

Effects of Civic Education on Women's Political Participation in Gatanga Ward in Gatanga Constituency, Murang'a County- Kenya

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Abstract

Kenyan women comprise 52 percent of the population (according to 2009 national census) and 60 percent of the country's registered voters but are represented in very limited numbers as elected officials. The dominance of patriarchic structures in Kenyan politics and society is well illustrated by the low number of women among the members of parliament. This paper examines the effects of civic education (CE) on women's political participation in Gatanga Ward in Gatanga Constituency in Murang'a county-Kenya mainly political knowledge. Results of the study reveals that the majority of respondents support women's political participation in public life in the society. Also, women's supports the right of women to have equal educational opportunities, as well as equal participation in civil societies, volunteer societies, and political participation. Finally, empirical results are that civic education is associated with women's political participation. The study recommends that civic education should be carried out to sensitize women on their role in politics and participation in other leadership positions. It further recommends that women should be considered for political appointment at the County and National level to facilitate gender balance.

Keywords: Political participation, women's participation, democratic orientations, civic knowledge, women

1.1 Background to the study

Women constitute slightly more than half of the world population. Their contribution to the social and economic development of societies is also more than half as compared to that of men by virtue of their dual roles in the productive and reproductive spheres. Yet their participation in formal political structures and processes, where decisions regarding the use

of societal resources generated by both men and women are made, remains insignificant. Presently, women's representation in legislatures around the world is 15 percent. Despite the pronounced commitment of the international community to gender equality and to the bridging the gender gap in the formal political arena, reinforced by the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform of Action, there are only twelve countries where women hold 33% or more seats in the parliaments (UNDP Report, 2005).

Women's historic exclusion from political structures and processes is the result of multiple structural, functional and personal factors that vary in different social contexts across countries. However, beyond these specificities of national and local contexts, there is a generic issue in women's political participation that relates to the wider context of national and international politics, liberal democracy and development. It is, therefore, imperative to critically review these constructs and decode the gendered nature of Democracy as well as Development, which poses limitations on women's effective political participation. The elements of enabling environment for women's participation in politics and development cannot be discussed and identified without putting the current development and political paradigms under scrutiny. Development today as Rounaq Jahan (1999) maintains has brought tremendous benefits to people all around the world who have gained in terms of education, health and income. But at the same time development leaves behind 2.5 billion people who live on less than \$2 dollars a day. There are glaring disparities among and within countries. Forty percent of world population accounts for 5% of global income while 10% richest account for 54 percent (UNDP, 2005). Presently, the mainstream development paradigms based on capitalist relations of production thrive on opportunities created by gender relations for power and profit (Connell, 1987). There is an intrinsic link between women's domestic labor with capital accumulation. Leacock further elaborates the same point as "...the inequalities between men and women could not be understood in isolation from polarizing tendencies of the capitalist mode of production which places the 'peripheral' countries of the Third World in a relationship of dependency with the metropolitan centers of the First World. Within an egalitarian world order, so called development could not release women from oppressive social, economic and political institutions; it merely defines 'new conditions of constraints'" (Leacock, 1977). It is imperative for gender equality advocates to focus on the gendered nature of development and challenge the capitalist paradigm of international development that creates and recreates gender disparities, while at the same time working towards creating an enabling environment for women's participation in development. Women's mere participation in mainstream development cannot automatically lead to their advancement and gender equality unless the contradiction in the development claim for equality and justice and the practice is eliminated. The level and nature of participation is equally important to determine whether women are able to share development gains. Another contextual issue in women's political participation relates to the nature of politics in general and the liberal democracy in particular. Democracy has historically served men better than women. As a political system from the ancient Greece to the modern times of the 21st century, it has built on the public-private dichotomy and excluded women from citizenship. Women have been kept outside the public domain of politics as most of the political thinkers and philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, John Lock, Thomas Hobbes and Hegel considered women fit only for domestic roles in the private sphere and maintained that there was no place for women in politics because of their suitability in caring roles as mothers and wives. The public

private divide remains as the foundation of the various forms of world democracies (Phillips, 1998, Rai, 2000).

This is one of the reasons that the normative political theory considered private sphere as non-political and did not make any effort to explore the political nature of the private life. The ancient and modern democracies failed to recognize women as citizens. Therefore, they sidelined them and their concerns in its theory and practice (Bathla, 1998). It was only the liberal political philosophy of the 19th century that promoted the idea of 'free and rational' individual which was used by suffragists to demand for the right for vote. However, as Rai maintains the conceptual basis of liberal theory is inherently gendered in ways, which perpetuates patterns of patriarchy and ignores gender subordination in both polity and society (Rai 2000:2). Feminist theorists also challenged the notion of abstract individual in liberal theory and argued it is not a gender-neutral category. This is why despite women had the right to vote they were not able to impact public policy and could not bring private sphere in the preview of the public. Even western democracies left them dislocated on many fronts. When women enter politics within this patriarchal context of modern democracies, they are unable to play a role to radically change the sexual politics rather they largely play political roles on male's terms. The fundamental assumption in liberal democracies needs to be changed in order to create genuine political space for women. Considerable cultural and social barriers impede Kenyan women's participation in the political process. The political climate has added to these barriers, fostering suspicion and distrust between organizations, including women's organizations, and discouraging open discussion and coordination. As a result, many women leaders have been forced to stand alone on the political front, without the support of their parties or of one another.

Kenyan women comprise 52 percent of the population (according to 2009 national census) and 60 percent of the country's registered voters but are represented in very limited numbers as elected officials. The dominance of patriarchic structures in Kenyan politics and society is well illustrated by the low number of women among the members of parliament. From the time of independence in 1963 to 1969, no women were elected to parliament. Between 1969 and 1974, women constituted less than 1 percent of the elected members of parliament. In 1979, there were five elected and one appointed female Member of Parliament. In 2002, there were only eight women among the 210 elected MPs forming a paltry 3.8%. Overall, however, Kenya remain far behind the standards of its neighbours that have a female representation in parliament of about 30 per cent – not to talk of Rwanda where women even form a majority in parliament today."The small number of women in Kenya's parliament – even and especially if compared to the situation in other countries of the region – shows the continued existence of patriarchic power relationships in the most direct manner", says Dr. Axel Harneit-Sievers, director of the Heinrich Böll Foundation's (HBF) Regional Office for East and Horn of Africa, located in Nairobi. In the elections of December 2007, only 15 women were elected as Members of Parliament (MPs), out of a total number of 210 MPs and only six women were nominated as MPs by the political parties. As a result, the women's share of Kenya's parliament now is about 9.5 per cent.

To-date, Kenya still has a substantial proportion passive and less-informed electorate exhibiting little claim-making capacity despite the ills perpetrated against them by the present and past leaderships and a corresponding lack of accountability or transparency of leaders. This unaccountability and in-transparency in Kenya is reinforced by a political situation where multiparty democracy is practiced in a semi-single party institutional framework. In the implementation of the National Civic Education Programme (NCEP) shows generally low level

of human rights and basic civic awareness in Kenya due to low literacy and high poverty levels and an oppressive regime. This socio-economic and political environment has diminished societal quest for civic knowledge to subsistence needs and undermined democracy and good governance. This necessitates continued civic awareness and economic empowerment at the community level to educate Kenyans on their role in governance and the democratic space, while simultaneously addressing their socio-economic predicament.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Kenyan women comprise 52 percent of the population (according to 2009 national census) and 60 percent of the country's registered voters. Kenyan women have been at the forefront in championing the discourse and strategies that support women's rights and gender equality, politically, economically and socially-reinforced ostensibly by the hosting of the 3rd world Conference of Women in Nairobi in 1985; this pioneer spirit has not only failed in achieving effective political participation or the taking up of leadership positions in Kenya. From the background to the study of this research study, it is clearly indicated that Kenya's female representation in Parliament has consistently fallen below the global average of 16.4 percent and the sub-Saharan average of 16.512. At 33.5 percent representation in decision-making positions in the judiciary, Kenya has barely passed the 30 percent minimum representation set forth in its policy frameworks. Reports have indicated that there has never been an elected or nominated woman MP in Gatanga Constituency and in the entire Murang'a County. This showed that there was an information gap especially in the rural areas. This was mainly created by lack of sufficient information on the effects of civic education in enhancing women's political participation particularly in rural areas. The reports also indicated very high Percentage of illiteracy in rural areas. Therefore the research study aimed at collecting data within Gatanga ward in Gatanga Constituency which is basically a rural area with a view to establish the effects of civic education in enhancing women's political participation particularly in the area.

This study is designed to investigate the effects of civic education on political participation among the women, a population which most existing studies have neglected.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical framework

As regards the impact of civic education on civic knowledge, there was some variance in scholars' findings. In their study on Zambia, Bratton et al. found that civic education has "consistently greater impact" on knowledge and values than on political behavior (1999, abstract). This also seems to be the conclusion of Finkel and Ernst (2005) who utilize 1998 data on students in South Africa. Comparing effects on knowledge to that on attitudes, they say: "Exposure to civic training has weaker attitudinal than pure knowledge effects and . . . it was more difficult to impart values and political orientations in the classroom than simple factual information (Langton and Jennings, 1968; Ehman, 1980(35); Niemi and Junn, 1998)" (351). They state that this confirms previous research. In fact they found civic education to have twice as large an effect on political knowledge than what Niemi and Junn (1998) found: That was, civic education matters in predicting students' level of political knowledge as much as their exposure to the mass media, their age and grade level, whether they come from a family that discusses politics often, and whether other members of their family are politically

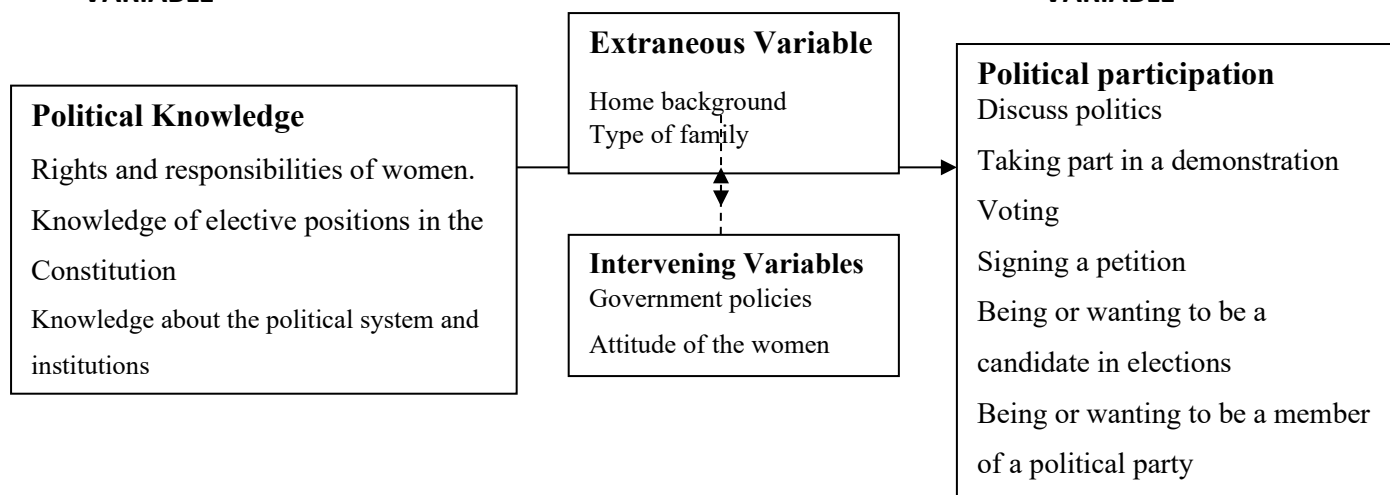
active. These other factors are important determinants of knowledge, but civic education exposure was at least their rival in magnitude (Finkel and Ernst 2005).

Yet in another study Finkel (2002) had come to a different conclusion, arguing that civic education does not have much impact on knowledge, at least when compared to local-level political participation.

2.2 Conceptual framework

**INDEPENDENT
VARIABLE**

**DEPENDENT
VARIABLE**



3.0 Research design

The research design which was used to conduct the study was descriptive survey method. According to (Kombo et al, 2006) the descriptive survey method is used to collect information by interviewing or administering questionnaires to a sample of respondents with an intention of describing the nature of existing situations. It is considered most appropriate design in behavioral sciences as it seeks to find out factors associated with certain occurrences, outcomes and condition of behavior (Bell, 1987). The research design was found to be appropriate for gathering information, summarizing, presenting and interpreting it for the purpose of clarification based on (Orodho and Njeru, 2004). According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999), the method has the following advantages; subjects are observed in their natural set up without manipulating the environment, it deals with clearly defined problem and desired objectives. It collects data from relatively large numbers of cases making it more representatives and it is essentially a cross-section. This design answers the question why, how what to provide the researcher with specific details both qualitative and quantitatively. This design was one of the most commonly used methods in studying continuous civic education. The method was appropriate for the study because it assisted the researcher to produce statistical information to investigate the effects of civic education (CE) on political participation among the women in Gatanga Ward in Gatanga Constituency.

To accomplish the purpose of this study, the researcher administered the questionnaires with assistant from two female research assistants from Gatanga ward.

4.0 Research findings discussion

4.1 Response Rate

In order to answer the research questions, the researcher and his research assistants administered 246 questionnaires to the study respondents who were women registered as voters in Gatanga Ward. All the questionnaires were returned since the researcher and his assistants administered the questionnaires due to the inadequate literacy levels which required them to interpret the questionnaire in the local language.

4.2. Women's political knowledge

Women's political knowledge was measured by four questions about the participant's political knowledge in different aspects of politics (right to hold public office, right to participate in civil society as a man, Right to work in government and whether women had same rights to working conditions as men). Women were asked about their past political knowledge and questions to be answered on a five-point scale.

4.2.1 Right to hold public office

The responses on whether a woman has a right to hold public office were as shown in Table 1

Table 1: Right to hold public office

Right to hold public office	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	179	72.8
Agree	60	24.4
Don't Know	2	.8
Disagree	3	1.2
Strongly Disagree	2	.8
Total	246	100.0

Table 1 shows that 239(97.2%) believes that women have the right to hold public office. Only five women (2.0%) disagree that women have a right to hold public office. 2 (0.8%) however, don't know whether women have a right to hold public office.

4.2.2 Women right to participate in civil society as a man

The following are the results obtained after the respondents were asked whether women had a right to participate in civil society as a man. Table 2 shows responses from respondents when they were asked whether women had a right to participate in civil society as a man.

Table 2: Women right to participate in civil society as a man

Women right to participate in civil society as a man	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	187	76.0
Agree	55	22.4
Don't know	1	.4
Disagree	2	.8
Strongly disagree	1	.4

Total	246	100.0
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Table 2 shows that 242 (96.4%) agree that women have the right to participate in civil society as men, 1 (0.4%) don't know and 3 (1.2%) disagree.

4.2.3 Right to work in government

The researcher wanted to know whether the respondent were aware of their right to work in government. The responses were as shown in Table 3

Table 3: Right to work in government

Right to work in government	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	189	76.8
Agree	54	22.0
Don't know	3	1.2
Total	246	100.0

Table 3 shows that 243 (96.8%) agree that women have the right to work in government, 3 (1.2%) don't know.

4.2.4 Same rights to working conditions as men

The researcher wanted to know whether the respondent were aware of same rights to working conditions as men. The responses were as shown in Table 4

Table 4: Same rights to working conditions as men

Same rights to working conditions as men	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	190	77.3
Agree	48	19.5
Don't know	2	.8
Disagree	2	.8
Strongly Disagree	4	1.6
Total	246	100.0

Table 4 shows that 138 (96.8%) agree that women should have the same working conditions as men. Of the remaining sample 2 (0.8%) don't know whether women should have the same working rights as men, while 6 (2.4%) don't agree.

5.0 SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 SUMMARY

Below are summary of findings on effects of civic education on women political participation in Gatanga Ward. We begin by presenting the basic findings from the study, that is, the effects of civic education on women's political participation in Gatanga ward
The results of these analyses can be summarized as follows.

5.2 DISCUSSION

The study carried out in Gatanga within Gatanga Constituency found that 239(97.2%) believes that women have the right to hold public office. Only five women (2.0%) disagree that women

have a right to hold public office. 2 (0.8%) however, don't know whether women have a right to hold public office. 242 (96.4%) agree that women have the right to participate in civil society as men, 1 (0.4%) don't know and 3 (1.2%) disagree. 243 (96.8%) agree that women have the right to work in government, 3 (1.2%) don't know. 138 (96.8%) agree that women should have the same working conditions as men. Of the remaining sample 2 (0.8%) don't know whether women should have the same working rights as men, while 6 (2.4%) don't agree.

5.3 CONCLUSION

One of the research objectives was to determine the extent to which political knowledge affects women's political participation. Civic education activities were highly successful in promoting women's political knowledge and actual political participation. These effects were the largest seen in the entire study.

The study was to investigate the effects of civic education on women's political participation. From the findings it can be concluded that by carrying out civic education at the community level on women could significantly increase the percentage of political participation amongst the women.

It can be concluded that the study established that there was inadequate civic education at the ward level and therefore there was noticeable low political participation amongst the women.

Civic education were generally more effective in altering women's political knowledge and actual political participation than other kinds of civic education activities

Finally, the basis of the results of this present research that political knowledge acquisition could improve the political participation of Gatanga Ward women more than the quota system, which only allows certain well educated women to have some more influence in politics. The average Gatanga Ward woman, especially considering the high proportion of Gatanga Ward women that is illiterate or has little education, is more benefitted from such interventions than of a quota system. Moreover, these implications might also apply to all the other women in Kenya and in other democracies in the world.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings, we propose the following recommendations for the design and implementation of future civic education in Gatanga Ward, and by extension, in Kenya and other developing democracies:

1. Civic education programs should focus on the specific democratic orientations where civic education is both needed and can realistically be expected to achieve significant effect.
2. Civic education programs must be implemented in ways that ensure sustained, multiple exposures to civic education messages.
3. Civic education training must make frequent use of active, participatory teaching methods.
4. Training of civic education trainers is also important, as trainers may sometimes produce positive or negative changes in democratic orientations;
5. Greater efforts should be made to target women in lower socio-economic strata, while maintaining the generally group-based focus of Kenyan civic education.

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