

**SOCIOCULTURAL DETERMINANTS OF WOMEN'S ACCESS TO POLITICAL
LEADERSHIP IN GARISSA TOWNSHIP SUB-COUNTY, GARISSA COUNTY, KENYA**

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UNIVERSITY**

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DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my original work and has not been submitted to any other university or institution for academic credit or award. The findings, analysis, and conclusions presented herein are the result of my own independent study.

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This research was carried out under our supervision and is submitted as a final report with our approval as University Supervisors.

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I have examined this document, and the research has met or exceeded the requirements for the degree sought. In addition, the candidate has sufficiently defended the material presented to merit the awarding of the degree of Master of Science in Governance, Peace and Security Studies

Internal examiner –

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my beloved wife, Irene John, who has offered me moral support and a conducive environment to concentrate on this thesis. God bless you.

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First of all, I thank the almighty God for keeping me in good health and in sound mind to complete the research that was necessary for this thesis. I also appreciate the support and guidance of my supervisors, Dr. Joan Githae and Dr. Antony Odek, for their guidance throughout this thesis writing. Finally, I thank my colleagues at Meru Law Courts for their encouragement in carrying out the research, making it easy for me to do the research necessary in writing this thesis.

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Cultural Norms: These generally comprise a collection of beliefs, practices, and traditions that determine or shape how members of the community behave. Insofar as this study is concerned, the focus is on the practices and values of the community concerning the leadership of women and whether they are appropriate for the role.

Cultural Perceptions: In the context of this study, cultural perceptions refer to the collective beliefs, attitudes, and values held by the community in Garissa Township Sub-County regarding the role of women in politics. This includes traditional norms, expectations, and stereotypes that shape how women's participation in political leadership is viewed within the cultural framework of the community.

Educational Qualifications: Educational Qualifications include the level of formal education attained by individuals aspiring to political leadership roles

Gender: Gender, in the context of this study, refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, and expectations associated with being male or female within the community.

Gender Bias: This refers to attitudes, assumptions, or practices that show favoritism to one gender over the other. In the study, gender bias refers to prejudices or discriminatory practices that operate against the attainment of political leadership positions by women.

Gender Norms: These include the socially accepted expectations that prescribe the roles, behaviors, and responsibilities of men and women in a given society. In this research, gender norms comprise expectations that generally control the perceived suitability of women for leadership positions in Garissa County.

Political Leadership Roles: Within this study, political leadership roles refer to positions of authority within the political sphere, including elected offices, decision-making roles, and administrative responsibilities. The Constitution of Kenya, 2010, created a two-tier system of

governance that consists of the National government and 47 devolved county governments. Garissa County is one of those 47 counties. Political leadership roles are therefore based on the two-Tier System of representing the citizens of Garissa County by holding elected offices on both the National and county levels. The elected positions held at the National level include, but are not limited to, members of the National Assembly and Senators. On the other hand, those held at the County level include the Governor and Members of the County Assembly. The study focuses on the elected political leadership positions in Garissa County. It also acknowledges that these elected political leadership positions are part of the overall political infrastructure for both the National Government and the devolved County Governments of Kenya.

Weak Institutional Support: This refers to the poor or inadequate support provided by structures such as political parties, government agencies, or electoral bodies. Within the study's context, it refers to the barriers that include limited access to leadership positions or mentorship opportunities and the lack of basic policy guidelines.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
EAC	East African Community
IPU	Inter-parliamentary Union
RMT	Resource Mobilization Theory
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals

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ABSTRACT

Although women across Kenya have made significant gains in education, employment, and participation in public life over the past several decades, their representation in political leadership remains disproportionately low, particularly in regions where traditional social structures continue to shape political participation. Garissa Township Sub-County presents a unique context because of its deeply conservative, clan-based, and patriarchal social system, where cultural traditions, religious interpretations, and gender norms continue to influence leadership opportunities. Despite constitutional provisions promoting gender equality and inclusive political representation, women in the area continue to face substantial barriers to accessing elective political positions. This study sought to examine the socio-cultural factors influencing women's access to political leadership in Garissa Township Sub-County, Kenya. Specifically, the study examined the influence of educational pathways on women's access to political leadership, assessed the role of gender-based perceptions in shaping women's participation in leadership, evaluated the influence of religious beliefs and practices on women's access to leadership positions, and analyzed the effect of cultural views regarding women's leadership competence on their access to political leadership.

The study was grounded in Resource Mobilization Theory, Social Role Theory, and Cultural Hegemony Theory, which collectively provided a framework for understanding how access to resources, socially constructed gender expectations, and dominant cultural beliefs influence women's political participation. A descriptive research design was adopted to capture the prevailing perceptions and experiences of registered voters within Garissa Township Sub-County. The target population comprised 53,253 registered voters. Using Krejcie and Morgan's formula, a sample size of 382 respondents was determined, with the final sample increased to 389 participants to account for possible attrition and incomplete responses. Multistage sampling techniques were employed to ensure adequate demographic representation across the study area. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews, allowing both quantitative and qualitative evidence to be gathered. Quantitative data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28, employing descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, while qualitative responses were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and enrich the interpretation of the statistical findings.

The findings revealed that formal education ($M = 2.190$, $SD = 0.893$) exerted the strongest influence on support for women's political leadership, indicating that respondents generally valued academic qualifications more highly than community-based leadership experience. Gender-based perceptions remained a significant obstacle, with 61.3% of male respondents expressing discomfort with female political candidates, reflecting persistent gender stereotypes regarding leadership suitability. Religious beliefs and practices were perceived by 55.6% of respondents as limiting women's political participation ($M = 2.017$, $SD = 0.801$), although the diversity of responses suggested opportunities for more progressive religious interpretations that support women's leadership. Cultural norms also influenced perceptions of women's leadership competence ($M = 2.003$, $SD = 0.829$); however, opinions were divided, with 49.2% of respondents agreeing that culture restricted women's leadership opportunities, while others emphasized the influence of political party loyalty, clan affiliation, and ethnicity. Regression analysis further confirmed that education and gender-based attitudes were the strongest predictors of support for women's political leadership, with the model explaining 26.4% of the variance (Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.264$, $\chi^2(5) = 51.73$, $p < .001$).

The study concludes that women's limited access to political leadership in Garissa Township Sub-County is primarily driven by educational disparities and entrenched gender-based perceptions, which are further reinforced by prevailing cultural norms and religious beliefs. These interconnected factors continue to constrain women's political participation despite existing constitutional and policy frameworks promoting gender equality. The study recommends expanding locally tailored leadership training and civic education programmes for women, strengthening the implementation of gender-inclusive political party policies, engaging progressive religious leaders in public awareness initiatives, and implementing sustained community-based campaigns aimed at transforming cultural attitudes toward women's leadership. The findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge on women's political participation in marginalized and conservative contexts and provide evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, political parties, civil society organizations, and community leaders seeking to promote more equitable and inclusive political representation in Garissa Township Sub-County and similar settings across Kenya.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves as a foundation for the study, providing a comprehensive overview of the background, problem statement, research objectives, questions, significance, justification, scope, limitations, and key term definitions. This sets the stage for a thorough exploration of the influence of societal beliefs and practices on the election of women for political leadership roles in Garissa Township Sub-County.

1.1 Background to the Study

Globally, women continue to be underrepresented in political leadership, despite comprising half of the population. Paxton et al. (2020) note that women hold less than 25% of national parliamentary seats, only 12 countries have female heads of state, and women occupy just 26% of local government positions and 21% of cabinet roles. This persistent gap highlights the structural and societal barriers that limit women's political participation. International frameworks such as CEDAW and the Beijing Declaration advocate for gender equality and women's inclusion in governance, yet progress remains uneven, particularly in regions with entrenched patriarchal values and weak institutional support. Kumar (2019) observes that gender biases in electoral processes create a double standard, subjecting female candidates to greater scrutiny than their male counterparts.

In more developed regions, intentional policies and institutional support have led to notable progress. Nordic countries, for instance, have achieved near parity, with women holding 43% of parliamentary seats on average in 2020, and Sweden leading at 47% (Atske et al., 2019; Paxton et al., 2020). These outcomes, largely driven by gender quotas and supportive governance structures, provide instructive models for regions struggling with gender disparities in political leadership.

Nevertheless, the global picture remains uneven, as women still hold only 24% of legislative positions worldwide (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2020). This shows that while deliberate policies and institutional support can substantially improve women's political representation, such progress is uneven globally and highlights the need to address persistent structural and cultural barriers.

Within Africa, sociocultural and institutional barriers continue to constrain women's political participation. Gender stereotypes, cultural norms, and patriarchal systems often restrict women to domestic roles, undermining their credibility and capacity to engage meaningfully in political processes (Kameri-Mbote, 2016). Political parties and electoral systems frequently limit women's access to resources, campaign financing, and leadership opportunities. These challenges are amplified in areas with weak governance and limited infrastructure, so-called "forgotten development" spaces, where educational deficits and economic marginalization further constrain women's political participation (Kumar, 2019). South Africa and Mozambique stand out for women's political representation, largely through voluntary party quotas and proportional representation, enabling women to hold between 30% and over 40% of parliamentary seats. Despite these gains, translating representation into substantive, gender-responsive policies remains limited, particularly at the devolved or local government levels (Tolmay & Lowe Morna, 2024). Conversely, Nigeria has made minimal progress, with women holding only 3.9% of seats in the House of Representatives (Fayomi et al., 2021). These disparities illustrate the critical influence of historical, political, and socio-economic contexts, as well as the uneven implementation of gender-sensitive policies.

In East Africa, sociocultural norms continue to shape women's leadership opportunities. In Uganda, affirmative action has raised women's parliamentary representation to 33.3% and cabinet membership to 43.3%, yet women's roles remain largely symbolic (Kagoro, 2024). Women face

entrenched gender stereotypes, while political parties often perpetuate gender hierarchies, relegating women to deputy positions. In Tanzania, women make up half the population but remain underrepresented, with only 26 elected to parliament out of 264 seats in 2020 and accounting for just 9% of candidates for presidential, parliamentary, and councillor roles (Lihiru, 2024). In contrast, Rwanda has achieved over 60% female parliamentary representation through gender-sensitive legal frameworks and policies (Galal, 2023). These comparisons underscore that progress across the region is uneven, and sociocultural barriers, including norms, perceptions of competence, and traditional practices, persistently limit women's meaningful political participation.

Within Kenya, gender disparities persist despite constitutional and statutory mechanisms aimed at promoting representation. Following the 2022 general elections, women's representation in elective and appointive positions showed modest gains, yet remains below the two-thirds gender rule mandated by Articles 27 and 81 of the Constitution. Key 2022–2027 figures include 7 women governors (Embu, Homa Bay, Kirinyaga, Kwale, Machakos, Meru, and Nakuru), 23.5% of National Assembly seats (including 47 county Woman Representatives), 28.4% of Senate seats (including 16 nominated women), 33.5% of County Assembly seats (largely filled through nominations to meet quotas), and 7 out of 22 cabinet secretaries. The August 2022 general election nonetheless recorded a noticeable increase in women contesting elective positions. Female candidates accounted for an estimated 11% of all candidates gazetted by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC). The number of women running for gubernatorial seats increased from nine in 2017 to twenty-two in 2022, out of whom seven were successfully elected, representing a 32% success rate. These outcomes indicate incremental progress in women's participation in competitive electoral politics, though overall representation still relies heavily on nomination mechanisms rather than direct electoral success (Nyaga, 2021; Kameri-Mbote, 2016).

At the county level, representation remains uneven, exposing deep structural and sociocultural barriers. Nakuru County recorded the highest number of elected women representatives, with 15 women holding positions across 68 elective seats. These included 1 governor, 1 senator, 11 members of the National Assembly, and 55 members of the County Assembly. Kiambu County followed, electing 7 women MCAs out of 59 seats. In contrast, six counties, Garissa, Mandera, Marsabit, Samburu, Kajiado, and Nyamira, did not elect a woman to any office beyond the constitutionally reserved Woman Representative seat (Kenyatta, 2023). The inclusion of Garissa highlights the persistence of local political environments where women remain largely excluded from competitive electoral positions despite national legal guarantees (Stephen & Warfa, 2020). In Garissa County, this disparity is pronounced: women's representation outside the Woman Representative position is extremely limited due to intersecting constraints, including entrenched patriarchal norms, clan-based political systems, restricted access to education and economic resources, and persistent perceptions that question women's leadership competence (Mutungi & Mutembei, 2022). These patterns indicate that while national-level improvements in gender representation are occurring, local political structures and sociocultural dynamics continue to limit women's electoral success.

At the county level, women's political representation remains highly uneven, highlighting the influence of sociocultural barriers on electoral outcomes. Nakuru County leads with 15 women holding elective positions, including 1 governor, 1 senator, 11 National Assembly members, and 55 County Assembly members, followed by Kiambu County with 7 women MCAs out of 59 seats. In contrast, six counties, Garissa, Mandera, Marsabit, Samburu, Kajiado, and Nyamira, did not elect any women beyond the constitutionally reserved Woman Representative seat (Kenyatta, 2023). Garissa, in particular, demonstrates how entrenched patriarchal norms, clan-based political

systems, limited access to education and economic resources, and persistent perceptions questioning women's leadership competence restrict women's participation in competitive politics (Stephen & Warfa, 2020; Mutungi & Mutembei, 2022). These patterns indicate that while national-level improvements in gender representation are occurring, local political structures and sociocultural factors continue to limit women's electoral success; hence, understanding how these factors operate is critical to identifying the barriers that prevent women from achieving meaningful political representation and informing strategies to enhance their leadership opportunities.

Garissa Township Sub-County provides the setting for examining women's political representation because it functions as the political and administrative center of Garissa County. The county headquarters, major government offices, and key political institutions are located here, and political campaigns, party mobilization, and leadership negotiations largely take place within this space (Huho et al., 2020). Other sub-counties, including Ijara, Lagdera, Fafi, Dadaab, and Balambala, are more geographically dispersed and largely rural, with lower concentrations of political institutions (Mutungi & Mutembei, 2022). Focusing on Garissa Township allows the study to examine women's political participation within the county's most visible and politically active environment. What strengthens this focus is not uniqueness alone but the combination of political centrality and persistent underrepresentation of women in competitive elective positions. This tension between a highly active political center and continued exclusion of women provides a strong basis for investigating the sociocultural determinants shaping women's political representation, highlighting how entrenched norms, clan-based dynamics, and gendered perceptions continue to limit women's access to leadership despite national legal frameworks.

Existing studies have documented barriers such as patriarchal norms, clan-based political dynamics, and gendered perceptions of leadership. Yet the specific ways in which these sociocultural factors shape women's political participation within particular local contexts remain insufficiently examined. This gap is particularly evident in Garissa Township Sub-County, which serves as the county's political center yet continues to reflect limited electoral success for women. The persistence of this disparity highlights the need for a closer, context-specific examination of the sociocultural conditions that influence women's political representation. Accordingly, this study focuses on Garissa Township Sub-County to investigate how sociocultural factors shape women's participation in electoral politics and to contribute empirical evidence that can inform broader discussions on gender and political representation in Kenya.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In Kenya, women remain significantly underrepresented in political leadership despite constituting a numerical majority of the population. Nationally, women hold only 18% of legislative seats and 17% of decision-making roles, compared to 82% and 83% for men (Nthiana, 2015). This disparity is particularly evident in Garissa County, where no women were elected to the County Assembly in the 2022 general elections (Omulo, 2022). Deeply entrenched cultural norms and societal beliefs that associate leadership with men contribute to the systematic exclusion of women from political spaces (Nyaondo, 2020). These gendered barriers limit women's visibility and opportunities in political leadership, reinforcing stereotypes and weakening women's participation in decision-making processes.

The limited presence of women in leadership in Garissa County has wider governance implications. Policy priorities may insufficiently address critical local concerns such as healthcare access, literacy levels, and socio-economic challenges facing marginalized groups (Nthiana,

2015). The absence of women's perspectives in leadership spaces may also contribute to limited attention to issues such as water scarcity, food insecurity, and inter-clan conflicts that affect the region (Nyaga, 2021). This situation reduces the diversity of perspectives necessary for inclusive governance and local development.

Despite national and international commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals and Kenya's Vision 2030, women's representation in political leadership remains limited, particularly in regions such as Garissa, where social structures and religious traditions strongly influence gender roles. Previous studies on women's political participation, including those by Okinda et al. (2020) and Canudo and Ali (2018), have mainly examined voter turnout, women's candidacy in elections, and representation within political parties. While these studies provide useful insights, they give limited attention to the community-level social influences that shape acceptance of women as political leaders. In particular, little empirical attention has been directed toward the combined influence of educational pathways, gender-based perceptions, religious beliefs and practices, and cultural views regarding women's leadership competence within the local context of Garissa Township Sub-County. Consequently, the persistence of low female representation in the county legislature indicates the need for closer examination of the sociocultural conditions that influence women's entry into political leadership at the local level. This concern provides the basis for the present study on sociocultural determinants of women's access to political leadership in Garissa Township Sub-County, Garissa County, Kenya.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine sociocultural determinants influencing women's access to political leadership in Garissa Township Sub-County, Garissa County, Kenya.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives were to:

- i) Examine the influence of educational pathways on women's access to political leadership in Garissa Township Sub-County
- ii) Assess the role of gender-based perceptions in shaping women's access to political leadership in Garissa Township Sub-County.
- iii) Evaluate the role of religious beliefs and practices in shaping women's access to political leadership in Garissa Township Sub-County.
- iv) Analyze the influence of cultural views regarding women's leadership competence on their access to political leadership in Garissa Township Sub-County.

1.5 Research Questions -see comments on research objectives.

- i) What influence do educational pathways have on women's access to political leadership in Garissa Township Sub-County?
- ii) What role do gender-based perceptions play in shaping women's access to political leadership in Garissa Township Sub-County?
- iii) What role do religious beliefs and practices play in shaping women's access to political leadership in Garissa Township Sub-County?
- iv) What influence do cultural views regarding women's leadership competence have on women's access to political leadership in Garissa Township Sub-County?

1.6 Justification of the Study

The study addressed a significant research gap by examining the underexplored dynamics of women's participation in political leadership roles in Garissa Township Sub-County. While

existing literature, such as the works of Okinda et al. (2020) and Canudo and Ali (2018), offered some insights into factors influencing women's electoral success, they lacked a nuanced, context-specific analysis of how educational qualifications, gender norms, religious beliefs, and cultural perceptions shaped women's political trajectories in this region. This study contributed original knowledge to the broader discourse on gender and political representation by focusing on these intersecting variables within a marginalized and culturally distinct setting.

The research was timely and relevant, aligning with global and national imperatives for inclusive governance. By centering on the unique sociocultural and religious environment of Garissa Township Sub-County, the study responded to both academic and policy-level needs. The findings were particularly valuable for informing locally grounded interventions aimed at promoting gender equity in political leadership. They also offered a potential reference point for other regions facing similar structural and cultural barriers.

The findings carried practical significance for the Garissa Township community, providing tailored insights with the potential to influence real-world change. By unpacking the specific barriers and enablers to women's political participation, the study helped identify context-appropriate strategies for enhancing inclusivity. These included policy recommendations focused on education, religious engagement, and sociocultural transformation. The results offered a strong foundation for designing targeted community-level initiatives aimed at dismantling gendered barriers to leadership and increasing women's representation in governance structures.

At both local and national levels, the study's conclusions held clear policy implications. By systematically identifying entrenched obstacles, such as patriarchal cultural norms and uneven access to educational or religious authority, and highlighting opportunities for reform, such as mentorship programs and community sensitization, the research provided actionable insights. These could guide the formulation of more inclusive political policies and institutional reforms, not only within Garissa Township but also in broader efforts to advance gender equality and democratic participation across Kenya.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The study's significance lies in its potential to provide crucial insights for various stakeholders at local and national levels. Firstly, it will inform policymakers about cultural and societal factors affecting the election of women in Garissa Township Sub-County, guiding the development of policies for gender equality in politics. Additionally, the findings will contribute to national gender policies, aligning strategies with the unique socio-cultural context of the region. The county government can tailor strategies to encourage women's active participation in political leadership, including initiatives to challenge stereotypes and promote gender-sensitive policies. This targeted approach aims to create opportunities for women in decision-making positions.

The study also has a community-centric impact by raising awareness about the influence of cultural beliefs on gender representation in politics. This knowledge empowers the community, potentially fostering attitudinal shifts and creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for women interested in political leadership roles.

Lastly, the research adds to the body of knowledge in development studies, specifically in the intersection of gender and political participation. Researchers and scholars can leverage these

findings to enhance their understanding of the complex dynamics between culture, societal beliefs, and women's engagement in politics. What is your key contribution to scholarship in this area? Overall, the study's multifaceted contributions aim to foster positive change in the representation of women in political leadership roles.

1.8 Scope of the Study

This study was conducted in Garissa Township Sub-County in Garissa County, Kenya—a region recognized for its unique sociocultural dynamics that significantly shaped women's political participation. The decision to focus on this area was informed by the distinct influence of local norms, gender roles, and religious practices on women's access to political leadership. Garissa Township was characterized by deeply rooted cultural and religious traditions, which, as noted by Nyaga (2021), often determined social interactions and power structures. This made it a particularly relevant context for examining how these factors affected women's involvement in leadership. By narrowing the scope to this specific region, the study sought to generate in-depth insights into the interplay of sociocultural forces that influenced women's political engagement.

The study primarily explored how societal beliefs and gender perceptions influenced the election of women to political leadership roles within Garissa Township. It examined the extent to which different educational pathways, including both formal education and cultural knowledge systems, shaped women's participation in leadership. The study further assessed how gender-based perceptions impacted women's ability to secure leadership positions and perform effectively once elected. In addition, it investigated the role of religious beliefs and practices in influencing women's access to political roles, with attention to how religious norms intersected with political structures in the area. Finally, it analyzed how cultural perceptions of women's leadership

competence influenced their electability, especially in a context where traditional views on gender roles continued to dominate public discourse. This multifaceted approach allowed the study to offer a nuanced understanding of the sociocultural barriers and enablers shaping women's leadership prospects in the region.

The study targeted residents of Garissa Township Sub-County, with a particular focus on individuals actively engaged in the political processes of the area. These included voters, community leaders, political activists, and others involved in influencing or deciding the election of women to leadership roles. By gathering perspectives from these groups, the study captured how sociocultural beliefs and practices shaped women's political opportunities. Anchored in the specific sociocultural landscape of Garissa Township, the findings provided contextually grounded insights that could inform both local and broader efforts aimed at enhancing women's political participation. Ultimately, the research contributed to a deeper understanding of the factors influencing women's leadership roles in the area and offered evidence that could support policy development and advocacy strategies to promote gender-inclusive political processes in similar settings.

1.9 Delimitation

This study was delimited to specific aspects of women's political leadership within the context of Garissa Township Sub-County. As Kothari and Garg (2019) explain, delimitations are the boundaries a researcher deliberately sets to ensure clarity and maintain focus. In examining how societal beliefs and practices influence the election of women to political leadership roles, the study intentionally excluded several broader dimensions.

First, while the study explored sociocultural beliefs and community-level perceptions, it did not consider the influence of broader national or international political frameworks. The roles of national political parties, policy structures, or legal reforms, though potentially impactful, were considered outside the scope of this localized inquiry. The intent was to maintain a sharp focus on grassroots dynamics within Garissa Township that directly shape community attitudes toward women's leadership (Lavrakas, 2018).

Second, the study did not investigate the personal or psychological motivations of individual female candidates. While such insights might enrich understanding of women's leadership journeys, they were excluded due to their highly individual nature and limited generalizability. The focus remained on collective societal attitudes, educational pathways, gendered perceptions, and cultural norms that broadly influence public views of women's electability (Creswell, 2014).

Lastly, the study did not extend its scope to women's participation in national-level politics or political party leadership. These arenas involve different institutional and strategic dynamics that fall outside the localized framework of this research. By maintaining a tight focus on local electoral processes and sociocultural influences in Garissa Township, the study aimed to generate context-specific insights aligned with its central objective (Babbie, 2017).

1.10 Limitations of the Study

This study faced several limitations in examining how societal beliefs and practices influenced the election of women to political leadership roles in Garissa Township Sub-County. As with most research focused on sociocultural dynamics, challenges arose around generalizability, potential bias, and the inherent subjectivity of interpreting cultural norms (Babbie, 2017).

One key limitation was the limited generalizability of the findings beyond Garissa Township. The area's unique cultural and religious context, marked by strong traditional gender roles and specific community values, means that the insights drawn may not directly apply to other regions in Kenya or to different cultural settings globally. While the study aimed to maintain local relevance, the findings are most applicable within similar sociocultural environments. To address this, the analysis included references to comparable regions where sociocultural influences on women's political participation have been studied. This offered a wider perspective and positioned the findings within a broader context, even while acknowledging the specific dynamics of Garissa.

Another notable limitation was the potential for bias, both from respondents and the researcher. Given the sensitivity of topics such as gender, leadership, and cultural expectations, participants' responses may have been influenced by social desirability or personal beliefs. Similarly, the researcher's own interpretations could have been shaped by prior assumptions or cultural distance. To minimize this risk, the study employed triangulation, collecting data from interviews, focus groups, and document reviews. This approach allowed for cross-checking of perspectives, reducing the over-reliance on any single source and enhancing the credibility of the findings. Efforts were also made to reflect the diversity of voices within Garissa Township, recognizing that attitudes toward women's leadership are not uniform across the community.

Lastly, while the study adopted a mixed-methods approach, the interpretation of qualitative data presented its own set of limitations. Analyzing narrative responses and cultural perceptions involves a level of subjectivity, even with structured coding and thematic analysis. However, the

inclusion of quantitative survey data, capturing indicators such as education levels, electoral outcomes, and demographic patterns, helped ground the qualitative findings in measurable evidence. This combination of methods strengthened the validity of the conclusions and allowed for a more balanced and multi-dimensional view of the issues under study.

Despite these limitations, the study provided a detailed and grounded account of the sociocultural factors that influence women's political participation in Garissa Township Sub-County. Through careful design, diverse data sources, and a context-sensitive approach, the research offered meaningful contributions to the ongoing dialogue on gender and leadership in culturally conservative settings.

1.11 Assumptions

As with any research, this study was built on a set of underlying assumptions that influenced its design, data collection process, and interpretation of results. These assumptions, as noted by Babbie (2017), are fundamental to how research is conceptualized and carried out, forming the backdrop against which data is gathered and analyzed.

The study assumed participants would give honest and clear responses, but this was a calculated risk given the sensitivity of gender topics in Garissa. To reduce social pressure, the research team used gender-matched interviewers, private sessions, and confidentiality assurances. These safeguards likely helped, but cannot fully eliminate the possibility that women softened their views out of fear of clan backlash, or that men adjusted their answers to avoid appearing biased. Separately, the study understood that terms like “leadership” or “gender roles” might be confusing, especially for people with lower literacy or those who speak different languages. To help with this, the tools were tested in advance, the language was adjusted, and important words were explained

during the interviews. Even so, some misunderstandings may have happened and were taken into account when making sense of the data. These challenges do not cancel out the findings, but they do mean the results, especially on sensitive issues, should be read carefully and with an understanding of the local pressures people may have faced.

Another assumption was that the selected sample, comprising community leaders, political activists, voters, and aspiring women candidates, would be reasonably representative of the broader population in Garissa Township. This assumption underpinned the generalizability of the findings within the local context, based on the view that the voices of these key informants reflect prevailing sociocultural patterns and community-level beliefs affecting women's political engagement.

Lastly, the study assumed that the questionnaires and interview guides would produce consistent and dependable data. To support this, both tools were pre-tested with a small sample to assess clarity, cultural relevance, and suitability for the Garissa Township context. Feedback from this stage informed targeted adjustments to question order, phrasing, and translation. Additionally, a reliability test was conducted using Cronbach's alpha to check internal consistency across key Likert-scale items, with most constructs scoring above the accepted threshold of 0.7, suggesting acceptable reliability. However, the test was limited to closed-ended items and did not cover the qualitative tools. While this strengthens confidence in the consistency of the quantitative instruments, some variation in how questions were understood, especially across different languages or literacy levels, may still have occurred. These limitations do not invalidate the findings, but they do suggest that some caution is needed when generalizing results or interpreting fine-grained differences between subgroups.

Reflecting on these assumptions was critical for grounding the study in the realities of Garissa Township. The most vulnerable assumptions involved expecting fully honest responses and a uniform understanding of key terms in a multilingual, low-literacy environment. These concerns influenced both the design, through measures like pre-testing, gender-matched interviewers, and simplified wording, and the interpretation of results, especially for sensitive or contested topics. While not all assumptions could be fully verified, openly acknowledging their limitations allowed the study to remain cautious, context-sensitive, and ethically sound. The results should be understood not as exact figures, but as credible insights shaped by local dynamics and respondent constraints.

1.12 Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored in three key theoretical frameworks: Resource Mobilization Theory, Social Role Theory, and Cultural Hegemony Theory. These theories collectively provide a comprehensive lens for examining the various factors influencing women's political participation in Garissa Township as described below:

1.12.1 Resource Mobilization Theory

Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT), developed in the 1970s by sociologist Oberschall (1973), emerged as a response to the limitations of earlier theories such as mass society theory and relative deprivation. These theories viewed participation in social movements as rare and driven primarily by individual grievances. In contrast, RMT emphasizes that social movements, and by extension, political campaigns, are shaped by the strategic mobilization of resources, organizational structures, and rational decision-making (Wei, 2020). According to RMT, participation in collective action is not driven by spontaneous emotional reactions or isolated grievances but is the

result of rational calculations based on the availability of resources, including financial, human, and organizational assets (McCarthy & Zald, 1977).

The Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT) shows how women in Garissa Township Sub-County obtain their necessary resources for entering political leadership positions. The traditional cultural system, together with patriarchal norms, delegates to men the authority to control resources, which include financial assets, personal abilities, time resources, and institutional assistance. RMT describes how women establish strategies to overcome obstacles through their social networks while they acquire financial resources and information assets and develop methods to use current power systems for their political efforts. The study requires this theory because it studies actual strategic political campaign requirements. The RMT framework enables political participation research through its focus on structural elements while showing how resource management and intentional actions influence results. The RMT framework demonstrates how women in Garissa can overcome their cultural and religious and economic barriers to leadership according to two main factors, which are their strategic approach, their access to resources, and their cultural background.

RMT is preferred over other theoretical frameworks because it emphasizes the structural and strategic dimensions of social movements and political campaigns. The theory recognizes that candidates must deliberately acquire and deploy resources to succeed, making it highly applicable to Garissa, where women's leadership is limited by cultural expectations, religious beliefs, and restricted access to financial and organizational support (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). By focusing on resource mobilization, RMT provides a lens to understand the practical and strategic efforts women undertake to overcome sociocultural constraints and participate in political leadership.

By grounding the study in Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT), the research focused not only on structural barriers but also on the specific resources, such as education, religious legitimacy, and political networks, that women in Garissa must access or negotiate to pursue leadership. RMT informed both the framing of interview questions (e.g., how women mobilize support within clan or religious institutions) and the coding of qualitative data, allowing the study to trace patterns in how access to resources affects women's political trajectories. This application helped shift the analysis from viewing women as passive victims of culture to understanding the strategic ways they engage with, or are excluded from, critical enabling resources.

RMT informed both the design and analysis phases of the study by focusing attention on the specific resources women in Garissa must mobilize, such as education, religious legitimacy, and clan-based networks, to navigate political barriers. Interview guides included questions that asked how women accessed or negotiated support within family, religious, or political institutions. During analysis, qualitative data were coded using resource-related categories (e.g., financial limitations, mentorship access, informal support networks), allowing the study to trace how patterns of resource access shaped leadership opportunities. This operational use of RMT moved the theory beyond description, helping the study uncover the strategic ways women try to overcome gendered constraints rather than portraying them as passive recipients of culture.

RMT most closely aligns with the first objective, which relates to the examination of how diverse educational pathways, including cultural knowledge systems, influence the participation of women in leadership positions in Garissa Township Sub-County. According to RMT, access to education,

both formal and informal, can serve as a key resource for women candidates, enhancing their qualifications and providing them with the tools to navigate the political landscape (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). In Garissa, women may face barriers not only in accessing formal education but also in acquiring cultural knowledge that is valued in local leadership roles. RMT suggests that the success of women candidates in these contexts depends on their ability to mobilize these forms of education and cultural capital in their campaigns.

However, RMT has limitations in this context. While the theory effectively explains the role of resources in political campaigns, it overlooks the complex ways in which cultural and gender-based perceptions shape the allocation and use of these resources (Ryan et al., 2019). In Garissa Township, deeply ingrained cultural norms often place limitations on women's leadership roles, regardless of their educational achievements or resource mobilization capabilities. For example, voters may perceive women candidates as less competent or less suited for leadership roles due to prevailing gender stereotypes. These cultural biases may prevent women from fully utilizing their mobilized resources, undermining the potential impact of their campaigns (DeLaet & Cramer, 2019).

This gap in addressing the influence of cultural perceptions is a critical weakness of RMT in the context of this study. Gender-based stereotypes and cultural attitudes towards women's leadership competence play a pivotal role in shaping the electoral success of women candidates. For instance, while education and resources may be mobilized effectively, these factors may not guarantee electoral success if the broader sociocultural environment does not support women in leadership. Therefore, RMT, while useful in analyzing the strategic mobilization of resources, fails to account for the cultural dynamics that may inhibit women's ability to effectively use these resources in

their political campaigns. This underscores the need for complementary theories as discussed in subsequent sections.

1.12.2 Social Role Theory

Social Role Theory, developed by Eagly (1987), provides a valuable framework for understanding how societal gender norms shape behavior, particularly in political settings. Eagly introduced the theory to explain the behavior of men and women, emphasizing the stereotypes, attitudes, and ideologies that shape gender roles. The theory posits that gender roles are socially constructed and reinforced through socialization processes within key institutions, such as family, community, and the workplace, which dictate what behaviors are deemed acceptable for men and women (Schneider & Bos, 2019). These socially constructed roles significantly shape how individuals act, make decisions, and navigate social and political environments. In the context of Garissa Township Sub-County, Social Role Theory sheds light on how deeply-rooted stereotypes around gender can affect women's engagement in political leadership roles by influencing how society views and recognizes male and female roles as being acceptable. Additionally, there are times when these established societal conventions can actually help facilitate a woman's move into leadership because of the support (or direct sponsorship) by male leaders or other people of influence (e.g., fathers, husbands, brothers) for female-based relatives and individuals (e.g., daughters, wives, sisters, protégés) into political roles and positions of power. This two-fold lens illustrates that not only do gender stereotypes place limits on women, but they can also be strategically used by females via existing social and political networks to create opportunities for them to access political representation. Cultural norms in this region often portray women as less suited for leadership roles, perpetuating the perception that leadership is predominantly a male domain.

This study aligns with Social Role Theory, particularly through the second objective: "Assess the impact of gender-based perceptions on women's ability to secure and perform leadership roles." Social Role Theory directly informs this objective by highlighting how societal perceptions, shaped by deeply rooted gender norms, influence women's leadership prospects. Eagly (2001) asserts that societal gender roles perpetuate stereotypes about leadership, positioning men as inherently more competent leaders than women. These perceptions are shaped through a process of socialization, where individuals are taught to associate leadership qualities with masculinity. As a result, women may be seen as less capable or suitable for leadership positions, limiting their ability to secure and perform in leadership roles. In the case of Garissa Township Sub-County, traditional gender norms that associate leadership with men may affect how both the public and political aspirants perceive the leadership potential of women.

The relevance of Social Role Theory to this study lies in its ability to explain how gender-based perceptions shape the opportunities and barriers faced by women in Garissa Township. Eagly's theory emphasizes that these perceptions are not simply individual biases but are reinforced through societal structures and cultural beliefs. In Garissa Township, where traditional gender roles are particularly influential, women's leadership aspirations may be undermined by public perceptions that associate leadership with masculinity. This directly aligns with the second objective of the study, which seeks to assess how these gender-based perceptions affect women's ability to secure leadership roles. The theory suggests that women may face significant challenges in gaining leadership positions due to the cultural belief that men are more competent or suited for such roles, a key factor in understanding the obstacles to women's political participation in the region.

Social Role Theory further suggests that these gendered expectations not only shape public perceptions but also influence how women perceive their leadership capabilities. In Garissa Township, women may internalize these gendered norms, leading to a diminished sense of self-efficacy when it comes to pursuing political leadership roles. This dynamic is crucial for understanding the barriers women face in political environments where leadership is viewed through the lens of masculinity. Schneider and Bos (2019) support this view, emphasizing that the socialization process, shaped by entrenched gender norms, continues to restrict women's political opportunities. By focusing on how these perceptions limit women's chances to secure and perform leadership roles, the study can explore the direct impact of gendered societal expectations on women's political engagement in Garissa Township.

To operationalize Social Role Theory in this study, key concepts such as gender-based perceptions and cultural beliefs about leadership competence will be explored. These concepts will be measured through qualitative interviews, focus group discussions, and quantitative surveys that examine how gendered expectations shape voting behavior and perceptions of political candidates. As Schneider and Bos (2019) argue, societal expectations about gender roles significantly influence women's political participation. By focusing on how these expectations shape perceptions of female political candidates, the study will provide a deeper understanding of the role that gender-based perceptions play in women's political opportunities in Garissa Township. Despite its utility, Social Role Theory has limitations, particularly in its tendency to view gender roles as static and binary. In a culturally diverse context like Garissa Township, where gender identities may be more fluid, this binary framework may overlook the complexities of gender

expression and non-binary identities. Furthermore, the theory's focus on gender roles does not fully account for other intersecting factors, such as education, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, that may also influence women's political participation (Cabrera et al., 2018). While Social Role Theory provides valuable insights into the influence of gendered perceptions on women's leadership roles, it is essential to recognize its limitations in capturing the full spectrum of factors that shape women's political participation. Thus, the study will incorporate additional theoretical perspectives, such as intersectionality theory, to offer a more comprehensive understanding of the diverse factors influencing women's ability to secure leadership roles in Garissa Township.

1.12.3 Cultural Hegemony Theory

Cultural Hegemony Theory, developed by Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci, offers a critical framework for understanding how power is maintained in society, not just through coercion but through the manipulation of culture (Jackson, 2018). In his *Prison Notebooks* (1971), Gramsci introduced the concept of "hegemony" to explain how the ruling class secures its dominance by embedding its values, beliefs, and norms into the cultural landscape. This process ensures that the ideology of the ruling class is accepted as "common sense" by the subordinate classes, thus preventing challenges to the established social order. Unlike overt coercion, this form of power is subtle and operates through cultural institutions, shaping how individuals perceive their roles within society.

One of the core assumptions of Gramsci's theory is that power is not maintained merely through force or coercion but also through the consent of the governed. The ruling class does not simply enforce its will; it secures its power by cultivating consent through cultural and ideological influence. This consent is subtly shaped by cultural institutions such as the media, education, and religion, which present the worldview of the dominant group as natural and universal. In this way,

alternative ideologies are marginalized, and the prevailing beliefs are internalized by individuals, often without their conscious awareness (Lears, 1985). This cultural manipulation reinforces the legitimacy of the ruling class's dominance, making inequality appear inevitable and natural.

The theory further posits that cultural institutions play a central role in shaping individuals' perceptions and values. Through institutions like schools, churches, and the media, the dominant ideology becomes deeply embedded in society, leading to widespread conformity. This ideological control fosters an environment where ideas that challenge the status quo are suppressed or viewed as extreme. The process of interpellation, discussed by Louis Althusser (1971), explains how individuals are "hailed" into specific roles by dominant cultural messages. For example, through religious teachings and media portrayals, women in many societies, including Kenya, internalize cultural narratives that position them as suitable only for domestic or supportive roles, while leadership positions are often seen as outside their realm. As a result, these cultural beliefs become entrenched, and women's exclusion from leadership roles is framed as a natural, even unquestioned, aspect of society.

Gramsci's theory also offers insight into the potential for resistance through counter-hegemony. While the ruling class may have successfully embedded its ideology in cultural institutions, this hegemony is never absolute or uncontested. Subordinated groups, including women, can resist the dominant culture by creating alternative narratives that challenge the existing power structures (Lears, 1985). Counter-hegemony emerges when marginalized groups, such as women in Garissa Township Sub-County, begin to challenge the cultural norms that restrict their leadership roles and instead promote alternative cultural frameworks that assert their right to participate in political and

leadership spaces. This process of resistance is not merely about confronting the ruling class but about disrupting the cultural narratives that sustain its dominance.

Cultural Hegemony Theory offers an in-depth lens through which to examine the complex interplay of religious beliefs and cultural perceptions on women's access to leadership positions in Garissa Township Sub-County, particularly in relation to the third and fourth study objectives. Gramsci's theory underscores the power of cultural institutions, such as religious bodies, in shaping and maintaining the social order by embedding dominant ideologies within everyday life. In this context, religious beliefs in Garissa Township often align with patriarchal values, presenting leadership as a male-dominated sphere while positioning women primarily in caregiving, domestic, or supportive roles. These religious teachings, deeply embedded in community practices, become normalized and are accepted by individuals, often without critical reflection, making it difficult to challenge the prevailing gender norms. As a result, women's access to leadership positions is not only restricted by societal expectations but also by religious doctrines that implicitly reinforce the notion that women are unsuitable for political leadership.

Furthermore, Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony explains how such gendered perceptions are perpetuated through various cultural channels, including religious institutions, local media, and community narratives, shaping both public attitudes and individual self-perception. In many cases, these cultural narratives of competence and leadership are inherently masculine, associating strength, decisiveness, and authority with male figures, while undermining women's capacity for leadership. As these ideas become ingrained in the collective consciousness, they subtly dictate how society evaluates the electability of women candidates. Women who aspire to leadership roles

in such an environment often face an uphill battle, as their political competence is often questioned or undervalued due to these entrenched cultural perceptions. Gramsci's theory, therefore, not only highlights how cultural narratives about gender roles are created and reinforced but also reveals the subtle mechanisms through which these narratives influence the broader political landscape, ultimately hindering women's participation in leadership positions.

Cultural Hegemony Theory offers a valuable framework for understanding how religious beliefs and cultural perceptions in Garissa Township limit women's access to political leadership by framing leadership as a male-dominated domain. This ideological control, reinforced through institutions like religion and media, perpetuates the belief that women are unfit for leadership roles. Gramsci's concept of counter-hegemony provides a pathway for challenging these ingrained cultural norms, allowing women to assert their political competence and leadership rights. By promoting alternative cultural narratives and fostering collective action, women can disrupt these dominant ideologies, contributing to a more inclusive political environment. Ultimately, Gramsci's theory helps explain how gender-based inequalities are maintained and offers insight into how resistance can lead to social change, positioning women's leadership as both legitimate and vital for community development.

1.12.4 Justification for Theory Selection and Non-Use of Feminist Theories

Despite the prevalence of examining gender discrimination and male-dominated societies through the lens of feminist theories, this study did not use a feminist conceptual approach to analyse political participation among women. Feminist theory encompasses a variety of theoretical frameworks (e.g., liberal, radical, and structural) and critiques and challenges patriarchy on an ideological basis. On the other hand, this project is concerned with more practical aspects of how

gender roles, social norms, religious beliefs, and access to resources directly affect women's political participation in Garissa Township. Using the combined frameworks of RMT, Social Role Theory, and Cultural Hegemony Theory, the research design captures the structural, relational, and cultural dimensions of women's political engagement in order to achieve a context-specific analysis of both visible obstacles and supports to their political involvement. As a result, this complementary framework produces actionable solutions to improve women's access to leadership. While limiting the ability of the researcher to explicitly investigate patriarchy as an abstract concept, it does provide an effective conceptual framework to understand the structuring, relational, and sociocultural circumstances that facilitate or inhibit women from obtaining leadership opportunities.

1.13 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework, a vital component of this study, serves as a visual or written representation of the anticipated interrelationships among the variables under investigation (Varpio et al., 2020). The illustrative depiction of the conceptual framework is presented in Figure 1.1.

Independent Variables

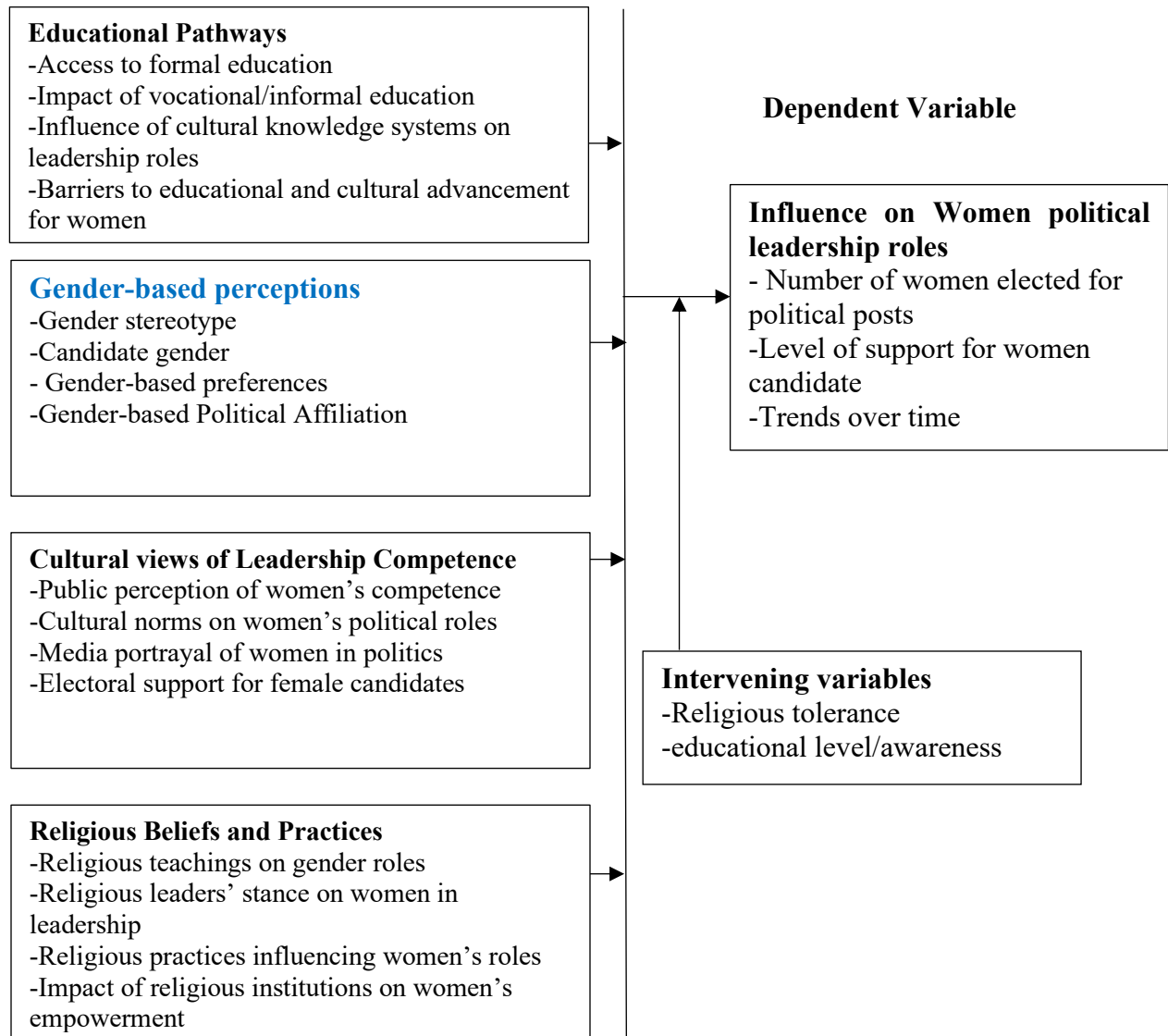


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework Variable

The framework presented in Figure 1.1 illustrates the complex relationship between the independent and dependent variables affecting women's political leadership roles in Garissa Township Sub-County. The independent variables in this study include factors such as educational pathways, gender perceptions, religious beliefs, and cultural norms. These factors directly influence the dependent variable, women's ability to access and succeed in political leadership roles. For instance, educational pathways impact women's ability to acquire the necessary skills, confidence, and qualifications to pursue leadership positions, while gender perceptions can either support or hinder women's leadership aspirations depending on societal attitudes toward gender roles. Similarly, religious beliefs and cultural norms shape the environment in which women operate, either encouraging or limiting their participation in politics.

The relationship between these independent variables and women's political leadership roles, however, is not one-directional or fixed. The impact of these factors can be influenced by intervening variables, which mediate the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Intervening variables, such as religious tolerance and educational awareness, play a crucial role in either amplifying or diminishing the effects of the independent variables. For example, a higher level of educational awareness among women and the broader community can empower women to gain the necessary skills and confidence to pursue leadership positions, thereby increasing their electability and leadership competence. On the other hand, a lack of religious tolerance may hinder women's access to leadership roles by perpetuating restrictive cultural and religious views that limit women's participation in public and political life. These intervening variables actively shape how the independent variables affect the dependent variable,

underlining that the influence of factors like educational pathways, gender perceptions, and cultural norms is often moderated by other elements within the community.

The dynamic nature of this framework is captured in the arrows that intersect between the independent and dependent variables. These arrows indicate that the relationship is non-linear and fluid, where the impact of any one variable can be altered by the presence or absence of an intervening variable. For example, women who benefit from higher education and live in an environment of religious tolerance may encounter fewer obstacles in their pursuit of political leadership, as these conditions provide both the necessary skills and the supportive environment for success. However, in communities with low levels of educational awareness or high religious intolerance, women may face substantial barriers that limit their opportunities for leadership.

In conclusion, the framework highlights the importance of considering both direct and indirect factors in understanding women's political participation. It suggests that addressing the barriers women face in leadership requires not only tackling the independent variables, such as gender norms and education, but also recognizing and addressing the intervening variables that mediate their effects. By targeting these critical factors, policymakers and activists can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for women's political leadership in Garissa Township Sub-County. Recommended strategies include promoting gender-sensitive educational initiatives, increasing access to leadership training, fostering religious tolerance, and addressing gaps in educational awareness, all of which are essential to empowering women and creating a more equitable political landscape.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the literature review for the study on the influence of societal beliefs and practices on the election of women to political leadership roles in Garissa Township Sub-County, Kenya. It synthesizes existing research on the interplay between education, gender, religion, and culture in shaping women's political participation. The review highlights research gaps, particularly in the context of Garissa Township, and emphasizes the need for further exploration into how these sociocultural factors affect women's electability.

2.2 Empirical Review of Literature

This review synthesizes existing research, providing valuable insights into the intricate relationships between education, gender, religion, culture, and women's participation in political leadership roles.

2.2.1 Educational Pathways/ Cultural Systems and Women's Political Leadership

Numerous scholarly investigations have explored the educational backgrounds of women candidates and their correlation with success in political leadership roles. These studies delve into the factors that either facilitate or impede women's educational attainment in the political sphere. The research by Glaser (2023) explored the issue of underrepresentation of non-degree holders as citizens of the Netherlands when examining how parties in the Dutch parliament select their candidates. The research is based on a case study using the procedures for candidate selection of four different political parties to produce findings using five semi-structured interviews and party documents for each party. The conclusion of Glaser's study shows that political party candidate

selection practices place a greater emphasis on experiential knowledge than on educational diversity, thereby limiting opportunities for inclusion for non-degree holders. Although the findings inform the existence of structural barriers that operate within candidate selection, the inability to have a larger sample of interviews (a total of five) across four political parties renders much of the research non-generalizable due to limitations arising from methodological and contextual factors. The very small number of interviews (five) and the number of parties included (four) raise clear concerns regarding the potential representativeness and reliability of Glaser's study. In addition, the political and socio-cultural contexts in the Netherlands differ significantly from those in Garissa Township, where there are different electoral systems, differing expectations regarding gender, and differing party structures. While this research identifies how political institutions shape the characteristics of candidates, it cannot provide insight into the underlying socio-cultural factors impacting women in Garissa Town, such as clan-based politics, patriarchal norms, or religious prescriptions. Nevertheless, the research makes the important point that, when political parties use structural processes to establish candidate criteria, they can limit access to leadership positions significantly; this is true for women in Garissa Town, even though the contexts are different. The study's utility for this thesis lies in conceptual parallels rather than empirical applicability; local investigations must consider gendered cultural dynamics absent in the Dutch case.

Marco Alberto De and Maria De's (2017) longitudinal analysis in Italy examined the relationship between candidates' educational levels and voter turnout in municipal elections from 1993 to 2011. Using a municipality fixed-effects model and a Fuzzy Regression Discontinuity Design, the study identified a positive correlation between higher median candidate education and electoral turnout.

Methodologically, this study is rigorous, leveraging a large dataset and attempting to address endogeneity. However, its relevance to Garissa Township is limited. First, the context assumes that voters prioritize formal educational credentials over other attributes, whereas in Garissa, informal legitimacy derived from clan ties, religious knowledge, and community recognition may weigh more heavily for female candidates. Second, the study does not disaggregate effects by gender, leaving unexamined the intersection of educational attainment and societal gender norms. Consequently, while informative about general trends linking education and electoral engagement, this research cannot explain the unique constraints that women face in Garissa Township. A key gap emerges: empirical evidence is needed to understand how voters' perceptions of women's education interact with gendered cultural expectations and leadership norms in Garissa.

The research conducted by Arnesen et al. (2019) used two conjoint experiments to study Norwegian Citizen Panel members' candidate preferences for educationally qualified candidates. The study results show that voters display a preference for candidates who possess higher education through their voting behavior. The study used a sample size of more than 2000 experimental participants, but its methods operated at a lower level of scientific validity than the study could have produced through its relevant scientific methods, which studied Garissa Township. The political system of Norway, which promotes equality through its secular institutions, maintains a major contrast with Garissa, which has social systems that use patriarchal customs and clan structures and religious rules to establish perceptions about women who hold leadership positions. The study tracks formal educational attainment as its main research focus, while it excludes all forms of informal and culturally approved educational methods. The study proves that social characteristics decide voter preferences across different environments, yet it fails to explain how gender and cultural factors specifically impact women who run for office in

Garissa. The research provides useful theoretical concepts, yet it does not deliver practical solutions that show how education, gender, and local political legitimacy interact with each other.

The use of Afrobarometer data from 2015 was analyzed by Dim and Asomah (2018) to explore how socioeconomic factors relate to women's political participation in Nigeria. Women with post-secondary education were found to have increased opportunities for involvement in politics because education empowers them to become more involved in political processes. The use of nationally representative survey data enhances the generalizability of the results to a larger population within Nigeria. While identifying education as an important factor influencing political participation, the analysis does not separate out the layered influence of cultural norms, gendered perceptions of women, and religious beliefs, all of which are important elements for Garissa Township, Nigeria. The authors also undertake a general examination of political engagement, but do not provide an examination of women's ability to run for office or win elections. This lack of focus creates a gap in the literature, as being educated does not always lead to leadership opportunities, especially in places such as Garissa, where women's pathways to political office are considerably influenced by cultural gatekeeping practices, clan-driven politics, and religious expectations. Thus, while the findings of Dim and Asomah present evidence in support of education, they neglect to consider the socio-cultural mechanisms by which women may or may not actually access leadership roles.

Aga (2022) studied how women lead peacebuilding and deradicalization work in Isiolo County, Kenya, through their informal leadership activities. The study shows that women achieved increased power through both their official educational qualifications and their cultural legitimacy, which included their understanding of clan customs and religious texts, and their ability to access

trusted social circles. The research shows that women in traditional settings can acquire leadership positions through informal knowledge that exists outside official educational requirements. The research conducted by Aga does not examine how informal authority pathways lead to actual political leadership positions. The research presents women as moral agents who work within community and religious spaces, but fails to examine the structural obstacles that prevent women from obtaining electoral office through political party gatekeeping, campaign financing, and voter discrimination. Aga's research results demonstrate that leadership depends on more than academic credentials, which helps explain how women in Garissa Township achieve political office. The present study builds on Aga by examining whether both formal education and informal legitimacy jointly affect women's ability to contest elections successfully.

The literature consistently shows that educational attainment is a critical factor in political participation and leadership, with higher levels of formal education enhancing women's perceived competence, credibility, and ability to engage in political processes. Research studies conducted in different settings show that political parties and voters prefer candidates who hold formal educational credentials because educational background serves as a fundamental asset that creates electoral validity. The research results demonstrate that educational attainment serves as the primary factor that determines leadership opportunities for individuals, although the study fails to consider the impact of informal learning methods and cultural knowledge systems that operate within various socio-cultural environments. The existing research maintains a pattern that divides formal education from cultural and religious knowledge while failing to demonstrate the way these two educational systems interlink to affect women's access to political positions. The existing literature fails to analyze how educational benefits impact men and women differently because it

treats educational benefits as identical for both genders and fails to recognize how patriarchal standards and societal norms restrict women from transforming their educational achievements into leadership roles. Women residing in traditional societies such as Garissa Township face difficulties when they try to balance their official schooling with their native cultural practices and religious traditions for the purpose of political leadership attainment. The present study addresses this gap by examining how different educational pathways, both formal and culturally grounded, interact with socio-cultural factors to shape women's access to leadership roles in Garissa Township Sub-County.

2.2.2 Influence of Gender on Voting-Based Decision

Research has probed the complex interplay of gender on voting behavior, shedding light on how societal norms and expectations influence voters' decisions and perceptions of female candidates. The study conducted by Kulachai, Lerdtomornsakul, and Homyamyen (2023) categorizes factors influencing voting behavior into three main categories: individual-level factors (including income, education, gender, age, political ideology, personality traits, emotional intelligence, climate change concerns, and healthcare experiences); socio-cultural factors (such as social identity, ethnicity and race, religion, media influence, and social networks); The researchers emphasize the interconnectedness of these factors and highlight that their relative significance varies depending on the individual and the context. While providing a thorough overview, the study lacks specific attention to gender-related influences. In the unique sociocultural context of Garissa Township, a targeted investigation into gender-specific factors affecting voting decisions is crucial for applicability. The study underscores the necessity for nuanced exploration within specific contexts to understand the complex interactions shaping voting behavior, particularly in regions with distinct sociopolitical dynamics like Garissa Township.

Ono and Burden (2019), in their study entitled “The Contingent Effects of Candidate Sex on Voter Choices, suggest a small and specific effect of a candidate's sex on voter decisions, primarily observed in presidential elections and among male voters. It highlights partisanship as a mitigating factor, acting as a form of "insurance" for voters, particularly in ensuring that party affiliation represents their views. Although the study's findings contribute to the broader discourse on gender bias in voter decisions, the generalization of these findings to a different cultural setting, like Garissa Township, requires careful consideration of local factors that might influence voter perceptions differently. Overall, the study's findings contribute to the broader discourse on gender bias in voter decisions, but their applicability to Garissa Township necessitates caution. Addressing these considerations requires localized research that accounts for the specific cultural, social, and political dynamics of the region to enhance the understanding of gender influence on decision-making during voting in Garissa Township Sub-County.

The study conducted by Grosholz (2017) in the United States emphasizes that women's reluctance to run for office is rooted in their perception of potential unfair treatment rather than actual voter bias. The research contends that gender is not a significant consideration for voters, as partisanship remains the predominant factor influencing voter choices. The study challenges the notion that the electoral process is inherently biased against female candidates, suggesting that the issue is more social than political. However, the applicability of these findings to Garissa Township in Kenya is questioned due to the unique cultural and social dynamics of the region. The summary underscores the need for localized research to explore whether social perceptions in Garissa Township align

with the progress in female candidates' views, emphasizing the importance of considering specific regional contexts in understanding voter behavior and gender dynamics.

Yalley's (2021) study in Ghana reveals that women are more inclined to support candidates and political parties emphasizing issues such as good jobs, a high standard of living, and income equality, while showing less support for those championing issues related to capital punishment and gun ownership. The study suggests that a candidate's gender communicates messages about their abilities and behavior, with voters drawing on stereotypical notions when evaluating and voting. However, it's crucial to note that these findings may not be directly applicable to the Kenyan context due to differences in sociocultural backgrounds. The social and cultural distinctions between Ghana and Kenya may shape voter perceptions differently, necessitating a nuanced exploration of the role of gender in voter behavior specific to the Kenyan context. Additional research focusing on the unique sociopolitical dynamics of Kenya, particularly in Garissa Township Sub-County, would provide a more accurate understanding of how gender influences voter preferences in this specific region.

Okinda, Ojwang, and Nyambuga (2020) examined the political attitudes and sociodemographic traits that predicted women voters' participation in the 2013 general election in Kakamega County, Kenya. They discovered that while sociodemographic factors explained 27% of the variation in women voters' electoral participation, gender was not found to be a significant factor in voters' decisions. As an alternative, it was shown that women voters' election involvement was significantly predicted by factors such as age, education, income, political interest, political awareness, and a sense of civic duty. The report offers suggestions for improving women's political

participation through voter education, civic engagement, and legislative changes. Although the study clarifies the significance of several elements in women's voting behaviors, there may be a research vacuum about the influence of gender, particularly on voting in the Garissa Township Sub-County, and decision-making. The fact that the study did not specifically address the complex facets of gender dynamics that could affect women's decision-making in this specific area offers a chance for more targeted research to delve into these details.

2.2.3 Influence of Religion on Electoral Success of Women Candidates

Studies by Setzler and Yanus (2016), Campbell et al. (2017), and Mendez and Sides (2015) have explored the significant role of religion in shaping electoral outcomes for women, particularly examining how religious affiliations and beliefs influence voter preferences. Setzler and Yanus (2016) found that Evangelical Protestants and Catholics in the United States were more likely to support Republican women and less likely to endorse Democratic women compared to secular voters. Similarly, Campbell et al. (2017) and Mendez and Sides (2015) highlighted the influence of religious beliefs on political preferences, emphasizing the role religion plays in determining support for female candidates. These studies suggest that religious exposure and tradition are important factors in voting behavior, especially in regions with high religiosity. However, these studies also have limitations, including their reliance on data from the 2010 and 2012 Cooperative Congressional Election Studies, which may not fully reflect the current political dynamics. As political landscapes continue to evolve, the relevance of these findings should be reassessed. Additionally, while trends among Evangelical Protestants and Catholics are well-documented, applying these findings to other religious groups or regions requires further exploration, underscoring the need for continued research on the complex relationship between religion and voting preferences in contemporary society.

Khan and Ali (2017) conducted a study in Pakistan, delving into the determinants of religious voting in the electoral landscape of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) with a focus on the 2002, 2008, and 2013 General Elections. Their findings indicate that the theory of religious voting holds some validity (55.1%) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's electoral dynamics, drawing from primary data obtained through a questionnaire administered to 800 respondents in NA-2 Peshawar. The study's robustness is underscored by its adoption of a multistage random and systematic sampling method, which enhances its credibility by ensuring a diverse and representative sample. The comprehensive breakdown of religious voting percentages across each election year contributes to a nuanced understanding of the trends. However, to offer a more thorough comprehension of the subject, an in-depth analysis of the underlying factors shaping these trends is warranted. Particularly, a closer examination of how these factors relate to the electoral success of women candidates in leadership positions in Garissa Township Sub-County would contribute significantly to the broader understanding of the interplay between religion and politics in the region.

To better understand voter behavior, Yalley (2021) looks into the effects of age, gender, religion, and ethnic homophily on status homophily in the Ghanaian setting. According to the findings, religious homophily has the least impact on status homophily, while gender and age homophiles and ethnic homophily have the most influence. The results indicate that voter choices during elections are more correlated with ethnicity than religion, which runs counter to popular belief. The study emphasizes the importance of status homophily in political marketing research and practice. It also highlights the necessity for political marketers to use market-oriented strategies, take voters' demographic inclinations into account, and use political brand ambassadors and personalities accordingly. Notwithstanding these insightful observations, there are also drawbacks,

such as the unique Ghanaian setting, which might not be entirely compatible with the circumstances in Garissa Township Sub-County. Furthermore, concentrating only on demographic characteristics may ignore other subtle influences on voter choices. For this reason, the present study seeks to fully comprehend the role that religion plays in the electoral success of female candidates for leadership roles in Garissa Township Sub-County.

Using a descriptive survey design employed with a sample of 385 respondents, Nyaga (2021) investigated socioeconomic factors influencing women's participation in elective politics in Embu County. The research provided valuable insights into the impact of various sociocultural factors, including religious beliefs, on women's engagement in elective posts. However, a notable limitation lies in the study's omission of a detailed exploration into the specific extent to which religious beliefs influence voting decisions, particularly in the context of electing women. While the findings indicate the presence of an influence, a more thorough investigation into the nuanced dynamics of how religious beliefs directly affect the voting process for women candidates is essential. The present study endeavors to delve into the specific ways in which religious beliefs shape individual perceptions, attitudes, and voting behaviors, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the intricate relationship between religion and the electoral success of women.

2.2.4 Cultural Perceptions of Women's Competence and Electability to Political

Leadership

An array of empirical inquiries has focused on cultural perceptions, examining societal attitudes towards women's competence and electability to political leadership positions. Research consistently shows that cultural perceptions significantly shape women's political leadership opportunities, but the evidence reveals key limitations and inconsistencies across contexts.

Chalmers (2021), in a study synthesizing evidence from multiple Western settings, examined how societal expectations regarding warmth influence evaluations of female politicians. The study found that women lacking warmth were judged more harshly than men, limiting their leadership potential. However, the reliance on secondary data and Western contexts restricts applicability to settings like Garissa Township Sub-County, where social hierarchies, clan-based politics, and religious norms may shape perceptions differently. While the study illuminates the role of gendered traits in leadership evaluation, it does not account for the interaction between cultural norms and formal leadership pathways, leaving an important empirical gap for understanding women's political opportunities in non-Western, conservative societies.

Nawabdin (2021) studied gender stereotypes that caused Hillary Clinton to face electoral disadvantages in her campaign for the United States presidency. The research showed that political leaders prefer masculine traits, which create disadvantages for female candidates at all electoral stages. The study achieves methodological strength through its research methods, although its results remain limited to the political and cultural aspects of American society. The research fails to consider how local cultural practices and religious traditions shape community views toward female candidates in areas such as Garissa Township. The study concentrates on elite political figures, which prevents researchers from applying its findings to rural areas and culturally traditional communities that value community recognition and adherence to social norms more than educational attainment and gender-based personality characteristics.

Żemojtel-Piotrowska et al. (2017) studied how U.S. political scandals affected public opinion toward female politicians. The researchers discovered that women faced more severe evaluations than men when judging their moral character and their ability to perform their professional responsibilities after scandals. The study demonstrates a double standard through its findings, yet restricts its analysis to judgment standards used to assess scandals instead of examining the social factors that impact political candidate selection. The research fails to investigate how cultural expectations and religious beliefs influence these assessments while also omitting any examination of how these judgments impact women's ability to secure political positions in non-Western countries. The research results demonstrate institutionalized bias yet fail to explain how different cultural and institutional factors combine with gendered views to shape political results.

Al-Mutawa (2020), in the United Arab Emirates, investigated female Emirati students' perceptions of leadership. The study revealed a paradox: high aspirations for female leadership coexist with enduring sexist stereotypes. The research identifies societal messaging and state feminism as key influences but fails to analyze the broader cultural norms and community expectations that sustain these contradictions. While the study offers insight into the tension between formal promotion of women's leadership and informal cultural barriers, it does not provide empirical evidence linking these perceptions to actual political participation or electability. This limitation is particularly relevant when considering Garissa Township, where local cultural and religious structures strongly mediate women's political trajectories.

Philips et al. (2023) studied women's participation in leadership in Abia State, Nigeria, focusing on Umuahia and Uturu. The research found that entrenched gender roles and societal attitudes

negatively impact women's leadership opportunities. While the study acknowledges cultural barriers, it provides a broad overview without examining how specific cultural perceptions influence assessments of competence or electability. The lack of nuanced, context-specific analysis limits the applicability of findings for other settings, particularly Garissa Township, where gendered norms and religious influences may operate differently. The research points to structural barriers but leaves unanswered questions about the mechanisms through which cultural perceptions affect women's leadership outcomes.

In Kenya, Canudo and Ali (2018) investigated leadership styles, performance, and desired characteristics among youth in Nairobi universities. Using twelve focus group discussions and media content analysis, the study found that women face significant obstacles due to societal stereotypes framing leadership as masculine. Women were judged more harshly for leadership performance, mirroring patterns observed in Western studies. The mixed-methods approach strengthens the findings, but the urban, university-based sample limits generalizability. The cultural norms and religious practices in Garissa Township differ substantially from those in Nairobi, raising questions about whether the observed patterns hold in more traditional, rural settings. The study highlights systemic bias but underscores the need for research that examines cultural perceptions in context-specific environments.

Across these studies, several patterns emerge. There is consensus that women are evaluated through gendered lenses, with warmth, morality, and masculine traits disproportionately influencing perceived competence. Structural disadvantages arise when masculine traits are privileged. Cultural and societal norms intersect with institutional processes, including voter

behavior and party selection, yet these intersections are rarely analyzed in depth. Contradictions appear in studies such as Al-Mutawa (2020), which finds high aspirations for female leadership alongside persistent stereotypes, and Chalmers (2021), where the warmth-competence link is inconsistently replicated across contexts. These divergences suggest that cultural perceptions are not uniform and vary significantly depending on local societal, religious, and political structures. Despite these insights, the literature has persistent gaps. Most studies focus on Western or urban elite contexts, with limited evidence from rural or conservative African settings. Sample sizes are sometimes small, and secondary data reliance or case-study designs restrict generalizability. Few studies directly link cultural perceptions to women's electoral outcomes, leaving unclear how societal attitudes translate into barriers to office. Moreover, the interplay between formal education, informal knowledge, and cultural legitimacy is underexplored, particularly in contexts like Garissa Township, where informal authority within clans or religious communities may influence electability as much as formal qualifications.

The collective evidence shows that cultural perceptions function as both a filter and a gatekeeper for women's political leadership. Local cultural norms and community approval, together with gendered expectations that exist in the local community, determine leadership assessments, even though formal qualifications hold value to them. Women are judged based on their professional skills and their ability to fulfill societal expectations for their gender. The existing empirical research shows these social dynamics, but it does not explain how leadership access works in Garissa Township Sub-County, because local clan structures, religious authority, and community views control access to leadership positions. The research opportunity allows researchers to study

how cultural beliefs and stereotypes influence both people's competence and actual electability in the local area.

Overall, the studies reviewed provide compelling evidence that cultural perceptions impede women's political leadership; however, they fail to adequately address the specific realities of particular contexts (e.g., rural, conservative, or religiously influenced) in which women are more likely to experience specific barriers. While the weight of evidence reveals that women endure heightened scrutiny, experience a double standard when being evaluated, and accommodate structural disadvantage, there remains a gap in documenting how these trends are observed in rural, conservative, or religiously affected regions (e.g., Garissa Township). Similarly, there is a methodological gap in that a limited number of studies utilize mixed-method approaches capable of triangulating the relevant attitudes, perceptions, and political consequences based on non-Western contexts. This current study fills these gaps by examining the specific cultural beliefs, stereotypes, and social norms that inform the perceived competence and viability of female candidates in Garissa Township Sub-County. This study builds on previous research and provides critical insights into how the intersections of formal credentials and informal cultural legitimacy shape women's opportunities to lead. By situating the analysis within the local cultural and socio-political context, the study seeks to provide actionable knowledge about the mechanisms through which societal perceptions create barriers or pathways to political office for women. In doing so, it moves beyond generalizations derived from Western or urban contexts and offers empirical evidence relevant to policy, practice, and empowerment initiatives in conservative, patriarchal societies.

2.3 Summary of Literature

This chapter presented a comprehensive literature review on the influence of societal beliefs and practices on the election of women to political leadership roles in Garissa Township Sub-County, Kenya. It synthesized existing research on how education, gender, religion, and culture shaped women's political participation, with a focus on the role of societal beliefs and practices, such as traditional gender norms, religious influences, and cultural perceptions of women's competence. These factors were identified as central to understanding the barriers and opportunities women faced in seeking political leadership positions. The review also highlighted significant gaps in the current literature, particularly regarding the unique context of Garissa Township, and called for further exploration into the impact of these sociocultural factors on women's electability. In doing so, the chapter laid the foundation for this study's contribution to a deeper understanding of how sociocultural dynamics influenced women's political engagement in the region.

2.4 Research Gaps

A review of previous studies reveals significant gaps in the current literature, emphasizing the necessity for a targeted study in Garissa Township Sub-County to address these specific aspects of women's participation in political leadership. Firstly, the gap in the localized understanding of women candidates' educational qualifications and electoral success is evident. For instance, Glaser's (2023) study on the Dutch Parliament and Marco Alberto De and Maria De's (2017) research in Italy provide insights into the role of education, but their generalizability to Garissa Township's socio-cultural context remains uncertain. Secondly, while studies like Kulachai et al. (2023) and Ono and Burden (2019) shed light on gender-specific voting behavior, their applicability to Garissa Township's unique sociocultural context is unclear. This gap emphasizes the need for a nuanced exploration of gender dynamics in voting decisions within this specific

region. Thirdly, the gap in understanding the influence of religion on the electoral success of women candidates in Garissa Township is notable, given the specific cultural and religious dynamics of the region. Existing studies, such as Setzler and Yanus (2016) in the U.S. and Khan and Ali (2017) in Pakistan, lack direct relevance to Garissa Township, highlighting a critical need for research that considers the specific religious landscape of this area. Finally, the cultural perceptions of women's competence and electability, as explored by studies like Chalmers (2021) and Nawabdin (2021), need a more specific investigation in Garissa Township.

The general implication of these gaps is an insufficient understanding of the socio-cultural, religious, and political factors shaping women's political leadership experiences in Garissa Township. Addressing these gaps is crucial for implementing effective policies and initiatives tailored to the unique context of Garissa Township Sub-County.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter encompasses crucial elements such as the research design, specifying data collection, and analysis strategies. The area of the study defines the geographical scope within the Garissa Township sub-county, ensuring contextual clarity. Identification of the target population shapes subsequent sampling decisions, and detailed information on sample size determination and sampling procedures guarantees participant representativeness. Elaboration on data collection instruments and procedures clarifies the tools and processes used, while a pilot study refines methodologies. Rigorous emphasis on validity and reliability safeguards robust findings, and the ethical consideration section underscores the commitment to responsible research practices, prioritizing participant welfare and rights.

3.2 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive research design to examine the sociocultural determinants that affect women's political leadership access in Garissa Township Sub-County within Garissa County of Kenya. This design was selected because it allows researchers to systematically document and present educational pathways together with gender-based perceptions, religious beliefs, and cultural views, which determine women's political participation (Kothari & Garg, 2019). The research studied how the community views female leaders together with their traditional gender roles, while examining how local religious and cultural practices affect women's political leadership opportunities, which people can use to understand what restricts or enables women's involvement in local politics

The research utilized three methods to gather data, which included surveys, interviews, and observations. The surveys assessed how the community perceived women who held leadership roles while measuring their attitudes about these women. The interviews documented how personal experiences and social expectations inhibited women from attaining leadership roles. The observations documented actual societal norms that people followed in their regular activities and political dealings. The combined methods of this study created a comprehensive framework that examined all sociocultural elements that impact women's political participation.

Experimental or quasi-experimental designs were not used because they needed to control sociocultural factors, which created practical and ethical challenges. Correlational designs were not used because those designs only show statistical relationships without showing complete information about the social environment of the area. The descriptive design served as the ideal method for documenting current educational pathway patterns, trends, and relationships that exist between gender-based perceptions and religious beliefs and cultural views of leadership competence in Garissa Township.

Descriptive research has a key limitation because it relies on self-reported information, which can sometimes produce inaccurate responses. In addition, while this design provides detailed descriptive data, it cannot establish causal relationships between independent and dependent variables. To mitigate these risks, the study used carefully designed survey instruments, ensured participant anonymity, and applied random sampling techniques. Despite these limitations, the design effectively captures real social conditions and identifies the factors that restrict or enable

women's access to political leadership. This approach generates essential evidence to inform policies and strategies aimed at promoting equitable political participation for women in Garissa Township Sub-County.

3.3 Area of the Study

The research was conducted within Garissa Township Constituency, formerly known as Garissa Central/Dujis Constituency, which formed one of the six constituencies within Garissa County (see Appendix IV). This constituency was administratively divided into four electoral wards: Waberi, Galbet, Township, and Iftin. Geographically, the area was characterized by low-lying terrain, with elevations ranging from 70 to 400 meters above sea level (Stephen & Warfa, 2020). The region experienced a predominantly hot and arid climate, with limited and irregular rainfall typically ranging between 150mm and 300mm annually. Garissa County was largely inhabited by Somali ethnic communities, including subgroups such as the Ogaden, Ajuran, and Degodia, among others. Although small populations from other ethnicities existed, the overwhelming majority of the population identified as Somali. Islam was the dominant religion, with most residents adhering to the Muslim faith (Mutungi & Mutembei, 2022).

The local economy in Garissa Township Sub-County is largely sustained through livestock keeping, small-scale agriculture along the Tana River basin, and trade activities concentrated in the town center. Pastoralism remains the dominant livelihood in surrounding rural areas, while Garissa town functions as the county's main commercial hub. According to county development data, Garissa County had a population of about 841,353 in the 2019 census, with 458,975 males and 382,378 females, and projections indicating continued population growth in subsequent years (County Government of Garissa, 2022). The county also has a predominantly youthful population,

with large proportions of residents falling within the age groups below 30 years. These demographic patterns shape the social environment within which political participation occurs.

Educational attainment remains relatively low compared with national averages. County development reports indicate that only about 39.7% of the population can read and write, while approximately 57.9% are unable to do so, with literacy levels generally higher among men than women (County Government of Garissa, 2022). Secondary school enrollment is also limited, with boys significantly outnumbering girls in school attendance. These educational disparities form part of the broader sociocultural context influencing women's participation in public life. Lower female literacy and school participation may shape access to information, political networks, and leadership opportunities, although the direct relationship requires empirical examination within the study (Stephen & Warfa, 2020).

The county's sociocultural environment is further shaped by pastoralist traditions, clan-based social organization, and strong religious influence within community life. In many rural pastoralist settings, traditional norms and kinship structures assign women primary responsibilities in domestic and household spheres, which can limit their visibility in public decision-making arenas. In urban economic spaces such as Garissa town, women participate actively in trade and small-scale commerce; however, their transition into formal political leadership positions remains limited. These dynamics suggest that sociocultural expectations and gendered community perceptions may influence women's pathways into political leadership roles.

Historical patterns of women's political participation in the county also reflect this imbalance. Available election reporting indicates that women have rarely secured elective positions in the county's political structures, particularly in ward-level representation within the County Assembly

(County Government of Garissa, 2022). This pattern highlights the persistent gap between constitutional commitments to gender inclusion and the realities of political participation at the local level.

Overall, Garissa Township's context, characterized by pastoralist livelihoods, a youthful population structure, relatively low literacy levels, and strong cultural and religious traditions, provides an important setting for examining the social conditions that shape political participation. These demographic and sociocultural realities provide critical insight into the barriers and opportunities affecting women's entry into political leadership within the country.

3.3.1 Reasons for Choosing the Study Area

The choice of Garissa Township for the research is strategic due to its status as a diverse urban center within Garissa County, Kenya. The political and administrative hub of Garissa County is located in Garissa Township Sub-County. The county headquarters, most government offices, and important political entities are located there, which makes Garissa Township the primary location for political campaigning, party organizing, and negotiating leadership (Huho et al., 2020). Other sub-counties in Garissa County, like Ijara, Lagdera, Fafi, Dadaab, and Balambala, are primarily other than urban with limited political affiliation (Mutungi & Mutembei, 2022), while Garissa Township is the most visible and politically active location of Garissa County. Disparities exist among different counties regarding the election of female representatives, so it is important to focus this study on Garissa Township. In some counties, many women have been elected to multiple positions; in contrast, Garissa County's recent elections did not elect any woman except for an individual who was elected to the constitutionally mandated Woman Representative position (Kenyatta, 2023). This pattern reflects the significant sociocultural factors that thwart women's

participation in political leadership within Garissa Township. These include patriarchy, clan-based politics, limited access to education and economic resources, and continuing disbelief in their ability to assume a political leadership role (Stephen & Warfa, 2020; Mutungi & Mutembei, 2022).

The political importance of Garissa Township combines with its ongoing problem of female political representation to create a special conflict that enables researchers to study how cultural factors affect women's pathways to political power. The research uses this sub-county as its main site because it functions as the central area where political authority is exercised and challenged, whereas the study investigates all existing obstacles that prevent women from participating in competitive political activities. The explanation shows that Garissa Township serves as an optimal setting to investigate the social and cultural factors that influence women's leadership roles in the county.

3.4 Target Population

Kothari and Garg (2019) define the population as the complete assembly of cases that meet specific criteria. In the context of this study, the target population encompasses individuals residing within Garissa Township Sub-County, Garissa County, Kenya, who are actively involved in the political processes within the township. This includes potential voters, community leaders, political activists, and individuals contributing to or participating in the election of women for political leadership roles. The selection criteria are designed to encompass a diverse and representative cross-section of the local population to ensure that the study's findings accurately capture the varied perspectives and experiences of those intricately involved in Garissa Township's political landscape.

The total population for this study, as inferred from the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) (2022), includes all registered voters in Garissa Township Sub-County, which is recorded at 53,253 registered voters. This figure represents the eligible voting population, and it forms the basis for understanding the broader demographic and political participation landscape within the sub-county. Given the focus on political engagement and leadership, the target population includes not only registered voters but also key political figures such as community leaders and activists who are pivotal in influencing or determining the election of women for leadership roles.

By focusing on this group, the study aims to gather insights from individuals who are directly engaged in political processes, ensuring that the data reflects the lived experiences, perceptions, and challenges faced by those contributing to the political landscape in Garissa Township.

3.5 Determination of the Study Sample

3.5.1 Sample Size Determination

The appropriate sample size for this study was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula, which is widely adopted in social science research for calculating sample sizes from finite populations. The formula is as follows:

$$S = \frac{x^2 N \cdot P \cdot (1 - P)}{(E^2 \cdot (N - 1) + X^2 \cdot P \cdot (1 - P))}$$

Where:

- S = Required sample size

- N = Population size
- X^2 = The table value for Chi-square at 1 degree of freedom (3.841)
- P = The population proportion (0.5 is used as a conservative estimate)
- E = Desired margin of error (usually 0.05)

For this study, the target population was 53,253 registered voters in Garissa Township Sub-County, as reported by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC, 2022). The sample size determination follows a step-by-step process using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula and sample size table. First, the population size of 53,253 was identified. Next, the population size is located in the Krejcie and Morgan table, where for populations ranging from 50,001 to 75,000, the recommended sample size is 382 participants. By referencing the table, it is confirmed that the appropriate sample size for a population of 53,253 is 382. This process ensured that the sample was sufficiently large to provide reliable results while being manageable within the study's constraints. This was adopted as the baseline figure, ensuring statistical reliability and representativeness while remaining feasible within logistical constraints.

To safeguard against common fieldwork challenges, such as non-responses, incomplete questionnaires, or unusable entries, the study incorporated a modest oversample of 7 respondents, resulting in a final sample size of 389, slightly above the 382 recommended by the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table. This 1.8% adjustment was a conservative buffer designed to mitigate potential data loss, in line with established guidelines. Scholars such as Hochheimer et al. (2019) advocate for a 5–10% oversample in survey-based research to account for attrition and ensure completeness. By planning for this margin early, the study maintained statistical rigor while remaining practical and resource-conscious.

Overall, the final distribution of respondents across the four wards, Waberi, Galbet, Township, and Iftin, did not perfectly reflect the initial proportional allocation. This deviation arose from field-based constraints, including variable response rates and logistical difficulties in reaching some areas. Rather than exclude complete, valid responses to enforce exact quotas, the study opted to retain all 389 cases. This approach upheld the ethical principle of honoring participants' contributions and preserved the integrity of the data. While the deviation was minor, it was transparently reported and did not introduce systematic bias. The resulting sample still reflected strong geographic coverage and a demographically diverse cross-section of the sub-county, making the final dataset both defensible and analytically sound. A detailed breakdown of the sample size across different wards is provided in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Distribution of Sample Size across the Wards

Wards	Registered Voters	Sample Size	Proportion (%)
Waberi	11,657	87	21.9
Galbet	16,698	125	31.4
Township	13,419	100	25.2
Iftin	11,479	86	21.6
Total	53253	398	100

3.5.2 Sampling Procedures

The study employed a multistage sampling technique, incorporating stratified, random, and purposive sampling methods to ensure a comprehensive and representative sample for the research. In the initial stage of the research, a multistage sampling technique was employed, specifically utilizing a clustered sampling approach. This approach involves the selection of clusters, where

the four wards, including Waberi, Galbet, Township, and Iftin, will serve as the primary clusters. Each ward represents a distinct geographical and sociocultural unit within Garissa Township Sub-County, Garissa County, Kenya. The choice of these wards is intentional, aiming to ensure a comprehensive and representative coverage of the study area, considering their unique characteristics and potential variations in societal beliefs and practices. By employing a clustered sampling technique in this initial stage, the research seeks to efficiently manage the geographical and cultural diversity of Garissa Township, providing a structured approach to capture a diverse range of perspectives on how societal beliefs and practices influence the election of women for political leadership roles.

In the second stage of the multistage sampling process, a systematic sampling method was employed to select specific locations or neighborhoods within each of the four wards. The systematic sampling approach involves selecting every 8th element from a list after randomly determining a starting point. In this context, the elements refer to locations or neighborhoods within each ward. The selection was systematic, ensuring a structured and unbiased representation of different areas. This method aims to include diverse localities with distinct societal beliefs and practices in the study, as the systematic sampling helps cover a range of neighborhoods in a standardized manner. By incorporating various locations within each ward, the research can capture a comprehensive understanding of how different societal contexts influence the election of women for political leadership roles in Garissa Township Sub-County, Garissa County, Kenya.

In the third stage of the multistage sampling process, random sampling was employed to identify households within the previously selected neighborhoods in each ward—Waberi, Galbet, Township, and Iftin. Random sampling ensures that each household within the chosen neighborhoods has an equal chance of being selected, promoting fairness and eliminating bias.

This approach aims to achieve an equitable representation of various households, enhancing the study's overall inclusivity (Babbie, 2017). By employing random sampling at the household level, the research can capture a diverse range of perspectives on the influence of societal beliefs and practices on the election of women for political leadership roles. This method allows for the selection of households without any predetermined pattern, reducing the likelihood of systematic errors and contributing to the research's robustness and reliability.

In the final stage, within each household, eligible participants will be meticulously identified using a purposive sampling approach. This method involves a deliberate and thoughtful selection of participants based on specific criteria, such as age, gender, and socio-economic background. Purposive sampling allows for the intentional inclusion of individuals who possess valuable insights and varied perspectives on the influence of societal beliefs and practices on the election of women for political leadership roles in the context of Garissa Township Sub-County, Garissa County, Kenya. This targeted sampling strategy ensures that the chosen participants can provide in-depth and diverse viewpoints, enriching the qualitative aspects of the research.

The selection of key respondents, such as community leaders, local politicians, and individuals with expertise in local cultural practices, will be carried out purposively. This deliberate selection method is based on the knowledge and relevance of potential participants to the research topic (Kothari & Garg, 2019). By choosing respondents with direct experience and insight into societal beliefs and practices related to the election of women for political leadership roles, the research aims to gather in-depth and valuable information. The purposive approach ensures that individuals who can provide nuanced perspectives and contribute substantially to the understanding of the research topic are included in the study. This targeted selection enhances the research's qualitative

richness and depth, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the influence of societal beliefs and practices on the election of women in political leadership roles in Garissa Township Sub-County, Garissa County, Kenya.

3.6 Data Collection Measures

The study employed a descriptive research design with a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative tools to enhance the depth and reliability of findings. Data were primarily gathered through a semi-structured questionnaire and an interview guide, each aligned with the study's objectives. The questionnaire was divided into four thematic sections. The first section collected demographic data, including age, education level, and occupation, which allowed for meaningful disaggregation of responses and helped contextualize patterns related to women's leadership aspirations across social categories.

The second section focused on the influence of education, using both closed and open-ended items. Respondents identified their highest level of education and were then invited to describe how education had affected their confidence, visibility, and perceived legitimacy in seeking leadership positions. While this dual format was intended to capture both quantitative and narrative depth, the qualitative value of open-ended responses varied widely depending on respondents' engagement levels and literacy fluency. The third section examined gender-based perceptions, combining Likert-scale statements with follow-up prompts that probed experiences of bias, support, or exclusion. This blend provided measurable data on societal attitudes while also highlighting contradictions and outliers in personal narratives, though the quality of open-text responses occasionally lacked clarity or nuance, requiring cautious interpretation.

The final section addressed the complex role of religion and culture in shaping political space for women. Structured questions explored the perceived impact of religious teachings and clerical authority, while open-ended prompts captured local understandings of traditional gender roles and the acceptability of women's leadership. These questions were piloted with local informants and carefully translated, but challenges remained in ensuring consistent interpretation, especially across different ethnic and religious subgroups. While the intention was to gather both statistical trends and deeper cultural insights, the depth of data varied and was influenced by the perceived sensitivity of the topic.

To address these limitations and enhance interpretive validity, the study conducted semi-structured interviews with purposively selected community leaders, women aspirants, and key informants. These interviews were guided by themes emerging from the questionnaire responses, especially where patterns appeared ambiguous, contradictory, or thin. The use of thematic analysis allowed for a more grounded understanding of how cultural, religious, and structural factors interact in real-world leadership experiences. Triangulation between survey data and interview findings was not merely additive; it was iterative. Interview insights helped interpret weak or unclear survey responses, while the quantitative patterns framed where deeper probing was necessary. However, it must be acknowledged that complete integration between instruments was not always seamless, and interpretation required constant reflexivity regarding the limitations of each tool.

3.6.1 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted in neighboring Isiolo County before the main data collection in Garissa Township Sub-County. This decision was based on the perceived socio-cultural parallels between the two regions, including similar religious compositions, gender norms, and political structures. The intention was to pretest research instruments in a culturally familiar environment

without contaminating the main sample. Through this pilot, the study sought to assess the clarity, sensitivity, and contextual relevance of the tools, especially regarding potentially contentious topics such as gendered leadership and religious influence on politics.

However, this methodological choice is not without complications. The strongest argument against piloting in Isiolo lies in the risk of overestimating the similarity between the two counties. While Isiolo and Garissa share broad cultural traits, subtle yet significant differences, such as clan dynamics, local governance structures, or religious leadership influence, could have skewed the pretesting process. If Isiolo respondents interpreted questions differently due to these micro-contextual factors, refinements made to the instruments may have been ill-suited for the Garissa context. This undermines the external validity of the pilot and may result in the main study underperforming in terms of cultural fit or instrument reliability.

There's also a methodological inconsistency in assuming that cultural proximity guarantees conceptual equivalence. Isiolo is a distinct administrative unit with its own electoral history and gender politics, and piloting there may have masked or diluted issues unique to Garissa. Furthermore, ethical considerations emerge if pilot data were perceived as extractive, especially if no follow-up or feedback was given to Isiolo participants, who were not part of the core study.

To address these limitations, the study took a cautious and iterative approach. Instruments were not only piloted in Isiolo but also subjected to post-pilot revisions based on feedback from both Isiolo participants and a panel of local Garissa stakeholders. Additionally, key questions, especially those dealing with religion and leadership, were rephrased to reflect Garissa-specific

terminologies and reference points. The pilot was treated not as a definitive rehearsal but as a heuristic tool, guiding improvements without assuming full transferability. Ultimately, while piloting in Isiolo carried some methodological risk, these were mitigated by deliberate calibration of instruments post-pilot, ensuring alignment with Garissa's socio-political realities.

3.6.2 Instrument Validity

Ensuring the validity and reliability of research instruments is fundamental to producing accurate and credible study findings. Validity refers to the extent to which the instruments measure what they are intended to measure, ensuring that the results accurately represent the phenomenon being studied (Babbie, 2017). To achieve validity, multiple strategies will be employed.

Content Validity will be ensured through a comprehensive literature review, aligning the instruments with established knowledge and theoretical frameworks related to societal beliefs, gender politics, and the election of women in leadership roles. Additionally, subject-matter experts with local expertise in gender and political dynamics will review and provide feedback on the instruments. Their insights will ensure the tools effectively capture the relevant constructs. Feedback from the pilot stage, involving a representative sample, will allow for further refinement of the instruments, addressing any gaps or ambiguities. Face Validity will be addressed by ensuring that the instruments are clear and comprehensible for participants from diverse educational backgrounds. Language will be simplified, avoiding technical jargon, while ensuring cultural sensitivity by using terminology that is respectful and appropriate for the local context. Furthermore, the instruments will undergo a cognitive pretest to confirm that participants interpret the items as intended. Construct validity will be established by ensuring that the instruments accurately measure the theoretical constructs underpinning the study, such as political

participation, gender bias, and resource mobilization. This will be verified through expert feedback and alignment with the theoretical framework guiding the research.

By implementing these strategies, the study will enhance the accuracy, relevance, and credibility of its instruments, ensuring that the data collected are both valid and reliable in addressing the research objectives.

3.6.3 Instrument Reliability

Instrument reliability was critically upheld throughout the study to ensure the consistency and stability of data collected on the societal beliefs and practices influencing the election of women to political leadership in Garissa Township Sub-County. The study employed both test-retest reliability and internal consistency checks. For test-retest reliability, selected respondents from the pilot in Isiolo County were re-administered the same instruments after a short interval. This approach was used to assess whether responses remained consistent over time under stable conditions. Internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, particularly for scaled items in the questionnaire assessing gender norms, religious attitudes, and perceptions of leadership. A Cronbach's alpha value above 0.7 was accepted as evidence of acceptable internal reliability.

However, this approach is not without limitations. The use of test-retest reliability with a pilot group from Isiolo, while useful, raises methodological concerns. Repeating the test on a population outside the main study area may not reflect the full contextual and semantic nuances relevant to Garissa Township. Subtle shifts in how respondents interpret questions (especially those linked to sensitive gender norms) can compromise reliability even if statistical measures appear strong. Also, while Cronbach's alpha is a standard metric, it assumes that all items are equally relevant to the construct being measured, which may not hold in socio-culturally loaded instruments. High

alpha values can also be misleading if they reflect redundancy rather than true conceptual alignment.

To counter these risks, the study took deliberate steps to strengthen instrument reliability post-pilot. Items that showed instability or inconsistent interpretation during the test-retest phase were either reworded or replaced entirely before the main data collection. Thematic alignment was further tested by triangulating responses across instruments, specifically, comparing questionnaire results with qualitative data obtained through interview schedules. Thematic analysis of these interviews helped flag ambiguous or poorly framed items that quantitative methods alone might not reveal. In addition, enumerators were thoroughly trained to minimize interviewer bias and to ensure consistent administration of the tools, especially in a culturally sensitive environment where phrasing could unintentionally skew responses.

In summary, while standard statistical measures of reliability were applied, the study did not treat them as sufficient on their own. Instead, it complemented these metrics with qualitative triangulation and real-time feedback adjustments. This integrative strategy ensured that the instruments remained not just statistically sound, but contextually grounded, a critical requirement when studying deeply rooted socio-cultural phenomena like gendered political participation.

3.7 Data Processing and Analysis

Data analysis involves arranging and structuring raw data in order to draw out valuable insights (Kothari and Garg, 2019). Therefore, this research used both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a thorough understanding of the study questions. The quantitative data collected from the surveys were analyzed utilising both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the main characteristics of the data; these included measures of central

tendency (mean, median, mode) as well as measures of variability (range of scores, variance, and standard deviation). The descriptive statistics provided a summary of demographics, attitudes, and behaviour for the research participants. Inferential statistics were used to study the relationships between the independent variables, including educational pathway, gender perceptions, religious beliefs and practices, and cultural views of women's ability to lead, and the dependent variable (access to women's political leadership) in Garissa Township Sub-County. Furthermore, regression analysis was conducted to assess the strength and direction of each of these relationships as well as to predict how each independent variable (and combinations of independent variables) impacted a woman's access to political participation and leadership.

Using the SPSS statistical software package to analyze data allowed for the efficient management of multiple variables, using both descriptive and inferential procedures, and for creating reproducible results. SPSS's use in the study of the trends in and relationships between the independent variables and the access of women to positions of leadership provided clarity in visualizing these trends and statistical relationships.

The women in this study discussed the barriers they face due to educational opportunities, gender expectations, religious norms, and cultural beliefs by responding to questions in semi-structured interviews, participating in focus groups, and providing open-ended responses to survey questions. Through these responses, the study's thematic analysis aims to familiarize itself with the data, code the data, develop themes, review the data, and synthesize the results. This process provided an opportunity to understand in depth the participants' experiences, perceptions of themselves, and the narratives that they create regarding their access to political leadership.

The combination of quantitative and qualitative data supported the triangulation and multidimensionality of understanding how the participants' educational pathways, gender-based views and perceptions, religious beliefs and practices, and cultural beliefs influence their access to leadership in the Garissa Township Sub-County. Both the statistically valid and contextually rich nature of the mixed-methods approach allowed for capturing the complexity of the interaction between social and cultural structures and the political opportunities available to the women in this study.

3.8 Legal and Ethical Considerations

This study placed strong emphasis on ethical considerations to ensure the well-being and rights of participants, as well as to maintain the overall integrity of the research. Ethical approval was sought from the university's ethical review board, aligning the study with institutional standards. Compliance with national regulations in Kenya was ensured by obtaining approval from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). At the local level, permission was obtained from relevant sub-county offices within Garissa Township.

The voluntary nature of participation was upheld through informed consent procedures. Potential participants were provided with detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, and potential implications. They were explicitly informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw at any point without facing any consequences.

Confidentiality was treated as a top priority. Measures such as anonymizing data and implementing secure data storage systems were used to protect participants' identities and responses. In addressing potential benefits and risks, the researcher communicated both the expected

contributions of the study to knowledge and practice and any potential discomforts or risks associated with participation. This information was clearly presented during the consent process to ensure participants could make well-informed decisions.

Finally, a debriefing procedure was conducted to address any queries or concerns that arose after data collection and to provide participants with additional information and support. This process enhanced transparency and helped protect participant well-being throughout the research.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION, AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study on sociocultural influences on gender dynamics and women's leadership in governance in Garissa Township Sub-County, using both quantitative and qualitative data. It begins with demographic characteristics of respondents, which are essential for understanding the social context that shapes attitudes toward women in leadership. These demographics are not just background; they help identify patterns, potential biases, and the extent to which the sample reflects the broader population. The chapter then moves into a thematic analysis of the main study variables, linking them to relevant literature, theoretical perspectives, and the governance realities of Garissa County.

4.2. Demographic Information

4.1.1 Personal Identity (Gender, Age, Religion, Ethnicity)

Understanding the personal identity of respondents is foundational to analyzing how sociocultural norms influence gender dynamics. These identity markers often determine access to power, exposure to leadership, and the extent to which individuals endorse or resist women's roles in governance. The composition of the sample in terms of gender, age, religion, and ethnicity, therefore, sets the stage for interpreting deeper cultural currents.

Table 4.1 shows that the majority of respondents were female (68.6%), while males accounted for 31.4%. In terms of age, most participants were between 25 and 44 years, with 44.2% falling within the 25–34 range and 49.6% within the 35–44 range. Only 6.2% were aged 45–54. Regarding

religion, 63% of respondents identified as Muslim and 37% as Christian. Ethnically, Somali respondents made up the largest group at 63%, followed by Kikuyu (15.4%), Kamba (9.3%), and Turkana (6.2%). Another 6.2% did not specify their ethnicity.

Table 4.1 Personal Identity of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	122	31.4
	Female	267	68.6
	Total	389	100
Age Bracket	25–34 years	172	44.2
	35–44 years	193	49.6
	45–54 years	24	6.2
	Total	389	100
Religion	Islam	245	63
	Christianity	144	37
	Total	389	100
Ethnicity	Somali	245	63
	Kikuyu	60	15.4
	Kamba	36	9.3
	Turkana	24	6.2
	Not specified / unknown	24	6.2
	Total	389	100

The 68.6% female imbalance in the quantitative sample reflects the nature of household-level participation resulting from a multistage sampling strategy that combined clustered, systematic, random, and purposive methods. Women were more available and open to discussing issues of exclusion, leading to their overrepresentation, a trade-off accepted to gain depth in grassroots perspectives on women’s political participation. In contrast, key informants such as traditional elders, religious leaders, and political elites were sampled separately through purposive sampling

and are represented in the qualitative data. This separation ensured leadership voices were included without mixing community sentiment with institutional power, preserving methodological and analytical clarity.

The age distribution, concentrated in the 25–44-year range, suggests the sample draws from socially and politically active individuals who are more likely to interact with governance structures and evolving gender norms. The predominance of Somali (63%) and Muslim (63%) respondents reflected Garissa’s demographic makeup, but this overlap did not obscure the internal diversity within and across these groups. While Somali-Muslim norms had shaped dominant expectations around gender and leadership, particularly through clan structures and religious authority, experiences were not uniform. For example, a Somali Christian woman could face compounded exclusion based on both her clan position and minority religious status, while non-Somali groups such as the Kikuyu or Kamba appeared to approach women’s leadership through different cultural and religious frameworks, often less influenced by clan dynamics. By recognizing these distinctions, the study avoided treating identity groups as monolithic and instead engaged more critically with how culture, religion, and gender intersected. This approach sharpened the analysis and provided a more grounded account of the complex realities women navigated in seeking political leadership in Garissa.

Compared to national datasets like the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS 2022), this study’s sample had a much higher proportion of Muslim (63%) and Somali (63%) respondents, reflecting the actual makeup of Garissa Township, even though these figures are well above the national averages. This wasn’t a limitation, but an intentional focus that helped the study explore how local cultural and religious norms shape women’s political participation. Respondents spoke about the real, everyday barriers they faced: needing clan or male approval to run for office, limited

freedom to appear in public without male relatives, and a widespread belief that leadership goes against expectations of modesty for women. Even so, the data also revealed quiet but meaningful ways some women worked within these boundaries, by framing their ambitions as community service or using religious language to justify their involvement in public life. While such strategies were not common, they offered insight into how women in Garissa navigate a landscape shaped by strong patriarchal and religious traditions. Focusing on this demographic helped the study move past broad national averages and instead capture the deeper, more specific dynamics shaping women's leadership in this particular context.

Similarly, while female respondents dominate the sample, this does not necessarily indicate female dominance in political voice or leadership. Previous studies, such as Hussein (2022), found that in North Eastern Kenya, high female participation in surveys often masks deep structural exclusion in leadership settings. This contrast points to a key analytical tension: women may be present in civic spaces, but not necessarily powerful within them. What these comparisons reveal is not representativeness in a national sense, but cultural concentration. The data reflects the voices most likely to influence or experience sociocultural constraints around leadership in Garissa. Rather than weakening the study, this demographic specificity sharpens its relevance: it gives us a closer view of the environment in which women must navigate their roles, challenge gender norms, and assert public leadership.

4.1.2 Socioeconomic Status (education, occupation, marital status, household size)

Understanding the socioeconomic background of respondents is essential to contextualizing women's participation in leadership within Garissa Township Sub-County. Education, employment, marital status, and household size are not merely demographic descriptors; they are deeply tied to women's access to power, decision-making authority, and public legitimacy. These

factors often shape not just the capacity to lead, but the perceived appropriateness of leadership by women in patriarchal sociocultural settings. Table 4.2 below summarizes the findings

Table 4.2 Selected Socioeconomic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Highest Level of Education	No formal education	20	5.1
	Primary education	6	1.5
	Secondary education	10	2.6
	Diploma	123	31.6
	Bachelor's degree	206	53
	Postgraduate degree	24	6.2
	Total	389	100
Marital Status	Single	122	31.4
	Married	243	62.5
	Divorced	24	6.2
	Total	389	100
Occupation	Employed	231	59.4
	Self-employed	109	28
	Unemployed	49	12.6
	Total	389	100
Household Size	1–3 members	74	19
	4–6 members	194	49.9
	7–9 members	72	18.5
	More than 9 members	49	12.6
	Total	389	100

The socioeconomic profile of the respondents reveals a generally well-educated sample. A majority held either a bachelor's degree (53%) or a diploma (31.6%), with only 5.1% having no formal education. In terms of marital status, 62.5% were married, 31.4% single, and 6.2% divorced. Employment patterns showed that 59.4% were employed, 28% self-employed, and 12.6% unemployed. Household size also varied, with nearly half (49.9%) living in mid-sized households

of 4–6 members, while 19% lived in smaller households (1–3 members) and 31.1% lived in larger ones (7 or more members).

While demographic data showed that many women in the study were educated and economically active, traits often linked to empowerment, these factors did not guarantee leadership participation. Their impact depended heavily on household dynamics and cultural expectations. Qualitative interviews revealed that some married women with large families navigated leadership roles with the backing of their spouses or clans, while others found these same structures restrictive. As one respondent put it, *“Even with education, if your husband says no, that’s the end of the conversation.”* This revealed a clear pattern where formal education and employment gave women some leverage, but only when these were accepted within local social and cultural boundaries. In Garissa, factors such as clan ties, marital status, and community approval often mattered more than professional credentials. By linking demographic data to lived experiences, the study avoided surface-level assumptions and showed how women’s agency was shaped by both opportunities and constraints.

From a sociological lens, the findings point to a tension between women’s personal capacity and the social structures that regulate their legitimacy. While many respondents were educated and economically active, their ability to step into leadership was shaped by broader norms around gender and public visibility. As one woman noted, *“You can be qualified, but if the elders haven’t seen your family name before, they won’t trust you.”* This suggests that, beyond credentials, recognition within existing social hierarchies remains crucial. Although the study did not measure clan affiliation directly, the dominance of Somali and Muslim respondents, groups where clan identity often plays a key role, provides important context for interpreting how leadership credibility is conferred. Drawing on Okinda et al. (2020), who note that patriarchal systems expect

women to lead without transgressing domestic expectations, these findings suggest that even empowered women must navigate a narrow path shaped by both cultural authority and moral acceptability. The absence of direct clan data is a limitation, but the recurring emphasis on family approval, name recognition, and male gatekeeping in the qualitative responses signals how deeply embedded structural filters still govern who gets to lead.

The implication here is that capacity-building alone is not enough. Without addressing the cultural scripts that define "respectable womanhood" and leadership legitimacy, women's educational and occupational gains will continue to hit invisible ceilings. Policy interventions must therefore go beyond training and mentorship, toward shifting community-level norms and gatekeeping structures that define who gets to lead, and why.

4.1.3 Respondents' Place Attachment and Political Affiliation

The study also enquired into respondents' connection to Garissa Township, measured by duration of residence, and their political alignment. Table 4.3 summarizes the findings.

Table 4.3 Respondents' Duration of Stay and Political Affiliation

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Duration of Stay in Garissa Township	1–5 years	97	24.9
	6–10 years	121	31.1
	More than 10 years	171	44
	Total	389	100
Political Affiliation	Affiliated with a political party	24	6.2
	Independent	194	49.9
	Prefer not to say	171	44
	Total	389	100

The findings show that a significant proportion of respondents (44%) have lived in Garissa Township for more than 10 years, while another 31.1% have been residents for 6–10 years. This suggests that a majority of the participants are long-term residents with likely strong ties to local cultural and governance systems. Only about a quarter (24.9%) were relatively recent arrivals (1–5 years). Regarding political affiliation, nearly half (49.9%) identified as independent, 44% preferred not to disclose their affiliation, and only 6.2% reported being affiliated with a political party.

This pattern implies a complex relationship between local embeddedness and political identity. The large number of long-term residents may mean that many respondents are deeply embedded in traditional clan-based governance structures, which could either support or resist women's political participation depending on prevailing cultural norms. The low formal political affiliation rate (6.2%) and high preference to abstain from disclosure (44%) may reflect distrust in formal political processes or fear of political exposure, especially in a region where party politics is often intertwined with clan interests and religious conservatism.

These dynamics are important when analyzing women's leadership access. Long-term residence may grant women local legitimacy but also expose them more acutely to traditional gatekeeping. Meanwhile, political independence might suggest openness to non-partisan forms of leadership, or it might reflect disengagement from formal power structures altogether. As Kandala et al. (2019) note, in conservative regions of Kenya, formal politics often remains a male-dominated space, and community actors, particularly women, may navigate leadership through informal or civic channels instead.

Overall, the efforts to promote women’s leadership must account for both community embeddedness and political culture. Long-term residents may have social capital that newer arrivals lack, but they may also face stronger pressure to conform to established gender norms. Additionally, the ambivalence toward political affiliation highlights a need for safe, inclusive political platforms where women and the broader community can engage without fear or stigma. Leadership programs that ignore these local dynamics risk reinforcing the very exclusions they aim to dismantle.

4.3. Education as an Entry Point: women’s leadership aspirations and opportunities in Garissa Township.

Respondents were asked how important access to formal education is in preparing women for leadership roles. The aim was to assess whether the community sees schooling as a credible pathway to leadership for women, or whether informal cultural knowledge systems still dominate public thinking. This question was central to testing not just the availability of education, but whether it is socially legitimized as a foundation for women’s leadership in the Garissa Township context. The findings are summarized in Figure 4.1 below:

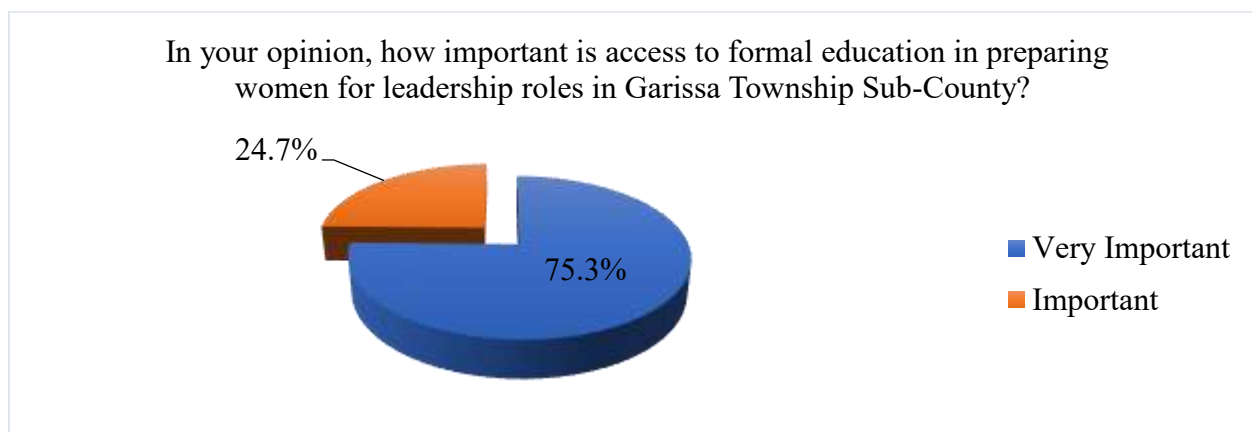


Figure 4.1 Perceptions on the Role of Formal Education in Preparing Women for Leadership in Garissa Township

The data reveal near-unanimous agreement that access to formal education plays a critical role in preparing women for leadership. A striking 75.3% of respondents felt it was very important, while the remaining 24.7% still considered it important. The absence of any dismissive responses points to a broad societal shift: education is no longer viewed simply as a personal good, but as a legitimate foundation for women's public leadership. This is particularly significant in a context where leadership has traditionally been shaped by elder councils, clan ties, or religious endorsement. The findings suggest growing acceptance that formal schooling provides the skills, exposure, and confidence women need to contest and occupy leadership roles.

This response pattern confirms that education is not only structurally valuable but also socially endorsed as a leadership tool for women. It also signals that the community may be open to women stepping into leadership spaces, provided they have educational qualifications. This point matters for policy because it shows that investing in women's education in Garissa is likely to be met with social support rather than resistance.

To interrogate this further, a cross-tabulation was conducted between respondents' views on the importance of formal education (Q11) and their belief in the relevance of cultural knowledge systems for preparing women for leadership (Q13). The results, summarized in Table 4.4, reveal important tensions.

Table 4.4 Crosstabulation of Views on Formal Education and Cultural Knowledge in Women's Leadership

Importance of Formal Education (Q11)	Belief in Cultural Knowledge Systems(Q13)			Total
	Yes	No	Not Sure	
Very Important	158 (54.0%)	111 (38.0%)	24 (8.0%)	293 (100%)
Important	24 (25.0%)	24 (25.0%)	48 (50.0%)	96 (100%)
Total	182 (46.8%)	135 (34.7%)	72 (18.5%)	389 (100%)

Chi-Square Test Summary

Pearson Chi-Square = 84.677, df = 2, $p < 0.001$

Spearman Correlation = 0.371, $p < 0.001$

Pearson's R = 0.403, $p < 0.001$

The results, presented in Table 4.4 above, reveal a more layered reality. Among those who saw formal education as “very important,” 54.0% also affirmed the value of cultural knowledge systems, while 38.0% rejected them and 8.0% were uncertain. This shows that strong support for formal education does not automatically displace traditional values. In fact, belief in both systems can, and does, coexist. Among those who rated formal education as merely “important,” only 25.0% endorsed cultural knowledge systems, and half were unsure. This group appears less anchored in either perspective, indicating a weaker overall conviction.

Statistical analysis confirmed the significance of this relationship. The Pearson Chi-Square test produced a value of 84.677 (df = 2, $p < 0.001$), and correlation tests showed moderate positive

associations (Spearman's $\rho = 0.371$, Pearson's $R = 0.403$; both $p < 0.001$). These results suggest that a stronger commitment to formal education is linked to clearer positions on cultural systems, whether supportive or dismissive, while less enthusiastic views on education tend to align with uncertainty about cultural alternatives.

The cross-tabulation deepens the analysis by showing that support for formal education does not mean people reject cultural knowledge. In Garissa Township, many view both systems as important for preparing women for leadership. While schooling offers new opportunities, traditional knowledge still holds value, especially in roles tied to clan identity or community conflict resolution. The moderate correlation ($r = 0.403$) suggests a meaningful relationship, but it doesn't prove one causes the other. Other factors, such as age, exposure to civic programs, or religious teachings, could influence both attitudes. Still, the findings suggest that education and cultural knowledge are not always in conflict.

These findings align with Aga (2022), who studied Somali communities in Isiolo County and found that support for formal schooling often coexisted with a deep respect for traditional values. Schooling didn't replace cultural expectations but added to them, especially for girls expected to lead in ways that reflect family or community honor. The current results affirm this blend, showing that in Garissa, both forms of knowledge are seen as complementary tools for equipping women to lead. This understanding is key for policies that aim to build on what communities already see as legitimate paths to leadership.

Following the cross-tabulation of community views on formal and cultural education in shaping women's leadership, the next layer of analysis asked respondents to rank different types of

education based on their influence on women’s leadership participation. This ranking was aimed at clarifying the perceived weight each form of learning carries in influencing women’s visibility, agency, and acceptability in leadership spaces within Garissa Township. Respondents were instructed to rank each education type from 5 (most influential) to 1 (least influential), and the results are summarized in Table 4.5 below.

Table 4.5 Perceived Influence of Different Education Types on Women’s Eligibility for Leadership Roles in Garissa Township

Type of Education	Most Influential	Moderate	Low	V.Low/Least Influential	Mean	SD
Formal education (e.g., schools, universities)	217 (55.8%)	98 (25.2%)	29 (7.5%)	45 (11.6%)	2.19	1.455
Vocational/technical education (e.g., trade or skills)	24 (6.2%)	147 (37.8%)	45 (11.6%)	118 (30.3%)	3.458	1.23
Informal education (e.g., community/religious teaching)	80 (20.6%)	111 (28.5%)	50 (12.9%)	148 (38.0%)	3.478	1.5
Cultural knowledge systems (e.g., traditional/community)	49 (12.6%)	140 (36.0%)	34 (8.7%)	166 (42.7%)	3.689	1.352

Formal education (e.g., schools, universities) was ranked “Most Influential” by 217 respondents (55.8%), “Moderate” by 98 (25.2%), “Low” by 29 (7.5%), and “Very Low/Least Influential” by 45 (11.6%). It had a mean score of 2.190 and a standard deviation of 1.455, reflecting both high perceived value and relatively tight agreement among respondents. Compared to other education types, it stood out as the most consistently endorsed pathway for preparing women for leadership, likely due to its institutional authority and societal recognition.

Vocational and technical education (e.g., trade schools, skill-building courses) had more mixed perceptions. Only 24 respondents (6.2%) rated it as “Most Influential,” while 147 (37.8%) viewed it as “Moderate.” A further 45 (11.6%) considered it “Low,” and 118 (30.3%) deemed it “Very Low.” It had a mean score of 3.458 and a standard deviation of 1.230, suggesting a broader

divergence in views. While technical skills may be seen as practical, they appear to carry less weight when it comes to public leadership credibility, perhaps because they are often disconnected from the political and civic literacy expected of elected leaders.

Informal education, including community or religious instruction, was ranked “Most Influential” by 80 respondents (20.6%), “Moderate” by 111 (28.5%), “Low” by 50 (12.9%), and “Very Low” by 148 (38.0%). It had a mean of 3.478 and a relatively wide standard deviation of 1.500. Although these forms of education are locally valued, they are often perceived as lacking the structure, visibility, and political clout needed to elevate women into formal leadership roles.

Cultural knowledge systems, such as traditional leadership roles or indigenous teachings, attracted the least confidence. Only 49 respondents (12.6%) rated them “Most Influential,” while 140 (36.0%) ranked them as “Moderate.” The rest classified them as “Low” (34; 8.7%) or “Very Low” (166; 42.7%). This category had the highest mean score of 3.689 and a standard deviation of 1.352, reflecting low consensus and low endorsement. While some respondents may see cultural roots as important for social legitimacy, many appear to associate them with outdated norms that limit women's authority.

Two key informants, both politically active community leaders, helped explain why formal education continues to dominate. One ward representative argued,

“Even if a woman is wise and cares about the community, people won’t take her seriously if she doesn’t have academic papers. Political parties and the law expect those qualifications. That’s where everything begins.”

This points to the institutional nature of the demand, not just cultural expectation, but legal and structural barriers. Another grassroots activist put it more bluntly:

“People might listen to a woman who speaks well, but if she didn’t go to school, they’ll say she’s not fit to lead. School helps women build the skills and confidence to deal with that kind of judgment.”

These quotes reinforce that the value of formal education lies in both structural gatekeeping (legal or bureaucratic qualifications) and personal transformation (confidence, civic awareness, public presence). While other education forms are still acknowledged, especially vocational and informal systems, they are largely seen as secondary or complementary.

Compared to similar studies, these findings both align and diverge. A study by Owuor (2021) in Wajir County also identified formal education as the most cited enabler for women’s election into political seats, particularly where ethnic or religious conservatism makes public credibility a hurdle. However, Ngunjiri and Wamue-Ngare (2018) critiqued this formalism bias, arguing that community-based knowledge systems offer more practical, culturally grounded models of leadership, especially in peacebuilding roles. That said, such knowledge often lacks institutional recognition, which may explain its weaker ranking here.

What this data makes clear is that in Garissa, leadership remains tightly tied to formal education both symbolically and procedurally. However, the relatively high standard deviations, especially for informal and vocational forms, suggest there is room for policy advocacy that promotes multi-modal pathways to leadership, not just one rooted in academic elitism.

When asked, “What barriers do you think women face in accessing both formal and informal education, which might hinder their participation in leadership roles in Garissa Township?” many participants pointed to deep-rooted social and cultural norms that continue to shape the lives of women and girls. The responses highlighted how long-standing beliefs, early marriage, family

pressure, and religious interpretations directly influence both access to education and the possibility of women stepping into leadership roles.

A recurring statement was the belief that “*women are not meant for certain positions.*” This reflects the widespread view that leadership, especially in public or political spaces, is a male domain. This perception limits the support girls receive from a young age and carries into adulthood, where women are discouraged or even blocked from leadership pathways.

Another key concern raised was “*early marriage is a major factor that inhibits women from furthering their education.*” Several respondents mentioned how girls are often pulled out of school at a young age, which not only limits their formal education but also stifles their personal development and confidence, two things crucial for leadership roles. This was echoed in the repeated mention of “*traditions like early marriage,*” and the cultural practice of prioritizing boys' education, with one participant noting simply, “*early marriage and favouring boys' education over girls' education.*”

The role of religion and culture was also prominent in the responses. Several people said “*religion and culture don't support the education of a girl*” or mentioned “*religious and cultural beliefs*” as a barrier. While this doesn't necessarily reflect the official stance of any religious doctrine, it shows how these beliefs are interpreted and enforced at the community level, often leading to girls being kept out of school.

Support from families was another major theme. Many mentioned “*lack of family support or community,*” indicating that even when opportunities do exist, girls may not be allowed, or

encouraged, to take them. This lack of backing can make it almost impossible for girls to stay in school or speak up later in life, especially in male-dominated settings.

Lastly, FGM (female genital mutilation) was cited repeatedly, simply written as “**FGM.**” Though not expanded upon in detail, its inclusion among the barriers shows its continued relevance as a harmful practice that impacts girls' health, rights, and long-term educational prospects.

Together, these comments paint a clear picture of how deeply entrenched cultural and gender norms in Garissa Township continue to limit women's educational access and leadership participation, not just through policy gaps, but through everyday community attitudes and practices.

4.4. Gender Norms and the Persistence of Stereotypes

The second objective of this study was to assess the impact of gender-based perceptions on women's ability to secure and perform leadership roles in Garissa Township Sub-County. One way to approach this was by exploring voter willingness to elect female candidates, since community attitudes during elections offer a direct lens into the structural and cultural barriers that women face. Understanding these attitudes is critical, not just as a gauge of current sentiment, but as a predictor of future access to political power for women in the region. If the electorate is uncomfortable with female leadership, then even capable women may struggle to be elected or taken seriously once in office.

To capture this, respondents were asked: "How willing are voters in Garissa Township Sub-County to elect female candidates, regardless of gender preferences?" The responses are summarized in Figure 4.2 below.

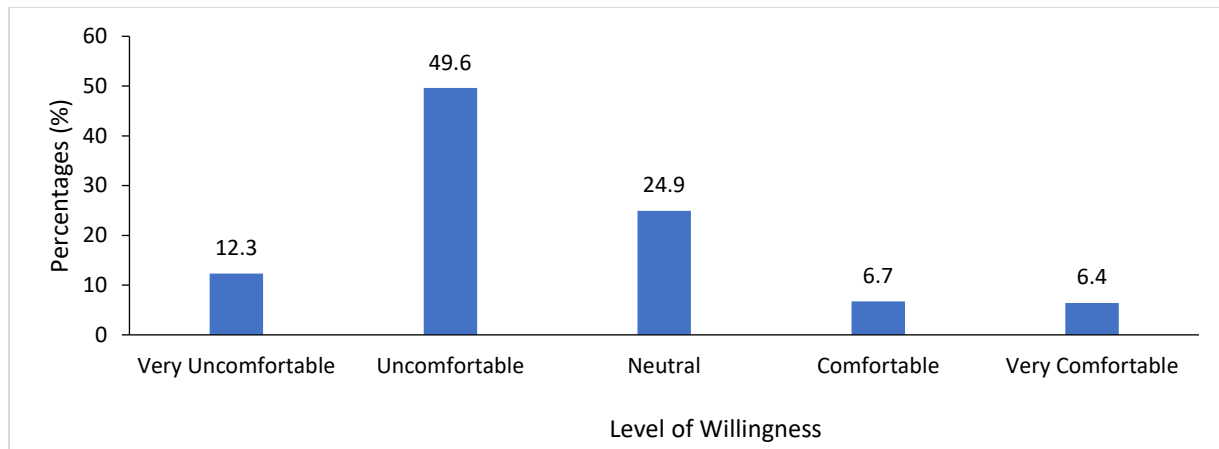


Figure 4.2 Voter Willingness to Elect Female Candidates in Garissa Township Sub-County

To deepen the understanding of voter attitudes toward women in political leadership, a crosstabulation was conducted between gender and willingness to elect female candidates. The goal was to uncover not just general attitudes, but whether gender itself influences voter openness to female leadership, and to what extent.

Table 4.6 Crosstabulation of Gender and Willingness to Elect Female Candidates in Garissa Township Sub-County

Willingness to Elect Female Candidates	Male	Female	Total
Very Uncomfortable	48 (39.3%)	0 (0.0%)	48 (12.3%)
Uncomfortable	48 (39.3%)	145 (54.3%)	193 (49.6%)
Neutral	0 (0.0%)	97 (36.3%)	97 (24.9%)
Comfortable	26 (21.3%)	0 (0.0%)	26 (6.7%)
Very Comfortable	0 (0.0%)	25 (9.4%)	25 (6.4%)
Total	122 (100%)	267 (100%)	389 (100%)

Chi-Square result ($\chi^2 = 221.475$, $p < .001$)

The results were statistically significant (Pearson $\chi^2 = 221.475$, $df = 4$, $p < .001$), indicating a strong association between voter gender and openness to female leadership. Out of 122 male respondents, 39.3% were “very uncomfortable,” and another 39.3% were “uncomfortable” with electing a

female candidate. None selected “very comfortable.” Among 267 female respondents, the largest share (54.3%) was also “uncomfortable,” but a meaningful portion were either “neutral” (36.3%) or “very comfortable” (9.4%). This polarization suggests gendered rigidity in political attitudes, particularly among men.

At face value, the results suggest male voters in Garissa Township Sub-County exhibit strong discomfort toward female political leadership: 78.6% of men were either “very uncomfortable” or “uncomfortable,” and none expressed feeling “very comfortable.” In contrast, female voters, while still showing notable hesitation (54.3% “uncomfortable”), had a more mixed response, with 36.3% selecting “neutral” and 9.4% saying they were “very comfortable.” This creates a sharp gendered divergence in attitudes, which the qualitative data help unpack.

These numerical trends were echoed in qualitative responses. One male respondent stated bluntly:

“A woman cannot lead men. That would shame her clan. We follow elders, and our elders are men.” (Male respondent, 37 years)

Similarly, a female participant expressed discomfort rooted in societal expectations:

“Even if I believe in her, my husband and the elders will not support me if I vote for a woman. It’s not worth the fight.” (Female Respondent, 34 years)

However, there were contrasting voices among women, especially younger ones:

“Some women are more honest than men. If she shows leadership, I would support her.”

“We need change. Even if it is difficult, someone has to try. Maybe the young can vote differently.”

From the above, it is clear that male resistance was deeply rooted in cultural norms around leadership and clan identity. Statements like *“A woman cannot lead men. That would shame her*

clan” reflect an entrenched patriarchy that sees female leadership not just as inappropriate but as disruptive to social order. Among women, the picture was more layered. Some reinforced this patriarchal logic by citing external pressures—“*my husband and the elders will not support me*”, while others, particularly younger women, expressed quiet defiance or hope for change.

The present study contrasts sharply with Yalley’s (2021) findings in Ghana, where female voters prioritized policy issues over gender identity, often supporting candidates who championed social welfare regardless of sex. In Garissa, by contrast, political participation, especially for women, is tightly regulated by clan approval, religious authority, and expectations tied to family honor. While clan endorsement is not a legal requirement, it functions as an informal but powerful gatekeeper, with several respondents noting that candidates without elder backing are viewed as illegitimate. Religious leaders also wield considerable influence, and some participants described mosque teachings that discourage women from seeking public roles, framing leadership as incompatible with norms of modesty and male guardianship. In this context, “honor” refers to a woman’s ability to remain within the boundaries of obedience and public restraint, which directly clashes with the assertiveness and visibility expected in politics. Unlike Ghana, where civic education and gender inclusion programs have stronger institutional grounding, Garissa lacks comparable structures to challenge these norms. As a result, discomfort with women candidates in Garissa stems less from policy disagreements and more from whether female leadership is seen as socially and morally acceptable. This makes Garissa not just culturally distinct but structurally more restrictive for women in politics.

A similar contrast emerges when comparing these findings with those of Okinda et al. (2020) in Kakamega County, where gender was found to be a relatively minor factor in shaping voter preferences. In that context, education, civic awareness, and economic standing carried more weight, pointing to a more inclusive political environment in which both male and female candidates were assessed based on merit rather than identity. In Garissa, however, the reverse appears true. The current study found that gender remains a central axis of exclusion, particularly among male voters who expressed discomfort or outright rejection of female candidacy—often citing cultural or religious justifications. This does not contradict the Kakamega study but instead illustrates Kenya’s regional diversity in how gender norms intersect with electoral behavior. Where some counties may be transitioning toward performance-based evaluations, others, like Garissa, remain anchored in culturally embedded standards of leadership legitimacy.

Overall, the present study, alongside comparisons with previous research, shows that while gender bias in electoral politics is a shared challenge across contexts, its local expression varies significantly. In Garissa Township, the bias is not just present; it is deeply woven into the cultural and social fabric. This reinforces the point that efforts to promote women’s leadership must be rooted in local realities, addressing not just attitudes but the deeper cultural narratives that sustain them.

This complexity came through clearly when participants were asked, *“In your view, what challenges or opportunities arise from voters’ perceptions of gender in political leadership roles?”* Many gave responses that revealed how gendered assumptions continue to shape who gets to lead and who does not. One woman explained bluntly,

“Even if she is educated or capable, people still think a man should lead. They say leadership is not for women.”

“Even if she is educated or capable, people still think a man should lead. They say leadership is not for women.”

Another participant, a male elder, noted,

“Our people believe a woman should support, not lead. If she stands in front, she looks like she’s abandoning her role in the home.”

Others pointed out the strong and constant pressure that female candidates face, even after they manage to get nominated.

“Some will listen to her campaign, but in the end, they will vote for the man, because they trust men with power.”

These sentiments were not isolated. They were echoed across multiple interviews, suggesting a widespread, community-level belief system that associates political leadership with masculinity, respect, and clan endorsement. The language used often framed women as “helpers” or “caretakers,” rather than legitimate authority figures.

The quantitative data closely mirrors this narrative. In Question 15, 61.3% of respondents agreed that voter perceptions based on gender present a barrier to women seeking leadership positions, with male respondents significantly more likely to hold this view (71.4%) compared to women (29.6%). This gender gap was statistically significant and reinforced by crosstabulation findings showing that men over 35, particularly those with lower levels of formal education, were the most likely to express doubt about women’s capacity to lead politically.

Even among youth respondents (18–35), where more gender-progressive views were expected, 42.7% still expressed concern that the community would not fully accept female leaders, underscoring that generational change alone is not enough to shift the norm. However, there was

a small but notable group, 18.4% of all respondents, who identified women as more trustworthy or attentive to community needs, especially in areas like education, health, and family welfare.

Together, the qualitative voices and the quantitative trends tell a clear story: resistance to women's political leadership is still widespread, but it is not absolute. Change is possible, but it needs to be deliberate, localized, and strategic. The belief that "leadership is for men" is tied to how power works in Garissa, including clan negotiations, elder endorsements, and how voters interpret strength and credibility. Any serious intervention has to work within these systems, not just around them.

This aligns in part with the findings of Ono and Burden (2019), who observed that gender bias in voter decision-making is often modest but can be magnified by partisan expectations and cultural framing, especially in presidential contests and among male voters. While their study was based in the U.S. context, its core insight holds here, that perceptions of leadership are rarely shaped by gender alone. In Garissa, just like in other contexts, voters rely on familiar cues, like clan affiliation or elder support, to make sense of political choices. Gender bias becomes stronger when it aligns with those cues and weaker when it does not.

The implication is that policy responses or civic interventions would not succeed if they only tell voters to "support women." They will need to challenge the full logic of how leadership is understood, and that means dealing with culture, not just campaign messages. In other words, to shift outcomes, we need to shift meaning, which starts with expanding the spaces where women are already seen as credible, then pushing that credibility into the political sphere gradually.

4.5. Religion as a Gatekeeper of Political Legitimacy

To assess the role of religion in shaping women's access to leadership positions in Garissa Township Sub-County, respondents were asked to rate the perceived influence that religious leaders have on the public's willingness to vote for women candidates. This question aimed to uncover whether religious figures, who often hold moral authority in the community, act as gatekeepers, neutral actors, or enablers in women's political participation. The goal was not only to measure direct discouragement or encouragement but also to expose the spectrum of influence they might exert. Figure 4.3 presents the findings.

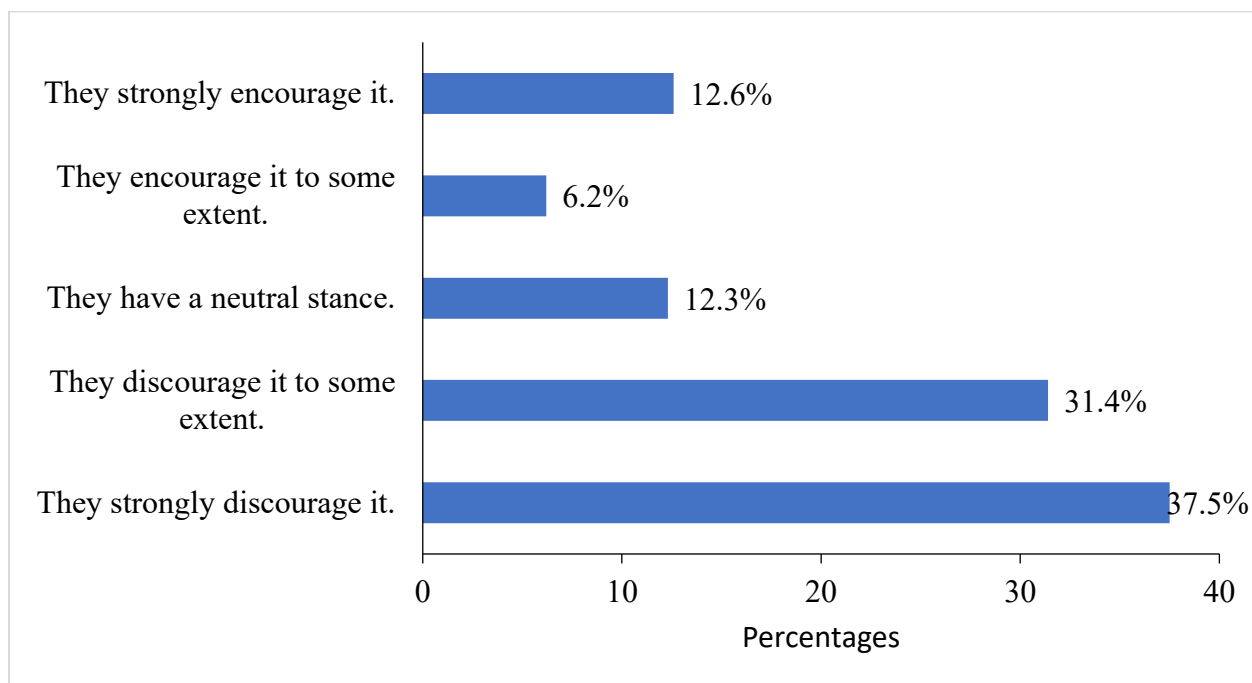


Figure 4.3 Public Perceptions of Religious Leaders' Influence on Support for Female Candidates

The present findings show that religious leaders are widely perceived as discouraging public support for women candidates in Garissa Township. Specifically, 37.5% of respondents said religious leaders strongly discourage voting for women, and another 31.4% said they discourage it to some extent. Only 18.8% perceived any level of encouragement, 6.2% said leaders encourage

it to some extent, and 12.6% said they strongly encourage it. Just 12.3% believed that religious leaders maintain a neutral stance. These numbers reveal a strong tilt toward resistance: nearly 7 in 10 people see religious leadership as a barrier rather than a bridge for women's political advancement.

The present study shows that in Garissa, religious leaders are widely seen as influencing voter attitudes against women candidates; nearly 69% of respondents felt they discourage voting for women. This challenges earlier research by Yalley (2021) in Ghana, which found religion had little sway in voter alignment, and goes beyond Nyaga's (2021) study in Embu, which noted religious influence on women's participation but didn't examine its impact on voter behavior. Unlike those contexts, the Garissa findings reveal that religion functions not as a neutral background factor, but as a strong, directional force that shapes who is considered politically acceptable, often to the disadvantage of women. This signals that religious discourse may be actively reinforcing gendered power hierarchies. It also points to a need for electoral strategies that directly engage religious messaging rather than treating it as incidental.

As a follow-up to the earlier question on religious leaders' influence on public willingness to vote for women, respondents were further asked to indicate the extent to which they believe religious practices shape the roles women occupy in political leadership within Garissa Township. This was designed to probe whether influence is merely rhetorical or if it translates into broader social norms that directly constrain women's political space. The results are summarized in Table 4.8.

Table 4.7 Perceived Influence of Religious Practices on Women’s Roles in Political Leadership in Garissa Township

Level of Influence	Frequency	Percent
They significantly limit women’s roles.	219	56.3
They somewhat limit women’s roles.	72	18.5
They have little to no impact.	24	6.2
They encourage women’s participation.	74	19
Total	389	100

This pattern confirms that religion is perceived more as a barrier than a bridge for women in political spaces. The low level of support for the idea that religion encourages participation reflects a lack of visible religious endorsement for gender equity in leadership. At the same time, the high rate of perceived limitation suggests that religious messages, or their local interpretations, are used to reinforce gender norms and exclude women from leadership by invoking moral or divine justification. This is not necessarily about religious doctrine itself, but about how religion is socially interpreted and enforced, often in ways that mirror broader patriarchal traditions.

Compared to Nyaga’s (2021) study in Embu County, which found that religion influences women’s participation in politics but did not delve into how communities perceive or internalize this influence, the present findings go further. In Garissa, religion is not just seen as part of the background culture; it is viewed as a structured and active force that helps define the boundaries of political participation. What sets this study apart is the clarity with which respondents describe religion as a limiting force, not through theological debate, but through lived experience and

community narratives. That clarity provides a useful entry point for intervention that is more culturally and socially attuned.

What these findings suggest is that religion may not be the root cause of women's exclusion, but a vehicle through which exclusion is justified. If women internalize these perceptions, even without formal religious sanctions, their political aspirations can be stifled from within. This complicates policy interventions that target religion itself, since the real issue may lie in social interpretation rather than scripture. A more strategic and potentially more effective path is to engage religious leaders not as adversaries, but as cultural gatekeepers capable of promoting inclusive interpretations. By focusing on dialogue, reinterpretation, and local legitimacy, it becomes possible to shift religion from a perceived constraint to a constructive force for change.

The study also asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with a set of statements exploring the relationship between religion and the success of women in political leadership. A five-point Likert scale was used, where 1 signified Strongly Disagree, 2 Disagree, 3 Neutral, 4 Agree, and 5 Strongly Agree. This was aimed at understanding how religious beliefs, affiliations, and teachings shape attitudes toward women in leadership. Table 4.8 provides the findings.

Table 4.8 Influence of Religious Factors on Women's Leadership Participation (N = 389)

Statement	SD	D	Neutral	A	SA	M	SD
Religious teachings on gender roles influence societal perceptions of women in leadership.	24 (6.2%)	121 (31.1%)	49 (12.6%)	98 (25.2%)	97 (24.9%)	3.316	1.308
Religious leaders' views shape public attitudes toward women in political leadership.	48 (12.3%)	98 (25.2%)	49 (12.6%)	97 (24.9%)	97 (24.9%)	3.249	1.391
Religious affiliations of women candidates affect their chances of success in leadership elections.	48 (12.3%)	48 (12.3%)	99 (25.4%)	121 (31.1%)	73 (18.8%)	3.316	1.258
The electoral success of women candidates is influenced by the religious perceptions of the voters.	65 (16.7%)	75 (19.3%)	102 (26.2%)	97 (24.9%)	50 (12.9%)	2.979	1.276
Religious factors play a role in shaping voter preferences for women candidates in leadership positions.	24 (6.2%)	73 (18.8%)	48 (12.3%)	171 (44.0%)	73 (18.8%)	3.504	1.172
Certain religious practices reinforce cultural norms that limit women's leadership opportunities.	114 (29.3%)	53 (13.6%)	78 (20.1%)	72 (18.5%)	72 (18.5%)	2.833	1.487

The findings show that religion plays a significant role in shaping public attitudes toward women in political leadership in Garissa Township. Nearly half of the respondents (49.8%) agreed or strongly agreed that religious teachings on gender roles influence societal perceptions of women leaders, with a mean of 3.316 (SD = 1.308), indicating moderate agreement. Similarly, 49.8% also felt that religious leaders influence public opinion on this issue (M = 3.249, SD = 1.391). These results highlight the role of religious institutions and figures in reinforcing traditional views about leadership as a male domain. Additionally, 49.9% of participants agreed that a woman's religious affiliation affects her chances of political success (M = 3.316, SD = 1.258), suggesting that religion not only shapes public opinion but may also influence voting behavior directly.

The strongest consensus emerged around the belief that religious factors shape voter preferences, with 62.8% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing ($M = 3.504$, $SD = 1.172$). However, views were more divided on whether religious perceptions of voters directly impact electoral outcomes, where the mean was more neutral ($M = 2.979$, $SD = 1.276$). The most contested issue was whether religious practices reinforce cultural norms that limit women's leadership, with a lower mean score ($M = 2.833$, $SD = 1.487$) and a large group (29.3%) strongly disagreeing. This suggests that while religion clearly influences perceptions and preferences, its role in upholding restrictive cultural norms is more debated, possibly due to differing interpretations of religious practice across the community.

When asked to share their personal views on the relationship between religion and women's leadership, respondents offered candid remarks that shed light on deeply held societal attitudes. Many described religion as a limiting force, often used to justify the exclusion of women from leadership positions. For example, some participants said

“Religion is used as a weapon to ensure women remain at arm's length,” or that “religion states that women are not supposed to lead a society.”

Others noted that

“Islam does not encourage women in leadership,” or emphasized that “women don't lead in the presence of men.”

These views suggest that in the Garissa Township context, religion is not only a private belief system but also a framework through which leadership legitimacy is judged, often to the disadvantage of women.

Several respondents also linked religion to how voters form opinions about women candidates. Statements such as “*religion influences the perception of voters about women’s capabilities*” point to a broader cultural climate where religious beliefs shape political behavior. While a few participants encouraged reflection, “*this should be an eye opener to women in leadership*”, most of the qualitative responses stressed the barrier effect of religion, especially where it intersects with cultural expectations and gender norms.

These qualitative perspectives match the quantitative trends. For instance, 49.8% either agreed or strongly agreed that religious teachings impact societal perceptions of female leaders. Similarly, 49.9% believed that a woman’s religious affiliation affects her electoral chances. The strongest consensus (62.8%) was that religious factors shape voter preferences for female candidates, highlighting the depth of religion’s influence in political spaces. Although there was some division regarding whether religious practices actively reinforce gendered cultural norms (with a more balanced spread across agreement and disagreement), the overall message is clear: religion is deeply entangled with political perceptions, and it often restricts women’s opportunities.

These findings align with other studies that have examined gender and politics in religiously conservative regions. In Kenya specifically, prior studies have also pointed to Islam and Christianity as institutions that sometimes support patriarchal interpretations of leadership, often influencing public attitudes toward women in politics (Nyaga, 2021). In many cases, women face a dual burden, not only having to prove their competence but also having to overcome religiously grounded skepticism about their right to lead. These insights reinforce what the current study has found in Garissa Township: while religion may serve a valuable social role, it can also act as a gatekeeper that upholds outdated gender norms.

Using Cultural Hegemony Theory, the findings suggest that religion in Garissa Township acts as a powerful cultural force that normalizes male dominance in leadership. Gramsci's idea, that dominant ideologies are reinforced through everyday institutions, helps explain why many view female leadership as unnatural, despite legal support for gender equality. However, a few respondents openly challenged this view, describing religion as a "weapon" or calling the situation "an eye opener for women." These voices represent the potential for counter-hegemony, offering alternative views that could shift cultural norms and gradually make women's leadership more accepted.

Overall, while the study confirms that religion significantly influences public perceptions of women in political leadership, it should not be overstated as a singular gatekeeper of political legitimacy. Rather, religion operates as a cultural amplifier, reinforcing pre-existing gender norms within a broader web of sociopolitical factors. The perception data show moderate but consistent agreement that religious teachings, leaders, and affiliations shape voter attitudes. However, actual political exclusion likely stems from a mix of religious, cultural, and structural forces. The presence of dissenting voices offers a potential for change, but their influence remains marginal for now. Going forward, efforts to increase women's leadership participation must be both culturally informed and systemically strategic, working across religious, political, and educational institutions to shift both perception and practice.

4.6. Cultural Narratives and the Boundaries of Electability

The fourth objective of this study was to analyze how cultural perceptions about women's competence affect their electability to political leadership roles in Garissa Township Sub-County. At the heart of this objective was the assumption that leadership is not evaluated purely on

individual merit but is also filtered through cultural expectations and community beliefs, especially in highly traditional contexts. To explore this, respondents were asked whether they believed that cultural perceptions influence the competence of women leaders in their area. Figure 4.3 below gives the findings.

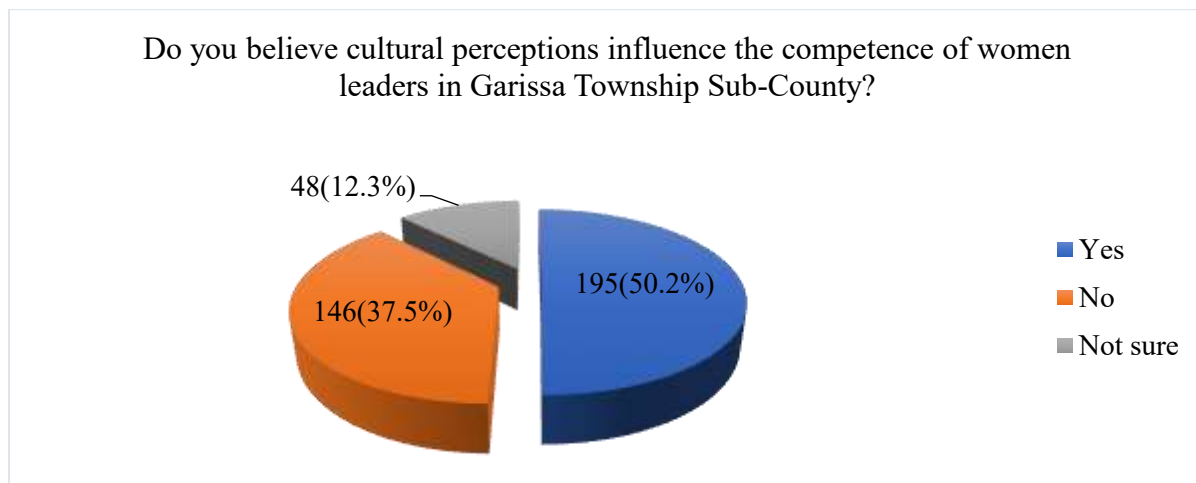


Figure 4.4 Do cultural perceptions influence the competence of women leaders in Garissa Township Sub-County?

As illustrated in Figure 4.3, just over half of the respondents (50.1%) affirmed that cultural perceptions influence the perceived competence of women leaders in Garissa Township Sub-County. A smaller proportion (37.5%) disagreed, while 12.3% were unsure. This division in opinion suggests that while many recognize the role of traditional beliefs, not everyone agrees, reflecting both cultural persistence and a degree of ideological shift within the community.

When further asked, “*How do you think these perceptions influence women’s leadership roles?*” respondents offered direct and often revealing insights. A common belief was that “*some roles are not for women,*” reinforcing the idea that leadership is still seen through a gendered lens. Many

linked this to assumptions that women “*lack leadership skills*” or are “*less competitive*” than men, perceptions that persist regardless of a woman’s actual qualifications.

One respondent put it clearly:

“Culturally, it is believed the woman’s place is in the kitchen.”

Such comments highlight how traditional norms continue to define women’s social roles, assigning them to domestic spaces and casting public leadership as a male preserve. Even when not explicitly stated, these beliefs shape how women are perceived in political spaces, not simply on their competence, but on how well they align with long-standing gender expectations.

Still, the fact that over a third of respondents (37.5%) rejected this view signals a society in transition. Yet, the weight of qualitative feedback, with repeated emphasis on gender roles, suggests that significant cultural barriers remain. Women are still being judged not just on their capacity to lead but on whether they conform to inherited ideas of who is “fit” to lead. That bar is not applied equally.

These findings resonate with broader research. Canudo and Ali (2018), in their study of Nairobi youth, found that women in leadership continue to face deeply embedded societal expectations. While both male and female leaders were recognized for their competence, women were more likely to be evaluated against traditional norms of behavior. Although their study focused on an urban university context, the same patterns appear in Garissa, albeit with a stronger influence from local cultural and religious values. This parallel strengthens the case that these are not isolated opinions but part of a broader pattern in Kenyan political culture.

Taken together, the evidence shows that cultural perceptions are not abstract. They actively shape how women are nominated, how campaigns are run, and how voters decide. Addressing skills or visibility alone is not enough; shifting these dynamics will require confronting the beliefs that still define leadership as a male domain.

To probe these views further, respondents were also asked to rate their agreement with a set of statements on how cultural perceptions affect women's competence and electability (Question 19). Using a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), this exercise was aimed at understanding how deeply such beliefs are held and where potential openings for change may exist.

Table 4.7 summarizes the findings.

Table 4.9 Perceptions on Cultural Influence and Women's Electability (n = 389)

Statement	SD	D	Neutral	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
Cultural perceptions of women's competence impact their electability to political leadership roles.	97 (24.9%)	72 (18.5%)	50 (12.9%)	163 (41.9%)	7 (1.8%)	2.771	1.2749
Voters' cultural beliefs play a role in shaping their views on the competence of women candidates.	48 (12.3%)	74 (19.0%)	25 (6.4%)	238 (61.2%)	4 (1.0%)	3.195	1.1410
Cultural factors contribute to either the empowerment or hindrance of women candidates in leadership positions.	48 (12.3%)	50 (12.9%)	49 (12.6%)	238 (61.2%)	4 (1.0%)	3.257	1.101
Women candidates' ability to conform to cultural expectations influences their electability.	98 (25.2%)	48 (12.3%)	49 (12.6%)	188 (48.3%)	6 (1.5%)	2.887	1.2914
The success of women candidates is influenced by how well their competence aligns with cultural norms in Garissa Township Sub-County.	96 (24.7%)	26 (6.7%)	97 (24.9%)	163 (41.9%)	7 (1.8%)	2.895	1.2401

The responses reveal notable divisions across all items, but also patterns that point to persistent cultural undercurrents. Roughly 60.3% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that cultural perceptions of women's competence influence their chances of being elected. Yet nearly 43.4% either disagreed or strongly disagreed, signaling a significant split in opinion. The mean score for this item was 2.77, with a high standard deviation of 1.275, indicating a broad range of views.

A clearer consensus emerged on the idea that voters' cultural beliefs shape how they judge women candidates' competence, with 62.2% agreeing and only 31.3% disagreeing. This item had a higher mean score of 3.20, suggesting firmer belief in the role of cultural influence at the voter level.

On whether culture can either empower or hinder women leaders, responses leaned similarly, where 62.2% agreed or strongly agreed, while only 25.2% disagreed. This item had the highest average rating at 3.26, pointing to wide recognition of the dual role culture can play.

Interestingly, opinions were more divided on whether women's ability to conform to cultural expectations influences their electability. While 49.8% agreed, a sizable 37.5% disagreed, and the item posted a middling mean of 2.89. A similar pattern was seen on the statement “The success of women candidates is influenced by how well their competence aligns with cultural norms in Garissa Township Sub-County,” where 43.7% believed that success depends on alignment with cultural norms, while 31.4% disagreed and 24.9% remained neutral. Again, the mean score of 2.90 and a relatively high standard deviation (1.24) pointed to ideological contestation.

These findings suggest that cultural perceptions still shape how many in the community assess women's political fitness, but this influence is not uniform or unchallenged. While majorities agree that cultural norms play a role, significant minorities reject or question this view. This split

underscores a community in transition: one still negotiating the boundaries of gender and leadership.

This tension was echoed in open-ended responses. For instance, one respondent observed:

“Some people believe a woman should remain at home, and not speak in public forums, let alone lead. But others, especially the youth, now think differently.”

Another pointed out:

“Competence is not about gender, but elders still think a woman cannot lead men. That’s the struggle we face.”

These comments validate the quantitative findings that show that culture still matters, although its hold is not absolute. Younger respondents, or those with more education or exposure, appear more willing to challenge inherited norms. Still, the weight of tradition, especially among older voters or gatekeepers, remains a filter through which female candidates must navigate.

The findings align with Cultural Hegemony Theory, which explains how dominant groups maintain power not through force, but through cultural norms internalized as “common sense” (Gramsci, 1971). In Garissa Township, the belief that women must conform to cultural expectations to be electable reflects how patriarchal ideals are reinforced by institutions like religion and education. The strong agreement across several items shows that many respondents have internalized these norms, which aligns with Gramsci’s view that cultural dominance relies on widespread consent (Jackson, 2018). However, the presence of disagreement and neutral responses reveals ideological cracks that the theory struggles to explain. Cultural Hegemony often underestimates individual agency and the potential for resistance. In this case, some respondents are clearly beginning to question or reject gendered leadership norms, which points to emerging counter-hegemonic thinking. While the theory is useful in framing how leadership is gendered in

public consciousness, it is less effective in capturing the complexity of cultural shifts already underway.

The overall implication here is that cultural beliefs clearly affect how people see women leaders, but they are not the sole factor. Politics, systems, and changing generations also play a role. Therefore, effective progress requires both cultural change and broader system reforms. Focusing only on culture oversimplifies the issue, while ignoring it overlooks a key part of the challenge.

4.7. Regression Analysis: Predictors of Support for Women's Political Leadership

To examine which sociocultural factors most strongly predict public support for women's leadership in governance, a binary logistic regression was conducted using data from Garissa Township Sub-County. The dependent variable was whether a respondent was willing to vote for a female candidate, coded as 1 (Yes) or 0 (No). Independent variables included: level of formal education, perceived cultural discouragement, religious discouragement, and perceived gender bias. These variables were selected based on theoretical relevance and prior descriptive trends in the data.

All independent variables met logistic regression assumptions. Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were below 2.5, confirming no significant multicollinearity. The overall model was statistically significant, $\chi^2(5) = 51.73$, $p < .001$, with a Nagelkerke R^2 value of 0.264. This suggests that approximately 26.4% of the variance in willingness to support a woman candidate is explained by the included predictors. The classification accuracy stood at 72.8%, indicating moderate predictive power. Table 4.10 summarizes the findings.

Table 4.10 Logistic Regression Predicting Willingness to Vote for a Woman Candidate

Predictor	B	S.E.	Wald	Sig.	Exp(B)
Educational pathways	1.243	0.337	13.63	0	3.466
Cultural perceptions of women's leadership	-0.921	0.288	10.21	0.001	0.398
Religious influence	-1.054	0.317	11.06	0.001	0.348
Gender-based perceptions	-0.873	0.302	8.35	0.004	0.417
Constant	-0.378	0.501	0.57	0.448	0.685

Model $\chi^2(5) = 51.73, p < .001$; Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.264$; Classification accuracy = 72.8%

The regression model shows that educational pathways had a strong and statistically significant positive effect on support for women's leadership ($B = 1.243, p < 0.001$). The odds ratio ($\text{Exp}(B) = 3.466$) indicates that respondents with exposure to formal education were over three times more likely to support women's leadership than those without such exposure. This reinforces the idea that education not only builds awareness but also actively challenges deeply held biases about gender roles. In contrast, cultural perceptions of women's leadership were a strong negative predictor ($B = -0.921, p = 0.001$). Respondents who internalized traditional cultural narratives that associate leadership with men were significantly less likely to support women in public decision-making roles. The odds of supporting women's leadership dropped by about 60% ($\text{Exp}(B) = 0.398$) for individuals influenced by such cultural views.

Religious influence also had a significant negative association with support for women's leadership ($B = -1.054, p = 0.001$), with an odds ratio of 0.348. This suggests that where religious teachings are interpreted in ways that limit female authority, they present a serious constraint on gender equality in leadership. Similarly, gender-based perceptions, including beliefs about innate

male superiority in leadership, significantly reduced the likelihood of support ($B = -0.873$, $p = 0.004$). Respondents holding such perceptions were less than half as likely to support women leaders ($\text{Exp}(B) = 0.417$). The constant term was not statistically significant, indicating that the base likelihood of support without any of the predictors is not meaningful on its own. What matters here is the direction and strength of the specific variables.

The model confirms that support for women's leadership in Garissa Township Sub-County is strongly shaped by sociocultural factors. Education emerges as the most powerful enabling factor; it triples the likelihood of support, suggesting that expanding access to formal education could have cascading effects on gender equity in governance. On the other hand, cultural, religious, and gender-based beliefs sharply constrain support, reinforcing systemic resistance even among otherwise civically engaged populations.

This evidence underscores the central thesis of the study: that efforts to increase women's representation must go beyond quotas or formal rights. They must engage the social and ideological foundations that either empower or block women from being seen as legitimate leaders. Without directly confronting the cultural and religious narratives that shape perception, policy reforms are likely to hit a ceiling. Educational interventions, religious dialogue, and targeted awareness campaigns are not just complementary; they are essential.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a synthesis of the study findings, concludes the data, and outlines actionable recommendations. The study explored how sociocultural factors, such as education, religion, gender perceptions, and cultural beliefs, influence women's access to and participation in leadership within governance structures in Garissa Township Sub-County. The chapter also suggests areas for further research that could deepen understanding or address remaining gaps.

5.2 Summary of Key Findings

The study was dominated by Somali and Muslim respondents, each making up 63% of the sample (Table 4.1), consistent with Garissa Township's demographic makeup. Despite high levels of formal education, over half held bachelor's degrees (53%) and nearly a third had diplomas (31.6%), and significant representation in formal employment (59.4%), women's presence in political structures remained low. Only 6.2% were affiliated with political parties (Table 4.3), even though 44% had lived in the area for over a decade. While the data suggest that many women had the capacity to lead, their low political participation points to other barriers not fully captured by the quantitative measures. Although the study did not collect detailed data on clan affiliation or religious practice, qualitative responses hinted at broader expectations around gender roles, respectability, and social permission, which likely shape how women navigate public life. Without overstating, the findings suggest that formal credentials alone are not enough; social acceptance, though harder to quantify, remains a key influence on leadership legitimacy in this context.

5.2.1 Education as an Entry Point: women's leadership aspirations and opportunities in Garissa Township.

The study found that formal education was widely viewed as the most influential pathway for women aspiring to leadership in Garissa Township. Over half of the respondents (55.8%) ranked it as highly important, with a mean score of 2.19 (SD = 1.455). In comparison, vocational education (M = 3.46, SD = 1.23), informal education (M = 3.48, SD = 1.50), and cultural education (M = 3.69, SD = 1.35) were rated significantly lower (Table 4.4). Instead, leadership legitimacy in Garissa is shaped less by qualifications and more by conformity to gendered expectations tied to modesty, marital status, and deference to male authority. For instance, several respondents emphasized that a woman without a husband “cannot represent the community well” or that women who speak assertively in public “lose respect.” Others noted that failing to wear a hijab “makes people question her morality.”

Qualitative data reinforced this perception, with many participants describing formal education as a source of confidence, credibility, and access to public platforms. Some also emphasized its role in helping women navigate political spaces dominated by men. However, a few respondents challenged the dominance of formal credentials, pointing to cases where women without formal schooling, particularly those grounded in cultural teachings or mentored through informal networks, exercised forms of leadership that carried weight within religious or elder-led spaces, though often in ways shaped by respectability rather than formal authority. For instance, one respondent explained, *“People might listen to a woman who speaks well, but if she didn’t go to school, they’ll say she’s not fit to lead. School helps women build the skills and confidence to deal with that kind of judgment.”* This highlights how informal influence depended not only on moral

standing or clan ties but also on education, which gave women credibility to speak publicly without being dismissed. While their roles may not have included formal decision-making, these women operated as trusted voices in settings where legitimacy was earned through knowledge, restraint, and social navigation, underscoring how leadership was possible even within constrained spaces.

Notably, 36.0% of respondents found cultural education moderately influential, while 28.5% said the same about informal education (Table 4.4). Though these pathways were acknowledged, their overall rankings were considerably lower, reinforcing the perception that leadership legitimacy is closely tied to formal education. This perception, while dominant, may obscure the value of alternative leadership trajectories that continue to shape influence within less formal but socially important domains. Regression analysis confirmed that formal education was the strongest predictor of support for women in political leadership, with a statistically significant coefficient ($\beta = 0.412$, $p < .001$), underscoring its central role in shifting voter attitudes.

5.2.2 Gender Norms and the Persistence of Stereotypes

The data revealed a strong gender gap in how voters in Garissa Township perceive female political leadership. Quantitative responses showed that 78.6% of male respondents were either “uncomfortable” (39.3%) or “very uncomfortable” (39.3%) with the idea of electing a woman, while none selected “very comfortable” (Table 4.6). Female responses showed more variation: 54.3% were uncomfortable, 36.3% were neutral, and only 9.4% were “very comfortable.” The relationship between gender and voter comfort was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 221.475$, $p < .001$), pointing to a deeply uneven distribution of attitudes.

These voter perceptions were not just anecdotal; they emerged as a significant barrier to women's political advancement. In Question 15, 61.3% of all respondents agreed that gender-based attitudes negatively affect women's chances (Table 4.7), with male respondents (71.4%) more likely to hold this view than females (29.6%). Younger voters (ages 18–35) were also more likely to flag voter bias as a problem, although the trend was not consistent across all age groups. This pattern was confirmed through regression analysis, where perceptions of gender roles had a statistically significant negative influence on support for female candidates ($\beta = -0.361$, $p < .01$), underscoring how entrenched norms continue to suppress women's political participation.

Qualitative responses gave further context, frequently citing tradition, family pressure, and clan-based endorsement systems as key drivers of discomfort. These influences appeared to shape not only voting behavior but also early-stage nomination decisions. Still, some younger and more educated respondents pointed to gradual progress, especially in how women are trusted in sectors like health, education, and community engagement. This shift was echoed in the finding that 18.4% of respondents felt women were better suited to social-sector leadership (Table 4.8), a minority view, but one that signals a slow evolution in attitudes.

5.2.3 Religion as a Gatekeeper of Political Legitimacy

The study found that religion is widely seen as a barrier to women's political leadership in Garissa Township. A combined 68.9% of respondents said religious leaders either strongly discourage (37.5%) or somewhat discourage (31.4%) voting for women. Only 18.8% of respondents reported any form of encouragement from religious leaders, and 12.3% reported neutrality (Figure 4.3). Encouragement was more often cited by women and youth, typically in the form of verbal support or private reassurance rather than public or institutional endorsement. One respondent described

hearing that “*the Sheikh said women should help guide the community, but not stand before men,*” which reflected the type of informal guidance some participants received. In general, active support for women’s political participation from religious leaders appeared limited, with most respondents reporting either a lack of engagement or passive responses. When asked more broadly about religious practices, 56.3% felt they significantly limit women’s political roles, and 18.5% said they somewhat limit them. In contrast, just 6.2% saw little or no impact, and 19% believed religion actually encourages women’s participation (Table 4.7).

The Likert-scale responses echoed this trend. On religious messaging, 49.8% agreed that religious teachings shape how society views women in leadership ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 1.31$), and a similar share said religious leaders influence public opinion on the matter ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 1.39$). On candidate identity, 49.9% believed a woman’s religious affiliation affects her chances of getting elected ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 1.26$). The strongest agreement came under voter behavior, where 62.8% felt that religious factors influence voter preferences for female candidates ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 1.17$). Views were more split on whether religion reinforces restrictive cultural norms; only 37% agreed, and the lower mean score ($M = 2.83$, $SD = 1.49$) pointed to mixed opinions (Table 4.8).

Qualitative data backed this up. Many participants described religion as a key barrier, citing beliefs that “women are not supposed to lead” or that “religion is used as a weapon” against women candidates. Others said religious views strongly shape how voters perceive gender roles. A few respondents offered more positive takes, calling the findings “an eye opener to women in leadership,” but these were in the minority.

While religion was clearly influential in shaping attitudes, its direct impact on support for women’s leadership was limited. In the regression model, religion had a relatively weak and statistically

insignificant effect ($\beta = 0.118$, $p = .079$). This suggests it may not act as a standalone barrier, but rather reinforces existing cultural norms that already limit women's political space.

5.2.4 Cultural Narratives and the Boundaries of Electability

The findings show that cultural perceptions still play a notable role in shaping how people in Garissa Township Sub-County view women in political leadership. Half of the respondents (50.1%) agreed that such perceptions influence how competent women leaders are seen, while 37.5% disagreed and 12.3% were unsure. This points to a community that is divided on the issue.

Responses to specific statements in Question 19 revealed a similar pattern. About 60.3% agreed or strongly agreed that cultural beliefs affect a woman's chances of being elected, compared to 43.4% who disagreed or strongly disagreed (Mean = 2.77, SD = 1.27). A slightly higher share (62.2%) agreed that voters' cultural beliefs shape how they assess a woman's competence (Mean = 3.20, SD = 1.14), and 61.2% believed that culture can either empower or hinder women candidates (Mean = 3.26, SD = 1.10). Views were more mixed when it came to whether electability depends on how well women conform to cultural expectations: 49.8% agreed while 37.5% disagreed (Mean = 2.89, SD = 1.29). A similar divide was seen in responses about whether women's political success depends on aligning with local cultural norms (Mean = 2.90, SD = 1.24). Qualitative responses reflected these split views. Some participants saw leadership as incompatible with traditional female roles, while others rejected that idea and emphasized that leadership should be based on fairness and ability. These mixed opinions show that cultural perceptions still have influence, but they are no longer accepted without question.

The regression results showed that cultural beliefs did have an impact on support for women in leadership ($\beta = 0.225$, $p < .05$), but this influence was smaller than two other factors: education ($\beta = 0.412$, $p < .01$) and gender norms ($\beta = -0.361$, $p < .01$). Education had the strongest positive

effect, meaning people with more education were more likely to support female leaders. In contrast, negative gender attitudes had a strong blocking effect, more than culture, suggesting that what people believe about women's roles matters even more than tradition. So while culture still plays a role, it is not the biggest factor. Changing views on gender and improving access to education may do more to boost support for women in leadership than simply rethinking traditional beliefs.

5.3 Conclusion

Through this research, it's clear that education, gender perception, religion, and cultural narratives are a part of how women get into political positions in Garissa Township Sub-County. Education was found to be the primary means of receiving credible recognition as a leader; hence, it gives women confidence to take on public roles. However, placing an undue emphasis on formal education may disadvantage those women whose influence comes from their informal, cultural, or religious connections. Thus, although these women may hold high status in their community or faith-based institutions, they may be excluded from formal political processes even though they meet the recognized standards for leadership. The study has found systemic bias that assumes that to be recognized as a leader, you must have formal schooling, and fails to acknowledge the value placed on other social constructs within authority.

Gender based attitudes continue to create a persistent and strong barrier for women to gain access to leadership positions. Male discomfort over female candidates is heavily entrenched in society, and females continue to be penalized through social norms for asserting their authority or leaving their traditional roles. Even the younger and more educated electorate shows limited signs of changing their attitudes toward candidates; therefore, the progress made by socially progressive voters is slow and insufficient to overcome any existing structural bias. Politically, political

structures and party processes perpetuate these norms, which result in women having limited access to leadership positions regardless of their qualifications.

Religion is one of the things that influences the way people think about women's place in positions of authority. In addition to this role, religious authorities and the teachings of different faiths are also a second level of influence on people's views about how appropriate it is to have female leadership. Specifically, while there may be some encouragement towards increasing the number of women participating in politics, religious institutions in many cases also serve to reinforce the traditional hierarchies that already exist based on gender. Thus, addressing these issues of exclusion will require both working with religious groups who are supportive of women's rights as well as those who hold on to patriarchal norms stemming from their interpretations of religion.

Cultural narratives have a continuing impact on a community's judgment of the competence and ability of women to be elected leaders; however, the influence of these narratives is not the same across the board. Because of the existing divergence of opinion within the community about the compatibility of female leadership with a traditional female role, and the difference in opinion on whether leadership ability and fairness or adherence to cultural norms should be valued, culture has a unique interaction with other elements (such as political networks and gender attitudes), but it is secondary in its impact to both traditional gender norms and educational achievement.

The overall conclusion is that political inclusion of women cannot rely solely on one means of production; when working to improve inclusion for women in politics, a combination of efforts will be necessary to expand education, to improve gender stereotype reduction, and to provide

culturally based means of developing female leaders. Unless the various interconnected barriers that have been the subject of this report are addressed simultaneously, reforms in political systems will not provide women with adequate opportunities that are a result of formal education and general public support, but not tied directly to their ability to perform as leaders.

5.4 Contribution to Scholarship

This research adds to our understanding of women in politics in Garissa Township through an assessment of formal education, gender roles, religion, and cultural perceptions, and how they all affect political support for female candidates in this area. In contrast with prior studies, which either assume that having an education produces political legitimacy or study women's politics only from urban and/or western contexts, this research shows that while being educated can enhance a woman's credibility and self-confidence, informal and culturally based leadership options tend to be viewed as inferior within formal politics.

Although traditional beliefs about gender, religious interpretations, and cultural norms appear to influence voting through their negative impact on attitudes towards women, some non-traditional opinions among younger and/or more educated respondents may provide room for change. Both quantitative evidence and qualitative evidence are used in this study to support an expansion of social roles and the cultural hegemony theory and provide recommendations for future actions: that any intervention intended to increase a woman's inclusion in politics will need to address education, stereotypical beliefs, and cultural/religious gatekeeping as all three are related and acting separate from one another will not assist in improving women's inclusion in politics. However, the findings of this study are specific to the context of Garissa Township, and there are

many other unmeasured contextual factors, including clan, that may apply to Garissa Township's findings in general, so applying these findings across Garissa Township is taken with caution.

5.5 Recommendations

To support women's leadership in Garissa Township, the focus shouldn't be only on formal education. Training programs should be held in trusted local spaces like mosques, women's groups, or community centers, but they must be designed by local women and reflect real-life needs. Short leadership training sessions can help build confidence and skills, but they need to be flexible, offer childcare or small allowances, and stay community-run, not controlled by outside NGOs. New rules that open leadership roles to women with informal experience must be backed by proper enforcement and regular follow-up, or they'll just remain promises on paper. Sharing stories of successful women can shift public attitudes, but lasting change depends on fixing the systems that block others. Most importantly, regular community forums, led by women and youth, should be held to track progress and hold leaders accountable. Without local involvement, practical support, and follow-through, even good ideas will fall flat.

To address the deep-rooted gender bias limiting women's political participation in Garissa Township, a dual-track strategy is needed. First, localized civic education should be implemented through trusted community institutions, such as mosques, clan councils, and youth groups, to challenge harmful gender norms using respected local voices. These campaigns must focus on shifting perceptions through storytelling, dialogue, and practical examples, not just slogans. Second, enforceable policy measures should be introduced to push political parties toward gender-balanced nominations, such as mandatory quotas or tying public funding to demonstrated inclusion. These efforts must be locally led and context-sensitive to avoid backlash or tokenism. But most

importantly, all efforts should be geared towards changing not only public attitudes but also the structural incentives that currently allow gender exclusion to persist without political cost.

To address the limiting role of religion in women's leadership, there is a need for faith-based discussion groups held in trusted spaces like mosques, churches, or community halls. These forums should create room for open dialogue on gender roles, guided by progressive yet locally respected religious leaders. Identifying and empowering a few of these figures to publicly support inclusive interpretations of religious texts can help shift perceptions gradually. At the same time, forming coalitions between women's groups, educators, and religious stakeholders can support the co-creation of civic education materials that are both constitutionally grounded and culturally familiar. This slower, layered approach respects the influence of religious norms while laying the foundation for long-term change.

To reduce the impact of cultural perceptions on women's electability to political leadership roles in Garissa Township Sub-County, there is a need for community-based awareness campaigns that challenge the idea that leadership is inherently male, using respected local figures such as elders and religious leaders to shift mindsets. At the same time, support systems for women candidates should be strengthened through mentorship, campaign training, and financial backing from political parties and civil society groups. Legal and policy reforms must also be pursued to promote gender-sensitive voter education and ensure fair treatment of candidates. Finally, engaging men and youth as allies in these efforts, through dialogue forums and inclusive leadership programs, will help create a broader cultural shift that opens political space for women.

5.6 Suggestion for Further Studies

This study uncovered key gaps that future research should address. It revealed strong male discomfort with women in leadership, yet did not explore the root causes of this resistance. Further studies could apply insights from masculinity theory to investigate how male identity, cultural expectations, or perceived status threats contribute to this opposition. Additionally, while many participants believed that religious leaders discourage voting for women, it remains unclear whether such perceptions reflect actual religious messaging or translate into voting behavior. Therefore, future research could track voter patterns alongside religious discourse, through longitudinal studies, to assess whether perceived religious barriers have a measurable impact on women's electoral outcomes. Without understanding these underlying dynamics, interventions may continue to miss the real obstacles to women's political participation.

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APPENDICES

Appendix i Krejcie and Morgan's Formulae for Calculating Sample Size

<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>
10	10	220	140	1200	291
15	14	230	144	1300	297
20	19	240	148	1400	302
25	24	250	152	1500	306
30	28	260	155	1600	310
35	32	270	159	1700	313
40	36	280	162	1800	317
45	40	290	165	1900	320
50	44	300	169	2000	322
55	48	320	175	2200	327
60	52	340	181	2400	331
65	56	360	186	2600	335
70	59	380	191	2800	338
75	63	400	196	3000	341
80	66	420	201	3500	346
85	70	440	205	4000	351
90	73	460	210	4500	354
95	76	480	214	5000	357
100	80	500	217	6000	361
110	86	550	226	7000	364
120	92	600	234	8000	367
130	97	650	242	9000	368
140	103	700	248	10000	370
150	108	750	254	15000	375
160	113	800	260	20000	377
170	118	850	265	30000	379
180	123	900	269	40000	380
190	127	950	274	50000	381
200	132	1000	278	75000	382
210	136	1100	285	100000	384

Note.—*N* is population size. *S* is sample size.

Source: Krejcie & Morgan, 1970

Appendix ii Introduction Letter

I am a graduate student at Africa Nazarene University conducting a research study titled, ***“SOCIOCULTURAL INFLUENCES ON GENDER DYNAMICS AND WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN GOVERNANCE: A CASE OF GARISSA TOWNSHIP SUB-COUNTY, GARISSA COUNTY, KENYA”*** I have chosen you as a potential participant to contribute valuable insights to this study.

Please be assured that your responses will remain strictly confidential; your identity and any information you provide will be protected and not disclosed to anyone. The data gathered will be securely stored and used exclusively for academic purposes within this research. Your participation is highly valued, as it will help deepen our understanding of the factors affecting women's political representation in this area.

Yours sincerely,

MUTUA JOHN PAUL

Appendix iii Questionnaire

Dear Participant,

This questionnaire is aimed at facilitating the research on ***“SOCIOCULTURAL INFLUENCES ON GENDER DYNAMICS AND WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN GOVERNANCE: A CASE OF GARISSA TOWNSHIP SUB-COUNTY, GARISSA COUNTY, KENYA.”*** Your response will be highly appreciated.

Instructions

Please provide accurate and honest responses to the questions.

If a question is not applicable or if you prefer not to answer, feel free to choose the appropriate option.

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Gender: a. Male ☐ b. Female ☐
2. Age: a. 18-24 years ☐ b. 25-34 years ☐ c. 35-44 years ☐
d. 45-54 years ☐ e. 55 and above ☐
3. Choose the option that best represents your highest level of education attained
☐ No formal education
☐ Primary education
☐ Secondary education
☐ Diploma
☐ Bachelor's degree
☐ Postgraduate degree
4. Marital Status:
☐ Single
☐ Married
☐ Divorced
☐ Widowed
☐ Others (Specify).....

5. Which of the following best describes your current occupation?

- ☐ Employed
- ☐ Self-employed
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Retired

6. Religion:

- ☐ Islam
- ☐ Christianity
- ☐ Other (Specify).....

7. Ethnicity:

- ☐ Somali
- ☐ Other (Specify).....

8. For how long have you been in Garissa Township Sub-County?

- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 1-5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ More than 10 years

9. Which of the following describes your political affiliation?

- ☐ Affiliated with a political party
- ☐ Independent
- ☐ Prefer not to say

10. Household Size:

- ☐ 1-3 members
- ☐ 4-6 members
- ☐ 7-9 members
- ☐ More than 9

Section B: Educational Pathways and Cultural Knowledge Systems Influencing Women's Participation in Political Leadership

This section explores how formal education, vocational training, and cultural knowledge systems influence women's participation in leadership roles in Garissa Township Sub-County. Please tick in the provided boxes or spaces where applicable.

11. In your opinion, how important is access to formal education in preparing women for leadership roles in Garissa Township Sub-County?

- ☐ Very Important
- ☐ Important
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Not Very Important
- ☐ Not Important

12. In your view, which of the following types of education has the most influence on women's leadership participation in Garissa Township? (Please rank them in order of influence: 1 for most influential, 5 for least influential)

- ☐ Formal education (e.g., schools, universities)
- ☐ Vocational or technical education (e.g., trade schools, skill-building courses)
- ☐ Informal education (e.g., community or religious-based teachings)
- ☐ Cultural knowledge systems (e.g., traditional leadership roles, community teachings)

13. Do you believe that cultural knowledge systems (e.g., traditional leadership roles and community-based teachings) contribute to women's readiness for leadership in Garissa Township? (Please tick one box)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not Sure

14. If yes, in what ways do cultural knowledge systems contribute to the leadership capabilities of women in Garissa Township? (Please provide your response in the space below.)

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15. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about cultural knowledge systems and women in leadership? (Use a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represents "Strongly Disagree," 2 indicates "Disagree," 3 reflects "Neutral," 4 signifies "Agree," and 5 corresponds to "Strongly Agree.")

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
Cultural knowledge systems support women's leadership roles in Garissa Township.					
Women who participate in cultural teachings are better equipped for leadership roles.					
Traditional leadership roles and cultural teachings hinder women's access to political leadership in Garissa Township.					
Cultural systems in Garissa Township create opportunities for women to engage in leadership roles.					
There is a perception among voters that women candidates with advanced educational qualifications are better equipped for political leadership.					
Educational qualifications substantially contribute to the electability of women seeking political leadership roles.					

16. What barriers do you think women face in accessing both formal and informal education, which might hinder their participation in leadership roles in Garissa Township? (Please tick all that apply)

- ☐ Cultural norms and traditions
- ☐ Gender-based discrimination
- ☐ Economic constraints
- ☐ Lack of support from family or community
- ☐ Limited access to education resources (e.g., schools, training centers)
- ☐ Political and societal resistance to women in leadership
- ☐ Religious beliefs or practices
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

17. Can you describe any specific challenges or cultural factors in Garissa Township that limit women's advancement in education and leadership? (Please provide your response in the space below.)

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18. What do you think can be done to reduce these barriers and encourage more women in Garissa Township to pursue education and leadership opportunities? (Please provide your response in the space below.)

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Section C: Gender And Voting-Based Decision-Making

13. How willing are voters in Garissa Township Sub-County to elect female candidates, regardless of gender preferences?

☐ Very Uncomfortable

☐ Uncomfortable

☐ Neutral

☐ Comfortable

☐ Very Comfortable

14. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding the influence of gender on voting decisions. Use a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represents "Strongly Disagree," 2 indicates "Disagree," 3 reflects "Neutral," 4 signifies "Agree," and 5 corresponds to "Strongly Agree."

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
Gender plays a significant role in shaping voters' decisions during elections in Garissa Township.					
Voters in Garissa Township Sub-County consider a range of factors, including the gender of political candidates, along with other elements such as qualifications, experience, and cultural perceptions, when making voting decisions.					
Gender-related considerations have an impact on voters' preferences and choices in the electoral process.					
The gender of candidates is a determining factor for voters in Garissa Township when deciding whom to support.					
Voters in Garissa Township Sub-County acknowledge that gender considerations influence their decision-making during elections.					

15. In your view, what challenges or opportunities arise from voters' perceptions of gender in political leadership roles?

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Section D: Religion And Electoral Success of Women Candidates

This section explores the relationship between religion and the electoral success of women in political leadership within Garissa Township Sub-County. Kindly provide your responses to the following question.

16. What influence do you think religious leaders have on the public's willingness to vote for women candidates? (Choose one)

- ☐ They strongly discourage it.
- ☐ They discourage it to some extent.
- ☐ They have a neutral stance.
- ☐ They encourage it to some extent.
- ☐ They strongly encourage it.

17. To what extent do religious practices in Garissa Township shape the roles women play in political leadership? (Choose one)

- ☐ They significantly limit women's roles.
- ☐ They somewhat limit women's roles.
- ☐ They have little to no impact.
- ☐ They encourage women's participation.
- ☐ They strongly encourage women's participation.

18. Kindly express your agreement level with the statements below regarding the connection between religion and the success of women in political leadership. Utilize a scale ranging from

1 to 5, where 1 indicates "Strongly Disagree," 2 signifies "Disagree," 3 denotes "Neutral," 4 reflects "Agree," and 5 corresponds to "Strongly Agree."

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
Religious teachings on gender roles influence societal perceptions of women in leadership.					
Religious leaders' views shape public attitudes toward women in political leadership.					
Religious affiliations of women candidates affect their chances of success in leadership elections.					
The electoral success of women candidates is influenced by the religious perceptions of the voters.					
Religious factors play a role in shaping voter preferences for women candidates in leadership positions.					
Certain religious practices reinforce cultural norms that limit women's leadership opportunities.					

19. In your opinion, how do religious teachings shape societal expectations about women in leadership roles?

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20. In what ways do religious leaders shape voter preferences, particularly regarding female candidates, considering the influence of cultural and social norms?

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21. What role do religious institutions currently play in empowering women for leadership in Garissa Township, and how could this role be enhanced?

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Section E: Cultural Perceptions of Women's Competence and Electability

17. Do you believe cultural perceptions influence the competence of women leaders in Garissa Township Sub-County?

[] Yes

[] No

[] Not Sure

b) If yes, how do you think these perceptions influence women's leadership roles?

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18. In your view, do cultural norms in Garissa Township support or discourage women's participation in political leadership?

[] Support

[] Discourage

[] Neutral

b) Can you provide examples of specific cultural norms or practices that support or discourage women's participation in politics?

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19. Which of the following statements on cultural perception of women's competence and their electability? Use a scale from 1 to 5, where 1=Strongly Disagree, 2 =Disagree, 3 =Neutral, 4= Agree, and 5 =Strongly Agree.

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
Cultural perceptions of women's competence impact their electability to political leadership roles.					
Voters' cultural beliefs play a role in shaping their views on the competence of women candidates.					
Cultural factors contribute to either the empowerment or hindrance of women candidates in leadership positions.					
Women candidates' ability to conform to cultural expectations influences their electability.					
The success of women candidates is influenced by how well their competence aligns with cultural norms in Garissa Township Sub-County.					

The End, thank you for your participation.

Appendix iv Interview Guide

1. View on the Role of educational qualifications in shaping the success of women candidates in political leadership elections in Garissa Township Sub-County.
2. From your perspective, how do you think women candidates' educational backgrounds influence voters' perceptions and decisions during elections?
3. Are there specific challenges or advantages associated with the educational qualifications of women candidates in political leadership roles?
4. How would you describe the influence of gender on decision-making processes among voters in Garissa Township Sub-County?
5. Have you observed any gender-related biases or preferences in voters' decision-making during past elections?
6. In your opinion, how does the gender of a candidate impact voters' choices, and to what extent does it influence election outcomes?
7. Could you discuss the role of religion in shaping the electoral success of women candidates in leadership positions in Garissa Township Sub-County?
8. Are there specific religious beliefs or practices that you think influence voters' perceptions of women candidates?
9. How might religious factors contribute to or hinder women candidates in their political aspirations?
10. In your experience, how do cultural perceptions of women's competence affect their electability to political leadership roles in Garissa Township Sub-County?
11. Are there cultural norms or expectations that impact how women candidates are viewed in the political arena?
12. What role do cultural narratives play in shaping the electorate's perception of women's competence in leadership?
13. Can you share any instances where you've observed a woman candidate's educational qualifications positively or negatively impacting her political campaign?
14. How would you describe the overall political landscape in Garissa Township Sub-County concerning the representation of women in leadership roles?
15. From your perspective, what steps could be taken to address potential barriers faced by women candidates in political leadership elections in this region?

Appendix v Introduction Letter



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26th March 2025

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: RESEARCH PERMIT: MUTUA JOHN PAUL

Mutua John Paul Reg. No. (17J03DMGP032) is a Bonafide postgraduate student at Africa Nazarene University, pursuing a master's degree in governance, Peace and Security Studies. This program entails Coursework and Thesis. He has successfully completed coursework and defended his thesis proposal entitled:

"Sociocultural influences on gender dynamics and women's leadership in governance: a case of Garissa Township Sub-County, Garissa County, Kenya."

Any assistance accorded to him to facilitate data collection and complete his thesis will be highly appreciated.

Sincerely,



Prof. Orpha K. Ongiti
Dean, Postgraduate Studies & Director, Institute of Research

Appendix vi Research Permit

 REPUBLIC OF KENYA	 NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
Ref No: 980086	Date of Issue: 02/April/2025
RESEARCH LICENSE	
	
This is to Certify that Mr., JOHN PAUL MUTUA of Africa Nazarene University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Garissa, Isiolo on the topic: SOCIOCULTURAL INFLUENCES ON GENDER DYNAMICS AND WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN GOVERNANCE: A CASE OF GARISSA TOWNSHIP SUB-COUNTY, GARISSA COUNTY, KENYA for the period ending : 02/April/2026.	
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Appendix vii Map of the Study Area

