

Challenges to Women's Participation in Elective Political Leadership; Evidence from Meru County, Kenya

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Abstract

Women participation in elective political leadership is gaining traction with many nations seeing women holding political leadership positions in high offices. However, in most African societies, women participation in elective political leadership is still worryingly low. Therefore, this study investigates the challenges faced by women seeking elective political leadership in Meru County, Kenya. The research used a descriptive design, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The study collected data from 341 registered voters and 16 key informants, using structured questionnaires for quantitative and interviews for qualitative data. The study utilized SPSS version 24 for quantitative data analysis to examine challenges related to electoral participation and their impact on women's political leadership, using frequencies and means and regression analysis respectively. Thematic codes were extracted using NVIVO 14 software to identify recurring themes. The study established that sociocultural, political intimidation and economic challenges are most prevalent and significantly affected women's elective leadership aspirations in Meru County. Social cultural challenges had a negative influence on women participation in elective leadership in Meru County ($\beta=-0.405$, $p<0.001$). Similarly, political interference had a negative and significant influence on women participation in elective leadership ($\beta=-0.319$, $p<0.001$). However, the influence of economic challenges though negative, had

no significant effect on women elective leadership participation ($\beta=-0.031$, $p>0.05$). The study reveals that while women in Meru can significantly contribute to the county's development through elective leadership, they face socially constructed challenges, emphasizing the need for political stakeholders to address these issues for full women's inclusion in decision-making.

Keywords: Women participation, elective political leadership, social economic challenges, political challenges, social political development

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Introduction

Women's significant role in influencing a country's political and socioeconomic progress is emphasized by research which shows that implementing successful strategies for social and economic development is futile without their full participation (Ilo & Otu, 2020). Moreover, evidence demonstrates that when a society's political and economic landscape changes, women take the lead in helping families adapt to new conditions and challenges (Sardinha, Maheu-Giroux, Stöckl, Meyer, & García-Moreno, 2022). The contribution of women to education is equally largely documented (Burek, 2014; Kezar, 2014; Payeng, 2020). Research indicates that education increases living standards, reduces population growth rates, and boosts the status of women (Walker-Smith, 2019). This implicitly means that through education women impact living standards in societies while also boosting their self-image.

Despite the key role that women play in social-political development, societies continue to give them unequal possibilities for success. In most instances, they are often regarded less highly than men and have their rights violated (Kenyatta, 2023). The persistence of alienation of women is most starkly brought home in the political sphere. Women comprise half of the world's population, yet their representation in elective political leadership positions is reportedly less than that of men (World Economic Forum, (WEF) 2018). Moreover, by 2015, targeted outcomes in global gender equity in health and education had been achieved, but only 21% of political empowerment for women had been realized (Women, 2021).

Improvement in women's representation in elective political processes between the 1950s and 1990s remained largely slow, with women making up just 3% of members of parliament in

1955 and 11.6% in 1995 (WEF, 2018). However, the last twenty years have seen significant advancements, with women's representation almost doubling from 11.6% in 1995 to 21.8% in 2016 (Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN Women, 2020). This trend was also observed in ministerial positions, with women occupying less than 9% of all ministerial positions worldwide in 1999 but increasing their share to 17% in 2015. The under-representation of women in elective political leadership processes and decision-making institutions persists to date possibly borne out of a variety of reasons.

Scholars have held various views regarding the under representation of women in elective positions. According to Hornsby (2021), harassment, social media account hacking, lack of credit facilities to begin income-generating, stereotype, and character assassination deter women from pursuing elective political leadership. Sociocultural practices and attitudes such as patriarchy, which acknowledges men as leaders and women as followers, have also been identified as sources of women's disempowerment, which in turn restricts their access to resources and influence in society (Kivoi, 2014; Nzomo, 2011; Sivi-Njonjo, 2016). However, Kamau (2010) attributes women's under representation in elected political leadership to lack of practical democracy. But from a different perspective, Owuor (2016) demonstrated that women's visibility was obscured and so excluded from mainstream political activities due to the small number of female historians who have documented the role played by women in the fight for independence, leading to the exclusion of their opinions from decision-making processes (Orwako, Atim & Opoku, 2018).

Cognizant of the sociocultural lacuna in the under representation of women in elective politics, civil society organizations have been working to

promote gender parity in decision-making processes by establishing legal frameworks for gender equality, such as the Covenant on Eradication of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979, the African Charter on Human and Peoples Right of 1986, and the World Conference on Women in 1995 (Bauer, 2020). However, the nature of affirmative efforts varies regionally, ranging from inflexible quotas to encouraging increased women participation in elective political leadership (UN Women, 2023). In Africa, women's participation in political leadership has been gradual, with post-conflict countries like Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, Djibouti, and Sudan experiencing an increase from 8% to 33% by 2022. East Africa, particularly Rwanda, reported an increase from 10% to 32%, with Rwanda having 61% of women's representation in elective political leadership (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, IIDEA, 2021). Sociocultural practices in most African countries have largely been responsible for the limit to which women participate in elective political leadership practices (Inter-Parliamentary Union, IPU & UN Women, 2020).

Kenya has not been left out in the discourse on women representation in elective political leadership. This country has gradually seen an increase in the number of women holding elected political office since independence (UN Women, 2021). The post-independence governments have endeavored to enhance prospects for women's political inclusion. For instance, the Kenya constitution 2010, through Article 27 (3) guarantees gender parity by advocating fair treatment for both sexes. The Article emphasizes the values of equality and non-discrimination. It forbids holding office in the government beyond two-thirds of the same gender, addresses past gender exclusion, and supports work

towards gender mainstreaming, promoting women's involvement in politics and leadership roles (Kenyatta, 2023). However, patriarchal views, institutional hurdles, and prescribed gender roles undermine women in Kenya's political institutions, lowering the proportion of women who run for office and are elected.

In the 2017 general election, women made up only 9.2% of those elected to county assemblies, the senate, and parliament. Despite a slight increase of 7.7% in the number of women elected, including women representatives, women currently make up only 23.3% of parliamentarians in Kenya. One County that features significantly in the conversation on women in leadership is Meru County. In a report dubbed 'Patriarchy rules: An outlook and reflection of women leadership in Meru County' released by Ipas Africa Alliance, Meru women are reportedly being excluded from leadership due to long-standing cultural beliefs that place women and girls as subordinate to men and boys (Saya, 2024). Regretfully, the report notes that currently, women hold just two (3.5 per cent) out of 56 elective positions in the county. Using the case of a female governor who has survived impeachment twice, the report highlights the persistent challenges women face in political participation, not just after defying odds and being elected, but even worsening with victory. The report raises the gap of limited knowledge and empowerment on opportunities for women in the County.

With the consideration that women's equal participation and leadership in political and public life are essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, this study addresses the knowledge gap and empowerment opportunities by interrogating the specific nature of challenges that women seeking elective

political leadership and those participating in elective political leadership in Meru County encounter, and how such challenges influence their electoral leadership participation.

Literature Review

The concept of women participation in elective leadership

The concept of women's participation in elective leadership is rooted in the international human rights law and associated treaties. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) 1948, guarantees everyone the right to participate in their country's government (Assembly, 1948). The International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) also acknowledges this right, allowing citizens to vote and be elected in democratic elections (O'Flaherty, 2012). The African Union's African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights also emphasizes the importance of participation in public affairs as a fundamental aspect of democracy (OAU, 1986). Meanwhile, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance also mandates member states to recognize participation as an inalienable right (Africa, 2007).

The interest of women participation in elective leadership pervades conversations in global commitments which continue to underline the importance of women in leadership. For instance, women's leadership was given priority in the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted in 1995 during the Fourth World Conference on Women (Declaration, 1995). It argued for women's equal access to decision-making, power structures, and leadership. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, through target 5.5 highlights the importance of gender parity in leadership and calls for women to

fully and effectively participate in all levels of decision-making in public, political, and economic spheres (Carpentier & Braun, 2020). Women's political equality and equitable participation at all levels is also stressed by the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women which asserts that women's equality in political decision-making roles is a prerequisite for achieving their right to equality (Assembly, 1979).

The efforts of such global commitments are not in vain based on evidence of positive social outcomes from women's leadership. Research demonstrates that women in political leadership positions have a number of positive social effects, including decreased levels of inequality (World Economic Forum, WEF, 2017), enhanced cross-party and cross-ethnic cooperation, and a greater emphasis on social issues such as education, health, and parenting (Georgeac & Rattan, 2019).

Furthermore, research has demonstrated that women's political engagement has a disproportionately positive impact on women inside their communities. There is a positive correlation between the number of women in leadership and female voter turnout, female political participation, and public service responsiveness to women (Baskaran & Hessami, 2018). According to O'Neil, Hopkins, and Bilimoria (2015), women in leadership act as role models who normalize "the idea and practice of women holding power" for people of both genders. This is further emphasized in a study carried out in India which revealed an erasal or reversal of the gender gap in educational results following higher prevalence of female village leaders that tended to reduce the "aspiration gap" between girls and boys (Beaman, 2012). A similar impact of women in leadership as role models has been documented in Fiji

where after the 2018 general elections, women now make up 20% of parliament, a record high for the nation, with its first female speaker being credited with being a role model for others (ESCAP, 2019).

Kenya women elective participation trajectory

Despite Kenya's patriarchal culture and opposition to women serving in politics, women have had a substantial impact on the country's political landscape since colonial times (Were, 2017). During the colonial era, women led nonviolent protests, and rulers saw their potential and took advantage of it for their own agendas (Bosibori, 2023). Though patriarchal culture prevented women from taking on prominent roles in politics, the 1992 National Women's Convention was a historic event in the promotion of women's engagement in politics (Nzomo, 1998). Kenya's 2010 Constitution (CoK) drastically altered the country's political system by transferring resources and authority from the president's office to recently devolved counties. The one-third gender principle and increased representation of women in government were formed by the insertion of measures for women's support action in the constitution, thanks to the efforts of women's rights campaigners (Kenyatta, 2023).

Although both houses have allowed for the introduction of measures to correct historical prejudices against women, they have not done so in spite of the constitution's gender representation principle. Although there were 21% and 22% of women in the legislative and executive branch, respectively, in 2013, the one-third gender criterion was not met (Republic of Kenya, 2013). With only 22% of women in both houses, Kenya continues to lag behind other East African countries in this regard. The majority of women in government hold appointed or reserved positions, with 44%

of counties reaching the one-third gender barrier in 2017 (Independent Elections and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), 2020).

Women elective participation: The Meru chapter

Women participation in elective politics in Meru County has mostly been defined by intimidation and voter bribery experienced by the first Meru woman MP (Marete, 2023), and long held negative social norms and cultural beliefs (Pratiwi, 2019). However, in the wake of the devolved governance systems, the growing momentum to have women voices amplified in conversations on political representation is occasioning a paradigm shift in Meru. The Meru Women Legislative Association (MEWOLA) in Meru County has formed a caucus to promote women's rights and legislative processes at the county level. The women MCAs have strategically positioned themselves to influence the Assembly and work with the County Government to deliver services to communities. The MEWOLA launched its inaugural five-year Strategic Plan in December 2018 to harness greater partnerships between men and women legislators to promote gender equality through legislation and increase women's political leadership and governance in the County (CREAW, 2019). Therefore, this research on challenges faced by women's participation in elective political leadership in Meru is timely from a sociological perspective since it sheds light on social structures of power, gender inequality, and the impact of socialization on possibilities and aspirations of women in politics.

Methodology

This research targeted all 701,856 registered voters drawn from Meru County, including opinion leaders and current elected leaders. It employed the

descriptive research design that precisely and methodically characterizes a population, circumstance, or phenomena. This design was suitable in the enquiry about the nature of challenges women in elective positions in Meru County experience and how they impact on their aspirations. A sample of 384 was constituted using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size formula. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to select respondents from the 9 electoral constituencies of Meru County. The final sample included 357 individuals comprising 341 registered voters whose views were sourced through structured questionnaire and 16 key informants whose views were sourced through interviews. Data analyses was facilitated using SPSS version 24 for quantitative data and NVIVO 14 for qualitative data. Frequencies and proportions were used to explore the prevalent electoral participation-related challenges that women experience, while regression analysis was used to assess the influence of these challenges on women participation in elective political leadership. Thematic codes were extracted to show prevalent themes pertaining to prevalent challenges experienced.

Results

Analysis of the data focused on first establishing the demographic profile of the respondents, following which, perceptions of prevalent challenges, women electoral leadership participation, and the influence of perceived challenges on women participation in electoral leadership were probed. The response rate to the distributed questionnaires was 88.8%, exceeding that obtained in recent studies conducted in Meru County, Kenya by (Muthoni et al., 2016) and (Maina, 2020). The sample obtained further met the representative criteria set out by (Babbie &

Edgerton, 2023) and (Jobst, Bader, & Moshagen, 2023).

Demographic profile

Respondents demographic profile was assessed in terms of age, gender and marital status. Research demonstrated that these demographics influence women’s political ambitions in one way or another (Agrawal, Fischer & Singh, 2022; Fraile & Gomez, 2017), making them variables of interest in this study. Results of

the demographic profile (Table 1) revealed that a majority of respondents (84.2%) were aged above 30 years, an indication that their views could be taken seriously. Gender wise, both females (54.8%) and males (45.2%) had substantial representation in the sample, meaning that views collected may not have been biased towards any sex. Most of the respondents (78.6%) were married, indicating that accounts of familial interference could possibly be encountered.

Table 1: Demographic profile

Demographic factor	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Below 20yrs	8	2.3
	21-25yrs	5	1.5
	26-30yrs	41	12.0
	Above 30yrs	287	84.2
Your gender	Male	154	45.2
	Female	187	54.8
Marital status	Married	268	78.6
	Single	46	13.5
	Widowed	8	2.3
	Divorced	9	2.6
	Separated	10	2.9

Prevalent challenges experienced

The first objective of this research was to assess prevalent challenges that

women in Meru County experience when participating in elective leadership.

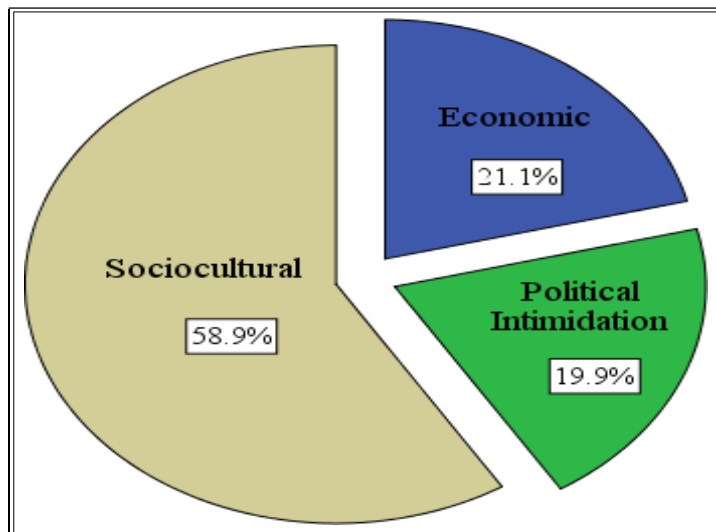


Figure 1. Challenges to women elective leadership participation in Meru County

Analysis of revealed three categories of challenges. The results showed that sociocultural challenges at 58.9% are the most prevalent challenges that women in elective leadership in Meru County experience (Figure 1). Economic challenges at 21.1% and political intimidation challenges at 19.9% were identified as the other categories of challenges that are prevalently experienced by women in elective leadership in Meru County.

Nature of sociocultural challenges that women in elective leadership in Meru County face

The nature of sociocultural challenges that women in elective

leadership in Meru County face were ranked in terms of degree of agreement and the corresponding mean response scores as portrayed in Table 2. Results revealed that exposure to insecurity and gender-based humiliation ranked highly among sociocultural challenges. This was closely followed by expectation of women to stick to their gender roles of childcare and home maintenance. Coercive nature of husbands forcing women to choose between family and leadership, early marriages that restrict women from elective roles, and the stereotype notion of considering women as homemakers while men as leaders were also ranked among sociocultural challenges mainly directed towards women in elective leadership in Meru County.

Table 2: Nature of sociocultural challenges

Rank	Nature of challenges	Disagreement		Agreement		Mean
		n	%	n	%	
1	Women are exposed to insecurity and gender-based humiliation	12	3.5	329	96.5	4.41
2	Women are expected to stick to gender roles of childcare and maintenance of homes	19	5.6	322	94.4	4.30
3	Coercive nature of husbands forcing women to choose between family and leadership	25	7.3	316	92.7	4.27
4	Early marriages restrict women from elective roles	26	7.6	315	92.4	4.27
5	Women are mainly considered as homemakers while men as leaders	32	9.4	309	90.6	4.26

Nature of economic challenges

Three categories of aspects were consistently mentioned in connection with economic challenges (Table 3). Ranked first was the fact that women lack power to decide over family resources, rendering

them inaccessible to the much needed resources. Lack of financial support by political parties was highlighted as the second ranked challenge that women in Meru experience relating to economic status in elective leadership participation.

Table 3: Nature of economic challenges

Rank	Nature of challenges	Disagreement		Agreement		Mean
		n	%	n	%	
1.	Women have no power to decide over family resources	26	7.6	315	92.4	4.18

2.	Lack of financial support by political parties	32	9.4	309	90.6	4.11
3.	Lack of collateral for financial independence	39	11.4	302	88.6	4.02

The third ranked economic challenge was lack of collateral to access financial independence.

Nature of political intimidation challenges
The third set of challenges delineated were political intimidation challenges among which ranking revealed receiving of a backlash from the society as the first ranked form of intimidation (Table

4). The second ranked political intimidation challenge was lack of appointment to leadership roles in political parties. Preclusion from accessing funding sources was ranked as the third political intimidation-oriented challenge. Meanwhile, lack of political mentorship and physical assault by hired goons were ranked as fourth and fifth respectively.

Table 4: Nature of political intimidation

Rank		Disagreement		Agreement		Mean
		n	%	n	%	
1.	Receiving a backlash from the society	14	4.1	327	95.9	4.21
2.	Lack of appointment to leadership roles in parties	21	6.2	320	93.8	4.11
3.	Precluded from accessing available sources of funding	26	7.6	315	92.4	4.13
4.	Lack of political mentorship	44	12.9	297	87.1	3.96
5.	Often physically assaulted by goons hired by male politicians	55	16.1	286	83.9	3.82

Prevailing status of women participation in elective leadership in Meru County

Analysis of perceptions on women's participation in elective

leadership in Meru County presently, painted a picture with most of the respondents disagreeing with their involvement in most activities (Table 5).

Table 5: Prevailing women elective leadership participation in Meru County

Rank		Disagreement		Agreement		Mean
		n	%	n	%	
1.	Women in this county have strong organizations to drive their political ambitions	32	9.4	309	90.6	4.11
2.	Women in this county are accorded plenty of opportunities in civil society to partake in decision-making	257	75.4	84	24.6	1.96
3.	Political parties in this county readily welcome women ideas towards policy development	258	75.7	83	24.3	1.89
4.	Women in this County participate in political activities without interference from family members	261	76.5	80	23.5	1.91
5.	Women have a say in political transition conversations in this County	265	77.7	76	22.3	1.86
6.	Political parties in this area promote fair, equitable, and positive image of women politicians	270	79.2	71	20.8	1.80

Although most of them agreed that women in the county have strong organizations to drive their political ambitions (90.6%), percentages of disagreements in the other activities were quite high. For instance, a large proportion (75.4%) disagreed that women were being accorded plenty of opportunities in civil society to partake in decision-making. Similarly, 75.7% disagreed that political parties in the county readily welcome women ideas towards policy development. Disagreements were also directed towards women in the county participating in political activities without interference (76.5% disagreement); women having a say in political transition conversations in the County (77.7% disagreement); and political parties promoting fair, equitable, and positive image of women politicians in the county (79.2% disagreement).

The influence of prevalent challenges on women participation in elective political leadership in Meru County

The second aim of this research was to assess the influence of prevalent challenges so identified on women participation in elective leadership in Meru County. Therefore, a multiple regression analysis was run such that participation in elective leadership was regressed on the three challenges. Results of these regressions are presented in Table 6. From the results, the R-square value of 0.423 implies that the three prevalent challenges contributed 42.3% of the variance in women participation in elective leadership

in Meru County. Therefore, there must be other several challenges that may not have been captured in this research possibly for not being prevalent, including personal challenges. The F-value of 82.465 was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), an indication that the model relating women elective leadership participation to existing challenges was viable.

The negative nature of the regression coefficients indicates that all the three challenges had a negative influence on women participation in elective leadership in Meru County. Specifically, social cultural challenges negatively and significantly influence elective participation ($\beta = -0.405$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, for every unit increase in sociocultural challenges, women participation in elective leadership decreases by 0.405 units. Similarly, political interference had a negative and significant influence on women participation in elective leadership ($\beta = -0.319$, $p < 0.001$). Meaning that a unit increase in political interference increases women participation in elective leadership by 0.319 units. However, the influence of economic challenges though negative, had no significant effect on women elective leadership participation ($\beta = -0.031$, $p > 0.05$). The t-value for sociocultural challenges (-7.953) was in absolute sense bigger than the t-value for political intimidation (-6.182). This implies that sociocultural challenges have more negative influences on women's participation in elective leadership in Meru County.

Table 6: How challenges women in Meru County face influences their elective leadership participation

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1 (Constant)	4.655	.156		29.800	.000
Social Cultural	-.318	.040	-.405	-7.953	.000
Economic	-.020	.033	-.031	-.603	.547
Political Intimidation	-.234	.038	-.319	-6.182	.000

R-square	.423	
F	82.465	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Elective leadership participation

Discussions

The study established that efforts by Meru women to participate in elective leadership are often curtailed by sociocultural, political intimidation, and economic challenges. Sociocultural challenges by way of exposure to insecurity and gender-based humiliation together with gender-role stereotypes are the main challenges that women in Meru have to navigate. This finding mirrors the findings unearthed by (Pratiwi, 2019) showing that women's leadership trajectories are held back by long held negative social norms and cultural beliefs. Stereotypes such as expectation of women to stick to gender roles of childcare and maintenance of homes and early marriages are not new among women leadership aspirations. Research demonstrates that distribution of household work is a critical issue in the realm of women and girls advocacy (Van Eerdewijk et al., 2017). Moreover this study joins a plethora of studies that have documented the negative influence of sociocultural factors on women participation in elective leadership in Africa (Adamu, 2023; Sachiel & Komu, 2020). However, the novelty in the finding of this study lies in showing the extend of the influence of sociocultural challenges on women's elective leadership participation allowing for modelling of such effects.

The finding of this study showing that sociocultural challenges restrict women's participation in elective leadership in Meru contradicts previous studies in the same context which have demonstrated that social cultural challenges in Meru may not inhibit women from joining electoral leadership positions (Kivoi, 2014; Sivi-Njonjo, 2016). Suffice it to

note however, that the use of the word 'may' does not preclude the negative impact of sociocultural challenges. This point was brought out through interviews with key informants. Noting that women

have been securing elective positions, including governorship, one informant account cited verbatim noted that

...the election of a woman in an open seat and defeat of a "political Goliath" or a political king pin in Meru County should not be construed to mean that voters in Meru County, a patriarchal society can change their way of doing things overnight.

Another Key Informant had this to say

"the unseating of a man from top political seat of the County should not amount to a woman being popular. Rather it was to teach leaders that getting intoxicated with power and subsequent pride does not pay."

In finding that women experience political intimidation that includes, lack of appointment to leadership roles in parties, preclusion from accessing available sources of funding, lack of political mentorship, and physical assault by goons hired by male politicians, this study reinforces an issue that has been persistently brought out across studies (Owuor, 2016). Indeed, from the account of one key informant *"politics have become very competitive in this area and many crooks have infiltrated the process leaving a lot of destruction"*. Yet unlike these other studies, this study goes an extra-mile to highlight the actual contribution of political

intimidation on women's elective leadership participation, allowing for future prediction and handling of such challenges. This study also joined others in showing that, that women's participation in elective political leadership processes are challenged by financial and economic challenges. The study unearthed economic challenges facing women such as lack power to decide over family resources, lack of financial support by political parties, and lack of collateral for financial independence, all of which have featured consistently in the discourse on women elective leadership (Feo, 2019; Hossain et al., 2009; Kabeer, 2020; Mwirigi, 2019; Thumi, 2022). Unlike these earlier studies, this research adds the dimension that in the context of Meru County, economic challenges may not be statistically significant, meaning they arise due to chance and should not be of concern compared to sociocultural and political intimidation challenges.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Women in Meru County have huge ambitions for inclusion in decision-making through elective leadership as emphasized through associations such as the Meru Women Legislative Association (MEWOLA) formed to promote their rights and legislative processes at the county level. However, these ambitions are largely curtailed by three major categories of challenges, including sociocultural, economic, and political intimidation. They are mostly segregated along gender-role stereotypes and are denied the chance to decide on familial resources that deny them power to seek for political funding. Despite forming strong organizations to drive their political ambitions, these women are mostly precluded from accessing available sources of funding, are

physically molested, and are often excluded from leadership roles in their respective political parties. There is therefore need for stakeholders in elective leadership in Meru County to start acknowledging the critical role that women play in social-political development of societies by giving them ample space to participate in decision-making. Modern societies have embraced women contribution and continuously decry outdated stereotyping of women, something that should be de-linked from women elective leadership potential. Formation of caucuses such as MEWOLA need to be encouraged in order to create awareness in communities on the leadership potential inherent among women. Future studies should focus more on women elective leadership in narrower representation locales such as wards given the diversity of communities in the larger Meru County.

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