

**Assessing the Impact of Devolution on Gusii Women's Participation in  
Electoral Politics in Kisii County**

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award of the degree of Master of Arts in Gender and Development Studies of  
the University of Nairobi.**

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## DECLARATION

This project is my original work and has not been presented for examination in any other  
University.

Signature-----

Date-----

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

Signature-----

Date-----

**Dr Tom Ondicho**

## **DEDICATION**

To my family.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

First, I thank the Almighty God the Father for the gift of life and opportunity He has granted me to reach this far. This is not to be taken for granted. I wish to thank my Supervisor Dr. Tom Ondicho for his timely feedback, advice, encouragement and support throughout the entire process of writing this research project.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>DECLARATION.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>DEDICATION.....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES .....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS .....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	4
1.3 Research Questions.....	5
1.4 Objectives of the Study.....	5
1.4.1 General Objectives of the Study .....	5
1.4.2 Specific Objectives .....	5
1.5 Assumptions of the Study.....	6
1.6 Justification of the Study .....	6
1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Study.....	7
1.8 Operational Definition of Terms and Concepts .....	8
<b>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	10
2.1 Women and Politics .....	10
2.2 Overview of women’s political participation in Kenya.....	16
2.3 Kenya Constitution, Devolution and Women Political Participation .....	17
2.4 Theoretical Framework.....	24
<b>CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>26</b>
3.1 Introduction.....	26

3.2	Research Site.....	26
3.3	Research Design.....	28
3.4	Study Population and recruitment procedure.....	29
3.5	Data Collection .....	29
3.5.1	In-depth Interviews .....	30
3.5.2	Focus Group Discussions.....	31
3.5.3	Key Informant Interviews .....	32
3.5.4	Secondary Sources .....	33
3.6	Data Processing and Analysis.....	33
3.7	Ethical Considerations .....	34
	<b>CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION.....</b>	<b>36</b>
4.1	Introduction.....	36
4.2	Results of Findings .....	36
4.3	Ways of Electoral Politics Involvement by Women in Kisii County .....	37
4.4	Role of Devolution in Enhancing Women Political Participation in Kisii County.....	40
4.5	Challenges Women Encounter in Political Processes and Leadership in Kisii County.....	43
4.5	Constitutional Compliance in Enhancing Women Participation in Kisii County.....	45
	<b>CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>48</b>
5.1	Introduction.....	48
5.2	Summary of the Findings.....	48
5.3	Discussions .....	52
5.4	Conclusions.....	53
5.5	Recommendations.....	54
5.6	Suggestions for Further Research .....	56
	<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>57</b>
	<b>APPENDIX 1 UNIVERSITY LETTER OF AUTHORIZATION.....</b>	<b>61</b>

**APPENDIX II ELECTORAL RESULTS OF KENYA TEA DEVELOPMENT  
AUTHORITY ELECTIONS (2018) IN KISII COUNTY ..... 62**

**APPENDIX III INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL AND BOUNDARIES COMMISSION  
RESULTS IN KISII COUNTY..... 63**

**APPENDIX IV COUNTIES IN KENYA (PER FIRST SCHEDULE OF CONSTITUTION)**

**64**



**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 3. 1 Map of Kenya ..... 28

## **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 2. 1 Women in parliament since the first parliament up to the 10th parliament.....	22
Table 4. 1 Composition of Kisii County .....	40

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

<b>AMWIK</b>	Association of Media Women of Kenya
<b>FIDA</b>	The Federation of Women Lawyers
<b>IEBC</b>	Independent Electoral and Boundaries Committee
<b>NARC</b>	National Alliance Rainbow Coalition
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>KADU</b>	Kenya African Democratic Union
<b>KANU</b>	Kenya African National Union
<b>KNBS</b>	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
<b>LEGCO</b>	Legislative Council of Kenya
<b>MP</b>	Member of Parliament
<b>MCA</b>	Member of County Assembly
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

## **ABSTRACT**

The participation of women in politics has throughout the world been acknowledged as a significant measure of the status of women. In retrospect, women's participation in electoral politics has increasingly received growing attention in many developed and developing countries. However, women remain seriously underrepresented in electoral politics. The main aim of this study was to assess the impact of devolution on Gusii women's participation in electoral politics in Kisii County. This study sought to answer the following four questions: One, in what ways are Gusii women involved in electoral politics? Two, how has devolution enhanced Gusii women's participation in electoral politics? Three, what is the level of compliance on the one third gender rule in all elective positions? Four, what challenges does devolution pose to Gusii women's participation in elective politics? The issue of women's participation in electoral politics was explained within the social constructivism theoretical framework. A qualitative research methodology was employed and data were collected through in-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions, Key Informant Interviews and secondary sources in the months of October and November 2018.

The findings of the study reveal that while devolution has contributed a slight increase in Gusii women's participation in electoral politics, the actual number of women elected into political office remains very low. The findings of the study indicate that economic, cultural, social and religious factors impede Gusii women's participation in electoral politics under the devolved system of governance. The study further shows a low level of compliance with the constitutional requirement that not more than two-thirds of the members of elective or appointive bodies shall be of the same gender. The study concludes that while devolution has opened the political space for wider

participation and Gusii women constitute slightly more than half of the electorate, they remain seriously underrepresented in elective and decision making positions within the country. The study suggests that women's equal participation in electoral politics and compliance with the constitutional requirement will not only enhance democracy but also ensure that women's interests are taken in account.

## CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

### 1.1 Introduction

Women's participation in politics has increasingly been acknowledged globally as an important measure of the status of women in society. As a consequence of that, women's participation in electoral politics has, in recent years, received great research attention across the world. However, women in many countries in the world remain extremely under-represented in elective positions. According to UNDP (2010) women account for about 18.4% women in the world parliaments which means there is a serious and persistent gender gap in women's participation in politics generally and electoral politics specifically. It is often stated that in every public institution where decisions that affect people's lives are made, each gender should have at minimum representation of between 30-40% in all decision making organs (CEDAW, 1997). This underscores the importance of women's participation in the political processes of their countries. For example, a study conducted by Russell (2015) in 19 countries found that when the number of female legislators increased, there was an increase in government funding of education in those countries. In India, research showed that West Bengal villages with greater representation of women in local councils called *panchayats* (pan-chai-ats) saw an investment in drinking water facilities double that of villages with fewer women on local councils. In addition, women's unique perspective is critical to peace building and post-conflict reconstruction (Onsongo, 2010).

Kenya represents of the developing countries with the lowest level of women's participation in politics both at the national and local levels. There is need to increase women's participation in politics to not only advance democracy and gender equality but also as a prerequisite for advancing other social, economic and political issues of the country that are often over looked by male

legislators. In Kenya, the deeply rooted patriarchal system in which women hold a subordinate position to men have greatly contributed to the low participation of women in elective politics. It has often been argued that even though women in Kenya constitute about 52% of the total population in the country, there still exist minimal political participation and enjoining in positions of decision-making. Women in Kenya have since independence in 1963 been marginalized and disfranchised from the social, economic and political affairs of the country. A strong perception entrenched in cultural beliefs, traditions and practices has not only served to discourage women from political participation but also out of the reach of a vast majority of women. Yet it has been shown that political participation, representation and voice are crucial not only to protect and defend women's rights and interests in a democracy especially at local level but also for the equitable development of society.

The Kenyan government has recognized that women's participation in politics has important effects in the country's development processes, and over the past decade, policies and mechanisms have been put in place to increase women's participation and representation in electoral politics. Towards this end, in 2010 the country adopted a new constitution which replaced the country's political system with a devolved system of governance. Under Article 6 in the First Schedule two of the three arms of government: namely the Legislature and the Executive were devolved into 47 Political and Administrative Counties. The primary objective of decentralization was to extend governance to the lowest level of government structures. The aim was to empower people and enhance local participation and representation in processes of decision-making at the grassroots level, promote good governance, improve political representation and efficiency in resources allocation and service provision. Article 27 of the Constitution of Kenya provides an opportunity

for both gender to participate in political dispensations and governance-inclusive of other bodies in Government-and leadership (National Council for Law Reporting, 2010).

County governments provide convenient structures for local people at the grassroots level to participate in elective politics and governance of various public bodies whose members are directly elected by the local population. This not only guarantees women a place in leadership but also opens up the political space for them to participate in electoral politics. Based upon available figures, currently there three women were elected governors, 3 to the senate, and 23 to the national assembly up from 16 and 96 as MCAs. These numbers are dismal given that women constitute more than 52% of the total population of Kenya. Previous research on decentralization and political participation in Africa show that devolution may not automatically lead to women has increased level of participation in electoral politics. While there are examples in Africa that indicate that decentralization enhances women's political participation, there is very little evidence that it has been the case in Kenya. Thus, previous researches do not give a solid answer on the impact that devolution has on women's participation in electoral politics.

Kisii County, which is located in the south western part of Kenya represents, has one of the lowest level of women representation and participation in electoral politics. The number of Gusii women who have ventured into electoral politics is dismal and many women are still reluctant to contest for elective positions in government and executive positions in various public bodies at the county level. This makes the county a good case study site for assessing the impact of devolution on Gusii women's participation in electoral positions. Surprisingly, little information exists regarding Gusii women's participation in electoral politics in terms of what motivates the to participate or not to participate in electoral politics, their levels of participation, the challenges they face and how the



one third gender rule has impacted their political participation. This research explores the impact of devolution on Gusii women`s participation in electoral politics in Kisii county.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Half of the Kenyan population is a composition of women. This implies that for development of Kenya, women participation in political, leadership and socio-economic is of significance. However, there are serious gender disparities between men and women in Kenya mainly due to the patriarchal structures, which put women in a subordinate position to men. Gender disparities are especially highest in politics where women continue to lag behind men. The need to open up the political space to accommodate all groups and enhance participation in electoral politics, especially by women cannot be overemphasized. This implies that women participation in elective politics is critical and in particular at the low cadre levels such as the County level. Civil society and women organisations have been at the forefront in spearheading campaigns for the full integration of women in the electoral process. Because of these efforts, women`s low participation in electoral politics within the devolved system of governance has become an issue of increasing concern in Kenya.

Despite efforts by Kenyan women to penetrate the public sphere and political governance which is also supported by the 2010 constitution which not only opened up the political space for wider participation but also signalled the government`s willingness to enhance women`s participation in politics, women`s representation at all levels of governance still remains dismal. On aspects of religion, marital status, cultural backgrounds, resistance towards women engaging in elective

politics has often been witnessed. There is scanty literature on participation of women in elective politics in Gusii region. This study therefore seeks to assess the impact of devolution and the 30% gender rule on women participation in electoral politics.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

This study sought to answer the following questions:

In what ways are Gusii women involved in electoral politics in Kisii County?

Has devolution enhanced Gusii women's participation in electoral politics in Kisii County?

What challenges does devolution pose to Gusii women's participation in electoral politics in Kisii County?

What is the current Constitutional compliance level in enhancing women's participation in electoral politics in Kisii County?

### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

#### **1.4.1 General Objectives of the Study**

This study sought to assess the impact of devolution on Gusii women's participation in electoral politics in Kisii County.

#### **1.4.2 Specific Objectives**

The specific objectives of the study were to:

To explore the different ways Gusii women are involved in electoral politics in Kisii County.

To examine how devolution has enhanced Gusii women's participation in electoral politics in Kisii County.

To determine the challenges devolution poses to Gusii women's participation in electoral politics in Kisii County.

To evaluate the current Constitutional compliance level in enhancing women's participation in electoral politics in Kisii County.

### **1.5 Assumptions of the Study**

The study was based on the following assumptions that:

- i. Devolution enhances women participation in electoral process in Kisii County.
- ii. Devolved system of governance in Kenya has inadequate opportunities for participation of women in politics at the local level in Kisii County.
- iii. Women experience many cultural barriers to ascend to top political leadership in Kisii County.

### **1.6 Justification of the Study**

Empirical data and literature detailing the electoral participation and involvement of women in Kisii politics since independence remains scanty. In addition, information about the factors affecting women participation in electoral politics is limited. Subsequently, this study endeavours to determine participative levels of women in electoral politics and also fill identifiable gaps and contribute knowledge on Gusii women's participation in electoral politics. It is of significance that this study will conduct a post-electoral analysis of women participation in the general elections and newly ushered political dispensation.

Findings of this study will contribute in understanding the available strategies to enhance women participation in political leadership, challenges that are constraining ease of access to political

space, constructivism thoughts, beliefs, perceptions and biased ideals that face women's participation in political leadership within Kisii County and Kenya at large.

This study is important on the premise that it will provide empirical content useful in understanding the women's needs and solutions towards enhancing their political ascendance to leadership, which has male dominance. Further, this study will anchor as lead content and provide areas for further research and investigation by interested parties.

elective political positions within Kisii County. These are Kenya Tea Development Authority, Constituency Development Fund, Kenya National Union of Teachers categorized as agencies Member of County Assembly (MCA), Member of Parliament (MP), the National Assembly, Senator (SN), the Senate House, County Woman Representative (CWR), Governor (GVN) as civic electoral representations. Findings have been discussed with relevance reviewed literature.

### **1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Study**

The study was limited to Gusii women who have participated in electoral politics since 2010 and/or are still active in politics both nationally and locally. These include women who have contested for any seat in national elections or local level board member positions in public bodies. The public bodies covered in this study include the Kenya Tea Development Authority, Constituency Development Fund, and Kenya National Union of Teachers and in civic organizations: County Assembly (MCA), Parliament (MP), Senate and Governor. The major limitation of this study is that the findings cannot be generalized to all women. However, the findings are valid and can inform similar studies in other counties where the social, economic, religious and cultural factors are different and may affect findings in a variety of ways.

## **1.8 Operational Definition of Terms and Concepts**

For the purpose of this study, the following were the operational definition of the terms below:

### **Participation:**

This means being part of engaging in a given activity either in social, economic or political circles.

### **Political Participation**

This refers to engaging in political activities or actions particularly, women participation in civic education, rallies, conferences and elective campaigns, registration drives or advocacy activities.

Women's attainment of freedom of speech, being listened and enduring through elective positions is noted as political participation.

### **Representation**

This refers to a situation of speaking, deliberating and making informed decisions on behalf of parties whereby the choice mandate is binding either issued through elections, nominations or direct appointments.

### **Devolution**

Devolution is a movement to place governmental power in the hands of elected or appointed managers operating closer to the beneficiaries of government actions.

## **1.9. Structure of the Project Report**

The research report is divided into five chapters as follows:

Chapter 1, this introductory chapter presents the contextual background to the study. It also includes a statement of the problem, research objectives, scope and limitations as well as justification of the study.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the relevant literature and discussion of Social Constructivism, the theoretical framework that informed this study.

Chapter 3, present a description of the study site, research methodology including methods of data collection and analysis

Chapter 4, presents the findings of this study aligned to the four research questions that this study sought to answer.

Chapter, the final chapter presents a summary of the key findings and a discussion of the findings linking the empirical and theoretical literature and draws the mains conclusions of the study.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents a review of related literature in the area of gender equality in politics, women participation in politics globally, why it is important to ensure there is gender equality in politics, factors hindering women participation in politics and governance and lastly women participation in politics before and after devolution in Kenya. Marshall and Rossman (2006:42) explain that a literature review is a “thoughtful and logical discussion of related literature which builds a logical framework for the research and locates it within a tradition of enquiry and context of related studies”.

### **2.1 Women and Politics**

Women’s representation and participation in politics has been a challenge throughout the world. According to a UN report published in 2000 titled, “The World’s women 2000: Trends and statistics”, women comprise less than one-tenth of the world’s cabinet ministers and one-fifth of all sub-ministerial positions”. In this report, sub-Saharan Africa is ranked lowly number five in the ranks, while Nordic regions followed by the Americans are rated comparatively high. The reports indicate that percentage of women in parliament in sub-Saharan Africa is just below the global average. This report seems to be corroborated by the fact that women in Africa have been excluded from most of the important positions until 2003 when Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was elected president of Liberia (Hay and Stitcher, 1995).

Eastern African countries has made some strides in terms of women inclusion in political participation in recent past. The first African country in 1998 to include 30% quota representation

in her national constitution (Meena, 1992). Tanzania was followed by Rwanda which crossed the gender parity in women participation in politics. Kenya is among one of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and the world with observably low participation of women in political processes. Kariuki (2010) observes that even though women make up to about 52% of the population, decision-making organs have remained largely minimal and marginal to women since independence. In Africa Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda have achieved the critical mass of 30 percent or higher women representation in their national parliaments and according to Sirleaf (2010), these countries achieved this milestone because they recognized the importance of equity between women and men in decision-making and they instituted changes in their electoral and parliamentary processes.

Globally, Rwanda has made a mark in the women's parliamentary political participation. It has the highest number of women parliamentarians at 56.3 percent. Rwanda succeeded by implementing a gender quota system. With a population of 70 percent female following the 1994 genocide, women had to assume traditional male roles. Able finally to participate in the drafting of a new constitution and new legislative structures, they pushed for greater equality in politics through such initiatives as a constitutional quota and election quotas to ensure women's place at the political table. This achievement could not have been possible without the support and demonstrated political commitment of the Government of Rwanda at the highest level of leadership (Mutamba, 2005). Rwanda is case that agrees with the sentiments of Banda, (2011) that Africa will only develop with total participation of women in politics and other leadership roles.

Gordon and Gordon (1996) observe that politically women in most African societies during the pre-colonial period were influential political actors in informal ways, if not through formal political roles. They continue to observe that with the advent of colonialism in Africa men gained



political advantage as customary sources of female power were ignored or undermined. Europeans imposed their own prejudices about the proper authority of men over women by dealing only with male leaders. Moreover, men were provided new commercial opportunities in cash crop agriculture, and began to assert their customary rights to land and the labour of their wives in order to accumulate income for themselves.

According to Kassily and Onkware (2010), since independence in 1963, Kenyan women have played a marginal role in political life even though they make up 52 percent of the country's population. The underrepresentation of women in politics and governance brought about the need to formulate two-thirds gender principle in the new and current Kenyan constitution to ensure women are represented and they are actively participating in politics and governance of the country. Currently there are eighty-six women parliamentarians, which is a total of forty seven women representatives elected from each county, sixteen elected members of National Assembly, five nominated members of National Assembly and eighteen nominated senators. Despite the two-thirds gender rule, Mzalendo; an independent body that keeps an eye on parliament, points out that women parliamentarians continue to be subjected to stereotypes, sexism and accusations of incompetence.

The body of literature on the participation of women in political processes is increasing from time to time. However, literature on political participation in many parts of Kenya is scanty. Gusii region is one of such areas where literature that focus on women's participation in political processes is lacking. The literature that exists is basically dedicated to socio-economics of the region (Bochaberi, 2014). There is little existing literature on women participation in politics and governance in Kisii County and this makes this work important as it provides insights to the present

study, on the hindrances to women participation in politics and governance in Kenya generally and Kisii County in particular. The study aimed at studying why there was low participation of Nyamira County women in the political arena since independence. Most studies that have been carried out in Gusii cover the general areas of socio-economic issues, deal with the Gusii in general and have not tackled specific localities in Gusiiland. This means there are often no studies on the small entities of Gusii. Yet local level studies can generate detailed information on issues that have merely been dealt with generally. This work will not only shade light on gender inequality in politics of Kisii County but also the impact of devolution in women participation in politics.

There are a number of reasons why women are side-lined in politics and governance. Charlton (1984) observes that in virtually every country in the world, women are dependent upon men in formal politics at the local, national and international levels. Other studies done globally conclude other factors influencing low number of women participation in politics include, patriarchy in our societies, education systems that discourage women from taking an active role in governance, domestic chores, economic hardships, lack of resources among others. Walby (1990) defines patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices, in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. Okemwa (2002) describing characteristics of a patriarchal society observes that in these societies, women are regarded as second-hand citizens, used and handled like personal property of men, exploited, oppressed and degraded.

Walby (1990), Okemwa (2002) and Ruth (1998) assert that in many patriarchal African communities, women are not supposed to challenge men in the contest for political leadership. Silberschmidt M. (1999) observes that patriarchy and socio-economic change have benefited men at the expense of women. She further argues that both customary law and some consequences of socio-economic and political change have put women in disadvantageous positions. In these

studies, women are portrayed as being weak and this has an impact on how women are perceived when they decide to vie for an elective position.

Onsongo (2005) has done a study on patriarchy and subordination of women among the Gusii and she points out that the traditional practices governing marriage among the Abagusii contribute to the subordination of women, a similar observation which was made by Hakansson and Levine (1997) who also argue that in Gusii community the wife becomes a property of the clan into which she is married once dowry has been paid. All these studies identify the role of women in Gusii community as that of being subordinates to their male counterparts. Girls are raised to be someone's property and to play a subordinate role in the community.

Kariuki (2010) adds that in most Kenyan communities, the place of women is not clearly demarcated in the public as they are perceived as appendages of men and hence unfit for leadership positions. The gender differences prevalent in most Kenyan societies are not because of one's sex but a creation of Kenyan cultures that are primarily patriarchal. Once a child was born, patriarchal aspects of the society were inculcated in his or her mind through socialization. These works are important to the present study as they address the role of culture in the marginalization of women in Kenya generally and specifically in Kisii County.

Education and education systems in most African countries have also contributed in women's indifference to politics and governance. Kenworthy (1997), Maina (2012), Onsongo (2005) and Kanogo (2005) argues that women had fewer educational opportunities against those extended to men in African communities. Lack of education is a force that hinders women's political participation against their male counterparts. Kenworthy (1999) asserts that education instils interest in political matters and educated women would be more adept to seek elective office. He explains that, over many years educational opportunities have been muted in, preference for

education for the boys. Maina (2002) notes that in effort to eradicate inequalities and entrench gender inequalities, there is need for communities to be educated.

Several scholars have also identified patriarchy as a major hindrance against women's political participation. Some of these scholars include: Norris and Inglehart (2001), Kenworthy (1999), Wollack (2010), Agbalajobi (2009) and Maina (2002) all observe that economic power and resources are essential in political participation. Norris and Inglehart (2001) and Kenworthy (1999) note that (non-) participation in labour force influences female political participation.

Women who find themselves in the formal wage labour force are more likely to enjoy political representation. They point out that these women have greater financial independence as well as higher levels of self-esteem. Wollack (2010) posits that financial autonomy or access to economic resources is a very important factor for women's greater participation in political life. He further points out that, worldwide women's lower economic status and relative poverty are substantial hurdles to overcome. This is because as Kenworthy (1999), notes active women in the formal labour force are thus in the minority.

Women's participation in elective politics and leaderships are influenced by religion, marital status and education levels (Khan, 2010). Goetz (2003) argues that formal education contributes greatly to men and women participating in politics. In their study about factors that influence participation of men and women in politics in the USA, American sociologists Burns and Schozmann (2001), concluded that, education is especially a powerful predictor of political participation. According to Onsongo (2005), education introduced by the colonialists was discriminatory to women. Kanogo (2005) also affirms that the syllabus that girls were exposed to during the colonial period was designed to cultivate their domestic skills for their roles as wives and mothers. In addition, as such, women were not expected to combine marriage and careers.

The above contradictions have continued to affect careers of women and structuring of work places and politics. These studies are important to this work as they interrogate the effects of the colonial policies and practices. UNESCO (2006) argue that education is an effective tool for women's political participation despite two-thirds of the world's population is a composition of women and 60 percent of the 135 million children in the world who are not receiving education are girls (Khan, 2010).

According to Bochaberi (2015), Butegwa (1995) and Ogunyanya (2002) mass media is also another tool that is used to create, spread and perpetuate stereotypes as well as to alter them. They continue to note that the image the African media has given women is rather typeset. Those women are presented as powerless victims of wars, violence, famine and diseases. They note that stories of successive initiatives launched by women hardly get a line in national newspapers. This has hampered better information sharing and coverage on the positive efforts by women therefore hindering their participation.

## **2.2 Overview of women's political participation in Kenya**

After independence in 1963, Kenya adopted the Majimbo Constitution which provided for devolution of government to regional assemblies in the context of a bicameral, Westminster-type parliament with a Senate and National Assembly (the Lower and Upper Houses, respectively). These constitutional provisions were premised on the need to secure the rights of ethnic minority group in the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) party, against domination by the 'big tribes' grouped in the Kenya African National Union (KANU) party (Nyanjom, 2011). However, in 1964 KADU was dissolved after joining the ruling party KANU thus rendering devolution unnecessary as KANU was advocating for a unitary government.

Into the third independence decade, however, deteriorating government service delivery raised questions about the efficacy of an excessively centralized government. This led to an up rise of political opposition and a robust civil society that persistently demanded for a return to political pluralism as a means of fostering greater government accountability. Along with global liberalizing pressure, it bore fruit in 1991 when Kenya returned to plural party politics (Nyanjom, 2011). Nyanjom further notes that the demands for extensive constitutional reforms, however, notably incorporating the devolution of government to sub national agencies, were eventually only met in the new millennium. After a two-decade gestation, August 2010 saw Kenya adopt a new constitution with far-reaching provisions for democratization, including the devolution of government to 47 counties. Muia (2008) asserts that decentralization is one way through which people's right to participate in governance is attainable. Therefore, decision-making governance is dispersed closer to the people.

### **2.3 Kenya Constitution, Devolution and Women Political Participation**

Continuous changes in the constitution since independence bore the current constitution. Amendments in the constitutions contributed to unitary system of government where the President is the head of state and head of government and subsequently removed democratic protections. Abolishment of the bi-cameral parliamentary system to a one party state system denying opportunity for multiparty system gave incidental rise to agitating for a new constitution. Civil societies, politicians and diplomatic institutions pushed for the change of the Constitution especially repealing of the section 2A that had made Kenya a single party state. This was a significant democratic reform process.

In the end of the Post-Election Violence, a political agreement agreed in 2008 emphasized among other things, constitutional reforms whereby the Constitutional of Kenya Review Act of 2008 and Constitution of Kenya (Amendment) Act of 2008 were instrumental in facilitating the processes. The amendment act ushered the review process while the review act was objectively to commence the reviewing of the constitution where the Committee of experts was established to conduct the process. This committee was made of nine members where three were non-citizens and six were citizens. The Committee was tasked with identifying, recognizing and attending to raised issues by citizens in the draft of the new constitution and presenting final draft to the Parliamentary Select Committee tasked with Constitutional review process. Outcome of these processes was the draft subjected to a referendum on 4 August 2010 which was later promulgated in 27 August 2010 (Kaguongo, 2013).

Over-centralization allowed certain men to dominate the state, leading to inequitable resource distribution, an 'all or nothing' form of politics, and the politicization of ethnicity in ways that fuelled violence (Mueller, 2008; Branch & Cheeseman, 2009). Despite growing frustration and pressure for reform of the highly centralized state that benefited particular groups, the situation remained fundamentally unchanged even after the introduction of multi-party politics under President Moi. Although Moi's successor, Mwai Kibaki was elected on a platform of change, he diluted the significant provisions for devolution in the new constitution put to referendum in 2005. The main opposition party created during that referendum, Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), successfully opposed the proposed constitution and continued to demand meaningful decentralization (Lynch, 2006; Lynch, 2008). The 2007-2008 post-election violence finally challenged the status quo and provided the impetus for significant reform. Already forced to work together in the unity government that was negotiated after the violence, President Kibaki and ODM

leader Raila Odinga, oversaw the drafting of a new constitution that included a number of reforms aimed at curbing the power of the presidency and significant provisions for devolution. These included: the creation of county governments, with a governor, executive and county assembly in 47 sub-national county units; the reassignment of key service delivery tasks, including healthcare, to the county administrations; the redistribution of fiscal resources, to be not less than 15% of the national budget to the county governments; and the re-introduction of a bicameral parliament, with an upper house, the senate, which would constitutionally protect the interests of county governments (Kramon & Posner, 2011).

The devolution reforms were in many ways return to the original *majimbo* constitution of the state, albeit with smaller units. These reforms were long fought for and devolution was one of the main reasons behind the 47 counties adopted in the 2010 Constitution are based on the 46 administrative districts that existed as of 1992, along with Nairobi County (Bosire 2014,5) decisive popular vote in favour of the new constitution in the 2010 referendum (Kramon & Posner 2011, 96). If what had historically afflicted Kenyan politics, and caused ethnic violence, was the over-centralization of the state, then devolution is seen to be a critical part of the cure (Ghai, 2008).

The structure of governance was both provincial and local and therefore, limited citizens from participating in politics due to lack of opportunities (Kaguongo, 2013). Devolution and governance structure providing opportunities for citizens to participate was a contentious issue in the review process. The Constitution explicitly stipulates the objects and principles of devolution of government as including the promotion of democracy and accountability in the exercise of power; the fostering of national unity by recognising diversity; providing for self-government and participation in the exercise of power; the management of own affairs and development; the protection of the interests and rights of minorities and marginalised communities; effective service



delivery; equitable sharing of resources; enhancing checks and balances; and the separation of powers (COK, 2010).

The Constitution of Kenya 2010 provides for equal rights among citizens of both genders. For instance, Article 27 goes further to protect representation of women in leadership "...the State shall take legislative and other measures to implement the principle that not more than two-thirds of the members of elective or appointive bodies shall be of the same gender." (National Council for Law Reporting, 2010) This essentially assures the place of women in leadership, a protection from past discrimination. It is for this reason that the election of March 2013 saw Kenyans vote 47 women representatives to the national assembly. However, no single woman was elected as a senator or governor, and only 6% of the more than 1400 elected members of county assembly (MCA) were women. (NGEC, 2014). These legislative bodies, therefore, resorted to nominating women in order to fulfil the two-thirds gender rules.

The County is one of the administrative units created in the current Constitution where it has a legislative arm consisting of Members of the County Assembly elected each from a lower unit called a ward. The county has a County Government, with county executive and internal administrative units of authority. The aim of the County is to decentralise functions that were initially vested on the National Government. Gender participation, fair elective positioning, self-administration and other function delivery are all enshrined in the constitution of Kenya, schedule four (CoK, 2010).

The empirical evidence from both Africa and beyond has questioned the assumption that devolution improves governance. While some have found evidence that decentralization decreases corruption (Fisman&Gatti, 2002), others have shown that it either has no effect (Treisman, 2007) or increases corruption (Fan, Lin &Treisman, 2009). The effects of decentralization on corruption

are ambiguous and seem to be highly dependent on context (Bardhan & Mookerjee, 2006). These findings suggest that the effects of decentralization are conditional on certain beneficial circumstances (Faguet, 2014). An important conclusion is that decentralization reform 'is not exogenous to the issue of who has the power. In this report, decentralization is defined as 'the transfer of public authority, resources, and personnel from the national level to sub national jurisdictions' (Ndeuge, 2002).

Even with the continued progress as noted above, Kenyan women have played a marginal role in Kenya's political life since independence in 1963 even though they make up 52 percent of the country's population (Kassily and Onkware, 2010). Currently, the Kenyan parliament has only about 19 percent women representation, trailing far behind the global average of 18.8 percent women representation in parliaments and this is despite the creation of women representative positions. Some African countries have already attained the critical mass threshold of 33 percent women's representation in decision-making. Over the past decade, all the countries in the East African region have overtaken Kenya on all measures of gender equality indices. (Kamau, 2010).

Before the promulgation of the current Kenyan constitution, which birthed devolution, Kenya had held ten national elections since independence and in total, seventy-five women parliamentarians where fifty of them elected while the other 25 were nominated (AMWIK, 2015). These included women who offered to be elected with male dominance in the electoral process, others were locked out from contesting. The 11<sup>th</sup> Kenyan election was different and remains significant in Kenya's electoral history. The Constitution of Kenya 2010 set the legal framework for promoting gender equality which saw a record eighty-six woman elected and nominated to the eleventh Parliament.

This number surpassed the total number of women representatives in the fifty years of independence combined and saw an increase from 9.8% to 19% representation, Kenya has been ranked 76th of the top 100 countries in the World Classification of Women in National Parliaments.

The table below is summary of women representation in parliament since independence up to the last parliament before devolution:

**Table 2. 1 Women in parliament since the first parliament up to the 10th parliament**

Parliament	Period	Total no. of constituencies	No. of women elected	of Available slots for nomination	No. of women nominated
1st parliament	1963-1969	158	0	12	0
2nd parliament	1969-1974	158	1	12	1
3 <sup>rd</sup> parliament	1974-1979	158	4	12	2
4 <sup>th</sup> parliament	1979-1983	158	5	12	1
5 <sup>th</sup> Parliament	1983-1988	158	2	12	1
6 <sup>th</sup> Parliament	1988-1992	188	2	12	0
7 <sup>th</sup> Parliament	1992-1997	210	6	12	1
8 <sup>th</sup> Parliament	1997-2002	210	4	12	5
9 <sup>th</sup> Parliament	2002-2007	210	10	12	8
10 <sup>th</sup> Parliament	2008-2012	210	16	12	6
Total			50		25

*Source: Kamau (2014)*

The 2013 general elections saw an increase in women representation in parliament. Women representation in Parliament (National Assembly and Senate) stands at 21%. In total, there are 86 women parliamentarians. 47 women representatives, 16 elected members of National Assembly, 5 nominated members of National Assembly and 18 nominated senators (Mzalendo, 2015). Despite the gains made at national levels, in Kisii County devolution did not create much impact on women's participation in politics. There is only one woman from Kisii County in the National

Assembly, Mary Sally Kerara as the Kisii County Women Representative. There is no woman in the senate from Kisii County. At the grassroots level, Kisii County has 45 electoral wards and of the 45 wards only one ward elected a woman to be a Member of County Assembly (MCA). There are 26 nomination slots at the county assembly and 24 were given to women. There was rising concern that the females were only interested in the women's representative seat set aside for women.

The dismal participation of women in elective politics had been attributed to hostile cultures, violence and lack of resources (Moraa, 2012). A range of official and unofficial, formal and informal barriers can limit women's political participation. There are also opportunities and factors that facilitate participation in various ways. Access to power tends to emerge from familial, communal and economic linkages, and these factors may help explain patterns of participation. Norms about women's appropriate roles and leadership capabilities also shape both aspirations and opportunities.

In countries where women have historically been absent in public life, such barriers to entry may be much higher. Participation in local level government may be a good route to participation at the national level. Official measures, such as quotas, can be instituted as part of the parliamentary system and/or at the political party level. The level of transparency in party decision-making may affect political participation, especially for women who are less likely to have strong political networks. While informal rules and relationships tend to reinforce hierarchies of power, procedures that promote and guarantee women's decision-making within political parties can increase their public voice. Lack of financial resources can limit participation given the costs

associated with elections. Independent funding and placing limits on campaign spending may support women in overcoming the barriers to political participation.

## **2.4 Theoretical Framework**

This study was guided by the Social constructivism, a concept that grew from the philosophy of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology and White Diltthey study of interpretive discipline called hermeneutics (Eichelberger, 1989). The basic assumption in this paradigm is that people construct knowledge socially and that both individuals and groups create their own perceived realities. This theory suggests that reality is socially configured. Therefore, several mental creations can be caught, some of which contradict each other and perceptions of reality do change. This may be seen as a continuous, dynamic process creating a reality that is re-produced by people applying their interpretations of what they perceive to be their external environment.

Suitable and informed deliberations construct political principles leading to formation of a political constructivism. These deliberations are a formation of fundamental elements such as race, attitude, behavior, gender and concepts or ideals or beliefs. For the full understanding, it is needful to fill out the abstract idea and content. Original position is the fair position or situation that has been hypothesized. In this positions, various concepts, situations and procedures are organized in a manner to meet needs of the society individuals. Individuals deliberating these matters have to reason in rationality to the context of the ideals.

In this study, the leadership roles of women the management and engaging in politics, their participation and their management skills are largely dependent on socially constructed barriers of tradition, education levels, ability, gender constructions, legal concerns and interest in

participation. The perceived assumption is that the male gender is better placed to run key institutions in society, and that women's dominance is domesticated. This in reality is true given that Social constructivism as a concept looks at the ways in which both individuals and groups create their own perceived reality and in this case, the created illusion is on the superiority complex that seeks to define males in society and the thorough subordination of females.

This theory applies to this study in explaining the societal constraints barring women from accessing leadership roles and other political positions. For instance if the inclusion of women in the management of these devolved funds is enhanced by breaking the traditions and reservations preventing them from pursuing their interests in development issues, then there will be very clearly observable changes in the way these projects are managed and the outcome will hold great and unprecedented impact in the society. This will lead to a case scenario where all stakeholders develop interest in the way the projects and funds are allocated, implemented and managed hence sustainable development of community projects. The reasoning behind this is that local communities in particular women will be equipped with both personal and administrative responsibility, and if these are wholly or partly taken away from political leaders then it would positively impact in policy making and expenditure plans.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the researcher discusses the research methodology adopted for the present study. It presents the study population, sampling, data collection instruments, data collection procedures and data presentation, analysis and interpretation techniques. Ngulube (2005) indicates that the key elements of a research design are defining the population and how it was obtained, sampling procedures, instrumentation used, procedures employed in gathering and processing data and the statistical treatment of the data.

### **3.2 Research Site**

This study was conducted in Kisii County which is located in southwestern Kenya. Kisii County (see figure 3.1 below) borders Nyamira County to the North, Narok to the south and Homabay and Migori to the west. Administratively the county is divided into 6 sub-counties and nine electoral constituencies namely, Bobasi, Bonchari, Bomachoge Borabu, Bomachoge Chache, Kitutu Chache North, Kitutu Chache South, Nyaribari Chache, Nyaribari Masaba and South Mugirango. The County covers an estimated area of 1,317.9 km<sup>2</sup> and based on the 2009 Population and Housing Census, a population is 1,152,282 comprising 550,464 males and 601,818 females respectively (KNBS, 2009). Most of the county is characterised by a hilly topography with several ridges and valleys and high and reliable rainfall ranging from 1200-1500mm per annum which makes the county suitable for rainfed agriculture.

Kisii County is one of the most important ancestral homelands of the Gusii people, also known as Kisii. While the large majority of the inhabitants are Gusii horticulturalists, there are also people

from other Kenyan communities, the majority recent migrants living in the county. With a population density of 2, 862 km<sup>2</sup>, Kisii is one of the most densely populated counties in Kenya. The main economic activities for a large majority of the Gusii people include growing tea, coffee, pyrethrum, maize, beans and bananas as well dairy farming. It is estimated that over 90% of all the people in the county depend directly or indirectly on natural resources for their livelihoods.

Traditionally, the Gusii community is patriarchal and decision making powers are bestowed upon men. Gusii women and children usually do most of the agricultural and housework including fetching water, firewood and performing other socio-economic activities. Generally, Gusii women are dependent on men for survival as they cannot own land and inherit property. However, the community has embraced modern ways of living and most cultural traditional beliefs and practices are increasingly distengrating. Gusii women especially the educated ones are increasingly becoming economic empowered and therefore gain autonomy and independence. These are some of the women who are joining politics and vying for various positions thus challenging the status quo. It is against this background that Gusii women's participation in electoral politics can be understood.



**Figure 3. 1 Map of Kisii County**



Source: Google Maps (2018).

### 3.3 Research Design

The study utilised a qualitative research design in which in-depth interviews, Focus Groups Discussions and Key Informant Interviews as well as secondary sources were the main methods of data collection. A research design is a strategic blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data whose choice is dependent on the stage to which knowledge about the research topic has advanced (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). A qualitative research has the advantage that the subject is observed in a completely natural and unchanged natural environment and that study

participants respondents are allowed to respond in their time frame (Cooper and Schindler, 2003). Sekaran & Bougie (2010) noted that a qualitative designs seeks to obtain information that describes existing phenomena by asking questions relating to individual perceptions and attitudes. The main aim for using multiple methods of data collection or triangulation was to increase the validity of the findings.

### **3.4 Study Population and recruitment procedure**

The study population consisted of all women in Kisii County who have previously vied for elective office. The study participants were recruited through telephone calls and scheduling of appointments for interview by the researcher. Records obtained from the ELCK were used to scope potential study participants. A purposive sampling procedure was employed in recruiting the study participants. Only those women who were willing to voluntarily take part in the study were interviewed. This group of women was deemed knowledgeable enough to respond to provide detailed information about the levels of women's participation in electoral politics and the challenges they face as well as how the current electoral law comply to the constitutional requirement that no less than one third of all elected to political office be women.

### **3.5 Data Collection**

The data used in this study were collected between October and November 2018. With prior knowledge that the research site covers a wide area and that most women who have previously vied for various elected positions in the county are difficult to find in one specific location, the researcher had to call and book an appointment with potential participants. The participants were identified from the Electoral Commission of Kenya's election results register. A total of 20

respondents were chosen using purposive sampling technique as already discussed because probability sampling techniques were found to be impractical. The researcher opted for this sampling procedure because it is simple and flexible to operationalize given time, resource and other constraints.

The study was largely qualitative in which in-depth interview were employed as the primary method of data collection. Supplementary data was collected through key informant interviews and focus group discussions Last but not least, additional data was obtained from secondary sources which included published and unpublished works and online resources.

### **3.5.1 In-depth Interviews**

In-depth interviews (IDIS) were used as the main method for primary data collection. Unlike survey questionnaires where respondents are asked to respond to pre-prepared and structured questions, in IDIS respondents are asked questions orally without following any specific order and the researcher records the respondents' answers. Interviewers also provide a guard against confusing items. If a respondent has misunderstood a question, the interviewer can clarify, thereby obtaining relevant responses (Babbie, 1992). IDIS were deemed the best way to gather information from women it allows researchers to ask any relevant questions, to seek clarification and probe issues not well elaborated, thus yielding a rich data in a way that quantitative methods could have not generated.

The IDIS were conducted with 20 Gusii women who vied for various positions in 2017 elections. A semi-structured interview guide (Appendix 1) was used to collect data. The interviews followed

an open-ended face-to-face question and answer format. The IDIS were largely conversational in style and probes were used to seek clarification on issues that were not clearly articulated or understood by the researcher. All the interviews were conducted in a private place/room where external interference was minimal during interviews and each interview session lasted 50-80 minutes. All the interviews were facilitated by the researcher and responses were documented by a note taker who was recruited from the study site. The IDIS were conducted either in the English or Kiswahili language. However, in a few instances the interviews were conducted in the local Ekegusii language, the researcher is a native speaker. The transcripts were scrutinized at the end of every day to make sure an understanding of the process, the links between various study sub-themes and when there was inadequate information or when further clarification was needed.

### **3.5.2 Focus Group Discussions**

A total four FGDs conducted exclusively with women and each comprised of comprised of 8 participants. All the FGD participants were women who had vied and lost in previous elections. The FGD were meant to supplement the data obtained from IDIS. Compared with individual interviews, FGDs allow participants to express convergent and divergent opinions about the various issues under discussion thereby revealing the participants real perceptions and views on the topical issues. In FGDS no specific question is asked in a specific order and probing questions are used in subsequent FGDS to include emerging themes. All the FGDs took place in secluded place in a hotel in Kisii town and each lasted for 80-120 minutes. The researcher was the discussant/moderator and the discussions were documented by a notetaker. The FGDS were conducted in the English language as all the participants had university education.

Mobilisation of the FGD participants was done by an officer from the Country Elections Commission of Kenya office in Kisii town. All the FGDs were conducted in mid morning and started with the research introducing himself and the note-taker, and then explaining to the participants the nature and objectives of the study. In addition, the participants were given an assurance that the information collected from them could be kept confidential and anonymous. They were invited to ask any questions or seek clarifications on any issue that was not clear about the study after which they were asked to give oral consent prior to the commencement of data collection. The discussions focused mainly on issues considered pertinent to the research topic and were stopped only after reaching saturation levels, where no new ideas were emerging. Generally, the FGDs did not generate any information that was different from that obtained from IDIS.

### **3.5.3 Key Informant Interviews**

In addition to IDIS and FGDS, the researcher conducted 6 key informant interviews (KIIs) with people who had extensive knowledge, expertise, long experience and involvement with Gusii politics and the issue of gender participation in the study area. These included one lecturer with a background in Political Science from Kisii University, one lawyer who had handled election petitions in court, one officer from Election Commission of Kenya, one lady from Maendeleo ya Wanawake Kisii branch, one non-governmental officer working in the area of gender and governance and one Sub-County Commissioner. The information collected from KIIs was used to supplement data collected from the other two methods. Such information was deemed useful and necessary in supporting or disapproving the main assertion made during IDIs and FGDs. A KII Guide was developed to assist keep the interviews focused (Appendix- 4).

### **3.5.4 Secondary Sources**

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from various secondary sources on and in the study area. These included policy papers, manuals, maps, research reports, textbooks, internet and other relevant documents.

### **3.6 Data Processing and Analysis**

According to Kemoni (2007) data analysis involves reducing to manageable proportions the wealth of data that had been collected or had become available. Identifying patterns and themes in the data and analysing the data involved both qualitative analysis, which included processes such as thematic and content analysis and quantitative or statistical analysis. The aim of data analysis is to transform data into an answer to the original research question. (Kemoni 2007). In this study, frequency distribution tables were used to present quantitative data obtained from questionnaires. Newman (2000) points out that frequency distribution tables are the easiest way a researcher can use to describe numerical data of one variable.

The data collected for this study was largely qualitative. Where necessary data was transcribed and thoroughly edited to separate unwanted data from the data used in the analysis. The researcher read the raw data several times to check for accuracy, consistency, legibility and comprehensiveness before analysis. The data was then analysed thematically through identifying the themes running through the findings and that were consistent with the objectives and research question. Data from secondary sources was analysed using content analysis method.

### **3.7 Ethical Considerations**

Authorisation to conduct this research in Kisii County was secured through the National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) after a successful oral defense of my proposal at seminar and approval by the Institute of Anthropology, Gender and African Studies, Faculty Postgraduate Studies Committee (FPSC). Ethical considerations are an important component of any research that involves human subjects. It is therefore important to reflect on the possible effects of research on the study participants. Ethical considerations are principles or standards that protect the rights of participants in a research study. They are actions taken to assure safety and rights of participants are not violated whatsoever. These considerations were therefore made to ensure that research involving human subjects is carried out in accordance with high ethical standards (Awour, 2015).

Prior to any form of data collection, the researcher clearly and repeatedly explained to the potential participants the objectives of the study to make sure that they properly understood the nature of their involvement and the attendant risks and benefits associated with their participation in the study. The study participants were given an opportunity to seek clarification on any issues that were not clear to them about this study. Once they were satisfied with the explanations and all their concerns addressed, they were asked to give their informed consent. Both verbal and written consent from each participant was obtained prior to commencement of data collection. I also explained to the participants that they had a right to withdrawal from the study or to terminate the interview at any time, if they felt uncomfortable to continue and all documentation could be immediately made available upon request. The study participants were also informed that all the data obtained from them could be handled with great confidentiality and that their identity could

not whatsoever be divulged to anybody and that their names could not be included in the final report.

In addition to assuring them of their right to privacy, anonymity and confidentiality, all the prospective research participants were fully informed on procedures benefits and risks involved in the research. after which they were voluntarily asked to fill informed consent (IC) forms to participate. Beneficence is another ethical consideration that the researcher kept in mind. Research was not to be carried out if it does not benefit either the researcher or society, it must be able to contribute to knowledge or improved service or treatment. The researcher asked himself/herself whether or not the study was worth undertaking and how it contributed to society. If no benefit was derived from the study then the project was unethical.



## **CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings the study. The study overall aim of this study was to assess the impact of devolution on Gusii women's participation in electoral politics in Kisii County. The data presented here were collected through interview indepth interview, key informant interviews and focus group discussions. .The findings are presented in four sections, each corresponding to one of the specific objectives of this study. The findings are presented as follows:

- 1) In what ways are Gusii women involved in electoral politics?
- 2) How has devolution enhanced Gusii women's participation in electoral politics?
- 3) What is the level of compliance on the one third gender rule in all elective position?
- 4) What challenges does devolution pose to Gusii women's participation in elective politics?

The chapter ends with a brief summary.

### **4.2 Results of Findings**

The researcher arranged interviews with key informants. Data responses were recorded and later transcribed for analysis. Subsequent sections detail research findings from field data per each elective office. This study covered seven elective political positions within Kisii County. These are Kenya Tea Development Authority,

Constituency Development Fund, Kenya National Union of Teachers categorized as agencies Member of County Assembly (MCA), Member of Parliament (MP), the National Assembly, Senator (SN), the Senate House, County Woman Representative (CWR), Governor (GVN) as civic electoral representations. Findings have been discussed with relevance reviewed literature.

### **4.3 Ways of Electoral Politics Involvement by Women in Kisii County**

Electoral politics in Kenya are gender inclusive however, with strong bias to male dominance in most representations of electoral offices. Gusii region is among the main areas with electoral seats for qualified candidates to contest. Electoral politics in Kenya are timely based on particular constitutional timelines. Voting, Campaigning, Signing a petition, joining political parties and becoming involved in pressure groups. It was observed that one of the most important ways women can participate is by voting. They do this usually at election time when the whole country is given the opportunity to choose who they want to represent them and become their MPs. Elections to the Parliament have taken place every five years since independence. Sometimes it was necessary to hold a by-election-this is an election in a constituency where a seat becomes vacant.

Campaigning can involve many different methods to persuade candidates to support a cause. It was revealed that women can become involved in demonstrations, sending representatives messengers, emails, petitions, organising visits to candidates homes, or organising media and social media campaigns. Everybody in Kenya more so women in Kisii County, constitutionally have the right to campaign, to seek to influence others and decision-makers. Based on responses from interviewees and discussions groups held, majority of women actively participated in the campaigning and voting with those associated with political parties gaining opportunities of nomination and participating as electoral observers.

Political parties are organisations that are concerned with a wide variety of issues. They want to be successful at the election and form the government. This allows them to put forward many of

the laws they think will be good for the country. Becoming involved in a political party is a way some people seek to influence politics and decision-making. As members of a political party people can shape that party's ideas and policies through, for example, women took part in debates at a County level, interviewed and chose the prospective electoral candidate for their area or became candidate themselves. The party members also worked closely with and support their party candidates. It was observed that minimal participation of women in competitive electoral processes was witnessed in the member of county assembly and Member of Parliament positions. Gubernatorial, Senatorial positions had nil female participants thus male dominance in the electoral processes.

Majority of women participating in the campaigns and those nominated for various county and senate seats by political parties, it was observed that the opportunities were provided for by means of political association and affiliations. For instance, a woman had to be related to a famous political figure, or was an heir of an individual with political stability and experience. In addition, the electoral process for the Kenya Tea Development Authority is based on a patriarchal system. Female growers are registered in chances of the death of the male grower (husband/father). In the Buying Centre level, a constituted committee governs the operations and implementation of the KTDA regulations at the lower cadre level. In this level, the committee has to be constituted by the growers-who sale tea leaves to local factories-in the Buying Centre. BC elections are held per the By-laws provided by KTDA to guide the management and operations of all tea BCs. The committees in the BCs are in charge of ensuring safety and hygiene levels, management and other matters involving the growers of the specific BC.

Growers who sell their tealeaf to the respective local tea buying company (regulated by KTDA) are owners of the companies, with shares in the company per the number of tea leaf quantity sold

to the company. The BC follows the structural leadership format of Chair/person, Treasurer and Secretary and two elected members, making a cumulative sum of five members. Findings revealed that patriarchal land system leading to male registration and low new female growers registration was major contributory factors. This implies, in not a near future, such low female representation will continue to be witnessed in the tea sector in Kenya.

Electoral participation rates in Kisii County depend on many factors, including the type of electoral system, the clan, marital status, the social groupings to which voters and candidates belong, the voters' personalities and beliefs, their places of residence, and a host of other idiosyncratic factors. The level and type of election had a great impact on the rate of electoral participation. Electoral turnout is greater in national than in county or parliamentary elections, and greater in the latter than in local elections. Based on responses, women interested in the Member of County Assembly position relied on nomination process to participate in the Assembly matters as members. The findings revealed that there was a higher female nominee in the 2013 and 2017 by political parties with majority representation in the Assembly. It implies that majority of the women were only represented in the nomination vacancies offered by the political parties. Representation of house committees was mainly procedural and women were offered ceremonial rather than entitlement positions. For instance, in Kisii County Assembly, there were twenty six nominated Members of the County Assembly. The women who contested for the Member of County Assembly were never elected.

**Table 4. 1 Composition of Kisii County**

<b>Constituency Name</b>	<b>District(s) Name</b>	<b>Electoral Wards</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Women Elected as MCA</b>
South Mugirango	Gucha South	6	0	
Bonchari	Kisii South	4	0	
NyaribariChache	Kisii Central	6	0	
NyaribariMasaba	Masaba South	5	0	
KitutuChache North	Marani	4	0	
KitutuChache South	Kisii Central	4	0	
Bobasi	Nyamache and Sameta	8	0	
BomachogeBorabu	Kenyenya	4	0	
BomachogeChache	Gucha	3	1	

**Source: Adapted from Kisii County ([www.kisii.go.ke](http://www.kisii.go.ke)) (2018)**

#### **4.4 Role of Devolution in Enhancing Women Political Participation in Kisii County**

Devolution is a new concept in Kenya. Since the promulgation of the current Constitution, women positions were created through a wide electoral scope. For instance, there was an increase in the number of County Wards, Constituencies from two hundred and ten to two hundred and ninety, and forty-seven counties. These electoral positions are competitive and both men and women eligible to contest do participate.

The researcher sought to investigate the women participation in the gubernatorial contest in Kisii County. The research findings revealed that in 2013, out of the six (6) candidates seeking the Governor position, there was no woman contesting for the position. Respective political party represented each of the candidates without any independent candidate participating in the contest. Out of the six candidates, 342, 839 were tallied for the Governor position, where the emerging winner garnered 229,380 votes. This was 66.91% of the total vote count for the position. In 2017, there were eight candidates participating in the contest. Respective political party represented each of the candidates with one (1) independent candidate participating in the contest. A sum of 402,659

was tallied for the position where the winner garnered 206,164 votes being a 51.20%. This was a drop of 15.71% in votes garnered from the previous election and a 14.86% increase in the number of the total vote tallied from the previous election. In the two elections, there was not woman contesting. This implies that there has not been a woman seeking to be elected as the Governor for Kisii County.

The researcher sought to investigate the women participation in seeking to be elected as Senator for Kisii County. Seven (7) candidates participated in the 2013 general elections, where respective political party represented each of the candidates without any independent candidate participating in the contest. Out of 343,754 tallied for the Senate contest, the winner garnered 120,445 votes, which was a 35.04% of the total vote with an estimate average of 49,108 for each candidate. In 2017 general elections, eleven (11) candidates participated where respective political party represented each of the candidates with one (1) independent candidate participating in the contest. Out of the 405,395 votes tallied for the Senate position, the winner garnered 183,375 votes being a 45.23% of the total count. This was a 15.21% improvement of the votes tallied for the position from the previous contest and 34.42% improvement of the total votes garnered by the candidates from the previous one. In both contests, there was no woman participation in the Senate position. It implies, since the promulgation of the constitution, there has not been any woman expressing interest to represent Kisii County as a Senator.

In the 2013 General Elections, only two women contested the Constituency level positions and few were elected in the Member of County Assembly position. The county woman representative position was created to enhance women participation in the National Assembly. Based on research findings, twenty six nominated women represent interests of electorate in the Kisii County Assembly and one CWR represents women interests in the National Assembly. In 2013, there was

only one nominated Senator from Kisii while in 2017; there are two nominated senators to the Senate House. KNUT increased its representation to anchor the new counties. The elections from various regions select delegates who represent their interest in the top cadre leadership level. All these delegates are subject to allowances.

In 2017 general elections, twelve candidates contested for the position being the second time it was contested per the current constitution of Kenya. Respective political party represented each of the candidates with one independent candidate participating in the contest. Based on the research findings, out of 403,930 votes, the winner emerged with 171, 492, being a 42.46% of the total vote. From the tallied votes in 2013, this was 16.05% improvement in the total voter participation. It will be deduced that there was 8.39% improvement in vote cast for the winner in 2017.

In 2013 general elections, this position was contested for the first time where nine candidates participated. Respective political party represented each of the candidates without any independent candidate participating in the contest. Out of the 339, 089 recorded vote count, the winner of the election for the County Woman Representative was elected by 115, 508 votes representing a 34.06% and an average of 37,676.56 for each of the total. This implies that despite being elected for the position, it was competitive election and the votes were spread across board.

The researcher sought to find out the women participation in the Member of County Assembly position. Out of the cumulative 723 candidates who presented their candidature for 2017 General elections vote contest in all the wards in Kisii County, only 18 were female (IEBC, 2018). The findings further revealed that few women were interested in political positions. High number of male participation implicates low women interest in the member of county assembly position.

The researcher further sought to find out the nominee membership in the County Assembly in Kisii County. The researcher also sought to find out the women representation in the House Committees

of the County Assembly of Kisii. The findings revealed only committee out of the nine committees that had a woman chairperson with most of them not complying with the two-thirds gender rule representation in their compositions.

According to research findings from KTDA, 2018 elections conducted recently and results of the newly elected directors published in the *Daily Nation* of 9<sup>th</sup> November 2018 (see appendix III).

Constituency Development Fund is a fund in place to enhance development and support constituents in education excellence. Each constituency has a board that handles the fund utilization. These are public officers elected to represent interest of the constituents at the board and fund utilization subject to the Constituency Development Fund Act. The term of office for the board members is five years. Based on the findings, it was revealed that out of the 9 constituencies in Kisii County, women were merely representative members of the board with no woman as the chairperson for the CDF boards. This implies that preference for women choice on the leadership of CDF Boards was very minimal.

#### **4.5 Challenges Women Encounter in Political Processes and Leadership in Kisii County**

Women participation in electoral politics in Kenya have suffered myriad of challenges in seeking elective positions. The researcher sought to find out the challenges hampering women participation in political processes and leadership in Kisii County. Based on research findings, the following challenges (among others) were affecting women political participation in Kisii County:

##### **Society Constructivism**

Abagusii Community has concentrated priorities on the male gender. The male are prioritized and poised for leadership wins in situation of representation. In the communities, few women are chosen to represent in various leadership position. The perceived thoughts of female as a weaker gender have generated a biased way in which the society handles women. Fewer women are chosen



as Administrative Chiefs, the male mainly holds District Officers or Commissioners in the region as most of the representation. Women have perceived thoughts among themselves creating a barrier for interested women in seeking leadership positions. Majority place age, marital status and education levels or respective career experience about public life as the basis of electing women into political positions. Lack of woman-to-woman efforts hampers women chances of being elected to power.

It is also important to note that there are instances where women have been accused of being their own worst enemy. In this regard they are accused of not supporting their fellow women when they vie for office. However, it is important to note that women should not be blamed for this rather they should blame the norms that women have been forced to live by.

### **Information Asymmetry**

Lack of proper information on the need to elect women leaders is a concern. Majority of the registered voters are misinformed about existing political positions. Unclear sharing of information mainly by poor dissemination on the role and available elective positions, contributed to low women participation in Kisii County.

### **Popularity**

Fame and popularity is a major factor in Kisii County elections. Famous individuals contesting for most political posts have higher chances of getting elected for political positions than those that are less famous. The study revealed that connecting with the electorate on social media weighed in the determining who was elected for political positions in Kisii county. Famous individuals with online social media following or capable of purchasing commercial advertisements had a higher preference choice by the electorate than those that were not. However, based on the findings, not all famous candidates enjoyed the popularity platform to score against their competitors in political

contests. For instance, candidates from minority parties that were not from Jubilee or National Super Alliance Coalition were elected on the premise of electorate choice preference. This was evidenced in the County Woman Representative, Member of County Assembly and Member of Parliament position contests although only the CWR had a woman elected for the position.

## **Finance**

Finance plays a huge role in as far as nominations is concerned. According to a survey done by Coalition for Accountable Political finance, politicians and their parties spent an enormous sum of money in the nomination week. The amount is estimated to be Kshs 5 million in each of the 290 constituencies. The lack of adequate finances hinder majority of women from participating in political activities. Interviews held revealed that on the onset of campaign elections, lack of proper financial pool to issue handouts to the electorate. Handouts are common during the electioneering period whereby the higher tune of monetary ability the higher chances of being elected by the electorate. Women that are not endowed with monetary wealth or resources encounter a challenge in contesting with other candidates as was revealed by this study.

### **4.5 Constitutional Compliance in Enhancing Women Participation in Kisii County**

The researcher sought to investigate the Constitutional require of two third representation in all electoral positions in Kisii County. The researcher observed that this compliance was complied with on a minimal level. For instance, the researcher sought to find out the women representation in the CDF boards of the nine constituencies in Kisii County. Based on the research findings, each of the CDF Board had atleast three women representation on the board with none having a woman

has the board chair (CDF Kenya, 2018). It implies that women are fairly represented in the boards however, with none on the leadership cadre.

Based on the findings, KNUT has a representation member in the Board of the Teachers Service Commission. Despite the elections being conducted, there is no clear framework to comply with the two-thirds gender rule for female representation. In addition, the researcher sought to find the women political participation in seeking election for the Member of Parliament position in 2013 and 2017 general elections. In the 2013 general elections, only two women attempted to view for the positions with not clear data provided for the female gender participation in the 2017 general elections. Elective politics in Kisii, based on the research findings are male dominated in all the constituencies with low women participation witnessed.

The researcher sought to investigate compliance of the two-third gender rule in the tea growers' representation in the company management. It was revealed that KTDA instituted a strategy to accommodate constitutional requirements by allowing one female member to be represented on the company management. It was revealed that she is selected for representation by association framework. It was revealed that the female independent director had either to be a grower's daughter subject to the leaf quantity sold by the grower to the respective company. The female direct must be a diploma level graduate and above 18 years of age. The two female members are independent directors and therefore not elected. The independent directors serve for three years renewable subject to compliance with the KTDA rules and regulations. It was revealed that the strategy has been operational since 2013. This makes six (6) selected female independent directors to represent tea-buying companies within Kisii County. It was also revealed that all female directors are subject to disciplinary measures in cases of indiscipline.



## **CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter summarizes the project's main findings and presents a final discussion on the impact of devolution on Gusii women's participation in electoral politics, implementation and operationalization of the one third-gender rule, on women's representation in all elective positions and attendant challenges. The study has answered the three questions posed in this study: (1) in what ways are Gusii women involved in electoral politics? (2) Has devolution enhanced Gusii women's political participation? (3) What is the level of compliance on the one third-gender rule in all elective position and (4) what challenges does devolution pose to Gusii women's participation in elective politics? Kisii County provided the empirical ground from which Gusii women's participation in electoral politics was assessed. The chapter also presents the main conclusions arrived at from this study and recommendations.

### **5.2 Summary of the Findings**

The study used the social constructivism theory to assess the impact of devolution on Gusii women's participation in electoral politics in Kisii County. Findings reveal that devolution has not enhanced women's political participation in any meaningful way and that the social constructed patriarchal structures which promote male dominance continue to act as a barrier to women's participation in electoral politics. Scholars Walby (1990), Okemwa (2002) and Ruth (1998) found that in many patriarchal African communities' women are not expected to participate in elections least of all to compete with men in various virtually all elective positions. Silberschmidt (1999) found that devolution benefited men as it increased men's participation in electoral politics at all

levels of society to the detriment of women. The project report argues that Gusii women face many social, cultural and economic barriers that hinder them from effectively participation in politics within the devolved units and patriarchy was cited as the, main factors that inhibited compliance to the constitutional requirement that women occupy no less than two thirds of the elected positions at all levels of the community. Thus, considering community power relations between men and women is vital when considering the impact of devolution on women's participation in electoral politics.

The study has highlighted the opportunities devolution has created for Gusii women to participate in electoral politics and the challenges that continue to hinder them from taking advantage of the opportunities created by the constitution and the opening of the political space in the devolved units for all people including previous marginalized groups such as women to participate in electoral politics. This study argues that devolution has not had any meaningful impact on the number of Gusii women vying for political office, which still remains dismal compared to other counties in Kenya. The low number of women vying for political office all levels of the devolved units and representation in various elective positions suggests a low level of constitutional compliance. This study provides a good example of how patriarchal structures and cultural traditions continue to undermine and marginalize women's participation in electoral politics. The study suggests that there is need to sensitize people on in general about the significance of devolution in enhancing women's participation in electoral politics and to encourage women to vie for the available positions in order to increase the level of constitutional compliance. Following the discussions in the preceding chapters, Kenya still has a long way to go in as far as women's participation in governance is concerned. While there has been steady progress since

independence, this has been particularly slow. Our neighbouring countries such as Rwanda and Uganda are miles ahead in as far as women's political participation is concerned. Some of the reasons given for this for example is the introduction of quota system.

The main challenges devolution poses to Gusii women's political participation and by extension constitutional compliance is patriarchy. The sound found that many women were willing to vie for political office but their husbands and male relatives either refused to grant them permission and/or discouraged them from running for political office. Furthermore, it was hard for women to be nominated by male dominated political parties to vie, thus posing another challenge to those who wanted to run for political office. In addition, to these two challenges, poverty was identified as another challenge that Gusii women face. Elections are a very expensive venture and certainly a large majority of Gusii women do not have the kind of resources required to mount any serious campaign against their male competitors. This study suggests that inequalities can only be minimized when political parties start to nominate and finance women candidates running for various elective positions. Without such support it will be hard for women to take advantage of devolution to enhance their participation in elective politics and for the county to attain the required constitutional compliance.

When reviewing the role that women play in the political environment in Africa what emerged clearly is the will of women to take part in political activities which is countered by a chauvinistic group that wants to maintain the status quo. It has also been established that women do indeed play an important role in governance and when given the chance and the right environment their accomplishments are significant. Patriarchy still deeply embedded in the social norms of the

different societies. Throughout the research, what was evident was the fact that both men and women regardless of their background (origin) still believed that people's mind-sets were still ruled by the different roles that both men and women ought to play.

Looking at the example of Kenya, patriarchy is still deeply rooted. The country has both the customary and civil laws operating concurrently. Customary law is deeply informed by patriarchal norms and as long as they are used to, guide Kenyan patriarchy will still prevail. Political parties play a very crucial role in as far as women participation in governance is concerned. While some recognise the importance of incorporating the gender aspect in their manifesto, many have only written their position in as far as gender and political participation is concerned but very few walk the talk. Women are still encouraged to take part in lowly positions as opposed to those that might attract strong competition. The political parties are still structured such that it is only men who have easier access to leadership roles.

Men are given preference when vying for certain posts for example. Men have old boys' networks which they rely on heavily to get support for their ambitions. This is however the opposite for women who have no established networks within the party for them to lobby. These parties are still ruled by patriarchal norms. It is okay for men to act in a certain manner and get away with it despite the said actions being contrary to what leaders ought to do. This is why we have unruly set of leaders re-elected every five years, as people are quick to forget with some accepting their behaviours as the norm.



### **5.3 Discussions**

Out of the research findings, it was revealed that the traditional female/male roles are deeply ingrained and glorified in all Kenyan languages, in education, the mass media, and advertising. This findings are in lign with Obura (1991) who noted that the society's perception of women is for the most part negative with the best women as mothers, and their capabilities and capacities going virtually unnoticed. Such sex stereotypes and social prejudices are inappropriate in the present society where female/male roles and male-headed families are no longer the norm.

According to the United Nations (2000), sex stereo-types are among the most firmly entrenched obstacles to the elimination of discrimination, and are largely responsible for the denigration of the role and potential of women in society. This is in line with the findings of this study where women encountered challenges with convincing the electorate to elect them. The study established that subordinate position of women in the society seems to legitimize their exclusion from participation in political and decision-making processes where many stories depict women as disloyal, disagreeable, untrustworthy, stupid and even gullible which agree with Kabira and Nzioki, (1995) findings.

The heavy underrepresentation of women in political life and most decision-making processes in Kenya needs to be closely investigated. Karl (2001) explores some of the factors affecting women's political participation worldwide where among the factors she cites include: house-hold status; work related rights (maternity leave, job security, provision of child-care); employment and remuneration; double burden of work; education and literacy; access to financial resources; legal rights; traditions, cultural attitudes and religion; socialization and self-reliance; violence against women; the mass media; health; ability to control fertility. Her findings confirm with the outcome

of this study where level of education, skills and financial ability are used as benchmark for electing women into political leadership positions.

Cooper and Davidson (1982) sought to study the problems that women in leadership positions generally face. They found that women face stress from both the work, home and social environments. In addition, women have to acquire male leadership and managerial skills (for example, being aggressive, assertive, confident), as well as multiple demands in running a career and a family. Their findings conform with this study findings that implicated the social constructivism established contributed to limited electoral participation of women in their respective zones.

#### **5.4 Conclusions**

The findings and insights gained from this study allow me to make the following conclusions.

One, Kenya's constitutional dispensation and devolution have important implications for women's participation in electoral politics. Gusii women have traditionally been marginalized from participation in electoral politics due to the patriarchal structures which tend to favour men and promote the view that politics is a male domain. However, devolution and the new constitution have opened up the political space for wider participation in electoral politics by previously marginalized groups especially women. This study however, has clearly shown that Gusii women's participation in electoral politics remain dismal in spite of devolution creating more opportunities for women to vie for elective position. While the constitution stipulates that no less than one third of people elected to various positions in public organisations and government,

compliance in Kisii County remains low partly because women have not come out to vie for the available positions.

Two, Constitutional demands on fair gender representation were visible in Kisii County. Nomination of women to the respective houses and representation on other organizational elective boards implicates compliance with demands of the Constitution. However, despite the nominations, minimal number of women elected to the respective positions clearly indicate limited full representation or gender equity.

Three, there is need to address perennial recurrence of similar challenges hindering women participation in politics. The findings clearly showed presence of bias based on gender, financial ability, tribe and nepotism elements, which render women incapable of vying for political positions. Patriarchal land system in Kisii where all tea growing areas' growers are male owned therefore dominating the elective politics in the tea sector. This limits the women participation and locks them out necessitating the application for compliance of the two-thirds gender rule.

## **5.5 Recommendations**

### **Women empowerment**

Patriarchy is the number one problem plaguing women's participation. As it is difficult to change people's culture from outside, it is better to do so from within. This means that the government are relevant stakeholders should ensure that women are empowered. This can be done through ensuring that all children and especially girls go to school and get an education. For those who are adults, the government should focus on civic education that will also empower the women and

trigger them to challenge the status quo. This civic education however should not be timed too close to the general elections as the civic educators will be competing with the politicians for the voter's attention and seeing as the politicians always have incentives, little progress will be made with civic education. It is only through empowerment that women are able to make independent decisions about their choice candidates and consequently hold them accountable.

### **Policy change**

It is not enough to come up with the two third gender rule; the government must come up with a mechanism to implement it. The president of Kenya-Uhuru Kenyatta-set a good precedence by nomination six women to cabinet positions out of eighteen positions. This was an attempt at meeting the two-thirds gender rule.

### **Party reforms**

Reforms should take place within political parties such that they do not just talk the talk in ensuring gender parity but walk the talk as well. They have manifestos to start with, which are cognizant of the issues that women face. They should however go the extra mile and try to implement these policies within the parties. It would be worthwhile to see the effect this would have in the next general elections should parties restructure their systems. Media has played an important role. In the past, some have recommended that the media stop portraying women as being soft. The media should instead exercise neutrality when covering both men and women. The media should be neutral such that the masses are able to focus on the policies and ideas of individual rather than their biological make up and what they ought to do as a result of this make up.

### **Women's organisations**

Women should come together and speak with one voice. This gives them stronger bargaining power and that way they are able to achieve more. Women also know the problems that their fellow

women are facing and it is only through these organisations they will be supported accordingly through either mentorship or networks with which they can work in.

## **5.6 Suggestions for Further Research**

Research on the applicability of the two-thirds gender rule in the composition and compliance in various establishments and how it affects the women participation is needlesful. Further, research on structural obstacles hindering women participation in elective politics is significant. How the constitution of Kenya has influenced women, participation is important.

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## APPENDIX 1 UNIVERSITY LETTER OF AUTHORIZATION



**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI  
INSTITUTE OF ANTHROPOLOGY, GENDER & AFRICAN STUDIES**

P.O. Box 30197

Nairobi, Kenya

Telephone: 020-2082530/020-2082531/020-2082545

Email: director-aags@uonbi.ac.ke

22<sup>nd</sup> October, 2018

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

Dear Sir/Madam

**RE: MR. LAWRENCE NYAKUNDI ARONI – N69/78109/2015**

This is to confirm that the above named is a Master of Arts in Gender and Development Studies student in the Institute of Anthropology, Gender & African Studies, University of Nairobi.

He has completed his course work and is now undertaking a research project entitled: **Assessing the Impact of Devolution on Gusii Women's Participation in Electoral Politics in Kisii County.**

Any assistance accorded him will be highly appreciated.

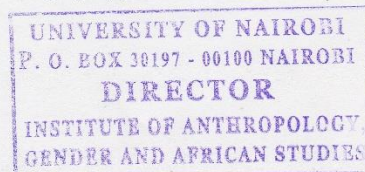
Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Judith E.O. Obam'.

**JUDITH E.O. OBAM**

**SENIOR ASSISTANT REGISTRAR**

**INSTITUTE OF ANTHROPOLOGY, GENDER & AFRICAN STUDIES**



JEO/ewk

Source: The University of Nairobi (2018).

**APPENDIX II ELECTORAL RESULTS OF KENYA TEA DEVELOPMENT  
AUTHORITY ELECTIONS (2018) IN KISII COUNTY**

**APPENDIX III INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL AND BOUNDARIES COMMISSION**

**RESULTS IN KISII COUNTY**

<b>Position</b>	<b>Curren t Elected Female</b>	<b>2013 General Elections</b>			<b>2017 General Elections</b>		
		<b>Total Votes</b>	<b>Winne r Vote</b>	<b>Percentag e</b>	<b>Total Votes</b>	<b>Winne r Vote</b>	<b>Percen tage</b>
County Woman Representative	1	339089	115508	34.06%	403930	171492	42.46 %
Senator	0	343754	120445	35.04%	405395	183375	45.23 %
Governor	0	342839	229380	66.91%	402659	206164	51.20 %

**Source: Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (2018).**

**APPENDIX IV COUNTIES IN KENYA (PER FIRST SCHEDULE OF CONSTITUTION)**

1. Mombasa
2. Kwale
3. Kilifi
4. Tana River
5. Lamu
6. Taita/Taveta
7. Garissa
8. Wajir
9. Mandera
10. Marsabit
11. Isiolo
12. Meru
13. Tharaka-Nithi
14. Embu
15. Kitui
16. Machakos
17. Makueni
18. Nyandarua
19. Nyeri
20. Kirinyaga
21. Murang'a

22. Kiambu
23. Turkana
24. West Pokot
25. Samburu
26. Trans Nzoia
27. Uasin Gishu
28. Elgeyo/Marakwet
29. Nandi
30. Baringo
31. Laikipia
32. Nakuru
33. Narok
34. Kajiado
35. Kericho
36. Bomet
37. Kakamega
38. Vihiga
39. Bungoma
40. Busia
41. Siaya
42. Kisumu
43. Homa Bay

44. Migori
45. Kisii
46. Nyamira
47. Nairobi City

**Source: Constitution of Kenya**

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