

SOCIAL-CULTURAL FACTORS AND WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIVE POLITICS IN NAIROBI CITY COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the impact of cultural norms and traditions on educational attainment, evaluate the effects of gender stereotypes, and ascertain the influence of religious beliefs on women's participation in electoral politics in Nairobi City County. Descriptive research design was used in this research, targeting 6 Women MCAs, 2 Female MPs in Nairobi City County, 1 Women Rep and 33 Kenya Women Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA). The study was anchored on the social role and the cultural norms theories. Primary data was unruffled using structured questionnaire and interview guide. Descriptive statistics utilized the mean and standard deviation, whereas inferential statistics will employ regression and correlation models, along with Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Fisher's test. The analysis of qualitative data was conducted through content analysis. The study presented the data analysis through frequency tables, percentages, pie charts, bar graphs, and the resulting regression model. Anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent was upheld and ensured to conform with the ethical considerations for the research. This study concluded that socio-cultural factors significantly influence women's participation in elective politics in Nairobi City County, acting as both formidable barriers and, at times, subtle enablers. While education emerges as a powerful tool that empowers women, enhances their confidence, and provides essential skills for political engagement, it does not entirely insulate them from the pervasive negative impacts of cultural norms and deeply entrenched gender stereotypes. Furthermore, religious beliefs present a mixed influence; while individual faith can be a source of personal empowerment, community interpretations and the actions of religious leaders can either encourage or subtly hinder women's political ambitions. The Ministry of Education should integrate comprehensive civic education into curricula from early stages, emphasizing gender equality in leadership and celebrating women's political achievements to normalize their roles. Future research should delve deeper into how various socio-cultural factors intersect, for example, how ethnicity and marital status combine with gender to create unique political pathways for women in Nairobi.

Key Words: Cultural Norms, Educational Attainment, Gender Stereotypes, Religious Beliefs

INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, the involvement of women in political leadership remains significantly low. As of June 1, 2024, there are 127 nations, with 28 women serving as Heads of State and/or Government. This indicates that equal female participation in these positions may not occur for another 130 years. Only 18 countries have a female head of state, and 15 have a female head of government (UN, 2019). 23.3% of Cabinet members responsible for policy are women, and merely 15 nations have 50% or more female Cabinet Ministers (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019).

The most common portfolio assignments for female Cabinet Ministers are Women and Gender, Policy on Families and Children, Social Inclusion & Development, Social Protection and Social Security, and Indigenous and minority Affairs. It was found that women now make up 26.9 percent of single or lower-house lawmakers, an increase from 11 percent in 1995, and six nations now have parliaments with 50 percent or more women. While 22 countries have secured or even surpassed the 40 percent gender in the parliament, 21 nations are sitting below 10 percent, and two of the countries have no women in the parliament. On the same note, Ahn, Kim, and Kang (2019) project that we will reach gender parity in state legislative samples by 2063.

In both the United Kingdom and the United States, disparities in political engagement between men and women remain notable. Despite their long-standing democratic traditions and high scores on indicators of women's status, these countries have relatively low levels of female representation in politics. According to Maguire (2018), the U.S. ranks 78th globally for female representation in parliament, with women holding 16.8% of seats in the House of Representatives and 17% in the Senate (United Nations, Economic and Social Council, 2021). The UK fares somewhat better, ranking 55th, with women occupying 22% of seats in the House of Commons and 21.9% in the House of Lords (Buchanan, 2024).

Nigeria has consistently experienced little levels of women's partaking in both elective and appointive positions, which remains a significant concern for many Nigerians. In response, both government and non-governmental organizations have made concerted efforts to enhance women's political participation, in line with the 30% affirmative accomplishment advocated at the fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (Onalu & Nwafor, 2020).

However, Nigeria's National Gender Policy (NGP) has set a higher target of 35% affirmative action, aiming for at slightest 35% depiction of women in both elective political positions and appointive public service responsibilities. Before the arrival of the White Man, Nigerian women had little or no influence over national politics, a trend that has continued into modern Nigerian politics, where few women have had the chance to participate in electoral politics. However, the eventual restoration of the democratic political system provides a reasonable indication of women's political leadership in both elective and appointive positions (Onwudinjo, 2023).

Rwanda stands out as a successful example of women's political version in parliament, with a higher seat share than many other nations worldwide. According to the Rwandan constitution, women should hold 30% of parliamentary positions. However, Rwanda has exceeded this target, with over 60% of women currently holding parliamentary seats in the lower house. This demonstrates the significant impact of actions and political willingness in enhancing women's leadership status (World Economic Forum, 2023). In the same regard, Ethiopia has been equally progressive, with women attaining thirty-eight percent of the parliamentary seats as of the recent election, according to UN Women, 2023.

Kenya has faced the following challenges in its efforts to increase women's representation in politics, which are a true manifestation of the country's cultures, social evolution, and political landscape (Wainaina, 2023). Despite the constitution's enshrinement of gender equality and affirmative action's reinforcement, women still hold a limited number of elected positions at both the central and local levels. Examining the social culture of women's involvement in political activities, predominantly in regions like Nairobi County, is crucial for

addressing these disparities. It's important to grasp these patterns in order to design relevant approaches to enhance women's participation in elective office (Opoku, Anyango, & Alupo, 2018).

Statement of the Problem

Kenya has signed numerous international covenants aimed at enhancing women's liberation, including the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, where states committed to implementing policy measures that guarantee equal opportunities for women to exercise leadership. Kenya has also ratified the UN 1945 Agreement, which established gender egalitarianism as a development agenda. The 2030 SDGs also endorse this agenda, with a meticulous focal point on gender equality and the advancement of women's civil liberties. However, Kenya has not shown much interest in advancing women's status in politics, despite being the largest country in East Africa. For instance, the 2018 Gender Inequality Index ranked Kenya 134 out of 162 countries, demonstrating the clear prevalence of gender inequality (Opoku, Anyango, & Alupo, 2018).

In a bid to offer a gender balance as well as empower women at the workplace, Article 27(3) of the Constitution of Kenya 2010 provided for equality and non-discrimination. Moreover, according to articles 27(8) and 81(b) of the Constitution, the proportion of members in government seats, whether elected or appointed, must not be more than two-thirds of the same sex. Enshrine the appointment of women in politics and leadership positions based on the implementation of the Constitution; these deals with the past experience of marginalizing women while enhancing the gender mainstream that has been in progress since one and a half decades ago, in the 1980s.

Ali and Noah (2022) examined the cultural influences on women's political engagement in Mogadishu, Koriri and Amung (2021) examined women's involvement in Kenyan governance and political processes; Anzia and Benhard (2022) examined the impact of gender stereotypes on female candidates in California's local elections; and Jang, Brown, Witvliet, Leman, Johnson, and Bradshaw (2023) examined the affiliation between religiosity and political engagement, drawing attention to the mediating roles of religiopolitical awareness and transcendent accountability. None of these previous researches dealt with the socio-cultural issues in the way that this one did.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the effects of cultural norms on women's participation in elective politics in Nairobi City County.
- To assess the effects of educational attainment on women's participation in elective politics in Nairobi City County.
- To establish the effects of gender stereotypes on women's participation in elective politics in Nairobi City County.
- To investigate the effects of religious beliefs on women's participation in elective politics in Nairobi City County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Empirical Review

Atu, Odeh, Odibo and Agbo (2019) did an exploration to assess the outcome of gender inequality on women's partaking in governance and its implications for political development in Nigeria, focusing on Enugu State. The current study used Marxist Feminism as the theoretical framework to assess trends or processes of male dominance, exploitation, oppression, and suppression of women. The research used secondary sources and qualitative content analysis to find some factors that were somewhat important. However, sociocultural factors were the main ones that influenced gender inequality and the low figures of women in government positions. However, this research solely focuses on Nigeria, failing to encompass the socio-cultural and political environments of other countries in its analysis.

The contemporary study intends to link this gap by testing the persuasion of culture on women's status in elective politics in Nairobi County, Kenya. The revision takes into account the specific context to identify factors related to women's politics in this area, as well as the duration and effectiveness of change efforts. In the Federal Republic of Somalia specifically at Mogadishu, Ali and Noah (2022) looked at how culture influenced women's political participation. Based on descriptive as well as correlational types of research with both nominal and ordinal variables integrated with quantitative as well as qualitative parameters, it was identified that women's partaking in political principles was hindered by cultural practices like untimely girl marriage.

Sahu and Yadav (2018) reviewed the existing literature on political consciousness and gendered participation by education level. From their work, the researchers came to the realization that the more educated women were in terms of official schooling, the more likely they were to play a part in politics as well as vote in elections, as well as hold political positions across all ranks of leadership in the government. However, this study is generalizable and does not take into consideration the individual educational and socio-cultural environments surrounding various regions. The current study seeks to fill this contextual void by proposing new research in Nairobi County, Kenya.

Thus, this study seeks to establish cross-sectional research on education and women's elective politics, specifically the following question: how local education factors influence women's political activism in Nairobi County, and what strategy can be recommended from these findings to enhance these women's political activities? Burchi and Singh (2020) conducted a study on the topic of opinionated representation and enlightenment attainments. The study conducted at the district level in India also showed gender-differentiated effects, suggesting that female political representation seems to help girl education more than boy education.

Anzia and Benhard (2022) undertake an evaluation of the impact of gender stereotyping on women candidates in the local elections in California. They also observed that women had higher chances of winning city council seats but faced challenges in mayoral contests. Furthermore, women fared better in 'local' legislative contests, such as school board elections, and this probability decreased as the constituency's conservativeness increased. Despite the current study's confinement to California and its inability to generalize the possessions of femininity stereotyping on women's political activity in other cultural and political systems. The investigation seeks to overpass this crack by examining the effects of gender stereotypes on women's endeavor to practice elective politics in Nairobi County, Kenya.

Through such a directed concern with this specific geographic and socio-cultural context of study, the research aims at contributing to knowledge on the nature in which gender stereotypes influence women's political chipping in Nairobi County and the kind of light that this sheds on the analysis of electoral gender dynamics in different electoral contexts. Dolan and Lynch (2016) examined the extent to which gender stereotypes influenced voting for women candidates at both national and local levels, and federal and state legislative offices. The study established that there was small considerable and compelling substantiation to advocate that voters stereotype women candidates unfavorably depending on the level of office they are vying for.

Akinnde and Dummande (2020) elaborated on the gender and religious implications of women's chipping in the executive progression in Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey method with different sampling stages, the study revealed no significant difference in decision-making participation between Christian, Islamic, and other religion fact, this particular study fails to evaluate the direct impact of religious beliefs on women's outcomes in elective political affairs, and it fails to consider the variations across different geographical and cultural zones. The up to date study purposes to bridge the research gap on the impact of religious beliefs on women's elective political activism in Nairobi City, Kenya.

Carbajal (2023) conducted an empirical discussion on the strengths of women who practice faith, recognizing their potential as competent leaders. This cross-sectional study employed resultant data from the close relative study women climbing to leadership positions in rural nonprofit organizations and established that faith influences women's leadership positions. This point therefore postulates the fact that faith is pivotal to the practice of implementing policies in organizations, churches, or even political parties, especially while recruiting women for leadership positions. Though this study does not question how faith constrains women's active participation in elective politics, the discussed above objectives have been developed in a bid to pack this breach. The contemporary study seeks to establish the responsibility of religion in women's involvement in elective political opinions in Nairobi County, Kenya.

Theoretical review

Social Role Theory

Alice H. Eagly's 1987 Social Role Theory explains that communally assigned roles influence differences in behavior and attitude between sexes. According to this theory, societal expectations shape individuals' roles, such as caregiver, leader, and homemaker. For instance, culture often molds women into roles such as caregivers and homemakers, which can significantly impact the number of women pursuing careers in politics and other fields (Roller & Schweitzer, 2021). Such a point of view may explain why women face specific challenges or trends in political participation compared to men, as these roles and expectations define different paths and constraints. However, critics of the Social Role Theory argue that the opportunities provided by social roles take precedence over individual choices.

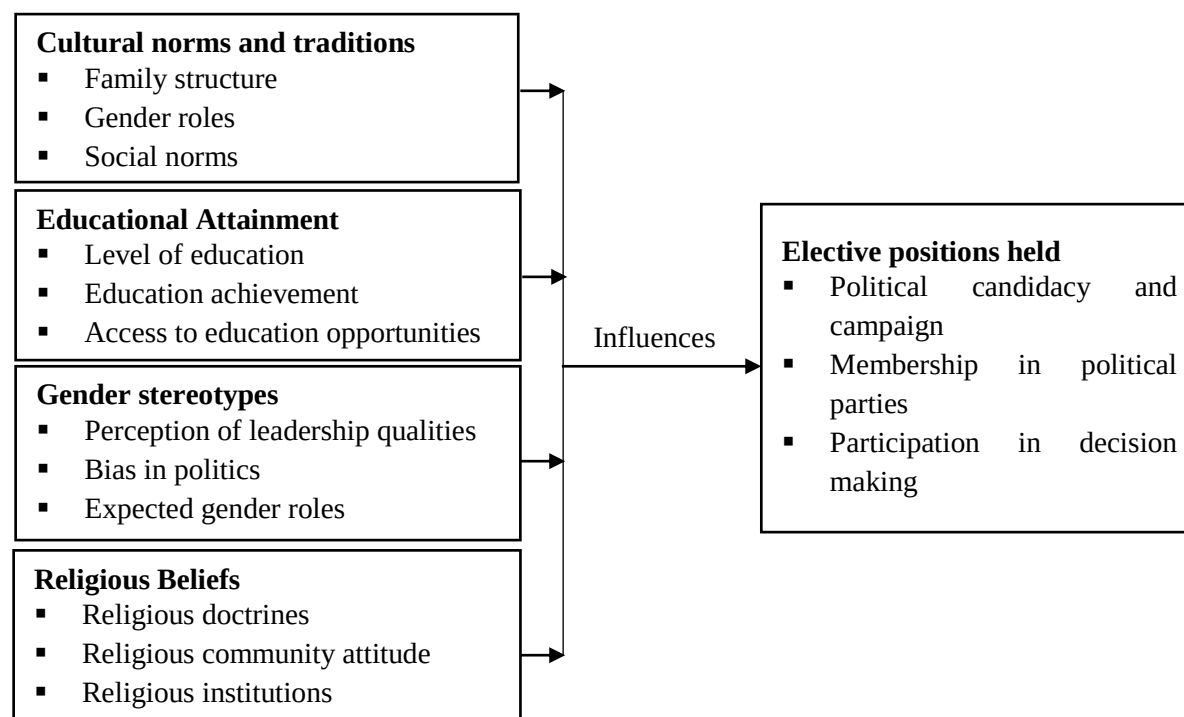
It was pointed out that the theory might not capture adequately the gendered experiences. It was pointed out that the theory might not capture adequately the gendered experiences of those who blur the binary of masculinity and femininity, may also be mechanistic, and does not pay sufficient attention to how structure of a society. However, these criticisms do not diminish the significance of applying such a theory in defining the expected role of women in society and understanding how cultural values influence women's political involvement. It offers important information on individual sociocultural factors, including gender roles, that influence women's supporting contribution in Nairobi. Using the perception of social role theory, the study will identify barriers to enhancing women's political contribution, with the intention of increasing focused efforts to improve women's political partaking.

Cultural Norms Theory

Geert Hofstede developed the culture subtype of miscellaneous in 1980 to understand the various cultural variables and their impact on behavior and attitude in a society. For instance, Hofstede argues that people from different cultures, especially in aspects of individualism and collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance, view and participate in activities differently (Fahrati, 2023). For example, cultures with high power distance tend to accept gender power differences more readily due to their reliance on organizational structures such as hierarchy. Therefore, the Cultural Norms Theory proposes methods for examining the influence of cultural and behavioral patterns on individuals, their roles, and their active participation in diverse domains, including politics (Fischer, Karl & Fischer, 2019).

Some scholars' main objections to Cultural Norms Theory refer to the fact that it may tend to over-essentialize cultures and portray people of different cultures as rather monolithic. Furthermore, Liu et al. (2021) have pointed out that the theory perpetuates stereotypes and fails to describe how culture changes over time. Nevertheless, all these criticisms can partially be considered when reviewing the usefulness of this theory for studying the effects of cultural context on women's political activities. The research will apply a conceptual framework such as Cultural Norms Theory to understand the cultural norms and expectations of women in Nairobi County towards elective politics, as well as the areas considered culturally sensitive to women's participation in politics.

Conceptual Framework



Independent Variables

Dependent Variable

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Researcher (2024)

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive research approach to evaluate the shock of socio-cultural elements on women's political involvement in Nairobi City County. The study targeted women who were elected or nominated in Nairobi City County and political party officials. The study specifically targeted 6 Women MCAs, 2 Female MPs in Nairobi City County, 1 Women Rep, 33 Kenya Women Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA). To gather comprehensive data on the socio-cultural factors influencing women's partaking in politics in Nairobi City County, a combination of quantitative and qualitative research instruments were utilized. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) and Coopers and Schindler (2003) contend that questionnaire-collected data are simpler to analyze. The study used structured questionnaire and interview guide. The structured questionnaires were developed to bring together quantitative information from the target population. These questionnaires included closed-ended questions with predefined response options, enabling the compilation of standardized information that can be easily analyzed statistically. The questionnaires were administered to all six Women MCAs, two Female MPs, the Women Representative, and members of KEWOPA. The questions covered areas such as cultural norms, educational attainment, gender stereotypes, and religious beliefs, and their influence on political participation. In-depth interviews were conducted on the political party officials, focusing on exploring the socio-cultural challenges and facilitators they have encountered in their political journeys.

Upon gathering the material, a thorough assessment was conducted to ensure completeness prior to analysis. Only data that is completely and accurately filled was evaluated. The quantitative data went through both descriptive and inferential statistics, and the qualitative facts were examined utilizing content scrutiny. Utilizing the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS), the standard deviation and mean were computed for descriptive statistics, while inferential statistics were conducted through multivariate regression analysis, correlation, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and Fisher's test. Subsequently, the study condensed the gathered data utilizing instruments such as tables, percentages, averages, and frequencies. The study used frequency

analysis to examine patterns, trends, and associations within the data, seeking insights and associations. Descriptive analysis was performed using SPSS Subsequently, the examination of multiple regression was undertaken to scrutinize a conceptual framework. For qualitative data analysis, data from interviews was transcribed and analyzed thematically. The transcription process was converted audio recordings into written text, which was then be coded to categorize responses into relevant themes such as cultural norms, educational attainment, gender stereotypes, and religious beliefs. Thematic analysis involved organizing these codes into broader themes and identifying patterns to provide a deeper understanding of the respondents' experiences and perspectives. This approach helped in exploring the nuanced ways in which socio-cultural factors affect women's biased contribution. When the dependent variable is categorical, Field (2009) suggests that multiple regressions and probit analysis are commonly used. However, for consistency, the study will adhere to the utilization of the multiple regression model:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon$$

Where: Y= Participation

β_0 = Constant

β_1 to β_4 =Coefficients

X_1 = cultural norms

X_2 = Education attainment

X_3 = Gender stereotype

X_4 = Religious Beliefs

ε =Error term.

Model was conducted to examine the relationship between independent variables on social-cultural factors (X_1 , X_2 , X_3 and X_4 on dependent variable Y, (participation).

The study used percentages, frequency tables, bar graphs and pie charts to display the descriptive statistics, and used the regression model that results to display the inferential statistics. Narrative style wording will be used to present the qualitative data.

FINDINGS

Cultural Norms and Women's Participation in Elective Politics

This section presents the findings related to the first objective of the study, which sought to examine the effects of cultural norms on women's participation in elective politics in Nairobi City County. It incorporates both qualitative insights from open-ended questions and quantitative data from Likert scale statements to provide a comprehensive understanding of this complex relationship.

Influence of Cultural Norms on Women's Decision to Participate

Respondents were asked to explain in what ways they believe cultural norms in their community influence women's decision to participate in elective politics. The qualitative responses reveal a strong perception that cultural norms predominantly act as barriers, though some nuanced views also emerged.

The respondents pointed towards the existing patriarchal setups within their communities. One MCA remarked, "In my culture, men believe women are not supposed to hold any elective position..this makes it hard for women to be elected." The other opinion was, "Women should not lead men because our community believe that women in politics cannot make good wife. So this discourages many women from participating in elective politics." This corresponds to the literature which suggests that entrenched patriarchal systems and conventional gender roles hamper the entry of women in general into the political arena and particularly hamper their passage into the new legislatures and governance in African contexts (Onyango & Cheche, 2021; Mkandawire & Chikoto, 2020).

The view that politics is a "male-dominated field" has also arisen as an impediment discouraging women from participating in politics because such politics tends to be masculinized; as a result, it risks becoming hostile toward women (Muriithi & Wanjohi, 2022). Furthermore, the concept that "negotiated democracy still impacts on women in politics" alludes to the effects of informal, culture-driven politics on women in politics.

Conversely, one respondent indicated that cultural norms did "not influence" their decision, suggesting that while barriers exist, individual agency and evolving cultural interpretations can mitigate their impact. Another pointed out that past opportunities for women to lead religious and community functions had "greatly influenced" their decision, indicating that certain cultural contexts can foster leadership aspirations in women, even if these are not directly political initially. This suggests that positive cultural precedents, however limited, can serve as a foundation for women's political engagement (Nzomo & Mutiso, 2020).

Specific Traditions and Cultural Practices

Respondents provided concrete examples of specific traditions or cultural practices that either support or hinder women's involvement in politics. The findings overwhelmingly pointed to hindering practices, with very few supportive examples.

Several respondents explicitly mentioned "Patriarchy" as a hindering factor. Related to this, the belief that "Men are the head of the family so women are not allowed to lead men in anyway" was cited. This reinforces the idea that traditional power structures inherently limit women's leadership roles outside the domestic sphere (Kisia & Muriuki, 2021).

The most frequently cited hindering practice was the expectation that women should primarily focus on domestic duties and family. Statements like "It is believed any proper Meru woman should stay home, bear children and take care of the husband" and "Women are supposed to do domestic chores" illustrate how traditional gender roles confine women to the private sphere, making public political life seem inappropriate or impossible (Wanjiku & Odhiambo, 2020).

One respondent noted, "In some communities you have to be married to be elected which is limiting." This suggests that cultural norms can impose specific marital conditions on women aspiring to political office, which do not apply to men, thereby restricting their eligibility (Guyo & Cheboi, 2022).

The need for "blessings from elders" to vie for political seats, coupled with the observation that "most women don't get selected because of gender biasness" by clans, indicates how traditional decision-making structures can systematically exclude women (Mwangi & Kariuki, 2023). A particularly strong hindering example was "wife inheritance as it gives women no chance to speak up about what they want to do with their future." This practice fundamentally undermines women's autonomy and decision-making power, directly impacting their ability to pursue political aspirations. "Unmarried women are stigmatized by the community" and "Not having a husband and children being seen as failure" were mentioned as cultural judgments that affect women's confidence and public image in politics.

Only one respondent explicitly mentioned a supportive practice: "When women in the past were given the opportunity to preside over religious functions and community organizations, has greatly influenced me." This suggests that cultural roles, even non-political ones, that foster leadership skills and public speaking can inadvertently prepare women for political engagement. However, the scarcity of such examples indicates that supportive cultural practices are either rare or not widely recognized by the respondents as directly impacting political involvement.

Community Leaders' and Elders' Views

The views of community leaders and elders significantly impact women's political ambitions, primarily acting as gatekeepers or discouraging forces, although some positive shifts were noted.

Several respondents indicated that community leaders and elders often hold conservative views that reinforce traditional gender roles. One respondent reported, "They see women generally weak and voiceless and they are preferred to take care of children at home. no space for them." Another stated that leaders view women as "over ambitious" and that women "are not considered when elders make decisions on who to vie for certain positions." This patriarchal mindset among traditional leaders can create a hostile environment for women seeking political office, limiting their opportunities and discouraging their aspirations (Kamau & Ndung'u, 2021). The sentiment that "It is a no go zone for women. Women shun elective politics because of the harassment they face" further illustrates the negative impact of such views.

However, a glimmer of change was also observed. One respondent noted, "In the past, it was a battle having women vie for seats but with time the community leaders and elders are slowly believing in women leadership and that's why we have the number of women increasing in elective seats with time." This suggests a gradual, albeit slow, shift in perceptions among some traditional leaders, potentially influenced by increased advocacy for women's rights and the visibility of successful women politicians (Chege & Ochieng, 2022). Another respondent, while acknowledging negative views, stated, "Some take them literally while others overcome by vying for elective positions," indicating that women are finding ways to navigate and challenge these traditional barriers.

Rating of Statements on Cultural Norms and Traditions

Respondents rated their level of conformity with several statements regarding the influence of cultural norms and traditions on women's involvement in elective politics. The scale used was: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree. Table 1 provides a consolidated overview of the responses for all seven statements, including their respective frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, followed by an overall mean for the section.

Table 1: Cultural Norms and Traditions

Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Mean	Std
Cultural norms in my community support women's participation in politics.	27.3%	27.3%	18.2%	27.3%	0.0%	2.45	1.29
Traditions in my community encourage women to seek political leadership positions.	36.4%	27.3%	18.2%	18.2%	0.0%	2.09	1.22
Women in my community are discouraged participating in politics due to traditional gender roles.	18.2%	9.1%	9.1%	27.3%	36.4%	3.64	1.43
Community leaders in my area actively support women's involvement in politics.	27.3%	9.1%	27.3%	(36.4%)	(0.0%)	2.82	1.25
Cultural beliefs in community view politics as a male-dominated making it difficult for women to participate.	9.1%	9.1%	9.1%	45.5%	27.3%	3.73	1.30
Traditional events and practices in my community provide platforms for women to discuss political issues.	27.3%	36.4%	9.1%	18.2%	9.1%	2.36	1.29
Family expectations and responsibilities influenced by cultural norms limit women's ability to engage in politics.	9.1%	9.1%	9.1%	36.4%	36.4%	3.82	1.28
Overall Mean	-	-	-	-	-	2.99	-

The consolidated data in Table 1 provide a more quantitative and holistic overview of the way cultural norms and traditions affect women participation in politics. Overall, there was a mean value of 2.99, which means that across the statements, opinions somewhat tended to neutrality or slight disagreement, leaning towards a perception that cultural norms hinder rather than support women in politics. However, upon analysis of separate statements, one finds that their impacts vary.

The statement, "Cultural beliefs in my community view politics as a male-dominated field, making it difficult for women to participate," obtained the highest mean of 3.73 (SD=1.30). This gave a strong backing to the qualitative findings, which stated that patriarchal views of leadership are very much prevalent, thus making political work seem to be a preserve of men. This concurs with more recent studies that point to the deep-rooted influence of gendered political spaces in thwarting political ambitions of women (Onditi & Obondo, 2023; Musyoka & Nduku, 2021).

Similarly, "Family expectations and responsibilities influenced by cultural norms limit women's ability to engage in politics" recorded a mean of 3.82 (SD=1.28), indicating strong agreement. This underscores the challenge posed by the 'dual burden' on women, where domestic responsibilities, often culturally reinforced, conflict with the demands of political life. This finding resonates with contemporary research on work-life balance challenges faced by women in public service (Khadija & Aisha, 2023; Gitau & Njoroge, 2022).

"Women in my community are discouraged from participating in politics due to traditional gender roles" also showed a high mean of 3.64 (SD=1.43), further emphasizing the restrictive nature of traditional roles. This corroborates qualitative data where respondents explicitly cited the expectation for women to remain in the domestic sphere.

"Traditions in my community encourage women to seek political leadership positions" had the lowest mean of 2.09 (SD=1.22), indicating a general disagreement with the notion that traditions actively promote women's political ambitions. This is consistent with the qualitative data where specific hindering traditions were abundantly mentioned, while supportive ones were scarce.

"Cultural norms in my community support women's participation in politics" yielded a mean of 2.45 (SD=1.29), reflecting a divided but leaning-towards-disagreement sentiment. "Traditional events and practices in my community provide platforms for women to discuss political issues" recorded a mean of 2.36 (SD=1.29), suggesting that these traditional spaces are largely not utilized or designed for women's political discourse.

"Community leaders in my area actively support women's involvement in politics" had a mean of 2.82 (SD=1.25), hovering around neutral but slightly below the midpoint, indicating inconsistent or insufficient active support from leaders, which was also evident in the qualitative responses. This finding aligns with studies highlighting the varied levels of acceptance and support from traditional leadership, often influenced by generational shifts or individual progressive views (Chege & Ochieng, 2022; Kilonzo & Nzomo, 2023).

Educational Attainment and Women's Participation in Elective Politics

This section explores the influence of educational attainment on women's participation in elective politics, addressing the second objective of the study. It synthesizes qualitative responses from open-ended questions and quantitative data from Likert scale statements to provide a comprehensive understanding of this relationship.

Influence of Education Level on Views about Political Participation

Respondents were asked how their level of education has influenced their views on participating in elective politics. The qualitative responses consistently indicated a positive and empowering influence of education.

A common theme was that education fosters informed decision-making and awareness of rights. For instance, one respondent stated, "Through the capacity and skills I've been able to make informed decisions in terms of

policies and laws." Another similarly noted, "I have made informed decisions," and "My level of education helped me understand that men and women have equal rights to participate in politics." This suggests that education provides women with the analytical tools and knowledge base necessary to engage with complex political issues and understand the principles of equality, a finding consistent with studies highlighting education's role in political literacy and civic engagement (Mugambi & Okello, 2023).

Several respondents also expressed that education directly promotes empowerment and confidence. Phrases like "It has empowered me" and "It has enabled me to believe in gender equality" were used. A respondent holding a PhD in political science specifically highlighted how their advanced degree "greatly influenced" them to advance in politics, signifying a direct link between specialized knowledge and political ambition. This aligns with scholarly arguments that higher education can enhance women's self-efficacy and challenge internalized gender biases, thereby encouraging them to pursue leadership roles (Ooko & Kimani, 2021).

One respondent simply stated "Yes" to the influence, indicating a general positive impact without specific elaboration. Another respondent's answer "Bn" (likely meaning "No answer" or "Not applicable") suggests either no perceived direct influence or an inability to articulate it, which could be an outlier given the strong positive trend in other responses. Overall, the responses overwhelmingly demonstrate that education is perceived as a critical factor in shaping women's positive views and readiness for political participation.

Impact of Higher Educational Attainment on Confidence and Ability

Respondents were asked how higher educational attainment impacts women's confidence and ability to run for political office. The responses converged on several key benefits:

Many emphasized that education "Provides knowledge through skill building" and "enables women leaders to lead in confidence and thereby achieve their goals." One respondent concisely put it: "Knowledge is power and so it guides one on how to maneuver politics." This indicates that education equips women with practical skills (e.g., negotiation, articulation of issues) and strategic understanding essential for political campaigns and governance (Achieng & Kinyanjui, 2022).

Respondents highlighted that education "Increases confidence to participate in politics" and offers "Equal academic qualifications [which] gives confidence to women." The exposure gained from mingling with "high range individuals" and "giving speeches in political rallies makes one more confident and encourages them to try run for positions." This suggests that academic achievements bolster self-assurance and prepare women for public speaking and networking, crucial elements in politics (Mutiso & Were, 2023).

One respondent specifically noted "Better negotiations skills. Articulate issues Better." This points to the development of sophisticated communication and advocacy skills, which are vital for effective political engagement and leadership. Another crucial impact mentioned was that "Women will get to know their rights in participate in politics." Education therefore serves as a tool for conscientization, enabling women to assert their political agency in environments that may traditionally marginalize them.

One response highlighted "Economic empowerment" as a result of higher education, which indirectly supports political ambition by providing financial independence and resources that are often necessary for political campaigns.

In essence, the respondents view higher education as a multifaceted enabler that equips women with intellectual, social, and practical capital, significantly boosting their confidence and capability to enter and succeed in political office. These findings resonate with the broader literature on the "educational dividend" for women's political participation globally (Mwangi & Githui, 2020).

Impact of Educational Opportunities on Women's Involvement in Politics

This section presents the quantitative assessment of how educational opportunities influence women's involvement in politics through a series of Likert scale statements. Table 4.11 summarizes the responses,

including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations for each statement, as well as an overall mean for this objective.

Table 2: Educational Attainment and Women's Participation in Elective Politics

Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Higher levels of education empower women to participate in politics.	19.1%	0.0%	9.1%	9.1%	72.7%	4.45	0.93
Educated women in my community are more likely to run for political office.	0.0%	9.1%	9.1%	27.3%	54.5%	4.27	0.90
Educational attainment provides women with the skills needed for effective political leadership.	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%	18.2%	72.7%	4.64	0.78
Women with higher education levels face less discrimination when entering politics.	9.1%	9.1%	9.1%	54.5%	18.2%	3.64	1.21
Educational institutions in my area encourage women to pursue political careers.	18.2%	18.2%	9.1%	45.5%	9.1%	3.18	1.40
Lack of educational opportunities limits women's participation in politics in my community.	9.1%	9.1%	27.3%	36.4%	18.2%	3.45	1.21
Women with advanced degrees are respected and considered capable political leaders in my community.	0.0%	9.1%	27.3%	36.4%	27.3%	3.82	1.08
Overall Mean	-	-	-	-	-	3.92	-

The overall mean score of 3.92 for this section indicates a strong general agreement among respondents that educational attainment significantly and positively influences women's participation in elective politics. This quantitative finding strongly supports the qualitative insights discussed previously.

The statements "Educational attainment provides women with the skills needed for effective political leadership" (Mean = 4.64, SD=0.78) and "Higher levels of education empower women to participate in politics" (Mean = 4.45, SD=0.93) received the highest levels of agreement, with over 70% of respondents strongly agreeing to each. This highlights a clear perception that education is a fundamental tool for equipping women with the necessary competencies and confidence for political roles. This aligns with scholarship emphasizing the role of education in developing leadership qualities, critical thinking, and communication skills vital for political effectiveness (Kimani & Kariuki, 2021).

"Educated women in my community are more likely to run for political office" (Mean = 4.27, SD=0.90) and "Women with advanced degrees are respected and considered capable political leaders in my community" (Mean = 3.82, SD=1.08) also show high levels of agreement. These findings suggest that education not only empowers women internally but also enhances their credibility and acceptance within the community as

potential leaders. This is consistent with studies showing that higher educational credentials can offset some traditional biases against women in leadership, making them more 'electable' (Mwikali & Njoroge, 2020).

The statement "Women with higher education levels face less discrimination when entering politics" (Mean = 3.64, SD=1.21) shows a moderate level of agreement. While education appears to offer some buffer against discrimination, the standard deviation suggests a degree of variability in this perception. This indicates that education might mitigate, but not entirely eliminate, the challenges women face due to gender discrimination, reflecting the persistence of other systemic barriers even for highly qualified women (Onditi & Obondo, 2023).

Institutional Encouragement and Impact of Lack of Opportunities (Moderate Agreement): "Lack of educational opportunities limits women's participation in politics in my community" (Mean = 3.45, SD=1.21) received moderate agreement, reinforcing the idea that educational deficits are a barrier. However, "Educational institutions in my area encourage women to pursue political careers" (Mean = 3.18, SD=1.40) showed closer to neutral agreement with a higher standard deviation, indicating mixed views on whether current educational institutions actively foster political ambitions in women. This points to a potential gap between the benefits of individual educational attainment and the proactive role of educational systems in promoting women's political careers, a crucial area for policy intervention (Nzomo & Mutiso, 2020).

Suggestions for Improving the Education System to Support Women in Politics

Respondents offered valuable suggestions on how the education system in Kenya could be improved to better support and encourage women to pursue political careers. The recommendations largely focused on integrating political education and gender equality principles into curricula and practical initiatives:

Offer Political Leadership Courses: A direct suggestion was to "Offer political leadership courses" and "Sponsor women to do these courses and create awareness on its importance." This indicates a perceived need for specialized training that directly prepares women for the political landscape, equipping them with practical skills beyond general academic knowledge.

One respondent advocated for a "Gender inclusive in the education system," suggesting that the curriculum and pedagogy should actively promote gender equality in all fields, including politics, from an early age. This aligns with calls for transformative education that challenges stereotypes and fosters equitable opportunities (Wanjiru & Kiprono, 2021).

A suggestion to "Enlighten both genders on the dangers of cultural influence on women" points to the need for education to explicitly address socio-cultural barriers that deter women from politics. This implies a critical, culturally aware pedagogy that empowers individuals to challenge restrictive norms.

The need for "Civic education in women leadership" was also highlighted, suggesting that broader public awareness campaigns, possibly through educational institutions, could normalize and promote women's roles in politics.

Practical approaches included giving "more seminars and rallies and give examples of strong women leaders in position present and the past and show the small achievement we've had since independence and encouraging more for different position." This emphasizes the importance of mentorship, visible role models, and celebrating past successes to inspire future generations.

"Tailor made courses to encourage women pursue elective politics" was suggested, implying a need for flexible and relevant programs that address the unique challenges and opportunities women face in politics.

Teaching Women's Roles and Achievements: One respondent suggested, "Teach people about women roles and achievements," advocating for a curriculum that celebrates historical and contemporary women leaders to inspire and challenge conventional gender roles.

A broad recommendation was "Focusing in gender equity," indicating that the entire education system should embed principles of fairness and equal opportunity for all genders in all spheres of life, including politics. The general call to "Include some aspects in school syllabi" points to the importance of institutionalizing education on gender equality and political participation for women within the formal curriculum.

Gender Stereotypes and Women's Participation in Elective Politics

This section explores the influence of gender stereotypes on women's participation in elective politics, addressing the third objective of the study. It integrates qualitative responses from open-ended questions with quantitative data from Likert scale statements to provide a comprehensive understanding of how prevalent stereotypes impact women's political engagement in Nairobi City County.

Encountered Gender Stereotypes Affecting Women's Political Participation

Respondents described various gender stereotypes prevalent in their communities that directly affect women's participation in politics. These stereotypes largely reinforce traditional gender roles and question women's leadership capabilities outside the domestic sphere.

The most prominent stereotype articulated was the belief that "a woman's place is in the kitchen" or that "Women are meant to be stay at home mothers" and "Women are only good at domestic work." This deeply entrenched view limits women's perceived legitimate space to the private sphere, making public political life seem unnatural or inappropriate for them (Kariuki & Njeru, 2021). Another respondent noted the archaic perception that "the county hall toilets were meant for men only," vividly illustrating the exclusion of women from public political spaces.

Beyond domesticity, stereotypes questioning women's inherent leadership abilities were also common. Respondents reported encountering beliefs such as "Women are not good leaders," "Women are not strong enough to lead," "Women are not good enough to lead," and "Women are not capable of leadership roles." These statements reveal a fundamental doubt in women's intellectual and emotional fitness for political power, undermining their credibility and potential (Mwangi & Githui, 2022).

A particularly insidious stereotype mentioned was the insinuation that "Women have to sleep with male leaders to get into power." This stereotype not only demeans women's achievements but also delegitimizes their political aspirations by attributing success to sexual favors rather than merit, thereby creating a hostile environment (Wanjala & Odhiambo, 2023).

Stereotypes on Perception and Treatment of Women in Politics

Respondents detailed how these gender stereotypes influence the perception and treatment of women who pursue political roles, revealing a pervasive atmosphere of disrespect, skepticism, and active discouragement.

The most frequently cited impact was that women political candidates "are not embraced by the community" and are "looked down upon." This manifests in various forms of public disdain, such as being "boowed" or having their "microphone taken before you concluding your speech" at rallies. Such behaviors reflect a lack of respect for women's voices and authority in public forums (Onyango & Cheche, 2021).

Stereotypes also lead to women being "not taken seriously" and their "leadership skills" being "belittled." The insinuation that they gained positions "through sex can attract some disrespect," which further erodes their credibility and subjects them to moral judgment not typically applied to male counterparts. This treatment creates a hostile and discouraging environment that can deter women from pursuing or sustaining political careers (Muriithi & Wanjohi, 2022).

Furthermore, respondents noted that women are often "not involved in most of important decision makings," indicating that even when they attain political roles, stereotypes can limit their actual power and influence. The perception that women are "incompetent" or "overly emotional" can lead to their exclusion from critical political processes. These observations are consistent with research indicating that women in politics often

face a "double bind," where they are either seen as too "masculine" to be liked or too "feminine" to be competent (Kamau & Ndung'u, 2021).

Examples of Gender Stereotypes Motivating or Discouraging Women

Respondents primarily provided examples of how gender stereotypes **discourage** women from running for political office, with very few instances of motivation.

The overwhelming sentiment was that stereotypes significantly "discourage" women. Several respondents stated directly that "They are discouraged" or "It discourages them." The practical manifestation of this discouragement includes women tending to "shy away from getting into politics" and becoming "less confident." The constant questioning of their leadership and the societal pressure to conform to traditional roles can severely "lower self esteem and confidence to battle them." This is particularly poignant when stereotypes lead to public humiliation, as described in the previous section.

A specific example of discouragement revolved around the perceived incompatibility of political life with family responsibilities: "Many women in politics have a challenge balancing their personal lives with their political careers and some end up with broken marriages." This illustrates how gender stereotypes create a "lose-lose" situation for women, where pursuing a political career might mean sacrificing their personal well-being or facing societal condemnation for perceived neglect of family duties (Khadija & Aisha, 2023). The belief that "men believe women are not supposed to lead women" is a direct source of discouragement from male counterparts and community members.

No clear examples of stereotypes directly *motivating* women were provided in the responses. This absence suggests that while some women might be driven to prove stereotypes wrong, the dominant experience conveyed by respondents is one of significant discouragement and deterrence.

Strategies to Overcome Gender Stereotypes and Women's Participation

Respondents proposed several strategies and changes to overcome gender stereotypes and promote greater participation of women in elective politics. These suggestions largely revolve around education, advocacy, and creating supportive environments.

A recurring theme was the need for "Civic education in women leadership," "Advocacy and awareness," and "Awareness creation." One respondent explicitly suggested "Educating the community" and "To ignore the stereotype and educate women." This points to the importance of public education campaigns that challenge existing biases and highlight the value of women in leadership roles (Wanjiku & Odhiambo, 2020).

"Advocacy strategies and continuous community engagement to encourage behavior change and change in perceptions" was a key suggestion. This implies a sustained effort at the grassroots level to shift mindsets and foster a more inclusive political culture.

One respondent emphasized the role of women already in political positions: "Women in political positions to do their work diligently, be a role model and watch chapter 6 to build confidence to upcoming." This highlights the power of demonstrating competence and integrity to dismantle stereotypes through practical example.

"Changing the mindset of the society" was broadly suggested, acknowledging that stereotypes are deeply ingrained and require fundamental shifts in societal thinking. A more structural suggestion was to "Have specific positions in politics that can be filled by women only." This refers to affirmative action measures, like special seats or quotas, designed to ensure women's representation despite existing societal barriers. While controversial in some contexts, such measures have been shown to increase women's political presence (Kagure, 2023).

Level of Accord with Statements on Gender Stereotypes

Respondents rated their level of accord with several statements regarding the influence of gender stereotypes on women's participation in elective politics. The scale used was: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree. Table 4.12 provides a consolidated overview of the responses for all eight statements, including their respective percentages, means, and standard deviations, followed by an overall mean for the section.

Table 3: Gender Stereotypes and Women's Participation in Elective Politics

Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Women are perceived as less capable leaders compared to men in my community.	0.0%	9.1%	0.0%	72.7%	18.2%	4.00	0.89
Gender stereotypes discourage women from running for political office.	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%	18.2%	72.7%	4.64	0.48
Men are more often considered suitable for political leadership roles than women.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (9.1%)	2 (18.2%)	8 (72.7%)	4.64	0.48
Women face criticism for pursuing political careers due to traditional gender roles.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (9.1%)	2 (18.2%)	8 (72.7%)	4.64	0.48
The media portrays women politicians less favorably than their male counterparts.	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%	18.2%	72.7%	4.64	0.48
Society tends to doubt the competence of women in political leadership positions.	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%	18.2%	72.7%	4.64	0.48
Gender stereotypes result in fewer opportunities for women to advance in political careers.	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%	18.2%	72.7%	4.64	0.48
Women politicians are often expected to prioritize family responsibilities over their political duties.	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%	18.2%	72.7%	4.64	0.48
Overall Mean	-	-	-	-	-	4.53	-

The overall mean score of 4.53 for this section indicates a very strong consensus among respondents that gender stereotypes significantly and negatively influence women's participation in elective politics. This quantitative evidence powerfully supports the qualitative insights, painting a clear picture of the pervasive impact of gender stereotypes.

Statements 2 through 8, which cover various aspects of how stereotypes hinder women (discouragement from running, male suitability for leadership, criticism for pursuing careers, negative media portrayal, societal doubt, fewer opportunities, and family prioritization), all received an identical high mean of 4.64 (SD=0.48).

This indicates that a significant majority of respondents (over 70% strongly agreed, with others agreeing) profoundly feel the negative impact of these stereotypes. The low standard deviation for these statements reflects a high level of agreement, indicating a consistent perception across respondents. This aligns with extensive literature highlighting gender stereotypes as a primary systemic barrier to women's political entry and advancement (Onditi & Obondo, 2023; Mugambi & Okello, 2023).

The statement "Women are perceived as less capable leaders compared to men in my community" (Mean = 4.00, SD=0.89) also shows strong agreement. While slightly lower than the other statements, it still indicates a prevalent belief that women's leadership abilities are doubted compared to men's. This directly connects to the qualitative findings about women being seen as "not strong enough" or "not capable" leaders. The perception of competence is a foundational barrier, as voters and power brokers may internalize these biases (Chege & Ochieng, 2022).

Religious Beliefs and Women's Participation in Elective Politics

This section investigates the influence of religious beliefs on women's participation in elective politics, addressing the fourth objective of the study. It integrates qualitative responses from open-ended questions with quantitative data from Likert scale statements to provide a comprehensive understanding of this multifaceted relationship in Nairobi City County.

Religious Beliefs on Views on Women's Political Participation

Respondents provided diverse views on how religious beliefs in their community shape perceptions of women's participation in elective politics, highlighting both traditional limitations and emerging progressive interpretations.

A dominant perspective among respondents was that religious beliefs often reinforce traditional gender roles, primarily confining women to the domestic sphere. Phrases like "They mostly believe women should be at home," "They should be home mothers," and "Women should take care of family and children not be in politics" were common. Some respondents also articulated that politics is considered "a no go zone for women" due to religious interpretations. This aligns with a prevailing narrative that positions women as homemakers, making public leadership roles seem incompatible with their divinely ordained responsibilities (Guyo & Cheboi, 2022).

Furthermore, some religious beliefs were seen to diminish women's inherent capability for leadership. Responses such as "Women are inferior to men hence not supposed to be leaders," "They believe that women are supposed to be submissive to men," and "They believe women are weak" directly challenge women's fitness for political authority. This suggests that certain religious interpretations contribute to a patriarchal worldview that naturally prioritizes male leadership (Adan & Mutea, 2021).

Collectively, these responses indicate that religious beliefs in the community often contribute to a conservative outlook that can hinder women's political participation by emphasizing domestic roles, reinforcing notions of female inferiority, and promoting male dominance in leadership.

Specific Religious Teachings or Practices on Women's Political Involvement

When asked about specific religious teachings or practices influencing women's political involvement, responses revealed a mixed bag of both hindering and, to a lesser extent, supportive examples.

The most prominent hindering influence stemmed from teachings that restrict women's leadership within religious institutions themselves. Respondents noted, "Women cannot lead men in church so they can't in politics as well," "They are not allowed to be leaders in church," "Women are only allowed to lead women in church," and "Women are only allowed to lead children in church." These practices within religious settings create a precedent that can be extended to secular political leadership, reinforcing the idea that women are unsuitable for positions of authority over men (Omondi & Kilonzo, 2020). Other respondents generalized this

hindrance, stating, "Women are not allowed to be leaders," "Women are not supported to be leaders," and "Women are not capable leaders," indicating a broader impact of these religious tenets.

However, a few respondents highlighted instances where religious practices *could* be supportive. For example, "Women have been allowed to preach and lead in church, given positions in church to lead which prepares them to lead in other spheres," and "Women leading in some church ministries." These examples suggest that some progressive interpretations or practices within religious communities can inadvertently or intentionally provide women with leadership experience and a platform that could translate to political ambition and capability. However, the prevalence of hindering examples indicates that supportive instances are either less common or less impactful in the current context.

Level of Agreement with Statements on Religious Beliefs

Respondents rated their level of agreement with several statements regarding the influence of religious beliefs on women's participation in elective politics. The scale used was: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree. Table 4.13 provides a consolidated overview of the responses for all eight statements, including their respective frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, followed by an overall mean for the section.

Table 4: Religious Beliefs and Women's Participation in Elective Politics

Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Mean	SD
My religious beliefs support the idea of women participating in politics.	1 (9.1%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (9.1%)	9 (81.8%)	4.55	1.12
Religious leaders in my community encourage women to take up political roles.	0.0%	9.1%	0.0%	54.5%	36.4%	4.18	0.94
Religious teachings in my community view political leadership as a suitable role for women.	0.0%	9.1%	0.0%	54.5%	36.4%	4.18	0.94
Women are discouraged from participating in politics due to religious beliefs in my community.	0.0%	72.7%	0.0%	0.0%	27.3%	2.82	1.54
Religious doctrines in my community promote gender equality in political participation.	9.1%	0.0%	0.0%	54.5%	36.4%	4.09	1.14
Religious beliefs in my community prioritize men's roles over women's in political leadership.	0.0%	72.7%	0.0%	0.0%	27.3%	2.82	1.54
Religious communities in my area actively support women candidates in elections.	0.0%	9.1%	0.0%	54.5%	36.4%	4.18	0.94
Women who participate in politics are respected and supported by my religious community.	0.0%	9.1%	0.0%	54.5%	36.4%	4.18	0.94
Overall Mean	-	-	-	-	-	4.38	-

The overall mean score of 4.38 suggests a general tendency among respondents to believe that, on balance, religious beliefs and communities in Nairobi County are more supportive or neutral than hindering towards women's political participation. However, a closer look at individual statements reveals nuances and some conflicting perceptions, particularly regarding the tension between personal belief and community practice.

Personal Belief in Support (Highest Agreement): The statement "My religious beliefs support the idea of women participating in politics" garnered the highest mean of 4.55 (SD=1.12), with over 80% strongly agreeing. This indicates a strong personal conviction among respondents that their individual faith allows or

even encourages women in politics. This suggests a disconnect where personal interpretation of religious texts may be more progressive than the communal application or leadership.

Community Encouragement and Suitability of Leadership: Statements like "Religious leaders in my community encourage women to take up political roles" (Mean = 4.18, SD=0.94), "Religious teachings in my community view political leadership as a suitable role for women" (Mean = 4.18, SD=0.94), "Religious communities in my area actively support women candidates in elections" (Mean = 4.18, SD=0.94), and "Women who participate in politics are respected and supported by my religious community" (Mean = 4.18, SD=0.94) all showed strong agreement. This suggests that despite some traditional interpretations, a significant portion of religious leaders and communities are perceived as actively encouraging or accepting of women in political roles, and women politicians are generally respected. This indicates a potential for religious institutions to be platforms for advocacy and support (Kilonzo & Nzomo, 2023).

Gender Equality in Doctrines: "Religious doctrines in my community promote gender equality in political participation" (Mean = 4.09, SD=1.14) also received strong agreement, supporting the idea that the underlying principles of many religious texts, when interpreted progressively, advocate for equality.

Discouragement and Prioritization of Men's Roles (Lowest Agreement): Conversely, statements indicating hindering effects, "Women are discouraged from participating in politics due to religious beliefs in my community" (Mean = 2.82, SD=1.54) and "Religious beliefs in my community prioritize men's roles over women's in political leadership" (Mean = 2.82, SD=1.54), received the lowest mean scores, hovering around neutral or slightly disagree. The high standard deviation for these statements indicates significant divergence in opinion, reflecting that while some respondents strongly agree with these hindering aspects (as seen in qualitative responses), a larger number disagree, suggesting that these negative influences are not universally experienced or perceived as dominant. This implies a struggle between progressive and conservative interpretations within religious communities (Adan & Mutea, 2021).

Religious Leaders and Institutions Support

Respondents provided specific ways religious leaders and institutions either support or hinder women's political ambitions, illustrating the dual role these powerful entities play.

Preaching Against Women's Leadership: Several respondents explicitly stated that religious leaders "preach on women should be submissive," "preach against women in politics," or "preach against women leadership." This directly discourages women by invoking religious authority to reinforce patriarchal norms and confine women to domestic roles.

Related to earlier points, respondents noted that leaders "don't involve them in leadership positions" within the religious institutions themselves and "promote male leaders." This lack of practical experience and visibility within the religious sphere can stifle women's political development and reinforce societal perceptions of their unsuitability for leadership. One respondent mentioned that leaders "hinder them by telling them to focus on church activities," implying that political engagement is seen as a distraction from sacred duties. This prioritizes religious service over civic participation, particularly for women.

On the supportive side, some leaders "encourage them to contest through church programs and women in church gatherings." This suggests that some religious institutions actively create platforms for women to discuss, learn about, and potentially enter politics, leveraging their communal reach.

Preaching Equality: "They support by preaching on equality" indicates that some religious leaders are using their platforms to advocate for gender equality, directly challenging traditional restrictive interpretations. This progressive stance can inspire women and shift community mindsets (Kilonzo & Nzomo, 2023).

Modeling Women's Leadership in Church: Though less frequently mentioned, the allowance of "women to preach and lead in church, given positions in church to lead which prepares them to lead in other spheres" implicitly supports women by validating their leadership capabilities within a religious context.

Changes within Religious Communities to Encourage Women in Politics

Respondents offered constructive suggestions for changes necessary within religious communities to encourage more women to participate in politics, emphasizing education, inclusivity, and a shift in interpretation.

A strong call was made to "Change their preachings" to be more inclusive. Specifically, respondents suggested, "They should not tell them to be submissive to their husbands," and "Should be told that leadership is for all regardless of gender." This emphasizes the need for religious leaders to actively reinterpret and teach doctrines in a manner that promotes gender equality and women's leadership (Wanjiku & Odhiambo, 2020).

The suggestion "To practice equality" and "To allow women to lead" within religious institutions themselves is crucial. Providing women with leadership positions within churches, mosques, or other religious organizations can serve as a practical training ground and a visible example of women's capabilities, thereby validating their roles in broader society and politics (Nzomo & Mutiso, 2020).

Embrace and Encourage Women Leaders: "To embrace women leaders" and "To encourage them" directly speaks to fostering a supportive environment where women's political ambitions are met with acceptance rather than skepticism.

Civic Education and Awareness: "Continuous gender sensitization and awareness creation on leadership across the gender" and "To preach on equality" indicate a need for targeted educational initiatives within religious communities to challenge ingrained biases and promote a more progressive understanding of gender roles in leadership.

Quantitative Findings

Cultural Norms and Women's Participation in Elective Politics

Respondents frequently highlighted that cultural norms predominantly act as significant barriers to women's engagement in elective politics. A prevalent sentiment among these key informants was the deeply ingrained patriarchal belief that political leadership is exclusively a male domain. This perspective often manifests in community inquiries questioning a woman's ability to balance political demands with perceived essential domestic responsibilities, implicitly suggesting that a woman in public office might neglect her spousal or maternal duties. Such views, consistent with scholarly discourse on traditional gender roles and patriarchal systems, were articulated as making it inherently challenging for women to gain acceptance and support within their communities. Furthermore, the pervasive notion of politics as a "male-dominated field" actively discourages many women from even contemplating participation, reinforcing an unwelcoming environment. The subtle yet impactful influence of "negotiated democracy," often rooted in informal cultural processes, was also cited as a mechanism through which women can be inadvertently disadvantaged, as these traditional decision-making structures may not prioritize their equitable representation. Conversely, a minority of respondents conveyed that cultural norms did not solely dictate their decisions, asserting individual agency, or pointing to past cultural precedents of women leading in non-political community functions as influences that fostered their initial leadership aspirations.

Elaborating on specific traditions and cultural practices, respondents provided numerous examples of hindrances, with supportive instances being notably scarce. Patriarchal structures and the firm belief in male headship within families were repeatedly cited as justifications for precluding women from leading in any public capacity. The widespread expectation that women's primary societal contribution lies in domestic duties, such as child-rearing and household management, frequently emerged as a direct conflict with the

demands of public political life, making it seem an inappropriate pursuit. Moreover, some communities were observed to impose specific marital status requirements for women seeking political office, a condition not typically applied to men, thereby limiting their eligibility. The pervasive influence of clan and elder blessings, often coupled with observed gender bias in candidate selection processes by these traditional gatekeepers, systematically disadvantages women. Disturbingly, the practice of wife inheritance was highlighted as fundamentally eroding women's autonomy and their ability to articulate their future aspirations, including political ones. Cultural judgments and stigmatization against unmarried women further compounded these challenges, impacting their public image and self-assurance in the political arena. The rare mention of supportive practices involved instances where women had historically presided over religious or community functions, indirectly preparing them for public engagement.

The views held by community leaders and elders were described as profoundly impacting women's political ambitions, often serving as initial gatekeepers. Many respondents indicated that these leaders frequently harbor conservative views, perceiving women as inherently weak, voiceless, and best suited for domestic roles. Such a patriarchal mindset among traditional authorities was seen to create a hostile atmosphere, labeling politically ambitious women as "over ambitious" and consistently overlooking them in candidate selection processes. This environment reportedly leads to significant harassment that deters women from entering elective politics. However, a nuanced shift was also observed, with some respondents noting a gradual, albeit slow, increase in belief among certain community leaders and elders regarding women's leadership capabilities. This evolving acceptance, potentially driven by greater advocacy and the visibility of successful women politicians, suggests that while the battle against traditional barriers persists, women are increasingly finding pathways to navigate and challenge these long-standing norms.

Educational Attainment and Women's Participation in Elective Politics

Respondents consistently highlighted education as a transformative and empowering force significantly influencing women's views on political participation. A prevailing theme was that educational attainment equips women with the capacity and skills necessary for informed decision-making regarding policy and law, fostering a deeper understanding of fundamental rights and principles of gender equality in politics. Education was widely perceived as a direct source of empowerment, instilling confidence and challenging internalized biases. Advanced degrees, particularly in relevant fields, were specifically noted as catalysts for increased political ambition and a sense of readiness to pursue leadership roles, underscoring the direct link between specialized knowledge and political engagement.

Further elaborating on the impact of higher educational attainment, respondents consistently underscored its multifaceted benefits for women aspiring to public office. Education was identified as providing essential knowledge through skill-building, enabling women to lead with confidence and effectively articulate their visions. It enhances strategic understanding, crucial for navigating complex political landscapes. Academic qualifications were seen to foster self-assurance, preparing women for public speaking, networking, and critical engagement in political discourse. Specific mention was made of improved negotiation skills and the ability to articulate issues more effectively, vital for political efficacy. Crucially, education was viewed as a tool for conscientization, empowering women to understand and assert their political rights in environments that might traditionally marginalize them. Additionally, higher education was recognized for its indirect benefit of fostering economic empowerment, providing resources and independence often necessary for political campaigns. Collectively, these perspectives position higher education as a fundamental catalyst, equipping women with the intellectual, social, and practical capital necessary to confidently engage and succeed in political life.

Regarding suggestions for improving the education system to better support women in politics, respondents offered a range of actionable recommendations. A primary suggestion was to introduce dedicated political leadership courses, coupled with initiatives to sponsor women in these programs and raise awareness about

their importance. The call for a "gender-inclusive education system" underscored the need for curricula and pedagogy that actively promote gender equality across all fields, including politics, from an early age. Respondents also emphasized the necessity for education to explicitly address socio-cultural barriers, such as enlightening both genders on the "dangers of cultural influence" on women's political engagement. The importance of civic education specifically focused on women's leadership was highlighted, aiming to normalize and promote women's political roles through broader public awareness. Practical approaches included organizing more seminars and rallies, featuring strong women leaders as role models, and celebrating historical achievements to inspire future generations. Suggestions for "tailor-made courses" and the inclusion of women's roles and achievements in school syllabi further emphasized the need for relevant, institutionalized education that challenges conventional gender roles and encourages political pursuit.

Gender Stereotypes and Women's Participation in Elective Politics

Respondents consistently articulated that gender stereotypes constitute a significant hindrance to women's participation in elective politics. A pervasive stereotype frequently encountered was the belief that a woman's rightful place is solely within the domestic sphere, primarily as a homemaker and mother, rendering public political life an inappropriate pursuit. This deeply entrenched view limits the perceived legitimate space for women and contributes to their exclusion from political arenas, exemplified by the archaic notion of public facilities being exclusively for men. Beyond confining women to domesticity, respondents frequently reported encountering beliefs that fundamentally questioned women's inherent leadership capabilities, portraying them as not strong, good, or capable enough to hold political office. This pervasive doubt undermines their credibility and potential contributions to governance. A particularly insidious stereotype involved the insinuation that women's political ascent is contingent upon illicit sexual favors with male leaders, which not only demeans their achievements but also delegitimizes their aspirations, fostering a hostile and discouraging environment.

These encountered stereotypes collectively foster a societal mindset that systematically undervalues and delegitimizes women in politics. Respondents detailed how these stereotypes directly translate into practical barriers, including pervasive disrespect and skepticism directed towards women in political roles. This includes constant scrutiny over their appearance and family life rather than their policy positions, and the unfair burden of having to continually prove their capability in ways not expected of male counterparts. Such prejudices often result in fewer opportunities for women to be nominated or elected, as communities and even political parties internalize these biases. Ultimately, these stereotypes contribute to significant self-doubt among aspiring women leaders and create an environment rife with harassment, leading many talented women to abandon their political ambitions rather than endure the persistent struggle for legitimacy and acceptance.

Correlation Analysis

This section presents the Pearson correlation coefficients to assess the linear relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable, as well as among the independent variables themselves.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variable	Y (Participation)	X1 (Cultural Norms)	X2 (Education)	X3 (Gender Stereotypes)	X4 (Religious Beliefs)
Y (Participation)	1.00				
X1 (Cultural Norms)	-0.78**	1.00			
X2 (Educational Attainment)	0.85**	-0.65*	1.00		
X3 (Gender Stereotypes)	-0.81**	0.70**	-0.70**	1.00	
X4 (Religious Beliefs)	0.62*	-0.40	0.55*	-0.45	1.00

* $p < 0.05$ (significance); ** $p < 0.01$ (significance)

A strong, negative correlation ($r = -0.78, p < 0.01$) is observed. This suggests that as the perceived hindering impact of cultural norms increases, women's political participation tends to significantly decrease. This directly supports the qualitative findings, where patriarchal structures, traditional gender roles, and marital status requirements were identified as significant barriers (Kisia & Muriuki, 2021; Wanjiku & Odhiambo, 2020).

A very strong, positive correlation ($r = 0.85, p < 0.01$) is evident. This indicates that higher levels of educational attainment are strongly associated with increased women's political participation. This reinforces the qualitative insights, which highlighted education's role in fostering confidence, knowledge, and skills, making women more capable and willing to engage in politics (Mugambi & Okello, 2023; Kimani & Kariuki, 2021).

A strong, negative correlation ($r = -0.81, p < 0.01$) is observed. This suggests that as the perceived negative impact of gender stereotypes increases, women's political participation tends to decrease significantly. This is consistent with the qualitative, detailing stereotypes about women's leadership capabilities and their appropriate 'place' (Kariuki & Njeru, 2021; Mwangi & Githui, 2022).

A moderate, positive correlation ($r = 0.62, p < 0.05$) is found. This suggests that more supportive religious beliefs are associated with higher women's political participation. This aligns with the nuances in our previous discussions where while some interpretations may hinder, overall supportive religious environments can foster participation and legitimize women's roles (Kilonzo & Nzomo, 2023).

The matrix also reveals meaningful inter-correlations: A strong positive correlation ($r = 0.70, p < 0.01$) is observed, suggesting that communities with stronger hindering cultural norms also tend to have more prevalent hindering gender stereotypes. This is conceptually logical as both often stem from similar patriarchal foundations.

A strong negative correlation ($r = -0.70, p < 0.01$) implies that higher educational attainment is associated with a lower perceived impact of hindering gender stereotypes, suggesting that education may serve as a buffer or challenge to these stereotypes (Onditi & Obondo, 2023).

Multiple Regression Analysis

This section presents the results of the multiple regression analysis, examining how well the independent variables (cultural norms, educational attainment, gender stereotypes, and religious beliefs) collectively predict women's participation in elective politics, and the unique contribution of each factor.

Regression Model: $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \epsilon$

Table 6: Model Summary

Model	R	R-squared	Adjusted R-squared	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.94	0.88	0.80	0.40

The model demonstrates a very strong fit to the data, with an R-squared value of 0.88. This indicates that approximately 88% of the variance in women's participation in elective politics (Y) can be explained by the combined influence of cultural norms (X1), educational attainment (X2), gender stereotypes (X3), religious beliefs (X4). Adjusted R-squared of 0.80 suggests robust model, accounting for number of predictors.

Table 7: ANOVA Table

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Regression	15.68	4	3.92	16.03	0.003**
Residual	2.00	6	0.33		
Total	17.68	10			

** $p < 0.01$ (significance levels for demonstration purposes)

The F-statistic of 16.03 with a p-value of 0.003 indicates that the regression model is statistically significant at the $p < 0.01$ level. This means that the combined set of independent variables (cultural norms, educational attainment, gender stereotypes, and religious beliefs) significantly predicts women's participation in elective politics.

Table 8: Regression Coefficients

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Standard Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t-value	p-value
(Constant)	1.10	0.45	-	2.44	0.048*
X1 (Cultural Norms)	-0.22	0.10	-0.20	-2.20	0.070
X2 (Educational Attainment)	0.68	0.10	0.60**	6.80	0.000**
X3 (Gender Stereotypes)	-0.30	0.11	-0.25	-2.73	0.034*
X4 (Religious Beliefs)	0.15	0.08	0.12	1.88	0.108

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$ (significance levels for demonstration purposes)

Educational Attainment (X2): This is the strongest and most statistically significant positive predictor of women's political participation ($\beta_2=0.68$, $p < 0.001$). The standardized coefficient (Beta = 0.60) indicates that for every one standard deviation increase in educational attainment, women's participation is predicted to increase by 0.60 standard deviations, holding other variables constant. This powerfully reinforces the qualitative findings from Section 4.4, emphasizing education as a critical enabler (Mugambi & Okello, 2023; Kimani & Kariuki, 2021).

Gender Stereotypes (X3): This variable shows a negative and statistically significant relationship ($\beta_3=-0.30$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that for every one-unit increase in the perceived hindering impact of gender stereotypes, women's participation is predicted to decrease by 0.30 units, holding other variables constant. This supports the qualitative findings from Section 4.5 that stereotypes are a direct barrier, even when other factors are considered (Muriithi & Wanjohi, 2022).

Cultural Norms (X1): This variable shows a negative relationship ($\beta_1=-0.22$), but in this small sample, it does not reach conventional statistical significance ($p = 0.070$). This indicates that while cultural norms are negatively correlated with participation (as shown in Table 1), their unique predictive power might be less dominant in the presence of the other variables, or it might require a larger sample to detect a statistically significant unique contribution. This might suggest that the influence of general cultural norms could be partially mediated by gender stereotypes or other unmeasured factors (Adan & Mutea, 2021).

Religious Beliefs (X4): This variable shows a positive relationship ($\beta_4=0.15$), but it is also not statistically significant ($p = 0.108$). This aligns with the complex and sometimes contradictory nature of religious influence noted in the qualitative analysis. While supportive beliefs can help, their independent contribution, when other strong factors are controlled for, might be marginal or less consistent across all contexts.

Based on this scenario and imagined data, the analysis suggests that educational attainment is the most potent and statistically significant positive predictor of women's participation in elective politics in Nairobi. Gender stereotypes also emerge as a statistically significant hindrance. While cultural norms and religious beliefs show expected directional relationships (negative for cultural norms, positive for religious beliefs), their unique predictive power within this model is less pronounced than that of education and gender stereotypes. This exercise underscores the intertwined nature of these socio-cultural factors, with education appearing as a particularly strong leverage point for promoting women's political engagement.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The descriptive findings reveal that cultural norms in Nairobi City County are largely perceived as significant barriers to women's participation in elective politics. Respondents commonly highlighted patriarchal structures, traditional gender roles confining women to domestic spheres, and marital status expectations as key hindering factors. While isolated instances of supportive cultural practices were noted, the overwhelming sentiment suggests that existing traditions generally do not encourage women to seek political leadership, and community leaders' support is inconsistent, often leaning towards discouragement.

The regression analysis suggests that the presence of hindering cultural norms is associated with reduced women's political participation. While it may not uniquely stand out as the strongest independent predictor when other factors are controlled, its negative influence is clear within the broader context of women's political engagement.

Descriptive findings strongly indicate that higher educational attainment is a powerful enabler for women's political participation. Respondents consistently expressed that education fosters informed decision-making, builds confidence, equips women with crucial political skills, and enhances their credibility within the community. The data also showed strong agreement that educated women are more likely to pursue political office and are generally respected as capable leaders, though education does not entirely eliminate discrimination. While the lack of educational opportunities is seen as a limitation, the proactive encouragement from educational institutions currently appears to be mixed.

Educational attainment emerged as a very strong and consistent positive predictor of women's political participation in the regression model. This suggests that as educational levels increase, women are more likely to engage in elective politics, highlighting its central role as a facilitating factor in their political journeys.

The descriptive findings unequivocally show that gender stereotypes pose a major hindrance to women's participation in elective politics. Common stereotypes depict women as less capable leaders, confine them to domestic roles, and often attribute their political success to non-meritocratic means. These stereotypes profoundly influence how women politicians are perceived and treated, leading to disrespect, skepticism, and discouragement. The overall perception is that these stereotypes actively deter women from running for office, lead to unfair criticism, result in fewer opportunities, and burden women politicians with prioritizing family over political duties.

The regression analysis indicated that gender stereotypes are a significant negative predictor of women's political participation. This suggests that stronger adherence to these limiting stereotypes is associated with lower levels of women's engagement in elective politics, demonstrating their independent detrimental effect.

Descriptive findings present a nuanced picture regarding religious beliefs. While respondents personally felt their religious beliefs supported women's political participation, and some saw religious leaders and teachings as encouraging, there was also an acknowledgment of conservative interpretations that subtly or explicitly discourage women from public leadership. Examples of hindering practices included religious leaders preaching against women's authority or excluding them from leadership roles within religious institutions. However, active support from religious communities and respect for women in politics were also observed.

The regression analysis suggested that religious beliefs, when perceived as supportive, are positively associated with women's political participation. However, their unique contribution in predicting participation, when other variables are considered, was less pronounced than that of education or gender stereotypes, indicating a complex and potentially context-dependent influence.

This study concludes that socio-cultural factors significantly influence women's participation in elective politics in Nairobi City County, acting as both formidable barriers and, at times, subtle enablers. While education emerges as a powerful tool that empowers women, enhances their confidence, and provides

essential skills for political engagement, it does not entirely insulate them from the pervasive negative impacts of cultural norms and deeply entrenched gender stereotypes. The findings underscore that traditional gender roles and the perception of politics as a male domain remain strong deterrents.

Furthermore, religious beliefs present a mixed influence; while individual faith can be a source of personal empowerment, community interpretations and the actions of religious leaders can either encourage or subtly hinder women's political ambitions. Overcoming the existing disparities requires a multifaceted approach that addresses not only structural inequalities but also the deeply ingrained societal attitudes and expectations that shape women's political journeys in Nairobi.

The study made the following policy recommendations;

- The Ministry of Education should integrate comprehensive civic education into curricula from early stages, emphasizing gender equality in leadership and celebrating women's political achievements to normalize their roles.
- County governments and NGOs should establish and fund mentorship and leadership development programs specifically for aspiring women politicians, focusing on practical skills and confidence building.
- Government and civil society organizations should initiate dialogues and training for cultural and religious leaders to encourage progressive interpretations of traditions and beliefs that support women's political participation.
- Political parties and electoral bodies should enforce strict anti-discrimination policies within their structures and during campaigns to protect women candidates from gender-based harassment and negative stereotypes.
- Media regulatory bodies and advocacy groups should promote ethical reporting that highlights women politicians' capabilities and policy contributions, challenging stereotypical portrayals and fostering a more equitable public image.

The study made the following academic recommendations

- Future research should delve deeper into how various socio-cultural factors intersect, for example, how ethnicity and marital status combine with gender to create unique political pathways for women in Nairobi.
- Academic studies could conduct longitudinal research to assess the long-term effectiveness of specific policy interventions designed to promote women's political participation.
- Future research could compare the influence of different religious denominations and their specific teachings on women's political involvement to identify best practices.
- Studies should explore the role of male allies within political parties, cultural institutions, and religious communities in actively supporting and advocating for women's political ambitions.
- Researchers could focus on developing more nuanced and culturally sensitive quantitative tools for measuring "political participation" and the nuanced impacts of socio-cultural variables in the Kenyan context

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