WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS AT THE GRASSROOTS IN KICUKIRO SECTOR IN RWANDA

BY

PATRICK GATSINZI
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A thesis submitted to the faculty of the Graduate School of the University at Buffalo, State University of New York in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Global Gender Studies
DECLARATION

This research is my original work and has not been presented for the award of any degree in any other University.

Signature [Signature] Date 8/27/2018

PATRICK GATSINZI

50059420

Project Advisor

Signature [Signature] Date 8/27/2018

Dr. Barbara Wejnert.  
Associate Professor,  
Dept. Of Global Gender Studies

Committee Member

Signature [Signature] Date 8/27/18

Dr. Keith Griffler  
Professor, African-American Studies,  
Dept. of Transnational Studies.
DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to…

….all the women in Rwanda and all other places globally, advocating for equality, justice and inclusion.

…my wife, Aline Gatsinzi.
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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to investigate the level of women’s participation in politics in Kicukiro, Kicukiro sector, Kigali, Rwanda. There have been national and international policies to foster women participation in politics, however the level of women’s participation at the grassroots has been low which is different from a higher participation at the national levels in Rwanda. Rwanda has been celebrated due to the increase of women participation in parliament. Hence, Rwandan women have been hailed globally for their role in political leadership for women globally. At the moment in the world and Africa, Rwanda is one of the highest performing in women’s political leadership above the gender quota of 30%. Kicukiro district is one of the biggest and important district in Kigali. It plays host to various national and international programs for women, hence women are deeded to be aware of the role in politics. The objectives of the study are to identify ways women participate in politics at the grassroots, also it investigates the perceptions of the public on women in politics. Lastly, it explores the impeding factors as well as the effects of women participation in politics at the grassroots in Kicukiro. The study was delimited to Kicukiro sector because it best suits the characteristics under study. Literature was reviewed on the following sub heading: women participation in political systems from a global and African perspective, economic factors and their influence on women’s participation in political leadership, gender equality and the quota system, cultural factors and its influence on women’s participation in political leadership and the history of women representation in Rwandan parliament. The review reveals that women have often been left out of political offices but with the introduction of the quota system and the various national policies, there have been an increase in the amount of women participating in politics. However, the review indicates that women at the grassroots are still restricted.

The study was conducted through a descriptive survey. Data was collected using questionnaires and from 25 women and 5men in Kicukiro. Respondents were randomly selected from people who live in the region. There was no limit to the ages of the respondents, however ages of respondents was between 22-65 for and 30-55 for men. The theoretical framework used for the study was the symbolic representation which measure the impact of women on other women in term political participation. Data was analyzed using a qualitative descriptive method. The study concluded that women’s marital status and educational level influence their participation in politics. Women are economically and culturally disadvantaged therefore that hinders their chances of ascending to political office Gender roles and public opinion limit women and prevent them from participating in politics. Women at the grassroots often organize around various co-operative societies to discuss women issues, however, these are not considered as making any political significance to the participation of women in politics at the grassroots. The study recommends that education should be encouraged for women at the grassroots. Economic empowerment programs and various organization critical for women’s participation. The study recommends the implementation of various policies at the grassroots level. The study also suggested possible areas of future research based on the findings.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

There have been much increase in the representation and participation of women in national legislatures globally since the early 1990s. A report by the Inter-Parliamentarian Union (IPU, 2012), shows that the global average of female parliamentary representation was at 19.8% in 2011, an increase from 19% in 2010. This pattern has been duplicated in successive years. While on the one hand there is a upward increase, what is observed is a slow increase in the percentage growth. These increases plays out different in various regions globally. This increase has produced remarkable results in sub-Saharan Africa. In many national legislature, women have participation has increased tremendously. In post-conflict Uganda, the election for a National Resistance Council in 1989 brought about a 17.6 women into the national legislature as against a lower percentage prior to the election. In 2008, following the great success recorded in Uganda, Rwanda became the first country globally to have more women than men (56.3%) in the national parliament.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU, 2013) indicates that women’s political participation has increased. When considering total Members of Parliament in the lower or single house, the percentage has increased to 21.8 percent. Considering the world average for 2012 globally, women in parliaments stood at a little over twenty percent, which was an increment of 19.5 percent in 2012 representing a gain of 5.3 percentage points in ten years. Available data from IPU (2013) indicates that thirty-three houses of parliament had thirty percent or above women or female members of parliament by the close of 2012, which according to the data is more than tripled ten
years past. In the same year 2012, women fared better through either legislation or voluntary quota use. In 2012, electoral quotas were adopted in twenty-two countries which held elections.

Africa has consistently maintained a high level of advocacy for increased women representation at various level of governance. In 2012, the results of various election into national legislatures reveal that eight sub-Saharan countries, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, Mozambique, Angola, Uganda, Tanzania and Burundi ranked among the top 30 countries with increased seats for women in the national legislatures globally. In countries such as Tunisia, Kenya and Senegal, there have been national legislation to increase the chances of women being voted into parliament at the national, state and local level. This is part of the gender quota system that was implemented by the government of the respective nation to ensure equal representation in parliament. Political parties have also taken the bold step to support women election into political position at all level of governance. While this consistent with the global trend of using the electoral gender quota system in electing women to parliament. Dahlerup and Friedenwell (2005) identify this trend as a means of taking the ‘fast track’ to parliament. The use of an electoral gender quota to increase women’s representation and participation is crucial to the growth of women voice globally. They argue that this system also surpasses the much slower ‘incremental approach’ which tends to wait for political and socio-economic changes over time. This gender quota approach enforces, through law and legislation, the equality of all and the rights of all to be vote and to be voted for elections.

There are variations in women’s involvement in the political system on the globe scale and their active involvement in politics and the democratic development has been necessary for modern discussion on development and governance. Ogbogu (2012, 1) stresses that in the wake of various agitations for female empowerment by civil societies and international associations, regular studies
have depicted that around the world, women are not well represented in the political systems. Although women’s participation in politics and its governance has been lacking behind, there has been a steady improvement over the past years. In circumstances, where elections were based on quotas, women obtained 24 percent of seats in parliaments and in countries where quotas were used voluntarily women made gains of 22 percent. Where there was no existence of quotas, women were only able to win very low number of seats comparable to when specific gender participation legislation was enacted.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, Geisler, (1995) observes that low level of women’s political participation in the region have been limiting cultural and traditional roles. She further illustrates that women who obtained seats in national parliaments achieve such feat through the women’s wings of political parties, which left women sidelined and isolated from the policy formation procedure. For instance, the women wing of the ANC in South Africa have always been active in advocating for inclusion for women in government. Though there the women wings of the ANC boast of high membership, this doesn’t correlate with the actual number of women that are active participants in the running of the government. However, of recent times the scenario has been varying. Since 1960, none of the remaining regions have seen a rate of intensification in women’s political representation greater than in sub-Saharan Africa, which went from 1 percent in 1960 to 14.3% in 2003. (Tripp, 2003).

The rise of women’s political participation as well as the recent renewed voices of women advocacy groups, there have been large improvements in most parts of Africa on women’s participation in legislation and political decision making processes. However, the literature on women participation at national levels have grown over the years but scholars have advocated the need to move beyond numbers at the national level and examine the impact of those numbers on
the growth and development of women at the grass-roots. There have been question of how women are the grass-roots engage in various political activities and how national legislations are enforced for grass-roots increase in women participation. The question there is to ask what impacts we can identify from having more women at the national parliaments. Building on this line of inquiry, this research examines the women’s presence in parliament in Rwanda and their impacts on women at the grass-roots in terms of their symbolic representation. This is important because these women stand in for women at all level of governance as well as the political, economic and social activities, acting on behalf of women and become role models to other women especially at the grass-roots level where cultural and traditional perceptions often restrict women from actively engaging in political activities. It also relates to how women at the grass-roots organize themselves to fit into national or local discourse of issues that concern them such as health, family and economic growth.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Over the past decades, the discipline of gender studies has witnessed rapid changes on issues of power, representation, (in) equality and increased participation of women at various levels of political, economic, cultural and social institutions. The participation of people in political processes is crucial for the development of political structures, systems and institutions. In Africa, women participation in politics has been celebrated as among the fastest growing worldwide (Yoon, 2001; 2004; Lindberg, 2004; Tripp & Kang 2008; Stockemer, 2011; Franceschet et al, 2012; Bauer, 2012 Bauer& Burnet, 2013). These results have been achieved as a result of various intervention and advocacy programs aimed at enhancing women’s participation in politics. Most of these legislations were formulated through international conventions, and treaties. These includes the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, CEDAW conventions and the Beijing Platform for Action.
Participation in political systems and institution is imperative for women’s empowerment. The higher the number of women in politics, the higher the chances of enacting gender sensitive policies, legislation and laws. It also increases the interest of women at the grass-roots in participating in organizations and networks aimed at women development. (Oxal and Baden 1997). Researchers have also observed that when women get into leadership and management in any institution, they bring a different perspective than men (Clinton, 2003; Maathai, 2006, Neuman, 1998; Thomas & Wilcox, 2005; Wanjohi, 2003). Women leaders are likely to focus on human and women development projects.

While the support for women participation in politics is important, questions have also been asked about how these increases impact the lives of women at the descriptive, substantive and the symbolic levels (Tripp & Kang 2008; Franceschet et al, 2012; Bauer, 2012 Bauer& Burnet, 2013). In examining the descriptive representation of women, Franceschet et al (ibid) argue that studies must go beyond the means by which women were elected but also into the kinds of women who have been elected into office. This approach will examine the background of elected women and how their roles, voices and background is being used to foster equality and gender sensitive legislation. Franceschet et al’s descriptive, substantive and the symbolic levels of approaches that help to evaluate the impact of women participation and representation in politics. The substantive representation explores the extent to which women members of the parliament represent women interests, giving attention gender sensitive policies and legislative accomplishments for women. The symbolic representation addresses the ways in which women’s increased presence in parliaments affects public attitudes towards women in politics as well as women’s own engagement in politics. These three points of discourses are crucial because it is not enough to have increased women in parliament, but there is a needs to promote women issues at such levels.
This therefore will focus on the symbolic representation of women at the grass-roots level in Rwanda. The research studies the perception of the public, within a local geographical location, on women participation in politics and how is has influenced other women at the grass-roots level to engage or organize themselves around political issues. The study argues that the increased participation of women at the national level is very symbolic to the growth of women at the grass-roots. When women at the grass-roots are able to organize themselves around issues of similar interests, they are able to influence higher national representation at the national level. Also, with more women at the national levels, women at the grass-roots can aspire for more participation in local political activities. Consequently, the national growth of women representation witnessed at the national level is as a result of large grass-roots engagement of women in various social and political organizations. However, research into the increase of women representation in politics in Rwanda have often focused on the national legislature which much attention have not been to grass-roots public perceptions and organizations on the women participation. Studies have not also focused on the reorientation of women at the grass-roots levels and their involvements, through social networks, participate in politics. Therefore, the study attempts to assess the existing gaps and explore the symbolic factors that impact women political engagement at the grass-roots as well as public perceptions on women’s role in political systems. Based on the main points the following research questions guide this study:

- In what ways do women participate in political system at the grass-roots level?
- Does women participation at the grass-roots affect the national outcomes?
- Does women participation at the national level impact grass-roots women involvements?
- What is the perception of the public at the grass-roots on women engagement in politics?
- What major problems affect women participation at the grass-roots levels?
1.3 Objectives of the Study

The broad objectives of this research are to assesses and examine the symbolic factors that impact women’s representation in political systems at the grass-roots level and identify how such influences national increase and public perception about women engagement in political systems. The specific objective of this study are

- To identify the methods women participate in political systems at the grass-roots level.
- To identify the impact of grass-roots participation on national increases
- To evaluate the perception of the public on women engagement in politics
- To examine the impeding factors to women participation at the grass-roots or vice-versa.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in the ability to reveal that the actual participation of women in politics at the national level is crucial but much more important is how women at the grass-roots organize themselves around political system and influence change. Also, the increased number of women at national level impacts the increase of focused gender/women issues. This also encourages women and other members of the public to support women at every level of governance. The study is also significant because it will allow researcher to focus on grass-roots women groups, networks and organizations as a result of the contributions to national growth and blurring the lines of political discrimination. Finally, the research suggests recommendations for political parties and electoral institutions as well as policy makers to include in their policies specific legislative laws that enforce women inclusion in political process and also address cultural, traditional and cultural rules that prevent women from participating in politics. Evidently, there is enough reasonable backing to support the claim that women have capabilities, which can be employed to meaningfully enhance economic, social and most importantly the political
development of nations. Civil and women's groups have identified that women’s political participation is lacking and have made conscious efforts to address the issue, while such efforts have generated, in certain instances, positive outcomes, there is still much to be done to ensure that women are recognized at the grass-roots levels.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on women participation at the grass-roots level in Rwanda. Rwanda has made a mark globally in the women’s parliamentary political participation. It has the highest number of women parliamentarians at 56.3 percent. Rwanda succeeded by implementing a gender quota system. With a population of 70 percent female following the 1994 genocide, women had to assume traditional male roles. Being able to participate in the drafting of a new constitution and new legislative structures, they pushed for greater equality in politics through such initiatives as a constitutional quota and election quotas to ensure women’s place at the political table. This achievement could not have been possible without the support and demonstrated political commitment of the Government of Rwanda at the highest level of leadership (Mutamba, 2005).

Though, there are various communities that can serve as grass-roots in the country, the study focuses on Kicukiro sector. Kicukiro is a district in the Kigali province of Rwanda. The district is divided into 10 sectors with Kicukiro as one of the sectors. The sector is the second largest in Kigali city with a population of over 300,000 as at 2012. (National Institute of Statistics, 2012.) The choice of Kicukiro sector is based on its nearness the nation’s capital, Kigali, and it has often been a host to different local and international organizations that focus on women based issues. Kicukiro sector is often seen as important to the development of women issues and the engagement and orientation of women, through various organizations and networks, on political issues. Kicukiro sector has a lot of rural areas and its nearness to Kigali, an urban area is crucial
for examining the role of the urban on the rural. Also, the study examines the symbolic representation factors to achieve the objectives stated above. Also, the questionnaires used for this study was filled by randomly selected persons in the area in order to gather substantive perceptions on women in politics. However, attention was given to more women in order to engage them on their levels of knowledge and impact of group, networks and organization around women in politics.

1.6 Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five Chapters. Chapter one constitutes the introduction which focuses mainly on the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, the research questions, and significance of the study, scope of the study and organization of the study. Chapter two consists of the theoretical, conceptual and review of relevant literatures in connection with the objectives of the study. Chapter three describes the research methodology that includes a brief description of the research design adopted for the study, target population, collection procedures, data analysis techniques and ethical issues. The fourth chapter covers detailed analysis and interpretation of research findings while the fifth chapter covers document summary, conclusion and recommendations based on the research findings.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of related literature on issues of gender and politics in Africa. The section is divided to explain the impact of Rwandan women in politics, the gender quota system, its key points and critiques. The section also covers literatures on women participation in politics in Rwanda. The sub-sections focuses on the concepts of gender and gender inequalities and the need for more studies in gender inequalities in various political systems with specific focus on Rwanda. The literature review seeks to explain and justify how the research will lead to uncovering solutions to some of the questions in the research area. It also outlines that theoretical and conceptual framework that guides this study.

2.2 Women Participation in Political Systems: An Overview.

The gender equality in political systems have been at the forefront of discourses at various national and international levels. Despite the fact that most countries have embraced democracy, there are still considerable inequalities in the number of female participation in politics. The number of those who participate are higher than those that are actually elected into political office positions. It is imperative to mention that women may be members of political parties, which can be counted as participation, but most are sidelined from the real decision making processes of the party and are only made to function with the women wing. So, there is a difference between participating in politics and being actually been elected into political office position at any level of government. On a comparative scale, either on the level of actual participation or being election, men still overwhelmingly outnumber women.
The low political participation of women in political system is a global phenomenon with various regions of the world exercising different methods to achieve equal representation between men and women especially in parliament. While different continents have been celebrated for much increases, the Nordic countries, such as Finland, Denmark and Sweden, are closing the gender gap as the percentage of women parliamentarian increases. However, Rwanda and Andorra are the only countries that have achieved a gender balance in parliament. The percentage of women in Rwandan parliament is 56.3% while Andorra is 50% thus the two countries rank top in world female representation in parliament (IPU, 2012). On the other hand there are seven countries in the world: Belize, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the Solomon Island that do not have women parliamentarians (Almasry, 2012).

Raymond (2014) observes that at global platforms and political institutions, the relatively number of women participant reveals that gender inequalities still exists. Women constitute 50% of the populace of almost every country in various continents. An unassuming impartial debate would then veto that women and men should be evenly matched in legislations. Opinions about women’s equal representation in politics are defined in three categories, each form with a diverse idea of representation; formal, descriptive and substantive representation (Paxton & Hughes, 2007). The initial and most straightforward formulation of equal representation is formal representation. This means that women have the legitimate right to contribute to politics on the same level as men. Formal representation stipulates that any hindrance to women’s contribution to political leadership be exterminated. Women must have the power to cast ballots and the prerogative right to contest in elections as well as biasedness that do not serve the interest of women in the political sphere be removed, hence legislation must eliminate all gender restrictive
laws that limit women access to political offices. In simple terms, women must have similar chances as men to partake in politics. (Raymond 2014)

Paxton & Hughes (2007), argue that there is no country in the world that women constitute fifty (50) percent of the national legislature, but few nations come near and even beyond. Sweden for several years occupied the league table of the percentage of women in parliament; however, Sweden was overtaken by Rwanda in 2003, which reached 48.8%, but now boasts of the world’s highest average of women in parliament with 63.8 percent (IPU, 2013). The difference between the two countries is that Sweden is an industrialized nation and has seen harmony for centuries. In a 2017 report by IPU, Rwanda still occupies the top spot globally with women having 61% of the total seats in the lower house i.e. occupying 43 out of 80 seats, while have a 38.5% in the senate, representing 10 out of 26 seats.

The rise of Rwandan women in legislation came as a result of the devastating civil war and genocide. The role of women during this period serves as a springboard for their inclusion in the political systems. In 2003, Rwanda had just started to recuperate from a ruthless eradication in which over a million people died. The 2003 poll was the maiden balloting of a new constitution, which assured women at least 30 percent of the National Assembly seats, which was in line with the general consensus of the gender quota at the 1993 Beijing conference. Prior to this, women have been invisible, never reaching 20% of the legislature before the change to a provisional government in 1994 (Paxton & Hughes, 2007). Longman (2006) attributes this achievement of Rwanda’s women in parliament to international organizations, local women’s institutions, and the total number of men who were either exterminated or imprisoned after the massacre, defines the sudden rise of women to significant political supremacy in Rwanda.
The equal representation of women is not limited to the political system. Lynn (1978) explains that politics is very vital for women. The study asserts that the success of women movements in terms of advocacy increases women’s access and participation in politics. Martin (2004), asserts that legislators are important to other social organizations such as family or education, and are capable of organizing specific practices into the decree. Political figures have the supreme edge to impose their decisions, sometimes with force. When there is political power, there is a position of control. Decisions and legislation is made at this level of governance and if women boast of higher population, then there is a need for more representation. In principle, most regulations are gender unbiased, and selected officials focus on voters in the same way. In practice, though, feminist political philosophers have contended that the presence of objectivity toward gender or parity that exists among men and women in political office really hides large gender disparity (Paxton & Hughes, 2007). In general terms men legislators are less likely to move and pass rulings that function in the interest of women and children (Childs & Withey, 2004; Schwindt-Bayer, 2006). But in social equality, opinions of all individuals or groups need to be heard, therefore, the expressions and point of views of women as well as men must be assimilated into political decision making. It can be argued that gender perspectives are essentials in formulating laws and policies that affect the general populace. However, having women to advocate for women issues are crucial to gender sensitive policies.

Momodu (2003) argues that for women to be part of policy formulation, there has to be access, participation, representation geared towards transforming and advocating gender sensitive policies. By access, all limiting factors that impede involvement must be eliminated. Women must also be allowed to vote and be voted for in various electoral processes. The participation of women is an indication for more gender sensitive legislation and policies. Political participation and
empowerment can therefore only be enhanced when these conditions are fulfilled. Dovi (2006) also argued on the necessity of female representation in politics. She stress the fact that with more women in positions of authority, other women see them as role models to be followed and these women also become mentors to other women. This is line with what Franceshet et al (2012) describes as symbolic representation. Ballington (2008) stresses that the inclusion of the perception and participation of women in politics are requirements for democratic development and attainment of good governance. Political participation is good for democracy, but democracies are plagued by systematic inequalities in participation. One of the most persistent has been according to gender, such that women are found to participate less than men, suggesting that half the population’s interest are less well represented (Scholzman 1994). If democracy is going to put down strong and healthy roots, it must profit from all the full and equitable participation of women in national and local leadership positions and in a full range of advocacy roles (Lijphart (1999, National Democratic Institute, 2010). Paxton and Hughes (2007) measures the impact of women in politics and opines that the importance of politics to decision making cannot be neglected, therefore the officials that hold positions in government get to influence policies made in the country cutting across allocation on scarce resources and others. Politicians therefore often make decision that are favorable and also in favor of themselves and people around them at the expense of others. Women’s participation in politics brings about political authority which is a valuable tool to influence control over political and social institutions. As more women inclusion is advocated, this study submits that access to political power has a large correlation with policies that affect women on the one hand and as serve as a means for closing the gender gap. (Paxton & Hughes: 2007). Increased access for women in politics also comes with a need for advocacy on gender equality and political engagements.
While there are conflicting reports from Africa about women serving in ministerial positions not nearing or exceeding the gender parity quota of 30 per cent of representatives, the number of women in executive government and in parliament worldwide has continued to be stagnated, with only marginal improvements since 2015. According to reports by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and UN Women, which depicts global rankings for women in the executive and parliamentary branches of government as of 1 January 2017, shows slow progress towards gender equality in these areas at regional and national levels. Women’s political empowerment and equal access to leadership positions at all levels are fundamental to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of gender equality and a more equal world. With limited growth in women’s representation, advancement of gender equality and the success of the SDGs will continue to be jeopardized. The decrease in the number of women head of state or head of government is a source of worry and concern for attain and advocating gender equality.

From a global perspective, progress in the number of women members of parliament worldwide continues to be slow. The IPU data shows that the global average of women in national parliaments increased just slightly from 22.6 per cent in 2015 to 23.3 per cent in 2016. Women speakers of parliament have however significantly increased in number, now at an all-time high of 19.1 per cent, but obviously still far from gender balance. These developments show that progress in gender equality remains slow in all structures of power and types of decision-making. Top government executive and legislative positions are still largely occupied by men, and although there has been some positive trends in the inclusion of women, there are still more grounds to be covered in attaining equal representations.

Equal representation in positions of power is a fundamental precondition for truly effective and accountable democracy. The report by the IPU highlights regional and national governments’
progress in including women in government. However it also indicates that the voices of women are still missing in the vital aspects of political representation. It notes that the overall proportions of women in politics are changing for the better but such changes are slow-paced as women are part of government but their roles in influencing decision making is very marginal and confined. There are calls for the intensification of advocacy at the global levels but most importantly, at the national and local levels where women participation is crucial to the protection of women rights and privileges. The drive to protect women’s rights and achieve substantive equality for women in leadership will take joint action across parliaments, governments, civil society and international organizations. This must include the repeal or amendment of existing discriminatory laws, and the support of women in all forms of representation, including at the highest levels of government. In order for these to be achieved, it is imperative to explore how legislation as well as cultural and traditional laws affect the representation of women at the grassroots.

The limiting factors in most developing countries has been traditional, cultural and religious outlook to women participation in politics. Politics is often seen as the domain of men, hence women shouldn’t be part of political systems. This is couched under the generalized assumption that general issues are also women issues, hence women do not have a special role to play in legislation for the influencing women centered politics. On the contrary, women issues are different from the general issues and ought to be given much attention and priority to challenge traditional perceptions of women which inherently limits the opportunities of women. The correlation between gender and politics is therefore an important area of study that must be understood for ensuring gender equality and balanced representation.
2.3 Gender Equality and the Quota System

Gender equality is a major issue in the international system. In most recent times it has been on the agenda of leading institutions and government organizations. Gender parity is important to the growth and development of the women and the active participation of women in all sectors of public and private institutions. Gender equality is often argued to be explored as from the perspective of human rights. All persons regardless of gender are endeared with basic human rights. Therefore, inclusion of women is very crucial to recognizing the rights or women to be fully represented in public and private enterprises. However, what has been most prevalent, especially in politics as well as positions of higher authority is that women are often excluded. In response to the under-representation of women at all level of governance, the quota system was introduced. The issue of Quota emerged as a result of the persistent gender inequalities in politics. Gender quotas have therefore been recognized internationally as a platform for achieving gender equality in politics especially in favor of women (increase women participation in national and local government). Quotas has therefore been entrenched in various international treaties and conventions such as, Convention of the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women(CEDAW)1979, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 1995 which gave a distinct and specific outlined objectives concerning “Women and Decision Making”. The 1995 UN Beijing Conference on Women went beyond other platforms for female representation, by giving a force to quota policies by calling for governments to “ensure equal representation of women at all decision-making levels in national and international institutions.”(Beijing conference: 1995). Given this worldwide condition, political quotas started to develop as a suitable and well known policy choice in nations over the world.
The need for the implementation of a gender quota for women participation is crucial to closing the gender gap globally. The Nordic countries were the first to introduce quotas as Norway's Socialist Left Party presented a 40% least target for representation of both genders on election records. This standard was followed by different political parties in Norway, Denmark, and Sweden. Female representation has historically been high in these countries, but, contrary to popular wisdom, its initial increase has not been sparked by quotas. In fact, Quota was presented in these nations just once female representation in parliament had just come to around 25%. The quota system was an apparatus for increasing women’s chance or getting elected and for higher female representation (Ballington & Binda: 2005).

Women participation continually declined in Africa until the emergence of quota system (Kathleen: 2016). Africa has witnessed the adoption of a wide variety of quota schemes over the past decades. For instance, African National Congress in South Africa introduced quota in the post-apartheid democratic election in 1994 and the country is considered as the pioneer for voluntary party quotas on the continent (Myakayaka, 2004). Uganda also took lead in introducing reserved seats in 1986. This has been replicated in other East African countries such as Djibouti, Eritrea, Somalia, and Sudan (Ballington, 2007).

Quota system as a global standard has been embraced by different nations across the world differently. According to (Rohumi & Deanna: 2011), there are three fundamental types of political quotas. First, voluntary party quota has been received by political parties in various nations and includes a party conferring itself to assigning a specific level of female candidates for election lists. Second, Candidate quotas are required by the law of a nation and stipulate that a specific number of contestant positions must be held for women. They at times incorporate conditions on the situation of women on the rundown, for example by requiring that every second entry on
election list must be a woman. Lastly, reserved seats are positions for which just female competitors can contend and are utilized as a more straightforward method for managing the capacity of women in electoral positions. Of the nations that at present have gender quota, 61% have Voluntary party quota, 38% have legislated candidate quotas, and 20% have reserved seats. According to (Rohumi & Deanna: 2011), Types of quota system is also determined by geographical region. This is because of the variety in political systems and political histories globally, and the impersonation of quota system within various regions.

The introduction of quota system to enhance produced high impact for women representation in the local political parties as well as at national legislatures. Before considering this, the pros and cons of quotas has been discussed by various scholars. Pitkin (1967) stress that Quota Improves substantive representation for women and the chance that gender sensitive legislation will be promoted to the improvements of the lives and wellbeing of other women and their children. Rohini & Deanna (2011), gender based policy brings about improved investment by women in the election of more women into political offices, therefore providing opportunities for advancement in political or cooperate affairs of women through quota system, women are therefore encouraged to invest more in education, career, and leadership potential. Grace (2013), observes that the systems has been advantageous and by this it is the best way of achieving a better gender balance in politics. She further argues that quota enables women election into political office and this tend to serve as a sample for other women i.e. other women take the ones in political offices as role models. It also eradicates choice limiting by giving the chance for equal representation and giving chance to elect both male and female; promotes impartiality as against discrimination. It further stress that the quota policy should serve as a measure that is temporarily applied until the critic and discrimination against women in politics are fully removed.
While the benefit of a gender sensitive voting policy such as the quota system has been applauded and as a means of closing the gender inequality gaps, it could lead to election of incompetence candidates, anti-men discrimination, women only sensitive policies, discrimination against other areas that concerns national growth and development.

2.4 History of Women’s Representation in Rwanda’s Parliament

Rwanda is a small country located in the central part of Africa that is best remembered for the landslide genocide that it went through in 1994. However, in more recent time, the country has been celebrated because of its growth and development of democratic institutions and its gender inclusive policies. In October 2003, women won 48.8% of seats in its lower house of parliament, placing Rwanda first among all nations in terms of women’s political representation.

Scholars have long argued for the ability of women to make considerable impact when put in male dominated sectors. Also it has been suggested that women’s ability to make an impact in male dominated institutions will be limited until they are represented in numbers large enough to have a collective voice, until they reach a “critical mass.” Based on political theory and investigation, most activists have settled on 30% as the minimum necessary for critical mass. The call for women’s participation at the level of 30% was made more than two decades ago in the United Nations Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and has been embraced rhetorically, if not in practice, by many international and national bodies since. Rwanda is celebrated because in its new Constitution adopted in 2003, it asserts that the representation of women is a fundamental principle and commits to “a state governed by the rule of law, a pluralistic democratic government, equality of all Rwandans and between women and men reflected by ensuring that women are granted at least thirty per cent of posts in decision making organs.” What is remarkable is not only that Rwanda’s constitutional mandate of 30% has been respected with regard to
parliament, but that in the 2003 elections women candidates met and exceeded that minimum target. It is therefore imperative that this study examine the changing perceptions of the public about gender roles in Rwanda and women’s parliamentary representation as well as factors that led to the overwhelming election of women in 2003. This will also be valuable to examining the effect of women parliamentarians on policies that concerns women, children and families. Is will also be help achieve the objective of assessing the impact of women parliamentarians on other women especially at the grass-roots in terms development of legislation.

Women were largely impacted during the genocide as many of them lost husbands, children, relatives and communities. They also became sexual victims as many were raped and sexually abused in different manners. As a result of the impact of the event, there was a gender gap in the demography of communities as women assumed roles as heads of households and property. Therefore, Rwandans believe that as a result of the victimization of women and their role in taking important decisions and endurance, they deserve significant recognition and official role in the recovery of the nation. (Powley, 2006). In the recent population in Rwanda, women still have the simple majority, which makes up more than 50% of the population and are very active in the recovery of the nation in every sector. Rwandan women are central to the physical reconstruction of the various communities as the nation has large parts of its population in the rural areas. As the nation heals women are equally crucial to the social healing, reconciliation and governance of the nation. The role of women in Rwanda has not only assumed a public discourse in the nation but it has received various global acclaim. Global leaders such as the Ex Secretary General of the United Nation, Ban Ki Moon, lauds the efforts of the government to encourage more women to contest for public offices. Rwandans appreciate the efforts, contributions and participation of women to gender sensitive legislations. In April of 2003, speaking about the
upcoming parliamentary elections, President Paul Kagame said, “We shall continue to appeal to women to offer themselves as candidates and also to vote for gender sensitive men who will defend and protect their interests.” He re-iterates that “Women's underrepresentation distances elected representatives from a part of their constituency and, as such, affects the legitimacy of political decisions. Increased participation of women in politics is, therefore, necessary for improved social, economic and political conditions of their families and the entire country.” (Xinhua News Agency, 2003). However, critics have questioned the effectiveness of the large amount of women in government. They believe that they were too weak to influence the decision of the President and that they were merely tools for easy manipulation rather than being a genuine commitment to gender equality. Critics have also mentioned that it is only at the urban areas who gain access to political offices as women in the rural or grass-root regions were barely given any opportunity for top political offices. What is however crucial is that women parliamentarians have debunked these criticism by presenting evidences of their effectiveness and independence to act for the growth of women and the nation in general.

Rwandan women were allowed to compete for elective positions in 1961 after the nation gained its independence from Belgium. However, before the civil war in the early 1990s which culminated in the genocide, women in parliament were not more that 18% of the total seats available for elective positions in parliament. However the post-genocide period present an overwhelming increase in women representation in parliament. This was due to the adoption of a new-gender sensitive constitution. The upper house of Rwanda's new bicameral legislature, the Senate, has 26 members elected or appointed to eight-year terms. Some members of the Senate are elected by provincial and sectoral councils, others or appointed by the President and other institutions (e.g. the national university). A constitutional guarantee was achieved in 2003 by the
appointment of women to 30% of posts. The lower house is the Chamber of Deputies. There are 80 members serving five-year terms, 53 of whom are directly elected to represent political parties in a proportional representation system. The additional seats are contested in the following manner: 24 members are elected by women from each province and the capital city of Kigali, two are elected by the National Youth Council, and one is elected by the Federation of the Associations of the Disabled. The 24 seats that are reserved for women are contested in women-only elections; that is, only women can stand for election and only women can vote. In addition to the 24 set-asides in the Chamber of Deputies, the 2003 elections saw an additional 15 women elected in openly competed seats for a total of 39 out of 80, or 48.8% of seats. The historic gains for women are a result of specific mechanisms used to increase women’s political participation, among them a constitutional guarantee, quota system, and innovative electoral structures. Hogg (2009) opined that women’s unprecedented presence in Rwanda’s parliament may, in part, be a way of ‘building national unity by quieting dissent’. By contrast, Burnet (2008) argues that even gender initiatives implemented by authoritarian regimes can lead to transformation. Women’s increased representation in an authoritarian government could lead to meaningful participation in a genuine democracy as a result of continued advocacy for national and international organizations.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework involves depicting ideas about relationships between variables in the study and showing these relationships as it relates to the research questions and the objectives. (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003) This study uses Franceschet et al. (2012) framework on the participation of women in political systems. Their frameworks explore women’s presence in African parliaments in terms of their descriptive, substantive and symbolic representation, in brief,
standing for women, acting for women and role modeling women. This study focuses on the symbolic representation.

2.4.1 Symbolic Representation.

More recent scholarship on women in African parliaments seems to suggest that a most important impact of more women MPs may be in the realm of their symbolic representation of women’s interests. This may be of particular significance for African cases where symbolic representation effect takes place far outside national legislatures. Researchers have argued that such system is weak in Africa, thereby raising doubts about the importance of women’s greater representation in them. Ahikire (2004), has observed that the presence of women in the post-genocide period in Rwanda brought ‘such an unprecedented number of females in an institution that was traditionally dominated by men had introduced a gendered perspective to the legislative process. In addition, the increased visibility of women in leadership positions in politics was slowly changing the attitudes of Rwandan women and men towards women in politics. She predicted that this could lead eventually to a more radical transformation of gender relations in Rwanda and the entire Africa region. Tripp (2001, pp. 122–3) made a similar observation for Uganda, reporting from 1993 survey results that ‘the biggest transformation that has come about in part as a result of the affirmative action politics is a new political culture regarding the acceptability of women as political leaders’. Tripp et al. (2006, p. 129) made this into a still broader generalization, noting that one of the main benefits of introducing electoral quotas has been the way an influx of women has helped influence popular perceptions of the acceptability of women being active in politics’.

In a much more thorough investigation of this question, Burnet (2011) suggests that, through women’s increased presence in parliament in Rwanda, women ‘may have found respect’.
Burnet argues that women have reaped other benefits than legislative gains from women’s increased presence in parliaments, ‘including respect from family and community members, enhanced capacity to speak and be heard in public forums, greater autonomy in decision-making in the family, and increased access to education’. Coffé (2011, p. 21) suggests that at least some women MPs in Rwanda interviewed for her study value their function as role models more than their role in policy making, perhaps because the latter role is so constrained.

Yoon (2011b, p. 91) notes that the increase in women’s representation in parliament and the ‘good performance of some female politicians’ has ‘gradually changed the unfavorable cultural and social attitudes toward women in politics. Finally, Barnes and Burchard (2010), relying on Afro barometer data from twenty countries across four waves of surveys (1999 to 2008), argue that, as women’s descriptive representation increases in sub-Saharan Africa, the political engagement gender gap decreases, and not because men’s engagement falls, but because women’s rises. Our study reveal that there have been a large of women in political systems especially in parliament, however this is often limited to the national centers where women at the grass-roots need to be included in the various networks and organization at the local levels. The perception of people also reveals a growing confidence in the abilities of women due to the impact in parliament.
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section presents how the study will be conducted in order to achieve the stated objectives. It includes research design, target population, procedures for data collection and analysis and the ethical issues that will be considered while conducting the study.

3.2 Research Design

The research design chosen for this work is a descriptive survey which involves a qualitative approach. A survey method is relevant as the questions require an extensive and in-depth description of some social phenomenon. According to Yin, (2009) the investigator in such kind of research method has little control over events and the focus is a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context, in the case grass-roots perception and participation. This method requires intensive data source with multiple evidence where the researcher employed different sources of data ranging from primary to secondary across a certain time period. The purpose of the research questions is to evaluate the obstacles to women participation in politics as well as looking into actors’ role in order to increase women’s political participation. It is therefore appropriate to carry out a qualitative methodological approach for this study.

The descriptive survey method is suitable for this study because it allows for the voices of respondents and a good way of assessing views and perceptions of the respondents. The method used is also relevant to this study because, it is an efficient and effective way of collecting information from a large number of respondents, a method this study uses. Surveys are also flexible in this sense because they allow for a wide range of information gathering. In this case of this study, respondents were not boxed into responding in a certain manner but the method allow for attitudes, perceptions, values, beliefs and other behavioral views to be freely expressed.
Consequently, information will be collected ranging from background information of the targeted population and factors that influence women’s participation in political systems.

3.3 Target Population

This study was conducted in Kicukiro sector. Kicukiro is a district in the Kigali province of Rwanda. The district is divided into 10 sectors with Kicukiro as one of the sectors. The sector is the second largest in Kigali city with a population of over 300,000 as at 2012. (National Institute of Statistics, 2012.) However, the specific section this study sampled had about 1000 residents. Many of those who reside in the area often travel for job in the nearby cities. With the population having more of the men getting jobs in nearby cities, women are often left to manage the affairs of the family. Also, this specific community, has not produced any female politician either at national or grass-roots level, however, they are participants in various networks and organizations that promote the development of women. The choice of Kicukiro sector is based on its nearness the nation’s capital, Kigali, and it has often been a host to different local and international organizations that focus on women based issues. Kicukiro sector is often seen as important to the development of women issues and the engagement and orientation of women, through various organizations and networks, on political issues.

3.4 Research Instrument

The study used questionnaires as instrument of data collection. Research on views, perceptions feelings and attitudes is best done using questionnaires as well as interviews. (Bell, 1995). As a result of travel grants constraints and communication technology usage in the regions interviews were not conducted. In order to cover for this lapse, the open-ended approach was used in the questionnaires. This allowed for informative opinions which can be used to describe the perceptions of respondents. Questionnaires are veritable sources of data collection method from a
substantial number of people. They can be used to gather data over a wide area as people are not static to a given location. This method is also suitable because the research is concerned with views, opinions which can best be known through this medium. The questionnaires were admitted to 30 people, 25 women and 5 men who are either live in the Kicukiro sector or are from the community. The questions were open-ended in nature and was designed to fulfil the objectives mentioned above. For the respondents who can neither read nor write in English, a translator was available to translate the questions for them and write down their answers. The process of respondents was through a purposive random selection.

3.5 Data Analysis Technique

The data used in this study was in qualitative forms. Organization, presentation and analysis was conducted using a descriptive method of analysis. This method was able to provide ways of discerning, examining, comparing and contrasting as well as interpreting meaning themes and recurring patterns. Thematic analysis was important to evaluate the views of respondents. Recurring themes and patterns of respondents were instrumental to either validating the background information provided in the literature or providing more information with context specific examples about the subject matter.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

In this study, participants were voluntarily allowed to participate and were fully informed on procedures, benefits and risks involved in the research. Prospective respondents were given the chance to opt out of the process if any of the questions were in conflicts with any personal beliefs. Respondents were informed of the confidentiality of their information and that the process was only for research purposes only. In order to also maintain, respondent confidentiality, personal information such as names or any information that could be used to identify them was not asked.
Apart from the above ethical standards and principles, permission from relevant authorities were sought at all levels to ensure the research was conducted ethically.
CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of collected data discussed under theme areas identified from the responses of the respondents. This are also merged to align with the objectives of this study as well as the research questions. The areas of discussion will include the symbolic influences of women in political leadership on the growth of grass-roots participation of other women at the local levels. Also the discussions will interpret how various networks and organizations have influenced the women at the national legislature to advocate for more gender sensitive policies. The influence of cultural and economic factors on women’s participation in political leadership as well as perception of respondents about women participation in the political system either at the grass-roots or national level.

4.2 Questionnaire Response Return Rate

The questionnaires were admitted to 30 people, 25 women and 5 men who either live in the Kicukiro sector or are from the community. The questions were open-ended in nature are was designed to fulfil the objectives mentioned above. There was a 100% return rate of the questionnaires that was used for this study. However the success of the return rate does not automatically translate to quality of response from all respondents. Some of the questions were left unanswered, while some responses were vague to the specific question. It must also be stated that the questionnaire was administered to adults above the age to 25 years. This is done to reflect knowledge about the political, social and cultural issues on women participation in political office as well as various effects on the women at the grass roots. It was also assumed that persons from this age range will be conversant with issues of the genocide and the role of women in the
upliftment of the nation in time of crisis. From the return rate, most of our respondents were between the ages of 25-65 years. The five men were between the ages of 30-55 years old, while the women covered the spectrum of 25-65 years. This demography is important for our study because, we are able to measure perceptions of women in politics of the older generation of men and women on the one hand, as well as those of younger women who are less than 40 years of age on. On the other hand, the generational gap helps to access changing or static perceptions of women in politics at the national level and how this motivate interest groups to include women in various grassroots political development initiatives.

4.3 Women in Politics: Interests, Perception and Attitudes

The number of people that indicated interest in the national politics of their nation is very significant in understanding the mindset of politicians as well as the impact of politics on the lives of the people especially as the grassroots. This issues becomes even more significant when a gendered dimension is introduced. There are a large number of people interested in the political system of the nation. This is reflected through campaigns and participation in the election processes. Free and fair elections are one of the most veritable means by with citizens elect their leaders and equally show high level of interest in who governs the nation. In many sub-Saharan countries, elections are considered to be rigged in favor of the ruling political party of the most favorable candidate which may not necessarily be the choice of the people. In this sense, women are not often the choice of the people, because politics is seen as the terrain of men. Hence, women venturing into to the political terrain are often faced with various obstacles especially in traditional and cultural settings. The next section focuses on how women participate in the political systems at the grassroots. This implication for this to access ascertain if women at the grassroots are interested in politics.
4.3.1 Women’s grassroots political participation

The position assigned in parliament is not restricted to specialized professions. Women in parliament have various professional qualification and educational backgrounds prior to becoming members of parliament. A review of some of the professional background of the women reveal that they are teachers, doctors, entrepreneurs, activist, lawyers etc. This indicates that education is a very important tool for becoming a members of parliament. This is one of the flaws that prevents women at the grassroots levels from becoming active members of parliament. However, as the respondents indicate, women at the grassroots have various groups or organizations where they discuss issues that concern women development. Some of the respondents indicate that language, which is often seen as a barrier, does not deter the women form organizing themselves, as conversation in meetings are conducted in the local dialect. Hence, the local language become a veritable too for expressing views, opinions and issues.

One of the most important issues that was discussed is to find out the motivation for women in joining various women groups at the grassroots. While most women claim not to be part of any political organization, it was revealed that various women groups that didn’t consider themselves political were engaged in various political conversations that could influence the growth of the organization and women. In one the responses, a woman aged 35 reveals that, “we don’t not think we call ourselves a political group but what we do is that to be aware of what the government is doing and how we can benefit from it. We also, sometimes talk to other high women in politics about the things we want them to do for us”. This indicates that they keep themselves informed about public policies that can affect their lives. Engaging other “high women”, those who are influential in government, these women make their issues known and in certain ways influence what the government includes in its policy for the growth of women. While, these women
organizations and groups at the grassroots may not consider themselves as political or influential to legislation, being informed, discussing and engaging with “high women” is crucial to women development at the grassroots.

The greatest motivation for women organizations at the grassroots, regardless of their levels of education, is to share their experiences as mothers and women. This is also one of the motivation for women parliamentarians from various backgrounds who claim that their experiences as mothers are crucial to joining politics. Most of the women indicate that women issues are mostly about their children and families. One woman notes that “I joined this organization because I can learn from other elderly women how to take care of my children and my family”, another indicates that “my husband doesn’t earn a lot, so I need to find a way to support him so we can take care of our children and family; by joining the groups, I can get loans for my business”. The ministry of local government created what is known as the ‘Umenege’ program, a form of co-operative group that encourage women to save money and also offer small credit opportunities to women who are in need of such for their small business. This is very important because most women, as a result of various cultures laws, do not often have access to credit opportunities without their husbands.

The responses from the respondents reveal that women at the grassroots do not consider themselves as part of any political organization, however their associations with other women groups are organization are considered most important. While these women don’t consider their conversation important enough to influences public policy and legislation, they often keep themselves informed about various public initiatives and programs that are important for their organization. Also, as women organize and engage with “high women”, a term used to refer to women in position of power and authority, stating their opinions and views about issues, they are
contributors to the creation of a grassroots or user centered approach to addressing problems that affect women.

4.3.2 Impact of Women Parliamentarians on Grassroots Participation

The respondents for this study indicate that the impact of women participation in politics at the national level are important to other women and younger girls. It is imperative to indicate that many of the women in sector considered for this study are less educated, but they are aware of the impact of the achievements of other women especially those in politics and how they help to carry the voices of women as a national concern that must be addressed by all government agencies. In one of the responses by a male respondent, he affirms that when women are involved at all levels of decision making, they are able to bring to perspective issues that women only can understand. He emphasizes that as a result of women taking part in legislation, they fight for equality, family and the entire community. “Women understand the family more than the men, the men just go out and make money, but women know how to keep the family together”, he says.

The performance of women as parliamentarians is also considered natural. Many emphasized that women are tender, caring and loving towards their children and families, hence they bring that form of love and sometimes toughness to the work environment in proposing laws and policies. The underlying response from our respondents indicate that women in parliaments are better in understanding, analyzing and acting on a wider perspective. What was revealed is that there is often a correlation between the roles of women as mothers and their ability to transfer those skills to the work space. This is a form of emphasizing the traditional role of women as the best care-givers. The role of women as parliamentarians and as mother is not conflicting in Rwanda because it is an offshoot of the women’s experiences during the genocide and post-genocide. This
argument has been used as a veritable tool for advancing the result-oriented performance of women as a strategy to gain entrance to decision-making position and influencing policy.

The increased participation of women at the grassroots is also been celebrated by the men. This contrasts notions that men are not supportive women’s political careers. The most important as indicated by our respondents is the growth and development of the nation. “what I am most interested in is the development of the nation, I don’t care who does it, as long as it is done but I think the women are doing very well”. The women in parliaments are organized, regardless of party lines, around issues of common grounds to women. They unite as women to think about the challenges that surround women. This has also influenced the group organization as the grassroots level. A respondent indicates that, because the ‘high women’ send their representatives to the women meetings, informing them of what the women were working on, encourages many people to join. She indicates that “because we know what they are doing and they come to ask us about what we want, we always come together all the time to talk”. The women forum of female parliamentarians often focus legislation and advocacy for Rwandan women on capacity building, how to create more enabling environment that eliminates discrimination and biases. They also review existing laws as well as introduce amendments to eliminate discriminatory statutes, ensure gender sensitive policies as well as initiating training with women groups to sensitize them about various issues. The more women appear in various political positions, especially in parliament, more women and girls, especially at the grassroots, are empowered to join various groups and organization for support.

One of the important things emphasized by the respondents is that women in politics serves as encouragement for other women especially young girls at the grassroots who are often uneducated and have the tendency of getting married off at a younger age. “with many women at
the top, I can tell my daughter and grand-daughters about the importance of going to school”. Women serves as the role models to children, they encourage them to aspire to greater heights. One of the respondents indicate that “the successes of their mothers will be what they will study, they will have good living standards, for themselves and their communities, and this is how we will rebuild our communities”. Our respondents reveal that’s there has been an increased enrollment of girls into schools as a result of women-sponsored legislation that ensures all girls of school age have access to education and barriers to girls education is eliminated. In line with the success rate of the women, other have an underlying perspective that there will be changes in the perspectives of people taking leadership positions. In a society where women are not considered to taking the lead as indicated by the respondents, women in parliament opened up the access for more women voices to be heard and play active roles in leadership.

In line with Burnet’s 2011 study on the symbolic, descriptive and substantive impact of women in parliament, our study reveals that as a result of the historical role in the civil rights’ organizations, the increasing representation of women at all levels of governance has increased. As a result of the increasing national index of women in the federal government, women now serves as cell, sector or district elected officials and are accepted by the various communities which they govern. These positions were largely the domain of men but in recent times women have been elected into these positions which has equally had a large impact of communities to include more women in various political and elective positions.

The respondents also indicate that the success women enjoy in politics in Rwanda is as a result of the hard work of various women’s civil society organizations and well as the Women’s Ministry. They believe that they have been at the fore front of advocating for women’s rights at different times in the political history of the nation. The women indicated that it was only a woman
who would fight that a woman should be able to inherit a piece of land from her father after his
death, which was not the case before. While there is a growing awareness among the people that
advances in legislation have not immediately being translated to gains, continued monitoring,
avvocacy and public sensitization will be of great importance. Consequently, the role of women
in the political system as motivators and leaders is always influential to the growth of women
organizations and groups at the grassroots.

4.3.3 Public Perception on Women in Politics

The study sought to investigate the impact of public perception on women’s participation
in political systems. Respondents were asked if they would vote or support a woman who was
vying for political position. Majority of the respondents indicated in the affirmative that they we
support any woman vying for political office. However, some the respondents were not clear in
the their responses as they said they would be appreciative of a woman contesting a political office
but was only go to cast their vote for the candidate they consider most suitable for the position in
terms of experience and professionalism. Hence, the gender of a candidate would not influence
their choice even though they would support women. They stress that political positions should be
left open to anyone and making gender a category only emphasizes the inequalities in the society.
For those that indicated support for women believed that women would be dedicated and tough in
ensuring compliance of various laws and policies more than men. When asked about the gender
quotas assigned to women and the reason for its adoption, respondents agreed to the fact that
women need to given more opportunities to exhibit their leadership abilities.

When respondents were asked to give feedbacks on whether women should venture into
politics or remain in other spheres of profession. 20 women respondents believed that women
should engage in politics because they have often been left out decision making at the highest level
of political systems. Blomgren (2010) stress that people’s negative opinion about women participation often deter women from actually participating. At the grassroots, women are often considered not knowledgeable about political issues, hence they are not given the opportunity. Respondents stress that at the grassroots, women voices are often marginalized by male figures. However, the women in our respondents stress that with more women in politics, the conditions are changing as more women from the Kikuyu sector are being given opportunities to lead other women groups and organizations. It was also established from the responses that because of the successes recorded by women in various political sectors, more women at the grassroots should be given the chance to participate in the local politics so they could learn how they can influence change in their communities. The male respondents also agree that women can be trusted with political power, because they have lesser tendencies to be corrupt or sabotage the political systems. Therefore, the perception of people at the grassroots about women participation is positive but women at the grassroots should be given more opportunities to participate in politics at the local level.

4.3.4 Impeding Factors to Women Participation in Politics at the Grassroots

There are various ideological and psychological obstacles that restrict the active participation of women in politics at the grassroots. Many of these are as of the traditional, cultural and sometimes religious roles ascribed to women in the society. Traditionally, women are restricted to the role of caretakers which restricts them to the private sphere. In the district under study, women are mostly housewives who are saddled with the responsibility of taking care of the household activities. These roles present the overlying perception that politics is male dominated while females are to take responsibilities for other duties, should be apolitical.
Consequently, women in the rural areas have internalized this views of being apolitical and influences their level of participation in politics. Therefore, they often do not consider their organizations and groups as political or having the power to influence policies and legislation. Also, women also believe active participation in politics would derail them from paying attention to their roles as wives and mothers as a result of the time demands. Other views are summarized under the lack of confidence to contest election as a result of their level of education, expertise and the final implication of running a campaign. The respondents from our survey emphasized the fact that politics as a “dirty and dangerous’ terrain for women to participate.

The various barriers identified by the respondents indicate that though women participation and representation has increased over the years, women in the rural areas still find it difficult to see their activities as political. It is important to indicate that tough there are various barriers that could limit women, the adoption of the gender quotas in the political party and as a national laws is instrumental for the surge of women into politics. Gender quotas has been effective in eliminating obstacles to women representation and participation in politics. In the response, many of the respondents agree that gender quota has been beneficial for women and girls. Many of the women observe that there is an increase acceptance of women to speak in public as a result of the implantation of the gender quota system. This has also increased the autonomy of women as economic actors and decision makers. The gender quota has also been seen as a tool in the hands of the ruling political party to make itself popular and relevant in governance. What needs to be done is for women and others to see political participation beyond occupying a political office but influencing laws and policies through various organizations and groups.
CHAPTER FIVE
FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the major findings based on the main objective of the study. Conclusions were also made from the summary of the results and findings, recommendation for policy makers and suggestions for further studies. The recommendation doesn’t focus solely on the results of this study but it takes into cognizance the impact of such study on politics in Africa which seeks to increase the overall participation of women in politics.

5.2 Summary of Findings and Results

The summary of the findings are presented according to the objectives for this study and the research question that guide the study.

The study observed that there are different ways in which women organize and participate in various political systems. These are through co-operative groups and association where credit facilities are given to women to encourage savings and start small businesses. This is seen as a method of economically empowering women to be self-sufficient. The ‘Umenege’ program initiated by the Ministry of local government is another way women organize themselves. This organization help women to discuss issues that are common to women such as education, health and their economic growth. Through this organization, women get information about opportunities that could help them develop themselves. The continued visit of women in political office helps these women express their views on various legislation or laws that still affect women in general in the sector. The study reveals that women at the grassroots don’t consider these group or organizational meetings as political. They believe it’s just a medium where women can encourage each other in matter of concern and common interests.
The study also shows that women participation at the grassroots doesn’t necessary affect the national outcomes. What is important is that the national outcome of women in political positions influences as serve as motivation for women at the grassroots to organize themselves and aspire to discuss various issues of concern. The women in politics serve as role models to women and girls to aspire to get educated. The study reveals that most women in the sector considered for this study are less educated, but they are aware of the impact of the achievements of other women especially those in politics and how they help to carry the voices of women as a national concern that must be addressed by all government agencies. Women who occupy political office at the national level serves as encouragement for other women especially young girls at the grassroots who are often uneducated and have the tendency of getting married off at a younger age. Women have also been able provide increased access to educational opportunities for girls and women at the grassroots. It also influences the visibility of women in the political realm even though it through small groups and organizations. Women’s ability to organize and form networks encourages other women to join in the debates that influence their lives. They emphasize that with more women, the voices, concerns and issues of women at the grassroots can be discussed at the national level.

The perception of the public at the grassroots on women engagement in politics is positive. While the study reveal that most persons do not consider themselves as part of any political organization or group, they still indicated that they would support anyone woman who was vying for any political office. There were concerns about the qualification of the women. It was revealed, mostly by men, that the competence of the candidate will be their top priority rather than gender of sex. They stress that political positions should be left open to anyone and making gender a category only emphasizes the inequalities in the society. For those that indicated support for
women believed that women would be dedicated and tough in ensuring compliance of various laws and policies more than men. When asked about the gender quotas assigned to women and the reason for its adoption, respondents agreed that women needed to be given more opportunities to exhibit their leadership abilities and that the gender quota has been impactful. The perception of people at the grassroots about women participation is positive but they indicate that women at the grassroots should be given more opportunities to participate in politics at the local level.

The study also sought to find factors that limit women at the grassroots from participating in politics. These results were divided into cultural, economic and ideological. The study reveals that respondents couldn’t differentiate the different ways in which people can participate in politics. Many believed that the only way of participating in politics is by occupying a political office. However, it should be observed that political participation could be in various forms such as voting, being part of various organizations that could influence government policies. The study also reveals that respondents would pay attention to other duties than they would to political issues. Women are often limited in raising the funds necessary for political campaigns and the time and energy needed to perform a well impactful campaign. Finally a higher percentage approved that women should be political leaders because of the abilities to discuss issues that concern women, children and the family from a broad perspective. It is important to note that the priorities of women are shifting from family care to other careers.

5.3 Recommendation

The increase in the number of women participating in politics and actually occupying political office in Rwanda is impressive and has been celebrated globally. However, this study recommends that most of the women in politics are mostly at the national level such as in the executive boards, legislatures or in the provinces. Women at the grassroots have still not had
enough access to political participation at the local level. It must be emphasized that various
organizations, non-profits and groups leverage on the nationally positive perception of women in
politics to push the barriers of the factor that restrict women participation. Women must be
encouraged to join various social and political groups. Education has also been a central limiting
factor. Access to education must be implemented to women across all age groups in all forms.
While there have been various international and national laws, policies and legislation that have
been passed, implementation has not been effective at the grassroots. In order to achieve gender
parity, strict attention must be given to policy monitoring at the grassroots where cultural
restrictions are most potent.

This study also recommends that forming strategic networks and organizations at the
grassroots is a way of promoting women’s active participation. Networking among women at the
national and grassroots, as well as NGOs and civil society organizations can be a significant
booster to increasing awareness on policy schemes and implementation. Local groups can put more
pressure on governments to address the limiting factors to women participation at the grassroots.

5.4 Conclusion

The explosion of women’s movements and international agreements on women’s rights
and gender equality has most likely had a significant spillover effect on women’s advancement in
politics in Sub-Saharan Africa. The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of
Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and other international treaties, UN conferences and
conventions have been essential in shaping the norms driving the women's movements in Africa.
(Tripp, A. 2006) African women have organized and held several post-Beijing regional
conferences throughout the continent to plan for increased women’s socio-economic and political
empowerment. African governments have been urged to provide needed resources and effective
mechanisms to secure women’s rights and to implement commitments made under the Beijing Platform for Action. Involving women in traditional methods of resolving conflicts and promoting the participation of women in conflict-resolution were important recommendations made by the participants of the conference. The increased numbers of women in parliaments in the region can be explained by various factors, amongst which Politics experts highlight the implementation of quotas, involvement of women in national liberation and women’s movements, and the spillover of democratic values and practices throughout the continent. Although each of the above-mentioned factors significantly contributed to women’s political empowerment, it was the will and confidence of great women leaders in Africa that made these changes real and effective.

Rwanda has made important improvements in closing the gender equality gaps as a result of the representation of women in parliament and other top political positions. They have been really important voices in pushing legislation on issues that affect women such as education, gender-based violence, rural poverty and health. While this success has been celebrated globally and in the urban areas by various elite women, implementation of reforms have been difficult for women in the grassroots or the rural areas. This results from perceptions from men and women, cultural attitudes towards women, lack of education and self-believe as well as lack of funds to contest elections in the rural areas. Our research has shown that there are still many grounds to cover in the rural areas to achieve gender parity.

How far can gender equality policies work if the general population of women in the rural areas don’t consider their voices important enough to influence public policy? How can less educated and economically dependent women actively participate in politics? The crucial solution to these problems are the need to increase access to formal and informal education which would allow for change, not rapidly but on a longer period. Educated girls in the rural areas can learn
various values from the education systems and well as other female representatives who serve as role models. The changes and improvement in legislation and continued implementation is a right step in the right direction for women in the rural areas. Consequently, studies will continue to explore the growth of women participation at the grassroots in Rwanda as means of strengthening advocacy and implementation of gender equality measures.
REFERENCES


Raymond K.O (2014). Women’s Political Participation: A Comparative Study on Ghana and Tanzania. Faculty of Social Sciences University Of Eastern Finland


APPENDIX

BASE LINE SURVEY (QUESTIONNAIRE)

This survey is divided into TWO section. The first section to ascertain you level of knowledge, through a YES or NO response to the questions. If you have further explanations, they can be written below each question. The second section requires responders to give short/brief responses to the question. This allows to measure and know the various perspectives to women involvements at the local level, challenges and some of the possible solutions.

PART A: PLEASE ANSWER YES OR NO TO THE QUESTIONS BELOW

1. ARE YOU INTERESTED IN THE POLITICS OF THE COUNTRY? YES or NO.

2. HAVE YOU BEEN PART OF ANY WOMEN ORGANIZATION AT THE GRASS ROOT LEVEL? YES or NO

3. HAVE YOU BEEN PART OF ANY PUBLIC OR POLITICAL OFFICE AT THE NATIONAL, PROVINCE OR LOCAL LEVEL?

4. HAVE YOU PARTICIPATED IN ANY POLITICAL CAMPAIGN OR POLICY ADVOCACY INITIATIVE?

5. DO YOU THINK INCREASED WOMEN PARTICIPATION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL INFLUENCES PROVINCIAL AND LOCAL PARTICIPATION?

6. ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH THE LEVEL OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN AT THE LOCAL LEVEL? YES or NO

7. DOES PARTICPATION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL INFLUENCE WOMEN TO BE INVLOVED AT THE NATIONAL LEVELS? YES or NO

PART B: PLEASE GIVE YOUR RESPONSES TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.
(Responses can be written on a separate sheet or at the flip side of this questionnaire)

8. HOW DO YOU ACCESS THE POLITICAL PARTICPATION OF WOMEN AT THE LOCAL LEVEL?

9. WHAT ARE THE MAJOR PROBLEMS TO GENDER EQUALITY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL?

10. WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE FOCUS OF WOMEN ORGANIZATION AT THE GRASS ROOT LEVEL?
11. WHAT EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMES ARE AVAILABLE FOR WOMEN AT THE LOCAL LEVEL?

12. IF YOU CAN, WOULD YOU CONVINCE MORE WOMEN TO PARTICIPATE IN POLITICS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL? WHY?

13. IN YOUR LOCAL AREA, IF A WOMAN IS NOMINATED FOR ELECTIONS INTO AN OFFICE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL, WOULD YOU SUPPORT HER? WHY?

14. DO YOU FEEL WOMEN WILL WORK BETTER FOR WOMEN’S RIGHTS THAN MEN? WHY?

15. WHAT PROBLEMS DO YOU THINK SHOULD BE THE FOCUS OF POLICY MAKERS ESPECIALLY FOR WOMEN? WHY.

16. WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES WOMEN AT THE GRASS ROUTS FACE IN PARTICIPATING IN POLITICS?

17. IN WHAT WAY ARE LOCAL TRADITIONS A LIMITING FACTOR FOR WOMEN ACTIVE PARTICIPATION?

18. HOW DOES CULTURE AND RELIGIONS EITHER ENCOURAGE OR LIMIT WOMEN IN PARTICIPATING IN POLITICS?

19. FOR WOMEN INVLOVED IN POLITICS ARE THE LOCAL LEVEL, WHAT ARE THEIR MOTIVATIONS?

20. HOW ARE WOMEN IN POLITICS VIEWED BY OTHERS MEN AND WOMEN?

21. SHOULD THE QUOTA SYSTEM OF WOMEN INVOLVEMENT BE INCREASED?

22. DO POLITICAL PARTIES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL ENCOURAGE WOMEN PARTICIPATION?
23. WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE CHALLENGES TO THE QUOTA SYSTEM?

24. WHY DO YOU THINK WOMEN DON’T SUPPORT OTHER WOMEN WHO CONTEST FOR POLITICAL OFFICES?

25. WHAT ROLES DO YOU THINK LEGISLATION WILL PLAY IN ENCOURAGING MORE WOMEN TO PARTICIPATE IN POLITICS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL?