

## ABSTRACT

Gender role overtime, has emerged to be of integral importance in environmental resource management for ecotourism planning amongst various stakeholders. However, there are few gender studies that have been carried out in Kisumu County which have considered the differences in gender roles within local communities towards ecotourism planning and sustainable environmental resource management. Research gaps that have emerged from previous gender studies suggest that there is need to establish factors that perpetuate gender inequity in willingness to participate in ecotourism planning and the reason for lack of an appropriate gender equity enhancement framework. Overall study objective was to investigate the relationship in gender roles, environment-based ecotourism activities and roles of various actors in ecotourism planning within Kisumu County. Specific objectives of the study were: Examine differences in factors affecting willingness of men and women participation in environment-based ecotourism activities, determine differences in pro-environmental attitudes of men and women towards ecotourism planning, assess differences in gender roles of co-management actors involved in ecotourism planning and propose an appropriate framework for gender equity in co- management of environmental resources for ecotourism planning. Systems theory was used to explain the interactions between the environment, gender roles and specific ecotourism activities as components of a system, while Social Role theory was used to explain the differences in gender-based roles that emerge among men and women as they engage in various ecotourism activities. Concurrent nested mixed method and cross-sectional designs were both used in the study. The study was conducted in Kisumu County and through multi-stage cluster sampling, simple random sampling and purposive sampling, households (n=376) were surveyed in Nyalenda B, Kogony and Kanyawegi/Osiri. Purposive sampling was used to identify beach study sites and key informants. Data was collected using household questionnaire survey, key informant interviews, Focus Group Discussions, direct participant observation and review of secondary data sources. Data analysis methods used were: unpaired *t*-tests, Principal Component Analysis, One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Content Analysis, Social Relations Approach, Force Field Analysis and Gender Roles Framework. Study findings revealed that: there was no statistically significant difference in willingness of men and women to participate in environment-based ecotourism activities; there was a difference between pro-attitudes of men and women; pro-environmental attitudes in both men and women was high and there is no statistically significant difference in time spent in hours per week on gender-based roles by both men and women in all the three zones namely Kogony, Nyalenda B and Osiri. Key recommendations of this study are: to enhance gender participation there was need for gender empowerment; continuous development of ecotourism guiding principles and mounting of a county institutional framework as an appropriate framework for gender equity enhancement in collaboration with actors involved in ecotourism planning.