

The participation of women in political leadership has been a key concern worldwide for a long time. There has been a dismal participation of women in political leadership globally with Kenya not left behind. However, there is very little recorded information about women's participation in political leadership in Kisumu County from 1963 to 2017. This work studies a women and politics in Kisumu County from 1963 to 2017. The study interrogates the participation of women in elective politics as candidates and political office holders at both civic and parliamentary levels. The objectives of the study were; to establish the trends of women's participation in political leadership in Kisumu County, to determine factors that affect women's participation and to identify strategies employed to cope with the factors that affect women's participation in political leadership in Kisumu County from 1963 to 2017. The study adopted gender and patriarchy theoretical frameworks to analyse the participation of women in political leadership in Kisumu County. Descriptive research design was used for this study. Krejcie and Morgan table was used to arrive at 384 respondents who were then distributed using proportional sampling. Purposive sampling was used to select key informants who were chiefs, members of parliament, female members of Kisumu County Assembly, MYWO officials. Also, the participants in Focus Group Discussions were purposively sampled officials of the main political parties in Kisumu County. Questionnaires, archival sources, focus group discussion schedules, interview schedules were employed to collect primary data. The study used secondary data from books, journals, newspapers, magazines, thesis, and periodicals. The expert judgement of the lecturers ensured the validity of the instruments. Data from questionnaires was analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and presented using tables while data from key informant interviews and focus group discussions was analysed using thematic analysis. The findings of the study contribute to the advancement of knowledge about history of women's participation in political leadership in Kisumu County. The study found that even though women political participation in political leadership in Kisumu County has been insignificant, they have made some progress at civic level. The study revealed that there are challenges that continue to impede women political participation at both civic and parliamentary levels. The study found that even though Kisumu County produced the first woman to parliament in 1969, the participation of women in political leadership has remained low since then. The factors found to be affecting the participation of women in political leadership in the county include male dominance in politics, poverty, unfair nomination process, cultural stereotypes, religion, and low education of women. The strategies for improving women's participation in political leadership in Kisumu County include implementation of a third gender rule, financial empowerment, fair nomination process, and mobilization of women groups at grass root levels. This study recommends that corrective measures and affirmative action be implemented to redress the obstacles that hinder women's participation in political leadership.