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POLITICAL GOVERNANCE AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN SELECTED COUNTY GOVERNMENTS KENYA

¹Lynn Muthoni Nganga, ²Dr. Samson Nyang'au Paul, PhD & ³Dr. Makori Maronge, PhD

¹PhD Scholar (Leadership and Governance), Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology

^{2,3}Senior Lecturer, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Women are the single largest demographic group in Kenya and thus constitute the majority of the Kenyan population. Women empowerment is not only a human right but also essential in a democracy. Governments around the globe are increasingly supporting women ministries, policies and programmes, and there seems to be greater appreciation that women are the future of their country's development. Devolved governance is increasingly being pursued across the world as a means to improve the women empowerment in the devolved states. The general objective of this study was to examine the relationship between political governance and women empowerment in selected county governments in Kenya. The study pursued the following specific objectives; to establish the influence of political governance on women empowerment in county governments in Kenya and to examine how gender mainstreaming moderates the relationship between devolved political governance and women empowerment in county governments in Kenya. The study was based on the Empowerment Theory. A conceptual framework was developed which was used in the study and depicted the interrelationship between the study variables. The independent variables was; political governance. The political governance was moderated by the gender mainstreaming. The dependent variable was the women empowerment. The study adopted a descriptive research design. For the purpose of this study, the unit of observation was 252 (women representatives, opinion leaders, Women entrepreneurs and chairpersons of women groups) drawn from the selected county governments in Kenya. The study findings showed that each of the independent variable (Political Governance) had a strong positive significant influence on the dependent variable, Women Empowerment in both cases i.e., when alone and when they were combined. The findings further indicated that Devolved Governance (Economic Governance, Political Governance, Socio-cultural Governance, Administrative Governance) positively and significantly explained 78.7% to the total variability in the dependent variable, Women Empowerment. Therefore, considering that only 21.3% of the total variability in the dependent variable, women empowerment could not be explained, this study recommends the implementors of women empowerment engage more devolved governance through Economic Governance, Political Governance, Socio-cultural Governance, and Administrative Governance in their implementation.

Key Word: Political Governance, Gender Mainstreaming, Women Empowerment.

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BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Devolved governance is presented as a means of increasing local participation, electoral accountability, and bureaucratic innovation (Lind, 2018). Over the past four decades, the empowerment of sub-national units through devolution has emerged as a way to improve public service delivery in various countries, including Bolivia, the United Kingdom, and Kenya (Kivoi, 2020). Devolution supports bureaucratic responsiveness and political accountability, with Kenya's 2010 Constitution marking a significant step in this direction. The World Bank (2021) has praised Kenya's rapid and ambitious devolution process, which created 47 counties with elected governors and assemblies. Unlike other African nations, Kenya's devolution aimed to improve service delivery, ensure geographically unbiased public spending, and limit presidential powers (Karogi, 2019). This shift has allowed local governments to acquire significant autonomous financial and administrative powers (Mumbi & Gikandi, 2019).

However, the success of devolution is not guaranteed without empowering women, a crucial factor in enhancing public service delivery and governance. Empowerment is a complex process that involves enabling women to act freely, exercise their rights, and fulfill their potential as equal partners in society (USAID, 2020). Empowering women involves creating an environment where they can implement government programs and policies affecting their lives (Manuere, 2018). Despite global efforts, no country has achieved true gender equality and total women's empowerment (UN, 2019). Effective empowerment requires fiscal, economic, political, legal, and administrative systems to be implemented simultaneously (Olatona & Olamola, 2021). While there is no conclusive evidence that devolved governance uniformly leads to women's empowerment, it is believed to contribute to better projects and collaborative governance, particularly in countries with the political will to support it (OECD, 2020). Research indicates that women's empowerment enhances the implementation of planning decisions, benefiting overall development (Indeche & Ayuma, 2021).

Statement of the Problem

Women are the single largest demographic group in Kenya and thus constitute the majority of the Kenyan population. KIPPRA (2019) reports indicate that women empowerment is not only a human right but also essential in a democracy. Governments around the globe are increasingly supporting women ministries, policies and programmes, and there seems to be greater appreciation that women are the future of their country's development (UN, 2020). Devolved governance is increasingly being pursued across the world as a means to improve the women empowerment in the devolved states (Kivoi, 2020). The Institute of Economic Affairs (2021) contends that there is a positive relationship between devolved governance and women empowerment. This was reinforced by the World Development Report (2019) report which indicated that devolved governance recognizes the contribution of women and effective enforcement of the performance of devolved states. Mumbi and Gikandi (2019) opine that effective devolved governance embrace women participation in county governments in Kenya. Karogi (2019) states that devolved governance geared towards women empowerment is critical for the successful devolved governance and has been realized in developed countries such as UK, USA, India and South Africa.

However, Kenya's women have remained at the periphery of the country's affairs for decades since independence and their needs and aspirations have not been accorded due recognition (World Youth Report, 2023). Women's empowerment in counties throughout Kenya remains disappointingly low, as reported by studies conducted by reputable international organizations like the World Bank and Transparency International. Data gathered by the latter revealed that approximately 58% of citizens expressed dissatisfaction with devolved governance's ability to spur women's empowerment (Transparency International, 2018). Alarming, Kenya ranks poorly concerning gender inequality, with a score of 64.9%, indicating substantial disparities between men and women (WEF, 2019). As a result, females face considerable hardships in securing decent employment, acquiring quality education, and attaining adequate healthcare.

According to official statistics, female-headed households represent around 30% of Kenya's total, wherein roughly half of these homes exist below the poverty line (Republic of Kenya, 2019; World Bank, 2020). Despite forming the bulk of the populace, women in Kenya endure a precarious existence marked by rampant discrimination in various domains, including politics, economy, culture, and social stratum (UN, 2020). Limited access to land, credit, education, technology, and markets further exacerbates women's vulnerabilities, rendering them incapable of fully realizing their inherent potential. Hence, urgent action must be taken to rectify these inequities and uplift the status quo for good.

Further, Kabugua (2020) study sought to establish factors influencing women's economic empowerment in Kirima sub-location, Kenya. Tumo (2019) study was to determine factors influencing women empowerment through microfinance programmes in Central Division, Narok North Sub County. Kiptarus (2019) found out that women are disadvantaged as they do not have equal access to opportunities as do their counterparts. Women have been marginalized in all aspects of social, economic and political development. In addition, Gitegi and Iravo (2019) established that despite quality devolved systems, women empowerment in county governments is still wanting. A few studies have been carried out to examine the women empowerment and governance. Drawing on empirical research, Shah, Aziz and Ahmad (2021) critically analyzed the role of policy, legal and institutional framework on women participation in governance. In Kenya, the study revealed that policy, legal and institutional framework as the major issue affecting women participation in governance in Kenya. Moreover, Bouka, Berry and Kamuru (2019) and Obiero (2020) studies are narrow and suffered from conceptual gaps since they only addressed merits and demerits of women and governance. Therefore, mentioned empirical studies have yielded both conceptual and contextual gaps. This research study seeks to fill the void as it will focus on devolved governance and women empowerment in county governments in Kenya.

Research Objectives

- To establish the influence of Political Governance on women empowerment in selected county governments in Kenya.
- To examine the moderating role of Gender Mainstreaming on relationship between political governance and women empowerment in selected county governments in Kenya.

Research Hypothesis

- **H₀₁:** Political Governance does not positively and significantly affects women empowerment in county governments in Kenya.
- **H_{a2}:** Gender mainstreaming does not positively and significantly moderates the relationship between Political Governance and women empowerment in county governments in Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Souffle Theory

The Soufflé theory, proposed by Parker (1995), emphasizes the importance of fiscal relations in the process of devolution, comparing successful decentralization to the precise combination required for a soufflé to rise. Parker argues that fiscal elements are crucial for improving rural development outcomes and that decentralization must adapt continuously to changes in social, political, and economic conditions (Laryea-Adjei, 2019). Political decentralization transfers policy and legislative powers from the central government to local authorities, but this alone is insufficient without local accountability. Mechanisms such as third-party monitoring by media and NGOs, extensive participation, and central government oversight are essential for ensuring accountability at the local level (Nduta et al., 2020; Nzimakwe & Ntshakala, 2021).

Despite its advantages, the Soufflé theory's emphasis on decentralization faces criticisms. Hart and Spero (2023) argue that decentralization may foster local loyalty to regional identities over national identity, potentially risking national integrity, particularly in multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies. Additionally, decentralization can increase local-level corruption and fail to improve accountability. In low-income countries, the limited resources at the local level might be more effectively utilized if concentrated at the national level, potentially jeopardizing equity among different localities (Dabla-Norris, 2019). In Kenya, the Soufflé theory underpins the devolution process, with the fiscal powers devolution achieved through the 2010 constitution (Ahmed & Mbwambo, 2019).

Conceptual Framework

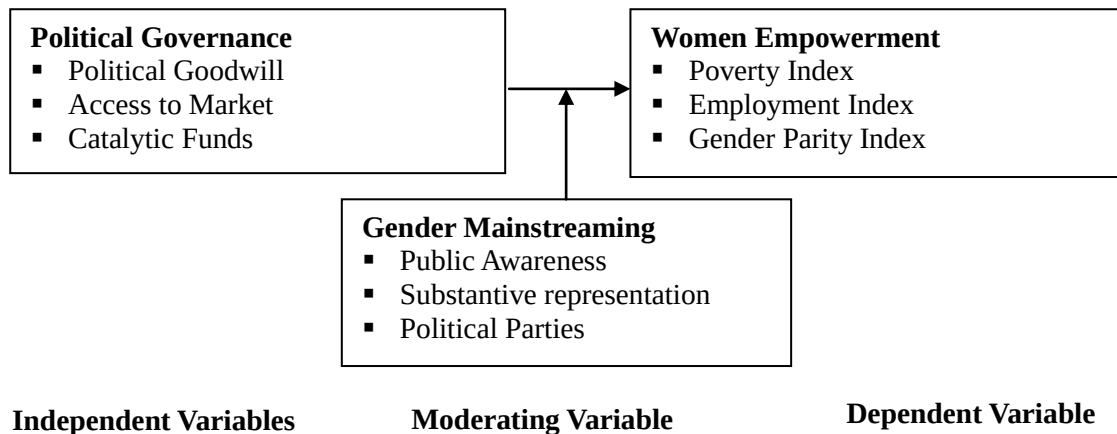


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Political Governance

The leadership of women is often described as more transparent, democratic, and sensitive to pertinent issues compared to men (Barton, 2019; Conway, 2011; Kabeer, 2021). Historically, Kenyan parliament saw very low representation of women from the 1960s to 2002, largely due to patriarchal attitudes and a one-party system that undermined women's political empowerment (Thongo, 2019). Early political figures, such as Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, believed women were incapable of leadership, and nationalist parties failed to promote women's liberation (Wambui, 2019). Globally, women remain underrepresented in parliaments despite making up nearly half the world's population, with only Rwanda and Bolivia having parliaments that reflect this ratio as of 2019 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019).

Kenya's 2010 Constitution includes robust gender equality provisions, supported by international agreements like the African Charter on People's Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (Odote & Musumba, 2019). However, for these measures to be effective, continuous dialogue and legal action are necessary to ensure women's representation in elected offices (Kabeer, 2021). The current legislative framework requires collaboration between advocacy groups and lawmakers to uphold the constitutional mandate that no more than two-thirds of members in elective bodies shall be of the same gender (Biegon, 2019). Political parties play a crucial role in advancing representative democracy, being primary vehicles for political organization and mobilization in elections (Omwami, 2021). Ensuring women's representation in these processes is essential for democratic governance and equality (Omondi, 2019).

Gender Mainstreaming

People often misconceive that only women, as caregivers, should engage in development, disregarding that both men and women contribute based on their adaptation to their environment and social roles. Gender

studies highlight the importance of supporting women's participation in development by ensuring their security and welfare due to their reproductive responsibilities (Moser & Moser, 2021). It is essential to recognize that both men and women have multiple gender identities and roles that are not solely determined by biological sex (Behra & Gupta, 2019). Promoting gender-atypical involvement in development and addressing structural inequalities through proactive awareness is crucial, as it acknowledges the different needs, experiences, and priorities of men and women.

The capacity of human resources in development requires attention, particularly for the successful integration of gender mainstreaming. There is a shortage of human resource capital needed for these initiatives, and resources must be allocated at all levels to support democratic and demand-responsive approaches in development projects (Pialek, 2019). Gender mainstreaming aims to raise awareness and build capacity to overcome development obstacles by involving both men and women and addressing the structural level of gender inequality. This includes identifying and addressing gender biases in current policies and ensuring that regular policymakers incorporate gender equality perspectives into their policies (True & Mintrom, 2020). Effective policy implementation requires a comprehensive understanding of the social, political, economic, and administrative contexts, as well as a strong commitment from policymakers and implementers at all levels (Roux, 2021).

Women Empowerment

The notion of empowerment originated with Paulo Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed," which highlighted the dichotomy between oppressors and the oppressed in society. Freire emphasized that education should make students aware of societal prejudices, enabling them to liberate themselves (Manuere, 2018).

Empowerment, as defined by Adams (2018), involves individuals or groups gaining control over their circumstances, exercising power, and achieving their goals. It is a dynamic process characterized by self-determination, self-confidence, and self-efficacy (Asaolu et al., 2018). The 1985 International Women's Conference described empowerment as redistributing social power and control over resources, aiming to enhance autonomy and self-determination so people can represent their interests responsibly (Singh, 2019). Women's empowerment specifically involves gaining power and making strategic choices, enabling them to participate in decisions affecting their lives at all levels (Rahman, 2023).

Women, who constitute over half of the world's poor population, face marginalization in many productive sectors, particularly in developing countries due to gender stereotypes (UN, 2019). Enhancing women's capabilities in economic, political, and other meaningful areas has become a global priority. Policymakers are increasingly focusing on gender mainstreaming, recognizing that women's participation in economic activities is crucial for growth and development (UN, 2019). Empowerment allows women to fully engage in and benefit from economic growth, thereby reducing poverty and enhancing societal well-being (Mmbengwa et al., 2020).

Economic empowerment is essential for achieving broader development goals and benefits society by increasing efficiency and productivity (Wiego, 2010). Despite women making up nearly half the global population, they remain disproportionately poor with limited access to empowerment opportunities (World Bank, 2019). Enhancing women's participation in decision-making and ownership of assets can significantly motivate and uplift them (Dash et al., 2019; Garikipati, 2023; Khader, 2020; Khan et al., 2023). Economic interventions for women can also alter traditional gender norms, benefiting female children and promoting significant social changes (Booz, 2020). Women's economic participation is essential for societal progress, and addressing gender-specific barriers in service provision is critical (Buvinic & O'Donnell, 2019). In regions like Mexico and Kenya, cultural shifts and governmental structures, such as devolution, play vital roles in advancing women's empowerment (UNF, 2023).

Empirical Review

An empirical literature review is a comprehensive survey of previous inquiries related to a research question. Although it can often be wide in scope, covering decades, perhaps even centuries of material, it should be narrowly tailored, addressing only the scholarship that is directly related to the research question (Miller & Cox 2021). The variables under study namely: political governance gender mainstreaming and women empowerment are discussed below.

Political Governance

Orisadare (2019) assessed the role of women's groups in political participation and economic development in Nigeria, utilizing primary data from forums and dialogues within these groups across ten local government areas in Osun state. The study revealed that while these groups had agendas, they lacked political ones, and despite enjoying government patronage, members had high illiteracy rates and were largely unaware of gender equality laws or affirmative action policies. This lack of awareness hindered their political participation and influence on economic development. Consequently, the study concluded that the current efforts of women's groups at the grassroots level were insufficient to boost women's political involvement and economic contributions effectively.

In the SADC region, Mlambo, Kapingura, and Meissner (2019) found that labor participation, effective government functions, political culture, and overall political engagement positively influenced women's political participation. However, civil liberties, human development index, and electoral process and pluralism had negative impacts. They recommended that SADC governments engage political parties to involve more women in political structures. Bayeh (2019) highlighted that women's roles in sustainable development in Ethiopia are underrepresented, emphasizing that empowerment and gender equality are crucial for women to contribute politically. Zaheer (2020) pointed out that in Pakistan, social norms, low skills, education, and lack of empowerment opportunities restrict women's political participation, which is essential for a successful democracy. Similarly, Huq (2019) demonstrated that in Bangladesh, women's participation at the grassroots level is vital for sustainable development, with significant gaps in gender balance in governance policies that need addressing to ensure equal access and participation in political power structures.

Women Empowerment

Women's empowerment is crucial for development, and devolution in Kenya has been recognized as a key factor in this process. Devolution, which involves transferring power from centralized to local government structures, aims to enhance service delivery, promote inclusive decision-making, and foster grassroots economic growth. This process has created opportunities for women to participate in politics and public life, challenging traditional gender roles and increasing female representation in county governments. The 2019 Kenyan elections saw a notable rise in women elected to county assemblies, with some counties achieving gender parity in representation (UNDP, 2019; National Gender and Equality Commission, 2018). Additionally, the Constitution of Kenya mandates that at least thirty percent of public funds in each county be allocated to gender and equity issues, ensuring that women's needs are prioritized in budgetary allocations (Constitution of Kenya, 2010).

Devolved governance also facilitates women's access to essential services like healthcare and education, which disproportionately affect women. For example, Siaya County has implemented programs to improve maternal and child health services, while Kitui County has launched free primary education initiatives targeting marginalized communities, including girls (Siaya County Government, n.d.; Kitui County Government, n.d.). Moreover, women are given platforms to participate in policy formulation and implementation through consultative meetings, ensuring that their perspectives are incorporated into policymaking (World Bank, 2021). However, significant barriers remain, including cultural norms, limited resources, and inadequate legal frameworks. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts from both

state and non-state actors to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in devolved governance practices (Gichuhi & Njuguna, 2019; Wambua, 2023).

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted positivism philosophy because the study variables were based on facts derived from the empirical literature review and also the theoretical premises highlighted in chapter two. The research design for this study was an explanatory survey research design; this is by and large a positivism approach, under objectivism ontology and epistemology, a methodological philosophy in quantitative research where we apply the methods of natural sciences to discover the study of social science (Hammersley, 2019). The study used theories and hypothesis to account for the forces that caused a certain phenomenon to occur (Cooper and Schindler, 2011).

The population for the study comprises of the unit of analysis and unit of observation and they are important measures that explain the subjects and objects under study. For the purpose of this study, the unit of analysis was women representatives, opinion leaders, women entrepreneurs and chairpersons of women groups in the selected 14 county governments in Kenya. On the other hand, the unit of observation which is the unit described by the data that one analyzes. The sample size of 155 respondents was determined based on the criteria of efficiency, representativeness, reliability, and flexibility, with each stratum/category representing 10% of the target population to ensure optimal representation. This study collected primary data using a structured questionnaire. Data analysis was performed with the aid of SPSS version 29.0 (Hayes and Matthes, 2009) using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

RESULTS

In the study, a total of 126 out of the 155 sampled responded to the study questionnaire. This translates to a response rate of 86.29%. The response rate of 86.29% gave the study high degree of representativeness that could be relied upon confidently to generalize the respondents' views. According to Portney (2020), a response rate of 50% is considered average, 60-70% is considered adequate while anything above 70% is considered to be excellent response rate. This response rate was, therefore, considered good representative of the respondents to provide information for analysis and derive conclusions, representing a response rate within the acceptable range for scientific investigations, as suggested by Sekaran (2017).

Descriptive Analysis

Political governance

The study sought to establish how the respondents responded in terms of the descriptive statistics for Political Governance that were presented as percentages, means and standard deviations. From the findings presented in Table 4.9, a majority (36.7%) agreed that the county government has established political mechanisms for women to consider vying for a civic or parliamentary position, 35.6% agreed that there is a policy on number of women holding positions in the county and party structures in the county assembly, 36.9% agreed that there is involvement of women in campaigns in the elections, 38.1% agreed that women are oriented towards politics and their training is tailored towards political leadership representation, 42.1% agreed that Political parties promote gender equity in electoral participation for women in the county assembly, while 32.5% remained neutral that The political parties and count government have provided adequate structures that support women entering politics

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Political Governance

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
The county government has established political mechanisms for women to consider vying for a civic or parliamentary position	2.4	5.6	33.3	39.7	19.0	3.67	.928
There is a policy on number of women holding positions in the county and party structures in the county assembly	1.6	12.7	32.5	34.9	18.3	3.56	.984
There is involvement of women running for political office	2.4	7.9	27.8	42.1	19.8	3.69	.959
Women are oriented towards politics and their training is tailored towards political leadership representation	4.8	9.5	21.4	38.1	26.2	3.71	1.102
Political parties promote gender equity in electoral participation for women in the county assembly.	4.0	5.6	34.1	42.1	14.3	3.57	.942
The political parties and county government have provided adequate structures that support women entering politics	2.4	11.1	27.8	34.9	23.8	3.67	1.035

The study sought to establish how political governance influenced women empowerment in terms of political good will, substantive representation and political parties in counties. On the political good will, the study established that there have been some positive trends from some politicians in regards to supporting women empowerment initiatives. Most political parties have encouraged women to vie for political seats, though the representation still falls lower than the constitutional threshold. Women political candidates are also subjected to harassment, intimidation and gender based violence during political rallies. Due to this many potential female contenders fear and prefer to keep away from politics. On substantive representation, the respondents said that the constitutional requirement of the 2/3 gender rule continues to be a challenge as the society has not fully embraced women as political leaders. The recently concluded election was an indication of how much more needs to be done to sensitize women to take their rightful place in leadership.

Gender Mainstreaming

The study generated a descriptive statistic for Gender Mainstreaming and the findings were summarized in Table 2 in terms of percentages, mean and standard deviation. The table shows that a majority (42.9%) of the respondents agreed that the staff undergo continuous gender awareness trainings to encourage the development of correct attitude, 42.9% agreed that gender perspective is integrated into on-going and future programs, 38.1% agreed that government offers capacity building opportunities to strengthen the knowledge on gender issues, 41.3% agreed that resource mobilization for gender mainstreaming has been fully achieved by the county government, 42.1% agreed that the county government has flexible terms and conditions and other benefits to encourage women to join and build their careers, 41.3% agreed that county government has policies that promote gender equality and respect of diversity, 44.4% strongly agreed that the county government considers gender mainstreaming in its policies and programs, 31.7% agreed that internal gender audits are conducted in departments in order to identify gaps and take necessary action.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Gender Mainstreaming

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
Gender perspective is integrated into on-going and future programs	1.6	7.9	19.8	42.9	27.8	3.87	.963
Government offers capacity building opportunities to strengthen the knowledge on gender sensitivity	2.4	12.7	20.6	38.1	26.2	3.73	1.061
Resource mobilization for gender mainstreaming has been fully achieved by the county government	5.6	7.9	17.5	41.3	27.8	3.78	1.109
The county government has flexible terms and conditions and other benefits to encourage women to join and build their careers	1.6	9.5	19.0	42.1	27.8	3.85	.988
County government has policies that promote gender equality and respect of diversity	3.2	11.1	15.1	41.3	29.4	3.83	1.074
Internal gender audits are conducted in departments in order to identify gaps and take necessary action	2.4	7.1	18.3	31.7	40.5	4.01	1.047

The study sought to find out how gender mainstreaming influenced women empowerment in the counties in terms of Public Awareness, Resource Mobilization and Policy Functionality. The findings revealed that on Public Awareness, the counties had attempted to sensitise women through campaigns on the need to come out and make contributions to development by taking part in the economic, political and socio-cultural environment. Through these efforts many women are no longer intimidated. On Resource Mobilization, the respondents said that there has been a lot of meetings held within the communities to encourage women to take up funds from the counties. There has also been a push to have micro enterprises register for AGPO to enable them get procurement opportunities within the counties.

Women Empowerment

The study generated a descriptive statistics table in terms of percentages, means and standard deviations for the variable Women Empowerment and presented the results in Table 3. The table shows that a majority (33.3%) of the respondents agreed that they had access to financial services, 32.5% agreed that women's opinions are valuable and should be considered when household decisions are made, 40.5% agreed that they had a specific plan/goal that they were saving up for, 35.7% agreed that women's opinions are valuable and should always be considered when household decisions are made, 31.7% agreed that they combine money and decide when to spend it, 38.9% agreed that they participate in merry-go-rounds, 35.7% agreed that they have signed up for vocational training to enrich their skills, 39.7% agreed they can make their own independent investment decisions.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Women Empowerment

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
I operate a bank account	2.4	7.9	26.2	33.3	30.2	3.81	1.033
My opinions are valuable and always considered when household decisions are made	1.6	7.1	23.8	32.5	34.9	3.92	1.009
I participate in merry-go-rounds	2.4	10.3	28.6	38.9	19.8	3.63	.993
I combine my money together and decide where to spend it when expenses come up.	2.4	10.3	29.4	31.7	26.2	3.69	1.047
I have taken up vocational training to enrich my skills to provide opportunities for me in future	1.6	6.3	27.0	35.7	29.4	3.85	.972
I can make my own independent investment decisions	1.6	15.1	22.2	39.7	21.4	3.64	1.031

Correlation Analysis

The study computed Correlation analysis to determine the strength and the direction of the relationship between the variables being studied. If the correlation values are $r = \pm 0.1$ to ± 0.29 then the relationship between the two variables is small, if it is $r = \pm 0.3$ to ± 0.49 the relationship is medium, and when $r = \pm 0.5$ and

above there is a strong relationship between the two variables under consideration. Table 4 presents the findings obtained.

Political governance is also seen to have a positive significant relationship with Women empowerment in selected county governments in Kenya, ($r = .812^{**}$, $p < 0.05$). Since the p-value (.000) was less than the selected level of significance (0.05), the relationship was considered significant. This therefore suggests that political governance affects Women empowerment in selected county governments in Kenya. The observed positive significant relationship between political governance and the Women empowerment in selected county governments in Kenya, aligns with previous research findings.

Political governance is indeed a crucial factor influencing women's empowerment, as supported by existing research. For example, a study by Kabeer and Natali (2013) found that political governance structures and processes play a significant role in shaping women's empowerment outcomes. Similarly, Karam Singh (2018) highlighted the importance of political governance in promoting women's political participation and decision-making power. These studies provide complementary evidence that underscores the significance of political governance in enhancing women's empowerment in different contexts (Poorhosseinzadeh et al., 2020; Tabo, 2023)

Table 4: Correlation Analysis

		Women empowerment in selected county governments in Kenya,	Political governance
Women empowerment in selected county governments in Kenya,	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	126	
Political governance	Pearson Correlation	.812 ^{**}	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	126	126

Regression Analysis

Test of Hypotheses

Test for Hypothesis One

H_{a1}: Political governance does not positively and significantly impacts on women empowerment in county governments in Kenya.

Regression between Women Empowerment and Political Governance

The study generated a model summary table using SPSS and as shown in Table 5 R-Square value was .660 implying that 66.0% of the total variance in Women Empowerment could be explained by Political Governance.

Table 5: Model Summary Table for Women Empowerment and Political Governance

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.812 ^a	.660	.657	.51267

a. Predictors: (Constant), Political Governance

The study also sought to test for the hypothesis to determine if there was no positive significant relationship between political governance and women empowerment in Kenya. ANOVA Table 6 generated using SPSS showed that p-value was .000 meaning that the null hypothesis was rejected and alternative hypothesis accepted in place.

Table 6: ANOVA Table for Women Empowerment and Political Governance

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	63.281	1	63.281	240.766	.000 ^b
	Residual	32.591	124	.263		
	Total	95.872	125			

a. Dependent Variable: Women Empowerment

b. Predictors: (Constant), Political Governance

The study generated a coefficient table from the dataset using SPSS and the findings were summarized in Table 6. From the table, Political Governance was found to contribute .855 for every unit increase in the dependent variable, Women Empowerment. This implies that the model equation; $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_2 X_2 + \varepsilon$ became; $Y = .641 + .855X_2$.

Table 7: Coefficients table for Women Empowerment against Political Governance

Coefficients ^a						
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.641	.206		3.110	.002
	Political Governance	.855	.055	.812	15.517	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Women Empowerment

There have been several studies conducted to examine the relationship between women's empowerment and political governance, which lend support to these research findings. For instance, a study by Subramanian and Deere (2021) on "Gender, Poverty, and Agrarian Reform in Latin America" revealed that women's participation in local politics significantly improved their access to productive resources, leading to their greater empowerment. Similarly, Swaminathan (2021) in her study titled "Women's Empowerment and Food Security: A Review of Evidence" found that better governance structures at both household and community levels positively impacted women's decision-making power over critical resources such as land and credit, thereby enhancing their overall empowerment.

Moreover, Duflo (2021) in her work "Women's Empowerment and Economic Development," noted that improving gender equality through strengthening democratic institutions had led to increased economic opportunities for women. These studies provide evidence supporting the positive association between political governance and women's empowerment, aligning with the current study's findings.

Test for Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: Gender mainstreaming does not positively and significantly moderates the relationship between Political governance **and** women empowerment in county governments in Kenya.

Moderating Effect of Gender Mainstreaming on the relation between Devolved Governance and the Dependent Variable (Women Empowerment)

In order to establish if there was a moderating Effect of Gender Mainstreaming on the relationship between the combined Independent Variables and the Dependent Variable (Women Empowerment), the study generated a model summary table using SPSS and presented the results in Table 8. From the model summary Table 8, R-Square was found to be .769 up from .758 implying that Gender Mainstreaming had a 1.1% positive

moderating effect on the relationship between Women Empowerment and the Devolved Governance (Economic Governance, Political Governance, Socio-cultural Governance, and Administrative Governance).

Table 8: Model Summary Table for Women Empowerment and Devolved Governance moderated by Gender Mainstreaming

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.871 ^a	.758	.750	.43772	.758	94.842	4	121	.000
2	.877 ^b	.769	.751	.43688	.011	1.094	5	116	.368

a. Predictors: (Constant), Administrative Governance, Socio-cultural Governance, Political Governance, Economic Governance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Administrative Governance, Socio-cultural Governance, Political Governance, Economic Governance, Gender Mainstreaming, Gender Mainstreaming and Administrative Governance, Gender Mainstreaming and Political Governance, Gender Mainstreaming and Economic Governance, Gender Mainstreaming and Socio-Cultural Governance

Through hypothesis five, the study further sought to test if gender mainstreaming does not positively and significantly moderates the relationship between devolved governance and women empowerment in Kenya. From the ANOVA Table 9, the study established that p-value was .000 meaning that the null hypothesis was rejected and alternative hypothesis accepted.

Table 9: ANOVA Table for Women Empowerment and Devolved Governance moderated by Gender Mainstreaming

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	72.688	4	18.172	94.842	.000 ^b
	Residual	23.184	121	.192		
	Total	95.872	125			
2	Regression	73.732	9	8.192	42.923	.000 ^c
	Residual	22.140	116	.191		
	Total	95.872	125			

a. Dependent Variable: Women Empowerment

b. Predictors: (Constant), Administrative Governance, Socio-cultural Governance, Political Governance, Economic Governance

c. Predictors: (Constant), Administrative Governance, Socio-cultural Governance, Political Governance, Economic Governance, Gender Mainstreaming, Gender Mainstreaming and Administrative Governance, Gender Mainstreaming and Political Governance, Gender Mainstreaming and Economic Governance, Gender Mainstreaming and Socio-Cultural Governance

The study generated a coefficient table from the collected data using SPSS and presented the results in Table 10. From the table none of the independent variables (Economic Governance, Political Governance, Socio-Cultural Governance and Administrative Governance) was found to contribute significantly to the variability in the dependent variable, Women Empowerment. This implied that the moderating variable, Gender Mainstreaming did not have a significant moderating effect on the relationship between the individual independent variables (Economic Governance, Political Governance, Socio-Cultural Governance and Administrative Governance) and Women Empowerment in Kenya. Therefore, the study did not develop any optimal model equation for the moderated relationship as none of the variables was statistically significant.

Table 10: Coefficients table for Women Empowerment against Devolved Governance moderated by Gender Streaming,

		Coefficients ^a		t	Sig.
		Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	
1	(Constant)	-.082	.217		.706
	Economic Governance	.252	.079	.250	.002
	Socio-cultural Governance	.175	.077	.145	.025
	Political Governance	.383	.082	.364	.000
	Administrative Governance	.223	.077	.217	.004
2	(Constant)	1.213	.973		.215
	Economic Governance	.041	.363	.040	.911
	Socio-cultural Governance	.200	.373	.166	.593
	Political Governance	.422	.416	.400	.313
	Administrative Governance	-.085	.271	-.082	.755
	Gender Mainstreaming	-.330	.252	-.346	.193
	Gender Mainstreaming and Economic Governance	.051	.098	.340	.608
	Gender Mainstreaming and Political Governance	-.007	.090	-.040	.942
	Gender Mainstreaming and Socio-Cultural Governance	-.022	.108	-.144	.841
	Gender Mainstreaming and Administrative Governance	.088	.081	.613	.277

a. Dependent Variable: Women Empowerment

The study by Poorhosseinzadeh et al. (2020) contributes significantly to the discourse on women's empowerment by highlighting the multifaceted nature of governance's impact on this phenomenon. Their findings, which establish a clear link between economic, socio-cultural, political, and administrative governance and the empowerment of women in Malaysia, echo the importance placed on these governance dimensions in fostering women's advancement. By emphasizing the interplay between governance and women's empowerment, Poorhosseinzadeh et al. underscore the need for comprehensive governance frameworks that address various aspects of women's lives to achieve meaningful empowerment.

Similarly, Tabo's (2023) examination of challenges affecting women's empowerment further reinforces the critical role of governance in this context. By identifying economic governance, political governance, socio-cultural governance, and administrative governance as key challenges, Tabo highlights the complex and interconnected nature of governance factors that impact women's empowerment. This aligns with the broader understanding that effective governance, across all dimensions, is essential for creating an environment where women can fully participate, contribute, and benefit from development processes. Together, these studies provide valuable insights into the importance of governance in shaping women's empowerment agendas and underline the need for holistic approaches that address governance challenges comprehensively.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the study reveal significant insights into the relationship between governance dimensions and women's empowerment, particularly in the context of county governments in Kenya. The high response rate of 86.29% indicates a strong level of representativeness in the data, providing a reliable basis for generalizing the

respondents' views. The descriptive analysis of political governance highlights both positive trends, such as political mechanisms for women's participation, and challenges, including harassment of female political candidates. This underscores the complexity of women's political empowerment, which requires addressing structural issues within political systems.

Furthermore, the study's correlation and regression analyses demonstrate the significant impact of economic governance on women's empowerment, aligning with previous research findings. The positive correlation suggests that improvements in economic governance can lead to enhanced women's empowerment in county governments in Kenya. However, the study did not find a significant moderating effect of gender mainstreaming on the relationship between economic governance and women's empowerment, indicating the need for further investigation into how gender mainstreaming can effectively enhance women's empowerment in governance structures.

The study contributes valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of governance's impact on women's empowerment, emphasizing the importance of addressing economic, political, socio-cultural, and administrative governance dimensions to achieve meaningful progress. The findings underscore the need for comprehensive governance frameworks that promote gender equality and empower women to participate fully in decision-making processes at all levels of governance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study's recommendations emphasize the importance of strengthening political mechanisms to support women's participation in civic and parliamentary positions. This includes establishing policies that promote gender equity in electoral participation and providing tailored training for women in politics. Efforts to address gender-based violence and harassment faced by female political candidates are also crucial. Additionally, integrating gender mainstreaming into government programs and policies, along with promoting economic empowerment through capacity-building opportunities and flexible career terms for women, can significantly enhance women's empowerment. Improving substantive representation of women in governance, enhancing public awareness, encouraging resource mobilization, and addressing structural barriers are further key recommendations to promote gender equality in county governments in Kenya.

By implementing these recommendations, county governments in Kenya can contribute to enhancing women's empowerment and promoting gender equality in governance structures. Strengthening political mechanisms, addressing gender-based violence, enhancing gender mainstreaming, promoting economic empowerment, improving substantive representation, enhancing public awareness, encouraging resource mobilization, and addressing structural barriers are crucial steps towards achieving these goals. It is essential for county governments to prioritize these recommendations in their policy and program implementation to create a more inclusive and gender-responsive governance system that empowers women and promotes their active participation in decision-making processes.

Future Research

While the present study sheds light on the positive relationship between political governance and women's empowerment in Kenyan county governments, there is still room for further investigation.

Future research in this area should aim to deepen our understanding of the complex interplay between governance and women's empowerment in county governments in Kenya. By adopting a multidimensional approach and utilizing diverse research methods, researchers can generate valuable insights that can inform policy and practice. Additionally, there is a need for research that focuses on the intersectional nature of women's empowerment, considering how factors such as age, ethnicity, and socio-economic status intersect with gender to influence women's experiences in county governments. Moreover, researchers should explore innovative ways to leverage technology to enhance women's participation and empowerment in governance.

processes. Through these efforts, future research can contribute to advancing gender equality and promoting women's empowerment in county governments in Kenya and beyond.

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