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Pottery Production Potentials for Rural Livelihood And Empowerment of Kisi Female Potters in Tanzania, 1970–2010

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the pottery production potential for rural livelihood and empowerment of Kisi female potters of Tanzania, 1970–2010. Interviews, observation, and consultation of secondary data are used to collect data from five villages, including Matema and Ikombe in the Kyela District and Lumbila, Nkanda, and Chanjale in the Ludewa District. The interviews include 65 female potters from these villages—17 from Lumbila, 15 from Nkanda, 15 from Chanjale, eight from the Huruma potting group in Matema, and ten female potters that were working with the Ikombe workshop in the village of Ikombe.

After the collapse of workshops, these female potters returned to traditional pottery making. Findings from the study reveal that the majority of female potters interviewed are married and have attended primary schools—none of them have any secondary education. Furthermore, these female potters contribute to the livelihood of their families as pottery replaced fishing and became the main source of income. Through this, Kisi female potters diversified their pottery products and made goods such as flowerpots, ashtrays, candle pots, and decorative souvenirs for tourists. The income generated from potting gives female potters social and political freedom to engage in various activities as well as the establishment of groups such as the Huruma potting group. Despite their efforts, female potters receive minimal support from the government. This study recommends that the government should find appropriate means of empowering potters.

Keywords: pottery production, Kisi female potters, rural livelihood, female empowerment, Tanzania

Potentiels de production de poterie pour les moyens de subsistance ruraux et l'autonomisation des potières Kisi en Tanzanie, 1970-2010

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Résumé

Cette étude vise à étudier le potentiel de production de poterie pour les moyens de subsistance ruraux et l'autonomisation des potières Kisi de Tanzanie, de 1970 à 2010. Des entretiens, des observations et la consultation de données secondaires sont utilisés pour collecter des données dans cinq villages, dont Matema et Ikombe dans le district de Kyela et Lumbila, Nkanda et Chanjale dans le district de Ludewa. Les entretiens ont inclus 65 femmes potières de ces villages - 17 de Lumbila, 15 de Nkanda, 15 de Chanjale, huit du groupe d'empotage de Huruma à Matema et dix femmes potières qui travaillaient avec l'atelier Ikombe dans le village d'Ikombe. Après l'effondrement des ateliers, ces femmes potières sont revenues à la poterie traditionnelle. Les résultats de l'étude révèlent que la majorité des femmes potières interrogées sont mariées et ont fréquenté l'école primaire – aucune d'entre elles n'a fait d'études secondaires. De plus, ces femmes potières contribuent aux moyens de subsistance de leurs familles car la poterie a remplacé la pêche et est devenue leur principale source de revenus. Grâce à cela, les potières Kisi ont diversifié leurs produits de poterie et ont fabriqué des produits tels que des pots de fleurs, des cendriers, des pots à bougies et des souvenirs décoratifs pour les touristes. Les revenus générés par l'empotage donnent aux femmes potières la liberté sociale et politique de s'engager dans diverses activités ainsi que la création de groupes tels que le groupe d'empotage de Huruma. Malgré leurs efforts, les femmes potières reçoivent un soutien minime de la part du gouvernement. Cette étude recommande que le gouvernement trouve des moyens appropriés pour responsabiliser les potières.

Mots-clés : production de poterie, potières Kisi, moyens de subsistance ruraux, autonomisation des femmes, Tanzanie

1.0 Introduction

Rural livelihood has received much attention from researchers and policymakers in connection with poverty reduction and economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa and Tanzania in particular. Michael et al. (2021) argue that rural areas contribute substantially to the overall development of any nation through the supply of food, raw materials, surplus labour, and a market for goods produced in other sectors of the economy. Tanzania's rural space held about 65.5 per cent of the nation's population in 2019 (World Bank, 2021). People residing in these areas engaged in agriculture. Achieving rural livelihood is essential to all human development and economic growth (Michael et al., 2021). In this case, the agricultural sector in Tanzania is significant since it accounts for a quarter of the GDP. In 2019, 37.9 million people lived in rural areas, 80% of whom were involved in the agricultural sector. Since all rural households depend directly or indirectly on agriculture and given the significant contribution of this sector to the overall economy, it might seem evident that agriculture should be a key component of growth and development. However, undertaking agricultural activities by rural dwellers of Tanzania is impaired by various environmental, social, economic and political factors. These challenges force rural populations to diversify and engage in small-scale farming, fishing, raising livestock, and non-farm activities. Prominently, the shortage of land has affected farming activities. This was the case for the Kisi people of the southern Highland of Tanzania (Nindi, 2007). Kisi people were engaged in agriculture, but because they lacked land for agriculture, they practiced it in the narrow lake plain and on the ridges and spurs. Due to this, the harvests were very meager, which forced them to diversify into fishing in near Lake Nyasa.

Many factors also affected fishing activities, which led to the decline of fish catches since the 1970s. These factors included the villagisation programme of the 1970s, which greatly impacted the Kisi as it encouraged people to cultivate on highlands, spurs, and ridges. These provoked intensive soil erosion and sediment runoff into the river valley, and consequently to the lake (Nindi, 2007). Reportedly, this accounts for the decline of fish catches in Lake Nyasa during the 1970s. Furthermore, the liberalisation of the country's economy in 1986 led to commercialisation and demand for money. Müller (2011) notes that the liberalisation was first felt by the Kisi fishermen as it led to high prices of fishing equipment. Only a few fishermen and households managed to buy them at these prices. The decline of fishing transformed pottery making into the leading economy among the Kisi. During the 1980s, pottery production became the leading economy that helped the Kisi people earn their living. Since then, female potters have contributed much to the survival of their families. How this contribution really translates into empowering and liberating female potters from patriarchy by giving them some measures of freedom and voice in their families and individual economic decisions is not well known.

2.0 Literature Review

The concept of rural livelihood is regarded as one of the central aspects of development policies, practices and programs, not only in Tanzania but in other countries of the world as well. Adequate and secure livelihoods are considered a concern to the well-being of rural individuals. The livelihood concept is characterized as a set of economic activities involving self-employment and/or wage employment in order to generate adequate cash or non-cash resources. Rural

individuals use these resources to sustain their livelihoods in an enhanced manner. Chambers and Conway (1992) define livelihood as the composition of assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required to enable a living for the community. Scoones (2009) defines livelihood as the capabilities, assets (including both materials and social resources) and activities required for a living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stressors and shocks in order to maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, while not undermining the natural resources base. Chambers and Conway (1992) and Mbaiwa and Stronza (2010) define livelihood as encompassing assets (natural, physical, human, financial and social capital), activities and access to these assets (mediated by institutions and social relations) that together determine the living gained by the individual or households. Tao and Wall (2009) further state that the usefulness of the sustainable livelihood approach is in its acknowledgment that people in poorer communities often improve their livelihoods through numerous activities, or what they termed livelihood diversification.

Pottery production represents an example of livelihood diversification. Livelihood diversification is considered a key strategy at different economic levels, which are usually linked directly. It is noted that rural livelihood diversification is commonly classified as farm/non-farm, wage employment/self-employment or on-farm/off-farm (Asfaw et al., 2017). Loison (2015) considers household diversification as an income strategy for rural individuals or households in which they expand their number of activities, regardless of the location or sector. Many rural small-holder farmers have increasingly diversified their livelihood through non-farm activities and out-migration. Kassie et al. (2017) note that there are four distinct rural livelihood strategies: (1) non-farm agricultural production; (2) unskilled on-farm or off-farm wage employment; (3) non-farm earnings from trade, commerce and skilled employment; and (4) mixed strategies that combine all the three strategies. Asfaw et al. (2017) note that the prominent non-farm economic activities practiced in Ethiopia (Woleka sub-basin) include small-scale trading, casual daily labour, handcrafting of different forms and selling local liquor. All of these activities require few skills and little capital. According to Asfaw et al. (2017), non-farm livelihood diversification in Ethiopia favours the better-off groups, with special support being given to the marginalised sections of the population.

In Tanzania, rural households consider different activities an important livelihood diversification strategy in both economic and social terms. Empirical evidence confirmed that rural non-farm activities positively affect household well-being in Tanzania (Katega & Lifuliro, 2014). An analysis of the changes in rural consumption recommends that changes from agricultural to non-agricultural activities play a vital role in poverty reduction (World Bank, 2008). Similarly, Ellis and Mdoe (2003), in their study on livelihood and poverty in Tanzania, observe that non-farm activities offer an important direction out of poverty. The predominant non-farm activities undertaken in rural Tanzania vary depending on the available economic activities (Mulungu & Myeya, 2018). However, non-farm income-generating activities are commonly conducted in much of rural Tanzania. These activities include retail shops, milling machines, bars, sale of cooked food, tea rooms, tailoring, vegetable sales, bicycle repair, butchery and fish trading (Mulungu, 2013). The income generated from these non-farm activities is used to cover health service expenses, pay school fees, buying clothes and food purchases (Mbonile & Haule, 2020). Further, income earned from non-farm activities is often invested in agriculture, particularly in the purchases of farming tools like ox-

ploughs and hand hoes, purchasing of farming inputs like fertilizer and pesticides and acquiring agricultural labour (Mbonile & Haulle, 2020).

Rural livelihood and female empowerment are not recent phenomena in Tanzania. There is an adequate body of literature that exists on the subject. However, research on pottery production, rural livelihood and female empowerment is limited. Although it has been observed that pottery production contributes to the household livelihood, how this contribution really translates into empowering and liberating female potters from patriarchy by giving them some measures of freedom and voice over family and individual economic decisions is not well known. Therefore, this paper attempts to understand pottery production as a potential for livelihood and its translation into empowerment and the liberation of Kisi female potters in Tanzania between 1970–2010. The paper first describes how female potters became involved in pottery production in Ukisi. Second, the processes involved in pottery production among the Kisi are described. Third, the contribution of pottery production to the Kisi livelihood is examined, and lastly, the paper investigates whether the contribution translates into empowering and liberating female potters from patriarchy by giving them some measures of freedom and voice over family and individual economic decisions.

Historically, the period from 1970 to 2010 is of particular interest because it was when pottery production became the leading economic activity after the decline of fishing in the 1980s. It was also the period when Ukisi was much affected by trade liberalization, which led to the high price of fishing equipment. Further, this period was marked by significant improvements in the pottery industry, most notably in 1976, when the first pottery workshop was constructed in the Village of Ikombe, located on rich clay soils. This workshop led to training male and female potters on how to use potter's wheels and manufacture products such as cups, flowerpots, and ashtrays. However, when the workshop was abandoned in the 1980s, men stopped engaging in potting activities while women continued with traditional pot making. In the 1990s, women from Matema organized and formed a potting group, and from that point on onwards, the pottery industry continued to flourish and capture markets within and outside Ukisi.

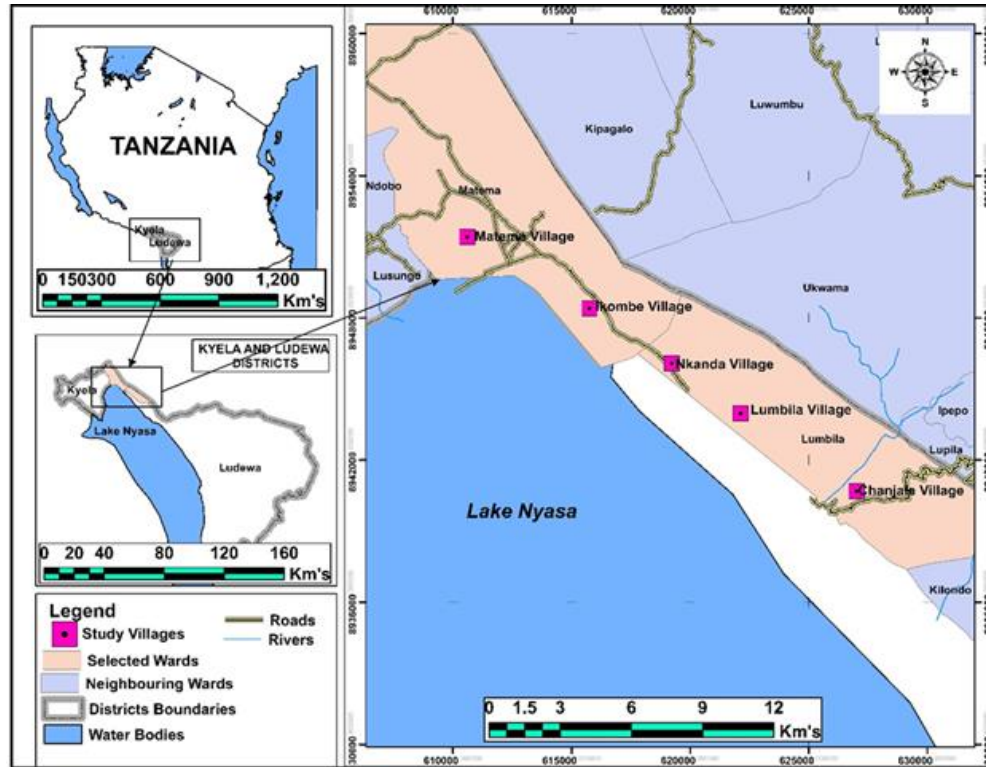
3.0 Methodology

3.1 Description of the Study Area

This study was conducted between July and November 2017 and July and November 2018 in the Ludewa and Kyela Districts of the Njombe and Mbeya Regions, respectively, in the southern highland of Tanzania (see Figure 1). The period was very important as it was when potting activities were at their peak. The Ludewa District is bordered in the north by the Njombe and Makete Districts, to the east by the Ruvuma Region, and in the south by the country of Malawi. Kyela District, on the other hand, is located at the southern end of Mbeya. The district has an area of 1322km², and borders in the east with the Makete and Ludewa Districts in the Njombe Region, in the west with the Ileje District, in the north with Rungwe, and in the south with the Republic of Malawi and Lake Nyasa (URT, 2013). The climates in Ludewa and Kyela vary with altitude, and the districts are divided into lowland (ranging from 700 to 1000 meters above sea level) and highland (ranging from 1300 to 2200 meters above sea level). The districts also receive rain between 700 and 1600 mm per year, which falls from November to

April with a break in February. Temperatures are generally warm, with prolonged high temperatures from May to October. The major soil types of the districts are mainly clay, sandy loam, and sandy (Kyela District Investment Profile, 2019).

Figure 1: Map of the northern tip of Lake Nyasa showing the study villages.



Source: Cartographic Unit, University of Dar es Salaam, 2018.

Figure 1 shows the location of the five study villages: Matema and Ikombe villages (Matema ward) in the Kyela District; and Nkanda, Lumbila, and Chanjale (Lumbila ward) in the Ludewa District. Kisi from the mentioned villages engaged in various economic activities, which were and still are determined by the prevailing environmental conditions, such as the nature of the soil and rainfall patterns. Kisi people have in the past and still are practicing agriculture in the narrow lake plain and on the ridges and spurs. Because of this, their farmlands are narrow and elongated, as seen in Figure 2. The most commonly cultivated crops include cassava, maize, millet, and sorghum.

Given the shortage of land for agriculture, Kisi people prefer fishing activities in which fish have been historically distributed freely by fishermen to elders and widows or single females. Later, fishermen started to exchange their fish for beans, finger millet, and maize from the Nyakyusa (Interview with Philipo Mwamanda Tunduru, Ikombe, October 4, 2018). The strengthening of the fishing trade enabled the Kisi and people living along the northeastern part of Lake Nyasa to sell their fish to Kinga, Nyakyusa and Bena people of Makete, Kyela and Njombe Districts, respectively. For a long time, fishing has been the backbone of local livelihoods among the Kisi. Towards the end of the 1970s and throughout the 1980s, the pottery industry in Ukisi—which was for many years produced for domestic use and bartering—transformed into an exchange for cash.

Figure 2: *Ukisi landscape showing elongated farms between ridges and spurs.*



Source: *Field survey, 2018*

The Matema, Ikombe, Nkanda, Lumbila, and Chanjale villages were selected for this study because, firstly, pottery for many years in history provided a secondary role in Ukisi, supporting fishing in the mentioned villages. Secondly, since the 1980s, the economic position of pottery in Ukisi has been transformed. Pottery replaced fishing as a principal economy in northern Ukisi households as well as became a commodity for exchange. The result was that pottery production in Ukisi has changed from meeting domestic needs to becoming a commodity for exchange in the market. Initially, Kisi potters were working individually (solitary potters) from their respective homes. The potting activities within this group were shared among the members of the household. In the 1970s, Kisi potters started to form potting groups, including the Ikombe potting workshop in 1976 and, later, the Huruma potting group in the 1990s. This helped female potters make substantial development in the pottery industry production to sustain their household livelihood (Mteti, 2015). However, little is known about whether the livelihood improvement potential really translates into empowering and liberating women from patriarchy by giving them some measures of freedom and voice over family and individual economic decisions.

3.2 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling was used for observation and in-depth interviews to obtain desired and representative samples. In total, 65 female potters were interviewed from various potting groups. This included 47 solitary potters (females) producing pots from within their households (17 from Lumbila village, 15 from Nkanda, and 15 from Chanjale). Of the remaining 18, eight were members of the Huruma potting group who made their pots at Matema and ten who worked at the Ikombe

workshop but stopped after the collapse of the workshop¹ in the 1980s. They continue to make pots using traditional methods at Ikombe.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The study used a qualitative research design. The decision to employ qualitative research was aimed at getting a deeper insight into the respondents' lives (Creswell, 2003). The data for the study was collected using structured and unstructured interviews. The interviews were conducted at the respondents' homes at times of their convenience. Each interview lasted between 40 and 60 minutes. The interviews were conducted in Kiswahili and were later translated into English. In addition to interviews, field observations and secondary data analysis were employed to enrich the primary data. Informed consent of female potters was obtained prior to each interview.

Respondents' narratives were transcribed from recorded tapes. Notes taken during the interviews were also analysed. Primary themes were identified through this process. The process was repeated many times in order to immerse in each participant's narrative before making the decision on how to transcribe it.

4.0 Findings

4.1 Women Involved in Pottery Production

In this section, data gathered from 65 women who are involved in pottery production is presented. These women were selected from different pottery production groups, which first involved the individual potters who produced pottery individually within their houses. Also, potters in either the Huruma potting group or the Ikombe potting workshop were interviewed.

4.1.1 The biographical information of the female potters. Table 1 lists the ages, marital status and level of education of the female potters. Most respondents (69.4%) were an economically active group with an age range of 21–41, while those within the ages of 43–62 accounted for 23%, and those within the 63+ age group accounted for 7.6%. A large portion of women (84%) who participated in the study were married, while single women and widows made up 13% and 3% of the sample, respectively. The study revealed that 91.8% of interviewed female potters attained primary education, and only 9.2% had no formal education.

4.2 Pottery Production

The pottery production is presented in Table 2 in terms of pottery production categories, pottery production processes, reasons for participating in pottery production, sources of potting skill acquisition, and access to potting and experience in potting activities. The findings from the study indicate that pottery production among the Kisi falls under three categories. The first category includes potters who work individually at their respective homes where no rent must be paid, and little or no money has to be spent on raw materials as well as production. The potting activities within this group are shared among the members of the household. The second group involves female potters who decided to organise and

¹ Workshop production used in this study represents a high capital investment sector that is characterized by the use of bigger premises for making and firing pots, kilns, and potter's wheels.

form a potting group in the 1990s—the group was named Huruma Female Group. This group was started by Matema women for the purpose of increasing production to earn a higher income. The aim of their organization was to generate funds that would assist those people who were living with HIV/AIDS. They did this by making pots which were sold to local as well as regional and national markets. They made varieties of pottery designs, including ashtrays, cups and saucers, frying pans, jars, hotpots, thermoses, and various tourist souvenirs. The third category is workshop production, which was established in the Ikombe village in 1976 with the assistance of Small Industrial Development Organization (SIDO). SIDO was established in 1973 with the aim of developing the small industry sector in Tanzania.

Table 1. Social Characteristics of Female Potters

Variable	Frequency N=65	% of respondents
Age		
21–42	45	69.4
43–62	15	23
63+	5	7.6
Total	65	100
Marital status		
Married	55	84.6
Widow	2	3.1
Single	8	12.3
Total	65	100
Education status of respondents		
Never attended formal education	6	9.2
Attended primary education	59	90.8
Total	65	100

Pottery production in the categories mentioned above involved activities such as the acquisition of clay and transportation, preparation of clay and pot making, and decoration and firing of pots. Traditionally, Kisi potters use three kinds of clay. First, there is blackish-grey clay which is the actual moulding clay. Second, there is whitish-grey clay which is very important for finishing and is found higher up the hill. Lastly, there is red clay, commonly known as *lila*, which is obtained from Kisi’s neighbours, the Kinga, who sell or exchange this clay for pots. Through interview and observation, it was revealed that Kisi potters have been extracting their clay using pit extraction. The system of extraction was done by females using small hand hoes, which were held by one hand, while the other hand was used for picking and sorting the clay lumps.

The clay preparation among the Kisi depended on the technology used in making pots, whether traditional or modern. Traditional pot making involves the use of the

hand to remove such impurities as pebbles, rocks or leaves that are not sorted out while digging the clay. The establishment of workshops and the introduction of wheels in the 1970s in Tanzania have changed the preparation of clay for pot making. The clay is first sun dried and then pounded using a wooden hammer.

The third stage in the pottery production process involved the forming of the vessel. Once the clay was processed to a sufficiently plastic and workable state, the potter would begin to form the vessel. In the Kisi case, potters use their hands and a device which acts closely to a potter's wheel known as *lumenyu* (see Figure 3), where potters place a heap of clay on the wheel and start building a pot.

Figure 3: A *lumenyu*.



Source: Field survey, 2018.

The Kisi pots are decorated at the end of the shaping process while the clay is still malleable. Various decoration motifs have been observed, including impressions done with a sharp knife edge to obtain a zigzag line. Also, roulette has been common among the Kisi and appeared in big pots. Roulettes are objects that are impressed onto the surface of a pot. They are made with a maize cob before firing to create decorative patterns. Kisi potters also ornament their pots with painting and specific surface treatments. The potter first applies white clay to the surface and then leaves it to dry in the sun. The application is made by hand, and the smoothing is done using special smooth stones. Later, the pots are smeared with a slip made from red clay (*lila*). After being coloured, the pots are left to dry in the sun for six to ten hours before the firing begins. The Kisi female potters fire their pots using a fire made on the ground, which is the simplest technique in firing pots.

Table 2 summarizes pottery production in terms of categories, processes, and reasons for participating in pottery production; sources of potting skill acquisition; and access to potting and experience in potting activities. This table shows that the majority (61.5%) of potters produced pots individually in their house with their family members (solitary potters), 23.1 % joined potting groups (Huruma potting group) and worked together, while 15.4% joined and worked in a workshop (Ikombe potting workshop). Of the 65 female potters interviewed, 84% extract

clay, process it, make pots, decorate and fire them in a traditional handmade way, while 15.4% use modern ways of making pots involving the use of pottery wheels. The majority of respondents (53.9%) indicated that they participated in pottery production because it was a traditional women’s activity. In comparison, 30.7% indicated that they participated in pottery production because of their low level of education, and 15.4 % of the interviewed potters showed that they engaged in potting because it was the only activity that could help them earn an income. As far as the potting skill acquisition and access to potting are concerned, 69.2% of all female potters interviewed learnt potting from their mothers, and 15.4% learnt from their mother-in-law. Members of Ikombe, who constituted 15.4% of all potters consulted, learnt pottery from their mothers or mother-in-laws and then attended formal or informal training within vocational training centers or workshops. Regarding the experience in pottery production, Table 2 shows that most female potters had extensive experience in potting activities. Almost half (46.2%) of female potters had been doing potting for more than 20 years, while 46.2% of female potters had been doing potting between 11 and 20 years of experience. The remaining 7.6% had less than ten years of experience in making and selling pots.

Table 2: Pottery Production

Variable	Frequency N=65	% of respondents
Pottery production categories		
Solitary potters	40	61.5
Huruma Potting Group	15	23.1
Ikombe Potting Workshop	10	15.4
Pottery production processes		
Traditional pottery production processes	55	84.6
Modern pottery production processes	10	15.4
Reasons for participating in pottery production		
Traditional female craft	35	53.9
Low level of education	20	30.7
Employment opportunities	10	15.4
Total	65	100
Experience in potting		
Less than 10 years	5	7.6
11–20 years	30	46.2
More than 20 years	30	46.2
Total	65	100

4.3 Pottery Production Products

Ethnographic sources indicate that pots were mainly used for cooking, serving, storage, and transporting. Most potters today make pots for cooking and storage. It has been noted that potters among the Kisi made and still make varieties of pottery designs. The oldest and biggest ones are pots which were used in the past for long-term storage of grains, and each could accommodate more than 100 kg of maize. These kinds of pots were made by elders, while young people specialized in small pots. Since the 1980s, very few potters have continued making them as the demand has decreased due to the fact that nowadays, people store their grains and water in sacks and plastic buckets, respectively. Furthermore, Kisi potters make cooking pots that are always small with a wide mouth and range in size from small to large pots. The small pot is a special pot for cooking vegetables, fish, meat and the like, while the bigger one is used for cooking bananas and rice. Other kinds include pot covers, jugs, flowerpots, frying pans, cups and saucers, ashtrays, ironing boxes, hotpots, kettles, sufurias, cooking stove candle holders and canoes (see Figure 4). Most of these styles did not exist before the 1970s, but since 1980s, the styles have dominated markets within and outside Ukisi.

Figure 4: *Common forms of pots made by Kisi women.*



Source: *Field Survey, 2018.*

4.4 Contribution of Pottery Production to the Household Income

In examining the financial contribution of pottery income toward the livelihood of the respondents, a range of variables were considered, including household size, engagement in potting, household head and income contributor, on the one hand; and pottery products and their costs, market base for potting items, income from potting, uses of pottery production income, respondents' satisfaction of the income generated and freedom to spend money from potting activities, on the other hand.

Of the 65 women interviewed, the majority (70.8%) of potters from the surveyed households had between six and ten members. Those with zero to five members constituted 24.6%, while those with 11+ family members constituted only 4.6%. Out of 65 female potters interviewed, 75.4% engaged in pottery together with other activities, while 24.6% worked full time in the pottery production. Most (84.6%) of the households were headed by males, while 15.6% were headed by single or widowed females (see Table 3).

Information gathered revealed that the cost of pottery items women made and sold ranged from 100 to 10,000 Tanzanian shillings (Tsh.). The cheapest item (Tsh. 100) was a small pot most popular for cooking vegetable and soup. The most expensive item were tourist souvenirs priced at Tsh. 10,000. In terms of the market base for pottery items, the majority of women (80%) said that they sold their products in Matema Liulilo every Saturday, where buyers from as far as Mbeya, Njombe, and Dar es salaam come to buy. In comparison, 20% indicated that they sold from their homes to the traders who resell them to the distant market in Mbeya, Njombe, and as far as Dar es Salaam. Table 4a summarises the costs of pottery items in various marketplaces.

Table 3: Household Size, Engagement in Potting and Household Head

Variable	Frequency N=65	% of respondents
Household size		
0–5	16	24.6
6–10	46	70.8
Above 11	3	4.6
Total	65	100
Engagement in potting		
Full time	16	24.6
Part time	49	75.4
Total	65	100
Household head		
Male headed	55	84.6
Headed by a female	10	15.4
Total	65	100

Table 4a. Pottery Products and Costs in Various Marketplaces

Type of pot	Price of pot in Tsh.			
	Ikombe	Matema	Mbeya	Trade fairs/ tourist souvenir
Big cooking pots	200	500	1500	-
Small cooking pots	100	150-200	1000	-
Indeko sya misi/ Mtungi	300	350-500	1000	-
Sufuria	100	200	1500	10,000
Masyala/ mbuta	400	-	-	-
Majiko (cooking stove)	-	1000	3500	10,000
Pot cover	-	500	2000	10,000
Ndelele (small pots) and the like	100	200	500	-
Flowerpot	-	500	1000	5000
Cups	1500	2000	4000	5000
Plates	2000	2500	3000	-
Thermos	-	5000	8000	-
Hotpots	-	6500	8000	-
Canoe	-	3000	5000	-

The income generated by selling pottery items varied considerably, as shown in Table 4b. These figures were obtained by calculating how much income was acquired per week with a total per month. Table 4b indicates that 53.8% of the solitary women who actively participated in potting earned between Tshs 10,000 and 50,000 per month, 35.4% earned between Tshs 50,001 and 100,000 (Ikombe Workshop), 10.8% earned above Tshs.100,000 (Huruma potting group). Table 4b shows that 70% of female potters spend the income from potting on food, clothing, expenses relating to children’s education (paying for school fees, buying school uniforms, and the like) and health expenses, 20% spend the income on food, clothing, education, health and building houses, while 10% use it for education, food, and clothing. Out of 65 female potters interviewed, 33.8% had the freedom to spend the income from potting, as shown in table 4b. However, 38.5% of respondents argued that they were free to spend the money they get from potting but acknowledged the importance and need of doing so with their husband’s cooperation. There were also those who had limited freedom to spend the income (27.7%). Apart from small purchases, those who could not buy anything valuable brought it home and then informed their husband. Instead, prior consultation had to take place and only with the husband’s consent could the wife proceed to buy the item in question.

Table 4b. Summary of the Monthly Income, uses of Income, and Freedom to use Income

Variable	Frequency of respondents	% of responders
Income generated from Potting		
10,000–50,000	35	53.8
50,001–100,000	23	35.4
Above 100,000	7	10.8
Total	65	100
Uses of potting income		
Food, education, clothing, and health	46	70.8
Food, clothing, education, health, and building houses	13	20
Education, food, and clothing	6	9.2
Total	65	100
Freedom to spend money from potting activities		
Full freedom	22	33.8
Partial freedom	25	38.5
Limited freedom	18	27.7
Total	65	100

4.5 Reasons for Participating in Pottery Production

The Kisi women had provided different reasons as to why they decided to engage in potting, among other economic activities undertaken in their respective areas. Some of the reasons include that the task is traditionally considered a female one, the lack of education, and the employment opportunities potting provided. Regarding potting as a traditional task for women, Kisi people consider potting to be a gift that God gave to the Kisi women while their husbands received the gift of fishing. From the study sample, 53.9% of women potters interviewed adopted potting because it was the only activity for women that generates income, 15.4% adopted potting due to the lack of employment opportunities in other sectors. In comparison, 30.7% said they engaged in potting because they had no educational qualification needed for other types of employment. The findings clearly indicated that no potter has gone beyond primary education.

4.6 Pottery Production and Female Empowerment

The Kisi pottery was dominated by women who initially exchanged their pots with grain, while only a few pots were sold for cash. Towards the end of the 1970s and throughout the 1980s, the pottery industry transformed from a bartering system into an exchange for cash. This was due to various reasons; one being the introduction of a transport system that could cross Lake Nyasa to various ports

from Itungi port (Kyela District) to Mbamba Bay in the Ruvuma Region via Liuli, Manda, and other small ports along the lake. Also, there was a weekly service from Itungi port to Nkata Bay in the Republic of Malawi via Mbamba Bay (Kyela District Socio-economic Profile, 1997). The transport system facilitated the transportation of pots from Ikombe, Chanjale, Lumbila, Nkanda and Matema villages to market centres in Njombe, Kyela, Mbeya, Mbozi and Tunduma (Kyela District Socio-economic Profile, 1997). This made Ukisi a potting hub, attracting many people and various institutions who wanted to promote the industry. This was evidenced in 1974 when Ikombe village received a Finnish potter, Catherine Reinhardt Kajander, who spent some time with Ikombe potters to learn potting skills and to teach them how to manufacture teapots, cups and saucers, flower vases, and western bowls.

Ukisi, with its rich clay soil and all of its households engaged in making pots, was recognized by SIDO as a pottery industry. In 1975, one man and four women from the Ikombe village were sent to SIDO headquarters in Arusha and Mbeya to be trained on how to make various pottery designs. This followed the plan of establishing a pottery workshop in Ikombe village, which was expected to help Kisi potters make as many pots as possible using the potter's wheel to increase their income. Following this, the Ikombe potting workshop was established in 1976. The government expected that the Ikombe workshop would be able to draw many people who would receive financial, technical, and marketing assistance from both government and non-governmental institutions. Also, it was expected that the industry workers would have greatly benefited from each other's experience and personal expertise, which would allow them to advance their potting skills. To ensure this, in 1978 and 1979, eight people—four men and four women—were sent to Mbeya and Arusha with assistance from SIDO to attend training on how to make various pottery designs using wheels. These people were introduced to new techniques, products, and designs with the aim of penetrating the external markets and attracting orders from outside their bounds. Unfortunately, the majority of industrial workshops established by SIDO, including Ikombe, reached an end towards the latter half of the 1980s. With this demise, most women returned to their independent pot-making tradition, while men stopped engaging in potting altogether.

It was expected that women could continue working as a group to increase production. Through interviews, it was noted that Kisi potters joined the Ikombe Pottery Industry for security purposes, as they thought it could be a way of safeguarding their right over pottery production. They feared that the clay would be officially taken over to become the property of the industry or workshop, which would limit the free access to clay. This may lead to an end of independent individual producers. Potters claimed they joined the workshop or industry as they perceived them as liberators. These potters felt that their cooperation as potters would assist in ending their exploitation by the pottery traders. Female potters argued that this was because, before the 1970s, pottery traders were very powerful in imposing terms upon potters.

Despite the collapse of the potting workshops, female potters continued with potting and earned an income, which helped their household livelihood. During the 1980s, potters started to adapt to changes and started to make goods such as flowerpots, ashtrays, candle pots and decorative souvenirs for tourists. This is how they sought to compete with imported ones. The round-bottomed traditional pot

design has consequently been altered with the introduction of *sufurias*, which are flat-bottomed to fit in modern homes. Fighting against the importation of goods facilitated potters to accept new ideas and adapt earlier inventions and innovations more extensively than they had previously done and transformed their pottery production by adding new products. The adaptation and improved products helped Kisi women to capture modern markets as well as improve their technology and increase their production and incomes. Potters produced more to meet the demand of their customers. It was noted that during the 1980s, the prices of pots were not uniform; it varied according to size, type, intended use, and the location where pots were sold.

Following the acceptance of new inventions and innovations in pottery, Kisi potters started to advance. Despite the death of the Ikombe pottery industry, in the 1980s, the people of Ikombe received two flying potter's wheels from Lejdra Chert, an Indian ceramist, who came to Mbeya to train youth on how to make ceramics. Again in 1984, Ikombe was visited by a German, Klaus Sachau, who was amazed by the richness of clay in the village, and the way women were engaged in pottery. When Sachau returned to Germany, his people contributed two kick wheels to the Ikombe people. Furthermore, in 1985 Ikombe village was visited by two people from the Friedrich Obert Federation as a follow-up on the establishment of the Ikombe industry and had a discussion with potters on the progress of the industry. The visits helped to improve the products, mode of production, and scale of production. It was during this time that more pots were made and transported to various places within and outside Ukisi. In terms of product, new pottery designs were manufactured, and the scale of production increased from the 1970s.

In the 1990s, the Huruma Female Potters Group was formed. The group was started in Matema, where women connected to generate funds that would assist those people who were living with HIV/AIDs. They did this by making pots which were sold to local as well as regional and national markets. Women used traditional methods of pot making and made a variety of pottery designs, including ashtrays, cups and saucers, frying pans, jars, kettles, and hotpots. The group experienced problems in storing their pots before and after firing while waiting for customers. Also, the group faced the problem of marketing their products, although sometimes the group was invited to various national and international functions like the Dar es Salaam International Trade Fair and Nane Nane Agricultural Trade Fair, where they obtained higher prices for their products. Apart from these trade fairs, the group depended on customers who visited their homes and bought one or two products.

The decision on how to use the income from potting varies between potters. According to this study, a majority of women potters (76.8 %) made their own decisions to use the money received from potting. In comparison, 27.7% of women potters had limited freedom to use the money from potting activities.

5.0 Discussion

The biographical information of female potters indicates that the majority (69.4 %) of the respondents in the study were between 21 and 41 years of age. It was realized that potting is the only economic activity that generates income for women, and there are very few secondary schools in the study areas that could accommodate all *standard seven leavers* (those who completed primary education) for secondary

education. Moreover, the distance from home to school is quite long, forcing young girls to drop school and engage more in potting. These results correspond with Mteti (2016), who noted that the only nearby secondary school to accommodate the standard seven leavers was in Matema, about ten to fifteen kilometres from Lumbila or Chanjale. In this case, they joined potting at an early age. The majority (98%) of female potters in this study had low levels of education. None of the potters interviewed had attended secondary school, while very few of them advanced their education by attending informal vocational training.

However, those potters who worked in workshops got a chance to attend formal or informal training on how to make pots using potter's wheels and business training related to the performance of the workshop. This characteristic is very similar to the potters that were found in Uganda and Ethiopia (Kayamba & Kwesiga, 2016; Sirika, 2008). Low levels of education for women are common in rural areas as the general practice was to educate boys because it was believed that girls would get married one day, move out and stay at their husband's house. Kayamba and Kwesiga (2016) insist that potters in the Ankole Region had been optimistic about pottery making but became less interested when they joined secondary education. The authors note that female youth who got a chance for further education felt that pot making is for the low class and is a dirty job. Despite this, findings from the study indicate that Kisi female potters engaged in pottery production and reached a stage of forming workshop after being recognised by SIDO. SIDO insisted that small industries make use of local materials to avoid transport over long distances (Msami & Wangwe, 2016). The Ikombe potting workshop was among these pottery workshops and aimed at modernizing the pottery industry and increasing pottery production among Ikombe people.

Pottery production among the Kisi female potters involved activities such as the acquisition of clay and transportation, preparation of clay and pot making, and decoration and firing of pots. It was noted by Livingstone (2001) that clay is often discovered by mere chance through such activities as farming, digging a well, a pit latrine, a foundation for a house, or numerous other activities. Through interview and observation, it was revealed that Kisi female potters have been extracting their clay using pit extraction. This is supported by Gosselain (2008), who argues that African potting communities extract clay using pit extraction, surface collection, underwater galleries, or underwater extraction. Ethnographic sources indicate that pots were mainly used for cooking, serving, storage, and transporting. Most potters today make pots for cooking and storage. It has been noted that potters among the Kisi made and still make varieties of pottery designs. These designs are generally determined by the purpose it has, which into account by the potter before she begins to build her pot (Mteti, 2016).

The Kisi female potters have provided various reasons why they took up potting, among other economic activities in their area. The reasons included traditionally female tasks as all potters who engaged in potting are female. Also, they considered the low level of education as a major reason for taking up potting. This is supported by data from the study, which show that none of the potters had attended secondary school. Despite their low level of education, Kisi female potters considered education a typically powerful factor for individuals to obtain a higher income and standard of living (Mteti, 2015). In this case, Kisi female potters struggled to increase their chances of obtaining better payment from their

pots, hence empowerment. In this way, they were empowered through various training and visited by various visitors from within and outside the country.

The training emanated from various efforts put in place by the organization *Women in Development* (WID), which because of associated shortcomings, it was replaced by *Gender and Development* (GAD). WID encouraged women to engage in various income-generating activities (IGAs), which targeted low-income women. It was in this way that women potters were encouraged to undertake IGAs to realise cash income of their own to supplement their household income and to improve their standard of living. It was also during that time that women potters were encouraged to form potting groups to increase production to meet the demand of many customers. It was in this effort that Kisi women potters joined the Ikombe industrial workshop, and with its demise, Ikombe and Kisi female potters, in general, struggled to attend training and formed potting groups in 1990. This was facilitated by the mass importation of aluminium pots and pans, plastic buckets and basins, and porcelain and enamel experienced by Tanzanian and other African societies in the 1980s (Msami & Wangwe, 2016). These goods seriously threatened the traditional pottery industry and women potters in particular. Many people seemed to prefer these containers and utensils because they thought they were more durable than clay pots. In addition, plastic vessels were more colourful, light and less liable to break. In this case, flexibility was required to meet the needs and tastes of both rural and town markets. It was during the 1990s, when Kisi female potters started to diversify their pottery products and make flowerpots, ashtrays, candle pots, decorative souvenirs, cooking stoves, and flat bottomed (sufuria) pot designs. This was how they sought to compete with imported products.

The fight against the importation of goods facilitated potters to accept new ideas, adapt to earlier invention and innovation more extensively than they had previously done, and transform their pottery production by adding new products. This helped Kisi women to capture modern markets and increase their production and income. The dynamics from WID to GAD helped to explain the reappearance of potting groups among the Kisi and other pottery producing communities in Tanzania. Mteti (2015), for example, noted that there was a reappearance of potting groups among the Pare in the 1980s and accelerated in the 1990s, when many governmental and non-governmental organisations increased support to women in a bid to eradicate household poverty. Pottery production increased, and potters formed potting groups, and others reached the stage of establishing workshops, as in the case of Pare potters, resulting in increased income for them. This was followed by a growing recognition of the importance of the informal sector in Tanzania and realisation of its vital contribution to the growth of GDP (Mdoe et al., 2015).

Therefore, the main reason given by the respondents was to earn income or a living (as pots were initially exchanged with other goods like grains, and later became commodities sold to earn income). Similar findings were reported by Mbonile and Haulle (2020), where income is mentioned as the main reason for the Kisi to engage in potting. Early work by Mihanjo (2001) supports this claim in the conclusion that pottery production replaced fishing in the 1970s, and starting in the 1980s, it became the main source of income. This is also supported by the study,

which shows that Kisi female potters made several efforts to make sure their pots fetched a high price.

As indicated in this study, the price for different pottery products ranged between Tsh 100 and Tsh 10,000. According to Mteti (2016), the price of a pot was determined by the location where the product was sold, the design, type of product, and its size. As a result, bigger pots (lysiyala) are sold for less than smaller pots, and the prices at the marketplace are lower than when sold at home. By selling these pots, Kisi female potters obtained a monthly income, which helped them to earn their living. Mteti (2016) noted that it is difficult to estimate the income producers receive from potting (Kayamba & Kwesiga, 2017). In the case of this study, part of the challenge is that women do not keep records of the income they earn from potting. However, besides that, the income made by respondents from potting varied considerably, as seen in Table 4b.

The income received by women from potting plays a crucial role in the well-being of a household (see Table 4b). The money earned is spent on the basic needs of the household, such as food, clothes, and other household goods. These findings are in line with the study conducted by Nindi (2007), Majuk et al. (2010), and Mbonile and Haulle (2020). In their study on the livelihood impact of income from pottery production in Ukisi and Nigeria, Kayamba and Kwesiga (2017) state that those who produced pottery mostly spend their money on food, followed by other basic needs. They further state that although the income received from potting may be small, it enables them and their households to afford future investments. The income also contributed to the welfare of the potters and their households to some extent. Kayamba and Kwesiga (2017) point out that even though the importance of this income can demonstrate, the income mostly serves as supplementary income in most of the households. Pereira et al. (2006) reflect on this phenomenon and state that money from potting is used for groceries, school fees, and school uniforms. In this study, the Kisi potters also use their income from potting to construct houses.

The decision on how to use the income from potting varies between potters. According to this study, a majority of women potters (76.8 %) made their own decisions to use the money received from potting. These results show a similar trend to findings made by other authors, such as Arthur (2013) and Kayamba and Kwesiga (2016), who note that most women make decisions about the money they receive from their activities. Arthur (2013) argues further that allowing women to make decisions about their income can be seen as a positive factor in the livelihoods of their households (Murth Raju & Kamath, 2005). The contribution of women to their family expenditures is an important indicator of economic empowerment. When women are economically and socially empowered, they become potential forces for change in their families and communities. A number of studies, such as those by Duflo (2011) and Doepke and Tertit (2011) indicate that female income earning is an important step in overcoming poverty. Kristof & WuDunn (2009) found that females have a greater propensity to reinvest a much higher portion of their income in their families and communities than men, thus spreading wealth beyond themselves. A study conducted in Uganda about child health revealed that when income is earned by the mother, the survival probability of a child increases by at least 20% (Kayamba & Kwesiga, 2017). Furthermore, childrens' nutritional well-being is improved because mothers tend to invest more of their income in health and nutrition.

6.0 Conclusion

Findings of this study have established that the Kisi's primary engagement has been agriculture on the narrow lake plains and in the ridges and spurs where they cultivate crops such as cassava, bananas, maize, and millet. However, most of the time, the annual yield has been low and inadequate for subsistence due to insufficient land for agriculture and inadequate labour inputs. Due to this, the Kisi prefer fishing and agriculture. However, the cultivation on the ridges provoked erosion which then affected aquatic systems and led to the decline of fish in the lake. Furthermore, trade liberalization in the 1980s in Tanzania and Africa at large contributed to the decline of fish catches due to the high price of fishing equipment. Few fishermen or households could afford to buy them. This study revealed that the decline transformed pottery production, which initially was for domestic use, to production for earning cash. Since 1980, pottery production has faced the challenge of mass importation of aluminium, plastic, and porcelain pots from nations such as China, Indonesia, and South Africa. To overcome this, women potters advanced their potting skills by attending various training within and outside their region. This helped them diversify the pottery products to make products which imitated the imported ones. Their engagement in the pottery business increased their source of income, and they developed good relationships between themselves and the external traders. They all understood the significance of producing different types of pottery with different designs to exploit good market opportunities. The income obtained by women potters from pottery was their financial capital that facilitated their livelihoods at individual and household levels. The study revealed that the income was used for household purposes like buying food, paying school fees, buying clothes, and other domestic needs. In the same vein, the findings show that income earned by women potters gives them more decision-making power in their respective households. Despite this, the competition from imported goods still threatened the markets of locally produced pots. This led to a decrease in the number of potters and young ones are not interested in the industry. This study recommends that because pottery has been seen as a source of livelihood and empowerment of women among the Kisi, the government should find an appropriate means for rescuing the industry.

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