
CULTURAL FACTORS AS DRIVERS OF WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN ELECTIVE POSITIONS IN NYAMIRA COUNTY

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ABSTRACT

Despite constitutional and institutional frameworks aimed at promoting gender equality in Kenya, women's representation in elective political positions remains critically low, especially at the county level. The under representation of women in elective leadership is a global challenge to the realization of gender equality and inclusive governance. This study investigates the drivers of women's leadership in elective positions in Nyamira County. The specific objective include the influence of cultural on women's pursuit and attainment of elective offices. Anchored in Patriarchy and Feminist Theories, the study employed a descriptive survey design targeting 384 registered voters across the county's four constituencies. The study used structured questionnaires and interview schedules to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for quantitative analysis, while qualitative responses were examined thematically. The findings reveal that entrenched patriarchal norms, traditional gender roles, cultural taboos and exclusionary political party structures continue to suppress women's leadership ambitions. The study concluded that entrenched cultural resistance to female candidacy, financial inequities in campaign mobilization and political party biases significantly perpetuate systemic discrimination against women in leadership engagement. The report suggests that political parties, the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), and the Kenyan Parliament county governments, and gender advocacy organizations prioritize the implementation of gender-responsive policies and legal reforms. The study also recommends deliberate policy enforcement, targeted civic education, gender-sensitive electoral reforms and the institutionalization of quota systems.

Key Words: Culture, Women Representation and Elective Positions

INTRODUCTION

The involvement of women in elected leadership is seen as a crucial component of development, given that women make up fifty percent of the global population (World Bank, 2013). Strong women leadership for democratic government is essential; unfortunately, due to restrictive legislation and institutional impediments, women continue to be marginalized in politics around the world leading to low women leadership in elective positions. Such under-representation is a rights issue with detrimental societal effects, as perspectives and experiences of more than half the population are never taken into account.

According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (2008), women exhibit elective leadership when they collaborate across party lines in parliamentary women's caucuses, even in the most politically charged settings, and when they advocate for gender equality issues like voting reforms, parental leave and childcare, pensions, gender-equality laws, and the abolition of gender-based violence.

As per calculations from UN Women (2023), there are currently 31 nations with women holding positions as Heads of State and/or Government, indicating that it may take another 130 years to achieve gender parity in top leadership roles. The reality of women serving in legislative assemblies across the globe has an effect on the social, political, and economic facets of the countries they represent; nonetheless, they encounter significant barriers in gaining entry to these crucial legislative frameworks. Therefore, it is essential that these issues be identified and resolved in order to guarantee that democratic institutions are fully functional and that everyone's human rights be respected in full. Targeting all stages of women's admission into elective roles, as stated by IIDEA (2005), necessitates a concerted effort, from the beginning to the end, to ensure that they have the resources and means necessary to make a positive and constructive contribution to the advancement of their country as members of parliament.

Even Nevertheless, the majority of nations worldwide still lack gender balance, gender quotas have made significant advancements possible. As per the United Nations, Economic and Social Council (2021), countries with constitutionally enforced candidate quotas had higher representation of women in parliaments and local government, by five percentage points and seven percentage points, respectively.

In 1995, women accounted for 11% of lawmakers, while today they represent only 26.5% in single or lower chambers, based on data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Just six nations, either in the lower house or the single chamber, have 50% or more of their female citizens in parliament: Rwanda (61%), Cuba (53%), Nicaragua (52%), Mexico (50%), New Zealand (50%), and the United Arab Emirates (50%). Twenty-three more nations have reached or exceeded the forty percent threshold: six are in Africa, three are in Latin America and the Caribbean, one is in Asia, and thirteen are in Europe. There are 22 states in the world where the proportion of female lawmakers in single or lower houses is less than 10%, with one lower chamber having no female legislators at all. In parliamentary seats, women account for 32% in Europe and Northern America, and 36% are found in Latin America and the Caribbean. They make up 26% of the population of Sub-Saharan Africa, with Eastern and South-Eastern Asia coming in second at 22%, Oceania at 20%, Central and Southern Asia at 19%, and Northern Africa and Western Asia at 18%.

It is important to acknowledge that while women have indeed achieved greater representation in elected roles, significant gaps remain between female leadership and that of males (Brown & Diekman, 2013). Women make up just 21.8% of the national parliament, with only 17% of government minister positions held by women (United Nations Women, 2014). The international community will achieve both the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and female basic rights through investing in gender-responsive political involvement. This will in turn involve women in decision –making processes and hence pave way for a more inclusive and resilient political processes.

Despite the rise of female candidates for public office in America, women are becoming less confident that voters will support them. The main causes of women's underrepresentation are due to this, as well as gender

discrimination and the fact that women must put in more effort to show themselves than males. Males are still considerably less likely to regard this as a serious obstacle than women (32% of males do so), since they believe that women simply aren't as interested in holding elective positions. However, 57% of women believe that voters are not ready to elect them. Even so, a lot of people in America doubt that women will ever be able to get over the barriers standing in the way of reaching gender parity in elective positions. Men will continue to hold more elective jobs, according to about half (48%) of respondents. (Horowitz, J.M, Igielnik R. and Parker, K. (2018).

Kenya is said to have a strong and forward-thinking institutional, administrative, and legal structure that, if put into place, might eliminate the socio-economic and political disparities that still plague the country. The National Assembly has not yet passed the legislation that would create the framework for implementing the principle that "Not more than two-thirds of the members of elective or appointive bodies shall be of the same gender" (Article 27, clause 8), despite the fact that the 2010 Kenyan Constitution gives the State the authority to take legislative and other actions to carry out this principle. The Supreme Court declared in its 2012 advisory opinion that the National Assembly needed to enact the legislation by August 27, 2015, and that the State was required to create suitable legislation to carry out the gender equity mandate or face dissolution under Article 261 (5-7). Parliament attempted to enact the necessary legislation to ensure equal gender representation in 2015 (twice) and 2018 through constitutional amendments that aimed to develop a formula for achieving the required one-third representation for each gender in Kenya's bicameral legislature. In 2016, the court determined that the legislature and the attorney general had not moved to enact the laws required to uphold, honor, defend, and advance gender rights.

Statement of the Problem

Women in Kenya comprise 50.49% of the Kenyan population (Kenya Population and Housing Census, 2019) and 49.11% of the registered voters (IEBC Data report of 2022 Elections) their leadership in elective positions is low. It therefore follows that with proper awareness and resource mobilization; women can vie and win Elective Positions. The country however, continues to witness gender disparities in elective positions brought about by among others patriarchal structures which subordinate women to men. Whereas organizations like National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC), Kenya Electoral Assistance Programme (KEAP), Echo Network Africa (ENA), Kenya Women Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA) have been leading in campaigning for the absorption of women in elective positions and while the Kenya Constitution 2010 gave an opportunity for women leadership in elective positions and other governance positions, women leadership in elective positions remains dismally low.

The percentage of women holding elective positions in Nyamira County and the nation as a whole is still low, despite the resolutions adopted and ratified at the UN Decade Conference in Nairobi in 1985 and the Abuja Declaration. This status persists despite the fact that Kenya has ratified most human rights conventions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (Yoon, 2004).

Numerous studies on women's involvement in political leadership and the political process have been undertaken nationally. For example, Lokoro (2018) studied the factors that influence women's involvement in political leadership in Turkana County's Central Constituency. Tundi (2018), conducted an investigation into the elements influencing women's involvement in political leadership in the Kimilili constituency, Bungoma County and Bochaberi (2009) did a study in Nyamira County on women's involvement in political processes. The first two investigations, however, were restricted to Constituencies, which made it difficult to extrapolate the results. While Bochaberi's study (2009) focused in Nyamira County, it was done in 2009 before the adoption of the 2010 constitution which brought with it the gender rule. The leadership of Nyamira women in elective positions following the adoption of the 2010 constitution has not been the subject of any research. As a result, there is a void that must be filled.

In Nyamira County, we have both governor (and his deputy) and senator being male; all members of the County and National Assemblies being men. Owing to this evidence of gender disparity in elective positions in the different elective positions within Nyamira County, the study investigated the determinants of women leadership in electoral positions in Nyamira County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature Review

Cultural Factors and Women Leadership

Since the fight for gender equality began, cultural factors have been identified as the biggest barrier for women in leadership roles globally (IPU, 2000, 2015; Norris & Inglehart, 2000; UN, 2000). The culture of a society provides the rules and regulations that its members must follow in order to function. Women's participation in extracurricular activities is influenced by culture (Kabeer, 2015; Lawless & Fox, 1999; Kameri-Mbote, 2016; Mwangi, 1996; Omwami, 2011). Notably, women are prohibited by cultural norms from pursuing elective positions since engaging in extracurricular activities is seen negatively by society (Mbarika et al., 2007; Musandu, 2008). According to Wandia and Njoroge (2022) in a study of effects of Social-Cultural Values on Women Leadership in Murang'a County Government found out that cultural issues significantly affects women leadership.

These cultural factors, when combined with religious factors—especially in States where citizens practice and obey Islam—have an impact on women's leadership because these States come to the conclusion that there may not be any female leaders, which in turn affects how women are viewed and treated in both public and private settings (Venny, et al., 2014). According to Tawo et al. (2009), women continue to experience oppression, discrimination, alienation, humiliation, marginalization, and exploitation in Nigeria as a result of male dominance, which Islam emphasizes. In Sudan and Northern Nigeria, where the Purdah marriage system is prevalent, women are frequently excluded from and denied a voice in decision-making. According to this custom, women must be physically isolated from men, cover their bodies, and remain within their homes. Married women should consequently stay at home to prevent them from being exposed to vices (Tawo et al., 2009).

In many African countries, where women are trained to be subordinate and obedient to their husbands, a man's honor is determined by his ability to govern his wife (Institute of Economic Affairs, 2008). In many regions of Africa, Christianity supports this viewpoint as well (Gouzou, Eriksson-Baaz, Olsson, 16 2009; AAUW, 2016). Furthermore, women who have divorced or are single are looked down upon because marriage is a sacred institution. All these factors likely contribute to the low number of female candidates for elective offices. Values, ideologies, and images make up a significant portion of the background whereby the socializing procedure affects work and family life yet many traits gained by men and women through socialization processes, have implications in the quest for elective positions. Cultural views of women continue to tell them that owning property is usually bad or undesirable, in contrast to men who are indoctrinated to confidence, aggressiveness, and self-promotion (Koenig et al., 2011 as quoted in AAUW, 2016).

Omtatah (2008) asserts that socialization programs that prepare girls for household duties and boys for leadership roles also prevent women from advancing into elective positions. Many men find it difficult to comprehend the notion that they might be on the same platform as women as a result of this type of socialization. Due to the conflict between employment chances and parental/marital responsibilities, women are confined to household tasks and have limited time to be nurtured for electoral processes (Norris & Inglehart, 2001; White, 2012). The ability of women to assume elective positions is impeded by their familial responsibilities (Biegon, 2016; Kassilly & Onkware, 2010; Kameri-Mbote, 2016).

The Institute of Economic Affairs (2008) claims that women in Kenya are not afforded equal access to elective positions due to social, cultural, and traditional standards. FIDA-K (2013) says that there are communities which still think that being a woman is a curse to hold an elective position. By seeking elective positions, females in such communities are viewed as violating the gender-role norms (Institute of Economic Affairs, 2008) and such attempts are often met with dire consequences. Indeed Hon. Peris Tobiko, then Member of National assembly for Kajiado East Constituency, Kajiado County was cursed (to death, including those who would vote for her) by community elders for seeking an elective position, as it was against her Maasai culture (FIDA, 2013).

Women are generally uncomfortable traveling far, staying away from home for extended periods of time, going to bars, and interacting with men—all of which are necessary for political campaigns (Tripp, 2001; FIDA-K, 2013). Women who are interested in elective positions must take into account the possibility of societal stigma and being branded as "loose" or "unfit" mothers or wives (Kiamba, 2008; FIDA, 2013). Muhammad (2010) agrees that Politicians spend a lot of time traveling and frequently spend the night in hotels away from their homes while attending political events, with people identifying these women as being promiscuous.

Patriarchy Theory

According to Walby (1990), patriarchy is a set of structures and ideas that let men to rule over women and keep them from gaining wealth or positions of authority. The term is now typically used to describe a system that maintains women in a variety of inferior roles and power dynamics where men dominate women (Bhasin 2006:3). "Patriarchy" is a term used frequently by feminists to characterize the uneven power relations between men and women. Because of this, feminists refer to the notion known as "patriarchy" to describe a way of thinking that, like other concepts, may be used to better understand the reality that women experience.

Patriarchy uses gender norms as a mechanism to keep women in the home as wives and mothers (Bari, 2005; 4). As a result, women are not welcome in public spaces like politics (Ackelsberg and Shanley, 2018). Men's predominate societies, which erect a "glass ceiling" for women, are the source of deep-rooted cultural restrictions for women. Women lack the motivation to challenge gender inequality, which is why most patriarchal societies prefer voting men over women (Dana, 2009, p. 67).

In other instances, it is held that women should always be considerate to men. Consequently, a girl is trained from birth to believe she is less than a guy. It depends more on nature than nurture how boys and girls develop their social skills in this area. Therefore, roles are assigned based on a person's gender. According to Sperandio (2009) (p. 53), successful women are portrayed as those who respect and obey their husbands. A woman cannot object to anything a man does or says, and she also cannot disagree with cultural norms. Most of the time, it is thought that a lady belongs in her home. She is therefore limited to employment in the domestic environment. This suggests that a woman's role is to care for her husband, cook and clean the kids at home. The male, on the other hand, is expected to provide for and lead his family; as a result, he can pursue elective roles in the workplace. According to this argument, women have less influence overall, even when it comes to speaking for themselves (Cubillo & Brown, 2003).

On the other side, most males will struggle under a woman's leadership. Women are not appropriate for elective professions that require one to be strong and think analytically, according to men who claim that women always use their emotions rather than analytical thinking when carrying out daily tasks. Only women who accept the challenge of leadership will be able to disprove these gender preconceptions (Coleman, 2002, pp. 82–83). There are situations where female leaders are expected to "think like a man and act like a woman". Due to the significant obstacles that women in elective positions encounter from male harassment, they often withdraw and become more solitary. To go through obstacles, one needs to be a tough lady. (Eddy, 2009).

Conflicting duties are also a significant barrier for women seeking elective positions. This is so that she can care for the child and put her career on hold to support her family, both of which she is expected to do as the child bearer. It is challenging for women to balance job and family as a result. (Dean et al, 2009). The majority of women worldwide are reluctant to accept elective posts because of the heavy responsibilities of family life. Prioritizing their family's needs over any other demands should be their top priority (Schuler et al., 2006). Women are discriminated against since tradition says that they should be content taking care of their families rather than running for office.

Because of the above, the International political system has thus been historically created by men for men and excludes women in many ways. One of the main ways patriarchy maintains power in politics is through the male-dominated organizational structure of political parties. Parliaments and other high-ranking elective seats are known to be guarded by political parties. As a symbol of democracy, parliament should ideally not exclude, restrict, or practice gender discrimination (Palmieri, 2011). In contrast to what is commonly believed, women experience discrimination and disadvantage in political parties. This discrimination begins with the requirement for a cash deposit during candidate registration, which many women find difficult to raise because of their lower socioeconomic and political clout relative to men (OSCE ODIHR, 2014; 16).

According to Barnes and Cassese (2017), women are more inclined than males to blame systematic discrimination for inequality. Because party structures prefer the viewpoint and agenda of men, such discriminations have finally led to the marginalization of women in electoral posts. Once more, the ideologies of the various political parties influence how they treat women in leadership. Right-wing and conservative parties typically have more patriarchal attitudes about women. The smaller percentage of female candidates for high-ranking positions in various parties serves as evidence of this. Nonetheless, because they have a track record of promoting women in politics and seeing more women run for office and win leadership positions, leftist and liberal parties are perceived as being more accepting of women (Morgan and Hinojosa, 2018).

It is imperative to acknowledge that a growing proportion of female party members does not necessarily equate to elective positions. Many political parties employ the marginal seat syndrome to uphold the current quo and patriarchal rule while looking gender sympathetic and welcoming. Here, political parties field female candidates in electoral areas where their chances of winning are minimal (Palmieri, 2011; 10). While political parties may have differing opinions on a range of sociopolitical issues, parties are thought to be less transparent than parliaments when it comes to having established laws that are fair to all candidates in terms of gender equality, according to Palmieri (2011; 75). According to Caul (1999; 83), the majority of parties have implemented the quota system (which mandates percentages of women) and the goal system (which recommends percentages of women) to help overcome these barriers. These policies and processes, according to the Quota Project (2009), are meant to ensure that in legislative assemblies, women comprise at least a crucial minority of thirty or forty percent.

However, in addition to the reasons mentioned above, women who want to become politicians encounter more difficulties as a result of the patriarchal structure of politics, such as work schedules that are often incompatible with raising a family. This makes it especially difficult for women to fully engage with their employment tasks, as they are typically (according to patriarchal standards) assigned as the primary responsible figure for family matters. Women are usually burdened more than men because of strange work schedules, especially at night, or the incompatibility of the legislative cycle. Mothers find it more difficult to work in the workplace because of the patriarchal nature of politics. In terms of infrastructure, most parliaments are not well suited to satisfy the demands of women, especially nursing mothers. Verge and de la Fuente (2014) have identified a number of tactics that devalue women in politics, such as time management techniques, gendered informal punishments, super-surveillance of women's performance, gendered rituals in party bodies' daily operations, and informal networking. Women generally find it challenging to manage their obligations to their relatives and their professions because politics is a patriarchal field.

Women in Kenya's patriarchal society are primarily responsible for taking care of the home, which discourages females from participating in traditional political activities. The patriarchal structure of Kenyan society has resulted in decades of sexual gender-based violence (SGBV) against women. Abuse of female leaders began in colonial times, when several were killed in the 1952 state of emergency declared in response to the Mau Mau uprising, while others endured various forms of humiliation. When women attempted to run for elective positions, state agents attacked them, including Nobel Prize winner Wangari Maathai (Kassilly & Onkware, 2011).

The socialist feminist theory identifies connections between women's exploitation and oppression. Socialist feminists disagree with the notion that one's gender is predetermined by genetics and hold that the oppression of women and class structure are directly related. Moreover, the status of women must change in both the public and private spheres due to the fact that societal roles are not inborn (Freedman, B.E., 2002). The foundation of gender discrimination is a male-controlled capitalist hierarchy, which is completely destroyed in a radical feminist political theory in favor of the reconstruction of a society based on complete gender equality.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The primary investigation methods utilized in the research were identified in this chapter, along with the target population, sample plans, data collection instruments and methods, research design, ethical issues, data processing and presentation, and the dependability and validity of the research tools.

Target Population

All objects in any field of study are collectively referred to as a population, or the "universe" (Taylor, Bodgan, & De Vault 2015). A target population is a portion of the general demographic that was chosen as the intended audience for a study based on shared qualities. The 323 283 (IEBC 2022) individuals who were registered to vote in the four constituencies of Nyamira County during the 2022 General Election would be the target population for the study.

Sampling Technique

A condensed group selected from an easily available population is called a sample (Lewis, 2015). The practice of selecting a number of individuals or objects from a population so that the selected group contains elements typical of the characteristics found in the entire group is known as sampling. (Flick, 2015). The study therefore had a target of 384 respondents registered as voters across Nyamira County.

Data Analysis and Presentation

Since both kinds of data were gathered, both qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques must be used. The researcher used qualitative methods to analyze answers to open-ended questions. Such information was transcribed, and then reviewed for consistency, accuracy, response errors, omissions, and other irregularities. The major topic of each question was then identified and compared as part of the data analysis process utilizing the content/thematic analysis method (Mackey & Gass, 2015). The researcher grouped, examined, and presented the key concepts in a narrative format.

To evaluate the data and determine the degrees of response concentration, descriptive statistics such as percentages and mean scores were employed. The correctness and consistency of the Likert Scale data were examined. Once coded and imported into SPSS (V.22), a data sheet was generated for analysis. The data collected was cleaned and verified for accuracy, and the answers were coded.

The relationship between the study's measurable variables was assessed using regression analysis. To ascertain the associations between the variables in the study, correlation and multivariate regression analysis

were also employed. All statistical tests were conducted at the 5% significance level, and the results were presented using tables and figures.

The equation below displays the linear regression model of the independent variables vs the dependent variable;

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 K + e$$

Where

Y is women leadership in elective position

K is culture

β_1 beta coefficients

α is the y intercept and e the error term. It is assumed that the error term has a constant variance and a normal distribution with a mean of 0.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presented a descriptive analysis of study variables, the research findings, subsequent interpretation, and discussion of the results. The first part of this chapter presents the demographic and descriptive analysis that provides the characteristics of the target participants and study variables. The second part delves into thematic analysis and tests of hypotheses and subsequent outcome interpretation and discussion.

The extent to which cultural factors drive women's leadership in elective positions in Nyamira County

Table 1: Cultural Factors

Cultural Factor	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Mean	STD
Home	55 (14.8%)	44 (11.8%)	92 (24.7%)	131 (35.2%)	50 (13.4%)	372	3.94	0.91
Permission	55 (14.8%)	54 (14.5%)	129 (34.7%)	92 (24.7%)	42 (11.3%)	372	3.67	0.54
Status	90 (24.2%)	98 (26.3%)	128 (34.4%)	32 (8.6%)	24 (6.5%)	372	2.95	1.26
Derogation	96 (25.8%)	54 (14.5%)	110 (29.6%)	92 (24.7%)	20 (5.4%)	372	4.00	0.88
Taboo	0 (0.0%)	22 (5.9%)	22 (5.9%)	262 (70.4%)	66 (17.7%)	372	3.51	0.69
Voting	25 (6.7%)	71 (19.1%)	60 (16.1%)	132 (35.5%)	84 (22.6%)	372	3.43	1.08
Mean Score	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.42	0.87

Source: Field Data (2025)

As shown in Table 1, a significant portion of respondents, 35.2% (f=131), moderately agreed that A woman's role is in the home and not seeking elective positions, while 24.7% (f=92) agreed and 13.4% (f=50) strongly agreed. The response shows that, in total, 73.3% (f=273) expressed some level of agreement with this culturally conservative view. The outcome indicates that the respondents recognized that traditional gender roles persistently shape perceptions about women in politics. In contrast, only 14.8% (f=55) strongly disagreed, and 11.8% (f=44) disagreed. According to these statistics, women's political participation in the nation is still significantly hampered by traditional gender role expectations.

When asked about the belief that women must seek permission or blessings from their spouses before contesting in politics, 34.7% (f=129) of the respondents agreed, 24.7% (f=92) moderately agreed, and an additional 11.3% (f=42) strongly agreed. Collectively, 70.7% (f=263) of the respondents acknowledged the role of male approval in shaping women's political decisions. This trend affirms that familial structures still function as political gatekeepers, and women are not always seen—or do not see themselves—as autonomous political agents. The outcome mirrors the findings of Moe and Kabera (2024) in Turkana County, Kenya that local political dynamics and cultural expectations significantly influence women's participation in elective roles.

Respondents were also asked whether they believe that most women who enter politics are single, divorced, widowed, or past menopause. As shown in Table 4.4, a considerable proportion, 34.4% (f=128) agreed, while 8.6% (f=32) moderately agreed and 6.5% (f=24) strongly agreed. In contrast, 24.2% (f=90) strongly disagreed, and 26.3% (f=98) disagreed. The nearly even distribution of responses, where 49.5% were in agreement in comparison to 50.5% in disagreement, reflects a prevailing cultural narrative that women with less family responsibility are more likely or more permitted to engage in public life, reinforcing stereotypes that associate political ambition with marital status.

Similarly, the respondents were also asked whether women who enter elective positions are branded with all sorts of derogatory names. As shown in Table 1, a majority of respondents, 29.6% (f=110), agreed and 24.7% (f=92) moderately agreed, while 5.4% (f=20) strongly agreed. The combined responses comprising 59.7% (f=222) suggest that moral scrutiny and social labeling of female politicians remain widespread in Nyamira County in Kenya. As shown in Table 1, a notable minority of 25.8% (f=96) strongly disagreed with the presented notion, indicating resistance. This resistance, coupled with the observed cultural policing through derogatory naming, underscores how social norms can suppress women's political aspirations.

The respondents were further asked to indicate whether it is taboo for a woman to challenge a man in elective positions. As shown in Table 4.4, an overwhelming majority of 70.4% (f=262) moderately agreed, with an additional 17.7% (f=66) strongly agreeing. In total, 88.1% (f=328) were in favor of this viewpoint. As shown in Table 4.4, only 5.9% (f=22) disagreed or strongly disagreed. This finding exposes the deep-seated patriarchal norms that frame political competition as inherently male, with female candidacy seen as disruptive or unnatural. Such cultural taboos serve as informal social laws that inhibit women's participation even in contexts where legal frameworks allow it. Women are thus required to navigate not only formal political processes but also entrenched gendered expectations that are rarely codified but widely enforced.

Finally, the respondents were asked whether most women vote for men instead of their fellow women. The outcome presented in Table 4.4 revealed that 35.5% (f=132) moderately agreed, 22.6% (f=84) strongly agreed, and 16.1% (f=60) agreed. The outcome shows that in total, 74.2% (f=276) of respondents believe women do not support each other electorally. This result may be attributed to internalized cultural norms that favor male leadership or to skepticism about the electability or competence of female candidates.

In summary the cultural factors index recorded a mean of **3.42 (SD = 0.87)**, suggesting that respondents moderately agreed that cultural norms affect women's leadership outcomes, though opinions varied moderately across the sample. The outcome of the current study underscores the fact that cultural factors have a profound and multidimensional influence on women's leadership in elective positions in Nyamira County. Women's leadership seems to be rooted in deep-rooted patriarchal beliefs, traditional gender roles, and cultural taboos. From perceptions of appropriate gender roles to the requirement for spousal approval to reputational stigma and intra-gender distrust, the cultural terrain remains a formidable challenge to women's political empowerment. Despite legislative provisions supporting gender equality, the socio-cultural ecosystem continues to be defined by patriarchal norms that construct female leadership as abnormal, suspect, or morally questionable.

The study outcome aligns with the findings of Onamu et al. (2024) that in Nakuru and Narok counties, leadership is socially construed as a male domain, and women who deviate from this norm often face resistance.

Regression Analysis

The study sought to examine the extent to which cultural, economic, and political factors drive women's leadership in elective positions in Nyamira County. A multiple regression analysis was conducted with women's leadership outcomes as the dependent variable and cultural factors as predictors.

Table 2: Model Summary

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.450 ^a	.323	.315	.29700	

a. Predictors: (Constant), Political factors, Economic factors, Cultural factors

The regression model yielded an R^2 of 0.323, indicating that approximately 32.3% of the variance in leadership outcomes is explained by the three predictors (Table 2). Although this leaves a considerable proportion unexplained, the explained variance is meaningful in social science research and demonstrates that the predictors are collectively influential.

Table 3: Anova

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.751	3	.250	2.838	.038 ^b
	Residual	32.461	368	.088		
	Total	33.212	371			

a. Dependent Variable: Women Leadership

b. Predictors: (Constant), Political, Economic, Culture.

The ANOVA result presented in Table 3 tested whether the regression model as a whole was statistically significant in predicting women's leadership outcomes. The results showed that the model was indeed significant, $F(3,368) = 2.838$, $p = .038$. This indicates that, collectively, cultural, economic, and political factors provide a meaningful contribution to explaining women's leadership outcomes beyond what would be expected by chance. The significance of the overall model confirms that the chosen independent variables are relevant for understanding women's leadership, even though their individual contributions may vary in strength and direction. Put differently, when considered together, the three predictors significantly improve the model's explanatory capacity compared to a model with no predictors.

Table 4: Regression Coefficients

Coefficients ^a					
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t
1	(Constant)	3.982	.288		13.846
	CultureC	.100	.070	.085	1.441

a. Dependent Variable: Leadership

The objective was to establish the extent to which cultural factors drive women's leadership in elective positions in Nyamira County. The regression coefficient for cultural factors was positive but statistically insignificant ($B = 0.100$, $\beta = 0.085$, $t = 1.441$, $p = .150$). This indicates that although cultural attitudes appear

to exert some influence, they do not significantly predict women's leadership outcomes once economic and political variables are taken into account. This finding implies that traditional beliefs around gender roles, though still present, may be gradually losing their direct impact on electoral outcomes. The insignificance could also suggest that culture operates indirectly—perhaps reinforcing political or economic barriers rather than independently determining women's leadership success. These results align with emerging literature that point to a slow but noticeable shift in cultural perceptions, where younger and more educated populations are more accepting of women in leadership.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Regarding cultural factors, the study revealed that cultural norms and beliefs strongly shape and often limit women's pursuit of elective leadership in Nyamira County. The study found strong evidence that deep rooted gender roles significantly hinder women's political participation. A substantial portion of respondents expressed agreement with the view that a woman's role is in the home and not seeking elective positions. These cultural views manifest in expectations that women should remain in domestic roles and seek permission from male family members before pursuing public office. Furthermore, a significant number acknowledged the role of male approval in shaping women's political decisions, indicating the persistent hold of patriarchy. The belief that it is a taboo for a woman to challenge a man in elective positions garnered overwhelming agreement, exposing deep-seated patriarchal norms. The study also revealed that a majority of respondents believe women do not support each other electorally, indicating a lack of intra-gender solidarity. These findings align with observations in other Kenyan counties regarding cultural influences on women's leadership. Interview data further reinforced these cultural barriers, with key informants citing gender stereotyping and religious conservatism as primary reasons for women avoiding other elective positions or voters not supporting them.

Based on the study's findings, it can be concluded, with a high degree of certainty, that cultural factors represent a formidable and pervasive barrier to women's leadership in elective positions in Nyamira County. The study concludes that cultural norms, beliefs, and traditional gender roles continue to act as strong deterrents to women's political leadership in Nyamira County. These barriers are deeply embedded within the fabric of traditional gender roles, societal expectations, and even religious interpretations, collectively acting to discourage women's political participation. This manifests not only in overt discrimination but also in subtle yet powerful influences on voter behavior, often resulting in a marked preference for male candidates. Transformative change must address deeply ingrained societal attitudes and cultural narratives.

Recommendations for Policy Implication and Practice

The study recommends that Policy-makers should prioritize the robust implementation and enforcement of existing gender parity laws, such as Article 27(8) and Article 81(b) of the 2010 Constitution of Kenya, focusing specifically on electoral processes to ensure equitable access for women beyond nominated seats. This includes establishing mechanisms for gender-responsive campaign financing, potentially through public funding for female candidates or waivers on nomination fees, and enacting stricter penalties for gender-based abuse and intimidation during campaigns.

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