ABSTRACT
This study sought to establish the contribution of national decentralisation policy towards the empowerment of women. Just like in the rest of African, Rwandan women had traditionally been subject to all sorts of abuses perpetrated by the patriarchal society. This limited their access and control of resources and bearing in mind that women were the majority numerically compared to men, a big part of Rwandan population was not effectively participating in development. However, with the turn of the 20th century, women emancipation started to spread worldwide to empowerment so as to participate in development. With the introduction of decentralization in Rwanda in 2000 as the best means of bringing services closer to the people, there was need to find how women were benefiting at the backdrop of how they had been segregated for a long time. This study was carried out in Bugesera district in the eastern province of Rwanda and covered period between 2000 and 2010. The research adopted both qualitative and quantitative designs. Responses were obtained from primary and secondary sources. A response rate of 145 was achieved instead of the anticipated 175 respondents. These included community members, opinion leaders, and representatives of NGOs working in the district and government officials from five randomly selected sectors at district, regional and national levels. It was found that decentralisation had registered a number of achievements because there had been gender mainstreaming in most of the activities aimed at developing the district. However, it was concluded that fewer women were benefiting generally since there were fewer women involved especially at local levels. The major recommendation was that there should be continued sensitization of gender issues and that men should always be involved since there was a tendency of seeing gender issues to be regarded as “women issues