

STRATEGIES USED BY WOMEN IN CARRYING OUT THEIR LEGISLATIVE MANDATE IN MOMBASA COUNTY

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ABSTRACT

Women's participation in elective leadership positions is essential since greater women representative in politics will support women's rights at every level. To this end, enabling strategies which enhance women's participation in political leadership should be investigated. This study aimed at establishing the strategies used by women in carrying out their legislative mandate in Mombasa County. The study employed a cross sectional descriptive study using qualitative data collection methods on 21 women Members of Mombasa County. Data was analyzed NVivo 10 software and presented in an inductive thematic approach. It was found that through the formation of Women Caucuses, women are able to collectively champion for their rights. As such women in leadership positions in Mombasa county must adopt various strategies for them to fulfil their legislative and representative mandates. Through the formation of Women Caucuses, the women are able to collectively champion for their

rights. The strategies used by women are women caucus, co-ordination with leaders at the grassroots, lobbying for the support of male leaders and training, research and community engagement. Since women are disadvantaged numerically in leadership positions, it is imperative that they should lobby their male counterparts to support the agenda that affect the women. The women leaders were able to achieve their mandates through coordinating with other leaders and women at the grassroots and in so doing they are able to understand the problems that face women and come up with solutions. Recommendations from this study are that the Women Caucus should ensure women are trained in the legislature and executive at county level on the formal rules, system and processes of the institutions they work in to increase their effectiveness and ability to wield influence.

Key Words: *empowering women, women's participation, political leadership and legislative mandate*

INTRODUCTION

Participation in political leadership is imperative for women's empowerment because greater number of women in politics will support women's cause at every level (Aswath, 2015). Researchers have noted that when women get into leadership and management they bring a different perspective from that of men (Barasa, 2011; Baden, 2012). Women leaders are likely to focus on human development projects such as renegotiation of gender roles in the home, educating the society in order to change the way of viewing effective leadership and mentoring programmes that will focus not only on increasing the number of women in government but also enhance women's effectiveness in political positions and their impact on decision-making.

Strategies have been formulated to enhance women's participation in political leadership. Such interventions are encompassed in international instruments, covenants and interventions such as Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Beijing Platform for Action. However, none of these have helped women in attaining the target of 30 percent in parliament (Almasry, 2012).

In spite of the strategies that have formulated, women's political participation in Kenya and generally in Mombasa County is quite challenged with regard to women's ascendancy into public political leadership positions. The disparity and inequality in participation in political leadership has persisted probably due to demographic factors, cultural factors, economic factors, gender based electoral violence (Maloiy, 2016). Unlike men, women are averse to political leadership. As such, this study aimed at establishing the strategies used by women in carrying out legislative mandate in Mombasa County.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Though the Constitution of Kenya emphasizes equality between women and men in the political arena, the dismal progression of representation of women in parliament indicates otherwise (Government of Kenya, 2011). Women's engagement in political leadership is a global concern because in virtually all societies leadership is gendered masculine (Maloiy, 2016). Various studies have been done in relation to leadership studies about women from developed and developing countries, for instance, Nkomo and Ngambi (2009) did a study on African women in leadership: Current knowledge and a framework for future studies, Barasa (2011) conducted a study on the Trend of Women's Participation in Politics in Kakamega Central District since Independence. The sample for the study was taken from two divisions: Navakholo, Municipality and Lurambi in Kakamega County. The study was guided by Gender and Development (GAD) theory developed in the 1980s by Carolyn Moser and adopted historical research design. The sample size was 360 respondents; 349 women and 15 men. She established that women gender agenda remains a major unfinished business that requires the attention of both men and women. However, the current study was guided by Feminist Political, Liberal Feminism and The Politics of Presence theories to examine the effects of women MCAs in legislative and representative mandate in Mombasa County. From the reviewed study above, it is clear that number of researchers have documented the increased representation of women in a parliament. However, most the studies have been carried out in areas outside of Mombasa largely assessing the voters' perception of women political leaders. The narratives derived from such largely project third-party voices and may not be to unpack the institutional-based factors that can hinder or promote elected women's performance of their mandates. The current study pursued the latter trajectory to voice elected women legislators' experiences in the County Assembly. Additionally, the type of theories applied in the previous studies was different from the ones used in this study. Hence,

to address the foregoing, this study was guided by the following research question: What are the strategies used by women Members of County Assembly in realizing their legislative and representative mandates in Mombasa County?

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The overall objective of the study was to assess the strategies used by women in carrying out their legislative mandate in Mombasa County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Women's caucus has been found to play a significant role in representation of women (Tsami, 2012). Caucuses ordinarily include a different gathering with a mutual belief system to accomplish a shared objective. They can go about as a minimum amount with vital weight, however formally, they do not really need to have a substantial number of individuals. A powerful women's caucus could bring about results, for example, regional political procedures that results in arrangements or motivation which oblige women's interests; raised constituent attention to issues that are advanced by individuals from the assembly in their voting demographics; a viable 'watchdog' to monitor the usage of approaches concerning issues important to women's support; and a mouthpiece to continuously promote issues that they remain for, through media or open backing efforts (Mina and Louise, 2010).

Notwithstanding running open promotion campaigns, parliamentary caucuses likewise assume a vital part in building the limit and aptitudes of ladies individuals from Members of Parliament (MPs) to make approaches that are in light of a legitimate concern for ladies, and to frame dependable officials who can do their parliamentary capacities. Inside, caucuses generally complete an assortment of projects including limit building trainings, workshops and classes, identified with key subjects, for example, the change of debating aptitudes or open talking, coalition building and the investigation of parliamentary working techniques (Kazuki, 2008).

Women's parliamentary parties all through the world are not the same as each other. Some are set up inside a formal structure that compares to the parliamentary commissions, while others are fixed to a progressive structure with one assembly at the national level and others at the commonplace level, with some notwithstanding having parties down to the area level, for example, in the United States. The last has leverage as far as systems administration and coordinated effort, in that the on-screen characters could work in an organized way to help issues like wellbeing, training, financial development (Mina and Louise, 2010).

The Government, Civil society Organizations and the Non-Governmental Organizations as well as other stakeholders have embarked on partnerships with youth and improvement programs for

potential women contenders (Tsami, 2012). This needs to be backed by plans founded for establishing a partnership or around a critical mass of experienced women in political arena. African Civil society organizations have continued playing a major role in improving the participation of women in elections and politics (The African Development Forum, 2008).

There have been cases where male candidates offer support to their female counterparts in politics. Focusing on attaching a sense of harmony among women to conquer the impediments they come across has been conducted by national women's groups in partnership and with technical assistance from international actors. Low self-perception of women makes it hard to challenge men and take part in decision-making as well as voting in other women (Maloiy, 2016). As per Economic Commission of Africa (2009), "collaborating with Non-governmental organizations, the media, and community leadership, promote rights of women and girls awareness via sending relevant messages which can have an influence of accelerating variations in attitudes and practices which are currently affecting women advancement in society negatively."

This needs to be done in African rural and remote areas where majority of women are and are commonly unaware of the laws which boost their status legally. The capacity building is key in making rural women to participate in politics. Women's representation and participation in politics at the local government level is a key driver for their empowerment. It is at the local government level where political parties are able to recruit their members and identify potential candidates who can later move on to contest at the national level (Panday, 2008). It is also at the local level where there is a higher probability of direct impact of women in politics because of its proximity to the community. There is still little or no understanding of the political systems as well as government role among women in rural areas (Tsami, 2012). This therefore hinders them from being aware of their rights as well as how to claim them, and from seeing the benefit that elections come with. It is crucial for intensive campaigns to be done in countries in Africa so as to gain significant accomplishments in the developing trends in participation of women in political (The African Development Forum, 2008).

Research by Kellow (2010) established that having no experience in politics makes it more difficult for women in accessing the existing structures of power and knowledge to influence them. Therefore there is need for inter-party partnerships in supporting women in acquisition of skills in fundraising, public speaking as well as campaigning skills, which are essential for obtaining support of the public. There is a need to help women financially so as to run effective campaigns in their respective constituencies in order to battle with men who established themselves in the communities they are living in (Tsami, 2012).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted cross sectional descriptive study using qualitative data collection methods. The population of interest of this study was thirty-one (21) women Members of Mombasa County in both the 1st and 2nd County Assemblies. Case narratives and Key Informants Interviews were used to collect data. Women MCAs were purposively selected by being either nominated or elected in the 2013 and 2017 elections. Former Women MCAs were interviewed to give their perspectives on the strategies used by women MCAs to fulfil their legislative mandates. The current MCAs were also interviewed on their experiences and a comparison done with those who had been in those positions to ascertain the changes if any in their experiences. Data was collected verbatim from the participants with the assistance of an audio recorder. The transcripts were imported into NVivo 10 software for qualitative analysis. Auto-Coding was used in organization and creation of nodes for each interview question and organization of the data into nodes. The collected data was analyzed by use of an inductive thematic approach that assisted in identification of the major themes from the collected data and the themes developed directly from the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Women Caucus

Women have employed various strategies to increase their political participation in leadership positions even against the backdrop of various challenges that face them. In their desire to participate in political leadership, women have come up with different strategies to assist them in increasing their participation. Women organizations such as Maendeleo ya Wanawake have been used as platforms for articulating the issues and grievances that face them. Maendeleo ya Wanawake have been in the fore front in championing for women's rights issues (Kamau, 2010). Another organization is Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) which has been in the forefront fighting against injustices meted against women more so gender and sexual violence and hence ensuring that such challenges are addressed hence levelling the field for women to participate in leadership positions (Kamau, 2010).

The study established that one of the strategies that the women employed is that of championing the issues that affected women was the formation of women caucuses which are used as vehicles of empowering women. One of the key informant leader who is a Vice Chair of the Mombasa Women Caucus pointed out that:

“So we sat down and we like just came me up with the Women Caucus, so that it can give us a platform on which now to start venturing them, women issues. And first and foremost, we always like empowering ladies and we are coming up with

that agenda, of visiting schools, and start giving them ethical lectures, we believe in character first because nowadays many people go with the popularity, we don't go with our principles.” [Interview with Vice Chair, Mombasa Women Caucus”

“We have managed to procure a vehicle under Affirmative action fund which will aid in movement from point A to B carrying [and] identifying needy students and awarding them with bursary to curb on the high level of school drop out by primary school pupils as a result of lack of fees”

[Interview with Woman MCA]

The study findings align with Rosenthal (2001), who argued that caucuses for women amplify voices of women. Through unity in a formal caucus, there is a likelihood of success among women in shaping the agenda of the parliament. That is, through resources sharing like staff time, training materials as well as research budgets, women caucus members are more efficient and strategic in improving their agenda. These caucuses improve policy priorities of women and also provide them with an important democratic governance and collaborative policy-making model, especially in post-conflict or environments which are highly polarized. Women have been crucial components of the cross-party collaborations since their style of leadership is more of participations than power hence making them able to work across party lines than their male colleagues.

According to Ebeku (2012), women’s caucuses can equally serve as the main entry points providing women legislators with the necessary information, support and connection building between civil society and legislature. Various women’s organizations can provide research, expertise and also assist in the drafting of policies on an array of various women’s issues thus providing insights into ways in which other legislations involving that concern for instance water, education reforms or ownership of land may affect women in a different way as compared to the men. Women’s caucuses can identify important upcoming committee meetings or votes and assist the women in strategizing with an aim of influencing the outcome.

The above proposition concurs with the composition of the committee’s membership for the second assembly 2017-2022 whereby, three (3) committees were headed by women MCAs as chairpersons while the other four (4) the women were the vice chairpersons the fifteen (15) were dominated by male MCAs as illustrated Table 1. Furthermore, the composition of the committee membership did not take into the consideration the third gender rule. The framers of Kenya’s new Constitution, 2010 in Article 27 (8) provide an affirmative action where the state is required to take legislative and other measures to ensure that no more than two-thirds of the members of elective or appointive bodies are of the same gender. Article 81 further reiterates that the same rule should be applicable in elective public bodies. According to Article 81(b) *“not more than two-thirds of the members of elective public bodies shall be of the same gender.”* As a result,

many state agencies and private institutions are working towards implementing what has come to be referred to as a third gender rule.

Table 1: County Assembly of Mombasa, Second Assembly Committee per Chairpersons per gender, October 2017

S/No:	Name of the Committees	Chairperson	Vice Chairperson
1.	House Business Committee		
2.	Appointment/ Rules and Procedures		
3.	Finance, Budget and Appropriations		
4.	Agriculture, Fisheries, Livestock and Co-operatives		
5.	Education, Information Technology and MV 2035	Male	Male
6.	Lands, Planning and Housing Committee		
7.	Youth, gender, Sports and Cultural Affairs		
8.	Trade, Tourism and Investments		
9.	Environment, Waste Management and Energy		
10.	Transport, Infrastructure and Public Works		
11.	Labour and Social Welfare		
12.	Implementation Committee		
13.	Health Committee		Female
14.	Selection Committee		Female
15.	County Public Investment and Accounts Committee		Female
16.	Justice and Legal Affairs Committee		Male
17.	Water, Sanitation and Natural Resources	Female	
18.	County Delegated Legislation		Female

Source: (County Assembly Library of Mombasa, 2018)

Co-ordination with Leaders at the Grassroots

The study established that the women MCAs coordinated with the leaders at grassroots as a strategy in realizing their legislative and representative mandate. An elected Women MCA pointed out that she worked and coordinated with the leaders at the grassroots level including the Chiefs, village elders and the youths in identification of the problems and providing the solutions:

“As an MCA am working with the grassroots because those are the people who appointed me to the position and of course I had the agenda in the manifesto that I used in campaigns with the Youth Council. And then of course they come up with

rules and also the mandate of the president. So those are the point men we are using on the ground to be able to drive my agenda and achieve part of what I made in my manifesto. Another strategy that I use is that I work very closely with the village elders and the Chief so as to identify problems in the village and using those identified problems we are able to see how we can help one another, how we will hold hands and solve the problem. We have initiated the digging of boreholes in every village.” [Interview with elected Woman MCA]

Bratton (2011) argues that majority of the people found at the grassroots, women face many challenges unlike those people who live in places where there are many social amenities. The challenges which they face are different from those in urban centers. People struggle daily to put bread on the table, lack water, employment opportunities among other basic necessities. Community organizations, women groups, village elders and youth group leaders have a better understanding of the daily suffering of the people, the urgent concerns which they feel should be addressed. The women leaders’ coordination with the leaders on the ground enables them to address these concerns as part of fulfilling their legislative mandate.

Concurring with this point, a nominated woman MCA key informant pointed out that through engaging with other leaders on the ground, they were able to well understand their problems:

“Okay, we are also going back to the ground, and ask our fellow women, you see it does not mean if you are not in position to be a leader, you cannot lead, so we believe that even those who are outside there, they can still give us information to assist them because they are the people who feel it. You see the moment you are here, you tend like forget, yeah, you forget that one day you will go back there. So we are trying to say that we should embrace them and learn more from them because we believe they have a story to tell that will be of help to us.”[Interview with nominated Woman MCA]

The sentiments of the key informant are echoed by Agbalajobi (2010) who asserts that people at the grassroots level tend to act in a manner that is geared towards solving their problems. He further adds that people tend to oppose people who appear to have polarized interests and the community. With these in mind the women leaders seek to engage, work and share ideas with their electorate in a bid to address the issues that face them and creating a sustainable solution.

Lobbying for the support of Male leaders

In many patriarchal societies, the majority of the members of the County Assembly are men, the study established women leaders have to strategize through lobbying for the support of men in pushing the agenda that relate to women. One key informant stated that:

“If you have something, you lobby them, so that they bring it up then you support. The Bills are mainly passed by the men. There is a bias in the way the Bills and the Motions are tabled in the County Assembly. And again even when the Motions are passed, it’s the numbers which count and if you are not able to lobby and mobilize the numbers, it becomes tricky, your Motion will never see the light of day” [Interview with elected Women MCA].

The above opinion was seconded by secondary data collected on bills tracker 2013 to 2017 which showed that a total of fifty-seven (57) bills passed only three (3) bills were sponsored by one woman elected from the 2013 elections from the County assembly of Mombasa. Thus, the 95 per cent of men in the Assembly actively participate in the drafting of bills and lobbying from their counterparts to pass the bill unlike women who are represented by 5 per cent thus less efforts made by women in drafting the bills reason well known as lack of knowledge knowhow as well as unfamiliarity with the problems facing the people at the grass root level due inadequate research by the women MCAs.

The motions analysis carried out from the year 2013-2017 revealed that men dominate the process of passing the motion by 87 percent unlike women MCAs represented by 13 per cent thus the process of decision making in the assembly signifies that men MCAs play an important role in the affairs of the house.

The KII commented as follows;

“Women voices have not been heard clearly as men still dominate, Men’s voices are the ones heard and the women have to work with this men especially when passing the motions” [Focus Group Discussion Women/ men, KII]

Nzomo (2012) notes that the Sexual Offences Act was initially opposed by male MPs but was later passed. The Act was passed after intense lobbying both from women parliamentarians and women civil societies and organizations but not before the removal of some clauses such as marital rape and the criminalization of female circumcision.

In agreement with that opinion, another informant stated that working through their women caucus, they lobbied and talked to their male counterparts to have their agenda sail through when they are tabled at floor of the house:

“We can use the lobbying, that is what we are about to, but right now we are on recess but we are putting down strategies the women caucus of this county assembly, we are trying to come up with lobbying, first we must sweet-talk our men counterparts so that when next time we go back to the floor of the house, we

can be able to get the assistance so that our agenda may sail through.” [Interview with nominated Women MCA]

Mwatha (2013) notes that lobbying is an essential technique that women leaders use in influencing their male counterparts to support their agenda in parliament. The nature of lobbying has shifted from the aggressive lobbying to making men understand the women agenda as they point out that the agenda are for the good of every person in the community. Women leaders now consider their male counterparts as partners in the actualisation of their legislative mandate. Since men are the majority in parliament, they have to be lobbied as essential partners in the implementation of change. Lobbying may require sensitization of members especially the men on aspects of gender equality and the benefits that will accrue from supporting women.

Training, Research and Community Engagement

Women leaders just like men who make it to parliament for the first time encounter various challenges with regards to fulfilling their legislative mandate. Lack of knowledge on handling of issues makes the newly elected women leaders ineffective in performing their duties of representing the people who elected them to parliament. Training is a key source of information which the women leaders can utilize in understanding what their legislative and representative mandates entail. The information can be obtained from documented work or through interviews with other leaders and the women at the grassroots. One key informant stated that:

“One I think they should know why they are there, honestly speaking apart from the elected MCAs, the nominated ones don’t even know what they are doing in Parliament so I think, first of all is for them to understand their roles, because most of them will tell you their roles but they don’t know so first of all is for them to understand their roles then they can designate that to the people on the ground, then aside from that what they should do.” [Interview with elected Women MCA]

The focus group discussions revealed women MCA voices were not heard as indicated below;

“You know, the women MCA are not heard speaking and their voices are not considered. They could be lacking training or they do not know their responsibilities, this is an issue that needs to be looked at and addressed, so that their voices can be heard and acted upon.” [Focus group discussion, men]

The study findings concur with Carroll (2009) who argued that women who are elected to parliament are required to have a thorough understanding on how parliament functions and as well learn the rules that guide their work, both written and unwritten, mechanisms and procedures. Once the women learn these internal practices they are able to use them to their favor in advancement of the interests of women. Additionally, the women need to understand

the difference women perspectives and women issues. Issues which affect women are primarily those physical things which are of concern to them such as reproductive health issues ranging from provision of sanitary towels to girls and breast cancer issues among others. Gender equality also falls under women issues. On the other hand, women's perspectives concern the way women perceive political issues. In many cases new women representatives are influenced to focus on women issues such as education and health at the expense of such issues such as security and finances which not only affect women but everybody in the society.

In agreement, another key informant and focus group discussant pointed out that there was need for the women leaders who get elected into parliament for the first time to make use of the resources and personnel within parliament in acquiring more knowledge as regards to their mandates:

"We are also trying to do some research from our library and we also have researchers within this assembly, so we have decided that we will start maximizing their assistance." [Interview with nominated Women MCA]

"The women leaders have a commitment to be involved in the community. Anyone showing interest in doing something that will benefit the community has support and motivation. This is because the leadership of the community gives everyone a chance for self-development in making decisions. A good association amongst the members of the community based on respect and trust forms the basis for participation of the community in the organization." [Focus group discussion, women]

According to Johnson *et al.* (2009), parliamentary libraries are known as the primary sources of independent and non-partisan information. The elected members of parliament in most cases, in their effort to fulfill their legislative and representative mandate do not have access to information at the constituency level so they are left to rely heavily on the national parliament library and the research staff. The libraries also provide access to information through provision of internet services, developing and policy debates in countries within that region. Other than the many sources of information and opinion that the parliamentarians are exposed to, parliamentary library and research services remain as a unique valuable resource to all parliamentarians and especially the newly elected members. Thus, the newly elected and nominated women MCAs can make good use of the parliamentary services and library staff to gain an understanding on how to go about the fulfillment of their legislative and representative mandates.

The study established that most of the women who are nominated do not actually understand what their roles, and to overcome this they have to engage with women on the ground so as to better have a grasp of their problems:

“They should engage women to know really what their problems are, because you will find whatever is ailing a woman in Changamwe is not the same as it is ailing maybe a woman in Kisauni, maybe a woman in Kisauni will cry of insecurity, maybe a woman in Changamwe would cry that the transport or infrastructure is not good so they should really go to those women and find out really what is their problem...” [Interview with elected Women MCA]

The Gender Principle has not served to strengthen the women’s movement around a shared agenda, Networking between women in politics, public service and the private sector is ad-hoc, often along party lines and largely confined to Nairobi [Focus group discussion, men]

The study findings are echoed by Murphy (2012), who defines community engagement as a process of engaging people on the ground so as to have a better understanding of their challenges. Through community engagement, the elected leaders are in a position to get a highlight of the tensions at local level in a participatory and representative democracy. In many cases, there are leaders at the grassroots level who consider themselves as the true representatives of the people and they may perceive elected leaders as lacking understanding of the challenges facing the electorate. Thus, the elected and nominated women MCAs have had engagement with women and other leaders on the ground to understand the challenges which they face at that moment which may be different from that faced in the neighboring electoral ward.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, leadership positions have been a preserve for the men. The women in leadership positions must adopt various strategies for them to fulfil their legislative and representative mandates. Through the formation of Women Caucuses, the women are able to collectively champion for their rights. Since women are disadvantaged numerically in leadership positions, it is imperative that they should lobby their male counterparts to support the agenda that affect the women. The women leaders will be able to achieve their mandates through coordinating with other leaders and women at the grassroots and in so doing they are able to understand the problems that face women and come up with solutions. The affirmative action and policies in place that are provided for in the constitution assist the women also in fulfilling their legislative and representative mandates. Concerning the strategies that used by women in carrying out legislative mandate in Mombasa County, the study established that among the strategies employed by women in championing their issues included working through Women caucuses. However, it was established that not at all times has the Woman Caucus championed for the rights of the women with the leaders thinking more of themselves than those they represent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that the Women Caucus should ensure women are trained in the legislature and executive at the county level on the formal rules, system and processes of the institutions they work in to increase their effectiveness and ability to wield influence. Champion the achievements of women in politics and public service through the media and annual wards to challenge the perception that men are more effective than women within political arena. Facilitate regular meetings between women in national and county governments.

The recommends that more programmes focusing both girls and boys should be initiated to promote an equal enrolment of children in schools. The creation of women social groups had been promoted and provision of loans provided for the women to engage in income generating business activities. Nevertheless, not all women have benefited from this initiative since not all women are in these social groups and some of the groups do not have access to the loans.

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