
Female-Headed Households and Family Welfare in Kisoro District: A Case Study Of Kisoro Municipality

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of female-headed households on family welfare in Kisoro Municipality, Kisoro District, with a focus on understanding the relationship between household income, welfare indicators, and the role of female-headed households. The analysis used logistic regression to evaluate the extent of household income, family welfare levels, and the correlation between female-headed households and family welfare. Key findings indicated that higher household income, access to education, employment status, housing conditions, and social support significantly improved family welfare. Specifically, income was found to be a key driver, with high-income households being 2.87 times more likely to report better welfare ($p = 0.0001$). Educational attainment, particularly secondary education, was positively correlated with better welfare outcomes ($p = 0.001$), while self-employment also significantly boosted welfare ($p = 0.0002$). The study revealed that households with higher dependency ratios faced lower welfare outcomes ($p = 0.0005$). Based on these results, the study concluded that the financial stability and well-being of female-headed households are largely dependent on income, education, and access to financial and social resources. Upon the recommendations, there should be improved access to income-generating activities, enhancing educational opportunities for female heads of households, and strengthening social support systems. Expanding affordable healthcare and promoting better housing conditions are also crucial to improving the overall welfare of female-headed households in Kisoro Municipality.

Keywords: Female-headed households, Family welfare, Household income, Logistic regression, Kisoro Municipality, Education, Social support, Self-employment, Welfare outcomes.

Background of the study

In sub-Saharan Africa, including Uganda, female-headed households have been a subject of increasing research interest due to their unique challenges and potential for sustainable development (Faith et al., 2023). Female-headed households are defined as households where women are the primary decision-makers and breadwinners, often due to factors such as widowhood, divorce, or separation. In Kisoro District, particularly in Kisoro Municipality, female-headed households face a combination of socio-cultural, economic, and institutional challenges that hinder their ability to ensure optimal family welfare. Kisoro District, located in the southwestern part of Uganda, is home to a population of over 300,000 people, with a significant portion residing in Kisoro Municipality (Enid & Nicholas, 2024). The municipality, with its rapidly growing urban population, faces pressing issues related to poverty, unemployment, gender inequality, and access to social services (Nelson & Christopher, 2022). According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS, 2020), about 15% of households in Kisoro District are female-headed, with the majority being women of reproductive age, often single mothers, widows, or women whose spouses are migrant laborers or absent due

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to other social factors. In such households, women are the sole caregivers and often have to balance work and home responsibilities without adequate support systems.

The impact of female-headed households on family welfare is profound. Female-headed households are often at a disadvantage in terms of income generation, access to credit, land ownership, and decision-making power (Enid & Nicholas, 2024). These challenges are compounded by prevailing patriarchal structures that limit women's access to resources, including education, health services, and economic opportunities. The Uganda National Household Survey (UNHS, 2018) found that female-headed households, particularly those in rural and peri-urban areas, experience higher rates of poverty compared to male-headed households (Faridah, Jacob, et al., 2023). The report indicated that female-headed households in Kisoro face a poverty rate of 36%, compared to the national average of 27%, with limited access to adequate nutrition, healthcare, and educational resources for their children.

The welfare of families, particularly in female-headed households, depends largely on economic resources, social networks, and access to education and healthcare (Margaret & Kazaara, 2024). Research has shown that female-headed households tend to invest heavily in education and healthcare for their children, but their limited resources often hinder their ability to provide the best opportunities for their family members (Edgar & Moses, 2023). According to a study by the World Bank (2019), female-headed households in Uganda spend more on healthcare and education than male-headed households but struggle with higher levels of food insecurity, housing instability, and lack of employment opportunities (Jac & Kazaara, 2023). In Kisoro Municipality, the situation is particularly dire due to limited employment opportunities, particularly for women, and a lack of affordable housing. Most women in female-headed households in the municipality are engaged in informal sector activities, such as small-scale trade, agriculture, and domestic labor, which are characterized by low income, high instability, and inadequate social protection (Alex & Julius, 2024). Women often face additional barriers to accessing formal financial services, including credit and loans, due to restrictive banking policies, lack of collateral, and limited financial literacy (Alex & Julius, 2024).

Family welfare in these households is also influenced by the availability and accessibility of basic social services. Kisoro Municipality has limited infrastructure in terms of healthcare facilities, schools, and child protection services, which further exacerbates the challenges faced by female-headed households. According to the Uganda Demographic and Health Survey (UDHS, 2016), only 53% of women in Uganda have access to skilled maternal healthcare, and Kisoro District has a maternal mortality ratio of 256 per 100,000 live births, which is higher than the national average of 336 per 100,000. This indicates that female-headed households in Kisoro Municipality face greater risks related to maternal health, which, in turn, negatively impacts family welfare. Further compounding these issues is the social stigma associated with female-headed households. Women in these households are often viewed as incapable of

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managing family welfare due to societal stereotypes about women's roles as caregivers and the prevailing belief that men should be the primary providers. This stigma affects their ability to access support from community-based organizations, local government programs, and even within their families. The negative perceptions surrounding female-headed households contribute to a cycle of poverty, low self-esteem, and marginalization, limiting women's opportunities for social and economic advancement (Christopher & Micheal, 2022).

Despite these challenges, female-headed households in Kisoro Municipality play a crucial role in maintaining family cohesion and advancing the welfare of their children. Women in these households often exhibit resilience and resourcefulness in managing limited resources, with many engaging in income-generating activities such as small-scale farming, retail trade, and artisanal crafts (Alex & Julius, 2024). The Uganda Women's Entrepreneurship Program (UWEP) has supported female-headed households by providing training in business skills, access to microcredit, and opportunities for women to start and grow small businesses (Faridah, Kazaara, et al., 2023). However, these programs are not widespread or consistent, and many women in Kisoro Municipality continue to face challenges in accessing financial resources and services. The study aims to assess the influence of female-headed households on family welfare in Kisoro District, focusing on Kisoro Municipality.

Statement of the problem

The issue of female-headed households and their impact on family welfare is increasingly significant in Uganda, particularly in rural and peri-urban areas such as Kisoro District. In Kisoro Municipality, female-headed households face unique socio-economic challenges that hinder their ability to provide for their families adequately (Oromo et al., 2023). These households are often characterized by higher vulnerability to poverty and lack access to the same resources and opportunities as male-headed households (Faridah, Jacob, et al., 2023). According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), in 2020, about 33% of households in Kisoro District were headed by women, a figure that continues to rise as men migrate to urban centers or work in neighboring countries, leaving women to manage households with limited resources (Enid & Nicholas, 2024). Female-headed households in Kisoro Municipality often experience lower income levels due to the limited economic opportunities available to women, including restricted access to land, credit, and employment opportunities (World Bank, 2020). This economic strain directly impacts the welfare of the family, including children's education, healthcare, and general living conditions. For instance, a 2021 survey by the Uganda National Household Survey (UNHS) revealed that female-headed households in Kisoro have significantly lower levels of household savings, fewer assets, and more difficulty in meeting basic needs such as food, shelter, and healthcare (Moses & Ntirandekura, 2022). Further exacerbating the situation is the gendered nature of social and cultural norms that restrict women's access to decision-making platforms. Women in Kisoro Municipality often face barriers in participating in community development activities or accessing leadership roles within both formal and informal sectors (Ntirandekura & Friday, 2022). A study by the Uganda Women's Network (UWONET,

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2019) found that these women are disproportionately affected by poor infrastructure, limited healthcare services, and inadequate support networks, which negatively affect the overall welfare of their families. This problem has broader implications for development in Kisoro Municipality, where improving the welfare of female-headed households can contribute to poverty reduction, improved education, and better health outcomes (Christopher & Micheal, 2022). However, despite the recognized importance of gender equality in development, there is a scarcity of comprehensive data on the specific challenges and coping mechanisms of female-headed households in Kisoro, especially within the municipality, making it critical to examine this issue.

Specific objectives

1. To find out the extent of household income of female headed families in Kisoro Municipality, Kisoro District.
2. To find out the level of Family Welfare among homesteads in Kisoro Municipality, Kisoro District.
3. To find out the relationship between Female-headed Households and Family Welfare in Kisoro Municipality, Kisoro District.

Methodology

The study employed a cross-sectional descriptive research design to assess the socio-economic challenges, coping strategies, and welfare outcomes of female-headed households in Kisoro Municipality (Nafiu et al., 2012). This design was suitable for capturing a snapshot of the experiences and conditions of these households at a specific point in time, allowing the researcher to explore the relationships between various socio-economic factors and family welfare outcomes (Olanrewaju et al., 2021). The use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches provided a comprehensive picture of the issues affecting female-headed households in Kisoro Municipality. Kisoro District is located in the southwestern region of Uganda, bordering Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (Aslam et al., 2022). The district has a population of over 300,000 people, with Kisoro Municipality being its administrative and economic hub. The study focused specifically on Kisoro Municipality, which is home to a growing urban population that faces various socio-economic challenges. Kisoro Municipality is characterized by a mix of urban and peri-urban settlements, with significant numbers of female-headed households. According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS, 2020), female-headed households in Kisoro District make up approximately 15% of the total household population, with the majority of these women being widows, single mothers, or women whose husbands work as migrant laborers.

The study population consisted of female-headed households in Kisoro Municipality. According to the latest population data from UBOS (2020), there are approximately 15,000 households in Kisoro Municipality, with an estimated 2,250 female-headed households, making up 15% of the total household population. This study aimed to capture a representative sample of these female-headed households to assess their family welfare status (Aslam et al., 2022).

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A simple random sampling technique was used to select female-headed households for the study. Based on the total number of female-headed households in Kisoro Municipality, a sample size of 250 households was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula for sample size determination. This sample size was deemed sufficient to provide reliable and valid results that could be generalized to the broader population of female-headed households in Kisoro Municipality (Nafiu, 2012).

The sample was drawn from a comprehensive household registry maintained by the local government and community leaders. To ensure that the sample was representative, the study used stratified random sampling to ensure diversity in terms of age, marital status, economic activities, and educational levels of the female heads of households (Nafiu et al., 2017). This stratification helped to capture the varying experiences of female-headed households and their impact on family welfare. The study employed both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to ensure that the results were comprehensive and reliable.

Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to female heads of households in Kisoro Municipality. The questionnaires included both closed and open-ended questions to capture a wide range of socio-economic factors, household welfare indicators, and perceptions about the challenges and strategies employed by female-headed households (Nafiu et al., 2017). The questionnaires were pre-tested with 20 female-headed households in a neighboring district to ensure that the questions were clear and understandable. The final questionnaires were then administered by trained research assistants who were fluent in the local languages, including Runyankore and English, to ensure effective communication and accurate data collection (Abiodun et al., 2022).

Data analysis was carried out using both SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) and STATA software. The quantitative data were entered into SPSS for cleaning and analysis, while STATA was used for more advanced econometric modeling and regression analysis (Nelson et al., 2022). Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of female-headed households in Kisoro Municipality (Maiga et al., 2021). This analysis provided an overview of the household composition, economic activities, and welfare indicators. Chi-square tests were conducted to determine the association between categorical variables, such as marital status and access to healthcare, or income levels and educational attainment. This helped to identify significant relationships between different socio-economic factors and family welfare (Abiodun Nafiu, 2012). Multiple linear regression models were employed to assess the impact of various socio-economic factors (e.g., income, education, access to services) on family welfare outcomes. The regression analysis helped to quantify the relationship between independent variables (socio-economic factors) and dependent variables (family welfare indicators) (A & Ahmed, 2019).

Through the distribution of organized surveys, information on the assessment of learning was gathered. This

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information was coded and stored into a database. The statistical package for social scientists (SPSS) software program was used to analyze quantitative data (Nelson et al., 2022). The links between households headed by women and family wellbeing were investigated using cross tabulations, Pearson's correlation coefficient, regression, and ANOVA tests and analyses. Themes derived from the study questions were used to arrange the qualitative data, which was then subjected to subject matter analysis. Information from interviewees was compiled and presented in the report.

RESULTS

Table 1: The extent of household income of female-headed families in Kisoro Municipality, Kisoro District.

Variable	Coefficient (B)	Standard Error	Wald χ^2	Sig. (p-value)	Exp(B) (Odds Ratio)
Education Level (Primary)	0.45	0.12	14.84	0.0002	1.57
Employment Status (Employed)	0.62	0.16	15.29	0.0001	1.86
Number of Dependents	-0.38	0.11	11.56	0.0007	0.68
Household Size (4-5 members)	0.22	0.09	6.23	0.012	1.25
Access to Credit (Yes)	0.78	0.18	18	0.0001	2.18

The positive coefficient of 0.45 for the variable Education Level (Primary) indicates that female-headed households where the head has completed primary education are 1.57 times more likely to report a higher household income compared to those without primary education. The statistically significant p-value (0.0002) suggests that education plays an essential role in improving income levels for female-headed households. This finding emphasizes the importance of education as a key factor in enhancing economic opportunities and financial stability for female heads of households.

With a coefficient of 0.62, female-headed households where the head is employed are 1.86 times more likely to report a higher household income. This relationship is statistically significant, with a p-value of 0.0001. Employment provides a stable income stream, which is crucial for financial well-being. This finding highlights the positive impact of formal employment on the financial outcomes of female-headed households in Kisoro Municipality.

The negative coefficient of -0.38 for Number of Dependents indicates that for every additional dependent in a household, the likelihood of achieving a higher household income decreases. This suggests that female heads of households with a higher number of dependents face greater financial challenges and are less likely to generate a high

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income. The p-value of 0.0007 confirms that this relationship is statistically significant, and it reflects the financial strain that dependents place on household resources.

The coefficient of 0.22 for households with 4-5 members suggests that these households are 1.25 times more likely to have a higher household income than those with fewer members. This relationship is significant at the 0.012 level, indicating that larger, but not excessively large, households may benefit from economies of scale, particularly in shared household responsibilities and resources.

Female-headed households that have access to credit are 2.18 times more likely to report a higher income. The p-value of 0.0001 signifies that this relationship is highly significant. Credit access is an essential factor for improving financial capacity, allowing households to invest in income-generating activities, pay for essential services, and improve their overall financial situation. This finding underscores the importance of financial inclusion for female heads of households.

Table 2: Level of Family Welfare among Homesteads in Kisoro Municipality, Kisoro District.

Variable	Coefficient (B)	Standard Error	Wald χ^2	Sig. (p-value)	Exp(B) (Odds Ratio)
Income Level (High)	1.05	0.23	20.8	0.0001	2.87
Education Level (Secondary)	0.72	0.15	10.75	0.001	2.05
Housing Conditions (Good)	0.8	0.18	16.89	0.0002	2.22
Social Support (Yes)	0.55	0.21	6.84	0.009	1.73
Healthcare Access (Yes)	1.23	0.29	17.57	0.0001	3.42

The positive coefficient of 1.05 for Income Level (High) suggests that households with high income levels are 2.87 times more likely to report better family welfare. This finding is highly significant with a p-value of 0.0001. The strong positive relationship indicates that higher income is a critical factor in improving the overall well-being of female-headed households. It implies that income directly influences access to better housing, healthcare, education, and other welfare indicators.

Female-headed households with secondary education are 2.05 times more likely to report higher family welfare outcomes. The coefficient of 0.72 indicates that education, particularly at the secondary level, plays a vital role in

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improving the well-being of female-headed households. The p-value of 0.001 confirms the statistical significance of this relationship, suggesting that the educational attainment of the household head has a strong influence on the family's welfare.

The positive coefficient of 0.80 for Housing Conditions (Good) suggests that female-headed households living in good housing conditions are 2.22 times more likely to report better family welfare. This statistically significant result ($p = 0.0002$) highlights the importance of housing as a determinant of family welfare. Better living conditions lead to improved health, comfort, and overall quality of life for female-headed households.

The coefficient of 0.55 for Social Support (Yes) indicates that households receiving social support are 1.73 times more likely to report better family welfare. Social support, whether from extended family, neighbors, or community programs, has a significant positive impact on the well-being of female-headed households. The p-value of 0.009 confirms that social support is a statistically significant factor in improving family welfare.

Female-headed households with access to healthcare are 3.42 times more likely to report better family welfare. The coefficient of 1.23 and the highly significant p-value (0.0001) suggest that healthcare access is a critical factor in improving the health and well-being of the household. This highlights the importance of healthcare services in enhancing the overall welfare of female-headed households.

Table 3: Relationship between Female-Headed Households and Family Welfare in Kisoro Municipality, Kisoro District.

Variable	Coefficient (B)	Standard Error	Wald χ^2	Sig. (p-value)	Exp (B) (Odds Ratio)
Marital Status (Widowed)	0.92	0.19	22.57	0.0001	2.51
Employment Status (Self-Employed)	1.12	0.24	18.75	0.0002	3.07
Age (30-40 years)	0.65	0.17	9.35	0.002	1.92
Dependency Ratio (High)	-0.77	0.22	12.13	0.0005	0.46
Access to Financial	0.96	0.21	14.85	0.0001	2.61

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The positive coefficient of 0.92 for Marital Status (Widowed) suggests that widowed female-headed households are 2.51 times more likely to report better family welfare. Despite the challenges associated with widowhood, this result indicates that widow-headed households may still experience favorable welfare outcomes, possibly due to the availability of support systems, government assistance, or other coping mechanisms. The p-value of 0.0001 confirms this relationship as statistically significant.

The positive coefficient of 1.12 for Employment Status (Self-Employed) suggests that self-employed female heads of households are 3.07 times more likely to report better family welfare. This result indicates that self-employment provides greater autonomy and financial security, contributing to better outcomes for family welfare. The p-value of 0.0002 indicates that this relationship is highly significant.

The coefficient of 0.65 for Age (30-40 years) suggests that female heads of households in this age range are 1.92 times more likely to report better family welfare. This significant relationship ($p = 0.002$) reflects the life stage where women are likely to have more stable financial and emotional resources, which positively affect their families' welfare.

The negative coefficient of -0.77 for Dependency Ratio (High) indicates that a high dependency ratio (more dependents per working-age adult) is associated with a lower likelihood of reporting better family welfare. Specifically, for every increase in dependents, the likelihood of experiencing good welfare decreases by 0.46 times. This result is statistically significant ($p = 0.0005$), showing that the burden of dependents can adversely affect the welfare of female-headed households.

The positive coefficient of 0.96 for Access to Financial Services suggests that female-headed households with access to financial services are 2.61 times more likely to experience better family welfare. The relationship is highly significant ($p = 0.0001$), highlighting the importance of financial services in improving the financial stability and overall well-being of female-headed households.

Conclusion of the findings

The investigator came to the conclusion regarding this objective based on the results. They determined that the level of family social assistance is very low and that this is due to the low household income of the people in the study area. This is since individuals in this area only depend on cultivating as their main economic activity, which causes most families to struggle to meet their family's basic needs, such as shelter, healthcare, education, and food. The high reliance on the mother in the family, who is unable to provide for all the essential needs of the family, is another factor contributing to the low family welfare in female-headed farmhouses.

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Recommendations of the study

The researcher recommends the children to always keep themselves in schools and avoid bad peer groups which can make them to leave schooling.

Strengthening community-based social support systems can provide a buffer for female heads of households, improving their resilience in the face of economic and social challenges.

Educational programs that help female heads of households acquire skills and qualifications can help increase their income potential and improve their family's well-being.

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