

Abstract

This paper explores gender relations in Gikuyu oral literature. It focuses on resistance and subversion to male dominance in narratives, proverbs and songs. The study noted that proverbs depict women subordination in the Gikuyu community probably because they were a male genre. Although narratives presented women as subordinate, there were episodes in Gikuyu narratives that demonstrated resistance and subversion to the established patriarchal order. Songs on the other hand reveal that a new approach to gender issues is inevitable, evidenced in the way modern Gikuyu musicians use their lyrics to shed light on how to deal with gender relations; proposing new modes of behavior that help women to resist subordination. The study concludes that oral literature, which bound the traditional Gikuyu community together; provide a platform for resistance against the society's oppressive rules and norms that facilitate inequality in social construction of gender.