

Capacity Building by Civil Society Organizations and Women's Political Participation in Nairobi City County; Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The general objective of this study was to determine the extent to which Capacity Building by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) affects women's political participation in Nairobi City County; Kenya. Despite the presence of many Civil Societies Organization in Kenya geared towards enhancing women's political participation, little is known of the effect of their initiatives. This study adopted a descriptive survey design. The target population comprised of 112 women who vied for elective positions in Nairobi County via CSO support, some of whom were successfully elected. The researcher collected primary data via the use of questionnaires. Data collected was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28.0.

The findings from inferential results reveal a positive and significant relationship between capacity building and women's political participation in Nairobi City County; Kenya with a $p < 0.01$. Capacity building and women's political participation had a Pearson correlation of $r = 0.822$ which implied a moderately strong positive correlation. The r-square for the model was 0.709. This implied that 70.9% of the variation in the dependent variable, women's political participation could be explained by capacity building, the independent variable.

While the Social Capacity Theory and Empowerment theory that this study is anchored has been substantiated, the study recommends that CSOs should adopt sustainable frameworks that ensure ongoing mentorship, post-election engagement, and consistent monitoring of women who have contested in political races, CSO's should introduce post-training tracking systems that should allow them assess progress and provide targeted assistance to women pursuing political leadership and lastly, the institutional capacity of CSO should be strengthened through activities such as: staff development, partnership-building, and improved data management systems to enhance their operational efficiency and advocacy impact. Above all, cooperation among organizations should be encouraged to prevent competition and duplication of efforts. Through collaboration, CSOs can pool resources, harmonize activities, and build stronger collective influence.

Keywords: Capacity Building; Civil Society Organizations (CSOs); Women's political participation

INTRODUCTION

Women occupy an important role in society. Their contributions towards building society and strengthening democracy cannot be ignored. This is because democracy enables the ordinary citizens to take part in the governance processes of their society since sovereignty lies in the people (Kumar, 2020; Azmi, 2020; Fashagba et al., 2019). The definition of democracy provided by Dahl (1998) is that it is a system of government of the people, for the people by the people. In this context, it establishes the fact that all citizens are entitled by the constitution and the law to be properly represented, this includes women.

Women's political participation has gained global recognition as a key indicator of democratic governance and inclusive development. Uwa et al. (2018), Oshewolo and Adedire (2019) as well as Fashagba et al. (2019) note that the Beijing Declaration formulated in 1995 which called for 30% of women's involvement in governance and decision-making processes is yet to be achieved despite women constituting nearly half of the world's population. This underrepresentation has influenced development actors such as governments, international organizations, and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to develop interventions aimed at increasing women's political participation.

Among the various interventions employed to promote women's political participation, capacity building has emerged as one of the most significant. According to Turay and Kamara (2024), capacity building involves activities such as training, mentorship, civic education, leadership development, and awareness creation which are aimed at strengthening women's ability to engage effectively in political processes.

Globally, capacity building has been widely recognized as a key strategy employed by civil society organizations (CSOs) to enhance women's political participation. Rather than merely increasing numerical representation, these interventions focus on strengthening women's political agency through leadership training, civic education, and mentorship. UN Women (2024) found that structured programs improve women's political efficacy by strengthening leadership competencies and electoral competitiveness.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, CSO capacity-building is framed as an empowerment process targeting entrenched socio-political barriers to women's leadership. Wainaina et al., (2023), identify mentorship as the most impactful component in preparing women for elective and appointive positions. Nevertheless, patriarchal norms and clientelist electoral practices, including vote-buying, continue to constrain women's political advancement by privileging candidates with greater access to financial resources and entrenched political networks, thereby limiting the conversion of women's political preparedness into sustained political inclusion (Kiplimo & Amunga, 2021; Kilimo, 2022).

In Kenya, CSO capacity-building activity expanded significantly after the 2010 Constitution established the two-thirds gender principle and devolution. According to Githae et al. (2022), the Kenyan Constitution represents a monumental success as far as gender equality and women's rights are concerned. Despite these legal frameworks, women remain underrepresented in elective positions both at national and county levels.

Several barriers continue to hinder women's political participation in Kenya. These include inadequate access to campaign financing, limited political networks, patriarchal cultural norms, electoral violence, gender-based discrimination, and insufficient political experience (Kenyatta 2023; Onamu et al., 2024). In response to these challenges, CSOs have developed various capacity building interventions which are aimed at enhancing women's political participation and leadership.

Capacity-building initiatives not only prepare women to run for office but also enhance their ability to perform effectively once elected. Women are often trained on parliamentary procedures, legislative processes, political party operations, leadership skills, and governance structures. Such initiatives enhance their understanding of the political system, which enables them to make informed decisions regarding their political careers and effectively compete for elective positions. These interventions prepare women to not only contest for elections but also to perform their legislative and leadership roles effectively once elected (Wainaina et al.,2023).

Key actors differ in mandate: Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA-Kenya) provides rights-based legal training; Coalition On Violence Against Women (COVAW) addresses electoral violence deterrence; Kenya Women Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA) delivers parliamentary mentorship; Centre for Rights , Education and Awareness (CREAW) which runs Leadership Incubation Forums and Uraia Trust which delivers ward-level civic forums . Wainaina (2013), in a study of women voters in Gatanga Ward, Murang'a County, found that civic education enhanced women's political knowledge, political interest, political efficacy, and political trust, all of which were positively associated with women's political participation. The study further revealed that women who had received civic education were more supportive of equal political participation and leadership opportunities for women, demonstrating the role of civic education in strengthening women's engagement in political processes.

Nairobi, being the capital city and political hub of Kenya hosts the densest concentration of CSOs involved in capacity-building however, it presents a peculiar case where, despite women having relatively higher access to education, civic awareness, and capacity-building opportunities, they still face persistent challenges in attaining political leadership positions. Ochieng and Jattani (2022) demonstrate that while educational attainment between men and women in Kenya has nearly reached parity, the country's political empowerment score remains critically low, indicating that educational access has not translated into political inclusion .Studies by Onamu et al.,(2024),show that although women constitute nearly half of the voting population, they occupy a significantly lower proportion of elected positions . Ranta (2024) further argues that studies measure inputs and outputs but rarely track women's progression through the full political pipeline, from awareness to candidacy, electoral success, and effective officeholding.

Statement of the Problem

In Kenya, despite constitutional provisions and gender equality policies being in place, women's political participation is low, particularly in political elective positions. Women in Nairobi City County continue to face barriers such as limited political knowledge, weak leadership networks, financial constraints and exclusion from party nomination structures. In view of this, Civil Society organizations and development partners have undertaken various capacity building programs but there is limited evidence on the effectiveness of these programs in translating into actual political leadership. Wainaina, et al.,(2023) find that capacity building initiatives have been increasingly recognized as an important strategy for overcoming barriers to women's political participation and improving women's representation in governance structures.

However, recent evidence suggests that women's political participation in elective positions is still disproportionately low, despite constitutional provisions such as Article 27(4) of the Kenyan Constitution and a host of interventions by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), including leadership training, civic education, and mentorship. Although women in Nairobi City County; Kenya have relatively greater access to education and civic opportunities, there is still a glaring under-representation in political leadership, underscoring a significant gap

between empowerment efforts and political outcomes Ouko (2024). This prompts significant inquiries into the efficacy of empowerment strategies in changing political participation outcomes.

Against this backdrop, this study sought to ascertain the effect of Capacity Building Interventions in Enhancing Women's Political Participation in Nairobi County; Kenya with the view of informing effective policy and programmatic interventions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section provides a summary of the research on how Capacity Building initiatives by Civil Society Organizations have improved Women's Political Participation in Nairobi City County; Kenya. The review is grouped into three broad categories namely; the theoretical review under which the study is based, global, regional and local empiricism, and the conceptual framework which bridges the key variables under study.

Theoretical Review

This study was grounded on the following theories:

Social Capital Theory

Robert Putnam brought the idea of social capital theory into aspect of social networks and community. In the context of Robert Putnam (1993), social capital is those characteristics of the organizations or the groups that enable collective or joint action to occur among the members of a given society. Natures of social organizations such as networks, norms and trust facilitate action and cooperation for mutual benefit. This theory involves relationship that can be formed, both formal and informal, that can add value within an organization. These include Bonding Social Capital: It refers to a close working relationship between individuals or groups that call for loyalty and commitment from the two. It may be derived from values, beliefs and experiences that are shared. Bridging Social Capital: This kind of capital points toward those sparse and casual connections that are established when individuals or groups that usually have different values and beliefs come together. These relationships can result in increased diversity and access to new resources in the organization.

In his book *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (2000), Putman elaborates how the social capital continues to shrink and its consequences on civic and political engagement. According to Putnam, social capital has potential to enhance the workings of democracy since politics attracts increased attention and enthusiasm when people other than the candidates are interested. Putnam posited that both bonding and bridging social capital complement each other. Therefore, when bonding capital declines, so does the bridging capital which in turn leads to increased ethnic tensions.

One of the arguments critics advance against this approach is confusion of concepts and operations. The critics say that Putnam's theory lacks adequate and clear definitions of social capital thus the measurement approaches have made it difficult to quantify social capital putting more hindrances to empirical uses. Critiques have also said that Putnam founded his theory in the conditions of the U.S in the 90's and therefore it may not be usefully applied in other areas of the world (Narayan & Cassidy, 2001).

A particular weakness in applying Putnam's theory of social capital is that it overlooks power dynamics and structural inequalities within society. According to the critics in the current society, social capital can be a disadvantage if marginalized groups find it hard to get access and participate. The concept of social capital at the community level on which the theory focuses can also overlook may neglect the disparities and power imbalances that exist within and between communities. There can be a tendency to universalize findings across populations. In this concept, the theory has been used to explain how CSO capacity building influences women political engagement.

This theory provides a framework for understanding how networks, norms, and trust among individuals or groups contribute to mutual action and cooperation. The concepts of bonding and bridging social capital are particularly relevant in examining how civil society organizations (CSOs) foster women's political participation. For instance, bonding social capital rooted in strong, close relationships enhances trust and loyalty among women's groups, helping them mobilize and support one another in political initiatives. Bridging social capital, on the other hand, expands access to diverse networks and resources, which is essential for addressing structural barriers women face in politics. Despite criticisms of conceptual ambiguity and context specificity, the theory effectively explains how CSOs use social capital to strengthen advocacy, foster inclusivity, and enable women to engage in political systems.

Empowerment Theory

Empowerment Theory is mainly linked to the works of Naila Kabeer (1999) and Paulo Freire (1970). The theory explores how individuals and marginalized groups gain the ability to make strategic life choices by increasing their access to resources, agency, and achievements (Kabeer, 1999). It points out that people's ability to change their lives and surroundings is aided by education, social networks and institutional support. According to Freire (1970), becoming empowered means understanding the structures that keep people oppressed and deciding to take action to change these circumstances. Empowerment is seen as a process and an outcome, assisting people, especially women, to get past obstacles like discrimination, poverty and not being able to take part in political matters (Sen, 1999).

Empowerment Theory is believed by many to have several weaknesses. Critics point out that empowerment is not clear and is tough to measure which results in difficulties in using it in policy and development (Cornwall, 2016). Other critics also state that these initiatives concentrate on helping individuals instead of addressing main systemic injustices (Batliwala, 2007). In addition, using a Western approach to empowerment may not pay enough attention to what life is like in the local culture, sometimes forcing foreign ideas that do not suit the communities in question (Mohanty, 1988). There are also doubts among critics as to whether these initiatives truly change the balance of power or just allow marginalized people to be part of systems that still keep them oppressed (Parpart, Rai & Staudt, 2002).

Capacity building by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) aligns with Empowerment Theory by strengthening women's skills, knowledge, and confidence in participating in political processes. The theory explains this as an empowerment process where individuals gain control over decisions affecting their lives. Through training, civic education, and networking, CSOs enhance women's individual and collective capacity. This ultimately leads to increased and more meaningful political participation.

Empirical Review of Literature

Empirical study findings indicate that Capacity building is a significant enabler of women's effective and sustained engagement in formal and informal political processes, although they also highlight persistent structural barriers that can dilute its impact if pursued in isolation (Wainaina et al., 2023; Musa, 2020).

Civil society organizations (CSOs) are major supporters of women's political representation around the world (Norris & Lovenduski, 1995; World Bank, 2024). CSOs provide trainings, advocacy and act as support structures that help women to participate in politics as well as navigating any challenges that they may encounter. Carson (2022) describes how, in the United States, organizations as Ready to Run and VoteRunLead, prepare women for the political office, by providing them with crucial skills such as campaign planning and public speaking. The National Democratic Institute (NDI) has also organized training sessions in countries such as Afghanistan where it has helped women understand electoral processes, understand how to launch campaigns, and communicate their messages effectively which has resulted in increased female candidacy and voter engagement (NDI, 2021). As much as these initiatives are implemented in different political and cultural contexts, both studies are in concurrence that both building political knowledge and sharpening campaign skills hence enhancing women's readiness to participate in politics.

Capacity building is not only limited to the development of political skills. CSOs have also played a great role in changing the societal attitude towards women's political engagement. For instance, in Nigeria, the Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre (WARDC) has over the years put pressure on policy makers to adopt policies that protect female candidates from violence and harassment. Such efforts have paved way in creating a safer and favorable environment for women to engage in politics (Olatunji & Ojakorotu, 2022). These initiatives aim at combating gender violence and discrimination ensuring women get an equal opportunity to contest in elections. Unlike the studies by Carson (2022) and NDI (2021) that seems to solely focus on individual capacity enhancement, the Nigerian experience demonstrates that capacity building also largely involves shifting the overall political environment within which women participate. This implies that increasing women's political participation not only requires individual empowerment but also institutional support from the relevant stakeholders.

In Kenya, CSO's have also developed effective programs to improve women's leadership and political engagement. The Women's Empowerment Link (WEL) offers leadership training that equips women with skills to engage in political activities as well as championing for gender sensitive legislation once voted into office (Nzomo 2021). Women are also informed on how they can conduct efficient electoral campaigns in terms of sourcing for votes, how they can access finances and how they can navigate various electoral laws (Mukhwana & Mukhwana, 2023). Women are also trained on the function of parliamentarians, how to prepare bills and the operations of political parties (Wainaina et al., 2023). These studies collectively show that leadership and political training equip women with the technical knowledge and practical skills needed to contest for political seats. They are also able to continue to defend and secure those positions once won.

Besides formal training, mentorship has emerged as another important dimension of capacity building. Ugwu et al (2023), note that political mentorship initiatives are fundamental in supporting women in the political processes. FIDA-Kenya offers mentorship to its female candidates within the political scenes. According to Sanbonmatsu and Dittmar (2020), women attending mentorship programs demonstrate greater confidence and better campaign

knowledge than those without such interventions. Mentorship provides an opportunity for women to get individual guidance from mentors on how to build their political vision, strategies and their image. This gives the women candidates the confidence they need to excel in the political field. Mentors acquaint women with relevant political contacts including fellow politicians and the leaders of the respective political parties. Networking is a strong technique that can be implemented to promote politics careers among women. Gichuhi and Kinyua (2023) note that “soft skills” attained during capacity-building initiatives are essential for understanding complex legislative and political systems

Capacity building also extends to civic education and rights awareness. The Center for Rights Education and Awareness (CREAW) offers civic education and communication training to equip women to better articulate their needs and champion their rights in political spaces (CREAW,2023). Through community mobilization, debates, and forums, CREAW also works to build public awareness and support for women's political participation. According to Rusfiana and Kurniasih (2024), Civil Society Organizations’ purpose is to uphold human rights and social justice. The Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) conducts Programmes that empower women through informing them on their constitutional right to vote and political participation.

Collectively, the reviewed studies indicate that capacity building itself is not a standalone process .It encompasses leadership development, mentorship and legislative knowledge acquisition. While the approaches differ, they all seek to significantly reduce barriers to women’s political participation and strengthen women’s ability to engage effectively in politics and incorporate them in decision making processes for better development outcomes.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework provides diagrammatic representation which illustrates the relationship between Capacity Building (Independent Variable) and Women’s Political Participation (Dependent Variable) in Nairobi City County; Kenya. Leadership development programs, Mentorship programs and Legislative knowledge acquisition are intended to affect Women’s Political Participation through level of participation in political decision making processes (such as voting and contesting elections, holding elective or appointive positions and participating in policy-making and governance processes) and ease of participation (such as number of barriers reported (in terms of i.e. .cost, discrimination, time constraints etc.). It serves as a foundation for understanding and interpreting the phenomena under study, helping researchers to outline their hypotheses and design their methodology (Miles et al.,2019).

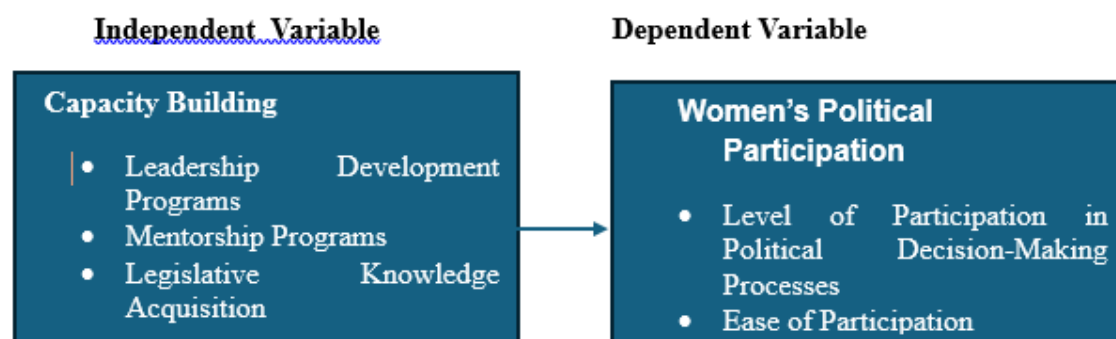


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

To examine the effect of capacity building by civil society organizations on women's political participation in Nairobi City County; Kenya, the study adopted a descriptive research design. This chapter presents: Research Design, Target Population, Sampling Frame, Sample Size, Research Instruments and the methods used for data processing and analysis.

Research Design

Research design is a plan embedded in the analysis of collecting and transforming data into findings to achieve research objectives by empirical evidence systematically in the most economical way possible (Sachin and Rajesh, 2022). It is a plan for acquiring, measuring and analyzing data to achieve the outlined goal(s) (Hoerl & Snee, 2020).

This study used a descriptive survey design. A descriptive survey design was suitable since it involve the collection of mapped data describing present conditions and experiences, about the subject of study in this regard the effect of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) capacity building on women political participation in Nairobi County. Additionally, it addressed key research questions such as who is involved in implementing these strategies, what strategies are being used, where these interventions have the most impact, when they are applied, and how they influence women's political engagement.

Quantitative techniques were also applied to measure the impact of capacity building on women's political participation. The quantitative data explained the extent to which capacity building significantly influences women's political participation. It quantified the impact of these interventions on women's involvement in political processes.

Target Population

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) a target population refers to a group of individuals and objects that have common observable characteristics. The target population, on the other hand, relates to that specific portion of the population to which the researcher intends to generalize the findings of the study. This study was conducted in Nairobi City County; Kenya. The focus was on women who have been involved in political processes and either gotten elective seats or attempted to get elective seats because of CSO support in building capacity of women for political participation in Nairobi County. The total population of women who were cleared by IEBC to contest in the 2022 General Elections countrywide was 1,962 women.

This study's focus was narrower in two respects. First, geographically, it was confined to Nairobi City County. Secondly, it targeted women whose candidature was linked to CSO capacity-building support, since the effect of such support could only be assessed among women who had received it. Considering that no register exists that lists CSO-supported women aspirants in Nairobi County and nationally, the actual population could not be ascertained with precision. In view of this, the study employed a snowball approach, in which already-identified participants referred the researcher to participants who met the inclusion criteria, this placed them at 112 women in number.

Sampling Frame and Sample Size

A sampling frame is the list of elements from which a sample is drawn, and it should represent the target population as completely as possible (Cargill & O'Connor, 2021). In this study, no formal sampling frame could be constructed in advance, since no record of CSO-supported women political aspirants in Nairobi County existed from which such a list could be drawn. The population of interest could be best described as a hidden, hard-to-enumerate. Hence, the study employed a snowball sampling technique. In this case the researcher began with an initial set of known CSO-supported women aspirants and used their referrals identifying other participants meeting the inclusion criteria, where the 112 women reached through this process became the sampling frame for the study and sample size too.

Research Instrument

A research instrument is a tool that a researcher can use to collect measure and analyze data (Cervone & Pervin, 2022). The data for the purpose of this study was collected with the help of a semi -structured questionnaire. The questions were both closed and open ended, which enabled the researcher to get specific details from the respondents, and this facilitated structured data collection. A Likert scale was also used as it is most effective when it comes to measuring opinions (Dykema et al., 2022).

Data Processing and Analysis

According to Greene (2003) the purpose of data analysis is to prepare raw data for presentation and statistical inference. After the data collection process, the data was cleaned, edited, coded, classified and tabulated so that they could be amendable for analysis. The data collected was analyzed by use of descriptive and inferential statistics using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28. Under descriptive statistics, frequency, mean and standard deviation were computed and under inferential statistics, correlational analysis and regression analysis were used.

Regression was the most preferred method because of its ability to accurately estimate and in fact display a positive or negative association between independent and dependent variables and further qualify whether such a relationship is either significant or non-significant (Cooper and Schindler, 2018). Simple regression analysis was applied to test the relationship between independent and dependent variables. The model aimed at the tentative calculation of interaction effects between the independent variable and the dependent variable.

The simple regression model was of the form:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$$

Where, Y = Women's Political Participation

β_0 = The intercept/constant

β_1 = Beta coefficients to be estimated

X_1 = Capacity Building

ε = Error term

The test of relationships and significance between variables was obtained using inferential statistics. Pearson correlation was employed to assess the strength of the relationship between independent and dependent variables. The relationship is considered significant at a p-value of <0.05 . A Pearson correlation (r) value of ± 0.5 shows a strong correlation, ± 0.30 to ± 0.49 moderate correlation while ± 0.29 is weak. Significance is at less than 0.05 (Pallant,2020).

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was also undertaken to determine the overall significance and goodness of fit of the regression model. The applicability of this model in the context of this study was evaluated using the p-value and F-statistic. F statistic is used in hypothesis testing to compare explained variance to unexplained variance and decide whether a model or group differences are statistically meaningful. P-value on the other hand is used in hypothesis testing to quantify how compatible your data is with the null hypothesis. A p-value less than 0.05 indicates that the model is significant, possesses strong predictors of the dependent variable, and that the results are not attributable to chance. If the p-value exceeded 0.05, the model is deemed insignificant and unsuitable for elucidating variations in the dependent variable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Information

In this section, the demographic characteristics of the respondents were presented to describe the study sample and provide contextual background for interpreting the subsequent findings.

Response Rate

From the sample of 112 women described under the Sample Size, 12 had participated in a pilot test, hence were excluded from the final data collection to avoid biasing the results. This left 100 women eligible for the final data collection, and questionnaires were administered to all 100. Of these, 83 were fully filled and returned to the researcher whereas 17 were not returned thus making a response rate of 83%. Bhardwaj (2019) argues that a response rate which is more than 50% is considered adequate while excellent response rate is usually above 70%. This implies that the response rate in this study is good for making conclusions as well as recommendations.

Table 1: Response Rate

Questionnaires	Frequency	Percent
Returned	83	83
Unreturned	17	17
Total	100	100

Participation in Political Activities

The respondents were requested to indicate if they have participated in any political activity. The results are shown in Figure 2. From the results, 90.2% (75) of the respondents indicated that they have participated in political activities while 9.8% (8) of the respondents indicated they have not.

The implications of these findings are that: with only 9.8% reporting no political participation, this is a small minority; implying that women are already somewhat mobilized or connected to political processes. This pattern is consistent with other Kenyan context as per findings from related studies where women engaged by civil society, parties, or community groups tend to show higher rates of party membership, attendance at rallies, or involvement in campaigns.

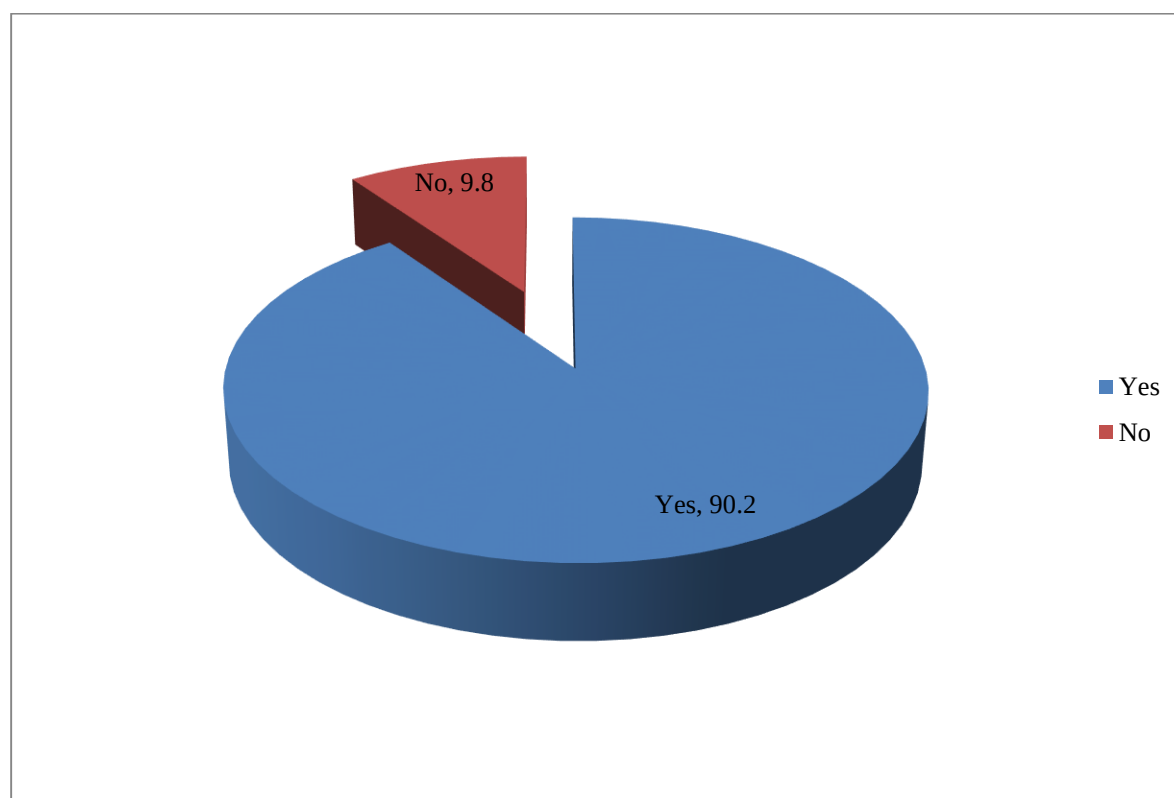


Figure 2: Participation in Political activities

Length of Participation in Political Activities

The results in Figure 3 indicate that there is a highly experienced group of politically active women, with 48.6% (40) reporting involvement in political activities for over 6 years and a further 23% (19) engaged for 4–6 years, meaning about 71.6% (59) have at least four years of experience. This contrasts with 17.6% (15) who have participated for a period of 1–3 years and only 10.8% (9) who have been involved for less than 1 year, showing that roughly 28.4% (24) are relatively recent entrants (≤ 3 years) into political life. Together, these findings suggest that the study largely captures the views of women with medium-to-long term political engagement, who are likely

to have established networks, familiarity with political processes, and sustained interaction with civil society organizations, rather than mainly first-time or very new participants.

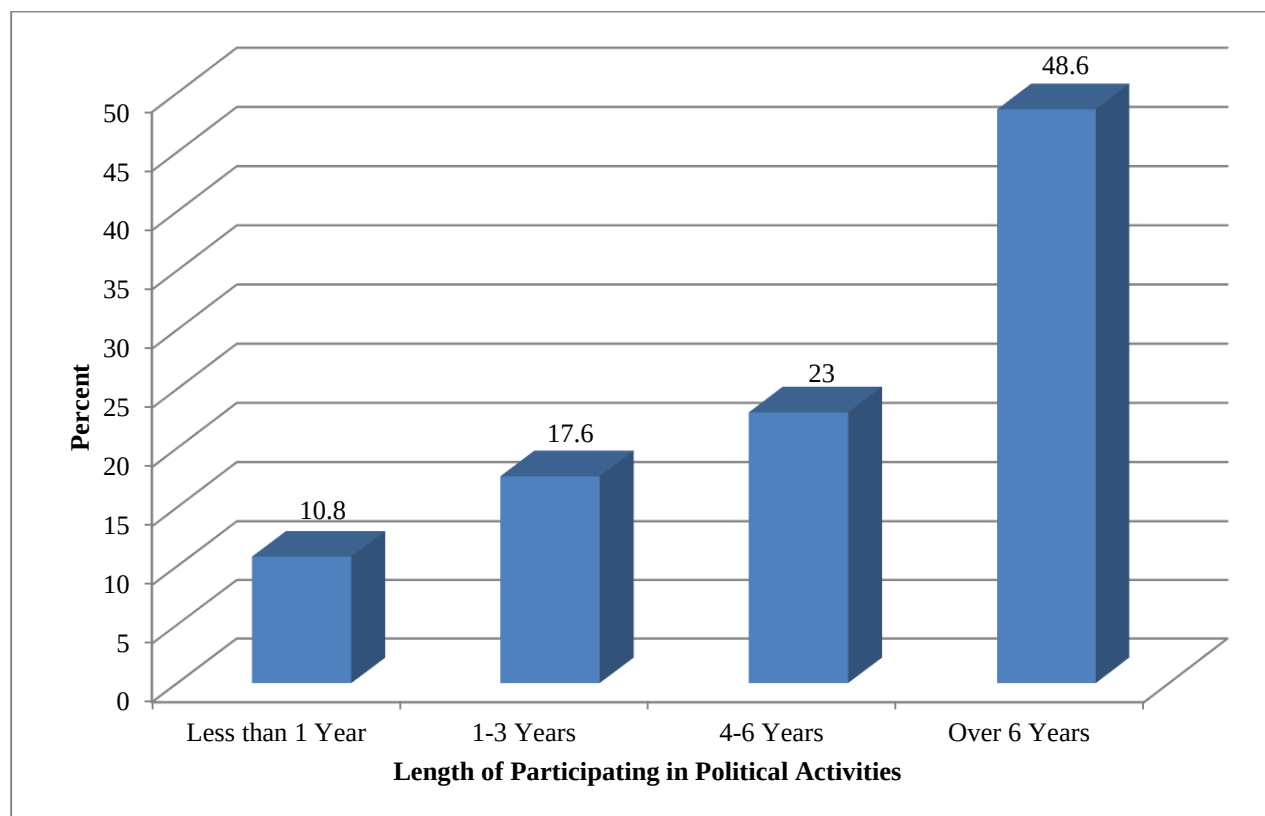


Figure 3 : Length of Participation in Political Activities

Interaction with Civil Society Initiatives

The respondents were requested to indicate if they have interacted with any civil society initiatives aimed at promoting women's political participation.

These findings on Figure 4 indicate that a large majority of respondents, 84.1% (70) have interacted with civil society initiatives aimed at promoting women's political participation, while only 15.9% (13) of the respondents report no such interaction.

The high interaction rate suggests that most women in the sample have been exposed to civic education, training, advocacy, or mobilization efforts by civil society organizations, which are known in Kenya to play a significant role in empowering women politically through capacity-building, mentorship, and awareness campaigns. Consequently, the study's results on the CSO social inclusion strategy and participation patterns mainly reflect women who are already within or close to CSO networks, and may under-represent women who remain outside these initiatives and potentially face greater informational or structural barriers to political engagement

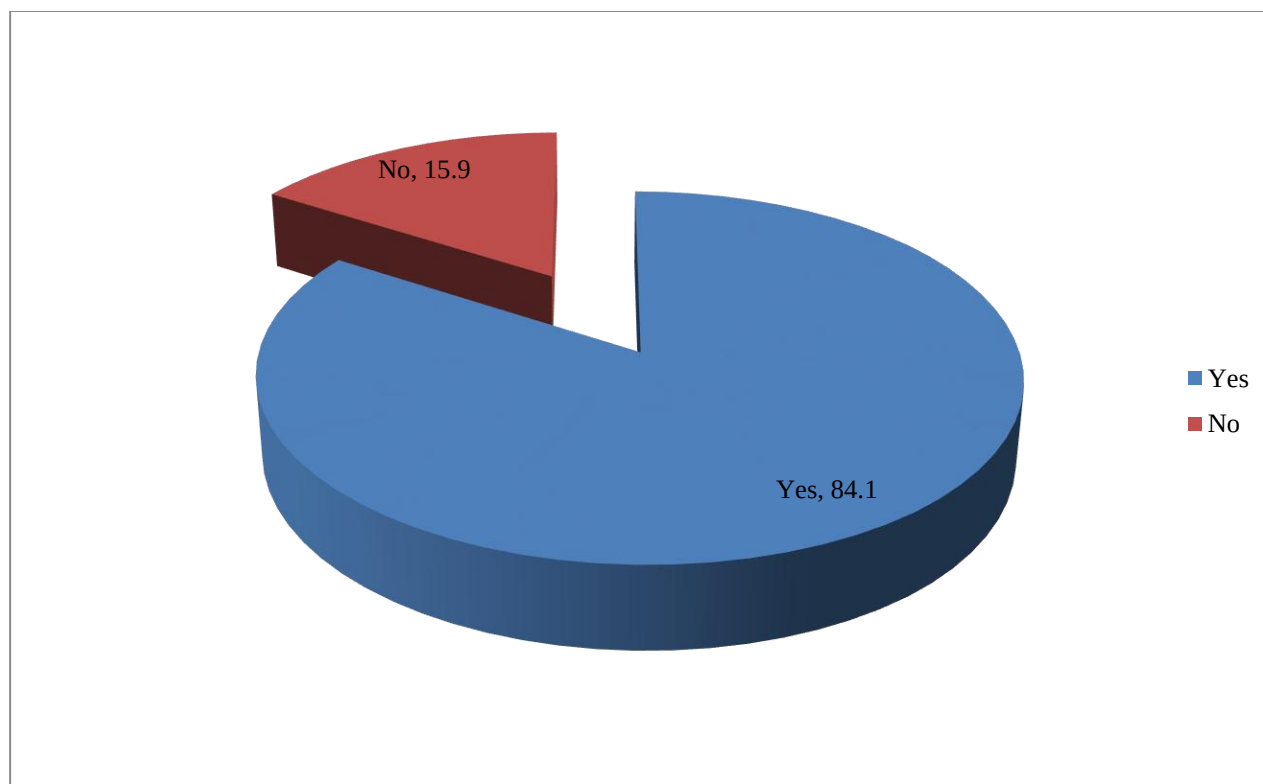


Figure 4 : Interaction With Civil Society Initiatives

Effect of Capacity Building on Women’s Political Participation

The objective of this study was to ascertain the effect of capacity building on women’s political participation in Nairobi City County; Kenya. The respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement on various statements. The results were as shown on Table 2.

The mean scores for all four capacity-building items as shown in the table range from 3.794 to 3.900 on a 5-point Likert continuum scale where 3 is neutral and 4 is agree, indicating that respondents generally agree that CSO capacity-building significantly supports women’s political participation. Using common interpretation bands (e.g., 3.40–4.19 = “agree”), the highest mean of 3.900 shows that most respondents agree leadership and training programs enhance women’s confidence and campaign skills, while means of 3.866 and 3.847 indicate that mentorship and training on legislative processes help women navigate political challenges and understand how laws and policies are made. The mean of 3.794 reflects agreement that training on legal frameworks strengthens women’s ability to advocate for gender equality and address systemic barriers. The standard deviations between 0.696 and 0.947 (all below 1) suggest a moderate dispersion, meaning responses crowd around agreement with some variability but no strong divergence, reinforcing the conclusion that capacity-building is widely perceived as an effective CSO strategy for enhancing women’s political participation.

These results are consistent with the literature reviewed earlier. Nzomo (2021) and Ugwu et al. (2023) similarly find that CSO-led leadership training and mentorship equip women with the skills and guidance needed to navigate political processes, while Sanbonmatsu and Dittmar (2020) and Gichuhi and Kinyua (2023) link such interventions to greater confidence and stronger grasp of legislative systems.

Table 2 : Capacity Building and Women’s Political Participation

	Mean	Std. Deviation
CSOs run leadership and training programs (e.g., public speaking, campaign strategy) that have been known to boost women’s confidence and skills for running effective political campaigns.	3.900	0.947
CSOs connect women newcomers to politics with incumbent leaders who are experienced leaders through mentorship initiatives, hence enabling them to navigate political challenges.	3.866	0.817
CSOs training programs and workshops do equip women with knowledge of legislative processes i.e. how laws and policies are made.	3.847	0.738
CSOs train women on legal frameworks to strengthen their ability to advocate for gender equality and dismantle systemic barriers	3.794	0.696

Key: 1.00– 1.80: Strongly Disagree, 1.81 – 2.60: Disagree, 2.61 – 3.40: Neutral / Neither Agree nor Disagree, 3.41 – 4.20: Agree, 4.21 – 5.00: Strongly Agree

Correlation Analysis

This research adopted Pearson correlation analysis determine how the dependent variable (women’s political participation in Nairobi City County; Kenya) relates with the independent variables (capacity building).

The correlation analysis results presented in Table 3 reveals a strong and positive relationship between capacity building and women’s political participation. Capacity building exhibited a moderately strong and positive correlation ($r = 0.822$, $p < 0.01$), meaning that training, mentorship programs and legislative knowledge acquisition contribute meaningfully to enhancing women’s political engagement.

Table 3 : Correlation Coefficients

		Women’s Political Participation			Capacity Building	
Women’s Political Participation	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
	N	83				

Capacity Building	Pearson Correlation	.822**	.219	.467	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.050	.074		
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						

Regression Coefficients

This subsection presents the regression coefficients for the simple linear model that examines how civil society strategies predict women’s political participation. The coefficients table below reports the unstandardized and standardized effects of Capacity Building on Women’s Political Participation factor score, together with their standard errors, values, and significance levels.

Table 4: Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.215	0.092	–	2.34	0.020
	Capacity Building	0.276	0.052	0.282	5.31	0.000

a Dependent Variable: Women’s political participation in Nairobi City County; Kenya

Table 5: Analysis of Variance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	96.42	4	24.11	141.37	0.000
Residual	39.69	78	0.51		
Total	136.11	82			

Table 6: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.842	.709	.703	.715

The results in Table 4 revealed that capacity building has a statistically significant effect on women's political participation in Nairobi City County; Kenya $\beta_1=0.276$, p value= 0.000). The relationship was considered significant since the p value 0.000 was less than the significant level of 0.05. These findings align with studies conducted by Nzomo (2021) and Ugwu et al., (2023). In Kenya, Women Empowerment Link provides leadership and campaign training to aspiring female leaders while FIDA Kenya offers political mentorship to guide women into navigating the political terrains and establishing political networks.

The statistical model is expressed as ; $Y= 0.275 + 0.276X$ β_1 meaning that, on average, a one-unit increase in X- (Capacity Building) is associated with a 0.276 increase in Y- Women's Political Participation with 0.275 being the expected value of Y- Women's Political Participation when $X=0$.

The ANOVA in Table 5 was used to determine whether the model was a good fit for the data. The F-statistic of 141.37 with a p -value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) indicates that the model is statistically significant, meaning that the model was considered as a good fit for the data. The regression sum of squares (96.42) is much larger than the residual sum of squares (39.69), implying that most of the variability in participation is accounted for by the CSO social inclusion strategy variable rather than unexplained error. Therefore, the model can be used to predict the influence of capacity building on women's political participation in Nairobi City County; Kenya.

The model summary in Table 6 was used to explain the variation in the dependent variable that could be explained by the independent variables. The correlation coefficient $R=0.842$ indicates a strong positive association between the set of capacity-building predictors namely (Leadership development programs, Mentorship programs and Legislative Knowledge acquisition) and women's political participation in Nairobi City County; Kenya.

The R^2 value of 0.709 indicates that about 70.9% of the variation in women's political participation in Nairobi City County; Kenya is statistically associated with variation in the predictors in the model. This result suggests that the variables in the model together explain a substantial share of the differences in women political participation. However, this alone does not establish that changes in these predictors lead to changes in participation.

The adjusted R^2 of 0.703 indicates that, after accounting for the number of predictors and the sample size, about 70.3% of the variability in women's political participation in Nairobi City County; Kenya remains statistically linked to the capacity-building predictors. This adjusted measure shows that the observed association between capacity building and women's political participation is unlikely to arise solely from model complexity for the adjusted R^2 remains close to the unadjusted R^2 of 0.709, yet the relationship still reflects a strong but non-causal association.

The standard error of the estimate of approximately 0.715 indicates that the average distance between the observed values of Women's Political Participation and the values predicted by the regression model.

Limitations of the Study

Geographic Scope

This study was carried out in Nairobi City County; Kenya. This limited the pool of potential participants available for the research. Hence, extending this study to other counties would have allowed for a larger and more diverse

participant base yielding finding that could be more generalized of civil society organizations' engagement with women's political participation across Kenya. Owing to financial and time constraints, the study's scope was restricted to a single geographical area (Nairobi City County; Kenya). Hence the findings reflect the dynamics that are specific to Nairobi County City County; Kenya and may not fully capture variations that could exist in other counties with different socio-political, cultural, or devolved governance contexts.

Self-Report Bias

Data was collected from respondents using self-administered questionnaires and self-reported; regarding their perceptions of CSO capacity-building interventions and their own political participation. This approach is susceptible to social desirability bias, where respondents may overstate or understate their level of civic engagement to present themselves favorably. Recall bias might also have affected responses, particularly where participants were asked to reflect on past training or capacity-building activities. Consequently, the findings were interpreted with an awareness that reported levels of participation and perceived impact may not fully correspond to actual behavior.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that capacity building significantly affects women's political participation. This indicates that training, mentorship, and legislative knowledge acquisition equip women with the necessary confidence, knowledge, and technical competence to engage effectively in politics. Participation increases when individuals acquire knowledge, confidence, and control over resources. Thus, capacity-building initiatives by CSOs are instrumental in nurturing women's political agency and leadership capacity.

The study further recommends that, there is a need for CSOs to establish long-term, strategic support systems that extend beyond short-term, election-related projects. Most interventions are project-based and end once elections are over, leaving women without continued support. CSOs should therefore adopt sustainable frameworks that ensure ongoing mentorship, post-election engagement, and consistent monitoring of women who have contested in political races. This will help maintain their political visibility and influence beyond electoral periods.

In addition, there is a strong need to enhance capacity building beyond conventional training sessions. While most CSOs offer leadership and campaign trainings, they often lack follow-up mechanisms and post-training support. Therefore, capacity building should be continuous, incorporating practical exposure, peer mentorship, and personalized coaching. Introducing post-training tracking systems would allow CSOs to assess progress and provide targeted assistance to women pursuing political leadership.

Another key recommendation is the strengthening of CSO institutional capacity. Some organizations face internal limitations such as inadequate staffing, weak coordination, and donor dependence. CSOs should therefore invest in staff development, partnership-building, and improved data management systems to enhance their operational efficiency and advocacy impact. In addition, cooperation among organizations should be encouraged to prevent competition and duplication of efforts. Through collaboration, CSOs can pool resources, harmonize activities, and build stronger collective influence.

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