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FROM THE RESOLUTION OF SOCIOCULTURAL FACTORS LIMITING FEMALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP TO THE PROMOTIONAL DYNAMICS OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN BADESSANKRO-PRIKRO (REPUBLIC OF COTE D'IVOIRE)

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Abstract

The issue of women's empowerment is at the origin of several social debates. Many of them opt for independence in their daily activities and emerge in order to intervene in the socializing aspects of the development of their community. This research aims to analyze the sociocultural factors of women's empowerment in rural areas from Badessankro to Prikro. A questionnaire survey and interviews were conducted with 46 women. Early pregnancies or marriages were revealed as sociocultural factors limiting entrepreneurship and empowerment among 87% of the women surveyed.

Keywords: Socio-cultural factors, Women's empowerment in rural areas.

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Introduction

Women play an important role in economic production, but are not distributed across sectors of activity and do not have the same level of access to wealth and job creation opportunities [1]. In rural areas, women are at the heart of the domestic economy and the well-being of rural communities. Their role is to help their community, particularly their household, to observe food and nutrition security, to generate income and improve their livelihoods, while contributing to agricultural work of all kinds [2]. According to 2011 FAO studies. They represent 43% of the total agricultural workforce in developing countries [3].

They also play an essential social role within the family unit as well as an active role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The progress made and the important place they occupy in no way remove the persistent structural constraints and discriminatory practices they face [4]. Low access to land ownership in Africa where the majority of the population lives from agriculture reduces their access to credit; their ability to undertake income-generating activities (IGAs) in a sustainable manner with good empowerment [5].

First of all, empowerment is the complex process of women's access to full participation in civil, political, social and economic life and the exercise of corresponding rights [6] Taking into account the place and essential role of women in society, the 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women defines that the empowerment of women is an essential factor for peace, social, economic and environmental progress and a favorable path for inclusive economic growth (UN-WOMEN, 2017). In both urban and rural areas, several civil society groups and NGOs (national and

international) campaign and work for the empowerment of women, the defense of their rights and gender equality. In the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, as in several countries, the empowerment of women is a priority for the government. To this end, a State Secretariat for the Empowerment of Women was created in 2019 and many actions were carried out in this direction. But to achieve women's empowerment [7], suggests challenging certain traditions such as gender inequalities that maintain disparities between men and women [8]. In Badessankro, a village in the Commune of Prikro, it is noted that women have no right to decision-making, inheritance or land ownership. Also, limited access to education, the status of housewife and reproductive woman that is attracted to them in addition to the domestic violence they suffer, thus promotes in one way or another illiteracy associated with the occurrence of pregnancies and early marriages. Women are less educated and 48.1% of them are at risk of dropping out of school halfway through their studies compared to 43% of boys [9]. It is clear that these obstacles contribute to slowing down the empowerment of women. These facts constitute some of the challenges they have been facing for many years. Given all these reasons that women face, we are analyzing the sociocultural obstacles linked to the empowerment of women in rural areas in this locality.

Method

This is descriptive cross-sectional research carried out from March to July 2023 in the form of a mixed survey in the Iffou region, more precisely in the village of Badessankro located in the commune of Prikro. The village chief and opinion leaders gave their approval for the survey to be carried out. The target population consisted of all women in Badessankro. The non-random method with the accidental sampling technique was used to select 46 women who met the inclusion criteria. The data were collected with an observation grid and an interview guide addressed to women in the village of Badessankro who had given their informed consent to participate in the survey. Data collection techniques such as direct observation and semi-directive interview made it possible to collect information in the field. Direct observation made it possible to observe the discriminatory attitude of men towards women in the commune of Prikro and to appreciate the daily difficulties experienced by women in rural areas. The semi-directive interviews conducted with women surveyed in the village of Badessankro made it possible to focus their speeches around different themes relating to empowerment, illiteracy, problems of pregnancy and early

⁹Ministry of National Education, Technical Education and Vocational Training of Côte d'Ivoire, (2017)

marriage and social discrimination. The data from the interviews were subject to content analysis. To do this, the statements collected were transcribed faithfully and, in their entirety, to focus the discourse of the interviewees around different themes previously defined by the investigators and recorded in an interview guide. The IBM SPSS Statistics software (version 21) was used to process the quantitative data collected during the field observations.

Results

In conducting this research, to understand the difficult environment in which women live in the village of Badessankro, it is important to explore the daily difficulties that these women face, especially those relating to the behavior of their spouses.

Women's Empowerment

Women's empowerment in the village of Badessankro relates to elements related to the rural dimension of this study environment.

Indeed, according to the information received during the field surveys, a woman in Badessankro is considered autonomous if she meets the following conditions: practicing an activity that generates income, providing for her personal needs, contributing to the family's expenses, benefiting from the family inheritance in the same way as men and managing to make decisions in the family or in public.

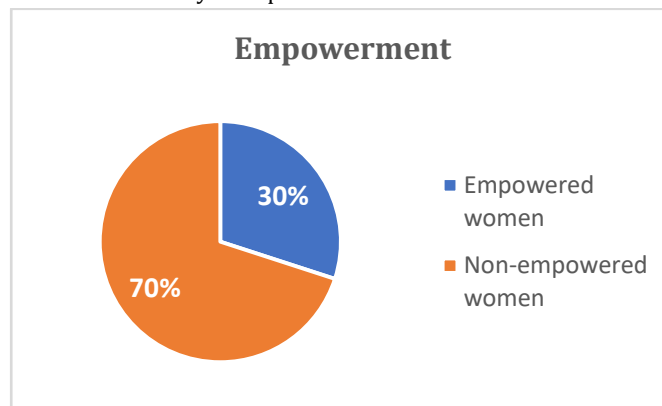


Figure 1: Pie chart of women's empowerment in Badessankro

In the village of Badessankro, 30% of them met all of these conditions and are therefore considered autonomous. Although it is a taboo subject in Badessankro, almost all of the women in this village have their empowerment as a

major objective. However, as illustrated in Figure 1, 70% of the women surveyed in Badessankro are not autonomous, which is due to several obstacles. In Badessankro, some women are unable to take charge of themselves and do not always benefit from the exercise of their rights. Also, many of them experience inequalities in terms of accessibility to certain professional and social dimensions. For the most part, they do not feel free to undertake social actions. One of the respondents stated: "I cannot do what my heart desires" (A.B, 50 years old, mother of 8 children; May 2023).

Illiteracy among women in Badessankro

The data collected in the field made it possible to analyze the effect of illiteracy on the empowerment of women in Badessankro.

Table 1: Illiteracy among women in Badessankro

| Status | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|----------------|-----------|----------------|
| Illiterate | 20 | 63 |
| Non-illiterate | 12 | 37 |
| Total | 32 | 100 |

Following the investigations, it appears that 20 women, or 63% of women in Badessankro, are illiterate. There are 12, or 37%, who are non-illiterate and are considered to have been educated.

Problem of early pregnancy and marriage among women in Badessankro

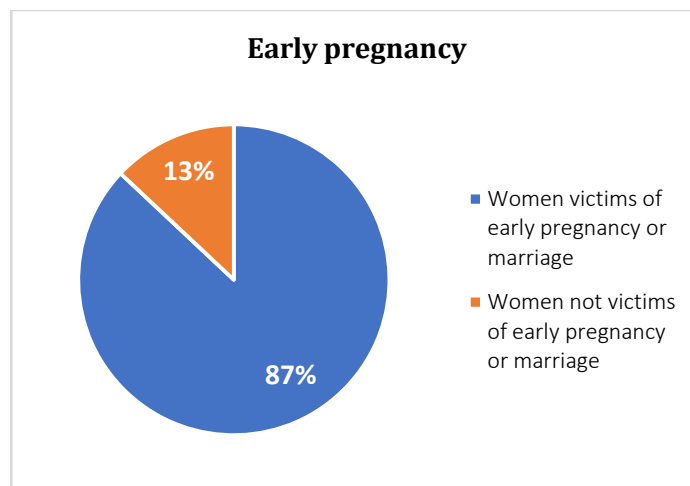


Figure 2: Pie chart of early pregnancy or marriage according to the empowerment of women in Badessankro

The results showed that of all the women surveyed, 87% were victims of early pregnancy or marriage, compared to 13% who lead a normal family life (Figure 2).

The majority of respondents stated that adolescent and young girls in their societies are often subject to cultural practices that push them to marry at an early age, whether with or without their consent, thus hindering their empowerment. One of the women surveyed confided the following: "I was married very young and I am not autonomous because of tradition." (A.Z, widow, 40 years old; June, 2023).

Also, the results from the interviews revealed that the majority of non-autonomous women in Badessankro contracted their first pregnancies between the ages of 14 and 17.

Social discrimination among women in Badessankro

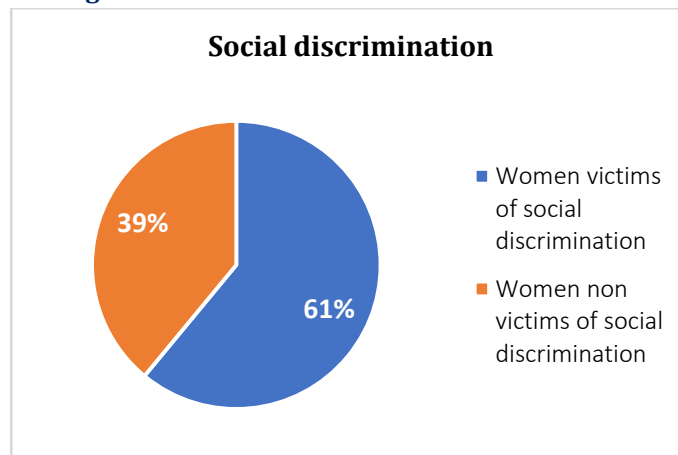


Figure 3: Pie chart of non-autonomous women who are victims of social discrimination

This graph shows that 61% or more than half of non-autonomous women in Badessankro are victims of social discrimination and do not benefit from the exercise of their rights in the same way as men. Just like this figure speaking of social discrimination as a reason for non-empowerment, a 68-year-old woman states "because women are always after men" (B.F, Housewife, 68 years old; July 2023). Also, other testimonies support or highlight the link of influence between social discrimination and women's empowerment. An 18-year-old married woman stated: "Being a woman, I cannot say that I am autonomous because I am not free to act" (K.F, trader; 18 years old; June, 2023). A 38-year-old divorced woman confided during the interviews that: "(...) I cannot use a large portion of my field (...) I encounter a lot of difficulties in the village by taking initiatives" said a 38-year-old divorced woman (Y.A, housewife; 38 years old; June, 2023). It should be noted that this stated inequality constitutes obstacles to access to income and therefore to the management of the latter. Also, it constitutes obstacles to freedom and access to fundamental rights, thus contributing to optimal empowerment.

Discussion

Not knowing how to read and write is very recurrent in our African societies. Precisely in rural areas, it affects more than 50% of the population. Access to schooling is considered a privilege that excludes the economically weak classes as well as women.

In Badessankro, the place of this research, this situation, although conditioned by certain aspects, plays a major role in slowing down the process of women's empowerment.

In Iran, the first national data on the population of elementary and secondary schools show the relatively low presence of girls among students, despite the first achievements in the field of women's education [10]. The analysis of data on United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, (2016) women's literacy since 1956 allows us to observe that the main obstacles to women's education persist and that we are far from having eliminated sexual prejudices [11].

The empowerment of girls, recognized as an essential pillar of sustainable development, is sometimes handicapped by the phenomenon of pregnancy in schools. The prevalence of school pregnancies was 5.61% among all girls surveyed and 15.99% among sexually active girls [12]. Similarly, the practice of early marriage persists globally, defined as a customary marriage of a person under the age of 18, early marriage of a girl takes place before the girl is physically, psychologically and legally ready to assume the responsibilities of marriage and motherhood. In developing countries, more than 30% of girls are married before the age of 18 and 10% before the age of 15 [13]. According to this research conducted in Badessankro, the majority (87%) of non-autonomous women have in common an early pregnancy or marriage. This is observed in most underdeveloped countries. Indeed, West Africa is one of the regions in the world where the prevalence of early marriage is the highest [14]. According to UNICEF data (2018), among the 10 countries with the highest prevalence rates of early marriage in the world, half are located in this region. These include, among others, Niger (77%), Mali (61%), Guinea (58%) and Burkina Faso (52%).

The issue of social discrimination against women was studied in a problem of explaining the obstacles related to the empowerment of women in Badessankro. In our context, it is located at the level of the benefit of the rights to freedom of decision-making, at the level of access to land ownership, inheritance and entrepreneurship. This phenomenon has, however, shown its role in the slowdown in the empowerment of women in Badessankro. Following the same logic, [15] explains that the social and professional situation of women is often lower than that of men for various reasons, all related to education. In Mali, the under-education of girls began with the colonial school. Today, the problem persists despite initiatives aimed at improving the education of girls and women, since the education reform of 1962. The article first provides a diagnosis before examining the constraints and challenges of the education of girls and women in this country. presents the existence of gender discrimination in hiring on the labor market which is now widely documented in most Western economies [16]. These results indicate that female candidates are favored compared to their male equivalents and relatively less affected by discrimination of origin. On the other hand, states that the notion of gender is now present in French and European legal instruments to combat discrimination, despite the virulent opposition aroused by its introduction into French law [17].

Thus, non-discrimination law defines gender as "social sex", through the notions of "gender identity" and "gender stereotype", but does not tend to understand gender as a system of bi-gender categorization. A revolution in non-discrimination law through the concept of gender would require adopting a constructivist perspective, allowing us to rethink the process of differentiation and construction of categories, in order to grasp the complexity of discriminatory phenomena.

Conclusion

It emerges in this research that several sociocultural obstacles hinder the empowerment of women in the world. Indeed, in Côte d'Ivoire, a developing country, the empowerment of women is a relatively unknown concept. The empowerment of women is defined as a state of empowerment, also of freedom and enjoyment of their fundamental rights at all levels of society. No one said that it is an important means of combating poverty in Africa. In some traditional societies, the empowerment of women, although it is a primary objective, constitutes a taboo subject as women must be reduced to the education of children and household chores. These stereotypes added to certain social phenomena prove to have a link with the state of non-empowerment of women. All things that led us to analyze some socio-cultural obstacles to the empowerment of women in rural areas specifically in the context of

Badessankro in order to find solutions. It therefore emerged that all these factors previously stated have a negative impact on the process of women's empowerment in rural areas, more precisely in Badessankro. The conclusions of this research constitute a strategic character for organizations and public authorities working in the field of women's empowerment. It is also a concrete path to improve intervention programs in this area.

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Conflict of Interest

No

Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from study participants

Ethical Statement

This research was approved by the scientific committee of the National Institute of Youth and Sports of Abidjan

Author Contribution

Literature search, Data acquisition, Manuscript preparation Manuscript editing.

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