

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Gender Mainstreaming Strategies and Women Political Participation in Kibwezi East Constituency of Makueni County in Kenya

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Abstract:

The study was carried out in Kibwezi East Constituency of Makueni County based on the following objectives; to examine awareness of existing gender mainstreaming legislations on women political participation, to assess the influence of formal education on women political participation and to establish the relationship between economic empowerment and women political participation in Kibwezi East Constituency. The study was underpinned by Marxist Feminist Theory and Butler Gender Relations Theory. The target population for the study included women aged 18 years and above from Masongoleni County Assembly Ward, randomly selected from the Constituency. A correlational research design was adopted to execute the study. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 100 respondents. Yamane sample calculation (Israel, 1992) was used to determine the sample size. The study used closed and open ended questionnaire. Data was analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) Version 20.0. The data was summarized through correlational analysis; frequencies, means, percentages, and some inferential statistics. Correlation and regression analysis was undertaken to analyze the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Sixty three percent (63%) of the respondents exhibited awareness of some form of gender mainstreaming policies. Respondents agreed that, education increases women participation in politics with a mean of 2.52. Financial wellbeing doesn't increase women participation in political discussions and debates and women with high income are not likely to attend political meetings with a mean of 2.43 and 2.23 respectively. From the analysis it emerged that equality of access to and attainment of educational qualifications is necessary if more women are to become agents of change. Education of women contributes to gender equality in the areas of political economy. The findings revealed that formal education was a significant predictor of women political participation. This implied that women with higher education are most likely to participate in politics. Further the study showed that there was no significant relation between economic empowerment and political participation. This implied that, increase in economic status did not necessarily lead to likelihood of political participation. The study concluded that more awareness of gender mainstreaming legislation gender equality in terms of women economic empowerment did not necessarily lead to women political participation. We concluded also that economic empowerment of women did not necessarily lead to enhancement of political participation of women. The researchers recommend the need for increased awareness to boost women empowerment. Motivation for women to get educated as it builds confidence for women to participate in politics. Finally strict adherence and implementation of the 2010 Kenyan constitution since it is gender responsive

Keywords: Gender mainstreaming, Political Participation, women political participation

1. Background to the Study

Internationally the participation of women in political leadership is constantly becoming smaller according to Women Watch, (2015) with the current Global average of female parliamentarians being 19.5%. This falls below the 30% 1995 Beijing global target which was to be attained by the year 2005. Presently, women's representation in legislatures around the world is (21.9%) according to Dudman, (2014) with only twelve countries where women hold 33% or more seats in the parliaments (Lijphart, 2012). Despite comprising of over half of the world's population, women continue to be less represented as voters, political leaders and elected officials (House, 2014). As of January 2019, 11 women are serving as Head of States and 10 are serving as Head of Governments (UN Women 2019).

Africa's women's political participation has increased in the recent past years a consequence of constitutional portions composed of law and obliging that a particular rate of political position be occupied by women (Paxton & Hughes, 2015). Six African countries; Burundi, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda have achieved the minimum global target of 30%. Despite the increased women occupying political offices, there still exists a gender disparity between men and women's level of political participation.

The East African region is one of the African regions to have registered great improvement in women political participation. World Bank Group, (2014) observed that, Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda have achieved the target of 30% women representation in their national parliaments. Leading the East African region is Rwanda, with 64 women to 36 men in parliament, propelled by a law stipulating that 30% of all parliamentary seats be held by women (Bruce-Lockhart, 2015). Even though Rwanda is doing well there are other countries within the region that are lagging behind hence less women political participation.

Currently in Kenya, female representation in parliament has increased by six from 16.7 points in 2013 to 23 points in the 2017 elections according to (Kosen, 2017). This proportion was expected since elections were held under the country's new constitution, adopted in 2010. Under the constitution, no more than two thirds (2/3) of the members of elective or appointive bodies may be of the same sex.

In Kibwezi East Constituency, the current Member of Parliament is a female. However, there are four County Assembly Wards which are all represented by male Members (IEBC, 2017). These observations show that, political gender inequality is both a local, national, regional and global concern. Therefore, there is need to assess the existing gender mainstreaming strategies to identify and document success, weaknesses and areas that need improvement to ensure women are motivated to participate in politics from all levels.

2. Statement of the Problem

The 2010 Kenyan Constitution promotes the participation of women and men at all levels of governance and makes provisions for proportional representation. Article 81b of the constitution provides that not more than two thirds of individuals from elective open bodies might be from the same gender (Mzalendo, 2012). Political participation allows individuals to participate in formal political structures and procedures, where choices concerning respect to the utilization of societal assets are generated.

Globally a lot of interventions have been formulated to enhance women's participation in political leadership. Such interventions are encompassed in international instruments, covenants and interventions such as Universal Declaration of Human Rights, The International Covenant and Civil and Political Rights and Beijing Platform for Action. However, none of these has helped women in attaining the 30% target in parliament. Researchers have noted that, when women get into leadership and management they bring a different perspective from men (Arnold & Loughlin, 2013). The social, political and economic landscape in Kenya alienates women participation in politics, more so in the elective political positions. Kenya's system of governance has failed to provide efficient policy formulation and implementation strategies that can foster women representation in political leadership across the country. Researchers have relied on secondary data from (Institutions of higher learning, Non-Governmental and civil society Organizations) and primary data from urban settlements for their analysis. This study relied on primary data from rural Constituency to assess gender mainstreaming strategies.

3. Objective and Study Questions

- To examine awareness of existing gender mainstreaming legislations on women political participation among residents of Kibwezi East Constituency.
- To assess the influence of formal education on women political participation in Kibwezi East Constituency.
- To establish the relationship between economic empowerment and women political participation in Kibwezi East Constituency.

4. Justification

Women's concerns in seeking equality in the various aspects of public life, especially in governance, is one that is constantly under discussion, and would continue to be so until the desired results are attained (Osabutey, 2018). Women constitute a majority of the world's population; yet only 22 % are in Parliament where few countries have attained the 30% global target for women in national legislatures (Dahlerup, 2018). The low participation and representation of women in the public and political institutions negates the equity principle that is affirmed and espoused in the Constitution of Kenya (Kivoi, 2014). The concept of affirmative action means a deliberate move to reforming or eliminating past and present discrimination using a set of public policies and initiatives designed to help on the basis of colour, creed, geographical location, race, origin and gender among others (Kaimenyi, 2013). The Constitution of Kenya provides compliance with the principle of affirmative action and states that no more than two-thirds of the members of elective bodies shall be of the same gender.

Women in Kenya have been underrepresented in the political facet. After the 2013 general elections, it was quite evident that there was inadequate representation of women in parliament (Wang'ondy, 2018). The Attorney General hence foreseeing a possibility of a constitutional crisis in the National Assembly and Senate if the two-thirds gender rule were not achieved by the electoral process alone, sought the Supreme Court's Advisory Opinion (Amdany, 2015). In its ruling, the Supreme Court directed that Parliament is under an obligation to have a framework on the realization of the two thirds Gender rule by 27th August 2015; otherwise it would be rendered unconstitutional. This ruling was followed by

the decision that was made on the 11th December 2012, where the Supreme Court of Kenya delivered a majority decision that the realization of the two-thirds gender principle under Article 81 (b) is progressive. This application was brought to the High Court by the Federation Women of Lawyers. The government was hence given time to come up with legislation to effect this rule (Mutunga, 2012).

In 2015, a petition was launched by Centre for Rights Education & Awareness (CREAW) versus the Attorney General and another at the High Court so as to ensure the effecting of the legislation. In the petition, Judge Mumbi Ngugi issued an order of mandamus directing the Attorney General to prepare the relevant bills within 40 days for tabling before parliament for the purposes of implementation of Articles 27(8) and 81(b) of the Constitution of Kenya. This led to the Two thirds gender rule law (amendment) bill and the Election Offences bill that were brought to parliament following the order. They are commonly referred to as the 'Duale bill and the 'Chepkonga bill'.

Kenya's male dominated Senate and National Assembly chambers have not passed any legislation to put this constitutional principal into practice despite Article 27 (6) of the constitution requiring the state to enact laws that will redress historical discriminations and injustices (Kameri-Mbote, 2018). In 2013 there was no single female governor elected in the 47 Counties, there was no single female senator elected and out of 1,450 County Assembly Wards, women only managed to get elected in 88 wards (6.1%) in Kenya (Kosen, 2017).

The August 2017 election saw the first election of three female governors and three women senators out of 68-member in the Senate. These added to the 47 women-only seats and half of the 12 nominees by political parties, bringing the women in the National Assembly to 76, still short by 41 seats to make 117. A third of the 349 MPs – 290 elected 47 woman representatives and 12 nominated members (Oluoch, 2017). In the election, female accounted for 9.4 million (47%) of voters out of 19.6 million voters. At least 23 women were elected to the National Assembly, up from the 16 elected in the 2013 elections (IEBC, 2017). This clearly shows that there has been an increase in women political leadership, but there exists a great gender inequality gap and a clear highlight of "glass ceiling" (Ochieng, 2015).

There are several academic studies that have been conducted on women participation in politics in Kenya. Kivoi, (2014) conducted a study on factors impeding political participation and representation of women in Kenya and found that lack of political good will is the biggest obstacle in addressing gender imbalance in the country. However, these studies were limited to secondary data and mostly primary data from urban settings and from Non-Governmental and civil society Organizations and institutions of higher learning to investigate the factors or reasons for impeding women's political participation in Kenya. Since earlier studies on this research problem did not investigate mainstreaming strategies on women's political participation in Kenya. Therefore, the study examined the strategies which can contribute to election of more women candidates in the electoral process in Kenya using primary data from a rural constituency in Kenya. This study will be carried out to offer advice to policy makers on what strategies would empower women participation in politics despite the 2/3 gender rule. The study will also help policy makers, Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission, political parties, Non-Governmental Organizations, Community Based Organizations and Faith Based Organizations among other institutions, to adopt strategies which can help improve community's perceptions towards accepting women political leadership and eradicate any barriers within Kibwezi East and the nation at large towards women leadership.

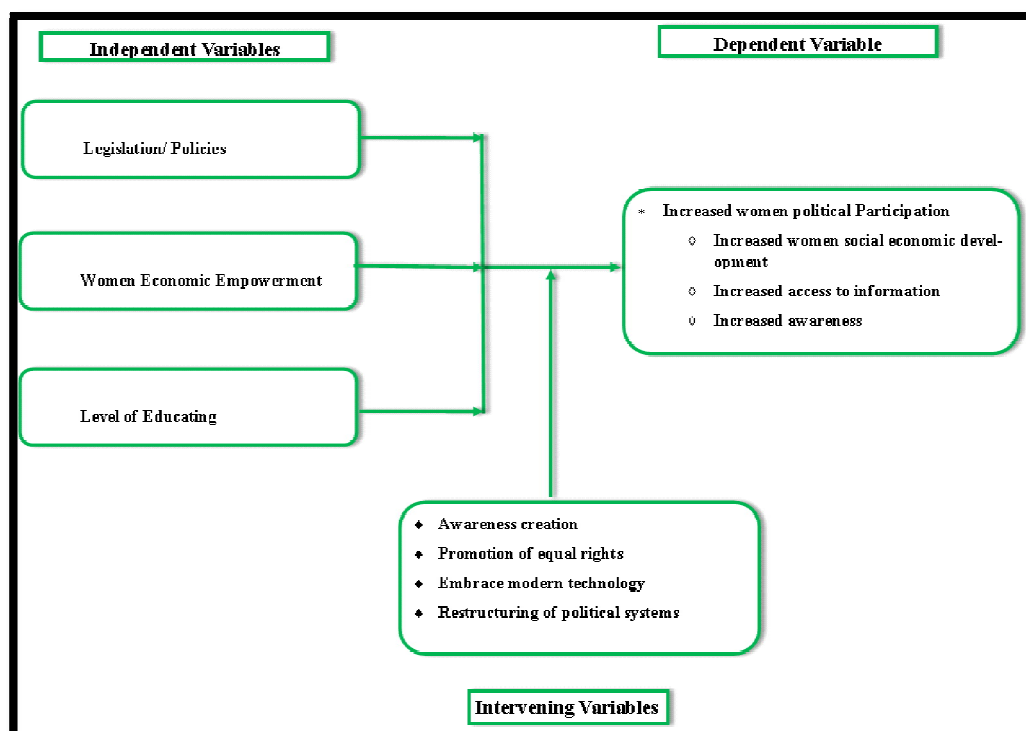


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
Source: (Researcher, 2018)

5. Theoretical Framework

5.1. Butler's Gender Relations theory

This study was guided by Butler's gender relations theory (Kyriakidou, 2011). According to this theory, society views all activities that are carried out to be based on social roles and interactions of men and women. The society seems to have ultimate authority on the precise nature of what women and men actually do, and their real contribution to production and reproduction which turns out to be prejudiced against women. The experiences of women in the society are not the same as those of their male counterparts.

Women still suffer and in a family setting they suffer more because they cannot give up their children. Moreover, the ultimate wellbeing of women is influenced by culture to a large extent. The society decides which cultural beliefs and practices govern women and take control of their roles and responsibilities. Men on the contrary are left with the role of defining these societal norms with full control being left to them. Their interaction on different levels is fully determined by societal norms. Economically the means of production and access are also controlled by the society. The society on a bigger angle controls the process of development through resources (Siemens, 2013).

5.2. Applicability of the Theory

This study was based on this theory because it emphasizes on the influence of social norms, cultural norms, economic norms and standards which must be considered for gender mainstreaming to be effective. These norms are the factors that influence the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the government. Almost all the variables were captured by this theory. Gender mainstreaming is affected by cultural factors such as the patriarchal ideologies which are very dominant. Lack of awareness on gender issues is also an influencing factor as well as the limited nature of resources and dysfunctional policies.

5.3. Weaknesses of the Theory

Gender relations must allow us to study critically how the sexes serve to reproduce the ensemble of social relations. Thus, it must in some sense presuppose what is a result of social relations, namely, the existence of gender in the sense of historically recognizable men and women. On the basis of a complementarity in procreation (a natural basis), what is assumed to be natural is also formed historically. Hence, the sexes enter into the social process as non-equals, and their non-equality becomes the foundation or basis of further formations. In this way, gender relations become fundamental regulating relations in all social formations that we know of. They are absolutely central for questions of the division of labor, domination, exploitation, ideology, politics, law, religion, morals, sexuality, bodies and senses, and language. At the same time, they transcend each of them. In short, no area can be studied in a meaningful way without researching how gender relations both shape it and are shaped by it.

Gender relations can only be ignored if it is assumed as is done in the tradition of bourgeois science that there is just one sex, the male sex, in which case all relations have to be depicted as male. Opposing this, and starting to rewrite the history of social theory adding the forgotten women, has been the accomplishment of feminism over the last three decades. Very often, though, this insight is obscured because of the phenomenology of men and women who exist in a specific relationship in society, in a constellation which is an effect of gender relations but which, taken by itself, focuses the analysis on relations between particular individuals. Starting from there makes it difficult to subvert an assumed fixedness of the sexes. Instead, concepts have to be shaped in such a way as to recognize that their subject is in motion and subject to change. A concept should also allow discussion of itself. The concept of gender relations should, like that of relations of production, reflect the multiplicity of practical relations and thereby account for both the formation of the actors and the reproduction of the social whole. Thus it is not based on notions of a fixed relation or of fixed natural actors.

5.4. Review of Empirical Studies

According to a study by Klasen, and Pieters, (2012), female education, remains a major determinant of female participation in the labour force. Carroll and Sanbonmatsu, (2013) argued that, women tend to hold political seats in states and communities where politicians are least professional and legislative service least desirable. Ball, (2012) also agreed by arguing that, education influences women's political participation in political leadership. It appears to be obvious that formal education ought to be firmly connected with political cooperation for women and men (Ball, 2012).

In the USA, education is a powerful predictor of political participation for decades an observation which was made by (Potgieter, 2013). Inglehart, (2018) observed that, education has led many women in the society to be a part of the political parties or take part in political parties since it is the most important channel for encouraging women to speak out. Studies in Asia suggest that illiteracy and low level of educational attainment presents a most disempowering factor for women's development (Sraboni, Quisumbing, & Ahmed, 2013). Two thirds of illiterate people in the world are women (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Lusardi, & Mitchell, 2014); 60% of the 135 million children in the world between ages 7 and 18 who are not receiving education are girls: and only 1 out of every 4 girls who begin primary School remain in School 4 years after. Despite the introduction and provision of free and compulsory primary and secondary education, girls access to education stays constrained to a limited extend because of customary states of mind and also high dropout rates because of pregnancy, early and forced marriages (estimated at 80,000 annually).

Nigerian studies show that most customs often prefer sending the male child to school over the female, who is expected to nature siblings and be married off. This marginally increases the number of illiterate women and stiffens their

competition with their male counterparts in politics (Amadiume, 2015). Iyer, Mani, Mishra and Topalova, (2012) researchers in India discovered that, literacy has a substantial impact on women's capacity to perform in the political institutions. Fafunwa, (2018) argues that, in Nigeria it is expected that women who are educated will be more and will want to participate in political leadership. Generally, the scholars are agreeing that women's educational empowerment helps women to be empowered by building money earning capability among them, developing the confidence to face challenges, enhancing the ability to make political decisions regarding themselves and the society.

In Kenya, many women lack not only basic education but also have inadequate political training that can enable them to participate fully and effectively in the political arena. This leads to a situation where women are not taken seriously even when they declare their candidature. Giroux, (2015) observed that democracy cannot function without an informed electorate. An uninformed or misinformed public cannot sufficiently participate in governance matters in the country. Chambers, (2014) found that many Kenyan career women give first priority to their families, not because they lack commitment to professional growth but because they have been socialized that a good woman thinks of her family first. In a study of senior university women in Kenya, Enloe, (2014) found that, many women would rather wait until their children have matured before they consider making major career moves such as taking doctoral studies.

This clearly depicts that, women's educational empowerment is challenged by cultural practices which if addressed can support women to embrace education and also balance with other cultural responsibilities. Kenya has also adopted an education Act which provides for the right of pregnant girls to continue with education until and after giving birth. Despite the Act, pregnant girls continue to be expelled from Schools (The Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), 2012). These scholars portray a clear picture that education is a factor in today's political competition where education empowers women to gain interest in politics. They also agree that, there is need for good will to address the emerging challenges to the initiative being implemented to ensure women's educational empowerment.

6. Materials and Methods

This study was carried out in Kibwezi East Constituency of Makueni County based on the following objectives; to examine awareness of existing gender mainstreaming legislations on women political participation, to assess the influence of formal education on women political participation and to establish the relationship between economic empowerment and women political participation in Kibwezi East Constituency. The study was based on Marxist Feminist Theory and Butler Gender Relations Theory. The study used a qualitative as well as quantitative approach, employing a Correlational survey design which involved quantitative approaches. It allowed many variables to be studied at the same time with ease. The research design was used since it is an efficient way of collecting and analyzing information from a large number of respondents at a specific point in time which this study targeted. The target population for the study included women aged 18 years and above from Masongaleni County Assembly Ward, randomly selected from the Constituency. A correlational research design was adopted to execute the study. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 100 respondents. Yamane sample calculation (Israel, 1992) was used to determine the sample size. The study used closed and open ended questionnaire. Data was analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) Version 20.0. The data was summarized through correlational analysis; frequencies, means, percentages, and some inferential statistics. Correlation and regression analysis was undertaken to analyze the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

7. Study Findings

7.1. Response Rate

The study targeted women in Kibwezi East Constituency and managed to reach 84 out of 100 of the target population. This therefore means the response rate of the study was 84% which according to Richardson (2005) is good response rate as it was above 80 percent. 16% non-response rate was attributed to lack of time from some of the respondents who requested for participation on another day different from the data collection day. Due to time and financial constraints it was not possible to include all the targeted respondents.

Response Rate	Frequency	Percent
Filled Questionnaires	84	84%
Unfilled Questionnaires	16	16%
Total	100	100%

Table 1: Showing Response Rate

7.2. Demographic Data

7.2.1. Distribution of the Respondents Based on the Level of Education

It was evident from the data that all the respondents had certificate level of education and above majority of whom (47%) had diploma while 36% had certificate level of education. Eleven per cent had bachelor's degree and 6% had master degree. This result implies that the respondents were educated enough to understand the questions and give credible information.

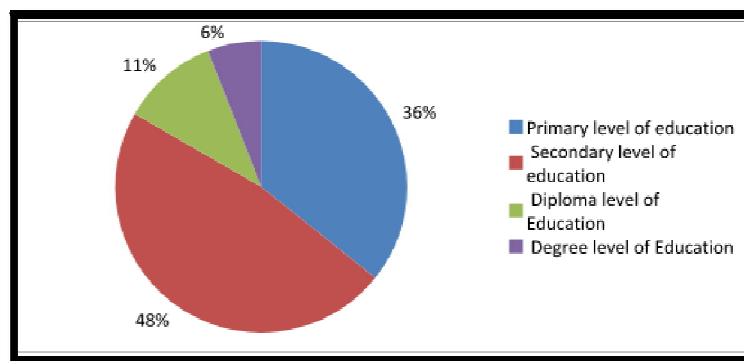


Figure 2: Distribution of the Respondents Based on the Level of Education

7.2.2. Education and Political Participation

The study sought to establish how education influences political participation through various Likert questions. From the study respondents agreed that, education increases the chances for women participation in political discussion and debates (mean=2.52). Similarly, the results also indicated that respondents were neutral that educated women have high chances of communicating with their political representatives. This highlights the importance of education in regards to improving the self-confidence of women to articulate themselves. In the same view, Fanny, (2014) argued that, education enhances the quality of women participation in political debates. The findings showed that the respondents did not agree that, level of education affect women attendance to political meetings. This finding implies that, women education does not necessarily enhance civic action of women in politics. This contradicts the findings of David, Morais, Abreu, Marques & Segura, (2016) who established that, respondents believed that women education leads to voluntary participation in politics. Further the results indicated that respondents disagreed that learned women are more likely to contribute financially towards political campaigns (mean=2.47). This shows that education does not necessarily makes women conscious of party affairs. Concerning the likelihood to register as voters, the study revealed that respondents agreed that educated women are more likely to register as voters. According to Kaimenyi, Kinya & Chege, (2013) education makes women conscious of their rights and civic duty in the country. In addition the study established that the respondents were neutral to the question, educated women are more likely to register as members of political parties. This implies that feminization of political parties in Kenya is still low. This supports the findings of UNDP (2015) who concluded that, fewer women are registered members of political parties in Kenya. Finally, the study revealed that the respondents agreed that informed women are more likely to compete for political party offices (Mean=4.04). This implies that educated women have high interest in political party offices. This is attributed to parties push to have more women representation in various party offices

Statement	N	Mean	SD
Education increases the chances for women participation in political discussion and debates?	84	3.52	0.778
Well informed women are more likely to attend political meetings	84	2.32	1.257
Learned women are more likely to contribute financially towards political campaigns	84	2.47	1.032
Educated women have high chances of communicating with their political representatives	84	3.02	1.234
Schooled women are more likely to register as voters	84	3.76	1.007
Educated women are more likely to register as members of political parties	84	3.46	0.987
Informed women are more likely to compete for political party offices	84	4.04	0.768
Overall Mean		2.98	

Table 2: Education Contribution to Political Participation

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

The second objective of the study was to assess the influence of formal education on women political participation in Kibwezi East Constituency. The findings revealed that formal education is a significant predictor of women political participation ($p < 0.05$). This implies that women with higher education are most likely to participate in politics. The findings also revealed that formal education had the second significant predictor based on Odd ratio.

From this study, it is emerging that equality of access to and attainment of educational qualifications is necessary if more women are to become agents of change. The study concludes that more gender equality in terms of participation in education results in more gender equality in the areas of political economy. Based on the findings above the study concluded that awareness on gender mainstreaming legislation has a positive and significant impact on women empowerment in political parties. The study also concluded that more awareness of gender mainstreaming legislation gender equality in terms of women economic empowerment does not necessarily leads to women political participation.

The study findings suggest that economic empowerment of women does not necessarily lead to enhancement of political participation of women.

In the light of the aforesaid results, the study suggests the following recommendations:

Based on the research findings the study suggests that, there is need for increased awareness through media and social media so as to boost women empowerment. The study also recommends that priority should be given to increased sensitization and awareness as this has the highest predictor on political participation.

Ultimately, even though it has not resulted in more gender equality, education plays a major role in determining political participation for women in Kenya. Even during the nominations, it is usually the educated and enlightened women who are given first preferences. The new Constitution is a gender responsive document that has led to the outlawing of all forms of discrimination including discrimination against women, guaranteeing women representation and increasing the number of women in all decision-making organs including in the devolved government. If effectively implemented, this Constitution will greatly improve on the participation of women in political party processes as it promotes empowerment of women through education.

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