

**PERCEPTIONS OF FEMALE LEGISLATORS IN THE 11TH
PARLIAMENT ON MEDIA PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN
POLITICIANS IN KENYA**

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this project is my original work and has not been submitted to any other institution other than the University of Nairobi for academic credit.

Signed..... Date.....

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This research project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the appointed University supervisor.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my children, Daniel and Michelle, for their patience and endurance of long hours of absence during the study.

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Portrayal -	This is used to mean the interpretations of words, images, and themes the media ascribe to women politicians.
Representation -	The concept of meaning making through media illustrations of women politicians in the 11 th Parliament in Kenya.
Invisibility -	Quantity and quality of coverage of women politicians in the media.
Trivialization -	Reductionism of gender concerns.
Gender -	Cultural orientations of being male or female.
Women Politicians -	Female legislators.
Two thirds gender rule -	Affirmative action to increase participation of women in politics.
Sexism -	Coverage of women politicians based on their physical appearances and their bodies.
Objectification -	Reduction of women politicians' worth to their physical appearances and their bodies singled out for male desire.
Commodification -	Use of female images as sex symbols to entice audiences to purchase items.
Placement -	Location of women photographs and stories in newspapers and television news which signify the priority given to those images and stories and the quality of the language used to tell the stories.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

- AMWIK** - Association of Media Women in Kenya
- CoK** - Constitution of Kenya
- GMMP**- Global Media Monitoring Project
- GoK** - Government of Kenya
- KDHS** - Kenya Demographic Health Survey
- KEWOPA** - Kenya Women Parliamentarians Association
- KEWOSA** - Kenya Women Senators Association

ABSTRACT

The study sought to examine the perceptions of female legislators in the 11th Parliament on media portrayal of women politicians in Kenya. The objectives of the study were: Assess the experiences of women politicians with how the media cover them; Find out the factors that influence the coverage of women politicians and establish the contribution of women politicians towards the creation of an identity of a female politician in Kenya. The study adopted a phenomenology qualitative research method and employed purposive sampling procedure to identify a sample of five female legislators for in-depth interviews. The five female legislators were purposively sampled from the Mzalendo Report of 2015 on the most active women Parliamentarians in the 11th Parliament. Data was collected through an interview guide. The data was analysed thematically and presented in narratives around the research objectives. The study found that the media demean and trivialize women politicians through invisibility on media platforms. It also found that the media apply collective judgement on female politicians which is not the case with male politicians. The study found that the media use uneven standards of scrutiny on female and male politicians. The study recommends specific policy guidelines for gender sensitive language use in media houses. It recommends gender training for media workers and women politicians. The study also recommends continuous liaison between parliament, the media council, the Association of Media Women in Kenya and the Editors Guild to develop content for training of elected and aspiring women politicians. This will assist women politicians to build confidence and develop content for effective engagement with the media. The study recommends the need to conduct a similar study on the perceptions of male politicians on media portrayal of women politicians in Kenya.

CHAPTER ONE

INRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This chapter provides an overview of the background information to the study, explains the problem of the study, research objectives as well as the research questions. The chapter also presents the justification of the study, the scope and explains the underlying assumptions of the study.

1.2 Introduction

While gender imbalance in politics is a global phenomenon, it is a social reality in Kenya with only sixteen women elected outside the affirmative action, to the 11th Parliament in 2013. This was after the promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya, 2010, through which Kenyans overwhelmingly stated that they wanted to have increased women representation in Parliament. Forty-seven (47) women representatives were elected to the 11th Parliament on an affirmative action and five women were nominated. The Senate had 18 female legislators, all of whom were nominated, making a total of 86 women politicians in the 11thParliament. According to Kaimenyi, Kinya & Chege (2013), the 11th Parliament had a 15 per cent women representation from 9.8 per cent in the 10th Parliament.

Article 81 of the Constitution of Kenya, 2010, provides a legal framework for increased women participation in politics in Kenya with a provision that no gender should occupy

more than two thirds of the seats in Parliament. While the court in Kenya has ruled that the achievement of the two thirds gender principle is progressive, the media is expected to play a pivotal role in ensuring that this is achieved. The media is expected to play a major role in advocating for the implementation of this principle and ultimately for gender parity in Kenya. While there is an increase in women in politics compared to previous Parliaments, it is still way below the expected women participation in the Kenyan political spaces. The study seeks to establish the values the media attach to women politicians, through the lived experiences of women politicians, which influence public perceptions about the suitability of women as political leaders in Kenya or not.

Kenya has had 11 Parliaments since Independence. Ten of them, from 1963 to 2013, had cumulatively 75 women representatives; 50 elected and 25 nominated as explained by Kabira and Kimani (2012). The parliaments were governed by the old constitution of Kenya, which did not provide for women participation in politics. Affirmative action propelled 47 women representatives to parliament, through seats reserved for women, but only sixteen women were elected through competitive politics. According to Kabira and Kimani (2012), in 1997, Kenya had only a 3% women representation in the legislature and this could be attributed to unequal power relations caused by the fact that men are the custodians of resources in African culture.

Gallagher (2003) argues that while a lot of progress is being made around the world to have increased women participation in politics, the struggle is still alive in the 21st Century. This requires concerted efforts from the Government, the civil society and the

media to promote the electability of women to political institutions. The lived experiences of women politicians in the struggle to be elected or when elected, affect how they behavior, how this behavior work for or against them and ultimately influence their suitability as worthy political competitors with male politicians.

1.2.1 Background

Many scholars in the field of media effects hold that media texts and narratives have potential to influence the decisions the consumers of such texts make in their daily lives. In politics, consumers of media texts evaluate political leaders based on the information they receive through the media. If the media disseminate biased and skewed information about women politicians, women politicians are evaluated based on that information. Lippman (1992) argues that media texts have a big influence on the decisions audiences make. He argues that consumers of media form mental images based on the media texts and information gathered from the mass media. Even when audiences have no personal contact with political candidates, the media becomes the only link between them and the candidates.

According to Graber and Dunaway (2014), media narratives possess great potential to direct the consumers to society defined appropriateness and inappropriateness behavior. Such narratives influence the thoughts and actions of the society about a certain group. Byerly and Ross (2008) argue that women seeking political offices endure a lot of scrutiny and encounter cultural prejudices which hinder any progress that would have been made through legislation. Media texts define and construct politics in male

hegemony which propagate the notion that the male is the norm in the political spaces and female is an intruder. According to MacIntosh (2013), media narratives present female politicians as lacking political intelligence and as only being endowed with sexual power, which the women must exploit to fit in the political spaces and to access any other forms of power. She argues that the media have not illuminated the feminine strength and the values women bring to politics, different from the male strength, which would only enrich and widen the democratic spaces in a nation.

The media are accused of narrowing the lens within which the public evaluates women politicians to the issue of the girl power. According to Allan, Branston and Carter (2002), the media use the girl power negatively to disadvantage women politicians. The scholars argue that the media is involved in the narratives of “them” and “us”, thus demarcating the female and male political playing arenas. The media influence the participation of women in politics through stereotypical narratives that make women shy away from the political scene in Kenya. This is supported by the views of Trimble and Arscott (2007) who argue that the media use gendered specific narratives that hinder the progress and success of women in politics, thus working against the gains towards gender equality around the world. The study delves into the perceptions of women politicians in the 11th Parliament in Kenya to seek to uncover the hidden meanings that women attach to media narratives, that either force them out of the political spaces and expose them to public ridicule, hence their poor evaluation by the voters.

Buckingham (2013) postulates the media have taken a big share in the socialization of members of the contemporary society. He argues that the media is competing with the family, the church and the school in the socialization of members of the society. When the media give prominence to the hairstyles, handbags and dressing styles of female political leaders like Hon. Millie Odhiambo or Hon. Racheal Shebesh, and even try to evaluate the cost involved in maintaining certain hairstyles, they eclipse the skills and abilities of such politicians and the values they would add to the political processes in Kenya. According to Gallagher (2001), Falk (2004) and Kitzinger (2004), the media is continuously involved in the construction of meanings and values in the modern society. The study analyses the perceptions of women politicians in relation to the role of the media in the progress of women politicians in Kenya. The 11th Parliament has the biggest number of female legislators and the identity the media has created around the issue of a female politician becomes part of the struggle of women towards increased women participation in Parliament.

The media have described successful women politicians in masculinity as evidenced by a statement about a former Minister for Justice, Hon. Martha Karua as being the only man in the former President Kibaki's Government. When being addressed as a man may appear a strong attribute, it stereotypes and embarrass such women. Gallagher (1995) argues that gender stereotypes result into negative evaluation of women in politics. This forms the lenses and or frames within which women politicians are evaluated by the public, and are found to fall off the male defined political behavior, which explains the low level of elected women in Parliament in Kenya.

The study is woven around the nexus between the media and gender equality in politics in Kenya. The perceptions of women politicians in the 11th Parliament will assist to illuminate the place of the media in the promotion of gender parity and ultimately gender equity in Kenya. This is based on the meanings and values women politicians think the media have attached to them as they engage within the political spaces in Kenya.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

According to MacIntosh (2013), skewed portrayals of women politicians in the media fail to bring out their skills and values, and scuttle their ability to compete effectively with men in politics. With increased women participation in politics, more women are expected to appear in the media as news subjects or news sources. The coverage should be devoid of stereotypes and gendered ideologies, so that the media can place women at a vantage point to articulate their agendas. According to the Kenya Demographic Health Survey (KDHS), 2014, women form about 52 per cent of the Kenyan population and the media should reflect that reality in news subjects and news sources, but this is yet to be achieved in the Kenyan media as indicated in recent studies.

Bauer (2015), Verloo (2016) and Crowder-Meyer, Gadarian and Trounstein (2016) support the argument that distorted portrayal of women in politics through stereotypes, sexism or patriarchal ideologies affect women participation in politics. The media is expected to play a major role in social change and have increased women participation in politics through setting a clear women public agenda. The media has not set a clear agenda for women politicians in Kenya as indicated by studies on women, media and

politics which indicate that the media have portrayed women politicians negatively which has led to negative evaluation of women politicians by the public. Nduva (2016) found that women encounter more scrutiny by the media and in most cases, the media is more concerned about their appearances and family statuses which divert the public attention from their skills, values and abilities. The media should also make a conscious choice of words and images about women politicians which are in sync with enhancing positive evaluation of women politicians by the public. Even with the enhanced legal framework in the constitution for more women to access political spaces, many women are evaluated negatively by the voters as evidenced by the few number of elected women politicians in the 11th Parliament.

Article 81 of the Constitution of Kenya, 2010, requires that not more than two thirds of members of elective public bodies shall be of the same gender yet Kenya has achieved a paltry 16 elected female legislators in a possible 349 Membership, which gives a bleak picture of political gender parity. Media is expected to play the role of dismantling the traditional meanings of political leadership and creating a new cultural hegemony to place women politicians at par with male politicians. This is possible through positive portrayals of women in politics in the media, to ensure women politicians are evaluated positively by the voters and their electability index is raised. The 11th Parliament has the highest number of women in politics since Independence as a result of an affirmative action which provided for the election of 47 women as women representatives, whose electability was only through that platform. It is therefore necessary to explore whether women are evaluated negatively by the voters from how the media portray them or there

is a problem in the self-representation of women to the media, which falls short of feeding into positive evaluation by the voters.

The Beijing Platform for Action and the Declaration Platform for Action identified the media as one of the platforms with immense potential to support the achievement of gender parity and the fulfillment of the UN Charter on Human Rights (World Media Monitoring, 2010). The full implementation of the two thirds gender principle, the process of positioning women politicians at par with their male counterparts through portrayals that dispel gender hierarchies, as envisaged in the Constitution of Kenya (CoK), 2010, requires a lot of sensitivity from the media. The desired social change requires Government's effort, the Civil Society and mostly importantly the media, to reinforce the und position of having, at least, a third of the political positions held by women. This will work towards the promotion of total and equal participation of all the members of the society in political leadership.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were as follows:

1.4.1 General Objective

The general objective of the study was to examine the perceptions of female legislators in the 11th Parliament on media portrayal of women politicians in Kenya. The study delves into the deeper meanings and values that women politicians attach to media narratives about women in the Kenyan political spaces.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

1. Assess the experiences of women politicians with the way the media cover them in Kenya.
2. Find out the factors that influence the coverage of women politicians by the media in Kenya.
3. Establish the contribution of women politicians towards the creation of an identity of a female politician in Kenya.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What are the experiences of women politicians with the way the media cover them in Kenya?
2. What factors influence the coverage of women politicians by the media in Kenya?
3. What is the contribution of women politicians towards the creation of an identity of a female politician in Kenya?

1.6 Justification and Rationale of the Study

The media provide a site within which meanings are negotiated and constructed. According to Silverman (2015), audiences engage with their environments based on the meanings the environment hold for them. Studies indicate that there is negative portrayal of women politicians in the media and the media have not accorded women equal opportunity to access the public sphere. However, there is no specific study on the lived experiences of female legislators with how the media portray women politicians, what they think influence the coverage of women politicians and the contribution women can

make to create an identity of a female politician in Kenya. The study will contribute to the body of knowledge on the construction of gender meanings in politics, from the participants' point of view. It will benefit the Government of Kenya in understanding the place of the media in the implementation of the constitutional requirement of the two third gender principle and gender mainstreaming in politics. It will also benefit the Civil Society in its mobilisation and advocacy for increased women representation in politics in Kenya. The study will also benefit journalism educators and media practitioners, who are involved in content development. The study will greatly benefit women politicians in Kenya and all women who aspire to join politics to understand their role in creation of meanings in the media and how to engage effectively with the media in their political agendas.

1.7 Scope and Limitation

The study focuses on the perceptions of women politicians in the 11th Parliament on media portrayal from the individual and collective narratives. The coverage of the study are female politicians in the 11th Parliament in Kenya and not any other Parliament. The study looks at the women politicians' engagements that are influenced by media portrayal as opposed to the overall engagement in terms of policy.

The study concentrates on the lived experiences of women politicians as subject and consumers of media texts and not the perceptions of other people on how the media portray women politicians in Kenya. However, even with the said limitation, the researcher is certain that through in-depth interviews, the perceptions of female

legislators on media portrayal of women politicians in Kenya are accurately and reliably captured and the research findings are not compromised.

1.8 Basic Assumptions of the Study

The study assumes that all women politicians go through similar experiences. They have access to mainstream forms of media like newspapers, television and radio and have a similar understanding of media operations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview

This chapter presents the literature that was reviewed around the theoretical frameworks as well as relevant studies in the field of gender, media and politics from books, journals, magazines, research papers, newspapers and the internet.

2.2 Theoretical framework

Representation Theory and the Gender Role Theory have been used to illuminate the body of knowledge around media portrayal of women politicians globally and in Kenya. The study focusses on the perceptions of female legislators in the 11th Parliament in Kenya on media portrayal of women politicians.

2.2.1 Media Representation Theory

The public make certain decisions based on mediated texts. Lippman (1922) argue that most audiences have no connection with the world beyond and the only contact they have with that world is the mass media. According to Hall (1997), representation can be understood from three perspectives. The first meaning of representation is to stand for something. The second meaning is to re-present something that was already there, and lastly, to depict, image or present something. The last meaning forms the basis for this study. The study seeks to explore the perceptions of women politicians on how the media portrayal them and how the portrayal affects their engagements in the political spaces in Kenya.

Hall (1997) argues that media representation involves the production and distribution of meanings through the use of language. According to Gay, Hall, Janes, Madsen, Mackay and Negus (2013), meaning is constructed within the circuit of culture, which involves representation, identification, production, consumption and regulation. They argue that meanings are constructed at every step within the circuit and the media is at the centre of the circuit. Women politicians as consumers of media texts, are regulated by such texts and forced to behave in a certain way that is deemed appropriate. Hall (1997) further posits that to represent something is to depict it and to call it from our mental frameworks from the constructed meanings through our shared ideas, concepts and values.

Political discourses take place within the public sphere and if certain voices of some members of the society are missing, those discourses cannot be said to represent the society. According to Gallant (2002), the media provide a site within which the process of constructing peoples' identities is struggled within. This supports Hall's view that the words and the images we use and project about a group of people or events, and the narratives we construct around them, have a great impact on the values we attach to them. These meanings are then struggled with at the public sphere and have a significant impact on the perceptions of the public especially in electoral processes. The place of women politicians in the media should be acknowledged as they participate in the struggle to produce new meanings in the political spaces in Kenya.

Hall (1997) posits that representation happens through three different approaches, namely, reflective, which holds that the meaning is on the object and there can never be

any other meaning outside the object. The other approach to representation is interpretative, which argue that there is meaning beyond the statement, the concept, word or image. It is the interpretation by the readers, viewers or listeners of language that meanings are attached to events. The last approach is constructivist, which holds that nothing has fixed meaning, but meanings are negotiated and constructed by the users and a text can have multiple meanings.

Media meanings continuously shape public views and define events on the public sphere, the identities of those who access the public sphere and to a great extent, the importance that is attached to events in the media. Rakow (2015) posits that women, rightly part of the processes that should name the world, must be visible in order to deal with the societal unequal arrangements of power. Hall (1997) supports Rakow's view, in his explanation of the circuit of culture. The media is the theatre in which materials are produced and distributed hence the significance of assessing the interpretation of women politicians about the meanings the media create about their character as political players in Kenya.

The media cover women politicians within frames which are meant to imply that they have broken the ceiling and in unfamiliar grounds. Braden (2015), postulates that media narratives have potential to mould perceptions and attitudes through how they are delivered and how deliver those narratives. This involves the frames the media use to interpret issues about women politicians and how women politicians are narrated. What

voices are prominent? Is it men telling the stories of women or women are given opportunity to tell their stories using their own words?

According to Graber and Dunaway (2014), media portrayal of women politicians within the dominant male ideology distort the public view about the abilities and values women bring to politics. It influences the public interpretation of the world and issues. Media messages are conveyed through language, which, as a product of culture, carry cultural symbolism which is then open to different interpretation depending on different audiences. The interface of this argument with the study of media portrayal of women politicians is that the current moment of the Kenyan history is desirous of enhanced participation of women in politics. The media, identified by the Beijing Platform for Action as having great potential in achieving gender parity, should engage in a conscious choice of words, images and themes that only work towards the dissemination of gender balanced news.

While the visibility of women in politics in the media might have increased, the media still has a big role to play, as explained by Padovani and Shade (2016), in the promotion of balanced and non-stereotypical portrayals of women in the media. The increase should translate into quality coverage towards the destruction of the dominant male political ideology. The media is expected to ensure that the change that is desired by Kenyans in political spaces is not structured within the traditional hegemonic values that “other” women and keep them away from occupying political power. To further media representation of women politicians in Kenya, it is important to look at another level of

representation, which is semiotics, which also informs the process of meaning making through media narratives within the contemporary Kenyan society.

2.2.2 Semiotics

The media use signs and symbols to construct meanings about certain phenomenon. According to Chandler (2007), human beings are meaning makers through the use of images, signs, objects and even events. He argues these symbols of meaning making like words, images, sounds, gestures, events and even ideologies cannot be taken for what they are but are interpreted within certain contextual setting of the users of such symbols. The deconstruction of meanings in media narratives and stories illuminate to the public the issues the media consider important and those in which the media use a reductionism view about.

Interpretive media narrative analysis seeks to do beyond the face value of such media narratives and delves into the deeper social meanings that audiences create about the narratives. According to Chandler (2007), the media narratives have potential to link the perceptions of the audiences to existing societal ideologies, which in most cases, are based on the dominant view of the society. Thoughts are patterns of signification and the media inform certain thoughts among the consumers of media texts. They influence audiences in the creation of self-identities, identities of other members of the society. They inform have potential to shape the value systems of the people. The study therefore seeks to examine how the media in Kenya shapes the perceptions of women politicians in

Kenya towards the debate of increased women participation in politics and ultimately, towards gender parity in Kenya.

2.3 Gender Role Theory

The gender role theory illuminates the socially constructed behavioral differences between male and female and the appropriate ascribed masculinity and femininity roles. Eagly, Wood and Diekmann (2000) postulates that the key concepts under the theory are the masculinity and femininity division of labour and gender equity in terms of who accesses what roles in the society and which values are attached to which roles. They argue that the division of labour is socially constructed and men are associated with productive instrumental roles like leadership and paid work while women are associated with child bearing and expressive nurturing roles.

Feminist media scholars have explored the gender role theory to explore the inequalities in media culture. Byerly, Ross and Blackwell (2004) argue that the media describe women in traditional gendered ideologies which tend to ascribe to them socially constructed appropriate feminine roles and behavior. They are identified as wives, mothers, home makers and nurturers who should have no business within the political spaces. The socially ascribed gender roles are embedded within societal stereotypes associated with skills and attitudes development between male and female, so that women are seen as weaker political players, hence evaluated negatively by the voters. This has then worked against the world struggle for gender equity.

As conferrers of statuses, the media legitimize the male physical and economic dominance of men over women. According to Gallagher (2001), the media represent the male social order as the just and women aspiring to occupy political spaces are forced to operate within it. Negative portrayal of women influences the public perception of women politicians' identities and their capabilities or lack of in political leadership. According to Kitzinger (2004), media texts influence the perceptions of the audiences about certain gender roles. They affect how members of the different genders access opportunities and participate in decision making in the society.

2.3.1 Post-Feminist Perspective and Media Narratives

“Postfeminism presents an opportunity for all parties, men and women, to access the media and use it for the benefit of the society through speaking freely publicly and forcefully in their own ways. This is the spirit which helps to shape societies' consciousness and values and becomes the central force and resource through which societies make decisions (Byerly, Ross and Blackwell, 2004, p.3).

Stemming from the above argument, the study argues that if the voices of some members of the society are left out, that society's awareness and consciousness is incomplete. Dow (1990) argues that media have potential to reinforce and reproduce societal dominant perspectives and in the process, force the minority to accept them as the norm. He argues that the media have portrayed male as the ideal political narrative and has sought the approval of women to accept this oppressive ideology. The study seeks to capture the voices of the participants as they tell their stories in connection with media portrayal of women politicians in Kenya.

2.3.2 Media and Contemporary Kenyan Society

Fiske and Hancock (1996) hold that media narratives shape contemporary life through opening up debates and dialogue in the public sphere, from where the public draws in the forming of perceptions. Women politicians, especially those serving in legislatures like the 11th Parliament, are an integral part of the consciousness of the society. First, their consciousness form part of the broader policy consciousness and it is therefore important to capture their perceptions to inform the totality of the societal consciousness. The participation of women in political discourses in Kenya should be manifested by their presence in the media, and electronic, as news subjects and sources. Nzomo (2006) hold that very few Kenyan women leaders access the public sphere and those that access it, are trivialized and scandalized. This has led to the low level of Kenyan women participation in governance, which means that the consciousness of governance is not complete.

Allan, Branston and Carter (2002) argue that the media is guilty of covering women within masculine narratives which only succeed in objectifying them. Under the political economy of the media, women fail to qualify as sources or subjects in patriarchal societies where resources are held by the male segment of the society who have easy access to the media and there is need to capture the reflections, thought and feelings of female legislators in the 11th Parliament on media portrayal of women politicians in Kenya.

According to the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) (2010), women form more than half of the world population, and this is also the same in Kenya, and their voices must be loud with clarity of purpose in all decision-making platforms. The media must present a clear women agenda that is informed by women experiences without having male narrations attempting to express women experiences. Gallagher (2001), McRobbie (2009) and Ross (1996) argue that even as women numbers increase in political spaces around the world, the society should be more concerned about the quality of such voices in the media. The Kenyan constitution has laid down a legal framework to have increased women participation in politics and in other leadership positions, and this must be clearly reflected in media narratives through words, images and events.

Hayes and Lawless (2014) argue that the contemporary media must engage a conscious effort to get out of the traditional structuralism which is riddled with cultural male ideologies that inform daily systems of reporting and editing of news, and develop new modes of reporting and editing, which are sensitive to the place of marginalised members of the society. Men and women should access the public sphere and tell their stories their own way without gendered lenses of interpretation and meaning making. Hall (1997) posits that women politicians are absent in media narratives and when they appear, their stories are told within ideologies that carry convey different meanings from what women politicians stand for.

2.4 Media Coverage of Women Politicians around the World

Many studies in the field of gender, media and politics indicate there has been progress in media portrayal of women politicians. However, a lot still needs to be done to deconstruct the meanings constructed around the political spaces in Kenya. According to Belkaoui & Belkaoui (1976), the media have power to transform societies through the construction of strategic meanings geared towards a certain objective like gender equity. At a particular moment in a society, media texts must be geared towards the desired meanings by the members of the society. Armstrong (2004) supports Belkaoui's and argues that newspapers do not consider women politicians worthy as first page news. The scholar argues that when women politicians' views are covered within the dominant news frames, it works against the advancement of women as active players in the decision-making processes of a nation. Das (2014) posits that the media have failed to bring out the best of women in the advancement of the industry. Women politicians are not considered as strong news sources and subjects and male voices are even dominant in matters that greatly affect women. Positive portrayal of women politicians would reinforce the fact that they can add value to the political discourse and the growth of the Kenyan democratic space.

Tuchman (1978) found that the media symbolically annihilated women. Her study was conducted at a time when few women were involved in active politics and the media had not experienced the digital growth of the 90s. She posits that women were disadvantaged through stereotypical media narratives. While some scholars argue that there is improved media coverage of women politicians, the improvement has not been expressed through

the election of more women to Parliament in Kenya. Braden (2015) found that women politicians only make news when they behave in the society defined “unladylike” manner and out of the traditional norms, but when they are involved in development agendas like their male counterparts, they are invisible.

Sreberny and Ross (1996) in a research on the media portrayal of members of parliament within the dominant societal ideology found that women stories are covered within the dominant male ideology which forces women to adjust to fit into the schemata. The women are then accused of adopting extreme femininity or masculinity, which fail to capture the experiences of women in the political sphere as they are in a continuous stage of seeking to belong. According to Gallagher (2001), women should have the necessary skills to interpret, challenge and criticise cultural media products and messages. This will place them in the contemporary media meanings production and negotiation processes as they participate in the production of new cultural ideologies which challenge the dominant patriarchal and sexism ideologies in the society.

For Kenyan to increase women participation in politics from the current 86, the media must get actively involved in the construction of a positive identity of a female politician. Kellner (2003) elucidates this view and argues that the media produce materials from which audiences form their identities as well identities of others. They use the media materials to define successes, failures, male or female, poor or rich. Bradley (2015) found that women are devoid of substantive social, political, and economic equality with men in the society as defined by the division of labour concept under the gender role

theory. They have less access to the means of telling their stories and experiences with clarity in the media as opposed to their male partners who have easy access to the media. According to Hurst, Gibbon, & Nurse (2016), this inequality can be attributed to women's insufficient participation in the process of development. Increasing women's participation and improving their shares in resources, land, employment and income relative to men are necessary and sufficient to effect dramatic changes in their economic and social positions, which in turn lead to positive representation of women politicians in the media.

A report by the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (United Nations, 1982) reinforces the perception negative portrayal of women in the media affected the development of women as leaders and their attitudes towards themselves. The current study seeks to explore the perceptions of women politicians on how the media cover them and the values attached to them by the media. The Commission also observed that the society also carried negative attitudes towards women politicians based on the cultural patterns, which are disseminated on a large scale through advanced digital mass media technology.

2.4.1 Gender Stereotypes in Media Texts

Stereotypes are generalized misrepresentations about a group. Burton (2010) posits that stereotypes construct damaging ideas about the difference of the subject from the others - in this case the differences between masculinity and femininity in politics - and encourage the reinforcement of the feeling of one being the other and less normal.

Burton avers that when social groups are represented in the media, for example, female politicians, significance should be given to the substance of their ideas represented by the group and not in physical appearances. Sreberny and Ross (1996) posits that gender may be a factor in how human beings represent reality, but when it is, there is hegemony of the dominant ideologies involved in the construction of meanings.

Stereotypical media narratives influence a society's perception of its members, especially women, and influence how women perceive themselves especially while participating in male dominated leadership spaces. This has a bearing on how young women, who form future generation of female politicians, develop their identities. Gallagher (2003) and Friedan (2009) in feminist media scholarship hold that negative portrayal of female politicians has a great impact on the kind of women a society raises as women and as leaders. Jacobus, Keller & Shuttleworth (2013) found that stereotypes are live in the media and there must be continuous analyses of stereotypes to raise sensitive about the impact of such media texts in the understanding the role of the media at a particular moment in the history of the society.

Studies in gender, media and politics agree that there has been marked improvement in the media coverage of women politicians (Gallagher, 2001; Smith, 2011, and Falk, 2008) and more women are on the media as news sources as well as news subjects. However, a recent study by Insenga (2014) found that the British Press stereotype women politicians and cover them within frameworks of physical appearance, emotional status, family and associate them to soft issues. It is from this background that the study seeks to examine

the thoughts and views of female legislators in the 11th Parliament on media portrayal of women politicians in Kenya.

Munir, Shehzad and Sahi (2014) found that stereotypical images of female politicians in the media scandalize them and deny the audiences the real stories behind these women's struggles for democracy and human rights. They found that new newspapers use female politicians' photographs without the stories behind those women as a way of enticing the readers to buy those newspapers. Gallant (2002) posits that stereotypes present short cuts within which audiences compare and categorise others even in situations where factual details for generalisation are partial or incomplete. When women politicians are stereotyped as having broken from the norm and running away from families, the voters evaluate them through that lens which is in most cases negative.

According to Ryan-Flood and Gill (2013), covering women politicians within a gender slant remains a major challenge in electoral processes and bar them from accessing the public sphere. Voters rely on the mass media information to make political choices and those who are absent are disadvantaged. This is supported by Fowler and Lawless (2009) who found that the media has great potential to influence the information that is received by the voters. Muhatia (2010), in a study on the representation of women leaders in Kenya found that there is rare coverage of women politicians in front pages of newspapers. This is a symbol of the value attached to women politicians in the media and the weight of their voices. The study found that journalists seek for news from elite male politicians and consider female politicians unfamiliar grounds. There must be a conscious

effort to make women leaders a familiar ground as news sources to create equilibrium of opinions and views of the both genders. The report of the World Economic Forum for Gender Gap Index (2014) states that the status of women has continued to decrease since 2006 and has played a role in the decrease of women status in governance. The report asserts that the media occupy an important place in the society in the destruction of traditional patriarchal and stereotypical systems and values that prevent women from ascending to political offices.

Thuo (2012) found that women politicians are referred to by some male politicians as tokens which diminish any value they would have otherwise added to the governance discourses in Kenya. The relationship between women politicians and the media can be summed up by Kellner (2006) argument that media texts based on dominant ideological hegemony can create a forced reality which distort the reality, especially in terms of minorities in the society. It is therefore important to establish the opinions and feelings of women politicians about the role the media play in the attainment of gender parity in political spaces. Distorted reality about women politicians in Kenya has potential to scuttle the gains of having increased women participation in the political arena.

Nduva (2016) in a study about media portrayal of women leaders in Kenya found that there is skewed biased coverage of women politicians in the media. She argued that women leaders are more scrutinized by the media than their male counterparts and the narratives expand to their families, hairstyles, dresses and appearances. This eclipses their capabilities and results to negative evaluation by the public as suitable leaders. The

current study expands this view and wish to understand the meanings women construct about how the media portray them in their struggles in the Kenyan political spaces. The media is accused of narrowing women participation to politics to their physical appearances and reduce them to playing the political game within the shadows of powerful male politicians.

Jacobus, Keller & Shuttleworth (2013) postulates that the 2016 US elections campaigns were not an exception and Hilary Clinton was portrayed as incompetent and unable to lead the United States of America. The media portrayal of Hillary Clinton worked against the US aspiration of having a female presidency and this can be argued to be the case with the Kenyan situation of the failure to increase women participation in Parliament. The language and the images used by the media influence how the public view a female politician in Kenya.

Kemp (2014) postulates that stereotyping women politicians in the media reinforce the patriarchal ideology that women are subordinate to men and belong to the home. Politics is presented as a dangerous place for woman and those who venture into it are seen as aggressive and rebellious. This is also not new in the Kenyan media. Vocal women are always portrayed as having broken the ceiling which invites the media to scrutinize their personal lives critically as opposed to their contributions in developmental agendas.

2.4.2 Sexism in Media Texts

When the media delve into the physical appearances of women, the narrative shifts to their bodies and not their abilities as leaders. Wheeler and Anderson *et.al.*, (2013) found that sexualisation of Palin's identity foregrounded the meaning that potentially, women hold sexual power, which should be used to gain any other form of power in the society. On the Kenyan political scene, we have seen images of women being sexualized to sensationalise an issue. A good example was the image of Hon. Millie Odhiambo in Parliament when the media narrowed on her physical appearance as opposed to her capabilities as an informed legislator.

2.4.3 Commodification of Women by the Media

According to Carter and Steiner (2003), media narratives fail to reflect reality but instead construct hegemonic definitions of what should be accepted as reality, especially in politics. O'Brien (2014) argue that the media use women physical beauty or attractions to market products and this commodifies the female body. These commercialized ideologies diminish the visibility of women in the media and fail to accord them a fair representation among their male counterparts.

Cottle (2000) argues that the mass media have a great role to play in reinforcing social consensus through the ramification of shared beliefs among the members of the society. He argues that the media mediate in situations and allow individuals and groups to engage with one another. Prevailing state policies and the minority discourses should inform the production of meanings in a society. This informs the philosophy behind the

study in terms of whether the state policy on the two thirds gender principle has informed construction of media meanings in Kenya.

Plakoyiannaki & Zotos (2009) found stereotypical images and narratives about women perpetuate undesirable gender unevenness and challenge any policy intended towards gender parity. This is supported by the findings of Griffin, Viswanath & Schwartz (1994) and Ross (2011) that the media is pervasive and if care is not taken to ensure a balanced coverage of men and women, there is a risk of reinforcing cultural patriarchal norms that predominant in most societies. Women, even in developed societies in the world are stereotyped as weak and unable to bring any constructive ideas in the media. According to Ross (2011), the media have a duty and obligation to its audiences to lead in the deconstruction of derogatory narratives about women politicians and map the way towards a society that treats its women with respect and dignity. They should accord women opportunity to tell their stories their own ways in their own words.

Tuchman et al. (2013) found that media have a potential of unconsciously branding women politicians as inadequate through news and advertisements together with the media preoccupation with women physical attractiveness, which bars the audience view of women leadership traits. The media then must be conscious of this risk and work towards ensuring that the best of women is brought out, to out-shadow the inherent patriarchal perspectives in our society. Joshi, Pahad & Maniar (2006) found narrow and negative portrayal of women in the media diminish the weight of their voices, even when the media are dealing with issues from which expertise would only come from women.

These views are corroborated by Lonsdale (2013), who found that the media portray women politicians in limited roles which include wife of, yet no male politician is narrated in terms of husband of. This create a sense of incompetent on the part of women leaders, which disadvantage them.

2.5 Unequal Power Relations in Media Texts

According to Van Zoonen (1995), media narratives depict women politicians within the dominant structural ideologies that disadvantage them in terms of political competitiveness as compared to male politicians. Women politicians' activities are covered using negative frames which disadvantage them and render them less competitive. In Africa, the media is implicated in the promotion and reinforcement of male hegemony, within which women politicians' stories are told. In Nigeria, Botswana, Rwanda and Uganda, portrayal of women in the media fall short of the expectations of the society as argued by Byerly (2016). Bauer & Burnet (2013) assert that women are portrayed as incompetent in most leadership roles and are represented as shadows of powerful male political leaders, who in most cases, own the society capital resources.

Women politicians must have a clear understanding about the role the media play in political spaces so that they understand the role they can play to attract positive portrayal. Muthoni (2014) argue that the media must enact policies that are friendly to women to encourage them to participate in the debates on the public sphere and to enhance gender equity. The media is expected to tell women politicians' stories that conform to the aspirations of the people and cultivate the right public attitudes, perceptions, values and

meanings about women politicians in Kenya. This conforms to Macharia (2016) assertion that media messages and images are powerful tools in the formation of public attitudes, perceptions, and values, especially with regard to marginalized groups in the society.

2.5.1 Media and Women on Campaign Trails

In Africa, women are assumed as incapable of dealing with political matters especially political campaigns and the few that try their luck in politics, the media cover their activities and actions from a stranger perspective. They are covered in gendered narratives which insinuate that they are less of their male counterparts. Marks & Trapido (2014) found that the media fail to illuminate the best of women during campaigns as the narratives are shrouded with feminine scrutiny. They argue that the media portray women in campaigns only acting in shadows of powerful male political figures. Women politicians are portrayed as dishonest in campaigns and as only representing certain male interests. According to Ngara, & Ayabam (2013), negative media portrayal constructs a distorted image of women ineptness and inability in politics. Women in political spaces are portrayed as naiveties who have no capacity to make sound political decisions for the world, and for Africa. The portrayal push women politicians to remain in a continuously mode of trying to fit in the media created appropriate political behavior, and not to play the political game just as women who can add value to the democratic spaces in Africa.

Tripp (2015) found that women in Africa share the blame for the media portrayal as they behave as strangers in the political spaces. They behave and act as if African politics is a male game. They play the political game as if they owe gratitude to their male colleagues

for allowing them in. Negative media portrayals of women politicians have a great bearing on the female leaders a society raises. Positive media portrayals of women politicians in the 11th Parliament in Kenya has potential to influence more participation of women in politics as well as raise a generation of male leaders who encourage women to participation in leadership, especially in politics.

2.5.2 Coverage of Politics by the Kenyan Media

Nzomo (2006) argues that women are completely absent in public policy debates, which challenges the country's struggle for gender equity. This means that even in decisions which involve women, the women voices are absent or the minority and they can only join politics as defined from the male perspective. Odero, & Kamweru (2000) postulates that the issues presented by the media to the public sphere provoke serious debates and discussions which inform public policy. When one group in the society is absent from such policy debates in the public sphere, the implementation of such policies marginalise the groups which have not participated in the formulation of the policies. The scholars argue that women are only found on gossip newspaper pages or on pages that promote beauty and fashion. This portrays women as commodities and objects meant to increase newspapers sales and eclipses the broader struggle as enshrined in the constitution to have increased women participation in politics. This is supported by a policy document by the Government of Kenya, 2006, contends that the media is a powerful tool in shaping public opinions, educating and socializing the masses, but have not portrayed women as worthy competitors with male leaders. This promotes gender inequality that the Kenyan

society desires to deal with and enhance the participation of women in politics through the two third gender rule in the Constitution of Kenya, 2010.

Padovani and Shade (2016) attributes a great responsibility to the media in terms of theorizing, deconstructing and reconstructing the concept of power to expose the underneath gender inequalities and the unbalanced power relations in the society. The media must be sensitive to women issues and accord women politicians access to the public sphere to tell their stories their own way. The media narratives must carry with them positive portray of women politicians as worthy and competent political leaders to attract positive evaluation from the public. Padovani and Shade (2016) argue that the media are expected to destroy the traditional thinking and open debate for the creation of new knowledge and meanings in gender mainstreaming and gender equality. It is therefore important to understand what women politicians perceive as the identity created of them by the media and how they interact with the media in the construction of new values and meanings. Cherogony (2002) found the media, consciously and unconsciously, portray women in the political sphere in bad light. This lead to negative evaluation of women as electable political leaders by the voters. This reinforce the findings of Nduva (2016), that there is skewed and biased media coverage of women leaders in Kenya.

Omari (2008) and Macharia (2016) also support the view that the media confine women leaders in a checklist of behavior and those who fail to fit within the checklist, are labelled rebellious scandalous and social misfits. This does not happen with male

politicians. This narrows the society's expectations of women politicians and the value they bring into politics hence the negative voter evaluation that produce few women as elected representatives of the people. They are portrayed as lacking any political capital, which keep them away from the media. They remain absent in policy discourses, which then leave label them as intruders in the Kenyan political spaces.

Oakley (2015) found that African women are treated as part of the patriarchal wealth and must behave and act within the realms and confines of the owners of the wealth. Such stereotypical notions in the media bar women from registering their presence in political spaces in Africa. The narratives make women subordinate to men consciously and unconsciously, which has a great effect on how they behave within such male defined spaces. The media are expected to develop conscious strategies towards the construction of new knowledge and meanings that forge towards a common shared understanding of the women and provoke society's praxis towards gender equality. O'Brien (2014) found that due to the low numbers of women in leadership positions, both in and outside the media, there is a vacuum in the participation of women as media policy makers as well as policy analysts to continuously ensure that there is gender mainstreaming in the structural systems of the media. Consequently, the missing link between political gender concerns and media policies reproduce old stereotypes in the modern political environment and create male hegemony that challenges the possibility for change.

According to Mudhai, Wright & Musa (2016), the media undermine women politicians and demean them for plunging into male defined spaces. The media portray such women as rebellious and defiant. Women politicians' stories are told within strict scrutiny of a group that has moved away from the societal defined women roles of child bearing and dealing with soft issues like social welfare and child support. According to Nzomo (1997), the low level of women's involvement in politics is a consequence of the negative portrayal of women politicians in the media, which discourages other women from aspiring to seek elective offices in Kenya and maintains the status quo. An analysis of the perceptions of women politicians in the 11th Parliament in Kenya explores whether the situation has changed or the media portrayal of women politicians is still negative, stereotypical and it is done within the dominant patriarchal ideology with defined male as the norm in politics and female as the stranger in the political game.

2.6 Literature Gaps

Most literature reviewed around the issue of media portrayal of women has looked at media portrayal of women leaders which includes women in politics and in other leadership positions. Studies like Munir, Shehzad and Sahi (2014), MacIntosh (2013), Tuchman (1978), Padovani and Shade (2016), Zotos and Tsihla (2014), Muhatia (2010), Thuo (2012), Nduva (2016) and Insenga (2014) conducted content analysis of newspaper articles to explore the issue of dominant frames the media use to discuss women leaders. They looked at the issue from the media content and found that there is skewed biased and negative portrayal of women leaders in the media. This affect how women are evaluated by the public especially in electoral processes. While acknowledging negative

portrayal of women in the media as espoused in previous studies, the study seeks to give voice to the concerns of female legislators in the 11th Parliament with regard to media portrayal of women politicians in Kenya. It seeks to explore the lived experiences of women politicians as audiences and subjects of media narratives and events.

There is also a literature gap in women politicians' self-representation to the media as they advocate for better portrayal in the media. This would work towards the implementation of the two thirds gender rule in Kenya and encourage more women participation in governance and politics. How women politicians self-present themselves to the media has a bearing on how they are evaluated by the public as suitable candidates or not.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

Research methodology is the logical structure and flow of the study. The Chapter explains the kinds of processes that are followed to achieve the objectives of the study and to answer the research questions. The chapter gives an overview of the philosophical leanings of the study, study design, research approach, research methods, data needs, types and sources. It gives the study population, sampling and sample size, research instrument, data collection, data analysis and presentation. It also explains the reasoning behind the selection of the various approaches and methods employed in the study within the stated worldview.

3.2 Philosophical Paradigm

A paradigm is a way of pursuing knowledge and informs the decisions the researcher makes in the entire process of the study. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009), this is the entirety of the assumptions about how the researcher view the world in the process of the study. The study uses the constructivism subjective worldview to gather the perceptions and experiences of women politicians on how the media portrayal them and how this challenge or reinforce societal stereotypes and dominant ideologies.

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013), the constructivism world view deals with the direct experiences of the people. Mertens (2013) argues that philosophers in this

world view hold the notion that reality is not fixed but socially constructed. Meanings are negotiated. The researcher undertakes the study within the understanding that reality is socially constructed and epistemology is negotiated among the participants. This is supported by Creswell (2013) view that under the constructivism world view, there are no fixed meanings in individuals, but meanings are negotiated through human beings' interactions.

The study leans on the understanding that the social world and reality is best understood from the standpoint of individuals who have lived through the phenomenon under investigation as argued by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013). The ontological worldview of the study is that the social world is intertwined with the social actors, who are participants in the phenomenon. Mertens (2013) and Bowling (2014) argue that investigators using this worldview must understand the participants' interpretation and reinterpretations of their lived experiences as co-researchers with the researcher.

The study employed inductive reasoning which according to Creswell (2003), begins from the data and makes inferences building onto existing theory. This involves observing examples, observing emergent themes and generalizing the characteristics to the whole category.

3.3 Study Design

The study employs a phenomenological study design to describe the lived experiences of women politicians as news subjects and audiences of the media text. It is concerned with

answering the “what” questions as female legislators express their thoughts about media portrayal of women politicians in Kenya.

3.3.1 Study Site

The site of the study is the Parliament of Kenya buildings, with the exception of two respondents who were interviewed outside Parliament Buildings. The two respondents requested to be interviewed at their convenient locations which were at one’s residence in Nairobi and at a restaurant in Nairobi City.

3.4 Research Approach

The study adopted a phenomenology qualitative approach within the constructivist philosophy to explore the perceptions of female legislators in the 11th Parliament on media portrayal of women politicians in Kenya. It sought to assess the experiences of women politicians with media coverage; find out the factors that influence the coverage of women politicians and the contribution women politicians make to enhance their coverage by the media.

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) postulates that qualitative research design is flexible and is concerned with giving meaning to the participants’ concerns about a phenomenon. The study relied on open and flexible processes from the formulation of the research questions, data collection, analysis and presentation. It relied on the deep meanings from the participants’ points of view.

The purpose of qualitative research design is to produce textual data that cannot be measured numerically. Qualitative research design has been criticized for lack of generalizable data due to the small size of the sample. However, qualitative research design is concerned with ensuring that the elements in the sample share similar characteristics with the population. In the current study, the sampled female legislators in the 11th Parliament have similar characteristics with the entire population of women politicians in Kenya. This ensured that the findings can be used for wider application beyond the sample. An interview guide with open ended questions allowed the researcher to delve into the deeper understandings of the participants.

3.5 Research Method

The study used in depth interviews to collect data from the respondents. The respondents were contacted on telephone and interviews were arranged at their convenient locations and time. Three of the respondents were interviewed at Parliament Buildings, one at her residence in Nairobi and one at a restaurant in Nairobi. The researcher used different styles of administering the questions on the interview guide to enrich on the scope of the data collected. The data was audio recorded, transcribed, cleaned, transformed, categorized, analyzed and interpreted around the emerging themes. It was presented thematically in narratives around the research objectives.

3.6 Data Needs, Types and Sources

The study required textual primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through interviews administered to the respondents using an interview guide with open

ended questions. Open ended questions were administered to the respondents using different styles of questions like leading and provoking questions to allow the respondents the lee-way to express themselves freely as well as give them flexibility in responding to the questions. Secondary data was obtained from journals, books, magazines, research papers, newspapers and the internet.

3.6.1 Population

According to Obwotha (2014), population is the entire group of individuals, events or objects having a common observable characteristic. The study population was 86 female legislators in the 11th Parliament, both elected and nominated. The respondents are from both the National Assembly and the Senate, as constituted in 2013 under the Constitution of Kenya, 2010, which forms the 11th Parliament.

3.7 Sampling Procedure

The sampling procedure is informed by the research approach and the constructivist philosophical worldview of the study. Byrne (2001) holds that sampling in phenomenological qualitative inquiry is more concerned with rich descriptions and interpretations of the participants to produce findings that can be transferrable to other situations. Qualitative research is concerned with the richness and quality of the descriptions from the participants' point of view and not with how representativeness the sample is. The 11th Parliament had 86 female legislators made up of 68 in the National Assembly and 18 from the Senate (AMWIK, 2015). Purposive sampling procedure was used to select a sample of five from the 86 women politicians in the 11th Parliament.

Five female legislators were purposively selected from the Mzalendo Report of 2015 on the most active women Parliamentarians in the 11th Parliament and based on the researcher's judgement about information rich cases. Marshall (1996) supports purposive sampling based on the researcher's judgement about information rich cases and argues that it is the ideal sampling procedure when the researcher is more concerned with having deeper understanding of meanings than the generalizability of the findings.

3.7.1 Sample Size

The sample size is five respondents for in-depth interviews. The study relied on the rich and knowledgeable descriptions and interpretations of the selected respondents to solve the research problem. The focus on deep meanings has a greater implication in qualitative research than the representativeness of the sample. Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls and Ormston (2013), argue that the sample in qualitative inquiry should be geared towards the production of rich data that is relevant to the wider application of the study beyond the sample used.

3.7.2 Research Instruments

The study used an interview guide with open ended questions to collect data from the respondents, which is attached as Appendix I. The interview guide used open ended questions which allowed the respondents flexibility in responding. The face to face interviews allowed the researcher an opportunity to make observations that add value and contribute to the perceptions of the female legislators on media portrayal of women politicians in Kenya. The data was recorded using a mobile hand recorder and transcribed

verbatim. The data was analyzed posteriori around the emergent themes and presented thematically around the research objectives.

3.8 Data Collection

Data was collected through face to face in depth interviews using an interview guide with open ended questions. Brinkman (2014) supports the use of open ended questions and states that this allows the respondents the freedom to make more spontaneous descriptions and narrations. Each of the respondents was contacted on their personal cell phones and requested for interviews at their convenient time and place. The data was collected through leading, provoking and brain teasing questions to ensure completeness and the reliability of the data collected. The different styles of questioning allowed the respondents room to express their opinions and views freely and in a wider scope. This enabled the study to delve into the deeper meanings as narrated by the participants in the phenomenon under investigation. The data was audio recorded and transcribed for analysis.

3.8.1 Data Analysis

The data that was collected was subjected to thematic analysis. The analysis was guided by emergent themes from the respondents' responses and was not based on any predetermined categories. The data was cleaned, sorted and categorized around the themes that emerged from the respondents' responses and categorized thematically around the research objectives. The researcher observed the patterns, trends and themes that featured prominently from the respondents' views, opinions and perceptions and

identified the themes posteriori. The recurring themes were assigned to the transcripts and verified against each respondent's response to the questions on the interview guide.

3.8.2 Data Presentation

The study is purely qualitative and the data is presented thematically in a narrative manner around the research objectives. The data is presented in a combined format of paraphrased and direct quotations of the views, opinions and perceptions of the respondents based on their responses to the interview questions. The direct quotations help in delving into the deeper meanings the respondents attach to media portrayal of women politicians in Kenya. They also highlight the themes and feeds into the findings.

3.9 Validity and Reliability

The credibility, transferability and confirmability of research conclusions depend on the appropriateness of the research processes and the instruments used. According to Merriam (1995), qualitative research should strive to achieve dependability and consistency. He argues that qualitative research is concerned with whether the results of the study are consistent with the data that is collected. To ensure internal validity, the research engaged in a back and forth cross checking of the data to ensure proper understanding of the themes. The data was also subjected to peers who are not involved in similar studies to establish the trustworthiness and the plausibility of the interpretations as explained by Merriam (1995).

There was strict record keeping of anything that happened during the interviews to ensure that all important details during the interviews were captured. The researcher also took notes during the interviews and observed any non-verbal communication to capture any information that might be useful to the process.

3.9.1 Ethical Considerations

The study was only conducted after receiving permission from the University of Nairobi. The researcher defended the proposal and was cleared by the Board of Examiners to proceed for fieldwork, and a certificate of fieldwork was issued, which is attached as Appendix II. After the fieldwork, the researcher defended the work, the plagiarism test was run on the work and the work successfully passed the test. A certificate of originality was issued which is attached as Appendix III. All the corrections that were suggested by the Board of Examiners were inserted and a certificate of corrections was issued, attached as Appendix IV, which cleared the work to proceed for printing and binding for final submission.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Overview

This Chapter presents the findings of the study around the research objectives and in line with the research study design adopted and explained in Chapter Three. Fundamentally, the study leans on previous research findings that there is biased, skewed and negative portrayal of women in the media, Thuo (2012), Nduva (2016) and Insenga (2014).

The findings are from the respondents' interviews. The responses fall into seven recurring themes, namely, invisibility versus Trivialization; uneven standards of scrutiny; unrealistic expectations versus collective judgement; commodification versus equalization; gendered coverage, stereotypes and lack of confidence on the part of women politicians.

4.2 Experiences of Women Politicians with Media Coverage

The study sought to assess the experiences of women politicians with how the media cover them. This is on the background of whether they think the media play a role in enhancing the electability of women to politics in Kenya. The following themes emerged from the interviews.

4.2.1 Invisibility of Women Politicians on Media Platforms

The theme of invisibility of women politicians came out from most of the respondents. Respondent 1 argue that women politicians, like other women leaders in Kenya, are absent on front pages of newspapers. She mentioned that when women politicians are told, for example, on newspapers, the stories are hidden inside and are not given prominence. She added that this invisibility misinforms the electorate that women politicians are not as knowledgeable and prominent news subjects and sources as their male counterparts in governance issues. She stated that invisibility of women politicians on media platforms ultimately represent women politicians as lazy and inept. She brought this out clearly when she stated:

“Presence of women on the media is very critical to sell women to the electorate. However, the media in Kenya sell male politics. This creates an impression that men are better news than women”. (R1. 22.07.2017).

All the five respondents have experienced the struggle of attracting media coverage and hold the opinion that the media in Kenya is male dominated. There is an agreement from the respondents that the absence of women politicians on media platforms distorts the reality that women are as good political leaders as their male counterparts. Three of the respondents think the media demean women politicians and this lead to negative evaluation of women as suitable political leaders by the voters. The respondents converge around the opinion that there is silent masculinization of political news in Kenya, where male is the norm in political news and female is intruder. This, the respondents opine, is against the Kenyan aspiration to have increased women in governance spaces. This was clearly brought out by Respondent 2, when she said:

“Male politicians are covered fairly well. Male governor aspirants in the 2017 general election were covered fairly well but the media give a blind eye to female governor aspirants. The impression created is that women are lesser suitable governors than men”. (R2. 17.08.2017).

She further highlighted that during the just ended elections, many women, those who had served in the 11th Parliament and others, were campaigning, but the media was silent about their manifestos. She argued that the media was dominated by male manifestos and thus forced women politicians to fit within the male defined manifestos. Respondent 1 felt that the media is partly to blame for the failure of women politicians, some with great skills and wonderful manifestos in the just concluded elections for failing to accord them equal space on media platforms with their male competitors.

Respondent 3 gave an example of the 2017 political campaigns when both male and female politicians were campaigning but no women politician was given prominence on newspapers or even in big television shows. She noted that the few women politicians whose narratives found their way on the mainstream media were either being mocked, dramatized or the media was concerned with side shows and not the fabric and depth of the issues at hand. She stated that:

“When I joined politics, it was very difficult for me to attract the media because, because male politicians buy journalists and even political supporters who make a lot of noise which attract the media. So, anything I did, however good or developmental it was, it was missing on the media. Male politicians engage in putting the media on their side and so, women really suffer especially those who are new in politics and have no resources to buy the media or to bribe the media”. (R3. 29.08.2017).

Respondent 4 stated that she has experienced harsh treatment by the media, especially electronic media. She noted that it is very easy for women politicians to attract media

coverage when they are involved in a scandal, but not when they are involved in great works for the benefit of the country like their male counterparts. She argued that female sex scandals make news all the time and this representation misinforms the public that women politicians are scandalous. She stated that:

“Media in Kenya are harsh to women politicians. They have represented any woman in politics as a sex scandal in waiting. They are always looking for sex scandals in women politicians and even when they cannot find them, they are always sniffing”. (R4. 04.09.2017).

4.2.2. Trivialization of Women Politicians by the Media

Respondent 1 mentioned that the media is unfriendly to women politicians especially when it comes to the composition of interview panels. The media, especially television, compose male only panels for interviews, which in essence creates an impression that it is only male politicians who have something important to say about serious issues. She said that it was hard to see an only women panel especially on serious matters and this portray women as novices in serious democratic matters. She added that sometimes women are considered as flowers in such panels and are only asked to comment after the male have had their way. On her experience with media coverage, she said that:

“People always say that women political leaders do not speak, but even on the floor of parliament, it is a struggle for women to get a chance to speak. The media treat women politicians as just political numbers with no value to add to political debates”. (R1. 22.07.2017).

Respondent 4 hold the opinion that during campaigns, the media trivialize women politicians, especially by diverting attention from the issues. According to her, the media divert attention to women politicians’ physical appearances and other none issues, which

rarely happen in narratives about male politicians. She brought this out clearly when she stated that:

“If you are a woman politician, it is about your physical appearance and not your abilities. The media narrow issues to women hairlines and hairstyles and this diverts attention from serious issues that women deal with”. R4. 27.07.2017).

Respondent 5 stated that there is progress in media coverage of women especially women leaders. She quickly noted that more still needs to be done to ensure the representation of women politicians is not slanted towards their physical appearance and issues that add no value to governance and developmental issues. She stated there is still negative representation of women politicians by the media, but is worse for women living with disability. She said that sometimes the media attack the person of the woman, but has more to do with the operations of different media houses. She stated that:

“The media generally report about women politicians in bad light. When I was protesting the Government amendments to the elections law in parliament, the media mostly dealt on my hairline and dressing instead of the substance of what I was saying for the benefit of the country. It was different for male politicians protesting the same amendments”. (R5. 27.07.2017).

4.2.3 Uneven standards of scrutiny

All the five respondents highlighted that in Kenya, women politicians are placed under high and undue scrutiny by the media and are expected to work extra hard to be at par with their male counterparts. Three respondents gave an example of Madam Waiguru and the NYS scandal. They opined that media narratives around the NYS scandal created an impression that it is more sinful for a woman to misappropriate public funds than it is for a male. The respondents stated that women politicians are more scrutinized by the media

on issues of marriage and children than male politicians. They feel that the high scrutiny dis-advantage their positions as seekers of political power.

Respondent 1 noted that on television interview panels, women are scrutinized more than male politicians. She said that this has made women politicians to doubt themselves and result to low confidence in women politicians. She further stated that:

“The media push us to doubt ourselves. The media need someone who can just respond on the hit of the moment. The dog biting a man is no story but a man biting a dog is a story. Women are not very good with fabrications. We are more facts oriented, we want to look serious. We want to research. Men will get away with anything, but for women, you have to be structured. You must have the facts. That gets to the women”. (R1 22.07.2017).

4.2.4 Unrealistic Expectations of Women Politicians by the Media

The five respondents noted that the media have a check list of behavior within which women politicians are supposed to act and behave. They mentioned that the media have placed male politicians on a pedestal and women must act within certain limits. Respondents 1, 4 and argue that women politicians are expected to dress in a certain way, failure to which they are judged harshly. They also mentioned that women politicians are expected to talk in a certain way, failure to which they are branded arrogant. They argue that women politicians are also expected to walk in a certain way, failure to which they are called names. The respondents postulate that when a woman politician behaves and acts below the expectation, the media are quick to attack her and portray her as a social misfit. This was brought out clearly by Respondent 4, who stated that:

“The media have created a notion among the people that women politicians are rebels. They have established behavior standards for

women politicians and once a woman is seen not to have behaved within the checklist of behavior, she is admonished”. R4. 04.09.2017).

Respondent 1 mentioned that the media expect women politicians to be perfect in everything. Women in Kenyan political spaces must be perfect mothers, perfect wives, perfect sisters, perfect girlfriends and perfect politicians. It is all about perfection in women politicians. Any small mistake that a woman makes is magnified by the media and it ceases to be a personal mistake. It becomes a collective mistake and a measure within which women performance is measured. Respondent 1 noted that:

“A woman politician should never make a mistake. She is not supposed to divorce or separate with a spouse. She is always the bad one. It is all about perfection in women politicians, which does not apply to politicians of the opposite gender. R1.22.07.2017).

Respondent 2 support the feeling that the media use uneven standards to scrutinize women politicians different from the standards used on male politicians in Kenya. She felt that the media always ask women politicians about their families and how they cope in politics as well as in raising families. According to her, the media has constructed a meaning that families belong to women and women must juggle between these roles, which does not happen with male politicians. She also narrated the example of Ann Waiguru and the NYS scandal and noted that the media used high levels of scrutiny on women leaders, especially in corruption cases as opposed to corruption cases involving male politicians. She said that:

“During Hon. Waiguru’s gubernatorial campaign, the media kept flashing back to the NYS corruption cases yet many male gubernatorial aspirants had pending corruption cases which the media did not think was important news for the voters”. (R2.17.08.2017).

4.2.5 Collective Judgement of Women Politicians by the Media

Three of the respondents converge around the issue of the use of collective judgement on women politicians by the media. Respondent 1 gave an example of the alleged sex scandal between Hon. Racheal Shebesh and Mike Sonko. She argued that the media used the incident to put to question the morality of all women politicians yet for Sonko, it was his battle. She stated:

“For the media, women politicians make mistakes together. There is a way in which the media want to use any mistake committed by one women politician against all women politician. The media use these unfortunate incidents of a few female politicians as a morality text for women politicians. This is not the case with male politicians”. (R1. 22.07.2017).

Respondent 4 also gave an example of the scandal between Evans Kidero and Racheal Shebesh and stated that the media reprimanded Shebesh and branded her the bad girl even after she was slapped by Hon. Kidero. Respondent 1 opined that to the media, the scandal was an arrogance test for women politicians and not one woman. She stated that:

“The media made great news of the scandal between Shebesh and Kidero, but the media narrative was meant to discredit women politicians as disrespectful and arrogant, but not the individual female leader”. (R4.04.09.2017).

Respondent also narrated the example of the media narrative about the sentiments of the Kiambu Woman Representation, Hon. Gathoni wa Muchomba on parliamentarians pay. According to Respondent 4, the media narrated the story in a slant which portrayed female legislators as outsiders in payment matters. The respondent argued that the female legislator was only commenting on a debate that was ongoing and many male politicians had commented on it, yet the media did not use the same wrath on them as they did on

the female legislator. According to the respondent, the narrative was meant to portray female legislators as only interested in money and not in representing their people in Parliament. The respondent opine that the media expect women politicians to be subservient and only participate in issues that are defined by the society as women appropriate issues. The respondent argued that the media have failed to realize that women are part of the governance processes and must participate in equal measure with male politicians. On this, Respondent 4 noted:

“According to the media, money matters belong are male domain and women politicians know nothing about them. Any woman who dares to get into the debate, she is put attacked to put off any other women politician who would wish to participate in such matters”. (R4. 04.09.2017).

4.2.6 Commodification of Women Politicians by the Media

All the five respondents mentioned that the media commodify women politicians. Respondents 2, 3, and 4 referred to the recent branding of women political aspirants in the 2017 general elections as “minji”. This was brought out clearly by Respondent 4 when she stated that:

“Even the minji story is derogatory. This is demeaning women to foodstuffs, but we are not seeing men being referred to such items. When you compare a woman gubernatorial aspirant and others with edible items like peas, really, this is demeaning”. (R4. 04.09.2017).

Respondent 3 gave an example of politicians coming from a public event at the Nyayo National Stadium on Madaraka Day, 2017. She stated that journalists chase male politicians for comments on the speech of the day while they take photographs of and pictures of female politicians to showcase their attires on pullout newspaper pages. She

added that while such pullouts can be used to showcase women abilities, sometimes they are used to misrepresent women politicians as only concerned in dressing and beauty. The respondent argued that through this, the media exploit femininity to increase sales. She added that this representation diminishes the skills and abilities of women politicians to engage with serious development issues. She mentioned that the media narratives have led to the negative notion that women politicians are mere flowers at the pleasure of powerful male political leaders.

4.2.7 Sexualisation of Women Politicians by the Media

The theme of sexualization also emerged from the interviews. All the five respondents stated that they have been sexualized by the media or they know a woman politician who has been sexualized by the media through narratives, photographs or associations. Respondent 5 stated that this dehumanize women politicians. This was supported by the views of Respondent 1, who mentioned that the coverage of women politicians is skewed and related to party politics. She mentioned that the media is concerned with which women politician is associated with which male politician, but not what women politicians are doing or how women politicians can model young women into politics. She further stated that:

“The media portray women in politics as having broken cultural taboo of the place of woman in the African society. Today’s women in politics struggle with the negative value of home breaker, husband snatchers and other negative values that African societies associate with women who do not fit within the society women defined roles”. (R1. 22.07.2017).

Respondents 2 and 3 note that women are considered flowers even within legislatures most of which are headed by male speakers. The respondents feel that the media have

made it very difficult for women to even be elected speaker at county assemblies. According to Respondent 1, women politicians are considered women first, then leaders, and not leaders first, then women.

Respondent 3 argue that the media tell the narratives of women politicians in insensitive language, coded with sex undertones, which paint an image of women politicians as homemakers at the beck and call of their husbands. She mentioned that the media attribute sexual power to women politicians and insinuate that this is the only power they hold which they use to gain other forms of power. Three of the respondents opine that the media is more concerned with sex scandals narratives about women politicians which place women politicians as objects of male desire. This was brought out clearly by Respondent 1 who stated that:

“The media treat women politicians as sex scandals in waiting. Even when they do not get one, they anticipate and the narratives lead towards that direction”. (R1. 22.07.2017).

4.2.8 Gendered Coverage

Another theme that emerged from the respondents is gendered coverage. Three of the respondents narrated how the media have unconsciously or consciously categorized news as hard and soft, and women are only found in what is defined as soft news. Women politicians feel that the media look for them only to comment on issues of domestic violence and sexual assault. The respondents feel that the media portray women as victims of sexual issues hence they look for women politicians only when required to comment on such issues. Respondent 1 argued that the media have not worked to bring out the best in women politicians. She noted that:

“The media attribute gender violence only to women, yet gender violence is a national problem. It is a problem for both male and female, but some media workers seem to have a fixed mind that this is a women problem. According to the media in Kenya, sex scandals are only associated with female politicians”. (R1. 22.07.2017).

She added that the media have also made news out of the paternities of women politicians meant to discredit the skills of women as political leaders as opposed to male politicians.

She noted that:

“We had the case of Joyce Laboso and Cecily Mbarire, and the media always created a narrative about them having been married outside their counties in which they were seeking elective posts, yet, the media never created a narrative about where the male candidates are married from. It has never been an issue for male politicians, but it is repeatedly using against women politicians”. (R1. 22.07.2017).

Respondent 2 mentioned the women alone panels on television talk shows and stated that while this may work as an avenue for women to engage with the media, it has a down side which is that it portrays women as not having the ability to participate in one panel with male politicians. She stated that there was need for balance in such panels so that there is fair representation both in numbers and views. She argued that:

“The media is quick to look for women to comment on issues which they have labeled ‘women issues’ like sexual violence, domestic violence but when it comes to serious issues like election petitions and political party democracy, they consider these male issues, yet women may not be owners of political parties but they are the major supporters of political parties”. (R2. 04.09.2017).

Respondent 3 also agreed with the views of Respondent 2 and noted that the media have mislead the electorate to believe that women legislators and politicians add no value to the legislative and the political processes through gendered coverage that disadvantage

women against men in the eyes of the voters. She noted that the media is stuck in the analysis of the paternity of women politicians and their roots and not in their skills and development agenda. She gave an example of Joyce Laboso and the narrative of her paternity in terms of whether she could be elected as governor in Bomet, her roots, or in Luo Land, where she is married.

“Paternity of women politicians has been a big issue on the media. This was a big issue with the media yet we have men elected in their home constituencies but married from far away constituencies and this is never an issue to the media. Such gendered coverage does not happen to male politicians”. (R3. 29.08.2017).

Respondent 4 gave an example of the recent presidential election petition in Kenya, which she said was predominantly male agenda. The media treated the petition as if it was a happening in a country where only men existed. She noted that all the comments were from male participants and women, especially women politicians. This was a political and governance agenda and women politicians should have featured prominently in the debate, but the media made it a male political agenda. She stated that:

“The media was questioning male politicians about the presidential petition and its implications and not failed to bring out the women voice in it. It was like the petition had no implication for women”. (R4. 04.09.2017).

All the five respondents were of the opinion that the Kenyan media is more likely to distort the stories of female politicians than those of male politicians through gendered coverage. Most of them gave the example of the sex scandal between Racheal Shebesh and Mike Sonko and the fact that the media was quick to distort the narrative of Shebesh ignoring that it takes two to tangle.

4.2.9 Stereotypes in the Media

All the five respondents' view converge around the fact that the media cover women politicians within stereotypical narratives woven around the African patriarchy. According to Respondent 2, this assumes that power belongs to male and women are strangers in power. Respondent 3 mentioned that the media is always quick to ask women especially on television shows about their families, which is not common with male politicians. According to her, the media stereotype married women as better political leaders than unmarried women. She adds that this is not the reality. The respondent argued that the media have created a notion that the marital stability of women is important in political leadership, which distorts the reality.

Respondent 4 mentioned that the media portray successful women politicians as aggressive, abrasive and even hysterical. She argued that women politicians are portrayed as nurturers and caregivers, and when they fail one of the tests, they are labelled social misfits or rebels in the society. Respondent 1 hailed the newspaper pullouts that highlight women success stories, but she was quick to state that marital statuses, children and family always find their way into the narratives about women politicians. She felt that this creates a stereotypical frame within which women politicians must fit without which, they are evaluated negatively by the voters. Another stereotype is that male politicians are the ones who should address public rallies, conferences and women should work behind the scenes to support powerful male politicians. Respondents 1, 3 and 4 highlighted the fact that the media have portrayed woman politician as weak and only having acquired

some sense of power from powerful male politicians. In her words, Respondent 1 stated that:

“The media is very negative about women politicians. It is hard for them to talk about women who have made it in politics without digging which woman is associated with which powerful male politician”. (R1. 22.07.2017).

The five respondents perceive the media as stuck in patriarchal structuralism which is evidenced by the stereotypical narratives of women politicians’ marital status, children and paternity. Respondent 2 argue that media narratives about women politicians work to scuttle any progress women have made in the Kenyan politics. This was supported by the views of Respondent 4, who argued that while the media have moved away from the hard gender stereotypes of the latter decades, there still exist subtle gender stereotypes in the media. She stated that such stereotypes work against any progress women have made in politics and hinder the attainment of the two thirds gender in Parliament and other legislative bodies. She gave an example of the case of Hon. Joyce Lay’s sexual assault and stated that the media painted a picture of female politicians of loose morals for not having kept the secret.

Respondent 5 mentioned that the media stereotype women politicians as aggressive, abrasive and hysterical, especially during campaigns. She argued that this has led to the failure of many progressive women in politics. According to her, the contrast works against the Kenyan aspiration of having increased women participation in the Kenyan politics. She brought it out clearly when she stated that:

“Media is sometimes fair, but most of the times, it is unfair to women politicians during campaigns, the media covered women political within

hysterical narratives. Media have stereotyped women politicians as family losers, especially those like Joyce Lay who even think about going through a divorce. A woman who wants to join politics must be married, because if not, she will be a husband snatcher". (R5.27.07.2017).

4.2.10 Lack of Confidence on the Part of Women Politicians

Another theme that was presented by the respondents is that women are shy to face the media mostly because they lack confidence. According to Respondent 1, the media treat all women politicians as sex scandals in waiting, and even when they do not get one, they are always sniffing. Four of the respondents mentioned that they know a woman politician who has been called upon by the media to comment on certain issues and turned down the offer for fear of scrutiny or sex scandalized. This was brought out clearly by Respondent 1 who stated that:

“We have had many conferences with the media and I want to agree to some extent that women have failed. Sometimes like when I am in Nakuru, I am asked to appear for a prime show and I am asked to refer another woman; it is either myself, Elachi and nobody else in the Senate. I try to look for a woman to do an interview and they say no”. (R1. 22.07.2017).

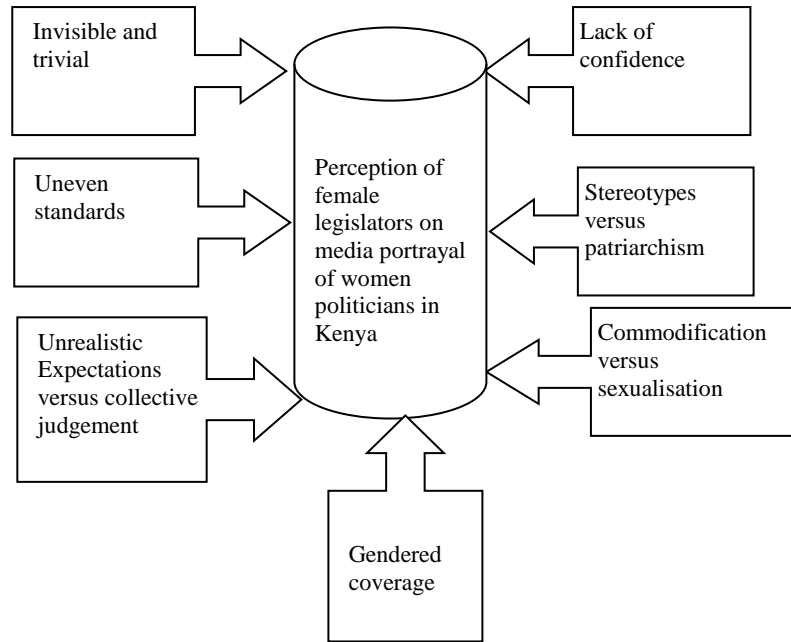


Figure 4.1: Perceptions of Female Legislators in the 11th Parliament on Media Portrayal of Women Politicians in Kenya

4.3 Factors that Influence Coverage of Women Politicians

The respondents were asked what factors they think influence media coverage of women politicians. This means women politicians already serving in political offices and those seeking political offices. Generally, they mentioned resources, patriarchy, competencies, availability, specialization and personal confidence as factors that affect the coverage of women politicians by the media.

4.3.1 Resources

The five respondents felt that resources influence the coverage of women politicians by the media in Kenya. According to the respondents, those with more money have better access to the media than those who do not have money. They mentioned that resources

also affect the quality of coverage of women politicians by the media. Respondent 1 noted that some journalists ask women politicians for tips before they cover them. Failure to give a tip or a handout, women politicians are branded less preferred news sources and subjects. In the African patriarchal system, male is the custodian of resources and so, male politicians start from a vantage point as opposed to female politicians. Respondent 1 brought this out clearly when she said that she had experienced being asked for some money by some journalists in order to be slotted for an interview panel. She said that:

“Some journalists ask for money from women politicians to have their stories covered or for the women to appear in some talk shows. Women do not like this although male politicians engage with it all the time”. (R1.22.07.2017).

Respondent 3 stated that she experienced the effect of resources during the campaigns as journalists covered stories, but only the stories of those who gave some money appeared on front pages of newspapers the next day. She brought it out clearly when she said that:

“Male politicians especially those who have been in politics for many years understand the game of resources with the media. They succeed in having the media always on their side by buying journalists and making sure their female competitors do not get quality coverage by the media”. (R3. 29.08.2017).

4.3.2 Patriarchism

All the five respondents noted that patriarchy influence media narratives about women politicians. Respondent 2 mentioned that when women politicians are considered as news sources and subjects, the language used to narrate the stories and the photographs used by the media are greatly influenced by patriarchy. The respondents opined that the according to the media, male is the news and women are the backup for power. Respondent 2 argued that women politicians are mostly referred to ‘wife’ especially

when they are married to prominent men, but no male politician is referred to “husband of” even when married to prominent women. Women are supposed to be perfect wives and mothers mostly found at home while the male are expected to be out in the political arena. Once women start competing with men for political positions, they are seen as rebels, disobedient and disrespectful of the African culture. The respondents felt that this affects how women politicians are covered by the media in Kenya. This was brought out by Respondents 1 and 4. Respondent 1 stated that:

“As a female politician, you are expected to perform many other roles like a mother, a wife and then politics. Our society is still stuck within the traditional thinking that a perfect politician must be a perfect wife, a perfect mother and all these perfections and we are judged harshly if we seem to have failed somewhere. So, this search of perfection hinders our effective engagement with the media. As the society grows, more room is found for women to operate and such perfections will diminish, but currently, the media is in a hurry to deal with women not considering these expectations”. (R1.22.07.2017).

She noted that the media is stuck in the traditional thinking that men are better leaders than women. She argued that patriarchy is consciously or unconsciously woven around media narratives about women politician and added that this require deliberate effort to deal with. Respondents 2, 3 and 4 fault media workers for not being sensitive to societal undertones which are influenced by the patriarchal nature of the Kenyan society. The respondents argue that media workers should be wary of such undertones so that they can avoid them when covering women political leaders. Three of the respondents felt that media narratives about women politicians are skewed towards male dominance. They cautioned that the society should give women a chance and judge them based on their performance and not based on carried forward patriarchal standards.

4.3.3 Competencies

Respondents 1, 3 and 4 noted that personal competency influences the coverage of women politicians. All the respondents understood that the media is looking for competent commentators on the various national issues. They agreed that facts and knowledge are important in media engagements. Respondent 2 noted that women politicians are considered inept and lacking competency in political capital. She added that the media do not make it better by concerning itself with women failures and not women success stories. She argued that the media have failed to tell success stories of women politicians. According to her, this has led to negative evaluation of women as political leaders based on this distorted notion. Respondent 3 noted that there is need for women to enhance their skills and competences. She advised that this will propel them to engage with the media meaningfully. According to Respondent 3, competent women politicians will be able to participate in the deconstructing of the sex scandals and failure narratives and in the construction of new narratives of competence and success of women in politics in the media. She added that there is need for women politicians to enhance caucuses like the Kenya Women Parliamentarian Association (KEWOPA) and even start others. She holds the opinion that through such caucuses, women can acquire some skills which they can use in their engagement with the media. Respondent 3 argues that with the competency acquired through participation in political caucuses, women politicians will be able to generate content that is attractive to media coverage. Respondent 4 brought this out clearly when she said that:

“Women politicians must enhance their capabilities especially on media engagement. Once one is elected or seeking political power, her competencies will influence her attractiveness to the media. It is therefore upon us to ensure that we keep refreshing our competencies so that our

content form part of the news Kenyan masses receive from the media”. (R4.04.09.2017).

4.3.4 Availability

The views of the five respondents converge around the issue of availability to the media. Respondent 1 argue that women politicians must avail themselves to the media when called upon to do so. She mentioned that women politicians must make meaningful contribution to the media so that they become part of the construction of new women narratives. Respondent 4 mentioned that the media is a business and work with deadlines. She argued that when journalists call upon women to make comments, it should be on real time. Respondent 4 mentioned that availability of women to the media will automatically enhance their visibility and ultimately improve the quality of coverage of women politicians by the media. This was supported by the views of Respondent 1 who stated that:

“Once women join politics, they should avail themselves to the media to sell their agenda. It is unfortunate that women are invited to participate in interview panels and do not avail themselves. Sometimes it is about the timing of the programmes, most of which are done at night, but women must make this sacrifice if they have to be properly represented on media”. (R1. 222.07.2017).

4.3.5 Specialization

Specialization also emerged as one of the factors that influence the coverage of women politicians by the media. Respondent No.2 gave the example of Hon. Amina Abdalla who specialized in environmental matters in the 11th Parliament. She mentioned that this specialization enhanced her engagement with the media. Respondent 2 argued that the media always sought for Hon. Amina Abdalla to comment on any environmental matters.

According to Respondent 4, when women politicians deal with all the issues, the media fail to understand where to place them. She argued that specialization will give women politicians an edge on certain matters. She stated that with specialization of issues, the media will create a political identity of women politicians around certain issues and always look for them to comment when such issues arise. This was brought out clearly by Respondent 4 who stated that:

“Media have failed to acknowledge that before women join politics, they have fields of specialization. But I also blame women for not showcasing such expertise in their engagement with the media”. (R4.04.09.2017).

4.3.6 Individual Confidence

The five respondents agreed that confidence influence the coverage women politicians by the media. According to Respondent 4, media are businesses that must sell and only that which media houses find newsworthy are projected to the public. Respondent 2 argue that women politicians must develop confidence in leadership and fight for an equal share of the media spaces with their male counterparts. They must engage with the media from a point of not entitlement. This view is supported by the Respondent No.1 who stated that:

“Women must fight very hard first even in nominations, then to attract the media to sell their manifestos and even to be considered as front-page news. It is a struggle to even be seen first as a politician before a woman. The media have constructed a narrative that certain woman will battle it out with say, two men. This scares women and they shy away from the media. It is a battle and this is what women must get first. The media have not worked to highlight the skills women bring in, but are quick to define how hard women will have to fight with men to win political seats”. (R1.22.07.2017).

Respondents 2, 3 and 4 noted that it is about confidence building. Respondent 2 advised women that they must balance all their duties. While she acknowledges that it is harder for women to attend night media shows, she advises women to develop confidence to deal with issues at par with their male counterparts. She mentioned that confidence is very important for women leaders and they need to work hard to develop it. She noted that this can be done by having faith in one self, personal development through trainings and seminars with media workers and academic institutions.

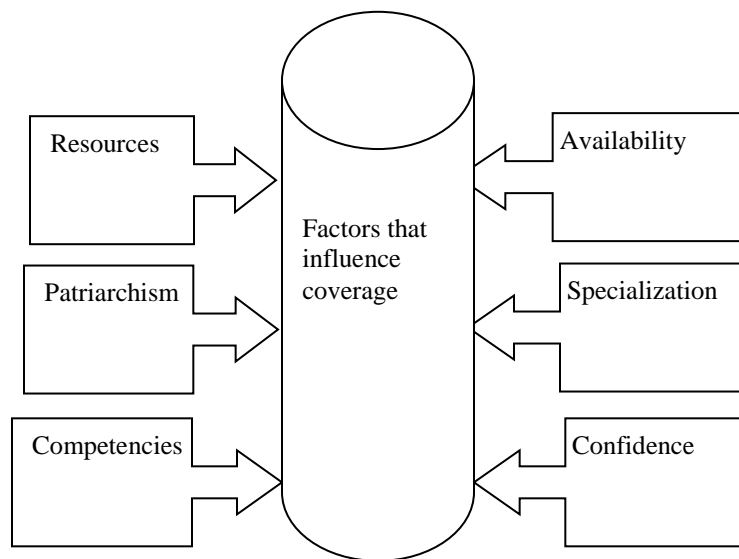


Figure 4.2: Factors that Influence coverage of women politicians

4.4 Contribution of Women Politicians towards Creation of an Identity of a female Politician in Kenya

The study also sought to establish what women politicians think they can do to enhance media portrayal and ultimately create a favorable identity of a female politician in Kenya. The five respondents strongly believe that women politicians have a role to play in ensuring that they are present on the Kenyan media as news subjects and sources. The issues that emerge from the respondents' views are individual and collective training; persistence; confidence; availability and effective use of social media platforms.

4.4.1 Training

All the five respondents agreed that personal and collective training is critical towards the contribution of women politicians towards the improved media coverage. Respondent 1 noted that media organizations like the Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK), the Editors Guild and media institutions should assist in developing content for induction and training of women politicians, especially those who get elected to legislatures. This would then trickle down to women political aspirants. Respondent 2 argued that training would be easier for women politicians to engage with the media effectively. She added that this would ensure that women politicians are an integral part of the construction of positive narratives and representation of women politicians in the media.

Respondents 1 mentioned that the National Parliament conducts extensive training for elected leaders, and holds workshops and seminars with media operators, but there must be deliberate gender specific training for women politicians outside the general training on how to engage with the media. She said that after the Senate held a workshop of elected leaders and editors, there was marked improvement in the quality of coverage leaders attracted thereafter in the mainstream media. She stated that:

“Women politicians need to improve. There is a challenge with the media, but it is also a challenge to women politicians that we need to be more open minded with the media”. (R1. 22.07.2017).

Respondent 5 noted that there is need for elected women political leaders to engage the services of professional media handlers. According to her, this will enhance their presence on media platforms as well as check on the value of what gets to the media. She noted that it is unfortunate that women politicians still struggle with unprofessional communication handlers, yet there was a huge resource of communication experts who could assist them in handling media matters. She clearly stated that:

“There should be deliberate effort to train and induct women politicians to teach them how to sell their agenda to the media and how to deal with publicity. Perhaps the media in collaboration with other parties can hold familiarization workshops, seminars and trainings”. (R5.27.07.2017).

4.4.2 Persistence

Majority of the respondents noted that women need to show persistence when it comes to media coverage. According to Respondent 5, women politicians must show determination and diligence. She advised women politicians never to turn down a request by the media to make certain comments. She added that when journalists call upon women to make comments and it happens they are busy, they should take it up and schedule the interview

to a later date. She argued that this would indicate to the media that women are willing to make meaningful contribution to the political discourses in the country even within their busy schedules.

4.4.3 Confidence

The respondents hold the opinion that for a woman politician to be an attractive news subject or source, they need to be confident and focused on the issues they are dealing with. The words of Respondent 5 summarized this opinion when she stated that:

“As women in politics, we must work within the understanding that media is attracted to worthy content. Women politicians must develop themselves, read widely and be confident with their facts when engaging with the media”. (R5. 27.07.2017).

According to Respondent 2, the media is comfortable dealing with confident news subjects and sources. She stated that over time, she has learned to block any negative narrative from the media and only concentrate on positive narratives. She also mentioned that through research on her subjects, she has built confidence with the media. She advises women politicians to research on their subjects so that they can engage the media from a point of confidence and knowledge. She cautions that without confidence in women politicians, the media opt for male politicians, who have confidence either way.

4.4.4 Availability

The five respondents agreed that availability is very important when it comes to media coverage. Respondent 2 argued that while women politicians have other tasks as ascribed by the society like being wives, mothers, daughters, sisters, aunts and friends, they must

understand the role of the media in governance and ensure they are available in media spaces to articulate their views on issues that affect the society. Respondent 3 advises women politicians to be aware of the operations of the media and ensure they are available when required to cure the issue of the absence of women politicians on media spaces. Respondent 1 was categorical about the use of women political caucuses to steer certain political agenda as women politicians in agreement. She brought this view clearly when she stated that:

“As individuals, women politicians must be present and willing to engage with the media. This is not given but they must struggle for it. Our society is male dominated and the media is too. So, women must consciously get out there and occupy their rightful place on the media in Kenya”. (R1.22.07.2017).

Respondent 5 also noted that women politicians have a duty to participate in governance discourse through the media. She acknowledged that even as the media should be sensitive to the struggles of women to get space in the Kenyan political spaces, women must be on media platforms constructing new meanings about women as political leaders. She noted that:

“Once in politics, one must play by the rules, male or female. So, one must be available to sell their manifestos through the media, whether it is happening at night or during the day”. (R5. 27.07.2017).

4.4.5 Effective use of Social Media platforms

Respondents 2 and 4 hold the view that women politicians must be available to the media and must explore other media platforms to enhance their visibility. Respondent 2 stated that women politicians have engaged with the electorates through the social media, but many of them have failed to understand the power of the social media. She argues that

the social media has power to build or destroy, depending on how one use it. She stated that this is a new phenomenon that requires a lot of care when dealing with. Respondent 4 mentioned that women in politics should explore the social media with an aim of understanding what works for each individual woman politician. She further noted that there have cases of people misusing the social media and not exploring its full potential. This was brought out clearly by Respondent 1 when she stated that:

“If a woman politician has a page that they intend to use for political purposes, it should serve that purpose. So, women have a role in ensuring clarity of purpose and focus, so that the issue of fragmented female politician identity is dealt with”. (R1. 22.07.2017).

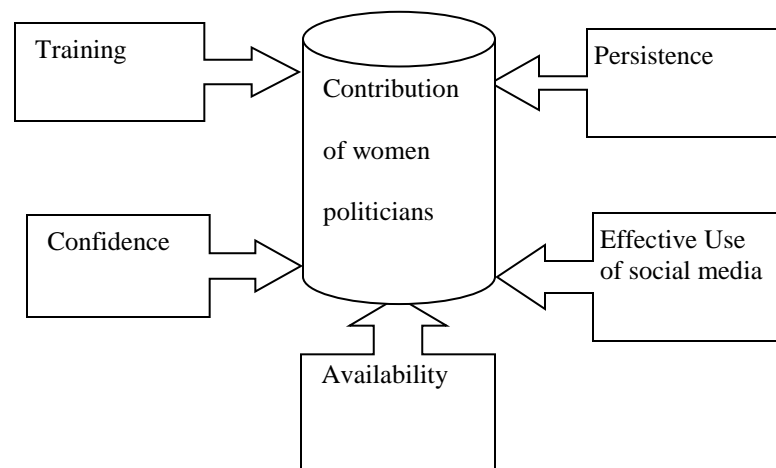


Figure 4.3 Contribution of Women towards Positive Identity in the Media

4.5 Conclusion

The study investigated the perceptions of female legislators on media portrayal of women politicians in Kenya. It sought to assess the experiences of women politicians with how the media cover them; find out the factors that influence the coverage of women politicians by the media and establish the contribution of women politicians in the creation of an identity of a female politician in Kenya. The study found that the media demean women politicians and portray them as inept and incompetent. It also found that media is still stuck in traditional structuralism especially when dealing with political matters. There are sexism narratives about women which are influenced by patriarchy and gender stereotypes. The media have normalized political male news and have not opened up enough space for women politicians. The media subject women politicians to undue scrutiny, unrealistic expectations and cover them within gendered frames that tend to go against the struggle for gender parity in governance in Kenya.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Overview

This chapter provides the summary, discussions, conclusions and recommendations of the study. This was based on the research findings that are presented in the previous chapter. The study established several findings which make a direct contribution to the body of knowledge on gender and the media as well as policy formulation. Recommendations have been made for policy and practice within the media and political institutions as well as for further research.

The study explored the perceptions of female legislators in the 11th Parliament on media portrayal of women politicians in Kenya. This was in a bid to get the meanings and values women politicians construct around media narratives in Kenya. The task included assessing the experiences of women politicians with the coverage they receive on the media; finding out the factors that influence their coverage and establishing the contribution of women politicians towards the creation of an identity of a female politician in Kenya. The study reviewed previous studies with a view to establish academic gaps which the present study sought to bridge.

5.2 Summary of Research Findings

The findings are drawn from the respondents' responses to bridge the research gap stated in Chapter Three.

5.2.1 Experiences of Women politicians with media coverage in Kenya

The broad recurring themes from the interviews are invisibility versus trivialization; uneven standards of scrutiny; unrealistic expectations versus collective judgement; commodification versus sexualization of women; gendered coverage, stereotypes and lack of confidence on the part of women politicians.

The respondents perceive the media as an enemy of women politicians in Kenya. They argue that women politicians' narratives are not given prominence by the media. They argue that while male politicians are found on front pages of newspapers, women politicians' stories are hidden inside. From the views, the media have failed to give women politicians the prominence they deserve, like male politicians, in order to participate meaningfully in the expansion of the Kenyan democratic space. Women politicians perceive the media as being involved in misinforming the electorate that they have nothing important to contribute to the Kenyan democracy. This act of omission eclipses the skills and values of women politicians, demean and trivialize their contribution in development issues.

The media use uneven standards to scrutinize male and female politicians. Women politicians are expected to work extra hard to be accepted by the public, and the media do not make it better. The media have a checklist of appropriate behavior for women politicians, which is not the case with male politicians. Women politicians are expected to behave in certain defined way and those who fail to fit within the check list are portrayed as social misfits and social climbers of questionable morals. Women politicians

who engage in certain discourses which the media have categorized as male domain are represented as aggressive and abrasive even when they have better knowledge on the issues than male politicians. Under the agenda setting role of the media, the media must be conscious of the narrative they project about women politicians. They should represent the desired and discard that which is not desired, so that the gender agenda is set. There must be objective representation of women through gender sensitive language use, the right photographs and placement on newspapers.

Women politicians shy away from the media because of fear of undue scrutiny. In the absence of women politicians on media platforms, male politicians dominate the media. Women politicians, therefore, must develop confidence to deal with the media through personal development, reading widely and other forms of training to widen their scope and be able to engage with the media effectively.

According to respondents 1, 4 and 5, the media use female drama and sex scandals to increase sales. A small mistake that is committed by a woman politician is used by the media to put to question the morality and integrity of all women politicians, which is not the case with a mistake committed by a male politician. Women politicians are pushed by the media to be dramatic and behave in theatrics to attract coverage. Dramas and theatrics work for the individual women to access media coverage, but ultimately work against women politicians in general. This portrays women politicians in general as drama queens who must engage in drama and theatrics for political survival. This was brought out clearly by Respondent 3 who raised the issue of the coverage of women politicians after

State functions. Women politicians also acknowledge the fact that media are businesses. What is projected by news subjects and sources eventually get projected by the media. This informs the coverage of women politicians by the media in Kenya.

There is gendered coverage of women politicians in the media. The respondents perceive the media as having categorized issues as male and female issues. Issues to do with child rearing, gender violence, rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and female genital mutilation (FGM) are associated with women while serious military and defence issues are categorized male issues. When male politicians comment on scientific and military issues, they are given an intelligence edge over female politicians. This has led to negative evaluation of women as suitable political leaders by the voters. This reinforces the traditional thinking that male is the norm in politics and female is stranger as expressed by Respondents 1, 2 and 3. The respondents perceive the media as concerned with sex scandals, dramas and theatrics in the coverage of women politicians, but not in equal measure when dealing with male politicians.

The themes of unrealistic expectations and collective judgement of women politicians emerged. The respondents perceive the media as involved in collective judgement of women politicians especially when one of them commits a mistake. When a woman politician commits a mistake, it is used collectively to put to question the integrity and morality of all women politicians. This theme is closely related to the undue scrutiny on women politicians than male politicians which lead to negative portrayal of women politicians by the media.

The respondents perceive the Kenyan media as still stuck in traditional patriarchy, which is evident with the low level of participation of women in editorial bodies in the Kenyan media. Respondent 1 stated that the fact that there are few female editors in most media houses shows that the media have not achieved gender parity internally. She highlighted the fact that the media have crafted the notion that women do not merit and those that succeed are propelled by powerful male politicians. She argued that media narratives about women are woven around the fathers' power, so that the issue of women politicians' paternity make news and not the paternity of male politicians.

Respondent 3 and 5 hold the opinion that there have been improvements in media portrayal of women politicians from the stereotypes of latter days. They argue that the hard and crude stereotypes are diminishing within media narratives, but caution the media operators to be wary of the subtle stereotypes that form the representation of women. They feel that such subtle stereotypes have a big impact on how women politicians are portrayed and scuttle any gains in gender parity in politics in Kenya. Respondent 4 gave an example of an incident of sexual assault involving Hon. Joyce Lay where the media victimized her further, but the male victim was not a subject of media scrutiny.

Confidence is important in media engagement. According to four of the respondents, women politicians doubt themselves. They blame the media of undue scrutiny. They argue that women politicians fear victimization and embarrassment from the media. Respondent 4 argue that the media have a role to play in assisting women to build

confidence through deliberate and targeted continuous engagements with the media. The respondents argued that there is need for media institutions to liaise with political institutions to develop training content for elected women politicians.

5.2.2 Factors that Influence Coverage of Women Politicians by the Media

The respondents think resources, patriarchy, competencies, availability, specialization, confidence and effective use of social media platforms influence the coverage of women politicians by the media. Those with more resources access more coverage after giving tips to journalists or even buying space to sell their agendas. The richer a politician is, the better coverage they receive while those with less resources struggle to attract media attention. Respondent 1 noted that some journalists ask women politicians for handouts for the women to access the media. This influences who gets covered, how they get covered and who does not get media coverage.

The five respondents perceive patriarchy as a factor that influence how women politicians are covered by the media. The media prioritize male as the norm and create a narrative around which women are supposed to be mere political parties' supporters and not owners of political power. Those who compete with men for political power are labelled rebellious, scandalous, disobedient and disrespectful of their cultures. The respondents argue that the media is concerned with a woman politician's family, spouse, children as these are the roles women are expected to play in patriarchal African societies. Negative media representation leads to failure of many women who aspire to

join politics as they struggle to fit within the society's expectations that are further reinforced by media narratives.

Respondent 2 noted that the media portray women politicians as inept and lacking in any political capital. She said that it is evident that voters evaluate women political aspirants negatively and this is evident in the country's failure to attain the constitutional gender threshold of two thirds gender representation. She noted that the media have a big role in the struggle for gender parity and need to consciously change the narrative about women politicians. Presence together with content will enhance visibility and improve the quality of coverage, which will inform the voters about the strengths of women as political leaders.

The respondents feel that lack of specialization in issues has worked against positive portrayal of women politicians by the media. They argue that women must specialize in areas of expertise, for instance, health, environment, economic and water issues, so that the media can easily identify who to call upon to discuss which issues. Without this, there is fragmentation of knowledge and the media does not know which areas which women politicians are good at. They generally felt that women politicians especially those serving in legislatures should specialize in issues of expertise and this would make it easy for the media to identify talents and skills and look for such skills when they need them. This will work to expand the knowledge base of the women politicians as well as assist them to advance specific knowledge.

Respondent 1 mentioned the lack of confidence on the part of women politicians to deal with the media. She argued that women politicians, especially those holding political offices, must build enough confidence and fight for their space in the media. She advised that this is not given, but it must be fought for. She stated that women have no option but to build enough confidence to deal with the media. She argued that without confidence in women politicians, the media will always give coverage to male politicians who have developed confidence to articulate issues. Respondents 1 and 4 feel that with the right content and confidence, women politicians will access media coverage, enhance their visibility and improve how the media portray them.

The respondents perceive the social media as a powerful tool in politics, especially in political campaigns. However, Respondents 1, 3 and 4 felt that the social media also influence how women politicians are portrayed by the media. They argue that whatever women politicians post on their social media sites eventually get to the mainstream media and form part of the narratives about women. They caution women politicians' use of the social media and advise them to only post that which contributes to positive narrative about women politicians.

5.2.3 Contribution of Women Politicians towards the Creation of an Identity of a Female Politician in Kenya

The respondents agreed that women politicians have a major role to play in ensuring that they receive adequate and quality coverage by the media in Kenya. Majority of the respondents stated that women politicians can contribute towards the creation of a

positive identity of a female politician in Kenya through training, persistence, confidence, availability and effective use of social media platforms.

Respondent 1 noted that media organizations like AMWIK, the Editors Guild and institutions of higher learning should come together to assist political institutions like Parliament to develop content for induction and training of women. They observed that this knowledge would then trickle down to those aspiring to occupy political seats. This knowledge would ensure adequate and improved quality of coverage of women politicians both as aspirants and as legislators. Respondent 2 mentioned that Parliament has been involved in training and induction of political leaders, but a lot needs to be done, so that women politicians, in particular, understand the role of the media in the society and how to they can push their agendas through the media.

They also mentioned that women politicians must be persistence in their search for visibility and quality coverage without giving up. Respondent 1 stated that as a female politician in Kenya, one must develop a thick skin, be consistent and persistence. However, she acknowledged the fact that adequate representation and positive portrayal of women politicians in the media is a process, which will take time. She was quick to add that this must be earned by women themselves. The respondents challenged women politicians to be determined and diligent in their pursuit to have increased women participation in politics in Kenya. Respondent 1 stated that the media is comfortable interviewing confident women politicians. She argued that most women politicians shy away from the media. She quickly added that the media is to blame for chasing women

politicians away through scandalizing. She advised women politicians to develop a thick skin, be focused, read widely and this will boost their confidence.

All the respondents acknowledge that the media work on deadlines. They agree that the quicker the response, the better for the media. They argue that women politicians must avail themselves to comment on issues on the media. Without being available, women politicians will remain invisible on media platforms. When journalists call a woman politician to comment on an issue and she takes a long time to get back, they get alternatives. Women politicians must avail themselves to the media, whether during the day or during late-night television shows. This will enhance coverage and attract positive portrayal of women politicians. According to Respondents 1 and 4, well researched content and confidence attract prominence and quality coverage by the media. It is up to women politicians to develop content and confidence that is newsworthy.

Respondent No.1 noted that many women politicians engage with their electorates through the Facebook, Instagram, twitter and websites. However, those who are focused on what they post on their political pages have created a definite identity of themselves which then attract the media. The content on the social media platforms find its way to the mainstream media and affect the narrative about women politicians. Respondent 5 stated that self-representation of women politicians on social media platforms form the broader narrative of the identity of a female politician in Kenya. However, the five respondents agree that the formation of an identity of a female politician in Kenya is a process and not an event, which will take time. Respondents 1, 4 and 5 caution women

politicians to be focused on the content they post on their social media platforms as this contributes greatly to the media portrayal of women politicians. They argued that this ultimately feeds to the creation of an identity of a female politician in Kenya.

5.3 Conclusions

The study found that the media have not played their role effectively in advocating for gender parity in the Kenyan political spaces. Women politicians have to work harder than male politicians to attract media coverage. Women politicians are invisible on media platforms and are trivialized. There are uneven standards of scrutiny for male and female politicians and unrealistic expectations and collective judgement for women politicians. Women politicians are commodified and sexualized, there is gendered coverage, stereotypes and lack of confidence on the part of women politicians.

The study agrees with MacIntosh (2012), that distorted and unrealistic images of women in the media diminish the strength of women and scuttle any progress in gender parity in societies. This also trivialize and demean women as human beings, and as leaders. With regard to stereotypes, the study found that the media use stereotypes which project women politicians as inferior to male politicians. The study also agrees with Thuo (2012) that patriarchy affects the language used by the media in women narratives. This lead to societal stereotypes which demean women and fail to bring out the best that women can contribute in development issues.

The findings agree with Gallagher (2003) and Friedan (2009) that negative media representation of women politicians contributes negatively to the strength and values of women leaders a particular society raises. According to Jacobus, Keller & Shuttleworth (2013), stereotypes are rife in the media in this century. There must be continuous analyses of stereotypes in the media to raise sensitivity about the impact of such texts in understanding the role of the media at a particular moment in the history of the society. Kenya is in a moment where the society desires to have more strong women political leaders. Therefore, there is need to study the lived experiences of women politicians as continuous analyses of the existence of stereotypes in media narratives about women leaders.

The study found that there is gendered coverage of women politicians in the media in Kenya. The respondents stated that the media have categorized news as soft and hard, and women politicians are only attributed to those that are assumed soft news like beauty, child bearing and rearing, cosmetics while male politicians are involved in hard news like presidential petitions, internal security and military affairs. The media refer to women politicians mostly in issues of domestic violence and sexual assault and portray them as victims of these circumstances and not even as solution providers.

The findings also agree with Ryan-Flood and Gill (2013), that gendered coverage of women politicians' challenges electoral processes. This bars women from accessing the public sphere and misinforms the public about the values women hold as political leaders. Many voters have no direct contact with political aspirants, but rely on the mass media

information to make political choices. This, therefore, calls for surveillance on the media, so that there is no misrepresentation of women as political leaders. This will ensure that voters evaluate all political aspirants based on correct information. When women politicians are absent on the media, they are absent on the audiences' mind.

The study found that the media commodify women politicians. This distorts the real values women stand for. The Minji slogan as narrated by the respondents is a clear example of the media treating women as commodities as well as sexual objects. The respondents perceive the media as more concerned with sex scandals and dramas in the coverage of women politicians. O'Brien (2014) hold that the media use women physical beauty or attractions to market products and this commodifies the female body. These commercialized ideologies diminish the visibility of women in the media and fail to accord them a fair representation among other political players.

The study found that the media have a check list of appropriate behavior for women politicians. They are expected to dress in a certain way, talk in a certain way, behave in a certain way and when some fall off the mark, they are admonished and portrayed as rebellious. Ultimately, the media create an impression among the voters that male politicians articulate political issues better than female politicians. This is supported by the findings of Griffin, Viswanath & Schwartz (1994) and Ross (2011) that media portrayal of women politicians reinforces cultural patriarchal norms that are predominant in traditional societies. Studies indicate that the media have a duty and obligation to its audiences to lead in the deconstruction of derogatory narratives about women politicians

and map the way towards a society that treats its women with respect and dignity. The media should accord women opportunity to tell their stories their own ways in their own words, and within equal spaces with others.

The study also found out that women politicians encounter undue scrutiny different from which is encountered by male politicians in the media. When a woman commits a mistake, it becomes a women collective mistake. The media use it to put to question the integrity and morality of all women politicians. The findings support Nduva (2016) who found that there is skewed and biased coverage of women leaders in the media. She argued that women leaders face more scrutiny from the media than their male counterparts. The narratives about women politicians delve into marital statuses and physical appearance. This blur the value women add to governance. The scrutiny is narrowed down to issues that do not contribute to national development.

Studies indicate that the media play a major role in advancing gender equity and parity in the society. For this role to be attained, the media, women politicians, private and government institutions must work together to ensure that the media place women at the rightful place without jeopardizing their struggles for equal participation in development discourses.

5.4 Recommendations

The study investigated the perceptions of female legislators in the 11th Parliament on media portrayal of women politicians in Kenya in a bid to bridge the research gap identified in Chapter Three. Based on the above conclusions, the researcher made the following recommendations.

5.4.1 Recommendations for Policy

- 1) The researcher recommends that media houses should have specific policy guidelines on gender sensitive language especially when covering women politicians. This will ensure that the narratives about women politicians are devoid of stereotypes, patriarchy and gender overtones that disadvantage women as political leaders. There should be continuous training of journalists on the role of women as political leaders so that they can appreciate the role of women in political leadership.
- 2) Secondly, the researcher recommends that Parliament should liaise with the Media Council, the Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK) and the Editors Guild to develop content for training women political leaders on the role of the media. This will ensure that women politicians understand how to weave their agendas around the operations of the media. This can be operationalized through workshops, seminars and short courses for women political leaders in the country. The two should have continuous close interactions to build harmony in their working relationships.

- 3) The researcher also recommends the strengthening of women political caucuses like KEWOPA and KEWOSA, and the establishment of similar ones in county assemblies. This will ensure there is unity of purpose and focus among women politicians. It will give women politicians a loud voice and propel them to access media spaces collectively. It will also assist women politicians in the creation of a positive identity for a female politician in Kenya.

5.5. Recommendations for further research

Studies in the area show that there is negative, biased and skewed portrayal of women leaders, but no study had been done to record the perceptions of female legislators in the 11th Parliament as political leaders on media portrayal of women politicians in Kenya. There is need to conduct a similar study and investigate the perceptions of male politicians on media portrayal of women politicians in Kenya.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Interview Guide

Dear Respondent,

I, Mary Mwathi, I am student of MA, Communication and Media Studies at the University of Nairobi, School of Journalism. This Interview Guide is an instrument to collect data for a Thesis Project on the Perceptions of Female Legislators in the 11th Parliament on Media Portrayal of Women Politicians in Kenya. The information given will only be used for academic purposes. Kindly assist by answering the questions as accurately as possible to facilitate the study.

A. Women experiences

- 1) There is a school of thought that women politicians are portrayed negatively by the media. Is that so and what has been your experience with media coverage as a woman politician in Kenya?
- 2) Photographs and images are powerful way of representation and they speak more words than words. How would you describe the use of women politicians' images and photographs by the media, the placement of these photographs and the meanings that are communicated?
- 3) In your experience, do you think the media have covered women politicians objectively or has the coverage different from how male politicians are covered in terms of prominence and even language used? How is the tone that the media use to narrate activities of women politicians?

- 4) Collectively, women politicians are expected to develop a political identity. What identity have media attached to women politicians in Kenya and what can women do to create a favourable identity of a female politician in Kenya?
- 5) What sort of stories attract the media in women politicians' activities and what do you think influence the coverage of women politicians by the Kenyan media?
- 6) Previous study indicate that women politicians shy away from the media, is this so and why do you think women should stay away from the media even with the realization of the role of the media in the expansion of the democratic space in Kenya?
- 7) For the society to achieve equity in terms of representation of both male and female politicians, both of them have to be covered objectively by the media. What do you think women politicians can do to attract quality coverage by the media in Kenya?
- 8) Some women politicians have attracted more coverage and others quality coverage than others, what do you think influences this trend? Is it education, profession or other issues? Has the media played its role in placing women politicians at par with their male counterparts?
- 9) What do you think women politicians can do to enhance their coverage in the media and even quality representation?
- 10) Kenya is a patriarchal society and there are defined gender roles that are ascribed to the various genders. What role has this played in the media in relation to the advancement of women politicians in Kenya?

Appendix II: Certificate of Fieldwork



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REF: CERTIFICATE OF FIELDWORK

This is to certify that all corrections proposed at the Board of Examiners meeting held on 09/06/2017 in respect of M.A/PhD. Project/Thesis Proposal defence have been effected to my/our satisfaction and the project can be allowed to proceed for fieldwork.

Reg. No: K50/81389/2015

Name: Mary Wangari Muthuri

Title: Perceptions of Female Legislators in the 11th Parliament
On Media Portrayal of Women Politicians in Kenya

Dr. JAMIE WAMUKU THUPA
SUPERVISOR

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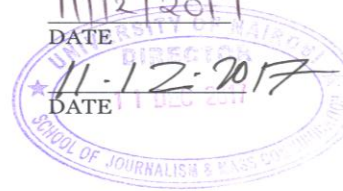
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Reg. No: K50/81389/2015

Name: Mary Wangari Mwangi

Title: Perceptions of Female Legislators in the 11th Parliament on Media Portrayal of Women Politicians in Kenya

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