

## Causes of Women Marginalization and its Effect on Their Performance of Socio-Spiritual Roles in Christian Churches in Kisii Central Sub-County, Kenya

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**Abstract:** The aim of the study was to find out the causes of Lay women marginalization as they perform socio-spiritual roles in Christian churches in Kisii central sub county in Kenya and their effects to the Christian churches. The study design was cross-sectional survey that was performed in Kisii County Sub-county in Kenya. Self administered questionnaire were administered to 375 Lay church members and 34 to Christian church leaders. Data was collected and analyzed descriptively so as to find out the causes of marginalization among the Lay women in Christian churches and their effects. The study outcome showed that there numerous causes of women marginalization in Christian churches which affects the church growth, it was also noted that the causes of Lay women marginalization varied from one denomination to the other due to differences in social, economic and political situations where the churches are located. Lay women empowerment on how they can participate fully in performing social-spiritual roles in Christian churches needs to be enhanced. There is need for cultivation in order to create doctrines that practices that advocates for equality of both gender in the church.

**Keywords:** Laywomen, marginalization, social-spiritual roles, incultivation gender

### INTRODUCTION

The universal declearagation of human rights was adopted by the United Nations 2003, proclaim that all human beings are born frère and equal in dignity and rights. However, women's freedom, dignity and equality are persistently compromised by law, custom and religious tradition in ways that men are not.

Kendall et al [1] argues that in most religious of the world, women have less influence in Church matters. They further note that even when women and men belong to the same religious groups their roles are not the same. Language that is used to refer to women shows that they do not exist in the world a major religious religion has symbols and languages that marginalize women [2]. Religious languages describes women as evil spiritual forces that often confuse the men of God.

There are cultural values that have come up with myths that potray women's image negatively leading to negative perceptions of their performance and denial of opportunity to participate in church activities.

Through socialization process the widely held beliefs that women are inferior before men is passed to

young gils and boys. This implies that women are not accorded the same rights as men in the Christian churches. Meyer [3] says that women in some churches are not allowed to participate in litorgial service.

Women have been marginalized for a long period of time [4]. Due to marginalization women lack opportunities to learn learders skills Charon [5] laments that women have be degraded and not respected for long. women are discriminated in all areas of life and therefore there is need for a research an causes and the effects.

African religion had a lot of influence on the religions that were established in Africa. [6]. The African culture put a lot of emphasis on the divisions of Labour, where women are supposed to participate in less roles in the society. Africans who were converted into Christianity still continue to be influenced by their traditional and that could be in the reason for the subservient roles played by Christian women in their churches.

Women listen to the gospel preached by men, clean the church used by men and cook during ceremonies officiated by men. This calls for concerted efforts to try and find out exactly what went wrong that

a part of humanity has been condemned to the status of slaves, even in the house of God, where all are supposed to be equal in the quest to find common salvation for all.

Religion has been unfair to women since its beginning [7]. Judeo Christian religion valued men more than women. The ancient Israelites valued men more than women and it is said that a Jew man thanked God every morning for not creating him a woman. The bias to Christianity through the teachings of the Apostle parlo Modern Christianity reserves their priesthood or senior positions in their church for men.

Henslin [8] notes that in history religion has justified the oppression of women. The Bible glorifies male character like Moses, Abraham, Solomon and Elijah as it ignores women like Esther, Elizabeth and Hannah who played great roles in the history of human salvation. The teachings in the old testament discriminated against women. Women were referred as unclean especially during menstrual cycle and after birth. This way they could not may spiritual role in the temple or even attend the temple teachings. Today some religious leaders are using such teaching to continue undermining women in the Christian churches.

Based on the literature review, laywomen in Christian churches faces a lot of marginalization. This means that there is need to establish the causes of women marginalization in our Christian churches. The study will also aim at identifying the effects of marginalization of layawomen in Christian churches on their performance of their social roles.

The findings of the study will provide useful information to the gender policies maker. This will help our Christian churches and government organizations to come up with gender policies that advocate for equality of all the people.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The design of the study was cross-sectional survey. According to Mugenda and Mugenda [9] the survey helps in gathering facts and characteristics of a certain population.

The study involved 16 Christian denominations found in Kisii Central Sub-county. The researches selected Kisii Central Sub-County because it acts as a headquarter for many churches within this religion. This groups were more homogeneous than the

total population [10]. The research used cluster sampling which involves dividing the population into small units called clusters. This way 34 Christian churches were sampled. Cluster contained both men and women. The gender connotation was important so as to hear what men think of lay women's marginalization in the churches.

The research further used simple random sampling to select 375 lay members from the Christian churches. Purposive sampling was used to select 34 religious leaders. Religious leaders were purposively sampled because they assumed to understand the church doctrines more than the other members [9].

The study used questionnaire that had often ended questionnaires. Open ended questionnaires it allows the respondents to give their response in defith [11]. The validity of the researcher instruments were verified by the expert in the department of Religion and flustory in the University of Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of science and technology. The reliability of the research instruments was checked through pilot study. Piloting study was done on 10% of the sum population. Piloting helped in changing items that were ambiguos. Causes of laywomen marginalization in Christian churches and the effects of laywomen marginalization in Christian churches. Data was collected, put into themes and analyzed descriptively indications frequency and percentage.

## **FINDINGS**

382 Questionnaires were returned which is 93.4% response rate. 349 were lay church members and 33 were church leaders. The findings of the research as depicted on Table 1 and 2.

### **Causes of Laywomen marginalization**

The researcher found out that there are numerous causes of laywomen maginalization in chrsitan churches in Kisii Central Sub-County in Kenya. Thus, 80(20.9%) indicate culture as the cause, (61(16.0% indentified stranous family responsibility as onother cause, 52(13.6%) note that insufficient leadership skills led to marginalization, 46(12.0%) talked of inadequate resources was noted by 32(8.4%) respondents, 28 (7.3%) identified as poverty as a cause, ignorance was noted by 22(5.8%), women social strafic alian was mentioned by 17(4.5%), domestic violence was noted by 15(3.1%), insecurity was highlighted by 10(2.6%), lack of time was at 5(1.3%), and discouragement from men was 4(1.0%).

**Table 1 : The Analysis on the causes of marginalization of laywomen in Christian churches.**

Causes of women marginalization	Frequency out of 382	Percentage
Culture	80	20.9
Strenuous family responsibilities	61	16.0
Insufficient leadership	52	13.6
Illiteracy	46	12.0
Inadequate resources	32	8.4
Poverty	28	7.3
Ignorance	22	5.8
Women social/stratification	17	4.5
Domestic violence	15	3.9
Health problems	12	3.1
Insecurity	10	2.6
Lack of time	5	1.3
Discouragement from women	4	1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>100</b>

**Effects of marginalization of Laywomen**

In reference to the effects of marginalization a women, 146(38.2%) respondents noted that marginalization of laywomen leads to irregular performance of socio-spiritual roles by laywomen, 107(28.0%) said that laywomen tend to avoid

performing socio-spiritual roles due to marginalization, 82(21.5%) of respondents said that it leads to delayed competition of social spiritual roles by laywomen, 47(12.3%) noted that marginalization of laywomen leads to low equality of performance of socio-spiritual roles by laywomen.

**Table 2: Effects Of Laywomen Marginalization In Christian Churches**

Effects of women marginalization	Frequency out 382	Percentage
Irregular performance	146	38.2
Avoidance of performance	107	28.0
Delayed completion	82	21.5
Low quality performance	47	12.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>100</b>

**DISCUSSION**

The findings of the study show that culture is a major cause of laywomen marginalization in Christian churches in Kisii Central Sub-county in Kenya. This could be associated with those different cultural beliefs and practices from the church members come. The findings of this study are in line that socializing agents like schools, family and religion emphasize the belief that women are inferior before men [4]. Culture portrays women as weak and not ambitious and this cultural beliefs has been transmitted into the church and that is why laywomen are denied churches to perform socio-spiritual roles to their potential.

In addition 16 percent of the church members noted that laywomen were unable to perform socio-spiritual roles effectively due to sonorous family responsibilities. Sonorous family responsibilities consumes laywomen's time and hence deny them energy and opportunity to be in the church to perform socio-spiritual roles [12]. This could also be attributed the fact that laywomen are involved in domestic work and manual jobs that are lowly paying.

As the findings of the study indicate, 13.6 percent of laywomen are unable to perform socio-spiritual roles in their Christian churches due to illiteracy. This implies that they cannot be able to write or read the religious materials. The study found that illiteracy among the women was high.

Moreover, the study found that when laywomen fail to perform the socio-spiritual in the Christian churches due to marginalization, the church is affected. Although in small percentages, insufficient leadership skills, illiteracy, inadequate resources, poverty, ignorance women social stratification, domestic violence, health problems, insecurity, lack of time and discouragement from men affects the performance of socio-spiritual roles by laywomen in Christian churches in Kisii Central Sub-county in Kenya.

The study noted that 38.2 percent of the church members asserted that marginalization a laywomen in Christian churches leads to irregular performance of socio-spiritual roles. Laywomen are not able to perform their spiritual roles regularly in the Christian churches due to the challenges they face [13]. This could be

attributed to the fact that laywomen stand a lot of their time taking care of their families or performing manual jobs exhaust them or denies them chance to perform spiritual roles in the church.

The study findings also reveals that marginalization of women in Christian churches make them to avoid performing the socio-spiritual roles [3]. This implies that laywomen keep off the performance of the socio-spiritual roles in Christian churches. This could be the reason as to why laywomen avoid performing liturgical roles like preaching in church.

Furthermore, marginalization of laywomen in Christian churches leads to delayed completion of performance of socio-spiritual roles and low quality performance of the socio-spiritual roles. This implies that marginalization of laywomen affects the church growth negatively.

### CONCLUSION

The study findings indicate that laywomen face numerous challenges as the execute socio-spiritual roles in the Christian Churches. Marginalization of laywomen does not only affect them but it also affect the whole church at-large. Christian churches should give laywomen a chance to practice their talents within the church. In addition, Christian churches should encourage enculturation and emphasis priesthood of all.

The outcome of the study will assist the Christian churches in coming up with doctrines that will assist laywomen to perform socio-spiritual roles that will lead to church growth. The findings will also help the county government of Kisii in formulating gender policies that provide equal opportunity for all the genders.

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