THE ROLE OF CLAN COUNCILS IN THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN ELECTIVE

POLITICS: A CASE OF THE BORANA COMMUNITY IN ISIOLO COUNTY

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DECLARATION

This project paper is my original work and has not been submitted for examination in any other university.

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This project paper has been submitted for examination with my approval as the university supervisor.

SUPERVISOR---Date-----------------------------

Prof. Owuor Olungah

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all women who went against all odds to aspire for leadership positions. I wish to state that their efforts were never in vain; many women and girls stand on their shoulders today because they went before them enduring so much on untraveled road to open up leadership space for them.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

Communities that have strong traditional governance structures are conflicted about enforcing their long held and proven convictions about leadership in the face of emerging needs for inclusion. Clan Councils in Isiolo have become an important playground for political leadership yet as structured, they are an exclusive men-only club designed to functionally exclude women from all forms of decision making and leadership. Modern society has demanded that women are included in decision making and leadership.

This exploratory qualitative research used the Gidden's structuration theory to explore the functioning of the clan councils and how women seeking leadership navigate through the clan councils. Four Clan council leaders were interviewed for insights into how the clan councils operate. Four Key Informants were interviewed to share their experiences about what it is like for women to navigate through the clan councils. A focus group discussion was conducted with the umbrella clan council to enrich the data from the interviews.

The findings point to a well-structured organization of the Borana community starting with a supreme assembly at *Gumi Gayo* in Ethiopia, an umbrella council of elders, clan councils and sub clan councils. Women are not members of any clan, and therefore cannot become clan council members and neither can their political support be organized around clan councils. The rules of membership and engagement relegate women to peripheral roles like cooking and dancing. Women are required to prove themselves first before they can be trusted. Therefore, those women who have had an opportunity to serve the public usually leverage on their achievements as an entry point into leadership, unlike men who leverage on their gender and clan support.

The study recommends that women be provided with affirmative action opportunities for leadership since their success has the biggest impact on a community's skepticism on women abilities. Also, because of many years of disenfranchisement, it is necessary to build the capacity of women as a way to prepare them to take up upcoming opportunities and to succeed in performing their tasks. This is especially necessary for communities that have strong traditional governance structures that do not have spaces for women's participation.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

BC	Before Christ
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GII	Gender Inequality Index
ICCPR	International Convention on Civil and Political Rights
IEBC	Independent Election and Boundaries Commission
KWS	Kenya Wildlife services
MCA	Member of County Assembly
MP	Member of Parliament
NACOSTI	National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNWOMEN	United Nations Women

CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Women under-representation in political leadership continues to be a pressing political agenda worldwide (Kittilson, 2010), with many countries reporting substantive progress while others are still struggling with various strategies to ensure more equitable representation. Political participation gives every individual, both men and women an opportunity to exercise the right to participate in making critical decisions. This emerging realization departs from ancient male dominated constructions of political leadership that stretch from way back in ancient Athens in the 5th century BC. The Athenians women had no right to vote or to participate in the democratic process. They were not considered as citizens and only Athenian men had a right to attend meetings of the assembly (Bentley et al., 1995). Subtle levels of this exclusion exist in our society to date.

In recognizing participation as a fundamental political right, the United Nation (UN) notes that the right to participation is the right of individuals, groups and peoples to seek decisions collectively and to choose their own representatives, and have the freedom of democratic action, free from interference (United Nations, 2006). Other than being a core element of democratic systems, political participation enables the individuals to fulfill their obligations toward their society through holding discussions and exchanging opinions that determine the responsiveness of the development process to the needs and particular interests of all segments of the society (Abdi, 2007).

After the establishment of the UN in 1946, there was an increased international recognition of women's historical exclusion from structures of power. The UN member states have since made critical commitments to redress gender imbalance in politics. Several instruments have been used

to recognize the women's right to equally participate in politics. Most notably the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which in its Article 21 recognized the right of every one, both women and men, to take part in the government of their country, directly or through a freely chosen representative. The importance of the right of the participation as a means for the individual to be involved in the political affairs and decision making process of his/her society is further recognized and protected in article 25 of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The UN adapted the convention on civil and political rights, which legally obliged the state parties to ensure the effective women's political participation in public affairs without discrimination on the ground of, among others, sex. The UN also adopted a special Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which elaborates the nature of women's political rights and the steps required to promote greater equality between women and men in this area.

Even with the extensive support of the above statutory instruments, women worldwide have been extremely under-represented in participation and decision making politically, socially and economically. Recent efforts to increase women representations in decision making have focused on either women empowerment or leveling the playing field. Women empowerment initiatives have proven successful in a number of ways, especially economically and socially, but a lot still needs to be done on the political front. Efforts geared at leveling the playfield focus on removing barriers to participation and these too have yielded substantial gains in all but the political scene.

Taking membership to all levels of political leadership as an indicator, as of July 2017, the Nordic countries had the highest level of participation of women at 41.7% membership, America at 28.1%,

Europe at 25.3%, sub-Saharan Africa at 23.6 %; Asia at19.4% and Arab States at 17.4% (UN-Women, 2018).

This research project focused on the Borana Community of Kenya. Borana community inhabit Ethiopia, Somali and Kenya. Female representative in elective state Councils in Ethiopia are only 27.61% and Somali region 3.27% (Adamu & Mekonnen, 2009).

The Kenyan Borana woman has faced discrimination in the elder led selection of political candidates and this project intended to illuminate this process and what needs to be done. At the regional level, Rwanda has the all-time highest number of women in political leadership at 64%. The circumstances for Rwanda are unique but provide a glimpse of what women are able to achieve once they get leadership and decision making opportunities. The barriers to women participation are systemic and deeply entrenched in most communities.

It is not hard to pick out issues that propagate the dominance of men in politics. Under guidance from Supreme Court judges, for a long time Latin American rights to participate in electoral decisions, including voting, propagated exclusionist principles for example by requiring that voters necessarily need to be property owners (Michelman,1989). Even with repealing of such policies, the male dominance has been so entrenched that most countries have had no serious female presidential contenders for a long period. It was until 2016 that the United States had a serious female contender for the presidency in the name of Hillary Rodham Clinton. In Japan, a long history of social activism by women has yielded substantive gains in social and economic empowerment. However, a study by Sheel (2003), reported that though women have started taking

political leadership position, it is only at the local government level because political parties have only provided limited opportunities for women to participate in politics at national level.

In Africa, women seeking elective positions have to fight socially constructed barriers that are deeply entrenched in popular narrative and media. The predominant discourse posits that exclusion of women is a consequence of the African customary and traditional laws which were based on patriarchal supremacy (Abdo & Abegaz, 2009). In African traditional assemblies, dominant male leadership was seen in the exercise of both political and religious leadership. Patriarchy formally relegates women to certain spaces, especially those that concern mothering, while at the same time expecting conformist behavior. There are reports that women can't go against the wish of their husband, and even being perceived as threats to male dominance for even trying (Tunde & Tayo, 2008).

Despite surmounting many odds to become the first ever Kenyan female "headman", Wangu wa Makeri's lingering narrative quickly departs from her accolades as a leader, to the stereotypical representation as a bad woman who embodied all that the community loathed, including sitting on the backs of men (Wanyoike, 2002). Ette (2017) reports that even when women are in leadership positions, the media gives them low visibility and often times do not represent them well.

Though Kenya is ethnically very diverse, there are commonalities in pastoral communities that all have very robust traditional institutions specifically created to manage the community resources, especially land. Such traditional institutions are developed from the harmony of people's traditional beliefs, history and cultures, but in contexts characterized by differences and

similarities. Some of these institutions have managed to create structures of governance that focus on among other things, conflict prevention and resolution. One example of such traditional institutions is the Borana Clan Council. The clan council has regulated the social, political, economic as well as cultural aspects of Borana life for a long time. It also maintains Borana people's identity, culture, unity and egalitarianism (Watson, 2001). With the advent of modern political systems of representations, the clan councils have remained powerful institutions especially since they informally influence the community on how to vote (Tunde & Tayo, 2008). Ideally, political participation should be the voluntary actions through which citizens seek to influence the making of public policy. However, community institutions such as the clan councils remain influential in determining the nature of this participation. It is this influence that the project intended to unpack.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Clan councils in Borana are constructed around long standing traditional ethos. The Borana clan council comprise of predominantly male elders who ascend to the positions through earned respect and honor. Since there are no documented formal ways of operating, the opinions of the clan council can be compared to the constitution for a country. What can be observed though, is that the clan council's responsiveness to the affirmative efforts to have more women representation in elective politics is slow. The Borana women interested in seeking political leadership of necessity need to navigate through clan councils.

The participation of women in decision-making and politics is a human rights issue enshrined in the Kenyan Constitution. Since the 1980s, there have been considerable efforts to mainstream gender in elective politics. Given their under-representation in the legislature and other state decision making organs, women's interests were not adequately articulated. Though the

Constitution has attempted to address this shortcoming in Article 100 by empowering the National Parliament to enact legislations that will promote the representation of groups that have been historically marginalized since independence, there are cultural, religious and social norms in most communities in Kenya that still impede equal gender representation in political governance.

Very little is known about how such indigenous leadership structures like the Borana Clan council influence the ascension of women to elective politics. The study aimed at exploring the ways that the Borana Clan councils support or limit the participation of women in elective politics. The research was guided by a set of research questions as indicated in section 1.3 below.

1.3 Research Questions

In seeking to find out the role of clan councils in influencing the participation of women in elective politics among the Borana Community of Isiolo County, Kenya, this study answered the following research questions:

i.   What are the functions of clan councils among the Borana Community in Isiolo County?

ii.   How do these roles influence the participation of women in elective politics?

iii. How do women aspiring for political leadership roles navigate through clan councils in Isiolo County?

1.4 Research objectives

1.4.1 Overall objective

The general objective of this study was to explore the roles of clan councils in influencing the participation of women in elective politics.

1.4.2 Specific objectives

The specific objectives of this study were:

i. To identify the functions of clan councils among the Borana Community in Isiolo County.

ii. To establish how such functions, influence the participation of women in elective politics.

iii. To establish how women aspiring for political roles navigate through clan councils in Isiolo County.

1.5 Assumptions of the study

The study made the following assumptions:

i) That there are functioning clan councils among the Borana community of Isiolo that play various roles in the community.

ii) That some of the roles of these clan councils have an impact on the participation of women in elective politics.

iii) That women who are aspiring for political leadership roles have to navigate through the clan councils.

1.6 Justification of the study

This study could be used to stimulate policy re-orientation towards increased gender mainstreaming amongst those coming from communities with traditional councils. The outcome of this research could also be used in the creation of public awareness on the functions of clan councils and how to best tailor them towards achieving sustainable development. The research is timely since political participation and representation of women is yet to reach the minimum one third constitutional requirements. It is hoped that this research could lead to further policy measures that will inform legislation to enhance the representation of women in political

governance and gender mainstreaming as envisaged in the Constitution which advocates for equal gender participation and representation.

The study findings could also contribute to the existing body of knowledge on traditional leadership institutions, their roles and how these roles impact on various undertakings of the men and women in these communities.

1.7 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study was conducted in Isiolo County. It only included individuals from the Borana community. Both males and females of 18 years of age and above and with knowledge on the role of clan councils was included in this study as interviewees and as participants in the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Elected leaders and local politicians, especially women, were included as key informants. The study also included the secretariats of the various clan councils in the community. The selection was purposive based on a voluntary basis.

The interviews were conducted in the Borana local language and it is natural that the translations could lose the original deeper and richer expressions that the interviewees may employ to stress or emphasis a point. These limitations were however bridged given that the researcher speaks the local language and did the best transcription possible, that is close to or the same as the original intentions of the native speakers who were interviewed.

1.8 Definition of key terms

Clans: A social group comprising of people who are closely related. In the case of the Isiolo, a clan may have several families from one lineage.

Clan council: A group of respectable elders who manage the social, economic and political affairs of the clan. The elders occupy these positions by virtue of being respected. The actual criteria for gauging the respect is not clear but the councils exert a lot of control on decisions that are made by the community.

Umbrella clan council: A clan council that is constituted by representative from smaller clans. It represents the interests of the whole Community.

Borana: The community that inhibits the areas of Isiolo. The use of Borana refers to all the people who are beneficiaries of the Isiolo community resources. Members of the Borana Community speak the same language.

Women in Elective politics: This refers to women who have successfully or unsuccessfully tried to vie for a position as a ward representative, member of the national assembly, senator, women representative or governor.

Gerontocracy: This refers to government predominantly by elderly people, such as those that comprise the clan leaders in Isiolo County.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section presents literature review of the role of clan councils or traditional institutions of leadership and how these institutions influence the political participation of women in elective politics. The theoretical orientation of this study is also detailed in this section.

2.2 Role of clan councils in the community

In order to improve the lifestyles of individuals, communities have evolved governance and leadership structures right from individual family level to community level and even national levels (Mengisteab, 2017). Shuke (2005) argues that such structures provide definition of roles and clearly specified codes of conduct. With globalization and advances in technology, the need for intra and inter-community as well as inter-governmental relationships has increased. There has been specialized governance and leadership institutions developed to address complex demands such as legislature, judiciary and presidency, as is the case for Kenya. Even with changes that attempt to address these new demands, the core mission of all governance and leadership structures has remained making the living standards of their communities at local levels better and more enduring. However, some traditional organizational structures, such as the clan, have not been given sufficient academic considerations especially with respect to the role they play in transitions framework.

Literature has focused on the formal and elite level of governance, rather than on the often more powerful informal levels (Collins, 2004). The dominant literature on clans has often overemphasized their static, unchanging culture and social structure as well as their incompatibility with modernity or democracy.

Clan councils in patriarchal societies are composed of men. There is little room for women representation. Studies focusing on recent upsurge of violence and resolutions of such conflicts in Northern Kenya indicate that such exclusions are justified by the need for expedited decision-making processes and the implications of possible outcomes of such decisions. The decisions are informed by patriarchal notions of resistance for economic protection. For example, clan leaders are concerned that having a woman representative in the clan council would reduce their ability to respond to threats through armed counter offensive strategies (Chome, 2016). Even when women are allowed into the clan governance, Shuke, (2005) reports that they select women who are perceived as easily malleable. These two approaches - not allowing women in total and selecting malleable women - undermine women's engagement, even where quotas for women representation exists. With the immense political influence of such clan councils, political participation for women is hindered by moves that exclude their unbridled participation in decision-making and governance in the clan councils.

Clans and other traditional institutions are governed by a set of customary and traditional laws that address local needs. Such laws were built up and used over many centuries to respond to people's need to manage their lives in the environment they live (Lewis, 2002). The traditional institutions therefore, reflect and represent the local peoples' culture, feelings, mode of behavior, social and economic relations and the rules of dealing with other groups and political establishment. Governments have not been able to require women representation in these structures. Lewis argues that when such structures exist, and in the absence of a political authority capable of enforcing effectively its statutory laws in a pervasive manner, it seems inescapable that aspects of the traditional structures are absolute even when they are not relevant to the legal and political system,

more so among the pastoral and nomadic communities. This seems to legitimize women under-representation for as long as the clan councils can execute their traditional mandate.

Clans have played an important role in pre-modern governance systems. In Nigeria, land transactions at the community level do not go through the formal legal channels. For example, leasing, purchasing and donations of land are often done in private, which in the long run may create problems. With the intervention of the traditional rulers, land disputes are resolved amicably. Where the issues are still pending or unresolved, there is good understanding and cordial and peaceful coexistence amongst the disputing communities as a result of the fatherly intervention of traditional rulers (Blench et al., 2006). In Somalia, traditional structures regulate the expanding 'modern' private economic sector, as well as develop and regulate conflicts within the state. Gundel (2006) posits that the traditional structures in Somalia are at the crux of the challenges and dilemmas of the processes of societal change and modernization. The extended family and lineage system, which form clans, is the core institution of all basic societal functions stemming from the pre-industrial pastoral society.

In the case of Somalia, the household or family is the center of production, and has inherited rules of redistribution between both the productive and non-productive members, which guarantees that women, children, the elderly and disabled persons are given care. The same system defines marriage and family norms. Induction into these clans primarily entails familiarization with the inherited traditions and cultural rules - the *Xeer*. The predominantly male clan elders safeguard law and order within and between the clans. Additionally, these traditional leaders are useful conduit of the government policies to resolve inter-clan conflicts, security matters or as an

instrument for peace-making in times of political crises between opposing political factions. In this arrangement, the clan leaders play a very useful and effective role that supplements government efforts (Shuke, 2005). Exclusion of women therefore, compromises the prioritization of issues critical to a significantly productive gender.

The clans as social organizations interact with state even when they were not formed by the state (Collins, 2004). For example, Jahun (2015) reports that in Bauchi State in Nigeria, the state recognizes the roles of traditional rulers and accords them the advisory status and as the custodians of culture and tradition at the local government and to some extent, at the state level. Their views and instructions are obeyed and respected with total loyalty without questions.

According to Jahun, the traditional institutions are often times seen as sacred and extra ordinary. It is on that belief and recognition that government programs and policies are accepted by the communities when routed through traditional rulers. Special programmes such as immunizations against polio, infectious diseases, census and voter registration, for example were sometimes accepted with lukewarm attitude or rejected in many instances by some communities. However, with the intervention of traditional rulers, the communities do agree to avail themselves for the various immunizations programmes without suspicion. Likewise, Cookey et al. (2010) argued that traditional rulers, by virtue of being in existence for long, and their being on the throne indefinitely has given their subjects confidence, assurance, reliability and continuity. They see their rulers as permanent pillars of their existence. Their power even when it manifests in abstracts form, is still strong and enduring. In fact, it is believed that failure to adhere to advice given by traditional rulers can spell doom on whoever rejects their advice. The influence of such indigenous institutions cannot therefore, be isolated from modern political dispensations, whether the influence is positive or not.

Chelanga (2012) opined that the prevalent Kenyan council of elders, whose wisdom is defended by their age, experience, parentage and sometimes myth, are in the business of securing their communities future leadership by positioning themselves in a position of favor with the current leadership. In return for votes, the president would hive-off prime jobs in government and give to members of the community. Chelanga argues that such emerging roles are useless as they neither advance a national development agenda nor foster empowerment of women. Similar sentiments are reported in a study by Nyamweru and Chidongo (2018). The scholars argue that these institutions as constituted are at odds with the ideals of modern democratic governance and will become increasingly less relevant in future decades.

This level of gerontocracy has also been seen in the recent attempts by the Mandera Garre council of elders' attempts to introduce a rotational leadership structure that drastically departs from the tenets of democracy. A report by Kimani (2016) depicts this idea by the Garre clan council as inconsistent with democratic election of leaders and more inclined to selection and anointing of county leadership through clan councils.

The continuum of governance through clans or through state has no clear delineation of where one starts and ends. Clans assume a political role that is indispensable by the state. Shuke (2005) notes that the clan council or assembly of clan leaders addresses the clan interest and develops political strategy in relation to their own political administration in relation with other clans. The elders are delegated to advocate for the clan interest and its defense. Politically, the council of elders pressures the administration for more concessions and appointments of their members to managerial and political positions. This mechanism could be said to be a kind of local but powerful

political party with narrow objectives. Ingiriis (2012) describes the effect of such narrow objectives by highlighting the inability of local governance structures in Somali to coalesce to a state. Ingiriis gives an example where the state army disintegrated to clan-based platoons during the Somali civil war in the 1990s. The different clan platoons could not form strong coalitions across clans and made Somalia a clan-state. This implies that even though clans have capacity to advocate for a national agenda, they still are clans and cannot achieve a national outlook. These studies show that clans act at a local level as a bi-directional link between the community and the government.

Other scholars have reported an opposing perspective of clans by suggesting that they are able to persist through strong forces that tend to crush them. States that have tried to outlaw or suppress clans, members of the clan, united by their organizational identity, coalesce to counter oppressive regime. Clans in those states that do not create a thriving economy always have a way to fill the gap through networks for economic changes, including findings and negotiating new markets (Collins, 2004). This is important because one sees the supremacy of clans emanating from their ability to perform multiple roles without necessarily separating the functions. For example, among the Apatanis, a community in India, the clan council locally known as *Buliangs* does not have a clear-cut separation of powers such as those found in modern political organization in relation to legislature, executive and judiciary. The clan serves as an important mechanism of maintaining law and order within the society of the Apatanis as would be done by a combination of the judiciary, executive and legislature (Das, 2017). Above all, the supreme aim of this institution on the part of Buliangs is to preserve social harmony and equilibrium through their role in settling disputes and punishment of criminals.

2.3 Clan Councils and Women Participation in Elective Politics

Clan councils are guided by traditional perceptions of masculinity and femininity. These perceptions of gender roles correlate to the practices of the communities and are further enshrined by the communal modes of subsistence. For example, according to Somali culture, women were traditionally responsible for tending to small livestock, establishing the home and gathering resources and so forth, while men were responsible for tending to larger herds, and were more mobile as they spent time away from the home. These are powerful cultural norms, associated by many Somalis with times of peace, and as such, there are deeply held beliefs that traditional gender norms with clearly defined roles for men and women should be re-established (Ingiriis, 2012). These attitudes are transferred to the political arena by the clan councils.

Leadership and governance roles are marked as male responsibilities in complete disregard for the exclusionist stance such roles take. Bauer (2010), in describing the role of women in leadership in Botswana stated that "cows will lead the herd into a precipice" (p.56), referring to the innate fear of having women in leadership positions.

Traditional gender norms in Somali society are largely derived from gendered divisions of labour. Clan has played a significant role in shaping women's perceptions of their status within a wider kinship group. The status of women within the Somali clan structure has remained in place, despite broader social/political/economic changes brought on by colonialism, post-independence state-building, and civil war. Somali society is organized around a social structure in which descent and inheritance is traced in a patrilineal way. Women have specific roles based on the communal needs and demands of pastoralist society. Girls and married women tend smaller livestock and build and dismantle the *aqal* (house), taking care of the children and occasionally selling milk or ghee

(Osman, Klingberg-Allvin, Flacking & Schon, 2016). As Somali society relies on labour as one factor in production, it is debatable whether women's roles can easily be construed as a source of inequality.

Even when identical roles have been reported for both genders in Latin America, their women have been reported to progress through organizing autonomously to protest poor living conditions challenging dominant gender ideologies (Lind, 2018). The emancipation of women of necessity may not come through.

In the Somali pastoral community, marriage is the site for which gender roles are cemented and patriarchy is reproduced. The cultural construction of 'power' and 'authority' is largely based upon the *xeer* (loosely understood as a social contract or customary law) (Leite, 2017). This is, however, not solely contingent upon the *xeer* but also strongly influenced by Islamic principles of gender relations. Although Islamic principles are interpreted by some to deny women access to property, the product of their labour, and power over their decision-making capabilities, women interviewees have consistently reported that religion can also be used to assert women's rights (Warsame, 2002). Such constructions of gender relation respected and adhered to strictly, even when they are devoid of any mentorship for leadership among girls and women in such communities.

The structures of the clan councils propagate barriers to political participation such as those summarized in Thanikodi and Surgitha (2007). The scholars cite the prevalence of a masculine model in leadership, lack of party support, economic dis-empowerment and inadequate training as the key barriers to women accent to political leadership. Though these barriers exist even in

clanless communities, where the clans loosen their grip of community governance, women find access to political leadership positions easier.

In central Asia, Collins (2004) reports that women have come up in leadership more easily where the clan structures are failing and that once in positions of power, the women are able to institute inclusive governance structures that gain acceptance across all genders. The traditional roles of women in most communities with clan councils are exactly those that have been attributed to socio-economic development. Rwanda, the country with highest number of women in leadership has achieved tremendous socio-economic growth, which has been linked with the presence of leaders who articulate the issues relevant to women (Ryan & Woods, 2018).

For women, there are fundamental issues about the legitimacy of belonging to a clan. As unmarried young women, they are seen as people on transit and as married women they are perceived as outsiders (Liu, Cutcher, & Grant, 2015). Women therefore, face the challenge of campaigning in a region or district where they are not seen as a full member of that clan (Gardner & El Bushra, 2004). This scenario is not any better for women married to their original clans since they are also inextricably associated to the male partners in such a way that the man still functions as the gatekeeper to legitimate clan membership. This arrangement problematizes the ability of women to get clan support for political leadership.

Even without the barriers posed by clans, women have found the process of seeking political positions unwelcoming or even hostile. Bauer (2010) reports that even without one of their own being elected, women are represented by those they chose, be they male or otherwise. Countries with a notable number of women in elective politics trace the origin of women empowerment to

small women-led organizations that form with support from local non-political and international donors as well as the changing gender roles in post conflict societies as is the case in Uganda and Rwanda (Tripp, 2015). Once the initial barriers are overcome, women have increasingly been reported as capable leaders for performing at levels beyond their ability, implying gradual erosion of gender beliefs (Evans, 2016).

In conclusion, clan councils are the major 'gatekeepers' in determining who will be candidates in elected office from their communities. Though they play a critical role in advancing women's participation in decision-making bodies they are currently constructed as an impediment to legitimate female representation. Patriarchy, with its exclusionist character, is propagated in the clans disguised as preservation of traditional and cultural values. Women have been reported as capable of political leadership but for that to happen, the conception of clans has to be unpacked.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

2.4.1 Structuration Theory

The structuration theory explains how social systems are created by considering both the actors and the environment. The Antony Giddens' Structuration theory argues that the agents and the context must of necessity be considered simultaneously. People use the resources and experiences from their past to structure a society. Each member of the society acts in a limited space, not entirely within their preference or discretion. The people therefore, do not have an unchecked control of their actions. Their knowledge is restricted to such elements as those that recreate the social structure and fabric. The social structure including traditions, institutions and moral codes determine the ways of doing things in a society. Change is introduced when people start either

ignoring them or doing things in different ways to reproduce modified social structures. This is what has been referred to as "the duality of structure" (Giddens & Pierson, 1998:46).

The creation or modification of social structures is by means of invented values and norms that are reinforced through social acceptance. At the same time, this act of creating or modifying such norms is restricted by the social structure itself. As an example, a person is unable to choose who one's parents are or what period of time one exists or even the language they speak or write. When the norms for such belonging or language are flaunted the social structures resists such flaunting by correcting the sense of belonging or the mechanism of the language by highlighting the "shock" in either the change or breach of rules. This is especially so in the case of gender, where social reproduction is particularly specific. What, for example, comprises women roles that would be frowned upon if it is done by men?

2.4.2 Relevance of the theory to the study

This theory is relevant to this study in that it helps in understanding the relationships that exist in the roles of the clan councils and individual behavior of the members of the Borana community in everyday life. It also links these roles to women's participation in elective politics as this is part of the political, geographical and religious institutions that influence individual as well as collective behavior as observed by Giddens.

There are recursive relationships among person (agency), environment (structure), and behaviour (outcome). These recursive relationships suggest that people create the environment (structures) which in turn shape the person; it is also expected that both the person and the structures will influence the behaviour. Thus, when cast within the original question of whether or not clan

councils influence women participation in elective politics, there are factors related to the clan councils which may be responsible.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

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┌─────────────────────────┐
│   Demographic factors   │
│           Age           │
│    Educational status   │
│  Occupation/Employment  │
│      Marital status     │
└─────────────────────────┘
          │
┌─────────────────────────┐                ┌─────────────────────────┐
│  Socio-cultural factors │                │  Women participation in │
│      Gendered roles     │───────────────▶│     elective politics   │
│         Age set         │                │                         │
│   Belief/Taboo systems  │                └─────────────────────────┘
│        Avoidance        │
└─────────────────────────┘
┌─────────────────────────┐
│     Economic Factors    │
│      Access to land     │
│     Financial capital   │
│    Property ownership   │
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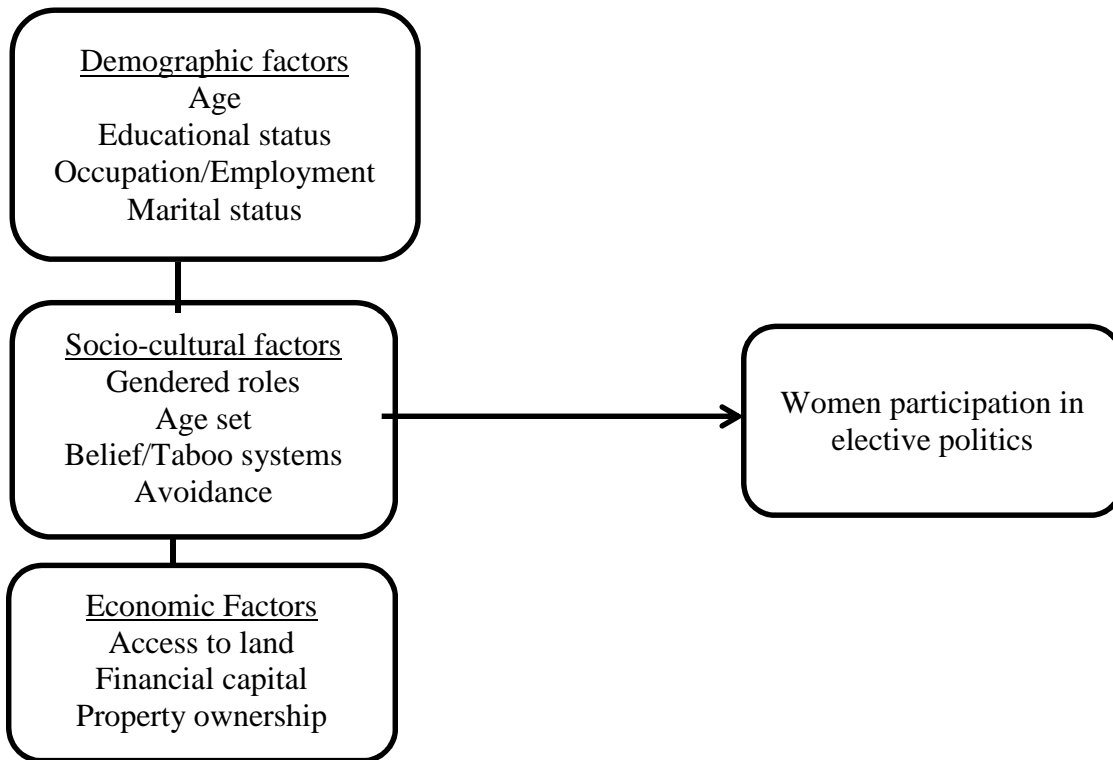
Figure 1: Conceptual Framework (Source Author)

As explained in the structuration theory, the person (demographic factors) and the environment (Social cultural and economic factors) interact to determine the communities' perception of leadership and consequently how a community votes. The clan councils as custodians of the community ethos are a major determinant of people's behaviors since they informally define what is expected of each individual in the society (See Fig 2.1). The conceptual framework suggests that it is possible that socio-cultural and economic factors as perceived by the clan councils may

influence the participation of women. Similarly, demographic factors personal to the women themselves can also be associated with influencing the participation of women in elective politics.

This study tried to look at how the clan councils guided by the attributes such as age, educational status occupation/employment and marital status of the women in conjunction with socio-cultural and economic factors influence the participation of women in elective politics.

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CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section describes the research site, study population, unit of analysis, sample and sampling procedure, data collection methods and data processing and analysis procedures. It concludes with a discussion of the ethical considerations that guided the study and a subjectivity statement.

3.2 Research Site

African rangelands are characterized by expansive landscapes and low density occupation by nomadic and semi-nomadic people. The pastoralists manage widely roaming livestock that provide sustenance for their livelihoods. In Kenya, the North Eastern and Lower Eastern regions are primarily occupied by pastoralist Somali and Borana Communities. Isiolo, the focus region for this study, represents a typical nomadic community that inhibits vast regions in the lower Eastern part of Kenya.

Isiolo County spans over 25,700 km^2 subdivided politically into two constituencies and ten wards and administratively into three sub-counties, ten wards, 22 locations and 43 sub-locations. Eighty percent of the land is communally owned, and is currently held in trust by the County government. The land, which is mainly arid and semi-arid is predominantly used for pastoralism.

Currently, the county has an estimated total population of 191,627. Of this, 93,073 are female and 98,551 are male. About 55.3% of the population (106,082 persons) are below 19 years. The 2012 IEBC data showed that 78.8% of all persons eligible to vote registered as voters. Registration to vote is usually a clear intent to participate in political decisions.

Scarcity of arable land and pasture is a daily challenge for the people of Isiolo, a phenomenon that is responsible for the constant community conflicts in the county. The Borana are nomadic pastoralists, moving from one area to another - within the county and in neighboring counties in search of pasture and water for their goats, camels and cows. Traditionally, men are entrusted with livestock rearing and guarding against cattle rustlers, while the women stay home and perform all domestic duties including constructing the houses; mostly out of mud, and taking care of the children. Among the Borana, Turkana, and Ameru, the younger boys normally take care of the goats while young men take care of the cows. Cattle raids frequently happen and so the young strong men go around armed well to defend their stock as they roam in search of pasture and water.

Isiolo County's Gender Inequality Index (GII) shows that the women are disadvantaged in three key areas: reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market. The inequalities are reported to lead to a decline in human development in the County. According to the 2009 national statistics, there were about 60 active women groups in the County, mostly operating revolving funds. Despite this, women are more susceptible to poverty since they spend most of their time searching for water and firewood. Of significance to this study, is the disadvantage due to lower levels of empowerment. Women rarely control key assets like livestock and rarely take part in decision making. Formal education is reported to benefit men more than women further complicating possibility of finding gainful employment for the women. In view of these imbalances, the County government's strategic plan prioritizes capacity building initiatives that empower women, especially through education, provision of water, involvement in conflict resolutions and campaign against negative cultural practices.

3.3 Research Design

The study used descriptive research design. A descriptive research design is used when the variables are known, but the relationships between the variables are not clear (Levy & Ellis, 2011). The design allowed for an investigation of the roles of the clan councils and how such roles affect women participation in elective politics. The design allows the researcher to interpret connections between the roles of such councils, and the experiences of women in leadership and the nuances of exclusion, thereby pinpointing aspects of clan councils that support and those that hinder participation of women in elective leadership positions. Purposive sampling was used to select the informants. Key informant interviews, in-depth interviews and focused group discussion was used to collect primary data. Analysis of data was based on a thematic process that followed the set themes along the study objectives.

3.4 Study Population and sample population

Qualitative samples are not meant to represent large populations, but rather "purposeful samples of articulate respondents are used because they can provide important information" (Sale, Lohfeld, & Brazil, 2002 p.45). There are 18 Borana sub-clan councils, 6 clan councils and an umbrella council usually referred to as the Borana Council of Elders. The study population was these 6 Borana clan councils, the umbrella council and some key informants that have navigated the clan councils to become elected leaders.

3.5 Sample Size and Sampling

A sample of one participant each was drawn from each of clan councils to make 5 participants for the interviews. The roles of each clan council can be adequately articulated by any one informed member of the council. The umbrella council members were purposively sampled for one focus group discussions. Equally, four women leaders that have had a direct or indirect interaction with

the actors in the clan councils were purposively selected for key informant interviews. An additional male active campaigner for one-woman leader was interviewed to provide insights into what the leaders had to navigate through to get elected.

Though the sample population was obtained through random recruitment of individuals in these clan councils, there was an inclusion and exclusion criterion that was adopted, which required the individuals to be at least 18 years of age and that they are individuals who have full interaction with the clan councils and understands their roles besides being part of the council.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

The study started by pre-testing the instruments and making necessary amendments to the tools. The pretesting was done with one participant and one elected leader. After that, one-on-one interviews were conducted with the sampled clan council representatives. At this phase, the researcher also collected contact information on individual key informants. The second phase was conducting interviews with key informants. During the same phase, the researcher arranged for focus group discussions with the umbrella clan council. The final phase involved the researcher conducting the FGDs. This phasing allowed that the emerging themes be interrogated further in subsequent interviews.

3.6.1 In-Depth Interviews

The in-depth interviews provided an initial insight in to composition of the clans and the extent to which the clan councils participate in influencing political leadership more so, for women. These interviews represented a volunteer's views about how the clan council they belong to operates. The information they shared represents to a large extent the views of clan council leaders. By the

third interview, the data had reached saturation and so only four interviews were used for this study.

3.6.2 Key Informant Interviews

The Key Informants are elected people or those who have ever sought elective positions. They provided information about how they perceived the clan councils during their campaign for elective positions. These gave the specific ways that the clan council assisted them or did not. This perspective was triangulated with the information from the clan council members in the in-depth interviews.

3.6.3 Focus Group Discussions

The role of clan councils as given by individual members is often subjective. The use of a focus group clarifies the actual role of the clan councils. The composition and formation of the umbrella clan council provides insight in to how inclusive the clan councils are. Their mandate as well as their role in elective politics was explored. Clarifications were sought about ways that the Key Informants had noted on how they perceived the clan councils and their roles in politics.

3.7 Data Analysis

Basic demographic information about the participants is presented as brief profiles.

The profile of the participants sheds light on their level of engagement with clan councils as well as the researchers' description of their significance in the study. Qualitative data from the interviews was transcribed into written transcripts. The transcription process was enriched by field notes. Each transcript was further examined for completeness and credibility. This data was then analyzed for emerging codes. The codes were then grouped into sub-themes and themes in accordance to the study objectives.

The demographic profiles of the participants are presented in a descriptive profile. The emerging themes are presented as descriptions supported by excerpts based on the objectives of the study. The reporting of qualitative data is done in a rich, thick emphatic, and somewhat informal language (Brannen, 2007; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). This helps to preserve the views of the participants while at the same time grounding the themes in literature. Besides the above presentations, verbatim quotes are used to amplify the voices of the informants where necessary.

3.8 Ethical Considerations of the Study

This study sought a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). The nature and the purpose of the research was explained clearly to all potential participants by the researcher before seeking their informed consent in order to administer any of the research instruments. The right of refusal to participate in the study and the right of withdrawal from the study at any given point was respected. Anonymity was guaranteed to all participants in the study. In cases where names were required, pseudonyms are used to hide the true identities of the research participants.

 In regards to privacy and confidentiality, the participants were assured that any sensitive, personal or potentially threatening information shall not be revealed to anyone and that the information will only be used for academic purposes. For quality purposes, the findings of the study will be disseminated back to the community through local administration channels, and shared with the scientific community through publications. Copies of the final thesis will also be availed at the University of Nairobi Library for academic purposes.

3.9 Subjectivity and Reflectivity Statement

Qualitative research constantly faces legitimacy issues because of the subjectivity of the researcher. Bourke (2014) recommends that a researcher needs to explicitly state their beliefs and perspectives that may shape their interpretation of the data and presentation and how they mitigate such subjectivities. Having been born and brought up in Isiolo County, I am an insider woman who has seen first-hand the exclusion of women in decision making. I have also worked with very able women from Isiolo County and so I am curious whether/if given an opportunity these women would perform as well as men. I am therefore, observing very keenly the instances that make women succeed or fail in politics.

While I recognizes that these perspectives are likely to influence my data interpretation, I've made deliberate efforts to interview persons that I have not interacted with before. The sample where possible had very deliberate gender considerations and findings are triangulated across the gender by seeking clarifications from women about what was raised by men and vice versa. In all cases, I exercised fidelity to the interview guide so that questions that focus on the study objectives and not on personal opinions were emphasized. The findings have been reported using many quotes from the participants to support the findings and amplify the voices of the participants. In this way, I made sure that my subjectivity does not come on the way of objective position in this report.

CHAPTER 4: BORANA CLAN COUNCILS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIVE POLITICS

This chapter presents the data collected from the interviews and observations during fieldwork. A brief profile of the participants is presented, then the chapter explains the structure of Borana clan councils and respond to the three research questions. The first question was about the functions of Borana clan councils. The second question was about the role of these clan councils in the participation of women in elective politics and finally, the last question sought to understand how women who have aspired for political leadership navigated through the clan councils.

4.1 Profile of Participants

Wario

Wario is a Borana Clan elder who was one time an elected councilor. Having been a politician, he leads the clan council in terms of making political decisions. He sits in the clan council of the Hawatu clan. He ascended to that position based on the perception of people about his kindness, his wife and wealth. Wario is a renowned mobiliser around the political stand that the clan takes.

Gabana

Gabana is a Borana from the Thigalu Matari clan. He has been a *Licho Dhulati* (old leader of the clan council) of the Thigalu Matari clan council for more than 30 years. He was co-opted by the then incumbent clan leaders. He has good exposure to formal administration and the Kenya's constitution, which he has gained from many workshops and seminars that he has attended. He is a member of the Peace Committee in the County. Having been in clan leadership for this long, he is perceived as the epitome of the Borana culture.

Jarso

Jarso is a 76-year-old Borana elder from the Warjida clan and a member of the Borana Council of Elders. He is the *Licho Dhulati* of the Warjida clan council. He assumed this position in his 40s therefore, implying that he has over 35 years in clan leadership. He was a former Member of Parliament and therefore, a useful resource person in political decisions.

Guyo

Guyo is a Borana from the Dhigalu clan. He is a member of the clan council in Waso a position that was given to him in 2017. He got this position for two main reasons: First, he is from one of the royal families and a possible heir to the Aba Gatha throne. Secondly, he participated in the Gada Assembly at Gumi Gayo and helped them with all matters relating to the constitution. It is argued that had Guyo not moved from Ethiopia to Isiolo, he would have been the key contender for the Aba Gatha, in lieu of this position, the assembly decided to crown him a clan council member.

Kabale

Kabale is a nominated member of the County Assembly of Isiolo. She is a teacher by profession who also served as an education administrator. She participates in gender forums at national level as a gender activist and a member of FAWE. She unsuccessfully vied for a parliamentary seat both in 2002 and in 2007 in her clan of birth and the clan where she is married respectively. She knows how clans treat women because she has been a victim of the clan machinations.

Abdullahi

Abdullahi is the voice of the Isiolo Borana Council of Elders. This is the umbrella council for the all the Borana clans in the country. In this study, Abdullahi represents the opinions of the chairman and 5 other members that participated in the Focus Group Discussion. The Wazee leads

not just the political affairs of the tribe but also advises in affairs of land disputes, (boundaries and resources use) conflict resolution arbitration among others.

Hussein

Hussein is also an *Ayu-* an elder of his Dhele sub-clan where the incumbent senator belongs. He comes to this study because of his role in the victory of the incumbent senator as her campaign manager. He coordinates community projects and does community mobilization for the senator. He is also an *Ayu-* an elder of his Dhele sub-clan where the incumbent senator belongs. He inherited the position from his father. He presents both an Ayu perspective and an outsider view of how women navigate through the clan councils to get electoral positions.

Guyatu

Guyatu is married and a mother, and she is also a student in a University currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in social work. She was once involved in politics running for an elective MCA seat. Her father was a politician and therefore, it is not a surprise that she also ran for an elective seat. She represents a case of women married out of the Borana community and suffered double discrimination for being a woman and also for getting married to a foreigner.

Ware

Ware is a daring community development worker. She is remembered for an incident where she crushed into a meeting of the council of elders without seeking permission. This act caused the meeting to adjourn. She is therefore, radical in her approach even which in some instances can tear the community apart. She worked with the county government and she is very educated.

4.2 Structure of clan councils

There exists one supreme Borana Assembly called *Gatha* based in Ethiopia at a place called Gumi Gayo. *Gatha* is a system of governance for Borana. The president of the Gumi Gayo assembly is called an *Aba Gatha* meaning "father to all". According to Guyo, the *Gatha* system was started by a person called Gatha Galgalo Aya in 1456 as a break out from the Oromo people. The leadership of this assembly is an eight-year term that rotates among five families. The families come from Galantu, Mathi Titi, Moye and two families from the Thigalu clans. The break out from the Oromo was the Borana's reaction to poor laws about marriages, poor restitution for homicide crimes and rampant theft of livestock.

The assembly is responsible for creating the regulations that form the culture and govern the Borana communities in the world. This assembly considers and amends the existing regulations. There are examples of rules that were seen as retrogressive, and this supreme council made considerations to change them. An example is the old traditional culture of throwing first born girls to the forest:

> "Before, Borana used to throw their first born child who is a girl into the forest to be eaten by wild animals like Hyena. …but someone else with no children would take her and raise her as her own. But later, Gumi Gayo decided that children should never be thrown away. And now Borana do not throw away their children" (Jarso, Council elder interview).

Hussein, while corroborating the idea of throwing away babies, added that this supreme council operates as if "*they colonize the people. People used to pay taxes to them*". This strengthens the argument that the Gumi Gayo assembly is supreme and creates laws that govern the people. Unless the Gumi Gayo assembly at Ethiopia changes a regulation that affects the cultural ways of life of the Borana, the Borana Clan councils at Isiolo exists to faithfully implement the regulations without any other considerations.

This adherence to regulations is significant because even with the Kenya's constitutional requirement to include at least a third of each gender in decision making, the rule set at Gumi Gayo that a clan council of elders shall comprise men only is upheld in supremacy to the constitution. Clan councils at Isiolo are therefore, by design convened as a men-only club. When elder Jarso was asked if there is a special way to make women members of this clan council, he noted thus "*No. There is no special way. In our Borana tradition, there is no way a woman can be a clan council member*". The clan councils are not inclusive, and council members believe they are not supposed to be. Young people may be brought in, but only to implement decisions and to run errands. When asked further about youth in the council, he agreed that the council needs some young people but added that "*these can only be peripheral members for purposes of errands, this is limited to male youths only*".

This is said in ways that remove any iota of doubt about the inclusion of women and the roles that young men can and cannot play. When women come to the clan council meetings, their roles are clear. This is clarified by elder Gabana who noted thus: "*Women just come to cook, they cook at a distance then the men serve the food*".

The clan councils therefore by design exclude young people and women in decision making, but include them for insignificant marginal roles that are insignificant and belongs to the private domain.

Membership to the clan councils at Isiolo is through amorphous and informal procedures. Some participants alluded to appointment made at the supreme council in Ethiopia. Others said that it is passed on in a family while others described a local co-option mechanism. During the

meeting held by the Supreme council in Ethiopia, decisions to incorporate a member in the Council

can be made and communicated through a symbolic mantle. Jarso noted thus:

> "All Borana clan council used to come from the forest. They come from Qalu [Ethiopia]. So while
> there, if they hear about you, they may say they will make you a clan council. They will bring home a
> "*Medich*". Then they can say, give it to Jarso".

 The "*Medich*" is a wearable skin made from an animal slaughtered for the purpose of including a

person into a clan council. Giving a person the "*Medich*" makes them a member of the clan council.

This idea alludes to the fact that some of the clan council members at Isiolo are appointed from

the supreme council in Ethiopia.

Other committee members interviewed in this study indicated that they were co-opted into the

committee having met an informal qualification. The informal qualification includes ability to

show kindness, patriotism to the clan, wealth, patience and, interestingly and more importantly,

the hospitability of one's wife. Jarso explained these qualifications further:

> "You can qualify for this position if, first, you are merciful to others and generous. Second, you
> have to be wealthy and knowledgeable- you can mobilize others to help people. Thirdly, your wife
> also determines whether you can qualify to be in the Council of Elders. Actually, a lot of emphasis
> is put on your wife on whether you qualify for the position of Council of Elders.... Your wife is
> actually your first qualification. Your wife can disqualify you from being a clan council member".

Wario identified similar requirements but also added that:

> "What they look at is, first, whether you can fulfill the work of the clan, for instance whether you
> are kind to your clan, whether you can die for your clan, whether you can do anything for your
> clan, even during conflicts. You can speak for the clan during conflicts… In case my wife is a bad
> person, I cannot qualify to be in the clan council. You are disqualified. When I am a bachelor, I do
> not qualify"

Hussein added that "…*you can be weak but you can get Ayu because of your wife*". It was

interesting to see reference to the hospitability of one's wife being repeated by each participant as

a criterion for membership. The recognition of the role of women as important criteria for

successful leadership at the clan councils is limited only to the hospitality they show to the

husband's visitors. These informal qualifications are used as criteria for belonging to the exclusive clan councils.

There were isolated references to participatory nomination. For example, Gabana who has been a clan council member for over 30 years described instances where the sub-clans can decide to include a person, in which case they hold a meeting and decide on a person who they approach to make their leader. *"Wards came together and suggested many names then they select one - a person who can deliver on a task"* In fact, Gabana himself was co-opted in this manner. In another instance, Hussein alluded to an inheritance scheme where the seats are passed on in a family like manner as was the case for his nomination. *"My Father was Ayu. In that way, I was given that chance. His inheritance in the council was preserved for me".* Ayu, Hussein explained, is like the president of a sub-clan who preside over all critical meetings.

The Borana community in Isiolo has 18 sub-clan councils functionally referred to as "*Tisa"* which means a caretaker committee. The councils are located everywhere and address the issues of the sub-clans. There are six main clans that are formed from aggregating 18 sub-clans. The leader of the clan council is called the "*Licho Dhulati*". He basically acts as the opinion leader, convener and the chair of clan council meetings. When the council convenes, they discuss issues and give verdict as the clan's formal position on the matter. In the event that the issues require more time to reach a decision, the *Licho Dhulati* allows the council members to go sleep over it and return to make decision later on.

In 2006, people from each of the clan councils came together to form an umbrella council- the Borana Council of Elders. The mandate of this council is nationwide coordination of all

activities of the Borana community. Membership to this umbrella council has to be relinquished whenever one has conflict of interest. The Borana Council of Elders is able to fundraise and occasionally attract funds from incumbent political leaders. The political power wielded by the Borana Council of Elders has set it up for wrangles and opposition from interested politicians - to the extent that parallel Councils of Elders are being created to rival this organ. The council also attracts huge donations from the interested lobbyists.

One of the main roles of the umbrella clan is to mediate interested politicians to form strong coalitions. One participant of the focus group discussion explained how they mediated the previous elections of the governor. *"We call each one of them, made them sit down here on these chairs and asked them whether they will do what Borana want or not"*. The umbrella council then goes on to advise that none of the contestants would win if they all went for the seat and eventually mediated a leaner line up of contestants that would ensure that votes are not split among the clans. In this way, the Borana Council of Elders can promote a person from a small sub-clan whenever they are deemed suitable for political office, and package them for acceptance in all the clans.

In summary, Borana's 18 sub-clans have caretaker sub-clan councils called the "*tisa*". These sub-clans aggregate to form 6 clans that have a clan council headed by the "*Licho Dhulati*". From these clan councils, a national Borana Council of Elders is created to take care of the interests, especially political interests, of the Borana community in Kenya. The rules and regulation especially for membership is made in Ethiopia by a Supreme Assembly called the *Gumi Gayo* and headed by the *Aba Gatha*. All these clan councils exist as a men-only club that women and youth cannot join.

4.3 Functions of clan councils

There are no written functions of a clan council that one can cite as terms of references for office bearers. The functions are gleaned from the activities that the Councils have been engaging in. The functions of the clan councils can be grouped into three main categories, the socio-economic, judicial and political functions.

The socio-economic functions include supporting people in distress and arbitrating marital problems. Most people who are clan council members go there by virtue of being compassionate to the community. It is not a surprise therefore, that the main functions of the clan council are to support less privileged members of the society. For example, as a way to support community members who are distressed, Gabana noted thus:

> "We raise funds for students, when someone has a funeral, we help in burials. When someone is in debt, it can be paid for him. Even for someone who has no livestock, livestock can be given to him. When someone gets sick, he can be taken to hospital."

Livestock being the main source of livelihood for the community, the Clan councils extends support mechanisms to mitigating effects of adverse climate on this source of livelihood. Jarso explained that the clan councils in some instances consider helping someone who has lost many livestock because of drought.

With respect to marital issues, there was reference to discussions about issues that concern conflicts about marriage. In one case, a man was jailed for assault but upon release, the clan councils intervene to mediate and make decisions about the matter, including who the women in the middle of the dispute is supposed to 'cleansed' for acceptance back to the community and a sense of belonging. In another example, a man who was suspected of infidelity and since there was no sufficient evidence, Jarso explained how the clan council members adjourned the case to gather

evidence. He noted that part of the evidence gathering is consultations with their spouses even though there is no tacit acknowledgement that the women are some of the best thinkers and knowledgeable. He noted thus:

> **"**When there is no agreement during the gatherings, people say that they will go back home and sleep over the issue. They go back and consult their wives in their bedrooms. In the morning they will come having made up their mind because of what their wives have said to them. No one however, admitted that they got information from their wives"

This conversation alludes to the critical peripheral participation of women in decisions of clan councils as well as the systematic suppression of opportunities to directly express themselves.

The clan councils also play a judicial role in arbitrating matters of property disputes and crime. Wario gave examples of cases they deal with including where someone stole cattle from someone else or a case of someone who has disagreed with someone else either from their clan or from another clan. The members will sit and discuss these cases in a bid to solve them, adjudicate over fines and reconcile the people concerned. The jurisdiction of the clan councils is not limited to livestock disputes but extends to other crimes as well as conflicts resulting in death. Hearings in judicial matters are made in public but decisions are reached by the council members in private. In terms of how the council members arrive at decisions, Jarso noted as follows regarding the jurisprudence of the clan councils:

> **"**Decisions are based on consensus and history. However, you see, majority of the cases are on disputes about livestock, for example cattle rustling… the case is made and opinions are heard and the guilty person is later fined a specific amount that is predetermined for the offence. In the case of a death, where someone of the tribe has caused death of a person of another tribe, then the clan council will discuss this case and make a decision about the necessary payments".

The decisions that are reached are based on "*arga dageti*", which according to Jarso, means that "*someone with the knowledge from history, someone who has lived for long, has experienced many things…will be called to say what is normally done in such a case*". He further explained that the

Borana say that "*there is nothing that has not been seen and heard of before*". So the role of the

clan council is to retrieve from history, the ways that those before them resolved an identical case.

A participant in the FGD said that "*the constitution is in our heads. It is an oral constitution and*

not a written one. All the crimes are provided for. It is not written but all the procedures exist and

are known" In most instances, the clan leader makes a decision and communicates about what kind

of fine to charge on offenders. Gabana, a clan council leader said that one of his main roles is to

fine people as part of the dispute resolution outcome.

The other emerging role of the clan councils, and one that this study concerned itself with

was the political role. The leader of the clan council, the *Licho Ghulati*, has, as one of his main

mandates in the council, to provide political direction to the community. Jarso for example said

that "*my main role is about politics. The clan council can discuss about politics. Opinions are*

heard from everyone on politics". When such opinions are heard, the clan council will discuss

the people who want to vie for leadership positions and then organize for big meeting that

include feasting and probably endorsement.

In summary, the main roles of both the sub-clan and clan councils are socio-economic,

judicial and political. The roles are not guided by any written guidelines but rather by a

traditional way of governance that includes benevolent and economic support, a penal code for

offenders and a robust political organization.

4.4 Clan councils and women in politics

Clan councils support their clan members who are seeking political leadership. Women do

not belong to any clan. Clan councils therefore, do not support women in their political ambitions.

The following confessions by the different council members amplify this position further. First, the distrust that clan councils have on women is cast and propagated in emphatic traditional sayings of the Borana community. Secondly the women are seen as outsiders and can therefore, never be trusted members of the clan. Gabana notes as follows:

> "In Borana Culture, women are not allowed be part of the Clan Council and they cannot be made leaders of the clan. This is because, it is just wrong since women are always wrong in their judgment. It is said that people who are led by women will get lost, whether day or night".

Jarso gave an example of a woman born as a member of the Karayu clan but becomes a Warjida because of being married by a man in the clan, It's is a known fact that she is not originally from Warjida and "*we cannot let her hear everything about Warjida. The only way such a woman can listen in is if she is an Ad Iyesa*". This term refers to a woman who has been married into the clan from another clan, bore children for the husband, raised these children, and whose husband has since died. These conditions only make the women able to self-present her cases and be listened to. Any other woman, will need a man to present issues for her to the clan councils.

One FGD participant confirmed this by giving an example of a woman who tried to vie and "*her people rejected her. She got like 99 votes from her husband's clan. She lacked belonging and a constituency. It was hard for her to establish which clan she belonged to*". The said contestant was an "*Ad Iyesa*"; a windowed mother who was presented for candidature by the husband's clan. Her mother clan where she is said to have had a big family did not vote for her either.

In another interview, Jarso noted that their unmarried daughters do not belong to the clan because they will be married away. These statement place the woman as a transit member in her pre-nuptial clan and as a stranger in her marital clan. Clans where a woman was born and clans where she is married do not accord women insider membership. This exclusion from the clan of

birth is done like a one-way terminal ex-communication through marriage without recourse. Gabana noted thus:

> "Once women are asked in marriage from their parents and the woman is given away, she goes away. It is said 'beat her and insult her but don't involve us".

Even when the woman is married to an abusive or absentee husband, Gabana confirmed that there is no recourse:

> "The husband might be crazy and he might beat her to death, he might travel for months, (and) when he returns, he doesn't even need to greet you. A wife is supposed to beg (supplicate to him) and ask him whether he is thirsty".

There are, however, some instances where the woman has substantial value in her matrimonial clan. When the clan sees value in a woman's knowledge of a rivaling clan, especially that which she was born in, the clan council sees need to listen to them in a council meeting. It may be that the woman is seen as a "spy" for her matrimonial clan against her clan of birth. Jarso explains thus:

> **"**When a woman) has been in trouble with the previous clan that she was born in, she has permission to sit in our council. She can also speak in the council. She can also be given cows. She can only sit in when she has issues with the other clan. Other than that she cannot sit in".

The clan councils expressed awareness that in excluding women, they are aware that they are propagating injustices but also did not show any concrete willingness to remedy that sorry state of affairs. **Gabana** admitted thus:

> "We have all wronged women. Look, women raise children but they are denied many things. We have talked a lot in the seminars. Since Kenya got independence, only Fatuma Dullo was voted in, before we never had any female member of county council. Women are just being wronged. It is just injustice against women".

He explained that there are several seminars that teach men how to live with their wives and how they can be included in the society. There was acknowledgement that the government now requires that women be included and also that Islamic religion teaches men to respect their women. Gabana

even gave examples of women leaders calling for women meetings that the clan councils endorse. So, even when the mobilizing capabilities of women are recognized, the political decisions are still exclusive to men.

In the build up to elective politics in Kenya, the clan councils become important units of the making of a leader. Endorsement by a clan is critical for negotiating support from another clan. Individuals vying for political office are often seen as flag bearers for the clan. The clan identifies a person who understands the Borana culture and who has good public standing in the community for nomination into elective politics. So once the clan nominates a person, Jarso explained that "*many things take place, the second task is to slaughter a cow and call other clans for endorsement. After the other clan accepts to support you, you spread the word to the rest of the electorates*". Gabana added that the clan can raise campaign funds for men who are nominated as clan flag bearers.

Clan councils are not comfortable with women in politics. Even when there exists an explicit position created for women, the clan council is lethargic in supporting her and dismisses it as "women affairs". In the event that there is a contest between a man and a woman, Jarso explained that *"the clan members feel negative/bad she is vying against a male clan member"*. If a woman wins against another man, the clan members think she cheated. "*A "liar" has won against the man*". Gabana explained that when a woman contests for elective positions, and there is "…*a man from the same clan, it becomes more difficult to show her support*" because it is not possible to talk about a woman in public when a man from the same clan is also vying. Gabana gave an example of an elected woman leader thus:

> "She is educated. She understands security issues. She has worked in an NGO. She is a lawyer.
> There is nothing she doesn't know. She is in every security committee in Kenya that the president
> is in. She is someone who can lead. But she cannot get the local support. That is not in our culture.
> Borana are people with culture".

This attitude captures the rigidity of the community gender norms and the extent to which traditional governance structures are prepared to enforce such norms.

Women have a higher value in politics as voters. Gabana explained that during political campaigns, men are aware of the women population and the extent to which they can be trusted.

> "Women are trustworthy. They don't take bribes. When women support you, you are very lucky. They are not like men. They also have big population. Even in the world, women have bigger population. Even in Isiolo, women have majority population".

Jarso confirmed that a woman's promise for support is irrevocable and added that it also comes easily through acts of kindness to their family.

> "…women when they promise you, they keep their promise. They don't go against their promise because of money or Miraa like men. For instance, when a person gives bursary to their children or when someone gives a lift to their school going children, these children go and talk to their mothers about it, the mothers will vote for that person. She will say, as long as he has helped my children and my children talked to me about him, I will vote for him"

Women are not just voters but effective grass root mobilisers, albeit in the periphery. Their role in mobilization is confined to door-to-door interactions consolidating the clan's position. In public gatherings, the role of women is to cook and dance for the men. Jarso explained thus:

> "She does other tasks like walking in the Manyattas campaigning day and night. That job they do it so well. Secondly, when nominee's meeting take place, they are the ones who cook. Thirdly, when the nominee comes to that place, they are the ones who will come out and sing for that nominee"

Women have an emotional demeanor that is perceived as inconsistent with leadership. Their ability to empathies in grief, express emotions through crying, and their dedication in such moments is seen as a weakness that cannot be tolerated in leadership. Jarso elaborated on this as follows:

> "Women, they are very good, they are the ones who are very merciful, they are the ones who help you when you are facing difficulties, when they hear that someone has died, they will quickly come there, they work a lot, they get so emotional, they cry a lot, women cry a lot, all this because they are very merciful. Because of their mercy, a lot of work should be put in their hands- but not leadership. Nobody wants her in leadership".

A woman is answerable in areas that are not leadership. One participant explained that women are caregivers with a divine role in the society. The community's belief is that a woman is answerable to the community for three issues and to divinity for an additional three things.

> "What did you do with the children? What did you do with the livestock? What did you do with your body?" And religiously, 'Do you pray? Do you fast? Do you listen to your husband? These are the only things for woman. It is that simple".

Women who try to vie do not match the political needs of the clan. Kabale explained that northern Kenya is frequently dealing with security issues that are localized around cattle raids. The community perceives that the protection of communities from such insurgencies cannot be dealt with by feeble hearted women leaders. According to Kabale, in the face of such insecurities *"people feel that one day or night people who are led by women can perish"*

In summary, the clans are the center for political decisions in Isiolo. The decisions do not favour women leadership mainly because they are not considered as members of any clan. Women's participation at the periphery is recognized, but not in leadership. The clans have gender norms that confine women to care-giving only.

4.5 How women navigate through clan councils

The starting point for women seeking support for elective political roles is finding an identity from the loose ends of a disenfranchising system. Political leadership relies on a grassroots support system that emanates from the people one is able to identify with. This herculean task for women has to be navigated before they get endorsement, mobilization goodwill and votes. The next step is to plunge into the vote-seeking rigorous campaigns. To

understand how women navigate through these challenges, the cases of three women is presented.

Kabale was an aspirant for Member of Parliament seat but now is a nominated member of the County Assembly. She went through the initial part with a very supportive husband. The second is the case of Fatuma who is an elected Senator for Isiolo County. Her story is told through the eyes of a man who campaigned for her and also through review of documents. The third woman is Guyatu, who was once involved in a political contest where she aspired to become an MCA

Kabale explained to the research how she had to struggle with identity issues from the beginning. There seemed to be no successful end to that struggle. There is nothing women can do to get an insider, recognized clan membership:

> "It was very difficult to identify myself. It was very difficult to associate myself. Women do not have tribe, they don't have clan, they do not have religion even. So when they go as far as not having religion… what can you say?"

In an attempt to overcome this barrier, women leaders have to bear with a rigid and unreasonable clan's bureaucracy including being represented in a meeting by a man. For example, when Kabale wanted to get the endorsement of the Borana Council of Elders, she attended what was an 8-day meeting at Sericho, accompanied by her husband. The husband's role was to seek for her a platform where she could seek endorsement. Kabale described the waiting she had to endure as follows:

> "The first day I was not given audience, second day I was not given audience, the third day they said, go and call the woman now. So when I came, they carried a small seat/stool, so that I sit there. They told me to sit there, greet the clan and say what I want. So I went there I talked to them, I greeted them, I started with my vision now. That I want to vie for a political seat, as Member of Parliament for Isiolo South Constituency. After listening to me, they told me that they have heard. I was blessed".

This blessing is not the same as endorsement, which usually is in the form of the clan agreeing that one is their official candidate and even campaigning for them. This was just a blessing, a sort of being freed to go and vie. The use of a small stool for the woman at the council is an intimidation tactic that belittles her. Throughout the rest of the meeting, the clan council reverted its agenda to the aspiring male members of county assemblies. "*They did not discuss my issue at all*" (Kabale observed).

To Kabale, being allowed to talk in that platform was not a mean feat and she went on to explain that before that, the husband had been taken through traumatizing experiences that bordered on being ridiculed. She explained thus:

> "What played a major role in my candidature is that my late husband was very supportive. When he went to the clan, they asked him, "Why don't you stand yourself? Because we can afford to give you votes and not her." He said, "No". Sometimes they told him, "Tell her to step down, why don't you talk to her. He insisted that he is not her, it is me who wants her to run".

This confirms the reluctance that the clan councils have in supporting women. They go as far as attempting to set up the husband to explain the will of the clan to the wife. What is clear though is that the Council cannot be able to articulate this rejection on the face of the emerging women leaders. This is complicating further the process of explaining the council's decisions to the determined and empowered women who would wish to contest political seats.

To consolidate the gains from the Sericho platform, Kabale and her late husband invited members of the clan council to their home. *"…we kept on calling them to our house, we kept on calling them for the meetings and then they cheated. They said 'we will see to it when the elections come closer' just like that"*. This behavior of accepting to honor an invitation and postponing it continuously is possibly a system dissonance that the clan council could not resolve immediately. This is possible considering that most decisions are guided by history. There is no history of a clan council endorsing a woman.

Instead of coming to her house, another council meeting was convened at Garba Tulla. In that meeting, Kabale was allowed to sit in and even give an opinion. She explained as follows:

> "When we met them, I was accommodated in the meeting. I sat in the meeting throughout. Throughout the seven days I was in Garba Tullah sitting in the meeting. They even asked for my views. After they have discussed views, they also accommodated mine. They were asking me, "Wasila" [in-law], what is your opinion?" so I felt accommodated."

This made Kabale feel confident about the hitherto elusive endorsement. She said that *"my husband convinced them and they were coming to endorse me"*. But that did not happen. Members who vouched for another candidate stormed out in protest, scuttled the deliberations and so another meeting was scheduled. Shortly before the meeting, Kabale's husband passed on. The clan council then visited her at home and went ahead to endorse her. After the endorsement, Kabale complained that *"they never went ahead to campaign for me and that was the end of my politics for that"*. The Clan council went ahead to campaign for the opponent despite the endorsement. Turns out that Kabale focused a lot on a manifesto for development while the opponent focused on the sustainability of the clan's values.

The support that Kabale got from the husband was her number one source of strength. The second thing was the confidence that she had going for the seat. The third and most important was the women support from organizations that were doing civic education in the area *"The organizations were telling our people the rights of women, that leadership is not only for men, women can also be leaders. Also they discouraged people from getting hand-outs"*.

Alliance making is an inevitable political machination without which, candidates cannot garner the support they need for political office. Alliances are created at the level of the Borana Council of Elders. Representatives from the 6 Borana clans and an additional two clans come together in negotiations that go on and on for days. When alliances are built, they are such that clan A with a candidate A promises to give support to another candidate B from clan B as long as

clan B also promises to support candidate A. Jarso explained how this works. First he said that women get more support from the husband's clan than from their birth clan. The husband's clan (Clan A) can only form an alliance to support a candidate B if that candidate is acceptable to Clan A and if Clan B is willing to support candidate A. If, however, candidate A is a woman, and that there is a competing candidate from clan A, then *"…they will say we don't want to go against our clan because of a woman."* This means that alliances are not easily formed around women candidates. The recourse for women, according to Kabale, is that one has to be in alliance with the gubernatorial candidate, usually because he will have a line-up that has been jointly endorsed.

However, it is noted that despite all these machinations, the future for women seeking elective political positions is becoming brighter. Kabale argued that it is clear that the *"clans have been weakened by the interests of the politicians"*. Even though it may take another 50 years for the clan councils to include women, there are opportunities that can be exploited. One such opportunity is inviting the men to women affairs meeting like sensitization against FGM. She said that those aspiring for seats have already started making inroads into the Clan Council meetings. However, true change can only come from changes in the rules. Kabale said that "*there is also need to go to Aba Gatha because that is where the culture is made and it should be changed from there*".

In another case of a woman who got elected senator, Rashid, a man who works very closely with her gave his input about politics and women. He holds a modern view of women in leadership and appreciates that the opening up of media has changed a lot of things in the community. The recent affirmative action to give government contracts to youth and women is one example of things he noted are changing the landscape, though not that fast "*Youth and women are told that*

they are going to get jobs". Though this has been provided for, Rashid is still skeptical to these new opportunities. He observes that "*all issues later come on before the elders. So without their signatures, no one can proceed"*

Rashid highlighted some of the attributes that made Fatuma succeed. First, he said that one needs to be resilient and hardy. He gave an example of Fatuma. He noted thus:

> "She travelled up to Merti (a remote location) for campaign, She did not embarrass us. You know that you can go with someone who is weak and that person may not even get into the campaign area".

Secondly, one needs to be charismatic. Drawing examples from the McCain and Obama contest, Rashid explained that Fatuma was like Obama. He explained this position as follows: *"when she spoke, she won people over"*. The oratory skills and choice of words that Fatuma used were her biggest strength.

Thirdly, a woman need to have proven herself first by saying things that she has already done for the people. This means that for a woman to succeed, she needs to work harder than a man and demonstrate actual evidence that she is able to do what she promises.

One newspaper article by Khalif (2017) described how Fatuma overcame her gender to be elected. First, orphaned at a tender age and brought up by a renowned elder, she had the backing of the elder in her campaigns. This provided her with somewhat strong male backing. Secondly, Fatuma worked in the provincial administration starting at an early age of 22 years when she started engaging women groups and leaders to discuss issues that have implications on security in the otherwise volatile region. Her ability to bring peace among conflicting clans earned her respect at an early age. Her peace initiatives were credited for peaceful elections and so the community petitioned for her nomination into the senate due to her contributions in the entire community.

Thirdly, Fatuma worked hard as a nominated Senator and won various awards for her efforts. Her stellar performance in the senate endeared her more to the community and as Khalif reports, she earned a nickname "*mtetezi wa wanyonge*" (the voice of the weak). Hussein described his perception of Fatuma during the campaign thus:

> "She had the capacity. She had fulfilled many of her promises. She asked for this tarmac road, she prevented the KWS from fighting us and all these were in the public knowledge. When we looked at all her capacities, we said that this is a man. People are actually now saying that we will push her to be a governor".

Fatuma benefited from media coverage of her first stint as a senator. Kabale said that *"when you come and ask people about her, they will say that we have seen her on TV"*. Rashid added that "*in one of her campaigns, she gave people water tanks*". This resonated very well with people.

> "She was not giving any handouts. So when we were selling her, it was not a problem. It was very easy. Because of the things she has done, it made it easier for us to sell her to the people".

Even with these accolades, there were sections of the clan councils that opposed her candidature insisting that she should go for the Women Representative seat.

Fatuma represents a case where the traditional gender biases were forced into submission by effective leadership by a woman. Kabale confirmed that Fatuma was different from an ordinary politician in that she easily showed people things that she had done for them *"People were saying that even though we do not know her very well she has done so much"*

The third woman leader is Ware, who unapologetically confronted the clan issues. Unlike Fatuma and Kabale, Ware's decision to enter politics was skeptical from the beginning and had to be modified from thinking of a bigger seat to finding a small entry position as a Member of County

Assembly. But like all the others, the common denominator for all those who aspired is that they were aware of how their gender was going to affect them. Ware said:

> "Our communities are not usually very friendly to women in leadership especially politics. I contested for a seat purposefully (starting from lower level seat) so that when I get the MCA seat, I can work hard for the community so that they see that I am capable of performing even in other higher political posts. But there are a lot of challenges I faced during my campaigns. I had a lot of challenges because of the gender issue and the clan politics and the women's unacceptability by the community. I thank God that I was able to campaign and even though I did not win the seat, it was a shock to many who thought that I couldn't mount such a campaign against all odds. I consider it an introduction to the community and hopefully, next time will be better".

Though she did not succeed in winning the seat, Ware's contribution to the success of women leaders is in her ability to go against the grain and confront issues that she very well knows will not usually work. Ware received a lot of opposition from both the clans that she would have counted on. *"I had challenges from the clan that I was born and from the clan I am married in"*

The clan of birth thought she was returning to interfere with the political systems of the clan. Ware said that a carefully orchestrated propaganda was initiated to associate her with camps of suspicious and un-trusted leaders. *"So they started planting negativity into the community such that I came to distort the status quo"*. Ware was however, very proud that she contested and was a role model to those who want to go against clan norms.

Ware summed up the frustration of navigating through the clan councils to get an endorsement for a political seat thus:

> "Women are not in the decision making organs. All political decisions are made in the gathering of men and mostly in the elders meeting…they go on a retreat to go and decide on who will contest for what seat. At such times, there are no female representations. Not even those in leadership… the gatherings are done away from homes. It is outside the settlements. The few women who come there only come to cook and they sit far away from the gatherings. So they have no access to any information that is being discussed in the meeting".

She explained that the political playing field is not level and there is serious and urgent need to proactively level it. Being quite educated, Ware clearly understood and articulated the circumstances that she chose to go against.

> "You know we are not yet liberated. So the information that come from the clan becomes the final decision. So it is like they are colonizing the mindset of the community. Nobody questions why that person is selected despite his inabilities. There is no forum to ask hard questions".

This is the reason she decided that she will go against the clan councils. She even decided that she will not seek a male representative to advocate for her interest. She confronted the clan councils herself and made it known to them that she is running and does not really need them to endorse her but to listen to her vision and make informed decisions.

In summary, women aspirants seek some sense of belonging and endorsement in futility. The clan councils do not have capacity to change their ways to support women. The women are required to provide evidence that they are capable before they can be trusted. This is the only way they can win over an electorate.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter discusses the summary of findings along the specific objectives of the study, draws a conclusion based on the findings and makes several recommendations.

5.1 Summary of findings

The Borana clan system is a rigid gerontocracy whose main focus is to coalesce the community, manage resources and govern the ways of life of the community. Like with many governments, unity and solidarity of the community is at the core of the formation of the clan councils and the operationalization of their regulations. The organization of the clan system is a functional structure with hierarchy. There is a governing assembly that sets and reviews laws, an umbrella clan council that coordinated activities in Kenya, clan councils that perform political roles like negotiating for candidates and sub-clan councils that manage more domestic issues like benevolence. As Shuke (2005) puts it, the clan council exists to make the life of all the Borana people better.

Membership to the clan council is through multiple and amorphous mechanisms. Some council members just ascended to the positions, others join because they have demonstrated an array of social and economic abilities that the community values such as being wealthy, generous and compassionate while others are co-opted using semi-formal consensus. One underlying factor is that one needs to have a good wife to become a council member. There are 18 sub clans, 8 clans and one umbrella organization operating in Kenya.

Systematic Exclusion of Women

There is no Borana woman who is a member of any clan councils. Clan leadership is for men. Women are not even full members of any clan. As Liu, Cutcher, and Grant, (2015) stated that women are not able to get support from any of the clans since they are considered on transit

in their clan of birth and aliens in their clans of marriage. Their role is to accessorize the men. Good wives nurture their families and increase the visibility of their husbands. Women do not get legitimate membership to any clan.

The clan councils inadvertently or deliberately exclude women in their operations. During critical formal events, women participate but only get a peripheral role. They cook and dance for guests. They are excluded from deliberations that can reach a decision. First they cannot present their views in front of men. They need a male spokesperson to present their views to the clan elders. Secondly, the decision making table holds latent chauvinistic beliefs that women cannot make good decisions because they have mercy and compassion, which are traits of weakness in leadership. Thirdly, the men hold meetings for up to 8 days away from the settlement areas. This means that people attending the meetings have to bear being away for extended periods. The other roles of women in the family require that they be present at home to care for others. The location of the meeting is therefore, an exclusionist strategy that complicates women's participation.

Lastly, despite the requirement for women issues to be presented to the council by the husband, the discourse used in clan councils seem to chastise other men who front women for leadership. In some instances, men are asked to leave "women affairs" out of men's forum. In one example of Kabale who was very persistent- we see the husband chastised for fronting a woman, his resilience pays off only on the 6th day in an 8-day meeting, Kabale is allowed to come before the council, She gets a small seat, a stool, and lays out her case. She is then sent off to allow for deliberations. Could the small stool also be reminiscent of masculine display of power? In another instance, a husband is told to take up a position that he is fronting the wife for, so that the clan can comfortably support him. This implies that women are not only excluded by birth but also face a playing field skewed to exclude them at all levels of decision making.

What is surprising though is the confidence that the same structures that exclude women have on their abilities of the same women to be steadfast in their civic duties. Women are trusted voters. It was reported that their word is dependable and no amount of voter bribery turns them against their civic commitments. They are therefore, seen as avid mobilisers that move from door to door spreading the word about what is purportedly good for the community. Women seeking elective posts see this as a betrayal. They reported that women are actually their own enemies. This is especially because they do not do mobilization for fellow women candidates. This study postulates that women are repeatedly told about their inabilities to the extent that they believe they are unable to provide leadership. This is a clear form of learned helplessness.

Women are therefore, not just excluded from the decision making table, they are trained to accept that they are incapable and also to see their other fellow women as such. Women believe in the system that does not believe in them. The success or accent of a man into the clan structures is greatly influenced by the women, yet we see that women are unable to tap from the courage and charisma of their men/husbands. Even when husbands present them as required by the clan regulations, the council becomes blind to female charisma and cannot fathom why a man who is so compassionate about his wife cannot offer himself for election.

Women have to demonstrate leadership first

For women to get the same attention from the clan councils as men, they need to prove themselves first. Women need to work many times harder than men for the same amount of trust and support. Evans, (2016) notes that though there are many barriers to women accent to both decision making forums and leadership, once the barriers are overcome, women have exceeded expectation and shown that they are capable of performing at levels beyond their ability. Similar sentiments were expressed by Honorable Lesuuda, herself an elected MP from Samburu county

that if she had not been given an opportunity as a nominated senator by affirmative action, there was no iota of hope that she could ever be accorded any hearing both by the electorate and the traditional leadership structures (Koinage, 2018,). It was what she did with the opportunity as a nominated senator that endeared her to the electorate.

There are few times that a Borana woman can be allowed to self-represent: if she has brought up children in the clan and if she is widowed. The requirement that she needs to have successfully raised up children means that the woman needs to have proved herself first for the council leadership to see her as worth listening to. This requirement is not there for men. Secondly the fact that one has to be widowed to self-represent means that men exist as canopies over the women's head and they are the only channel through which a woman can access a decision making forum. For a woman, this is an extra domestic check that does not exist for the men. Women have to first make their husbands convinced and convicted of their visions that they are willing and able to carry it for them.

When a woman wins an election against a man, the clan members think that she cheated and say a "liar" has won. This means that even when women prove themselves, they will not necessarily be trusted outrightly. The leaders interviewed in this study shared a latent belief that women cannot succeed. For example, in describing the achievement of Fatuma, Rashid said she is a "walking man", a statement that seems to immensely justify the good attributes that he had said about Fatuma.

Fatuma's election as a senator for Isiolo has largely been attributed to the fact that what she is capable of doing is already evident as she had prior opportunities to showcase her abilities. Once women get such opportunities they seem to be able to do much more than men in similar or better positions. Fatuma as an employee of the government used her office to end inter-clan

conflicts. She later used her influence to broker a solution to the persistent human-wildlife conflict. In her engagements with the electorate, Fatuma provided solutions for a community (water tanks) while her fellow competitors focused on solutions for individuals (cash handouts).

Women have to do remarkable things to get recognition. The playfield is skewed against them. The success of some women leaders points to the need for an affirmative action to provide opportunities for women to showcase their abilities. There is evidence that this has worked elsewhere.

Inevitable change

The Borana clan councils are conflicted by changes that their *Arga dageti* (historical knowledge) is not able to resolve. In structuration theory we see how social systems are created by considering actors and context simultaneously. The Borana community exists in a context that is carefully controlled by regulations that are enforced by the council of elders. These regulations are not known in any other from other than the experiences and wisdom of male elders. The other people in that Borana context are confined to a "limited space" by a number of autocratic governing norms that they cannot question. Some actors in the community especially women leaders have challenged this context thereby creating tension on the rigidity of norms, especially norms of inclusion in traditional Borana governance systems. Further, the community's norms have been set into a conflict with the constitutional requirements of inclusion, including the requirement to exclusively set aside a post for an elected woman.

Another aspect of the structuration theory that also points to an inevitable change is that the actions of members of the Borana community are not necessarily within their preferred discretion. The entry of women into elective politics has presented a never seen before scenario that has destabilized the equilibrium of the community. The electorate is awed by the benefits they

see from having women as leaders. They are increasingly being forced to consider them as capable leaders even when traditional wisdom has casted women leadership abilities in proverbs such as *" a community lead by women will get lost both in the day and in the night*". The councils are being forced to accept that women leaders can come into their meetings, and talk in front of men. Women leaders are increasingly getting concerned about their disenfranchisement and are pushing their agenda to the electorate. These changes are against the preferred discretion of the Borana culture and bring heavy tensions into the organization of the community.

The end product of these tensions, however, is change. According to Giddens and Pierson, (1998) when people start to act differently to create new structures, they end up creating a duality of the same structure in the sense that there is a "new" and an "old" where the new is restricted by the old and the old challenged by the new. The women are not forming different governance structures, but are infiltrating the existing structures to make them more inclusive. Change happens when the existing social structures are challenged successfully. Women leaders are staking a bid that calls for a complete rethinking of the membership and roles of the clan's governance structure. Some council elders acknowledged that women are wronged and that they can lead well. Others admit to having been told through seminars the importance of inclusion and change in the clan councils is therefore inevitable. There are changes that are likely to come because of imposition of requirements of gender compliance. The main actors are outside the community and so the decision is an imposition. Giddens saturation theory fails to account for structural changes that come from outside the context of the community, in this case, the inclusion of women in leadership as a constitutional requirement imposed by national level governance.

Strategies that women have used to navigate through clan councils

Women who have tried to provide leadership have found the clan system very disenfranchising. It is an aggressive obstacle that proactively excludes women and limits their opportunities and abilities. However, a number of women have tried to navigate through the clan councils using various strategies, some successfully and most others not.

One of the things for women seeking leadership positions try to do is to find an identity. All women who have tried this have found it an exercise in futility since they do not get recognized by their father's or husband's clan. Women who have become successful do not identify primarily with the clan. Kabale tried associating with both her birth clan and husband's clans unsuccessfully. In the separate occasions that she lobbied these clans she never got support. Fatuma's support base is not her Sakuye clan. The descriptions of her leadership did not at any one time focus on her clan. Seeking for clan support is one unsuccessful strategy that women have used.

Women have to be represented in the clan councils by men. In this study, we see some women trying this approach. Those that tried did not succeed. The men who represent these women are seen as weak and are chastised to take up leadership and stop talking about women. The women do not necessarily achieve what they want. The hearing that is given to women is not fair and respectful. From the experiences of Kabale, while the husband was alive, she did not get support from the clan councils despite getting a short-stool hearing from the council of elders. When the husband died, she got more than just a blessing and got endorsed for the seat. The use of proxies to gain access to the clan councils is a strategy that women have used, but it has not yielded any substantive outcome. Women who are able to represent themselves without proxies get better attention. The increase in the number of women organizations provides an opportunity for alternative source of power to negotiate hearing at clan councils, far better than having a male champion to carry a woman's vision.

Women have had to bear a rigid clan council bureaucracy. Clan council meetings are like bush-camp conferences. In pastoralist communities it is not uncommon for men to go into the pastures for extended periods and live a bush-camp kind of life. This however, is not a lifestyle for women. Women, by remaining at home, support this kind of lifestyle by nurturing young children, young livestock, and alternative non-grazing livestock that cannot go for pastures far off. Women seeking leadership positions have tried go for the council meeting and bear a rigid bureaucracy that requires that they stay in the bush for extended periods to get a hearing. In other case, the sub-clan council members have to hear the women and then present these cases to the higher decision making organs. Though this has been successful in providing a hearing for the women ideas, it is not clear if there is an equivalent benefit to the women for enduring the bureaucracy.

One of the strategies of clan councils of elders of securing and sustaining a united leadership front is through creating alliances. The alliances are created around trading of support for positions of male aspirants. A clan that fronts a woman for leadership therefore, invites ridicule from other clans. Women therefore, cannot be players in this kind of power sharing. Women who define their candidature separately from these clans seem to have an upper hand negotiating power and alliances with the individuals endorsed by the clan. For example, a woman who gets their nominations at the primaries in a non-dominant political party will be able to negotiate for an alliance with the individual vying in a different position. These alliances, unlike for male aspirants, are not crafted by clan councils but by the individual aspirants.

Another strategy that women have used in their quest for a place in leadership and decision making is to start low in the hierarchy. Ware, herself an educated individual of no mean achievement, made a decision to start her leadership journey as an MCA, though she felt that she

can do more. Women who have been allowed in some committees created by councils have been given nondescript responsibilities usually with no executive role other than being a representative of women. The positions that women take, and the performance of such women in those positions, are good starting points for creating community dissonance, a prerequisite for rethinking inclusive practices.

5.2 Conclusion

Traditional governance structures exist to coalesce a community and protect it from external threats and attacks. Such structures are customized to the aspirations and ways of life of the community and embrace gender norms that serve the purpose of sustaining the survival of the community. When such norms are in conflict with modern ways of life, the community is put in tensions that provide dynamisms for change. Borana clan councils are in conflict with modern demands for inclusion. The agitation within the community is towards a change that is geared towards propelling more women into leadership positions at the different levels.

The women who have attempted to seek leadership position, whether they succeeded or not, have provided insights into the things that work and those that do not work. The ultimate success is that each of the women who has ever attempted to offer their candidature at all levels of the political spectrum, have made an impact in the community. Those who get ridiculed for begging the clan council for support, and clinging to a clan for identity teach us how futile this activity can be and has been. Those that focused on issues that are dear to the community and had a chance to impact in the community teach us how important it is for women to provide evidence of their special abilities to a skeptical electorate. In all, any attempt is a success, even in the ways that it baffles the non-believers and nay-sayers of women leadership. The attempt has been a clear show of resolve and the urge to be heard and to be included on the table of decision making.

In summary, the journey towards political emancipation seems rather long for the Borana woman. The election of a female senator is a typical glass ceiling outcome that must be seen in context and where possible, reinforced for a better tomorrow. It will be incumbent upon the senator to show case a woman's leadership credentials that will open further doors in future for women. She could also be the key that opens the cultural door for women leadership. By virtue of her status and standing in the community and the Kenyan society in general, she could lead the process of transforming the council of elders to be gender sensitive and give opportunities to their daughters, wives and sisters as well. The discrimination on the basis of women not rooted in either clan whether of procreation or that of orientation must be reviewed. The journey seems possible and the determination of women will be crucial in achieving this transformation.

5.3 Recommendations

The women who have succeeded in leadership have had an opportunity to show case their abilities and provide evidence of their capabilities. This is a requirement of a skeptical electorate. It is therefore, necessary that women are given opportunities through affirmative action to take leadership positions and allowed time to provide evidence that they are capable of leadership. Mumina and Rugano (2018) posits that when given a chance, women provide insights into leadership that are more responsive to the community.

As far as leadership is concerned, women have been disadvantaged for a long time. This has resulted in capacity deficiencies that could compromise even the affirmative actions envisioned as a lead strategy for inclusion. It is therefore, necessary to build capacity for all women so that they start getting confident, assertive and effective. The absence of role models, opportunities, and a gender sensitive system that is not empowering can only be countered through robust capacity building of women.

Recommendations for further studies

The supreme assembly of the Borana clan councils, the *Gumi Gayo* is an organ that is credited for creating the traditions of the Borana community. The assembly creates rules. The rules are not written. They cannot be changed. Enforcement of these rules by clan councils is uniform and with ultimate fidelity. Yet very little is known about how this assembly achieves this. It is therefore, necessary to do further studies in the activities and operations of this assembly.

More studies need to be done in Laikipia, Samburu and Garrisa to triangulate the findings that women who get an opportunity to prove themselves first, out-perform men in similar positions and eventually succeed to persuade skeptical electorate to vote for them. The aforementioned Counties have elected women leaders who initially were nominated and given a chance to showcase themselves. This is important especially with recent media hype about some women nominated MCA saying they have no ideas why they are in those positions (Itumbi, 2018), and the recent clamour to decrease the wage burden by getting rid of leadership positions that yield no benefit to the electorate. The research takes note of the positive link between the nominated women who have used the positions to sharpen their skills hence plunging into the elective politics successfully. Research is necessary to investigate the associational links between nominations, confidence building and the art of electoral success among some women in the northern frontier counties.

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ANNEX 1: Informed consent

August 8, 2018

Consent Letter

RE: Exploring the Role of Clan Councils on Women Participation in Elective Politics

You have received this consent letter because you indicated a willingness to participate in the above research study examining the role of clan councils on women participation in elective politics.

I am interested in interviewing members of clan councils and elected women leaders in Isiolo County to help understand the ways that clan councils help or inhibit women participation in elective politics. The interview will be approximately 1 hour in length.

There are no known risks or benefits to you for assisting with this research. As a participant in this study, you will at no time be judged or evaluated, and at no time will be at risk of harm. Also, no value judgments will be placed on your responses. Participation in this interview is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time during the interview, without negative consequences. You may decline to answer any question(s) during the interview. Notes will be taken during the interview, and an audio recording will be made with your permission. Notes and recordings will be stored in a secure place controlled by the researcher, and will be destroyed at the end of the research project.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me the lead researcher at the address below, Mumina Bonaya at muminabn1@gmail.com or cell phone 0723445166 Or my Supervisor Prof. Owuor Olungah at Email address_____

Yours sincerely

Mumina Bonaya

CONSENT: I have read and understood this consent letter and agree to be interviewed and

recorded

Sign_____ Date_____

ANNEX 2: Interview Guide for Clan Council members

1. How do you identify yourself personally? (Name, gender, social status, political affiliations, economic status)

2. How did you become a member of a clan council? (qualifications, elections, qualities that make one a member)

    2.1 Is this the criteria for all other members of the clan council?

    2.2 Are there special ways that women become members of a clan council?

3. What is the structure of your clan council? – representation by special groups, management and decision making, election of office bearers

4. What is your role in Clan Council?

5. In what ways does the clan council participate in elective politics?

6. What is the general feeling of the clan council towards participation of women in elective politics?

7. How does the clan council support women in elective politics?

8. What in your opinion needs to be done to increase the participation of women in elective politics?

9. Which of these ways do you feel can be addressed by the clan council

10. Are there specific examples of how the clan council has helped a women to get an elective position?

11. Is there anything else that you would like to add about the role of you clan council in elective politics especially with regard to women?

Annex 3: FGD interview guide

1. Generally, what is an umbrella clan council?

2. How is the umbrella council constituted?

3. Are there ways that the councils take the interest of minority groups into consideration?

4. What are the main roles of the umbrella council?

5. In what ways does the clan council participate in elective politics?

6. What is the feeling of the clan council about women seeking elective positions?

7. Are there ways that the council supports women seeking elective politics outside assigned quotas.

8. To what extent do you think the clan council influences whoever becomes elected in political leadership?

9. Does the clan feel like their role in elective politics represents the will of the people/ interests of the clan?

10. Is there anything else that you would like to add about the role of this umbrella clan councils in elective politics especially with regard to women?

Annex 4: Key Informant Interview

1. How do you identify yourself personally? (Name, gender, social status, political affiliations, economic status)

2. What aspects of you background do you think played a part in you your campaign for political office? (Probe for Gender, clan family, or any other consideration identified in previous interviews)

3. Describe how it was to ascend to the political seat you hold?

4. In what ways did you interact with the clan councils in your campaign?

5. In what ways do you think the clan councils could best participate in elective politics?

6. What obstacles do you did you encounter while seeking elective post and how were helped of hindered by the clans?

7. Is there anything that you would like to add about the role of clan councils in elective politics especially with regard to women?