

WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN POLICY DECISION MAKING IN TURKANA COUNTY, KENYA: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

The decision to educate girls from arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL) has not been broadly supported by policy communities nationally and local governments. In effect, this phenomenon has produced women who find themselves in a disadvantaged position in regard to policy design and decision making. This article explores the extent to which women participation, or lack thereof, determines their influence in policy decision-making. It draws from feminist theory that advocates for gender inclusion, and women involvement in decision making. The administered a semi-structured questionnaire to 85 women employed by Turkana County and interviewed 10 other women mainstream ministries working at county level. Quantitative data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics while qualitative data was analyzed through content analysis. Results of the study showed that the prospects of women participation in policy decision making were; increasing number of women in managerial position/levels; economic empowerment of women; and increasing enrolment of women/girls into educational institutions or facilities. Major challenges found were: alienation within the political, economic, and cultural space. The study recommends Turkana County government should design a policy framework that guarantees: i) increased enrollment of women and girls in formal education institutions to enhance their knowledge and skills in leadership and governance; ii) increased number of women in managerial levels/positions; iii) support for the establishment of women micro-finance institutions; and iv) provision of financial and training support for women to boost their economic status.

Keywords: Women, Policy, Decision-Making, Policy Design; Prospects, Challenges

Introduction

The World Bank has identified women participation in policy decision making as key players in poverty reduction, an agent for democracy. The promotion of women's to take up policy decision making position provide a platform for social justice and women's empowerment (Malhotra, Schuler, & Boender, 2002). As noted by numerous scholars, the determinant of women in policy decision making is multidimensional and cut across the various sphere of governance i.e. political, cultural and social dimensions (Heerah and Hunter, 2006). Hunter and Heerah (2006) noted that women's participation in policy decision making enables women to live life with dignity, rights, equality, and justice. The increasing evidence indicates that women have stormed into possibly all challenging fields such as entrepreneurship and have achieved great success there (Makhoka, 2006).

As argued by Afolabi et al. (2003), women constitute over half of the world's population and contribute in various vital ways or role to societal development generally. In most societies around the world, women assume five key roles: mother, producer, home-manager, community organizer and socio-cultural and political activists. Of these roles mentioned, the last has been engendered by women movements, attributed to historical gender discrimination and inequality across the globe and stereotype the society inputs the relationship between men and women.

In India, women constitute nearly half the population of the country, but they are poorly represented in the various leadership roles and policy decision making bodies. The position depicted through the 14 general elections so far reflects a low representation of women in Parliament, State legislatures, in political parties and other policy decision-making bodies. Women have occupied less than 8% of Parliamentary seats, less than 6% Cabinet positions, less than 4% of seats in High Courts and the Supreme Court. Less than 3% of administrators and managers are women. The average percentage of women's representation in the Parliament, Assemblies and Council of Ministers taken together has been around 10% (UNIFEM, 2000).

Women's participation and the political process study conducted by Agbalajobi (2010) in Nigeria observed that women had for long suffered various forms of gender discrimination, inequality and exclusion, especially in the areas of policy decision making and political process despite occupying high-level positions in government and civil society departments. The movement for alleviation/eradication of gender discrimination is also multiple consequences of this system of beliefs and cultural values and norms. Agbalajobi (2010) further argued that these societal beliefs, as well as ethnic and most times religious doctrines and norms, have turned into self-fulfilling prophecies. Sex-role socialization assigns distinct and often unequal work and political positions to biological sexes turning them into socially distinct gender -economists see this as the sexual division of labour. The disparities between men and women are a clear manifestation of gender inequalities and biases as well as lack of recognition for women which are happening against the background of the potential, knowledge-ability and ability of women as Wallace indicates: "Women, although the poorest and most powerless, may hold the key to our common future. They command our attention not simply out of a sense of justice or expedience, but because unless their values, views and visions serve as a central focus for our policy-making, we cannot achieve the ultimate goal of peace".

The OECD (2009) report state that, the percentage of women in a level management position is commonly used as a basis for evaluating country progress in terms of governance, democracy and socio-cultural development. As noted by the OECD (2009) greater achievement of gender equity in leadership positions improve the economic performance of institutions since; women managers can "bring a wider range of perspectives to bear in corporate and policy decision making, contribute team-

building and communication skills, and help country or organization to adapt to changing circumstances (OECD, 2009). Increasing the number of women within management also represents a major goal of European Commission gender-parity policy because of the anticipated benefits to women, society and the economy as a whole (Commission of the European Communities, 2009).

The Rwanda government has taken a move that allows women to participate in policy decision making and political process despite the gender inequality norms which exist. This move has demonstrated leadership and political commitment at the highest level in pursuit of its goal of promoting gender equality in democratic governance and policy decision -making. This commitment by the new government which took power after the 1994 genocide focused on uniting and transforming Rwanda into a peaceful and prosperous country where the rule of law and human rights are respected. New constitution of Rwanda, adopted in May 2003, reference CEDAW and commits to representation of women at least 30% (Jodi Enda, 2003). This quota has been met and surpassed, as women now hold nearly 49% of parliamentary seats, a greater proportion than in any other parliament worldwide. This could at least partially be attributed to the fact that women in government are now perceived by Rwandans as more approachable and trustworthy politicians and managers than their male counterparts. They are also perceived as being better at forgiveness, reconciliation and post-conflict peacebuilding (Jodi Enda, 2003).

In African countries like Kenya, women's participation in public positions has greatly improved over the years. However, women still haven't managed to break through the glass ceiling and gender-based challenges, hence, this remains a top issue. Kenya has greatly been challenged in regards to women's participation in political leadership positions as it fails to achieve gender equality in parliament representation. This is even after two and a half decades of gender sensitization and activism, lobbying and mobilization of Kenyan women to take up political leadership positions and capacity building (ELDIS, 2017). According to statistics done by Inter-Parliamentary Union, countries like Rwanda have already achieved mass threshold of 38.1 per cent women representation in decision making with 70.9 per cent women representation in parliament (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2017).

In Kenya's history, women status has been perceived to be domestic in nature and burden with a lot of responsibilities at household, community and national level despite having knowledge and skills in various fields acquired through education (Kimani and Kombo, 2010). Despite the enormous contribution of government, county and other Non-governmental institutions in championing of women empowerment through advocacy and stakeholders' meetings with a view to influence on women's policy decisions making at community and national in Kenya, few studies have been done on prospects and challenges of women participation in policy decision making in Turkana county, Kenya. It is against this background that this paper sought to explore the extent to which women participation, or lack thereof, determines their influence in policy decision-making in Turkana Central, Kenya.

Statement of the problem

Women lack representation in various governmental institutions, especially high –level executives' positions, limit their influence on leadership and policies decision making (World's women, 2015). In most societies, gender inequality has largely relegated women roles to the home, as caretaker and wife and thus limiting involvement to policy decision making (US report, 2012). These norms practised in societies influence policies that define women's access to education, employment, properties, credit and management position. In Africa, the low proportion of women in political and policy decision-making position which has undermines their representation in electoral systems thus creating inequalities between men and women in society (Amin, M. & Islam, A. 2015). In Kenya, there is

persistent discrimination against women involved in policy decision making and politics despite their contributions being significant (Kimani and Kombo, 2010). More so, there has been limited research and data on prospects and challenges of women participation in policy decision making in Turkana county particular. In addition, in Kenya, there are limited reports or documentaries on tremendous change attributed by women in the level of management position and challenges in participating in policies decision making to address inequality. Nevertheless, prospects and challenges of women participation in policy decision making in Turkana County government has been noticed in a positive manner in Turkana central which was the major concern of this study.

Theoretical framework

This study was guided by the Feminist theory. Feminist theory first appeared in publications by Mary Wollstonecraft on the vindication of women's right, focusing on gender inequality. Feminists such as Sojourner Truth, (1851) and Susan B. Anthony, (1872) advocated for the equality of women and arguing that women should share equally in society's opportunities and scarce resources. Looking at the many similarities between men and women, the feminist perspective concludes that women and men have equal potential for individual development and decision making roles at all levels. Feminism in most of developing countries believed that fighting against oppression and retrogressive culture will help to remove the stereotype and perception the society inputs in women. Furthermore, the feminist theories were boosted by various studies which emphasized on women's empowerment and making women to participate in the development process, management and policy decision making (Erwer, 2000). An increasing number of women in the leadership position will shape how the management of resources are carried leading to extension services and productivity, which would, in turn, influence the development process positively and their policy decision making at the workplace (Erwer, 2000). Feminist theory underpins the study by addressing gaps of gender inequality which the society inputs on the relations between men and women (Pietila, 2007) and this exist in most of the societies based on the social and cultural construct, barring women from participating in policy decision making.

Literature and Empirical Review

Prospects of Women Participation in Policy Decision Making

Women's participation in policy decision-making ability is important with a view to enhance their empowerment (Bloom et al, 2011). Although efforts to have women participating in policies decision making has yielded fruits in various areas, still women have less representation in the political involvements (Walyne,2014). This is true in many developing countries in the world as the UN Human Rights Committee has found that the right of women to participate in political affairs is not fully implemented everywhere on an equal basis to achieve gender equity. (UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights & International Bar Association, 2003, p.50. There are some of the factors which are likely to help women participation in policy decision-making process;

Increasing the number of women in management levels/positions is more likely to ensure women lobby for policy reforms enabling them to take up roles which are believed to be dominated by men (Krook, 2010). In 2015, the study conducted by (Krook and Briem, 2012) indicated that women in cabinet positions have drastically increased since women have fully participated in the formulation of policies which allows women to take up cabinet positions in the government. (Krook and Biem, 2012) the study indicates that women are more likely to be ministers in health, education, security and

foreign affairs since most of them have advanced their knowledge by seeking further studies in the higher level of education to boost their portfolio.

Furthermore, women in leadership position ensure they lobby for funds to support policies which value their roles in the achievement of goals of government or institution this commonly arise when such issues present themselves to them (Mackay, 2014). Mackay further stated that, lobbying for policy reforms has enabled women to work in various sectors and taking part in the technological, social and economic development of the country, economics and society. Female politicians have indirect influence over other politicians and work closely with them in advancing policies which are geared to promoting gender equality agenda in public (Asbury, 2000).

Empowerment of women in politics as demonstrated by the Coalitions of Women in African countries such as Egypt, Nigeria and Jordan, women leaders have centered their attention in leveraging on their relationship with men counterparts to lobby for controversial policies especially those affecting the girl child in her quest to achieve her dreams (Htun and Weldon, 2011). Female law practitioners have played a key role in sensitizing the legal systems for policy reforms and this is evidenced in a study conducted by (Diaz and Marin, 2013) which indicated that experience female lawyers lobby for resources and expertise in the legal field to defend women against gender-based violence in the societies.

The study by Smith et al. (2006) on the influence of women in the leadership position to policy reforms indicated that increased women voices at all sphere of governance influence the performance of an institution or government. Smith et al. (2006) argued that women experience in working at different fields, improves performance of the organization since experience acquired gives women upper hand to participate and influence the policy decision making processes. Therefore, women may have a better understanding and raise their voices than men since their status on management level provide leeway to influence on performance attainment and by so doing that they ensure policies governing on achievement performance of the organization are reviewed annually and implemented fully. This study also indicated that female directors or managers who have attained a higher level of education in most cases are very vocal in championing for gender balance in political and leadership spheres and their involvement in the policy-making process is crucial for the performance attainment in government or any institutions.

Findings by Smith et al. (2006) linked representation of women leaders at board level to the financial performance of organization or institution. US firm Catalyst researched the correlation between increased women voices to performance attainment using correlational research design and the result indicated that increased women voices are positively correlated to performance attainment (Fox, 2007). Finally, the Fox study showed that the highest representation of women among senior officers significantly contributes to higher performance than boards with fewer women.

Das (2006) examined increasing gender gap and socio-economic status of women in North-East India. It was found that the best possible indicators of the determination of the status of women were education and employment. Education coupled with employment have made women more conscious of their rights and helped in making them assert in the society. Women's participation on equal terms with men in domestic decision making makes them being recognized in the family. The study pointed out that women's power of expression, capacity to reach through their views and ideas generally come with education. The educational attainment and participation in gainful economic pursuit make women strong and determined. The financial freedom that comes with their employment opportunity can't be

denied and these two aspects generally make women capable of asserting their voice both in the family as well as in the society.

Balk (2003) carried out a study in rural Bangladesh. The analysis has been focused on two indicators, women's freedom to move outside their homes (mobility) and women's authority in household decision making. The findings revealed that both mobility and authority tended to increase with women's age. Women who lived in the household, headed by their in-laws, had less mobility and much less authority. Women from poor homes had greater mobility, but wealth had little effect on household decision making. Education tended to increase decision-making authority but decrease mobility.

Batliwala and Dhanraj (2007) in an Indian case study reported that men resentfully perceived women handling money as a source of humiliation. In a nutshell, it was undeniable that the relationship between women and employment was a vexed one. Therefore, a further collection of data which included women's personal and often contradictory accounts of how employment influenced their personal lives was needed to unearth the complexity of women's salaried employment and participation in decision making especially in the community level (Chant and Craske, 2003).

Challenges of Women Participation in Policy Decision Making

Semakafu (2014) conducted a study on the challenges that women face in their quest to participate in the policy decision making and political process. The findings of the study established that lack of education, food, shelter and self-determination by women due to poverty, culture and other reasons, is a source of violation of their democratic rights to equally participate in election and policy decision making process. The retrogressive culture lowers the self-esteem of women in participating in the political process and in seeking for justice. This culture had made women get convince that, men are entitled to run for political seats. Lack of resources undermines their ability to facilitate political and policy decision making processes.

On the study conducted by Kassa (2015) on Challenges and Opportunities of Women Political Participation in Ethiopia. The study findings indicated that 50% of Ethiopian population comprises of women who are actively involved in various activities and earns low than men regardless of having the same position at workplace or community whereby they are generally poorer than men because they earn less, some are less educated, women are increasingly becoming heads of households, with no resources to support their dependents, they do not enjoy due acknowledgement for their labour contribution, particularly in agriculture, and do not have policy decision making power. The finding indicates the challenges women faces in Ethiopia despite playing key roles in ensuring the wellbeing of the family are taken care of. This jeopardizes their right to own properties and participate in policy decision making processes.

Study by Ahmed and Arahial (2013) on challenges facing Jordanian women in their quest to participate in policy decision making in political process observed that the challenges facing the Jordanian Women are not isolated from any experience of other Arab women across the continent experience indicates that immaturity and the weakness of the leadership and political roles of women in the performance of departments and political parties and lack of civil society organizations in championing for the right of women and addressing inequality and their fear of believing men are superior to men and pave way for men to participate alone in elections at the national level and local not being able to access their full rights and this relative absence is not due to legal obstacles either constructivism obstacles and cultural.

According to findings by Kassa(2015), political participation and policy decision making allows women to address their basic problems and needs in their community and ensures the openness, real fight against rent-seeking, accountability, political commitment, political leadership, and political responsiveness of the existing national, regional, districts, and local levels. More than half percent of the world's population are indeed women. But, they lack access to political and policy decision making as compared to their counterparts at all levels of government. So that women's equal participation in decision-making and politics is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy, but a necessary pre-condition for women's interests to be taken into account.

Results by Clara (2017) concluded that women in Kenya are still underrepresented in political leadership positions. It further argued that some societies are less cooperative in ensuring that women take senior leadership positions both in the public and the private sphere. The research further acknowledged that cultural practices and gender stereotyping may have influenced men's perceptions on women political leadership in the past, but closely observes that good leadership is not based on gender but qualities a person possesses, regardless of their gender.

Methodology

The target population of the study were female staff at managerial and middle level employed in 10 selected ministries of Turkana Central, Turkana County. The female staff were involved in the study because they play a key role in the policy decision-making process. It also involved 284 female staff. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2013), when the study is less than 10,000, a sample size between 10 and 30% is a good representation of the target population and hence 30% was adequate for analysis. Therefore, a sample size of 85 respondents was selected through cluster sampling technique. The research instruments included semi-structured questionnaires and an interview guide. The instruments were tested for validity and reliability during pilot testing stage. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics where findings represented in frequency and percentages while qualitative data was analyzed through content analysis.

Results and Discussion

The study involved 85 sample (Female staff) at managerial and middle level in Turkana County government based in Turkana Central Constituency. Table 1 present respondent's profiles, ministries and year of service.

Table 1. Distribution of respondent's profile, ministries and year of service

| Respondent's age classes | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|------------------|-------------------|
| 18-25 | 17 | 20 |
| 26-35 | 41 | 48 |
| 36-45 | 18 | 21 |
| 46 and above | 9 | 11 |
| Ministries | | |
| Ministry of Public, Administration & Disaster management | 25 | 29 |
| Ministry of Finance, Economic and Planning | 22 | 26 |
| Ministry of Education | 2 | 2 |
| Ministry Tourism, Culture and Natural Resource | 14 | 16 |
| Ministry of trade, youth and Gender | 4 | 5 |
| Ministry of land | 5 | 6 |
| Ministry of Agriculture, Pastoral Economy and Fisheries | 3 | 4 |
| Ministry of Health | 3 | 4 |
| Ministry of water, Environment and Mineral Resource | 3 | 4 |
| Ministry of Roads | 4 | 5 |
| Year of service | | |
| Less than 5 years | 53 | 63 |
| Between 5 and 10 years | 23 | 27 |
| Between 10 and 15 years | 9 | 10 |
| Between 15 and 20 years | 0 | 0 |
| More than 20 years | 0 | 0 |

The finding on age of respondents indicated that the highest respondents who participated in the study 48% were aged 26-35, 21 % were aged 35-45, 20% aged 18-25 and 9% aged 46 and above. On the other hand, findings on respondents' indicated that, 29% of respondents were from the Ministry of Public, Administration & Disaster management, 26% were from the Ministry of Finance, Economic and Planning, 16% of respondents from Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Natural Resource, 6% were from the Ministry of land, Ministry of trade, youth and gender and

Ministry of Road had 5 % respondents each while Ministry of Agriculture, Pastoral Economy and Fisheries ,Ministry of Health Ministry of water, Environment and Mineral Resource respondents had the same 4% respondents the least with 2 % respondents from Ministry of Education while years of service findings indicated that most of the female employed in the 10 selected ministries had been there for less than 5 years translating to 63%, 27 % of respondents have worked for more than 5 years, 10% will work for ten years and above since they are permanent and pensionable, 0% for those who

have worked for more than 20 years was not evidenced since the ministries were formed during devolution which has not lasted for 10 years.

1. Prospects of women participation in policy decision making process

Increase of number of women in management position/levels

The study findings indicated that, there was high representation of women in managerial positions in Turkana County government. More so, understanding women participation in policy formulation process and lobby for policy reforms and increased voice on performance and how it increases their participation in Policy decision making with a view to understand how women are able to navigates against the negative odds undermining their contributions hence the respondents' responses were presented in the themes below;

Respondents' participation in policy formulation process

The respondents were asked whether they have participated in policy formulation processes in Turkana government or not. Their responses were shown in the table 2;

Table 2. Respondents' participation in policy formulation process distribution

| Policy formulation process participation | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| Yes | 79 | 92 |
| No | 6 | 8 |
| Total | 85 | 100 |

The study findings on women participation in the policy formulation process indicated that most of the respondents 92% had taken part in the process while 8% of respondents had never participated in the policy formulation process. This implied that most of the respondents had played a key role in ensuring they are part of the policy decision-making process. Key informants reported that the ability of women to take part in the policy formulation process had shaped how elements in the policies are framed and enacted, thus making it easier for the legislative organ of the County to pass the policy since both gender took part in the process. Furthermore, respondents who said to have participated in policy decision making were able to mention various policies they have participated in formulation stage and their responses were shown in the table;

Table 3: Respondents' type of policies

| | Types of policies | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|-----------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1 | Health Policy | 29 | 8 |
| 2 | Security | 30 | 21 |
| 3 | Education Policy | 22 | 24 |
| 4 | Gender Policy | 3 | 27 |
| 5 | Human Resource Policy | 1 | 20 |
| | Total | 85 | 100 |

Most of the respondents 27% had participated in gender policy formulation process, 24% of respondents reported to have participated in formulation of education policy, 21% of respondents reported to take part in security policy formulation, 20% of respondents indicated to have participated

in Human resource policy formulation while 8% of respondents said they participated in formulation of health policy. For those haven't taken part in policy formulation process reported that, the information on policy formulation does not reach to them because in most cases, they are out in the field supporting activities in sub-departments at the sub-county level, other mentioned to have been barred by their senior male colleagues in attending the policy formulation process forums. Junior staff exclusion from participating in policy decision making by senior staff was one of the greatest problems which limits women participation in economic development projects as pointed in DFID (2010) report.

Table 4: Extent to which lobby for policy reforms and increased voice on performance on women participation in Policy decision making

| | Frequency | Percentages |
|-------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Very great extent | 64 | 75 |
| Moderate extent | 20 | 24 |
| Low extent | 1 | 1 |
| Very low extent | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 85 | 100 |

According to the findings the respondents indicated that, lobby for policy reforms and increased women performance had increased women participation in policy decision making 75% very great extent, 24% moderate extent while 1% very low extent. This implied that, women had devise mechanisms to lobby for policy reforms and raise voices on issues arising arbitrarily with a view to influence their participation in policy decision making processes and forums.

Economic empowerment of women

Respondents' source of income

The respondents were asked to mention other sources of income they are engaged in within the county or outside. Their responses were shown in table,

Table 5: Respondents' sources of income distribution

| | Source of income | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|-----------------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1 | Sale of farm produce | 8 | 9 |
| 2 | Cash from labour activities | 1 | 1 |
| 3 | Cash from rents | 42 | 49 |
| 4 | Others | | |
| | 1. Saloon | 21 | 25 |
| | 2. Tutoring | 11 | 13 |
| | 3. Retail shop | 2 | 3 |
| | Total | 85 | 100 |

The findings indicated that, 49 % of respondents had apartments and rental houses in which they get income out of it on a monthly basis, 25% of respondents had saloons in town and its outskirts, 13% of respondents were engaged in provision of tutoring services in public institutions in Turkana Central, 3% of respondents with retail shops and the least with 1% indicated that they were engaged in labour

activities. Respondents claimed that income earned from the above activities had made them to be self-reliance and helped in fundraising return out of school projects across the county for the girl child and supported the implementation of policies geared to improving Turkana community livelihoods. This finding was supported by the study conducted by Ehrenberg and Smith (2009) which concluded that when an individual decides to improve his/her living standards he/she tends to engage in day to day economic activities in order to boost his/her income.

Respondents' membership in Micro-finance institutions

Understanding the membership of the respondents in the micro-finance institution was of the essence because it helped to unmask the culture of saving among respondents and its influence in determining women policy decision making in Turkana Central. The respondents were asked to indicate whether they belonged to any women's microfinance institutions and if so, the number of groups they belonged to. Their responses were shown in table 6

Table 6: Respondents' Micro-finance membership distribution

| Micro-finance membership | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Yes | 72 | 85 |
| No | 13 | 15 |
| Total | 85 | 100 |

This finding indicated that 85% of respondents belong to micro-finance institutions in Turkana central and other counties within Kenya while 15% of respondents indicated that they were not members of any micro-finance institutions.

Table 7: Respondents' ownership of properties /assets

| Properties ownership | Frequency | Percentages |
|-----------------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Yes | 78 | 92 |
| No | 7 | 8 |
| Total | 85 | 100 |

The findings indicated 92% of the respondents own properties while 8% mentioned that they do not own any properties /assets within or outside of Turkana County. Most of the key respondents believed asset ownership boost women policy decision making processes or forums by opposing the negative narrative of asset ownership in which the culture input between the men and women relationship as pointed out by (Pietila, 2007).

Greater enrolment of women/girls into educational institutions or facilities

Level of education determination on women policy decision making in the study was of the essence because education is the most powerful tool that can be used to bring development to a nation, community and worldwide. It is therefore very important that women receive education that increases their knowledge, skills and enables them to compete with men and boost their participation in policy decision making processes in the society (Tavershima, 2012). Furthermore, he argues that educating a man is educating an individual for own personal gains while educating women you educate the whole nation.

Table 8: Level of Education distribution

| | Level of education | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1 | Primary level | 7 | 8 |
| 2 | O-Level | 10 | 12 |
| 3 | Certificate/Diploma | 36 | 42 |
| 4 | Degree | 30 | 36 |
| 5 | Postgraduate | 2 | 2 |
| | Total | 85 | 100 |

The study findings figure indicated that, the majority of female staff employed in Turkana County Ministries have attained certificate/diploma level with 42%, 36% of respondents have degrees, 12% of respondents have completed '0' level, 8 % of respondents have attained postgraduate level and the least are respondents who have completed primary level with 2%. The above findings implied that most of the female staff from 10 sampled ministries were employed based on their qualifications and given different positions which were advertised by Turkana County Government through Turkana County Board of Service. The key informants interviewed during the data collection for the study indicated that, most of the female staff with the above qualifications were involved in most of the policy decision making and they have influenced the local government through public forums to increase the number of female staff employed in the various ministries, more so they have championed for the return out of school children programmes within the county to ensure girl child remains in school and transitioned 100% across all level of education. More so, key informants mentioned that female staff with degrees are pursuing postgraduate level to boost their skills, knowledge, and promotion according to (The Republic of Kenya, 2014). Other female staff with the lowest level of education had been supported by the local government to attend fully paid courses administered by Kenya School of Government to enhance their capacity in handling day to day operations as explained by County women representative key informants in the study.

Table 9: Respondents' education fees support distribution

| Education fees support | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Personal | 19 | 23 |
| Helb Loan | 59 | 69 |
| Well wisher | 7 | 8 |
| Total | 85 | 100 |

The study findings indicated that 23% of the respondents reported supporting their education personally, 69% of respondents indicated their education being supported by helb loan, and 8% of respondent indicated that their education supported by well-wishers. Information acquired from 10 key informants who were senior staff of Turkana County Government indicated that, helb loan had helped most of the employees who joined the county government since the family backgrounds financially was pathetic and since most of them are female. Furthermore, the key informants added that the support from well-wishers, helb loan and personal support had helped to eradicate illiteracy level among the local and thus exposing them to the outside world as stated during UN women conference (UN women ,2011).

2. Challenges of women participation in policy decision making

The researcher sought data on the challenges facing women participation in policy decision making in Turkana County, Kenya. To this end, the study explored various obstacles hindering women participation in policy decision making which were; alienation within the political, economic, and cultural space.

Political barrier

On political side, the study sought to examine the alienation within politics and its implication on women participation in policy decision making. The study findings indicated that lack of women representation in political groups hinders women ability to participate in policy decision making since majority of politicians are men as shown in the table 10 below;

| | Women | Men |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Elected MCA | 1 | 30 |
| Nominated MCA | 17 | 1 |
| Senator | 0 | 1 |
| MP | 0 | 5 |
| Women representative | 1 | 0 |
| Governor | 0 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 19 | 38 |

Source: Office of clerk in the National Assembly Turkana county Government

The high number of male in elected position undermines the position of women in the Turkana County government, this situation has stimulated the democratic call that that women in all positions regardless of ethical background and economical status should be empowered by giving them due status, rights, and responsibilities to enable them participate actively in policy decision making at the political level (Kasomo, 2012). According to Byron (2016), this is clearly a stereotypical signals of power that is evidence in the manner women are treated as weak as spearheaded by cultural believers and perceived to occupy the lower positions within the social hierarchies / spheres, and therefore, should not be actively involved in leading their societies in policy decision making and political governance. Additionally, the study findings revealed that political parties which were vibrant in the county had not yet incorporated gender equality into their policy frameworks and selection procedures making women who seek appointment from the party to vie for any leadership position more vulnerable. More so, the findings established that there were no party rules and regulations for identifying, selecting and nominating women candidates for political leadership positions within the parties. The only solution to this menace would be the willingness of the society as a whole to work together and understanding the roles women play in the society towards dispelling the gender stereotypes in which the society inputs in the relationship between men and women in a manner that creates gender parity (Pietila, 2007).

Cultural barrier

On the Cultural side, nominated Members of county assemblies key informants guide interviewed, blamed the social norms as a hindrance to their participation in policy decision making and their inclusion to management and political leadership sphere. Analysis of their responses revealed that societal norms/culture was the worst enemy since it is linked to stereotyping beliefs about the ability and capacity of women across communities, especially in the globe. Also connected to society culture

is the patriarchal ideology, which provides the platform upon which women play and accept subsidiary roles. Furthermore, Sex stereotypes are among firmly and extremely entrenched obstacles to the elimination of discrimination in women in every society as social norms thus largely responsible for undermining gender equity (United Nations 2000). These cultural perceptions do not encourage women at all to actively participate in the policy decision-making process.

In relation to culture, interviewed key informants revealed how religion has undermined their representation in policy decision making and taking leadership roles since some retrogressive religions bare women from participating in activities which are believed to be men. This revelation clearly demonstrates religion as another source of anachronistic and dogmatic cultural beliefs in many communities and societies in Kenya that excludes women from mainstream leadership and participating in policy decision making. Arguments about women's inferiority complex to men are present across all dominant religions, and traditional religion has long been used to exclude women from aspects of social, political, economic or religious life around the continent and the world at large (Paxton and Hughes 2007).

Economical barrier

The economic barrier at greater extent plays a significant role in limiting women participation and representation in policy decision-making bodies. Furthermore, access to means of boosting economic status, production and finances have a direct relationship and influence on the participation of women in political institutions and electoral bodies like the Senate, National assembly and County Assemblies. In most Kenyan communities but Turkana county, in particular, women have no access to land and property/assets rights though they are entitled to own in the Kenya constitution as shown in table 11 below;

Table 11: Key informants' land-properties distribution

| Access to land and ownership | Frequency | Percentages |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Yes | 2 | 20 |
| No | 8 | 80 |
| Total | 10 | 100 |

The findings indicated 20% of the key informants own properties while 80% mentioned that they do not own any properties /assets within or outside of Turkana County. Most of the key respondents believed asset ownership boost women policy decision making processes or forums by opposing the negative narrative of asset ownership in which the culture input between the men and women relationship as pointed out by (Pietila, 2007) which has affected the ability of women to manage and make use of the assets they own since married women found their properties being own by their husbands. The findings of the study were backed by Afifu (2008) results on challenges facing women in rural areas that poverty facing women in rural communities is the greatest problem in their quest to participate in policy decision making and elective politics. More so economic barrier as pointed out as a barrier to women development and growth of nations echoed on Census Report, (2009) which indicate that there is a huge economic gap between women population in urban and rural communities in Kenya. This has further hindered women participation in politics since most of the political parties charge a lot of nomination fees despite economic challenges women pass through. The major political

parties demand huge nomination fees, which can be out of reach for many women who are aspiring for various seats to influence in most of the policy decision making bodies and leadership. For instance, the Jubilee Party senator aspiring to run on its ticket to part with Ksh. 50,000 as nomination fee, way below the Ksh. 250, 000 that the Orange Democratic Movement was demanding (Daily Nation, 8th December 2016 as seen in table 13 and 14 below;

Table 13: Jubilee party nomination fee structure

| Position | Nomination fees |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| President | N/A |
| Governor | 100,000 |
| Senator | 50,000 |
| Women Representative | 30,000 |
| Member of parliament | 30,000 |
| Member of the county assembly | 20,000 |

Source: www.jubilepamoja.co.ke.

Table 14: ODM party nomination fee structure

| Position | Nomination fees |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| President | 1,000,000 |
| Governor | 500,000 |
| Senator | 250,000 |
| Women Representative | 250,000 |
| Member of parliament | 25,000 |
| Member of the county assembly | 25,000 |

Source: www.odm.co.ke

Conclusion

Based on the study findings, it was evidenced that increase in the number of women in leadership positions or roles helps women to lobby for policy reforms and increasing the performance of departments or ministries towards achieving the Turkana County government's goals, vision and mission. Since the majority of the respondents believed their level of management position in the ministries gave them an upper hand to participate in the policy decision-making process. This implied that when women in a position of influence come across issues affecting the society or women and youth in policy formulation process, they unanimously fight to ensure they are addressed with a view to bridging barriers to economic growth of the country/county such as unemployment, social injustices, gender-based violence, and HIV-AIDS pandemic. More so, economic empowerment to a greater extent improves women ability to seek for political leaderships or inclusion to policy decision making bodies and be self-reliance. This has further helped women in fundraising and supporting return out of school projects for the girl child across the county and implementation of policies geared to improving the Turkana community. Additionally, greater enrolment of women/girls into education

facilities or institutions is very important since women receive the education that increases their knowledge, skills and enables them to compete with men and boost their participation in policy decision making processes in the society. Finally, political, economic and cultural barriers are major challenges pointed out in the study since it hinders women participation to policy decision making bodies/processes and stereotypically undermining their status and roles in the society.

Recommendations

The study recommends Turkana County government should design a policy framework that guarantees: i) increased enrollment of women and girls in formal education institutions to enhance their knowledge and skills in leadership and governance; ii) increased number of women in managerial levels/positions; iii) support for the establishment of women micro-finance institutions; and iv) provision of financial and training support for women to boost their economic status.

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