

CONTRIBUTION OF MICROFINANCE INSTITUTIONS TO WOMEN SOCIO-ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT: A CASE OF BRAC BRANCH IRINGA MUNICIPAL COUNCIL- TANZANIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of microfinance institutions (MFIs), with a focus on the BRAC Branch in Iringa Municipality, Tanzania, in enhancing the socio-economic empowerment of women. Using a non-experimental cross-sectional research design, primary data was collected from 66 respondents, complemented by interviews with key informants from the BRAC Institution. The research employed systematic simple random and probability sampling techniques, utilizing questionnaires and interviews as research tools, with data analysis conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The study aimed to assess the impact of MFIs on women's entrepreneurship skills, examine their influence on income generation, and evaluate their role in enhancing social respect among women. MFIs, particularly the BRAC Branch, have played a pivotal role in improving the entrepreneurship skills of women borrowers. Access to resources, capital, and training has empowered women to develop and enhance their entrepreneurial capabilities. MFIs have significantly contributed to the income generation of women. By providing accessible financial services tailored to their needs, women have been able to invest in and expand their businesses, resulting in sustainable income and improved financial well-being. The study underscores the instrumental role of MFIs in enhancing social respect for women. As women become financially independent through active participation in economic activities, they gain recognition and respect within their communities. This has led to increased confidence and challenges to traditional gender norms. This research highlights the substantial strides made by microfinance institutions, particularly the BRAC Branch in Iringa Municipality, in empowering women socio-economically. The positive impacts on women's entrepreneurship skills, income generation, and social respect are evident. To further strengthen this contribution, collaborative efforts involving the government and stakeholders are recommended. Extending loan repayment periods, increasing maximum loan amounts, and providing accessible collateral options are crucial steps toward ensuring continued empowerment. These findings underscore the critical role of MFIs in advancing gender equality and socio-economic development in Tanzania.

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Keywords: Microfinance Institutions, Empowerment, and Women Socio - Economic Empowerment

1. INTRODUCTION

Women's Empowerment has been associated with developing economies worldwide for almost half a century. Women's Empowerment entails leadership in household decision-making, improved access and control over household resources, including physical and financial assets, enhanced mobility, and acquisition of skills and knowledge (Meressa, 2020). In developing economies, microfinance and microcredit have increased women's economic independence and power. Microfinance Institutions have gained importance over the last twenty years by successfully implementing microcredit programs such as BRAC, FINCA, Bay Port, and many others (Ssembajwe, 2021). These programs are primarily aimed at people

25 who need help acquiring credit due to their inability to provide collateral, a requirement of
26 formal lending institutions. Such programs are especially vital for women folk because they
27 seldom own land or other physical assets in most developing countries. As such, Microfinance
28 Institutions (MFIs) provide credit and allow women to engage in productive activities leading
29 to their Empowerment (Mahfuzet al., 2017).

30 Sultan Yahaya (2020) observed that microfinance services have a long history that depends
31 on community groups' credit functions primarily channeled through trust-bonded mechanisms.
32 Firstly, these community groups' credit functions successfully set up a turning point in the
33 global microfinance landscape. These successfully set up a foundation ideal for multiple
34 microfinance services, including micro-credit, micro-saving, micro-insurance, and micro-
35 leasing supported by non-financial services (Ssembajjwe, 2021). Secondly, concessionary
36 loans, borne as donor attempts under development financial institutions, affected low-income
37 people more. This was because such loans had only targeted specific agricultural sectors in
38 society, such as cotton and coffee in Uganda, where only the rich had advantages. However,
39 with the schemes attached to government officials in most countries by then, the selection of
40 beneficiaries benefited the rich and their political supporters more (Meressa, 2020).

41 The results were that Microfinance Institutions (MFI) provided an avenue for a diversified
42 financial landscape with many financial service functions (Hunt & Samman, 2016). Their
43 popularity among both practitioners and poor clients then grew from its poor and vulnerable
44 people, women in particular. Since the 1990s, the expansion of microfinance as both a
45 replacement for and a complementary service to commercial banking has grown more in most
46 countries. With the typical features of proximity to clients, speed and flexibility of services,
47 diversity of services and products, and mutual reciprocity, microfinance continues to grow into
48 a popular industry. The number of major Microfinance Institutions (MFI) in Tanzania has grown
49 excessively from a single digit to double. Perhaps even triple digits considering from micro to
50 macro level. For example, according to (Buchenrieder et al., 2019). There were 98
51 Microfinance Institutions (MFI) in Tanzania by 2017. This number was good enough to help in
52 empowering vulnerable women. To date, however, these Microfinance Institutions (MFI) have
53 continued to increase such that it becomes essential to determine their role and performance.

54 The objectives of microfinance, among others, are that the poor, primarily women (because of
55 their engagement in unpaid work), need access to productive resources, with financial
56 services essential. Microfinance can significantly impact cross-cutting issues such as women's
57 Empowerment promoting gender equality. Microfinance schemes usually lend small short-
58 term loans to very poor micro-entrepreneurs (very poor micro-entrepreneurs are women).
59 Loan repayment is always guaranteed by group members collectively, and access to future
60 credit or loans is contingent on successful repayment (Beklentiler & Alemu, 2018). According
61 to the population and housing censuses conducted in Tanzania (2022), about 83.9% of the
62 working population is in the private informal sector (Kabeer, 2018). The sector is characterized
63 by women's dominance and lack of access to credit from traditional banking institutions due
64 to collateral security. Therefore, the effectiveness of any microfinance scheme or program
65 should be assessed based on how it has empowered women economically, politically, and
66 socially (Kaniz, 2021).

67 Increasing evidence shows that women are over-represented among the poorest people and
68 are more likely than men to spend their incomes on the welfare of children and dependents
69 (Cheston et al., 2020). Therefore, poverty reduction programs targeting women are likely more
70 effective. Empowering women is the second stated goal of the microcredit summit campaign.
71 There is also evidence of significant potential for microfinance to enable women to challenge
72 and change gender inequalities at all levels. There is a growing need to rethink the current
73 best practices to ensure that women have equal and possibly preferential access to all types

74 of financial services (Rweyemamu et al., 2018). Many micro-credit programs have targeted
75 one of the most vulnerable groups in society: households that own little or no assets. By
76 providing opportunities for self-employment, many studies have concluded that these
77 programs have significantly increased women's security, autonomy, self-confidence, and
78 status within their households (Nchimbi, 2017).

79 In Tanzania, most microcredit services are limited and pushed by formal and informal lending
80 Institutions, women high-risk borrowers. They consequently lack access to the financial market
81 (Microfinance), which offers financial services to the most disadvantaged people, such as
82 women. Hence, targeting credit to the poor people was found to be one of the instruments for
83 poverty reduction. Microfinance institutions have been established and operating with the
84 ultimate goal of alleviation. Based on the above points, Microfinance Institutions are the
85 economic solution for women entrepreneurs and people experiencing poverty, but still, more
86 emphasis should be given to realizing their potential in influencing community development.

87 **1.2 Statement of the Problem.**

88 In Tanzania, like in other developing countries, the microfinance industry is growing globally,
89 and the same industry advocates women's empowerment. One of the objectives of
90 Microfinance is to enhance women's empowerment and to generate empowerment
91 opportunities by promoting self-employment that consequently improves the social well-being
92 of poor people. According to the World Bank Report (2015), empowering women economically
93 will mean increased investment in children's education, improved health, and reduced poverty
94 at the family level. Despite the increase and efforts to integrate small enterprises into micro-
95 financing, more people still live in extreme poverty in urban and rural areas. Statistics show
96 that the poverty situation in Tanzania, about 12 million people in Tanzania still live in poverty
97 (World Bank Report, 2015).

98 Numerous Microfinance Institutions have been emerging in various parts of Tanzania,
99 including Iringa Municipality. All of them provide microfinance services to the poor, including
100 women, with the view of poverty reduction and economic empowerment for women. However,
101 there needs to be more information on how existing Microfinance Institutions have contributed
102 to women's empowerment. Therefore, this study intended to examine the contribution of
103 BRAC in Iringa Municipal Tanzania using the case of BRAC Institution.

104 **2. MATERIAL AND METHODS / EXPERIMENTAL DETAILS / METHODOLOGY**

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106 **2.1 Study Area**

107

108 This study is intended to be conducted in Iringa District which is one among the 4 districts
109 found in Iringa region. The district is bordered by Iringa District Council at North and West,
110 Kilolo District Council at East and Mufindi District Council at South, with the total population of
111 160,800 from which 76,426 are males and 84,374 are females. The study intends to access
112 information on the contribution of microfinance institutions to Women Socio-Economic
113 Empowerment in Iringa Municipal Council, using a case of BRAC Branch. The researcher
114 chooses the area because it's the major and dominant micro financial institution supporting
115 women and have larger number 6000 of clients' borrowers, for this reason were easy to obtain
116 the required data. In this study the key people in concern are woman entrepreneurs; this is
117 because the researcher was able to observe that. Still woman is behind in entrepreneurial
118 activities than man though they are the ones who taking care of the family and able to be
119 effective and mostly efficient than man in controlling business activities. So, the area is suitable
120 for the study, therefore it attracted the researcher to conduct the study on that area. But also,
121 the area selected is well-known by the researcher.

122 **2.2 The Research Approach**

123

124 The research approach utilized in this study aligns with Kothari's (2004) classification of two
125 fundamental research approaches: quantitative and qualitative. The primary objective of this
126 study was to examine the contribution of microfinance to women socio-economic
127 empowerment. Considering the nature of the research question, a quantitative approach was
128 chosen. This approach involves the collection and analysis of numerical data to provide
129 insights into the correlation between BRAC micro finance activities and women social
130 Economic empowerment. This quantitative approach enables a systematic examination of the
131 relationship between variables through statistical analysis, contributing to a more objective
132 understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

133 **2.3 Research Design**

134 A research design is the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a
135 manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure.
136 In fact, the research design is the conceptual structure within which research is conducted; it
137 constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data (Kothari 2012).
138 A research design is a general outline of how the study was conducted, it identifies how data
139 was collected, analyzed and presented (Kothari, 2012). This study adopted a Non-
140 experimental design specifically a cross-sectional research design. The choice of this design
141 is based on the fact that it allows data to be collected once at one point in time in the study
142 area. In addition, the design provided an opportunity for the generation of data needed for the
143 description and determination of relationships among variables, and moreover, due to the
144 scarcity of resources such as time and financial resources. The information collected helps to
145 construct questionnaire and conduct depth interview from the concerned universe.

146 **2.4 Population and Sampling Procedures**

147

148 **2.4.1 Population**

149 As defined by Cooper and Schindler (2006), the term "population" encapsulates the entirety
150 of elements around which a study intends to derive specific inferences. Within the scope of
151 this research, the study population encompassed the women's beneficiaries of the BRAC
152 micro finance. Drawing from data collected across BRAC micro finance beneficiaries, the
153 study population was comprised of a total of 66 beneficiaries.

154 **2.4.2 Sampling Technique**

155

156 Sampling technique refers to the method by which a researcher selects individuals to gather
157 information from within a studied population (Kumar, 2011). It is a process of selecting a
158 number of individuals or objects from a population such that the selected group contains
159 elements representative of the characteristics found in the entire group (Kumar, 2011). The
160 researcher did not deal with the whole population, Respondents was obtained through
161 Probability Sampling; specifically, a systematic simple random sampling was used to avoid
162 biases because each one has an equal chance to be selected and non-probability sampling,
163 specifically Key informants such as by BRAC branch, BRAC Branch manager and credit
164 officer. Procedure was done to enable the researcher to control the area of the study very
165 efficiently and to study sufficient respondents from those represent the total population.

166 **2.4.3 Sampling Frame**

167

168 The sampling frame has a close relationship with the population. It involves attributes from
which the sample of interest is drawn (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). According to Babbie

169 (2002), sampling frame means the list of elements in which a sample is selected under
 170 probability bases. In this study, the sampling frame was made of a list of beneficiaries of the
 171 BRAC microfinance, Iringa.

172 **2.4.4 Sample Size**

173

174 Sample size refers to the number of elements to be included in the study (Kumar, 2011). For
 175 any sample design, deciding upon the appropriate sample size depends on five key factors:
 176 (1) Margin of error or precision, (2) Amount of variability in the population, (3) Confidence level,
 177 (4) Population size, and (5) Proportion of the population. It is essential to consider these factors
 178 together to achieve the right balance and ensure that the sample objectives are met.

179 The sample size was calculated by using Yamane formula. Sample size based on the Yamane
 180 1967 formula. The study obtained information from the women empowered by BRAC branch.
 181 According to BRAC Iringa branch, the total number of women empowered was 210. The
 182 sample was based on the following formula.

$$183 \quad n = N / 1 + N (e)^2$$

184 Whereby;

185 n = sample size

186 N = number of entire populations

187 e = selected to be level of precision,

$$188 \quad (e=10\%) \quad n = 210 / 1 + 210(10\%)^2$$

189 =Sample size for women empowered by BRAC branch was 66.

190 From the above formula, the required sample for this study was 66 respondents who were
 191 made of the women empowered by BRAC Microfinance Iringa branch.

192

193 **2.5 Types of Data and Data Collection Techniques**

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195 **2.5.1 Types of Data**

196

197 According to Kothari (2004), there are two types of data, which are primary and secondary.
 198 Primary data are those which are collected directly for the field. On the other hand,
 199 secondary data are those that have already been collected by someone else and passed
 200 through the statistical process. Based on this study, the researcher used both primary and
 201 secondary data.

202 **2.5.1.1 Primary Data**

203

204 Primary data are the information gathered directly from participants (Mlyuka, 2015). Primary
 205 data for this research was obtained using questionnaires which were shared to respondents
 206 to examine the contribution of microfinance to women's socio-economic empowerment.

207 **2.5.1.2 Secondary Data**

208

209 Secondary data analysis can be literally defined as second-hand information used for analysis
 210 that was either gathered by someone else or for some other purpose, or often a combination
 211 of the two (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Secondary data can be classified into two sources, which
 212 are electronic based sources and paper-based sources. Based on this the researcher used
 213 both electronic and paper-based sources to get secondary data needed for this study.

214 **2.5.2 Data Collection Techniques**

215 This segment explains the particulars of the instrument which used to conduct this study.

216

217 **2.5.2.1 Questionnaire**

218

219 A questionnaire consists of several questions printed or typed in a defined order, to be sent to
220 respondents (Kothari, 2004). In this study 66 questionnaires were distributed to beneficiaries
221 from BRAC Micro finance. The questionnaires included closed-ended and open-ended
222 questions designed in a way that they would produce relevant useful data.

223

224 According to (Kothari, 2004) Likert scale consists of a number of statements which explain
225 either favourable or unfavourable attitude, the respondents asked to respond to the statement
226 with degree of either agreement (Yes) or disagreement (No).

227 **2.5.2.2 Interviews**

228 A structured interview was used to collect primary data and a questionnaire was employed as
229 a tool. Moreover, it was done face to face, such that a respondent was asked questions by
230 using a questionnaire, and answers obtained was recorded. Both closed and open-ended
231 questions were asked which helped the researcher get sufficient information. The interview
232 method of collecting data involves presentation of oral-verbal stimuli and reply in terms of oral-
233 verbal responses. This method can be used through personal interviews and, if possible,
234 through telephone interviews (Kothari 2004). The method has great importance because it is
235 less cost to get sufficient information, the primary information obtained is fresh and new,
236 detailed information obtained at a short time so time.

237 **2.5.2.3 Documentary review**

238 This method involved a review of various published and unpublished materials from different
239 sources such as related research reports, books, journals, and article contents, which used a
240 checklist as a tool such that it used for quickly and easily recording data.

241 Documentation is the process of collecting data from existing literature of the same study. This
242 is easy methods as it provides clear existing information on the matter in table. Researcher
243 use documentation method to collect data of average number of entrepreneurs who are getting
244 loan from BRAC Institution. Some of the data were collected by reviewing different articles,
245 reports and documents related to the topic.

246 **2.6 Data Analysis**

247

248 In data analysis, some of the most common ways of simplifying data are by calculating
249 the mean, percentage distribution, frequency distribution, and so forth. In this particular
250 study, the researcher used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS v.20)
251 to process the quantitative data. Data analysis begins after the data have been collected
252 and processed. In this study, the researcher adopted types of analysis to analyse the
253 findings such as frequency distribution.

254 **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

255

256 **3.1 Descriptive Analysis**

257 Descriptive analysis is a branch of analysis that focuses on the summarization and description
258 of data that was collected from the survey (Weiers, 2008). This part was used to provide an
259 analysis of the demographic characteristics of the respondents obtained from the survey and

260 used the analysis to make general observations on the data, such as gender, age, and marital
261 status.

262 Descriptive analysis is a branch of analysis that focuses on the summarization and description

263 3.1.1 Respondent Demographic Profile

264 This part reflects the demographic details of respondents such as age of respondents, sex of
265 respondents, marital status of respondents, household size of respondents, and level of
266 education of respondents. The researcher had distributed 66 copies of the survey
267 questionnaires and had received a 100% response from respondents. Regarding age, the
268 most were between 31-45, and the least were between 56- 65. Also, regarding the level of
269 education, we had 46 secondary-level respondents, 19 were primary education level and 1
270 post-secondary education respondents. The researcher fully utilized and analysed the 66
271 copies of the survey questionnaires.

272
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Table 1: Profile of Respondents

Demographic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
18-30	4	6.1
31-45	53	80.3
46-55	7	10.6
56-65	2	3
Total	66	100
Marital status		
Married	42	64
Single	11	17
Separated	6	9.1
Widowed	4	6.1
Divorced	3	5
Total	66	100
Education level		
Primary education	19	28.8
Secondary education	46	69.7
Post-secondary education	1	1.5
Total	66	100
Household members		
1-3	13	19.7
4-6	42	63.6
7-9	11	16.7
Total	66	100

274 **Source:** Field data (2023)

275 3.2.1 Age distribution of the respondents

276 Study findings, as presented in Table 1, revealed that 80.3% were aged between 31-45
277 years, 10.6% were aged between 46-55 years, 6.1% of the respondents were aged between

278 18-30 years, and 3% were aged between 56-65. The findings clearly show that most women
279 entrepreneurs who benefited from BRAC are aged between 31 and 45. Currently, youths are
280 involved in entrepreneurship activities because self-employment is a significant option for
281 income generation due to a lack of formal employment (Hogarth-Scott et al., 2017). These
282 results show that most respondents were aged between 31 to 45 years, followed by elders
283 aged between 46 to 45 years and 18-30 years. All these ages fall into the group of youths.
284 Therefore, it is believed that if these entrepreneurs get loans and good training from MFI, they
285 can do well in entrepreneurship due to their age and, as a result, be empowered. Provident
286 and Zacharia (2008) found that youths do better in entrepreneurship. It is recommended that
287 although all ages can do better in entrepreneurship, there is a need to encourage more youths
288 to be entrepreneurs through giving loans, training, and providing entrepreneurship business
289 skills by calling upon successful entrepreneurs to motivate young people to consider
290 entrepreneurship and self-employment. The respondents' age was analyzed to determine the
291 age of entrepreneurs with the support of BRAC.

292 **3.2.2 Marital status of the respondents**

293 Study findings, as presented in Table 1, revealed that 64% of the respondents are married,
294 17% are single, 9.1% are separated, 6.1% are widowed, and 5% are divorced. Therefore, it
295 shows that most women entrepreneurs are married. These results showed that 64% of the
296 majority of respondents were married. Married women have many responsibilities, so they
297 engage in entrepreneurship activities so that they can be able to access their children's needs.
298 So, the study recommends that all categories of people, whether married, single, or widowed,
299 remember that poverty does not choose any of the categories, and for that matter, whether
300 one is single or married, he/she has the responsibility to develop. In that regard, married
301 people are more committed to access to MFIs according to their responsibilities to family
302 matters and when compared to other people who are not married. Moreover, the respondents'
303 marital status level was analyzed in Figure 1.

304 **3.2.3 Education level of the respondents**

305 As presented in Table 1, study findings revealed that 69.7% percent had secondary
306 education, 28.8% percent had primary education, and 1.5% had post-secondary education.
307 Therefore, it shows that most women entrepreneurs must be more highly educated. The
308 findings reflect the argument presented by Hatibu (2018) that the more educated people are,
309 the less they are involved in entrepreneurship activities. Most of the entrepreneurs need to be
310 more educated. The study results show us that the majority of respondents had secondary
311 education. By majoring in secondary education, it implies that most entrepreneurs in the study
312 have a lower education level. For that matter, most of them have been in poverty for some
313 time. Therefore, it was okay for them to find a way by which they could manage to make a
314 living. It was perfect that they joined microfinance institutions, which were a better means for
315 alleviating their poverty by asking for loans and training assistance on writing business plans
316 and maintaining a business. These findings are similar to those by Hatibu (2018), that the
317 more educated, the less the involvement in entrepreneurship activities. Therefore,
318 entrepreneurs should find a way to improve their education level by joining evening programs,
319 reading journals, and attending exhibitions.

320 321 **3.2.4 Household size of the respondent**

322 The findings presented on Figure 2 shows that 63.6% of respondents live with 4-6 household
323 members, 19.7% of respondents live with 1-3 household members, and 16.7% of respondents
324 live with 7-9 household members. The findings reflect that high number of respondents have
325 many household members which means there is high consumption in their households. The
326 study finds that many women's in BRAC with larger number of members in their household
327 engaged in entrepreneurship activities because they want to improve their income and living
328 standard also taking care their children especial their needs and school fees.

329 **3.2 Contribution of Microfinance Institution on Entrepreneurship Skills**330 **Table 2: Entrepreneurship Skills**

Parameters	Frequency	Percentage
Training		
Number of respondents received entrepreneurship skills training from BRAC	66	100
Yes	66	100
No	0	0
Total	66	100
Women received in training		
Yes	66	100
No	0	0
Total	66	100
Reasons		
Importance of savings, health, time communication, sales, passion and energy, management of finance, customer care and marketing.	66	100
Total	66	100
Period for women received entrepreneurship training from BRAC		
Yes	66	100
No	0	0
Total	66	100
Reasons		
Five	26	39.4
Three	18	27.3
Two	12	18.2
Four	10	15.2
Total	66	100
Entrepreneurship training suit the business		
Yes	66	100
No	0	0
Total	66	100
Reasons		
Help to gain new skills, knowledge and strategies and increase the customers and savings	27	41
Help to improve the business and increase capital	12	18.2
Help to develop new market and increase businesses relationships	15	23

Help to improve product, services, technology and increase more spirit for business	12	18.2
Total	66	100

331 **Source: Field Data (2023)**

332

333 **3.3 Entrepreneurship Skills**

334 **3.3.1 Number of women received entrepreneurship skills training from BRAC**

335 According to Table 2, a researcher aimed at/ intended to know the number of women who
 336 receive entrepreneurship skills training from BRAC Institution. As presented in Table 2, the
 337 findings revealed that 100% of respondents received entrepreneurship skill training. This is
 338 analyzed to describe women's level of awareness and ability to perform entrepreneurship
 339 activities.

340 The findings presented in Table 2 show that 100% of women from BRAC received
 341 entrepreneurship training. BRAC Institution, among the products they offer for their clients, is
 342 entrepreneurship skills training. This helps their client to perform well in their business
 343 activities. Because it helps when they start businesses from scratch and generate profits for
 344 themselves. Findings from (Reshi, 2021) agreed well with the findings from this study on
 345 entrepreneurship skills training because education can help to challenge traditional gender
 346 roles and stereotypes, and can promote greater gender equality and social justice.
 347 Microfinance institutions found it is important to educate their beneficiaries, such as women,
 348 about their services, such as loans and savings, but also to empower them with
 349 entrepreneurship skills and knowledge which will help them to use their finances properly in
 350 business and domestic activities so that to ensure they pay on time as well as the utilize that
 351 resources for more and develop their businesses and hence socio-economic development is
 352 to be expected.

353 Likewise, during focus group discussions with respondents, it was realized that women
 354 confirmed that they received entrepreneurship skills training education from BRAC Institution.
 355 As one of the respondents asserted that

356 *"I received entrepreneurship training, which helped to improve my business".*

357 During interview session with BRAC Branch Manager, she was of the view that before they
 358 issue loan to women, they train them on the proper use of such money they secure from the
 359 BRAC Institution so all BRAC women's received entrepreneurship skills education which help
 360 to run their businesses. Here what she said.

361

362

363 *"BRAC Institution's product offer to their client include entrepreneurship skills training, which*
 364 *they believe can help business management, can help to in effectively plan, organize, direct,*
 365 *and control the resources for women's".*

366 *"The findings obtained from focus group discussions, interviews, and questionnaire sessions*
 367 *revealed that women who are the beneficiaries of loans from BRAC Institution received*
 368 *entrepreneurship skills education from the loan they secured".*

369

370 **3.3.2 The basics women received from BRAC entrepreneurship skills training**

371 According to Table 2, a researcher aimed at/ intended to know the basics women received
 372 in entrepreneurship skills training from BRAC Institution. The findings, as presented in Table
 373 2, revealed that 100% of the respondents responded that they received the basics of
 374 entrepreneurship skills from the training offered by BRAC Institution.

375 As presented in Table 2, the findings revealed 100% importance of savings, health, time,
 376 communications, sales, passion and energy, finance management, customer care, and
 377 marketing. Findings from (Reshi, 2021) agreed well with the findings from this study on
 378 entrepreneurship training education can help to challenge traditional gender roles and
 379 stereotypes and can promote greater gender equality and social justice. Microfinance

380 institutions found it is important to educate their beneficiaries, such as women, about their
381 services, such as loans and savings, but also to empower them with entrepreneurship skills
382 and knowledge which will help them to use their finances properly in business and domestic
383 activities so that to ensure they pay on time as well as the utilize that resources for more and
384 develop their businesses and hence socio-economic development is to be expected.
385 Likewise, during focus group discussions with respondents, it was realized that women
386 confirmed they received entrepreneurship skills training education basics from BRAC
387 Institution.

388 As one of the respondents asserted that

389

390 *Before receiving a loan, BRAC Institution provided entrepreneurship training, which taught us*
391 *the importance of savings, health, skills, and strategies for businesses, time, and love for the*
392 *businesses we were doing.*

393

394 During interview session with BRAC Branch Manager, she was of the view that before they
395 issue loan to women, they train them on the proper use of such money they secure from the
396 BRAC Institution so all BRAC women's received entrepreneurship skills education which help
397 to run their businesses. Here what she said.

398 *Every client received entrepreneurship training in order to improve their businesses.*

399 *The findings obtained from focus group discussions, interviews, and questionnaire sessions*
400 *revealed that women who are the beneficiaries of loans from BRAC Institution received*
401 *entrepreneurship skills education basics.*

402

403 **3.3.3 Period for women received entrepreneurship training skills from BRAC Institution.**

404 According to Table 2 a researcher aimed at/ intended to know the period of each
405 respondents received entrepreneurship skills training from BRAC Institution. The findings as
406 presented in Table 2 revealed that 39.4% of the respondents have received five times
407 entrepreneurship skills training from BRAC Institution also 27.3% revealed that they have
408 received three times entrepreneurship skills training from BRAC Institution, while 18.2% of
409 respondents revealed that they have received two times entrepreneurship training from BRAC
410 Institution and 15.2% of respondent revealed that they have received four times
411 entrepreneurship skills training from BRAC Institution. This entails that women who are the
412 beneficiaries of BRAC Institution received training of entrepreneurship skills in different times
413 due to the number of loans received from BRAC Institution.

414 Findings from (Kessy, 2016) agreed well with the findings from this study on provision of BRAC
415 training before receiving a loan because it helps a client to gain new strategies and knowledge
416 which will help to perform well in business so they can be able to overcome the challenges
417 women faced of relatively very little, medical care, property ownership, credit, training and
418 employment, far less likely than men to be politically active and more likely to be victims of
419 domestic violence.

420 Likewise, during focus group discussion with respondents, it was realized that women confirm
421 that they received difference time's entrepreneurship skills training from BRAC Institution due
422 to the different number or times of receiving a loan.

423

424 As one of the respondents asserted that

425

426 *We received entrepreneurship skills training from BRAC Institution with a different number*
427 *because it depends on how often you received a loan from BRAC Institution.*

428

429 During interview session with Credit Officer, she was of the view that entrepreneurship skills
430 which the BRAC Institution provided to the respondents are suit to their businesses because
431 it related to their businesses so that can help them to handle well their businesses. Here what
432 she said.

433

434 *All women who received a loan from BRAC Institution have received entrepreneurship skills*
 435 *training but at different times because it depends on how many times they received a loan,*
 436 *which is why there are differences in the number of times they received a loan that differs in*
 437 *number on receiving training.*

438

439 *The findings obtained from focus group discussions, interviews, and questionnaire sessions*
 440 *revealed that women who are the beneficiaries of loans from BRAC Institutions received*
 441 *entrepreneurship skills training many times.*

442

443 **3.3.4 Entrepreneurship training from BRAC suit their business**

444 According to Table 2, a researcher aimed at/ intended to know if the BRAC training suits
 445 their businesses. As presented in Table 2, the findings revealed that 41% of the respondent's
 446 training helped to gain new skills, knowledge, and strategies and increased customers and
 447 savings, and 18.2% revealed that entrepreneurship skills training helped improve businesses
 448 and increase capital. In comparison, 23% of respondents revealed that entrepreneurship
 449 training helps to develop new markets. Increased business relationships and 18.2% of
 450 respondent revealed that entrepreneurship skills training help to improve product, services,
 451 and technology and increase the spirit of business. This entails that women who are the
 452 beneficiaries of BRAC Institution the entrepreneurship training suiting their businesses.

453 The findings revealed that 66 respondents, constituting 100%, agreed that the education
 454 provided by BRAC institutions and that which they have got have a positive contribution to the
 455 usage of loans. This implies that educated people have a wider chance of succeeding using
 456 microfinance loans, contributing to poverty reduction. Also, training and business advice are
 457 more important for entrepreneurs because they can maintain their business, pay interest, and
 458 increase their standard of living. The above table can be presented pictorially in Table 2.

459 Findings (Kessy, 2016) agreed well with the findings from this study on women in African
 460 societies being perceived as home-based creatures as they were segregated economically,
 461 socially, politically, and culturally. They were more likely than men to be poor and illiterate.
 462 They had relatively very little medical care, property ownership, credit, training, and
 463 employment, far less likely than men to be politically active and more likely to be victims of
 464 domestic violence. The provision of training from BRAC Institution helps women to achieve
 465 entrepreneurship skills and knowledge related to their businesses so that they can perform
 466 well and achieve their goals.

467 Likewise, during focus group discussions with respondents, it was realized that women confirm
 468 that entrepreneurship skills training suits their businesses.

469 As one of the respondents asserted that

470 *Yes, it relates to the businesses because it helps to improve the business, increase more*
 471 *customers, increase capital, improve living standard, and get more new strategies and skills*
 472 *for business and confidence, which helps to expand the businesses, increases the capacity to*
 473 *work efficiently alone, Improve quality of life with new ideas and strategies which help the*
 474 *business to grow, and relationships, increase more spirit for businesses, improve the savings,*
 475 *income grow, provide opportunity for personal and professional growth, help to rich the goals*
 476 *and excellent result. Moreover, it improves the quality of ideas and building functional services.*

477 During interview session with Credit Officer, she was of the view that entrepreneurship skills
 478 which the BRAC Institution provided to the respondents are suit to their businesses because
 479 it related to their businesses so that can help them to handle well their businesses. Here what
 480 she said.

481

482 *BRAC Institution provide training to women which is related to their clients' economic activities,*
 483 *so it impacts the knowledge and skills which can help to improve their businesses.*

484

485 According to the findings obtaining from focus group discussion, interview and questionnaire
 486 sessions, revealed that women who are the beneficiaries of loan from BRAC Institution
 487 received entrepreneurship skills training which suit their businesses
 488

489 3.4 Contribution of BRAC MFIs Institution on women income empowerment

490 **Table 3: Amount of loan received from BRAC**

Parameters	Frequency	Percentage
Loan		
Loan received from BRAC Institution		
Yes	66	100
No	0	0
Total	66	100
Types of economic activities BRAC women practise		
Saloon	9	13.6
Catering service	10	15.2
Food crops and vegetable in the market	17	25.8
Cosmetic shops	6	9.1
Tailor	13	19.7
Clothes shop	5	7.6
Charcoal seller	3	4.5
Mobile network agency	2	3
Stationary	1	1.5
Total	66	100
Amount of capital of women entrepreneurs during starting the businesses		
500,000 – 690,000	15	23
700,000 – 990,000	16	24.2
1,000,000 – 1,490,000	18	27.3
1,500,000 – 1,999,000	9	13.6
2,000,000 – 2,490,000	6	9.1
2,500,000 – 2,990,000	1	1.5
Total	66	100
Amount women received from BRAC Institution.		
500,000 - 690,000	11	16.6
700,000 - 990,000	13	19.7
1,000,000 - 1,490,000	24	36.4
1,500,000 - 1,990,000	10	15.2%
2,000,000 - 2,490,000	5	7.6
2,500,000 - 2,990,000	3	4.5
Total	66	100
The period to pay loan		
40 weeks and 20 months	56	85
20 weeks and 10 months	10	15
Total	66	100

Challenges on accessing loans of BRAC

Institution

Lack of valid collateral and marital relationship	20	30.3
Lack of business and entrepreneurship education	14	21.2
Lack of loan savings and referees	6	9.1
High interest rate BRAC Institution Conditions and teams	26	39.4
Total	66	100

BRAC reduce poverty

Yes	66	100
No	0	0
Total	66	100

Reasons

It improves income	16	24
It improves living standard in household	14	21
It helps women to start business	12	18
It helps to afford basic needs	9	14
Help the children go to school	8	12
Help to improve business	7	11
Total	66	100

Savings.

Yes	66	100
No	0	0
Total	66	100

Types of savings of respondents

Through BRAC loan savings And VICOBA	59	89.4
BRAC loan savings	7	9.1
Total	66	100

491

492

Source: Field Data (2023).

493

3.4.1.1 Types of economic activities that are supported by BRAC

494

According to Table 3, a researcher aimed at/ intended to know the respondents' economic activities and practices. The findings in Table 2 shows that 13.6% are Saloon, 15.2% are Catering services, Food crops and vegetable to the market, 25.8% are Clothes shop, 9.1% are Cosmetics shop, 19.7% are tailors, 7.6% are Domestic needs shops, 4.5% are Charcoal sellers, 3% are Mobile network agency and 1.5% are Stationary. Therefore, Food crops and vegetables in the market were highly supported by BRAC compared to any other type of economic activity, with 25.8%. The researcher intended to know the types of economic activities that BRAC supports its owner-managers. The results are shown in Table 3 below.

502

These results showed that 25.8% of the majority of respondents dealt with food crops and vegetables in marketplace delivery. Although all entrepreneurs, whether manufacturers, service delivery, or commerce and trade, are concerned with poverty reduction, the speed of reducing poverty is low for those dealing with service delivery compared to those dealing with commerce and trade and those who are manufacturers. Findings by Morduch (2000) show similar findings that most entrepreneurs engage themselves in service delivery due to

507

508 insufficient capital. It is recommended that entrepreneurs join groups and have access to
509 higher loans that could enable them to speed up the rate of poverty reduction.
510 Likewise, during a focus group discussion with respondents, it was realized that women
511 confirm that Loan from BRAC Institution helps them to own different businesses.

512 As one of the respondents asserted that

513 *We do different businesses according to the area's demand, time, and amount of capital.*

514

515 During interview session with Credit Officer, she was of the view that loan which the BRAC
516 Institution provided to the respondents are helped them to own the differences businesses
517 because each of the respondents have their choices on what types of activities or business
518 want to practices. Here what she said.

519 *Clients own different businesses because everyone does a business that sees a good impact*
520 *and because of the nature of the place and the demand of the needs of their clients. Food*
521 *crops and vegetables are among the businesses that our clients like to do because it does not*
522 *cost much capital and has an impact on them.*

523 *The findings from focus group discussions, interviews, and questionnaire sessions revealed*
524 *that women who benefit from loans from BRAC Institution own different businesses because*
525 *they are available and easy to do, do not cost much capital and time, and have a better profit*
526 *than other businesses..*

527

528 **3.4.4 Level of capital of the entrepreneurs from the beginning and presents**

529 According to Table 3, a researcher aimed at/ intended to know entrepreneurs' capital level
530 at the beginning and present. The analysis was done to show if there has been capital growth
531 among entrepreneurs under the study. The results are shown in Table 3 below. The findings
532 show that 22.7% invested 500,000 up to 690,000, 24.2% invested 700,000 up to 900,000,
533 27.3% invested 1,000,000 up to 1,490,000, 13.6% invested 1,500,000 up to 1,990,000, 9.1%
534 invested 2,000,000 up to 2,490,000, 1.5% invested 2,500,000 up to 2,990,000. The findings
535 agreed with the (Feliccian, 2017). One of the significant challenges facing SMEs in Africa is
536 capital at the beginning. As such, once they begin their business, they have a better chance
537 of increasing their capital (Feliccian, 2017). The results show that the respondents started with
538 low income but have improved after joining BRAC Institution; their capital is much better.

539

540 Likewise, during a focus group discussion with respondents, it was realized that women
541 confirm that Loan from BRAC Institution helps them to improve their capital.

542 As one of the respondents asserted that

543 *Yes, I started with the low capital, but now the capital has improved.*

544

545 During interview session with BRAC Branch Manager, she was of the view that women who
546 received loan from BRAC Institution their capital have improved than before because for now
547 they have much better businesses than before.

548 Here what she said.

549 *There has been a massive change to the capital since they joined BRAC Institutions because*
550 *women have much better capital than before. After all, they received some loans from BRAC*
551 *Institution, which helped them to improve their capital.*

552

553 *The findings obtained from focus group discussions, interviews, and questionnaire sessions*
554 *revealed that women who are the beneficiaries of loans from BRAC Institution help women*
555 *improve their capital due to the result of women's statements that show how they started and*
556 *improved their capital.*

557 **4.4.2 Amount of loan received from BRAC**

558 According to Table 3, a researcher aimed at/ intended to know if the respondents' received
559 loans from BRAC Institution. The findings, as presented in Table 3, revealed that 100% of
560 the women received loans from BRAC, 16.6% received between 500,000 to 690,000, 19.7%

561 received between 700,000 up to 990,000, 36.4% received between 1,000,000 up to 1,490,000,
562 15.2% received between 1,500,000 up to 1,990,000, 7.6% received 2,000,000 up to 2,490,000
563 and 4.5% received between 2,500,000 up to 2,990,000. Therefore, it shows that many
564 respondents received between 1,000,000 to 1,490,000. The Findings from the study show that
565 the respondents are receiving different amounts of loans according to their differences in
566 criteria and differ from the amount they need according to their businesses.

567
568 Likewise, during a focus group discussion with respondents, it was realized that women
569 confirmed they received loans from BRAC.

570 As one of the respondents asserted that

571 *..... Yes I received loan from BRAC Institution.*

572 During interview session with BRAC Branch Manager, she was of the view that all women
573 received loan from BRAC Institution in different rank because it depends the number of times
574 started to have access to the Institution.

575

576

577 Here what she said.

578 *There are different ranks of applying for loans because of the number of years the women*
579 *received loans from BRAC Institutions.*

580

581 *The findings from focus group discussions, interviews, and questionnaire sessions revealed*
582 *that women have different ranks of loans received from BRAC Institutions.*

583 **3.4.2.2 The period to pay loan**

584 According to Table 3, a researcher aimed at/ intended to know the categorizations of paying
585 the loan and period of BRAC Institutions. The findings, as presented in Table 3, revealed
586 that 85% say they pay their loan in 40 weeks in 20 months, while the other 15.1% pay 20
587 weeks in 10 months. Chipindula and Mwanga (2016) agreed well with the findings from this
588 study on Microfinance Institutions enhancing access to loans at favorable conditions for their
589 clients because it allows clients to choose the right way to pay their loans according to their
590 different financial situations.

591 Likewise, during a focus group discussion with respondents, it was realized that women
592 confirmed receiving loans from BRAC.

593 As one of the respondents asserted that

594 *... I choose the long period of 40 weeks and 20 months payment because I can afford it.*

595

596 During an interview with the BRAC Branch Manager, she believed that BRAC Institution has
597 conditions for their clients on how to pay their loans, which is the long payment of loans taking
598 40 weeks in 20 months while the short loan payment takes 20 weeks in 10 months. Hence,
599 the clients have the freedom to choose one of them to make their loan payments.

600 Here is what she said.

601 *BRAC Institution has divided the loan payment into two ways: the extended payment period*
602 *for all loan take 40 weeks in 20 months, and the short period takes 20 weeks in 10 months.*
603 *Moreover, this categorization is for all clients who choose which period is reasonable for them*
604 *to pay according to the condition of their financial situations.*

605

606 *The findings obtained from focus group discussions, interviews, and questionnaire sessions*
607 *revealed that BRAC Institution categories of loan payments give freedom for the clients to*
608 *choose how they can pay their amount, which is favored to the clients.*

609

610 **3.4.6 Challenges in accessing loan from BRAC**

611 According to Table 3, a researcher intended to identify the challenges encountered by the
612 respondents to analyze what acts as an obstacle when accessing loans. The finding presented

613 in Table 3 shows that 30.3%, represents 20 of the total respondents, stated that the lack of
614 valid collateral and marital relationships is the major challenge they encountered, 21.2% (14
615 of the total respondents stated that the lack of businesses and entrepreneurship education is
616 the major challenge they encountered with, 9.1%, representing 6 of the total respondents,
617 stated that the lack of loan savings and referees is the major challenge they encountered,
618 whereas 39.4%, representing 26 of the total respondents, stated that according to the high-
619 interest rate and BRAC Institution, conditions terms is the major challenge they encountered
620 with. Therefore, lack of valid collateral and the marital relationship is a significant challenge
621 that faces many women accessing loans with 39.4%. The findings agreed with the (Golla et
622 al., 2021). Those institutions include legal and policy structures, economic systems, market
623 structures, and marriage, inheritance, and education systems. Also, the findings agreed with
624 the study of Liheta and Mosha (2014), which revealed that the overall performance of MFIs in
625 Tanzania could be better, and only a few have clear objectives or a solid organizational
626 structure. It was further observed that MFIs in Tanzania lack participatory ownership, and
627 many are driven. Due to that, BRAC women are facing challenges due to the high interest rate
628 and BRAC conditions and teams, extended loan process, lack of entrepreneurship education,
629 lack of valid collateral, and marital relationships.

630 Likewise, during a focus group discussion with respondents, it was realized that women
631 confirm that they face challenges when applying for loans from BRAC Institutions.

632 As one of the respondents asserted that

633 *High-interest rates and conditions are the major problems when accessing a loan because*
634 *sometimes we need more loans according to the demand of businesses we do. However, we*
635 *do not qualify to get it because of these conditions.*

636 During interview session with BRAC Branch Manager, she was of the view that BRAC
637 Institution have their interest rate and conditions and terms.

638 Here what she said.

639 *BRAC conditions are under BOT, limitations in the scale of their operations in outreach teams*
640 *and the number of clients served, poor portfolio quality, limitations in their professional*
641 *capacity, and weak government structure, so it is difficult to change them. Hence, the clients*
642 *have to meet these conditions and teams so that they can be able to acquire the loan they*
643 *need.*

644
645 *The findings obtained from focus group discussions, interviews, and questionnaire sessions*
646 *revealed that, due to BRAC Institution regulations, terms, and conditions, respondents need*
647 *help applying for loans.*

648 **3.4.4.1 Contribution to poverty reduction.**

649 According to Table 3, a researcher aimed at/ intended to know if BRAC Institution's loans
650 help reduce poverty among the respondents. The findings, as presented in Table 3, revealed
651 that 24% of it improves income, 21% improves living standard in the household, 18% helps to
652 start a business, 14% helps to afford basic needs, 12% helps the children go to schools, and
653 11% helps to improve business. The findings agreed with the (Yahie, 2000). There is a range
654 of MFIs whose participation is essential to appropriately address the challenge of poverty
655 reduction to women by providing loans for starting businesses and improving their businesses.
656 Also, it helps them improve their living standard and income, helps them meet their basic
657 needs, and helps the children go to school.

658

659 Likewise, during a focus group discussion with respondents, it was realized that women
660 confirmed that a loan from BRAC Institution helps them reduce poverty.

661 As one of the respondents asserted that

662 *It helps to improve living standards and school fees for children, get money for business, and*
663 *improve income, which improves living standards.*

664 Suring interview session with BRAC Branch Manager, she was of the view that BRAC
 665 Institution the aim is to reduce poverty and through improving women capital.
 666 Here what she said.
 667 *BRAC Institution aims to reduce poverty in society, especially by empowering women. Women*
 668 *are encouraged to join BRAC Institutions in order to get loans so that they can start*
 669 *businesses, which will help them to improve their income, which can help them to reduce*
 670 *poverty.*
 671
 672 *The findings obtained from focus group discussion, interview, and questionnaire sessions*
 673 *revealed that loan helps women to improve their living standard and poverty.*

674 **3.4.2 Savings**

675 **3.4.2.1 Savings made by the respondent**

676 According to Table 3, a researcher aimed at/ intended to know if the respondents have ever
 677 made any savings to analyze if they can make savings for their business and living. The
 678 findings in Table 3 show that 100% of respondents are saving since they received training
 679 on saving for their business and living. Moreover, they made savings for the future, specifically
 680 through VICOBA. Findings from (Rutenge, 2016) agree well with the findings from this study
 681 on the easy accessibility of Village Cooperation Bank (VICOBA) loans to promote livelihood
 682 improvement for its clients. Village Cooperation Bank (VICOBA) also promotes social solidarity
 683 between group members and the culture of saving (Rutenge, 2016) and saving based on
 684 saving accounts, which increases the savings (Ashraf et al., 2006). It is a microfinance service
 685 that enables people to access their assets with the help of weekly savings and contribute to
 686 group savings (Mkpado & Arene, 2007). Save Microfinance institutes provide the opportunity
 687 for individual and group saving. Micro-saving enhances rural women's productivity (Knowles,
 688 2013) as saving is one of the microfinance services that has long-lasting effects on women
 689 (Dupas & Robinson, 2013). According to Bernard et al. (2016), saving positively impacts
 690 women's microenterprises. Therefore, it enhances the income from microenterprises,
 691 automatically boosting women's employment.

692
 693 Likewise, during a focus group discussion with respondents, it was realized that women
 694 confirm that loan from BRAC Institution helps them to make savings.
 695 As one of the respondents asserted that
 696 *.....Yes I made the savings through VIKOBA and loan savings because I get from the profit of*
 697 *the business.*

698
 699 Suring interview session with BRAC Branch Manager, she was of the view that BRAC
 700 Institution starting making savings to all clients through loan savings.
 701 Here what she said.
 702 *Among the conditions of BRAC Institution, to receive a loan from BRAC, 10% of the loan you*
 703 *requested is for loan savings, so the clients must pay that amount to receive the loan from*
 704 *BRAC Institution.*
 705 *The findings obtained from focus group discussions, interviews, and questionnaire sessions*
 706 *revealed that Savings of the women helped women improve their businesses, as well as their*
 707 *children's school fees and all the house expenses.*

708 **3.5 Contribution of BRAC MFIs Institution on women social respect empowerment**

709 **Table 4: Social respect**

Parameters	Frequency	Percentage
Decision making Values and involved in decision making in family and society		
Yes	66	100

No	0	0
Total	66	100
Reasons		
Because am dependent now and able to cover expenses to the house and involve in community activities	35	53
Because I own the business and involved in the decision making than before	31	47
Total	66	100
Improvement in living standard		
Yes	66	
No	0	0
Total	66	100
Reasons		
Business improvement	19	28
Capacity building	3	4.6
Develops savings habits	7	10.7
Development creation	10	15.1
Health services access	8	12.1
Enhance food security	19	28.8
Total	66	100
Social services access to basic services		
Yes	66	100
No	0	0
Total	66	100
Reasons		
Yes am able to pay all the bills	12	6.1
Yes am able to have water, electricity, health insurance and cover all school expenses to my children's	54	93.9
Total	66	100

710 **Source: Field Data (2023)**

711 **3.5.1 Decision making**

712 **3.5.1.1 Value from the family and society and involvement on decision making.**

713 According to Table 4, a researcher aimed at/ intended to know how women are valued by
 714 their families and society and their involvement in decision-making.

715 The findings from Table 4 show that 100% of total respondents are now able to be valued
 716 in the families and societies 53.0 because they are independent now able to cover expenses
 717 for the house, 47% because I own the business also involved in the decisions in the house for
 718 now. As another dimension of empowerment (Midgley, 2013), better social respect decreases
 719 women's socio-economic empowerment. The findings from Table 4 show that 100% of total
 720 respondents are now valued by their families and society and are involved in decision-making
 721 making, which reflects that since they joined BRAC, they are respected, valued, and given an
 722 equal chance in decision-making as to men compared to before joined BRAC because now

723 they are dependent and able to help their husband in some expenses and own the business
724 which helps them to make capital.

725 Likewise, during a focus group discussion with respondents, it was realized that women
726 confirm that loan from BRAC Institution helps them to be respected by their families and
727 society.

728 As one of the respondents asserted that

729 *"I am respected since I am doing entrepreneurship activity and am self-reliant and fully*
730 *involved in decision making on my household and society as well.*

731 During interview session with BRAC Branch Manager, she was of the view that BRAC
732 Institution through loan which provides to women improves them in capital which make them
733 to be respected in families and society in general.

734 Here what she said.

735 *"BRAC Institution helped women and the society to change their minding set because there is*
736 *a big difference before and after joining BRAC Institutions because all women's doing*
737 *business because of the loan they reserved from BRAC so due to the income they earn from*
738 *the business can cover their expenses and their household life changed. So they get*
739 *respected by their Husband and society than before."*

740

741 "The findings obtained from focus group discussion, interview, and questionnaire sessions
742 revealed that a high number of respondents own the businesses also are involved in family
743 and community activities such as ceremonies, which makes them be respected within the
744 community."

745

746

747 **3.5.1.2 Improvement of living standard**

748 According to Table 4, a researcher aimed at/ intended to know how women have improved in
749 terms of living standards after being involved with BRAC Institution. The findings from Table
750 4 show that 100% of total respondents have improved in terms of living standard as follows:
751 28.8% BRAC influences business improvement that boosts their living standard, 4.6% BRAC
752 influences the capacity building through the training provided which helps them to improve
753 their living standard, 10.7% BRAC helped them to develop the saving habit which improves
754 their living standard since they save money for their daily needs, 15.1% BRAC helped them
755 to employ themselves through the loans used as starting capital and improve their daily living,
756 12.1% BRAC helped them to access appropriate health services through the loans provided
757 on which some of them can access health insurances, 28.8% BRAC enhances food security
758 among them and facilitating good health and hence good living standard. The findings agreed
759 with several studies such as Naved (2018), Hashemiet al. (2018), Amin et al. (2019), and
760 Osmani (2019) have also shown that women's participation in microfinance programs helps
761 to empower them and improve the welfare of their family. Therefore, BRAC improves living
762 standards among women and their households by improving their businesses and food
763 security.

764 Likewise, during a focus group discussion with respondents, it was realized that women
765 confirm that loan from BRAC Institution helps them improve their living standards.

766 As one of the respondents asserted that

767 *"Business improved, develops savings, employment opportunities. Health access services*
768 *and enhance food security".*

769

770 During interview session with BRAC Branch Manager, she was of the view that BRAC
771 Institution through loan which provides to women improves them in capital which make them
772 to improve in living standard.

773 Here what she said.

774 *"BRAC Institution influences the improvement of living standards among the women and their*
775 *households by improving their businesses and enhancing food security.*

776 According to the findings obtaining from focus group discussion, interview and questionnaire
777 sessions, revealed that the high number of respondents own their business and living in good
778 houses”.

779 **3.5.2 Social services**

780 **3.5.2.1 Access in basic services like water, light and education, and healthy for** 781 **household compared to before joining in BRAC**

782 According to Table 4, a researcher aimed at/ intended the researcher to know if the
783 respondents now have access to essential services like water, light, health esurance, and
784 education for their households since they joined BRAC Institution. The results are shown in
785 Table 4, which presents that 6.1% of total respondent need access to essential services like
786 water, light, and sewerage for their households. In comparison, 93.9% had access to essential
787 services like water, light, education, and health services for their households before joining
788 BRAC. Therefore, BRAC has a strong influence and advantage to women to access essential
789 services like water, light, and sewerage for their households, which improves their living
790 standards. The findings agreed with Midgley (2013) access to better essential services. This
791 implies that better access to essential services means women are empowered. In that regard,
792 microfinance institutions' contribution to providing loans to entrepreneurs can increase
793 income, which will be used to access affordable social services. This means that social respect
794 plays a good role in poverty reduction.

795
796 Likewise, during a focus group discussion with respondents, it was realized that women
797 confirmed that a loan from BRAC Institution helps them improve access to social services.

798 As one of the respondents asserted that

799 *“Yes, I can pay all the bills and connect water and electricity to my house.*

800 During an interview session with the BRAC Branch Manager, she believed that BRAC
801 Institution, through a loan provided to women, improves their capital, which makes them
802 improve access to social services.

803 Here is what she said.

804 *BRAC Institution influences the improvement of women’s access to different social services.*

805 The findings obtained from focus group discussions, interviews, and questionnaire sessions
806 revealed that many respondents have had access to social services since joining BRAC
807 Institution.

808

809

810 **4. CONCLUSION**

811

812 MFIs have significantly contributed to women's empowerment by providing them with access
813 to financial services, including loans and savings. This access has enabled women to engage
814 in a wide range of self-employment activities, fostering the acquisition of valuable
815 entrepreneurship skills. The positive impact of MFIs on women's income empowerment is
816 evident. Through tailored financial services and investments in their businesses, women have
817 been able to expand their ventures and generate sustainable income. This increase in income
818 has translated into an improved quality of life for women and their families.

819 The study reveals that MFIs have played a vital role in enhancing women's social respect and
820 status within their communities. As women became economically independent, they earned
821 recognition and respect from peers, families, and society at large. This shift in perception has
822 not only boosted women's confidence but also challenged traditional gender norms. The
823 research findings align with the broader objectives of eradicating poverty and achieving the
824 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). MFIs have emerged as a valuable tool in promoting
825 gender empowerment and sustainable development.

826 While the study celebrates these achievements, it also acknowledges the potential for further
827 growth. As women's businesses flourish, they may transition to individual customers with
828 stronger business acumen and collateral, making additional contributions to economic
829 development and poverty reduction. In conclusion, Microfinance Institutions have
830 demonstrated their pivotal role in the pursuit of gender equality and sustainable socioeconomic
831 progress.

852 **ETHICAL APPROVAL**

853 Ethics in research play a critical role in safeguarding the well-being and rights of
854 research participants. In this study, ethical considerations were paramount, and
855 several critical ethical principles were upheld to ensure that respondents did not suffer
856 any adverse consequences due to the research. The study ensures that individuals
857 clearly understand the study's purpose and voluntarily agree to participate. In this
858 study, an introduction letter from the postgraduate directory was used to request
859 consent from organizations, aligning with the requirement for informed consent (World
860 Medical Association, 2013). Respondents were informed that their participation was
861 voluntary, and there were no repercussions for those who declined to participate
862 (American Psychological Association, 2017). In the study, participants were
863 guaranteed to keep their information confidential, aligning with ethical standards
864 (National Institutes of Health, 2018). The data collected was used solely for academic
865 purposes and not for undisclosed or harmful intentions by ethical guidelines (CIOMS,
866 2016). The researcher ensured that the whole research was ethically guided and that
867 respondents had the privilege of refusing to answer the questions being asked if they
868 thought that it was no longer included in their participation. Lastly, any quotes and
869 theories used by fellow researchers throughout the research report were accounted
870 for by providing valid and genuine references of the researcher and source. This is to
871 acknowledge the work of the researcher and the other contributors and thus avoid
872 plagiarism.

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1032 **DEFINITIONS**

1033 Microfinance Institutions

1034 these are the financial services provision to the low-income people and small enterprises that
1035 lack access to formal financial institutions. microfinance is not limited to borrowing activities
1036 but also includes savings, transfer facilities, training, insurance and others. microfinance
1037 institutions are effective instruments for providing basic services like savings, affordable credit
1038 and skill training (manfuzetal al., 2017, misrak, 2021).

1039 Empowerment

1040 Generally, empowerment is defined in many ways depending on who it is being
1041 applied to. the general definition states that empowerment is the process of enabling
1042 or authoring an individual to think, behave, take action and control work in
1043 autonomous way (krishna, 2003).

1044 Secondly, empowerment as classed by the United Nations (UN), is classified into five
1045 components and these include; women's "right to make choices", "right to have
1046 access to resources" "right to control their own lives", "sense of self-worth" and "the
1047 ability to create a social and economic order" (the un, 2011).

1048 Women Socio - Economic Empowerment

1049 Refers to the ability of women and girls to act individually and collectively to change
1050 social relationships and the institutions and discourses that exclude them and keep
1051 them in poverty. this means the women ability to participate equally in existing
1052 markets, their access to and control over productive resources, access to decent
1053 work, control over their own time, lives and bodies and increased voice, agency and
1054 meaningful participation in economic decision making at all levels from the household
1055 to internal institutions international monetary fund (2018). pursuing women's
1056 economic empowerment. it is about the extent to which some categories of people
1057 are able to control their own destinies, even when the people with whom they interact
1058 oppose their interests mason, and (2005). in this study, women socio-economic
1059 empowerment stands for the efforts by microfinance institutions (mfis) to socially and

1060 economically empower women through micro-credit to improve their economic
1061 activities.

1062 **ABBREVIATIONS**

1063	MFIS	Microfinance Institutions
1064	SACCOS	Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations
1065	SMES	Small and Medium Enterprises
1066	SPSS	Statistical Product and Social Solutions
1067	UN	United Nations
1068	VICOBA	Village Cooperation Bank
1069	BRAC	Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee
1070	FINCA	Foundation for International Community Assistance
1071	SBLP	Service – Based Local Policy
1072	UNDP	United Nations Development Programmer
1073		
1074		