

# Socio-Cultural Factors and Women Participation in Community Agribusiness Projects: A Case of Kieni Constituency, Nyeri County, Kenya

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**Abstract:** In many parts of the world, women were traditionally assigned housekeeping responsibilities while men took bread-winning roles. These culturally biased roles have been limiting women's exposure and involvement in financially productive ventures such as agribusiness while limiting their ability to make decisions or take part effectively in agricultural projects. The main objective of the study was to assess the impact of socio-cultural factors on women's participation in community agribusiness projects in Kieni constituency, Kenya. The specific objectives were to assess how gender roles influence women's participation in agribusiness projects in Kieni Constituency. The study was grounded under the feminization theory while adopting a descriptive survey method. The target population for this study consisted of 24 farmer groups with a total of 600 women, and 16 extension officers working in the constituency. This study used simple random sampling procedure to select the farmer groups. Research questionnaires were used to collect data and SPSS software version 21 was used to evaluate data. The study analysed questionnaires from 487 participants who belonged to 24 women groups in Kieni Constituency. 350 of participants agreed that gender roles play a significant role of determining women participation in agribusiness activities. The study showed that gender roles ( $r=0.864$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ), had significant relationship with women participation in agribusiness. Gender disparities in access to resources, support mechanisms, and lack of access to information have disadvantaged many women in the area. Interview distributed to 16 farming extension officers showed that gender inequality and lack of sustainable women empowerment programs contributes to reduced participation of women in agribusiness. The research recommends an expansion of women empowerment programs in rural areas to improve knowledge, access to essential resources such as land, and access credit to increase participation in agribusiness and other social empowerment programs.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### ➤ Background of the Study

This research project focuses on the socio-cultural factors influencing women's participation in communal agribusiness projects in Kieni Constituency. It addresses the complex interplay between gender roles, cultural norms, and socio-economic factors in rural agricultural settings. To fully grasp the scope of this study, it is necessary to consider global, national, and local perspectives on socio-cultural issues that generally affect women's involvement in rural agricultural initiatives. Additionally, thorough research on this topic can provide valuable insights into promoting gender equality and empowering women through community-based agricultural ventures.

Globally, women make significant contributions to agricultural development (Agarwal, 2022). They are

involved in various aspects of agriculture, such as cultivation, livestock management, food processing, and farm administration (Shrestha, 2022). However, they continue to face gender-based inequalities, including limited access to essential resources like land, education, and credit facilities. In many developing countries, a pronounced gap exists in women's access to financing, training, technology, and other resources critical for enhancing productivity and sustainable agribusiness at small and medium levels (Agarwal, 2022).

In Bangladesh, for example, women's economic roles differ based on gender, activity, and geographic location. Rural women have long been engaged in income-generating activities such as post-harvesting processes, goat rearing, poultry keeping, crafts, food processing, silk production, and garment making (Anyidoho, 2021). A significant number of women from impoverished and landless households work in

construction and agricultural fields—roles previously held by men (Hernandez et al., 2023).

Similarly, rural women in South Africa encounter socio-cultural barriers such as restricted access to land, which limits their participation in agricultural projects. A case study from Khezana Village in Alice District revealed that prevailing cultural norms marginalize women in community projects (University of Fort Hare, 2014). The study emphasized that unequal representation in agricultural initiatives threatens women's social standing and reinforces male dominance. This exclusion, particularly in land ownership, undermines women's productivity (Davison, 2019). As such, communities must prioritize equitable land distribution to empower women and support future generations.

In Ghana, women's time is heavily consumed by childbearing and domestic responsibilities, which prevents them from engaging in economically productive activities. Compared to men, Ghanaian women carry a heavier household burden (FAO, 2019). They are also primary contributors to farming activities but are unable to expand production due to time constraints. Similarly, Tanzanian women spend long hours gathering food and water, often walking long distances to fetch firewood and cook meals (Etuk & Okoro, 2019). Their workload limits their time and energy for participating in community agribusiness projects.

Nonetheless, numerous countries and international organizations have recognized these challenges and are working to provide financial support, particularly in developing nations like Kenya. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) actively promotes gender equality, recognizing that rural women contribute as significantly as men to economic well-being. In Uzbekistan, for instance, women are prominent agricultural entrepreneurs, yet gender disparities still limit their access to credit and decision-making roles (FAO, 2019). These gender gaps reduce productivity and negatively impact both individual and national economic outcomes. Addressing them can enhance women's participation in agricultural projects and foster broader economic growth and poverty reduction.

The traditional view of women as economically inactive is increasingly being set aside to meet family needs (Meinzen-Dick et al., 2019). Yet, most women still work as unpaid laborers in subsistence agriculture, often using outdated tools and techniques (Khanum, Kanij, & Romaza, 2022). As men exit agriculture, the sector becomes increasingly feminized, though progress remains slow. Across Africa, various socio-cultural factors influence women's involvement in agribusiness. While these factors vary by region, common themes include limited land ownership, lower educational attainment, and the assignment of non-remunerative roles to women while men assume financially rewarding ones. These culturally embedded gender roles hinder women's involvement and leadership in agricultural initiatives (Brizioli, 2021).

In Kenya, decision-making authority is often male-dominated, restricting women's choices regarding what crops to plant, marketing strategies, and reinvestment in agribusiness. Women in Kieni Constituency are often burdened with childcare and household responsibilities, leaving little time to participate in community projects (Hernandez et al., 2023). Additionally, weak property rights prevent women from accessing loans and investing in agribusiness.

In Kieni Constituency, there is a notable gender gap in leadership, access to employment, healthcare, and resources. However, new development policies promoting equality are starting to benefit citizens regardless of gender. Such policies can help elevate women's societal standing over time (Qanti et al., 2021). International initiatives are also pushing for gender mainstreaming in agriculture. One example is Kenya's Agricultural Sector Development Support Programme (ASDSP), which promotes equal representation in community projects. When properly implemented, such programs can improve women's access to resources and funding for agribusiness (ASDSP II, 2017). Still, more action is needed to ensure women's full participation and recognition in development projects.

#### ➤ *Purpose of the Study*

The primary aim of this research is to evaluate the socio-cultural factors that influence women's participation in communal agribusiness projects in Kieni Constituency, located in Nyeri County, Kenya.

#### ➤ *Objectives of the Study*

To examine how gender roles affect women's participation in agribusiness projects in Kieni Constituency.

#### ➤ *Research Questions*

- Do gender norms significantly influence women's involvement in communal agribusiness projects in Kieni?
- How does access to resources such as land and credit affect women's participation in communal agribusiness initiatives in Kieni?

#### ➤ *Justification of the Study*

This study is vital because it explores the socio-cultural factors affecting women's participation in agribusiness projects within Kieni, contributing to national goals such as Kenya's Vision 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. Understanding these issues supports gender equality and economic empowerment, especially since women form a large portion of both the global and local population. Women also play a central role in food production and security. Despite this, limited research exists on the socio-cultural barriers they face in agribusiness. This study addresses that gap and enhances our understanding of women's roles in agricultural development in Kieni and beyond.

#### ➤ *Significance of the Study*

The findings of this study will be valuable to the County Government of Nyeri, the National Government,

and particularly agricultural departments at both levels. It will also benefit rural women in Kieni and similar areas by helping to shift community attitudes toward greater inclusion of women in agricultural initiatives. The study can guide policy development aimed at promoting gender equality in rural agribusiness.

Moreover, both levels of government can utilize the findings to inform budget allocations and policy direction that encourage women's involvement in funded agribusiness activities. The County Government of Nyeri, in particular, can organize capacity-building workshops to address sociocultural constraints and promote women's leadership in community-based agricultural projects.

#### ➤ *Conceptual Framework*

This study will adopt a socio-cultural framework to examine the relationship between gender roles and women's participation in agribusiness activities. It will also explore how access to social capital influences women's involvement in agribusiness projects within Kieni, Nyeri County.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

#### ➤ *Theoretical Framework*

This study was guided by two theories and approaches namely, Feminization theory and Gender Mainstreaming approach.

#### ➤ *Theme Dependent Variables*

##### • *The Feminization Theory*

Mary Wollstonecraft (1792), book titled, "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" in which she argues that class and private property are the basis of discrimination against women, and that women as much as men needed equal rights. In many nations, women farmers are playing an increasingly major part in agriculture, a development described as "feminization of agriculture." There is no clear elaborate, to the point, definition of feminization, so we used Lastarria-Cornhiel's broad definition, which defines feminization of agriculture as the situation where women get more involvement in agricultural labour (Haug, Dismas, Donald, & Mupenzi, 2021). However, we do not count women as part of agricultural wage labourers, which is common in the feminization of agriculture notion. This is the reason that while feminization of agriculture might result in greater wealth and labour burdens, it can also empower women.

##### • *Gender Mainstreaming Approach*

This is the newest development strategy designed with women in mind. In the Beijing Platform for Action from the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, gender mainstreaming was identified as a key international approach for advancing gender equality (Sandler & Goetz, 2020). Important general guidelines for gender mainstreaming were created by the ECOSOC accepted conclusions (1997/72). On October 13, 1997, the Secretary-General sent a letter to the heads of all United

Nations institutions outlining more specific guidelines. The 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly, held in June 2000 to follow up on the execution of the Beijing Platform for Action, expanded the UN's mainstreaming mandate (Sandler & Goetz, 2020). More recently, in July 2001, the Economic and Social Council assumed steadfastness on gender mainstreaming (ECOSOC resolution 2001/41) that calls on the Economic and Social Council to ensure that gender perspectives are considered in all of its work, including that of its functional commissions, and recommends a five-year review of the implementation of the ECOSOC agreed conclusions 1997/2.

##### • *Women's Participation in Community Agribusiness Projects*

In Kenya, women play a significant role in agriculture, and are involved in various activities from cultivation to marketing of produce. As a result, various agribusiness projects aim to enhance their involvement along different value chains with the sole goal of empowering them economically (Makokha, 2019; Meinzen-Dick *et al.*, 2019).

The number of women who actively engage in community agribusiness projects in Kenya is relatively high across the regions. However, one thing is common amongst all the communities; women are involved in basic agricultural activities (Ingutia & Sumelius, 2022). These include planting, weeding, livestock farming, harvesting and post-harvest management practices (Makokha, 2019; Meinzen-Dick *et al.*, 2019). On the other hand, most communities reserve the commercial aspect of agricultural projects to the men. For instance, leaving the sale of produce to men gives them control over the revenue stream or income from all agribusiness initiatives, short-changing the women.

In addition to their traditional household function, women make up approximately 75% of Kenya's agricultural labour force (Kihui & Munene, 2021), according to Paul (Onyalo, 2019). Women play a crucial part in agricultural output. In addition, women produce 60–80% of the food in the majority of underdeveloped countries and half of the food produced worldwide. Women's involvement in agricultural production differs significantly between and within areas, and they are changing rapidly in many parts of the world as economic and social factors reshape the agriculture sector. Despite women's vital involvement in agriculture and rural development in Sub-Saharan Africa, their central position in agricultural output has been largely disregarded, notably in policy (Onyalo, 2019).

##### • *Gender Roles on Women's Participation in Rural Agribusiness Projects*

Women's complete and equal input in agricultural projects is frequently hampered by gender conventions, norms and roles (Onyalo, 2019). This varies with the region and practices likewise. To fully understand the impact of gender roles on women involvement in agribusiness initiatives and projects, we took a look at three key indicators as highlighted below. Men and women are often assigned different roles in agricultural chores according to

societal expectations. Women are typically given more time and energy to take care of the home and family than to labour on farms (Onyalo, 2019). Therefore, women are left to cater for household duties that exclude them from meaningful economically viable activities. However, this is compounded by the fact that women's participation in decision-making and activities that increase productivity is restricted by their partners (Ingutia & Sumelius, 2022; Makokha, 2019). This societal expectation limits their willingness to fully participate in agribusiness projects even when they are at the local and community level.

One of the most notable differences in time between Rwandans, according to Okonya *et al.* (2019), is that men tend to do most of decision-making while women have to balance between small-scale farming and child-bearing. According to Okonya *et al.* (2019), women perform a large portion of the developing, such as getting wood and water, cooking, cleaning, buying, and caring for children, leaving them with little time for other activities. This covers their involvement in local agriculture initiatives. Within the household, women worry about the overwhelming stress of childcare, which affects their ability to engage in any activity that requires them to leave the homestead (Makokha, 2019).

Women who attempt to challenge traditional gender roles in agriculture may face challenges for instance stigma from societal views and expectations (Onyalo, 2019). This might result in prejudice, unwillingness, or resistance from community members, which makes it challenging for women to stand up for their rights and take an active role in farming endeavours. In addition, when compounded, women adopt the attitude that they cannot lead especially when they face a lot of backlashes from their male counterparts and often rely on the men to lead as a result. There is a "pipeline problem" associated with lack of qualified women in leadership roles. This shortage is connected to women's family household tasks and their tendency to exhibit fewer characteristics that are typically linked to success in executive level positions of leadership. Therefore, women are underrepresented in agribusiness management positions, which is a big concern (Davison, 2019). The psychological aspect of attitudes and values is a key factor in explaining why women, despite having the requisite training, do not advance to managerial positions (Davison, 2019). This leaves many qualified and trained women out of agribusiness project leadership positions, affecting overall success and participation.

### III. RESEACH METHODOLOGY

#### ➤ Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey method to generate social realities and perceptions of participants. The descriptive survey design was chosen because it is effective at revealing reality by obtaining precise factual information that characterizes existent events at a certain period (Stockemer, Stockemer, & Glaeser, 2019). The research design sought focused on participants' attitudes on socio-cultural factors that mark women's involvement in

agribusiness projects in Kieni Constituency. On the other hand, this study's design was appropriate because it allows the researcher to collect data from respondents using questionnaires.

#### ➤ Study Area

The study was conducted in the geographical area that is administratively delineated as Kieni constituency in Nyeri County. Kieni constituency is one of the six constituencies in Nyeri County and it has two sub-counties in it namely Kieni East and Kieni West. Kieni covers an area of 1,378.10sq Km with a population of approximately 178,800 persons. This translates to a density of 127.6 people per square kilometer (Kieni.NGCD, 2023). The constituency is on the leeward side of Mt. Kenya and borders Laikipia County to the North and Nyandarua County to the West. Kieni constituency has eight wards and 59 sub-locations. The main economic activity is farming where most farmers are horticultural farmers. The main crops grown in the area are potatoes, onions, tomatoes, carrots, and cabbages. Farmers in the area also engage in dairy farming and poultry farming.

#### ➤ Target Population

The target population for this study consisted women already involved in agribusiness activities in Kieni constituency. The inclusion criteria included women already registered in at least one agribusiness group running as a community-based organisation or local groups of women who have come together to support each other and start agribusiness ventures together. The exclusion criteria included groups of men participating in agribusiness ventures in Kieni because the objectives of the study focused primarily on women involvement. There are a total of 240 groups in Kieni and each was considered for sampling. Another target population was extension officers and government officers who work with the women groups and have a deeper understanding of their challenges. The officers were targeted for a qualitative survey of their beliefs and understanding of the issues affecting women involvement in agribusiness ventures in Kieni constituency.

The study sampled 24 farmer groups from the 240 groups in Kieni, which brought the total population of individual women in agribusiness ventures to 600 farmers, as well as an additional 16 ward agricultural extension officers selected from the eight wards in Kieni. The 24 farmer groups deal with horticulture framing, poultry farming. Dairy farming and one group in Gakawa ward make animal feeds. The groups in Gakawa ward are; Wendani, Arimi a Gatu, and Rucio Rweka farmer groups. In Naromoru ward, the groups chosen are; CHV, Mutathini, and Jijenge. In Kabaru ward, the farmer groups chosen are; Jikaze, Shama dairy, and Urumwe. In Thigu ward, the groups chosen are Matunda mema, Ngoperwa, and Chagim. In Mugunda ward, the farmer groups chosen are; Shamba letu, Ngorano, and Kirurumi poultry farmers. In Gatarakwa ward, the groups chosen are Chania flyers, Tujijenge, and Gakanga. In Endarasha ward, the groups chosen are Ihururu dairy farmers, Charity and Gakanga Gaitu groups. Lastly, In Mweiga ward, the farmer groups chosen are Gathumbi



women, Tuterete, and Gandu potato farmers groups. The study involved both men and women (for the agricultural officers) in order to gain a holistic perspective of the dynamics within the entire agricultural setting in Kieni constituency. Involving men sheds more light on the power dynamics in the community. This includes not only the challenges faced by women but also the perceptions, attitudes and behaviors of men that may influence women's roles and opportunities in community agribusiness projects.

#### ➤ *Sampling Procedures*

This study used simple random sampling procedure to select the farmer groups as it eliminates any bias in sample selection process. The sampling procedure involved highlighting of all available farmer groups and donor funded projects in Kieni Constituency, where all were coded and randomly selected and drawn from a box. This ensured that no group would be selected twice or no group would be left

out of the sample selection. This means that all the 240 farmer groups in Kieni Constituency had an equal chance of being selected to form the sample for the study. Every group had an average membership size of 25, which means that if all the members could have responded to the questionnaires, there could have been 600 participants in total.

#### ➤ *Data Collection*

Following approval from the Women Affairs department and the acquisition of a research permission from the appropriate authorities such as NACOSTI, University administrative and agricultural officers, these data collections begun. The questionnaires were formulated based on the research questions and objectives of the study. Structured questionnaires were used to collect data on the perceptions of respondents regarding the social cultural factors affecting women participation in community agribusiness projects in Kieni.

### IV. DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

#### ➤ *Data Analysis, Presentation, Interpretation*

Table 1 Questionnaire Return Rate

Groups	Members in the Sampled Groups	Questionnaires Returned	Not Returned	% response Rate
24	600	487	113	81.17

Table 1 represents the questionnaire return rate upon the completion of the study. The researcher issued 600 questionnaires. Only 487 copies of the were returned which represented 81.17%. In this case, 600 questionnaires are equivalent to 100% whereas 487 questionnaires that were returned are equivalent to 81.17%. The significance level was attained by getting the difference attained by

subtracting 81.17% from 100% thus 18.83%. This enhances 0.19% significance level. Response rate refers to the number of subjects that respond to a research study.

#### ➤ *Assessing Gender Roles and Women's Involvement in Community Agribusiness Projects*

Table 2 Gender Roles in Agribusiness

Effects of Gender Roles and Norms	1	2	3	4	5	Composite Mean	Standard Deviation
Gender roles hinder women from participating in agribusiness projects within the community	4 (4%)	6 (6%)	18 (18%)	48 (48%)	24 (24%)	3.99	1.32
There are specific gender roles associated with agriculture and agribusiness in Kieni	9 (9%)	18 (18%)	2 (2%)	42 (42%)	29 (29%)	3.64	1.30
Women should be involved in community agribusiness projects	19 (19%)	19 (19%)	8 (8%)	40 (40%)	16 (16%)	3.21	1.40
Gender roles do not affect women's involvement in agribusiness projects	49 (49%)	32 (32%)	4 (4%)	6 (6%)	9 (9%)	1.94	1.26
Gender roles affect women's involvement in agribusiness projects	5 (5%)	8 (8%)	3 (3%)	32 (32%)	52 (52%)	3.99	1.32
Composite Mean and Standard Deviation						3.35	1.32

Table 2 presents a summary of gender roles and how they have been affecting women's involvement in community agribusiness projects. 19 (4%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement that gender roles hinder women from participating in agribusiness projects within the community. Similarly, 29 (6%) of the participants disagreed with the opinion. On the other hand, 88 (18%) of the respondents expressed that they

were uncertain on whether gender roles hinder women from participating in agribusiness projects within the community. In addition, 244 (48%) of participants agreed and 117 (24%) strongly agreed that gender roles hinder women from participating in agribusiness projects within the community. The composite mean for this statement is 3.99 and the standard deviation is 1.32. The high composite mean indicates that on average, participants of the research lean

towards agreeing that gender roles hinder women's participation in community agribusiness project. The standard deviation of 1.32 implies that there is a fair level of variation in the responses. While some participants strongly disagree with the statements, most of them seemed to agree with the idea. A majority of the farmers also seemed to agree that there are specific gender roles associated with agriculture and agribusiness in your community. They expressed that most leadership positions in the community agribusiness projects are awarded to men because they are deemed more capable of leading.

In addition, 44 (9%) of the respondents strongly disagreed and 88 (18%) with the statement that there are specific gender roles associated with agriculture and agribusiness in Kieni, Nyeri. On the other hand, 10 (2%) of the participants were neutral with their opinion concerning the statement. 205 (42%) of the participants agreed with the statement that there are particular gender roles associated with agriculture and agribusiness in the community. In addition, 141.23 (29%) strongly agreed with the statement. This statement has a composite mean of 3.64 and a standard deviation of 1.30. The composite mean of 3.64 indicates that, generally speaking, respondents lean toward agreeing with the assertion that certain gender roles are connected to agribusiness and agriculture in Kieni, Nyeri. Similarly, the moderate dispersion around this mean, as indicated by the standard deviation of 1.30, suggests that although the majority of respondents err on the side of agreement, there is some variation in the intensity of their views. In most communities in Kenya, Women are frequently involved in smaller-scale farming, crop management, and household chores. They may work in post-harvest activities like food preservation in addition to planting, weeding, and harvesting. In many areas, women are also in charge of overseeing domestic agricultural operations and taking part in neighbourhood marketplaces. On the other hand, men often take up the primary decision-making roles in agribusiness, land management, some production roles and they also handle some financial aspects and strategic planning.

93 (19%) strongly disagreed and 93 (19%) disagreed that women should be involved in community agribusiness projects. Other than that, 39 (8%) were indifferent regarding the need of women being involved in community agribusiness projects. Nevertheless, 195 (40%) of the respondents and 78 (16%) of the respondents agreed that women should be involved in community agribusiness projects. The composite mean of this statement is 3.21 while the standard deviation is 1.40. The composite mean is marginally higher than the scale's midpoint (3) and suggests that, generally speaking, respondents incline in favor of agreeing that women should be involved in community agricultural projects. There is moderate diversity in the replies, as indicated by the standard deviation of about 1.40. This implies that although there is a general consensus, respondents' perspectives differ greatly from one another. Unfortunately, norm and values are pervasive so much in the community so that women are even unable dedicate enough time to agribusiness and economically productive activities. Women tend to be overburdened by domestic

chores and demands on their time from family and community. Despite this important role that they play, domestic labour is generally undervalued and women receive no compensation. Although women do not get enough acknowledgment for their immense contribution in agricultural production and even in other value chains in Agriculture, even male participants do not agree with women not being involved in agribusiness. Women smallholder farmers' agricultural endeavours are typically viewed as an extension of their household duties. Their contributions therefore continue to be informal and go unacknowledged. This has a knock-on impact that limits access to cooperatives, farmer groups, and marketplaces, which lowers the productivity and visibility of female farmers relative to male farmers.

239 (49%) of the participants strongly disagreed and 156 (32%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement that gender roles do not affect women's involvement in agribusiness projects. Contrarily, 19 (4%) of the participants were indifferent concerning the effect of gender roles on women's involvement in agribusiness projects. On the other hand, 29 (6%) of the participants agreed and 44 (9%) of the participants strongly agreed that gender roles do not affect women's involvement in agribusiness projects. The composite mean of this statement is 1.94 while standard deviation is 1.26. The scale's middle (3) is not reached by the mean, which is roughly 1.94. This suggests that participants generally trend toward disagreeing when it comes to the claim that gender roles have no influence on women's participation in agricultural initiatives. Additionally, there is a moderate amount of diversity in the responses, as indicated by the standard deviation, which is roughly 1.26. This implies that there is a wide diversity of opinions among the responders, notwithstanding the general inclination toward disagreement.

Like in many parts of the country, gender roles in agribusiness projects follow traditional patterns that assign specific responsibilities to women and men. For instance, production is mostly done by women while roles like ownership, decision making and income control is associated with men. Similarly, 24 (5%) of the respondents strongly disagreed and 39 (8%) of the respondents disagreed that gender roles affect women's involvement in agribusiness projects. 15 (3%) of the participants were uncertain with the opinion while 156 (32%) of the participants agreed and 253 (52%) of the respondents strongly agreed that gender roles affect women's involvement in agribusiness. This statement has a composite mean of 3.99 and a standard deviation of 1.32. The composite mean is almost 4, indicating that respondents generally incline towards agreeing that gender roles prevent women from participating in agribusiness initiatives, though not strongly. A standard deviation of 1.32 indicates that there is a fair amount of variation in the responses but a majority of the respondents are in agreement with the statement that gender roles affect women's participation in community agribusiness projects.

In summary, gender roles and norms hinder optimal women participation in community agribusiness projects as it is depicted by the highest response rate of agreement. This data shows that a majority of the participants agree that gender roles negatively affect women's participation in community agribusiness projects. Traditional gender roles often specify that men should do more visible or profitable chores like clearing land and selling crops, while women should focus on less apparent but equally important tasks like planting, weeding, and harvesting. This disparity may limit women's opportunities for recognition and financial success while undervaluing their contributions. In addition to their work in agriculture, women usually shoulder a large portion of the domestic duties. Their ability to commit time and energy to farming may be hampered by this dual load.

Data from interview questions revealed that gender inequality was considered to be the biggest challenge to making important agricultural decisions and was affecting women participation. For example, one participant stated:

*“As a woman, I cannot be considered to be equal to my husband by even the chief or another person in the community. This means that my issues will be looked into last and my husband's or my brother's issues will be handled first.”*

This means that women consider themselves inferior to men because society has created a norm for treating women as so.

## V. SUMMARY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### ➤ Summary of Findings

The target population for this study consisted of 24 farmer groups with a total of 600 women, and 16 extension officers working in the constituency. This study used simple random sampling procedure to select the farmer groups. The study analysed questionnaires from 487 participants completed the study and belonging to 24 women groups in Kieni Constituency. Interview distributed to 16 farming extension officers showed that gender inequality and lack of sustainable women empowerment programs contributes to reduced participation of women in agribusiness.

### ➤ Gender Roles Influence on Women's Participation in Community Agribusiness Projects

The findings show that gender roles ( $r=0.864$ ,  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ) have a major impact on women's participation in community agribusiness projects. Leadership and decision-making in agriculture are often associated with men, further marginalising women's participation. Furthermore, the study emphasises the community's understanding of the gendered division of labour in agriculture, with many respondents stating that particular positions in agribusiness are culturally ascribed to men and women. As a result, women's contributions are underestimated and frequently neglected, especially in leadership and decision-making roles.

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