

**SOCIO –ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN WEST POKOT
DISTRICT FOR THE PERIOD 1963-2011**

BY

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2014

DECLARATION

Declaration by the candidate

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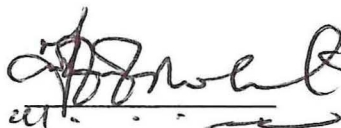
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my entire family and friends for their encouragement, assistance, cooperation and patience which enabled me to complete this work.

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ABSTRACT

There are few women who have been employed in governmental offices as head of departments for example in education, agricultural officers, and commissioners among others. This is contributed mainly by low level of education and in job opportunities which is controlled and dominated by men. Religiously, West Pokot women have not been empowered because most of the church teachings and doctrines undermines women and consider them to be weaker sex. They are supposed to be subordinate to their husbands. Men are represented to be head. This has made women to be seen as inferior and not supposed to participate in leadership roles of the church or contribute to decision making of affairs of the church. The current study sought to unearth the socio-economic barriers to women empowerment in West Pokot District. The specific objectives were: To examine the existing cultural setup structures among Pokots that hinder women empowerment; to analyze non-cultural factors that hinder women empowerment in West Pokot District; to establish the role of the church in empowering of women in West Pokot District; and to suggest possible solutions to the socio-economic factors that hinder empowerment of women in West Pokot District. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Data was collected from male and female adults in West Pokot district using questionnaires, focus group discussions and document analysis. Data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques that include means, percentages, frequencies and the hypothesis was tested using chi-square. The dissertation is organized into six chapters. The first chapter is the introduction, chapter two presents general information of the respondents, chapter three, four and five covers cultural set up structures, non-cultural factors and role of the church respectively. Chapter six is the conclusion and recommendations based on the findings of the study. The findings indicate that cultural beliefs and practices, female genital mutilation and forced marriage, hinders women participation while a few said that it does not affect women participation. Further, gender discrimination and religious rituals are barriers to women participation. It was also established that inadequate finance, low level of education, and ignorance affects women participation. However majority of the respondents disagreed that women do not participate in income generating activities and neither do they have professional skills but a few agreed that they do not participate in income generating activities and do not have professional skills. It is anticipated that the study findings will help women to un-earth the obstacle that have hindered the empowerment of women. The finding of the study will help the Kenyan government and politicians to work towards the implementation of the policies and laws that were designed to help in empowering women. The findings will help non-governmental organizations (NGO's) to identify priority areas in which they can participate in the process of empowering women. Finally the findings of the study will serve as a basis for future inquiry on the related topics on women empowerment.

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ABBREVIATIONS

MDG- Millennium Development Goals

EFA- Education for All

CEDAW- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

UN- United Nations

ATR- African Traditional Religion

HIV- Human Immuno Virus

AIDs- Acquired Immunal deficiencies

UNDP- United Nations Development programmes

KNBS- Kenya National Bureau of Statistics

KDHS- Kenya Demographic and Health Survey

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Development begins with the release of the God-given potential, which is only possible when people are free to be themselves. As we increase in positive attitudes about our potential to grow and ability to be better actors, this results to transformed persons and structures. People are said to be describing their ideals of development when they rise in protest against attacks of their own values. Development is liberation. It aims at strengthening the abilities of people and institutions to solve their own problems in harmony with the natural environment. We need to acknowledge that issues of human rights and development come together. This means that civil rights and political have a development dimension, and that without fulfilling the development needs of the human person, you can't have human rights either. We have to think about integral development of the person and the community where we live and the nation¹.

Our collective future depends upon achieving a transformation of our institutions, our technology, our values, and our behaviour consistent with our ecological and social realities. Development should be understood as a liberating process aimed at justice, self-reliance and economic growth. It is essentially a people's participation, in which the poor and the oppressed are and should be the active agents and the immediate beneficiaries. This means that we are called to find ways of empowering the marginalised, so that they can best utilize the opportunities at their disposal. We need also to unwrap the problem created by ideological fetters to domesticate women and frustrate their free participation in community activities as well as the

¹UNESCO (2003) "Gender and Education for All: The Leap to Equality", EFA Global Monitoring Report 2003/04. Paris: France, pg 8

larger society. Empowering means to give somebody the power or authority to do something. Or to give somebody more control over their own life or situation they are in². The term empowerment covers a vast landscape of meanings, interpretations, definitions and disciplines ranging from psychology and philosophy to the highly commercialized self-help industry and motivational sciences. Empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social, racial, educational, gender or economic strength of individuals and communities. It often involves the empowered developing confidence in their own capacities. Social empowerment is the process of accessing opportunities and resources in order to make personal choices and have some control over our environment³. In economic development, the empowerment approach focuses on mobilizing the self-help efforts of the poor, rather than providing them with social welfare. Economic empowerment is also the empowering of previously disadvantaged sections of the population, for example, in many previously colonized African countries. The ministry of gender, Labour and social development defines the term women empowerment, as the process by which an individual acquires knowledge skills and capacity to improve the quality of her life for his/her own benefit, the benefit of her families, communities and nation.

According to United Nations reports “women are half the world’s population, yet they do two thirds of the world’s work, earn one-tenth of the world’s income, and own less than one-

²Chattopadhyay, R. and E. Duflo(2001), “Women as Policy Makers: Evidence From an India-Wide Randomised Policy Experiment”, NBER Working Paper, No. W8615

³Mikkola, A (2005), “Role of Gender Equality in Development”, A Literature Review Department of Economics, University of Helsinki, RUESG and HECER, pg 44.

hundredth of the world's property"⁴. In Kenya and especially West Pokot District, women's position does not differ from the above situation. It is not uncommon to find women supporting very large families although the majority of them are still very poor. Kenya national bureau of statistics (KNBS) report census shows how Pokot Women are mostly affected in education when it gave 48.64% of the learned compared to 51.36% of the illiterate from the total population. As a result of this most women have remained to be housewife professionally, most of them cannot be employed in most of the available job opportunities. Also, they cannot compete favourably in politics due to lack of education. The few who are able to attempt are undermined by men because they are denied the opportunities.

Gender equality is important for both intrinsic and instrumental reasons. It affects social harmony and society's wellbeing in various dimensions. It involves policy dimensions in all areas including education, poverty, labour, financial markets, political and economic empowerment, institutions and overall economic development. Gender equality enhances prospects of achieving both international and national commitments such as Millennium Development Goals, Education for All, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Vision 2030, 2003- 2007 Economic Recovery and Employment Creation Strategy, poverty reduction and sustainable development either directly and or indirectly. Gender inequality on the other hand undermines economic growth and social development. This is particularly true among less developed economies where women are often constrained from having equal access to social and economic capital such as employment,

⁴UNESCO (2003) "Gender and Education for All: The Leap to Equality", EFA Global Monitoring Report 2003/04. Paris: France, pg 8.

political, financial and social services. Consequently empowering women and enabling them to actively participate and contribute to social, economic and political activities is important for sustainable development. The country's commitment to addressing gender equity and inequalities can be traced in both international and national policy commitments. The third and fifth Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) underscore the need for gender parity especially in education and access to social, economic and political opportunities, by 2015. As a result the country has put in place various policies and interventions including legislation, female specific policies, plans and programmes aimed at addressing specific gender gaps or forms of discrimination. Such interventions include affirmative action, promoting girl child education, economic empowerment through introduction of the Women Development Fund. Most of the policy interventions targeting elimination of gender gaps are however not consistently documented and they are not informed by data or statistics. Moreover, the status of female population with respect to distributions of opportunities in various economic, social and political dimensions is scantily documented.

Besides, when it comes to international conventions like the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), women are expected to play a key role in contributing towards meeting most of these goals on poverty reductions, mortality and morbidity reduction, environmental protection among other goals. In Kenya, women are marginally represented at all policy-making levels; everywhere the rules just seem to be for men by men. Each time women try making steps towards advancement; we hear those against the advancement of women call upon the wrath of culture while forgetting that the same culture respects the women. Sexual harassment, lack of day care services and inflexible work hours hinder women from pursuing their careers and hence

participating fully in development activities. These attitudes have their origin in traditional gender relations. In most cultures in Africa, women have never enjoyed equality with men; they have always been considered men's inferiors physically and intellectually, and as property to be handed over from fathers to husbands⁵. However, women should be encouraged to participate by bringing to their attention the biblical examples of women who broke the religious and cultural barriers imposed by their religion. A good example of this is the story of the Syrophenician woman who against all the requirements to stay indoors, went out and touched Jesus' garments⁶ and was healed of her disease. This story is a clear demonstration that women have power and potential to act in empowering themselves. But they have to take the initiative and the risk involved. They should take all the advantages at their disposal to liberate themselves.

Women's participation in decision-making is not only advantageous for women themselves, but for development and democracy in general. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspectives at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved, and women's equal participation is a necessary condition for women's and girls' interests to be taken into account and is needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning. According to the World Bank, the education of girls contributes to decline mortality rates and fertility rates, and improves the health and education prospects of the next generation. The UN Millennium Development Goals include commitments to universal primary education and to gender equality. Africa has made some progress toward achieving this goal. Enrollment figures are improving, and the gap/ratio

⁵Kabira M. Wanjiku, and Wanjira Muthoni. 1994. *The Road to Empowerment* Nairobi, Kenya: FEMNET Publishers, pg 38.

⁶Mark 5:25-34

between girls' and boys' enrollment is narrowing. In sub-Saharan Africa in 2005, the World Bank found that 83.6 girls for every 100 boys were enrolled in primary school. Primary school enrollment figures do not tell the whole story, however. The gap in higher levels is more dramatic. For many women, the lack of leadership capacity is due to discrimination in access to education and training. Globally, evidence of gender inequity includes the widespread preference of sons over daughters, limited education and work opportunities for girls and women, and high levels of physical and sexual violence against girls and women. More subtle forms of discrimination are arguably equally problematic and include gender stereotyping and institutional discrimination. Some cultural traditions that favour men over women, and the subsequent cultural practices that perpetuate that discrimination, lead to social exclusion.

West Pokot District

West Pokot District is one of the Districts in Rift Valley province in Kenya with an area of 9100 Km² or approximately 5% of the province. The district is bordered by the district of Turkana Baringo, Marakwet, Trans-nzoia, and also shares the international boundary with the republic of Uganda. The high altitude areas of the district consist of Sekerr hills the Cherangany range and the Chemorongit hills raising up the height of more than 300 metres above the sea level, the low land consist of the Masol plains and Kacheliba- Kongelai low land recording a height of 1500 metres above sea level.

The residents engage themselves in agriculture, livestock and small scale trading activities since there are no major industrial or mining activities. The district is estimated to have a population of 512,790 persons; of which 267,863 are female and 254, 827 are males. The district is mainly

occupied by Kalenjin (pokot) speaking people. The annual rainfall ranges from 400mm per annum in the lowest areas to 1500mm per annum in the highland areas. The operation areas will mainly be Kapenguria, Lelan, Sigor and Alale these areas are characterized by inaccessibility because of the steep hills and deep valleys, which are difficult to traverse either on foot not to mention by motor vehicle. The population in the highland still practices traditional farming methods with land tenure system based on communally cultivated small scattered holdings.

The agricultural Pokot tribe is known as the 'pi-pa-pagh' the people of flour and inhabits in the escarpment and the foot hills. The pastoral Pokot are known as 'pi-po-tich' the people of cattle and infringe upon the grazing of the Turkana and Karamojong. They are as nomadic as Turkana who are the most nomadic race in East Africa. The agriculturalist practices a settled life but since they share the same traditions with the pastoralists and pursue the environment in the same way.

In Pokot, there are people who practice Christianity while others continue practicing African Traditional Religion (ATR) and a few people practice Islam. Majority of the population constitute of women who are either illiterate or semi-illiterate. The administration lies upon the government officials and traditional religious leaders. However, women's empowerment has become one of the greatest challenges in the world. Although there have been many attempts globally wide to address this issue, there has been little success to achieve this goal. There is still more room to find ways and means trying to empower women to be at par with their male counterparts. This has agitated women activists, legislators, feminist scholars and human rights advocates. In order to lobby for an affirmative action and laying down of specific strategies toward planned programmes, which can be easily implemented and followed systematically. In

creating awareness and sensitizing women for their legal rights and their participation in development among others, that apparently has been down played by women.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The researcher has observed that women have not been empowered in West Pokot District. As a result of ignorance of women's rights a population of about 90% of 257,863 female depend on males for the provision of essential commodities. This is because many of them are not employed due to lack of education. Also they are denied the freedom to express their ideas that can contribute to income generating activities. They are expected to obey the commands and to be submissive to their husbands because they are ones in control of the household.

The continued lack of women empowerment has made women to be ignorant of their rights to have low esteem and to be submissive to oppressive cultural beliefs and practices. Many women are not aware that they have equal opportunities to education, employment, freedom of speech and freedom of movement as well as men. They have no confidence in themselves. They think they are weak, less important and they are just there to serve their husbands and to take care of their children. They have been subjected to oppressive cultural practices like female genital mutilation (FGM) so that they are not sexually active they are forced to early marriages because they have no right to decide who should marry them, but just accept anybody given to them without complaints. Girls are seen as source of wealth to the family. They can be married to anybody who gives the highest number of cattle given mostly by the old men. They are seen as their husband's property. Women are mostly considered to be children, sexual objects workers and bearing children because of the high dowry paid. They are not allowed to eat the best food

like eating of eggs, some parts of meat, not to cook food or the family when they are on their menses.

Politically, West Pokot women have not been empowered in leadership positions. This is because it is believed that leadership is for men and women cannot be heads but they are to be led. This has made them not to involve themselves in political seats like members of parliament, councilors and among others. For example, West Pokot District is made up of three constituencies; none of them is represented by a woman. Five out of 200 wards are represented by women.

There are few women who have been employed in governmental offices as head of departments for example in education, agricultural officers, and commissioners and among others, 3% of the total is only chaired by women. This is contributed mainly by low level of education and in job opportunities which is controlled and dominated by men. Religiously, West Pokot women have not been empowered because most of the church teachings and doctrines undermines women and consider them to be weaker sex. They are supposed to be subordinate to their husbands. Men are represented to be head. This has made women to be seen as inferior and not supposed to participate in leadership roles of the church or contribute to decision making of affairs of the church. The current study seeks to unearth the socio-economic barriers to women empowerment in West Pokot District.

1.3 Hypothesis

- a) There is no significant relationship between cultural beliefs and practices and women empowerment in West Pokot District.
- b) There is no significant relationship between women's level of education and women empowerment in West Pokot District.
- c) There is no significant relationship between church teachings and women empowerment in West Pokot District.

1.4.0 General Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this research was to investigate the socio-economic factors that have hindered women empowerment in West Pokot District.

1.4.1 Specific Objectives

- a) To examine the existing cultural setup structures among Pokots that hinder women empowerment.
- b) To analyze non-cultural factors that hinder women empowerment in West Pokot District
- c) To establish the role of the church in empowering of women in West Pokot District.
- d) To suggest possible solutions towards socio-economic empowerment of women in West Pokot District.

1.5 The Scope of the Study

The study covered West Pokot District. The district is bordered by the districts of Turkana, Baringo, Marakwet and Trans- Nzoia and shares the international boundary with the republic of Uganda. It's mainly occupied by Pokot who are Kalenjins.

The study covered socio-economic issues from 1963 to 2011. This is the time when Kenya got independence. Before independence, Africans were not given opportunity to serve in the Government and participate in economic activities. However, the government has continued to struggle towards improving and building capacities of her people of which women are included, although West Pokot District has remained one of the marginalized districts in the country. The West Pokot women are more marginalized despite the government putting in place affirmative action in terms of policies and programmes for example 30% representation and encouraged women owned organizations. This period is also manageable in terms of written literature and available witness within the scope. The study focused particularly on socio-economic empowerment of women in West Pokot District. This includes the existing cultural set-up structures among Pokot, government policies and programmes that empower women; positive and negative attitude towards empowering of women, political participation of women and strategies towards Girl child education.

1.6 The Significance of the Study

It is anticipated that the study findings will help women to un-earth the obstacle that have hindered the empowerment of women. The findings of the study will help the Kenyan government and politicians to work towards the implementation of the policies and laws that were designed to help in empowering women.

The findings will help non-governmental organizations (NGO's) to identify priority areas in which they can participate in the process of empowering women. The finding will provide a wealth of information to religious leaders that can help to fight obstacles towards women empowerment through preaching and enlighten the people on empowerment issues.

The finding of the study will equip women activists with necessary information to fight for the rights and other obstacles that stand in their way towards their empowerment and development. The findings of the study will provide information to human rights bodies and equip them to fight injustices that originate from oppressive cultural belief and practices. Finally the findings of the study will serve as a basis for future inquiry on the related topics on women empowerment.

1.7 Literature Review

In the New constitution of Kenya, Human rights are rights to which every person is indentified by virtue of being human in society of other human. Human rights, as part of the international law are rights that every human being is entitled irrespective of races, religion, political beliefs and economic status.

Further, in chapter 4 part 2 of the Kenya constitution, on rights and fundamental freedom, states that every Kenyan has a right to life, right to own property, freedom of movement, freedom of speech, right to vote, right to work, hold offices and religious rights⁷. Therefore the researcher sought to find out to what extent the government has implemented their policies in order to empower women in West Pokot District.

According to the Ministry of gender, labour and social development of Uganda, historical and social cultural denominations of women in most societies have continued to have an effect on women's access to social cultural, economic and political opportunities. In addition 90% of women are affected by age compared to men. This is because of different roles due to unequal household power relations, widows to be marginalized in terms of access/ownership and control

⁷ Republic of Kenya, *the Proposed Constitution of Kenya*, Nairobi: Attorney General Office Staff, 2010

over household relations⁸. This study was done in Uganda and the current study was done in Kenya to establish whether culture and age have impact on women empowerment in West Pokot District, in Kenya.

MajibeMadiba further observed that women are oppressed in many ways as daughters, wives, mothers, widows and concubines. There are many taboos, proverbs, poems, plays, films and remarks that support this secondary status of women. Such socio-cultural factors influence the minds of people from generation to generation which hinder women's full participation in various fields of the society. MajibeMadiba also continued to observe that women are often said to be weaker sex. It is because of all this cultural obstacles that finally the researcher would like to investigate on how the cultural belief and practices have hindered women's economic, social and political progress in West Pokot District⁹.

Peter WasswaMpigi further show how women were seen in the bible when he stated that before the coming of Jesus, women were not all regarded to be of value for they occupied a very inferior position in society. But things changed with the coming of Jesus who elevated their positions and accorded them with respect and dignity. Peter WasswaMpigi further continued to give illustrations on how the gospel presents to us how women were treated during the life of Jesus. For example, we learn that he healed women, allowed them to touch him and follow him until his death on the cross. He spoke, without restraint, of women, to women and with women. He related to them as human beings, he was interested in them as personal and his attitudes

⁸ Ministry of Gender and Social Development, National Policy for Older Persons, Kampala, Uganda.

⁹ MajibeMadiba, *Women in African Traditional Religions*: Nairobi, Action Publishers, 1996, p270

comes across clearly in His parable, miracle, stories and discourse. This is expected to be enumerated, especially by Christians in any society. The current study seeks to establish the role of the church in women empowerment socially and economically. Economic factors will also be studied with a view to looking for solutions to the barriers to women empowerment.

Religion as an integral part of society refers to the shared beliefs and practices of a society. Although religion legitimizes those norms and values that are consistent with the beliefs of a society, it also condemns those norms and values that are not. Due to its power and influence in society, religion has often been used as a tool for social control. The aspect of using religion for social control and societal manipulation is seen even in the political arena when some politicians use religion to assert themselves and their ideas to the masses. In the Jewish culture as exhibited in the Bible, women were usually excluded from social activities for almost three weeks every month in the name of ritual impurity rites. This is because women were expected to remain indoors during one week's menstrual period, followed by two weeks of ritual cleansing. This was a way of controlling women economically so as to make them dependants of men, rather than a purity issue. Together with this there is also the question of submissiveness propagated by many religions. These aspects of religious beliefs have in one way or another acted as barriers to women's participation in development activities. For women to be able to participate fully, these barriers must be broken especially in our rural areas where illiterate women are easily manipulated through these beliefs¹⁰. This is the concern for the current study, to establish the

¹⁰Ministry of Gender and Social Development, National Strategic Programme plan intervention for orphans and other vulnerable children, Kampala Uganda: Ministry of Gender and Social Development Staff, November, 2004, pg 31.

cultural beliefs that hinder the women empowerment socially and economically in West Pokot District, Kenya.

Peter WasswaMpangi finally, presents to us how Jesus took women seriously. This is unlike the Jewish and African attitude towards women. Jesus never discriminated against women. His attitude was quite different and we know it was in the purpose of his mission to come and set free those who were being oppressed in one way or the other. His mission therefore included the liberation of women even if the role of women in the church diminished because of the prevailing social condition, we can affirm that was never the intention of Jesus¹¹. It was with this in mind that the researcher wishes to establish the prevailing social conditions about women in the church teachings and doctrines that hinder women's participation in the church activities and decision making today.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by Woman's Emancipation theory. The term "emancipation" is derived from Latin (*emancipatio*), and originally meant in ancient Rome the liberation of a son from the authority of his father and his attainment of independent legal status. It has come to mean the liberation of individuals or groups from servitude, legal restrictions, and political and social disabilities. Emancipation is any of various efforts to procuring rights or equality, often for a specifically disenfranchised group, or more generally in discussion of such matters. It entails equal status of individual citizens in relation to the state, equality before the law, regardless of religion, property, or other "private" characteristics of individual people.

¹¹ Peter WasswaMpangi, *Africa Christian Theology*, Kisumu Uganda: Marianum Publishing Company Limited, 2002; pg 177.

The problem that confronts us today, and which the nearest future is to solve, is how to be one's self and yet in oneness with others, to feel deeply with all human beings and still retain one's own characteristic qualities. This seems to me to be the basis upon which the mass and the individual, the true democrat and the true individuality, man and woman, can meet without antagonism and opposition. Emancipation should make it possible for woman to be human in the truest sense. Everything within her that craves assertion and activity should reach its fullest expression; all artificial barriers should be broken, and the road towards greater freedom cleared of every trace of centuries of submission and slavery. This was the original aim of the movement for woman's emancipation. But the results so far achieved have isolated woman and have robbed her of the fountain springs of that happiness which is so essential to her. Merely external emancipation has made of the modern woman an artificial being, who reminds one of the products of French arboriculture with its arabesque trees and shrubs, pyramids, wheels, and wreaths; anything, except the forms which would be reached by the expression of her own inner qualities. Such artificially grown plants of the female sex are to be found in large numbers, especially in the so-called intellectual sphere of our life.

The sun in all his light and glory was to rise upon a new world; in this world woman was to be free to direct her own destiny--an aim certainly worthy of the great enthusiasm, courage, perseverance, and ceaseless effort of the tremendous host of pioneer men and women, who staked everything against a world of prejudice and ignorance. The emancipation of woman, as interpreted and practically applied today, has failed to reach that great end. Now, woman is confronted with the necessity of emancipating herself from emancipation, if she really desires to be free. This may sound paradoxical, but is, nevertheless, only too true.

Emancipation has brought woman economic equality with man; that is, she can choose her own profession and trade; but as her past and present physical training has not equipped her with the necessary strength to compete with man, she is often compelled to exhaust all her energy, use up her vitality, and strain every nerve in order to reach the market value. Very few ever succeed, for it is a fact that women teachers, doctors, lawyers, architects, and engineers are neither met with the same confidence as their male colleagues, nor receive equal remuneration. And those that do reach that enticing equality, generally do so at the expense of their physical and psychical well-being.

This theory was used in this study to establish the socio-economic factors and religious role in empowerment of women in order to ensure that women are emancipated in all areas in the society.

1.9 Methodology

The methodology which was used by the researcher in order to achieve the objectives, test hypothesis and solve the problem under investigation included research design, sample size and sampling techniques, research instruments and data analysis.

1.9.1 Research Design

The main research design that was adopted is qualitative which included historical survey. This helped to examine, describe and compare women's life in the old tradition set up to current. The design was narrative in its presentation of the phenomenon. Quantitative design in the form of descriptive statistics was used to support the main qualitative design especially during the time of illustrations and discussion of the findings.

1.9.2 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The subject in the study were 50 women, 20 civil servants, 20 professionals, 10 church leaders, 10 youths and 40 old people which added to a total population of 150. The research technique that was used to pick them was based on simple random sampling and purposeful sampling in order to solicit information during data collection.

Church elders; were interviewed because they offer valuable knowledge on current affairs about people participation and commitment to church.

Youth; they were interviewed because they are the shoot of any society and usually play a vital role in supporting community activities

Professionals; were interviewed because they have the technical knowledge and skills that are geared towards general development of a nation.

Old people; were interviewed because they are the main custodian of cultural traditions that is customs, norms beliefs and practices.

1.9.3 Research Instruments

1.9.3.1 Questionnaire

Questionnaires were given to 100 people, that is, politicians, professional and religious servants. This is because they are literate and educated enough to analyze issues and give the right information because of their knowledge and experience.

1.9.3.2 Interviews

Fifty (50) people were given face to face interviews.

1.9.3.3 Group Discussion

The women group discussion was organized in the study in Pokot District this is because they are in the right position to give deep information that affects Pokot Women and girl child, for instance, in politics, leadership and education.

1.9.3.4 Secondary Sources

Secondary sources were used in the study in West Pokot district. The researcher visited libraries to consult books, journals magazines newspapers dictionaries and internet. This is because secondary sources gave the already existing information on the problem under study of those which are related to it.

1.9.4 Data Analysis

The data collected in the study was subjected to critical analysis for its accuracy, reliability and validity. This was done by use of external and internal evidence. Data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques that include means, percentages, frequencies and the hypothesis was tested using chi-square.

1.9.5 General Information of the Respondents

The study sought first to establish the background information concerning the respondents who participated in this study. This information was obtained from the respondents through questionnaire that was administered to the respondents and validated through interview conducted. This variable was important since it enabled the researcher to obtain respondents' personal data in terms of gender, age, educational level, religion and marital status. The responses on each of the mentioned aspects are presented in the following sub-sections:-

1.9.5.1 Age

The respondents were asked to state their ages and their responses were captured in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Age of the Respondents

Age	f	%
18 – 30	50	54.3
31 – 43	24	26.1
44 - 56	11	15.2
Above 57	4	4.3
Total	92	100.0

As indicated in Table 1.1, 54.3% (50) of the respondents were aged between 18 – 30years, 26.1% (24) were aged between 31-43 while 15.2% (14) and 4.3% (4) were aged between 44 – 56 and above 57 respectively. This implies that majority of the respondents were mature and therefore at a position to respond appropriately to the items in the questionnaire.

1.9.5.2 Gender

Responses on gender of the people who participated in this study is presented in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 Gender of the Respondents

Gender	f	%
Male	52	56.5
Female	40	43.5
Total	92	100.0

It is clear in Table 1.2 that 56.5% (52) of the respondents were male while 43.5% (40) were female. This implies that almost an equal number from each gender participated in this study. This was to give a balanced opinion concerning the factors hindering women participation in most of the activities in the area of study.

1.9.5.3 Marital Status

The study sought to find out the marital status of the respondents as indicated in Table 1.3

Table 1.3 Marital Status of the Respondents

Marital Status	f	%
Single	36	39.1
Married	56	60.9
Total	92	100.0

As shown in Table 1.3, majority 60.9% (56) of the respondents were married while 39.1% (36) were single.

1.9.5.4 Educational Level

The respondents were asked to state their educational level and the results are as shown in Table 1.4.

Table 1.4 Educational Level of the Respondents

Educational level	f	%
Non formal education	1	1.1
Primary level	18	19.6
Secondary level	33	35.9
Tertiary level	40	43.5
Total	92	100.0

It is instructive from Table 1.4 that 43.5% (40), 35.9% (33), 19.6% (18) and 1.1% (1) of the respondents stated their educational level as tertiary level, secondary level, primary level and non-formal education respectively. This indicates that majority of the respondents had formal education. This is an important variable for the study since educational level influences ones perception towards women participation in the society activities.

1.9.5.5 Religion

It was necessary for the study to identify the religion of the respondents, as this was expected to influence their responses on the role of the church in enhancing women empowerment in the area of study. Their responses were gathered and summarized in Table 1.5.

Table 1.5 Religion of the Respondents

Religion	f	%
Protestant	56	60.9
Catholic	26	28.3
ATR	1	1.1
SDA	9	9.8
Total	92	100.0

Information in Table 1.5 states that 60.9% (56) of the respondents stated that they were protestants, 28.3% (26) said they were Catholics, 9.8% (9) said they were S.D.As while 1.1% (1) said they were ATR.

1.9.5.6 Occupation

Respondents were asked to state their occupations. Their responses are shown in Table 1.6

Table 1.6 Occupation of the Respondents

Occupation	f	%
Peasant farmer	34	37.0
Employed	43	46.7
Student	14	15.2
Leader	1	1.1
Total	92	100.0

It is instructive in Table 1.6 that 46.7% (43) of the respondents were employed, 37.6 (34), 15.2% (14) and 1.1% (1) were peasant farmers, students and leaders respectively.

1.10 Research Constraints

In this study the researcher faced problems in the field of study while carrying out the research in the following areas:

a) Accessibility of the Areas of Study

This is because west Pokot District and most of its roads are not accessible especially during the time of rain. It does not have good feeder roads and has very few vehicles or none at all. To overcome this challenge the researcher used all alternative means of transport like bicycle and motor cycles to reach the respondents.

b) Another problem that the researcher faced is financial hardships

This is because the financial support given by the sponsors was not enough to meet all the expenses required during the time the research was being conducted. The researcher solved this challenge by asking for personal loans from the bank and co-operatives and donations from other willing organizations.

c) Cultural Tradition created another problem to the researcher

In Pokot culture it's a taboo for women to talk to men on issues concerning the community in terms of customs, norms belief and practices. Since the researcher was a female this created a barrier between her and the respondents. However, the researcher used some of her elderly male relative mostly her grandparents and uncles who accompanied her to the field. The researcher also used research assistant to do the interview on her behalf.

d) Another challenge faced is negative attitude from women themselves

In most cases women tend not to respect their fellow women and always argue that nothing good come out of them because that is how they have been cultured. This negative comment would render the information inaccurate during the time of data collection. However, the researcher had to employ her social skill of being gentle, friendly and used wisdom during time of interaction.

e) Time

This is another challenge the researcher faced during the time of field work. This is because most of the respondents were reluctant to give some information. Especially during the time of interview collecting of questionnaire and arranging focused group discussion, data analysis, literature review and accessibility to the study to the research work and needed a lot of time.

f) Another challenge that was faced was opposition from the local politicians of the area under the study

This is because they were suspicious of the information being researched on as a threat in their future political campaigns. To overcome this, the researcher arranged face to face discussion with the respective politicians and requested for an authority letter to conduct the research from the university.

1.11 Operational definition of terms

Barriers – is a situation an event that makes it difficult for you to do or achieve something

Empowerment – to give somebody the power or authority to do something or to give somebody more control over his her own life or situation he/she is in.

Culture - is the custom, beliefs, way of life and social organization of particular peoples

NGO's – Non-Governmental Organization

FGM – Female Genital Mutilation

KNBS – Kenya National Bureau of Statistics

The first chapter has been an introduction to the study which includes statement of the problem, research objectives, significance of the study and literature review. Theoretical framework and research methodology used in this study has also been discussed. The next chapters present the analysis of the findings of the study based on the research objectives.

CHAPTER TWO

CULTURAL SET UP STRUCTURES

The first objective of this study was to examine the existing cultural setup structures among Pokots that hinder women empowerment. From the interview conducted on whether there are cultural practices that have affected women, majority of the respondents agreed that there exists but a few of them said there were no such cultural practices. According to the respondents, the factors that limit women from participating in socio-economic activities include cultural factors where the woman's position is always the kitchen and child bearing. The women also have low esteem and they have lots of pressure from their husbands and they feel insecure. Economic factors like lack of finances to start business and capital for farming also hinder them. The respondents were further asked to give their opinion on the eight items related to cultural set up structures that hinder women empowerment. Their responses were summarized in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Cultural Set up Structures

Statement	SA		A		U		D		SD		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Cultural belief	47	51.1	41	44.6	2	2.2	2	2.2	0	0	92	100.0
Female genital mutilation	39	42.4	35	38.0	8	8.7	7	7.6	3	3.3	92	100.0
Forced marriage	55	59.8	26	28.3	2	2.2	8	8.7	1	1.1	92	100.0
Gender discrimination	42	45.7	37	40.2	2	2.2	11	12.0	0	0	92	100.0
Harmful traditions	46	50.0	26	28.3	4	4.3	8	8.7	8	8.7	92	100.0
Religious rituals	18	19.6	13	14.1	15	16.3	22	23.9	24	26.1	92	100.0
Roles of family members	7	7.6	36	39.1	8	8.7	19	20.7	22	23.9	92	100.0
Women dependency on men	23	46.7	41	44.6	4	4.3	3	3.3	1	1.1	92	100.0

It was established in Table 2.1 on the cultural set up of the respondents that 51.1% (47) of the respondents stated that cultural beliefs and practices hinders women participation, 44.6% (41) agreed, while an equal proportion of 2.2% (2) disagreed and undecided respectively. This factor forms one of the most important impediments to the participation of women in most facets of public life. African traditions have mainly defined and ascribed separate roles to males and females. While the male roles are more empowering, the female roles are disempowering. These gender roles and societal expectations hinder the participation of women in many activities in the society. Non-conformists are made to suffer the negative effects of “group-think” (Negash, 2006).

In most of the African countries, the culture and traditions of most communities actually violate women’s rights and impede gender equality. Women are regarded as the weaker sex; they are not supposed to own properties; only get to speak when spoken to by men; and, remain relevant essentially in the kitchen and bedroom. Further compounding this circumstance is the demand on the women as wives, mothers, and home keepers, leaving them with little time and energy to partake in political meetings and campaigns, which unfortunately take place at very odd hours and with no strict compliance to time. This unfriendly time schedule excludes women who often have other domestic issues to cope with.

On whether female genital mutilation affects negatively women participation, 42.4% (39) strongly agreed, 38.0% (35) agreed, 8.7% (8) were undecided while 7.6% (7) and 3.3% (3) disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. Regardless of the extent of the circumcision, FGM affects the health of women and girls. Research evidence shows the grave permanent damage to

health. Acute complications of FGM are: hemorrhage, infections, bleeding of adjacent organs, and excruciating pain. Long-term complications include severe scarring, chronic infections, urologic and obstetric complications, and psychological and social problems. FGM has serious consequences for sexuality and how it is experienced. There is a multiplicity of complications during childbirth including expulsion disturbances, formation of fistulae, ruptures and incontinence.

Responses on whether forced marriage affects women participation indicated that 59.8% (55) of the respondents strongly agreed, 28.3% (26) agreed, 8.7% (8) disagreed while 2.2% (2) and 1.1% (1) were undecided and strongly disagreed respectively. The issue of forced marriage is one that is of both national and international interest and Focus (FCO, DoH et al., 2003; Schmidt and Jakobsen, 2004; Home Office, 2006). In the UK, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) commissioned a study on forced marriage in 2000, where a distinction is made between arranged and forced marriage, and a forced marriage is defined as a marriage where one or both parties do not consent freely to the marriage; entry into such a marriage is accompanied by physical, mental and/or emotional duress and coercion from family members. In contrast, an arranged marriage is where the family arranges the marriage, but both parties give their free and full consent (Uddin and Ahmed, 2000). Existing research indicates some of the complex interplay and differences between forced and consensual arranged marriages (Shan, 1991). However, some literature points out that the differences between arranged and forced marriages can sometimes be fuzzy and inchoate (Caroll, 1998).

Feminists argue that forced marriage violates human rights, and as a form of domestic violence is heavily gendered in its impact, as it disproportionately affects young women (Siddiqui, 2002). In

terms of ethnicity, currently available data from the Forced Marriage Unit indicates that forced marriage is prevalent in all South Asian communities, although there is some evidence that it also occurs in other communities (FCO and HO, 2005). However, there is a general perception that this is an issue that is predominant among Marginalised communities. Therefore Marginalised communities express concern about state interest in forced marriages, seeing it as a veiled threat against arranged marriages, and research indicates the need for community initiatives to be carried out in a culturally sensitive manner (Samad and Eade, 2002).

As shown on the table also on whether gender discrimination hinders women participation, 45.7% (42) strongly agreed, 40.2% (37) agreed, 12.0% (11) disagreed while 2.2% (2) were undecided. 50.0% (46) of the respondents strongly agreed that harmful traditions are barriers to women participation, 28.3% (26) agreed, an equal proportion of 8.7% (8) disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively while 4.3% (4) were undecided. Also on whether religious rituals affect negatively women participation, 26.1% (24) strongly disagreed 23.9% (22) disagreed, 19.6% (18) strongly agreed, 16.3% (15) were undecided while 14.1% (13) agreed. This is supported by Negash (2006) who stated that most of our communities are patriarchal in nature. Men remain at the helm of affairs and make decisions virtually exclusively, even when the issues border on women. The few women who venture into 'the man's world' feel inhibited to speak, especially when they are in large, male-dominated assemblies. Those who muster up enough courage and strength to speak receive very scant attention and respect.

On the other hand 39.1% (36) of the respondents agreed that roles of the family members hinders women participation, 23.9% (22) strongly disagreed, 20.7% (19) disagreed, 8.7% (8) were

undecided while 7.6% (7) strongly agreed. On whether women dependency on men affects women participation 39.1% (36) agreed, 25.0% (23) strongly agreed, 18.5% (17) disagreed, and 13.0% (12) strongly disagreed while 4.3% (4) were undecided. As asserted by (Negash, 2006), more than men, women suffer an acute lack of access to capital for business and other purposes. With limited access to land or total denial of land-ownership rights, it remains a daunting task for most women to engage in sustainable economic activities of any commercial significance. Their dependence on family networks for financial support further drives down the instrument of subjugation among them. Women's unequal access to, and control of, resources is therefore an important problem and is at the heart of the causes of their low level of participation. Women experiencing forced marriage found that their relationships with their parents deteriorated following the marriage. A woman forced into marriage felt that her mother had betrayed her by forcing her to get married, even though she was now content with the marriage. This hinders women empowerment in socio-economic issues.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it is evident that there are several cultural factors that hinder the socio-economic empowerment of women in West Pokot District. These factors include cultural belief, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, gender discrimination, harmful traditions, religious rituals and roles of family members. The next chapter presents findings on the non-cultural factors that hinder women empowerment in West Pokot district.

CHAPTER THREE

NON-CULTURAL FACTORS

The second objective of this study was to analyze non-cultural factors that hinder women empowerment in West Pokot District. Responses from the respondents were gathered on non-cultural factors that affect women participation and tabulated in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Non-Cultural Factors

Statement	SA		A		U		D		SD		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Low level of education	55	59.8	33	35.9	2	2.2	2	2.2	0	0	92	100.0
Ignorance	43	46.7	27	29.3	5	5.4	17	18.5	0	0	92	100.0
Income generating	5	5.4	15	16.3	5	5.4	38	41.3	29	31.5	92	100.0
Professional skills	12	13.0	15	16.3	7	7.6	23	25.0	35	38.0	92	100.0
Women's roles/occupation	9	9.8	15	16.3	8	8.7	26	28.3	34	37.0	92	100.0

It can be established in Table 3.1 that 46.7% (43) of the respondents strongly agreed that inadequate finance hinders women participation, 44.6% (41) agreed, 4.3% (4) were undecided, and 33.0% (3) disagreed while 1.1% (1) strongly disagreed. On whether low level of education hinders women participation, 59.8 % (55) strongly agreed 35.9% (33) agreed while an equal proportion 2.2% (2) disagreed and were undecided respectively. on whether ignorance hindered women participation 46.7 % (43) strongly agreed, 29.3% (27) agreed, 18.5% (17) disagreed while 5.4% were undecided. Studies indicates that two-thirds of the approximately 880 million illiterate adults in the world are women; 60 percent of the 135 million children in the world between ages seven and eighteen who are not receiving education are girls; and, only one out of

every four girls who begin primary school remains in school four years after (Negash, 2006). These statistics paint a dismal picture about the state of women/girl-child education across the globe. Most cultures promote the belief that the girl-child does not require formal education (which is the most potent tool for human empowerment), simply because she will be married off and become a housewife anyway. This increasingly unsustainable belief unfortunately still finds resonance in certain societies in Africa till date. It presents a most disempowering factor for women's development, as it serves to limit the educational attainment of females, especially in the rural and traditional societies. The current study concurs with the findings by Negash (2006), since the low level of education of women in Pokot hinder socio-economic empowerment of women in this area.

To achieve this Adult Education becomes an essential tool since education has been seen as the foremost agent of empowerment. Pomary (1992:21) says that:

“No matter how we run away from it, the foremost agent of empowerment is education: education is the only passport to liberation, to political and financial empowerment. Education contributes to sustainable development. It brings about a positive change in our lifestyles. It has the benefit of increasing earnings, improving health and raising productivity.”

Studies over time have revealed that education is the most potent instrument for the emancipation of any group of people (Azikiwe 1992; Ocholi 1999; UNIC, 2000). Sambo (2000) also opined that mental freedom, which usually precedes all other forms of freedom, can only be guaranteed by an effective education system. This view was further crystallised by Okeke (1995) when she observed that education is a sure pathway to the liberation of the mind and the improvement of socio-economic status of people.

History, the world over, is replete with the achievements of men folk and their contributions to the development processes and from time immemorial the position of women in the structure of society has never been considered on the same plain as that of men, they have been regarded as a second-fiddle. It is on this believe that Ker (1999) argued that women all over the world have been categorized under the disadvantaged groups of people and society itself has systematically and consistently pursued the socialization of women into accepting the notion of disadvantaged group. Given the preponderance of this categorization of women as a disadvantaged group of people, a social reengineering process is required to introduce equality through emancipation of the mind. This is where education has been found to be useful as a liberating force and agent of social change especially in developing countries. It is on this premise that the Open and Distance Learning scheme is hereby considered as an effective strategy for women empowerment, within the functional framework of the general lifelong education process.

The female youth of the community could be counseled, encouraged and given the necessary assistance to go through formal education to a higher level so that they will become well equipped to operate in higher competitive productive activities. Similarly, functional literacy programmes for the female adults will help improve their reading and writing skills. Obviously such skills will further enhance the women's access to public and educational information. The use of information technology like radio, internet, and handheld devices will help reach those in remote areas. Recent studies have shown that women are willing to pay for such services.

In the process of promoting and achieving women's empowerment, several policy approaches have been used. It is said that though the Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD)/Gender and Development (GAD) strategies that shaped policy

interventions and informed scholarly reflections in the 1960s and 1970s were limited by the fact that they remained within the established parameters of the state-led model of development and the discourses of its organic intellectuals, these approaches went some way in addressing some of the gender-based contradictions in the development process(CODESRIA, 2005).

Private researchers, donor literature, policy documents and several other literatures have shared views on women's empowerment. Karl(1995) remarks that long before the word became popular women were speaking about gaining control over their lives, and participating in decisions that affected them in the home and the community, in government and international development policies and adds that the word empowerment captures this sense of gaining control, and of participating in decision-making.

In providing a women's empowerment framework Karl (1995) gives five levels which include welfare, access, conscientization, participation and control. These levels also reflect the various approaches that have been used to promote the empowerment of women over the years. According to UNESCO (2006:17), women who participate in literacy programmes have better knowledge of health and family planning, and are more likely to adopt preventive health measures.

Women's empowerment could be briefly explained as the process of improving the human capital of women for effective participation in all aspects of development of a nation. This will make women become makers of development and history, not just receivers or objects of it. Women need not be just objects or beneficiaries of development but the development process of a nation needs the equal participation of women as well. Given that women form over 50% of the world population, their capacity building is crucial for holistic development. Women's

empowerment could also be said to comprise building their capacity or making the best of the lives of women for governance and socio-economic advancement. It is obvious that access to literacy or education, information or knowledge resources, natural or material resources, productive skills and capital facilitates the empowerment of women (UNESCO, 2006:17).

In providing a women's empowerment framework Karl (1995) gives five levels which include welfare, access, conscientization, participation and control. These levels also reflect the various approaches that have been used to promote the empowerment of women over the years. The first level, welfare, addresses the basic needs of women. This approach does not recognize or attempt to solve the underlying structural causes which necessitate provision of welfare services. At this point women are merely passive beneficiaries of welfare benefits. It is obvious that such an approach promotes dependence on the provider. Access, the second level, involves equality of access to resources, such as education, opportunities, land and credit. This is essential for women to make meaningful progress. The path to empowerment is initiated when women recognize their lack of access to resources as a barrier to their growth and overall well-being and take action to address it (Karl, 1995). Conscientization is a crucial point in the empowerment framework. For women to take appropriate action to close gender gaps or gender inequalities there must be recognition that their problems stem from inherent structural and institutional discrimination. They must also recognize the role they can often play in reinforcing the system that restricts their growth.

Participation is the point when women are taking decisions alongside men to ensure equity and fairness. To reach this level, however, mobilization is necessary. By organizing themselves and working collectively, women will be empowered to gain increased representation, which will

lead to increased empowerment and ultimately greater control. This level reinforces the mainstreaming approach which proposes that the concerns of both men and women be recognized and integrated into all plans, policies, programmes, goals, objectives, activities, and monitoring and evaluation indicators. This implies that in all interventions, implications for women and men should be assessed in all areas at all levels. Another implication also is that though there might be the need for special programmes to bridge existing gaps, this should be for a period of time in a project's life cycle in order to avoid creating another imbalance.

In the framework, control is presented as the ultimate level of equity and empowerment. At this stage women are able to make decisions over their lives and the lives of their children, and play an active role in society and the development process. Further, the contributions of women are fully recognized and rewarded as such. This framework shows how since the early 70s the women's empowerment processes have travelled from Welfare, Women in Development, Gender and Development, to Mainstreaming and Empowerment. A study on Gender Mapping (2000) also emphasises that key fundamental changes in the way all governments and agencies address women's concerns have been from Women in Development (WID) to Gender and Development (GAD); and from targeting to mainstreaming. It is obvious that most of these approaches overlap but this shows the trend of progress. In all these stages of progress, there are bound to be draw-backs and inhibiting factors, which inform the strategy or approach that follows. Despite the constraints and challenges, one could say that much has been achieved towards the empowerment of women.

The study further found that there were 41.3% (38) of the respondents who disagreed that women do not participate in income generating activities, 31.5% (29) strongly disagreed, 16.3%

(15) agreed while an equal promotion 5.4% (50) strongly agreed and were undecided respectively. This implies that majority of women in West Pokot District do not participate in income generating activities. This hinders socio-economic empowerment of women in the area of study. Karl's (1995) study identifies the measures commonly used by development agencies to include empowerment to increase women's economic status through employment, income generation and access to credit; and empowerment through integrated rural development programmes in which strengthening women's economic status is only one component along with education, literacy, the provision of basic needs and services, and fertility control. In recent terms focus has been on integrated quality health care provision, inclusion in sustainable natural resource management, full participation in governance especially at the grass roots level etc.

Further 38.0% (35) strongly disagreed that women lack professional skills, 25.0% (23) disagreed, 16.3% (15) agreed, 13.0% (12) strongly agreed while 7.6 % (7) were undecided respectively, on the other hand 37.0% (34) of the respondents strongly disagreed that women roles/occupation hinders women participation, 28.3% (26) disagreed, 16.3% (15) agreed while 9.8% (9) strongly agreed. Previous studies established that women remain concentrated in the so-called "female professions" and, at best, in the middle-level management positions. This, therefore, ensures that they remain excluded from the decision-making processes at higher organizational levels. Thus, women are grossly under-represented wherever key and sensitive decisions are being made, regardless of the institution involved (Wikipedia, 2010:l). This is especially true within government machinery despite the fact that most countries are signatories to many UN conventions and resolutions on gender equity. The reality of women is that they remain a vulnerable marginalized group that is yet to enjoy equality in status and access to

services and resources with their counterparts. Women are found at the bottom rung of the poverty ladder and illiteracy. They are also concentrated in rural areas where facilities and services are scarce. Women are also highly susceptible to the adverse impacts of economic and other structural policies and programs. Cuts in social expenditure, such as in health and education, mostly affect women and girls who are victims of the worst forms of violence.

From the respondents view on other non-cultural factors that hinder women participation are inadequate learning institutions within the district, lack of collective support for one another, lack of confidence among the women, lack of knowledge on entrepreneurship, lack of exposure of women, political affiliations, poor decision making by the women, type of profession of the women in the institutions, and poor time management. As establish from the findings of this study, the existing non-cultural factors have great impact in socio-economic empowerment of women in West Pokot District.

From both cultural and non-cultural factors, it can be concluded that women play an important role in society as procreators of the coming generation, as well as producers of goods and services. In the modern economies they are playing an important role in the labour force. However, in Pokot men continue to prevail as many people invoke the preservation of African culture to justify the subordination of women. In recent years, women's participation in management in all spheres is being advocated, however the reality of the women of Pokot is that they remain a vulnerable marginalized group that is yet to enjoy equality in status and access to services and resources with their counterparts in other areas. Women are found at the "bottom rung of poverty, of illiteracy, of landlessness" and are concentrated in rural areas where facilities

and services are scarce and they can never explore their skills since they lack professional skills attributed to low level of education and their positions in the society.

Conclusion

Women of Pokot are the most affected by negative impacts of economic adjustment programmes. Cuts in social expenditure such as in health and education mostly affect women and girls who are victims of the worst forms of violence, forced marriage and Female genital mutilation. The customary laws have given men more power and control over resources and decision-making processes, hence making 'in house' decisions both patriarchal and undemocratic. This has led to widely differing access to resources and decision-making processes, which is partly the reason why women's socio-economic status remains low. Women remain concentrated in the so-called "female professions" and at the very best in the middle management positions, and hence miss the decision-making processes at higher levels. Therefore, most women are compelled to find employment in the informal sector, which include business in petty trading in urban and rural areas, street trade, food processing, local beer brewing and hair making. Thus, women are grossly underrepresented wherever decisions are made, regardless of the level or the institution involved.

Besides the cultural and non-cultural factors that hinder women empowerment, the next chapter discusses the role of the church in empowering women in the same area of study.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH

The study further sought to establish the role of the church in empowering of women in West Pokot District. According to the information collected from the respondents during the interview on whether there are religious rituals that undermine women dignity it was established that there are some cultural rituals for example offering sacrifices and collecting offerings and in other areas female genital mutilation and early marriage lowers the number of women who are educated. It is evident from the respondents view on whether there are church teachings that undermine women in participating in church activities that most women are not allowed to stand on the pulpit to give an announcement or teaching, collect offerings, preach or even counseling but a few said that in the changing trend such teachings are fading away. Respondents' views on the role of the church were gathered using a questionnaire that was administered to the respondents. The responses are as shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 The role of the church

Statement	SA		A		U		D		SD		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Church teachings	16	17.4	35	38.0	4	4.3	11	12.0	24	26.1	92	100.0
Church practices	25	27.2	33	35.9	2	2.2	23	25.0	9	9.8	92	100.0
Church functions	3	3.3	24	26.1	13	14.1	28	30.4	24	26.1	92	100.0
Poor leadership	23	25.0	24	26.1	9	9.8	25	27.2	11	12.0	92	100.0
Church doesnt campaign against bad cultural practices	22	23.9	7	7.6	10	10.9	29	31.5	24	26.1	92	100.0
Poor audience	4	4.3	12	13.0	3	3.3	44	47.8	29	31.5	92	100.0

As shown in Table 4.1 on the role of the church in hindering women empowerment, respondents stated that there are church teachings that discourage women participation, 26.1% (24) strongly disagreed, 17.4% (16) strongly agreed, 12.0% (11) disagreed, 4.3% (4) were undecided while 38.0% (35) agreed. Further 35.9% (33) of the respondents agreed that some church practices do not allow women to participate, 27.2% (25) strongly agreed, 25.0% (23) disagreed, 9.8% (9) strongly disagreed while 2.2% (2) were undecided. Responses on whether there is poor participation of women in church functions, an equal proportion 26.1% (24) agreed and strongly disagreed respectively, 30.4% (28) disagreed, 14.1% (13) were undecided while 3.3% (3) strongly agreed. Religion is one of the instruments used in keeping women in perpetual servitude, domination, and slavery. The beliefs and values of most religions are sexist and patriarchal in structure and character, as they perpetually seek to subjugate women. The arithmetic of one party in a formal marriage relationship being entitled to four times the number of the opposite sex as spouses speaks volumes about the value or weight being given to either gender. Similarly, the continued reference to the subservient position of the female gender is testimony to the perception of the place of women in the scheme of things.

On the other hand on whether poor leadership responsibilities given to women discourages women from participating, 27.2% (25) of the respondents disagreed, 26.1% (24) agreed, 25.0% (23) strongly agreed, 12.0% (11) strongly disagreed while 9.8% (9) were undecided. Respondents views on whether the church does not campaign against bad cultural practices, 31.5% (29) of the respondents disagreed, 26.1% (24) strongly disagreed, 23.9% (22) strongly agreed, 10.9% (10) were undecided while 7.6% (7) agreed. Lastly on whether there's poor audience to women by church leaders, 47.8% (44) disagreed, 31.5% (29) strongly disagreed, 13.0% (12) agreed, 4.3% (4) strongly agreed while 3.3% (3) were undecided. This response

might have been due the fact that the general assumption is that women dominate in church membership and also carry out most of the church-supportive activities. However, the concern for this study is on socio-economic empowerment of women in decision making roles in the church.

Measures of church attendance and identification alone do not fully reveal the extent of women's religious participation. Although observers can easily document that women have been excluded from positions of religious leadership, nonetheless it is women who constitute the vast bulk of church activity. Many of these activities are difficult to measure numerically, but observations of women's activities in religious organizations show that women run the church bake sales, dinners, and bazaars. Women also teach Sunday schools, babysit during religious services, visit the sick, join prayer circles, sing in the church choir and arrange church social events. In fact, women have historically been those who raise funds for churches and temples. Although Orthodox Judaism defines women's religious role as centered in the home, women in Reform temples participate fully in the life of the temple and they engage in a wide array of volunteer religious, educational, and philanthropic activities (Hargrove, Schmidt, and Davaney, 1993).

These activities in different religious organizations make important social ties for women, but they also reflect a gender division of labor within religious institutions. In Protestant churches, women rarely preach, serve as trustees, control funds, or make decisions about the pastor, church, or church programs. In Roman Catholic churches, men have held all the positions of religious authority. This patriarchal structure is so pervasive that Roman Catholicism has even been described as a sexual caste system. This means that despite the greater participation and

faith of Roman Catholic women, the organizational structure, beliefs, ritual expressions, and prescribed norms of the Catholic Church are patriarchal (McGuire, 1997).

Gender segregation in religious institutions is also evident in the nontraditional religious cults. In the Hare Krishna, Sikh, and Divine Light Mission religious cults, women's roles have been described as those of a housemother. These cults are male authority systems in which women serve the men in exchange for the rewards of emotional gratification. The very intense nature of commitment in these non-traditional groups can lead to extremely repressive aspects. Women in these cults typically have domestic obligations required as demonstration of their religious commitment, and they are often expected to engage in sexual relations with the men of the cult. Whereas male devotees have access to positions of power as a means of bonding and sustaining their group affiliation, love and devotion are seen as leading to spiritual fulfillment for women in these movements. Women in these cults are often subjected to psychological, physical, and sexual abuse, as they are expected to be devoted to the religious leaders. Those who have studied women who leave such movements have noted, in fact, that the destruction of romantic idealism is a significant part of the women's decision to leave these movements (Jacobs, 1984).

Despite the patriarchal structure of religious institutions, women develop organizational and leadership skills through their work in these institutions (Gilkes, 2000). Although their contribution is often trivialized, there is a heavy dependence on women's labor in religious organizations; however, in most churches and temples, it seems that women are in the background. They play the support roles, but not the leadership roles. The theories of reification and regulation are inherent in women's roles and position in the church in Africa. Reification is an ideology of integrated system of ideas that is external to and coercive of people, which

functions to alter the thoughts and actions of people (Marx 1988). In this regard, “women have been exposed to contradictory, dissonant message and practices, filled with false expectations and aspirations”. This has rendered women vulnerable and receptive to an ideology that simplifies reality and promises escape from role conflict and ambiguity. Regulation on the other hand refers to the degree of external constraints on people (Durkheim, 1988). Patriarchy biblical interpretations that support the oppression of women in the church could be perceived as products of these theories. The monopoly of power by men in the church is reified and to enforce its prescriptions, regulations in form of manmade rules come to the fore.

Conclusion

As presented in the above findings it can be concluded that the church plays a role in socio-economic empowerment of women in the area of study. There are church teachings that undermine women in participating in church activities. For example, most women are not allowed to stand on the pulpit to give an announcement or teaching, collect offerings, preach or even counseling, however, in the changing trend such teachings are fading away. This has rendered women vulnerable and receptive to an ideology that simplifies reality and promises escape from role conflict and ambiguity.

The subsequent chapter presents the suggestions provided by the respondents concerning the suggestions towards empowerment of women in West Pokot District.

CHAPTER FIVE

SOLUTIONS TOWARDS EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

The respondents were asked to suggest possible solutions towards socio-economic empowerment of women in West Pokot District. When the respondents were asked what could be done to increase women participation in income generating activities, most of them stated educating women and sensitize them on their rights. The women could also be given capital on their small groups to enable them generate some money.

On what the church leaders should do to elevate women participation in church activities, most respondents said that women should be given roles and be motivated to do them. They should also be provided with monthly teaching to boost their morale and also be given leadership positions in the church. Women should also be supported financially and be paid for to work for the church. It is clear from the respondents view on the government's role in increasing women participation in general development of the society that it should provide leadership positions, educate them, provide financial assistance and encourage them to attend workshops and seminars to increase their participation in the society.

According to the information gathered from the respondents on whether there are ways in which women can be given equal participation in the society, all the respondents said that there are many areas including leadership in churches, parliaments, community development decision making, schools and hospitals. Women should also be given a chance to participate in environment conservation, large scale business, farming, military, sports and other income generating activities. The opportunity to own land, inherit land and access microfinances as well

as educational seminars could be put into place. Concerning on what can be done to increase women participation in income generating activities, most respondents stated that the key thing is empowerment and sensitization of the women through workshops, agricultural shows and educational tours. Women who are illiterate should be encouraged to go to school to improve their livelihoods. Women should also be provided with capital to start small business and also seeds and fertilizers to be able to do farming. Women who drink alcohol and other drugs should be educated on the harmful effects of drugs and be encouraged to take good care of their families.

It is evident that most respondents think that the government can increase women participation in general development of the society by providing educational opportunities through free primary and secondary education, motivation seminars, discouraging cultural practices e.g early marriages, wife battering. Women should also be encouraged to participate in women groups and the government provides loans for them to start business. The government could also give audience to women in parliamentary sessions, provide women rights awareness, and employment opportunities for the women. From the respondents point of view the church can also elevate women participation in church activities by giving them leadership and roles in the church. They could also provide bible programmes to educate women on ethics and teaching of the church. Women can also be included in prayer sessions and be registered for business loans to provide employment opportunities and also the church can involve them in seminars and crusades as chief organizers. When the respondents were asked to give their opinion on what should be done to cultural beliefs and practices that oppress women in order to increase their participation in the society, they provide many options including providing education to women on the effects of

cultural practices for example female genital mutilation, early marriages, polygamy and bearing many children whom they can not support. These teachings should be provided in the church, barazas, schools and women groups. The government should also come in to provide strict legislation on the cultural practices and also give opportunities to women to educate others.

After discussing the socio-economic factors hindering women empowerment and the role of the church in women empowerment, the next chapter provides conclusion and recommendations based on the findings of the study.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The first objective of this study was to examine the existing cultural setup structures among Pokots that hinder women empowerment. The findings indicate that cultural beliefs and practices, female genital mutilation and forced marriage, hinders women participation. Further on whether gender discrimination hinders women participation, most of the respondents agreed that it hinders women participation. On the other hand on whether harmful traditions, religious rituals are barriers to women participation, majority of the respondents thought that this played a big role as a barrier to women participation. Responses on whether roles of the family members hinder women participation and whether women dependency on men affects women participation majority of the respondents agreed that it affects women participation.

The second objective of this study was to analyze non-cultural factors that hinder women empowerment in West Pokot District. It can be established that majority of the respondents agreed that inadequate finance, low level of education, and ignorance affects women participation. However majority of the respondents disagreed that women do not participate in income generating activities and neither do they have professional skills. Further, majority of the respondents disagreed women roles/occupation hinders women participation.

The third objective of this study was to establish the role of the church in empowering of women in West Pokot District. Information gathered indicated that majority of the respondents disagreed on the presence of church teachings that discourage women participation. Further, most of the

respondents agreed that some church practices do not allow women to participate. Responses on whether there is poor participation of women in church functions majority disagreed. On the other hand on whether poor leadership responsibilities given to women discourage women from participating, majority of the respondents agreed but a few disagreed. Respondent's views on whether the church does not campaign against bad cultural practices, more than half of the respondents disagreed while the rest agreed. Lastly on poor audience to women by church leaders, majority of the respondents disagreed that poor audience is given to the women.

Recommendations

- i. Empowerment and sensitization of the women through workshops, agricultural shows and educational tours. Women who are illiterate should be encouraged to go to school to improve their livelihoods. Women should also be provided with capital to start small business and also be give seeds and fertilizers to be able to do farming. Women who drink alcohol and other drugs should be educated on the harmful effects of drugs and be encouraged to take good care of their families.
- ii. The church leaders should give roles to the women and motivate them to elevate women participation in church activities. They should also be provided with monthly teachings to boost their morale and also be given leadership positions in the church. Women should also be supported financially and be prayed for to work for the church. They could also provide bible programs to educate women on ethics and teaching of the church. Women can also be included in prayer sessions and be registered for business leans to provide employment opportunities and also the church can involve them in seminars and crusades as chief organizers.

- iii. The government should provide leadership positions, educate women, provide financial assistance and encourage them to attend workshops and seminars to increase their participation in the society.
- iv. The government can increase women participation in general development of the society by providing educational opportunities through free primary and secondary education, motivation seminars, discouraging cultural practices e.g. early marriages, wife battering. Women should also be encouraged to participate in women groups and the government provides loans for them to start business. The government could also give audience to women in parliamentary sessions, provide women rights awareness, and employment opportunities for the women.
- v. The government should also come in to provide strict legislation on the cultural practices and also give opportunities to women to educate others. Providing education to the women on the effects of cultural practices e.g. female genital mutilation, early marriages, polygamy and bearing only children whom they cannot support. These teachings should be provided in the church, Barazas, schools and women groups.

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- c) Divorced /Separated [] d) Widowed /Widower []
4. Educational level: a) No formal education [] b) Primary level []
- c) Secondary level [] d) Tertiary level []
5. Religion: a) Protestant [] b) Catholic []
- c) ATR [] d) S.D.A []
6. Your occupation: a) Peasant farmer [] b) Employed []
- c) Student [] d) Leader []

Section B: Cultural Set up Structures

Key SA-strongly agree, A-agree, U-undecided, D-Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree

Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD
Cultural beliefs and practices hinders women participation					
Female genital mutilation affects negatively women participation					
Forced marriage affects women participation					
Gender discrimination hinders women participation					
Harmful traditions are barriers to women participation					
Religious rituals affects negatively women participation					
Roles of family members hinders women participation					
Women dependency on men affects women participation					

PART C: NON- CULTURAL FACTORS

Key SA-Strongly Agree, A-Agree, U-Undecided, D-Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree

Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD
Inadequate finance hinders women participation					
Low level of education affects women participation					
Ignorance hinders women participation					
Women do not engage in Income generating activities					
Women lack Professional skills					
Women' roles/occupations hinder women from participation					

Any other non-cultural factors that hinder women participation _____

PART D: THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH

Key SA-Strongly Agree, A-Agree, U-Undecided, D-Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree

Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD
There are Church teachings that discourage women participation					
Some Church practices do not allow women to participate					
There is poor participation in church functions					
Poor leadership responsibilities given to women discourages women from participating					
The church does not campaign against bad cultural practices					
There is poor audience to women by church leaders					

2. In your opinion what do you think can be done to increase women participating in income generating activities?

3. What do you think the government should do to increase women participation in general development of society? List them down.

4. What do you think the church should do to elevate women participation in church activities? List them down.

5. In your opinion what should be done to cultural beliefs and practices that oppress women in order to increase their participation in the society? List them down.

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION- FROM DC WEST POKOT DISTRICT

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Telegrams: "DISTRICTER", Kapenguria
Telephone: Kapenguria 0203528879
Radiocall: KAPE 5ZRO



EMAIL: westpokotland@rocketmail.com

Ref: O.O.P.EDUCA.12/7 VOL.V/224

THE OFFICE OF THE
DISTRICT COMMISSIONER,
WEST POKOT DISTRICT
P.O. BOX 1,
KAPENGURIA.

Date: 6th September, 2012.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION - MILIARKET CAROLINE CHEROTICH

This is to introduce MILIARKET CAROLINE CHEROTICH who is a student of KYAMBOCO UNIVERSITY pursuing a Masters Degree in Religion Studies- SOCIO ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN WEST POKOT DISTRICT.

She is to be accorded maximum co-operation within the District.

Thank You.


WILLIAM NDIWA
FOR: DISTRICT COMMISSIONER
WEST POKOT DISTRICT.

c.c. CHIEFS - WEST POKOT DISTRICT
- O.C.P.D. WEST POKOT DISTRICT.

LIST OF INFORMANTS

S/N	NAME	AGE	OCCUPATION	DATE OF INTERVIEW
1	Lomwai C.	45	Politician	1 st March 2012
2	Adoket C.	39	Politician	1 st March 2012
3	Samson M.	61	Housewife	1 st March 2012
4	Losia J.	30	Business	2 nd March 2012
5	Teko A.	50	Business	2 nd March 2012
6	Neto A.	52	Pastor	2 nd March 2012
7	Kapelkuwu S.	42	Teacher	5 th March 2012
8	Lokamita S.	41	Farmer	5 th March 2013
9	Asinikal E.	30	Athlete	6 th March 2013
10	Chiroy J.	22	Student	8 th March 2013
11	Alew S.	32	Farming	12 th March 2013
12	Tarus S.	43	Teaching	12 th March 2013
13	Kasetem J.	60	Village Elder	13 th March 2013
14	Mosop W.	33	Education Officer	13 th March 2013
15	Waithaka S.	55	Pastor	13 th March 2013
16	Chepchumba A.	40	Housewife	15 th March 2013
17	Matet S.	35	Housewife	15 th March 2013
18	Ekuwum M.	42	Teacher	15 th March 2013
19	Wasike C.	25	Student	15 th March 2013
20	Alutsachi F.	53	Social work	16 th March 2013
21	Cheptum D.	28	Housewife	16 th March 2013

MAP OF WEST POKOT

