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The Political Participation of Women in Kenya

By Gloria Nyambura Kenyatta¹

Abstract

To tackle the historic marginalization of women in Kenya, the 2010 Constitution introduced reforms on the gender principle, the quota system, and decentralization to promote gender equality. Decentralization formed a localized political system that unlocked leadership positions to previously underprivileged sets of people like women in all the forty-seven devolved units. Worthy of note is that the elections of 2013 and 2017 had the highest number of women in Kenyan history both in the legislature and the executive branch; however, most government institutions did not attain the one-third gender rule, hence violating the Constitution. Achievement of gender equality in Kenya has been difficult despite efforts of the government to promote women's participation in politics through various policy and legal frameworks due to the prevailing standards of societal norms, financial capability, political parties' structures, and gendered violence that have not essentially been changed by these reforms. This study draws on desk research to scrutinize both qualitative and quantitative data on the socio-political and economic factors that have contributed to the status quo in the Kenyan political landscape despite numerous efforts by the government to enhance gender equality, and subsequently maps out the persistent structural hindrances to women's inclusion in politics. The study concludes that the political goodwill of a country is a major contributor to women's inclusion in politics. Further, since political parties are the main conduits for women candidates to emerge, there must be critical reflection about the political parties' power dynamics. There should also be concerted efforts by both the state and other stakeholders to fully implement the statutory instruments that support gender equality.

Keywords: Kenyan politics, Elections, Gender Parity, Inclusion, Women politicians, Structural Barriers

Introduction

Kenya has signed on to various global agreements that promote women's emancipation. Notable agreements include the 1995 United Nations World Conference in Beijing that offered a platform for action, pressing states to put strategies in place to promote women's equal and full participation in leadership. Further, the 1945 United Nations Agreement affirmed gender equality as a development agenda with reinforcement from the current 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially its third resolution on gender parity and women emancipation. Despite Kenya's national and international commitment to women's empowerment, it has regionally performed dismally in promoting women political participation and representation, notwithstanding being the leading economy in the East African region. Gender inequality is still prevalent in Kenya (Ouma & Maina, 2010) as the country is ranked at position 134 out of 162 countries evaluated globally in the 2018 Gender Inequality Index.

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In efforts to attain gender parity and women empowerment, Article 27 (3) of the Constitution of Kenya 2010 upholds the principle of equality and non-discrimination by guaranteeing fair treatment for both sexes. Further, the same constitution as provided for by Articles 27(8) and 81 (b) bars the holding of government seats either elective or appointive beyond two-thirds of the same gender. Hence, the Constitution of Kenya encourages engagement of women in politics and in leadership, targeting the historical exclusion of women in politics and contributing to the efforts that commenced in the 1980s on gender mainstreaming.

Women's underrepresentation in policymaking institutions means that their interests are also underrepresented (this goes the same for other vulnerable and marginalized groups in the country). Researchers claim that there is a relationship between women's concerns being addressed and their presence in the legislature (Tremblay, 1998; Devlin & Elgie, 2008), as women legislators are perceived to represent the necessities and wishes of the women in a country (Tremblay, 1998). In the Kenyan context, this shortcoming has been addressed by Article 100 of the Constitution, which empowers Parliament to pass laws that advance the representation of marginalized groups.

The persistent exclusion of women in Kenya to engage in politics is instigated by numerous factors that promote the prevailing standards of social, political, and economic barriers across the forty-seven devolved governments. Although the gender principle was partly implemented in the 2013 and 2017 general elections, still, it appears that the Kenyan society does not acknowledge the rights and capabilities of women in leadership, since the constitutional minimum of one-third female representation was not achieved in most governmental institutions. Therefore, this paper maps the four most persistent structural impediments to women's inclusion in politics in both local and national government levels: societal norms, financial capability, political parties' structures, and gendered violence. It also argues that the political good will of a country is significant towards promoting gender parity as well as full implementation of this policy and legal frameworks.

History of Kenya and Women Inclusion

The Kenyan political landscape has significantly been shaped by women since colonial times. This is despite the country being predominantly patriarchal, and the deep-rooted resistance towards women's inclusion in politics (Kassa, 2015; Nzomo, 1994; Musila, 2009). During the colonial era, for instance, as the country struggled for independence, women steered peaceful protests that risked their lives, for example Mary Muthoni Nyanjiru (Kabira, 2012), while others like Priscilla Ingasiani Abwao took part in the talks that led to the country's independence (Kamau, 2010). Colonial and post-colonial governments recognized the power women held and utilized them for their political gains. For example, Nyokabi Kamau (2010) and Wanjiku Kabira (2012) note that in the 1950s the British government formed the "*Maendeleo ya Wanawake*" (national women's development organization) which was later controlled by the then government party, to marshal the women countrywide for state support. Although this women's organization empowered women economically through capacity-building programs, unfortunately, it did not venture into empowering them to take up active roles in politics, and the patriarchal culture made them believe that political participation was a preserve of men only.

In 1991 when multi-partyism commenced, the 1992 National Women's Convention was held, which became a landmark in promotion of women participation in politics. Women were able to organize themselves and fight for the expansion of democratic space in politics (Kabira & Kimani, 2012). Several women legislators made efforts to contribute towards the gender principle. For example, Hon. Phoebe Asiyo, in 1997 sponsored the first affirmative action motion that recommended parties' proposals of women who would compete for elective

seats at the two levels of governments and set a goal for women's seats in parliament to a minimum of 18 (Kabira & Kimani, 2012). Similarly, Hon. Beth Mugo in 2000 sponsored a motion that promoted women's involvement during the constitutional process on the gender principle. Unfortunately, both proposals failed. This pointed to the fact that absence of political commitment by the state leaders is a major hindrance to gender parity.

Table 1: Women Representatives in National Assembly (1963-2007)

Election Year	Elected Women	Appointed Women	Women in Parliament (%)
1963	0	0	0
1969	1	1	1.2
1974	4	2	3.5
1979	5	1	2.9
1983	2	1	1.7
1988	2	0	1.1
1992	6	1	3
1997	4	5	1.4
2002	10	8	7.1
2007	16	6	8.9

Source: Tripp et al. (2014)

According to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (2021, p. 177), in East Africa, Kenya still lags behind in the representation of women at both houses with only 22% compared to Rwanda which has the highest percentage score of 61%. Other East African countries include Burundi with a percentage score of 38, Tanzania with 37 and Uganda with 35. Interestingly, the youngest nation in Africa and the newest member to the East African Community—South Sudan—performs better than Kenya with 28%.

The 2010 Constitution of Kenya and Gender Parity

Women's political participation in Kenya must be understood within the devolution context. The 2010 Constitution of Kenya (CoK) radically changed the political structure of Kenya through the devolved system which shifted and decentralized the state power and resources from the office of the president and the all-or-nothing politics to the newly devolved forty-seven counties. Women rights advocates fought hard for the inclusion of the provisions providing supportive action for women in the 2010 Constitution. The adoption of this Constitution was a defining point for Kenya, as it expanded the presence of women within government. It built a bounded and extremely aggressive political contest within the counties and a basis for women to claim representation in government through the one-third gender principle.

The Constitution demands greater political representation, especially expounding the democratic scope of women's participation in politics as per Article 27(8) and 81 (b), and also providing for the state to put in place measures for the implementation of the gender principle which ensures at least a third of each gender in all government posts. Unfortunately, Rosemary Okello (2010) notes that both houses have not enacted any legislation to affect the gender principle, despite the Constitution providing for the passage of laws which will rectify past prejudices against underprivileged persons as per Article 27(6).

The constitution's gender representation principle differs from the traditional gender quotas as it established a ceiling for the legally acceptable representation. The constitution ensured that one gender does not control government positions by giving a constitutional

gender threshold of a third by either gender to occupy governmental seats. Therefore, the gender concept is beyond a quota, as it restricts control by either gender. In Kenya, the highest number of women in state positions at both the legislature and the executive was recorded in 2013 and 2017 (IEBC, 2020; Kamaru, 2018; Republic of Kenya, 2013). This was an increase from the previous election held in 2007 that had percentage scores of 9.8 and 15 for women in the legislature and the executive respectively (Tripp et al., 2014). In 2013, the legislature and the executive comprised 21% and 22% of women respectively, whilst the one-third gender rule was not attained. At the county level, more than half of the legislatures (33) complied with the gender rule. The 2017 elections saw 23% of women hold seats at parliament and 25% at the cabinet, and the voters selected six women leaders at the county level--both governors and senators. Still, the gender principle was not achieved. Looking at the counties, forty-four counties attained the one-third gender threshold (IEBC, 2020; Republic of Kenya, 2013). It is apparent that at both levels that the gender threshold may be more easily achieved via appointment than through voting, with the majority of women in government being in appointed or reserved positions.

Table 2: Women and Men Legislators at the National Assembly (2013 and 2017)

The National Assembly						
	2013			2017		
	Elected	Appointed	Reserved	Elected	Appointed	Reserved
Men	274	7	0	267	7	0
Women	16	5	47	23	5	47
% of Women	5.5 %	41.7 %	100 %	7.9 %	41.7 %	100 %

Source: IEBC (2020) and Republic of Kenya (2013)

Table 3: Women and Men Legislators at the Senate (2013 and 2017)

The Senate				
	2013		2017	
	Elected	Appointed	Elected	Appointed
Men	47	2	44	2
Women	0	16	3	18
% of Women	0 %	89 %	6.8 %	90 %

Source: IEBC (2020) and Republic of Kenya (2013)

Table 4: General Election Results at the Counties by Gender (2017)

The County Assemblies	Elected		Appointed		% of Women (Nom + Elected)
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
County Assembly Members	1334	96	97	650	34 %
Governors	44	3	-	-	6 %
Deputy Governors	40	7	-	-	15 %

Source: IEBC (2020)

Still, the representation of women in major government institutions remains below the one-third threshold, especially the legislature at the national level and the Supreme Court (Kamuru, 2016). Further, it is visible that there is non-compliance within appointed positions (cabinet) at the national level. Among the cabinet secretaries that were appointed in early 2018, the number of women appointees did not change from 2013 despite an addition of four more cabinet positions. Six women were appointed out of the 22 cabinet secretary positions, less than one-third of the constitutional threshold (Kamaru, 2018, p. 204). At the county level, the compliance for appointed positions met the bare minimum.

The county legislatures are in compliance with the one-third gender rule, and the success can be attributed to the nomination of women candidates since the elected women account for only 9% in both national and county levels. Therefore, as the new constitution dispensation devolved political and economic powers, it created new opportunities for the disadvantaged groups in the country including women. Additionally, it fulfilled the quest for the expansion of the democratic space for women's participation in politics, which depends not only on affirmative action but also a multitude of other structural and functional factors that unfold and shape the course of their political journey.

Methodology

This study on the persistent structural impediments to women's inclusion in politics and representation in Kenya is secondary source research which scrutinizes the social, political, and economic factors over time and space at the local and national government levels. It focuses on these factors as the main contributors to the prevailing standards of the status quo in the Kenyan political landscape despite numerous efforts by the government to enhance gender parity. Data for analysis was collected from documentation of women's political participation, political party documents, election laws, the 2013 and 2017 election information from the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) election results and, on the electoral processes by the non-governmental organizations. This, therefore, aided the study in hypothesizing and readjusting the research with qualitative and quantitative data acquired from several secondary references.

Findings and Discussions

Structural and functional factors are significant shapers of women's decision to participate in the political sphere. They either act as enablers or obstacles to women's inclusion in politics depending on the nature of the political position a woman seeks, as well as the prevailing contextual elements such as the cultural, socio-political, and economic dynamics in the specific region of participation. What follows is a discussion of the most persistent structural barriers to women's inclusion and representation in politics despite government efforts to enhance gender parity; they include societal norms, financial capability, political party structures, and gendered violence.

Societal Norms

Women's ability to enter politics is also shaped by societal norms and gender expectations. According to Wanjiku Kabira (2016) and Elizabeth Corrigan and Alison Konrad (2007), customary tasks and the distribution of work are still gendered in most African societies. Therefore, management of families is done by men. Cultural influences in many societies are associated with prejudiced beliefs about women's ability; therefore, the cultural factors are perceived to reverse the critical role of women in leadership and politics. Anne Phillips (1991) notes that these customs confine women to private homes and to reproductive services in the public spaces. As a consequence of this male-dominated character of communities, men tend to be favored while women are pushed to accept subordinate tasks.

Most Kenyans have accepted socially that political positions are appropriate for men as opposed to women, and this is reflected in the election results patterns. Therefore, they are unwilling to back women candidates in elections due to this regressive ideology. As gender stereotypes are developed over many generations and are perceived as true by those in the society who absorb them, women are still seen and recognized as domestic workers, and this continues to hinder their contest in politics. If the society is patriarchal, then positive qualities are attached to men while the negatives are assigned to women. Janet Chafetz and Anthony Dworkin (1986) note that when women choose to participate in politics, they have to struggle and compete with the traditional beliefs that perceive the political sphere as men's territory only.

Although Kenyans approve women's inclusion in politics (Bouka et al., 2019), the gendered and dismissive language used towards women candidates reveals how the patriarchal attitude towards women's leadership is entrenched in the community. Further, cultural beliefs tend to be cruel towards women. For example, women are expected to demonstrate that they are good spouses and housekeepers before they can be selected for elective seats, a standard that is not applicable to the male candidates. Additionally, communities with traditional institutions such as the council of elders are usually unwilling to back women and discourage them to vie for elected positions as they consider them to be the weaker gender, hence, barring prospective women who may offer better administration (Tripp et al., 2014, p. 19). Similarly, despite women being the majority of voters, they tend to vote for men and sometimes against women candidates. This reflects their socialization, as they view men as leaders and themselves as helpers. Therefore, the level of scrutiny women face in the political arena is high and tends to affect their representation levels throughout the political process as many of them decide not to take part in politics.

African societal norms have defined separate roles for men and women. Men's roles are perceived to be empowering and women's disempowering, hence hindering women's participation in politics. Similarly, in modern societies, gender tasks have propelled men and downgraded women from control, portraying women as weak and lacking standing as compared to men. Further, Yolande Bouka et al. (2019) note that women are depicted as weak and peaceful while men are seen as strong and aggressive, qualities seen as beneficial to take part in politics. This points to the ladder of gender exclusion, also referred to by scholars as patriarchy. As most Kenyan societies are patriarchal and societal norms still support men, it will be tough for women candidates to compete on a par with men. Therefore, there is a need for Kenya to tackle extreme societal and gender stereotypes that alienate women from political participation.

Financial Capability

Finances are crucial for political campaigns. Financing these campaigns in Kenya is a hurdle for anyone seeking political office. Women seem to be more affected in accessing leadership roles due to the gendered nature of electoral financing (Kayuni & Muriaas, 2014). Further, Aili Tripp et al. (2014) note that women generally have less funds and are unlikely to be office holders. Most women in Kenya lack avenues to property entitlement despite the constitution guaranteeing them this; they own 1% of land legally while those who own land collectively are 5 to 6% (World Bank, 2004, p. 34). Further, according to Yolande Bouka et al. (2019), women in Kenya have access to 65% of the amount of finances that can be obtained by men.

Ownership of such resources results in their economic empowerment, which is also strengthened by education that enhances their full participation in politics. With resources, they can run successful campaigns as one is able to pay costs related to electoral processes. Lukong Shulika et al. (2014) state that since 1992 money has been an important factor in defining the

Kenyan elections. It is therefore a necessary evil that determines the winner. Further, due to the competitive nature of politics in Kenya, the cost of the electoral process is expensive as huge amounts of resources are required to fund the campaigns, advertisements, logistics and rallies. Susanne Mueller (2011, p. 105) and Mohamed Bakari (2002, p. 271) claim that political power and wealth are interlinked, and therefore those who have money are the ones who control politics in Kenya. Subsequently, without finances, women are economically incapacitated and cannot run successful campaigns. This drawback is perceived to contribute significantly to their low participation in politics.

According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2020), 29% of women in Kenya are emancipated and can engage successfully in the social, economic, and political spheres, while 40% of these women are in the urban areas in contrast with 22% in the rural areas. This is also supported by the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census, which shows a wide economic variation between communities in the countryside and the cities in Kenya. The country is predominantly rural, with a percentage of 68.9% making up the rural population, while the urban population is 31.1% (KNBS, 2019). Further, the bulk of the women stay in the countryside and obtaining finances is restricted in contrast to their fellows in the urban setting. Additionally, only 23% of women in Kenya are members of the communal enterprises that provide accessible finances (Wanjala & Odongo, 2010). Generally, this makes it difficult for women contestants to vie on a level ground with men candidates at both national and local elective politics.

Political parties do offer limited support to their candidates for their political campaigns. Although these parties are eligible for public funding as per the Political Parties Act of 2011, this framework is structurally discriminatory as it tends to fund large and short-lived parties, while blocking mini and more long-lasting political parties. These mini-parties are vital due to the role they undertake in championing women's participation and, as the preferred political vehicles for women who choose to run independently outside the party frames.

In 2013, only three political parties received public funding: The National Alliance (TNA), United Republican Party (URP) and Orange Democratic Movement Party (ODM), while in 2017, only two parties were funded: The Jubilee Party and ODM. Emma Pair et al. (2021) and Aili Tripp et al. (2014) state that although political parties are expected to use at least 30% of their funds to promote women candidates, this has not been fulfilled. Further, lack of political party support to women candidates disadvantages them more than their men counterparts (Kabira & Kameri-Mbote, 2013, p. 196; Ohman & Lintari, 2016). Therefore, women who are financially empowered are in a better position to run successful political campaigns and fully participate in politics. Economic constraints and the ever-increasing costs linked to political campaigns will unfortunately continue to hinder their ability to vie for political offices.

Political Parties' Structures

Political parties are the key vehicles that are used for those vying for political seats. Therefore, they are key players in advancing women for election or appointment. As major gatekeepers in political participation, they select and support women for inclusion in politics and representation (Kittilson, 2006, p. 2; Paxton et al., 2007, p. 8). Kenyan political parties are organized based on regional and ethnic distinctiveness rather than strong ideological basis, and this makes their organizational structures opaque (Jonyo, 2018). Research shows that insiders of political parties had an upper hand in the 2013 elections compared to outsiders, since they were considered as the sponsorship support system before the onset of decentralization (Cornell

& D'Arcy, 2014). This points to the influence political parties continue to wield within the party and their position as "kingmakers."²

In 2013, 58 political parties in Kenya were deemed to have complied with the gender quota requirement; however, those who vied for elective seats at the national level declined in comparison to the 2007 elections. Sixteen women (8.9%) were elected out of 207 in 2007, while in 2013 only 5% (16) were elected out of 290 (Tripp et al., 2014). Only 13 women were supported to compete for senatorial positions and five for governor positions by the political parties, but unfortunately none won in 2013. In 2017, the figures were better, as three women governors were elected, three senators, and twenty-three Members of Parliament. Further, 96 women members of the County Assemblies were elected which is an increase of 17% from the 2013 election.

Table 5: Women Elected by Parties (Highest to Lowest in 2013)

	Party	Elected Women	
		No	%
1	The National Alliance (TNA)	8	11.11
2	Wiper Democratic Movement (WDM)	2	10.53
3	United Republican Party (URP)	3	4.83
4	Orange Democratic Party (ODM)	1	1.28
5	Kenya African National Union (KANU)	1	14.29
6	National Rainbow Coalition (NARC)	1	33.33
	Total	16	5.00

Source: Ohman & Lintari (2016)

Despite the growing number of women in elective positions, parties are still a hindrance to the participation of women in politics. Party affiliations in Kenya are fluid, and so candidates can easily join different parties. However, the rise of coalitions which form pre-election coalitions has brought about their temporariness and unreliability, hence being a challenge for contestants to commit to them for the succeeding election period. For example, in 2016, the Jubilee Party was formed by the merger of both TNA and URP. This made the mentioned parties redundant after one election cycle in 2013. Due to such a challenge, women respond either by creating their individual parties or competing in unpopular ones for open seats. This is the opposite situation for women seeking nomination seats, as parties must nominate them on grounds of their proportional allocation of votes, and therefore, they must be loyal and sometimes wield connections to the elites of the parties, a situation that must continue even when in office. In 2017, candidates who competed as independents were 25%, with 21% being (IEBC, 2020). They did not perform well as only 15 were elected to Parliament, less than 5% of the National Parliament.

Additionally, in most political parties, women hold positions that have least control in decision-making, i.e. as deputies. This is because the political parties have been designed in a way that limits the potential for women's leadership; they are dominated by the male ruling class that is openly masculinist (Kassilly & Onkware, 2010; Kanogo, 2005). Further, Sara Longwe (2000) notes that since women participate more at the local and grassroots levels, they

² These are individuals or institutions that have direct links with communities and community-level stakeholders, command moral authority, control resources, and therefore can influence the electoral behavior of their dependents to bring leaders to power (Koter, 2013).

are less likely to be found in prominent political positions. Subsequently, Aili Tripp et al. (2014) note that some parties intentionally stop women from vying for open elective seats, as they cite that women can compete through the allocated slots for women representatives and through nominations. In some instances, women are told to give up in competing as a trade-off with an appointment or to vie for affirmative positions only, which negatively impacts the number of women running for elective posts. Magnus Ohman and Carol Lintari (2016) reinforce this by stating that in the 2013 elections, low numbers of women were nominated by the parties to run for elective seats. Further, this trend is perceived by Mi Yung Yoon (2008) as a contrast to previous studies which suggested that nomination seats are enablers as they empower women to run for elected seats. Nevertheless, parties remain important vehicles to elective seats in Kenya; however, their power dynamics and structures seem to significantly impact women's political participation; further, their implementation of the gender concept has confined women to the specially kept positions.

Gendered Violence

The magnitude of brutality women face in the African polls is unmatched. Intimidation and real brutality women face as contestants in politics has a significant influence on their political participation (Tripp et al., 2014). In the Kenyan political landscape, the polls have experienced violence from 1992, comprising racial conflicts and other types of violence. Women running for political office are targeted both verbally and physically (Bouka et al., 2017). This Violence Against Women in Politics (VAWIP) has an aim of making them withdraw from politics (Krook & Sanin, 2016). It is violence that manifests at all stages of the electoral cycle and continues even while they are in office.

Most Kenyan leaders have armed militia that they use during electoral processes to threaten and harass their opponents. Nanjala Nyabola (2016) notes that the capacity to organize violence to intimidate opponents leads to a candidate being admired, rewarded, and perceived as strong. This situation demoralizes women candidates, especially newcomers. In Kenyan politics, displays of violence take the form of chauvinistic or insulting utterances. Yolande Bouka et al. (2019) notes that verbal abuse depends on women candidates' marital status, as they are accused of being adulterers or prostitutes by their constituents or opponents, a treatment that does not apply to their men counterparts.

Additionally, the gendered violence is extended to the family members and supporters of the women candidates. For example, in the 2017 party primaries, some of the women candidates and their supporters were physically assaulted in most counties. This violence negatively impacts the voters' turnout since most of them choose to not participate as they fear chaos; further, it deters women from political participation and decreases their likelihood of securing party tickets. Aili Tripp et al. (2014) and Sara Longwe (2000) note how gendered violence is also aimed at undermining the integrity of women candidates, for example, when propaganda materials are published to tarnish their image. Therefore, women have to continuously struggle with threats, demolition of property, physical and emotional abuse. As VAWIP is ignored by the political parties and is rarely punished by the State despite Kenya having legal frameworks in place such as the electoral standard procedures, the penal code, and the party penalties, this one-sided violence will continue to deter women from political participation and representation.

Conclusion

This research underscores the reality that women continue to be underrepresented in political leadership positions as per the 2013 and 2017 Kenyan election results. This is despite the new constitution of Kenya 2010 increasing opportunities for their participation in politics as supported by devolution and gender regulation. Therefore, decentralization and the gender

rule have not changed the Kenyan political dynamics, as women still face exclusion and are marginalized from political participation and representation due to the prevailing structural obstacles. Although the elections of 2013 and 2017 had the highest quota of women in Kenyan history both at the legislature and the cabinet, most government institutions did not attain the one-third gender rule, hence violating the Constitution. Further, these election results reflect that women voters largely support men candidates.

Achievement of gender parity faces difficulties despite various statutory reforms by the state. The multiple causal factors are: the patriarchal nature of Kenyan society, societal norms that label politics as a field for men only, financial capability and the ever-increasing costs of political campaigns, the male-dominated nature of parties and their structures, and, finally, gendered violence during the electoral processes.

Further, this paper states the critical role parties play in politics, being the main conduits for candidates to compete, and to get elected or nominated. It is apparent from both the elections of 2013 and 2017 that male dominance and ethnic backing override the gender consideration in elections as well as during the party elections. Winnie Mittulah and Lillian Owiti (2007) note that absence of political commitment by parties to incorporate women in political structures is to be faulted for their low engagement. Therefore, without critical reflection on the duties and dynamics of political vehicles, Kenya will remain lagging in women's political participation. Interestingly, despite the Kenyan political terrain being hostile to women, the results of the 2013 and 2017 elections indicate their determination to occupy leadership positions. Thus, there is a need to consolidate efforts by the state and other stakeholders to fully implement the statutory frameworks that support gender parity, as well as ensure the country's political good will towards women's inclusion and representation in politics.

After this research was concluded, the next Kenyan elections were scheduled for 9th of August 2022. If the mentioned structural barriers of societal norms, financial capability, political parties' structures, and gendered violence are not addressed by the state and non-state actors, the inclusion of women in politics will remain constrained, and the status quo will be maintained. Nevertheless, as political parties play a conduit role for those vying for political seats, the incorporation of women in political party structures and their support during the party primary nominations will see more women in state positions and contribute towards the attainment of the one-third gender threshold. Therefore, given the mentioned barriers to women's participation in politics and leadership, this paper recommends a further study of women's political participation after the 2022 Kenyan elections.

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