

**TITLE:** Gender Construction in Ekegusii

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## **GENDER CONSTRUCTION IN EKEGUSII**

### ***Abstract***

Gender as an organizing principle is real in many societies. Such societies therefore construct gender consciously or unconsciously. The Gusii community whose speakers are Abagusii and who speak Ekegusii, a Bantu language, use their cultural practices and language to construct, represent and maintain gender. Using the *Critical Discourse Approach*, this paper shows how the community constructs gender through the socialization processes that accompany birth and naming. The socialization process that accompanies birth and names given to each gender reveal the societal expectations of men and women as well as the social status that these genders assume in society. The paper concludes that birth and naming carries nuances that clearly define a Gusii man and a Gusii woman.

**Key words:** Ekegusii, gender, gender construction, culture, naming.

### **1.0 Introduction, definition of terms and literature review**

Gender as an important principle cannot be ignored especially in patriarchal societies such as Gusii. Gender is viewed as a social construct which determines how one fits in a society as either male or female. Since this is not an inherent trait, it has to be acquired in a given cultural setting through various socialization processes. Some scholars have however viewed gender as a western phenomenon that is absent in African contexts. Oyewumi (1997) has argued that gender is not an organizing principle in Yoruba society. She proposes that Yoruba people do not do gender as the western societies do. She asserts that ‘The social categories “men” and “women” were nonexistent, and hence no gender system was in place. Rather, the primary principle of social organization was seniority, defined by relative age.’(p.31)

Oyewumi’s propositions notwithstanding, gender as a social category seems to run through the Abagusii community’s socialization system. We want to be in agreement with Stahlberg et al. (2007:163) who propose that the distinction between male and female has been present as long as language has existed. Gender is marked right from birth through death in the Gusii community. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003:16) agree that one’s sex simply sets a stage for a lifetime process of gendering which enables the child to become through learning how to be male or female. Gendering is therefore not a natural happening but something that has to be learnt. As soon as children can comprehend language, they start a socialization process that already has gender infused in it. Wood (2011:160) has indeed observed that ‘we are born into a gendered society that guides our understanding of gender and shapes our personal gender identities.’ This implies that gendering is both covert and overt. Children acquire language and behaviour even before they fully comprehend that they are constructing and reproducing gender. Janssen and Murachver (2004: 180) have suggested that gendering is done by behaviour. They posit that ‘These ways of behaving easily become habit, so that one has to consciously “undo” gender to avoid them. These behaviours include social roles within the home and the workforce, styles of dress, interests, hobbies, and styles of communication.’ As Abagusii children acquire language they for instance learn to respond with an ‘oo’ sound if they are boys and an ‘ee’ sound if they are girls when they are called out by other people. Such ways of gender construction reflects what Lorber (1999: 280) posits that ‘... individuals learn what is expected, see what is expected, act and react in expected ways and thus simultaneously construct and maintain the gender order.’

The community further trains children on different chores depending on their sex. While boys are trained on the chores that males are likely to take part in, girls on the other hand are likely to assist in chores which females take part in. Musyoka rightly (2011: 71) observes that social roles in many African societies were organized in such a way that each gender had specific roles to play. The training of various roles is an overt manner of constructing gender while others such as naming will be considered covert since the child is not in a position to comprehend the meaning and gender nuances of the assigned names. Naming is nevertheless a process of gendering since the names given to the specific genders are culturally predetermined. While gender construction has been viewed as a repetitive performance by an individual, the acts that are repeated are not that person’s invention. A person simply repeats what has been around for quite some time (Butler 1999).

Naming is thus a reproduction of the names that have been around for a long time. The data analyzed in this paper is obtained from interviews with native speakers of Ekegusii.

## **2.0 Theoretical perspectives**

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a theory which addresses social problems and it generally views society as having various forms of power imbalances which it aims at exposing. Habermas (1967:259) views CDA as ‘...fundamentally interested in analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination and control when these are manifested in language.’ In this regard, discourse is perceived as an instrument of power. The way it exerts power is usually obscure to a layperson since language use is usually perceived as commonplace. CDA as an approach to discourse analysis however attempts to make apparent the connection between discourse and other societal practices, power included.

CDA begins its analysis with problems and not necessarily texts and interaction (Fairclough 2001:229). The social problems range from social inequality in class, ethnicity, race, and gender among others. These social issues are usually revealed through an analysis of language. According to Frank (1989:108) language has three uses: a mirror, a tool and a weapon. Such a view of language as presented by Frank enables one to analyze how language reveals societal matters, how it is used for interaction and how it can be used to legitimize the power relations that exist.

A study of discourse that accompanies birth and naming is examined in this paper to reveal how gender is constructed in Ekegusii. Since the proponents of CDA have argued that there is always inequality where power relations are involved this paper examines how this is achieved through the socialization process accompanying birth and naming.

## **3.0 Results and discussion**

This section presents data on the socialization processes accompanying birth and names assigned to each gender. The practices that surround birth are first analyzed with an intention of showing the society’s perceptions regarding the boy child and the girl child. Since the community has had contacts with other communities, some borrowed names are also analyzed alongside indigenous names.

### **3.1 Socialization and gendering at birth**

Culturally, the ceremonies, rites and practices surrounding birth and its aftermath provide one of the most fertile terrains in imprinting gender as well as institutionalizing its continued conceptualization. The birth of a baby boy and a baby girl are received and proclaimed differently, marking the very first overt differentiation in gender marking and thus construction. The birth of boys was proclaimed by three ululations while the birth of girls was proclaimed by one ululation. The pattern of ululations that announce birth in this community cannot be claimed to be anything that was learnt or copied from the western societies. The birth of a boy was further accompanied with chanting by the women mid-wives which emphasizes perception of the child’s gender. The

chanting, as the example below shows, thus becomes the first demonstration of nuanced gender manifestation in linguistic expression.

|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <i>obeire omosacha boronge</i>       | ( he has become a true/ real man )                 |
| <i>onyorire esiro</i>                | ( he has found a pillar)                           |
| <i>onyorire egesaku</i>              | ( he has found/sired a tribe/community)            |
| <i>oyo igo aegwa ekerogo kengima</i> | ( this one has truly been bestowed a chair/ seat.) |

Birth in the Gusii society is centrally implicated in the issues of lineage continuity, posterity and prosperity and underpins the very issue of survival itself. Thus, there is a whole discourse of language in which the proclamations, ululations and chants associated with birth are either an affirmation of continuity, in the case of a birth of a baby boy; or birth was an omen of termination in the case of the birth of a baby girl. From a linguistic perspective, the chants are heavily symbolic and subtly nuanced in relation to gender construction. Thus the lexical items *omosacha boronge* (a true man/real man), *esiro* (a pillar), *onyorire egesaku* (he found/sired a tribe/ community) and *oyo igo aegwa ekerogo kengima* (this one has been bestowed a chair/seat), are clear markers of gender differentiation within this context. The suggestion that the baby has been given a seat symbolizes stability since the boy child will remain in the homestead whereas the birth of a girl is seen as transient since she will leave the family upon marriage. The birth of a boy child is therefore, a marked assurance of the continuation of the family lineage. The converse is true of a baby girl. The single ululation that accompanies the birth of the girl child simply announces that the birth has been successful besides proclaiming the sex of the baby. Right from the earliest stage the sex of a child seems to play a pivotal role in society. The chant praises the father of the boy and declares of his elevated status simply as a true man by the fact that he now has a son. Although the different ways of proclaiming the births of the different sexes are cultural, they are nonetheless pointers to gender construction.

In situations where a boy is born after several girls, the ululations were usually more than the standard three. There were also additional chants for both parents. An example of a chant is presented below:

|                                |                                     |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>rero kwabeire omokungu</i>  | (now you have become a wife/ woman) |
| <i>konye igo ore egesagane</i> | (you have been just but a lass)     |
| <i>rero kwabeire omosacha</i>  | (now you have become a husband/man) |
| <i>konye igo ore omoisiam</i>  | (you have been just but a lad)      |

The birth of a boy graduates the parents for a second time to becoming wife/woman and husband/man respectively. The gendering in this community is not purely based on taking up roles of man and wife but also on the siring of a male child from the relationship. Gendering is therefore not purely exhibiting qualities of a good wife or husband but also procreating a child who will carry on the family lineage. While gendering builds on biological sex, there is an extra aspect of gendering which builds on reproducing a particular biological sex.

### 3.2 Gendering through naming

Naming of children is equally important in the society as it ensures the continuity of a family. Dead relatives, community and national heroes and heroines are usually named after. This kind of naming partly explains why the sex of a child is important and it was marked differently. The community venerates dead kinsmen who can only be 'relived' in the lives of new born children. It is a sacrilege for a spirit of the dead not to find a child to be named after. This is worse if the dead person is a man and therefore there is a danger of such a person being forgotten completely in the family lineage. Grandmothers are usually entrusted with the role of naming and ensuring that the lives of only ethical members are 'relived'. Lau (1995: 374) has posited that it is women who are required to be 'guardians of culture'.

Oyewumi (1997:40) has claimed about Yoruba that 'most names and all pronouns are ungendered.' This holds true for pronouns in Ekegusii. Singular personal pronouns such as *inche*, *aye*, *oyo*, *oyio*, *ere* (me, you, this one, that one<sup>1</sup>, him/her) are indeed ungendered. The case is different for most names however as a majority of names are distinct for each sex.

#### 3.2.1 Female names associated with food and crops

There are a few female names that are associated with types of food. These include *Nyaboke* and *Gesare*. *Nyaboke* is derived from *oboke*, honey. The name *Gesare* is derived from *egesare*, or cowpeas as a type of vegetable. Tending and harvesting vegetables is a feminine duty and it is thus not surprising that such a name is given to females. As for the name *Nyaboke* which translates to honey, Wa Mutiso (2006: 9) observes that women among the Swahili which is also a Bantu community are given names which associate them with passivity. Among the examples of names he gives include *Asali* which is a cognate to *Nyaboke* as it also means honey. Bees work to make honey, but honey is seen as a product of this hard work. The name *Nyaboke* seems to imply the gender roles in the Gusii community since it is men who work to make wealth while women simply take care of the wealth. Men are referred to as *abasacha*, a derivation from the verb *gosacha*, which translates to 'look for or gather wealth.' Women on the other hand are referred to as *abakungu*, derived from the verb *gokunga*, which translates to 'take care of (wealth)'. The second perception of this name is that it initially begins as an endearing name especially for beautiful girls who may be viewed as being 'sweet'. With time what may have begun as a nickname or a term of endearment becomes a name. While a girl's beauty was appreciated she is likened to a product which depicts passivity. Steady (1981 in Musyoka 2011:72) suggests that colonialism introduced systems of inequality and oppression and that men were viewed as having stronger traits and were assigned challenging duties. Women were seen as having weaker qualities and were assigned less challenging domestic chores. This paper however holds the view that gendering was real in the community and that colonialism simply built on what was already in existence. The terms *omosacha* and *omokungu* for instance were not an advent of colonialism in this community.

<sup>1</sup> The use of 'one' in this context refers only to a person and not objects. Reference to objects and things uses 'eke' (this one) and 'ekio' (that one) respectively.

### 3.2.2 Male names associated with food and crops

The Abagusii's traditional staple food is *ugali* made from finger millet flour and vegetables such as African night shade and spider flower. The term used to refer to *ugali* is *obokima* or *obuba*. The name *Obuba* which is also a referent for *ugali* is suggestive of one who liked eating especially after short intervals. Although the community ridicules gluttony, the name *Obuba* does not carry negative connotations. A child who likes eating is presumed to grow up strong and healthy. Additionally, since *obuba* is the staple food in the community assigning such a name to males implies their principal rank in the society. Another name is *Omboga/ Mboga/Nyamboga* which is a derivation from *emboga*, pig weed, a type of vegetable. The vegetable can be cooked alone although it is usually added to other vegetables to counter their bitter taste. The vegetable may be alleged to reflect men's perceived nature. Women are portrayed through proverbs as having sassy mouths, while men are perceived as good orators who usually sit at the council of elders to resolve conflicts. However with the western influence, crops such as *echa* (tea), *chibando*<sup>2</sup> (maize) and *amaoga*<sup>3</sup> (Pyrethrum) were introduced. As a result male names such as *Nyachae*, *Nyabando* and *Nyaoga* were respectively derived from these crops. Tea and pyrethrum are among the cash crops grown in Gusii land. Maize is grown both as a staple food and also as a cash crop. The name *Nyabando* may have been initially given in memory of someone who traded in cereals such as maize. These names subtly nuance the gender positions in economic terms since men are generally supposed to 'gosacha (to look for property) and women are to 'gokunga' (to take care of property). A study done by Suda (2002:315) reveals that there is a low female participation rate in agriculture in Kenya in general. This leads to a conclusion that most women are limited to the production of subsistence crops while cash crop production remains principally a male responsibility. Since cash crops have economic benefit, farming of such crops leads to ownership of property. Ntabo (2006:244) has also made the following observation about Abagusii:

In the traditional setting, the culture of the Gusii people did not give women opportunity to own property. Over the years, men in this society have managed to dominate women because they have put everything in their hands. As a consequence, for women to enjoy the use of resources, they have to subject themselves to the "Owners" of the wealth.

### 3.2.3 Common female names

All the informants used in this study were in agreement that there are four common female names: *Kemunto*, *Kwamboka*, *Kerubo* and *Moraa*. These names have a dual purpose. They show landmarks of the migration of the Abagusii from Luo land to their current homeland and they were given to women when they were traditionally 'wedded'. The name *Kemunto* marked the arrival of the Abagusii people at the Kavirondo gulf<sup>4</sup>, while the name *Kwamboka* marks the crossing of the gulf<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> This term is borrowed from the Luos. The Ekegusii term for maize is *ebituma*. The two terms are now synonyms in Ekegusii.

<sup>3</sup> The term *amaoga* literally translates to flowers. This is probably in reference to the part of pyrethrum that is harvested.

<sup>4</sup> A gulf is called *ekemunto* in Ekegusii

<sup>5</sup> To cross over something is referred to as *kwamboka*

*Kerubo* on the other hand is a reminder of the Abagusii's arrival at the Kano plains<sup>6</sup>. While the name may have been coined when the Abagusii reached the Kano plains, it is important to note that plains are also common in Gusii land. Such land is ideal for grazing livestock and digging up clay soil which is commonly used for daubing mud-walled and floored houses. The assigning of such a name to females is not ambiguous as its subtle gendering can further be arrived at from the community's cultural perception of women. Women do not own livestock but they are usually viewed as a source of such wealth especially the one that is obtained in the form of cows that are given as dowry. Smearing houses with clay is a women's duty and it is therefore a kind of gendering to give such a name to women. The name *Moraa* on the other hand is a reminder of the time that the Abagusii reached Gusii land where there were a number of *emeraa* shrubs. The shrubs are incorporated in a proverb: *otabwati omwabo obwata moraa mwomo*. The translation of this is 'he who does not have siblings holds onto a dry *omoraa* shrub'. It is believed that the proverb arose from an incident of a warrior who was found dead while holding to a dry *omoraa* shrub probably because he had no kinsmen to warn him on time. The proverb subtly suggests the importance of kinsmen and these can only be available through child bearing which is majorly perceived as a woman's duty. Although these names initially suggest the major land marks of Abagusii migration, they seem to emphasize that women are transitory since they relocate upon marriage. It is thus arguable that this may be the rationale for giving women names that are a reminder of migration.

### 3.2.4 Common male names

Unlike for the females names where the informants unanimously agreed on common names, there seemed to be no uniformity for 'common' male names. Due to this the researcher opted to analyze names that venerate heroes and those that are suggestive of men's character and vocations. The mention of these names automatically places them in the community. The names which refer to heroes such include *Otenyo*, who was respected for his bravery when he wounded Northcote who was a colonial assistant District Commissioner. Other heroes are *Ogega*, a businessman who became famous for buying the first vehicle<sup>7</sup> in Gusii land. Others include *Morara* and *Nyaanga*. *Morara* was a brave and fiery politician in the first parliament after independence. *Nyaanga*<sup>8</sup> on the other hand was among the first successful businessmen in Gusii land.

The names which suggest men's character and profession include *Orina* and *Moturi*. The first name comes from the verb '*korina*' which means 'to climb'. It is men who usually climbed trees and thus the name. *Moturi* comes from the verb '*gotura*' which means to shape metals into useful tools and ornaments. One of the skills that men engaged in is blacksmith.

It can be observed that unlike the common female names which show migration, the male names show their character, achievement and vocation. A name such as *Moturi* shows a craft that had monetary implications unlike a name such as *Kerubo* which shows a domestic chore that women took part in. Domestic chores like daubing did not attract any kind of payment or returns.

<sup>6</sup> Plain land is referred to as *ekerubo* in Ekegusii

<sup>7</sup> This vehicle was a bus.

<sup>8</sup> *Nyaanga* is from *chianga* which means clothes. This businessman was clothes stockist



### 3.2.5 Female names that show adornments

Some female names are suggestive of both traditional and modern ornamentation. These include: *Bwari*, *Bosibori*, *Nyanduko*, *Bochaberi*, *Bochere*, *Nyarinda*, and *Kerebi*. The names *Bwari* and *Bosibori* refer to a beautiful and nice looking girl although *Bwari* is considered to be more beautiful than *Bosibori*. The names *Nyanduko*, *Bochaberi* and *Bochere* refer to beautification by use of beads which would make necklaces and armlets. Finally the names *Nyarinda* and *Kerebi* are modern forms of adornments. *Nyarinda* is derived from 'ririnda' which is a type of wrap-round skirt while *Kerebi* is a head-scarf. Women seem to be viewed as objects of beauty whose beauty is measured from her facial and head looks, her adornments and even the dressing of her lower part of the body. It is assumed that the women wore blouses with the wrapper skirts but there is no name that is derived from blouses. There is a proverb: *omoiseke esangonde omonyene emori namoroche* (a girl with beautiful hips has been noticed by the calf's owner) which puts emphasis on hips as one marker of a woman's beauty.

### 3.2.6 Male names that show cultural contact

There are names that show contact with western culture especially during the colonial period. These include *Somoni*, *Getange*, *Keraka*, *Oboyi/Maboye/ Maboyi*, *Bairoti* and *Nyabengi*. The name *Somoni* is from *esomoni*, a fifty cent, and the name reflects the use of such currency. A name that refers to a fifty cent may look diminutive if we consider the present day economy but this may not be the case when it is viewed from the historical period when it came into use. The name *Getange*<sup>9</sup> refers to the Kenya – Uganda railway. The railway line does not pass through Gusii land but some men may have provided labour during its construction. The name *Keraka* is an accommodation of the English word 'clerk'. Seemingly it is men, *abasacha*, who took up clerical jobs. *Oboyi* is an accommodation of 'oh boy' while the names *Maboye/ Maboyi* reflect an accommodation of the English phrase 'my boy'. These terms were a common reference to the men who worked as house-boys for the whites. While domestic chores are traditionally considered feminine the men did not seem to mind doing them since these were done at a pay. Through such duties the men took part in their duty of *gosacha*. The name *Bairoti* is an accommodation of the English word 'pilot'. Pilot was a type of cigarette that men smoked. This name suggests gendering in that it is men who usually smoked and drank local brew. For the women, only the very old were allowed to drink. Finally the name *Nyabengi* receives two suggestions of its meaning. Some informants argue that it is an accommodation of the English word 'bank'<sup>10</sup>. Others suggest that it is from 'kobenga' which implies a kind of running especially by men when they are hunting. If we adopt the former suggestion then it would suggest it is men who had more contact with banks. The latter suggestion is a reflection of one of the duties of men in the society.

### 3.2.7 Male names that refer to types of vegetation

Men bear names such as *Meroka*, *Gekonge*, *Nyabera* and *Kenyoru* which refer to types of vegetation. The name *Meroka* is derived from *omoroka*, a perennial shrub that has a medicinal

<sup>9</sup> A railway line is referred to as *egetange kie egari yo omorero*

<sup>10</sup> The Ekegusii term for bank is *ebengi*

value. Its perennial nature has made it to be quoted in a proverb which literally translates to ‘men are like the *omoroka* (plural *emeroka*) shrub’. The saying encourages men to take heart in times of misfortune such as economic loss or ill health for they will rejuvenate once more just like the *omoroka* shrub. The name subtly nuances the character that is expected of men as enduring and remaining optimistic at all times. The name *Gekonge* is derived from *egekonge*, meaning a tree stump. A tree stump is assumed to be hard to cut/split or uproot. This is again suggestive of the society’s expectation of men. They should be strong-willed and firm in their decisions. *Nyabera* is from *omobera* which is a type of hard wood. Its implication is more like that of *Gekonge*. Finally the name *Kenyoru* is a type of grass that is good for thatching. Thatching is a male responsibility in the community and such a name may be perceived as expressing a gender role. Although there is an argument that such a name was originally given to a child who was born in an area that had such type of grass, the gender role associated with the grass cannot be ignored.

### 3.2.8 Male names that are a corruption of English names

There are a few names that have been corrupted from English names. These are names of colonial administrators and missionaries. They include *Nyarigoti* which is from Northcote, an assistant District Commissioner whom the Abagusii rebelled against in 1908. Another name is *Nyangaresi*, from Nicklace who was a colonial administrator. A third name is *Pengo*, from Reverend Pingoos who was a missionary. In the accommodation and subsequent naming, these names were assigned to males only.

### 3.2.9 Male names originating from animals

Children whose siblings died at infancy were given names that are derived from wild animals in an effort to confuse the evil spirits. This was done through a cultural ritual known as *gotakera*, dedication. Men however bear names that are derived from wild and domestic animals but which do not suggest the dedication ritual. These names may have come into use probably when these animals were killed or introduced to Gusii land. The names include: *Simba* ( derived from *esimba*, lion), *Masese* ( derived from *chisese*, dogs), *Mangera* (derived from *chingera*, buffaloes), *Onchoke*, ( derived from *chinchoke*, bees), *Ong’ombe* (derived from *eng’ombe*, cow) *Ombori/ Ombuori*<sup>11</sup> (derived from *embori*, a goat), *Ong’ondi* (derived from *eng’ondi*, a sheep) *Ng’oko* (from *eng’oko*, a hen), *Nyankuru* ( derived from *enkuru*, a tortoise) and *Mabururu* (derived from *amabururu*, butterflies). Since it is men who took part in warfare such as the killing of wild animals, it is not surprising that these names are given to them. Animals like lions, buffaloes and dogs are fierce and dangerous and these names may hint at the perception of men in the community. Wa Mutiso (2006: 6) suggests that in communities such as Swahili men tend to have names that show aggressiveness. The Abagusii community seems to subtly gender men towards these traits too. Since the Abagusii did not practice bee-keeping, the name *Onchoke* may simply be suggestive of the fierceness bees while the name *Nyankuru*, seems to suggest the enduring nature of the tortoise. *Mabururu*, for butterflies may not be interpreted as suggesting the beauty of the butterflies but probably the fact it is not easy to catch them.

<sup>11</sup> *Ombuori* may have been borrowed from Dholuo *Nyaburi* which refers to a female goat that has given birth.

The names *On'gombe*, *Ombori*, *Ong'ondi* and *Ng'oko* may have come into use as a kind of praise of someone who had many of these domestic animals. It is necessary to point out that cows, goats and sheep are viewed as commercial animals and it is usually men who engage in the business of buying and selling them. The names are therefore suggestive of the gender role of men. Chicken, especially when they are many can also have a commercial purpose.

### 3.10 Loan names

It is important to point out that Abagusii have had prolonged contact with their neighbours especially the Luo, leading to the sharing of some names. These names include *Otieno*, *Onyango*, *Ouko*, *Mboya*, *Ochora*, *Ogari*, *Ouma*, *Okinyi*, *Nyandega*, *Ochwangi* and *Ondieki*. A number of these names have been modified so as to fit the phonotactics of Ekegusii. The frequency of these names is higher among the Luo than among the Gusii community thereby providing evidence that these are names that Abagusii have borrowed from the Luo and not vice versa. Surprisingly, they seem to be given only to boys and the researcher is yet to come across a girl name that has been borrowed into the community from the Luo. These names may be a pointer to gender construction since the men are the ones who usually travel in search of jobs in line with their role of looking for wealth. The women's duties centre on the homestead and while it is the women who are charged with the naming responsibility, these borrowed names are likely to have been suggestions from men. There are a few names from the Agikuyu community which have also been integrated in Gusii community. These include: *Karani*, *Kariuki*, *Nchoroke* (from the name *Njoroge*), *Chomo* (from Jomo Kenyatta) and only one female name: *Njeri* which has been phonotactically adapted to *Ncheri*. We can again note the inequality in the number of names borrowed from the Agikuyu for each gender.

### 4. 0 Conclusion

The aim of this was to show that Ekegusii constructs gender right from birth and through the names that are given to each gender. This has been shown by analyzing the cultural nuances that accompany the birth of children and analyzing the meaning and cultural perceptions that various names have. By so doing, the paper has indicated that various cultural practices and names are not arbitrary but they construct and keep the gender views and roles. The community subtly constructs a patriarchal order through which men occupy a higher status socially and economically. The roles of men allow them the liberty to be travelled and to engage in economically viable activities which get imprinted in their names. By use of the analyzed data, the paper has argued that gender phenomenon cannot be viewed as an import from the west but rather it has been an important principle in this community.

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