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# Financial Availability and Its Influence on Women's Economic Empowerment in Kakamega County, Kenya

**Lydia Keya, Edna Jemutai, Andrew Makori**

**Murang'a University of Technology (MUT), Kenya**

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## ABSTRACT

The relationship between women's financial allocation and women's economic empowerment is a crucial and complex household matter with global implications. However, UNICEF report designates that 65% of women aged 35 to 59 are underprivileged, compared to 56% of men in the same age group. A significant challenge in women's economic empowerment is the limited financial availability resources that women often face, particularly in marginalized and low-income communities. However, since devolution, Kakamega County government has shown significant efforts to contribute to women's economic empowerment according to Article 260 of the 2010 Constitution; women are recognized as a marginalized group, necessitating affirmative action to promote their advancement. This study examined the influence of financial availability on women's economic empowerment in Kakamega County. The specific objective was to examine the influence of women's financial availability on women's economic empowerment in Kakamega County, Kenya. This study was anchored on Empowerment and Financial Inclusion theory. This study adopted cross-sectional research design and targeted a population of 994 women groups registered by the department of gender and social services Kakamega County. Purposive and systematic sampling technique in line with Mugenda and Mugenda (2013) formula was used to sample nine hundred and ten (910) (30) women. Primary data was collected by use of a survey questionnaire and interview schedule. The collected data was analyzed by descriptive methods, correlation analysis and regression analysis. The study revealed that financial availability have a significant positive effect on the economic empowerment of women groups in Kakamega County, Kenya, (P-value=0.000<0.05) as their null hypotheses were rejected. This study recommended that woman groups should embrace and utilize these financial availability strategies to improve their economic status and their socio-well-being. Similarly, this study recommended for funding to women's empowerment programmes, especially in interior rural areas in collaboration with the private sector to provide more financial opportunities for both women in groups and those women who may not be particularly in women groups (chamas).This study recommends for a comparative study be undertaken between women headed households and male headed households in empowerment groups.

**Key Words:** Financial allocation, Financial Availability, Financial Availability Strategies, Women's Economic Empowerment

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the study

The relationship between women's financial availability and women's economic empowerment is a crucial and complex household matter with global implications. Empowering women to reach their full economic potential is of paramount importance for the competitiveness, advancement, and future-readiness of economies around the world (Schipke et al., 2023). Financially empowered women are more likely to contribute significantly to their households and communities, fostering an environment of economic growth and stability. Empowering women in economic activities not only increases household income and improved living standards but also positively impacts public economies, family efficiency, and the overall well-being of their communities. This holds particularly true in low-income households, where women's financial independence and decision-making autonomy can alleviate poverty and boost family resilience (Ojo & Ndzendze, 2023).

Globally, women's economic empowerment is recognized as a vital driver of sustainable economic growth, aligning with empowerment theory, which emphasizes that economic independence plays a key role in reducing poverty (Sen,1988). Kabeer (2020) applauds that effective budgeting and access to financial tools such as credit and savings are essential in facilitating this empowerment. UN Women (2024) citing Lyons et al. (2023) comments that for financial availability to be sufficient it must be supported by systemic reforms aimed at addressing gender inequality. In the same vein, Akenzua (2025) demonstrates that financial availability significantly enhance women's agency and resilience, especially when integrated with enabling policies. Similarly, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (2020) supports and advocates for digital financial services like mobile money, demonstrating their effectiveness in reducing transaction costs and improving financial inclusion and participation among women.

Regionally, Dorfleitner & Nguyen (2024**)** reports that the use of mobile money and other digital financial tools plays a significant role in facilitating empowerment across the region, although their effectiveness varies depending on contextual factors and the level of infrastructure development.

The African Women's Report (2021) underscores the importance of digital finance ecosystems in improving women's financial availability and advancing their economic empowerment, drawing on Gender and Development (GAD) frameworks. In a similar vein, Pal, Gupta, and Joshi (2022) highlight that women's income levels play a crucial role in determining financial accessibility, with ownership of bank accounts acting as a key driver of increased economic engagement. Williams et al. (2022) observed that while women's economic empowerment remains generally low across 33 Sub-Saharan African nations, there are significant differences across regions. Additionally, Haley and Marsh (2021) demonstrated that income-generating activities (IGAs) can play a major role in poverty reduction, particularly when reinforced by strong institutional structures and social support networks.

Kenya's Vision 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasize the elimination of poverty and the empowerment of women. To achieve these goals, the country has enacted legal frameworks most notably the 2010 Constitution to address the needs of marginalized groups and advance gender-inclusive policies that support women. Furthermore, Article 21(2) of the Constitution obligates the state to implement measures that safeguard the economic and social rights of all citizens, as specified in Article 43 (Kenyatta, 2023).

Despite the implementation of initiatives like the Women's Economic Empowerment Strategy (2020–2025), which has allocated Kshs. 21.4 billion toward empowering women, a significant number of women still experience high levels of poverty within their households. As outlined in Article 260 of the 2010 Constitution, women are identified as a marginalized group, requiring affirmative measures to support their socio-economic progress.

In Kenya, the poverty rate is higher in rural areas than in cities (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), 2019). According to Kenyatta (2023), citing Kulundu (2007), households headed by women experience elevated levels of poverty, largely due to limited access to essential services such as healthcare, clean water, primary education, affordable housing, and employment opportunities.

Furthermore, Naila Kabeer (2015) notes that female-headed households (FHHs) often rely on small-scale income-generating activities, such as operating kiosks and selling vegetables. However, the earnings from these ventures are typically insufficient to meet their families' basic needs, keeping them trapped in poverty. The persistence of financial availability disparities, limited job opportunities, and inadequate education and skills further exacerbates women's material deprivation and deepens the social consequences of poverty. As a result, they are unable to make significant contributions to the country's development agenda.

Despite existing provisions, a disconnect remains between policy and practice, with women having limited involvement in fund planning and policy formulation (Njeri et al., 2023). As a result, true empowerment of women has yet to be achieved, largely due to structural barriers such as poverty, inadequate education, and unequal access to resources. Policy interventions have struggled to improve financial availability for women, primarily because of unclear guidelines regarding financial allocation procedures, vague identification of target beneficiaries during annual budgeting cycles, inefficiencies in the budgeting process, and delays in fund disbursement. These shortcomings are reflected in the persistently high poverty rates among women particularly in female-headed households as well as disparities in education, access to employment and resources, and the continued influence of harmful gender norms (Kenyatta, 2023).

Nevertheless, the Fin Access Survey (2024) offers a differing perspective, indicating that access to formal financial services has increased to 84.8%, with the gender gap reduced to only 1.6%. This progress is primarily linked to the growing use of mobile money (52.6%) and credit facilities (64.0%).

Moreover, Minja et al. (2023) reinforce these findings by highlighting that table banking among women's groups has been effective in promoting business ownership and empowerment, thereby enhancing household living standards. Similarly, Ambutsi and Makokha (2023) emphasize that access to financial resources particularly through institutions such as the Kenya Women Microfinance Bank (KWFT) plays a crucial role in advancing women's empowerment and fostering community development. Although the county has allocated budgetary resources to support women's empowerment, significant gaps remain in women's participation in decision-making and policy development. This lack of financial availability undermines the long-term sustainability of empowerment initiatives and continues to limit women's access to financial resources and their contribution to improved household welfare.

**Statement of the Problem**

Kenyatta(2023) citing Kulundu (2007) explains that women-headed households experience high poverty levels due to limited access to essential basic needs, including healthcare, clean water, primary education, affordable housing, and employment opportunities. However, multiple indicators at statistical level reveal inefficiencies and challenges in financial allocation initiatives aimed at women's economic empowerment within households (Chisika & Yeom, 2023). In 2010, Kenya promulgated a dynamic Constitution that takes cognizance of regulations and strategies to improve women's financial liberation. The authorities outlined a number of policies and approaches to reduce poverty levels and give women more financial power. In addition, Kakamega County CPSB reports indicates progress made by the County in empowering women from 2014/2015 to 2020/2021 financial year (Chisika & Yeom, 2023). Since then, Kshs. 21.4 billion have been allocated by the national government as stated in the Women Economic Empowerment strategy for 2020-2025. UNICEF, (2020) report designates that 65% of women aged 35 to 59 are underprivileged, compared to 56% of men in the same age group. Further, the region's monetary poverty rate is 35.1%, which is nearly identical to the national figure of 35.7% of persons living in poverty (KNBS Comprehensive Poverty Report, 2020). This is supported by Ruheni, (2018) in South Kabras Kakamega County who concluded that women headed homes are more likely to be impoverished due to weaker financial capabilities compared to men headed households. Furthermore, the rate of undernourished individuals in Kakamega County continues to be elevated, although the underlying reasons for this phenomenon are still unclear (Gwada et al., 2020). A growing body of knowledge suggests that there is a considerable disparity between policy commitments and county-level procedures (Chisika & Yeom, 2023). Overall, there is minimal evidence of women's involvement in the design, development, and policy-making processes for these funds (Njeri et al., 2023). Unfortunately, this problem has not been validated because there is little data and figures for policy change by relevant stakeholders. Consequently, this study examined effect of financial availability on women's economic empowerment in Kakamega County, by examining financial availability on women's economic empowerment so as to identify barriers to and facilitators of women's opportunities to diversify income and improve living standards in households.

**Objective of the Study**

This study examined the influence of women's financial availability on women's economic empowerment in Kakamega County, Kenya.

**The study was guided by the following research hypothesis;**

**$H0_1$:** Women's financial availability has no significant influence on women's economic empowerment in

Kakamega County, Kenya.

### Study Limitations

This study was likely to face a number of limitations. First, the possibility that local women have low literacy levels may present certain difficulties that must be resolved through group meetings with interpreters. The participants may be reluctant to give information out of concern that the local community leaders will take advantage of them. The target key informers considered some information as confidential and were not allowed to disclose before prior consent. However, this was mitigated by having a letter of introduction from university to assure the participants that their details remained confidential and utilized exclusively for hypothetical purposes. A research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) was presented to the Department of gender and social services Kakamega County in order to eliminate suspicion and enable the respondents to disclose the information sought.

Second, much time that was required to interrogate women's group leaders; the time to attend to all questions raised was considered limited. Another concern was that, some respondents might not complete the questionnaire correctly due to misunderstandings and the clarity of the questions related to their literacy levels. All the concerns were mitigated by clarifying issues that respondents may find difficult to understand. The study will specifically use survey questionnaires, interview schedules and thematic analysis.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical review

### Empowerment theory

Empowerment theory, as introduced by Sen(1988), is centered on raising awareness and building capacity to enhance women's participation, decision-making, and transformative action. Scholars such as Hill (2011) and Hossain & Samad (2021) expand this framework to include economic advancement, agency, and the empowerment process. The theory is instrumental in analyzing challenges related to financial allocation and women's economic empowerment.

Empowerment theory provides a robust conceptual foundation for analyzing how increased financial availability can facilitate women's agency, autonomy, and participation in socio-economic processes. Rooted in the work of Zimmerman (1995), the theory emphasizes the importance of enabling individuals to gain control over their lives through access to resources, participatory decision-making and capacity-building opportunities. In the context of women's economic empowerment, scholars argue that financial availability acts as both a resource and a catalyst for broader forms of empowerment, including psychological, social, and political dimensions (Kabeer et al., 2023).

Cornwall & Rivas (2015) underscores that when women gain access to financial services such as credit, savings, insurance, and mobile banking they experience improvements in decision-making power, business autonomy, and confidence. Kabeer et al. (2023) argue that availability of financial resources enhances women's capacity to challenge existing gender norms, especially when accompanied by community engagement and collective action. However, they caution that empowerment is not automatically achieved through financial availability alone; the process must also include enabling environments and policies that address systemic inequalities such as property rights, education, and gender-based violence.

Oduro and Doss (2022) illustrate that improved financial access particularly when channeled through women's cooperatives or inclusive financial technologies enhances women's bargaining power and contributes positively to household welfare. However, they point out that the effectiveness of empowerment outcomes is context-dependent and shaped by cultural norms and institutional structures. In the same vein, Njeri and Wanjiku (2021) observe that financial access initiatives in Kenya have boosted women's involvement in business and savings groups, yet the impact on empowerment remains uneven, often limited by patriarchal decision-making at both household and community levels.

Moreover, Batliwala (2015), emphasize the need for empowerment strategies to be transformative rather than instrumental moving beyond economic access to challenging the power structures that perpetuate gender inequality. Empowerment theory, in this sense, provides a lens for assessing not only the availability of financial services but also the extent to which those services enable women to achieve meaningful control over their lives.

Despite its usefulness, the theory faces criticism for limited theoretical grounding and practical challenges (Kabeer, 2020). Critics like Kabeer argue that Duflo (2012) neglects the underlying power dynamics central to women's financial autonomy. While Duflo (2012) presents a broad view of empowerment including education, health, and economic opportunity her arguments sometimes lack clarity due to inconsistent use of women's economic empowerment as a terminology.

Other scholars emphasize that household dynamics, literacy, unemployment, and gender inequality significantly affect financial availability for women, particularly in developing regions (Yiyun & Wei Sieng, 2025). They additionally advocate for inclusive policies addressing these systemic barriers.

In Kakamega County, despite affirmative budgeting from 2013–2022, many women still face extreme poverty, lack housing, food, and education, and have limited financial knowledge (Ruheni, 2018). The County's Leadership Guide (2021) encourages gender equality, requiring site visits, inclusive planning, and budgeting for vulnerable groups, aiming to improve women's empowerment through participatory governance.

Empowerment theory therefore, provides a strong conceptual foundation for understanding and addressing women's disparities in economic empowerment and financial allocation. It emphasizes the importance of agency, access, participation, and structural reform, making it a critical framework for developing policies that advance women's empowerment and sustainable development.

**Financial Inclusion Theory**

Chakrabarty (2023), referencing his earlier work (Chakrabarty, 2011), is a key proponent of financial inclusion theory, which emphasizes universal access to financial services, particularly for marginalized and disadvantaged populations (Ozili, 2020). This theory presents a framework encompassing the principles, processes, goals, and outcomes of financial inclusion, advocating for equal rights to financial access for all individuals.

Financial inclusion theory has become a critical framework for understanding how availability to financial services influences women's economic empowerment. The theory posits that inclusive financial systems where marginalized groups, especially women, have access to affordable and appropriate financial products and services lead to increased economic participation, decision-making power, and ultimately, improved livelihoods (Demirgüç-Kunt et al., 2022). One of the leading arguments is that financial availability, especially through formal institutions, allows women to invest in businesses, smooth consumption, manage risks, and escape cycles of poverty (Sanyal et al., 2021).

Chakravarty and Pal (2021) emphasize that access to credit, savings, and insurance can have transformative effects on women by enhancing their bargaining power within households and communities. However, these authors also caution that availability alone is insufficient without supportive policy environments, and reduced structural barriers like gender bias in loan disbursement or collateral requirements. Relatedly, Duflo (2012) underscores that while financial availability is a vital tool, women's empowerment also depends on complementary interventions such as education and legal rights, highlighting the multidimensional nature of empowerment.

In African contexts, including Kenya, scholars like Kabeer et al. (2023) argue that group-based financial availability models such as table banking and microfinance have shown success in boosting women's income levels and social capital. Yet, these models often leave out individual women who cannot meet group requirements or who have urgent personal financial needs (Nzau & Karani, 2020). Therefore, financial

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availability must be tailored to address both collective and individual access pathways, ensuring flexibility and inclusiveness to achieve women's economic empowerment.

Overall, proponents of Financial Inclusion Theory assert that improving financial availability not only supports women's economic empowerment but also has broader social benefits such as improved child welfare, community resilience, and economic growth (UN Women, 2023). However, for this empowerment to be meaningful, availability must go hand-in-hand with usability, affordability, and institutional support.

However, the theory faces several challenges that weaken its predictive strength (Srinivas & Upender, 2014). Ozili, (2020) argues that despite ongoing efforts, regulatory gaps persist, hindering the full realization of financial availability. Similarly, Prabhakar (2019) notes a disconnect between policy and research, where theoretical models often fail to effectively address the practical realities of financial availability efforts to women households.

Downes et al. (2017), Kabeer (2020), and Shvedova (2024) emphasize the insufficient financial investment in women's empowerment, particularly concerning the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A significant portion of development funding allocates only a minimal share to gender-focused objectives. The Strategic Plan (2022–2025) highlights the critical role of financial resources in advancing key areas such as economic empowerment, peace and security, governance, the eradication of gender-based violence, and effective humanitarian response.

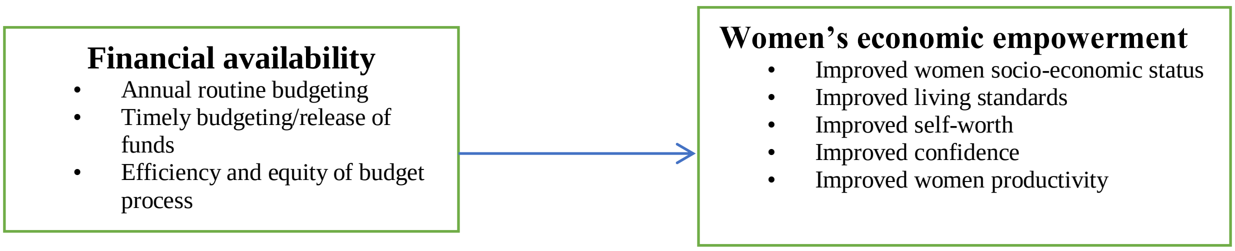
In Kenya, women make up 51% of the population (KNBS, 2020), making their economic participation vital to household and national development. Yet, access to financial services remains uneven. Ellis identifies four main barriers: lack of documentation, geographical limitations, inappropriate financial products, and Affordability.

These barriers form a useful framework for analyzing how financial access influences women's economic improvement, especially regarding the availability and proximity of financial services. This perspective is inclusive and non-discriminatory, taking into account women from diverse economic and geographic backgrounds.

In conclusion, financial inclusion theory provides an essential foundation for this study and is highly relevant to researchers, policymakers, academics, and practitioners. It offers insights into how expanding access to financial services can support women's empowerment, improve household well-being, and advance inclusive development.

**Conceptual framework**

In conceptualizing this study, two variables were taken into consideration: financial availability (construct); and economic empowerment of women representing the independent and the dependent variables respectively as elaborated in figure 1.1 below.




**INDEPENDENT VARIABLE** **DEPENDENT VARIABLE**

Figure1.1: Conceptual Framework

**Review of study variable**

Financial availability refers to the accessible, adequate, and reliable financial resources and services that enable women to meet basic needs, invest in income-generating activities or businesses, build assets and savings, make independent financial decisions and enhance resilience to economic shocks(Kern et al., 2025).

Findings by Zelu et al. (2024) and Kern et al. (2025) jointly emphasize the multidimensional empowerment impact of financial availability. Financial availability predicts stronger outcomes in women's ability to meet basic needs, save, invest, make independent financial decisions, and better withstand economic shocks (Joules Garcia, 2024).They concluded that credit availability, timely budgeting, release of funds, efficiency and equity of budget process significantly improved women's income, asset ownership, and decision-making power.

Similarly, Kumari et al. (2025) supported the notion that financial allocation is an effective tool for poverty alleviation and empowerment in his study across 26 Asian countries developed using a Gender-Based Digital Financial Inclusion (GDFI) index, which included components like mobile money, digital savings, and credit access. The regression results showed that a 1% rise in GDFI is linked to a 0.146% short-term and 0.067% long-term decrease in poverty levels, a proxy for economic empowerment.

Additionally, Odunga (2024), pointed out that access to reliable savings services, more than credit alone, is a key driver of women's economic empowerment in marginalized settings of the variance in economic outcomes.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**Research design**

Cross-sectional survey research design was used. This design is a type of observational or descriptive research that analyzes data from a populace at a specific point in time, without altering variables. This design helps determine the proportion of phenomena/events or opinions in an overall population, as represented by a study sample. This research employed a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative techniques.

**Target population**

A population is a group of individuals, objects, or items from which trials are selected for measurement that share common observable characteristics (Garner et al., 2016). Kakamega North, South, West and South sub-counties were purposively selected as the study's target population. The unit of observation for the study was 994 registered women's groups from the four purposely-selected sub-counties of Kakamega County (Department of gender and social services Kakamega County, 2024).

**Sampling design**

A sampling frame is a list of all the items in the population (Schindler & Schinder, 2019). That is, it is a complete list of everyone or everything you want to study or a list of things that you draw a sample from. In this study it consisted of registered women groups under empowerment fund bracket of the Kakamega County. From the target population of 994 registered women's groups, in line with Mugenda and Mugenda (2013), when the study population is below 10,000, a sample size of 10% to 30% is deemed a good representation of the target population. Since the target population of this study was women groups, systematic sampling techniques was employed to purposely select women group leaders (30%) who gave information on behalf of group members.

**Data collection**

Primary data was gathered through survey questionnaire, consisting of closed-ended and open-ended items, and interview guide/schedule. Through the survey questionnaire and the interview schedule the researcher was able capture both open ended and closed ended items ensuring consistency, reliability, and comparability of responses across participants. Additionally, the researcher was able to contact large numbers of people quickly, easily and efficiently using a delivery questionnaire. Questionnaires were pre-tested for validity and reliability before distribution to respondents.

**Data analysis and Presentation**

Data collected from the field was coded, cleaned, tabulated and analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of specialized Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 software. The data collected was analyzed by using both descriptive and inferential analysis. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages as well as measures of central tendency (means) and dispersion (standard deviation) was used. Data was also organized into graphs and tables for easy reference.

Further, inferential statistics such as regression and correlation analyses was used to determine both the nature and the strength of the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Correlation analysis is usually used together with regression analysis to measure how well the regression line explains the variation of the dependent variable. The linear and multiple regression plus correlation analyses were based on the association between two (or more) variables.

Study conceptualized Regression Model;

$y = \beta_0+\beta_1X_1 + \varepsilon$

y = Economic Women Empowerment

$\beta_0$ = Constant

$X_1$= Financial Availability

,$\beta_1$} = Beta coefficients

$\varepsilon$ = the error term

**Ethical consideration**

This study adhered to all ethical principles and procedures, ensuring compliance with matters related to confidentiality, privacy, and prior informed consent. In particular, the researcher secured an introductory letter from The County Government of Kakamega. Furthermore, a research permit was acquired from the National Council for Science and Technology (NACOSTI) to ensure that all relevant authorities were notified about the study's intentions. Moreover, all participants were duly informed about the study's objectives and guaranteed the utmost confidentiality for any information they shared. Prior consent was sought from potential respondents before the distribution of questionnaires.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Response rate for all the instruments was 93.4% for respondents. This implies that out of 910 questionnaires that were administered 850 were returned. This milestone was achieved by thorough supervision and immediate collection of the instruments on the same day it was filled by respondents.

**Descriptive statistics**

The objective of this study was to examine the influence of women's financial availability on women's economic empowerment in Kakamega County, Kenya. Data collected by both research instruments were analyzed quantitatively using both descriptive and inferential statistics while qualitative data was analyzed thematically.

Economic empowerment of women groups in Kakamega County was the dependent variable in all the four

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research objectives. To determine the economic empowerment levels of the sampled women group respondents, the Economic Empowerment Questionnaire (WEEQ) was administered as per the research design. To facilitate analysis, a composite score was calculated by averaging the recoded items, each coded as 1 (yes) or 0 (no), to represent the overall level of financial availability perceived by respondents. The study sought to establish the extent to which the aspects of financial availability were embraced in the respondents' respective women groups and the entire female headed households.

**Women's Economic Empowerment**

The descriptive results revealed a positive scenario for women engaging in economic empowerment. The mean score for women's economic empowerment was M = 0.47, SD = 0.11, suggesting a moderate level of empowerment among the respondents. The most positively endorsed indicators were having access to a bank or mobile money account (93.4%), control over spending and saving (89.6%), and participation in household financial decisions (68.0%). A majority also reported owning production assets (66.4%) and having a personal bank account (60.3%). However, relatively few respondents had their own source of income (17.7%), or reported that their income allowed them to invest in children's education (16.8%), improve living conditions (23.3%), or contribute more to household expenses (24.1%). Additionally, just 25.1% associated their income with increased self-confidence or self-worth, and 21.2% reported greater bargaining power in the household. These findings indicate that while women in Kakamega County have achieved strong access to financial tools and household financial participation, economic independence and self-directed outcomes (such as education, savings, and asset expansion) remain limited for many as shown in table 1.1.

**Table 1.1- Women's Economic Empowerment**

| Statement | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| Do you have your own source of income? | .1765 | .38144 |
| Has your income allowed you to improve your living conditions? | .2332 | .42313 |
| Has your income allowed you to invest in your children's education? | .1682 | .37430 |
| Has your income allowed you to save for the future? | .3083 | .46208 |
| Has your income allowed you to contribute more to household expenses? | .2408 | .42783 |
| Has your income increased your self-confidence and self-worth? | .2506 | .43361 |
| Has your income increased your bargaining power within the household? | .2123 | .40915 |
| Are you involved in major household decisions such as purchase of car, house, house appliance or agricultural machinery? | .7376 | .44021 |
| Do you own any production assets such as land, animals, and machinery? | .6643 | .47251 |
| Do women exercise a voice in economic decision-making in the market and the community? | .1847 | .38829 |
| Do you participate in financial decision-making within your household? | .6804 | .46659 |
| Do you have control over how to spend some money or saving? | .8963 | .30499 |
| Do you have a personal bank account? | .6026 | .48965 |

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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Do you have access to your own bank account or mobile money account? | .9339 | .24863 |
| Have you ever taken out a loan or borrowed money | .8227 | .38215 |
| **Aggregate Mean, Std. Dev.** | **.4741** | **.10750** |

Further, by use of Bar charts the outcomes of the respondents on categorical data were summarized, organized, described and unfilled by generating frequency and percentage table format of variables indicating their level of agreement on specific statements regarding financial women's empowerment in the findings indicated in the figure 1.2 below.

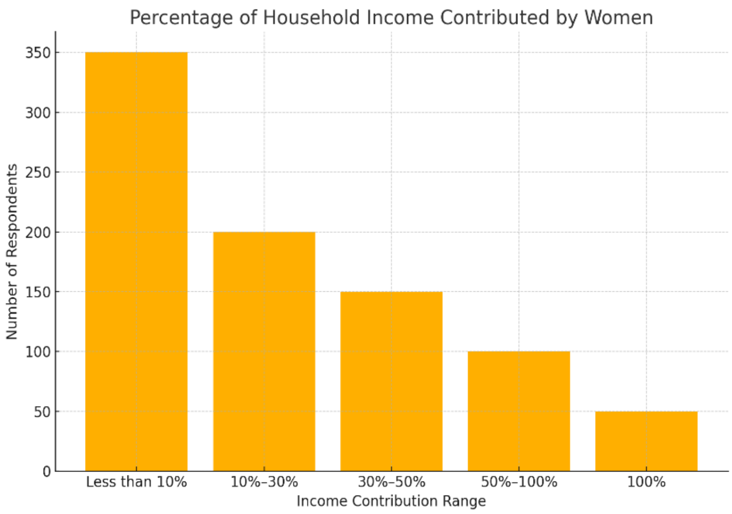


Figure 1.2: Percentage of Household income contributed by women

A large proportion of respondents (41.2%) reported contributing less than 10% to their household income, while 23.5% contributed 10%–30%. Only a small number of women reported higher contributions: 17.6% in the 30%–50% range, 11.8% in 50%–100%, and just 5.9% who claimed full financial responsibility (100% contribution). These findings reflect limited income generation capacity among most women, supporting earlier evidence of low economic independence despite high financial inclusion.

In addition, the respondents had qualitative responses providing additional insights into percentage of household income contributed by women.

**Respondent Quotes,** *"I can only contribute 5% of the income because I'm not employed I depend on casual labour.*"

**Financial Availability**

The descriptive results indicated a positive impact of financial availability on women's economic empowerment. The mean score for financial availability was M = 0.36, SD = 0.18, indicating generally low access and participation in county financial processes. Most respondents (64.9%) reported that funds were set aside for women's groups, yet only 30.8% found the loan repayment period to be friendly. Additionally, just 29.6% indicated that the application process was user-friendly, while only 12.1% stated that an application was not required. A majority (58.9%) confirmed that their group had previously received money from the county, though only 35.3% considered their group financially stable. Involvement in budgeting and financial management decisions was reported by just 17.6% of respondents. These results suggest that while some funding is available, significant barriers remain in the accessibility and transparency of the financial allocation process.

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**Table 1.2 - Financial Availability**

| Statement | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| Are funds set aside for the development of women groups? | .6494 | .47746 |
| Was the repayment period friendly to your group? | .3082 | .46204 |
| Does obtaining money from the County fund involve an application process? | .1206 | .32582 |
| Is the application process friendly? | .2956 | .45660 |
| Has your women's group ever received any money from Kakamega County? | .5889 | .49232 |
| Do you consider your group financially stable? | .3526 | .47806 |
| Women's groups are involved in budgeting and financial management process decisions by the county government | .1757 | .38080 |
| **Aggregate Mean, Std. Dev.** | .3560 | .17829 |

Further, by use of Bar charts the outcomes of the respondents on categorical data were summarized, organized, described and unfilled by generating frequency and percentage table format of variables indicating their level of agreement on specific statements regarding financial women's empowerment in the findings indicated in the figure below.

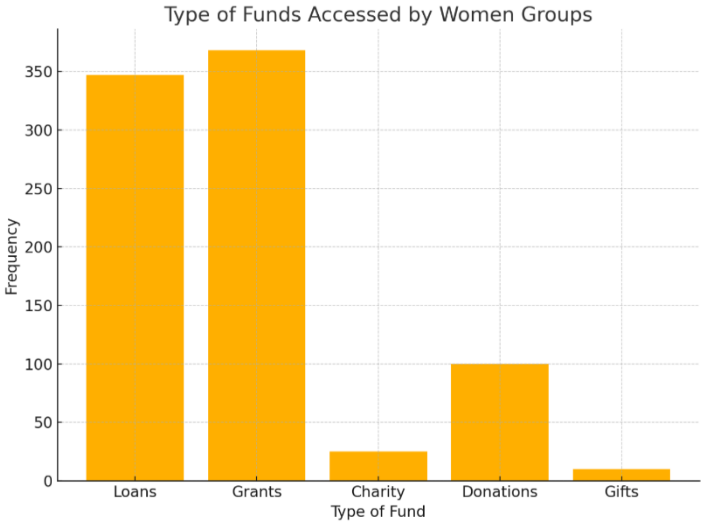


Figure 1.3: Type of funds accessed by women groups

Respondents were asked to indicate the type of financial support their women's groups had accessed. The results show that the most common sources of funds were grants (43.3%) and loans (40.8%), suggesting a nearly balanced reliance on both repayable and non-repayable financial aid. A smaller proportion of women's groups received support in the form of donations (11.8%), while charity contributions (2.9%) and gifts (1.2%) were the least common.

In addition, the respondents had qualitative responses providing additional insights into why some groups did not receive funds. This indicates that while financial resources are allocated, the accessibility and effectiveness of these funds may be limited, reflecting broader challenges in women's economic empowerment, particularly in rural settings.

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**Respondent Quotes,** "Our group received a grant that helped us fund a small-scale business venture."

**In contrast, Respondent Quotes,** "We were given a loan with very strict terms, which has been difficult to repay." The challenge of loan repayment is a common issue faced by women, especially when the terms are rigid and the businesses they support are still in their infancy."

**Association between financial allocation and Women's Economic Empowerment**

To determine how if the independent variables of this study contributed to the observed Women's economic empowerment levels among the sampled women groups, inferential testing was carried out on the null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of statistical significance.

The correlation results showed that there was strong positive and significant relationship between financial allocation and economic empowerment (Pearson's r= 0.526, p<0.000). Therefore these results suggest a positive and interconnected relationship between financial allocation and women economic empowerment indicating that higher levels of support are related to greater levels of economic empowerment among women. These findings imply that a comprehensive approach that combines both financial fiscal policy and financial allocation could be particularly effective in promoting economic empowerment. These interrelationships suggest that the financial dimensions are interdependent; potentially reinforcing one another in contributing to empowerment.

**Table 1.3 – Correlation results**

| **Variable** | **Financial allocation** | **Economic Empowerment** |
|---|---|---|
| Financial allocation | _ | 0.526 |
| Women economic empowerment | 0.526 | _ |

***p = 0.001**

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

These findings are in agreement with those of a study by Mbokani & Nyamboga (2024) and Odunga (2024), who looked at financial allocation as a key strategy for ensuring sustainability and economically empowered women households.

These results are also corroborated by those of Hermes and Lensink (2022) who support the notion that financial allocation is an effective tool for poverty alleviation and empowerment, particularly when access is designed with gender-specific barriers in mind. They emphasize that enhancing digital financial allocation and infrastructure directly supports women's participation in the formal economy, enabling more control over resources and reducing vulnerability to economic shocks outcomes that mirror the empowerment indicators in the households.

**Relationship between financial allocation and Economic empowerment of Women groups**

**Model summary**

This was determined by performing Simple Regression analysis. The model summary indicated that financial availability accounted for approximately 27.7% of the variance in women's economic empowerment ($R^2$ = .277). This suggests a moderate relationship, with financial availability playing a meaningful role in explaining differences in empowerment outcomes among women in Kakamega County.

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**Table 1.4 – Model summary**

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | .526[a] | .277 | .275 | .32985 |
| a. Predictors: (Constant), Financial Availability<br>b. Dependent Variable: Economic empowerment of women | | | | |

**Regression Coefficient**

The regression coefficients indicated that financial availability had a positive and statistically significant effect on women's economic empowerment, $B = 0.916$, $t = 25.44$, $p < .001$. This means that for every one-unit increase in the financial availability score, the WEE score increases by approximately 0.52 units, holding other factors constant. The standardized coefficient ($\beta = .426$) also suggests a strong predictive power. Therefore, the first hypothesis ($H_1$): Financial availability significantly influences women's economic empowerment is supported.

**Table 1.5 – Coefficients**

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | .213 | .108 | | 1.972 | .024 |
| | Financial Availability | .516 | .036 | .426 | 25.444 | .000 |
| a. Dependent Variable: WEE | | | | | | |

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusions

In conclusion, the study provides compelling empirical evidence of the positive impact of financial availability on economic empowerment among women in Kakamega County; hence, the more allocation of financial resources the greater the economic empowerment.

Moreover, the study underscores the pivotal role of financial availability strategies in enhancing the economic status of women groups, as evidenced by a strong and significant positive correlation. The rejection of the null hypothesis supports the assertion that financial availability strategies significantly contribute to the economic empowerment of women in the region. Additionally, the study reveals that money provided by the county government in form of grants and loans have significantly improved the living standards, levels of income among women, by table banking leading to a substantial increase in their economic empowerment. The correlation and regression results affirm the significant positive relationship between financial availability and women's economic empowerment.

This study provides essential insights for policymakers and highlights the need for tailored financial products, enhanced outreach of fiscal policies, and the provision of comprehensive financial availability programmes to interior rural setups specifically in female headed households.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Recommendation for Practice

To enhance financial availability for women, interventions must address structural and systemic barriers that limit their access and participation. Efforts should focus on streamlining financial processes to reduce bureaucratic delays, revising loan terms to be more user-friendly, and increasing the accessibility of financial services. Women's involvement in budgeting decisions must be actively promoted to ensure financial priorities align with their actual needs. In addition, there should be targeted support for individual women particularly those with urgent financial needs rather than relying solely on group-based funding models. Addressing resource constraints, eliminating gender-blind policies, and challenging restrictive socio-cultural norms are essential. Financial availability programs should be expanded and tailored to reach remote areas, with flexible delivery methods that consider women's household responsibilities. These combined efforts will strengthen women's financial inclusion and empower them to make informed economic decisions.

### Implications

### Policy Implications

From the study, it came out clear that financial availability strategies had a significant positive effect on women's economic empowerment in Kakamega County. However, policy awareness is low and the inclusion of women with youth in policy targeting weakens the focus on their unique challenges. Addressing these issues requires grant-based, individualized support, inclusive governance, expanded financial education, and gender-specific policy reforms to empower women particularly female-headed households and widows. The study will assist policy makers in coming up with policies geared towards improving women's economic empowerment by the county governments. The study will assist intellectuals and be a reference for future studies and practitioners undertakings on financial availability and women's economic empowerment particularly in poverty stricken households. This study makes a useful contribution to the advancement of academic knowledge on financial allocation strategies from the context of rural interior settings and particularly to county governments.

### Managerial Implications

The study provides managerial insights for county government officials, emphasizing the need to adopt gender-responsive fiscal policies and disaggregated data to enhance financial accessibility and improve outcomes for women-headed households. It also highlights the importance of integrating financial literacy and localized financial management strategies to streamline operations and promote sustainable women's economic empowerment at the county level.

### Theoretical Implications

The study contributes theoretically to the enhancement, expansion, and development of financial inclusion theory and Empowerment theory by challenging conventional loan-based models of women's empowerment, advocating instead for grant-based, individualized financial support to enhance agency and sustainable economic outcomes.

It also addresses a critical gap in fiscal policy literature by emphasizing the importance of county-level management in improving the effectiveness of women-focused economic initiatives in Kenya.

### Areas for further research

The study focused on the influence of financial allocation on women's economic empowerment. A similar study should be carried out to underpin other aspects that affect women's economic empowerment among the households apart from the financial allocation strategies.

The focus of the study was on women in Kakamega County. A study ought to be carried out to establish the effect of financial allocation prospect in urban set ups which is also a key economic driver in the country.

The study was limited to financial allocation among the women. These women are faced with other challenges apart from financial allocation. This study recommends for a comparative study to be undertaken between women headed households and male headed households in empowerment groups.

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