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Implications of intersectionality on Women's Political Participation in Electoral Outcomes in Githunguri Constituency, Kiambu County, Kenya

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Abstract: Political participation derives from the freedom to speak out, assemble and associate; the ability to take part in the conduct of public affairs; and the opportunity to register as a candidate, to campaign, to be elected and to hold office at all levels of government. The main objective of the study was to investigate the implications of intersectionality on women's political participation in electoral outcomes in Githunguri Constituency, Kiambu County, Kenya. The study was guided by feminist standpoint theories. Mixed approach and descriptive survey research designs were used in the study. Questionnaires and interview guides were used as tools of data collection and the unit of analysis was registered voters. Simple random technique was used to sample 330 respondents, 180 males and 150 females in churches, tea buying centers and markets. 15 key informants (KI to K15) were purposively sampled for the interviews, 7 males and 8 females. Inclusion criteria was influential and knowledgeable on constituency affairs residents who are registered voters. While qualitative data analysis applied thematic analysis by N-vivo, Quantitative data applied mean and standard deviation. From the findings, a coefficient of 0.290 indicates that addressing intersectionality improves women's political participation and electoral outcomes.

Key words: Intersectionality, Women, Political Participation, Electoral Outcomes

1.1 Background of the Study

Gender inequality is one of the many forms of social inequalities experienced in the social structure. In the 1800s as the Western Europe was transitioning from the feudal society to capitalism as a result of industrial revolution, Karl Max (1844 – 1883) observed the growing inequalities in the growing capitalist society and formulated the social conflict theory (Igwe, 2022). He goes on to explain that Marx's early writings on the conflict theory were dominated by an understanding of alienation and exploitation which leads to antagonism and conflict; a phenomenon often attributed to human nature and the desire to dominate. This theory would in subsequent years go beyond the economic classes to encompass other systems of inequality and this is how the feminist theory was birthed. According to Mohajan (2022) feminism is a movement founded by women aimed at removing all forms of female oppression as a result of patriarchy. This mass movement is characterized by stages presented in waves where the first wave of

feminism (1848-1920) sought to address the lack of political and reproductive rights among women, as a result most women around the world were granted suffrage and economic independence (Biana, 2020).

In the second wave of feminism (1960-1980) feminists fought for increased legal, economic and social rights. (Biana, 2020) explains that this saw women gain reproductive, legal, labor rights and most importantly adoption of CEDAW as the international Bill of Rights for women by the UN in 1979. (Madsen 2024) explains that the third wave of feminism emerged in the 1990s where men joined the movement as feminists. This wave took the multicultural global feminism approach to address gender equality and identity. Madsen, (2024) explains that many scholars have lauded the third wave as having achieved great progress globally which includes the highest number of women representation in politics, acknowledgement of women rights, affirmative action, workplace equality etc. The final and fourth wave (2008-present) shaped by technology and characterized by #hashtag revolution took activism to the online platform relying mainly on social media (Biana, 2020). According to Riva (2023) countries that have attained equal representation have legal and supervisory frameworks in place to develop policies and supervise progress. A country's leadership plays a pivotal role in empowering its women politically through creating policies, laws, and structures that promote a more democratic and inclusive leadership through gender mainstreaming.

On the African continent three countries are among the top ten democracies of the world that have attained gender equality in terms of political representation and they are Rwanda at 63.1%, Namibia at 46.2% and South Africa at 42.7% ranking first, sixth and tenth globally (Rivas, 2023). He explains that the three countries have attained this through an elaborate legislative and supervisory framework. The willingness and contribution of formal institutions in politics plays a pivotal role in promoting electoral outcomes that favor gender inclusivity.

Closer home, the East African Community Secretariat in 2018 while in Arusha, Tanzania launched the Gender Policy and the aim was to establish inclusivity among communities and guarantee equal opportunities as well as equal rights for all (Songa & Ronceray, 2023). They further explain that the framework adopted involves institutionalizing gender strategies as well as promoting and protecting the rights of men, women, boys and girls on an equal scale.

According to (Angelo, 2023) the 1969 General Elections attracted 610 candidates, six of them were women. This election saw Grace Onyango win the seat for Kisumu in Nyanza Province to be the first elected woman in Kenya. He goes on to explain that among the six was Jael Mbogo who was in 2021 on Mashujaa Day, awarded for her contribution to democracy, gender justice and human development. However, her political career was not an easy road considering how politics was and still is profoundly gendered. Her declaration to run for a political office angered her husband who was not only non-supportive but also destroyed her documents on her political career, and would later divorce her (Angelo, 2023). From Jael's experience it is easy to conclude that women's lived experiences contribute to low rates of participation in politics and even lower possibilities of winning an election. As she would explain to (Angelo, 2023), *"My husband was very much against everything. I had two battles: one at home and one outside. ...that I was becoming too popular for him as the head of the family and during official events he would go to a corner and drink himself dead."* In Jael's words and to echo the struggle that women participating in politics experience, it is clear that it attracts battles in their private spaces and in the public spaces. Her lived experiences included dealing with her husband's burning of her political paraphernalia during their separation and campaign organizers disconnecting her microphone at political rallies (Angelo, 2023).

Clayton, (2021) Observes that men and women have different lived experiences which lead to divergent interests, priorities and preferences, therefore electing women leads to diversification of legislative assemblies. Despite sensitization on gender inclusivity and diversity, the rising numbers of women offering their candidature in elections,

global funding, rising literacy levels among women and the general freedoms experienced by women today electoral outcomes still leave women underrepresented globally. Similar trends are witnessed in Kenya and more specifically in Githunguri Constituency. Vidiya (2023) reports that the 2022 General Elections saw the first woman, Gathoni Wa Muchomba elected to represent Githunguri Constituency in the position of the Member of National Assembly (MNA). Results of the 2021 continuous household survey by (KNBS) in Kiambu County has the second highest literacy rate in Kenya after Nairobi at 88% and 89% respectively. Economic empowerment and high literacy level are impetus to promoting gender equality but it seems not to work among the women of Githunguri constituency. Therefore, this research sought to analyze gender perception and women's political participation in electoral outcomes in Githunguri constituency.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

As explained by Clayton, (2021) women's substantive representation increases legislative attention to matters and policies that interest women. To drive a substantive gender equality agenda requires at least one-third gender representation which translates to 30%. The current state of underrepresentation denies women the power to influence policy and leadership. In the last General Elections in Kenya held in August 2022 the IEBC (2022) reports that out of all the political seats contested women managed to win only 8.44% of elective positions. Women of Githunguri constituency have experienced political alienation even after 13 successful elections and 1 By-election since 1963 when the first elections were held until 2022 when the first woman was elected to the National assembly. Past studies have shown that perception that influence women's marginalization begins at home where women are sometimes excluded from family decision-making process due to cultural beliefs and bias Kwame (2023). A study by Angelo (2023) found that women who participate in politics pay the price and sometimes it ends in a divorce. In a different study by Nyangweso (2020) found that religion is a significant agent of social construction used to maintain and regulate social structures which are mainly rooted in patriarchy prohibiting women from participating in leadership roles, but this study did not look at the perceptions of voters towards women leaders. None of these past studies have examined the impact of intersectionality on women's political participation in electoral outcomes in Githunguri Constituency. It is therefore against this background that my research sought to address the research gap on intersectionality and women's political participation in electoral outcomes in Githunguri Constituency Kiambu County, Kenya.

1.3 Study Objective

This study was guided by the following objective;

To investigate the impact of intersectionality on women's political participation in electoral outcomes in Githunguri Constituency.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The significance of this research was to establish the impact of intersectionality on women's political participation in electoral outcomes in Githunguri Constituency. Underrepresentation of women in politics denies them the power to influence policy and leadership. While the *Global Gender Gap Report 2023* indicates that as of 31 December 2022 the percentage of women in parliaments had risen to 22.9% the report notes that global trends mask regional disparities. While the women of Rwanda enjoy 63.1% political representation Nigerian women are politically underrepresented with a paltry 3.8%. It was therefore important to investigate the perceptions that contribute to women's underrepresentation in electoral outcomes to the extent they cannot attain 30% representation which is considered ideal to drive a substantive gender equality agenda (Dion & Mitchell, 2023). Past studies did not address gender perception and women's political participation in determining election outcomes in Githunguri constituency, therefore the study sought to fill the gap by answering the research questions developed from the objectives of the

study. The findings contribute to general knowledge and understanding of the limiting factors that stem from how women are perceived by voters through cultural, religious and societal norms and standards. It underscored the persistent need to delve into the study of gender disparity with the aim to close this colossal gender gap. Findings of the study review and advance knowledge in academia specifically on politics, gender studies, culture and sociology. The insights gained inform policy development that are more responsive to specific gender needs and decision making for targeted initiatives/interventions to address gender inequality. Findings also provide content for capacity building for women seeking elective positions and offer guidance in creating a framework that can be used to raise awareness on the biases and their effects, as well as projecting women in favorable light. Understanding the structured elements, norms and patterns of patriarchy serves as a backdrop for operationalization of the liberal feminist theory to create policies that enhance availing opportunities to women.

1.5 Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The study investigated the impact of intersectionality on women’s political participation in electoral outcomes in Githunguri Constituency. Githunguri constituency was selected because the voters here just like most voters around the country are yet to embrace gender inclusivity in politics and so the women are underrepresented at the policy and decision-making table. The methodology was confined to descriptive mixed-method research approach combining inferential qualitative and descriptive quantitative data collection and analysis. It used both questionnaires and interview guide as tools of data collection among the registered voters of Githunguri constituency. The theoretical frame work used on this study was feminist standpoint theory to analyze the findings of the study and galvanize the conversation.

1.6 Conceptual framework

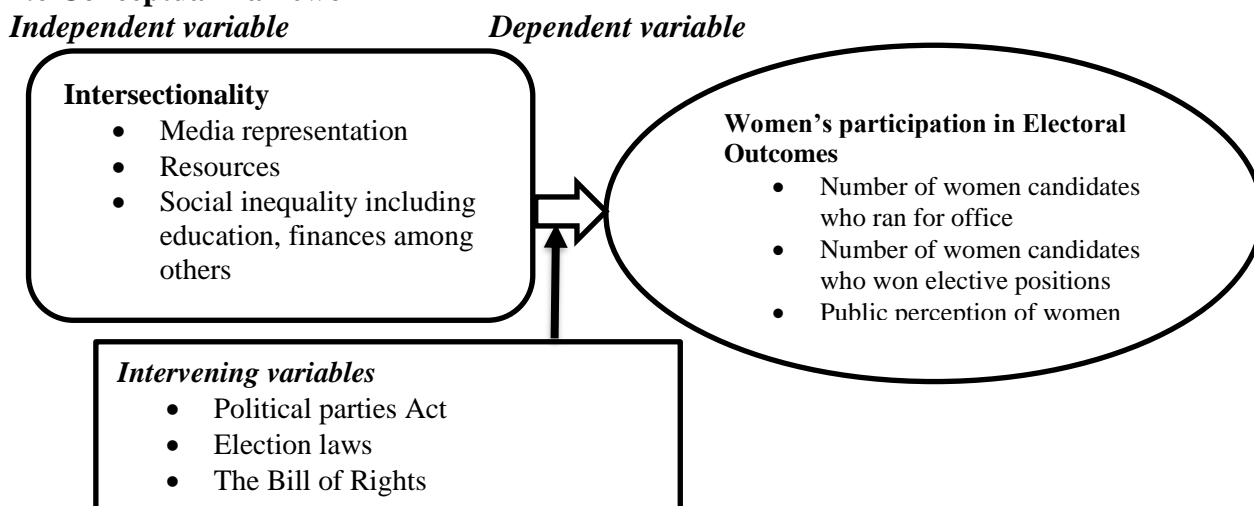


Figure 1: *The conceptual framework*
Source: *Own Conceptualization, 2024*

1.7 Literature review

In this section, a theory guiding the perspective of this study and empirical literature supporting the research are presented.

1.7.1 Theoretical review

The Feminist Standpoint Theory: The feminist standpoint theory was developed by Dorothy Smith in 1977

building from the consciousness-raising exercises and groups initiated by feminists in 1960s and 1970s (Hill, 2020). The standpoint theory argues that an individual's social position shapes and influences how they perceive the world. The theory emphasizes the importance of considering perspectives and the experiences of marginalized groups to help understand social relations and knowledge productions. It provides a deeper understanding of experiences and perspectives of women from different social backgrounds. The theory suggests that marginalized groups have unique intersocial structures and power dynamics because they experience oppression firsthand (Hill, 2000). The standpoint theory's tenets include (a) one's standpoint is socially situated (b) marginalized groups have unique insights (c) knowledge is partial and situated (d) power and privilege shape knowledge (e) Intersectionality.

According to W. E. B. Du Bois's concept of "double consciousness," in the experiential condition, it is the oppressed person who must adapt to the "rules of the game" (Hill, 2020). She explains that women in male-dominated professions like politics acclimate themselves to sexist and even misogynistic talk about the female body as a normal part of their everyday work environment (Hill, 2000). Not only do women learn to ignore the banter, but also might even chime in. However, because they must continually accommodate themselves to the dominant group in order to gain acceptance in a world that is not theirs, members of oppressed or minority groups become alienated from their "true" selves. In view of this, the standpoint framework will be used to examine challenges that women face in their campaign strategies. The feminist standpoint theory will provide the methodological framework where the women's experience will be analyzed on how they plan and execute their campaign strategy based on their social position and the lived experience.

Contemporary standpoint theorists deny the idea of situated-knowledge which states that social location influences experience and shapes knowledge (Gurung, 2020). They explain that the idea of knowledge acquisition in standpoints is not merely socially located rather it is achieved through a critical conscious reflection on power structures, only then can social location influence knowledge production (Gurung, 2020). However human sociological analysis is best studied from the realities of life lived in the immediate setting (Frechette, et al., 2020). Findings of a study by Cassidy et al, (2021) explains that women have not had the same opportunities as men in education acquisition and professional advancement. This social standpoint automatically shapes how they experience life and the kind of knowledge they have at their disposal. According to Hill, (2000) different forms of social oppression, such as racism, sexism and classism intersect and interact in complex ways to shape individuals' experiences (Bhandari, 2024). The theory was used to examine the experiences of women in order to analyze how they know and experience their lives differently from men. The feminist standpoint framework was used to examine the impact of intersectionality as a variable towards women's political participation and electoral outcomes. To understand the impact of intersectionality on women's political participation in electoral outcomes in Githunguri Constituency. and women participation in politics requires examining their position in life mainly by observing and analyzing their immediate experiences displayed in social life. This makes application of the Feminist Standpoint theoretical framework appropriate to inform the goals of this research.

1.7.2 Intersectionality and electoral outcomes

According to Van der, & Aaldering (2020) voters rely mainly on media for political information. They examine gender differences in media coverage classifying it into quantity to depict visibility and quality to depict covered differently. Media representation as a system of oppression promotes inequality and prejudice by underrepresentation or misrepresentation of women in politics. In their findings on quantity Van der & Aaldering (2020) report that men receive about 17% more attention from PR systems and on quality while focus is put on positive male electability for women focus is on appearance and family. Misrepresentation strengthens negative stereotype, promotes violence and stifles a career in politics for women (Santonniccolo et al., 2023). Disadvantageous reporting discourages political

elites from settling on women as party representatives (Van der, & Aaldering, 2020). Prejudiced individuals tend to choose prejudice consistent stereotypical news (Arendt, 2023).

Dulle, (2020), explains in Betty Friedan's words, "... it is not uncommon for women to suffer from 'the problem' that has no name," this is a phenomenon she refers to as a housewife's drudgery and isolation in the book *Feminine Mystique*. Friedan attempts to establish the cause for the "problem that has no name" where she believes it is many things, including sex, education, and the stereotypical housewife image. Dulle, (2020) found out that individual's lived experiences of social issues like gender inequality are shaped by an overlay of different social identities like gender, socioeconomic status, culture, education level etc. As reported by S.M.S, (2020) through the UN Women, violence and a system of discrimination create inequalities that disadvantage women from the beginning. She further explains that the system of inequality interacts with each other and a woman who lacks an education is not likely to secure a well-paying job and so they will have nothing to their name, and have to grapple with poverty should they consider political participation they might not have the resources to participate (Okpe et al., 2021). Property ownership is important for women because it guarantees them autonomy in the process of resource accumulation and ability to have and control disposable income which is key in conducting a successful political campaign. Findings of a research carried out by Kenyatta (2023) shows that the impediments that lead to failure of female candidates to win elections in Kenya are numerous and they include societal norms, constricted finances, election violence and lack of support from institutions.

According to Singh and Saxena, (2023) overlapping identities of discrimination lead to the muted ripple effect like in the case of Jael Mbogo being a married woman meant she takes instructions from her husband. If she didn't work, she would have never been in a position to fund her campaign. Still, even with her decisiveness to run for office and ability to fund her campaign her microphone is switched off during her public rally and this can easily be attributed to the fact that she is a woman since no other candidate is treated that way. Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw found that distribution of life chance opportunities is affected by an individual's elements of social identities, intersectionality is the interlocking multiple forms of the systems of oppression (Elaine et al., 2020).

1.8 Research Methods and Design

Descriptive explanatory and sequential designs and mixed-method approaches research were used in this research. The site of the study was Githunguri constituency, which is one of the twelve constituencies found in Kiambu County. It is made up of five County Assembly Wards (CAW) and covers a total area of 173 km² according to NG-CDF (2024). It has a population of 164,939 according to the KNBS's 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census. Githunguri which is peri-urban thrives in business, agriculture and industry with a milk processing plant and a tea processing factory. Most residents are farmers who grow coffee and tea and also keep cattle for commercial purposes. The researcher chose Githunguri because the women of Githunguri have been underrepresented on political decision-making table for a long time. Another reason for choosing Githunguri is, it is a peri-urban settlement making it representative of many constituencies around the country and lastly its high population offers ease of access to the respondents. In this study the target population was the registered voters of Githunguri constituency who according to the 2022 register of voters by IEBC are 104,562. The study population or sample frame was drawn from the target population. For quantitative research 330 respondents with 180 males and 150 females were randomly selected from the registered voters. Qualitative research respondents were 15 key informants with 7 males and 8 females who were purposively sampled.

Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

Mugenda & Mugenda (2003) asserts that, when the population under study is more than 10,000 individuals, 384

respondents are recommended as the desired sample size for quantitative research. Baker, et al., (2012) peak ideal sample size between 12-60 respondents for qualitative research interviews. Sample size for quantitative research was 385 respondents while sample size for qualitative research was peaked at 20 respondents, giving a total of 405 total respondents. Githunguri constituency had a total of 104,562 registered voters (IEBC 2022). To determine the sample size, Yamane formula was used and a desired confidence level of 95% was applied. Estimating the sample size for quantitative data collection using the sample size formula and a confidence level of 95%.

$$\text{Unlimited population: } n = \frac{z^2 \times \hat{p}(1-\hat{p})}{\epsilon^2}$$

$$\text{Finite population: } n' = \frac{n}{1 + \frac{z^2 \times \hat{p}(1-\hat{p})}{\epsilon^2 N}}$$

Population size (N) 104,592

Confidence level 95% -95 % has a Z score of 1.96 Margin of error 5%

Population proportion 50%

Where z is the corresponding z score of accuracy ϵ is the margin of error

N is the population size

\hat{p} is the population proportion $\hat{p} = 0.5$

$z = 1.96$

$\epsilon = 0.05$

n = Sample size

$$n = \frac{z^2 \times \hat{p}(1-\hat{p})}{\epsilon^2}$$

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5(1-0.5)}{0.05^2} = 384.16$$

Determination of sample size for each ward was through proportionate stratified random sampling where distribution is done according to proportionate weight in the population (table 1) within the five county assembly wards (CAW).

Table 1: Sample Size per County Assembly Ward

COUNTY ASSEMBLY WARD (CAW)	POPULATION	PROPORTIONS = CAW TOTALS/TARGET POPULATION	SAMPLE PER CAW = PROPORTIONS*TOTAL TARGET SAMPLE (N) (385)
GITHIGA	20,616	0.1971	76
GITHUNGURI	27,596	0.2639	102
IKINU	17,450	0.1668	64
KOMOTHAI	20,054	0.1917	74
NGEWA	18,876	0.1776	69
TOTAL	104,562	1.00	385

Source: *Field data, 2024*

Respondents of qualitative data collection were recruited through purposive sampling. The researcher intended to interview 20 key informants but due to data saturation the researcher settled for 15 respondents, 3 from each CAW comprising of 1 male and 2 female politicians, 1 male and 1 female religious leader, 2 female and 1 male business owner, 1 female and 1 male head of *nyumba kumi*, 2 male members of civil society and 2 female and 1 male policy enforcers. The inclusion criteria for key informants was based on participants who are registered voters, hold positions of influence in the community and are knowledgeable about the community and the residents. The exclusion criteria was based on nonresidence, non-registered voters and participants who do not hold a position of influence and know very little about the community. The simple random sampling technique was used to collect quantitative data based on the register of voters (ROV) targeting farmers at the tea buying centers, the people at the markets and congregations in churches to recruit respondents from Githunguri constituency. Questionnaires were administered to the respondents to collect quantitative data from the respective five CAW in Githunguri constituency. The return response from data collected from the five wards was 330 respondents distributed in the five CAW as follows: Githunguri (82), Githiga (68), Komothai (65) Ikinu (56) and Ngewa (59). Out of the total participants 180 (representing 54.5%) were male, while 150 (accounting for 45.5%) were female.

The researcher disseminated questionnaires to respondents in all the five county assembly wards with the help of assistants who also helped interpret the questions and ethical requirements of the research to respondents who could not read English. Further, interviews were scheduled with key informants after recommendation and confirmation of willingness to participate. While respondents of the questionnaires remained, anonymous interviewees were annotated as K1 to K15 but their real identities were not revealed. No emails, name or phone numbers were captured. The only identification details were gender and CAW of residence to ensure both genders are equally represented and that distribution is done according to proportionate weight of each CAW.

Questionnaires were administered to 385 participants from five county assembly wards of Githunguri constituency. The sampling technique employed was simple random as long as the participants engaged are registered voters. The researcher availed the questionnaires at tea farmers meetings, in churches, at the market. The qualitative research interviews targeted key informants who are considered not only influential but also thought of to have in-depth knowledge of the people and the constituency at large. The sampling technique was done through snow balling and they included politicians who have run for election in the past, members of the civil society, religious leaders, the sub-county employees, leaders of Nyumba kumi and business owners. Efforts to interview the leaders of *Gwatandai* (a religious sect whose teachings are consistent with the kikuyu culture) and the leaders of *Kiama* (the Kikuyu cultural group) were fruitless. These are people who are believed to be custodians of the Kikuyu culture.

The data collected was both quantitative and qualitative in nature and before processing the responses, the completed questionnaires were checked to confirm if they were filled to completion. Data coding was done and the responses were grouped into various categories. Data collected qualitatively was analyzed using thematic analysis by NVivo, while the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 24) was used to enter and analyze quantitative data by calculating the frequencies, mean and standard deviation. Tables and pie charts graphs were utilized for presenting facts, while prose was employed to explain them. Further inferential statistics, (Pearson correlation test) was used to understand the relationship between the variables. The Pearson Correlation was used after conducting a diagnostic which established that the data from both variables met the test assumptions since they follow a normal distribution, have no outliers and a linear relationship was expected.

1.9 Study findings

Questionnaire Return Rate

The study sampled 385 respondents out of which 330 respondents were able to complete the questionnaires. This forms a response rate of 85.71% displayed in table 2.

Table 2: Response Rate

Questionnaires issued	Frequency	Percentage
Questionnaires filled and returned	330	85.7
Questionnaires not returned	55	14.3
Total	385	100

Source: *Field data, 2024*

Impact of Intersectionality on Women’s Political Participation in electoral outcomes in Githunguri Constituency

This study sought to investigate the effect of intersectionality among women in politics and the election outcomes in Githunguri Constituency. By examining how the system of oppression comprising social identities like gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and education affect women’s engagement in politics, this section aims to uncover the nuanced ways in which these factors affect participation and election outcomes in Githunguri constituency. Through an analysis of both individual experiences and broader community dynamics, the data provides insights into the specific challenges faced and opportunities at the disposal of women candidates.

Study respondents were asked to show how much they agreed with the research statements in table 3 that sought to explain the effect of intersectionality on women in politics and the election in Githunguri Constituency.

Table 3: Effects of Intersectionality on Women taking part in politics

Statements	Disagree		Fair		Agree		Strongly Agree		Mean	Std Dev
	F	%	f	%	F	%	f	%		
Do deep-seated cultural beliefs on gender influence participation of women in politics and the community's lack of support for female leaders in Githunguri constituency?	11	3.3	42	12.7	179	54.2	98	29.7	4.10	0.74
Low literacy levels among women limit their awareness of political processes and lower their confidence in participating in politics.	21	6.4	24	7.3	213	64.5	72	21.8	4.02	0.74
women find it challenging to navigate political dynamics, especially if they do not belong to the dominant groups (tribe/class/religion) in the constituency	10	3.0	83	25.2	185	56.1	52	15.8	3.85	0.71
Intersectionality of ethnicity and gender can lead to additional layers of discrimination.	21	6.4	77	23.3	232	70.3			3.64	0.60
Traditional gender roles often position women primarily within the domestic sphere, limiting their opportunities and time for political engagement.			67	20.3	212	64.2	51	15.5	3.95	0.60
Women in Githunguri constituency face resistance when they step into political arenas traditionally dominated by men.	10	3.0	63	19.1	180	54.5	77	23.3	3.98	0.74
Women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds lack the resources needed for political campaigns, such as funds			46	13.9	211	63.9	73	22.1	4.08	0.60

for publicity, transportation, and other logistical provisions.

Aggregate mean

3.95 0.68

Source: Field data, 2024

From the study, 54.2% of the respondents agreed that deep-seated cultural beliefs on gender, influence participation of women in politics and contribute towards lack of community's support for female leaders in Githunguri constituency. This resulted in the highest mean score (Mean = 4.10, Std Dev = 0.74) which indicates that the overall average respondents strongly agree that culture determine whether or not a woman takes part in politics and also shapes the election outcomes with a low range of answers signifying agreement. This is consistent with the findings by Chirawu (2023) who states that women do not pursue leadership roles because they generally consider politics as a reserve for men. Similar sentiments are expressed by (Hawa, 2020) who found that rules set by patriarchy limit women in their choices for jobs because some jobs are considered a preserve for men.

Majority of constituents (64.5%) agreed and 21.8% strongly agreed that low level of education among women limit their awareness of political processes and lower their confidence in electoral participation. With a (Mean = 4.02, Std Dev = 0.74) it shows that the mean score falls on strongly agree. This assertion aligns with Betty Friedan's advocacy in *The Feminine Mystique* where she emphasizes that higher education empowers women to attain their full capacity and engage in their communities (Dulle, 2020). This was confirmed by key informants K1, K3, and K5, who states that knowledge is essential for navigating the complexities of political candidacy, from campaign planning and execution to policy formulation. Findings of the qualitative data are in agreement with similar sentiments illustrated in the excerpt from K1 as *“nowadays women are more educated than men, this gives them an upper hand in the job market, resource mobilization and ability to convince voters. They have also proven that they are capable of conducting a successful campaign and deliver on their mandate as leaders.”* (K1 a member of civil society). Education is critical for political participation, enhancing political knowledge and confidence, it is also crucial for effective participation and resource mobilization necessary for conducting a successful campaign.

However, this contradicts the findings by Okpe et al. (2021) that lack of education may not necessarily correlate with resources for political participation. This is true because one can amass wealth as a business person, from inheritance, as a gift or pool resources from their networks. Nevertheless, it is important to note that funds are not the only resources that education affords a candidate. Knowledge and skills acquired from education is pivotal in networking, planning and conducting a successful campaign.

It was revealed that women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds face significant challenges due to lack of resources needed for political campaigns, with 63.9% agreeing and 22.1% strongly agreeing and with a (Mean = 4.08, Std Dev = 0.60) it shows that the overall average response agrees that lower socioeconomic backgrounds disadvantage women who have an interest in politics. These finding is confirmed by the sentiments illustrated in the excerpt from K7 as *“women who are unemployed face a myriad of hardships. She would be taking care of her family but also required to work on tea farms to earn a meagre wage for upkeep. They lack resources, information and the networks to conduct a political campaign or even pay candidate registration fees.”* (K7, a policy enforcer).

A significant proportion of respondents (64.2%) agreed, and (15.5%) strongly agreed, that domestic roles assigned to women restrict them to chores that limit their opportunities and time available for political engagement. With a (Mean = 3.95, Std Dev = 0.60) it shows that the average response by respondents was an agreement to the answer. Traditional gender roles restrict women who prioritize domestic responsibilities over public or political roles. The majority (54.5%) agreed that women in Githunguri constituency face resistance when they step into roles traditionally

dominated by men eg politics (Mean = 3.98, Std Dev = 0.74). Qualitative data confirm this through the excerpt from K12 illustrates the sentiments:

“In the Kikuyu culture the man is the head of the household and this is drummed in their heads immediately after circumcision. Once they marry and pay dowry they view everything in the home as theirs including the wife. Whenever his masculinity is threatened, he will stump his authority by constantly reminding the wife ‘guku ni gwakwa’ (this is my home). The constant reminder is a way of intimidating the wife to get her to submit.” (K12 a policy enforcer).

A significant number (56.1%) agreed that women find it challenging to navigate political dynamics, especially if they do not belong to the dominant groups in the constituency (Mean = 3.85, Std Dev = 0.71). Qualitative data affirms this through the sentiments expressed by Key informants K6 illustrated as,

“Kenya’s political systems and institutions have inherent biases or gendered structures that disadvantage women. The informal networks (goat eating ceremonies) dominated by men favored incumbents (often male), and also additional hurdles were created by party systems that prioritize male candidates.” (K6, a business owner). Similar sentiments are also shared through the excerpt from K2 who illustrates the sentiments as, *“Patriarchy is rife in our community. As the chief (Ngewa sub-county) retires men are working hard to ensure the position is filled by a man. They have written letters and travelled to Nairobi lobbying for a replacement who is not female. They feel women are taking over especially with the MNA and OCPD being female. It’s easier for a man to influence fellow men because they have ‘goat eating ceremonies’ where they agree on a preferred candidate. Women don’t attend those functions and so they have no one to represent their interests. A win will also mean another goat is slaughtered to celebrate, but since women don’t attend there won’t be any goat eating for a win by a woman.” (K2 a policy enforcer).*

Respondents (70.3%) agreed that when ethnicity and gender intersect, they can lead to additional layers of discrimination (Mean = 3.64, Std Dev = 0.60). The aggregate mean score of the effect of intersectionality among women in politics is 3.95 with a standard deviation of 0.68, indicating a consistent recognition of these factors among the respondents. This finding aligns with the Intersectionality theory which suggests that overlapping identities can lead to compounded forms of discrimination and disadvantage affecting women's political participation and representation (Hill Collins, 2020). Similar sentiments have been made by Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw that distribution of life chance opportunities is affected by an individual’s elements of social identities. (Elaine et al., 2020).

Correlation analysis between intersectionality and women’s political participation and electoral outcomes

In order to understand better the relationship between intersectionality and participation of women in politics and electoral outcomes in Githunguri constituency, a correlation analysis was conducted. Table 4 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients, significance levels, and sample sizes for the predictor and dependent variables.

Table 4: *Correlation between intersectionality and women's political participation and electoral outcomes*

		Women's Political Participation And Electoral Outcomes	
			Intersectionality
Women's Political Participation And Electoral Outcomes	Pearson Correlation	1	.290**
	Sig. (2-Tailed)		.000
	N	330	330
Intersectionality	Pearson Correlation	.290**	1
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	.000	
	N	330	330

*. Correlation Is Significant At The 0.05 Level (2-Tailed).

The correlation analysis shows a moderate positive correlation between intersectionality and participation of women in politics and electoral outcomes in Githunguri Constituency, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.290 and a significance level of 0.000. This indicates that as the recognition and addressing of intersectionality increases, participation of women in politics rises and election outcomes improve. This confirms that political participation of women's and better election outcomes are dependent on elements of social identities. Therefore, a higher level of interlocking multiple forms of the systems of oppression means lower women's interest in politics consequently even lower numbers of women get elected in Githunguri Constituency.

Discussion of the findings

There is a moderate positive correlation between gender intersectionality and participation in politics and the outcomes of the elections in Githunguri Constituency, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.290 and a significance level of 0.000. This indicates that as the relevance and recognition of intersectionality increases participation and outcomes among women improve. This positive correlation suggests that acknowledging and addressing the diverse and intersecting experiences of women can enhance their engagement in politics and lead to better electoral results. This finding is consistent with (Dulle, 2020) who illustrates that understanding and addressing the multiple dimensions of women's identities and experiences such as gender, socio-economic status, and cultural background can positively impact their political involvement and electoral success. Intersectional approaches that recognize the unique challenges faced by women from different backgrounds contribute to more inclusive and effective political participation strategies.

Descriptive results show that majority of the participants strongly affirmed that entrenched cultural beliefs about gender significantly affect women's political participation and the community's support for female leaders in Githunguri constituency (Mean = 4.10, Std Dev = 0.74). Qualitative data revealed that cultural norms and gender ideologies are pivotal in shaping women's involvement in politics. These results affirm the research by Arendt, (2023) that deeply ingrained cultural attitudes can both constrain women's political engagement and influence their acceptance as leaders in his view, such cultural expectations often define gender roles and impact the level of support women receive within their communities. The study highlighted that lower educational levels among women constrain their understanding of political processes and lower their confidence in participating in politics (Mean = 4.02, Std Dev = 0.74). Education plays a crucial role in fostering political engagement, as it enhances both political knowledge and confidence. Research indicates that reduced educational attainment among women is linked to lower levels of political awareness and participation, emphasizing the importance of education for effective political involvement (Norris, 2024). This was also confirmed by Key informant K1, K3 and K5, who affirmed that, knowledge is essential for navigating the complexities of political candidacy, from campaign planning to policy formulation. These results correspond to the study conclusion of what Betty Friedan advocates for in the *Feminine Mystique*, that women need to attain the highest level of education become professionals and work in their communities because lack of education prevents women from attaining their full capacity (Dulle, 2020). Respondents agreed that women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds encounter significant obstacles due to insufficient resources for political campaigns, including financial support for publicity and logistical provisions (Mean = 4.08, Std Dev = 0.60). *Key informant K1, K2 and K4*, elaborated that intersectionality can lead to unique stereotypes that affect how women of specific ethnic backgrounds are perceived. For instance, stereotypes about assertiveness or leadership styles may differ across cultures, impacting how their political participation is viewed. Further K3, K5 added that intersectionality can lead to both additional layers of discrimination and denied opportunities. Women who understand the complexities of intersectional discrimination can push for strategies and rules that promote inclusivity. This may include policies promoting inclusive representation, addressing economic disparities, and combating discrimination based on both gender and ethnicity.

Participants concurred that traditional gender roles limit women's opportunities for political engagement by confining them primarily to domestic responsibilities (Mean = 3.95, Std Dev = 0.60). Qualitative reports suggest that traditional gender norms restrict women's involvement in political activities by prioritizing domestic duties over public or political roles. These norms frequently confine women to the private sphere, making active political participation challenging (Hochschild & Machung, 2022). There was agreement that women in Githunguri constituency face resistance when entering political arenas traditionally dominated by men (Mean = 3.98, Std Dev = 0.74). Women often encounter significant barriers and resistance in male-dominated political spaces, stemming from entrenched gender biases and norms that favor male candidates. Overcoming these barriers necessitates considerable effort and support to create a more equitable political environment (Krook, 2020).

Participants acknowledged the difficulties women face in navigating political dynamics, particularly when they do not belong to the dominant ethnic, class, or religious groups in the constituency (Mean = 3.85, Std Dev = 0.71). This finding suggests that intersectional factors further complicate women's political participation. Reports from Key informants K6 and K10 also deliberated that Kenya's political systems and institutions have inherent biases or gendered structures that disadvantage women. These include informal networks dominated by men, electoral processes particularly the campaign trail that favor incumbents (often male), and party systems that prioritize male candidates. The findings concur with study conclusion by Adegbite et al., (2023) that Women encounter several challenges when navigating political dynamics, which can vary depending on cultural, social, and economic contexts.

Finally, there was recognition that the intersection of ethnicity and gender can result in additional layers of discrimination (Mean = 3.64, Std Dev = 0.60). This perspective aligns with intersectionality theory, which posits that overlapping identities, such as ethnicity and gender, can lead to compounded forms of discrimination. Women experiencing multiple marginalizations face unique challenges that influence their political participation and representation (Hill Collins, 2020).

1.10 Conclusion

Overlapping identities, such as gender, ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic status, and family roles, compound the barriers women encounter in their political journey. These intersecting factors together with women's lived experiences impede their political participation leading to a reduction in the number of women willing to participate in politics in Githunguri constituency. Out of several social factors examined culture and education seem to be the axis upon which female disadvantage rotates. While the level of education majorly determines ability to mobilize resources, create meaningful networks, information acquisition and critical planning and execution of a successful campaign, culture is responsible for mental block and women subjugation that paralyses women's political ambition and guides the electorate in voting for their candidate of choice.

1.11 Recommendations

The findings demonstrate that addressing gender intersectionality promotes the involvement of women in politics and leadership roles. The findings also confirm that taking up political roles and attaining better outcomes for women in election are dependent on the elements of social identities. As mentioned earlier culture and education are the major derailleurs of women empowerment in politics. Culture is multifaceted and it cannot be overhauled with a single initiative. Overlapping identities, such as gender, education, ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic status, and family roles, compound the barriers women encounter in their political journey. It is recommended that the executive and the legislature remodel the national policy around political strategies and policies that acknowledge and address barriers that women face in their pursuit for a career in politics. Initiatives should focus on providing targeted support

that addresses these diverse challenges.

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