THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL PERCEPTIONS ON WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN LEADERSHIP AMONG THE ABAGUSII, A CASE OF KITUTU MASABA CONSTITUENCY, NYAMIRA COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to assess how cultural perceptions influence women's active participation in leadership in Kitutu Masaba Sub County. Globally the participation of women in leadership is very low. In East Africa, Kenya is the worst performing still struggling to achieve the 30% threshold mandated in the constitution, mainly because of the political environment and cultural beliefs that still place women at "home". One case worthy to note, is the Abagusii people who since independenc have never elected any woman as a Member of Parliament,except those elected as Women County Representatives in the general election held in 2013 and 2017. The study made use of the Feminist theory which recognizes the pervasive influence of gender divisions on social life and Empowerment Theory which explain how individuals' and communities increase power to control various aspects of their lives and participate in the community with dignity. Related literature on women participation was reviewed. The targeted population was men and women aged 18 years and above, the sample size was 384, arrived at through the use Morgan 7 Table. Purposive Sampling was used to sample leaders in the community (elected, appointed, men and women at all levels ad opinion makers) in the six wards of Kitutu Masaba Sub County. Respondents were selected from each ward on stratified random sampling and targeted at least 64 respondents from each ward of Kitutu Masaba sub County. Data collection was done through question guidelines and interviews. The study used descriptive survey design. Data were analyzed using the computer programme, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Result findings were presented using frequency tables, graphs, charts and narrations. From the findings of the study, it is concluded that women are marginally under-represented in leadership in the community, and that cultural factors are the strongest barriers that hinder women from participating in leadership positions. The findings of this study are significant in that they may assist the community and relevant government departments in developing more appropriate strategies, policies and regulations that will encourage more women to take part in leadership positions in Kitutu Masaba Sub County. The results of the study formed a basis for making recommendations on how more women could be empowered to perform leadership roles.

Keywords: *Community, leadership, empowerment, culture, participation*

Background of the study

An investigation by United Nations Women Report showed that although women are the majority of any country's population, they are least presented in employment educational management, political leaderships and in appointments to leadership positions in their local communities in most countries of the world. The

situation is worse in developing countries, considering that, only nineteen women have made it as heads of government and two- Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia and Joyce Banda of Malawi- are from Africa (United Nations, 2011). According to Inter-Parliamentary Union data, on average, women comprise 17 percent of parliamentarians in sub-Saharan Africa, Rwanda ranks first in the world in women representation in parliament, having about 48.8% female in the lower house (IPU, 2012). That shows that women remain seriously underrepresented in decision-making positions across the continent especially at the grassroots.

The proportion of female in leadership bears no relation to their population. Men solely dominate higher management at all levels hence, there is a gender gap in leadership globally and particularly in developing nations. According to a report by the United Nations in 2011, women participation in leadership should not only be recognized in national formal politics only, as women at all levels must be empowered (United Nations Report,2011).

Kenya is not unique in its pursuit of gender equity in a political system where the female gender is grossly underrepresented since independence to date. A research conducted in Kenya noted that, women are not included in leadership, nor do they advance in the leadership sphere because of cultural perceptions which hinder their continuation and participation in leadership. They include their triple roles at home, in the community and their various places of work. Many communities view, leadership as a man's role and inconsistent with the values of a good woman. At the family level, women hardly get support, at times spouses may sabotage their wife's leadership pursuits (Masango, 2012). In the community, women are expected to take on the responsibilities of caring and supporting their families; these responsibilities can be quite heavy and often deny women important experience and access to strategic information and limit their educational pursuits (Kiamba, 2009). Another limiting factor is lack of personal finances as women have been limited by the traditional laws to an inheritance, ownership of property and accumulation of wealth for a long time. The women hardly get financial support as compared to men who control family resources, and receive more financial support from the community which they invest into seeking for leadership positions (Andela, 2009). To lead, women must show self-confidence be ambitious and have willingness from within one's self with a strong sense of self esteem which is a requirement for success in all leadership cases. (Escando & Kamungi, 2010).

Women access to education is limited and their educational pursuits are often not encouraged,

A research conducted in Kenya and Uganda between 998-2007 showed that, when women attempt to seek for leadership, there is jealousy, violence, sexual harassment and competition instead of cooperation and support from the male counterparts. In the patriarchal societies, men are considered to be decision makers and are uncomfortable seeing women in decision-making positions; this limits women's participation in community leadership. The women further lack connections and patronage networks, to push for employment and promotions. It is only the well connected women who are pushed to senior leadership positions as vacant positions are inherited rather than filled fairly (Mutonga, 2009).

The Abagusii society was patrilineal and patriarchal. The largest political unit was the clan, the leader was called *omogambi*. In a homestead, the eldest male was the political head in the family, he was referred to as *omogaka bwomochie (*leader of the home*).* Among the Abagusii, male have dominated leadership and decision making from the family set up to the clan level since time immemorial. To date in the wider Kisii region, leadership remain dominated by men who use all means to remain in leadership, over the years, women have been underrepresented at all levels of leadership and decision-making from community to national levels (Ndubi, 2013). Women population in Kitutu Masaba Constituency, is 104,239 (KNBS, 2009) their

representation in public leadership has been low since independence. This motivated this particular study in Kitutu Masaba Constituency to assess the influence and implication of cultural beliefs on women participation in leadership. The ultimate aim is to challenge the attitudes of women, men and patriarchal forces to strengthen and propel women to leadership participation from the local community.

Statement of the Problem

Research studies confirm that women are underrepresented at all levels of leadership and decision-making, among the Abagusii. In Nyamira County, leadership is dominated by men who use all means to remain in leadership (Ndubi, 2013). The same is reflected at the constituencies. Kitutu Masaba is one of the constituencies, with a total population of 199,136 people, of which more than 52.7% are women. Since independence up to 2007, no woman was ever elected a Member of Parliament or a ward representative (IEBC, 2009). The best was in 2013 when the Women Representative was elected in the General Elections and one was nominated to the county assembly. This shows that women are inadequately represented in positions of leadership in the Constituency. Women who seek leadership positions face barriers and many times give up because they become overwhelmed in dealing with constrains which limit and marginalize their participation in leadership. In response, this study in Kitutu Masaba constituencies, tries, to assess the misconceptions which influence and impact on women's participation in leadership, and establish possible mitigations to elevate women to leadership in the Abagusii community.

Theoretical Framework

The study combined the Liberal Feminist Theory and the Empowerment Theory in its analysis to complement each other.

Liberal Feminist Theory

The study used the Liberal Feminist Theory, which is an extension of feminism and a philosophical discourse. The theory has evolved over time from the work of Mary Wollsonecraft in liberal philosophy. The feminist theories, developed to respond to women oppression in patriarchal societies.

The tenets of the Feminist Theory were derived from the assumption that women are under oppression. The tenets included in the study are gender inequality, women social roles, oppression and discrimination. The Feminist argue that women should fight to be recognized as worthy at all levels in society that keeps restricting them to certain roles. The theory recognises the pervasive influence of gender divisions on social life and tries to understand women's oppresion and the structures in society that espouse this oppression and subordination (Flax, 2005).

Another tenet is gender inequality. The feminist aim is gain equal rights for men and women. The theory is based on the belief that all men are potential to be rational and inequality has to be justified in rational terms. A feminist perspective posits that women and men have equal potential to develop themselves in all spheres of life.They argue that women must be treated equally to man in all instances of life and deserve equal opportunity, by the law, by the media, by the educational system, and institutions. This will improve their lives and living conditions, particularly with respect to problems that are unique to them (Flax,2005).This will also, produce equal outcomes of these policies such that they have similar levels of power, wealth, influence and respect to those enjoyed by men; and eventually change social attitudes that are hostile, derogatory, oppressive, or tend to interfere with any of the foregoing, so as to achieve positions of power in government, business and all other spheres (Henn, 1998). However, cultural beliefs influence the behavior of men and women at individual and interaction levels (Tichenor, 2011).

Feminist are againist discrmination based on biological differences.The argue that men and women are equal and biological differences between genders is irrelevant to the granting of political rights (Paxton, Kunoch & Huges, 2007). According to the proponents, feminist were not out to negate biological differences between males and females, but to make people understand that no one should be treated poorly because of their sex and gender. The Feminist perceptive aim was to erase the socially ingrained idea that women are somewhat lesser than men and thus secondary citizens (Paxton, Kunoch & Huges, 2007).

The theory explains that all societies have been patriarchal, where males domniate females and social institutions are characterized by male dominace, therefore the need to escape the chains of patriarchy. The absence of women in the public sphere is explained by the ideas of female feeling of inferiorty, women socialization process, discriminatory social and cultural barriers which are a restriction to women who could be valuable for national development. The gendered ideology of private and public sphere constructs men as bread winners, rational and stronger while women are characterized as mothers through the family, community, legal, educational and cultural institutions (Agarwal, 2009). The sentiments contribute to women's inability to participate in leadership in patrarchal societies.

Proponents of the theory note that,women are able and committed to assuming any leadership position but the realisation of women's potential is hampered by externally imposed constraints and influence of social institutions and values (Nzomo 1995). The feminist's main concern is, to ensure that women receive equal opportunities in education, business and employment so as to achieve positions of power in government, business and all other spheres (Henn, 1998).

The Liberal Feminist Theory has been considered suitable for this study among the Abagusii people of Kitutu Masaba Constituency, a patriarchal society with all shortcmings, the theorists aimed to eliminate, gender stratification, oppressive laws and cultural norms that limit opportuuities for women to enable them from operate effectively in the public sphere on equal terms with men. Feminists also suggests that there strategies to address the barriers to empower women to operate effectively in the public sphere on equal terms with men leadership (Onsongo,2012. However, the theory fails to explain processes to lead to women participation in leadership, therefore the use of a second theory,the Empowerment Theory .

Empowerment Theory

Empowerment is a process of increasing personal power to individuals to be able to control various aspects of their lives and participate in the community with dignity. This will enable them to take actions to improve their situation through reflection and actions (Zimmerman, 2000). The theory developed by Paulo Freire has been dedicated to aiding the oppressed and marginalized communities' and groups in communities transform their status (Demmitts & Oldeski, 1999). It was used as a strategy to help people to achieve liberation from obstacles that limit their progression in society (Zimmerman, 2000). As Dugan notes, prioritization of education, mentoring, organization and networking are strategies for empowerment (Dugan, 2003).

As a process it takes place at three levels, namely personal level, community level and socio-economic level. Empowerment Theory explains how individuals increase personal power, this enables them to take actions to improve their situations through reflection and actions (Rappaport, 2000). This process empowers people's lives, their communities and their societies by acting on issues they consider important (Czuba, 1999). At the community level, empowerment revolves around the utilization of resources and strategies to enhance community control (Labonte, 1989).

There are three main ways of empowering the oppressed people, these are, the oppressed working closely with the professionals and administrators, the empowered people serving as role models on how to achieve set goals and individuals taking social actions. For the empowerment process to occur there must be support from the people who provide supportive roles. There are three types of support, practical support, moral support and mentoring. Practical support involves providing information that enhances the person's ability to make decisions. Moral support provides people with an opportunity to confirm their own intuition, increase their belief in themselves, and recognize their own strengths and potential capacities (Labonte, 1989).

Mikkelsen states that empowerment expands people's abilities where their abilities were previously denied. Further it is a means of restoring to people a sense of value and strength. It entails building a positive self – image ad self confidence, developing the ability to think critically, building up group cohesion and fostering decision making and action (Mikkelsen, 2005). The Empowerment Theory's concern is to increase people's power to be able to control various ascepts of their lifes.

Through the use of the Empowerment Theory clarity was created on roles of indivudals, legal processes, policies, mentoring and social networks and informal education/civil education as interventions to mitigate on cultural perceptions which discourge women's partcipation in the public sphere.the aim is to empowe women in society.

Women's participation in leadership

There is gender imbalance in leadership positions experienced all over the world. Despite that, women continue to raise to leadership positions in the public and private sectors, although faced with constraints which hinder them from participating in development activities and in the decision making process. At least 77 women have occupied prime minister or president positions around the world (Otieno, 2011). At the moment the global average of women parliamentarians is 19.5 percent. It falls below the 30% target that was to be achieved by 2005. A report by the Inter-Parliamentarian Union (2012) reported an increase in female representation in parliament, from 19% in 2010 to 19.8% in 2011.This 0.8% point increase has followed similar patterns over the last ten years. As a result, attempts to reach gender parity in parliamentary representation have been minimal globally (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2012).

According to, European Commission report, in the European Union (EU) countries women is underrepresented in leadership positions at the local level. By 2015 only 22 females' leaders were head of state and government and 6.9 % of all political leaders were women globally (European Commission., 2015b). In America, women's population is 50.8%. Their representations in leadership in government ranges from 8.1% to 21.1% at different levels of government (Brown 2016). A survey study by Warner, explains that women are educated, almost equal to men, are intelligent and capacity for innovation, but only a small share make it to top leadership (Brown 2016). Warner notes that 52% of all professional jobs are held by women but 25.2% women hold leadership positions (Warner, 2016). Women performace is much lower for Asia and the Middle East.

In Africa the figures have been marginally lower, from the 1980s onwards women have made considerable progress to occupy public offices. Currently in Africa,22.5 % of legislative seats are occupied by women. By 2015 only 4.3% women were head of government and only 8.4 % were head of state, way below the 30% requirement. The women who have made it in the political realm in Africa, to occupy the presidency include President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia and Joyce Banda, president of Malawi from 2012 to 2014. Women also occupy such other high-ranking positions as Vice Presidency, Attorney General, are Finance ministers, and chair of the African Union Commission (Sir leaf 2010). Rwanda and South Africa have made much progress toward creating a gender-neutral society (Kiamba, 2008, Gihten, 2010). The critical mass of 30

percent women representation in their national parliaments has been achieved by only six African countries: Burundi, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda, they are almost creating gender-neutral societies within a short space of time (Cole, 2011). These countries have achieved this milestone because they recognized the importance of equity between women and men in decision making and they instituted changes in their electoral and parliamentary processes (Sirleaf, 2010). Towards the end of 2013, the global average of women in national assemblies was 21.5% [IDEA, 2014).

For the Eastern African countries, the pace has been much slower. The proportional of women in the legislature in Kenya is 19.1%, Tanzania has 36.6%,Uganda is at 35% while Burundi is at 36.4% (IPU,2016). Kenya is still grappling on how to implement the 2/3 threshold stated in the Constitution of Kenya (Constitution, 2010). Few women have been elected to parliament or nominated since independence. In the civil service in Kenya, 2002-2009, Kenya had only 8 women Permanent Secretaries, 20 women judges and 11 senior women in the police force (Ministry of Gender, Sport and Cultural Affairs, 2009). A report by Kenya Human Resource Development Sector (2011), found that very few women or none are in super job groups Q to U, this are the scales of senior managers. Women hold senior positions in the ministry of Gender at 42 percent of senior positions, while in ministries like Education, Planning and Finance the percent of women in management is at 18% (Kenya Human Resource Development Sector, 2011). The performance of women is dismal in the public sphere, in government and in the community as reported (Kenya Human Resource Development Sector, 2015).

A research by Chuku in 2010 indicated that, there has been an increase in the numbers of women in legislative bodies, despite that, Nebolisa (2013),notes that, African women continue to be under-represented in all structures of power and decision-making (Chuku, 2011; Nebolisa, 2013). It is below the 30% target set for the participation of women in leadership which was to be achieved by 2005 as set in 1995 during the Beijing Platform for Action (UN, 1995). Kenya is, trailing far behind; it is ranked 112 in the world in the female representation in parliament (IPU, 2014). The best representation of women in parliament was the 10th parliament (Kamau, 2010). The rapid ascension of women to positions of leadership at natioal levels has not triggered to the grassroot levels. There are several issues which need to be improved for women in Kenya to wholly benefit from the emerging trends in leadership participation. Thus, this study sort to access the levels of women participation in leadership in Kitutu Masaba Constituency, and how to revolutionize the patriarchal and cultural beliefs to enable women to be fully intergrated into leadership in the Constituency.

Cultural perceptions which influence women's participation in leadership

Cultural systems include shared motives, values, beliefs, identities, and interpretations or meanings of significant events that result from common experience of members of collectives that are transmitted across generations. The cultural beliefs hinder women from advancing to political, social and religious spheres of leadership in the patriarchal communities as they shape personality (Mbalcogu 2012). Otieno in 2010, from a study in Migori, identified major barriers to women participation in leadership, they included, socio-cultural beliefs, attitudes, biases and stereotypes (Otieno 2011). Another research in Uganda noted that "women's participation in leadership is affected by cultural and traditional beliefs that still place women at "home" rather than in political and public leadership" (Kadaga, 2013). A UN Economic Survey has pointed out cultural factors, low education levels, poverty and low support from the community and political parties as hindrances for the inclusion of women's participation in leadership (UN Economic Survey,2016).

History in Africa shows that women have played major leadership roles in their communities since the beginning of time. There have been queens in traditional Africa societies, typical examples include the Yaa Asante of Ghana (Odame, 2013). The activities of Mekatilele against the British encouraged Giriama men and

women not to cooperate with the British administration (Willis & Miers, 2010), and Makena was a great leader among the Kikuyu (Ndurongo, 2009)." Kenya is a patriarchal society and it is evident that stigma against women leaders exists although, not clear where it stemmed from." Therfore,imperative to divulge in the factors that actually dictate their level of participation in society and their impacts

Gender Roles

Rosen (2000) notes that, "gender roles are socially constructed roles, behavior, activities and attributes that a society assigns its members." In most African communities there are specific roles prescribed to women. They play multiple roles as wives, mothers, caretakers and other chores for which they receive no overt remuneration, although the responsibilities are very involving and heavy (Mbalcogu 2012). Female members are socialized from childhood on the importance of such roles. For example, a research in the 1990s among the Kalenjins revealed that women roles are only supportive, they need to be guided, directed and protected (Chesania,1991). The culturally prescribed roles deny women a chance to access information, exposure and experience (Gouw, 2014). Through research, prevalent beliefs regarding roles and status of women in society can be interogated and addressed hence the purpose of these study.

Women's inabilities and ineffectiveness

Ndurongo on a research in Central Kenya in 2006, on the impact of language on women's socialization, explained that perceptions on women's abilities are expressed in proverbs, songs and sayings. The research revealed that through myths women are portrayed as ineffective and inferior. Through the process of social conditioning; women accept that they are inferior to men (Ndurongo, 2006). Another study in South Africa confirmed that leadership, needs high abilities and ambition, and this is lacking in women (Matapa, 2013). A research study by Onyango in Western Kenya on school administration revealed that women are not participating in leadership because of their feeling of inferiority. These feelings are created by societal attitudes (Onyango, 2011). However, these perceptions have been proved wrong elsewhere. This is supported by research work from South Africa and in South West Nigeria in school administration, where women leaders were discovered to be better managers, their schools performed better and the women leaders worked harder than their male counterparts, hence proved their abilities and effectiveness. The women were portrayed to be more nurturing, democratic and allow sharing of strategic information (Aladejana, 2005, Kanjere, 2009). We live in a dynamic world, therefore there is need, to transform the understanding held on women abilities by the majority of the community members, to assist women to think and see themselves capable to participate in leadership in their communities. The literature above argues that women are denied access to leadership because of their inferiority; however it fails to suggest interventions to address that barrier, this study after identifying the gap sought to establish possible intervention in the study area.

Female complex personality

There is controversy surrounding African women personalities, they are seen as emotional, sensitive, weakling, ineffectiveness and this denies them a chance to take up leadership roles (Odotei, 2007). This has been attributed to biologicl differences and as a result men who are the superior sex are the best leaders, while women are ineffective and lack leadership abilities (Kanjere,2008). Men are viewed to be biologically strong and endowed with strength to perform tasks labelled as men's tasks and leadership is one of them (Grant, 2005). An earlier research among the Maasai of Kenya, supports that belief, and further said that women are weaklings who need men's protection, guidance and need to be directed by men. From a study in Uganda, women are viewed as inferior the weaker sex and should not speak before men . women's feeling of inferiority makes them shy off from participating in leadership, this was confirmed from a study on women participation

in community based organizations in Uganda where community leadership positions are mainly influenced by men ((Masango, 2012). In Kenya, from research by Ndurongo and Onyango confirms that women are influenced by cultural perceptions of inferiority, weakness, inabilities and ineffectiveness (complex personality) in their pursuit of leadership positions. The feelings are created by societal attitudes (Ndurungo, 2006, Onyango, 2011). As a result women don't take higher positions because they want to be near their spouses for security reasons (HRD, 2009).

Despite those beliefs, some women have been able to transcend cultural perceptions on inferiority, and participated in leadership and performed very well. More often than not, they have juggled cultural expectations with leadership roles. One notable example is the Honorable Grace Anyango, who in 1969 was elected as the first Member of Parliament in Kenya. Her success was because of her focus, boldness, vision and having skills that appealed to men and women (Masandu, 2008). In the 1990s other women like the late Wangari Maathai, Charity Ngilu and Martha Karua through courage delved into political leadership transcending many cultural barriers (Tripp, 2009, Maathi, 2006). The above examples dwell on what individuals did but don't mention the input of the community. This study sought to find out the best options to remove biased perceptions to encourage women to participate in leadership at all levels in Kitutu Masaba Constituency.

Impact of cultural perceptions on women's participation in community leadership

From a research in Uganda by Kadaga it was noted that "women's participation in leadership is affected by cultural and traditional beliefs that still place women at "home" rather than in political and public leadership" (Kadaga, 2013.These cultural beliefs are obstacles that generally prevent women from advancing to political, social and religious spheres of leadership (Lwanga, 2008).

The belief on domestic roles is shared across Africa thus, undermining women as leaders and their contribution in decision-making. For example from a study conducted in Nigeria, it was noted that, there is a patriarchal idealogy, where leadership is a man's role and men don't have to be "bossed" by women. The findings from that study revealed that,there is conflict between traditional roles for women and those outside the home (Akinboye,2009). Similar sentiments are shared from findings in a study in Uganda where men are considered to be the major decision makers and are uneasy when women are in leadership positions; this limits women's participation in community leadership (Mutonga, 2009). A research by Otieno in Rongo noted that, cultural perceptions create feelings among community members that women cannot serve well in leadership as a result of domestic roles (Oteino, 2012).

Ndurongo from a study in 2006, says the following, "cultural perceptions undermine women's abilities, and portrays women as ineffective, irresponsible and incompetent, and people who lack ambition, never to be taken serious" (Ndurongo, 2006). Iddris in a survey in Nigeria in 2009,.supports the findings of Ndurongo in this statement, " women are viewed to be weaklings, sensitive and emotional and as such can't be able to perform to the best of their abilities in stressful situations. For example those who campaign for leadership are treated with hostility, harassment and intimidation (Mutonga, 2008, Madimbo, 2012). Also, women are viewed as people of the weaker sex and are not likely to react when harmed for fear of further victimization. This makes women reluctant to take up public positions as cultural prohibits them on speaking or going in public places alone. As a result women are not motivated towards leadership. We live in a dynamic situation, therefore there is need, for a study, to assist women to think, stand up and see themselves differently and participate in leadership in their community. This can only be possible by transforming the understanding held on women abilities by the majority of the community members to respond to the challenge.

Women have been constantly remained that their place is in the kitchen as they are unreliable and unpredictable (Kasily & Onkware, 2010). Perceptions held about women in the patriarch societies are strong tools for group control. Yet women haves been proved to be natural leaders in the home, able leaders in institutions and organizations, and even as presidents, as Africa has already had two female presidents. The negative traditional myths held ,that certain jobs like decision making and leadership are for men only can be overcome through interventions at all levels to help women to realize their potential in leaderships outside the home.

Research design

A research design is a detailed outline on how data will be obtained, the instruments to be used and the procedure for data analysis. The study adopted descriptive survey research designs, which support the use of questionnaire and interview schedule to elicit information. In order for the survey to be both reliable and valid all the questions must be constructed properly and written clearly and easy to comprehend (Jackson, 2009).

The descriptive survey method helps to describe units in details to bring a deeper insight and better understanding of the problem. It helps to collect data about items from a large population (Taylor, 2008). Through the design, adequate and in- depth information was collected to explain the current situation in Kitutu Masaba Constituency on women participation in leadership using a questionnaire. Given the nature of this study a lot of information was collected ranging from the background information of the targeted population. A survey through the use of a structured interview schedule was used to probe experts to create a better on understanding on reasons, perceptions, values and beliefs that influence women's participation leadership and possible mitigation. This design enabled the researcher to analysis data using frequency distribution tables and percentages, and presents the findings using frequency distributions, graphs, diagrams, tabular and charts. Conclusions and generalization of the results of the study was drawn from the findings from the sample.

Area of Study

The study was conducted in Kitutu Masaba constituency in Nyamira County; Nyamira County is one of the two counties occupied by the Abagusii people. It has two Sub-Counties: Manga and Kitutu North, with six wards namely: Manga, Kemera, Magombo, Rigoma, Gichuba and Gesima. The Constituency is which subdivided into 27 locations and 79 sub locations. The constituency covers an area of 252.80 Sq.km. It is bordered by West Mugirango to the west, Kisii County to the East and south and North Mugirango Constituency to the north. The total population is 199,136 people with a female population of 104,975 that is 52.6% and the male population is 94,161 at 49.4% (IEBEC, 2012). The sample for the study will be drawn from six wards which are in Kitutu Masaba Constituency. The area was chosen for the study because it is predominately occupied by the Abagusii people whose leadership has mainly been dominated by men, from the family set up to the clan level since time immemorial. Women have been alienated from leadership, and have little power in leadership. This is based on their current occupation of leadership positions (elected office, administration offices) where women participation is still very low. As well, there is no documented research specifically addressing cultural perception and women leadership in Kitutu Masaba Constituency.

Target Population

The target population is a large group from which a sample is selected from (Taylor, 2008). The target population was drawn from the six wards in Constituency with a total population of 199,136 people. The male are 94,161 while the females are 104,975 (KNBS, 2009). It included community leaders, elected, nominated and appointed from the clan level to the national level. Those who participated included the area Member of Parliament, the Women Representative, Members of the County Assembly, Chiefs and Assistant Chiefs,

women group leaders, youths, school Administrators (Principals Head teachers and Deputies), teachers, church leaders, retired leaders, opinion leaders, people with different disabilities and clan elders in the community.

Sample Size

The sample size is the actual number of respondents to be used in the actual study. It is drawn from the target population (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2006, Oso and Onen 2005). The sample size was determined by using the Morgan 7 Table on Appendix vi on page 90. According to the table, a population of more than 50,000people requires that 384 respondents should be selected for the study (Krejcie, Robert V. Morgan, Daryle W, 1970). The locations were selected at an interval of three, starting with the first location on frame list on Appendix

To get the proportion for the study from each ward, the sample size 384 was divided by the number of wards, this gave an equal representation.

Data was collected from the following locations in the six wards Manga ward, Magombo ward Gesima ward, Kemera ward, Gachuba ward, and Rigoma ward. Leaders were targeted in the locations.

Data collection instruments

A questionnaire and a structured interview schedule were use to collect primary data from leaders in the Sub County. The data collected was qualitative and quantitative in nature.

Data Analysis and Presentation

The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The analysis was done using the Statistical Package for Social science version 19 (SPSS) computer software because it is reliable, cheap and its ability to process large amounts of data with its wide spectrum of statistical procedures. The study used descriptive statistics such frequency distribution tables and percentages to facilitate change of raw data into forms that were easy to understand and interpret in relation to the objectives.

Data was be sorted and categorizes were formulated for all the responses. The data collected from questionnaires and the interview schedules was categorized into themes and narratives, which were then analyzed as they emerged. Qualitative data was transformed into quantitative data where necessary. The research findings were interpreted by working out percentages and frequencies to determine the relationship of the variables. The data was presented in frequency distributions, graphs, diagrams, tabular and charts to show various trends in women participation in leadership, community interventions and efforts to change the current trends. Quotations and narratives will be used to present qualitative data

Women's Participation in Leadership

The study had sought to determine the level of women's participation in leadership and respondents were asked the different leadership positions held by women in the Sub County. From the findings women hold formal and informal leadership positions in the constituency. A total of 95 are leaders in local committees (school, health, and tea centers) and 5 in Community Based Organizations. There are 100 women group leaders by virtue of their gender, a total of 65 are youth leaders and a total of 144 women are in church leadership. At the clan level only 25 are leaders mainly leading *nyumba kumi*. In school administration, 6 women are Secondary school principals, 12 are Deputy Principals, and 43 are Primary school heads and deputies. Women are provincial Administrators; there are 10 women chiefs and Assistant-chiefs.

At the County level, not a single woman was elected as a member the County Assembly, with only two were nominated. The results show that, there is no woman elected as area Member of Parliament, one is elected as the Women Representative to the National Assembly. This has been the trend since independence.

The research findings reveal that, women are making some headway in leadership positions, as there women serving as leaders at the grassroots, county and national levels, but their numbers are embarrassingly low. Only 175 (12%) are in elective positions and those in appointed leadership positions are only 29%, majority of the women are informal leadership. This is insignificant compared with the female gender population is which 52% (KNBS, 2009). The findings concur with sentiments expressed by Davies(2008) which concluded that women are under-represented in management position after a study in the developing countries.

According to Kenya Human Resource Development, women's entry into leadership is low and slow mainly because of lack of *'geographical mobility'*, meaning, women don't like moving to work away from their families (Kenya Human Resource Development Sector, (2015). This is confirmed by a research by Onyango (2011), on school administration, who explains, that female teachers prefer to work near their spouses, they decline and sacrifice their career mobility to satisfy traditional demands.

Those in leadership got to the current positions through nomination, appointment, promotions and through elections. Those nominated include: Members of the County Assembly because of the 2/3 gender rule, or to represent party interests not necessarily to represent the interests of women. Other women have been nominated to boards and committees to represent special groups or their nomination is because, it is mandated by law Constitution of Kenya (2010). Women in schools and provincial administration leadership are serving in those positions through appointments and promotions. The finding above concur with sentiments from the Liberal feminist theory, which explain that women's participation in leadership is low: because of the patriacrchal nature of society and cultural barriers which create inequalities.Women in the study area need to juggle cultural expectations to transcend to leadership

A member of the County Assembly elaborated on the demands of ward leadership and said, *"getting to political leadership is very demanding, moral women cannot work under the difficult circumstances men go through during campaigns."*

A female school head teacher said*," women are all free to work and develop their human potentials, but their entry to leadership is limited by discrimination in appointments. Only the connected women get promoted as school head*s*. Climbing the leadership ladder is not easy*."

Cultural Perceptions and women's participation in leadership

It was necessary to establish the factors which influence women's participation in leadership. Respondents were asked whether cultural perceptions hinder women's participation in leadership and the results were as shown on figure 1.
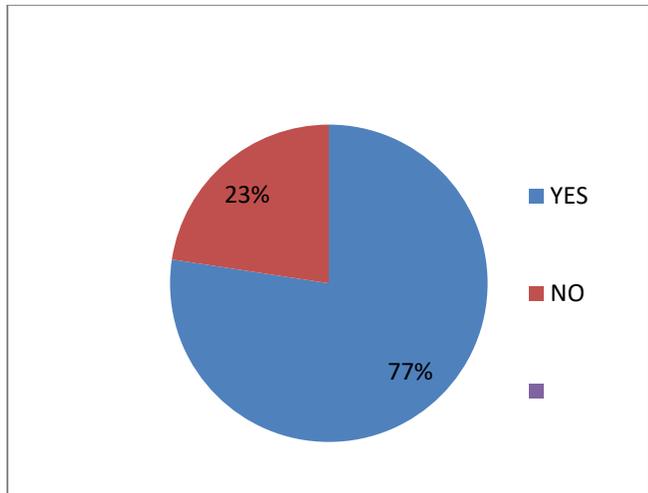
Figure 1: Cultural perceptions and women's participation in leadership

Source: field survey

From the table above, majority of the respondents, at 192 (77.4%) agreed that cultural perceptions hinder women from participating in leadership while 56 (22.3%) of the respondents gave a No response. The above results showed that, problematic beliefs and perceptions are held by both men and women. This is supported by a study in SADC, where it was noted that, in Africa, traditional beliefs and cultural attitudes regarding the roles and status of women in society are still prevalent and many women are part of this system, they find it hard to dislocate from this culture lest they be ostracized (Sadie,2005).

Gender role and women's participation in Leadership

Respondents were asked to identify the cultural perceptions which influence women's participation in leadership by rating several beliefs. One of the beliefs discussed was the belief that culture restricts women to domestic chores. The responses are outlined in figure 2.
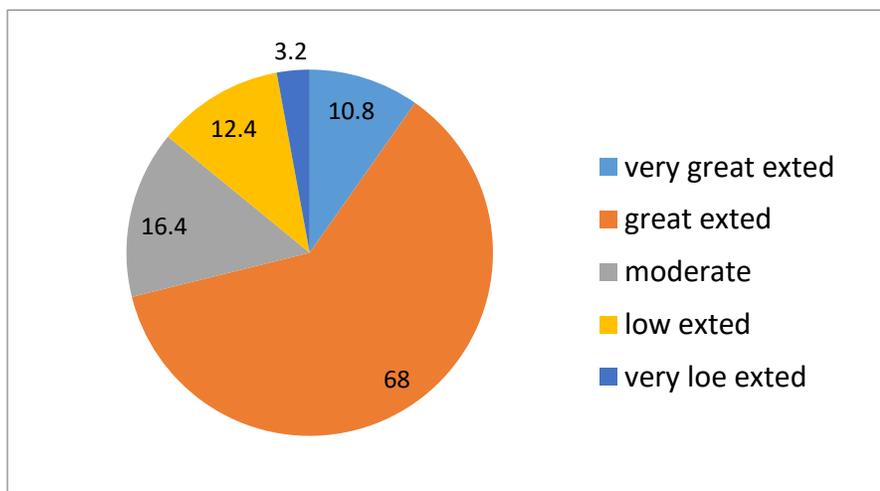

Figure 2: influence of gender roles on participation in leadership

Source: Field Survey

The total responses which imply that domestic roles influence women's participation were (170) 68%, while (41) 16.4% responded that the effect is moderate, 31(12.4%) and 8(3.2%) responses indicated that prescribed culture does not restrict women to domestic chores. The results on figure 4.3 clearly show that domestic chores restrict women from participating in leadership.

According to the study results, gender roles influence women's participation in leadership. This is, in line with Ndurongo (2006) and Kadaga (2013) who say, that in African communities, there are specific roles prescribed for women, the same sentiment is shared across Africa. The roles include being a wife, mother and a caretaker; this creates feelings among community members that women cannot serve well in leadership as a result of domestic roles.

"The women spend long hours collecting water and firewood, *cooking, washing clothes and nurturing children, "***said one participant***.

A chief said the following, "*the Abagusii women have the freedom to reach their potential, but they must make tough choices, to balance between cultural roles and career development*"

To establish the magnitude of the say that, ***"…..the place of women is in the kitchen"*** **meaning the** homestead and performing chores at home. The respondents said the following*……"*

"*household demands and family responsibility and other non identified roles limit women from involvement in the public sphere.....' *(School headteacher)

"....It is difficult for women to get the time and energy required to take part in leadership fully and effectively...(member of the County Assembly)

The responses confirm that in the area of study,cultural and traditional beliefs still place women at "home" rather than in roles outside the home including leadership. The non identified roles and responsibilities for women reduces the time available for work and increases stress, creating conflicts of balancing the private and public life.This leads to the biased and unpopular response that '*the place of women is the home."* This concurs with findings from an early study by (Kadaga, 2013) which concluded that culture places women to the home sphere where they are restricted to concentrate on domestic chores at home.

Although women participate in leadership in African communities, their roles are considered supportive, this deprives women opportunities to participate in leadership leading to their exclusion from leadership roles. This concurs with a research finding by Centre for Social Research(2010), which explain that ,women are expected to focus their lives on taking care of their families and for keeping the family together to the detriment, or exclusion, of other concerns. Their involvement in community, church, social and political organization is deemed secondary to obligations at home and the demands of earning a living. This make women primarily responsible for children's upbringing and home maintenance tasks. They are seen as only providing moral support and to nurture. This has been attributed to biological differences and as a result men are the superior sex and the best leaders, while women are ineffective and lack leadership abilities(Kanjere, 2008).

Belief that women are inferior to men and ineffective leaders

The study sought to find out how the belief those women are inferior and ineffective as leaders influence women participation in leadership. The findings are summarized on table 1.

Table 1: Analysis of the belief that women are inferior to men and ineffective leaders

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	ercent
	Very great extent	51	20.3	20.4	
	Great extent	63	25.1	25.2	
	Moderate	72	28.7	28.8	
	low extent	42	16.7	16.8	
	Very low extent	22	8.8	8.8	
	Total	250	99.6	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.4		
Total		251	100.0		

Source: Field Survey

The field findings show that 51(20.4%) said the beliefs effect their participation to a very great extent, 63 (25%) to a great extent, 72(28.8%) moderately and 42(16.7%) believe it contributes to a low extent while 22(8.8%) responded that the effect of the belief is very low.

The results depicted on table 1, shows that, the belief that women are inferior and ineffective hinders them from participating in leadership. In the community, majority of the respondents expressed the view that women lack abilities, one requires to become leader. A responses like,*''if a leader is a woman, disaster is bound to happen,''* suggest that a section of the community members view women as ineffective and inferior,this makes people reject female leaders because they are perceived as lacking qualities associated with leadership. This rejection of women as leaders results from prescriptive gender role norms that have expectations on what men and women ought to do and not to do. They require women to display communal behavior (Fisker & Steven, 2003).

Beliefs discourage women from participating in leadership

The study sought to establish whether beliefs discourage women from participating in leadership. The results indicated that 32% responded that they strongly agreed that beliefs discourage wome from participating in leadershp, 25% for agreed and 14.2% of the respondents strongly disagreed that beliefs discourage women from participating in leadership, (13.6%) respondents disagreed and (14.4%) respondents gave a neutral responses. Figure 3 give a summary of the findings.
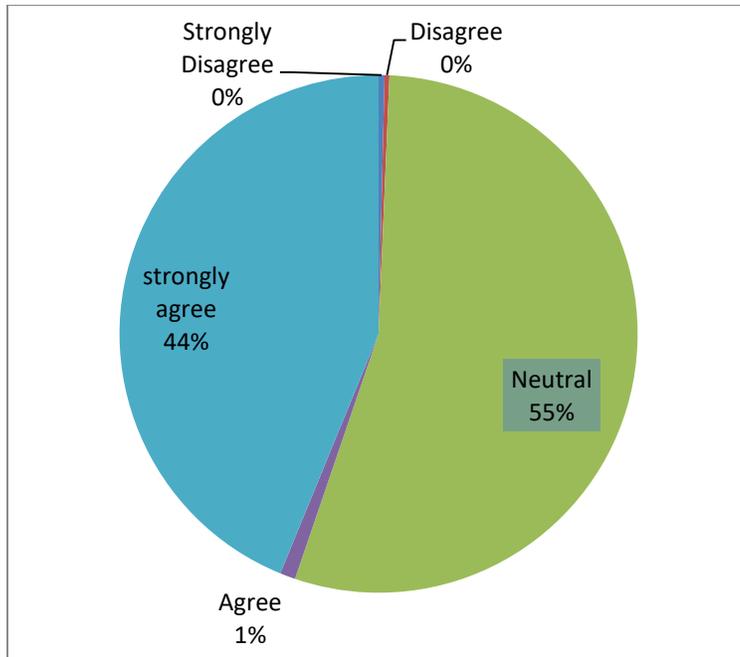
Figure 3: Beliefs discourage women from participating in leadership

Source: Field Survey

Perceptions make women to exhibit communal,supportive behaviors which the community prefers in women. Therefore,women are first expected to fulfill the prescriptive beliefs not agentic requirements of leaders. The respondents felt that women are more suited for pursuing communal roles like dealing with children and family problems, assisting the poor or working for peace. If they violate these prescriptive beliefs they are negatively evaluated for these violations, even while they may also receive some positive evaluation for their fulfillment of the leaders role. The percepions also,make community members to perceive women less favorably as potential occupants of leadership roles.

The field results confirm that traditions and cultural perceptions negatively influence women empowerment by hindering women's capability to seek positions of leadership in the community. The results agree with Iddirus (2012) that, the traditional norms militate against women participation in the public sphere,as the women are seen as challenging the traditional order.**.**

4.5.3 Family and friends in socializing the girls to leadership

The study targeted, the family, the media and community groups (women and youth groups) are some of the institutions involved in civic education(Brans*on* ,2012).The study sought to understand the role of family and friend in socializing girls to leadership, as the family setting is one centre of Civic Education.

Table 2: Analysis on   Family and friends in socializing the girls to leadership

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly disagree	3	1.2	1.2	1.2
	Disagree	34	13.5	13.7	14.9
	Not sure	104	41.4	41.9	56.9
	Agree	89	35.5	35.9	92.7
	Strongly agree	18	7.2	7.3	100.0
	Total	248	98.8	100.0	
Missing	System	3	1.2		
Total		251	100.0		

Source: Field Survey

The study findings revealed that 1.2 (1.2%) strongly disagreed, 34(13.7%) disagreed, 41.4(41,9%) were not sure, 89 (35.9%) agreed that the family has a role to socialize girls to leadership while18(7.3%) strongly agreed

The findings from the study in Kitutu Masaba Constituency confirm its patriarchal nature, where girls from an early age are socialized to participate in roles within the home while the boy child is nurtured for leadership roles. Therefore socialization of the girl child in Kitutu Masaba Sub County is to blame for perceived inabilities on leadership roles. Research findings elsewhere, explain that the few women who enter into leadership are those who have been nurtured into leadership by someone in their family who had participated in some form of leadership. Very few women rise to power "on their own."Most of the women "inherited" power from the family, father or husband (Tundi, 2013).

Through interviews, agreed that women socialization process effect their participation in leadership. Some of the respondents said this,

"Girls are socialized to know that they are away children", not to lead at home.

Mentoring in influencing women to leadership participation

In trying to understand other ways of correcting perceptions hindering women's participation in leadership, the respondents were asked to indicate how mentoring women helps to change beliefs which hinder women's participation in leadership.

Figure 4 below illustrates the effect of mentoring in influencing women to leadership participation.
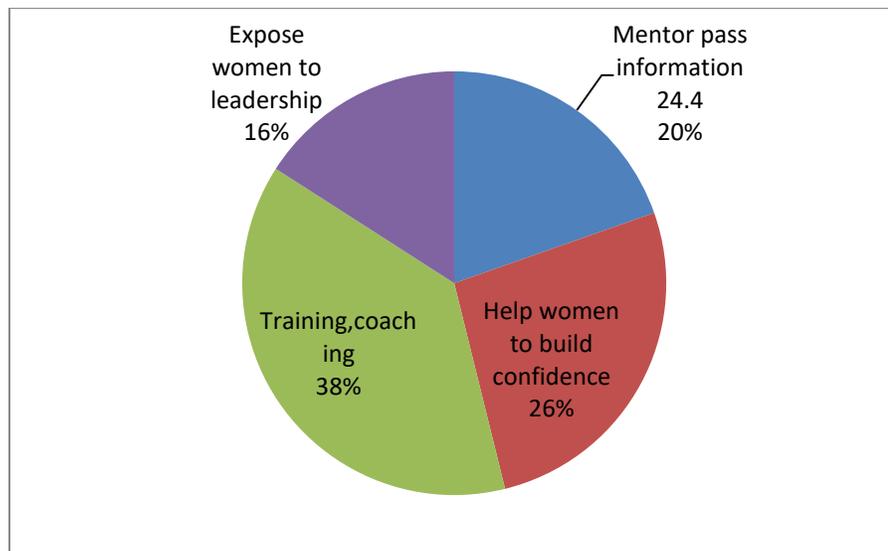
Figure 4: Mentoring in influencing women to leadership participation

Source: Field Survey

The respondents who said that through interactions mentor coaches, train and share experiences which will help women overcome perceptions were 93(47.1%) The interaction can be formal or informal. A total of 39 (16 %) responded that mentoring exposes women to leadership and leadership development programs. While 48 (24.4%) of the respondents supported that mentoring helps women to get information to shape beliefs and influence women to overcome cultural perceptions, and 17(8.6%) said through mentors women will build self esteem and confidence

The result suggests that Mentoring is essential in assisting, attracting and retaining women in decision making and leadership positions.

From the findings in the study area, mentoring is an effective intervention to support women to leadership, through mentors nurturing women's attitudes and characteristics to help them to overcome obstacles and identify opportunities to increase their level of participation in community leadership.

Study summary

The study concludes that the performance of women in leadership is very low at all levels. It is caused by cultural perceptions highly led in the Abagusii community. Other contributing factors are poverty among the female gender, religion and low formal education. The women are not ready to agitate to be given a chance to participate leadership positions.

The study concludes that among the Abagusii of Kitutu Masaba, there is a misconception that only men make good leaders. The main cultural constraints to women's active participation in leadership include prescribed gender roles and female complex personality.

The study concludes that the Abagusii women are massively disadvantaged because of their gender. Cultural stereotypes and other prejudices against women make it impossible for women to actualize their potentials. As a result men ambush women and monopolize leadership positions. The hostile perceptions, created by traditional norms militate against women in the public sphere and inhibit women's advancement to leadership,

as traditions view men as the natural leaders of the society. Many times women give up because they become overwhelmed in dealing with the cultural barriers.

Recommendations

From the study finding it is clear that women's upward mobility is challenged. It is there, recommended that gender stereotyping issues be addressed appropriately starting at local level mainly from the family level, to socialize girls to form personality and mold character in a particular directions by encouraging specific beliefs and attitudes to be developed. This will help the girl child to be assertive from early years and to know that they face prejudice, hostility and misconceptions about their competency. in their effort to get to the top. The rural leadership and traditional elders need to acquire skills to enable them to change mindsets surrounding women's leadership. It is also necessary to involve chiefs and opinion leaders to share knowledge and educate the community about women's empowerment to leadership. All community members should look beyond the community. This will help to increase the number of women participating in local leadership, the county and national levels.

The study recommends that all obstacles including cultural perceptions which impede women from realizing their leadership zeal be identified and be legally addressed. Also the study recommends that, women be given protection, to empower them from an inferior position as perceived by society to a position that would allow them to assume the leadership challenges in the same way as their male counterparts. One way of protecting women is to ban sexist remarks to promote the building of a positive and honorable reputation for women in society.This will encourage the members of society to respect women and have faith in them as leaders; and also instills confidence in the women. That will allow them to take up the initiative themselves and participate in leadeship. Sexual harassment can be criminalized to protect women from exploitation, discouragment and devaluing them.

The study recommends that the barriers which relegate women to the domestic sphere be overcome are at the local level where both men and women are often recruited from.

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