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Access to Extension Services and improved Crop Productivity among Smallholder Farmers in Simanjiro District, Manyara, Tanzania.

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Abstract: The study was conducted in Simanjiro District with the title "Access to Extension Services and improved Crop Productivity among Smallholder Farmers in Simanjiro District, Manyara, Tanzania." Based on the specific objectives of the study, the researcher was capable to find out sources of information on extension services in Simanjiro District, to determine roles of extension officers in improving crops productivity in this district, to identify gender issues in accessing agricultural extension services in the district and to examine existing challenges facing smallholder farmers in accessing agriculture extension services in the district. The study involved 150 respondents from three wards Naberera, Terat and Orkesumet. Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used to select the 3 wards from which respondents were drawn. After data collection the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data was done by using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), Microsoft excel and content analysis. Basing on the findings, the study revealed that 58.7% of the respondents had the information about extension services from their fellow farmers. Also the study revealed that extension officers are not playing their roles since 99.3 % of the respondents argued that there is no role played by extension officers in improving crops productivity in the study area. The results show that 65.3% of the respondents said that there are gender inequalities in accessing agricultural extension services in the study area. On the other hand, the study revealed that, the major challenge facing smallholder farmers in accessing extension services was unavailability of extension officers in their areas 34.7% of the respondents said that.

Keywords: *Extension officers, Extension services, Smallholder famers, Crops.*

1.0 Introduction

Smallholder farmers and rural producers are among the populations most vulnerable to climatic shocks and weather related disasters, and their vulnerability is compounded by market fluctuations, poor governance, conflict, and disease. Access to extension services may provide an opportunity for strengthening the resilience of rural and farming households by increasing their access to tangible and intangible resources, such as inputs and knowledge. More generally, extension and advisory services may be able to play a critical role in promoting agricultural and rural development and improving their crop productivity and resilience of the sector as a whole (Sulaiman and Davis, 2012).

Access to extension and advisory services in rural areas are challenging even under normal circumstances. They must be provided consistently throughout a country, even in remote areas and despite limited incentives for providing them efficiently. Monitoring and evaluating the quality of the services provided requires substantial resources. Extension and advisory services are subject to the "triple challenge" of market, state, and community failure (World Bank and IFPRI, 2010).

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In Africa, extension services play a great role in improving smallholder farmer's productivity. Agricultural Development Programs (ADP) plays the role of extension and delivery services in the agricultural sector. Agricultural Development Programs (ADPs) liaise with the research institutes for improved technologies in order to effectively deliver services to the farmers. The problems that emanate from agriculture at grass roots level are identified by extension Personnel and then related to the scientists for plausible solutions. Agriculture related information is disseminated to the farmers for implementation. The supply of modern inputs such as seed, fertilizer and other associated inputs are important for the promotion of agro-based agriculture among millions of small-scale farmers in Nigeria and other African countries as well (Ogunsumi, 2011).

In most developing countries, there are few extension officers to serve many farmers, for example, in Kenya the ratio of farmers to extension officer is 753:1. There is a need to determine ways in which the same few extension officers can serve a larger group of farmers with minimum effort (Ngulube, 2011). But in Tanzania, formulation of The National Agricultural policy of 2007 was focused on attaining the goals of the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty, Tanzania National Vision 2025 and the Millennium Development Goals. To alleviate abject poverty and improve the living condition of small scale farmers in Tanzania, the agricultural policy aims at increasing efficiency, profitability and competitiveness of the agricultural sector in Tanzania (NAP, 2012). Based on the facts these can be reached if the smallholder farmers will have access to extension services which will help them to improve their farming systems and increase their crop productivity.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Access to extension services is very crucial to smallholder farmers in Simanjiro District since, it will help to improve crop productivity in the study area. The Government of Tanzania has implemented a range of policy measures to improve access on agricultural extension services to smallholder farmers in many areas of the country. In this district , access to extension services is still a challenging issue due to the fact that smallholder farmers are still facing many challenges in accessing extension services in their daily agricultural activities. Poor access to extension services lead to poor crop productivity in Simanjiro District.

In spite of the measures and efforts taken by Non-Governmental Organizations, the Government of Tanzania and other international agencies in helping smallholder farmers to access extension services and improve crop productivity, yet the problem of accessing extension services in Simanjiro District exist. Up to date little information is known on access to extension services and improvement of crop productivity among smallholder farmers in Simanjiro District. In order to solve this problem, this study aimed at investigating on access to extension services and improved crop productivity among smallholder farmers in Simanjiro District.

The study objective was to investigate on access to extension services and improved crop productivity among smallholder farmers in Simanjiro District. Specifically the study intended to find out sources of information to smallholder farmers on extension services, determine roles of extension officers in improving crops productivity, identify gender issues in accessing agricultural extension services and examine existing challenges facing smallholder farmers in accessing agriculture extension services in Simanjiro District.

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2.0 Methodology

The study area was Simanjiro District in Manyara Region. According to the 2012 Tanzania National Census, the population of the Simanjiro District was 178,693 of which females were 89,718 and males were 88,975. Cross-sectional design was used, in which data were collected at one point in time from a selected sample of respondents. The study used both qualitative and quantitative methods. The sample size of the study was 150 smallholder farmers of which 73 were female and 77 were male. The purposive sampling technique was used to obtain the 3 wards which were Naberera, Orkesumet and Terat. The simple random sampling was used to select 50 respondents from each of the three wards. In this research both primary and secondary data were collected. Primary data was collected by using interview, focus group discussion, observation and questionnaires. Secondary data was obtained from books, journals, and internet and research reports. Qualitative data was obtained by using interviews, observation and Focus group discussion while, quantitative data was obtained by using questionnaires. The analysis of quantitative data was done by using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) and Microsoft excel while, the qualitative data was analysed by using content analysis.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

3.1.1 Age of the respondents

The results show that majority of the respondents (42.0 %) were between the age group of 29 and 39 years, whereas (31.3%) of were of the age of between 40 and 50 years, (13.3%) of the respondents were in the age group of 18 and 28 years and (5.3%) were between 51 and 61 and the last group (5.3%) were 62 and above. This implies that most of the respondents interviewed in this study were of age group between 29 and 50. Thus, most of the respondents interviewed were mature and hence ensured credibility of information provided.

Table 1: Age of the respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18-28	20	13.3
29-39	63	42.1
40-50	47	31.3
51 and above	20	13.3
Total	150	100

3.2.2 Sex of the respondents

Most of the respondents obtained in this study were male who constituted (51.3%) of the respondents and female were constituted of (48.7%) of the respondents. This implies that the majority of the respondents who interviewed engaged into small scale farming activities (51.3%) are men. In this study, women are also engaging in small farming activities but most of them depend on their husband that is why the majority of the respondents in this study were men. These findings conform to those of (Leavens and Anderson, 2011) that agriculture provides 27.8% of Tanzania‘s GDP and women play an essential role in agricultural production.

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The sector is characterized as female intensive, meaning that women comprise a majority of the labour force in agriculture (54%). Moreover, there over 15 million smallholder farmers in the country, more than half of who are women (Nyomora *et al*., 2012). Most cultivate one and three hectares, with limited access to modern machinery, inputs and improved technologies. Agriculture also comprises a greater part of women's economic activity than men 81% of women, compared to 73% of men, engaged in agricultural activity. In rural areas, that number rises to 98% for women.

Table 2: Sex of the respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	77	51.3
Female	73	48.7
Total	150	100

3.2.3 Education level of the respondents

The study revealed that (78.7%) of the respondents had primary level of education and (10.0%) of the respondent had never gone to school, (7.3%) had secondary education, (4%) had post-secondary education. This implies that, most of the smallholder farmers interviewed in study area are those people with only primary level of education. The level of education of the surveyed villages showed that majority (73%) had attained primary school education, 13% had secondary school education, 2% had collage education, 2% had attended an adult learning education program and 11% had not attended any formal school.

Table 3: Education level of the respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Never gone to school	15	10.0
Primary	118	78.7
Secondary	11	7.3
Post-Secondary Education	6	4.0
Total	150	100

3.2.4 Marital status of the respondents

Results show that majority of the respondents (93.3%) were married, (4.7%) were single, (1.3%) were separated and (0.7%) were widows. This implies that most of the respondents interviewed (93.3%) are those people with families, so most of the smallholder farmers in Simanjiro are people with their families. So they need to produce enough food for their families and business as well. In short extension services are needed so as to improve their production. Nearly 6% of the farmers were single, 88% were married, 5% were widowed and 2% was divorced.

Table 4: Marital status of the respondent

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	7	4.7
Married	140	93.3
Separated	2	1.3
Widowed	1	0.7
Total	**150**	**100**

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3.2.5 Source of information on extension services

Results from Figure 1 indicate that 58.7% of the respondents had the information about extension services from their fellow farmers. 32.7% said they are aware of extension services they heard it from radio. 6% of the respondents said they knew extension services from other sources such as newspapers and television programmes; it is only 2.6% of the respondents who said they knew extension services from extension officers. This implies that the majority of the respondent (58.7%) they are aware on extension services but they learned this from other farmers.

According to Daniel (2013) analysis showed that 40% of farmers in Kyela, 32.5% in Morogoro and 62.5% in Songea learned from one another. Also 32.5% of respondents interviewed in Kyela, 15% in Morogoro and 17.5% in Songea listened to radio programmes, 5% in Morogoro listened to radio and exchanged ideas with their fellow farmers and 5% in Kyela and 12.5% in Morogoro learned from other sources like newspapers and from their children who pursued agricultural subjects in schools.

Source of information on extension services

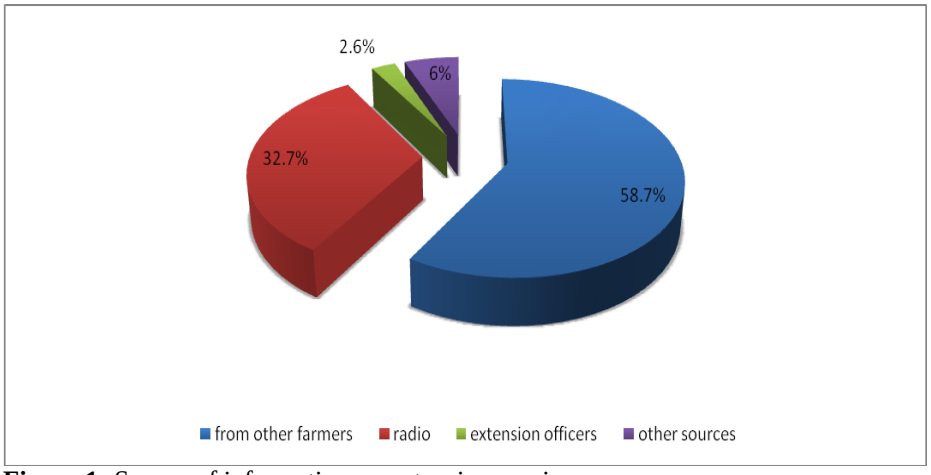


Figure 1: Source of information on extension services

3.2.6 Roles of extension officers in improving crops productivity

Results from Figure 2, revealed that 99.3 % of the respondents said that there is no role played to the smallholder farmers by extension officers while only 0.7 percent of the respondents said there were roles played by extension officers in improving crops productivity in the study area. During focus group discussion at naberera ward, one of the respondents said that:

"*since we have started to engage into farming activities we have never seen any extension officer though people are saying that there are extension officers but they have never reached us"*. During interview with the District Agricultural Officer in orkesumet he said that: "*The district has only 28 extension officers, 18 are in field and 10 at the head office, but we still lack 35 extension officers that are needed in the district."*

According to Daniel (2013), 25% (Kyela), 32.5% (Morogoro) and 88.2% (Songea) explained that the extension officer had a big role to play in terms of provision of agricultural education and advice. On the other hand, 25% of farmers in Kyela, and 5% in Morogoro said an extension

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officer had a small contribution to their success while 50% of farmers in Kyela and 11.8% in Songea said an extension officer had no contribution at all.

Roles of extension officers in improving crops productivity

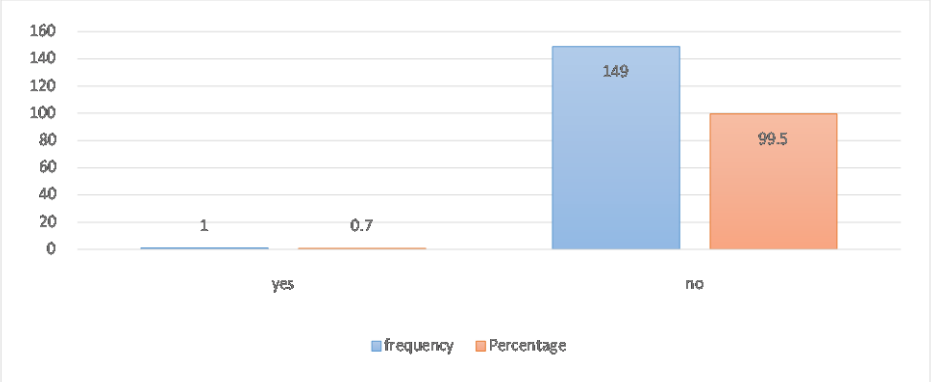


Figure 2: Roles of extension officers in improving crops productivity

3.2.7 Gender Issues in Accessing Agricultural Extension Services

The study revealed that 65.3% of the respondents said that there are gender inequalities in accessing agricultural extension services. 34.7% of the respondents said there is equality in accessing agricultural extension services in Simanjiro. During the discussion with one of the smallholder farmers at Namalulu village, he said that:
"In our community women do not have decision making, they are ruled by their husbands, no right for trainings and other extension services." This implies that there is gender inequality in accessing extension services in Simanjiro District.

According to Sanga (2014) one of the challenges for these development programmes for agriculture which is normally not accented enough is gender inequalities existing in agricultural extension services. Studies indicate that women participate actively in agriculture especially in production of food crops, but in many societies they have been excluded from training and extension services.

Gender issues in accessing agricultural extension services

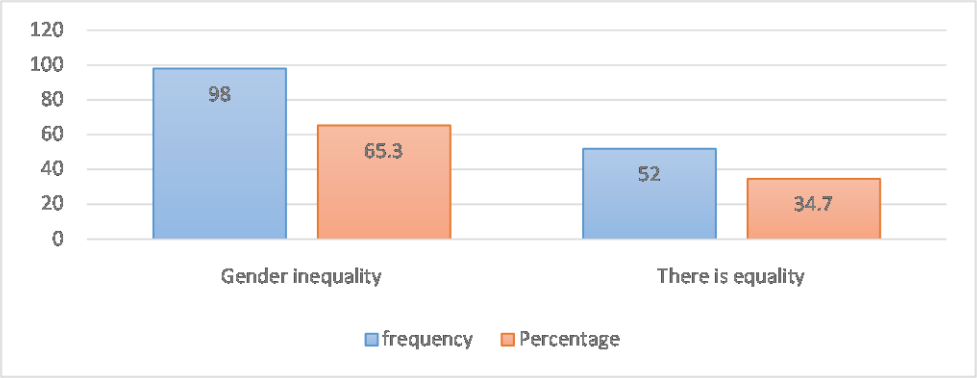


Figure 3: Gender issues in accessing agricultural extension services

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3.2.8 Existing challenges facing smallholder farmers in accessing agriculture extension services

The study revealed that 34.7% of the respondents said unavailability of extension officers is one of the challenges in accessing agriculture extension services. One of the respondents argued that:

"*For recent years productions have decreased a lot because we do not know how to perform our activities in the way that we can produce more and improve our farming activities. Things have changed a lot, we need training and seminars that can help us to improve our crop production but there are no extension officers."* About 23.3% of the respondents said that poor implementation of agricultural policies is another challenge to accessing extension services. One of the smallholder farmer in the study area said that:

"we heard that there are government strategies and policies for agriculture for example Kilimo kwanza but up to now we have never seen anything to support us as smallholder farmers were are just hearing them on radios and read about them in newspapers. The government is supposed to implement this if they real want to help agricultural sector in Simanjiro and Tanzania as well."

According to the study 27.3% of the respondents said that poor government is also a challenge for them to access extension services. The respondents argued that, they do not have access to markets; they use a lot of money in cultivating but at the end of the day, they sell their crops at loss. They do not have a place to sell their crops after harvesting. One of the respondents said:

"Sometimes you find you are in need of money for school fees and other domestic uses so there is no way we are just selling our crops to the business men at cheaper prices."

The results show that 14.7% of the respondents said poor budget for smallholder farmers and agricultural sector is also affecting smallholder farmers in accessing extension services. The study shows that smallholder farmers can not access extension services not only because of poor government, unavailability of extension services and poor implementation of policies but also poor budget is another great challenge.

Existing challenges facing smallholder farmers in accessing agriculture extension Services

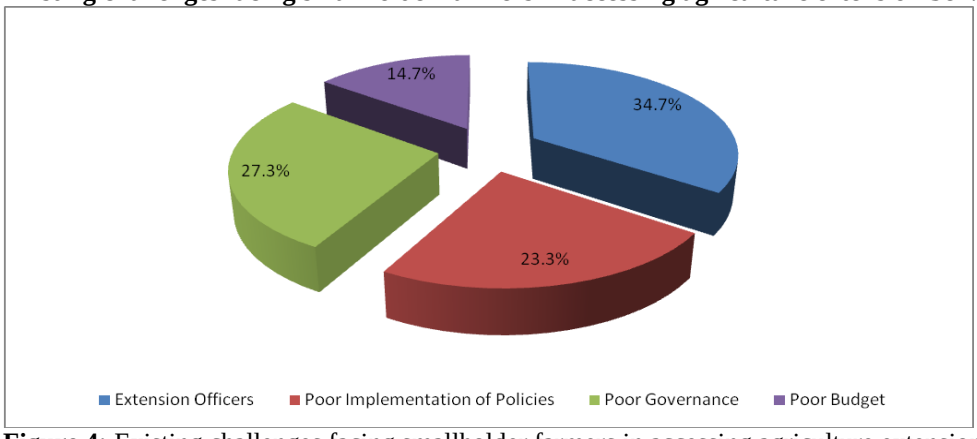


Figure 4: Existing challenges facing smallholder farmers in accessing agriculture extension Services

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4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Basing on the findings, it is true that access to extension services and improved crop productivity among smallholder farmers in Simanjiro District is still a challenge. The study revealed that 58.7% of the respondents had the information about extension services from their fellow farmers. Also the findings revealed that, extension officers are not playing their roles since 99.3 % of the respondents said that there is no role played by extension officers in improving crops productivity in their areas. But also, the results show that 65.3% of the respondents said that there are gender inequalities in their community in which it affect smallholder farmers especially women in accessing agricultural extension services. On the other hand, the study revealed that, the major challenge facing smallholder farmers in accessing extension services was unavailability of extension officers in their areas.

So there is a critical need for understanding the potential of access to extension services to smallholder farmers so as to improve their crop productivity in the study area. There is a need to undertake empirical analyses to provide specific insights for designing policies and programs that will enable extension services to be more effective, efficient, and impactful, especially in terms of building the resilience of smallholder farmers in the study area.

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