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WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND FAMILY STABILITY IN KODBUUR DISTRICT, HARGEISA, SOMALILAND

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between women's economic empowerment and family stability in Kodbuur District, Hargeisa, Somaliland. The target population comprised 199 households, from which a representative sample of $n = 133$ respondents was drawn using Slovin's formula. The investigation employed a mixed-methods descriptive, survey, and correlational research design, with primary empirical data collected in October 2025 using structured questionnaires and semi-structured key informant interviews. Quantitative analysis revealed that women's access to employment does not threaten marital stability or family cohesion ($r = -0.713$, $p < 0.01$); rather, increased household earning capacity reduces financial strain and fosters family resilience. Conversely, women's asset ownership exhibits a strong positive correlation with reported domestic violence dynamics ($r = 0.876$, $p < 0.001$), operating as a catalyst for domestic tension when sudden shifts in financial decision-making authority challenge traditional patriarchal norms without adequate intra-household communication. Furthermore, female education and skills development significantly enhanced household stability ($r = -0.813$, $p < 0.001$) by improving communication, emotional regulation, and dispute resolution capacities. The study concluded that while women's economic empowerment alters traditional authority structures, its overall trajectory remains overwhelmingly supportive of long-term family stability. Strategic recommendations emphasized community-level sensitization campaigns, joint household financial counselling programs, and expanded educational opportunities for women.

Keywords: Women's economic empowerment, Family stability, Employment, Asset ownership, Domestic violence, Household authority structure, Conflict resolution, Education, Skills development, Gender roles, Kodbuur District, Hargeisa, Somaliland

INTRODUCTION

Women's economic empowerment constitutes one of the most transformative socio-economic dynamics in contemporary development, fundamentally reshaping household authority structures, community stability, and national development trajectories across Sub-Saharan Africa. In post-conflict societies within the Horn of Africa, particularly Somaliland, economic empowerment is defined not merely as passive participation in the labor force, but as the

expansion of strategic agency specifically, women's ability to acquire resources, exercise decision-making power, and make autonomous life choices (Kabeer, 1999).

In Hargeisa, particularly within Kodbuur District, the transition toward gender-inclusive economic participation has accelerated markedly over the past decade. Women have become vital economic actors in micro-enterprises, formal employment, commercial trade, and civil society organizations.

Furthermore, women are increasingly acquiring tangible capital assets, including real estate, commercial vehicles, and business land resources that were historically controlled exclusively by male household heads. Coupled with targeted investments in female education and vocational training by non-governmental organizations and state institutions, women are developing critical competencies in financial literacy, communication, emotional intelligence, and leadership.

However, these socio-economic transformations occur within a traditional social framework characterized by patriarchal household structures where men are culturally designated as primary breadwinners and central decision-makers. Public opinion within Somaliland remains divided: while one perspective maintains that female economic contribution strengthens family financial resilience, an opposing view posits that shifting gender roles destabilize traditional family structures, erode marital bonds, and trigger domestic conflict. Family stability encompassing marital durability, emotional harmony, shared decision-making, and economic resilience is heavily mediated by these cultural dynamics (Ali & Warsame, 2020). When female earnings increase, income is predominantly reinvested into child education, healthcare, and basic household welfare. Yet, where male breadwinner norms are strongly reinforced, rapid shifts in intra-household power can generate friction and domestic violence (Ahmed, 2021). Empirical research is therefore required to clarify how female economic empowerment impacts family stability within local cultural contexts.

Statement of the problem

The rapid entry of women into economic spheres across Kodbuur District has reshaped traditional family interactions and household financial dependencies. While higher education, formal employment, and independent asset ownership enhance women's autonomy, they also introduce complex adjustments into traditional marital dynamics.

In local communities, concerns persist that female economic independence undermines traditional male authority, leading to heightened marital discord, domestic violence, and family dissolution. Preliminary evidence suggests that when shifts in asset ownership and income generation occur without open intra-household negotiation or gender sensitivity, power struggles frequently emerge. Despite these ongoing social transformations, there remains a lack of empirical research evaluating the precise relationship between specific empowerment dimensions namely employment, asset ownership, and educational attainment and family stability in Somaliland. This study directly addresses this empirical gap within Kodbuur District, Hargeisa.

Objectives of the study

- 1) To investigate the impact of women's access to employment on marital stability and divorce rates in Kodbuur District.
- 2) To assess how women's asset ownership influences domestic violence dynamics and household power relations.
- 3) To examine the effects of female education and skills development on conflict resolution and the prevention of family separation.

Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods descriptive, survey, and correlational research design to examine the relationship between women's economic empowerment and family stability. A descriptive-correlational design is appropriate as it enables the systematic evaluation and measurement of the direction and magnitude of associations between socio-economic empowerment variables and indicators of family durability (Creswell, 2024). The integration of quantitative survey data and qualitative key informant interviews provided a structured approach to capturing real-world intra-household dynamics in Kodbuur District.

The target population comprised approximately N = 199 married or cohabitating women aged 20–75

years residing in Kodbuur District, Hargeisa, alongside representatives from local women's non-governmental organizations and the Ministry of Employment, Social Affairs, and Family.

To determine the representative sample size (n) from the target population ($N = 199$), Slovin's formula was applied at a margin of error $e = 0.05$:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{199}{1 + 199(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{199}{1 + 199(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{199}{1 + 0.4975} = \frac{199}{1.4975} \approx 133$$

Thus, a sample size of $n = 133$ respondents was selected for the study.

Quantitative data were gathered using structured self-administered questionnaires distributed to female residents across Kodbuur District. The questionnaire captured demographic profiles, employment status, asset ownership metrics, and Likert-scale responses regarding family stability and domestic interactions. Questionnaires ensure standardization and comparative accuracy across the sampled population (Kothari, 2024).

Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured key informant interviews conducted with officers from local women's rights organizations, community elders, and social affairs delegates to gain contextual insights into household power shifts (Creswell, 2024). Primary field data were collected during October 2025.

Quantitative field data were checked, cleaned, coded, and analyzed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics including mean scores, percentage distributions, and standard deviations were computed to summarize item responses.

Bivariate inferential analysis was performed using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients (r) to evaluate linear associations between empowerment variables and family stability metrics.

Findings and Results

Question 1: Impact of Women's Employment on Marital Stability and Divorce

Table 1 outlines the descriptive statistics evaluating public perceptions and lived experiences regarding women's employment and marital stability ($n = 133$).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Women's Employment and Divorce Dynamics

Statement	Mean Score	Interpretation
Women's access to employment causes divorce.	2.14	Disagree (Not seen as a primary driver of divorce)
Employment reduces marital harmony.	2.44	Slightly Disagree
Increased income from employment reduces women's tolerance for an unhappy marriage.	2.92	Neutral / Moderate
Composite Average	2.50	Disagree / Compatible with Stability

The quantitative findings indicate that the majority of respondents (60.1%) explicitly disagreed or strongly disagreed with the assertion that women's access to employment is a direct driver of marital breakdown or divorce. The low mean score ($M = 2.14$) demonstrates that employment is generally viewed as compatible with marital stability. A moderate mean score ($M = 2.92$) was recorded regarding whether financial independence reduces tolerance for abusive marriages, indicating balanced perceptions.

Bivariate correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant negative relationship between female employment and family instability metrics ($r = -0.713$, $p < 0.01$). This confirms that female labor force participation reduces household financial strain and enhances marital resilience.

Question 2: Women's Asset Ownership and Domestic Violence

Table 2 presents the descriptive metrics examining the interaction between independent asset ownership and domestic violence dynamics.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Women's Asset Ownership and Domestic Violence

Statement	Mean Score	Interpretation
Asset ownership by women leads to domestic violence.	3.59	Moderate Agreement (May trigger friction)
Asset ownership changes traditional power dynamics in the home.	3.56	Moderate Agreement (Influences authority structures)
Owning assets increases women's capacity to resist or mitigate domestic violence.	3.44	Moderate Agreement / Variable Perceptions
Composite Average	3.53	Moderate Agreement

The data reveal moderate agreement across participants ($M = 3.53$) that female asset ownership directly alters traditional household power dynamics. Respondents noted that when women acquire high-value assets (such as real estate or commercial capital), traditional male decision-making authority is challenged, which can induce conflict ($M = 3.59$).

Inferential testing demonstrated a strong, statistically significant positive correlation between female asset ownership and reported domestic

tension ($r = 0.876$, $p < 0.001$). This finding indicates that while physical assets empower women economically, rapid shifts in financial control without joint decision-making frameworks can provoke intra-household power struggles and partner hostility.

Question 3: Female Education, Skills, and Family Stability

Table 3 summarizes descriptive findings regarding the influence of education and skill attainment on household authority and dispute resolution.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on Female Education, Skills, and Family Stability

Statement	Mean Score	Interpretation
Higher educational attainment among women reduces the risk of family separation.	3.87	High Agreement
Educated women are skilled communicators and dispute resolvers in the family.	3.63	High Agreement
Education and skills among women shift traditional household authority structures.	3.49	Moderate Agreement
Composite Average	3.66	High Agreement

The findings demonstrate high overall agreement ($M = 3.66$) that female education and vocational skill development significantly strengthen family stability. A large majority agreed that educated women demonstrate stronger communication competence, emotional regulation, and conflict negotiation skills ($M = 3.63$), thereby reducing the probability of family separation ($M = 3.87$). While 62% of respondents ($M = 3.49$) acknowledged that female education alters traditional patriarchal decision-making hierarchies, this shift is predominantly viewed as beneficial for constructive dispute resolution.

Pearson correlation analysis confirmed a strong, statistically significant inverse relationship between

educational attainment and family separation ($r = -0.813$, $p < 0.001$). Higher education levels among women correlate directly with improved marital durability and lower rates of domestic dissolution.

Discussion of Findings

The empirical findings from Research Question 1 establish that women's entry into employment does not function as a primary cause of divorce in Kodbuur District ($r = -0.713$, $p < 0.01$). Rejection of the hypothesis that female employment causes marital dissolution (60.1% disagreement) aligns with findings by Yilmaz and Çelik (2022), who observed that female labor participation reduces household financial vulnerability, thereby alleviating domestic stress and lowering divorce risks. Although a minority (17.3%) expressed concern over shifting gender roles, the dominant pattern indicates that economic contributions from women enhance overall family security.

Regarding Research Question 2, the significant positive correlation between asset ownership and domestic violence dynamics ($r = 0.876$, $p < 0.001$) illustrates the complex realities of intra-household power shifts. These empirical results align with research by Peterman et al. (2017) and Khan et al. (2017), which showed that male partners may exhibit controlling behaviors or hostility when women acquire independent property or real estate that challenges traditional male authority. Where asset acquisition occurs without joint financial communication or counseling, it can provoke domestic friction.

Finally, the results for Research Question 3 confirm that female education and skills development serve as key stabilizers of family life ($r = -0.813$, $p < 0.001$). This outcome supports findings by Jeejeebhoy (1995) and Mato (2010), who demonstrated that educated women possess greater negotiation skills, emotional maturity, and problem-solving capacities. Education enhances mutual communication within the home, mitigating misunderstandings and systematically reducing the likelihood of marital separation.

Conclusion

This study evaluates the relationship between women's economic empowerment and family stability within Kodbuur District, Hargeisa, Somaliland. Drawing upon empirical evidence from quantitative survey data alongside qualitative field interviews, the investigation provides a nuanced assessment of how expanding female socio-economic agency shapes domestic harmony and household authority. Overall, the findings demonstrate that while economic empowerment alters traditional intra-household dynamics, its primary trajectory remains fundamentally supportive of family resilience.

First, the investigation reveals that female labor force participation does not heighten the risk of marital dissolution. Contrary to local socio-cultural concerns that economic independence erodes marital bonds, female employment stabilizes the domestic environment by generating vital household income. By reducing extreme financial dependency and easing household budget constraints, women's earnings foster family resilience and protect marriages from economic strain.

Second, the acquisition of capital assets such as real estate, land, and business capital exerts a complex, dual influence on household dynamics. While independent asset ownership enhances women's long-term financial security and personal autonomy, it can simultaneously disrupt entrenched patriarchal authority structures. When rapid shifts in wealth and financial control occur without open, joint intra-household communication, they frequently provoke domestic tension, male hostility, and role conflict.

Third, female education and vocational skills development serve as crucial predictors of long-term family durability. Higher educational attainment equips women with enhanced

communication competence, emotional intelligence, and problem-solving abilities. These refined interpersonal capacities enable educated women to navigate domestic disagreements constructively, effectively reducing misunderstandings and systematically lowering the risk of family separation.

In conclusion, the study underscores that women's economic empowerment in Kodbuur District is predominantly beneficial for family stability, provided that structural power shifts are managed effectively. While female employment and higher education directly strengthen marital cohesion and dispute resolution, asset ownership requires supportive intra-household communication and counseling to mitigate potential domestic friction. Balancing economic opportunities with constructive gender dialogue therefore remains essential for sustainable household stability in Hargeisa.

Recommendations

- 1) Local municipal councils, community elders, and religious leaders in Kodbuur District should implement public awareness programs to address misconceptions regarding female employment, emphasizing that women's economic contributions strengthen rather than undermine family stability.
- 2) Government agencies and non-governmental organizations should expand vocational training and formal employment opportunities for women while advocating for flexible workplace arrangements that allow women to balance professional and family commitments.
- 3) Community-based organizations should offer voluntary pre-marital and financial management counseling for couples. Encouraging joint decision-making regarding asset acquisition and household budgeting can mitigate domestic conflict.
- 4) State authorities and development partners should increase investment in girls' secondary and tertiary education, alongside adult financial literacy programs, to enhance communication and dispute resolution capacities within households.
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