

**EFFECTS OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE ON WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN
POLITICAL ELECTIONS. A CASE STUDY OF WOMEN POLITICAL ASPIRANTS IN
NAIROBI CITY COUNTY, KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

The participation of women in decision-making and politics is a human rights issue enshrined in the Constitution. Violence during campaigns leading to elections is seen as a deterrent for many capable women aspirants from taking part in politics. The main purpose of this study was to examine the effect of election related violence on women political aspirants in Nairobi County. The objectives of the study was to investigate the nature and extent of violence against women political aspirants, to assess the empowerment levels of women in Nairobi, to assess the policies being implemented by various organizations to avert elections related violence against women in Kenya and to explore strategies for countering election related violence against aspiring women leaders in Kenya. This study embraced the Feminist peace and conflict theory and the empowerment theories which state the need for women in silencing conflict scenarios and the value of economic and knowledge empowerment in peace building, respectively. This study made use of a Census research design which proved to be effective in this study because of a small group of people to serve as primary data sources due to the nature of research design and aims and objectives of this study. Field survey was adopted to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. This study was carried out in the 17 constituencies in Nairobi County where the target population was all women political aspirants and various women political lobby groups. The study used both the questionnaires and interview guide to collect data from the respondents. 30 out of 40 respondents successfully responded the set questionnaires. Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS version 20 and Excel while Qualitative data was translated into numbers and content analysis done for results. The study revealed that women political aspirants experienced 85% insults, 56% sexual harassment, 78% threat to their families, 84% intimidation and 88% being attacked on the basis of gender in their quest for political leadership. The study revealed that women should be mentored before joining politics at 85%. The study revealed that peace education among the public was very key in deterring violence directed towards women political aspirants. The study also revealed that 8 in every 10 women felt that NCIC was not doing enough to avert election related violence on women. The study recommends that women in positions of leadership should instil an aggressive spirit to their fellow women in order to reclaim their rightful position in the society. The study further recommends that women should engage in activities that would encourage a unanimous political movement by women to liberate themselves from male dominance. The study concluded that more security to women political aspirants was needed during political campaigns, stiffer penalties on electoral violence and GBV, more women only offices and openness on candidacy requirements coupled with affirmative action and regulating political parties' internal rules to encourage and provide a level playing field for women vying for political positions. The study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge and provide literature to scholars in the field of gender studies, political science among others. It will be a reference material for future researchers and scholars on the related topic. In addition, officials of political parties in Kenya would use the findings of this study to develop solutions to the challenges faced by women in the political arena.