



The economics of the kitchen party in Tanzania

Daines Nicodem Sanga *

Department of Creative Arts, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Abstract

This paper examines the contribution of kitchen parties to the lives of women in Tanzania. The main argument of this paper is that Tanzanian women are denied access to economic opportunities, and so they seek alternative ways to resolve their economic challenges. Based on this fact the paper uses the concept of Marxist feminism to explore how Tanzanian women use kitchen parties to resolve their financial dilemma. The paper also explores the challenges they come across as they struggle to use kitchen parties for economic reasons. It is argued in this paper that through kitchen party, women resolve their economic plight in different ways. Property such as kitchen utensils, clothes and furniture that women give to one another at these parties means that they do not need to purchase them. Thus, the money that would have been spent on buying these items is used for other crucial issues. Cash contributions and entrepreneurship education, both of which are offered during a kitchen party, furnish women with capital and skills to run their businesses. The paper reveals that exploitation and exclusion are among the grave challenges hampering this new ritual. The paper concludes the discussion by arguing that despite all the challenges, the kitchen party is acknowledged as being, to a certain degree, the solution to women's fiscal dilemma.

Keywords: Kitchen party, Gender, Women economy, New cultures, Tanzania

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The study was carried out in Iringa region in the southern part of Tanzania. To triangulate the information collected in Iringa region, conversations were held with informants in Dar es Salaam. The data in this paper was gathered between January 2014 and March 2016.

* Corresponding author. *E-mail address:* dainesanga@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Until now, there has been no Kiswahili word that conveys the idea of kitchen party. The term appears to have been adopted from the English language, which refers to the kind of event designed and practiced by women with the intention of lending a hand to a bride who is about to get married. The mother whose daughter is getting married usually tells her neighbours, friends and relatives about the forthcoming marriage of her daughter and that she as her mother would like to prepare a sort of farewell party. Being informed about this, the neighbours, friends and relatives collaborate with the mother at all stages of planning and organizing the party. The day for organizing the ceremony often ranges from four days to one week before the actual wedding day.¹

The kitchen party is also referred to as a ceremony which came into being to substitute for the rites of passage ceremony. This is especially true of the Roman Catholic Church, whose members believe that the traditional rites of passage are a bad custom (Rasing, 1995). Roman Catholic leaders tend to discourage members of the congregation from conducting a rites of passage ceremony because it is associated with a sin. Sex education is an aspect which turns the rites of passage ceremony into a sinful ritual.²

From the humanistic point of view, the kitchen party is conceptualized as a practice that came into being as an outcome of human rights advocacy. It is suspected that it came into being to replace the coming of age ceremony which, in many cases, goes hand in hand with FGM (female genital mutilation), the aim of which is to reduce the sexual desire and satisfaction of females. Accordingly, it is said that it cuts down promiscuity among women (28 Too Many FGM 2013: 5). Waritary and Wilson raise an interesting point concerning the rationale for practising FGM in earlier times when they allege that, historically, men did not want women to have pleasure during sexual intercourse, but rather them (n.d: 16). FGM was therefore practised to weaken women's sexual desire. From the human rights perspective, women as well as men have the right to enjoy their sexual lives. FGM is also despised for claiming hundreds of lives each year during the cutting and childbirth as an upshot of massive bleeding and obstructed labour (UNICEF, 2006: 1).

Another perspective of the kitchen party is grounded on western civilization. In this point of view, the party is referred to an adaptation of the western custom pigeonholed as a bridal shower prominent in The USA, Canada and UK. It is claimed so due to similarities of activities taking place in both, such as giving presents, chanting and dancing (Finol, 1994). There are slight variations between the two. Whereas in the bridal shower, different types of fruits with male organs are used to expose the bride to male organs, this is not the case in the kitchen party, where kitchen-related presents are given as well as lessons on how to handle husbands. Finol (1994) goes further to provide three reasons why fruits are used in the bridal shower. She argues that when male organs in the form of fruit are exposed, it neutralizes the power that husbands have over their wives, on the one hand, and increases their confidence with regard to their husbands, on the other. It is also alleged that using fruit to display male organs makes the bride begin to see that a husband is an ordinary creature, and so he has nothing special to wonder at (ibid).

¹ No systematic study has been carried out on the subject of the kitchen party. Because of this, in striving to conceptualize the term, findings from the field are employed for that reason.

² Jenifa, interview, 2015

Adding to the discussion on the kitchen party, it is referred to as a self-help group by which women come together to help one another at the time of their daughters' marriage.³ Parents, particularly mothers, are answerable for any misconduct of their daughters. Therefore, they usually feel responsible for ensuring that their daughters leave home legitimately without bringing shame on the family, including being impregnated in the parents' home. For this reason, the kitchen party is viewed as a self-help group that emerged to ease tensions and worries that a mother might have as she endeavours to ensure that her daughter leaves home proudly. Drawing on the different definitions above, for the purpose of this paper kitchen party refers to a new ritual that came into being to equip women with financial power. It also refers as a new ritual that came into existence to strike a balance between modernity and traditionalism by breaking all patriarchal powers that for so long padlocked women financially.

2. Painting the economic situation of women in Tanzania

Similar to elsewhere in Africa, the majority of women in Tanzania are less powerful economically than men. In the agricultural sector, for instance, women play a major role. They produce 60 to 80 percent of all the food consumed (Ombakah, 2014). They comprise 80.7 percent of the labour force, which is slightly higher than men, which is 79.8 percent (Ellis et al., 2007: 49, see also Ombakah, 2014). Notwithstanding the higher percentage of women in agriculture, they do not enjoy the end products of their labour. In many cases, women are allowed to work on their husbands' land provided that they give the profits to their husbands and/or account for what they have got and how it has been used (Brown et al., 2003: 14).

Tanzanian women do not have control over or own land despite the fact that the land laws state clearly that both men and women have an equal right to land (Duncan 2014). It is estimated that Tanzanian women own only 19 percent of the titled land (Ellis et al., 2003: 49). Customary law exacerbates their predicament. Ellis et al. (2003), for example, lament that even when the government decides to give land to its citizens, it is still the men who become the primary beneficiaries. They provide the case of Village councils, who are usually assigned by the government to allocate land to the citizens. They argue that Village councils tend to use customary law to allocate land to heads of households, most of whom are typically men (Brown *et al.*, 2003: 9). This gives men a greater chance to own land whilst consigning women to a landless state.

Although women contribute a lot to the family economy, their contribution often goes unnoticed (Beneria, 2001: 10). Brown et al. (2003) explain this by pointing to the statutory law which the government of Tanzania adopted from the Indian Succession Act of 1865. The statutory law makes it clear that when a husband dies, two-thirds of his property should go to the sons and daughters and one-third should go to the widow. If the deceased did not have any children, half of the property goes to the widow and the other half to the relatives of the deceased (Ibid).

Not only do the laws discriminate against widows, women who get divorced face the same problem, as, yet again, the division of assets favours men. The joint property registered in the husband's name can be used

³ In Tanzania, the farewell party conducted for daughters is known as the kitchen party and the other one which is carried out for young men who are about to get married is called the bag party. In this paper, only the kitchen party is discussed.

as a case in point. As regards joint property, such as land or a house, statutory law demands that women provide evidence of ownership, which the majority of Tanzanian women cannot do. This is because the contribution they made is often indirect. Their contribution is connected to their domestic chores, such as washing clothes, cooking, caring for children and sick people, activities which cannot be converted into cash. The husbands do not consider that women's household chores have any economic significance (Shayo 2004: 110), nor does the government take them into consideration in the national accounts in spite of the initiatives of feminist scholars to ensure that women's unpaid labour is taken into account (Beneria 2001: 10). The inadequate protection of women by the law raises the question as to whether or not Tanzanian women are fully protected by the law.

Tanzanian women are noted for their hatred of laziness. In relation to the global economic and gender gap, Tanzanian women ranked number one globally in terms of participation in economic activities (Ellis *et al.*, 2007, see also Dahlquist 2014). Tanzanian women are not concerned about what they do to make sure that their families are fed. It is not uncommon to see a Tanzanian woman working as a *mama lishe*, a fruit and vegetable vendor or assisting house builders to make ends meet. A woman working as a conductor on city buses known as *daladala* is now normal, despite the fact that a few years ago it was perceived as men's work.

Women who seek to engage in business to receive an income are frustrated by their lack of capital. Credit institutions such as CRDB bank tend to demand land title deeds or household assets as collateral for the loan requested. Women entrepreneurs find themselves in an impossible situation because title deeds are often registered in the name of their husbands (Mwaipopo 2004:211). Although women experience numerous restrictions as regards obtaining a loan, the study shows that once they receive it, they are better at repaying it than men (Ellis 2007: 63).

Tanzanian women's disadvantaged economic situation is related to their lower level of education. The illiteracy rate of women is slightly higher than that of men. It should be noted, however, that during the years just after independence, Tanzanian girls benefited from the policy of Julius Nyerere, the first President of Tanzania, who insisted on education for all, which means that, ironically, both girls and boys have the equal right to education in Tanzania. Nonetheless, education parity is impacted by traditional norms and families' economic hardship that result in boys being sent to school rather than girls (Mbelle and Katabaro 2003: 14). This happens because of the belief that sending a boy child to school is more beneficial than sending a girl child (*ibid*). It is also believed that by educating a girl child you have enriched the family into which she is going to marry, whereas by educating a boy you have enriched the family he comes from. It is also believed that keeping a girl at home is cost effective, for she can help with household chores such as fetching water, taking care of siblings, cleaning the surroundings, collecting firewood, cooking, gardening, marketing, and caring for the elderly, sick people and others who need support. Thus, sending a girl to school creates an opportunity cost, which refers to the labour and income that are lost to the household when a girl child attends school (Sutton 1989: 393).

The lack of education has been proved to have negative consequences for the lives of women as entrepreneurs. A study on women entrepreneurs has shown that women who lack education encounter challenges when it comes to writing a project proposal in order to obtain funding (Nkonoki 2004:211). It is

also alleged that lack of access to education means that women lack information about institutions supporting women's projects.

Strengthening the point of the need to educate women, a study on women and education has demonstrated that the benefits of educating women go beyond their lives as entrepreneurs to touch the lives of their children. It has been substantiated that educating women reduces incidences of child labour and increases the chances of children attending school. This is because the money earned by the mother replaces the money that would have been earned by a child through child labour (WYR 2003), which in turn it breaks the vicious cycle of poverty.

Despite the fact that educating women has a positive impact on the family and society as a whole, it should be noted that not all educated women gain access to employment. Husbands' dread of losing power in their families and employers' negative attitude towards women employees are factors underpinning women's unequal access to job opportunities (Dahlquist 2014:23, see also Shayo 2004). While husbands fear that greater financial independence is a threat to their authority and the unity of their families, employers raise the issue of maternity and women's involvement in care economy as a hindrance to their productivity and effectiveness in the workplace (WYR 2003:257). Therefore, women, regardless of whether they have been educated, are likely to end up poor.

The lack of economic power appears to have unhappy consequences for the lives of women, one of which is limiting their ability to own assets in the home. As a result, husbands find that they have to supply everything in the home, including furniture, clothes, bed sheets, kitchen utensils and food. This paper is an attempt to show how a kitchen party gives women control over and ownership of assets and capital, which gives them economic power. This paper employs the concept of Marxist feminism to discuss the issues that emerged.

3. The concept of Marxist feminism

Marxist feminism believes that capitalists drive for making a profit and women are those who are more exploited than men (Spelman 1988). Because of this the capitalist economy is responsible for women's second-class status and other forms of oppression including unpaid domestic labour. Women's unpaid labour allows capitalists to save trillions of dollars every year. In order for women to achieve full liberation, returning to a modern form of cooperative egalitarianism is greatly needed. The concept of Marxist feminism is relevant for this paper as it encourages community members to go back to egalitarian cooperation in order to achieve full liberation, to which this study also pays attention. The paper explores how women through kitchen parties cooperate to achieve economic freedom. Using Marxist feminism I am aware of the fact that it was developed by women from Europe and the West. However, the reason for using this concept is that it puts forward the idea that being a woman varies greatly from one society to another. What it means to be a woman in the west is not the same as being a woman elsewhere. Thus, there is no common experience of womanhood. Dynamics such as culture, location, race, economic status, educational background and many others can to a large extent influence women's bargaining power, including the power to own and control

resources and assets. In other words, Marxist feminism was chosen, for it is the only approach that underscores women's economic situation and the dynamics that trigger their deprived economic state.

4. The economic contribution of the kitchen party to the lives of women

As indicated earlier, mothers are usually answerable for any wrongdoing of their daughters. This includes promiscuity, pregnancy before marriage and leaving home without the consent of their parents. Therefore, it is obvious that the kitchen party came into being to assist women in their struggle to make sure that their daughters leave home in an acceptable way.

Although the kitchen party was initially designed to serve the above end, this paper provides results beyond the social function of the kitchen party to reveal the economic contribution of this new ritual. To put it in another way, the paper is aimed at providing evidence of the contribution that the kitchen party makes to the economic lives of Tanzanian women. It intends to reveal the extent to which women convert presents, cash and entrepreneurship education given during the kitchen party into cash to support them as they enter the world of business.

The women interviewed for this study⁴ made it obvious that the kitchen party turned out to be a solution to their economic dilemma. Since the kitchen party came into being, it is not uncommon to come across women owning expensive items such as fridges, cupboards, beds, mattresses and sofas, to name a few, which could not have been owned if it were not for the kitchen party. Ownership of and control over the aforesaid assets seems to have a positive impact on their lives. Apart from giving them respect, some women were of the opinion that it has lessened the incidences of separation and divorce among women. This is what Samanka, aged 32, claimed:

*Ownership of expensive items has disciplined some husbands who used to repeatedly threaten their wives with separation or divorce. Now, husbands have to think first before they dare to say 'pack your stuff and go! Before, it was simple because women went to their husbands with nothing. Thanks to the kitchen party, women now go to their husbands with assets. This implies that if a husband attempts to drive out his wife, he must first of all think about where to get money to purchase items such as fridges, sofas, beds, cookers and others before he dares to say 'pack your stuff and go!' If I was told that, I would not only pack my clothes but the whole lot that belongs to me and leave the home bare. I am sure that women's ownership of assets has created a sort of discipline and respect for wives*⁵

⁴ The study employed a sample of 60 women. 50 women were selected from Iringa region. To triangulate the information collected from women in Iringa, I had a conversation with 10 women in Dar es Salaam. The women involved in this study were brides who had recently got married. Mothers who had recently organized a kitchen party for their daughters were also part of this research survey. Women who regularly participated in kitchen parties were also involved in the study. Observation and in-depth interviews were employed to collect data from the aforementioned selected sample.

⁵ Interview, 2015

The ownership of expensive assets was not the only thing appreciated by women for helping them financially. Through interviews with women, I became conscious of the fact that kanga and vitenge offered during the kitchen party are also appreciated. Kanga and vitenge are utilized by women in different ways. They are wrapped around their waist and/or they are used to cover their shoulders or head. Vitenge, for instance, are vital at the time of pregnancy and childbirth. They are also acceptable for social gatherings, such as burials and weddings. Some use the material to make a traditional dress. The women declared that since the kitchen party came into being, they no longer need to buy vitenge and kanga owing to the loads of pairs they received during a kitchen party. Therefore the money that would have been used to buy kanga and vitenge is now used to purchase food for the family, to pay school fees and to give pocket money to school children.

It should be noted that the ritual of offering of kanga and vitenge is done not just to the bride but also to the mother of the bride during the kitchen party. This ritual is known as *kutunzwa*,⁶ which is a metaphor for appreciation of the good care that the mother gave her daughter until she got married. The interview with mothers who had recently organized a kitchen party proclaimed that the vitenge and kanga offered to them have eliminated the dilemma of insufficient clothes. The majority connected their large quantity of vitenge and kanga in their wardrobes with the cooperation and unity that mothers demonstrate to one another during the kitchen party. They said that the provision of kanga, vitenge and bed sheets meant that the money which would have been used for those things is now used for purchasing other essential items, as Rebecca, aged 53, contended 'I used the money to purchase pesticides.'

As has been noted, the kitchen party goes hand-in-hand with financial contributions. The purpose of collecting money was and still is to help fund the bride's farewell party. Some money tends to be saved to give the bride a base. The cash given to the bride ranges from 500,000 to 2,000,000 TZS or more, depending on the economic condition of the contributors and the investment the mother has made in other kitchen parties. If a kitchen party is planned during the farming season or at the beginning of the school term, the contribution will probably be small, because, no matter what, parents have a lot of expenses at these times.

Notwithstanding the challenges relating to cash contributions, the contributions women give to one another during the kitchen party proved to have a positive outcome in the economic lives of women. Whilst it is irrefutable that some women use the money to buy clothes and ornaments, some use it as capital for their business, regardless of how little or huge the amount is. The brides, particularly from low-income families, affirmed that they use the money for capital. The interview with Federika, aged 32, exemplifies the point:

During my kitchen party I was given one million TZS. This was a huge amount of money. A few months after my marriage, I established a business of selling new clothes. At first, I feared losing my money in the business. I invested only half of it in my business. I requested a friend of mine, who does the same business, to buy new clothes at Kariakoo central market and send them to me by bus. After selling the whole package, I discovered I had made a profit of 600,000 TZS. This was possible because, after arriving in Iringa, the price of some clothes often doubles or triples. Such

⁶ *Tunzwa* means giving presents such as vitenge, kanga and bed sheets to the mother of the bride.

a profit made me think of investing the whole amount. Since then, my capital has grown. I use the profit I make in my business to support my parents. I use some to buy uniform and food for my family and to pay school fees.

Based on the evidence from Federika and others, it is apt to argue that the cash contributions made at kitchen parties enable women from low-income families to engage in economic activities, which allows them to contribute meaningfully to their families, giving them a sense of purpose in life.

It should be made clear that the money obtained from a kitchen party can be used afterwards. A woman wanting to establish her own business is free to use it for that purpose, and she is not obliged to give it back at the next kitchen party. I state somewhere that a woman who receives money and presents from this new ritual can choose to channel them into an income-generating activity. The point here is that the money and gifts given to women at a kitchen party can be used in a more profitable way.

As stated earlier, entrepreneurship education is another essential aspect of the kitchen party that supports women in their economic ventures. Entrepreneurship education is usually offered by *watoa mada*, who has been chosen to educate the bride on the ins and outs of participating in economic activities to raise their income.⁷ *Watoa mada* tend to give facts to the bride in the form of jokes and funny stories with the intention of sending a painful message in an amusing way. This entails telling the bride the outcome of being lazy in her marriage, which varies from being beaten up or insulted to being abandoned altogether. The interviews carried out with several brides made it clear that the strong messages provided by *watoa mada* have pushed them into searching for activities that can increase their income. It was alleged that slogans employed by *watoa mada* like *Mwanamke usipojishughulisha utaachwa kwenye mataa* or *kalaga baho* (in Kihehe it means that a woman has to work hard, if she doesn't she will be left at the traffic lights). Such expressions frighten most women. Salima's struggle appeared to be connected with *watoa mada* slogans as she had this to say:

I got married in 2009. Sometimes I feel lazy about going to work. But when I hear the echo 'kalaga baho', I stand up and go to work. I can say that the slogan kalaga baho made me who I am. Apart from running a small business, I have a farm and a garden. The farm is a bit far from my home but my vegetable garden is quite near. I initially designed the garden to meet my family's needs. As I have continued to take care of it, the produce has begun to exceed family needs. Because of this, I am now selling it and getting extra money.

Extending the discussion on entrepreneurship education, the interviews with women who were married a long time ago revealed that they participate in kitchen parties on a regular basis and that the entrepreneurship education offered by *watoa mada* trickles down to them too. The entrepreneurship education they receive from the *watoa mada* stimulates their enterprising spirit and encourages them to

⁷ *Watoa mada* is a Kiswahili term referring to women who are invited to give a talk on various matters during a kitchen party. The choice of who should give a talk in most cases depends on the skills the *Mtoa mada* has accumulated for this task. On the subject of entrepreneurship education, for instance, a successful businesswoman will be invited.

keep going in spite of the drawbacks. Many of them claimed that they engage in business to boost their income. Whereas women with a reasonable amount of capital claimed to have established their own shops and grocery stores, women with little capital stated that they are able to sell clothes, vegetables and food. Women trading in cooked food, known as *mama lishe*, mentioned that the kitchen utensils, such as plates, spoons and pots, they got from the kitchen party, are extremely useful in their business. An anonymous respondent affirmed that the idea of working as *mama lishe* came into her mind by virtue of the hundreds of cooking pots, plates and cups she had been given at her kitchen party.

Prior to globalization in the 1970/1980s, women tended to come together regularly through community events like rites of passage ceremonies, baby naming, the birth of a child and so forth (Sanga 2015). In the era of globalization most of these activities have been abolished because they are regarded as outdated and a waste of time. Kitchen parties are increasingly becoming a substitute through which women come together and discover how they can help each other achieve their economic goals. Lillian, 40 years old, clarified this:

I used to see some women passing down the street and thought that they were not interested in interacting with others. I thought they were unfriendly and perhaps felt proud of themselves. It is through kitchen party meetings that things turned out differently. I found that the women I thought negatively about were welcoming, sociable and ready to share their economic challenges at kitchen parties. Therefore, I appreciate kitchen parties for familiarizing me with them. Now we are united in the banner of supporting one another financially.

Although the aim of kitchen parties is to resolve women's financial dilemma, some members of society oppose them. The next section explains why this is the case.

5. The dynamics hampering the kitchen party

While the kitchen party is perceived as way of raising the economic status of the deprived, some women see it as nothing other than the act of forsaking our culture for western culture. Women, especially the older ones, criticized the moral aspect of the kitchen party. They were concerned about the employment of *mipasho* songs, characterized by chauvinism, sarcasm, scandal mongering and the exchange of abuse and insults (Khamis 2002:202). As regards the *mipasho* songs encourage the misconduct of brides instead of giving them knowledge about life as married individuals. The conversation with Miriam, aged 58, is self-explanatory.

*In my opinion, what you call a kitchen party today is nothing other than spoiling the bride. It is the songs that walk side by side with the kitchen party that annoy me. I have taken part in several kitchen parties here in Iringa, and what make me sick are Taarab songs. I thought they would have chosen songs which inculcate good morals in the bride. Things were quite different. I was perplexed to hear the song *utalijua jiji* (you will know the city) being played regularly. I feel this song is unsuitable for a kitchen party, for it plants the seeds of wickedness, rudeness and a nasty character in the bride. In my view, the song *utalijua jiji* encourages the bride to settle*

disputes by means of (vijembe) sarcasm and insults, which I imagine would exacerbate the conflict rather than settle it.

Some women associated the kitchen party with exploitation, because they perceive it to be a project for generating income by exploiting fellow women. It is common to hear a person complaining that they have received two to four kitchen party cards per month, all of which demand a woman to contribute between 20,000 and 50,000 TZS or more. Because of their economic situation some women cannot afford this. As a result, women, mainly from low-income families find themselves excluded from their own society.

Dishonesty is another issue pointed out which appears to hamper the kitchen party. This happens when a woman collects cards from friends or relatives pretending that she will collect money on their behalf. Once she manages to collect the money, some of course is given to those who gave her cards while some remains in her pocket. Such misconduct appeared to bother many. One extreme case was that a woman announced a fake kitchen party and collected a good amount of money without telling the contributors when the kitchen party was going to take place. When she was asked about it, her answer was always 'sit and wait.'

Delving deeper into such bad behaviour, it was found that women's viewpoint pertaining to the misconduct of some women varied greatly from one woman to the other depending on their experience of it. Whereas some perceived those who collect money without organizing kitchen party as thieves, I was perplexed to come across women who were positive about such behaviour. They claimed that some women were tired of giving their money for kitchen parties without getting any back. The escalation of fake kitchen parties was then linked to the desire of women of getting compensation. To stop this, integrity was regarded as fundamental. The women who approved of the dishonest behaviour lamented that the money that is demanded for these parties is too much. As an outcome, it pushes women who have no chance of organizing one into thinking of ways to get their money back. This entails publicizing fake kitchen parties. The anonymous informant said she hated kitchen parties because they encourage women to maintain the secondary position.

I hate kitchen parties because they encourage women to be submissive to men. I have participated in many kitchen parties. The emphasis is always on women doing everything they can to make their husbands happy. This shows that a woman has been born to make a husband happy. That's all. This has led many women to focus their attention on entertaining their husbands. For me, this is wrong. Women have to have their own development plans, and strategies for achieving their plans. That to me is the most important thing.⁸

This is why Nussbaum claims women are treated not as ends in their own right but as the means to the end of men (2000: 220). If that is the case, it could be said that capital and entrepreneurship education offered in kitchen parties is done not for the purpose of empowering them and make them stand on their own feet but rather to make their husbands happy. This is especially the case when they try hard to support their husbands who are the breadwinners.

⁸ Interview, March 2016

6. Conclusion

The study used the Marxist Feminist concept to explore how women use the kitchen party to free themselves from economic oppression. Using this concept the paper reveals the economic inequality of women in Tanzania and the extent to which the kitchen party is used to redeem the situation. The concept makes clear that women's economic redemption cannot be achieved without egalitarian cooperation. In this context, therefore, this paper sees the kitchen party as a form of egalitarian cooperation, which came into being to boost women's economic situation through cash contributions and presents, ranging from kitchen utensils to furniture, clothes and many other things. Although the Marxist Feminist concept maintains that the oppression of women varies from one society to another, this study exposes the oppression of women within society, where, for instance, poverty, education (or lack of it) and location play a major role in keeping them oppressed. Women from poor families are far less likely to participate in kitchen parties, and so they do not benefit from the presents and money offered, while educated women are much more likely to participate because of their financial power. In terms of location, women from remote areas are much less likely to be part of the ritual than those living in big cities, Iringa and Dar es Salaam being good examples. More kitchen parties take place in Dar es Salaam than in Iringa. Despite the consequences of poverty and location, the paper acknowledges that the kitchen party is a form of egalitarian cooperation that encourages women to participate in bringing about economic development, with the result that they need no longer be regarded by men as a burden, which sometimes leads to separation or divorce. Therefore, if the rate of divorce and separation were to decline, this would have positive consequences for women's future. Among other things, this would help to ensure stability, which is a prerequisite for economic development. Women who become upwardly mobile economically gain respect and power, thereby reducing the incidents of physical, social, sexual and psychological violence. Although the kitchen party is playing a major role in speeding up the development of women economically, its weaknesses need to be addressed, particularly the issue of exploitation and the exclusion of women from poor families. This is where the media can be of help in communicating these matters because it is well known that it is able to reach a vast audience.

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