

## ABSTRACT

Civic education programmes in Kenya were carried out by civil society organizations and the government to create political awareness on the public. The central argument of the study was that civic education was influenced by certain issues in promoting public participation in elections. Specifically, the study examined civic education in relation to participation in elections in Bungoma County, 1992-2013. With the re-introduction of multi-party democracy in Kenya in 1991, civil society organizations emerged to provide civic education on new systems of government and the need for participation in the 1992 General Elections. A series of civic education activities were undertaken until 2013 when Kenya had its last General Elections according to the study. The study covers this period to assess the influence on civic education in promoting public participation in elections. The purpose of the study was therefore to analyse the influence of civic education on public participation in elections in Bungoma County, 1992 – 2013. The objectives of the study were to ascertain the development and trend of civic education, analyze the efforts made by the government and the civil society organizations to promote civic education, investigate the challenges that faced civic education on public participation in elections and to evaluate the performance of civic education in Bungoma County. The study was based on the Rational Choice Theory which explains human behaviour in the socio- economic and political spheres as being based on rational choice of the most preferred and suitable options available. The theory was put to use to emphasize the individuals' rationale to embrace or object to civic education as an incentive to participate in elections. The study adopted a qualitative research design. Stratified random sampling technique was employed to select 382 respondents from a sample size population of 68,855 people in Kimilili Sub-County. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 30 civic educators from Civil Society Organizations. Qualitative methods were used to collect, analyse and present data. Primary data was obtained through administering questionnaires, oral interview and focus group discussions. Secondary data was obtained from libraries of higher institutions of learning and selected websites. The study ascertained that civic education gradually developed and was provided by the government and the civil society organizations. However, both extrinsic and intrinsic impediments influenced it in promoting public participation in elections. Low civic awareness, non-performance of political leaders, poor management and administration of elections, political ethnicity, inadequate financial resources and the negative attitude towards civic education culminated leading to voter apathy. More so, civic education was not modelled on practices that would lead to participation in elections. The study therefore concluded that with correct implementation of civic education and reformation of government institutions, greater public participation in elections will be achieved.