack of credit facilities, the inadequacy of quality control measures in the production process.

In this study, three types of markets for handicraft goods were identified, which are local and national market, tourist market and the export market. Market type constraints are those that influence the size and demand pattern of these kinds of markets. In terms of local and national markets, the constraints come where the majority of Malaysian crafts are produced in rural areas and sold locally and nationally. With regards to tourist market constraints, there is a postulation that Malaysia does not have a distinct reputation for crafts in the way that, say, India has for its silver products and brassware, or Thailand for its silk products and hardwood carvings. The tourists that visit Malaysia are not overtly aware of the variety and quality of the handicrafts that Malaysia has to offer.

The main constraint is that there has been no real effort on the part of the artisans and the dealers, effectively, to promote their products to foreign buyers. This might be related to the problem of communication (that is language barriers) between the artisans and the dealers with the tourists. On the one hand, the export market constraints are related to the lack of knowledge as how to export the products; and the passive, hesitant attitude of those involved, trying for relatively unfamiliar new markets. On the other hand, these constraints are related to the inadequacy and/or inefficiency of channels that communicate market information to all those involved in craft production and sales. One main constraint, as far as this channel is concerned, is the inaccessibility of the artisans to information due to transport and road linkage problems. Another study by Tambunan (2009) was

conducted on recent developments of women entrepreneurs in Asian developing countries. The study focused mainly on women entrepreneurs in small and medium enterprises based on data analysis and review of recent key literature. The study found that in Asian developing countries, SMEs are gaining overwhelming importance in which more than 95% of all firms in all sectors on average per country. The study also depicted the fact that representation of women entrepreneurs in the SMEs in this region is relatively low due to factors such as low level of education, lack of capital and cultural or religious constraints. However, the study revealed that most of the women entrepreneurs in SMEs are from the category of forced entrepreneurs seeking for better family incomes. This study has come up with challenges facing women in SMEs but did not specify in which industry; the current study fills this gap by showing the challenges facing both men and women in the handicraft industry.

Similarly, Bansal and Kumar (2011) did research on women empowerment and self-sustainability through tourism with a case study of self-employed women in handicraft sector in Kullu Valley of Himachal Pradesh. Their study concluded that women have experienced increased self-esteem and status within their community because of handicraft business and tourism. Moreover, the study found that women are more actively involved in decision-making in their community and have taken on new leadership roles. Handicrafts have provided them an opportunity to develop multidimensional empowerment at both the individual and collective levels. They also observed that women too require the training on how to obtain micro-credit loans as well as grant writing skills to secure small grants for investing in new occupations. The study concluded that women-focused training and workshops on receiving micro-credit loans and small business management could help women to build more self-confidence in managing their own small businesses.

A study by Barbados Investment and Development Corporation (2008) on the profile of the craft sector in Barbados found that, the dominant trends in the market internationally are in recycling, and eco-products that are friendly to the environment. This type of eco-focus opens the door for new product niches. The study therefore suggests that there is a greater need for more intensive research and development and technology investment to the local craft sector as well as an injection of more talented designers into the sector. The study also revealed some constraints that face the industry such as lack of available financing, design skills, and access to inexpensive raw materials. It is proposed that the viability of a common service facility be considered to provide

critical support services to craft operators. In addition, it is recommended that a development strategy be devised and implemented. This certainly has implications for the continued growth and expansion of the sector in enhancing the performance of existing producers by exploring the viability of a common facility to service the sector.

Damwad (2007) describes the experiences, initiatives and obstacles faced at five Nordic countries namely Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden towards women entrepreneurship. His study broadly identifies few obstacles like financing, lack of knowledge and skills in business life, markets and entrepreneurial activity, work life balance, including lack of growth and wishes to grow and most importantly women as other groups are heterogeneous. The study compares early-stage entrepreneurial male and female activity in the Nordic countries with the same in the USA. It also compares various programmes and schemes developed by Nordic countries and agencies that provide support to them. OECD and European Commission are focusing on methodologies in analyzing quantitative and qualitative women entrepreneurship. The study recommends that Nordic countries need a framework for policy learning so as to develop a proper policy mix towards promoting women entrepreneurship. However, this study only compares entrepreneurship between male and female but did not point out in which industry specifically. The current study fills this gap by focusing on the handicraft industry.

Generally, research has established that historically, women dominate the craft industry. The reasons for women's domination on this sector relate to the low barriers of entry. Women entrepreneurs, especially black women, have limited access to capital, technology, and resources and therefore craft activity often seems their only real opportunity for income generation. Furthermore, craft businesses are often built around traditional women's skills, for example sewing, braiding and beading. This means that women often had the basic skills for production and they could adapt these skills to generate income instead of having to learn totally new skills. The flexible and often home-based nature of craft production means that women can integrate their economic activities with household duties. Formal sector jobs cannot provide the same flexibility and cannot easily facilitate for poorly skilled workers. This is important in rural areas where women are responsible for agricultural activities as well (CIGS, 1998).

The UNESCO Conference of 2000 addressed that although handicraft have been a pillar to many African countries economy by providing employment as well as generating foreign currency, it is obviously poorly promoted, craftspeople are poorly trained and are facing financial constraints. The overwhelming impression is that the crafts organization and craftsmen generally feel unsupported, under financed, under promoted and undervalued (UNESCO, 2000). According to Kamuzora (2003), women entrepreneurs involved in handicraft industry in Tanzania are faced with diverse challenges that lead to business failure. Challenges facing many women in this business include: the lack of knowledgeable about the international businesses and protocol, lack of advertising strategies and lack of enough capital. According to Kemal (2020), women in handicraft business face challenges such as limited market, lack of storage and production areas, shortage of finance for the purchase of quality raw materials and production equipment; as well as the lack of skills for improved production.

Pokharel (2022) conducted a study on Social Status of Women Working in the Handicraft Industry. The study found out that women labors in Handicraft industry had lack of knowledge, training, education and skill for prestigious job. They are far away from the knowledge of economic rights, women rights and other rights of labors. Some of them were even harassed and abused.

Singh et al. (2021) examined the economic hurdles confronting women artisans in the handicraft sector. The study revealed that many women struggle with limited access to financial resources and credit facilities, which are crucial for purchasing quality raw materials and modern production equipment. Without adequate financial backing, these artisans often find it difficult to scale their businesses or maintain consistent production levels. This financial constraint not only impedes their business growth but also limits their ability to compete in broader markets where access to resources determines success. **Tamang and Shrestha (2023)** focused on gender disparities within the handicraft industry, particularly highlighting the systemic challenges faced by women artisans. The research underscored a lack of supportive policies and infrastructure tailored to address the specific needs of female artisans. This includes inadequate training and educational opportunities, which are critical for skill enhancement and product innovation. Moreover, the study noted that women in this sector often face social and cultural barriers that further marginalize them, restricting their access to information about

economic and labor rights. Such barriers contribute to a cycle of economic vulnerability and perpetuate gender inequalities within the workforce (Tamang & Shrestha, 2023). **Kaur and Kaur (2021)** examined the socio-economic challenges faced by women engaged in handicrafts in rural Punjab, India. Their research revealed barriers such as lack of access to credit facilities, inadequate marketing opportunities, and limited government support programs tailored to women artisans. These factors contribute to the overall vulnerability of women in the sector, affecting their income stability and economic independence.

3. Methodology

The study used cross-sectional research design, also called statistical research. This design was chosen for its ability to provide a snapshot of current conditions at a single point in time. This is important for identifying and comparing the specific barriers faced by men and women in the handicraft industry, as it allows researchers to capture and analyze the present state of these challenges. The study was conducted only in Dar es Salaam and Arusha regions. These regions were selected because of being among the biggest commercial cities, where handicraft industry is highly growing due to easy access to tourists and increase of the domestic middle class. Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. For secondary data, the researcher explored various studies related to the topic area such as published journals, books, newspapers, and other documents which allowed the researcher to gather relevant data for this study. Primary data was collected by using questionnaires from both men and women in handicraft industry.

The population for this study consisted of organizations that have direct links with handicraft industry in Tanzania and their stakeholders. The inclusion of participants in the study focused on the researcher's conception of their ability to provide the necessary and quality information. Convenience sampling was used. With this method, the researcher used subjects that were easy to reach. As the name describes, the researcher chose subjects because of convenience. The sample size was 135 respondents, involving both male and female entrepreneurs from Arusha and Dar es Salaam regions. The main research instrument for data collection was questionnaires comprising both closed and open-ended questions. Data analysis was performed by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). T-test analysis was conducted to analyze quantitative data.

Interviews were not considered as a data collection tool because of time and Resource Constraints, conducting interviews can be time-consuming and resource-intensive, particularly when dealing with a large sample size. The study aimed to collect data from 135 respondents, and administering and analyzing interviews for this number of participants would have required significant time and resources. Consistency and Standardization: Questionnaires provide a standardized method of data collection, ensuring consistency in responses across all participants. This standardization is crucial for statistical analysis, where uniformity in data collection methods helps maintain the reliability and validity of the results. Anonymity and Comfort: Questionnaires can be completed anonymously, encouraging respondents to provide honest and candid responses without fear of judgment or repercussions. Interviews, on the other hand, might make some participants uncomfortable, potentially leading to less candid responses.

The t-test analysis was employed to compare the means of two groups in this case, male and female entrepreneurs in the handicraft industry. The t-test aimed to test the following hypotheses: Differences in Marketing Accessibility; the t-test was used to determine whether there are statistically significant differences between men and women in terms of the marketing challenges they face, such as the effectiveness of their marketing strategies and access to market opportunities. The study also assessed the differences in product knowledge: the analysis aimed to identify if there are significant differences between male and female entrepreneurs regarding product knowledge. Further, the study examined the gendered difference on gender roles: the t-test sought to examine whether there are notable differences between men and women concerning their gender roles.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Gender Roles

The study tested the hypothesis to understand the differential gender roles between male and female and how they affect their involvement in handicraft industry.

H0: There is no significant difference in gender roles between male and female entrepreneurs and the way they affect their involvement in the handicraft industry

H1: There is significant difference in gender roles between male and female entrepreneurs and the

way they affect their involvement in the handicraft

industry

Table 1: Independent sample T-test for gender roles

| Gender Role | Gender | Mean | Std Deviation | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | |
|-------------|--------|--------|---------------|------------------------------|--------|-----|-----------------|-----------------|
| | Male | 2.9722 | 0.16549 | F | T | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference |
| | Female | 1.9603 | 0.24266 | 4.262 | 28.597 | 133 | 0.000 | 1.01190 |

Source: Field Survey 2020

The findings in Table 1 present gender roles between male and female entrepreneurs and the way they affect their involvement on the handicraft industry was significantly different at $p \leq 0.000$. In this regard, therefore, alternative hypothesis is accepted and null hypothesis rejected. This proves that gender role has more impact on female more than male. The study revealed that gender roles do have significant difference between male and female entrepreneurs. The researcher found out that female entrepreneurs are more affected by gender roles, which force them to be late to their businesses since they have to perform some home chores before coming to their business places. Various socially-accepted family roles tend to affect the type of economic activities that women engage in, the technologies available to them, the people and agencies with whom they deal with, the places they can visit, the time available to them and the kind control they can exert on their own resources such as capital.

In this regard, Mwobobia (2012) asserts that balancing work and family tends to be more difficult for women than for men because of the disproportionate huge family responsibility burden they have to shoulder. According to Makena *et al.* (2014), women face an uneven distribution of childcare and other domestic responsibilities which are major impediments to their career advancement. Cultural norms on multiple responsibilities affect women’s mobility and efforts designed to seek technical assistance, advisory services or networks with other entrepreneurs as well as other incentives available in entrepreneurship career (Msoka (2017). Eagly and Karau (2002) assert that the difference in socialisation contributes to gender imbalance even when it comes to the distributions of work, which in turn influences family and society expectations for both genders regarding how they should conduct themselves in society. Consequently, this state of affairs leads to unshared responsibilities for women when it comes to juggling between business and family. The women often end up overwhelmed by complete

involvement in family matters, which robs them of both time and strength to undertake business activities as extra duties.

These findings align with the findings by Pokharel (2022) who found out that in Nepal women have just started to work outside in recent years although women were involved in handicraft industries since many years ago. Women from age 15 to above age 45 are actively participating in the handicraft industries of Patan Industrial Estate. But their socio-economic condition is not very good. Women involved in the handicraft industry often face a significantly higher workload compared to their male counterparts. This increased burden stems from their dual responsibilities of managing both household chores and their business activities. This dual role creates substantial barriers to their performance and success in the industry. According to Rehman and Roomi (2012), women entrepreneurs frequently encounter several significant challenges, including a lack of adequate time, gender bias, and restrictive social and cultural norms. Additionally, family responsibilities further exacerbate these challenges, making it difficult for women to balance their entrepreneurial endeavors with domestic duties. These factors collectively hinder the ability of women to fully engage in and benefit from entrepreneurial activities.

This study established that multiple family responsibilities can translate into lack of adequate time to be effectively divided between home and business/work obligations. This situation also affects the women’s ability to grow their business. Similarly, Ahl & Marlow (2012) found that women failed to compete on a fair terrain with men because of the disproportionate domestic responsibilities they had to shoulder as women. In many cases, this herculean burden hindered the success of their business

venture, which ended up not being treated as a priority issue.

4.1 Gendered disparity on Product Knowledge Development between Male and Female Entrepreneurs in Handicraft Industry.

The aim of the study was to test the hypothesis on differential product knowledge development between male and female entrepreneurs in handicraft industry. Product knowledge relates to how much a person knows

about a product or service (Leigh et al., 2014; Mariadoss, et al., 2014). Product knowledge can be defined as the entire context of correct information that is stored in people's memories that can be used to make innovation or persuade customer to make purchasing decisions (Elysa & Indriyani, 2020). The following hypotheses were tested:

H0: There is no significant difference in product knowledge development between male and female entrepreneurs in handicraft industry.

H1: There is significant difference in product knowledge development between male and female entrepreneurs in handicraft industry.

Table 2 Independent sample test for product knowledge development

| Product Knowledge Development | Gender | Mean | Std Deviation | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------|--------|---------------|------------------------------|-------|-----|-----------------|-----------------|
| | | | | F | T | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference |
| | Male | 3.2667 | 0.32021 | | | | | |
| | Female | 2.1111 | 1.17982 | 369.372 | 7.985 | 133 | 0.000 | 1.15556 |

Source: Field Survey 2020

The findings in Table 2 above shows that the product knowledge development between male and female entrepreneurs in the handicraft industry is significantly different at $p \leq 0.000$. This is supported by difference in mean of 1.15556. These findings imply that males are more aware of product knowledge development than females, therefore, alternative hypothesis is accepted and null hypothesis is rejected. The study found that product knowledge development has significant difference between male and female entrepreneurs. The study further found out that men were more aware of the product knowledge development than women in retaining customers. Male were more able to communicate with foreigners. Male had more knowledge on the products comparing to female.

Also, it was found that males were more aware of how important it is to innovate new product and customization to retain customers and be able to compete in the international market compared to female entrepreneurs. The low level of product knowledge and inability to communicate well exhibited by the respondents can partly be explained by the difficulty in accessing education by women. World Bank data shows that the literacy level of Tanzanian women is lower than that of men. The data on

the literacy level of 2012 shows that the adult literacy rate for men was 10 percent higher than that of women (World Bank 2016). The difference in the literacy rate between men and women was much higher in previous years.

For example, between 2002 and 2010, the difference in literacy level between men and women was 15 percent. Though the figures for 2012 show improvement, the 10 percent difference is still high. The difference in the education level of women and men is more revealing if examined by location. The 2014 Integrated Labour Force Survey (NBS 2015) data shows that in rural Tanzania, the number of females who have never attended school is higher than that of males. Out of the 3.5 million rural people of working age, 2.4 million were uneducated women. Compared to other urban areas and in Dar es Salaam, the number of women without education is not very high: only 104,000 and 410,000, respectively, compared to just 34,000 and 129,000 men, respectively. Of course, in terms of percentage, it is higher for rural women than for urban women. The high number of women who have never attended school in rural areas can be explained by cultural norms such as early marriage and the preference to educate boys over girls because girls are expected to provide domestic labor. These findings show

that gendered differences between men and women in product knowledge development is attributed to the difference in education level among men and women.

Previous studies show that product knowledge has an impact on firm performance. Chang and Ahn (2005) investigated the extent to which product knowledge contributed significantly to explicit business process improvements and served as a central tenet for efficacious training programs. The study establishes a link between knowledge and performance using a Cobb-Douglas form linear model. Ogunkoya et al., (2022) conducted a study to investigate the impact of product knowledge on firm performance in Nigeria. Results revealed that product

experience knowledge is the most significant measure of product knowledge driving firm performance.

4.3 Market Accessibility

The aim of this hypothesis was to test whether market access has the same or different effect to male and female entrepreneurs involved in handicraft.

H₀: Market access does not have significant difference between male and female entrepreneurs involved in hand craft.

H₁: Market access does have significant difference between male and female entrepreneurs involved in handicraft.

Table 3: Independent sample test for market accessibility

| | Gender | Mean | Std Deviation | T-Test For Equality Of Means | | | | |
|----------------------|--------|--------|---------------|------------------------------|-------|---------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | | | | F | T | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference |
| Market Accessibility | Male | 4.0343 | .38753 | 8.601 | 5.948 | 129.690 | .000 | .05935 |
| | Female | 3.6813 | .29608 | | | | | |

Source: Field survey, 2020

T-test is 5.948 at the p value of 0.01-0.05 which means it is less than 0.05. There is a significant difference between male and female in access the market as sig 2 is 000, and also the mean between male and female are different and the difference is 0.35, this proves that males have more access to the market compared to females, therefore alternative hypothesis is accepted and null hypothesis is rejected. The study found that market accessibility had significant difference between male and female handicraft entrepreneurs. Also, it was found out that males had more access to the market compared to females.

The reasons were given that most female entrepreneurs have difficulties in communicating with foreigners as most of the customers in this industry are from other countries. Also the study found out that raw materials are more expensive even though they are available and males have advantageous on it simply because they process the products themselves while most of females buy already made products. So, when it comes to pricing it is a bit expensive since they buy already made product. In addition, in all the things to be included in the price so as to get the price, males were more aware of what to include in getting the price than females. Furthermore, in accessing the information about market, males were more easily getting information as most of them were aware of where information can be found compared to females. For example, the uses of internet were most used by males as they have higher level of education compared to females.

This was supported by Mwobobia (2012) who identified lack of education to be one of the reasons why most females fail to access information with regard to market of the handicraft products. Also, according to Ipsos (2012) most of the handicraft traders have only up to secondary school education.

Furthermore, Narzary (2012) found that lack of accessibility of market information is also one of the constraints facing handicraft entrepreneurs. The study also revealed that most of the customers are foreigners even though, to some extent, a number of local customers have increased due to the fact that middle income people have increased. In the recent years, for instance, the industry has experienced significant changes, some of which can be attributed to the growth of the middle class in Tanzania. From this point, it can be concluding that market accessibility has significant impact, both on male and female entrepreneurs even though they differ.

On the other hand, some of the respondents revealed that few handicraft enterprises export their products to other countries; most often to western countries in the northern hemisphere and to a lesser extent, to countries in the region, such as Kenya. Export numbers are usually low. Large(r) scale export is sometimes done through companies that specifically deal with export of handicrafts. The competition for local market is not high compared to regional and international markets. At

regional level Kenya is the major competitor. The results also show that on international market, the demand for handicrafts is generally higher because traders get to sell their products in higher volumes as long as the market likes them. For example, once foreigners like an item they order it in huge amounts to even go and sell them in their own countries. The only challenge is that normally demand outweighs supply because as soon as one displays a product in a trade fair, a customer may order the whole container and the seller may not have the capability to produce to that amount needed by the customer and therefore fail to supply the product at right time.

The findings that women have less access market accessibility align with Elam et al., (2019) who found that women entrepreneurs often face greater challenges in securing market compared to men. The study shows that women in handicraft sectors may rely more on local markets and informal sales channels, which can restrict their growth potential. In contrast, men may have more opportunities to access formal markets and e-commerce platforms. Study by Duggan & McGhee, (2016) indicate that gender stereotypes can influence market perceptions, where women's products are often undervalued or seen as less professional, affecting their marketability.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The main objective of this study was to examine the challenges facing entrepreneurs involved in handicraft industry by comparing females and males. It was purposely aimed to gain a better understanding on challenges facing male and female entrepreneurs in handicraft industry by comparing them. From the main objective, three specific objectives were developed from which hypotheses were created that guided the study. The first objective was to identify and analyze gender roles of male and female entrepreneurs and how it affects their involvement in handicraft industry. Gender roles indicators are number of activities and time of performing those activities. This indicator was found to have a significant difference between male and female entrepreneurs, whereby female were the mostly affected group as it showed to have affected their performance in the business. The second objective of the study was to examine the gendered differential product knowledge development between male and female entrepreneurs in handicraft industry. Product knowledge development indicators which are customize and innovation (technology) were found to have a significant difference

between male and female entrepreneurs in the handicraft industry, whereby males were more aware of the product knowledge development than females and this also had a strong influence on the growth of handicraft industry. The last objective was to assess gendered differential on market accessibility. The findings show that market accessibility indicators which are language barrier, availability of resources, information, pricing strategy were found to have a significant difference between male and female entrepreneurs, whereby males were accessible to the market more than females which in turn had strong influence on growth of handicraft industry. The knowledge gap that this study uncovered is quite deep as it enlarged the outlook of the policy makers and both male and female entrepreneurs in handicraft industry. For policy makers, the study has suggested that there are policies that need to be implemented in order to address different challenges facing women entrepreneurs in the handicraft industry in Tanzania. For both male and female entrepreneurs, this study has highlighted the challenges facing them. Therefore, both male and female entrepreneurs need to work together and avoid discrimination among them so as to minimize the differences between them. This is due to the fact that, working together as a group may help them succeed in entering into the international market.

5.2. Recommendations

The study found out that females are more affected in the handicraft industry than their male counterparts. Males are more aware of the product knowledge development, which is the key factor to enabling them to compete in the international market. To a large extent, gender roles also affect women full participation in handicraft industry, In addition, the study found that males were accessible to the market more than females which in turn had strong influence on growth of handicraft industry. Based on the findings from this study, the study recommends that the Government of Tanzania should strongly address the gender issues in handicraft industry to increase women participation and competitiveness in the industry. Feasible strategies towards this end are: facilitating policies, affirmative action and equal opportunity programmes, increased education and training for mostly females because they are the most affected part than males. These strategies will enable them to identify the main gender issues and appropriate solutions. This would in turn result in developing and strengthening gender sensitive working environment at the work place and at the same time create confidence and sense of respect to opposite sex. Different training should be provided to both male and female so as to increase their awareness in the handicraft industry; like

what should be done to ensure that they are competitive in the world market. Also, different sectors in the industry sector like SIDO and EPZA should provide training on communication skills because the language was indicated to be the main barrier in accessing the world market, especially for female entrepreneurs who are the most affected in the business industry. Overall, the study's

findings emphasize the importance of developing policies and programs that specifically cater to the unique needs of women in the handicraft industry. Providing targeted training and education and promoting equitable marketing strategies are essential steps towards empowering women entrepreneurs and fostering a more inclusive and competitive handicraft sector in Tanzania.

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