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## **Radio Exposure and Drivers of Electoral Participation among Women Voters under the New Devolved Political Structure in Kenya**

### **Abstract**

Radio dominates the news media ecosystem in Kenya. However, little is known about the relationship between radio exposure and drivers of electoral participation in Kenya. This research thus examines the correlation between radio exposure and political knowledge and attitudes, and interpersonal political discussions among women voters during the 2013 Kenya general election in Kakamega County. The study adopted a descriptive quantitative correlational research design, collecting data from 372 women voters using a survey interviewer-administered questionnaire. The data was analyzed through bivariate statistics based on Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficients. Findings reveal a strong and positive correlation between radio exposure and political knowledge as well as election campaign interest. This suggests that radio exposure can contribute to political learning and create voter awareness on political activities and rights that lead to election campaign interest. It was established that there was a low positive link between women voters' radio exposure and the frequency of face-to-face political discussions. The association between radio exposure and political self-efficacy was found to be strong but negative. This indicates that an increase in the level of radio exposure can lower women voters' political self-efficacy. We argue that as a result of long political marginalization, women require higher levels of political self-efficacy, which radio exposure might not build over a shorter time during elections. This article explores various implications and recommends to policymakers, political strategists, and journalists to tap into the power of radio in boosting the key drivers of women's electoral participation.

**Keywords:** Interpersonal political discussions, Interpersonal political efficacy, Kenya, Political interest, Political knowledge, Radio exposure.

### **1. Introduction**

Audience surveys in Kenya reveal high radio consumption among women (Gillwald et al., 2010; Koech, 2017; Ipsos Synovate, 2013). For instance, the survey by Gillwald et al. re-

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veals that 82 per cent and 81 per cent of women in Kenya own and listen to the radio respectively, with the average time spent per day listening to the radio being 5.3 hours. Ipsos Synovate's audience survey reveals that averagely, a female listener in Kenya spends almost 33 hours listening to the radio in a week. Radio, therefore, has the potential to shape key drivers of electoral participation, such as political knowledge, interest and efficacy and interpersonal political discussions (Scavo & Snow, 2016). This article, therefore, focuses on political knowledge, the psychological resources of political interest and internal political efficacy [hereafter referred to as political self-efficacy] and face-to-face political discussions (latent political behaviour) that might catalyze voters' electoral participation. We consider that the role of radio in influencing women voters' electoral engagement can be better understood by examining the correlation between radio exposure and key drivers of political participation.

Women require relatively higher levels of political knowledge before they consider themselves suitable to participate in politics (Shojaei et al., 2010). We consider current affairs political knowledge which signifies political learning from news media and is relevant in measuring media effects on political behaviour (Barabas et al., 2014). Contributing to this, Kalyango Jr. (2009, p. 201) theorizes that "some people use radio for exposure to political information and to fulfil individual political interest; and that such interest and keenness leads to supporting democracy." Political interest is thus important in electoral participation more especially among women who have been left out in the political space over time.

This article focuses on political self-efficacy which is closely related to news consumption more than external political efficacy (Park, 2014). Political self-efficacy operates at the micro-level based on one's perceived competence to participate and bring change in political participation. Ahmar and Zuberi (2013) acknowledge the role of radio and TV in promoting women's political efficacy and participation in countries with low literacy rates. Adekoya et al. (2015) find this relevant in Africa where the majority of women have low literacy levels.

Interpersonal political conversations which are a form of discursive political participation strengthen the total effects of media exposure (Solovei & van den Putte, 2020). Corroborating this, Southwell and Yzer (2007) add that news media exposure stimulates discussions about election campaign topics. This article is confined to the face-to-face discussion of politics as it fits well with the oral culture and blends well with the radio, all of which are dominant in Africa (Adekoya et al., 2015). Such discussions occur in social networks. For example, the nationwide research by Schulz-Herzenberg et al. (2013) reveals that the respondents frequently discussed the 2013 Kenyan polls with friends, neighbours, family and co-workers.

This study is situated within the direct media effects research approach focusing on the link between radio exposure and drivers of electoral participation among women voters. We, therefore, examined the influence of radio exposure on political knowledge, interest and efficacy as well as the frequency of face-to-face political discussions. We depart from past studies that have largely utilized a sociological approach centred on sociodemographic and cultural factors of political participation (Jung, 2010). It is well established in extant literature that women's political participation in Kenya is inhibited by socioeconomic and cultural factors (Kasomo, 2012).

The study set out to contribute to the empirical evidence on the correlation between women's radio exposure and key drivers of electoral participation. We seek to bridge a knowledge gap as the majority of prior studies on the link between news media use and drivers of political participation emanate from the developed democracies in the West (Scavo & Snow, 2016). In developing countries especially in Africa, radio dominates the media scene as a

source of information in contrast to TV and new media in the West. This study was conducted in Kenya's Kakamega County under a new political dispensation where power and resources have been devolved to counties. Women form a large segment of the voting block in Kenya. However, as Kasomo (2012) notes, women remain marginalized in politics and academic research in the country. This article further focuses on the radio which remains understudied for its role in women's political participation in Africa (Conroy-Krutz, 2018).

Kenya is still yet to meet its 2010 constitutional principle of gender equality in political participation, specifically in representation in the Parliament. Therefore, policymakers and other political stakeholders continue to look for ways to meet this requirement and find out mechanisms through which to promote women's electoral participation. One news medium that can contribute to this endeavour is radio as it reaches the majority of Kenyans. Radio can, therefore, reach and catalyze political participation of the electorate, especially the large voting block of women in the country.

## 2. Contextual background

This study focuses on Kenya, located in East Africa, with a population of 47, 564, 296 inhabitants, with 50.5 per cent of them being females (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2019). Women, constitute an important voting block but remain politically marginalized in Kenya (Kasomo, 2012). The country promulgated a new constitution in 2010 that introduced a new political structure comprising of two interdependent levels of government: national government and a devolved government structure. The new devolved government structure in Kenya came into force during the general election held in 2013. In this system, the country is divided into 47 counties each under the executive leadership of an elected county governor and a legislative arm of the County Assembly. In the 2013 general election, Kenya was politically divided into 290 constituencies and 1,450 County Assembly Wards (CAWs).

Bouka et al. (2019) argue that there is a need to understand women's political engagement under the newly introduced devolved political system as their participation helps to strengthen democracy, advance their agenda and promote their human development. This is consistent with the pillar of gender equality in political participation articulated in Social Development Goals (SDGs), Kenya's Vision 2030 and the 2010 Constitution. In Article 81(b), the 2010 Constitution of Kenya provides for affirmative actions toward women's political participation by stating that "not more than two-thirds of the members of elective public bodies shall be of the same gender" (p. 38). In Article 38, the Constitution provides for citizens' political rights such as freedom of making political choices, registering as a voter, voting in an election or referendum, standing for an elective post.

The first general election under Kenya's new devolved political arrangement was held on March 4, 2013. This article focuses on this general election within the setting of Kakamega County in western Kenya. The 2013 general election was the tenth since the country's independence in 1963 and the first under the 2010 Constitution of Kenya. A total of 14,388,781 voters were registered for the 2013 polls with 49.1% of them being women (Independent Election and Boundaries Commission [IEBC], 2013). Fifty-nine political parties participated in the election. The study of the 2013 general election in Kakamega County makes it timely and relevant as limited academic research has been done on it, more especially in respect of media effects on women.

Kenya has a vibrant and diverse broadcasting sector (Media Council of Kenya [MCK], 2012), playing a critical role in the country's elective politics (Mbeke, 2010). The country has about 194 radio stations, with 62.9 per cent of them broadcasting in English and Kiswahili while 37.1 per cent broadcast in vernacular (local) languages (KNBS, 2020). Seventy-four per cent of the households in Kenya own radio sets (KNBS, 2010) and 56.9% have a stand-alone radio (KNBS, 2019). Ninety-five per cent of Kenyans regularly listen to the radio, making it a dominant source of news and information for the majority of Kenya (MCK, 2012).

High radio listenership among households in Kenya is attributed to low socio-economic status (SES) (Mbeke 2010; Schulz-Herzenberg et al., 2015). According to Mbeke (2010), this diminishes the use of TV, newspapers, the internet and mobile phones which are considered expensive. Furthermore, Gillwald et al. (2010) contend that women are often at home and this may allow them to listen to radio within their households. Radio also overcomes illiteracy barriers as it can broadcast in Kiswahili and vernacular languages.

This study was conducted in Kakamega County located 30 kilometres north of the equator in western Kenya and covers an area of 3,051.3 Km<sup>2</sup> (County Government of Kakamega, 2018). In western Kenya, women have a keen interest to listen to the radio (Simiyu, 2015). Kakamega County has a population of 1,867,579, with 970,406 (52%) and 897,133 (48%) being females and males respectively (KNBS, 2019). With 73,273 more females than males, Kakamega County is the leading county in Kenya having more females than males. In the 2009 national population census, Kakamega County had a population of 1,660,651 constituting 863, 539 (52%) females. This made the county the second most populous in Kenya after Nairobi County (KNBS, 2010). Therefore, Kakamega County was considered an important hunting zone for political parties and candidates seeking votes in the 2013 general election.

Kakamega County has 924,142 persons in the voting age group of 18 years and above. Out of this, 496,949 (53.8%) are females while 427, 193 (46.2%) are males (KNBS, 2019). The majority of the females in Kakamega County are within the age bracket of 18-50 years, have low levels of education (pre-primary to secondary school), are poor and reside in rural areas (KNBS, 2019). The county is dominated by the Luhya tribe consisting of 17 sub-tribes (KNBS, 2019). The Luhya sub-tribes have diverse social and political organization. Thus, the voting block of the Luhya tribe is not homogenous (Were, 1967, as cited in Wanyama et al., 2014). Since the reintroduction of multiparty politics in Kenya in 1992, the electorate in constituencies in what is now Kakamega County has voted for different political parties and coalitions.

A wide range of news media reaches Kakamega County. Radio and TV stations of the major media companies in Kenya such as Nation Media Group, Standard Group, MediaMax and Royal Media Services Limited reach the county (County Government of Kakamega, 2018). Household radio ownership in the county stands at 77.8% (KNBS, 2010) and 62 per cent of the households have a stand-alone radio. This makes radio a major source of information for the residents (County Government of Kakamega, 2018).

### 3. Literature review

This research focuses on the correlation between women voters' radio exposure and current affairs political knowledge, interest and self-efficacy and interpersonal political discussions. Current affairs political knowledge focuses on questions seeking the recall of surveillance

facts which change often and hence demand individuals' to constantly monitor news and public affairs (Barabas et al., 2014; Delli Carpini, & Keeter, 1996). Answers to such questions can be obtained through listening to newscasts and talk shows on radio as these genres provide current news and information (McQuail, 2010). Exposure to political information on the radio is thus expected to increase voters' political knowledge. A study in Uganda by Conroy-Krutz (2018) reveals radio's central role in the acquisition of political knowledge among citizens. Research conducted in the rural Enugu State in Nigeria also established that the majority of women listening to a gender political programme, *Nn?ko Umunwanyi* on the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) radio moderately increased their political knowledge (Didiugwu et al., 2014).

Past research shows that radio was an important source of political news and information during the 2013 general election in Kenya (Muriithi, & Page, 2013; Scavo & Snow, 2016; Schulz-Herzenberg et al., 2015). The results in a seven-nation study in Africa and Asia further show a strong positive association between audience exposure to British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) Media Action governance programmes aired on radio and TV and political knowledge (Scavo & Snow, 2016). Kenya was included in this seven-nation study with the focus in the country being *Sema Kenya* (Kenya Speaks) governance programme reported by Muriithi and Page (2013). It was established that there was a strong positive association between audience exposure to the *Sema Kenya* programme and political knowledge among respondents in Kenya (Muriithi & Page, 2013). Overall, the aforementioned results are buttressed by research that indicates that media use influences women's acquisition of political knowledge in developing countries (Didiugwu et al., 2014; Shojaei et al., 2010; Uwem, & Opeke, 2005). We, therefore, envisaged that radio exposure has an impact on the drivers of electoral participation considered in this study.

Political information that voters seek from the news media is likely to reinforce their political attitudes. At the centre of this article are political interest and self-efficacy considered as predictors of political participation (Flanagan, 1996). According to Ekman, and Amnå (2012), interest in politics is important for political participation. Jung (2010) asserts that "interest in a political campaign is generated as a function of news media use especially in the election seasons" (p. 30). We take a cue from this and focus on the 2013 general election campaign interest. A study in Enugu State in Nigeria established that the majority of women listening to a gender political programme, *Nn?ko Umunwanyi* on FRCN radio increased their political interest (Didiugwu et al., 2014). Another research conducted in Uganda shows that radio exposure positively correlates with political interest (Kalyango Jr., 2009).

The positive association between news media exposure and political interest is challenged by media malaise theorists who observe that "entertainment media and/or certain news media (for example, TV news) diminish political interest and increase political cynicism" (Ha et al., 2013, p. 4). The authors argue that the time spent on media use displaces or diminishes the time available for people to engage in politics. Baek (2009) adds that this contributes to low political interest and participation among women. Media malaise theory is challenged on the basis that it is based on TV use. As a primary news medium, watching TV needs concentration to access its contents and thus this may diminish one's time for engaging in electoral activities. However, this study focuses on radio, a primary medium that does not need a lot of concentration and people can listen to it while performing other tasks such as household chores (Koech, 2017; Simiyu, 2010).

Media malaise theory is further challenged by Baek (2009) who notes that it is based on assertions rather than empirical evidence on the relationship between media use and political attitudes. Baek adds that the specification of dependent variables in media malaise theory is not clear. Therefore, it is unclear which political attitudes are affected by news media use. In contrast to the time displacement logic of media malaise theorists, we take a political mobilization perspective on the influence of exposure to the radio on selected drivers to women's electoral participation.

Political efficacy which is the second political attitude considered in this article also depends on the information provided by the news media (Park, 2014). According to Heger, and Hoffman (2019), this political attitude is divided into two: internal and external political efficacy. In distinguishing these two, Heger and Hoffman note that political self-efficacy focuses on an individual's perceived ability to understand politics (competence) and influence political participation. External political efficacy is concerned with the perceived responsiveness of the political system to citizens' demands which ultimately affects their perceived ability to influence political processes.

Internal political self-efficacy "taps into self-perception about the level of understanding about politics and ability to deal with politics, which is a strong predictor of political participation" (Jung, 2010, p. 28). Overall, Shojaei et al. (2010) assert that women consider themselves less politically efficacious. Kaid et al. (2007) link political self-efficacy to political information efficacy (PIE) which denotes an individual's confidence that the political knowledge possessed is adequate for him or her to participate in politics. We, therefore, support the position that news media use enhances political self-efficacy. However, we take cognizant of other factors and issues that can hinder the effective role of radio in enhancing women's political self-efficacy. First, women, as opposed to men, need higher levels of political self-efficacy to participate in politics (Shojaei et al., 2010). Second, Kaid et al. (2007) consider PIE as an important variable in building up political self-efficacy. This suggests that a radio listener who has low PIE is likely to perceive herself to be less politically efficacious.

Third, socio-demographics and other psychological factors shape people's level of political efficacy (Sarieva, 2018). Supporting this, Marshall et al. (2007) identify barriers to women's political self-efficacy as inadequate time due to family and work-related responsibilities, political attachment and inadequate socioeconomic resources. Finally, from a feminist media standpoint, we consider inadequate and stereotypical media coverage of women in the public sphere, particularly in politics, and the negative framing of politics as contributors to women's low political self-efficacy. There was inadequate media coverage of women candidates, on promoting women's leadership and gender equality (MCK, 2012). Shojaei et al. (2010) assert that women consider themselves less politically efficacious.

Besides the aforementioned political attitudes, this study considered interpersonal political discussions as a latent form of electoral participation likely to be influenced by radio exposure. Various scholars acknowledge that news media use stimulates interpersonal political discussions (Habermas, 1989; Jung, 2010; Jung et al., 2011; Scavo, & Snow, 2016). Reinforcing this, Solovei and van den Putte (2020) focusing on public information campaigns (PIC) assert that:

When people are exposed to a media message of a public campaign, they will be more likely to talk with someone else about the campaign topic, and as a result of this interpersonal communication (rather than of direct exposure to media) increase their awareness, knowledge, attitude, intention, and behaviour promoted in the campaign (p. 12-13).

Happer and Philo (2013) acknowledge that the media sets the agenda and focus on specific subjects of public interest to inform the public debate. Scholars taking a uses and gratifications theory (UGT) perspective acknowledge that people use the media to get information and retain it for use in interpersonal political conversations (Jung et al., 2011; Kim & Kim, 2007; McQuail, 2010). For instance, a study by Koech (2017) reveals that the majority of female radio listeners in Kipkelion West Sub-County in Kericho County in Kenya discuss with other people the information they obtain from their favourite radio programmes.

During elections, people often discuss politics within social networks comprising of mainly family members, neighbours, friends and co-workers (Schulz-Herzenberg et al., 2015). A study by Uwem and Opeke (2015) reveals that the majority of women in the Niger Delta in Nigeria obtain political information from interpersonal sources such as friends, relatives, passers-by, peers, colleagues, lay experts and village heads. The Comparative National Election Project (CNEP) conducted a survey focusing on the 2013 Kenya general election. The survey findings revealed the extent of interpersonal political discussions about election campaigns among respondents with various social networks to be as follows: friends (68%), neighbours (59%), family (58%) and co-workers (22%) (Schulz-Herzenberg et al., 2015).

Agreeing and disagreeing with the foregoing, Miller (1986) argues that media exposure can either dampen or spur conversations. Southwell and Yzer (2007) further observe that the effect of media exposure on interpersonal communication can occur when the contents affect have personal utility and value of conversing with others or affects perceptions that individuals can engage in conversations. Overall, extant literature confirms the link between news media use especially radio exposure and the drivers of political participation evaluated in this article. Despite this, there is a dearth of research focusing on the correlation between radio exposure and the identified drivers of electoral participation among women in Kenya. This is a knowledge that this study set to bridge.

#### 4. Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework adopted in this research is anchored on UGT, political mobilization theory and the two-step model of communication. Uses and gratifications theory (UGT) by Katz et al. (1974) is an audience-centred theory originating from research on audience motivations for radio programmes. The theory considers the news media use as a function of the gratifications of social or psychological needs. The motivations for using news media underpin the effect of citizens' use of media on their political participation (Park, 2014). This fits into the current study as it examines the consequences of women voters' radio exposure to gratify their political information seeking and social utility motivations, and psychological needs of political interest and political self-efficacy.

Uses and gratifications theory (UGT) assumes that the "audience is conceived as active" (Katz et al., 1974, p. 15). News media use is thus goal-directed as audience members seek out media sources that best fulfil their needs and they have choices to satisfy these needs (McQuail, 2010). For instance, voters may be motivated to listen to the radio to obtain political information (surveillance gratifications). Through the surveillance information obtained from the radio, audience members can increase their political knowledge. Further, access to and use of this information can influence political interest and political self-efficacy. Voters retain the political information acquired from the radio for use in interpersonal political dis-

ussions within their social networks. This denotes social utility gratification relating to people getting and retaining mediated political information so that they can use it in discussions with others (Jung et al., 2011; Katz et al., 1974; Kim, & Kim, 2007; McQuail, 2010).

Another supposition of UGT is that “many of the goals of media use can be derived from data supplied by individual audience members themselves” (Katz et al., 1974, p.17) Given their awareness of their media-related needs, audience members can self-report on their media choices, use and impact (McQuail, 2010). Therefore, the focus of this article is on women voters’ self-reported radio exposure and drivers of electoral participation.

The role of the news media in shaping individuals’ political knowledge, attitudes and discussions is also supported by the political mobilization theory by Scott Flanagan (1996). The theory assumes that news media use has a strong indirect association with political participation as it stimulates their psychological involvement through political knowledge attitudes and engagement in interpersonal political discussions. Flanagan further notes that the information that individuals obtain from the news media can shape their political knowledge and attitudes, and inclination to discuss politics with others in their social networks. Through this and other mechanisms, news media exposure psychologically mobilizes individuals to greater political involvement and participation.

In this study, the form of electoral participation considered is engaging in interpersonal political discussions, a less direct or “latent” form of political participation (Ekman & Amnå, 2012). As advanced in UGT and political mobilization theory, news media use can influence one’s engagement in interpersonal political discussions during election campaigns. This link maps into the two-step flow model of communication. The model explains the role of face-to-face discussions about politics in electoral participation as exemplified in a 1940 study on the USA presidential election in Erie County, Ohio (Lazarsfeld et al., 1968).

Based on the Erie County study, Lazarsfeld et al. (1968, p.151) concluded that “ideas often flow from radio and print to the opinion leaders and from them to the less active sections of the population”. The findings of this study led to the two-step flow model of communication. This model postulates that “messages pass from the media, through opinion leaders to opinion followers” (Baran & Davis, 2012, p.147). Taking cognizant of this, Southwell and Yzer (2007) argue that this highlights the significance of determining media effects through the analysis of interpersonal communication to grasp media effects.

The two-step model’s linkage of news media use to interpersonal political talk is supported by the theory of the public sphere by Habermas (1989). The theory postulates that people’s news-media usage fuels political conversations. Habermas considers the news media as core political public sphere platforms. This is in addition to institutions of political discussions such as parliaments, political clubs, literary salons, coffee houses, meeting halls, and other spaces where social-political discussions took place. The cornerstone of democratic political culture as identified by Habermas is an environment in which an individual can freely speak in public to express his or her political views. This study focuses on informal political discussions taking place within social networks.

As advanced in the two-step flow model of communication, opinion leaders are a key mediator in relaying information from the media to the rest of society. Opinion leaders are people with greater socio-economic status (SES) and media access who initially consume news media content on topics of interest to them, interpret it and then pass it on to opinion followers (Baran & Davis, 2012). Opinion leaders are thus expected to disseminate the political information they acquire from radio by discussing it with the others who follow them. In Kenya,



opinion leaders, include, political, religious, traditional, community and civil society leaders. The re-introduction of multiparty politics in Kenya in 1992 coupled with the enactment of a new constitution in the country in 2010 has opened up the public space for political expression. Articles 33, 34, 36, 38 and 39 of the Constitution of Kenya (2010) provide for rights and fundamental freedoms of expression, the media and association, political rights and freedom of movement and residence respectively.

Focusing on the female folk and within the context of the present study, opinion leaders could also be the politically active women comprising the elites and those in elective leadership positions (Logan & Bratton, 2006). This is the group often focused on in studies on political communication. Departing from this, the current study focuses on women in their ordinary lives as voters. Women's political public sphere participation in Kenya is hindered by the gendered nature of politics and society at large (Kassily & Onkware, 2011; Kasomo, 2012). Compared to men, women's participation in the public sphere is limited. Women are relegated to the private sphere at home performing a greater role as home-makers and caregivers. This denies women an opportunity of learning from others and engaging with others in interpersonal political discussions beyond their family social networks.

We acknowledge the underlying assumption of the two-step flow model of communication and limit its use in this article to linking it to UGT. We envisaged that opinion leaders are likely to be heavy consumers of political information broadcast on radio. In turn, these opinion leaders transmit the information to the opinion followers in their social networks through interpersonal political talk. This suggests an indirect flow of information from the media to the rest of the members of society. However, we also recognize the dominance of radio in Kenya and assume that women in their ordinary lives (opinion followers) can directly access political information from the radio. As McQuail (2010) notes, opinion leaders and opinion followers are interchangeable depending on the topics under discussion. Whether directly and indirectly receiving political information from the radio, what is relevant here is that the information obtained is used in and elaborated on interpersonal political discussions.

Abdollahyan and Machika (2017) observe that radio targets the audience directly while opinion leaders target their followers indirectly. Radio targets voters who can easily understand political messages broadcast due to their high educational levels. These authors add that opinion leaders target those who cannot easily understand these political messages and thus their role is to interpret the information to them. The interpretative function of opinion leaders complements that of the news media. This suggests that the news media interpret to the audience, political happenings in their environment. Opinion leaders interpret to their followers what the news media covers.

The foregoing discussion lays the basis of our conceptual framework. By listening to the radio, individuals can be exposed to political information which can enrich their political knowledge and also impact their political attitudes and engagement in interpersonal political discussions. Therefore, it is envisioned that radio exposure which is the main predictor in this research is correlated with political knowledge, election campaign interest, political self-efficacy and face-to-face political discussions about elections. The aim of this research, therefore, was to examine the correlation between radio exposure and selected drivers of electoral participation for women voters during the 2013 general election in Kakamega County.

Drawing from the conceptual framework, we sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the correlation between women voters' radio exposure and political knowledge?

2. What is the association between radio exposure and election campaign interest among women voters?
3. What is the relationship between radio exposure and the political self-efficacy of women voters?
4. What is the link between women voters' radio exposure and their frequency of engaging in face-to-face discussions about the 2013 general election campaigns in Kakamega County?

## 5. Methodology

This study was conducted in Kakamega County located in western Kenya. The choice of Kakamega County as the research site was done purposively for various reasons advanced in-depth in the background section of this article. The county has a large voting block of women voters. Radio ownership in households in Kakamega County stands at 77.8% which is 3.8% above the national figure (KNBS, 2010). In Western Kenya in which Kakamega County is located, residents have a keen interest to tune into their favourite radio programmes (Simiyu, 2015). Lastly, Kakamega County is dominated by the Luhya tribe whose voting block is not homogenous. Therefore, Kakamega County is a rich vote hunting region with heightened political activities during the general elections.

We adopted a descriptive quantitative correlational research design, involving describing and predicting relationships of variables through statistical manipulation. This helps in determining the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables. This research design was suitable for meeting our goal of examining the correlation between radio exposure and each of the selected drivers of electoral participation. Data relating to the study variables were collected through a survey which saves on costs and time in data collection particularly from widely dispersed and heavily populated areas (Rea, & Parker, 2014) such as Kakamega County.

The sample size for this study was computed at a confidence level of 95% using Yamane's (1967) formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = desired sample size

e = margin of error of 5%

N = the finite size of the population

1 = a theoretical or statistical constant

$$n = \frac{287,325}{1 + 287,325 (0.05)^2} = 400$$

We used a multi-stage sampling technique to draw a sample of 400 women voters to participate in this research. This method encompasses the selection of the sample population in stages using more than one sampling technique. This method saves on cost and time when surveying a large and widely dispersed population such as Kakamega County covering 3,033.8 Km<sup>2</sup>. The sampling procedure involved five steps relating to the selection of:

1. Six constituencies in Kakamega County using stratified and purposive sampling techniques. The 12 constituencies in the county were stratified into northern, central and southern regions and one constituency purposely selected from each region.
2. One rural and one urban CAW from each of the six constituencies identified in Step 1 using purposive and random sampling techniques respectively.
3. Two sub-locations in each of the sampled CAWs using purposive and random sampling techniques for rural and urban CAWs respectively. Voter registration statistics in Kenya are gender-disaggregated up to the CAW level and IEBC describes each CAW by the sub-locations it covers.
4. Households in the sampled sub-locations using a random walk sampling method. This method is appropriate when dealing with dispersed populations and it saves time as the researcher uses adjoining households and produces unbiased samples.
5. Women voters from the sampled households. Women voters were drawn from the study population proportionally based on the number of registered women voters in each CAW using sub-locations as the strata of allocating the sample. Proportionate stratified sampling ensures that each person in the population under study has an equal chance of being sampled. Only one interview was carried out per household with the respondent selected using the Kish grid method.

Primary data for this study were collected at the household level using an interviewer-administered questionnaire designed to seek answers to the research questions. The questionnaire was validated by two media studies lecturers. It was then pretested on 12 women voters and also piloted on 48 women voters selected through convenience sampling in sub-locations that were not part of those sampled in Kakamega County. The interpretation of the reliability results of the test-retest method and multi-point items in the questionnaire is based Pearson's product-moment correlation (Pearson's  $r$ ) following the guidelines by Rea, and Parker (2014): 0 (no association); .01 to .09 negligible association; .10 to .29 (low association); .30 to .59 (moderate association); .60 to .74 (strong association); .75 to .99 (very strong association), and 1 (perfect association). The test-retest results yielded a Pearson's correlation coefficient of .734, indicating a strong correlation, confirming the reliability of the questionnaire.

Each of the completed copies of the questionnaire was scrutinized for completeness and inconsistencies during fieldwork and before data coding and capturing. Data was initially entered into Epidata Version 3.1 before being exported and analyzed using SPSS Version 21. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics and presented in Tables. Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis was performed to assess the correlation between radio exposure and the selected drivers of electoral participation.

Pearson's correlation coefficient indicates the strength and direction of the relationship between study variables. The variables in this research were measured on a continuous scale. The assumptions of linearity, normality and homoscedasticity were checked and met. The interpretation of Pearson's  $r$  values in this study was based on Rea and Parker's (2014) guidelines as aforementioned. The correlational analysis is based on a 95% confidence level. Therefore, a p-value that is less than or equal to .05 shows a statistically significant relationship between the predictor and outcome variable.

Each respondent signed an informed consent form to show her acceptance to participate in the survey. Ethical considerations of confidentiality and privacy were maintained during

data collection and analysis and reporting of the results. This study was approved by the Maseno University Ethics and Review Committee.

The study variables were informed by prior empirical literature. The predictor in this research is radio exposure. Respondents were asked to indicate approximate days in a seven-day typical week and estimated hours in a typical 24-hour day that they spent in accessing political news and current affairs on the radio. Responses to these two questions were used to develop an index of radio exposure which ranged from 0 to 56 hours ( $M = 16.44$ ,  $SD = 13.46$ ).

The dependent variables considered in this study are political knowledge, election campaign interest, political self-efficacy and face-to-face political discussions. Political knowledge was measured as an additive index of dichotomous responses to six questions on the 2013 general election (see Appendix I) with correct answers coded as “1” while incorrect answers, Don’t Know (DK) responses and No Response (NR) were all coded as “0” ( $\alpha = .839$ ,  $M = 3.06$ ,  $SD = .1.81$ ).

For election campaign interest, respondents answered 1 (not at all interested) to 4 (very interested) to “Generally speaking, how interested were you in the 2013 general election campaigns?” ( $M = 2.38$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ). For political self-efficacy, this research used two differently worded statements based on a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) were used. The first political self-efficacy statement rated was: “Sometimes politics seem simple that a person like you could be able to understand what was going on during the 2013 general election campaigns” ( $M = 3.04$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ). The second political self-efficacy statement was: “You consider yourself less qualified to participate in politics” [reverse coded for analysis] ( $M = 2.28$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ ). A mean score was computed based on the respondents’ agreement or disagreement with the two political self-efficacy statements ( $\alpha = .789$ ,  $M = 2.71$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ).

For the frequency of face-to-face political discussions about election campaigns, respondents answered 1 (never) to 4 (always) to “How often in a typical seven-day week did you talk in person with others [spouse/partner, parents, siblings, other relatives, friends] about the 2013 general election campaigns in Kakamega County [if applicable]?” The responses were as follows: spouse/partner ( $M = 3.61$ ,  $SD = 0.05$ ), friends ( $M = 2.90$ ,  $SD = 0.05$ ), siblings ( $M = 2.92$ ,  $SD = 0.05$ ), other relatives ( $M = 2.86$ ,  $SD = 0.04$ ) and parents ( $M = 2.08$ ,  $SD = 0.02$ ). A mean score was computed based on a respondent’s rating for each of these social network members ( $\alpha = .621$ ,  $M = 2.85$ ,  $SD = 0.03$ ).

## 6. Results and discussion

A total of 400 questionnaires were administered, of which 372 (93%) were completed, returned and used for data analysis, indicating a high response rate. The demographic profile of the respondents is summarized in Appendix II. Seventy-two per cent of the participants were aged 18-50 years, almost two thirds (59.7%) were married and slightly above four-fifths (81.8%) were with low levels of education ranging from no formal schooling to secondary school qualifications. More than half of the respondents were from low-income households (53%) and their residential distribution was as follows: rural areas (41.7%) and urban areas (58.3%).

This study sought to examine the correlation between radio exposure and drivers of electoral participation among women voters in Kakamega County during the 2013 general election in Kakamega County. Three-hundred and fifty-three (94.9%) of the respondents indicated

listening to the radio during the 2013 general election, with the average time spent per week tuned to radio being 16.44 hours. High radio listenership among the respondents is in harmony with a report that indicates that radio is the main news medium source in Kakamega County (County Government of Kakamega, 2018). Further as noted by Mbeke (2010), radio is the main news source in Kenya as there is limited use of the other news media. Table 1 summarizes data on the correlation between radio exposure and the drivers of electoral participation considered in this study.

Table 1. Correlation between radio exposure and selected drivers of electoral participation

Predictors	Pearson's <i>r</i> coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)
	<i>r</i>	p-values
Political knowledge	.708**	.000
Election campaign interest	.661**	.000
Political self-efficacy	-.676**	.000
Frequency of face-to-face political discussions	.168*	.016

*Note*

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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

The first research question of this study intended to examine the correlation between women voters' radio exposure and political knowledge. Table 1 indicates that radio exposure and political knowledge were strongly positively correlated and statistically significant,  $r(353) = .708$ ,  $p < .000$ . This suggests that an increase in the time spent listening to the radio can lead to a significant rise in women voters' level of political knowledge. This underscores the contribution of radio towards women's acquisition of political knowledge during the 2013 general election in Kakamega County. As noted in prior surveys, radio was an important source of political news and information during this general election (Muriithi & Page, 2013; Scavo & Snow, 2016; Schulz-Herzenberg et al., 2015). Such information is useful in political learning and subsequent acquisition of political knowledge. Our results are in line with those from prior studies that reveal radio as a significant predictor of political knowledge in Uganda and Nigeria (Conroy-Krutz, 2018, Didiugwu et al., 2014; Kalyango Jr., 2009).

Our findings on the positive correlation between radio exposure and political knowledge fit into the broader sphere of past research. News media use influences women's acquisition of political knowledge (Shojaei et al., 2010; Uwem & Opeke, 2005). The role of news media in shaping political knowledge is affirmed in political mobilization theory and UGT. Political mobilization theory posits that news media use directly influences political knowledge (Flanagan, 1996). Surveillance gratifications identified in UGT are concerned with seeking information on what is happening in the socio-economic and political environment (Katz et al., 1974; Kim, & Kim, 2007; McQuail, 2010). Such information can lead to political learning and subsequent acquisition of political knowledge.

The second research question in this study sought to assess the association between women voters' radio exposure and election campaign interest. Table 1 reveals that the association between radio exposure and election campaign interest was positive, strong and statistically significant,  $r(346) = .661$ ,  $p < .000$ . This suggests that an increase in the time spent listening to the radio can lead to a rise in women voters' level of election campaign interest. This indicates that radio exposure can create voter awareness on political rights and activities, lead-

ing to election campaign interest. Our results are in harmony with Jung (2010) who notes that news media use generates interest in political campaigns. These results challenge media malaise theorists' view that in some cases, news media use can diminish individuals' political interest (Ha et al., 2013).

The third research question of this study planned to explore the relationship between radio exposure and the political self-efficacy of women voters. Results in Table 1 reveal a strong and statistically significant but negative relationship between radio exposure and political self-efficacy,  $r(353) = -.676, p < .000$ . This suggests an inverse relationship, with an increase in the time spent listening to the radio likely leading to a significant decrease in women voters' political self-efficacy. These findings seem to contract the view by Ahmar and Zuberi (2013) that radio and TV promote women's political efficacy in countries with low literacy rates. However, the results fall within the large observation by Shojaei et al. (2010) that women require higher levels of political self-efficacy to participate in politics and that overall, they consider themselves less politically efficacious. We argue that as a result of the long political marginalization of the female gender, women require higher levels of political self-efficacy, which radio exposure might not build over a shorter time during elections.

The findings of a negative relationship between radio exposure and political self-efficacy might be justified by the sociological approach to political participation in which socio-demographic and cultural factors are established as barriers (Jung, 2010; Kasomo, 2012; Marshall et al., 2007; Sarieva, 2018). In the current study, the respondents had low educational levels and were largely from low-income households. Furthermore, there was inadequate media coverage of women candidates, on promoting women's leadership and gender equality (MCK, 2012). Political self-efficacy also mirrors the idea of PIE, a factor that can account for inadequacies in political self-efficacy. According to Kaid et al. (2007), PIE symbolizes a person's perception that he or she has adequate political knowledge needed for political participation.

All the foregoing factors taken together may have contributed to the finding of a negative association between radio exposure and political-self efficacy. However, we have no sufficient evidence in this article to fully confirm this. Indeed, the analytical strategy adopted in this study could not allow testing the influence of these factors on the relationship between radio exposure and drivers of electoral participation. This is an area for consideration in a further study involving multiple regression analyses.

Finally, this study sought to answer the research question on the link between women voters' radio exposure and their frequency of engaging in face-to-face discussions about the 2013 general election campaigns. Out of the total of 372 respondents, 209 (56.2%) were engaged in face-to-face discussions about the 2013 polls. From Table 1, it can be observed that the association between radio exposure and the frequency of engaging in face-to-face political discussions was low but positive and statistically significant,  $r(203) = .168, p = .016$ . This suggests that an increase in the time spent listening to the radio might lead to a minimal rise in women voters' frequency of engaging in face-to-face political discussions.

The findings of a positive correlation (albeit low) between radio exposure and the frequency of engaging in face-to-face political conversations, albeit low, fit into the overall picture of news media use as a stimulant of political discussions (Habermas, 1989; Jung, 2010; Jung et al., 2011; Kim & Kim, 2007; McQuail, 2010; Scavo & Snow, 2016). The small effect size between radio exposure and the frequency of face-to-face political discussions established in this study can be justified on the points raised by Miller (1986) and Southwell

and Yzer (2007). According to Miller (1986), exposure to the news media can either dampen or spur conversations. Southwell and Yzer (2007) acknowledge that the effect of media exposure on interpersonal communication can occur when the media content effects have personal utility and value of conversing with others or affects perceptions that individuals can engage in conversation. Furthermore, face-to-face political talk is a less direct or “latent” form of political participation (Ekman, & Amnå, 2012). However, we have no sufficient evidence in this article to fully confirm this. Indeed, the research design adopted in this study could not allow respondents’ interrogation in this area. This is an area for further study involving a mixed methods research approach in which the quantitative findings can be probed further and buttressed with explanations from qualitative data.

## 7. Conclusions and recommendations

Consistent with past research, we established that the correlation between radio exposure and political knowledge and election campaign interest is strong, positive and statistically significant. Furthermore, there was a low, positive and statistically significant link between radio exposure and the frequency of face-to-face political discussions. This finding has implications on the role of radio in fulfilling women’s social utility gratification for retaining political information from radio for later use in discussions with others. Interpersonal political conversations are a latent form of electoral participation that needs to be activated by what is covered on radio, more especially during elections.

Contrary to prior research, we found a negative but strong and statistically significant association between radio exposure and political self-efficacy. Socio-demographic and cultural factors, inadequate and negative framing of the female gender and politics, in general, that could underpin the negative correlation findings were not pursued in this study. This is due to the study’s use of bivariate analysis in examining the correlation between radio exposure and drivers to electoral participation. This is an area worth considering in further studies.

In a nutshell, radio exposure predicted the key drivers of electoral participation among women voters in Kakamega County during the 2013 polls. However, we recognize that other variables could be contributing to the variance in the drivers of political participation among women voters. Therefore, there is the need for political stakeholders to have long-term strategies to address the socioeconomic, psychological and political factors impeding radio usage and the key drivers of electoral participation among women.

The findings, conclusions, implications and recommendations of this study have to be considered in light of some underlying limitations. First, the research was focused on one particular general election in Kenya within a specific county. Therefore, any generalizations made from its results are confined to this general election and county and not applicable to settings and populations different from the one considered in this research. Second, the use of a correlation research design involving bivariate analysis poses methodological limitations to the study. Causal relationships between variables could not be investigated. In this research, all the relationships between variables are one way and thus do not show causal relationships and interrelationships. The use of bivariate analysis implies we did not consider multiple variables such as socio-demographics and the use of other news media which might have an impact on the drivers of electoral participation.

Lastly, the analyses and interpretation of the findings in this study should be done bearing in mind that self-reported measures were used for radio exposure and the drivers of electoral participation. Self-reporting methods can result in underreporting or over-reporting due to socially desirable biased responses and recall failures. However, the findings established in this study, provide background information that political actors including radio stations can use to improve their political information dissemination during elections. To political communication scholars, the correlational findings established in this study provide opportunities for further research using multivariate and mediation analyses.

Despite the study limitations, this article contributes to empirical evidence on the correlation between radio exposure and select drivers of grassroots electoral participation in a developing democracy under a new devolved political system. This article focuses on radio, a dominant but understudied news medium. It also focuses on women who despite forming a large voting block remain marginalized in politics and academic research in Kenya. The study results have implications for policymakers, radio practitioners and scholars. First, the findings can be used by policymakers, civic and voter educators, and political communication strategists in Kenya to utilize the power of radio in implementing public information campaigns on promoting women's electoral participation.

We recommend that radio stations should broadcast political education programmes that are gender-sensitive targeting to transform the political knowledge and attitudes of women voters. This is critical in the implementation of the yet-to-be met constitutional and SDG principle of gender equality in political participation in Kenya. Second, the results established a statistically significant correlation between radio exposure and all the selected drivers of political participation. Thus, it is expected that journalists could use gender-sensitive radio broadcasts targeting the large audience block of female radio listeners to promote their electoral participation in Kakamega County.

Lastly, political communication and media effects scholars can build on our results and conduct further studies. Similar research can be done within the same county or nationwide in Kenya but involving various data collection methods and rigorous data analysis. We suggest, a mixed-methods research approach involving the use of a survey questionnaire, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and content analysis of political information covered on the radio during elections. This can help explain the positive and negative results established regarding the correlation between radio exposure and the selected drivers of electoral participation.

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**Appendix I: Respondents' socio-demographic profile**

Characteristics	Label	Frequency (N=372)	%
Age (years)	18-25	59	15.9
	26-30	69	18.5
	31-35	34	9.1
	36-40	44	11.8
	41-45	32	8.6
	46-50	30	8.1
	51-55	36	9.7
	56-60	27	7.3
	Above 60	41	11.0
Marital status	Single/Never married	92	24.7
	Married/Live-in partner	222	59.7
	Widowed	33	8.9
	Separated	14	3.8
	Divorced	9	2.4
	NR	2	0.5
Level of education	None/No formal education	72	19.4
	Primary school	161	43.3
	Secondary school	71	19.1
	Middle-level college certificate and diploma	42	11.3
	Undergraduate	18	4.8
	Postgraduate	6	1.6
	NR	2	0.5
Household monthly income (Kshs.)	20,000 and below	197	53.0
	20,001- 50,000	130	34.9
	Above 50,000	22	5.9
	DK and NR	23	6.2
Residential location	Rural	155	41.7
	Urban	217	58.3

\* At the time the 2013 Kenya general election was held, 1 USD=Kshs. 84.9.

## Appendix II: Women Voters' Knowledge about the 2013 Kenya General Election

Question	Correct Answer	No. of correct responses (N=372)	%
1. What official document did you present to the electoral clerk when registering as a voter for the 2013 Kenya general election?	Valid Kenyan national ID or Passport	357	96.0
2. What is the name of the presidential candidate who vied on a CORD ticket in the 4 <sup>th</sup> March 2013 general election in Kenya?	Raila Odinga	286	76.9
3. Which political coalition promised free maternity services in its election campaign manifesto in the Kenya's 2013 general election?	The Jubilee Alliance	170	45.7
4. How many County Assembly Wards make up Kakamega County?	60	122	32.8
5. What is the name of the female presidential candidate who participated in the 4 <sup>th</sup> March 2013 Kenya general election?	Martha Karua	121	32.5
6. What total percentage of valid national votes cast in a general election in Kenya must a presidential candidate get in order to be declared a winner?	Over 50% of the vote	85	22.8