



EFFECT OF POLITICAL BARRIERS ON WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN KAKAMEGA COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to establish the effect of marginalization on women participation in political leadership in Kakamega County, Kenya. The study adopted correlation design with target population of 48 women who contested for positions in the 2017 general election in Kakamega County. Questionnaires were used for collecting data from the participants. Data analysis was through descriptive and inferential techniques. The findings revealed that political barriers had a positive linearly significant influence on participation of women in political leadership. The implication is that political barriers are one of the significant impediments suppressing the ability of women to participate in politics in Kakamega County. The study concluded that political barriers were the most important factor in diminishing participation of women in political leadership. This implies that lack of political support leads to non-molding and socialization of women candidates in political scenarios thus diminishing the level of competition. The study recommendation is that there is necessity for change in attitudinal and behavioral changes within the society that may culminate in arousing the participation of women in politics.

Keywords: *political barriers, participation, political leadership*

1.1 Introduction

In the last several years there have been a good number of campaigns to have women involved in political leadership (Wallace, 2018). Some United Nations Human Rights Conventions such as elimination of all forms of discrimination against women upholds the

right of women to fully participate in public life (Radovic, 2019). The Beijing Platform for Action calls on elimination of all barriers that frustrate equal participation of women, including in political processes. The just phased out millennium development goals and the current Sustainable development goals have strongly emphasized women's involvement public policy, governance and politics (UN Women, nd).

However, participation of women in political leadership has been poor over the years and continues to be so to date. By February 2019, only 24% of parliamentarians' and national levels were women across the world. This is very slow growth rate considering they were 11% by 1995 (Radovic, 2019). It is sluggish growth considering the amount of time and resources spent by global players in enhancing women participation in political offices. Only 11 women were serving as heads of states and only another 12 were heads of governments out of close to 200 countries on the globe (UN Women, 2019).

In 27 countries, the current parliaments have less than 10% women with three have no woman at all (Dudman, 2017). Looking at regional levels in terms of women involvement in political leadership as measured through parliamentary membership; Nordic countries lead the world with 42.5% (Wallace, 2018). North American region has a 30% women leadership in parliaments while Europe has a 27% women representation. In Asian and Arabic countries, their score is particularly poor at 19% alongside pacific nations which record 16% (UN Women, 2019). The situation is no different at governmental level. Globally, only 21% of government ministers are women with most of the positions being in social services and children ministries. At local government levels in 103 countries across the world, only 26% is made up of women membership (Dudman, 2017).

This impacts the kind of leaderships and decisions made. There is evidence that when women take government leadership, policies friendly to families are prioritized (Wallace, 2018). Evidence is available that shows that when women are involved in political leadership, the welfare of women improves. Women leadership is more tolerant of political differences. They are much more capable of reaching out across political divide and settle differences especially on matters that affect families, women and children (Dudman, 2017).

Involvement of women in political leadership has been recorded in Africa right from pre-colonial periods. Kingdoms led by women in Africa are recorded to have been more developed than those led by men and had more advanced militaries (Tamale, 2018). Women provided leadership as full chieftains or queens while others offered leaderships as assistants to kings either as king mothers or sisters (Tripp, 2017). In some governments, there were agreements that shared leadership across men and women leaderships. Some tripartite agreements ensured governance decisions were made by a king, king's mother and sisters. In other kingdoms women were part of councils that made critical decisions for their kingdoms (Tamale, 2018).

As suggested by Ekpe, Eja and John (2014) in a study of critical analysis of women and gender equality in Nigeria, marginalization, patriarchal biases, family support and political barriers are the critical psychosocial challenges women in political participation. As suggested by La Palombara and Weiner (2015), women politicians are generally perceived as weak and undeserving of their positions. Women in politics are usually targeted through political violence and hooliganism in political campaigns. This is meant to discourage women from participation in elective politics and competing with male politicians. Mittulah and Owiti (2011) reasoned that lack of political goodwill by male dominated leadership to include women in governance has led to limited involvement of women in political space.

Psychosocial factors are linked to stereotypes and beliefs about ability of women across many communities. The perceptions informed of local cultures Kivoi (2014) writes discourage women from active political involvement. Practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and domestic violence degrade women's worth and expose them to psychosocial factors that further thwart active political participation and leadership. Some social cultural practices like FGM have women disadvantaged in matters like access to education, and health services which has a negative effect on their chances in politics (Kasomo, 2012).

While women in political leadership have been on the rise in Africa, Kenya has made attempts at the same but it has been a rather slow progress. Patriarchal cultures in Kenya frustrate women involvement in political processes (Roberts & Karambayya, 2017). This is in spite of women being the majority of the Kenyan total population and the majority voters at 47% of the total 19 million registered voters (Ngele & Begisen, 2017).

Kenyan women however have been vocal in having their voice heard in the political sphere. Women are seeking meaningful participation in public life way back since Kenyan independence in 1963 (Nzomo, 2015). Progress, however was painfully slow in the first three post-colonial decades. This was informed by an ally of factors. There was and still is a deeply entrenched patriarchal culture, undemocratic political structure that was further aggravated by gender blind legal and policy frameworks. There were low levels of awareness on need of gender sensitivity and equity in political issues (Mulji, 2018).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In Kenya, evidence indicates, women are poorly represented in political and government positions. Article 27, section 8 of the Kenyan constitution directs that at least one third of all political positions should be of alternative gender, geared towards enhancing women representation (Rift Valley Institute, 2016). Even with the constitutional guarantees, women participation in political processes in Kenya and specifically their assumption of political leadership position has been slow. For example, less than a third of women in National assembly, Senate or County Assemblies are women. As witnessed in 2013 and 2017 general elections women continued to face hurdles that are social, economic, psychological or political in nature. In 2017, women were faced with gender based violence of unprecedented proportion in the political processes happening then. This had them need special protection from security organs as they campaigned for different political positions (Women Deliver, 2018).

In Kakamega County just like the rest of Kenya, there is a perception that women are inferior to men. Many people uphold practices and attitudes that subordinate women to men. Despite there being a law requiring at least a third of political positions in Kenya being held by women, Kakamega county assembly has not satisfied this law (Tundi, 2018). Out of this men continue their domination over women in political spheres. Women political achievements and roles are not recognized by the society. There is hence a massive movement to ensure that women are empowered to more fully participate in political processes. It is from this background that this study aimed at establishing the psychosocial challenges facing women in Kenya while pursuing for political leadership.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The general objective of the study was to establish the effect of political barriers on women participation in political leadership in Kakamega County, Kenya.

1.4 Research Question

What is the effect of political barriers on women participation in political leadership in Kakamega County?

2.0. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Review

2.2.1. Radical Feminist Theory

The proponent of this theory is Ellen, Willis and Shulamith Firestone in 1969. Radical feminism emerged from women discussion on ordinary issues surrounding their lives such as pregnancies, child bearing, housework, menopause and menstruation etc. It then evolved to discuss gender inequalities beyond ordinary daily lives of women (Daly, 1978). It focused on deep seated causes of women discrimination in social spheres, and political spaces. Dynamics of power both within the public and private circumferences is notable where demonstration of sexism was evident. These biases were realized to be social constructs rather than natural (Daly, 1978).

Gandhi (1988) reports that according to radical feminism, traditional social systems was overtaken by events and was only enshrined in social system to legitimate men's dominance over women. Furthermore, Mackinnon (1982) argues that patriarchy was difficult to do away with due to deeply embedded belief that women were way too inferior to men. According to Brookes (2008), issues so particular to women such as family planning and sexual health should as far as possible be left to women to decide on. Unfortunately, with men being major policy makers in the world, they end up being the ones to decide on such matters

While making an explanation on radical feminism, Tong (2013) holds that sexual framework of the society is responsible for oppression women experience. Male dominance of both public and private spheres results to different frameworks of human control. Men are dominant in various aspects of setting laws which eventually inhibit women from accessing public spaces of influence (Tong, 2013). Patriarchy rule, according to radical feminism is a bed rock of inequality existing between men and women and explains the social predominance of men over women.

The consequence of this is men attaining privilege over men in all humans' aspects from political, social and economic. Radical feminism considers sex war as critical in political struggle against male domination and patriarchy. This gives scholars interest to study male physical dominance over women as a pathway of social political control and look at ways to reduce it (Daly, 1978). Philosophy of radical feminism is perceived as a huge contribution to liberation of women globally.

Women rights activists were aggressive in the fight for women rights among 1967-1975. Radical feminism questioned the roles men and women were assigned in the society based purely on gender and sexuality. This theory holds that gender roles are socially constructed and not biological (Daly, 1968). This may mean that gender has no role in determining one's capabilities in career or political matters. Other factors such as experience and passion are relevant in ascending in political offices but not gender orientation (Daly, 1968). Radical feminists are much more aggressive than other fighters of liberation of women while deconstructing disabling social constructs. According to Connell (2005), traditional societal

systems build a masculine hierarchy that led to men rising in leadership that legitimates patriarchy.

Radical feminists deconstructed complexities that were grounded on masculinity such as war, violence, rape, sexism and homophobia. Masculinity was considered a tool through which female gender is legitimated as neither weak nor capable of assuming political power. Masculinity was linked to leadership that allowed men to dominate all levels of political office (Connell, 2005). From these theories, an explanation is provided on how women participation in politics varies from country to country. It is largely based on social, cultural and religious perceptions. According to Kabira (2016), patriarchal culture of many African countries explain male domination in politics. Laboso (2017) reports that in Kenyan national and county parliamentary seats, most women are not elected but rather nominated. This is an indication that women lack support to compete for political positions. In contrast, countries on the front line to make gender sensitive policies are seeing more women engaged in active politics.

2.3. Empirical Review

Mutabai (2017) investigated political challenges women in Kenya face. The research was qualitative with information gathered from literature such as journals, interviews reports and books. The study found that despite women being more than half of Kenyan population they are still under represented in political positions by a wide margin. Though Kenyan constitution provides for at least a third of all political seats be reserved for women, this law has not yet been implemented. However the research also established that that attention given to Kenyan women in politics has improved with more women being able to join active politics. However the overall conclusion of this study was that women are still under represented in Kenyan politics.

Ndirangu, Onkware and Chitere (2017) discussed the challenges women face in political participation with a specific reference to Nairobi City and Kajiado Counties in Kenya. The research design was descriptive with data collected through questionnaires. The study found that political participation is expensive and one needs a level of financial muscle to stand a chance. Political parties required huge nomination fees for participation in politics through them. Financiers of politics in Kajiado and Nairobi had clear preference for male aspirants based on social assumption that politics is masculine and male candidates stood better chances. This study recommended that political partners be regulated and forced to include gender sensitive policies facilitative of women participation in politics.

Abubakar (2015) looked at women and political participation in Kaduna state in Nigeria. Qualitative research method was utilized. Nine research informants were used for in depth interviews. The study found that in pre-colonial period, women were actively engaged in politics. However after colonialism, women were denied rights to franchise and consequently their participation in politics decline significantly. The factors influencing political participation of women were identified as political awareness, and reservation of positions in politics.

Tundi (2015) researched on factors influencing women participation in politics in Kimilili Constituency Bungoma County in Kenya. Descriptive research design was used. Data was collected through interviews where five women aspirants and six key informants were interviewed. Questionnaires were issued to men and women in eight wards on Kimilili constituency selected through purposive sampling. Data was analyzed through SPSS and

presented in tables and charts. The study found out that, men have a negative perception on women ability to lead and thus women fear male discouragements and criticisms. There is minimum support given to women by the government, political parties and social institutions such as churches in supporting women.

Kivoi (2014) investigated factors that frustrated participation of women in political processes in Kenya. It was a desktop based research that involved investigation of socially constructed characteristics as well as cultural and psychological traits linked to socialization defining feminist and masculinity. The study established that traditional beliefs perceptions and stereotypes showing women as less capable than men resulted to their marginalization. Considering the data of elected women in political offices in Kenya showed that gender equality in political participation is far from achieved.

Anigwe (2014) researched the perceptions of women in political leadership of Nigeria. This qualitative study had an objective of exploring and describing the experiences and perceptions of Nigerian women on gender equality and other issues influencing leadership in the political sphere. The theoretical framework used was Eagly's social role theory and Ayman and Korabik's leadership categorization theory. The research questions were centered on how women perceived and described their political participation and the challenges they faced. The study purposively selected ten women. Data was coded, categorized and analyzed through themes. The study found that women are still under represented in government and political positions even as they strive harder for equality in politics. The implication here are that for there to be positive change in women engagement in politics, there needs to be massive public education campaigns on women's full engagement in politics.

2.4. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is based on the relationship between political barriers on women participation in political leadership in Kakamega County, Kenya. Therefore, the relationship between the various political barriers and women participation in political leadership is indicated.

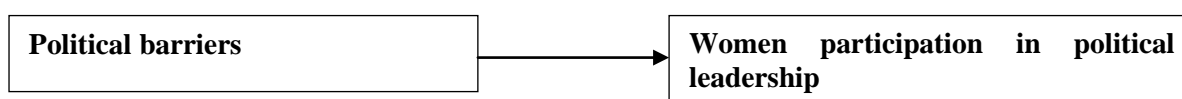


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3.0. Research Methodology

This study adopted correlation design where both quantitative and qualitative data was collected. This design enabled the researcher to fully establish the political barriers facing women in political leadership in Kakamega County, Kenya. The target population for this study was 48 women who contested for positions in the 2017 general election in Kakamega County. The study utilized a census method of all the 48 women political leaders. The researcher used a questionnaire to collect data from the participants. To test validity, the instruments were forwarded to the supervisor at Management University of Africa for validation. The appropriate modification based on the experts' advice was made on the pre-tested instruments in order capture the relevant information related to the study objectives. Reliability test was carried out through a pilot test and computation of Cronbach's Alpha at 0.7. Data analysis was through descriptive and inferential techniques. Analysis of data was

obtained effectively using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) programme version 23.

4.0. Results and Discussion

4.1.1. Reliability Analysis

Scale reliability for variables was determined by computing the overall Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the items of political barriers and participation of women in political leadership. The reliability was demonstrated since the overall Cronbach's alpha statistic for participation of women in political leadership was 0.877, which were greater than the threshold value of 0.7 as indicated in table 1.

Table 1: Reliability of study variables

Variables	No of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Political barriers	10	0.824

4.1.2. Normality test

The normality of data distribution was assessed by examining its skewness and kurtosis (Kline, 2005). A variable with an absolute skew-index value greater than 3.0 is extremely skewed while a kurtosis index greater than 8.0 is an extreme kurtosis (Kline, 2005). The results of the normality test of the study variables indicated skewness and kurtosis in the range of -1 and +1 as shown in table 2. This implies that the assumption of normality was satisfied.

Table 2: Normality test

	N	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Political barriers	268	-.696	.149	.032	.297

4.1.3. Correlation Analysis

Political barriers had a positive and significant relationship with participation of women in political leadership ($r = 0.837$, $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$) as indicated in table 3.

Table 3: Correlation analysis

Variables	Political barriers	
Participation of women in political leadership	Pearson Correlation	.498**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	44
Political barriers	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	44

4.1.4. Regression Analysis

The R square value in this case is 0.512 which clearly suggests that there is a strong relationship between political barriers and participation of women in political leadership as

indicated in table 4. This indicates that political barriers share a variation of 51.2 % of participation of women in political leadership.

Table 4: Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.716 ^a	.512	.507	.33947

4.1.5. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

The Analysis of Variance on the association between independent and dependent variables was conducted. The ANOVA table 5 indicates that the overall model was a good fit since (F-value=92.392 and p-value=0.000<0.05).

Table 5: Analysis of variance

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	31.942	3	10.647	92.392	.000 ^b
	Residual	30.424	264	.115		
	Total	62.366	267			

4.1.6. Coefficients analysis

Coefficients analysis on the strength of the predictor variables on the dependent variable was undertaken. The results are presented in table 6.

Table 6: Coefficients analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Political barriers	.201	.026	.395	7.872	.000

Political barriers was found to have a positive linearly significant influence on participation of women in political leadership ($\beta=0.201$, $p=0.000<0.05$). Here one unit change in patriarchal barriers results in 0.201 unit increase in participation of women in political leadership. The findings agreed with Mittulah and Owiti (2011) that lack of political goodwill by male politicians to include women in structures of political governance is to blame for limited participation in political parties. The implication is that political barriers are one of the significant impediments suppressing the ability of women to participate in politics in Kakamega County.

5.0 Conclusions

Political barriers were found to have a positive linearly significant influence on participation of women in political leadership. The study concluded that political barriers were the most important factor in diminishing participation of women in political leadership. This implies that lack of political support leads to non-molding and socialization of women candidates in political scenarios thus diminishing the level of competition.

6.0 Recommendations

The study recommendation is that since political barriers is the greatest impediment to participation of women in politics, there is necessity for change in attitudinal and behavioral changes within the society that may culminate in arousing the participation of women in politics.

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