FACTORS INFLUENCING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN GATUNDU SOUTH CONSTITUENCY, KIAMBU COUNTY (1992-2007)

ROSEMARY NJERI NDUNGU

A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF ARTS IN KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

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Factors influencing women's

MAY 2012
DECLARATION

This project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university

Signature…………………….. Date 05/06/2012

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my lovely son Francis Mwenga Mwangi
This study examined the factors that influence the political participation of women in parliamentary elections in Gatundu South Constituency. The study was based on the premise that there are socio-cultural and value related factors, which contribute to the subordination and marginalization of women in politics. The study therefore, attempted to identify and describe these factors, as well as suggest ways of overcoming the challenges facing women in political participation in that constituency. Liberal feminist theory and the concept of patriarchy guided the study. The study targeted registered voters in two of the six wards in the constituency. Polling stations in the selected wards served as the sampling units for the study. Simple random sampling was used to select two polling stations from each of the selected wards. Systematic sampling was employed to sample 30% of the registered voters from the selected polling stations. Three women, who had sought nominations in different political parties as parliamentary candidates, were purposively selected and interviewed for the study. A divisional officer, a chief and two assistant chiefs also served as key informants.

Primary data were collected through semi-structured questionnaires and interview guides. Secondary data were obtained through library research. Data analysis was done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 17.0 and the findings presented in tables, graphs and figures. Findings form qualitative data are presented in a narrative report. The research found that there are numerous challenges that have hindered the political participation of women in Gatundu South Constituency. These include: lack of funds to finance political campaigns, being sidelined by political parties, outdated cultural practices and stereotypes that portray women as the weaker sex as well as political violence during electoral campaigns. To address these challenges, the study recommends the following measures: intensifying gender responsive civic education, restructuring political parties to ensure free and fair elections in their nominations, training women political aspirants in practical skills such as public speaking and planning political campaigns, providing female aspirants with funds to finance their political campaigns as well as eliminating gender-based violence during electoral campaign.
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In a special way, I wish to thank my father, Bernard Ndungu, who taught me to believe in my potential to achieve my goals in life. My husband Ignatius, my son Francis and to the entire family members, I appreciate your timely love, patience and support which are the pillars upon which this work stands.

Above all, Glory and Honor be to the Almighty God in the highest.
# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IPU</td>
<td>Inter-Parliamentary Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDHR</td>
<td>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDGs</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAWORD</td>
<td>Association of African Women for Research and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBOs</td>
<td>Community-Based Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIEC</td>
<td>Interim Independent Electoral Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEBC</td>
<td>Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLARION</td>
<td>Centre for Law and Research International</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Politics ------------------- - A purposive activity that embraces power relationships in all aspects of our lives, generally confined to a public decision making domain.

Political participation ---- the effective involvement of a person(s) in the affairs of the state or in public affairs in general. It involves deciding what the goals are and how to achieve them. In this study political participation refers to vying and being elected as a member of parliament.

Political party------------ a group of people recognized and registered by the Government, organized to seek to control the offices and policy of government, national, state or local, and to represent the interests of part of the citizenry.

Patriarchy ---------------- - A social, political and economic system that ensures, preserves and perpetuates male supremacy in all sectors of life.

Gender------------------ socially constructed attributes, roles, activities and responsibilities connected to being male or female in a given society.

Sex --------------------- What one is born to be – female or male. It is a biological concept.
Ward----------------- the smallest electoral area in Kenya, represented by a member of a local council.

Constituency--------- an electoral area in Kenya that elects its own representative to parliament. It is made up of several wards.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Women are underrepresented in political participation everywhere in the world, despite efforts made by different nations of the world to achieve democratic governance (Selolwane, 2006). Nowhere in the world has universal suffrage provided women with political power on an equal footing with men (Nzomo, 1997). Although in formal terms women have had the same rights as men, this has not led to changes in predominant ideologies and social structures which are necessary in order to give substance and cogency to the right of women to participate (Nzomo, 2003).

A study carried out by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) 2007 indicates that only 10% of all parliamentary members in the world are women. This percentage falls far below the UN set target of 30% representation of women in politics by 2005. According to this study, by December 2007, women representation in parliament in different regions of the world was as tabulated below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nordic countries</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab states</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Studies undertaken concerning the political, socio-cultural and economic positions of women in Africa have demonstrated that women’s roles in pre-colonial Africa varied extensively across Africa’s multi-ethnic groups (Kabira, 2003). Some state systems in pre-colonial Africa had women’s positions as part of the normal fare of politics. Although women’s prerogatives were never equal to those of men in pre-colonial Africa, African women had considerable political power more than they had in the subsequent period (Hay and Stitcher, 1995).

While there were no complete egalitarian societies prior to European control in Africa, the advent of the colonial period in the late 19th century and its intensification in the first half of the 20th century had a profound impact on 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 helpmates to men and that women were outside the proper realm of politics (Kanogo, 2005).

African women participated in many early anti-colonial protests as well as in the nationalist and liberation movements that swept the continent after the Second World War. In Nigeria it is women who organized and executed the ‘Aba riots’ which were provoked by rumor that the recent taxation levied on men would apply to women. This caused resentment and dismay as women decided to take action. They marched
to the trading centers destroying property, breaking into prisons and freeing prisoners (Uchendu, 1993).

In Kenya women were involved in the struggle for independence in various ways, for instance, Agikuyu women were the backbone of the resistance movement against land alienation during the colonial days. They transmitted food, weapons and information to the freedom fighters in the forest. Apart from playing a supportive role, some women were co-opted into the forest army, for example, Muthoni Ngatha even rose to the senior position of a field marshal (Karuru, 1997). In Namibia, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau, women were trained for combat and they fought along with their male counterparts in the army. The participation of African women in the liberation struggle against colonial rule cannot be underestimated, yet in the post-colonial era their political participation has remained dismal.

At independence, African countries were given the mandate of ruling themselves. Political parties emerged primarily as instruments for formal transfer of power from the colonial rulers to African nationalists. The new political power institutions tended to have the common characteristics of relegating women’s participation to ancillary organs of the party and reserving their executive committees for male participation (Solewone, 2006). Therefore, African women continued to find themselves marginalized when it came to being fielded for parliamentary seats or political appointments.
The end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century has seen a steady increase in women’s political participation in Africa (Kamau, 2010). In a UN report ‘Africa and Millennium Development Goals 2007 Update,’ it is noted that the share of parliamentary seats held by women in Africa increased from 7% in 1990 to 17% in 2007. As at 2007, women held 48.8 per cent of seats in the Lower House in Rwanda, the highest percentage world-wide. Other African countries which had high women representation in their legislative councils included South Africa (44.3%), Angola (37.3%), Uganda (31.8%). Egypt and Chad had the lowest women representation in their parliaments with each having (1.8%). Nigeria had (7.1%) while Kenya had (8.1%) of its parliamentary seats held by women (IPU, 2007).

Despite the progress made in some African countries, serious and persistent obstacles still hinder the advancement of women and their participation in political decision-making processes. The hosting of the 3rd World Conference of Women in Nairobi in 1985 did put Kenyan women at the forefront in championing the discourse and strategies that support women’s rights and gender equality. Unfortunately, this pioneer spirit has not been translated into an increase of political participation of Kenyan women (Kamau, 2010).

Although Kenya is a signatory to international agreements and conventions which have persistently stressed on the importance of women’s equal participation in decision-making and political leadership, Kenyan women continue to be
marginalized in the sphere of leadership and decision-making. In 1995, the Beijing Platform of Action emphasized that in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning, both men and women must participate equally in decision making (Nzomo, 1992). Similarly, the convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) Article 7, calls upon parties to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country. In addition, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948 stresses that women have both a right and an obligation to active participation in political leadership.

Kenya vision 2030, the new country’s development blue print which aims at making Kenya a newly industrialized country by the year 2030, points out that sustainable development cannot be achieved without the participation of both men and women in decision-making. (Government Printers, 2007). This is why the political pillar of this vision has specific strategies which will involve increasing the participation of women in all economic, social and political decision making processes like through higher representation in parliament. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are also an integral part of Kenya’s development agenda. Goal number three stress the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women as an integral part of any country’s development, (Government Printers 2003). Unless and until issues of women empowerment particularly their inclusion in decision-making are addressed, the realization of MDGs and achievement of Kenya’s Vision 2030 will remain a dream.
Although Kenya claims to be committed to its development agenda, the government has not yet shown its political will to include women equally in political leadership as demonstrated in the Table 1.1 below.

**Table 1.1 Women Representation and Participation in Kenya’s Parliament, 1st to 10th Parliament**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parliament</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Total no. of constituencies</th>
<th>No. of women nominated</th>
<th>No. of available slots for nomination</th>
<th>No. of women elected</th>
<th>No. of women nominated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Parliament</td>
<td>1963–1969</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Parliament</td>
<td>1969–1974</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Parliament</td>
<td>1979–1983</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Parliament</td>
<td>1963–1988</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th Parliament</td>
<td>1992–1997</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th Parliament</td>
<td>2002–2007</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kamau (2010)

Kenya claims to be a democratic country. In a democratic country, members of parliament represent the people, thus the process of enhancing women status is inseparable from the process of rebuilding democratic institutions and practices (Selolwane, 2006). Women account for the majority of voters and have indeed voted
in all general elections in large numbers. However, their contribution to the political life of the nation is not commensurate with their population (Kabira, 1997). It, therefore, follows that half of humanity cannot wait forever watching this vital aspect of life passing them by, as their contribution remains at best negligible (Sambo, 1991).

The Central Province of Kenya is inhabited by the Agikuyu community almost exclusively. Since the colonial period, the Agikuyu are known to wield a lot of political and economic influence in Kenya, with the first and third presidents of Kenya coming from this community. Due to their history of economic success, a majority of them are well educated and have adopted several aspects of modern culture. Agikuyu women are also known to have participated in the Mau Mau war, which ushered in independence in Kenya. Despite this background, a comparison of women political leadership in Kenyan parliaments since independence easily illustrates the weakness of Central Province. For instance, out of the 16 women elected to the 10th parliament, the majority are from Rift Valley Province with Central Province having only two (Kamau, 2010). It is in this context that, this study sought to examine the forces that impact on political participation of women in Gatundu South Constituency.
1.2 Statement of the Problem

The background information reveals that Kenyan women have a long way to go before attaining equity and equality with men, especially in the area of electoral politics. However, this does not mean that policies made and implemented in the political process do not have an impact on their lives and on gender relations in general.

Although the Agikuyu are known to wield a lot of political, educational and economic influence in Kenya, there still exist challenges and constraints that promote inequality and discrimination against women’s political participation in Gatundu South Constituency. In this Constituency, no woman has ever passed party nominations to vie for a parliamentary seat. This may imply existence of gender specific obstacles or that no politically strong women candidates have presented themselves for parliamentary elections since independence. This study therefore investigated the factors that have continued to bar women from being elected to parliament in Gatundu South constituency.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

(a) To find out whether there were any women candidates who vied for parliamentary election in Gatundu South Constituency between 1992 and 2007.

(b) To evaluate the factors influencing women’s participation in parliamentary elections in Gatundu South Constituency from 1992 to 2007.
(c) To establish whether there are any gender specific challenges that women face in their effort to participate in parliamentary elections in Gatundu South Constituency.

(d) To suggest effective strategies of improving women’s participation in parliamentary election in Gatundu South Constituency.

1.4 Research Questions

(a) Are there women who presented their candidacy for parliamentary elections in Gatundu South Constituency from 1992 to 2007?

(b) Are there any factors that influence women’s participation in parliamentary elections in Gatundu South Constituency?

(c) Are there gender specific challenges that bar women from political participation in parliamentary elections in Gatundu South constituency?

(d) How can the participation of women in parliamentary election in Gatundu South constituency be improved?

1.5 Research Premises


2. A number of factors have contributed to the low participation of women in parliamentary elections from 1992 – 2007 in Gatundu South Constituency.
3. There are gender specific challenges that bar women from participating in parliamentary elections in Gatundu South Constituency.

4. The political participation of women in parliamentary elections in Gatundu South Constituency can be improved using different strategies.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study analyzed some of the practices and traditions that continue to subordinate women in politics, especially in Gatundu South constituency. The study findings are useful in explaining the major constraints that inhibit women from rising to parliamentary political positions in Gatundu South Constituency. They, therefore, contribute to knowledge and literature on the political participation of women in Gatundu South Constituency specifically and generally in Kenya. The data generated from the study provide baseline information regarding the challenges that have to be addressed in order to ensure the political participation of women. The data is important in policy formulation process and proposing changes that would improve women's political participation in parliamentary elections.

The findings of this study are important to other researchers and scholars interested in studying any related problem area, civic educators will benefit from these findings as they will realize the need for gender sensitive civic education. Further, the recommendations made from this study shed light on future prospects of women participation in electoral politics. Women lobby groups and human rights activists can use the findings of this study to campaign for reorganization of political
structures to provide a friendly environment that would ensure women participation in electoral politics.

1.7 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study was conducted in Gatundu South Constituency. The period of the study was limited to 1992 – 2007. 1992 was chosen as the earliest starting point of the study as it marked a new dawn in Kenyan politics with the widening of the democratic space due to the reintroduction of multiparty politics. The year 2007, on the other hand, served as a convenient date to end the investigations in the study because it was the last election year under the old constitution.

Accessing the sampled voters and low response rate posed challenges in collecting data for this study. To overcome these challenges, the researcher conducted several follow-ups with the respondents to increase the response rate.

1.8 Conclusion

It has been observed in this Chapter that despite the removal of legal barriers to women’s political participation in many countries, Parliaments remain largely male-dominated. The various factors that have influenced women’s access to decision-making bodies will be discussed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Women around the world at every socio-political level find themselves underrepresented in parliament and sidelined in decision-making bodies. As mentioned in Chapter one, in 2007 woman held only 10% of all parliamentary seats around the world. In Africa, although the share of parliamentary seats held by women increased from 7% in 1990 to 17% in 2007, a country like Kenya still lagged behind with only 8.1% of women representation in parliament. The current compositions of parliaments in any region of the world provide evidence that women still face numerous obstacles in political participation.

This chapter reviews literature related to political participation of women and the possible factors that have continued to influence women’s political participation. It is organized into three sub-sections, with the first section reviewing literature on the position of women in politics from a global perspective. The second section explores literature on the impact of colonization on the political position of African women, while the third section looks at the factors that influence women’s political participation in Kenya. The theoretical and conceptual frameworks are also presented.
2.2 Women in Politics

Kendrigan (1984) observes that although the statistics on women in public office in different countries in the world give dramatic indications of the lack of political equality for women, the reality is even more unequal than the simple numerical compilation would indicate. She further notes that the offices women run for and holds are the less important ones. Women have been found to have less influence and be less active than their male counterparts in whatever political body they serve.

Lovenduski and Norris (1996) agrees with Kendrigan by noting that the concepts of positional policy and organizational gender bias facilitates the exploration of the political disadvantages experienced by women and goes some way to explain them. Explication of different forms of sex and gender bias makes it possible to trace the connections between the presence of women in politics, the policies they advocate for and the institutions they seek to inhabit. Although these studies are too general and do not focus on any specific country, they do provide some insights into the nature of political involvement of women in Kenya.

Andersen (1997) also notes that as more women are being elected to political office in different parts of the world, they continue to encounter numerous barriers to their full political participation. Even with their increased representation, women remain vastly outnumbered by men in government and other institutions that comprise the political system.
She further observes that although women may be reaching new heights of political power, old attitudes and stereotypes remain and women who become powerful are frequently ridiculed; for the message is clear that some women can move into politics but it is still a man's world where women are largely excluded from key areas such as economic policy, defense, security and political affairs. Often, the very small number of women is appointed to positions which reflect the role so often they play in the private sphere. For example, women are often given responsibility for health, education, housing, welfare and women affairs. These studies are too general and they do not analyze the specific challenges that women face in political participation in different countries. Nevertheless, they will form the basis for the analysis of political participation of women in Gatundu South Constituency.

2.3 Political Position of African Women

Lumumba (1996) observes that the current gender disparities in African societies and the magnitude of the problems posed by gender inequality in every aspect of society in Africa today are as a result of a complex set of factors. She notes that while some of these factors are indigenous to African cultures, others are created by the policies and rules designed in the colonial context. These colonial legacies have been perpetuated by African men-dominated legislative and executive bodies that have developed little or no gender awareness. She further observes that although Africa bears no responsibility for the historical patriarchal foundations of western societies, European colonial policies are nonetheless directly or indirectly a determining factor.
in gender inequality in every sphere of contemporary Africa socio-economic and political dynamics.

Kamau (2010) adds that in the case of Kenya, the marginality of women in political leadership and their continued exclusion in political decision-making is a product of history of the patriarchal state in Kenya, both for the colonial and independent state. These works blame the subordination of African women in politics, not only to indigenous African cultures but also to the changes in African political systems brought about by colonialism.

2.3.1 Pre-Colonial Period.

A general assessment of women’s political position in pre-colonial Africa indicates that there were well defined and respected political roles of women. (Hay and Stitcher 1995) observes that several state systems in pre-colonial Africa had women’s positions as part of the normal fare of politics, in some cases the king’s wife or sisters ruled over women’s affairs and was responsible for the performance of those under her authority. She further notes that many African polities had a dual system in which a woman was responsible for women’s affairs and a man for men’s affairs and the general community.

Uchendu (1993) also notes that in some societies women were leaders, counselors, and/or spiritual figures. She cites the example of the Omu among the Igbo people of Nigeria who commanded considerable respect and authority as a leader among her
subjects. Among the Agikuyu of central Kenya, elderly women formed women’s councils which dictated behaviour patterns for their members and enforced sanctions as necessary (Mwangi, 2004). Generally, women usually had political control over some area of activity, be it farming, marketing, trading or household and family affairs.

Hay and Stitcher (1995) concludes that although women prerogatives were never equal to those of men across all types of systems, nor were there ever as many women in leadership positions as there were men, African women were not confined to a private sphere and excluded from public life. The public-private distinction thought of as natural in the west is in fact an artifact of western history and was not a useful way of describing African gender systems (Okombo, 2007). These works provide an insight into the role of African women in decision making, prior to the advent of colonialism. The current study examined the political role of African women in the post-colonial period.

2.3.2 Colonial Period

Prior to the systematic penetration of the European colonial systems, African women had a much broader role in decision-making than they did under colonial rule or they have had since independence. It is well understood that colonialism altered the status of African women and reduced their power through the imposition of Western conception of state and society, women, family and gender. The colonial administrative systems allowed European officials to govern through indigenous
male authorities, formalizing male institutions while ignoring their female equivalent (Hay and Stitcher, 1995).

A good example of the erosion of women’s political power under colonial rule is that of the Igbo of Southern Nigeria in West Africa, where the colonial government transformed the traditional male office of the Obi into a salaried position but ignored the Obi’s female counterpart, the Omu. The colonial administrators simply never considered the possibility that there were female political structures that should be incorporated into the colonial political system (Uchendu, 1993).

The colonial economy encouraged the migration of young men into the emerging urban centres in pursuit of formal employment, while women were left in the rural areas taking care of the children and homes. This effectively created domestic (private) and public spheres, which was reinforced by colonial education which prepared men for the public sector as women were trained to be good house makers. This new division of labour seems to have created male breadwinners with women dependent on them, a situation that created a sense of powerlessness among women which continue to affect their participation in public decision making (Kamau, 2010). These studies explore the changing roles of African women during the colonial period. They give this study a historical insight on the changing political position of African women in the colonial period.
2.3.3 Post-Colonial Period

The marginalization of women in politics was not reversed by post-colonial independent governments. Karuru (1997) observes that even where women had participated in nationalist and liberation movements they were not recognized. While the women went unrecognized the contribution of men was not only documented but also rewarded, as most of them were involved in the negotiations leading to independence and they eventually took over from the colonial government.

Kamau (2010) notes that in the case of Kenya, the colonial structure was never dismantled and its extant forms of class and gender discrimination and oppression persisted. Although the structures of the emerging state were de-racialized they were never gendered; on the contrary, the state was further masculinized and ethnicized. Therefore, the marginalization of Kenyan women in political decision-making is a product of history of the patriarchal state in Kenya both for the colonial and the independent state. These studies examine the impact of colonialism on the political participation of African women, they will provide a historical background on women’s political participation in Kenya.
2.4 Factors Influencing the Political Participation of Women

2.4.1 Socio-Cultural Factors

According to Kendrigan (1984), feminine qualities are used to legitimize the discrimination against women in politics and in the job market. The cultural understanding of femininity emanates from the socialization process, whereby the whole socialization process is geared towards discouraging girls from involvement and success in pursuit of things that require ambition, daring or inquisitives. Boys on the other hand are encouraged from childhood to portray masculine traits which call for tenacity, curiosity, ambition, responsibility, originality and competitiveness. Thus, masculinity is closely connected with qualities necessary for success. The myth of femininity as the opposite of masculinity is seen as an instrument for the oppression of women.

In expanding a similar view, Abena (1991) and Kabira and Maina (1997) examine aspects of culture in enhancing gender imbalances in African societies. Both scholars observe that conceptually language, gender and law converge in culture and that by the time they are adults, members of each society have internalized or acquired specific values regarding the gender issues they have experienced. They add that it is in culture where specific values and ideas about men’s and women’s roles are found, what the society expects from each, codes of behaviour in various circumstances and the associations and the connotations that go with each genus. This study examined the role of culture in defining women’s role in society and how it impacts on women’s political participation in Gatundu South constituency.
Several scholars have identified patriarchy as a major force militating against women's political participation often leading to subordination and marginalization of women, Kabira and Wasamba (1998), Ruth (1998) and Andersen (1997), all argue that in many patriarchal African communities' women are not supposed to challenge men in political leadership. They all agree that the control of patriarchal societies by men operates on the ideological premise that men are biologically superior to women and that because women are weak, they have to be subordinate to men. Kabira and Wasamba (1998) conclude that the outcome of this is that men become the natural leaders and the occupants of the public sphere while women are domesticated and marginalized. The possible effect of patriarchy undermining women political participation will be addressed in this study.

The Agikuyu oral traditions have myths that point out to the existence of a matriarchal system, where the kinship system was headed by women. Indeed the Agikuyu clans are based on the nine daughters of Gikuyu and Mumbi who, according to the Agikuyu were the descendants of the community (Kenyatta, 1964). Kabira and Nzioka (1993) observe that this arrangement did not survive for a long time as women ruled men with a lot of cruelty; they made men do all agricultural work, herd cattle, do house work and look after babies. They treated men like slaves and their rule was generally tyrannical. When the men could not bear it anymore they staged the most supreme of all coups, the coup by men against women's power.
Since men overthrew women’s power the Agikuyu have lived in peace, love and harmony. Kabira and Wasamba (1998) add that although the place of women is not clearly demarcated in the public, women are blamed for all kinds of evils in traditional societies which seem to legitimize their exclusion from participation in modern politics and decision-making. They further note that stories from different Kenyan communities depict women, particularly wives, as disloyal, disagreeable, untrustworthy, stupid and easily cheated hence unfit for leadership. Such stories obscure successful women leaders by discrediting them through falsehoods and stereotypes. These studies highlight some of the arguments that men use to justify, the exclusion of women from political leadership. Although these studies identify cultural practices as a barrier to women political participation they do not explain the exceptional cases where communities retain cultural practices and yet elects women leaders to parliament.

Tripp (2005) notes that the obstacles to African women’s full participation in the political arena are daunting. Women parliamentary candidates face a myriad of cultural prohibitions not experienced by their men counterparts. Married women politicians often find it difficult to find a constituency to run in. If they run in the constituency where they are born, they are told to go to the constituency where they are married, and when they run in their husband’s constituency, they are told, “You came here to be married not to rule.” Whereas women married away from their constituencies of birth may not be supported by the electorate, there are women who have defeated men candidates yet they are married away from their constituencies.
Abrams and Harvey (1996) observe that there are other subtle factors closely related to culture that affect women's participation in politics. They note that, women are constrained by the sexual division of labour which saps their energies and also limit the amount of time and effort available for them to engage in political matters. They further note that although many Kenyan women participate in the waged labour market, they have not been relieved of their traditional familial duties; thus they continue to play the triple role of producers, maintainers and reproducers, leaving them with no extra time to engage in politics. This study assessed whether the cultural factors identified by these studies pose a challenge to women political participation in Gatundu South Constituency.

2.4.2 Access to Education

According to Hay and Stitcher (1995), access to education and employment are the key ingredients for individuals in a modern society to obtain if they want to exercise political power. Education and job experience teach leadership skills and accord individuals' self-esteem. She further argues that it is this self-esteem that enables a person to gain political power and to exercise it effectively; she concludes that it is lack of adequate education that makes African women less competitive in the contemporary political world.

A study carried out by Centre for Law and Research International (CLARION) 2004 indicates that besides the importance of education, there continues to be gender bias
in many aspects of Kenya’s system of education and training. The number of girls reduces as one move to higher levels of education.

Lack of civic education makes most women unaware of their rights, they know very little of the issues of politics and decision making. Many women therefore; continue to rely on their husbands, fathers, brothers and sons to advise them on whom to vote for and for what position. This is not acceptable practice in democratic elections because each ballot should be secret and independent (Mwangi 2004). Civic education contributes to opinion shaping and active participation of the electorate; it creates awareness and seeks the participation of citizens in all aspects of democracy. It is therefore critical in enhancing women’s participation in elections (Okombo 2007).

In Kenya, civic education is built into the country’s educational system so that when children reach voting age, they already understand the basis of the national and local political and electoral system. Therefore, women who are disadvantaged in the country’s educational system may not have received the civic education necessary to enable them to participate in elections in a well-informed manner. The relationship between women’s access to education and their participation in politics in Gatundu South Constituencies will be addressed in this study.
2.4.3 Access to Resources

According to Tripp (2005), women are disadvantaged because they often lack the necessary resources for electoral campaign. Candidates are expected to give small gifts and make contributions to fund-raising events, funerals, wedding and community projects. Since in most cases women are not incumbents, they do not have a chance to use their positions to build roads, bridges, hospitals and schools and in this way win votes.

In discussing what she calls “universal barriers” to women’s participation in public roles, Nzomo (1997) identifies socio-cultural policy, institutional frameworks and lack of adequate money. She observes that many women are poor and even wealthy ones may not be independently so. Hence, they may not be able to afford the enormous amounts of money required to fund an electoral campaign. A publication by the Association of African Women for Research and Development on the 1997 general election (AAWORD 1997) also makes a similar claim that lack of resources constraints women’s participation in politics. It further observes that this factor is closely related to culture because due to cultural gender bias, women have less access to credit, education and employment opportunities. In addition, Kamau (2010) notes that in Kenya, it is those who give the most that get the votes and unfortunately, not many women can compete materially with men, given the patriarchal structures in operation. Resources are a key factor in helping men and women succeed in politics yet there are women and men who have had a lot of
resources at their disposal yet they lost elections. Miruka (2003) challenges the above observation and argues that although candidates must have money for some basic expenditure to make their campaigns meaningful, there is no correlation between political success and financial outlay. He further points out that just having money in the absence of other key determinant factors is irrelevant to success. The extent to which, lack of resources limit women’s participation in politics in Gatundu South Constituency, was investigated in this study.

2.4.4 The Role of Political Parties

Oyugi (2003) disagrees with the above arguments on social and cultural factors; he posits that traditionally, it has been argued that women’s low representation and lack of participation in politics is as a result of conspiracy between their social construction, culture and development, which undermine not only the rate and the levels of entry for women but also the retention and transition. He argues that this is not entirely the case; for him the real reason for women’s under-representation is largely as a result of the political structures, their organization and management.

The low degree of institutionalization of many political parties in Kenya, lead to biased candidate nomination in favor of those who have accumulated personal political capital and resources based upon personal status or external group support. In most cases, the beneficiaries of these biases are men. Oyugi further notes that due to inadequate regulation of political parties in terms of their membership recruitment
or requirements to practice internal democracy, party elections are held arbitrarily and at the party officials’ whims. In some cases the elections are never held. This principally locks out the admission of new membership and women in particular.

Selolwane (2006) observes that political parties are instruments and sites of negotiating power in Africa. Therefore, women have targeted political parties for greater inclusion and democratization as a means of gaining access to parliament, cabinet and other areas of public decision-making. According to her, the greatest challenge for women has been lack of democracy within the political parties which are open to abuse and patronage. In Kenya, affinity with the party boss is critical for visibility and for nomination. Needless to say major parties in Kenya are headed and dominated by men. The parties’ culture is therefore of necessity masculine and this could itself alienate women politicians. There is also the public image concern, that a woman politician seen too close to the party boss runs the risk of being suspected of moral impropriety (Miruka, 2003).

In addition, Kabira and Maina (1997), argue that political parties in Kenya often use sexist language, imagery and symbolism. Values of sheer physical brute are promoted and sustained through symbols such as fists, lions, cocks and tractors. They further note that these are macho images consistent with a culture of dominance, violence and control which promote patriarchal images.
2.4.5 The Role of Media

The influence of the media on public opinion and public consciousness cannot be over emphasized. The mass media can be used to cultivate gender bias and promote stereotypes about the role of women in society. Makokha (2003) points out that while women do sometimes make the front page in the print media, it is generally not on the basis of what they accomplish but rather what happens to them as victims of accidents and incidents. Stories of successful initiatives launched by women hardly get a line in national newspapers. He further notes that when the mass media give women political figures some publicity, it is never devoid of derogatory tones. Such women are portrayed as opportunists, lurking in the background waiting to ride on the back of their fathers, husbands and sons to power. In agreement with Makokha, Kamau (2010) notes that most of the times, the media covers women either as victims or when they fit into the stereotypical roles associated with the female gender.

According to Sambo (1991), the media shape how a person, group or thing is socially perceived by not only reflecting the values of the society but also by shaping them. Thus, the portrayal of women politicians determine who among them can be taken serious or how much influence they command. The lack of proper coverage of women’s issues and the activities of women MPs contributes to lack of public awareness about them.
2.5 Strategies for Increasing Women’s Political Participation

Many conferences have been held at the national, regional and international levels. In addition many instruments, agreements, charters, conventions, declarations and resolutions have been made and yet apart from the Nordic and Rwandan experiences, everywhere in the World women’s participation in politics remains limited. (Miria, 1998).

Tripp (1998) observes that the African experience is complex. In a few countries where democratic processes have been taking place, some attempts have been made to include women in the decision making machinery. This change in political participation, she notes has, however, been limited to increasing the number of women entering the system. It has not yet affected the political agenda or begun to reflect the broad concerns of women.

Miruka (2003) identifies affirmative action as one of the strategies of eliminating the gender imbalances in politics, but he warns that affirmative action addresses the problem of gender gaps without tackling the underlying causes of discrimination, oppression and patriarchal beliefs. He therefore advises that affirmative action should be accompanied by strategies to address the underlying causes of gender gaps like mentoring women aspirants and increasing their affinity with the electorate through grassroots’ networks and consistency in politics. He adds that packaging messages and ideas on addressing gender imbalances without projecting the image of being a representative of women only, would go a long way in increasing women’s participation in politics.
Miria (1998) notes that in many countries, national machineries have been established for the advancement of women. Ministries, as well as women and youth councils have been established right from the grassroots to national level to organize and mobilize women to participate effectively in the development of the country. In addition, Nzomo (2003) notes that non governmental organizations (NGOs) and community based organizations (CBOs) have initiated civic education and training curricula aimed at political empowerment and capacity building of women candidates and voters as well as gender sensitization of men and women. The immediate impact has been observable in the increased numbers of women running and being elected to political office. Tripp (2005) also observes that the future of women’s empowerment and their future political participation are linked to the transformation of the existing political structures and systems to make them responsive to women’s agenda.

Rebick (1998) cites constitutional and legal reforms as a necessary strategy to eliminate discriminatory laws and to enact laws aimed at removing customary and cultural practices which promote injustices against women.

The reviewed studies all explore how women are politically marginalized and subordinated in Africa generally and in Kenya particularly. The studies acknowledge the fact that there are certain forces that impact on women’s political participation.

The first section looks at the position of women in politics globally and observes that
women are politically marginalized all over the world, the studies assume that barriers to women’s political participation are universal across the globe.

The second section examines the changing political position of African women, blaming the subordination of women in politics to the indigenous African cultures and also the changes in African political systems, brought about by colonialism. Although these studies provide a historical background on women’s political participation in Kenya they do not consider other factors that have shaped African politics overtime.

The third section looks at factors that have contributed to the gender imbalance in political participation. Socio-cultural practices have been identified in this section as a factor inhibiting women’s political participation; however exceptional cases of communities that retain cultural practices and yet elect women leaders to parliament have not been accounted for. Lack of education has also been highlighted as factor affecting women’s participation in politics, but these studies do not explain the cases of highly educated women, who in spite of their education do not participate in politics. Men have been blamed in these studies for sidelining women in political parties but no explanation has been given about the position of women in women-led parties. This study investigated the forces that militate against women’s political participation in Gatundu South Constituency.
2.6 Theoretical Framework

This study will employ Liberal feminist theory and the concept of patriarchy to analyze the political participation of women in parliamentary elections in Gatundu South Constituency. The central theme of liberal feminism is equality of opportunity. It emphasizes that each individual in society should have an equal chance to compete for the resources of that society in order to achieve as much as talent permits. (Mill and Taylor, 1982).

Mill and Taylor (1982) identified two sources of customary discrimination suffered by women: outright prejudice and their dependent status. They further suggest that the solution to this problem of women’s discrimination can be found in redistribution of opportunities in order to even up the chances for women, what are seen as barriers to competition must be removed. Liberal feminist strategy, therefore, concentrates on improving educational opportunities for women in order to give them the tools to compete, changing socialization patterns that shape a feminine personality uncomfortable with competing and removing legislation that actively discriminates against women.

Patriarchy

The study also employed the concept of patriarch as propounded by Hartman (1976). Hartman identifies two major axes to men’s dominance and control in a wide range of domestic and community activities. The first axis is men’s superior power. According to her, men’s material power and the economic dependence of women it
creates, define men and their activities as superior and women and their activities as inferior. The second axis is based on the division of labour which identifies women with the domestic sphere and men with the outside world of modern economy. Women’s responsibilities in the domestic sphere saps their time and energy. This does not leave women with either much leisure or much energy and freedom of mind to engage in productive or creative activities in the public sphere. This, according to her, perpetuates monopoly by men of important positions in the socio-economic hierarchy and their associated control of the main institutions of modern society such as law and politics. Therefore male domination and the restriction of women to domestic work is the basis for women’s oppression and subordination.

The liberal feminists theory’s perspective, was in this study to show how denial of opportunity to women, has led to their exclusion from political participation in Gatundu South Constituency. Women lack opportunity because of gender prejudice and their dependent status. If the barriers to competition are removed and women provided with equal opportunity with men, they have the capacity to lead.

The concept of patriarchy was employed to demonstrate how men’s material power has led to their superiority over women, hence their dominance in political leadership. Gender stereotypes have shaped societal attitudes towards women. These stereotypes and proverbs that portray women as incapable to lead serve to keep women in their marginalized status by emphasizing their purported weaknesses.
Excluding women from positions of power impoverishes the development of democratic principles and inhibits the economic development of a society. Thus it remains imperative to adopt measures that enhance women's political participation to achieve sustainable development. The following chapter describes the methodology used to investigate the factors that influence the political participation of women in Gatundu South Constituency.
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction
This chapter provides the research design used in the study. It also describes the location of the study, the target population, sampling techniques as well as the methods of data collection, analysis and presentation used.

3.2 Location of the Study
The study was conducted in Gatundu South Constituency, which is an electoral constituency in Kenya. It is one of the four constituencies in Thika District. Thika District is 40 kilometres North East of Nairobi. It lies on latitude 1° 4’ 60” South and Longitude 37° 4’ 60” East. (See Map on Appendix iv)

The first president of Kenya came from this constituency, hence the assumption that people here are more politically conscious than those from other constituencies. Despite this historical background, the constituency has never had a woman elected to parliament since independence. Though a number of women have tried to vie for the parliamentary seat, none has gone beyond the nomination stage. This made it a suitable site for the study.

34
3.3 Research Design

A descriptive research design was employed in this study, to establish the political participation of women and to investigate the factors that impact on women's political participation in Gatundu South constituency. A descriptive research design enables respondents to give more information on the issue of interest to the researcher. It also seeks to obtain information that describes existing phenomena by asking individuals about their perceptions, attitudes, behaviors and values in relations to the study.

3.4 Target Population

Gatundu South Constituency had a population of 59,484 registered voters. Out of these voters, 32,120 were men while 27,364 were women. A total 198 voters were selected for the study. The voters, women aspirants who vied between 1992 and 2007 and the provincial administrators formed the target population in this study.

3.5 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size.

Gatundu South Constituency is divided into six wards, Mundoro, Kiganjo, Ng’enda South, Ng’enda North, Ndarugu and Kiamwangi. The wards are further subdivided into polling stations. The sampling units for this study were the polling stations from two purposively selected wards. Ng’enda South Ward was selected because it is home of the first President of Kenya and has also produced all the elected members of parliament for the constituency since 1992. Mundoro Ward, on the other hand,
was selected because it is mainly a rural area and has attracted very few immigrants; therefore the majority of those living here are indigenous people.

Simple random sampling technique was used to select two polling stations out of the seven in Ng’enda South Ward, the same sampling technique was used to select two polling stations out of the six in Mundoro Ward. Using the voter register of 2007 (Interim Independent Electoral Commission IIEC 2011). Systematic random sampling was employed to select 30% of the registered voters, from each of the sampled polling stations. Table 3.1 below gives a summary of the sample size

Table 3.1 Summary of Sample Size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward</th>
<th>Selected polling station</th>
<th>Target population</th>
<th>Sampling procedure</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ng’enda South</td>
<td>Githaruru</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>Systematic Random sampling</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kimunyu</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>Systematic Random sampling</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mundoro</td>
<td>Kanjata</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>Systematic Random sampling</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gathiriga</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>Systematic Random sampling</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>670</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>198</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: IIEC Regional Office, Thika (2011)
Three out of six women aspirants, who attempted to vie for parliamentary seats in this constituency more than once from 1992 to 2007, were purposively selected for the study. One Divisional Officer for Gatundu Division, the Chiefs of areas under the selected wards that is, Ng’enda and Kiganjo Locations and the Assistant Chiefs of the areas under the selected polling stations, which are Ndundu and Kimunyu Sub-Location, were also purposively selected and interviewed as key informants.

3.6 Data Collection

3.6.1 Primary Data
This study used both questionnaires (Appendix i) and interview guides (appendix ii, iii) to collect primary data. The questionnaires had both closed and open-ended questions and they were self administered. The researcher hand-delivered them to the respondents and collected them after two days.

Semi-structured interview guides were used to obtain in-depth information from key informants. The researcher guided the respondents through a question and answers session and recorded responses to the various questions posed.

3.6.2 Secondary data
The researcher also conducted library research to obtain secondary data, from various sources such as books, journals, periodicals and research reports among others.
3.7 Data analysis and presentation

The collected data was classified into different categories through coding and tabulation. Quantitative data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS version 17.0), while qualitative data was analyzed thematically.

Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were used to present quantitative data, while qualitative data was summarized then organized into relevant categories and themes. The findings are presented in a narrative report with tables and graphs used to make illustrations.
CHAPTER FOUR

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN GATUNDU SOUTH CONSTITUENCY (1992-2007)

4.1 Introduction

The number of women in Kenyan parliaments has generally increased from 1 woman in the second parliament to 16 women in the 10th parliament; however such progress has not been witnessed in central province. This chapter examined the factors that influence the political participation of women in Gatundu South Constituency. It is divided into five sections. The first section gives the general information on the sampled population in terms of age, sex and marital status, level of education and voting history of the respondents. The second section looks at Women parliamentary aspirants in the constituency between 1992 and 2007. The third and fourth sections provide a discussion on the factors that influence women in parliamentary elections in Gatundu South Constituency, while the fifth section presents a summary of suggested strategies for improving women’s participation in parliamentary elections.

4.2 General Information on the Sampled Population

The study targeted a population of 676 eligible voters from 2 wards in Gatundu South Constituency. 198 people, 99 men and 99 women, participated in this study.
4.2.1 Age and Gender Distribution of Respondents

The age and gender attributes of the sampled population are represented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Cross Tabulation of Respondents According to Age and Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE IN YEARS</th>
<th>WOMEN</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>MEN</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 25 yrs</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 26-35yrs</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 36-45yrs</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 46-55yrs</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 55yrs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study established that female voters who responded to this study had varied ages. Those aged 26-35 years had the highest number of respondents with 62%. Those below 25 years were 10%, while those aged 36-45 years were 19%. The respondents aged between 46 and 55 years were 6% and those aged above 55 years were 2%.
The study further established that male voters who responded also varied in age. The age distribution below 25 years were 12%, between 36 and 45 years were 24%, while those respondents aged between 46 and 55 years were 12% and those above 55 years were 7%. Figure 4.1 below presents a comparison of the ages of the men and women.

**Figure 4.1 Distributions of Respondents According to Gender and Age**
The ages of the respondents were evenly distributed for both men and women, showing that both men and women across the ages participate in voting. However, the presence of women in voting does not translate into their increased political participation in parliamentary elections in Gatundu South Constituency.

4.2.2 Marital Status of the Respondents

The study established that, 36.0% of the female voters were single and 8.0% were separated, while 2.0% were windowed and 54.0% were married. Table 4.2 below illustrates the findings.

Table 4.2: Marital Status of Female Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>54.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>99</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As for the male respondents, the study established that 34.0% were single and 16.0% were separated, while 2.0% were widowed and 48.0% were married. The trend was similar to that of the female respondents in terms of marital status. Therefore marital status did not seem to influence voting in this Constituency. Table 4.3 illustrates the findings.

Table 4.3 Marital Status of Male Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>99</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2.3 Highest Level of Education

In this study, 72.0% of the female respondents had studied up to College/University, 22.0% had secondary education, while 4.0% had primary level education. About 2.0% declined to respond. From these findings, 94.0% of the sampled population had secondary education and above. Therefore, we can deduce that the level of education in this area is high, suggesting that the information obtained from the respondents regarding participation of women in parliamentary elections is credible and significant for this study. There was a relationship between the level of education and participation in voting, in that those with higher levels of education voted more frequently than those with lower education. Table 4.4 below summarizes these findings:

Table 4.4: Level of Education of the Female Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University/College</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>72.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>99</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As for their male counterparts, 52.0% had studied up to College/University, 36.0% to secondary level, and 8.0% primary level. 2.0% had no formal education while 2.0%) declined to state their level of education as shown in Table 4.5 below.

Table 4.5 Level of Education of the Male Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University/College</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>52.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No formal education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>99</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.2 below presents a comparison of the levels of education of the men and women who participated in this study.
The study findings revealed that women in this constituency are more educated than men. However, their access to higher levels of education does not seem to translate into their increased political participation. This negates Hay’s observation that access to education and employment are the key ingredients for individuals in a modern society to obtain if they want to exercise political power (Hay and Stitcher 1995). This may imply either that, there exist other factors than education that militate against the political participation of women in this constituency, or that achieving high levels of formal education does not necessarily create political awareness.
Education does not also seem to arouse women’s interest in political issues. Most highly educated women appear to be unaware of their civic rights and their knowledge of the country’s political system and context is wanting. Masinjila (1997) points out that although education gives women the kind of exposure and experience that sharpens their critical thinking, the social and cultural gender stereotypes do not allow them to participate in politics.

We can therefore conclude that patriarchal society rather than education, gives men power and authority, a factor that increases their political participation. On the other hand, it militates against women’s political participation, irrespective of the education they receive; thus high education of women in Gatundu South Constituency does little to change their social political thinking.

4.2.4 Voting History

The research also sought to document the number of times that the respondents had voted in previous general elections. The findings revealed that, only 1.0% of the total sampled population had not voted at all, 18.0% had voted once, 47.0% had voted twice, while 27.0% had voted thrice. The findings further revealed that 5.0% had voted 4 times and 2.0% did not respond to the item. The statistics indicate that, a majority of people in Gatundu South Constituency participate in voting. Indeed, older people had participated more times than the younger ones. The Pearson’s correlation r was .243 and the statistical significance p value of 0.016, which shows
that the relationship between age and frequency of voting in general elections had statistical significance. Table 4.6 below presents the findings.

Table 4.6 Frequency of Participating in General Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How many times</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>47.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrice</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four Times</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of voting, the findings indicated that both men and women respondents participated adequately in equal measure in the voting exercise. As such, voting could not be a factor that hinders women from political participation. However, although they vote in equal measure with men, women indicated that they do not vote for fellow women. This finding is in line with Kabira’s and Maina’s (1997) who observe that in most patriarchal societies, men and women do have equal votes,
showing that the vote carries equal weight, but the exercise of the vote does not reflect in an equal sharing of power. The two further note that the reason for this could be attributed to other social forces that affect the capacity of women to exercise their voting in a manner that reflects their own power. This could possibly explain why the political participation of women in Gatundu South Constituency has remained dismal despite women participating in voting.


The process of electing a member of parliament in Kenya between 1992 and 2007 involved three major stages. First, a candidate presents her/himself to a political party for nominations and pays a nomination fee. Second, candidates carry out campaigns in preparation for grassroots’ elections which are held at the party level. It is through these elections that each party nominates and presents its candidate to the electoral commission for the general elections. The third stage starts with preparations for general elections whereby nominated candidates from different parties transverse the constituency seeking for votes from the electorate. At the end of the campaign period voters cast their votes on a date set for the general elections.

The study noted that for the entire period (1992-2007), there has not been a single woman candidate who has passed beyond the grassroot’s elections (party nominations) to vie for the parliamentary seat. Only six women presented themselves for nominations within the different political parties. Unfortunately, they never
emerged as the favourite candidates within their respective parties and their battle for parliament ended at this level (IIEC Thika Regional Office 4/7/2011). Numerous factors are attributed to this, among them lack of resources needed for campaigns. In this constituency an aspiring candidate must have at least 30 million Kenya Shillings to enable their campaigns to be meaningful and have an impact. This money is for expenses such as paying nomination fee (KES 18,000-30,000), hiring vehicles for transport (KES 8,000,000), hiring public address system (KES 2,000,000), paying for mass media adverts, (KES 10,000,000), buying and printing t-shirts, posters, badges, caps, calendars and other items (KES 3,000,000). Money is also needed to pay campaigners, agents and security personnel in addition to hiring meeting and campaign venues. The voters also expect aspirants to give donations to fund raisings (harambees), provide food and entertainment for supporters and sometimes bribe voters and party brokers; otherwise one risks being rigged out during nominations. This study found that some parliamentary aspirants spent as much as 50 million Kenya shillings to fund their election campaigns.

Nyambura an aspirants interviewed by this study, attested to having had to deal with the fact that people expected her to give them money because they were used to politicians doing this. She reckoned that:

In one of my campaign rallies some rowdy youths hurled stones at my vehicle, complaining that I had wasted their time. They claimed that I was the only one who did not give them money; other politicians would give them like 50,000 to share among themselves. They mocked me asking me why I joined politics if I did not have money, or who did I think I am? How did I expect them to vote for me without money?
Women who seek political leadership face more challenges than men in this constituency. In this society, men are considered to be natural leaders and women are supposed to be led. Therefore when a woman express interest in political leadership, a majority of the people wonder what is wrong with her. They criticize everything she does and try to pull her down back to 'her position' just because she is a woman.

The observation that the electorate judges the seriousness of a candidate according to the amount of money he/she is ready to give out during campaigns, supports Miruka (2003), who notes that the electorate often associates a politician with a certain minimum level of resources. Those who display an obvious deficiency are often equated with jesters who are out to add spice to the electioneering but not serious contenders.

On the sources of political funding, this study established that most of the parliamentary aspirants in Gatundu South Constituency, largely source their campaign funds from their personal coffers. This means that whoever wants to get into politics must set aside campaign money from their savings. Joyce (O. I, 5/8/2011) alluded to this when she asserted that:

_I spent all my savings on campaigns. Unfortunately I did not have any other source of income. Let nobody cheat you; to win elections you must have a lot of money. Party nominations are very expensive. They entail transporting voters, buying votes, registration fee and other such modalities. Being a woman I did not have this kind of finances. I was therefore unable to train mobilizers who could help in the various campaign meetings, leave alone hire campaign vehicles._
Most women use their meager savings to fund their electoral campaigns. When such savings are depleted they do not have an alternate source of funds. Unlike men who can sell property or seek other sources of funds, women are limited. Much of what they assume to own is family property which is not registered in their name and they cannot sell such property without their husband’s consent.

The hostile environment of political campaigns was also seen as a major drawback to women aspirants. Women respondents voiced the threat of violence as a major concern. Wanjiku, a parliamentary aspirant, narrated her experiences in the following words:

> It was very scaring to receive threats from those who wanted to kill or kidnap me. I was to be on the alert until nominations were over. In fact during that campaign period, my house was broken into twice, actions that made me realize the security risk I had gotten myself into. I had to take my children to stay with a friend in Nyahururu and hire two guards to take care of my home. I did campaigns during the day and spent nights in different places until the nominations were over. Let me tell you; politics is not for the faint-hearted. You must be prepared to face these kinds of challenges (Wanjiku O.I, 7/9/2011).

Some of the most popular political parties in this constituency like KANU and SDP have never had women presenting themselves for nominations. Wangare, a longtime member of KANU, disclosed to this study that in this party, no woman would attempt to compete with Uhuru Kenyatta, the National Party Chairman, for such competition would be a show of disrespect to “Mheshimiwa” (Wangare O.I, 6/8/2011). Women in this party are not expected to compete with Uhuru Kenyatta because he is the Party National Chairman. However, this rule does not
apply to men. These sentiments may lead to the conclusion that parliamentary election in Gatundu South Constituency is ‘a men’s only race’ and women are uninvited guests.

It was also noted that women who expressed interest in vying for parliamentary seats through these popular parties were discouraged by party leaders and urged to support other more popular candidates who in this case were men. The control of resources by men in the Agikuyu society and the fact that the rules of engagement in politics are defined and organized around male norms and values, contribute a large extent to the continued marginalization of women in parliamentary elections in Gatundu South Constituency.

4.3. Factors that Influence Women’s Participation in Parliamentary Elections in Gatundu South Constituency

The findings of this study established that, a number of factors have an influence on the political participation of women in Gatundu South Constituency.

4.3.1 Cultural Beliefs and Practices

Sixty per cent of the respondents cited cultural values which precisely define male-female relationship in the Agikuyu community, as an impediment to women’s participation in politics. In addition, stereotypes that portray women as the weaker sex, thereby labelling them inferior to men, were emphasized by some respondents. For instance, Mucoki (O.I,8/8/2011) argued that “women cannot make good leaders
as they don’t think twice, are easily convinced and give up easily. They are also too weak for politics, which requires tough people”. In support of the above stereotype, Gachora dismissed women politicians with a Gikuyu saying (Muici na mutumia nota muicii na kihii), “one who conspires to steal with a woman is like one who steals with an uncircumcised boy”. This demonstrates how unreliable women are perceived and justifies why such beliefs influence women’s aspirations to leadership (Gachora O.I, 8/8/2011).

The study also found that most women shun politics because they fear ridicule from society. Edith was of the opinion that, “any respectable woman should stay at home to take care of her children and husband, because it is a taboo for a woman to speak in front of men and worse still to shout in political rallies”. Edith could not comprehend how a woman could leave her house to move up and down in the company of men at odd hours of the night in pretence of undertaking political campaigns (Edith O.I, 7/8/2011).

Selolwane (2006) blames the masculine model of politics for the marginalization of women in political participation. She argues that men largely dominate the political arena, formulate the rules of the political game and often define the standards of evaluation. Furthermore, political life is organized according to male norms and values, and in some cases, even male lifestyle. Shvedova (2005 ) notes that it is not only the nature of women’s lives which prevents them from participating in politics,
but also the structures of formal politics which range from the timing of meetings, the venues of political rallies and the confrontational style of campaigns.

Culture silently prohibits Agikuyu women from entering social places such as bars especially at night. However, these are venues where political networks are established, meetings are held and campaigns are planned. In many cases, such activities often take place in the evenings and can go on for long hours into the night. Incidentally, such factors emerged as reasons that militate against women’s participating in politics.

Eighty per cent of the male respondents in this study vowed that they would not allow their wives to participate in politics. Asked why, they argued that the exposure a woman gets in politics would make her “unmanageable”, and could possibly lead to breakage of marriage. In support of this argument, Ephantus pointed out that most of the women politicians he knows are single or divorced and the few who are married, according to him, have ‘sat on their husbands’, a trap he terribly dreads (Ephantus O.I,10/8/2011). Such sentiments lead to the conclusion that society expects men and not women in political power. Social institutions have been organized over time to give men power and authority over women. Consequently, when women rise to power, men feel insecure, as their assumed position is threatened. Many men may get intimidated by the attention and visibility that a woman gets when she holds a public office. This explains why men are not
comfortable with women in political leadership. In relation to this, Joyce (O.I, 15/8/201) notes that:

*When I declared my interest in vying for parliamentary elections, people thought that I was not serious. They considered me to be a “good woman” and not the type that would try her hand in the dirty game of politics. My pastor and church elders summoned me and urged me to re-consider my family’s position. They felt that my involvement in politics would be at the expense of my family. My mother-in-law in particular, did not take this kindly either; she even told her son (my husband) that if he is not able to instill discipline in me, she herself would do it. She said that she could not stop wondering whom people would associate me with when they saw me campaigning. As such, she would not allow me to bring shame and embarrassment to her family. Fortunately, my husband supported me throughout those trying moments.*

While examining cultural beliefs and practices that inhibit women’s participation in politics, Kabira and Wasamba (1998) observe that although the place of women is not clearly demarcated in the public, women are blamed for all kinds of evils in traditional societies which seem to legitimize their exclusion from modern politics and decision making processes. They further notes that stories from different Kenyan communities depict women particularly wives, as disloyal, disagreeable, dishonest untrustworthy, stupid and easily cheated, hence unfit for leadership. Stereotypes that portray women as unsuitable for political leadership have continued to play a major role in sidelining women in political leadership in Gatundu South Constituency.
4.3.2 Resources for Electoral Campaigns

The study also sought to examine whether resources had an impact on women's political participation. It found that lack of economic independence has been a great challenge for women who would wish to enter politics in this constituency. As observed earlier, anybody wishing to join politics must be prepared to meet campaign expenditure, which includes nomination expenses, hiring public address system, agents and campaign manager’s allowances, transportation and accommodation. Two of the women aspirants interviewed disclosed that they used between one million and two million Kenya Shillings to conduct campaigns while some of their male counterparts had a campaign budget of more than ten million Kenya Shillings. This portrays women as ignorant and poor planners. The fact that many women operate at the micro level in financial matters, probably made these women aspirants imagine that, two million Kenya Shilling was more than enough to carry out electoral campaigns and they did not even bother to draw a budget for their campaigns. While their men counterparts take time to plan and raise enough money for campaigns, women aspirants assume that vying for parliamentary elections is as easy as seeking leadership in a women's merry-go-rounds, such level of ignorance lead to their failure.

Tripp (2005) observes that women are disadvantaged because they lack necessary resources for electoral campaigns. All candidates are usually expected to give small
gifts and make contributions to fund raising events, funerals, wedding and community projects.

Ninety per cent of the women who responded to this study said that family resources are controlled by the family head who is a man. As such, it is the man who decides how such resources are to be used. This applies to both employed as well as business women; both must seek their husband’s approval before they decide on what to do with “their money”. Such money though theirs, is also part of family resources. Njoroge (O.I, 12/8/2011) informed this research that, according to Gikuyu traditions, when he married his wife he paid dowry; consequently, she became part of his property which means whatever she has is his; by default. Thus, according to Gikuyu traditions, married women do not own any property, but married men continue to own and control what they had before getting married and whatever they acquire as a family in marriage. This gender biased assumption is in agreement with Nzomo (1992), who observes that many women are poor and even the wealthy ones may not be independently so, hence, they may not be able to afford the enormous amount of money required to fund an electoral campaign.

Both men and women face the challenge of financing campaigns. However, given the gender dimensions of wealth distribution in the family, this problem affects women more than men. Although women can access family resources, it is the men who have the control over it. Family property that is usually used as collateral to obtain bank loans is more likely to be registered in the name of male family members.
On the other hand, men inherit property from their fathers and in turn pass it over to their sons. As such, women whether married or single, are disadvantaged by this patrilinear system of inheritance. Moreover, for the married ones, their husbands have power over their personal income and savings.

A political candidate may also get donations from supporters for campaign; thus the extent and resource base of one’s supporters’ matters. The traditional set up of society, excludes women from the public domain. This denies them the opportunity to create meaningful social networks which could assist in resource mobilization. Moreover, when women attempt to fund raise, they often tend to invite fellow women; who have to account to their husbands on how they use their money. If they invite men, it raises suspicion on the relations they have with them. Men, on the other hand, can invite both men and women to their fund raising without suspicion. This limits women in resource mobilization base.

4.3.3 Religious Beliefs

Some respondents cited Biblical teachings on women’s role in society, arguing that, according to Christian teachings, women are supposed to be under the authority and care of men. Wanjiru (O.I, 8/8/2011) noted that Biblically, men are supposed to lead their families. If women cannot be leaders at the family level, she argued, how can they lead at the constituency level? Wanjiru cannot possibly comprehend the idea of women competing with men for political positions.
Leadership in most Churches and other religious organizations is the preserve of men. Women have no power within male clergy dominated church structures as they are also poorly represented in Local Church Councils. At the same time, many churches do not ordain women into priesthood and those that do, the numbers are negligible. Masinjila (1997) argues that the domination of church leadership by men means that they also shape religious ideology and to a great extent serve to perpetuate a conservative religious interpretation that affects women’s access to political leadership. Muiruri (1997) shares a similar view by emphasizing that both Christianity and Islam unequivocally identify leadership with men, right from their homes to the public sector. As such, male leadership is given a divine ordination by both Islam and Christianity. It is therefore mandatory for all believers to recognize male domination in everything if they have to justify their faith in the respective Holy Scriptures. The Church’s teaching on the equality and dignity of women should be expressed not only in documents but also in actions in order to increase women’s participation in political leadership.

Pastor Samuel (O.I, 5/8/2011) had a different opinion, he observed that men and women should participate equally in all spheres of life whether political, social or economic. He informed this study that in the church where he ministers, women are ordained to serve as pastors; therefore he did not see any problem if a woman was elected to parliament in this constituency. Unfortunately, such sentiments are only shared by a few men and their opinion is negligible.
4.4 Gender Specific Challenges that Influence the Political Participation of Women in Parliamentary Elections in Gatundu South Constituency

The study also sought to document the gender specific challenges that women who vie for parliamentary positions face. In this study, 88% of the respondents did agree that there are gender specific challenges facing women who aspire for parliamentary elections. The gender specific challenges noted were as discussed below.

4.4.1 Political Party Support

Although women in this constituency play an important role in campaigning and mobilizing support for their party, they rarely occupy decision-making positions in the parties’ structures. Wanjiku, a parliamentary aspirant in 2007 elections, narrated to this study her experiences in one political party. She notes;

*I contested for a parliamentary seat in 2007. I did not have adequate money to mount a good campaign. I paid 18,000 to participate in political party nominations and I was cleared to start my campaigns. To my surprise, the nomination exercise did not take place. Nomination certificates were given at night, I had not known that this is how things are done since it was my first time. I was told to stay put and support the chosen candidate for I would be given a job after the election (Wanjiku O.I, 7/8/2011).*

This out rightly denied Wanjiku the chance of being nominated by her supporters and eventually being elected. This also shows that women are not active members of political parties and are ignorant of what happens in them, they pay nomination fee then sit back and wait.
Joyce (O.I, 15/8/2011) also lamented that she was rigged out of the party nominations in 2002. She attributes this to the fact that it is men who drive political parties and influence the outcome of nominations. In her words:

*Parties are dominated by men so you never know what they are up to. They make decisions without involving you, especially if you are a woman; it is unfortunate that men don’t take women who join political parties seriously.*

Selolwane (2006) explains that the greatest challenge for women has been the lack of democracy within political parties which are open to abuse and patronage. Miruka (2003) also notes that in Kenya, affinity with the party boss is critical for both visibility and nominations. This locks out the admission of new members, especially women. Party elections are held arbitrarily and in some cases, they are not held at all. In the absence of a transparent selection system, parties tend to be biased in candidate nominations and hence favour those close to party leadership. In most cases, the beneficiaries of these biases are men.

In Kenya, women’s representation in political parties is low, although most political parties purport to support women’s leadership in their manifesto. They rarely consider women in party leadership. This low representation translates into comparatively few women getting the opportunity to be nominated on party tickets to vie for political office. Lack of political party support has been a big challenge to women vying for political leadership in Gatundu South Constituency.
4.4.2 Electoral Violence

The confrontational nature of Kenyan politics was also seen to influence women’s political participation in this constituency. Violence can take different forms such as inflicting physical injuries, physiological or emotional torture, which may be perpetrated through verbal abuse, derogatory language, or outmost display of contempt against one’s opponents.

The threat of violence, especially during political campaigns, remains a major challenge to women who aspire for political positions. Okombo (2007) asserts that violence or the threat of it has traditionally been used during the electioneering period to silence aspiring women leaders. She attributes gender-based violence to patriarchy, which is so much part of our culture. She further notes that the patriarchal hegemony provides dense institutional support that socializes men for violence while obscuring it from public scrutiny.

In connection to this, Joyce (O.I,15/8/2011) observes that:

*I could not go for late night meetings because of insecurity issue. The threat of insecurity and in particular, sexual violence scared me so much. I know of cases where men have used rape as a weapon to silence their female opponents, I had to be very cautious.*

Mama Maendeleo also mentioned the issue of violence, she noted:

*Violence during campaigns was a major issue of concern for me. During one of my meetings I encountered verbal insults from women. They literally shouted me down and they prevented others from listening to my speech. Surely it would have been less painful if it*
were only men who treated me this way; but to imagine that even fellow women, whom I had expected full support from, would publicly embarrass me! I felt like withdrawing from politics forever! (Mama Maendeleo, I.O, 17/8/2011).

She also complained that her male opponents incited the public against her, claiming that she had extra marital affairs. They not only paid other women to turn against her, but also sent rowdy youths to disrupt her political rallies.

Although electoral violence targets both women and men politicians, it is particularly ominous to women. Generally, women suffer more violence than men because of their weaker physical make up and their ‘peace loving’ nature. The violence meted against women in most cases tends to be sexual violence. Women aspirants interviewed in this study dreaded rape as a form of violence that could be used by their opponents to silence them. As women aspirants spend a lot of time worrying about sexual violence, their male counterparts who do not experience this specific form of violence have nothing to worry about. According to Kabira and Maina (1997) the rampant violence, mud-slinging and political intrigues have portrayed Kenyan politics as dirty and therefore, not suitable for women.

This study found that, the few women who have succeeded in politics have had no option but to play the male game in order to survive in this field. Such women use the same violent tactics as their male counterparts. Wanjiku(O.I,7/8/2011) confessed that she had to pay a group of young people to guard her and offer security in all her political rallies and meetings. She also had to learn to ignore verbal insults and derogatory language.
4.4.3 Traditional Roles

The Agikuyu social and cultural belief system continues to emphasize women's primary roles as mothers and housewives and to restrict them to the home environment. 74% of the respondents in this study felt that women should not involve themselves in politics because they have more 'important' responsibilities in society such as giving birth and taking care of their husbands and children. This means that most of the voters in this constituency will not readily support women political aspirants who, according to societal perceptions, have abandoned their familial responsibilities to compete with men for political leadership. It emerged that women politicians are often required to strike a balance between politics and family life.

Many Kenyan women have been socialized to believe that 'a good woman' thinks of her family first. This could explain why many women would rather wait until their children have matured before they consider joining politics. Out of the three women aspirants interviewed in this study, Joyce is married with young children, Wanjiku is single with grown up children, while Mama Maendeleo is widowed with mature children.

Joyce stated that though her husband supported her during the campaign period, it became difficult for her to go for late night meetings because she was expected to continue undertaking her domestic chores and responsibilities. Kamau (2010) points out that, the husband's support is generally ranked very highly as a contributing
factor to the success of women in politics. This could partly explain why a majority of the women in politics are widowed, divorced or never married. The married ones have had to get consent from their husbands, before joining politics otherwise they would not get full support. She further notes that the same does not apply to men, many of who have joined politics with fairly young families and whose wives are expected to not only support them, but also continue looking after the children.

4.5 Strategies for Improving Women’s Participation in Parliamentary Elections in Gatundu South Constituency

There are several strategies that could be employed to improve women’s participation in parliamentary elections. This research sought the respondents’ suggestions on how the political participation of women in Gatundu South Constituency could be improved.

Sixty two per cent of the respondents in this study felt that gender sensitive civic education should be the first step to be taken, in order to increase the political participation of women. Such education should target both men and women. Its aim should be to change stereotypes that portray women as weak, hence incapable to lead. It is only through gender sensitive civic education that the electorate can realize the importance of involving women in decision-making positions and discard the stereotypes they have acquired through socialization. Women in this constituency lose elections because people have negative preconceived ideas on their ability to
lead. Nzomo (2003) observes that civic education and training curricula aimed at political empowerment and capacity building for women candidates and voters have played a part in increasing the number of women vying for elections and being elected to political office.

This study also established that lack of political awareness was a great drawback for women aspiring to join politics. As such, women who aspire for political positions should be empowered through training so as to equip them with necessary political skills that would enable them to overcome the many challenges they encounter in politics. Joyce cited this type of preparation as an important tool for one to win elections. She admitted that:

*I think I entered the political arena not adequately prepared to face the competition. I thought like many women do, that going into politics is like walking to a meeting and addressing people. But it is when I went through the contest that I realized I needed to put some strategies to come out victoriously (Joyce O.I, 5/8/2011).*

Due to lack of awareness and experience, women who enter politics as noted earlier, often assume that seeking political office is as easy as seeking leadership in a women’s group or a merry-go-round. As such, they do not realize what is expected of them in political campaigns. Poor preparations lead to their failure in elections.

Networking with other women aspirants emerged as another important strategy that could be employed to increase chances of women winning elections. This study found that in this constituency women aspirants held several meetings during the
electioneering period to share experiences and encourage each other. Many women are inexperienced in politics and therefore, networking with other women who have been in politics gives them some important insights on how to handle political campaigns, besides serving as a source of encouragement.

Intimidation, violence and harassment by political opponents were cited as challenges to women aspiring to join campaigns for parliamentary elections. Wanjiku (O.I, 17/8/2011) felt that in order to encourage women candidates to participate in politics, the government should stand firm against violence by coming up with punitive penalties against those who use it as a means to win elections. Violence discourages women from joining politics. Eliminating election-based violence would probably increase the number of women vying for political positions.

Fifty-four per cent of those who responded to this study, supported affirmative action as the most effective way of reducing the marginalization of women in political leadership. Sabina (O.I, 30/8/2011) argued that without affirmative action, it will take a very long time for women’s visibility to be realized in political leadership.

Some respondents criticized affirmative action arguing that it favours women at the expense of men. Magoci (O.I, 21/8/2011) strongly opposed affirmative action, complaining that women are generally receiving a lot of unnecessary attention. He felt that having received the same level of education with men, women should take up the challenge and compete for political office.
Article 81 of the new Constitution of Kenya states that, “not more than two-thirds of elective public bodies shall be of the same gender”. In addition clause (b) of Article 97 on the membership of the National Assembly provides for the election of “47 women, each elected by the registered voters of the Counties, each County constituting a single member Constituency”.

Although Affirmative action is an important corrective measure, it has been criticized as undemocratic because it gives women an added opportunity improving their political participation. This could be interpreted as a form of discrimination against men. However, Miruka (2003) supports affirmative action as a good beginning point but argues that a long term solution of addressing gender imbalances in politics should be sought by tackling the underlying gender issues such as causes of discrimination, oppression and marginalization of women in politics.

Affirmative action is the only immediate measure which can be taken to correct the historical gender imbalances in parliamentary representation in Kenya; however it is a temporary measure that should be accompanied with a permanent solution. Such a solution can only be achieved by addressing the gender related factors that inhibit women from participating in politics.

From the findings of this study, we can conclude that both women and men participate in voting on an equal basis in this constituency. However very few women feature in the race to parliament, noting that only six women presented their candidature for parliamentary elections between 1992 and 2007 in Gatundu South.
Constituency: observably, none of them went beyond party nominations. Given the patriarchal nature of the Agikuyu society, women who seek political positions face more challenges than men.

Generally, very few women are able to raise the large amount of money needed (at least 30 million Kenya shillings) to run a successful campaign. Moreover those who can afford to raise such amounts of money have to overcome other challenges such as; politically instigated violence, the burden of domestic roles, being sidelined by political parties and gender based stereotypes that portray women as the weaker sex. Unless these challenges are addressed, women will remain politically marginalized in Gatundu South Constituency.

The various factors that influence the political participation of women in Gatundu South Constituency have been discussed in this chapter. The summary, conclusion and recommendations made from this study are presented in the following chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This study found that there are numerous obstacles that inhibit election of women to parliament in Gatundu South Constituency as discussed in the previous chapter. This chapter presents a summary of the findings of this study as well as the conclusions drawn from the findings. It also presents the suggestion on the way forward in light of the findings and conclusions and provides a glimpse into the areas for further research.

5.2 Summary

The first objective of this study was to find out whether there were any women who presented themselves for parliamentary elections between 1992 and 2007. The findings indicated that no women parliamentary aspirant passed party nominations to join the race for parliamentary elections. This was despite six women presenting themselves as interested parliamentary candidates for nominations in different political parties.

The second objective sought to evaluate the factors that influence women's participation in parliamentary elections in Gatundu South Constituency. The study found that women face numerous challenges at grassroots' elections, which impede on their political participation. It was established that women lack the much needed
resources to conduct electoral campaigns and are under a higher threat of politically instigated violence than their male opponents. They also lack adequate political skills such as public speaking and populist campaigning and are marginalized in political parties, which are organized along men’s norms and values. For instance political campaigns and meetings are organized in night clubs at odd hours. According to societal and cultural values respectable women are not expected to enter such social places especially at night. It was also established that in this constituency, the level of education might not be a serious challenge, given the high literacy levels among women. However, formal education did not seem to increase the political participation of women.

The aforementioned challenges deny women equal opportunity to compete with men in parliamentary elections at the grassroots level. This observation is in line with liberal feminist theorists’ John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill who argue that the root cause of women discrimination is lack of equal opportunity to compete with men.

In the third objective, this research tried to find out whether there were any gender specific challenges that hinder women from being elected to parliament in Gatundu South Constituency. Most of the respondents acknowledged the existence of gender specific challenges that hinder women’s participation in parliamentary elections. Among them were lack of economic independence, which was identified as a major obstacle to women’s political participation as it denies them access to the much
needed resources for political campaigns. It was observed that women do not own property and are denied the right to inheritance by the patriarchal systems. This observation, concurs with Hartman (1976), who blames patriarchy for the subordination of women, as it gives men material power which results in women's dependence on men. The findings of this study revealed that women in this constituency have to seek approval from their husbands or from other male relatives to join politics, an action that perpetuates their subordination and discrimination of in political participation.

A traditionally strong patriarchal value system that favours gender-based division of labour and traditional cultural values which discriminate against women were also seen to militate against the political participation of women. The image of a woman in traditional apolitical roles continue to dominate this society, making it difficult for the electorate to see women as suitable leaders.

Women aspiring to join politics were also found to face the problem of outdated and discriminatory cultural beliefs and stereotypes which seemed to shape the electorates' attitude. For example, "women don't think twice" and thus cannot make important decisions on behalf of the community. Besides, some respondents were of the opinion that "politics is too tough for women who are naturally weak". Such beliefs have led to low self-esteem and lack of confidence among women, discouraging them from participating in politics altogether.
The marital status of women aspirants seemed to matter as most of the respondents expressed their fear of electing separated or divorced women. Such women were not seen to be good role models in the society. Some of the respondents felt that giving women a chance to participate in politics was a noble thing but were afraid of the impact it would have on the family unit, as some respondents claimed that most women who are successful in politics are single, divorced or separated.

To address these noted challenges, 54% of the respondents were in support of affirmative action as a corrective measure that would address historical injustice against women. The new Constitution of Kenya has entrenched the right of women to participate in public decision-making and development matters. The law now requires that for elective and appointive positions, not more than two thirds of the membership will be of the same gender. This is indeed a phenomenal opportunity for woman who should take up this opportunity and prove that they are capable of transforming their role in society. Affirmative action is a move towards the positive direction for the inclusion of more women in politics. However it interprets the problem purely in terms of numbers whereas the problem actually has other more fundamental dimensions.

This study contends that long-term measures which aim at removing the barriers that hinder fair competition should be adopted. These should include empowering women through financial and moral support, launching gender responsive civil education that is sensitive enough to change people’s attitudes towards women’s participations
in politics, making the political battle field safer by eliminating violence during campaigns as well as changing the socialization process in order to prepare both men and women for political leadership. These suggestions agree with liberal feminism theorists who see the solution to women’s discrimination in the redistribution of opportunities in order to even up the chances for women and remove the barriers that limit competition.

5.3 Conclusion

This study found that there are numerous barriers that have continued to keep women out of political participation in parliamentary elections in Gatundu South Constituency. Outdated cultural attitude and traditions out rightly discourage women from entering politics, for the message is clear “good women” do not engage themselves in politics which is portrayed as a “dirty game”.

The few women who gather enough courage to join the competition have to overcome more challenges than their men counterparts; they lack money to finance their campaigns as they are not economically independent, being sidelined by political parties, they also have to deal with political violence, which ranges from verbal insults, sexual violence to physical assault. Unless these challenges are addressed, women will remain politically marginalized in Gatundu South Constituency.

Affirmative action is a good beginning point to correct historical injustices in regard to the exclusion of women in politics. However it should be accompanied by gender
sensitive civic education with the aim of changing people’s attitude towards women political leadership and eventually breaking the barriers to women’s political participation.

5.4 Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made for effective participation of women in parliamentary elections in Gatundu South Constituency.

- The Government, through the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), should intensify gender-sensitive civic education, with the aim of changing the misconception that women are not suitable political leaders to achieve this, capacity building for civic educators should be undertaken to sensitize them on gender issues.

- Women organizations and NGOs dealing with women empowerment should continue supporting women through initiating training programmes to impart various practical skills, such as public speaking and, developing strategies for campaigns. This should enhance confidence and encourage potential women candidates to run for parliamentary elections. They should also continue supporting women aspirants with funds and logistics in order to increase the number of women vying for parliamentary elections.
• The government, through the electoral body, should be more vigilant in the implementation of laws stipulated in the Elections Act. In order to level the political playing field and eliminate vices like voter bribery, electoral violence and electoral malpractices which work against the aspirations of politically ambitious women.

• The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) should be mandated by the Government, to oversee political party nominations to eliminate nomination malpractices and ensure a free and fair process. This action would increase chances of success for women. IEBC should also hold political parties accountable to execute the gender ratios spelt out in their manifestos and constitutions as concerns leadership positions.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

This study focused on the factors that influence the participation of women in parliamentary elections in Gatundu South Constituency Kiambu County. Further research needs to be carried out in constituencies that have continuously elected women to establish the factors that work for women and if possible replicate this elsewhere. A study should also be carried out to investigate effective measures that can be employed to ensure equitable redistribution of resources across gender in order to enable women to compete with men in politics on a level playing grounds.
REFERENCES


Inter-Parliamentary union (IPU). *Women in National Parliaments*, Available at <http://www.ipu.org>


APPENDIX 1

**Questionnaire Topic:** Factors influencing Women participation in Parliamentary elections in Gutundu South constituency, Kiambu County (1992-2007).

**Precautionary statement.**

The data collected from this study is purely for learning purpose, responses will be kept confidential and names of respondents are not required. Kindly answer the questions freely.

1. **Particulars of contact person**

2. **Sex:**
   - Female [ ]
   - Male [ ]

3. **Marital status:**
   - Single [ ]
   - Married [ ]
   - Separated [ ]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
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<tr>
<td>25-35 years</td>
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<td>35-45 years</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
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<tr>
<td>45-55 years</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Above 55 years</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
4. What is your highest level of education?
   - College/University level [  ]
   - Secondary level [  ]
   - Primary level [  ]
   - Non-Schooled [  ]

5. How many times have you voted in general elections in this constituency?

6. Which factor do you consider most important when determining the parliamentary candidate to vote for in a general election. (Tick where appropriate)
   - a) The amount of money a candidate gives out during election campaign.
   - b) The family background of the candidate.
   - c) Candidates level of education.
   - d) the most popular candidate
   - e) The development projects a candidate promises to initiate after elections.
7. Would you vote for a woman candidate in parliamentary elections in your constituency?

Yes [ ]  No [ ]

Explain: ........................................................................................................
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8. Just like men women can be reliable political leaders. How much do you agree with this statement?
1. strongly agree [ ]

2. Agree [ ]

3. Neutral [ ]

4. Disagree [ ]

5. Strongly Disagree [ ]

6. Are there gender specific challenges faced by women candidates who seek parliamentary elections in your constituency?

   Yes [ ]   No [ ]

   If yes list them .................................................................

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7. In your opinion what should be done to overcome this challenges? .......

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9. In your opinion is it important to provide equal chances for both men and women in political leadership.

Yes [ ]

No [ ]

Explain.

10. In your opinion how can women's political participation be enhanced?
APPENDIX II

Interview Guide for Women Aspirants

**Topic** Factors influencing Women participation in Parliamentary elections in Gutundu South constituency, central province (1992-2007)

Precautionary statement.

The data collected from this study is purely for learning purpose, response will be kept confidential and names of respondents are not required. Kindly answer the questions freely.

1. How many times have you vied for a parliamentary seat?

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2. What motivated you to seek political leadership?

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4. Where did you get funds to finance your campaigns?
5. Did family members support you when you were vying for this position?

6. What challenges did you face?

7. In your opinion how would the political participation of women be enhanced.
APPENDIX III

Interview Guide for Provincial Administrators

Topic Factors influencing Women participation in Parliamentary elections in Gutundu South constituency, central province (1992-2007)

Precautionary statement.

The data collected from this study is purely for learning purpose, response will be kept confidential and names of respondents are not required. Kindly answer the questions freely.

1. For how long have you served at this position?

2. Describe the security situation during electoral campaigns in this constituency?

3. What forms of violence are common during electoral campaigns in this area?

4. What measures does your office take against those who instigate violent acts during electoral campaigns?

5. Are there any gender specific challenges faced by women aspirants while conducting campaigns?

6. In your opinion what should be done to overcome such challenges?
APPENDIX IV
MAP OF GATUNDU SOUTH CONSTITUENCY