

**FACTORS INFLUENCING WOMEN'S POLITICAL  
PARTICIPATION IN KIBERA DIVISION, NAIROBI**

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**BY**

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**THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI  
(INSTITUTE OF AFRICAN STUDIES) IN PARTIAL  
FULFILLMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF  
ARTS IN ANTHROPOLOGY**

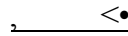
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**JANUARY 2001**

## DECLARATION

I declare that's this is my original work and has not been submitted for the award of a degree in any other university;

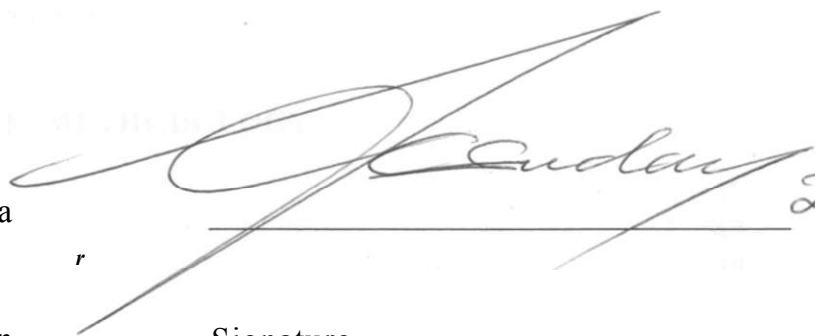
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This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as the university supervisor

Prof. Colletta Suda



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my employer the University of Nairobi for according me study leave and an opportunity to enhance my intellectual growth; the former Director of the Institute of African Studies Prof. Simiyu Wandibba, without whose support, I would not have got the chance to study. Special thanks go to my supervisor and advisor, Prof. Collette Suda the current Director of the Institute of African Studies for having given me guidance in shaping the focus of my study. I also wish to thank her for reading through the various drafts and giving me comments without which it would not have been possible to complete my study.

I would also like to thank Dr. Makumi Mwagiru for assisting me, particularly in the editing of my work. I also acknowledge the inspiration and support given to me by Women and Law in East Africa (WLEA) Research Associates and staff, particularly the WLEA Regional Office for the financial support for data collection; Lucy Chege and Rosefelyn Mungai for typing and formatting my work. I acknowledge Kamau Mubuu's help in data analysis and moral support throughout this study, and also Esau for data entry.

I cannot forget my research assistants, Wangari and Mai.ua  
Ngotho and Maina Kimondo for their diligent work in data  
collection.

I thank my family for their understanding and patience  
during my study and production of this work.

Any shortcomings of the work are mine!

## **A b s t r a c t**

**This** study examines some of the factors influencing **women's** political participation in Kenya by focusing on **women's** participation in civic and parliamentary elections in Kibera division of Nairobi. It also examined the political structures and institutions that affect women's participation in electoral politics and processes.

Research was carried out in Kibera Division in Nairobi. A total of 154 respondents were purposively selected and interviewed for this study. Library research was also carried out to supplement primary data sources. Data elicited from respondents were electronically analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

The findings of the study were that, although women constitute about 52.2 per cent of the population and are a majority of the voters, they have been unable to participate fully in the electoral process. For instance, women occupy only 3.2 per cent of the total seats in parliament, while since independence in 1963, only one woman has been appointed a Cabinet Minister (1996) .

The study finds that, although women have made great strides in some areas such as education (where they have achieved 60 per cent literacy) and in development

activities, they still lag behind in terms of political participation, where they largely occupy subordinate positions. This has immensely undermined their contribution to determining the political destiny of the Kenyan society.

Certain factors that affect the participation of women in political processes were identified. These exist at the household, community and national levels. A major factor is the lack of empowerment, as women are denied equal access to most resources such as education and property.

The most inhibiting factors to women's political participation are rooted in culture including social attitudes, economic inequities, access to education, and poor incomes. It was evident from the study that active political participation is associated with high expenditure, while the most popular attitude was that politics is a male domain. Women should basically be homemakers. Poor educational achievements among most women was found to be a key contributory factor to their low participation in political processes. It determines to a large extent their voting behaviour including effective networking for political ends.

Low income was cited as another major factor hindering the participation of women in politics. Active political participation is associated with high expenditure and therefore requires one to have a good income in addition



to other financial sources.

The major recommendations of the study are that first, a review of legislative policies addressing gender imbalances in all areas of society including politics as they negatively impact on women needs to be undertaken. The issues to be considered here include affirmative action and quotas for women seeking political positions.

Secondly, there is a need to train women on entrepreneurship and income generation, in order to empower them financially. Issues pertaining to property, access and control of produce in relation to women should be addressed through the formulation and implementation of appropriate economic policies that target women.

Thirdly, attitudes towards women should be addressed through community education and sensitisation. This can be done through rigorous civic educational programmes, which should not only be the responsibility of the civil society, but that of the government as a sign of positive political commitment.

Fourthly legislative measures should be put in place to address gender imbalances. These should include the scrapping of anachronistic laws especially those touching on inheritance and property rights which directly or indirectly oppress women. This can be done through the law reform processes. The current initiatives, for example,

**the Task** Force on Laws Affecting Women is a positive step in **this** direction.

**Finally,** further research should be carried out on women's **political** participation. As demonstrated in the study most **research** in this area address theoretical issues regarding **the** subject. There is therefore a need for empirical data, **as a** basis for designing practical intervention programmes **to** address the problems exposed by the study.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

#### 1.0 Introduction

Although women constitute more than half of the world's population, and nearly 40 per cent of the labour force, only sixty per cent of women are cabinet ministers and ten per cent are administrators and managers (Rounaq 1995) . A Global survey of women in politics found that the pattern was pyramidal everywhere, with many women at the bottom and a few at the top (Newland, 1975) . In a few socialist countries, the percentage of women in the legislature may reach twenty. However most countries register five percent or less of women in every sphere of government. In Africa, only 11.3 per cent are in National Parliaments (IPU 1998).

Statistics on regional averages of women members of parliament established by the Interparliament Union on the basis of data provided by national parliaments indicate that the Nordic countries lead with the number of women representatives in parliament at 35.9 per cent. The Americas follows with (13.2%), Europe (11.5%), Pacific

countries (12.7%), sub-Saharan Africa (11.3%), Asia (9.7%), and Arab states at 3.4% (Karam 1998:21).

Berget (1995) attributes the high rate of women's participation in parliament in Norway to the quota system. The Norwegian Gender Equity Act requires no less than 40 per cent representation of both sexes in publicly appointed boards, councils and committees. Although the act is not binding, all major political parties have adopted the quota systems in their internal bodies and election lists. Berget states that having a high number of women in governance does make a difference. One of the most significant results seen in Norway, for example, is the new significance and the progress achieved in the field of family policy, particularly with regard to opportunities for reconciling work and family responsibilities. In 1986 for instance, Parental leave has been increased from 18 weeks to 42 weeks with full pay and fathers also get paternity leave.

The participation of women in Kenyan politics, especially their involvement in civic and parliamentary activities is still very low despite the resolutions passed in the UN Women's Conference in Nairobi in 1985 and the Abuja Declaration of 1989 to increase women's representation in

both political and public decision-making positions. This situation persists despite the fact that Kenya has ratified most of the human rights conventions, the most prominent being the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (Oduol, 1985).

Studies carried out in Kenya indicate that between 1969-1974, women formed 0.5 per cent of the nominated members of parliament and 8 per cent of the elected Members of Parliament (Totensen *et al.*, 1998). By 1991, only two out of the two hundred elected Members of Parliament were women. With the introduction of multi-partism in Kenya in 1991 there was a significant change especially in women's interest in political participation. Prior to the repeal of section 2A of the Constitution that abolished the one party state, power circulated within a limited group, which decided on who to accommodate or ostracise. This resulted in apathy among the population making it almost impossible for women to venture into politics and key decision-making positions (Mitullah, 1994). The introduction of multi-partism brought changes that allowed some form of participation especially among groups who formed parties. Women then came out to form groups to encourage women to

participate actively in politics and to seek elective positions.

The 1992 elections saw the election of six women into Kenya's parliament, the highest in the country's electoral history. This, however, was still relatively insignificant compared to the male composition, and also considering the fact that women form about 52 per cent of the total national population (Suda, 1996). In 1997, the number of women parliamentarians dropped to four. According to Totensen et al (1998), the under-representation of women in politics is an indication that they have not been able to translate their numerical strength into commensurate political positions. This is more so when it is acknowledged that they are the majority of the voters.

**Various scholars have discussed the participation of women** in politics globally. Shvedova, while discussing obstacles to women's participation in parliament states that:

"women around the world at every socio-political level find themselves far removed from decision making levels. While the political play-field in each country has its own particular characteristics, one feature remains common to all: it is uneven and not conducive to women's participation. Women who want to enter politics find that public, cultural and social

environment are often unfriendly or even hostile to them" (Shvedova 1998:19).

**Steady** (1985:6) **further sums up this emerging school of thought:**

"Progress in the area of political participation of women remains slow. In almost all countries women have a right to the vote on paper, to be eligible for election, appointment to public office, and to exercise public functions on equal terms with men at local, national and international levels. In most countries, women participate only marginally at the " highest levels of decision making".

In fact, this is clearly visible in political party hierarchy; the higher the hierarchy, the fewer the women. Women are most often relegated to largely ceremonial 'women's wings (Totensen *et al.* 1998). Within KANU, for example, in 1989, the secretariat created the position of Director of Women and Youth Affairs and appointed Dr. Julia Ojiambo as Director.

This is also reflected in policy making and administrative positions where they are few and far between and tend to hold 'soft' positions. They also hold positions in government ministries such as Social Services as opposed,



for example, to Finance and Foreign Affairs. In Kenya, the only woman who has held a full ministerial position was appointed in 1996 to the Ministry of Culture and Social Services. This ministry includes the portfolio for women, namely, the Women's Bureau. In 1997, only one woman was appointed as an assistant minister, and this was again in the Ministry of Home Affairs, Culture, and Social Services.

As noted earlier, concern over the participation of women in politics in Kenya took new dimensions after the re-introduction of multi-party politics. Since 1992 various non-governmental organizations (NGOs), were created specifically to address the issue of women in national decision making and particularly their involvement in politics. At the top of their agenda was the nomination and election of women to parliament and local authorities.

In addition, they sought to raise political awareness among women by way of civic education on the, "power of the vote", as a means for effecting political change. They also sought to sensitise political parties to address more seriously the issues and concerns of women and the removal of discriminatory laws. Despite these efforts, the degree

of success was dismal as the results of the 1992 and 1997 elections indicate. This clearly shows that there is a problem that is not yet resolved. It therefore raises questions such as, what makes women vote for a particular candidate and not another; what women encounter in their bid to participate in politics that makes it so difficult for many to venture into politics; and what impact political parties and other social institutions such as the mass media have on women's participation in politics.

#### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

Women's participation in the political process, in Kenya, both as contestants for civic and parliamentary seats and as voters, has been influenced by a number of socio-economic, cultural and political factors. These factors which stem from the households to the community and the national level have affected the level of participation of women in politics in terms of increasing the number of women elected to parliament and local authorities, and  
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consequently their representation in high level decision-making positions.

Women constitute the majority of the population in Kenya. This, however, does not signify their full participation in the political process in spite of the fact that they have made great headway in other areas. In education, for example, women's literacy levels increased from 10 per cent in 1960 to 60 per cent in 1989. More specifically, the proportion of women among those with primary education increased from 44 percent in 1979 to 48 per cent in 1989 (Women's Bureau/UNFPA, 1995). Although this number may appear insignificant in relative terms, it is significant when compared to women in politics where they hold only 3.2 per cent of the total seats in parliament, while they represent 2.7 per cent of the total number of councillors in all the local authorities (Republic of Kenya, 1993).

The participation of women in politics is critical given that it is in parliament that policy decisions are made. Therefore, if women are under represented, their interests are unlikely to be taken into account. Hence the policies

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are likely to become ineffective if half the population is not involved in the formulation process. If policy decisions and laws are to be made for the benefit of all members of society, then the extent to which decision-

making bodies can take into account the experience of as broad a spectrum of that society as possible, will be the gauge of the degree to which its decisions will be appropriate and meet the needs of the entire society rather than those of a particular group or groups (Ginwala 1998).

Given this, it is important that women secure larger representation in parliamentary and civic seats in order to influence policy and decision-making. Consequently, it is also important that factors that hinder their participation are identified, documented and strategies for change designed.

This study examines the factors that influence the participation of women in politics. It specifically examines their participation as contestants and as voters in both civic and parliamentary elections.

### **Research Questions**

The study raises the following questions.

- 1- What factors do women consider when voting for a particular candidate?
- <sup>2</sup>- What problems do women encounter in their bid to Participate in politics?

3. What impact do political parties and other social institutions have on the participation of women in politics?

## **1.2 Objectives of the study**

### **1.2.1 Main Objective**

The main objective of the study was to identify and examine factors influencing women's political participation in Kibera Division in Nairobi Province.

### **1.2.2 Specific Objectives.**

- To identify factors that women consider when voting for a particular candidate
- To identify problems that women encounter in their bid to participate in politics
- To examine the impact of political structures and other institutions on women's participation in politics.

## **1.3 Justification of the study**

Over the years, the United Nations has recognised the importance of women's participation in politics as documented in UN resolutions (UN 1945, 1952).

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The vision statement for the NGO "Forum on Women, Beijing 1995 was to bring together women and men to challenge, create, and transform global structures and processes at all levels through the empowerment and celebration of women. In doing this the Forum was committed to equality, peace, justice, inclusiveness, and full participation of all (NGO Forum, 1996).

What has also come up increasingly in various forums, including international women's meeting, is that the transformation of structures can only be achieved if women were to be more involved at all levels of decision making, including politics. There is, therefore, need for research to investigate methods and strategies that can be used to make this happen.

In Kenya, however, women are under-represented in most political institutions particularly parliament and local authorities. The results of the 1997 elections are indicative of this. Of the 507 women candidates for the civic elections, only 78 were elected in the civic  
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electoral areas; out of 154 women who sought elective parliamentary positions, only four were elected to the National Assembly (Onyango, 1998). The magnitude of the problem has not been appreciated well enough to facilitate

the introduction of strategies that would increase women's participation in politics.

This study aims at contributing to the understanding of factors unique to the Kenyan situation that can be said to influence women's political participation. Esther Boserup (1975) discussing the status of women states that research aimed at helping women adapt to and improve their status must be based on solid investigation of economic conditions and other factors in the countries in which those women are living.

Likewise, if the situation of women in politics is to change, relying solely on international resolutions and domestic laws may not have an impact unless research is carried out to investigate other factors specific to their situation which influence their participation. In Kenya, studies carried out to investigate behaviour influencing women's voting patterns in politics are few (Datta 1979, Nzomo 1991, Mitullah 1997, Wanyande 1993, Onyango 1998).

The exclusion of women from decision-making fora has been justified by stereotyped notions of the roles of men and



women in the home and the economy. It is still too readily assumed that "men bring the food and women prepare it" (Mead 1950:190). This image however, sharply contrasts with the reality, where even the available though imperfect statistics indicate that one in every four families, on average, is headed by a woman (Dankel and Davidson 1988) . The number of such families has risen at an alarming rate particularly because of the social upheavals caused by conflicts and poverty. There is therefore a need for women to be integrated in decision-making processes particularly at the policy level since they play a major role as breadwinners and vital workers in the national economy (Mitter 1970).

The need to undertake research in this area stems from the fact that women's contribution to national policy formulation is important because of the significant role they play in national development. Identifying factors that hinder their full participation will contribute to knowledge which can be used to enhance their participation in elections in order to elect more women who are well equipped to lobby for policies that take into consideration diverse interests of the Kenyan society. Since

parliament is the highest level at which national policies are supposed to be made, it is important that a significant representation of women there is attained.

It is hoped that the findings of this study will be used to come up with strategies that can be developed by policy makers and organisations to enhance women's political participation. The findings will especially be relevant to anthropologists and development planners in mainstreaming women's issues in development policies and programmes.

#### **1.4 Scope of the Study**

This study was carried out among the residents of Kibera Division in Nairobi. The study focused on women seeking civic and parliamentary positions. Although there are leadership positions that women can hold such as public administration and leadership in national organisations such as the cooperative movement which impact on their well being, it was felt that including these other areas would

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wake the study too large. Because of the limited funds available for the research, it was not possible to research on all aspects of women's leadership.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.0 Introduction

Although the involvement of women in politics using the western based political structures started with colonialism, studies indicate that women were involved in politics in one form or another during the pre-colonial era. African women had many institutions in which they exercised their authority and political power. Societies where women held political roles have been documented in all parts of Africa, but there was tremendous variation from society to society.

In some, women held the highest positions such as paramount chiefs, for example, among the mende in Sierra Leone, whereas in others their roles were more limited. For example, among the Igbo, women took up political roles that emerged directly from their roles as women, whereas  
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among the Lovedu of the Transval, women were the sole monarchs in the nineteenth century (Hafkin and Bay, 1976) .

Adelaide Hill, at the 1961 Annual UNESCO Conference, contradicts those who have made superficial observations of traditional African society in describing the African woman as 'dominated' and 'inarticulate'. She states that:

Although her world was a narrow one, her authority, and her status within that world was unquestioned. Among such widely separated peoples as the Tuaregs of the Sahara desert, the Somalis of United Somali Republic, the Mende of Sierra Leone, the Sogan of Sudan and the Ibo and of Nigeria, there is ample evidence that the position of women in society was one of influence and status  
\* (Hill 1961, cited in Datta, 1979).

O'Barr (1984), cited in Kanogo (1992) further emphasizes this argument when she states that prior to the systematic penetration of European colonial systems, African women had a much broader role in decision-making than they did under colonialism. The hunting and gathering societies in southern Africa were characterized by relative political equity between women and men. There was no continuous leadership and each gender had its own sphere of activity, over which its leadership exercised control.

Among Agricultural societies of most of black Africa, **wher**<sup>^</sup> the majority of African women lived, women derived

their political status from the key role they played in production. Whether the society was matrilineal or patrilineal, women usually had political control over some areas of activity, farming, marketing, trading or household and family affairs. They also had political institutions to influence the affairs of men and were not subject to general control by men as much as they were autonomous in their own areas of responsibility (Hafkin and Bay, 1976; Rosaldo and Lamphere, 1974).

Anta Diop (1978) also has the view that women's place in traditional African society was recognised and gives an example of Egypt where women participated in running public affairs within the framework of a feminine assembly, sitting separately but having the same prerogatives as the male assembly.

"These facts remained unchanged until colonial conquest... Black Africa had its specific bicameralism, determined by sex. Far from interfering with national life by pitting men against women, it guarantees the flowering of both" (Diop, 1978:33).

**Similarly**, Okonjo (1976) argues that many early scholars of the traditional political systems produced a distorted Picture of these systems creating the impression that the **African** man was "oppressive" and that the African Woman was deprived". Giving a case study of the pre-colonial Igbo

community of Midwestern Nigeria, Okonjo states that traditional societies had political systems in which major interest groups were defined and represented by sex. The Igbo, for example, had a "constitutional village monarchy" system.

"In both systems, the units were small, and political authority was widely dispersed along the following lines: between the sexes; among the lineages and kinship institutions; by age grades; among secret and title societies; and among oracle, diviners, and other professional groups... each sex generally managed its own affairs and had its own kinship institutions, age grades, and secret and title societies" (Okonjo 1976:47).

These systems served the communities well until the advent of colonialism. Under colonialism women in this community suffered the greatest loss of power. Their invisibility in present day politics is a legacy of the colonial past. The British colonialists introduced sexist Victorian values into all aspects of the life (religious, economic, and political) of the colonised Igbo. Such Victorian values extolled the ideology that "a woman's place is in the home" and saw women's mind as not strong enough for the masculine subjects of science, business and politics (Okonjo 1976:46).

The colonial government chose to fill the newly created posts of chiefs and administrators with men. Thus men could now boast of some measure of power.

**Other authors, however, have a different view of the situation of women in the precolonial era. Kanogo (1992) argues that:**

"Other than belonging to the same gender, women are characterized by diverse differences of race, class and social status, among others. Significantly, and regardless of their social status, race or class, women are in general a marginalised category in any society. In pre-colonial Africa, they only differed slightly in terms of access to the reproductive resources and the dominant mode of distribution of resources"(1992:1).

In this regard, it can be argued that to a certain extent numerous social expectations placed women in subordinate, overworked and peripheral positions in the pre-colonial period. The colonial system only exploited this disparity more effectively, and consolidated women's low social status (Kanogo, 1992) and consequent marginalisation in politics. This "intense marginalisation of women by the colonial government had a profound effect on the position of African women's position in politics. In general, women were ignored and deprived of their power. All colonial

officials shared a basic belief that the role of women was that of household helpmate to men and that women were outside the proper realm of politics (O'Barr, 1984).

## **2.2 Women and Politics in the Colonial Era**

In Kenya, the imposition of colonial rule destabilized whole societies economically, socially and politically. Certain aspects of this colonial intrusion had adverse implications for women as a social category. Some of these constraints were reinforced by the dominant patriarchal system (Kanogo, 1992). The colonial government in Kenya reinforced traditional patriarchal leadership forms and styles. In terms of leadership, nearly all the top colonial administrators were male. Their habits and lifestyles also duplicated and reinforced the traditional British family structure where women existed as appendages of the male bread winner and were popularised as social butterflies whose responsibility was to stand behind their husband and provide obligatory moral support (Masinjila 1997). For example, in Nigeria, colonialism facilitated the creation of structures that sharply divided the domestic/private and Public sphere. The lack of recognition, however, was not



confined to the colonial period, but persisted even after independence. Despite their contribution to the independence struggle, women still lack adequate **recognition** in the political sphere. Shvedova (1998) attributes the lack of recognition of women in politics to the fact that men dominate the political arena; formulate the rules of the political game, and define the standards for evaluation. In addition, political life is organised according to male norms and values and in some cases male lifestyles.

In Kenya, for example, there was not a single woman, elected or nominated, in the first parliament of 1963-1969. It is only in 1969 that the first Member of Parliament, Grace Onyango, was elected while another woman, was nominated. Since then a number of women have attempted to enter the political scene by contesting and being elected to either parliamentary or civic seats (Table 1).

However the number is still low in relation to the Kenyan population and despite the fact that they constitute the <sup>ma</sup>majority of the population and the voters.

**TABLE 1s ELECTED AND NOMINATED MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT BY GENDER, 1969-97**

YEAR	ELECTED		NOMINATED		
	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	TOTAL
<b>1969</b>	1	154	1	11	167
<b>1974</b>	9	152	2	10	169
<b>1979</b>	3	155	1	11	170
<b>1983</b>	1	157	2	10	164
<b>1988</b>	2	186	1	11	200
<b>1992</b>	6	182	-	12	176
<b>1997</b>	4	206	4	8	218
<b>TOTAL</b>	22	1,192	11	73	<b>1,264</b>

*Source: Adapted from Human Rights Report No. 2 1998*

Domination of parliamentary seats by men as shown in Table 1 implies that major political views and decisions that inform or shape policy formulation and implementation emanate from men. It also depicts the gender voting biases within the Kenyan communities and confirms the existing distrust of women contestants particularly because women are the majority voters.

The scenario may, however, be explained by the fact that not many women present themselves for civic and parliamentary elections probably due to their feeling of inadequacy deeply rooted in socialisation. The trend, however, shows a positive change as regards the number of both elected and nominated women in parliament, albeit at a minimal rate.

The evidence corroborates observations by Mitullah (1994) who states that the ruling class has been and continues to be dominated by men who make most decisions. This factor clarifies the perception that development strategies still provide marginal consideration for women because they are not involved in their formulation.

## **2.3 A review of factors influencing women's political participation**

### **2.3.1 Cultural factors**

**Culture** has persistently come up as one of the factors that impede the participation of women in politics. Deep-rooted **traditions** and socio-cultural beliefs about what women can or **cannot** do have hampered women's participation in active

politics. Gender based hierarchies, which subordinate women to men, and the unequal division of labour between sexes is a case in point, which operates to keep women to their traditional stations as managers of the household (Totensen et al 1998).

Collier (1974) argues that women are seldom seen as political actors, but rather as pawns to be used in the political manoeuvres by men and hoarded for their productive, reproductive and prestige-enhancing value or traded to create and cement alliances. She further notes that male informants often speak of women as pawns, and that women are usually excluded from political gatherings, are ineligible for political office, and are occupied with child-rearing and domestic tasks.

Throughout Kenya's historical and contemporary experience, two factors have always influenced the course of the country's existence, namely, the preservation of patriarchy and the marginal role of women in public life (Mathangani, 1995) . The patriarchal foundations of the family and the Patriarchal power structure that provides the framework of Modern social systems contributes to the low level of

participation by women in politics. Sex-stereotyping and gender segregation in employment and the allocation of roles in private and public life are primarily a product of the early socialisation process, and the indoctrination of the social environment. In this regard, many women have hang-ups and lack confidence in their ability to competently execute public leadership roles. They are socialised to believe that politics is a male domain. In this environment, leadership is perceived as a male domain. Competing with men on terms that have been specifically designed by them puts women competitors at a disadvantaged position, giving rise to the subordination of women (Nzomo, 1992; Kibwana, 1996) .

The socio-cultural traditions tend to assume that women's public roles are secondary and are merely additional activities to their 'primary' domestic roles.

In contemporary times, women and men behave according to ideologies that were culturally transmitted from many centuries ago, and which were transferred through social institutions such as mythology, religion, history, oral literature, and narratives. Gallagher (1981) emphasizes

this fact by stating that the call to give women a separate definition from that of men has been a historically persistent demand. She asserts:

That the problem was formulated as if women had somehow a destiny different from that of men is in itself revealing. Just as important is the fact that the definitions handed down history are those of men, who have been in a position to impose their analyses and prescriptions, whether intellectual, economic or political. For there is no doubt that the cultural images reflect and promote values of the powerful (Gallagher, 1981:11).

Thus, gender roles which define women as perpetual children and the property of men has its basis in the earliest civilisation (Ondicho, 1993) and has been perpetuated through generations the world over.

The African situation is no different. Even as the colonial system destroyed the life patterns and customs of the Africans, it did not attack or alter the gender stratification of the society. On the contrary, it embraced and perpetuated the structures that existed among the various communities and sought to work within that framework, thus breathing new life into patriarchy and giving it new expression in the colonial and post-colonial

political and economic system. (Mathangani, 1995; Okonji, 1976).

**Mathangani** asserts **that this** situation did not **change** when Kenya became independent. Instead, the patriarchal system was absorbed into the government structures and institutions and was further reinforced by the law and social practices that depicted women as inferior, promoted gender stereotypes, and branded women politicians as people **who** had failed to conform to tradition.

Frederiksen sums up the major cultural impediment to women's participation in politics thus:

Gender identify has cross-culturally given rise to social inequities which have left women with less public and, probably, less private power than men. Socially based ethnic inequalities have reinforced women's insubordination in oppressed ethnic groups, but they modify or lessen the suppression of women from favoured ethnic groups. The persistence of marked social difference between groups of women is one factor, which has historically worked against politicisation of women as a group. The social ideological pressure in many societies confining women to the private rather than public space is another. The outcome in Kenya is that women do not count as a political factor of importance. Articulation of female identity and gender conflict does not pose a threat to the hegemony (Frederiksen, 1994).

In this regard Lung'aho (1996) states that redress in the political sphere should therefore begin with the politicisation of women out of the culture of silence and the private sphere. Although women have numerical power as the electorate especially in the rural areas, they usually do not vote for fellow women who contest for elective positions. The woman who ventures into the public sphere is yet to find an acceptable place in most cultures in Kenya.

Illiteracy has also been a contributing factor to women's participation in elections both as contestants and voters. Although it may be viewed as a socio-economic factor, it is important to note that the lack of, or low level of education of girls, is due to a large extent to cultural attitudes. In most communities preference is given to male children when a choice has to be made as to whom should be sent to school. In situations where both girls and boys go to school there is still a tendency to overload the girl child with house chores which limits the time allocated to home work, consequently leading to poor performance in school.



The cultural attitudes that discriminate against girls persist even within the school environment. Kang'oro (1999) states that school girls are sometimes given duties which are thought to be suitable for their role such as cooking, cleaning, and sweeping without involving boy pupils. In many mixed schools girls are hardly assigned positions of responsibility such as prefects, monitors or team leaders. He further states that in the classrooms girls are at times made to feel inferior in subjects such as mathematics and sciences. The textbooks do not help the situation either because they depict girls in the traditional roles (Daily Nation. April 12,1999).

Njiru (1996) has noted that illiteracy keeps women in a subservient position since they lack what it takes to compete in the rapidly changing world. Although there has been a substantial increase in the numbers of girls and women going to school, there are still few women engaged in professions which bestow recognition and influence (Kabeberi-Macharia, 1995).

To a great extent education determines the understanding a new environment and how that environment can be

improved to serve the community or individuals better. This is further determined by the kind of leaders that are elected.

Research on education has shown that women still remain unequal to men with regard to access to education. In formal education, for example, girls comprise 38 per cent of intake in government schools. In 1989, 30 per cent of the students who completed six years of high school education were female and almost the same percentage qualified for admission to one of the public universities in Kenya (Nzomo 1991).

The quality of education offered has also contributed to the subordination of women. Most textbooks, for example, hardly present women in leadership roles. They are only shown in submissive, serving and nurturing roles (Amisi, 1992). Though education is one of the most effective tools of change, the kind of education introduced by the colonisers created inequalities between sexes that has persisted in the post independence era (Datta 1979).

Nzomo (1987) has argued that whatever position women occupy and whatever role and status women are accorded in contemporary Africa, is to a significant extent determined by the quality and quantity of formal education they have access to. Indeed, that women remain underprivileged and under-represented in all-important decision-making positions in the African society, is primarily a function of the institutionalised and structural bias in the education system. It ensures that the amount and type of education made accessible to the majority of women is inappropriate, inadequate or both.

In most cases, the curriculum may be the same for both boys and girls. However, because of the traditional socialisation process, which persists even into the school environment, girls tend to make career choices that lead to professions that limit their access to activities in the public sphere.

**Although** education can be said to be factor that contributes to women's upward mobility, there are, however, other factors that come into play. These include corruption and nepotism where women are elevated to leadership

positions because they are politically correct or because they come from a particular ethnic community, and not necessarily because of their education achievements.

Mitullah (1995) while discussing women's education and leadership also argues that though education is a factor, women still have to over-exert themselves if they have to make it in the male world. She argues that limitation in men's education does not prevent them from assuming positions even as heads of states citing Liberia's Samuel Doe and Uganda's Idi Amin.

The lack of education, and in some instances, low level education of the majority of women limits their ability to articulate relevant issues and the awareness of their political rights, for example, understanding the meaning of the vote and its relationship to electing a candidate. There have been instances where women voted for a candidate who was not of their choice because they did not understand what the symbols stand for. This is significant for women particular because they form the majority of the voting Population.

According to Mbugua (1996), the lack of information and education contributes to the inability to participate in the sharing of power. The lack of education by women cannot be viewed in isolation but as one of the many factors that contribute to the marginalisation of women in politics

### **2.3 Economic empowerment and women's participation**

The Beijing platform for Action (1996) highlights major issues that concern women. The Report states that although women are primary producers of food and contribute significantly to economic life everywhere, they are largely excluded from economic decision-making. In most societies, they lack equal access to and control over various means of production, including land, capital and technology and their work is underpaid and undervalued. Women comprise about 32 per cent of the world labour force. This is, however, not reflected in top decision-making positions **where** they comprise 6.2 per cent of all ministerial Positions and 1.6 per cent in the economic ministries (U.N., 1995).

The impact of changing from the traditional economies to modern ones has resulted in extreme poverty in many African countries where women are the poorest of the poor. Naturally poverty is felt hardest at the household level. One of the impacts of poverty is that it restricts the making of choices (Njiru, 1996). This is particularly true among women. A study conducted by Ndungo (1996) indicates that women are manipulated mainly on account of poverty. The author asserts that women "claim that they can vote for anybody who can give them something to feed their children, give them *lesos* or promise to bring piped water to their constituencies" (Ndungo, 1995:145).

Because of the patriarchal nature of society where property essentially belongs to men, women lack the economic base which would enhance their political participation (Suda, 1996) . in terms of their contribution to the labour force, women spend the larger part of their time in unpaid work. Of the total hours worked by women, 56 per cent are in subsistence or unpaid labour, only six per cent is spent in Paid labour where cash payment is in the form of wages. In contrast, men allocate only 12 per cent of their total working hours to subsistence or unpaid labour (Njiru 1992).

The lack of an economic base for women has been a factor in their participation - or lack of - it in politics because the cost of campaigning is very high. The candidate contesting for a position has to spend money on transport during the campaign period, paying the campaign managers, and in some cases, paying voters to entice them to vote for them. Mitullah (1998) refers to it as the "commercialisation" of campaigns. She states that campaigns involve considerable expenditure including the buying of votes. With limited monetary sources, women cannot afford the expenditure incurred in this process.

## **2.5 Impact of political structures and institutions on women's participation in politics**

### **2.5.1 Political Parties**

Women play important roles in campaigning and mobilising support for their parties, but they rarely occupy decision-making positions. In fact less than 11% of party leaders worldwide are women (Shvedova, 1998) .



Shvedova further states that the selection and nomination process within political parties is also biased against women in that "male characteristics" are emphasised and often become the criteria in selecting candidates.

In Africa, the power holders have used political parties as instruments of political control. These parties are mainly male dominated especially at the top hierarchies. Party posts are awarded or denied depending on the disposition of power seekers towards the political establishment. Those who have access to the top managers of parties are men. In Kenya, it is not possible to seek for election to a civic or parliamentary position without being a member of a party. To participate effectively in politics outside the party framework is, therefore, very difficult.

Between 1969-1992 Kenya was a single party state. Given **that** it is a requirement that one can only contest for elections on a registered party ticket, it has been difficult for women to be nominated because men heavily dominate the existing party structures. The Kenya African **National** Union (KANU) for example, which is also the ruling Party has structures that comprise the National Executive



**Committee**, National Governing Council, the Delegates **Conference** and committees at district, branch, location and sub-location levels. There are also other organs such as the Women's League and Youth League. Women are represented in all party organs except the National Executive **Committee**. Nonetheless, the representation **of** women is still weak throughout the party structure.

With the exception of the Women's League, women KANU officials are relatively few and representation is even lower at the higher levels in the party structure (Anangwe and Wanyande, 1996) . No woman has ever been elected or appointed to any of the national executive positions. It is only recently that a woman Member of Parliament made history by becoming the first woman KANU district branch chairperson for Makueni District, although this was later nullified.

The trend is the same in other registered political parties with the exception the Social Democratic Party which nominated Mrs Charity Ngilu as the first ever female Presidential candidate for the 1997 elections.

No comprehensive study has, however, so far been carried out on the impact of the existing political structures on women's participation in politics, but observations on KANU indicate that women are marginalised and they face stiff competition from the men who are already well entrenched in the party hierarchy.

#### **2.5.2 Mass Media**

Other institutions that have an impact on the participation of women in politics include the mass media. In a world where women's access to political and economic empowerment is in most cases severely limited, their status and roles are defined within political, economic and cultural systems which tend to exclude them from active participation and therefore limit their access to the mass media. The mass media's role is primarily to reinforce definitions and identities set in a framework constructed for and by men. When that framework expands to admit women, the media can be seen to reflect this expansion.

An overriding concern for women, therefore should be with **changes** in the political and economic structure (Gallagher,

1981) . Since the media are a potentially powerful agent of socialisation, they can be used to enhance the empowerment of women, including the bolstering of women's confidence. This also includes the elimination of stereotypical and negative images of women, which shape the public opinion and attitudes towards women and undermine society's confidence in them. Of particular importance in this regard is the need to improve the portrayal of women in the communication media which are a powerful vehicle for moulding public opinion and determining people's perception of social reality.

Cognizant of the power of the media, the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing (1995) highlights the communication media as a 'critical area of concern' - "one of the ten major obstacles to women's progress and an area in which extensive strategic action must be taken if equality is to become a reality" (Gallagher, 1995:6). Of major concern is the negative portrayal of women in the media.

<sup>a</sup> study on the 'portrayal of the women in Nigerian home video films, Okunna (1996) found that in most of the films

using the Igbo language, the recurrent themes were of barrenness, polygamy, materialism and desperate quests for husbands, which are repeated and bring out the worst in women. A majority of the respondents in the study were of the opinion that the negative portrayal of women was unrealistic. Indeed, 81 per cent of them stated that they could not think of women whom they know who could fit the portrayal of women in the films.

From her study, Okunna concludes that in this era of women's empowerment, these films are counterproductive and damaging to the cause of women. Rather than contribute to the much needed empowerment of Nigerian women, such films lead to the subjugation of women because they increase men's disdain for women, sow seeds of distrust between women, undermine their confidence in themselves, and strengthen the forces which push women to the background in that patriarchal society.

The role of the media in elections is crucial. The lack of coverage of women's issues, and the activities of women Parliamentarians results in the lack of a forum for Revoking public awareness about these issues.

Consequently, this translates into the lack of a constituency for women in political positions (Shvedova 1998) .

## **2.6 Theoretical Framework**

This study used the gender perspective to conceptualise and analyse the factors that influence women's participation in politics.

### **2.6.1 The Gender Perspective**

Gender is seen as a concept that involves cultural interpretation of the biological differences between women and men. It is an analytical term that is used to distinguish between the biological (sex) and cultural (gender) dimension. It is a socio-cultural construct whereby women and men are perceived through socially and culturally defined roles as opposed to sex, which refers to the biological differences between men and women. Gender identity includes psychosexual developments, learning social roles, and shaping sexual preferences. Social

rearing or socialisation is a crucial element for gender identity (Gagnon and Henderson 1985) . According to Oakley:

To be a man or a woman, boy or a girl, is as much a function of dress, gesture, occupation, social network and personality as it is of possessing a particular set of genitals (Oakley, 1972: 158).

Personality development is therefore based on socially ascribed roles. The socialisation process that one goes through is appropriated, internalised and organised, and it constitutes the individual's personality. What is internalised becomes a permanent feature of one's personality.

The gender perspective recognises "gender" as the key principle that organises social arrangements, actions and even cognition' (Hess and Ferre, 1987). These socio-cultural arrangements, actions, and cognitions include roles, perceptions, beliefs, and self-images. They all constitute parts of a community culture. They are understood and internalised by communities through nurture and socialisation. According to Eshete (1991), traditionally society assumes that there are observable

differences between the sexes and that personal abilities are the result of differential socialisation.

Because these socially constructed differences result in discriminatory reward, status, opportunities, and roles, it is necessary to change the social structures that encourage them and the culture that perpetuates them. Eshete further states that gender roles and relations are culturally ascribed statuses that develop the subjective awareness that one is a member of the male or female sex. They therefore create the motivations to conform to culturally prescribed expectations and to determine the rights, duties, and power relations within the socio-economic system. Thus, women's subordination in societies is not something that can be changed by rearranging certain tasks and roles in the social system. The potential lies in changing the social institutions at the same time as changing cultural assumptions through consciousness-raising and involvement by both men and women.

### **2.6.2 Relevance of the gender perspective to the study**

Gender is seen as a concept that involves cultural interpretations of the biological differences between men and women and thus entails on the one hand, men's and women's active roles in society and on the other hand ingrained social ideas about femininity and masculinity. What men and women should do and how they ought to behave and interact spliced together with cultural, social and legal interpretations of perceived gender differences constitute a gender system (Stolen 1991:5) This system has various components and different approaches that include the following.

#### **Relational Approach**

The Relational Approach to Gender focuses on how men and women relate in terms of opportunities, distribution of resources and access to resources. This approach shifts from earlier feminist approaches where the emphasis was on women alone. The focus is now on how men and women are socialised to be socially domineering and subordinate respectively. This approach is based on the premise that gender relations are the result of negotiated social orders which require to be renegotiated in order to mainstream all gender issues all aspects of social life.



### **The Transformational Approach**

The Transformational Approach is based on changes in gender roles. Stolen (1991) argues that a gender system acknowledges that gender is constantly transformed as socio-economic, cultural and legal changes take place. The assumption is that the activities men and women carry out change over time and this may also lead to change in attitudes. The objective in this approach, therefore, is to look for oppressive structures, change them and create more equitable sharing of roles. This also, involves the monitoring of various interventions on men and women in terms of, for example, technological advances and education programmes with the intention of assessing how these interventions affect the progress of both men and women.

### **The Holistic Approach**

The Holistic approach stipulates that gender issues should be integrated as a category of analysis in assessing gender relations in programmes and development initiatives. This approach considers the totality of social organisation, economic and political life in order to understand the nature of other aspects of society. In this approach, the interaction between domestic life and the organisation of both political and economic spheres are analysed.

Using the Gender perspective, the study sought to determine factors influencing women's participation in politics by analysing the relationship between men and women and the holistic interaction of women and men contributes to **women's** subordinate role, and consequently to their low participation in politics.

## **2.7 Working Hypotheses**

1. Social and cultural factors undermine the participation of women in politics;
2. Existing economic and political structures impede the participation of women in politics.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter describes and discusses the study site, the sample and sampling procedure, data collection techniques, the research instruments used, and the framework of analysis.

#### **3.1 Site selection**

The site for this study was Kibera Division in Nairobi. The choice of Kibera as the research site was dictated by funding. Since the funds available were limited, it was necessary to conduct the research in Nairobi in order to reduce on travel expenses.

The specific study sites in Kibera Division were Kibera and Woodley wards. Kibera Division was selected because of its accessibility for the researcher. Kibera Ward has a large population of low-income people while Woodley Ward is largely composed of a middle income population. The residents in this area are not of equal socio-economic

income status and most of them have ties with the rural areas. As such it was felt that Kibera would provide a suitable site that would capture respondents who would give useful insights into factors influencing women's participation in politics. This site cannot be said to be large enough for the findings obtained to be representative of the national situation. The findings could, however, be used as a basis for further research.

### **3.2 Site Description**

Nairobi is the largest of the East African cities. It is the Capital City and seat of the government of Kenya. According to the 1989 census, Nairobi has a population of 1,346,000 (CBS 1991). The city is subdivided into divisions for administrative purposes. Kibera Division is one of these divisions and has a high population density. Kibera/Woodley Division has a total population of 224,448 residents out of whom 127,847 are male and 96,601 are female. It stretches across an area of 230 square kilometers and has a density of 976 people per square kilometre.

### **3.3 Sampling**

The population universe was the residents of Kibera/Woodley Wards. The sample was drawn purposively and was limited to women and men who are eligible to vote or to contest for parliamentary and civic seats. This meant the researcher went door to door purposively looking for people who met the this qualification.

From the total population of the site which is 224,448 (CBS 1991) , a sample of 77 informants was purposively selected from each study site, that is, Kibera ward and Woodley, giving a total of 154 informants. Since this was an exploratory study the researcher was convinced that this number of respondents would be adequate to give some incites on the objectives of the study.

#### **3.3.1 Sample Selection**

Babbie (1995) defines purposive sampling as a form of non-probability sampling method in which the researcher uses his or her own judgement in the selection of sample members. The subjects selected have to meet the study's needs.

This method was preferred in this study because the respondents had to meet a certain criteria to qualify as respondents. For example, the respondents had to be eighteen or above since under the laws of Kenya this is the age for eligibility to vote or contest for parliamentary and civic positions. Before proceeding with the interview the respondents were asked whether they had registered as voters and whether they had a voting card. Those who had not acquired a voting card were not interviewed.

#### **3.4 Data collection**

The data used in the study was derived from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was generated from field research that was carried out in Kibera Division of Nairobi Province. This involved collection of both qualitative and quantitative data using two semi-structured questionnaires. One of the questionnaires was administered to the general respondents and the other to the key informants. Since this study was conducted during the 1997 general election campaign period, the observation technique was also applied. While this was not done in any systematic order, the information gathered offered insights into the Process

Secondary data was obtained through perusal of literature in both published and unpublished documents on the participation of women in politics and factors influencing their participation. These included literature accessed in libraries at the University of Nairobi, the United Nations offices, particularly UNIFEM, government departments such as the Women's Bureau and local non-governmental organisations. Newspapers and other publications that had material on the subject matter were also reviewed.

#### **3.4.1 Interviews**

Interviews for this study were conducted on the basis of themes and questions contained in the questionnaires that were administered with help of two research assistants. In a few cases, the informants opted to fill the instruments themselves.

Two semi-structured questionnaires had been prepared before going to the field to elicit data pertinent to the study.

Of the questionnaires was designed to elicit formation from key informants. These are people who had

participated in elections as contestants for parliamentary and civic seats, while the other was for respondents who had registered as voters and were therefore in a position to vote in the general elections.

The key informants' questionnaire sought information regarding their background, their perceptions on women's participation in parliamentary and civic elections, and their views on what they perceived to be the factors that determine women's participation in politics. The questionnaire for the key informants, sought information regarding the factors that contributed to their seeking parliamentary and civic positions, the problems they encountered, and the changes they would suggest which would enable more women to participate in politics.

The questions were in English but were translated into **Kiswahili** for those who did not understand English. The key **informants** were women and men who had sought elective **Positions** for parliamentary and civic seats during the general elections. Since the study coincided with the 1997 **General** elections, most of those who responded contested in



the 1997 elections. The field study was carried out between **November** 1997 and January 1998.

#### **3.4.2 Library Research**

**Library** research went on throughout the period of **the** study. Information contained in the Literature Review (**Chapter** Two) was initially collected before **the** study began and was reviewed continuously and added on during the study.

#### **3.4.3 Observations and general discussions**

Since the study was carried out during the campaign period, the researcher attended some of the meetings organised by non-governmental organisations for women who hoped to participate in the elections. During the field work period, sporadic campaign meetings were held in Kibera and the researcher observed the process. These observations helped in raising discussions with people on an *ad hoc* basis. Information gathered in this manner helped to enrich the findings.

## **2.5 Data Analysis**

primary data was analysed electronically with the help of a statistician using the Statistical Package for Social **Sciences** (SPSS). Percentage distributions of pertinent **variables** were tabulated and these formed the basis for deductions made in this study.

### **Problems Encountered in the study**

#### **(i) Documents**

Documents specific to factors influencing the participation of women in parliamentary and civic positions were not easily accessible. However a lot of information was obtained from workshops and workshop proceedings held prior to the 1997 elections and discussions during the campaign period.

#### **(ii) Mistrust and suspicion due to timing**

Since the study was carried out during the campaign period, respondents tended to be suspicious and distrustful of the <sup>re</sup>searchers intentions. In addition, interviews held during <sup>We</sup>ekends were at times interrupted by campaigners. The <sup>1</sup>nterviews would be held up until the campaigners left.

This proved to be time consuming. The informants thought the researcher had been sent as a spy while others thought the researcher was trying to campaign for the female presidential candidate. Some refused to be interviewed while others were very cautious on what they said. The researcher noted that this could have led to self-censorship. However, not all were hostile. Some were very open.

**(iii) Access to some categories of respondents**

Access in the middle class area was very difficult. During weekdays it was difficult to get access to the residents. As a result, most of the interviews were conducted during weekends. Those who worked in the neighbourhood, such as Kenya Science Teachers College, the Meteorology Department, and primary schools were interviewed in their places of work. However the researcher had to seek appointments in advance so as not to inconvenience them.

**(iv) Expectations of respondents**

In some cases some of the informants asked for money. The researcher had to explain that this was an academic exercise and there was no money to give. Some would refuse

to be interviewed after realising that no money was being offered, while others agreed to proceed with the interview. Interviews were therefore only carried out with those who were willing.

(v) Lack of funding

**Although** funding was sought for this study, the funds available were inadequate. Consequently the study could only be carried out in Nairobi, which helped to reduce transport costs.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the demographic characteristics of the respondents and their significance to the study.

#### **4.1 Characteristics of respondents**

##### **4.1.2 Gender Ratio of respondents**

The study sample consisted of a total of 154 respondents, both men and women drawn from Woodley and Kibera wards of Nairobi. The gender ratio of respondents was about 1:1.

##### **4.1.3 Age of respondents**

As stated in Chapter one, the study aimed at analysing factors influencing women's participation, both as voters and contestants in parliamentary and civic seats. It therefore targeted eligible voters who had attained the age of 18 years at the time of the study. The information on the age of the respondents was, therefore, important to the

study. Table 4.1 shows the distribution of respondents by age.

**Table 4.1 Distribution of Respondents by Age (N=154)**

<b>AGE (YRS)</b>	<b>Men %</b>	<b>Women %</b>	<b>Both %</b>
<b>Below 20</b>	1.3	1.3	2.6
"20- 29	16.9	20.8	37.8
30- 39	12.3	12.4	24.7
40- 49	14.3	13.6	27.9
50- 59	1.3	0.6	1.9
<b>60 and above</b>	1.9	1.9	3.8
Non response	0.6	0.6	1.2

Most of the respondents interviewed were within the 20-29 **and** 40-49 age bracket accounting for 37.8 per cent and 27.9 **per cent** of the sample respectively. Out of these, 16.9 **per cent** were men while 20.8 per cent were women. Majority of **them** (90 per cent) fell in the 20-49 years age bracket. **Those** aged 20 and below constituted only 26 per cent of **eligible** voters.

### 4.1.3 Religion

Religion is one of the important factors that influence peoples way of life. This study therefore considered the importance of this factor and sought to know the respondent's religious affiliation, which are shown in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2 Distribution of respondents by religion (N=154)**

RELIGION	Men	Women	Both
Christian	44.8	55.2	88.3
Muslim	3.2	7.1	10.4
Other	0.6	0.6	1.2

The Christian community comprised the bulk of the study population (88.3%) with the Muslim community constituting only 10.4 per cent. Only a small proportion of the respondents stated their religion as 'other' category. Respondents were, however, not required to specify their denominations.

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^though the Muslim community constituted 10.4 per cent  
Ve\*"all of those interviewed, an analysis of the respective

individual areas indicated that Kibera had a higher population of Muslims than Woodley, with percentages of 14 and 2.8 per cent respectively. 97.2 per cent of Woodley residents interviewed were Christians compared to 66 per cent in Kibera.

Conway et al. (1991), while analysing women and political participation, state that religious beliefs affect political orientation because the doctrines of many religions are based on patriarchal authority. As such women who belong to denominations which adopt a patriarchal view on roles appropriate for women are likely to be less involved in politics than those who are from more liberal denominations.

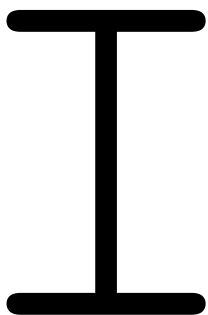
Indeed, informal discussions with church leaders involved in civic education workshops revealed that leaders from different denominations had varied views on this issue. One church leader from the African Inland church was of the **°pinion** that women sho'uld not be appointed to senior church **Positions** or ordained as church leaders. Women could, however lead fellow women in church and in women's groups.



A Catholic Bishop interviewed as a key informant was also of the opinion that women cannot be ordained as church leaders. He justified his view by stating that when Jesus ordained his disciples, he did not ordain any woman.

The significance of these views within the context of this study is that being denied leadership within the Church may also affect women's perceptions of leadership even in the broader sense of leadership within the wider society including politics.

In this study, therefore, respondents were asked to specify their religious beliefs. It was felt that this question was important in order to determine whether religious beliefs influenced the participation of women, both as voters and as contestants in civic and parliamentary positions. During the field work, it was noted that some of respondents refused to be interviewed saying that involvement in Politics was against their religious principles.



#### 4.1.5 Marital Status

**Marital** status was considered important because it falls **within** the cultural factors that are considered to influence the participation of women in politics. Out of the 154 respondents interviewed, an overwhelming 73.2% were married, while only 21.6% were single. Another 3.2% and 2.0% comprised of those widowed and separated respectively (see table 4.3) . Of those married, men comprised 39 per cent while women accounted for 37.7 per cent. **Only** 3.2 per cent of women indicated there were widowed while 1.3 per cent were separated. None of the men were widowed **and** only one indicated he was separated.

Table 4.3 **Distribution of respondents by marital status**  
(N=154)

MARITAL STATUS	Men	Women	%
Single	9.0	12.6	21.6
Married	39.0	34.2	73.2
Widowed		3.2	3.2
Separated	0.6	1.3	2.0

In traditional African society, leadership is viewed as a public domain that should be left to the men, while women are expected to take care of the home and children. This was particularly useful among the key informants because it helped to determine whether their marital status had anything to do with their decision to contest for an elective post, and also in the outcome of the elections. One of the key informants interviewed said that her campaigners kept bringing up the fact that she was divorced to put her down, but she managed to convince her electorate that her marital status did not matter so long as she could perform her duties. She won the elections but this continues to be a factor that is used to put women down.

Among the men key informants it was important to determine whether the marital status of women determined acceptability of women involved in politics compared to single women. In fact one of the key informants clearly stated that one of the reasons that make men hesitant to accept women leaders is because they cannot reconcile their Participation in public life or leadership with their roles within the home. He expressed fear that if a woman became a

leader, for example a minister; she may refuse to submit to her husband at home, which would lead to a marital conflict.

#### **4.1.6 Level of Education**

Information on the education levels of respondents was sought with a view to determining whether there were any differences of opinion among the respondents on the whether the participation of women in politics is determined by the level of education. Forty one per cent of the respondents had secondary school education followed by university education (19.6%) (see Table 4.4). Those with tertiary education were 11 per cent while only 5.5 per cent indicated they had never gone to school. Out of all the respondents with formal education women accounted for 46.7 per cent while men accounted for 41.2 per cent. It is interesting to note from the table that there were more women in the lower levels of formal education than men.

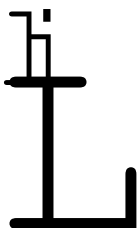
**Education** accordirfg to most gender studies as highlighted <sup>1n</sup> the Literature review is one of the key variables that determine women's political participation and general Public decision making processes.

An analysis of the study area of the two residential zones of different economic status revealed that Woodley has a relatively higher literacy level than Kibera with more than 90 per cent having attained secondary education level and above and 35 per cent having university education compared to Kibera's 6.1 per cent.

**Table 4.4 Respondents' Level of Education (N=154)**

EDUCATION LEVEL	Men	Women	%
None	1.3	3.9	5.2
Primary	9.1	13.0	22.1
Secondary	24.0	16.9	43.9
Tertiary	4.5	7.1	11.8
University	9.7	9.7	19.6

**Mitullah** (1994), states that in the contemporary political world, education and employment prepare people for public life and that literate women qualify to contest for **Parliamentary** and civic seats. However, their comparatively **lower** level of education limits their participation in the <sup>ou</sup>r market and reduces their networking capacity, thus



making it more difficult for them to fit into the public sphere.

The Constitution of Kenya does not determine the level of education one has to have to be elected. It only states that one has to be able to read and write. This however does not mean that women and men compete on an equal basis for political positions. Men are usually at an advantage particularly because they have easier access to economic resources. Women therefore have to go an extra mile and having a good background in education may increase their chances of accessing information that will make them better placed when competing for political positions.

#### **4.1.7 Occupation**

Respondents were asked to specify their occupation. It was noted that this ranged from professionals such as teachers, technicians, and civil servants of various categories, to self-employed business people. Those who specified their occupation as business were the majority. To obtain comparable figures, the occupation variable was broken down into five main classes namely:

Formal employment (teachers, civil servants, secretaries, etc.)

Informal employment (business people, Jua Kali hoteliers, hairdressers, etc.)

Housewives

Unemployed

Other (e.g. students)

Table 4.5 below illustrates this categorization.

Table 4.5 Distribution of respondents by occupation (N=154)

OCCUPATION	Men	Women	Both
Formal Employment	28.6	6.5	35.1
Informal employment	19.9	5.2	25.1
House wife	.	11.7	11.7
Unemployed	4.9	20.1	25.0
Missing observations	-	3.9	3.9

Out of 154 respondents, 35% were in the formal employment category while 24.7% were in the informal sector. About 12% of women respondents indicated that they were housewives while another 24.7% stated they were unemployed (see table 4-5). Out of the 35 per cent respondents in informal employment, only 6.5 were women as compared to 28.6 per cent men. Further women constitute 20.1 per cent of the

unemployed in this study. Prior research in gender studies indicate that occupation plays a significant factor in womens access to political and public positions particularly as it relates income and providing an economic base from which to launch campaigns. This is further discussed in Chapter Five where some of the key informants indicated that their occupation was instrumental in their being able to elected into political positions.

Out of those respondents earning over Ksh 6000 per month, men constituted 22 per cent while women accounted for 11 per cent. Income as indicated in prior studies is a key determinant for women's participation in politics. It is related to their ablility to exercise their autonomy in making decisions of whether or not to join politics. Most women do not have a say on even the little money they make because culture dictates that men are the household heads and therefore make the decisions.

#### **4.1.8 Levels of income**

Regarding respondents' income levels, 33 percent indicated that they earned over Kshs.6, 000/- while those earning between Kshs. 2,000/- to Kshs. 3,000/- constituted 21 per cent (see table 4.6).



**Table 4.6 Distribution of respondents by income levels**

**(N=154)**

<b>LEVEL OF INCOME</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>%</b>
1,000 and below	1.3	1.9	2.6
1,001 -2,000	3.2	7.1	10.4
2,001 - 3,000	5.8	4.5	10.4
3,001 - 4,000	2.6	2.6	5.2
4,001 - 5,000	3.9	3.2	7.1
5,001 - 6,000	5.8	5.8	11.7
6,001 and above	22.0	11.0	33.1
Missing observations	4.5	14.9	19.4

**Chapter five gives the analyses of the data described in this chapter.**

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSES AND DISCUSSION

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the major findings of this study—particularly the factors, which influence women's political participation in Kenya. These include community beliefs and attitudes, women's empowerment, levels of education and institutions that affect their participation in politics.

Before endeavouring to establish factors that influence women's participation in politics, the study sought to find out whether there existed any participation at all and at what levels. The study established that about 95 per cent of the sampled population registered for elections as voters while 92.9 per cent indicated that they had participated in voting.

**In** spite of the fact that the majority of the respondents **were** registered voters (95%) and also cast their votes **during** elections (92.9%), only a small number declared having had interest in political positions (3.2%). These

tallies with findings by Tostensen et al (1998) that state that Kenyan women have not been able to translate their numerical strength into a commensurate role in politics. Politically they remain a marginalised majority and tend to trail men in political practice and leadership.

**Tostensen** et al further state that in comparison to their **male** counterparts, more women turn up to vote although very **few** present themselves as candidates. It also confirms the **view** put forward in this study that though women form over 50 per cent of the population, their participation in politics is still insignificant, thus lending credit to the **fact** that there are underlying causes for this situation.

### **5.1 Factors influencing women's political participation**

The respondents gave their opinions on factors that contribute to the small number of women holding political positions. This was an open-ended question which elicited various answers that were then grouped thematically as lack of empowerment, traditional attitudes which define gender roles, low education levels, religious factors and also the attitude of the electorate. The attitude of the electorate seen in relation to cultural attitudes and

socialisation whereby women are expected to be at home and not seeking political positions.

As shown on table 5.1 lack of empowerment of women scored the highest both among men (15%) and women (17%). This was followed by traditional attitudes and beliefs, which scored 12 per cent (men) and 11 per cent (women).

**Table 5.1 Factors influencing Women's Participation in Politics (N=154)**

<b>Factors</b>	MALE (%)	FEMALE (%)	BOTH (%)
Religious beliefs	5.2 (8)	6.9 (10)	11.7 (18)
Women's empowerment	15.0 (23)	17.0 (26)	32.0 (49)
Education	9.0 (14)	10.0 (15)	19.0 (29)
Traditional beliefs	12.0 (18)	11.0 (17)	23.0 (35)
Electorate's attitudes	7.9 (12)	6.8 (10)	14.3 (22)

From the table it can be said the women's participation in politics is clearly undermined by various factors, the highest being the lack of empowerment which is mainly caused by the lack of access to resources and also the attitude of the society.

Although cultural attitudes ranked fourth on the rating some of the key informants felt that culture had a key role to play. However, the interpretation of what is cultural is determined by the players as this woman who was seeking a civic position narrates.

I was campaigning to be elected a councillor in Muranga. Though I did not succeed on an elective ticket, I was nominated and therefore now I am a nominated councillor. In retrospect I don't think I can do it again because I went through a lot. My opponent started a campaign against me saying that I was not circumcised that therefore I was not a true Kikuyu woman. He hired youth who went around saying that I should prove whether I was. Of course it was very demeaning for me. In traditional Kikuyu society circumcision was the very common but since the advent of Christianity, this does not happen as much. So I don't think they were saying this because they believed it was culturally correct but they just wanted to bring me down. Though I had education and a reasonable amount of money, it did not stop them hitting at me just because of my gender.

**A woman key informant who** had contested for a civic **Position emphasised the fact** that women are particularly **disadvantaged because of lack** of finances and the cultural

attitudes of society towards women. Narrating her own experience, she said that:

When I decided to get into politics, I was confident because I was campaigning in the area where I was working with the Family Planning Association of Kenya. Little did I realise that this was not enough. My family and my marital status became an issue. I was separated from my husband and my opponents dwelt on that saying that if I could not keep my husband how did I expect to be a role model for the people I was trying to lead. I was accused of neglecting my family and spending so much time with my male campaigners. Some of my strong women supporters abandoned me because they felt that campaigning for me would jeopardise their marriage. I find it interesting that those who supported me more strongly were the men. I can only attribute this to the fact they were in control of their homes as opposed to the women who had to answer to their spouses.

With regard to money, I did not have much. What helped me most was my past record with community members. Had I gone to contest there as a new entrant, I would not have managed because my name was maligned and I did not have as much money as my competitors.

**Linking her job to education this key informant noted that**

It is very important for women to get educated because that is the only way they can access public life particularly because they do not have control of resources. Take me for example. I went to school up to form two and then I trained as a social worker. This training is what helped me get a job with Family Planning Association of Kenya and for over 20 years I worked with these communities. It means that if I did not have the education I would not have been given the job and consequently I would not have managed to campaign.

Other female key informants who were interviewed in this study gave similar views.

This observation confirms a key hypothesis of this study that women interested in seeking political posts are more likely to encounter more problems than their male counterparts. After analysing the information given by the key informants, it is possible to state that women face more problems than men particularly because, by getting into politics they encroach on an area that is exclusively perceived as a male domain where they are regarded as intruders.

The study sought views from the respondents on women contesting for political positions. Regarding the kind of political positions that women should vie for, the majority of the respondents (about 40%) were indifferent. However approximately 35 per cent were of the opinion that women should hold parliamentary and civic seats. Less than 10 per cent were of the opinion that women could hold presidential Positions.

There was a notable range of reasons given on these views. Slightly under half of the respondents (45%) supported **i** women's candidacy for presidential and parliamentary seats and asserted that women are as capable as men in terms of performance. They therefore need to be given equal opportunities provided they meet the required qualifications.

On the other hand, those who felt that women should only vie for civic positions were of the opinion that women cannot cope with the responsibilities associated with higher positions. This attitude towards women can be said to result from socio-cultural gender based roles where women are expected to stay in the private domain while men are expected to be leaders. Thus women's position in the political realm cannot be viewed in isolation; it should be viewed in relation to the gender based roles of women *vis a vis* those of men.



**Table 5.2 Ideal political positions for women (N=154)**

<b>Positions</b>	<b>Men %</b>	<b>Women %</b>	<b>Both %</b>
Any position	15.9 (24)	26.4 (41)	41.9% (65)
Member of parliament	6.2 (10)	10.0 (15)	25.1% (25)
Civic Position	7.0 (11)	14.9 (23)	21.9% (34)
Presidential Position	1.3 (2)	9.0 (13)	9.7% (15)

Table 5.2 shows that although a large percentage of men and women were of the view that women could hold any position, the - percentage diminished when it came to specific positions such as members of parliament and presidency. This diminishing in percentage is however disproportionate by gender with a less percentage observed among men respondents. On the whole it seems that if women were sensitised many would support fellow women as the distinction in views is already clear from the table. This implies that any strategies aimed at enhancing women's political participation must first target women themselves.

**The respondents were then asked to explain their answer. Those who said that women could vie for parliamentary and Presidential positions said that women were as capable as**

men; that women can be trusted because they keep their word; and that they are more accessible than men. Others were of the opinion that women in other countries had attained such high levels in politics such as being Prime Ministers, and that there was no reason as to why Kenyan women should not occupy similar positions.

Those who said women should not vie for political positions gave reasons such as: lack of suitable positions for women; difficulties in women commanding respect, and the belief that a woman's place is at home. These answers reflect the cultural attitudes of society towards women.

Political participation, like any other undertaking has financial implications. It therefore requires that participants be economically sound and influential. Mitullah (1994) , Wanyande (1993) and Totensen *et al* (1998) cite the lack of economic empowerment of women as a contributing factor to their failure to participate in electoral politics. The amount of financial resources required in campaigns is prohibitive for most women. Hence, this study sought to find out how the respondents rated the economic status of women (see table 5.3).

**Table 5.3 Respondents' rating of women's economic status**

(N=154)

<b>Women's economic status</b>	<b>Male %</b>	<b>Female %</b>	<b>Both %</b>
Low	20.7 (32)	25.9 (40)	46.8 (72)
High	20.7 (32)	21.4 (33)	42.2 (65)
Moderate	6.9 (10)	2.9 (4)	9.1 (14)
Cannot tell			
Missing observations		1.3 (2)	1.3 (2)

As shown in table 5.3 both men and women rated women's economic status as low. A higher number of women rated women's economic status as low (25.9%) compared to men (20.7). The fact that the economic status of women was rated low by a large percentage of the respondents' attests to the fact that women's low rate of participation in politics could be attributed to their low economic status.

The reasons given as contributing to the low economic status of women were the fact that most of them have poor education levels, and therefore are not skilled enough to

get high paying jobs. Many are also unemployed. Those who are in business have small-scale businesses and earn just enough to meet their basic needs. The issue of lack of economic empowerment and its impact on women's participation in politics was also emphasised by the key informants who all stated that it was difficult for them to compete effectively especially during the campaign period when a lot of money was required.

Women's lack of resources can also be traced to culture and the patriarchal society where property belonged to the male / head of the household. Although women have user rights in property in most households, they cannot make decisions on how family resources should be used or allocated; therefore they cannot generate substantial incomes of their own. This finding partly confirms the hypothesis that cultural factors affect the economic empowerment of women, and hence influence their participation in politics.

The lack of an\* economic base impacts on women both as contestants and voters. As contestants, they find it difficult to compete with men who in most cases have more resources. One of the biggest problems facing women, as

indicated by the women key informants who had sought elective positions, was the lack of funds for campaigning. They could not spend as much as their male counterparts and this also weakened their campaigns.

As voters, women tend to vote for those who can afford to give them money. Women therefore end up voting for people they do not necessarily think are competent, but who are capable of giving out money during campaigns. This, however, is not always the case. In some situations the question of whether or not the woman has money does not arise. Even in cases where a woman has more resources than a man, she is still disadvantaged by the cultural disposition of society.

Ndungo (1996) in a study on community perspectives on the electoral process states that women are mainly manipulated because of poverty. One of the female key informants when asked to comment about this said that:

To a certain extent this is true and it is a serious problem. Some of the women I gave money to just took it and went to my opponent and told him how much I had given them and he gave them more. It reached a point that on the eve of elections I took those who on my side to my house to ensure that they did not change camp at night. But this does

not really help much because you cannot take the whole community to the house. I selected those that were influential because if they move camp they would have taken with them a huge following. It was very expensive for me but I had no choice.

A follow up question on the issue of women's economic empowerment regarding what should be done to improve women's economic status was raised. Education was cited as one avenue through which women could improve their status. The respondents said that through education women could acquire skills that would open up the high paying job market for them. Their economic empowerment would consequently give them an income that could be used for political campaigns. In this regard, the key informants stated that education would make women more confident. It would also make it easier for them to get access to information on politics, and help improve their networking.

A change in legislation especially on property ownership within marriage was also recommended. The key female informants particularly felt that the law should make it compulsory for property within marriage to be registered jointly. This would make it easier for women to have access to the proceeds from family property. Respondents also recommended that a change in legislation should include a

change in customary law that allows for the men to be sole owners of family property.

Some of the respondents also suggested that positive discrimination or affirmative action in job allocation should be encouraged so that more women could gain access to high-income jobs.

Some respondents suggested that a special fund be established to assist women to start businesses since they did not have collateral to put in the banks and therefore could not get bank loans. This would help women to be economically empowered.

The study sought to find out from the respondents whether they thought a woman's level of education affects her chances of participating effectively in politics. More than 51 per cent of respondents were of the view that women's level of education affects their participation in politics. The key informant's also concurred with this view. They were then asked to state how many years of schooling that a woman would need to succeed in politics. Table 5.4 below gives the breakdown of the responses.

**Table 5.4 VIEWS ON THE YEARS OF SCHOOLING A WOMAN SHOULD HAVE TO SUCCEED IN POLITICS (N=154)**

<b>EDUC. LEVEL</b>	<b>MALE %</b>	<b>FEMALE %</b>	<b>BOTH %</b>
Primary	10.1 (16)	15.5 (24)	25.6 (40)
Secondary	28.5 (44)	24.4 (38)	52.9 (82)
College/ Training	12.0 (18)	5.6 (9)	17.6 (27)
University	2.9 (4)	1.4 (2)	3.9 (6)

From the data, provided in the above table, it would appear that the attainment of education, to at least secondary school level was considered necessary for a woman to participate effectively in politics.

Respondents were also asked to state the point in the education system at which women should be informed about politics. Out of the total sample of 154 respondents, 45.5 per cent said such education should start at primary school level while 26 .6 per cent suggested high school level. Ten per cent felt that political education should be offered out of school wfiile the rest thought it should be offered at all levels. (See Table 5.5)



**Table 5.5 Views on the level of education at which women should be informed about politics (N=154)**

<b>Level</b>	<b>Men</b> %	<b>Women</b> %	<b>Both</b> %
Primary	44.4 (68)	51.7 (80)	96.1 (148)
High school	36.1 (56)	19.0 (29)	55.2 (85)
College	8.4 (13)	1.3 (2)	9.7 (15)
Out of school	4.2 (6)	17.3 (27)	21.5 (33)
All levels	6.9 (11)	10.7 (16)	17.6 (27)

It can be observed from the table 5.5 that compared to men, more women (51.7%) felt that women should be informed on political issues at primary school level. A considerable proportion of men (44.4%) also supported this view. This corroborates the views reflected in other works on women's participation. For example, Shvedova (1998) supports the view that it is important for women to access training in political leadership from an early stage. This includes training in community based organisations on the concerns of women, gendered political awareness raising, lobbying skills and networking.

A probing question on what should be done to improve women's opportunities in education elicited varied

responses on this issue. They included the view that parents should be sensitised on the importance of educating both boys and girls, that affirmative action should be introduced to give girls more opportunities, and that cultural practices discriminating against girls should be banned. Such practices include early marriages and traditional role expectations whereby girls are expected to help in housework instead of doing their school work while boys are given freedom to study.

The study also sought to establish how information on political issues was obtained. From the findings it was noted that no single source of information could be identified. The categories given were other people, radio, newspapers, television and all the above. Out of the total respondents, 29 per cent said that they got their information from all the suggested sources while 17 per cent cited radio as the source of information. A few (9.7%) cited other people, 4.5 per cent said newspapers while 1.3 per cent said television. From the available data, it is evident the radio was cited as the single most common source of political information.

This could be attributed to the fact that there is easy access to the radio. Because radio is cheaper than television and its possible to use it where electricity is not available, this makes it easier for the majority of Kenyans to own a set. In addition it transmits information in various languages, thus making it accessible to the majority of the population.

Regarding the level of coverage given to women politicians in the media, 19 per cent of the respondents were of the opinion that the coverage was good, 44 per cent thought it was fair while 46 per cent said they did not know. This coverage was said to be positive by the majority of the respondents (50%) while 42 per cent said it was negative.

From the data it is clear that the majority of the respondents had either not given much thought to the way women are portrayed in the media, or the question was not well understood, hence the majority's indication that they did not know. \*

It has been argued that women do not advance because they are their own worst enemies. The study sought to find out

whether the respondents shared this view. The respondents were asked to rate comments on women made by other women. Forty two per cent said the comments were positive while 39.6 said they were negative. Twelve per cent said they did not know.

**Responding to this question, a female key informant agreed with statement to some extent.**

You know when you go to speak to them, some of them will look at you and ask you what you think you can do for them. After all how many women have managed to be elected and what have they done. Some even asked me how I expected to represent them and yet I did not live in the village, meaning I was a class above them and therefore did not share their problems. I really failed to understand how the male campaigners were any better equipped to deal with the village problems because they also did not live there. I guess it is just a way of bringing me down because I am a woman.

One of the hypotheses in this study is that political institutions influence the participation of women in politics. The study sought to find out whether women held senior posts in political parties and if not, why. On this question 35 per cent of the respondents said women held senior positions while 44 per cent said they did not. These answers however do not reflect the existing situation since

There is no senior woman in the existing political parties,  
could also be that the question was not understood.

P^bira (1998) argues that the continued absence or dismal participation of women in politics necessitates concern with the space women have in political parties. Political parties are of the essence since these are the organs which politicians must use to achieve their political visibility. The fact that the respondents were not clear on women's participation in these organs means that there is a need to re-evaluate their participation in political parties to make them more visible.

The lack of space for women in political parties means that their chances of being elected are greatly reduced. This further compromises their participation in debates on issues of national development.

In fact most of the respondents (72%) were of the opinion that the lack of women's participation in politics has an effect on the development of the country. Development can be defined as a change towards patterns of society that allow a society greater power over its environment and over

its own political destiny, and that enables its individuals to gain increased control over themselves. Given this definition it can be said that women cannot be fully involved in development if they cannot actualise their political needs. In turn, this can only be achieved if they participate fully in politics.

Various factors came out clearly as being very important considerations when voting for a particular candidate. A majority of the respondents pointed out that a candidate wishing to win their confidence must be a principled person of integrity. The quality of a leader was also cited as a factor that would influence voting patterns in favour of particular candidates. The qualities cited include credibility, a good track record, intelligence, and honesty. Some of these qualities were given as very strong among women; this implies that women can make good leaders.

Education was also highlighted as one of the factors considered when voting for a particular candidate. As mentioned earlier, the education level plays a very important role in influencing decision making. This however

does not mean that all people who get elected to parliament are highly educated.

Development consciousness was also highlighted among the major factors taken into consideration by voters. A leader, being the people's representative ought to be a person with a vision.

Although the respondents gave these as qualities they consider when voting, these clearly reflect an ideal situation. What actually happens is that voters cast their vote for the person who gives the most money and this was clearly highlighted by all the key informants who were interviewed.

*r*

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

#### 6.0 Conclusion

From the findings it is clear that women still lag behind in terms of their numbers in political participation. This can be attributed to a number of reasons, which include cultural and socio-economic constraints.

In Kenya, as in many other African countries, a woman occupies a subordinate position to the man. This has contributed immensely in determining women's participation not only politics but also in public decision making in general.

One of the problems encountered by women that emerges from this study is the lack of women's empowerment. The lack of empowerment is a result of the paucity of access to various resources such as education and economic independence. As a result, the most important positions that could contribute to women's empowerment are held by men who, at times deliberately, perpetuate women's subordination even in situations where women hold important positions. The



subordination of women, however, is not solely perpetuated by men. The conflicts that arise between and among women cannot be ignored. This could be the result of cultural biases or of class differences. In this study it emerges that some of the respondents who felt that women should not occupy leadership positions were women. Some of the arguments put forward for this were the fact that women are expected to take care of their families at home, and that political leadership is a man's domain. Women who seek political positions are also seen to be elitist whom the ordinary women cannot identify with. This argument can, however, be challenged because men who seek political positions can also be seen in the same light. They are even twice removed from women because of their status and their gender. The reasons given are therefore very superficial and there is a need to carry out further research on the real causes of women's inability to compete effectively in politics.

The few women who are in high positions are also associated with tendencies of sidelining their fellow women and thus portraying negatively on their part.

Low income for the majority of women was cited as a major factor that hinders women's effective participation in politics. As the study reveals, most women who are housewives have no income at all, and therefore have limited resources. Active political participation is associated with high expenditure and therefore requires a person to have a good income in addition to other financial sources.

Another drawback to the political participation of women is the level of education. Just as the education level influences the voter's choice of a particular candidate, the level of education of women is in most cases lower than that of men. This inhibits their networking for effective political participation.

Some respondents attributed the lack of women's participation in politics to cultural beliefs and norms. Issues that kept coming up were the fact that women are meant to work in, the private domain where they are required to perform a larger share of the domestic chores like looking after children and providing basic family needs, while men work in the public domain, where they hold

important leadership positions. This attitude is common in both men and women but stronger among men. It plays a major role in discriminating against women in politics.

This study also reveals that even in the urban situations, there is still a high prevalence of discrimination in education, which favours the male child. The girls are treated as subordinate to boys, thus imparting the notion of male chauvinism even to the young ones. Girls are disadvantaged because their duties in the homes are more than those of boys thus reducing the time spent on schoolwork. This at times creates a lack of interest in education and consequently girls drop out rates in schools is usually higher than that of boys.

A number of girls drop out of school because of pregnancies. Others are married off by the parents before completing their education. In the long run, these factors eventually work negatively on women in as far as participation in politics is concerned.

From the study, it was evident that the respondents were not very clear on the important role that political parties

play in elections. Most of them could not tell whether women occupied senior positions in the parties. Their lack of participation at a high level means that their interests are not well represented, especially in the formulation of party manifestos. Quotas for women's representation at policy levels, would allow more women to be nominated to contest for elective posts. The lack of gender policies within the party manifestos therefore, disadvantages women.

Another area of concern for women is the media. The female key informants indicated that they are not given as much coverage as they would like. They also indicated that the general coverage of women is not good enough, and this contributes to their poor performance during elections.

#### 6.1 Recommendations

Arising out of the findings, various recommendations are suggested.

Cultural attitudes ^re a major hinderance to womens empowerment and consequently to their participation in politics. Though cultural attitudes ranked fourth among the

respondents, it was clear from the information derived from the key informants that cultural attitudes and perceptions on the role that women should perform in society was very clear. Their roles were perceived as those relating to child rearing and taking care of the domestic affairs. This attitudes and perception have to be changed through awareness creation if any significant change is to be achieved with regard to their increased participation in politics.

Legislation and policies should be enacted to address all the gender imbalances that have an impact on women's participation in elective politics. There should be legislation, for example, on affirmative action that would enshrine a quota for women's representation in parliament and civic bodies. This should be extended to political parties because their representation at that level determines, to a great extent, their effective participation in elections.

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As mentioned earlier women's income levels were rated as being low and moderate. This results from the fact that the majority of women are unskilled and therefore do not hold

professional jobs. Most of the women respondents, for example, indicated they were housewives or were running small-scale businesses. Low income was also thought to result in low education level, and a high level of dependency on men. The dependency on men can also be seen in the light of the patriarchal structure of the Kenyan society where property is passed on through the male lineage. This means that any proceeds gained from the property are controlled by the male, who is the head of the household. This has negative implications for women. Since they do not control any income, they are not financially independent and are unable to spend their income on campaigns. As was recommended by the respondents, this is a problem that needs to be addressed especially through changing the attitudes of society.

Laws that disempower women, particularly those on inheritance and property rights should therefore be reviewed with a view to making them more women-friendly. Similarly, policies should be put in place to ensure that women get easy access to credit facilities.

With regard to education, there is already a policy, which requires the education system to provide equal opportunities for both boys and girls. There are, however serious flaws in this because of cultural attitudes that discriminate against girl children where they do not do well due to added responsibilities at home. There is therefore a need to create awareness to eradicate these cultural biases that impact negatively on girls education, and consequently on the general education of women in Kenya.

Respondents expressed views that the economic status of women could improve through the provision of equal employment opportunities to women, cooperation, and women encouraging each other instead of fighting among themselves. The recognition of women as political leaders and their involvement in government's decision making and policy-making organs so that they can contribute to genderised strategies for development.

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The society has an important role to play in enhancing women's participation in politics. The first is to restructure the political field in order to encourage

women's participation. This includes providing civic education, in order to change cultural beliefs that women are not meant to be leaders. This could be achieved by increasing the literacy levels of women, which would in turn provide broaden their scope of understanding and make them responsive to change.

Some of the women who sought elective posts, for example, were insulted because they were single, while others were told that they could not lead since they were not circumcised. The language used was extremely derogatory to the extent that some women said they would never seek such positions in future.

The society also has an obligation to support women candidates who decide to participate in politics. This should start right from the political party level. Political parties should encourage more women to contest for elective positions, even at party levels. The women should also come gut in support of their fellow women.



## 6.2 Suggestions for further research

This study was limited to factors that determine political participation of women in parliamentary and civic seats. However, this is not to ignore the fact that women are involved in other sectors of leadership such as in public administration, non-governmental organisations, and the cooperative and labour movements, and elsewhere (in other sectors). Since most of the women begin as leaders in these other areas, there is a need to undertake research to investigate the problems they face and how these leadership roles influence their decisions to venture into higher positions.

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## APPENDIX 1

### FACTORS INFLUENCING THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS: A STUDY OF WOMEN IN NAIROBI

I am a student from the University of Nairobi carrying out research for my dissertation. You have been selected to participate in this research and any information you will give will be highly confidential and will only be used for this academic exercise.

#### **Bio-data**

1. Sex: \_\_\_\_\_ Age
- Religion
1. Christian
2. Traditional
3. Other specify
3. Number of children
4. Marital status
1. Single            4. Divorce
2. Married         5. Separated
3. Widowed       6. Other (specify)
5. Level of Education:
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary institutions
- University.

Occupation

Do you have other sources  
income?

8. Approximately how much do you earn per month?

- |                       |                      |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| (i) Below Ksh. 1000   | (iv) About Ksh. 400  |
| (ii) About Ksh. 2000  | (v) About Kshs. 5000 |
| (iii) About Ksh. 3000 | (vi) About Ksh. 6000 |

**Factors influencing political participation**

9. (a) Have you ever been interested in seeking a political post?

(i) Yes ( )

(ii) No ( )

(b) If yes which ones?

Parliament

Civic

r

Did you succeed?

(i) Yes ( )

(ii) No ( )

11. If yes what factors contributed to your success? (Rank them)

(1)

(2)

(3)

(4)

12. If yes to No. 10 is no

What factors would you say contributed to your failure? (Rank them)

(1)

(2)

(3)

(4) /

13. What are some of the problems you encountered?

(1)

(2)

(3)

(4)

14. Do you register for elections?

(i) Yes ( )

(ii) No ( )

15. Do you vote during elections

(i) Yes (     )

(ii) No (     )

16. What factors that you consider when voting for a particular candidate?

17. What other factors influence your decision?

18. Are you aware that there are fewer women holding political positions than men?

(i) Yes (     )

(ii) No (     )

19. What are some of the factors that have led to this situation

20. What are some of the factors that have led to this situation?

21. What in your view would increase the number of women candidates in politics?

22. Which political positions do you think would be ideal for women?

23. Please explain

### **Economic Status**

24. How would you rate the economic status of women?

Low

Moderate

High

25. Explain your option in No. 20 above

26. What is the impact of this status on women's political participation?

27. What in your view should be done to improve women's economic status?

### **Education**

28. Would a woman's level of education affect her chances to participate in politics?

(i) Yes (    )

(ii) No (    )

29. If yes. How many years of schooling do you think a woman should have to succeed in politics?

30. In your view are women's education opportunities fewer than those of men?

**(i) Yes (    )**

(ii) No (    )

31. Explain your answer

32. What can be done to improve women's opportunities in education?

33. At what level do you think women should be informed on politics?

- (1) Primary school
- (2) High school
- (3) College and training institutions
- (4) Out of school
- (5) Others

34. Give reasons

#### Role of media

35. Where do you get your information on political happenings from?

- (1) Other people
- (2) Radio
- (3) Newspapers
- (4) Magazines
- (5) Television
- (6) Others (specify)

36. How can you rate the coverage of women politicians in the media?

- (1) Good
- (2) Fair
- (3) Bad

37. Give reasons for the answer given in No. 33

(b) In what way can media coverage of women political candidates be enhanced?

38. (a) How would you rate comments on women political candidates by other women?

(1) Positive

(2) Negative

(b) Give reasons

39. How would you rate comments on women political candidates by men?

(1) Positive

(2) Negative

(3) Other (Specify)

(b) Give reasons

40. How can negative attitudes towards women political candidates be changed

Political institutions



41. Do women hold high position in political parties?
42. Explain your answer
43. Please comment on how you think this affects their participation in politics
44. What in your view can be done to enable women to attain higher positions  
political parties
45. (a) Would women's participations in politics affects development in the country?
- (i) Yes ( )
- (ii) No ( )
- (b) Explain your answer
46. What can be done to improve their participation?

## APPENDIX II

### FACTORS INFLUENCING THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS:

#### A STUDY OF WOMEN IN NAIROBI

#### KEY INFORMANTS QUESTIONNAIRE

I am a student from the University of Nairobi carrying out research for my dissertation .  
You have been selected to participate in this research and any information you will give  
will be highly confidential and will only be used for this academic exercise.

#### Bio-data

1. Sex: Age'
  
2. Religion
  1. Christian
  2. Muslim
  3. Traditional
  4. Other specify
  
8. Number of children
  
9. Marital status
  1. Single
  2. Married
  3. Widowed
  4. Divorce
  5. Separated
  6. Other (specify)
  
10. Level of Education:  
Primary  
Secondary  
Tertiary institutions  
University

7. Do you have other sources of income?
8. Approximately how much do you earn per month?
 

(i) Below Ksh. 10,000	(iii) About Ksh. 30,000
(ii) About Ksh. 20,000	(iv) About Ksh. 40,000

**Factors influencing political participation**

- 9 (a) What political post did you contest for in the first ended elections.
  - (i) Parliament
  - (ii) Civic
10. What made you think of contesting?
11. How did you organise your campaign?
- 12 Did you succeed?
  - (i) Yes (    )
  - (ii)No (    )
13. If yes what factors contributed to your success? (Rank them)
  - (1)
  - (2)
  - (3)
14. If answer to No. 9 is no.  
What factors would you say contributed to your failure? (Rank them)
  - (i)
  - (2)
  - (3)
  - (4)
15. What are some of the problems you encountered?
  - (1)
  - (2)
  - (3)
  - (4)

16. What changes would you like to see effected to enable women to participate more as contestants.

17. Which political positions do you think would be ideal for women?

18. Please explain

### **Economic Status**

19. How would you rate the economic status of women politician?

- (i) Low
- (ii) Moderate
- (iii) High

Explain your option in No. 19 above

19. What is the impact of this status on women's political participation?

20. What in your view should be done to improve women's economic status?

### **EDUCATION**

21. Would a woman's level of education affect her chances to participate in politics?

- (i) Yes ( )
- (ii) No ( )

22. If yes. Do you think is ideal for a woman's success in election?

- 1. Primary
- 2. High School
- » 3. College and training institution

23. In your view are women's education opportunities fewer than those of men?

- (i) Yes ( )
- (ii) No ( )

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24. Explain your answer

25. What can be done to improve women's opportunities in education?

26. At what level do you think women should be informed on politics?

- (1) Primary school
- (2) High school
- (3) College and training institutions
- (4) Out of school

(5) Others

27. Give reasons

#### Role of media

28. Where do you get your information on political happenings from?

- (1) Other people
- (2) Radio
- (3) Newspapers
- (4) Magazines
- (5) Television
- (6) Others (specify)

30. How can you rate the coverage of women politicians in the media?

- (1) Good
- (2) Fair
- (3) Bad

31. Give reasons for the answer given in No. 33

(b) In what way can media coverage of women political candidates be enhanced?

32 (a) How would you rate comments on women political candidates by other women?

- (1) Positive
- (2) Negative
- (3)

(b) Give reasons

33.(a) How would you rate comments on women political candidates by men?

- (1) Positive
- (2) Negative
- (3) Other (Specify)

(b) Give reasons

34. How can negative attitudes towards women political candidates be changed?

**Political institutions**

35. Do women hold high position in political parties?

36. Explain your answer

37. Please comment on how you think this affects their participation in politics

38. What in your view can be done to enable women to attain higher positions in political parties

39. (a) Would women's participations in politics affects development in the country?

- (i) Yes( )
- (ii) No( )

(b) Explain your answer

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