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**THE ROLE OF SPECIALISED PRINT MEDIA IN INFLUENCING
GENDER ROLES: A CASE OF SELECTED MAGAZINES FOR THE
MODERN WOMAN**

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ABSTRACT

While developing countries struggle to overcome social, economic and political problems within a shifting world, the pivotal role played by specialized media continues to provoke debate among these countries. It is important to consider specialized media and its contribution to women empowerment. Their contribution to women empowerment needs to be investigated. The study investigated the portrayal of women in Kenyan magazines, and the influence it has on their choice of gender roles. The objectives for the research were: to establish whether reading certain magazines influences and encourages shifting gender roles among Kenyan women, to analyze the attitude of the modern woman on gender roles having been exposed to aesthetic media, to examine the role of the aesthetic media in offering gender education to the modern woman to re-define herself in context. The study was guided by the gender theory developed by Helen Cixous (1975) a poststructuralist feminist, who argues that women are not as firmly fixed in place as men are. Specialised media can then influence them into new gender roles. It was complemented by the modeling theory of Albert Bandura (1968) which argues that people learn new roles by emulating their role models. The study was undertaken in Nairobi city. It adopted a descriptive survey design. The target population was 1000 women in the city. A sample of 250 respondents aged 18 years and above was selected through purposive and stratified sampling. The data was collected through questionnaires, structured interviews and focus group discussions. Data analysis encompassed descriptive statistical methods with the assistance of SPSS. The study revealed that there is a relationship between the behaviour of a modern woman and the specialized media she is exposed to. It empowers them to participate in all sectors of development. The study is important such that it yields data and information on the direct link between access to magazines, specifically specialized media, and the empowerment rate among women. Women's empowerment is vital in any developing country. The study recommends that specialized media should be made available to all women irrespective of their social class or residence; this will ensure that everyone acquires knowledge and skills imparted through the media. This will play a major role in women empowerment socially, politically, and economically. The government should partner with the various publishing houses in order to subsidize the prices of these magazines which are currently expensive. This will enable more women to read the magazines often. Publishers and distributors should also ecrucially really need the information contained in the magazines in order to adopt modernity.