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Navigating Gender Challenges in Advancing the Blue Economy: Insights from Zanzibar

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Abstract

Zanzibar, an archipelago in East Africa, holds significant potential for leveraging the blue economy for economic growth. However, entrenched gender disparities pose obstacles to achieving inclusive development. This paper explores community awareness of the blue economy project, to assess community perception of the blue economy concept and explore gendered challenges in advancing the blue economy. Through qualitative methods including stakeholder workshops involving 38 participants from Unguja and Pemba, data was collected. It is concluded that the community was informed about Zanzibar's efforts to implement a blue economy through mass media coverage and speeches by leaders. It is recommended that Zanzibar's Ministry of Education and Vocational Training use diversified communication channels like interactive workshops and educational campaigns to engage directly with community members in the blue economy. It is concluded that the community's perception of the blue economy has been influenced by the association of unrelated major components of the concepts in the blue economy. Zanzibar's Ministry of Education and Vocational Training works to clarify the relevance of fishing activities to environmental protection and mining, highlighting its potential benefits for local livelihoods and economic development. The study concludes that gender challenges persist in the blue economy, including traditional norms and limited opportunities that continue to disadvantage women and the disabled resulting in male dominance in key sectors of the blue economy. In the same way, the concepts of gender equality and equity remain unclear, hindering the effective integration of gender perspectives into sustainable development. It is imperative for Zanzibar's Ministry of Education and Vocational Training to challenge traditional norms and create equal opportunities for women and to clarify and integrate the concepts of gender equality and equity into sustainable development frameworks.

Key Words: Gender, Challenges, Blue economy, stakeholder, participation, Zanzibar

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

At the global level, the concept of a blue economy emerged before the Rio + 20 conference in the United Nations Convention on Sustainable Development where ocean resources are connected with the blue economy (UNCSD, 2012). However, the evidence on record shows that the term "blue economy" was initially used by Dr. Gunter Pauli in his book "The Blue Economy: 10 Years, 100 Innovations, 100,000 Jobs" published in 2010 (Zhang, 2020). Thereafter, the blue economy began as a project to investigate "100 of the best nature-inspired technologies" that could foster the expansion of the global economy (Zhang, 2020). In this way, the blue economy encompasses a wide range of ocean-based economic activities, including fisheries, aquaculture, tourism, and maritime transport (URT, 2020). Unfortunately, around the world gender inequality hampers economic development in both the short and long term (Altuzarra *et al.*, 2021). It is observed that gender stereotypes usually restrict women from realizing their full potential and contributing to the Blue Economy (World Bank, 2022).

Several studies revealed that there is a correlation between female participation in economic development activities and economic growth, thus restricting women in economic activities to obstruct economic growth (Verma, 2018; Jemiluyi and Yinusa, 2021; Ustabaş and Gülsoy, 2020). It is estimated that around the world GDP lost up to 27% due to women a lack of space in economic activities (IFM, 2017). Assessment of women's roles in economic development has several empirical evidence that improves economic efficiency increases productivity of both present and future generations and significant economic dividends. This article examines the persistent disparities between men and women in the distribution of benefits and the BE, as well as within and between social groups. Additionally, it examines the significance of equity and how to attain it.

The Africa Union Agenda of 2063 asks for the utilization of ocean resources for future social and economic development, hence the blue economy is a topic of discussion in Africa for sustainable economic development (Africa Union Commission, 2015). This is influenced by the fact that a total of 41 African nations border whether Mediterranean Sea, Atlantic Ocean, Indian Ocean, or Red Sea on their coasts (Attri, and Bohler-Mulleris, 2018). On the other hand, the blue economy offers greater opportunity beyond the economy and environment (Nagy and Nene, 2021). In this way, twenty-one (21) of the

countries made a conscious effort to promote the blue economy within their borders to unite the continent economically and foster economic growth (IORA, 2017). These member states adopted the Jakarta Declaration on Blue Economy in 2017, commonly known as the Indian Ocean Rim Association "IORA" Out of them 9(43%) of member states come from Africa and Tanzania inclusive. At the same time, 11(52%) are member states in the Asia-Pacific Group, and 1(5%) from the Western European group (Ntola and Vranken, 2018). The Declaration stressed harnessing the potential of the ocean to promote economic growth, job creation, trade, and investment, and contribute to food security and poverty alleviation, whilst safeguarding the ocean's health through the sustainable development of its resources (IORA, 2017). Unfortunately, many African nations deliberate in integrated blue economy policies and road maps, which also slows down the development and vision of the African blue economy anticipated by 2063. (Nagy and Nene, 2021). It was documented that, despite the expansion and growth of opportunities in sub-sectors of the blue economy it is estimated only 2.2% of women manage world maritime activities (Verma, 2018). In this review, gender issues related to the blue economy are not well noticed at this stage as among of challenges ahead in the implementation of the blue economy. Despite IORA's strong focus on women's economic empowerment across themes of the blue economy, women's contributions to the blue economy are still perceived as inefficient and insignificant inadequate due to a shortage of gender awareness and interest.

The blue economy in Eastern Africa was influenced by small islands due to the climate change to sea life, which they essentially depend on for survival in 2012 and called upon the ocean resource revolution (Armuhaya and Degterev, 2022). Tanzania is a signatory of the Jakarta Declaration on Blue Economy hence, to secure the sustainable use of ocean resources and advance inclusive economic development, both Zanzibar and mainland Tanzania have made the Blue Economy a top priority (IORA, 2017). The only government that has advanced in creating a national blue economy policy is the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar (URT, 2020). Zanzibar, with its coastal location and rich marine resources, has recognized the blue economy's (BE) potential for generating economic growth, employment, and sustainable development. However, gender inequality poses significant hurdles to achieving these goals. Zanzibar Island embarked on the implementation of the Blue Economy from 2020 to 2027 through Technical Skills Development for Youth Employability in the Blue Economy Project known as SEBEP which is implemented in Unguja and Pemba. It has been recorded that gender equality boosts economic development, thus

all gender groups should be included to achieve sustainable development (World Bank, 2022).

The Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT) is the custodian of Zanzibar's education system and custodian of the SEBEP project (URT, 2020). The project aimed to equip youth with technical, vocational and entrepreneurship skills for employment in the Blue Economy. Project intervention areas include the construction of five (5) Vocational Training centres, youth entrepreneurship ecosystem development capacity building and project management (URT, 2020). This project aimed to benefit about 42,707 youth among whom 50% will be female, Skills Development Institutions including the Karume Institute for Science and Technology (KIST), the State University of Zanzibar (SUZA) and three Vocational Training Centres managed by the Vocational Training Authority (VTA), Entrepreneurs and People Affected by the Project (URT, 2020). To help Zanzibar's youth acquire the necessary skills, the project has prioritized the following blue economy intervention areas: (i) fisheries and aquaculture; (ii) maritime trade and infrastructure; (iii) oil and gas; (iv) tourism; and (v) marine and maritime governance (URT, 2020).

Despite women relying on the ocean for their food, safety along the coast, and livelihood, still gender inequalities are underpinned by norms and relations that regulate the different roles, responsibilities, and expectations society ascribes to women and men (Cohen *et al.*, 2019). Women make up almost 85% of the labour in the sector, however, they are underrepresented in fishery management roles (Harper *et al.*, 2020). In the same way, the presence of unfair practices and discrimination based on gender norms and faith-based Islamic beliefs whereby male-dominated work environments of the blue economy often perpetuate discriminatory practices, such as unequal employment, limited promotions, and exclusion from decision-making processes noted as among of gender challenges in the Blue Economy (Msuya *et al.*, (2019): URT, (2020); Makame, 2022). This creates barriers to women's advancement and reduces their potential contributions to the blue economy (Verma, 2018). On the other hand, Makame (2022) argued that 80% of seaweed farmers are women and nearly half of them have no education, this observation was seconded by the SEBET project that skills mismatch amongst the youth for employment in the blue economy or lack of educational and skill-building opportunities: gender disparities in education and training perpetuate inequalities in the blue economy sector. As women experience limited access to technical and vocational training programs prevents them from gaining the necessary skills for meaningful participation in the sector's activities (URT, 2020). This influences the majority of youth to work in informal

sectors due to the lack of skills while others remain unemployed. Women's economic empowerment initiatives are hampered by their insufficient access to resources and funding (IORA, 2017; Verma, 2018). The lack of access to finance, credit, and financial services for women in Zanzibar makes it difficult for them to make investments in blue economy ventures. Due to this, they are less likely to participate in and take advantage of the sector's prospects for value chain activities. According to research by Aslan *et al.*, (2017), nations with greater gender disparities in financial inclusion also have greater income disparities. gender disparities in the blue economy reduced productivity and profitability as well as increased vulnerability for women, women who engage in informal or subsistence-based activities in the blue economy face specific challenges, including inadequate social protection which leads to gender-based violence, lack of access to healthcare, and exploitation in hazardous working conditions. Women's involvement can enhance productivity, innovation, and overall resilience of the sector. Thus, this paper explores community awareness of the blue economy project, to assess community perception of the blue economy concept and explore gendered challenges in advancing the blue economy

1.2 Statement of the Problem and justification of the study

Zanzibar's Blue Economy has the potential to make a substantial contribution to economic development, job creation, poverty alleviation, and environmental preservation (URT, 2022). Yet women face marginalization in the blue economy (Williams, 2023). However, ocean resources have been unsustainably exploited (Hadjimichael, 2018). In this way, the advantages of the sector might not be equitable or sustainable in the absence of gender equality. The opportunities in the Blue Economy sector in Zanzibar are currently dominated by men, with limited participation and representation of women (Verma, 2018); URT, 2022). This gender imbalance hinders the region's socio-economic growth and prevents the sector's full potential from being realized. Several studies, including one by Gustavsson *et al.* (2021) on gender and blue justice in small-scale fisheries governance, were done in four nations, including Zanzibar (Tanzania), Chile, France, and the UK, as ocean governance and development shifts from a Blue Economy to a Blue Justice approach, research finds that gendered power imbalances in fisheries and marginalized women's involvement in fisheries governance are connected with procedural injustices. Consequently, De la Torre-Castro *et al.*, (2020) in this study looked into the driving forces behind the development of coastal women's adaptive ability in Zanzibar (Unguja Island), Tanzania. As noted by Makame, (2022), the livelihood aspects of the seaweed value chain in Zanzibar as part of the blue economy agenda. According to the aforementioned perspective, none of the research discussed above incorporated

gender for a suitable development, hence there is a gap in the literature in the area of the blue economy. Gender disparities in BE hinder the achievement of several Development Goals in Zanzibar, including Zanzibar Education Development Plan 11(2017/18-2021/22), especially the focus on promoting TVET that is responsive to labour market demand. Blue Economy Policy (2020) underscores the need for Zanzibar to harness its blue resources to reduce poverty, create employment, and improve growth and exports while strengthening food and energy security. Zanzibar Development Vision 2050 which calls for “Responsibly Transforming Lives” intends to achieve Upper Middle-Income Status by 2050. With this in mind, this paper explores community awareness of the blue economy project, to assess community perception of the blue economy concept and explore gendered challenges in advancing the blue economy. Therefore, this study is timely and it is crucial to conduct a study as Zanzibar is embarking on the implementation of a blue economy.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Feminist Political Economy Theory

This study employs Feminist Political Economy theory (FPE) to explore gender issues in the blue economy. Feminist critiques of classical political economics, which include the theories of Marx, Smith, Ricardo, Mill, Polanyi, and Veblen, have resulted in a body of work known as Feminist Political Economy. This theory highlights multiple crises of finance, food, fuel and climate as major challenges in economic development. Feminist political economy examines how economic activities are often divided along gender lines, with certain sectors stereotypically associated with men and others with women (Bernstein, 2017). Therefore, when studying the blue economy, it is important to examine how gender roles and inequalities shape labour dynamics within the sector. This includes exploring the types of jobs women and men occupy, their access to resources, and the uneven distribution of benefits and risks. Feminist political economy theory also highlights power relations within economic systems (Rao and Lodhi, 2022). Applying this theory to the blue economy would involve examining who holds decision-making power, who benefits from resource extraction or conservation initiatives, and the impacts of these power dynamics on marginalized groups, including women and coastal communities. This analysis can shed light on how gender inequalities are reproduced or challenged within the blue economy.

2.2 Blue Economy

There is no single unified definition of the word blue economy (Williams, 2023). Other names for the blue economy including green economy, Oceans Economy, blue capital, and blue growth have emerged and established themselves in policy

talks on the future of the oceans. (Lee *et al.*, 2020; Hadjimichael, 2020). One of the problems is how the idea of the concept of blue economy is related to sustainable development and economic growth of the ocean invited different, and frequently conflicting, ways to define blue economy (Voyer *et al.*, 2022). It has been noted that the definition of a blue economy is influenced by a country its vision, needs, and goals. Furthermore, UNEP (2011) The blue economy, for example, is defined as "inclusive sustainable development in the long term, climate and environmental, economic policies and approaches that support blue sectors, like renewable energy technologies, transportation, agriculture, tourism, and management of natural resources (ecosystems and biodiversity). Thus, The Blue Economy is a catch-all term that is used to describe a wide variety of development approaches and priorities in the ocean and coastal areas. (Voyer *et al.*, 2022). This study seconded the definition provided by the project document that the Blue economy refers to the sustainable use and conservation of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and the preservation of the marine ecosystem. Fisheries, tourism, maritime transport, renewable energy, and marine biotechnology (URT, 2020)

2.3 Integration of Gender in the Blue Economy

The blue economy is dominated by men in many areas, which discourages the participation of women and young people in all project-related activities (UTR, 2020). Gender norms frequently prevent women from having the opportunity to realize their full potential and make a contribution to the Blue Economy. Women play a vital role in the blue including in coastal tourism, waste management, fishing, aquaculture, the processing and trade of marine products, garbage control, and the reduction of the danger of coastal disasters (Islam *et al.*, 2020). However, there are gendered power disparities in blue economy sectors and women are underrepresented in the blue economy's governance (Gustavsson, 2018). From the aforementioned premises, it has been stated that gender integration into the blue economy is necessary to address how power relations are gendered in important ocean resource sectors (Gustavsson *et al.*, 2021). By combining gender and Blue economy perspectives, there is also the necessity of incorporating gender equity and equality in the blue economy to understand the opportunities and challenges involved in achieving better gender integration in the ocean sector (Verma, 2018; Gustavsson *et al.*, 2021).

The reviewed literature reveals several gaps in understanding gender dynamics within the blue economy framework. While Feminist Political Economy Theory (FPE) sheds light on how gender roles intersect with economic activities and power relations, its application to the blue economy remains limited. Despite

recognizing the importance of gender integration, there is a lack of comprehensive analysis of how gender norms and inequalities shape labour dynamics, resource access, and decision-making processes within the blue economy sectors. Additionally, the diverse definitions and interpretations of the blue economy pose challenges to establishing a unified understanding, hindering efforts to address gender disparities effectively. Despite acknowledging women's significant contributions to various blue economy sectors, such as coastal tourism and fisheries, gendered power disparities persist, with women often underrepresented in governance structures. Thus, there is a clear need for further research and action to integrate gender perspectives and promote gender equity within the blue economy, considering the complex intersections of gender, power, and economic activities in ocean resource sectors.

3. Methodology

3.1 Description of the Study Area

In brief, the study site was localized in Zanzibar Island. Zanzibar is an archipelago located off the Eastern coast of Africa in the Indian Ocean. It consists of several islands, with the main ones being Unguja (often referred to as Zanzibar Island) and Pemba. Zanzibar is subdivided into administrative regions namely Unguja Region, Pemba North Region and Pemba South Region. Zanzibar is located approximately between latitude 6° and 7° south and longitude 39° and 40° east (URT, 2020; Makame, 2022). The current population of Zanzibar is approximately 1,889,773 persons as per the 2022 Census. Geographically, Zanzibar is known for its stunning white-sand beaches, clear turquoise waters, and coral reefs teeming with marine life. The islands are characterized by a tropical climate, with warm temperatures year-round and distinct wet and dry seasons (Mwalusepo, 2017). Historically and currently, Zanzibar relies on coastal and maritime industries for a living (Mwalusepo, 2017). Two Islands were selected because they implementing SEBET projects to equip youth with technical, vocational and entrepreneurship skills for employment in the Blue Economy (URT, 2022)



Figure 1: Map of Zanzibar

3.2 Research Design

The study utilized a cross-sectional design due to its efficiency in managing time, and resources, and offering flexibility, as suggested by Bailey (1998). This design facilitated the collection of data from a sample of participants at a single point in time, allowing for the analysis of relationships or differences within the population. By focusing on gender-related issues within the context of the blue economy in Zanzibar, the study aimed to provide insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by individuals involved in this sector

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

Purposive sampling was used to select the Unguja and Pemba islands because they implementing the SEBET project. The study employed qualitative methods whereby stakeholder engagement workshops were used as a means of data collection. Stakeholders are those who have influence or power in a situation and can influence the activities of others (Franklin and Franklin, 2020). Researchers and practitioners generally concur that stakeholder participation is essential and

has numerous benefits, but there is no one universally successful strategy to include stakeholders (O'Cathain *et al.*, 2019). Random sampling was used also to select stakeholders from Higher learning institutions, Vocational training institutions, Youth groups, people living with disability, women groups, seaweed growers and non-governmental organisations. A total of 42 individuals were involved: eighteen (18) from Unguja and twenty-four (24) from Pemba participated in the workshop (Table 1). In this way, two stakeholder engagement workshops were held, one each in Unguja and Pemba. In each workshop, group discussions were divided into two sessions.

Stakeholder participation has become a tool for understanding gender disparity in blue coastal zones on public attitudes, opinions and beliefs. Purposive sampling was used to select Key officers in the implementation of the blue economy from government and non-government organizations. Key informants through a checklist unearthed gender issues related to the blue economy including fishing, marine transport, coastal conservation and skills development. Random sampling was used to select participants to voice his or her views.

Table 1. Number of stakeholders.

Categories	Female	Male	Total
Unguja	10	8	18
Pemba	11	13	24

3.4 Data collection and data analysis

The study employed qualitative methods whereby stakeholder engagement workshops were used as a means of data collection. Participants were selected to participate in the workshops through the main implementers of the SEBEP Project. O'Cathain *et al.*, (2019) insisted that working with stakeholders is relevant during pro implementation process of the project. Consultation with a set of stakeholders helps developers understand the context of the problem or the context in which the intervention would operate. Participants were selected from government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), industry associations, Youth, People Living with disabilities and women's groups. The study considered factors like the mix of participants' ages, sexes, and social and professional levels, the group mix will always have an impact on the results. A total of 42 individuals were involved: eighteen (18) from Unguja and twenty-four (24) from Pemba participated in the workshop. In this way, two stakeholder engagement workshops were held, one each in Unguja and Pemba. In each workshop, group discussions were divided into two sessions. However, it has been argued that large teams can generate ideas and ensure all the relevant

skills are available but may also increase the risk of conflicting views and difficulties when making decisions about the final intervention (O'Cathain *et al.*, 2019).

In this regard, participants were divided into groups to collect their views. It has been also argued by Franklin and Franklin, (2020), that a moderator (or group facilitator) leads the participants' group, introducing discussion topics and assisting the group in engaging in vibrant, organic conversation. In this study, to prompt discussion with stakeholders a topic on Skills development for Youth Employability in the Blue Economy with a Gender Perspective was presented. During the discussion, a variety of interesting themes including; the concept of a blue economy, Ocean resources, BE opportunities, gender roles, local traditions and customs, religious aspects, gender equality, and Integration of gender were discussed. Stakeholders were engaged in dialogue to understand their perspectives, experiences, and recommendations for addressing gendered challenges in the blue economy. Different sources of information were triangulated including observations and documents to ensure the reliability and validity of data. This study used qualitative content analysis (QCA) from recorded data and observation and documents (Schreier, 2012; Lester, 2020). The analysis was guided by a research question that specifies the angle from which data were examined (Lindgren, 2020). The data was codified frame with main categories and subcategories such as gender roles, gender relation, access to resources, gender-based discrimination, unequal participation and decision-making, and social norms and stereotypes affecting women's achievements and Integration of gender in the blue economy as guided by Political economy theory. Data were further divided into coding units and finally, data were interpreted and presented findings.

Blue Economy

Immediate outcomes:

- Presentation
- Research question

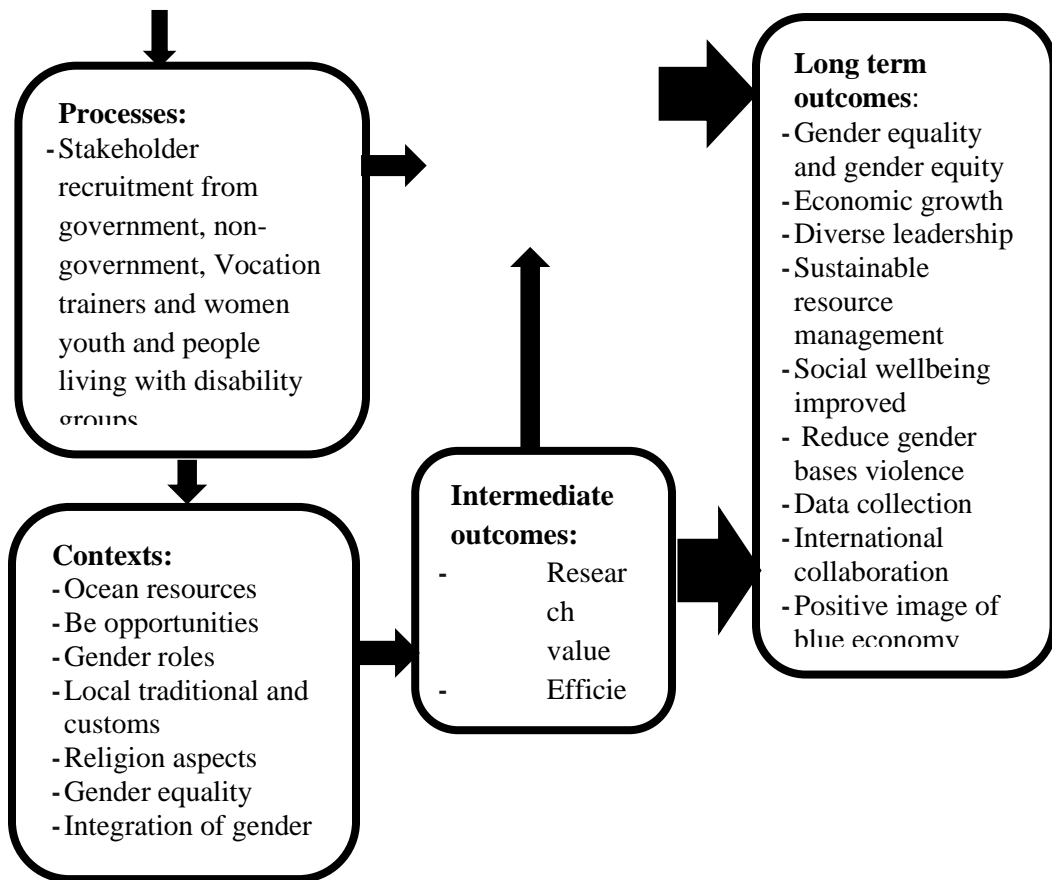


Figure 2: Data Collection Process

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Community Awareness over Blue Economy Project

During the discussion, it was revealed that the community was aware that Zanzibar is embarking on implementing a blue economy policy as a sustainable development agenda until 2050. It was further revealed through radio, Television programs, and leaders' speeches that the Skills Development for Youth Employability in the Blue Economy (SEBET) project was embarking implement a mentioned project that aimed to prepare young people in technical, vocational, and entrepreneurial skills for jobs in the Blue Economy. At the end of this project, more than 300,000 well-paying job opportunities in tourism, fisheries and aquaculture, maritime trade and infrastructure, energy, and marine and Maritime governance will be created. Thus, about 42,707 youth among them will be female benefited. This will make the economic transformation to achieve Upper upper-middle-income status by 2050 (URT, 2020).

In achieving this target, participants mentioned that the goals (rationale and type of intervention) geographic scope, project intervention, sectors identified to implement the blue economy, the main focus, beneficiaries and policies seconded blue economy under consideration varied substantially. This was supported by the project document that there were three areas for intervention including the construction of five vocational training centres, youth entrepreneurship ecosystem development capacity building and project management (URT, 2020). Although the project aims to increase the employability of Zanzibar youth, strengthen the ability of institutions for skill development to deliver high-quality, labour-market-relevant training, and increase the availability of high-quality skills in the labour market to meet industry demands, still the concept of the blue economy was not well understood by the community.

4.2 Community Perception of the Blue Economy

The study discussant mentioned that the concept of the blue economy hasn't been fully understood in Zanzibar, and it hasn't been related to other components of the blue economy. Here, most people exclusively identify the blue economy with fishing, unlike elsewhere, where environmental protection, marine transport, food security, mining and oil extraction are also regarded as components of the blue economy. The idea that mining, tourism, or environmental protection are components of the blue economy is unfounded. This finding is supported by Garland *et al.* (2019) that Oil and gas, become part of the blue economy because extractive, pact activities along the coast entail the use of freshwater, as well as having an impact on ecosystem protection. This finding aligns with Keen *et al.*, (2018) that despite the Blue Economy concept being used as an ideal more frequently, it is not properly defined with a clear mapping of its major components, therefore its utility has been more theoretical or political than practical up to this point. Furthermore, Voyer, (2022) added that the ambiguities surrounding the definition of a Blue economy are closely related to interpretations of sustainability and what constitutes a 'blue' activity. However, one discussant defined BE as:

"Blue economy is a broad concept. Any income produced by the ocean, such as gas and oil, fishing, maritime transportation, and value chain activities, is referred to as the "Blue Economy. Therefore, everyone helps the blue economy in their respective duties to accomplish the blue economy"

In some areas, the blue economy policy has been deemed disastrous for the community. Initially, it started as a joke, comparing the blue economy to a tough

life, but later, untrained individuals saw it as a reality and likened it to life's hardships. However, some people do understand it and related components. One Participant claims that:

"Right now, if you ask someone to pay your debt, you might get the response "I don't have money because of the blue economy"

This implies that economic challenges related to the blue economy have impacted their financial situation to the point where they cannot fulfill their financial obligations, such as repaying a debt. This could indicate that the blue economy, in this context, is seen as a factor contributing to financial constraints or hardships. This notion is contrary to the objective of the project that along the value chains of the blue economy, the blue economy agenda has the potential to increase self-employment and employment opportunities while improving their resilience to the effects of climate change to achieve status by 2050 (URT, 2020)

4.3 Gendered Challenges in Advancing the Blue Economy

4.3.1 Misinterpretation of Gender Equality and Equity Concepts in the Blue Economy

During the discussion, it was revealed by discussants that when it comes to achieving parity or 50%/50% in the blue economy, gender equality can be interpreted in a variety of ways by the community. Observation shows that a mere declaration of equal access to opportunities and resources for men and women is necessary to achieve gender equality. It strives to abolish gender discrimination in fields like leadership, employment, and education. However, in practice, the situation is quite different whereby needs, concerns and interests should be incorporated to achieve equality.

One participant claimed that:

When we talk about equal opportunities, it doesn't necessarily have to be a 50%/50% split. If we aim for a 50%/50% ratio, we might encounter significant challenges, and it may be unattainable.

This suggests that the speaker recognizes the complexity of achieving perfect gender parity and acknowledges that in some situations, it may not be feasible or practical. This is supported by the (URT, 2020) project document that socio-cultural gender norms and faith-based Islamic beliefs and limited access to productive resources, particularly for women and youth, include a lack of entrepreneurial skills, inadequate soft skills and first aid training, limited access to farming inputs, postharvest processing tools and skills for deep-sea farming,

transportation, and processing in specific sectors like seaweed, sea cucumber, and fisheries. Additionally, there's a low level of access to financial resources. From a gender perspective, this statement acknowledges the reality of the above circumstances that achieving absolute gender equality in all areas can be difficult due to various social, cultural, and structural factors. It further suggests a pragmatic approach that focuses on creating equal opportunities and reducing gender disparities, even if a perfect 50%/50% balance may not always be achievable. It underscores the importance of progress toward gender equality, even if it may not be possible to achieve complete parity in every context. Reviewing the project documentation reveals that, to achieve gender equity, the interests, to concerns of men, women, and youth should be taken into consideration during the execution and management of the project's operations in the blue economy.

4.3.2 Gender Differences in Coastal Roles and the Blue Economy

When discussing the assessment of gender roles in access to ocean resources, discussants revealed that women still work in post-fishing activities and are involved in seaweed farming and sea cucumber cultivation as part of the blue economy. In places like the Pemba Islands or the open sea, where there are more than 150 boats owned and crewed by men, you won't be engaged in deep-sea fishing. So it's uncommon to see a woman diving or women are diving are less concerned about deep-sea fishing than those on the shoreline due to danger involved. This study's findings are supported by Msuya *et al.* (2019), who asserted that more than 80% of seaweed farmers are women. Seaweed farming is a key source of income and livelihood on the Zanzibar islands of Unguja and Pemba. The fundamental problem is that women face difficulties due to cultural expectations and religious traditions, particularly about what they should wear and how they should present themselves. also supported by Stacey *et al.* (2019) that men's and women's participation is impacted by gender norms and gender relations, which has implications for the long-term viability of the natural resource base and dependent livelihoods. This implies that there were gender disparities or imbalances in how men and women are involved or represented in the blue economy initiatives in using ocean resources, and it underscores the need for greater awareness and efforts to promote gender equality within the project.

Similar circumstances have been seen in other nations, such as Indonesia, as supported by Fitriana and Stacey (2012) and Alami and Raharjo (2017). In these nations, women are underrepresented in developing fisheries policy, governance, and marine and habitat management frameworks, which limits their

physical access to fish and their capacity to stand up for themselves within Indonesia's bureaucratic fisheries management framework. A review of the project document sought to address this challenge through Women's Economic Empowerment in the Blue Economy is cross-cutting concerns across BE priority areas that are dedicated to improving gender equality through the Blue Economy.

4.3.3 Gender Disparity in Domestic Roles and Blue Economy

The roles of women and men in society differ, in the morning women often have more tasks than men. If you relate those roles with available opportunities in the blue economy, you will find that women have their opportunities within the blue economy. Workshop discussants revealed that according to Zanzibar culture still doesn't allow women to work outside the home. This implies that this situation reinforces gender inequality by perpetuating the idea that women's primary role is within the home, while men are expected to engage in economic activities outside. This unequal division of labour can lead to disparities in income and opportunities between men and women in BE. This can further perpetuate gender gaps in education and skill development as well as limit their financial independence and decision-making power. During the discussion, it was ironed out that:

"Women who go seaweed farming are still under the supervision of their husbands. Their husbands go to the coast as if to protect what they are doing at sea"

This finding aligns with URT, (2020) which revealed that protect men have served as the family's protectors, principal breadwinners, and primary public and private decision-makers. In certain households, men control household money and predominately participate in productive activities along the value chain of fisheries, such as fishing. In contrast, post-harvest management tasks are largely handled by women. This means that this situation may discourage families from investing in the education of girls which hinders them from pursuing careers and women are discouraged from working girls' education, which hinders them from pursuing careers, and women are discouraged from working outside the home, limiting as instructors at a technical college that serves as one of the blue economy's implementation hubs. One female student initially intended to study electrical engineering, but she changed her mind and chose to study tailoring instead because the skill she wanted to learn was useless to her because women are expected to stay at home in her culture.

It is suggested that gender roles and cultural norms may have an impact on a woman's educational and career choices. It is also suggested that traditional gender expectations may restrict women's opportunities and discourage them

from pursuing careers in fields that have been stereotyped as being dominated by men, furthering gender, stereotypes and inequalities.

During a discussion of female youth representative gave her testimony as the way forward in this:

I was chosen to lead Freedom Touch (Mwenge wa Uhuru) while wearing a military uniform. In our tradition and culture, it is practically equivalent to saying that a woman is naked when a woman is dressed in military garb. The government gave me this task to do for a while, but faith is the most important aspect. It is possible to appear correctly dressed, such as in Islamic garb, while secretly acting in a way that is incompatible with the religion and dishonouring God. You can pursue a rewarding career and engage in religious activity without breaching the law.

4.3.4 Gender Disparities with People Living with Disability in Blue Economy

Generally, participants agreed that there is a significant challenge in how to integrate people with disabilities into the blue economy. The major problem lies in how society perceives individuals with disabilities. They often say to them.

'Those with their legs intact struggle; what about you?'

This attitude is disheartening. Society lacks the understanding that people with disabilities (PWD) can achieve remarkable feats, sometimes even surpassing those with full physical abilities. This implies that society may underestimate the capabilities and potential contributions of individuals with disabilities, which can hinder their full integration and participation in various sectors, including the blue economy. The low expectations and stereotypes may limit opportunities for people with disabilities, including their access to education, employment, and participation in economic activities. However, a person with a disability can perform several activities including operating a boat or engaging in fishing, but what is needed is the appropriate training and skills and supportive intervention for them including acceptable building and appropriate learning requirements. Still, PWD can dwell in value chain activities as part of blue economy and the government supports their group by giving them loans. The challenge in this were the proposed project and implementation. One discussant said that:

"There is a group of disabled people whose major occupation is farming, and its leader is blind. Each team member has unique difficulties that keep them from working on the farm. The person with one eye who oversees everything is in charge of planting, weeding, and selling. Due to these factors, the group's members' profitability and inclusivity are restricted."

The findings call upon underscore the importance of recognizing and addressing the unique challenges faced by people with disabilities in their pursuit of livelihood activities such as farming. It highlights the potential for improved inclusivity and support to enhance the economic well-being of individuals with disabilities within the group.

4.3.5 Gender-Based Discrimination in Youth Education and Employment

The study uncovered a significant focus on preparing young individuals with the necessary skills for employment and self-employment within the blue economy sector. Specifically, vocational training programs were identified as key avenues for achieving this goal. In Pemba, for instance, there were established vocational training centres like Daya, Wawi, and Micheweni. However, it became apparent during the workshop that these vocational centres were not operating at full capacity, primarily because the number of enrolled youth was relatively low. This low enrollment was particularly noticeable when compared to the larger population of young individuals who had exited the formal education system after completing Form Two and Form Four. Many of these youths had left school due to academic challenges and subject failures. This finding is aligned with the project document that despite Zanzibar's experiencing an increasing number of students in lower and higher secondary schools, still transition to tertiary education and technical and vocational skills development remains low (URT, 2020).

Consequently, discussants mentioned that there was a gap in effectively utilizing these vocational training opportunities to equip the youth with the necessary skills for the blue economy which creates a skills gap for the blue economy. This finding is aligned with the project document that despite Zanzibar's experiencing an increasing number of students in lower and higher secondary schools, still, transition to tertiary education and technical and vocational skills development remains low (URT, 2020). This finding aligns with (Allard and Baue, 2018) who asserted that if the country has fewer qualified workers than required for these new blue jobs, which makes it is harder for the blue economy to fully develop. This situation underscored the need for strategies to encourage greater participation and engagement of female young individuals in these vocational programs to enhance their employability and entrepreneurial prospects within the blue economy sector.

It was observed that gender disparities in access to vocational training for young men and women, and differences in the types of skills and sectors that men and

women are encouraged or steered toward. During the study, it emerged that parents played a pivotal role in determining the skills and career paths their children pursued in vocational training centres. This parental influence often led to specific decisions made by students. In certain cases, students opted to shift away from technical subjects to acquire skills that would enable them to find employment opportunities closer to their homes or within their immediate communities. For female students, particularly those who managed to acquire skills suitable for work beyond the private sphere, another layer of influence was observed. In these instances, there was a likelihood that parents would discourage the application of such skills. This reluctance stemmed from concerns that certain vocational roles may contradict their religious beliefs or cultural norms regarding the expected roles and responsibilities of women. This means that some students prioritize skills that offer employment opportunities close to their homes or within their immediate communities, indicating the importance of local employment prospects. This finding aligns with the Project document (URT, 2020) that gender roles and time constraints- women should work close to households/villages. Nevertheless, improvements have been made, as 2023 female students who were enrolled in the maritime transport programme at Daya Vocational Training Centre graduated which will increase the number of women in the sea.

Other challenges were the wrong selection of projects for the value chain and selfless of the implementation of projects. One discussant revealed that:

"There are young people who initiated projects based on their preferences and were provided with funds. However, instead of adhering to the intended goals of self-employment, they opted to distribute the funds among themselves"

The findings indicate a need for better oversight and support to ensure that funds allocated for self-employment initiatives are used effectively to empower young people and promote sustainable economic development in the islands. This finding further indicates that the aspect of patriotism should be enhanced in empowerment education, promoting the idea of people taking group loans and investing in their individual development rather than solely focusing on advancing group work.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

In general, research indicates that the community was informed about Zanzibar's efforts to implement a blue economy through mass media coverage and speeches by leaders. These initiatives aimed to equip young people with

technical, vocational, and entrepreneurial skills to enhance their employability in blue economy projects in Zanzibar.

Furthermore, it is deduced that the community's perception of the Blue Economy has been influenced by the association of unrelated major components of the concept, such as environmental protection, marine transport, food security, mining, and oil extraction, rather than solely focusing on fishing activities. Consequently, the concept has not been comprehensively understood by the community and has been viewed as detrimental to the community and it has been linked to economic hardships on the island.

The study concludes that gender challenges persist in the blue economy, including traditional norms and limited opportunities that continue to disadvantage women, resulting in male dominance in key sectors. The concepts of gender equality and equity remain unclear, hindering the effective integration of gender perspectives into sustainable development. Furthermore, people with disabilities are often excluded and underrepresented despite their valuable skills that could contribute significantly to the blue economy, leading to the underutilization of human resources.

5.2 Recommendations

To build upon the community's awareness of Zanzibar's blue economy initiatives, it is recommended Zanzibar's Ministry of Education and Vocational Training use diversified communication channels beyond mass media and leadership speeches. Engaging directly with community members through interactive workshops, educational campaigns, and social media outreach can ensure broader reach and deeper engagement, especially among young people. Tailoring information to resonate with diverse demographics and involving stakeholders in the planning and implementation of skill development programs will foster a sense of ownership and relevance.

To address the community's misconceptions regarding the Blue Economy, Zanzibar's Ministry of Education and Vocational Training work must clarify the relevance of fishing activities to environmental protection and mining, highlighting its potential benefits for local livelihoods and economic development. Engaging with community members through targeted education campaigns, workshops, and interactive discussions can help foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Blue Economy's objectives and opportunities. Moreover, Zanzibar's Ministry of Education and Vocational Training should address concerns about perceived economic hardships associated with the Blue Economy policy

requires transparent communication and evidence-based discussions on its potential positive impacts on employment, income generation, and overall socio-economic well-being in the community.

To address the entrenched gender disparities and promote inclusivity in the blue economy, Zanzibar's Ministry of Education and Vocational Training must challenge traditional norms and create equal opportunities for women, thereby diminishing the prevailing male dominance in critical sectors. Additionally, there is a pressing need to clarify and integrate the concepts of gender equality and equity into sustainable development frameworks, ensuring that gender perspectives are systematically integrated into policy formulation and implementation. Furthermore, concerted efforts should be made to actively include people with disabilities in blue economy initiatives by offering accessible training and employment opportunities and fostering an inclusive work environment that accommodates diverse abilities.

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