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Prevalence of Men and Women in Wildlife Management and Conservation and Sustainable Community Based Conservancies in Narok County, Kenya

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Gender equity and women's empowerment are prerequisites to effective biodiversity conservation, climate action and meeting the Sustainable Development Goals. In view of its ecological, social, and economic value, wildlife is an important renewable natural resource. Its significance is felt in areas such as rural development, land-use planning, food supply, tourism, scientific research, and cultural heritage. A better understanding of the different roles, knowledge, needs and aspirations of women and men with regard to wildlife management and conservation can help us achieve the twin goals of better conservation outcomes and increased gender equity. This study aimed to assess the prevalence of men and women in wildlife management and conservation and sustainable community based conservancies within the Maasai Mara ecosystem, Narok County, Kenya with the aim of coming up with the best strategies to enhance gender-responsive and sustainable wildlife ecosystem. The study was carried out in four Maasai Mara wildlife conservancies. A descriptive survey and sequential explanatory mixed-method approach were adopted for the study. A sample size of 167 respondents comprising wildlife managers, conservancy, landowners, and conservancy rangers participated in the study. Data collection was done using questionnaires, Focused Group discussion and interviews. The data collected quantitatively was analysed using descriptive statistics and the findings were presented using percentages, graphs, and tables. The findings showed that there were gender differentials in prevalence of men and women in wildlife management and conservation in the Maasai Mara ecosystem. Women were underrepresented as staff, wildlife managers, and landowners in the conservancies. The study recommends that the wildlife conservancies, institutions, and managers should find ways of incorporating more women into wildlife management and conservation as well as employ gender advocacy and empowerment programmes to facilitate gender equity in wildlife ecosystems.

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INTRODUCTION

Gender equality and women's empowerment is a prerequisite to effective conservation, climate action and meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). International agreements on biodiversity as stipulated in convention for biodiversity, sustainable development (Agenda 2030) and most recently climate change (the Paris Agreement) present new opportunities for engaging both men and women in accelerating equitable action. From Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) processes to biodiversity strategies and climate change gender action plans (ccGAPs). Governments, businesses and civil society are now embracing gender-responsive solutions to address the world's most pressing development challenges, (IUCN, 2018).

In view of its ecological, social and economic value, wildlife is an important renewable natural resource. Its significance is felt in areas such as rural development, land-use planning, food supply, tourism, scientific research, and cultural heritage (FAO, 2017). A better understanding of the different roles, knowledge, needs and aspirations of women and men with regard to natural resources can help us achieve the twin goals of better conservation outcomes and increased gender equity. Since the development of wildlife management and conservation initiatives,

one wonders to what extent men and women are involved in the management and conservation of wildlife as a natural resource. Therefore, the need to investigate the gender prevalence in wildlife management and conservation in the Maasai Mara ecosystem, Narok County.

Historically, there has been higher participation rates of men in various wildlife activities, as well as traditional employment patterns which may account for the substantially greater numbers of men working in wildlife and other natural resource professions. However, a study by Torres-Cruz and McElwee (2012) explained that treating wildlife crimes and trade in a gender-blind way and failure to incorporate women in wildlife-related crimes in decision making and investigations may prevent understanding the issues fully and finding more sustainable solutions. This is because wildlife crimes are highly gendered activities hence the need to incorporate gender-responsive wildlife management and conservation policies and strategies for sustainable ecosystems.

A study by Keane et al. (2016) unveiled that there is a long history of community-based conservation (CBC) throughout Africa, but in Kenya, a new and important group of initiatives known as conservancies has emerged over recent years. Despite their growing importance, there

have been few attempts to evaluate the outcomes of conservancy establishment. Thus a critical need to come up with gender-disaggregated data on wildlife management and conservation for sustainable wildlife conservation interventions. Duran (2018) also adds that it is essential to keep the changing patterns of gender relations in wildlife management and conservation under continual examination, to monitor the extent to which progress is being made towards gender emancipation and to interrogate the adequacy of prevailing strategies towards this goal.

Statement of the Problem

The establishment of wildlife conservancies creates potential local level partnerships for addressing gender inequalities in wildlife management and conservation for sustainable wildlife ecosystems. Despite their growing importance, the attempts that have tried to evaluate the outcomes of conservancy establishment are limited in their ability to unveil gender disaggregated data on the prevalence of men and women in wildlife management and conservation. This therefore, makes it difficult for any intervention focusing on gender equity in wildlife management and conservation to know which direction to reinforce. There is therefore, a critical need to come up with gender-disaggregated data and gender analytical information on wildlife management and conservation for sustainable wildlife conservation interventions hence this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender Representation in Wildlife Management and Conservation Institutions

Biodiversity conservation and management practices are social processes in which women and men across various classes, castes, ages, occupations, and power groups are important actors in helping to conserve, manage, and use biodiversity in a sustainable way (Evans, 2007). Therefore, diverse elements of gender analysis such as gender roles, responsibilities, division of labour, gender relations of power, rights,

ownership, access to, and control over biodiversity are useful in analysing the gender differentials embedded in biodiversity conservation and management practices. Most studies of men and women wildlife-related recreation globally have found higher participation rates among men in institutions of conservation. This contrast is especially striking when activities involve consumptive use, for example, hunting, trapping, or fishing.

Westermann et al. (2005) found that women's participation in natural resource management groups across 20 countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia increased collaboration, solidarity and conflict resolution in groups. It also increased groups' ability for self-sustaining collective action but noted that women's participation was less compared with that of men.

In India, for instance, Douma, (2019), noted that women are poorly represented at the decision-making level, and even if they participate in discussions about wildlife management, their power was limited due to the social and cultural settings. This was also supported by Chetri (2008) who also argued that the importance of gender is not recognised to the same extent in protected area policy. For example, the Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPWC) in Nepal and India does not keep track of the number of women participating in buffer zone management. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) recognises the role of people, especially women and indigenous peoples, in the conservation and sustainable use of biological resources (UNDP, 2007). It also affirms the need for the meaningful participation of women at all levels of policy-making for biodiversity conservation (UNDP, 2012, FAO, 2010). However, Momsen, (2007) criticised that merely mentioning women in CBD documents is not enough to strengthen their access to biological diversity. There is hence a need to establish the gender differentials in wildlife management and conservation for sustainable wildlife conservancies.

In Africa, women rangers in Virunga national park in Congo and the Black Mamba Anti-

Poaching women rangers of Balule national reserve in South Africa are excellent examples of gender inclusion in wildlife management. Since its inception in 2013, the Black mamba women rangers have reduced snaring and poaching in Balule national reserve to a large extent (UNDP 2012). Wildlife tourism in Narok County is stipulated as a core economic pillar in the attainment of Sustainable development goals. Sustainability of wildlife conservancies in the Maasai Mara is critical for Narok County to achieve sustainable development.

Among the Vhavenda people of Zimbabwe, dialogue inclusiveness and complementarity among men and women in the management of natural resources were the major pillars that helped to sustain ecological systems while at the same time benefiting the human race (Mukoni, 2013). Ogra (2012) argues that experience and attitudes relating to the gendered use of space in conservation areas must not be overlooked. This position is supported by Gnyawali (2015), whose case-study research in the Khata Community in Nepal, has demonstrated the advantages of working with communities in a gender-inclusive way in order to reconcile the needs of both humans and wildlife within a conservation setting. Similarly, support for a gender approach to biodiversity conservation is provided by Pillai and Suchintha (2006) in their study of women self-help groups in the Periyar Tiger Reserve in Kerala, where groups of women regularly patrol the forests to discourage illegal entry and control biomass extraction. The adequateness of the gender representations in wildlife management and conservation in Kenyan wildlife ecosystems was of great importance.

A study by Satyanarayana et al. (2012) in Tanbi Wetlands National Park (TWNP) area of The Gambia on Africa's West Coast observed that the TRY Oyster Women's Association is an almost exclusively female Producer association with exclusive rights to the cockle and oyster fishery. The project has resulted, not only in the restoration of the oyster stocks through the establishment and enforcement of an optimal

harvest season and size limits for harvested oysters but also in the reforestation of local mangroves, thereby impacting positively on the conservation of marine forest biodiversity. A study by Harper et al. (2018) also noted that gender-aware approach to conservation which ensures that measures to regulate the harvesting of a common pool resource are drawn up and agreed upon together with representatives of the communities whose livelihoods depend on it is crucial. The Maasai Mara ecosystem is a (common-pool resource) for the Maasai community, whose livelihoods depend on it. For this wildlife ecosystem to be sustained, a gender-aware approach to wildlife conservation is critical hence the current study.

A study by Sayuni (2016) on the impacts of protected areas (PAs) on gender in Tanzania indicated variations between the two PAs studied. In the Enduimet wildlife management area, men and women have access to natural resources for household use and derive some direct and indirect benefits from tourism activities, while in the Kilimanjaro National Park, resource access is denied, and local tourism benefits are minimal. The PAs impact both men and women, but the most significant impact is felt by women due to inequality in the gendered division of labour and resources at the household level. In addition, women in female-headed households are affected more than their counterparts in male-headed households. The study also found that the PAs' attempt at benefit-sharing as compensation for resource restrictions does not meet the felt needs of men and women. The PAs function in such a way that they have aggravated people's workloads and risks instead of addressing community interests, paying attention to relevant livelihood needs, or improving wellbeing. This study therefore suggested strategies for gender-responsive wildlife management and conservation, which can be replicated in conservancies in Africa with similar characteristics for sustainable wildlife conservation.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was grounded upon feminist political ecology theory. Feminist political ecology (FPE) emerged in the 1990s as a subfield of political ecology, building on previous work by feminist scholars and feminist theorists. Feminist political-ecology was developed by Rocheleau et al. (1996). The approach has extended “the multiple-scale analysis of environment and power in political ecology to gendered relations both within and beyond the household, from individual to national scales”.

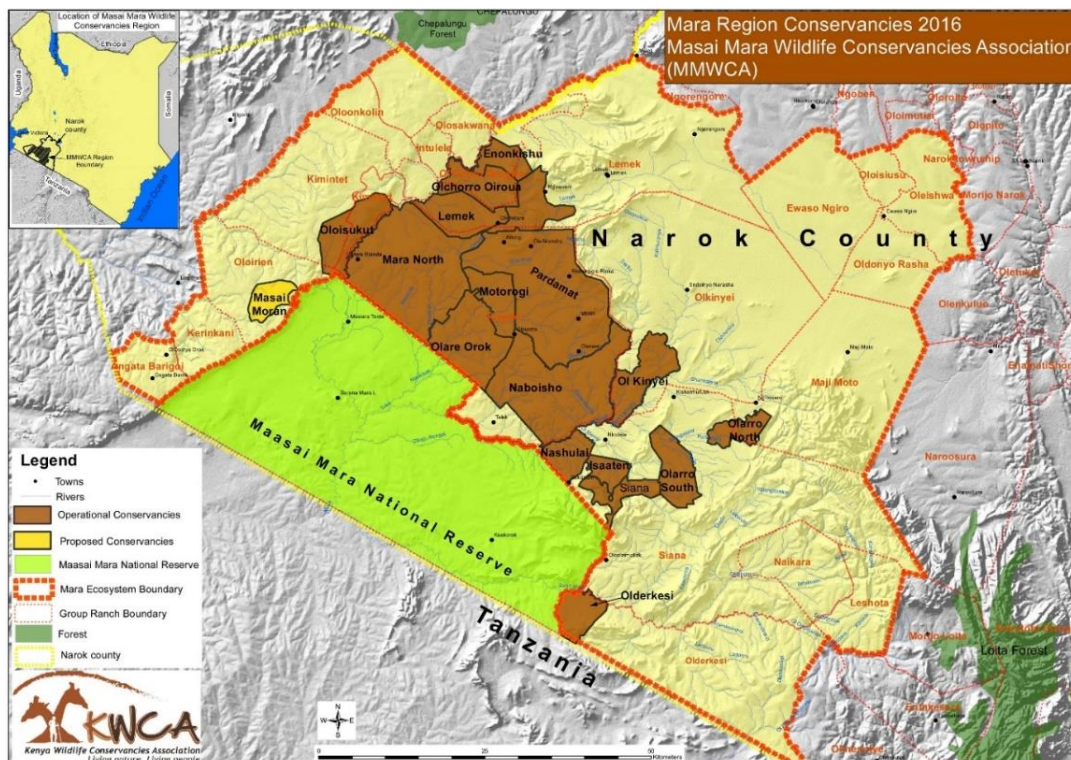
The theory demonstrates that gender is an important element in influencing access to resources, knowledge, and control over natural resources. This study thus adopted this gender-based political-ecology approach in analysing biodiversity conservation and management issues. Access to, control over, and ownership of natural resources such as biodiversity resources and land are negotiated within and between households, and therefore gender and household relations are a focal point through which the relations of production are studied.

METHODOLOGY

Study Area

The study was conducted in selected conservancies in the Maasai Mara ecosystem, Narok County, Kenya. The Maasai Mara National Reserve ecosystem covers 1,510 km² in south-western Kenya. It is the northern-most section of the Mara-Serengeti ecosystem, which covers 25,000 km² (9,700 sq mi) in Tanzania and Kenya. It is bordered by the Serengeti Park to the south, the Siria escarpment to the west, and Maasai pastoral ranches to the north, east and west. The Talek and Mara Rivers are the major rivers draining the reserve. Shrubs and trees fringe most drainage lines and cover hill slopes and hilltops. The terrain of the reserve is primarily open grassland with seasonal river lets. The long rains occur from March-June, followed by the dry season from July-October while the short rains fall in November-December, and a short dry season finishes off the year. The Altitude of Maasai Mara is: 1500-2180m; Rainfall: 83mm/month; Temperature range: 12-30°C (Keane et al. 2016).

Figure 1: Map of Maasai Mara conservancies



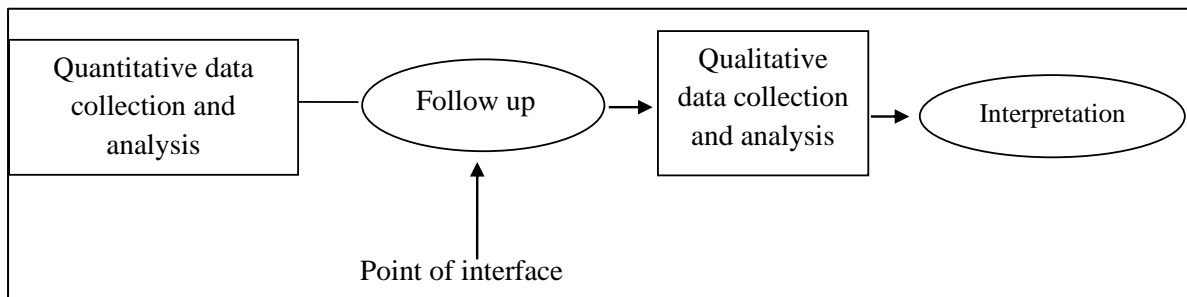
Research Method

The research design for this study was descriptive research. Orodho (2009) states that a descriptive research design is suitable where the study seeks to describe and portray characteristics of an event, situation, and a group of people, community, or population as it is. Since descriptive research allows for a multifaceted approach to data collection and analysis, a sequential explanatory mixed-method approach was used to guide the data collection and analysis process of the study. This approach is characterised by the collection and analysis of quantitative data followed by a collection and analysis of qualitative data. The

fundamental principle of the mixed-method approach is that the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a better understanding of the problem than either approach can achieve alone (Creswell & Plano, 2007).

In this study, quantitative data collection was done using questionnaires and subsequently qualitative data collection was done using FGD and in- depth interview. Creswell & Plano Clark, (2007), designed a diagrammatic representation of mixed method sequential explanatory design as illustrated in Figure 2 which was applied to the current study.

Figure 2: Explanatory Sequential Approach Diagram



Source: (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

Target Population

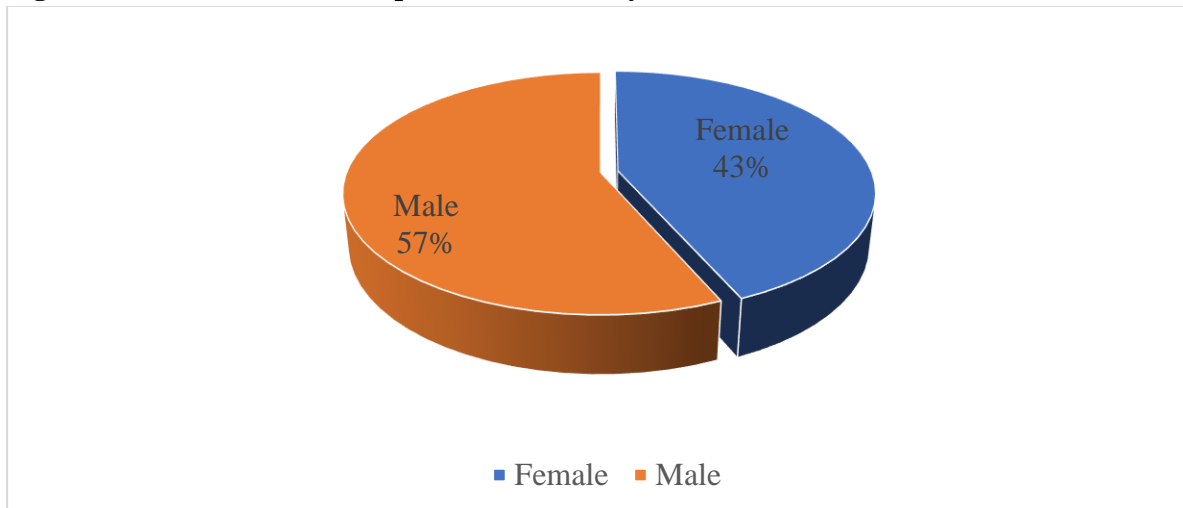
In total the conservancies in Maasai Mara are 16 in number (MMWCA, 2016). The target population for this study was 1,176 conservancy landowners, 44 conservancy land owners’ committee (LOC), 62 conservancy rangers, 4 conservancy managers, 5 Officers from Narok county government ministry of wildlife and tourism and 15 officers from Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancy Association (MMWCA).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Gender of the Respondents (Wildlife Managers)

The study established that 57% of the respondents were men while 43% were women. This can be interpreted to mean that there were more men than women working in the wildlife management and conservation institutions as staff and even as wildlife managers. The findings are presented in **Figure 3** below.

Figure 3: Gender of the Participants (Conservancy Landowners)



The total number of the conservancy landowners that participated in the FGD was 128. Out of these, only 10 representing (7.81%) were women, and the rest 118, representing 92.1%, were men. This disparity can be attributed to land ownership, as the majority of the women do not own land in the Maasai community.

Gender of the Informants (Rangers)

The number of rangers who participated in the study was 16, of which 2 were women and 14 were men. This can be represented as 12.5% women and 87.5% men. Although Kenya wildlife service has played a great role in employing women rangers nationally, a lot needs to be done in mainstreaming gender in the recruitment patterns in the Maasai Mara conservancies.

Gender Representations in Selected Wildlife Management and Conservation institutions in the Maasai Mara ecosystem

Gender Representations among Wildlife Managers

Figure 2 above displays the analysis of men and women wildlife managers who were sampled for this study. According to the analysis, 57% of the respondents were men, while 43% were women. The study further probed on the gender representations in the respective departments where the sampled respondents worked. This was done in order to get a deeper understanding of the other staff working in wildlife management and conservation institutions. The sampled respondents were asked to give the number of the staff who work in their respective departments in terms of gender composition. They were also asked to give the number of men and women who work at the management/supervisory level in their respective departments. The responses were tabulated below:

Table 1: Gender representations of the staff in the sampled wildlife institutions

	N	Max	Sum	%
Women staff in the department	23	8	63	22.5
Men staff in the department	23	20	217	77.5
Women in the management level in your department	23	3	28	24.5
Men in management level in your department	23	8	86	75.4
Valid N (list wise)	23			

From the table above, the responses revealed that the total number of men staff in the departments of wildlife management and conservation where the sampled respondents worked was 217, which comprises 77.5%. The responses further revealed that the number of women staff who were working in wildlife conservation institutions where the sampled respondents worked was 63 in number, which represents 22.5%.

The study further interrogated the number of men and women who worked at the management level in the various departments where the sampled respondents worked. The responses as shown in table 1 above show that men in the management level were 86 in number in the sampled institutions of wildlife conservation, which represents 75.4%, whereas women in the management level were 28 in number, which represents 24.5%. This reveals a wide gap of disparity in staff working in wildlife conservation institutions as well as those holding managerial and decision-making levels in these institutions. This study hence concurs with the feminine political ecology theory discussed earlier, which argues that gender is considered to be a critical factor in “shaping resource access, and control, interacting with class, caste, race, culture and ethnicity to shape processes of ecological change. The findings can also be interpreted to mean that the existing strategies to enhance gender-responsive wildlife management and conservation are inadequately implemented to reflect in the hiring and promotion processes in wildlife management and conservation institution.

The slow transition toward gender equity in wildlife management and conservation can be explained by Lopez and Scott (2000), who argued that social and organisational structures influence the human resource and social processes leading to the division of labour and related gender differentials. Social structures comprise the patterns of social interaction, thereby influencing the primary and secondary socialisation in the family and at the workplace, respectively. Socialisation is the transmission of social norms, values, and role expectations to the members of

the society within socialising agencies such as the family, the education system, and the workplace. The socialisation process leads to the gendered division of labour, as women and men learn their gender role expectations (Agyeman, 2003) The division of labour is transferred from the family to other institutions leading to gender differentials and inequalities in wildlife management and conservation institutions.

The findings from the informants (rangers) also revealed that women were underrepresented among the scouts and rangers employed by the wildlife conservancies in Maasai Mara. They argued that most of the women could not make it as rangers due to fear of wildlife, especially the dangerous ones and that domestic work such as caring for children, grazing cows and cleaning activities restricted women from seeking employment.

One-man ranger, for example, explained that;

The women cannot do the work we men rangers do. This is a risky job, especially when the animals become wild and women do not know the tricks of escaping and running. Even the few women rangers we have are left behind to guard the camps, they don't go to patrol (OI Martin, 29/6/2019).*

They also added that most men could not allow their wives to seek employment in wildlife conservancies as rangers since they regarded this job as a man's domain. Further, they concluded that women rangers could not make good wives as they would be very aggressive, and this may destabilise their homes.

A woman working as a ranger elaborated this by saying;

Most of the tourist camps and lodges that are in these conservancies are far from our residential homes because the game reserve is so wide. If you happen to get a job as a woman, you will be needed to stay in the staff houses, which most of the men will not condone. If you decide to go very early, it is not safe because

of wild animals roaming all over. Most married women decide to let men go as they are left behind to take care of children and cattle. She added that the ranger job requires a lady who is not married because she is not under any external authority (OI Nalinkunkera, 29/6/2019).*

Boone et al. (2014) argue that environmental education is an important tool to improve attitudes related to wildlife. For instance, education through direct experiences, such as visits to protected areas by local residents, can be a valuable learning tool. Particularly in the case of women, such visits can help reduce the participants' fear of wildlife and increase their support for the conservation of species that they rarely see or may view negatively due to human-wildlife conflict. Further research in the Maasai Mara ecosystem needs to be done to evaluate the adequateness of environmental education in fostering gender-responsive wildlife management and conservation. The findings from the informants have also revealed some form of cultural stereotypes in wildlife conservation roles in those women who work as rangers are labelled aggressive and hence cannot make good women. This confirms Keane et al. (2016) findings which supported that women have fewer opportunities to participate in making environmental decisions due to cultural stereotypes that devalue women's

opinions. As a result, their perceptions and interests are sometimes ignored or excluded when policies are designed. The absence of opportunities is often due to reproductive work, cultural restrictions, and women's lack of schooling and low self-esteem. The findings of this study hence confirm that nothing much has changed in the Maasai Mara ecosystem in terms of penetrating the cultural seal to awaken the Maasai community on the benefits of gender-responsive wildlife management and conservation.

Additionally, the participants (landowners) discussed that all the conservancies were managed by the landowners committee (LOC) that was elected by the landowners themselves. They, however stated that women were underrepresented as landowners in all the conservancies. The reasons given for this was that majority of the women did not own land in Maasai Mara. Further probing also revealed that those women who owned land in Maasai Mara were either windowed or were empowered economically.

The study further interrogated whether the differentials in terms of the prevalence of men and women in wildlife institutions impacted the wildlife ecosystems. The responses were tabulated below:

Table 2: Impact of gender differentials in prevalence of men and women on wildlife ecosystem

Question	Responses	F	%	men	women	both
Do the gender differentials above impact this wildlife ecosystem in any way?	Resistance to conservation initiatives	6	26			
	Destruction of trees in the conservancies	4	17			
Identify the major actors in the listed factors	Increased wildlife trade	4	17			
	Illegal cattle grazing	5	22			

Most of the respondents, i.e. 26%, noted that there was resistance to conservation initiatives by women in the conservancies. Destruction of trees by both men and women for charcoal and firewood was also revealed by 17% of the respondents. Other 17% recorded that there were

increased cases of wildlife trade whose actors were both men and women. Lastly, 22% of the wildlife managers unveiled that illegal cattle grazing in the conservancies was majorly a women's activity. From the above findings, all the listed activities have a detrimental effect on the

wildlife ecosystem. The results have also confirmed that women are also core actors in wildlife ecosystem destruction, contrary to Leach's (2007) findings that men are major culprits of ecosystem threats and form the majority globally in consumptive use of wildlife.

Destruction of trees, for example, will lead to wildlife habitat loss. The wildlife trade, on the other hand, is a global disaster which is threatening the existence of wild animals. Illegal cattle grazing leads to competition for pasture among wildlife and cattle and may cause the migration of wildlife to other countries. Nellemann et al. (2016) in his study, found out that women have creative and powerful ways to negotiate, contest, resist, and create room to manoeuvre in their struggles over biodiversity resources. Resistance to conservation initiatives could be one way in which women in the Maasai Mara ecosystem are struggling to lift up their voices of inclusion in wildlife conservation.

The study further concurs with McElwee (2012), how the world has been unable to find sustainable solutions to biodiversity loss due to failure to incorporate gender dimensions in wildlife loss. The underrepresentation of women in the management of wildlife resources is an issue of critical concern that can put sustainable wildlife habitats in the Maasai Mara ecosystem at stake. Wildlife tourism is central to the economy of Narok County and is stipulated as the second economic pillar in the Kenya vision 2030 that will lead to the attainment of Sustainable development goals (SDG). All these may fail to be achieved as envisaged if timely gender-responsive interventions are not implemented in the Maasai Mara ecosystem. The findings from landowners and rangers also concurred that women were major actors in ecosystem destruction despite the existing myth that men are major culprits. They also cited that this could be a result of women not being held accountable since they were underrepresented in wildlife institutions.

One ranger, for example, lamented that:

Women have made our work in these conservancies very difficult at times. When you find them with firewood, you cannot stop them, you cannot beat them like the way we beat men culprits. When you find them grazing, they lament that the cattle strayed. They are even less suspected of serious crimes in this ecosystem, yet they are directly or indirectly involved (OI Morompi, 29/6/2019).*

The above statement confirms that women are also major actors in wildlife crimes, but they are less suspected. It is also evident that women are also favoured by the law and the rangers as they are less severely punished or just left unpunished for gendered use of resources such as firewood and grass in the conservancies.

CONCLUSION

The study's objective was to establish the gender disparities in wildlife management and conservation and sustainable wildlife ecosystem. This was analysed with indicators such as the number of men and women in wildlife management and conservation institutions and those in the management and decision-making level in wildlife conservation institutions. The study also further probed on those who managed the conservancies at the community level and how the wildlife managers were selected at the local/community level. The study found that men were more represented in the wildlife management and conservation institutions as workers and occupied the majority of the management positions. The study also revealed that men dominated the rangers' jobs in the conservancies, as was evident in some conservancies where there were no women rangers at all. Further probing noted that the community labelled rangers job as a man's domain, and women who ventured into it were considered hard-headed/aggressive and not fit for homemaking. Among the landowners, women were also underrepresented, and men comprised the majority. The reason for this disparity was that there were very few women-owned lands in Maasai Mara as compared to their men counterparts.

Recommendations for Policy

While the government gender policy, SDGs, Kenya constitution 2010 and the Kenya wildlife act 2013 have been formulated, ratified and enacted, gender disparities continue to persist in natural resource management. This is because policy and legal frameworks cannot bring out gender equity unless they are properly communicated, implemented, enforced and institutionalised. This study therefore recommends that the governmental and non-governmental organisations revisit the policies and legal frameworks aforementioned so as to ensure they are effectively put into practice in wildlife management and conservation institutions. This calls for an evaluation Programme to address all the conformities and non-conformities with the purpose of implementing sustainable changes.

The study also recommends the availability of gender-disaggregated data in all wildlife management and conservation institutions so that it becomes easier to track the non-conformities and rectify them. This is because without this data, wildlife management and conservation institutions cannot know where to reinforce and the course of action to be taken. Hiring and recruitment personnel will not know the group that has a deficit and the one that is overrepresented.

Based on the research findings, it is recommended that wildlife management and conservation institutions give a fresh look at addressing the issue of gender equity in wildlife management and conservation. This is because women have been depicted to have fewer opportunities than men in wildlife management and conservation. Overall, this puts the sustainability of wildlife conservation initiatives at stake as both men and women are actors in both wildlife conservation and wildlife destruction. The study, for example, revealed some forms of wildlife conservation threats in the conservancies, such as charcoal burning, overgrazing and crop cultivation. This depicts a shift in focus by the groups that benefit less or those that do not benefit at all from the

conservation initiatives. It is against this that gender considerations in wildlife management need to be given a fresh look Vis a Vis the current situation.

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