FOREWORD

Prof. Elishiba N. Kimani[1]
Editor in Chief

On behalf of the Editorial Board members, authors, reviewers, and those who have contributed in one way or the other in making this issue come to be, within and outside of the University of Nairobi I extend a very warm welcome to all the readers of our journal *Pathways to African Feminism and Development*. I am delighted to present *Volume 8, Issue No.1 (Special Issue)* of the Journal on the theme *Harnessing Women's Knowledge, Experiences and Contribution towards Economic Empowerment and Sustainable Development.*

Without reservation, on behalf of the Editorial Board and my behalf, I extend my special appreciation and congratulations to the twelve authors whose articles are published herein - thank you for choosing to publish in our esteemed journal. I acknowledge and thank the members of the Editorial Board led by our Editor, Mrs. Anna Petkova-Mwangi, for the insights, unwavering support and focus in ensuring that the articles are professionally and timely reviewed. In a very special way, I wish to acknowledge the continued leadership of Prof. Wanjiku Kabira, particularly for her guidance and focus on ensuring that the original purpose of this esteemed journal is carried forward while ensuring the maintenance of the highest quality in processing articles for publication in every issue. As the Chairperson of the Editorial Board, I aspire to continue to work and draw on the expertise of the relevant stakeholders, particularly members of the Editorial Board and peer–reviewers to uphold seasoned decisions and processes for a quality peer-reviewed, international journal.

Equally appreciated are the readers not only for being the reason for the continuity of this journal but also because the journal would be meaningless without them. As the Editorial Board trusts your continued interest and support, we aspire to continue to make the journal more appealing and relevant, especially through the selection of thematic areas and articles for future publication issues. This special issue is the last in the year 2023, even though the logistics in the publication process may spill over to early, 2024. This issue carries a selection of very stimulating articles, demonstrating diverse ways in which women harness their knowledge, skills, and experiences to contribute to economic empowerment and sustainable development across various sectors. For instance, as socially defined caregivers, the first article on *Homeschooling Experiences of Kenyan Mothers of Children with Dyslexia during the COVID-19 pandemic*, brings out the experiences of mothers in caring, educating and nurturing children with dyslexia, with a lasting impact on women's social, emotional and career development. This is followed by an article with the title, *From one pandemic to another through Women's Eyes: An Analysis of the Impacts of Kenya's Response to HIV/AIDS and COVID-19* offering an interesting reading on the impact of the two remarkable pandemics, on women in their unique and diverse situations in the society. An article titled *Deconstructing Gender-Based Violence from Kenyan Soap Narratives, Unveiling the Nexus between Syndemics, Women's Health, and Transformative Change* brings out the interplay between

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media narratives and women's health through an analysis of two soap operas. The next article, titled *The Trilogy of the Coronavirus Disease, Religion and the Health of African Women* interrogates the experiences of African women from the perspective of religious-based gender inequalities and the management of the coronavirus, raising concerns about how the perceived subordinate position of women, as compared to their male counterparts, diminishes the chances of women from participating in health-related decisions that directly affect them.

An interesting article focusing on the *Health Insurance Enrolment and Utilization of Maternal Healthcare Services among Women in Kenya*, presents the experiences of women in Kenya, in the context of the current reforms in the health sector and particularly increased health insurance uptake. This is followed by an article that reaffirms the role of women as producers, processors, and managers of food in the households, titled *Participation of Women Small Holder Farmers in a Food Production Program: The Panacea to Household Food Security?* As if to complement the analysis, the following article presents a desk-reviewed study analysing the experiences and inclusivity of women in agriculture, based on the *Climate Smart Agriculture Policy Intervention for Inclusive and Sustainable Development*. This is followed by a write-up on *Media Framing of Women in Business: An Analysis of Mainstream News Article's Coverage in Kenya,* a critical analysis of how mainstream media portrays women leaders in companies that were listed at the Nairobi Securities Exchange. As the article confirms a stereotyped, gendered portrayal of women, the same is affirmed in the following article on the *Women's Experiences with Religion in the Novels of Three Women Writers,* which treats the readers to how religion is used as a symbol of forces that play a constructive role in the societies through analyses of three novels by women writers.

In a commonly perceived male-dominated housing sector, an article on *Enhancing Sustainable Housing through Women's Cultural Skills, Experiences and Knowledge,* brings out the importance of the experiences of Maasai women in the transfer of knowledge and skills in the construction of houses, and as custodians and change agents, bringing out an elevation and connectivity between the indigenous, modern knowledge and the dynamics of the transfer processes. Finally, readers in this issue will enjoy two other articles focusing on an analysis of women's social interactions in the *Labour Market in Kenya* and an African feminist critique on the inclusivity of women in *War and Terrorism,* thereby challenging the gender insensitive theories on war, terrorism, and the exclusion of women in the counter-terrorism activities.

African Women Studies Centre
(AWSC)

Homeschooling Experiences of Kenyan Mothers of Children with Dyslexia During The Covid-19 Pandemic: A Multiple Case Study

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Abstract

Previous studies have provided homeschooling experiences of parents, but little attention has been paid to African mothers homeschooling their children. Mothers of children with dyslexia spend more time nurturing, socializing and in care work as compared to non-homeschooling mothers. This study uses a qualitative method from an African Feminist Epistemology lens to explore the lived experiences of homeschooling African mothers. A small case study sample is used to provide a rich, detailed understanding of the phenomena (Scribner and Crow, 2012). Out of ten mothers interviewed from a Nairobi-based social support group for children with dyslexia, two were fully homeschooled during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The study specifically focuses on the unique experiences of the two homeschooling mothers to provide an African homeschooling context and experience. A narratological method is used to compare and contrast the mothers' exclusive experiences. Five main themes emerged from the study: strategies used by mothers; impact on careers; mental health; financial independence, and impact on social life. We conclude that mothers' homeschooling mainly resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic. Mothers used wide-ranging creative strategies for successful homeschooling alongside household chores and care work for the family. Homeschooling, however, had a negative impact on mothers' careers, mental health, financial independence, and social life. We conclude that the lived experiences of homeschooling Kenyan mothers of children with dyslexia may be considered an impression of what other homeschooling Kenyan mothers of children with learning disabilities face.

Key words: *children with dyslexia, COVID-19, dyslexia, homeschooling, learning disability, lived experiences, mothering, strategies.*

1.0 Introduction

The beginnings of contemporary homeschooling can be traced back to John Holt, an educational theorist and school reformer in the 1970s whose ideas took root in 1977. This provided an

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alternative to traditional, formal, mainstream education. Ruban et al. (2021) report that Holt's homeschooling option was motivated by the desire to boost poor students' performance by improving pedagogical development. Gaither (2017) reviews various aspects of the history of American homeschooling and reports emerging themes as parental motivations. McTurnal (2019) explains families' choice of strict homeschooling, while Jamaludin et al. (2015) find varied reasons for the appropriateness and compatibility of the execution of homeschooling and report inconsistencies. Dyslexia is a neurobiological disability often linked with the inability to read, write, spell, and acquire literacy skills (Snowling & Nation, 2020). Dyslexia affects one in every five students globally. It is a specific learning disorder, lifelong, but it can also be acquired, in some instances. Sahu et al. (2018) find that parents of children with learning disabilities already experience significantly challenging and transformative responsibilities in supporting their children's education. Therefore, the added responsibility of homeschooling and working can have grave repercussions on them. It is generally expected that all parents should take their children through formal school. However, a critical examination of the Basic Education Act (Government of Kenya, 2013) in Kenya shows it does not discourage the homeschooling alternative. During the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown mothers had to assume roles of homeschooling. This was done in terms of facilitating online learning. Some mothers opted to continue with full-time homeschooling even after formal learning resumed. This study has a greater focus on homeschool mothers' experiences because mothers often spend a lot of time with their children. They reproduce, nurture, and socialize. The care work they provide is often unpaid and unacknowledged. The effort, time and energy are likely to have an impact on their careers, mental health, and social lives. The research problem was to explore the lived experiences of Kenyan mothers of children with dyslexia. Accordingly, the following objectives were formulated: to examine the reasons why mothers homeschool; to identify the strategies used by mothers to successfully homeschool and to explore the impact of homeschooling on mothers' lives.

2.0 Literature Review

Comprehensive literature exists on homeschooling parents. However, there are limited studies on homeschooling African mothers. Indeed, homeschooling presents a widespread option for parents desiring different pedagogical methods (Lindsay, 2003; Shepherd, 2010).

2.1 Homeschooling Mothers: Obligatory or by Choice?

Homeschooling was considered obligatory during pandemics such as Covid-19 (Devitt, 2017; Machovcová et al., 2021). The place of the mothers became more apparent during lockdown, restricted attendance and closure of schools. De Jong et al. (2022) note the central situation of mothers in homeschooling during COVID-19 and a rise in anxiety among parents due to the length of time and impact of online digitized classes. This included emotional and behavioural well-being, insufficient outdoor activities, and well-being, Zhao et al. (2020). Fontenelle-Tereshchuk (2021) observes the experiences of homeschooling curriculum and distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in a study of ten parents in Alberta, Canada, with reports of immoderate pressure on them from teachers to help facilitate learning. He finds an array of negative impacts on parents, ranging from challenges of isolation and restricted movement, job losses, the weight of balancing between full working time, household chores and facilitating children's learning and impropriety of internet-based learning on young children as extremely stressful. Heers and Lips (2022) report the enormous responsibilities and challenges parents had to bear while taking up homeschooling during lockdown due to Covid-19. Mothers with lower incomes and less education bore the greatest brunt. Petts et al. (2021) give an overview of a gendered COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on childcare, homeschooling and parents' employment in the U.S. noting a gender difference in employment during pandemics. Using a qualitative–bibliographic study to investigate information on parents' coping mechanisms during COVID-19 Mendoza and Montes (2020) underscore the responsibility of parents in taking up homeschooling their children with findings that integrate individualized life

skill activities, with varied activities in art and sports that children find enjoyable produces holistic children. Mendoza et al. (2020), in an Egyptian study using a qualitative-bibliographic approach, explore homeschooling as a pedagogical option that enables parents to apply creative teaching and learning methods in a conducive home environment. Kallitsoglou and Topalli (2021) scrutinize the sentiments and experiences of employed mothers on homeschooling during the COVID-19 lockdown in the U.K. with findings of difficulties in combining care work and homeschooling with an escalation of socio-emotional stress, worry and remorse. Smith (2022) avers that alternative schooling methods provided by lessons learnt during the COVID-19 pandemic could be replicated after the pandemic. Vincent et al. (2021) emphasize the luminous aspect of homeschooling children with special needs during the COVID-19 pandemic in a nurturing familial environment, reinforced family bonds, and opportunities for digitized learning. Dobosz et al. (2022) review the literature on parents' opinions on homeschooling children with special needs and disabilities between 2020 and 2021.

2.2 Strategies and Methods and Impact of Homeschooling

Carpenter and Gann (2016), in a qualitative study of three homeschooling families in the United States of America, analyses the pedagogical activities and tools used in facilitating a typical day. Findings revealed self-instructed adjustable lessons with parents playing coordinating roles in their children's education. Sabol (2018) presents parental viewpoints on homeschooling collaborations concerning instructional infrastructure in a multi-case study. Pazhwak et al. (2022) found a link between homeschooling and students' psycho-social health among Afghanistan's homeschooled children. In a Turkish homeschooling study, AHI and Sengil-Akar (2021) find discrepancies in parents' perceptions of the choice to homeschool or take children through the challenges of formal school and no fitting familial school experiences. DesRoches et al. (2021) find a link between mothers, homeschooling, Covid-19, stress, and poor mental health. McQueen (2019), in a qualitative study of 26 homeschooling parents, finds an inclination for their adolescent homeschooled children's psycho-social well-being and sees it as a preferable choice for their children's opportunity for self-discovery and growth. Murphy (2014), in a sociological study, analyses the merits and demerits of the social and educational outcomes of homeschooling on students in the USA, while Neuman and Guterman (2022) examine homeschooling away from parents' perception and examine perceptions of homeschooled teenagers.

2.3 Global, African American and African Homeschooling

A South African homeschooling study by Dlamini et al. (2021) compares prospective homeschooling constructed from exposure. The researchers argue that decision to homeschool is guided by parental values and that drawbacks should be addressed through government and policymakers' interventions. Besides, parents who had taken up the homeschooling alternative, preferred a more personalized school exposure for their children. Complimentary findings are reported by Smith (2022) with further results indicating that black American mothers chose the homeschool option due to discrepancies in disciplinary measures between black and other children, perennial referrals for special education support, undervaluing of black parents in mainstream schools and reports of inequalities. In an Indonesian homeschooling study, Halik et al. (2021) observe it as an evolving pedagogical model in Indonesia homeschooling choice as one that offers a flexible curriculum and provides an opportunity for talent progression. Moreover, they see a focus on the children's areas of interest despite drawbacks such as lack of interaction and socialization with other children and lack of applicable measurement tools for children's achievement. Demerits of homeschooling experiences, including social isolation, expropriation, and their implications on adulthood have been reported in studies by Cheng et al. (2016), while Qureshi and Ali (2022) explore the Pakistani benefits of homeschooling in a phenomenological study whose results reveal invigorated family relationships, enhanced personalized instruction and openings for better acculturation and self-contemplation.

Previous studies have shown that homeschooling enhances children's interests and talents Abuzandah (2021) in an evaluation of literature on homeschooling perspectives and best practices establishes that parents choose to homeschool because of individualized decisions. Others were based on spiritual, communal, and moral principles. Furthermore, homeschooling families had reservations about unconducive school infra structure including aggression and overcrowding in schools. Parents reported that computer – based homeschooling was a better option than traditional schooling because of social collaborations that linked homeschooling families with universal networks.

Purwaningsih and Fauziah (2020) find that homeschooling enables the provision of an education that supports student's competences compared with formal mainstream schooling. They argue that homeschooling enhances the child's interests and talents which leads to the student's developing a sense of self-determination, and responsibility, strengthened psycho-physiological skills and lifelong skills acquired through lived experiences.

Research by Ray (2015) finds not only positive academic achievements in home-schooled students but also positive overall socio–emotional development. The study further finds relatively positive success in home-schooled students in adulthood in terms of their array of knowledge, attitude, behaviour, personal agency and self–efficacy when compared to those who had attended mainstream schooling.

Whether a decision is made to enrol a child in the mainstream school system or homeschool, a safe and conducive learning environment is critical in achieving positive outcomes. Baidi (2019) reports a link between an enabling home environment and successful homeschooling. He notes factors such as a conducive environment, involved parents, children's self-determination for a curriculum that fits their needs, use of appropriate study materials, application of workable techniques and strategies, self-teaching and relevant opportunities as essential for successful homeschooling.

Studies have shown that homeschooling may harm the mental health of mothers because of additional labour and burnout. Baker (2021) reports a link between homeschooling, mental health of mothers and coping strategies. The study explores mothers' experiences of homeschooling with findings that intensive mothering and homeschooling can hurt their mental health. This includes constantly recurring pressure, anxiety, and psychological distress.

2.4 Homeschooling of Gifted Children and Children with Special Needs

Whitlow-Spurlock (2019) explores the lived experiences of home educators with findings indicating the appropriateness of homeschooling to the gifted and twice-exceptional children and the need to change the name 'homeschooling' to 'personalized home education'. Cook et al. (2013) examine why parents choose to homeschool. The home environment is one that families of children with special needs deem appropriate where need-based instruction can be followed, and parents can closely supervise and control as reported in findings by Duffey (2002). Somerton and Mukashev (2023) find negative psycho-social, financial and mental constraints in parents' homeschooling children with disabilities. Ludgate et al. (2022) explore from an online survey the experiences of homeschooling parents of children with special education needs and disabilities (*SEND*) in England during the pandemic, with findings revealing new and exciting opportunities for creativity and all-embracing pedagogical activities that enabled reinforced familial bonds, productive learning and improved socio-emotional welfare of children and parents. This finding is corroborated in studies by Greenway and Eaton-Thomas (2020) and Cheng et al. (2016), further revealing parents' views that they were satisfied with the option to homeschool

Experiences of mothers homeschooling children with special needs are likely to differ from those of mothers of children in mainstream schools. Reilly et al. (2002), provide in-depth experiences of families homeschooling children with special needs with findings that children were able to cope better in the homeschool environment. The children had access to closer contact and assistance. However, their families frequently pursued external support. Additionally, their children

took longer years in homeschooling compared to regular school-going children. Recommendations were made for the development and implementation of policies at the national government as well as at the local government levels for homeschooling families and for enhanced partnerships to achieve positive results.

Delaney's (2014) study provides perspectives of parents of children with learning disabilities towards public and homeschool settings. The parents report positive aspects of homeschooling which they list as flexibility and tailored needs of the children, request by children to homeschool, and avoidance of bullying. Kouroupa et al. (2022) examine the experiences of homeschooling parents in the United Kingdom with a focus on children with neurocognitive challenges and learning difficulties during the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings indicate positive results, including access to relevant resources, and access to technology and services. Recommendations are made for future education policy decisions during the pandemics that take into account special consideration children with neurodiverse conditions. Cook et al (2013) highlight the increase in the number of children with special needs who are homeschooled and the need to avail resources and services. This includes a review of the history of homeschooling families and the relevant legislation and its implications for children with special needs. Setyabudi and Sridiyatmoko (2022) emphasise the need for children to have a relevant and quality education, with findings indicating a preference for homeschooling by parents of children with dyslexia.

3.0 Methodology

This study uses material drawn from Qualitative Feminist methods from narrative interviews with two Kenyan mothers of children with dyslexia. The case study design drew from a small sample size of two mothers to enable a comprehensive, detailed analysis and rich interpretation. While Gumpili and Das (2022) identify the importance of large sample sizes in any study, they recommend the need to generate high-standard data. This includes familiarization with the data, and adequate examination of the sample frame and circumstances to efficiently represent the sample. Njie and Asimiran (2014) emphasized the significance of samples that help describe a person, people, experiences, and events to provide a sound comprehension of different facets of a research investigation. Indarayan and Mishra (2021) explore the significance of small samples in research with findings that sample sizes are determined by context. Scribner and Crow (2021) use a case study to single out moral principles, philosophies, and inspirations while Takahashi and Araujo (2020) evaluate the opening of research through a case study that enables a multiplicity of epistemologies. This paves the way for central clarity between technique, knowledge production and creativity.

The multiple case study allowed for comparing and contrasting the similarities and differences. This helped to strengthen the validity and generalizability of the findings by evincing how occurrences differed or intersected across the multiple cases, as in studies by *Parsons and Lewis (2010), Skinner (2011), Somerton and Mukashev (2023) and Tabatabai (2020)*. A narratological methodology enabled mothers to make sense of their world and tell stories of their lived realities. This provided an alternative to predominant conventional methods that exclude women's knowledge *(Fraser & Taylor, 2022; Woodiwiss et al., 2017)*. It unveiled the uniqueness of individual mothers' insights into their place, power, and knowledge. Although women's epistemology has previously been overlooked in academic scholarship, it is a valuable and credible contribution to knowledge *(Lanser, 1986; Sosulsa et al., 2010)*. This can be done through documentation of their life stories and narrative analysis.

Out of ten mothers identified from a Nairobi- based social support group, only two were fully homeschooling their children during and after the pandemic. Eight mothers were facilitating formal virtual classes organized by private and public schools. Only two mothers, therefore, met the criteria of homeschooling, which was a deviation from the virtual classes organized by formal schools during the pandemic. The kind of curriculum and pedagogical instructions the two mothers used for teaching and learning differed completely from the formal school online learning. The two mothers

had bio-data that were of specific relevance to the study, thus justifying their selection. Emails of requests were sent, and consent was sought. This was followed up by phone calls and preparation of interview schedules. The first part involved asking the two participants to narrate their homeschooling experiences during and after the pandemic with some guidelines and prompts. Each interview was audio recorded and lasted between one hour and 1 hour and 30 minutes. This was followed by transcribing the data, which was sorted and analysed into main themes and sub-themes using the NVivo 12 software version 12.0. Draft transcripts were shared with and discussed with participants to check for facts and accuracy, and more clarification was sought through email and phone calls. These comments were then incorporated into the analysis.

Table 1: Characteristics of study participants who combine mothering children with dyslexia and homeschooling.

Mariana	Divorced mother in her thirties.	Imelda	Married mother in her forties.
	A media personality with a postgraduate education level.		A civil servant in a parastatal with a Diploma.
	A mother of two children: a boy and a girl.		A mother of two children: a boy and a girl.
	Her son has dyslexia.		Both her children have Dyslexia and Multiple Disabilities.

In order to preserve anonymity and protect children's identity these are not the real ages of mothers, names of mothers, names of their children, names of schools attended or professions.

4.0 Findings of The Study

4.1 Homeschooling by Choice or Obligation

Both mothers indicated that the choice to homeschool their children was mostly influenced by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and not a deliberate decision from the onset as expressed in the narratives below:

> *"Before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, my children attended a private school in Nairobi that offered the Kenyan school curriculum. I homeschooled them during COVID and continued even after formal schooling resumed."* **Mariana**

> *"I have two children, a boy and a girl, both in their early teens and still in preparatory school; both have dyslexia and comorbidity special needs conditions. They had been attending a private school. My decision to homeschool first came about because of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak."* **Imelda**

Virtual classes opened the challenges children with dyslexia face, which was an eye opener for mothers such as Mariana, thus the decision to continue to homeschool after the pandemic.

> *"My continuous absence from work was also becoming a challenge, and I started experiencing hostility from my employer when I frequently asked for time away from work to take my children to the hospital or to go to school and meet with their teachers.*" ***Imelda.***

"My children and I were victims of stigma, misunderstanding and judgement by peers and the community. This is because of a general lack of knowledge of learning and other overlapping disabilities. These were very difficult and emotional times. When I began to homeschool them, we coped better within a friendly and conducive environment." **Imelda**

"From my research, I have discovered methods and resources I could use to complement what they could not in school. I could fully apply these methods and resources when i began homeschooling them" **Imelda**

4.2 Strategies Used by Mothers

The two mothers, Mariana and Imelda, employed converging and divergent strategies in mothering and homeschooling their children.

"I use resources with many exciting and varied colours to sustain my son's interest in the learning activities. I engage both of my children in experiential learning through tours to relevant sites. As I facilitate and supervise, we do many practical **activities** *that allow for self-directed learning. I have created and modified an abridged version of the Accelerated Christian Curriculum to accommodate his learning disability."* **Mariana.**

"When I homeschool, I can monitor and supervise their learning activities. I focus on involving them in activities that teach and reinforce life skills. This includes cooking, drawing, painting, and conducting self-driven experiments." **Imelda.**

"I do not allow any activities that eat into my children's play or leisure time. We strictly limit our teaching and learning activities to normal hours without carrying forward any work beyond what we have scheduled to do." **Mariana.**

"Homeschooling has enabled me to cut on the cost of mainstream schooling and teach my children an appropriate curriculum for their learning type and need." **Imelda.**

4.3 The Impact of Homeschooling

There was a general lack of positive impact on the careers, mental health, financial independence, family, and social life of the two mothers.

I had to stop working full-time, and my husband also took an early retirement, so for a while, we were unstable financially. I engage in simple entrepreneurial. This way, I am able to contribute to our household financial needs." **Imelda.**

"While homeschooling, I still have to ensure I complete the household chores and care for my children. Sometimes, it gets challenging and very exhausting. On days I am not up to it, I take it easy on me and the children, too." **Imelda.**

Mariana began to homeschool other children apart from her own to make some money and meet financial obligations.

> *"Apart from homeschooling my own children, I started taking in other people's children to help me earn income to support my family. I am divorced and must do everything within my means to meet my financial obligations."*
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> *"My experience with homeschooling my son during this period made me realize he needed personalized attention, which only I could effectively and efficiently provide. Sometimes, I homeschool other children, but I can only take very few at a time. The implication of this is unsustainably low remuneration.*

Mothering children with dyslexia homeschooling required extreme patience and understanding, even with basic everyday support with routine activities. This was especially enhanced when dyslexia occurred with other conditions. Puberty also ushered in changes that required a lot of attention by the mothers:

> *"My son is very sensitive to noise and reacts negatively to crowds. He is also very possessive of his personal items, reacts negatively to strangers, and is greatly attached to only those he knows well. Now that my daughter has started experiencing pubertal changes, my husband and I have taken it upon ourselves to train her on personal self-care, which she has mastered well."*
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> *My day begins at the crack of dawn because of the weight of my responsibilities. I have to juggle between household chores, homeschooling... My small entrepreneurial business of fresh water supply often suffers because of extreme mental and physical exhaustion."* **Imelda**

5.0 Discussion and Conclusion

Until now it has been presumed from literature review findings that the global lived experiences of homeschooling mothers of children with specific learning disabilities are similar regardless of contexts and individual mothers' decisions. Nevertheless, the findings of this study present the unique perspectives that situate Kenyan homeschooling mothers of children with dyslexia as the '*knowers of their knowledge through their lived experiences'*. Thus, the findings address the structural biases and blind spots in the existing discourse by shifting the paradigm to the lived experiences of homeschooling African mothers of children with dyslexia, who are often an under-researched and underrepresented group. The following five points emanated from the mothers' narratives: circumstantial and deliberate reasons that led mothers of children with dyslexia to homeschool; the strategies used by mothers to successfully homeschool; and the impact of homeschooling on mothering, careers, mental health, financial independence and family and social life. Mothers homeschooled their children mainly due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. This was circumstantial because of global, regional, and national lockdowns and restricted movement. Consequently, children could not physically attend school while adults had to work from home. Virtual teaching became the norm worldwide while parents had to contend with facilitating online learning within the home environment. Mothers appeared to play a more central

role, compared to fathers in facilitating learning at home. This has been validated in findings by Kallitsoglou and Topalli (2021). Findings further showed that the choice by mothers to homeschool was, therefore, not initially a deliberate choice but circumstantial. This is corroborated in studies by Devitt (2017), Lindsay (2003), Lois (2013), Machovcová et al. (2021) and Shepherd (2010).The literature also indicates the central role of mothers resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, as corroborated in studies by Carlson (2015), de Jong et al. (2022), Dobosz et al. (2022), Fontenelle-Tereshchuk, (2021), Heers and Lipps (2022), Kallitsoglou and Topalli (2021), Mendoza and Montes (2020), Vincent et al. (2021), and Zhao et al. (2020).

However, both mothers revealed that they continued to homeschool after normal schooling resumed. They felt the mainstream schools did not adequately address the needs of children with dyslexia studies. This meant the children did not benefit meaningfully from formal schools because of inappropriate pedagogical teaching and learning methods and stigma. This is corroborated by Smith (2020) who found that African American mothers homeschooled because they faced racial and discriminatory inequalities against their children. Included were dissimilar disciplinary measures, a lack of special education support services and the undervaluing of Black children in formal schools. Mothers also found the homeschool environment as conducive to providing relevant and quality education as found by Setyabudi and Sridiyatmoko (2022).

On strategies used by mothers to successfully homeschool children with dyslexia, mothers reported the opportunity to pay closer attention to children with dyslexia. This was a positive move because children with dyslexia require close supervision and attention to successfully complete assigned tasks that involve reading, writing, spelling, and comprehension. Mothers used the homeschooling environment to give their children individualized attention. This was particularly significant because mainstream schools did not provide positive school experiences for children with regard to their educational philosophy, developmental concerns of negative social interaction and school experiences. AHI and Sengil-Akar (2021) have reported similar findings.

Mothers used a number of strategies that worked for their children's successful homeschooling. They found researching homeschool curriculums that were appropriate for teaching children with learning disabilities to be useful. Both mothers were keen to facilitate self-directed learning and a conducive personalized environment, as found in a study by Jeynes (2016). This enabled them to identify the children's difficulties and reinforce their strengths. They emphasized on life-skills development, interests, and talents. Both mothers were, therefore, best positioned to monitor the progress and growth of their children. This corroborates the findings by Carpenter and Gann (2016) that American parents used creative pedagogical activities and tools which facilitated successful homeschooling.

Findings revealed that homeschooling mothers played a critical role in initiating organized learning at home. This included establishing day-to-day routines, ensuring and providing a conducive ambiance for learning and preparing of self-instructed adjustable lessons to facilitate their children's learning. Francis (2019) found that homeschooling parents used learner-centred pedagogical approaches, differentiated learning methods and creatively tailor-made activities to fit the student's needs. Mothers indicated that it took effort, creativity, and time to research, plan, use appropriate teaching and learning methods and prepare resources for homeschooling. Both mothers facilitated their children's learning process and knew homeschooling curriculums that best suited their children. Both mothers were able to deal with the unmet needs of their children in mainstream schools by using a wide range of online resources. Sabol (2018) found that pooling together interactive resources and activities helped support the children's education; Pazhwak et al. (2022) tailored curricula that met the needs of the learners and provided interaction between parents and homeschooling children that enabled greater satisfaction, monitoring and response to the growth and progress of the children by parents. This was found to be particularly important for children with learning and other disabilities, as reported in studies by Ludgate et al. (2022), Greenway and Thomas (2020) and Cheng et al. (2016). Thus, an enabling environment, appropriate curriculum, teaching and learning strategies, and intensive mothering are critical in successful homeschooling.

Homeschooling had both negative and positive impact on mothers, affecting all aspects of their lives: social, financial, and mental. Lois (2013) has similar findings and claims that American mothers' homeschooling experience restricted them to household chores. She finds negative impacts ranging from the sacrifice of the identity of mothers, psychological and physical demands, and juggling household chores.

For both mothers in Kenya, the positive aspects of homeschooling included some level of successfully balancing between household chores, family needs and care of children's social, psychological and educational needs. This is corroborated in studies by Cook et al. (2013) and Whitlow-Spurlock (2019) and seen as the best option that could accommodate homeschooling mothers of children with disabilities and coping mechanisms of mothers. (Cheng et al., 2016; Cook et al., 2013; Delaney, 2014; Greenway & Eaton-Thomas, 2020; Kouroupa et al., 2022; Ludgate et al., 2022; Setyabudi & Sridiyatmoko, 2022; Somerton & Mukashev, 2023).

Imelda's son and daughter were pre-teens, undergoing puberty and requiring close supervision and care. This incorporated self-growth, discovery and self-care, thus corroborating findings by McQueen (2019) who observed that parents of teenaged children preferred homeschooling because of positive advantages such as self-discovery and growth. These were among the benefits formal schooling could not provide. Similar findings are reported by Abuzandah (2021), Purwaningsih and Fauziah (2020), Qureshi and Ali (2022) and Ray (2015).

By contrast, Mariana's children were much younger, requiring more preparation, facilitation, and guidance. Although positive in terms of gains for their children, it implied a sacrifice of self in the case of both mothers. Baker (2021) and DesRoches et al. (2021) report stress and poor mental health in homeschooling mothers, which was visible in both mothers, but Imelda was more greatly affected than Marianna. Mothers' sacrificing careers and paid jobs for their children's welfare was perceived as positive. This included providing conducive home environments, flexible teaching and learning activities and hours. On the other hand, mothers' careers, mental health, financial independence, family, and social life were affected by the demands of homeschooling and childcare. In some instances, mothers had to give up the demands and stresses of paid jobs to give full time attention to their children's education.

Career loss and taking up full or part-time homeschooling limited mothers' financial capacity. Mariana bore all responsibilities, while Imelda had some support from her husband, both financially and emotionally. Both mothers engaged in activities that contributed to family income. Both had to quit their jobs to focus on their children's schooling. Mariana left her job to take up full-time homeschooling but had to take in other children to get some income. Thus, mothers go the extra mile, even when homeschooling, to contribute to family financial needs. Combining mothering and homeschooling was demanding of their time, contributing greatly to mental and physical exhaustion. Completing all household chores, caring for the children and family, preparing, and implementing homeschooling tasks had a toll on mothers' physical, psychological, mental, and social health. Both mothers put in amplified energy compared with mothers of children without learning disabilities. This was evident in the time spent in planning, preparation and execution of homeschooling and household tasks. There was the perception of accomplishing this as good parenting and intensive mothering. Similar findings are reported by Beláňová et al. (2018) and Lois (2013). Homeschooling was seen as emotional, intensive mothering labour and sacrifice by mothers for their children's welfare (Edri & Kalev, 2019; Lois, 2013).

6.0 Limitations and Future Research

This study commences to address the insufficient information about the homeschooling experience of African mothers of children with dyslexia. Although it is generally held that all homeschooling mothers may share similar experiences, such as the inability of formal schools to meet the specific need of their children, this may vary with regard to context and individual mothers' reasons to homeschool. While the literature on homeschooling mothers in studies by Ludgate et al (2021); Garlington (2020); Lois (2021); Murphy (2014), Carpenter and Gann (2016); Tabatabai (2021) and

Baidi (2019), was generally found to be congruent with the mothers' experiences of the two Kenyan mothers of children with dyslexia, future research endeavours should broaden on these findings based on different contexts. The sample size used was from a small homogeneous group with similar demographics. Although this was particularly useful for examining unique and specific demographics, caution must be exercised when generalizing these findings to the wider Kenyan homeschool mothers' population. Subsequent research is necessary to explore the larger population of more homeschooling mothers of children with learning disabilities. This is likely to strengthen well- grounded research in the field of African Feminist Epistemology. This is of significance because it can inform the development of relevant services and support for mothers in the demanding journey of mothering and homeschooling children with learning disabilities.

Thus, this study contributes to new knowledge by capturing the lived experiences of homeschooling African mothers by situating their epistemology at the core of the study. The knowledge of the Kenyan mothers foregrounds their initiatives, borne out of their experiences as legitimate knowledge in consideration for policy discourse on homeschooling mothers of children with dyslexia.

7.0 Conclusion

We may not be in a position to conclusively determine that African mothers of children with dyslexia homeschool because of obligatory circumstances brought about by pandemics such as the COVID-19 pandemic. However, we conclude from this study that the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to the commencement of homeschooling by some mothers. We conclude that children's learning disability such as dyslexia may contribute to mothers' choices to continue homeschooling as an alternative to mainstream schooling. We further conclude that mothers employ varied and well-researched strategies from global best practices best suited for homeschooling ranging from tailor-made curricula, resources, self-directed activities, and pedagogical instructions.

The mothers' experiences converge in areas of strategies applied in homeschooling but diverge in methods of coping with negative socio-economic and emotional repercussions. Homeschooling may have a negative impact on the mothers' paid jobs, careers, mental health, and social life. This may be because of having to juggle between mothering, personal care, household chores and unpaid care work to support children with dyslexia. Finally, the narratives told by the mothers enable the unpackaging, demystifying and systematization of their homeschool experiences. These can be reclaimed, reformulated, and documented as an important contribution to African Feminist Epistemology.

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From One Pandemic to Another Through Women's Eyes: An Analysis of The Impacts of Kenya's Responses to HIV/AIDS and Covid-19

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Abstract

By the time the COVID-19 pandemic hit Kenya in March 2020, the country had made great strides in handling HIV. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has threatened the gains that the country has made in this fight. A major drawback that was caused in this regard is in the context of addressing the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS. For close to 40 years, Kenya has been dealing with HIV/AIDS and has gained significant experience in addressing a pandemic. However, Kenya failed to draw on this experience in dealing with COVID-19. Consequently, Kenya's failure to apply the useful experience gained in the context of HIV/AIDS in the containment of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in gendered impacts of the country's COVID-19 responses. The responses that were put in place to contain COVID-19 were reactionary, gender-blind and fluid, and resulted in creating greater vulnerability among women and girls. These gendered impacts of Kenya's COVID-19 responses were particularly adverse to women and girls living with HIV/AIDS. This article is, therefore, concerned with the intersections between HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 in Kenya, and how they have impacted women and girls. Using a desk review of various studies that have addressed the gender dimensions of COVID-19 and HIV-AIDS, the article highlights the adverse impacts that the COVID-19 containment measures had on women and girls in Kenya. These adverse gendered impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic could have been avoided if Kenya had been more prepared and the lessons learnt from the HIV-AIDS pandemic had been applied. The article, therefore, argues that Kenya needs to be more prepared for any future pandemics and to have in place measures that will prevent women from bearing the brunt of any future Pandemics. A key lesson is that there is a need to understand and document how past pandemics have affected women and girls and to use the lessons from those Pandemics in informing policies on pandemic preparedness.

Key words: *COVID-19, gender, HIV/AIDS, Kenya, women.*

1.0 Introduction

Kenya has borne the brunt of the Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome HIV/AIDS pandemic from the 1980s to the early 2000s. The devastation was particularly severe before anti-retroviral (ARV) medication became readily available (Roser and Ritchie, 2014). Indeed, a positive HIV/AIDS test was tantamount to a death sentence – death of relationships as

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people thought transmission occurred through contact or sharing spaces and ultimately physical death from opportunistic infections on an already immune-compromised body. The country has since made great strides towards addressing issues such as stigma, violence, and discrimination which persons living with HIV suffered (Avert, 2020). The efforts at the national level have been supported by international initiatives, such as United Nations-AIDS, where programs such as the Kenya HIV Situation Room have been developed in order to improve reporting and service delivery in HIV programming (UNAIDS, 2015).

The lessons that Kenya had learnt from dealing with HIV/AIDS should have informed the responses put in place to address the Corona Virus Disease-2019 (COVID-19) pandemic when the cases were presented in March 2020. However, this did not happen. In HIV programming, both government and non-governmental actors have over the years struggled to address marginalization based on gender through legal, policy and other interventions, and have made great strides in promoting gender-sensitive policies in the area (NGEC, 2012). Yet, despite having dealt with HIV/AIDS for close to 40 years through policy and law, health interventions, including reproductive health and maternal and child health measures, and amassing a lot of knowledge and experience in this (National AIDS Control Council, 2014), Kenya did not utilise the lessons learnt from the HIV/AIDS pandemic but instead adopted a gender-neutral approach in dealing with COVID-19. The country failed to pay special attention to the inordinate burden that women bear, as individuals who are affected by the pandemic, and also as caregivers for others affected by the Pandemic (Kameri-Mbote & Meroka-Mutua, 2020). However, in the same way, Kenya's HIV responses have been strengthened by international mechanisms, it is also envisioned that Kenya's domestic responses to future pandemics could be strengthened by international initiatives such as One Health and the ongoing negotiations for 'WHO Pandemic Preparedness Treaty' (WHO, 2023).

This article analyses Kenya's responses to the HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 pandemics through women's eyes. The article is divided into seven parts. Part one is the introduction while Part two provides the contextual background for both the HIV/AIDS and the COVID-19 Pandemics. Part three lays out the conceptual and analytical frameworks that undergird the discussion on women's experiences during Pandemics in Kenya. It includes African Feminism; Marxist Feminism; Capability Approach; Development as Freedom; Women's Health Perspective; Women's Empowerment Framework; and the Gender Planning Framework. Part four describes the methodology used in putting the article together while part five looks at the experiences of women during the HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 pandemics, highlighting the negative effects that both pandemics have had on women and girls. Part six looks at Kenya's responses to the pandemics generally and through women's eyes specifically, and demonstrates that where responses have been gender blind, the impacts of the pandemics on women and girls have been worsened. Part seven concludes and makes a case for using the lessons from the HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 pandemics in preparing for any future pandemics. The failure to take such a policy direction is likely to result in losing any gains made in dealing with past pandemics.

2.0 Contextual Background

As of February 2020, the Kenya Population-Based HIV Impact Assessment (KENPHIA) showed that the country's HIV prevalence stood at 4.9% (Ministry of Health, 2020). The KENPHIA data further showed that prevalence among women stood at 6.6%, which was twice that of men, which stood at 3.1%. In 2016, estimates indicated that 1.6 million people were living with HIV in Kenya, and 910,000 were women (Avert, 2020). This means that there were more infections among women than there were among men, and women remain disproportionately affected. The higher prevalence among women as compared to men is attributable to forms of gender discrimination that limit women's access to education, employment and business opportunities, health services, economic resources such as land and other forms of property (Avert, 2020) and (Sia, et al, 2014). Further, issues such as gender-based violence, harmful cultural practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM), widow inheritance, and early and forced marriage, limit the extent to which women can

exercise agency over their sexuality and bodies (Avert, 2020). Thus, for instance, when women experience domestic, spousal, and sexual violence, they are less likely to negotiate for condom use (Avert, 2020; Kako, et al, 2012). Further, women who are not economically empowered are less likely to participate in decision-making at the family level, and this includes decisions such as getting tested for HIV/AIDS, using ARVs, reproduction and breastfeeding (Avert, 2020). Girls who are subjected to FGM are also likely to experience early and forced marriage to much older men, often in polygamous settings, and this, in turn, limits the extent to which they can negotiate with their husbands and co-wives for safe sex practices (Maroncha, 2015).

While Kenya has made significant progress in the fight against HIV/AIDS, which includes having more people living with HIV on anti-retroviral (ARV) medication and reducing the viral load in persons living with HIV/AIDS to decrease their ability to transmit the virus to others, it is still estimated that more than half of the population of persons living with HIV does not know their status (Avert, 2020). Hence, a major focus of Kenya's HIV response has been to encourage testing. Relatedly, women tend to be tested for HIV more than men, particularly because of the country's policy on testing women for the virus when they present for ante-natal care. Consequently, in 2014, it was reported that 53% of women were tested for the virus over 12 months, compared to 45% of men (Avert, 2020).

Kenya's remarkable progress in addressing HIV has resulted in reducing the number of new infections annually, with the figure going down to 62,000 in 2016 from 100,000 in 2013 (Avert, 2020). As of 2019, the number of new infections stood at 42,000 (Ministry of Health, 2020).

In 2020, however, Kenya's fight against HIV/AIDS was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The first case of COVID-19 was reported in Kenya in March 2020, and this affected the country's economic, political, and cultural life. Several responses were adopted, including the closure of public spaces such as schools, churches and offices; restriction of movement in several counties including Nairobi, Mombasa, Kwale, Kilifi and Mandera; introduction of the national hygiene program; the introduction of economic stimuli packages; and the home-based care program for COVID-19 patients who were asymptomatic or who had mild symptoms (Kameri-Mbote & Meroka-Mutua, 2020). The responses to COVID-19, particularly the closure of public spaces and the restriction of movement contributed significantly to the rise in cases of gender-based, intimate partner and domestic violence, with women and children comprising the most victims (*Mutavati, Zaman, & Olajide, 2020)*. The closure of public spaces and restriction of movement measures led to the merging of the public and private spheres of life, which affected the organisation of many families as work and education activities moved from the public spaces to the home. The closure of public spaces also had adverse economic impacts on many people, who were rendered unemployed or under-employed which, in turn, affected the extent to which people could provide for basic needs including food and water (Kameri-Mbote and Meroka-Mutua, 2020). Further, the restriction of movement affected the health-seeking behavior of expectant mothers and mothers of young children (Kimani, et al 2020). All these issues impacted the country's fight against HIV/AIDS because gender-based intimate partner and domestic violence made women more vulnerable to HIV infection; the lack of clean water and food also limited the extent to which people living with HIV/AIDS could take their ARV medication; and with fewer women seeking ante-natal, reproductive health and well-baby services, there was less testing for the virus among women, who until then were being tested more than men.

The country also witnessed an increase in the number of teenage pregnancies during the period when schools were closed (Mersie, 2020). One of the factors that contributed to this was the inability of girls to access sanitary towels outside of the school set-up, where they normally get them free. This pushed teenage girls into engaging in sex for money to purchase sanitary towels (Muiruri, 2020). Cases of FGM and early and forced marriages also increased, with teenage girls being forced to undergo these harmful cultural practices while they were out of school. The policy of universal primary education had been heralded for keeping track of girls to ensure that they

remained in school. The closure of schools removed this control and FGM and early and forced marriages increased.

These issues indicate that there was a very strong connection between HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 in Kenya. While the lessons Kenya had learnt in dealing with HIV could have been useful in addressing COVID-19, this was not the case and the country's responses to COVID-19 contributed towards clawing back on the gains made in the fight against HIV. Looking at it through women's lenses, COVID-19 responses in Kenya created conditions that either made women more vulnerable to HIV infection or if they were already living with the virus, the responses limited the extent to which women could access testing facilities and also keep up with their treatment and medication.

3.0 Conceptual and Analytical Framework

This study is based on a number of conceptual approaches, which undergird the analysis of women's experiences during pandemics in Kenya. These include African Feminism; Marxist Feminism; Capability Approach; Development as Freedom; Women's Health Perspective; Women's Empowerment Framework; and the Gender Planning Framework.

3.1 African Feminism

African feminism is important in studying the experiences of women in the African context. African women face unique experiences, which are informed by colonial histories and neo-colonial realities in most countries on the continent; globalization; and development ideology (Tamale, 2020). An African feminist approach is useful in identifying the limitations of mainstream feminist thought in addressing these unique experiences of the African woman, and, in turn, developing approaches that are true to those experiences. African feminism is concerned with re-positioning the African woman today within her history and understanding how that history informs her present experiences. The history of the African woman has, however, been one that has not been told, and where it has been told, it has been told by others, and not by her, thus leading to misrepresentation (Tamale, 2020). In seeking to understand the situation of the African woman in the context of pandemics, the much wider history of colonial injustice, neo-colonial under-development, imperialism, globalization, and marginalizing development ideology, must first be appreciated through the eyes of African women. Thus, African feminism is also concerned with allowing African women to tell their own stories, in their own words and their voices, and is thus empowering the African woman (Tamale, 2020). One of the most dominant narratives that African feminism challenges is that in plural legal systems that characterize most post-colonial societies, women are likely to face inequality, marginality, and discrimination in the context of customary African systems, while the more formal systems imposed by colonialists or indeed international law systems are likely to be emancipatory for African women (Kameri-Mbote, 2018) and (Kameri-Mbote, 2019). In the context of the pandemics that Kenya and other African countries have experienced in the past, this dominant narrative is misrepresentative and, therefore, a more nuanced narrative that looks at how each system contributes both to marginality and emancipation in different measures is the focus of African feminism (Tamale, 2020). This type of nuanced narrative is only achievable when African women are allowed to tell their stories in their own voice.

3.2 Marxist Feminism

The second approach is Marxist feminism, which is an important lens in analyzing women's unpaid care work (Armstrong, 2020). In the context of both HIV/AIDS and COVID-19, women provide care for those affected and infected, thereby subsidising the state. However, the state does not necessarily appreciate or give back to women, and instead, what we see is a situation where women's labour is exploited and unappreciated. In Kenya, an example of this is in the context of home-based care for COVID-19 patients who were asymptomatic or had mild symptoms. The idea of social reproduction - an integral part of Marxist feminism - is especially useful in the context of

both HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 because the work that happens within home supports and enables the work that happens within the public sphere (Armstrong, 2020). Women, in their roles as wives, mothers and daughters perform work which makes it possible for workers in various sectors of the capitalist economy to go out and work in order to contribute towards the growth and recovery of the economy that has been battered by a pandemic. While women's reproductive labour within the home has remained undervalued and unappreciated, the conditions created by both HIV/AIDS and COVID-19, worsened the situation by further increasing women's burden of work, for example by requiring the provision of care for the afflicted, in addition to all the other work that women continue to perform within the home. In Kenya, we also see that in the context of providing care within the home, there was an increase in cases of violence against women specifically (Armstrong, 2020). Hence, as women subsidise the state and capitalism, their specific concerns remain largely unaddressed and while both the state and the market take from women, they do not give back!

In addition, Marxist feminism allows for an analysis of economic interventions in the context of pandemics. This is useful because in Kenya specifically, economic factors informed key decisions on the containment of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, for instance, the introduction of credit guarantee schemes in Kenya (The National Treasury and Planning, 2020) was informed by the need to allow businesses to recover after having suffered adverse effects due to the COVID-19 restrictions. However, few women-owned businesses were actually able to benefit from these schemes, mainly because they are small and informal (Kameri-Mbote and Meroka-Mutua, 2020). Thus, decisions that are based primarily on economic factors may not be beneficial to women.

3.3 The Capacity Approach

The capability approach propounded by Amartya Sen (1984, 1985 and 2005) and Martha Nussbaum (2000 and 2003) is also relevant as it allows us to analyse how women can be free from disease, infirmity, poverty, marginality, stigma, and discrimination that come about because of pandemics. It also allows for an analysis of the sets of conditions that exist that allow women to be free from disease. Thus, what real opportunities do women have that can enable them to be free from the burden of pandemics? In Kenya, for example, factors such as gender inequality resulting in women's unequal access to education, employment, and economic resources including property, in turn, have the effect of limiting women's ability to make decisions concerning their bodies and sexuality, and in particular to negotiate for practices that may prevent them from contracting HIV/AIDS, such as condom use. The responses to the COVID-19 pandemic also created conditions that made women more vulnerable to HIV infection, thus limiting their ability to be free from disease.

3.4 Development as Freedom

Closely related to the capability approach is the development as freedom approach, which is propounded by Amartya Sen (1999). The premise of this approach is that freedom and the enjoyment of human rights are both a means to achieving (economic) development, as well as an end of (economic) development. Thus, where individuals and communities can enjoy fundamental rights and freedoms, it creates a conducive environment for the attainment of development (Sen, 1999). On the other hand, economic development aims to facilitate the enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms, bearing in mind that human rights and freedoms do require financing if individuals and communities are to fully enjoy them (Sen, 1999). Thus, in the context of pandemics, this framework allows for an analysis of how the ability of women to enjoy rights and freedoms, such as freedom from violence and gender discrimination will eventually contribute toward development. This is because, when women enjoy these freedoms, they have a greater ability to avoid disease, which in turn will reduce the disease burden on the economy. Such a disease burden results from having a large section of the population who may be unable to work and contribute to economic growth due to illness; and another section of the population who may be unable to contribute more hours towards income-generating activities due to having to care for those who are

ill. On the other hand, where development is attained, a state has more resources to invest towards better health systems and provision of care for the infirm. It also has more resources that may be used to promote freedom from violence and discrimination.

3.4 Women's Health Perspective

The women's health perspective is also an important analytical approach. Here, we look at how women are treated when they present as patients within health care systems. The focus here is on highlighting the gendered nature of medical practice, and how this affects women (Rogers, 2006) Some of the notable issues in this regard include: the marginalization of women's health concerns; lack of investment in illnesses that affect women specifically, for example the struggle that many countries have faced in terms of investing in maternal health; and the failure by medical professionals to take female patients and their concerns seriously. In the context of pandemics, this has meant, for example, that gender-specific effects of COVID, such as the effect of COVID on the menstrual cycle (D'Ambrosio, 2020) and the link between menopause and COVID-19, may have been neglected in the same way all gendered issues are ignored (Basile, 2020). The women's health perspective helps us understand the gender bias in critically ill patients, both regarding HIV/AIDS and COVID-19. Aside from facing gender bias when women present as patients in health care systems, there are also economic arrangements that make it difficult for women who become sick with these illnesses. In the case of HIV, before ARV medication became readily available, the drugs were protected by patents that made them out of the financial reach of most people (Castro and Westerhaus, 2007), especially from the reach of women who were already economically marginalized (Bertozzi, et al, 2006). Thus, in cases where a man and his wife were infected, the man would in many instances purchase the medication for himself and neglect his wife, and for women who did not have their own sources of income, this nearly always meant death. Thus, gender discrimination and unequal access to economic resources, coupled with unfair global practices in the context of access to essential medication, meant that women have always fared worse than men.

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in Kenya, medical insurers, including the National Hospital Insurance Fund (NHIF) which is the universal healthcare provider subscribed to by most Kenyans, were not covering treatment for COVID-19, meaning that where one was critically ill and required hospitalization, they had no insurance cover for COVID-19 (Ouma, Masai and Nyadera, 2020). This, therefore, means that just as it was in the case of HIV/AIDS before the availability and affordability of ARV, treatment for critically ill COVID-19 patients was financially prohibitive.

The women's health perspective here allows for an analysis of whether the practice of medicine responds to men's and women's health issues with the same tenacity (Govender and Penn-Kekana, 2007). It also problematizes the fact that women are not seen as patients in their own right, and in many instances, women's health issues are conflated around childbearing, so that investments around women's health are justified on the basis of women's reproductive function, and not the fact that women as individuals also have the right to enjoy the provision of health care services (Namasivayam, Osuorah, Syed, & Antai, 2012). Consequently, women will mainly be treated when they take their children to the hospital and not necessarily as individuals. Culturally, many women who become unwell are abandoned, because they are seen as a burden on the household, as they are unable to provide reproductive labour within the home, while at the same time needing the provision of care (Govender and Penn-Kekana, 2007).

3.5 Women's Empowerment Framework

The women's empowerment framework developed by Sarah Longwe is useful in understanding how women may be empowered by approaching women's inequality and poverty from the structural oppression that they face (March, Smythe, & Mukhopadhyay, 1999). The framework highlights five levels of equality and how they lead up to empowerment. *Welfare* is seen as the first and most basic level, and it emphasizes the improvement of the socio-economic status, for example, through earning income, while this may be useful in allowing women to escape poverty, it does not

actually lead to empowerment. In Kenya for example, the early women's movement, championed by *Maendeleo ya Wanawake* (Women's Progress) took this welfarist approach and its main aim was to implement social and economic projects among its women's groups at the grassroots (Maatahi, 2006). While this may have improved the economic situation of women, it did not result in empowerment, particularly in the political context, where women continued to be excluded from political representation and decision-making during the KANU one-party rule in the 1980s and 1990s.

The second level that Longwe identifies is *access to resources*, which she sees as the first step toward empowerment. The third level is *conscientisation*, where there is recognition of structural barriers that result in the forms of discrimination that women face, and this recognition comes with the willingness to address such structural inequality. The fourth level is *mobilization*, which entails the implementation of specific actions that have been designed as a result of the conscientisation having occurred. The final level is *control of resources*, which is achieved as a result of making collective claims and taking collective action. This, in turn, allows women to make decisions and exercise autonomy. This framework is useful in analyzing where societies have reached in their quest for women's empowerment. Regarding HIV/AIDS and COVID-19, a welfarist approach that simply focuses on meeting the basic needs that women may have, such as access to medication, food, and water, is not empowering. This framework, therefore, pushes for more in terms of addressing the gender dimensions of pandemics, beyond the provision of the basic needs that women may have.

3.6 Gender Planning Framework

Finally, Caroline Moser's (March, Smythe, and Mukhopadhyay, 1999) gender planning framework is also used to amplify the fact that in the context of Pandemics, the multiple roles that women perform are also affected. Moser advances the idea that women perform three key roles, including the productive roles that generally include income-generating activities, through employment and entrepreneurship; reproductive roles that entail the provision of care and domestic labour within the home; and community work, which involves the collective organization of social events, participation in groups such as women's groups, political activities, and activities aimed at improving the community (March, Smythe, & Mukhopadhyay, 1999).

In this way, Moser challenges traditional assumptions that women are generally not involved in the public sphere where productive work and community work occur. The Moser framework sees women as being involved both within the public and private spheres, but women's activities in both these spheres remain undervalued and unappreciated. Thus, in responding to the effect of pandemics on societies, it is necessary to plan for interventions that will empower women in each of the triple roles that they play. In Kenya, as in many other countries, COVID-19 devastated economies and left many people without a source of income, and many interventions were aimed at addressing the impacts of the pandemic on productive work. It is also necessary to understand how the pandemic affected women's reproductive roles as well as their role in community work and put in place measures to mitigate these impacts as well. In Kenya, COVID-19 measures were intended to address the impacts the pandemic had on productive work. There were few efforts to address the impact that the pandemic had on women's reproductive roles in particular. The emphasis on productive roles is indicative of the masculine and gender-blind nature of Kenya's COVID-19 responses.

4.0 Methodology

This study undertakes a comparison of responses to HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 in Kenya. The aim of carrying out such a comparison is to understand how the responses to HIV/AIDS informed the responses to COVID-19. Issues such as stigma, violence and discrimination are key to both pandemics, but with close to 40 years of experience in the context of HIV/AIDS, the assumption is that Kenya should have been equipped to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, considering how it affected men and women. On the contrary, however, the country was caught flat-footed when

COVID-19 hit, and women again bore the brunt of this pandemic, as they continued to do as they did regarding HIV/AIDS. A comparison is, therefore, useful in understanding the factors that limit Kenya from effectively applying her experience in dealing with HIV/AIDS to the fight against COVID-19.

The comparison is undertaken by reviewing literature relating to HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 in Kenya. This review includes a textual analysis of policies and legislation governing the country's responses to both pandemics.

A gender analysis of the interventions for both HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 is also undertaken. This gender analysis aims to understand how responses to each of the pandemics have impacted women. This analysis also focuses on how, if at all, women's concerns have been addressed within the responses the country has taken to the pandemics.

Finally, and in line with the African feminist approach of documenting the experiences of African women based on the stories that African women tell in their own voices, this study draws from women's experiences of pandemics in Kenya. This method is also rooted in the grounded theory approach, which emphasizes the need to use data on the experiences of women in order to theorize and develop conceptual approaches.

5.0 Experiences of Women During HIV/AIDS and Covid-19 Pandemics

This section then broadly applies a feminist lens in setting out the impacts that both pandemics have had on women by organizing the themes identified from the reviewed studies.

5.1 Telling Her Story: The Impacts of HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 on Women in Kenya

Drawing on the accounts of women in Kenya, this section documents the specific ways in which HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 have impacted women in Kenya. These impacts are drawn from reviews of studies that have been conducted on the experiences of women in Kenya with both HIV/AIDS and COVID-19. This method is based on the African feminist and grounded theory approaches, which emphasize the need to allow women to tell their own stories, and to use those accounts to build theories from the ground up.

5.2 Worsening Existing Gender Inequalities and Creation of New, Intersectional and Unique Forms of Gender Inequality: From Struggle to Resilience

A 2012 study by (Kako, et al, 2012) collected qualitative data from 20 women living with HIV/AIDS in rural Kenya, using interviews. The interviews were conducted in 2006. Through these interviews, the women were able to tell their stories, and one of the major themes that is evident from that study is that women in rural areas living with HIV/AIDS face unique forms of gender inequality, brought about by the interaction between the virus and social-cultural norms around sexuality and access to resources. Women living with HIV/AIDS face a higher risk of domestic and gender-based violence, which is the result of the intersection between their gender, their health status, and their geographical positioning. This, in turn, takes away their ability to make decisions concerning their sexuality and health. However, the study also tells the story of resilience among these women, because they find ways to overcome the challenges that come with a lack of agency. Furthermore, their resilience is evident in their determination to protect not just themselves, but also their families from the ravages of HIV/AIDS.

Regarding lack of agency among HIV-positive women, particularly those living in rural areas, prevents them from taking action to lower their risk of transmission and re-infection of the virus (Kako, et al, 2012). From this study, we see that when rural women test positive for HIV, they are educated on how to lower the risk of transmitting the virus to their sexual partners, how to avoid re-infection and the importance of ARV use (Kako, et al, 2012). While women would want to adhere to these instructions from healthcare providers, however, their male sexual partners are often resistant. In particular, men resist the use of condoms as a means of reducing the risk of transmitting the virus, even where they know of their partner's HIV status; they also have multiple sexual

partners which in rural areas is largely informed by socio-cultural norms as well as alcohol abuse; and rural to urban migration (Kako, et al, 2012). What we see is that women living with HIV/AIDS experience unique forms of marginality in the context of HIV/AIDS infection, thus calling for innovative approaches to dealing with that marginality. Some excerpts from the (Kako, et al, 2012) study are illustrative of this:

> *"My husband was thinking the way I tell him I am positive is not the truth, and he misused the condom. The way it is supposed to be used; he was not comfortable with it. After 3 months I found out I was pregnant. That child is here. Last month she was tested and was found to have the HIV problem."* **(Kako, Stevens, Karani, Mkandawire-Valhmu, Banda, 2012)**

> *"At times he can come in the house drunk, he finds me asleep, he removes my clothes. I mean, he wants us to have sex without a condom. It is just like raping. Him, he would be raping me at times."* **(Kako, Stevens, Karani, Mkandawire-Valhmu, Banda, 2012)**

In addition to the resistance women living with HIV in rural areas face from their male sexual partners in adhering to health care instructions, these women also lack access to and control over economic resources. This means that they are forced to rely on men for economic provision, and where this happens, they also face sexual exploitation which again limits their agency in making decisions concerning their health and sexuality. Despite this, women can come up with ways to circumvent situations that may lead to sexual exploitation as this excerpt from a woman who was to be inherited by her husband's younger brother after she was widowed illustrates:

> *"When my husband died, I was left with his younger brother. That younger brother, I told him my HIV status so that we could have friendship, so that in the society I am not forced into the traditions. You see, among Akamba people we have the practice of kũtũania."* **(Kako, Stevens, Karani, Mkandawire-Valhmu, Banda, 2012)**

In this excerpt, the woman tells her potential inheritor that she is HIV positive to dissuade him from insisting on the traditional practice of widow inheritance that involves sexual relations. In so doing, she indicated that she not only wanted to protect herself but also her husband's younger brother. Here, what we see is the narrative of resilience, where women come up with strategies to address the unique forms of marginality that they face because of their gender, HIV status and geographical positioning. This is an important narrative because often, the story of the African woman is told from a one-sided perspective, that of victimhood and powerlessness (Chimamanda, 2009). However, the story of the African woman is more than that of victimhood, and it is also one of resilience and strength (Kabira, W., Kameri-Mbote, P., Kabira, N. and Meroka-Mutua, 2018) and (Win, 2004).

Regarding COVID-19, women experienced the worsening of existing forms of gender inequality and the clawing back on gains made toward gender equality (Kameri-Mbote and Meroka-Mutua, 2020). Thus, COVID-19 was a threat multiplier for women, as is evidenced by increased domestic and gender-based violence, with women as the primary victims; increased cases of sexual exploitation of teenage girls; and increased cases of girls experiencing harmful cultural practices (National Crime Research Centre, 2020). Further, COVID-19 has had a negative impact on

women's reproductive health rights, because it limited the extent to which women were seeking reproductive health services in clinics and hospitals (Baswomny, 2020).

In addition, Kenya's COVID-19 responses resulted in the social isolation of many women, because of the closure of public spaces, including churches and schools in the early days of the pandemic and this, in turn, limited the social support structures that women largely rely on when dealing with adverse situations (Kameri-Mbote and Meroka-Mutua 2020). Thus, for example, women's church groups, investment groups or *chamas* and welfare groups offer support to various categories of women, including those living with HIV (Eudaimonia, 2017) but the closure of public spaces and the banning of group gatherings meant that these groups could not meet, hence limiting the social support measures available to women (Kameri-Mbote and Meroka-Mutua 2020).

Women who were widowed during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic also faced limited support, due to the burial protocol, which allowed a maximum of 15 people to attend burials (Kameri-Mbote and Meroka-Mutua, 2020). The result was that few women attended burials and most of those who attended were kinsmen of the deceased, meaning that widows did not have other women to support them at a crucial time. Further, the burial protocol required burials of persons who died of COVID-19 to be held within 48 hours. In contexts such as Kenya, where burials are closely connected to succession and inheritance (Stamp, 1991), this would have harmed the rights of women to inherit, again because of the limited time availed to address succession issues before burial and also because of the general exclusion of women from the burials due to the limiting of the number of people who could attend burials (Kameri-Mbote and Meroka-Mutua, 2020). Although this burial protocol has been lifted, the impacts that it had on women will be felt for a long time to come. All these gender-specific impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic created vulnerability in women and predisposed them to increased risk of HIV infection, and for those who are already infected, they limited the extent to which they can continue taking their medication (Abimanyi-Ochom, 2011).

5.3 Worsening of Poverty among Women

A study by Amuyunzu-Nyamongo, et al (2007) also found that HIV/AIDS worsened women's experiences of poverty. This study was conducted in five informal settlements in Nairobi, and it found that in cases where there was pre-existing poverty due to the general conditions in slums, which include lack of basic services such as clean water, sanitation, security, and land tenure security, HIV/AIDS can worsen the situation of women in these already dire settings. Women in informal settings do not have adequate opportunities that allow them to limit the transmission risk of the virus, avoid reinfection and stay true to their ARV therapy. Thus, for instance, insecurity in informal settlements increases women's risk of experiencing sexual violence which, in turn, means that they can transmit the virus to their attacker or even become re-infected.

Regarding COVID-19, the pandemic had adverse economic impacts due to loss of employment and business opportunities. The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2020) reported that the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in loss of employment, with women accounting for 51.2% of those who became unemployed due to the pandemic. This is mainly because most women are employed in the services sector which was the most negatively impacted by COVID-19 measures (Kiriti-Ng'ang'a, 2022). In addition, businesses run by women were also adversely affected, as reported by women who spoke to Relief Web (2020) in their *series of stories in Voices from the Frontline. Below is an excerpt by a Maasai woman from their twelfth series:*

> *"Our main income was selling Maasai beads to the tourists, but they are not coming here anymore. We have the beads but there are no customers."*
> *(Relief Web, 2020)*

What we see, therefore, is that COVID-19 worsened the pre-existing situation of women. Before the onset of this pandemic, women already experienced unequal access to employment and business opportunities. They worked under precarious conditions in the informal sector, and often in roles informed by the gender norms that undergird the gender division of labour, meaning that women tended to take up work as domestic labourers providing care in the informal sector. COVID-19 meant that women lost even these precarious forms of employment (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2020; Kameri-Mbote and Meroka-Mutua, 2020).

5.4 Feminization of Stigma

A 2014 study by Colombini, et al (2014) found that women living with HIV/AIDS experienced stigma, which was founded both on their gender as well as their HIV status. Thus, for instance, where a couple is found to be HIV positive, the woman may be blamed for having 'brought the virus' into the home, as this excerpt from that study illustrates:

I: "So why have you not told him?
R: Now it is that fear. I do not have a way of explaining to him.
I: Ehe? What are you afraid of?
R: t ... that his parents know me, and they do not know about my status, they may say: 'Our son was infected by that girl', I do not know what... Mm. And it may be possible that he is the one who ... infected me. No one knows who infected the other". (Colombini, Mutemwa, Kivunaga, Moore and Mayhew 2014, pp 4)

Aside from being blamed for bringing the virus into the home, women whose HIV status becomes known to their family or who become critically ill also face abandonment, as is illustrated below:

I: "And why haven't you told anyone else?
R: They [people] *can do bad things to you [...]. They can tell my husband. [...] If my husband got to know about it* [that she is positive] *he will be mad with me and quarrel [...] He can tell me to go back home so that [we] separate. I don't want that to happen."*
 (Colombini, Mutemwa, Kivunaga, Moore and Mayhew 2014, pp 4)

In addition, Colombini, et al (2014) document the specific form of stigma that women with HIV face in the context of seeking reproductive health services. What we see here is that health care service provision that caters specifically to women can create an environment that allows women to face stigma again based on their gender and their HIV status. This is because HIV/AIDS services offered to women are often linked to other services which women are likely to seek, such as ante-natal care, post-natal care, and family planning. This means that when women present for these services and they turn out to be HIV positive, they can face gender-based stigma.

R: "I had to tell her [mother-in-law], she is the one who took me to the hospital, and she was there when I was giving birth. She knows that a woman is supposed to breastfeed after she has given birth, something she never saw happening because I was told not to breastfeed the baby she saw the service provider administering some drugs to the baby and she could not understand what was happening and therefore I had to tell her the truth." (**Colombini, et al 2014, pp 4**).

Further, women also face stigma related to breastfeeding. Because of Kenya's policy on promoting exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months so as to limit mother-to-child transmissions, women's breastfeeding practices can be monitored in order to "determine" their HIV status. For women who are HIV-positive, there is mixed messaging as to the feeding program that they should use for their infants (Colombini, et al 2014). Consequently, some are told to exclusively breastfeed and stick strictly to this in order to avoid the risk of mother-to-child transmission through breast milk, while others are told not to breastfeed their babies at all, or to discontinue breastfeeding once other feeds are introduced before six months because they are unable to breastfeed for various reasons, for example, if they become ill or have to go back to work. These women will generally stop breastfeeding their infants altogether, rather than continue with complementary breastfeeding as HIV-negative women are likely to do. This creates a situation where the feeding program a mother chooses to use for her infant is used to determine her HIV status. Thus, when a mother does not breastfeed her infant, this is seen as a confirmation that she is indeed HIV positive. These breast-feeding practices create conditions for stigma (Colombini et al., 2014).

Regarding COVID-19, the Population Council (2020) reported that more women in Kenya feared they would face stigma if infected with COVID-19, as compared to men. Thus, 85% of women compared with 74% of men feared they would face stigma if infected with COVID-19, while 77% of women compared with 66% of men feared they would be treated badly if infected (Population Council, 2020). These figures may be explained by the women's health perspective, where we see that women are likely to face discrimination when seeking treatment in healthcare facilities (Rogers, 2006) and are also likely to be abandoned if they fall ill (Govender and Penn-Kekana, 2007). Consequently, even in the context of COVID-19, what we see is that women were likely to experience more stigma as compared to men.

5.5 Strengthening Women's Mobilization and Civil Society Action

Because women have borne the brunt of both the HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 pandemics, this has resulted in stronger women's mobilization for purposes of implementing actions to address their unique challenges. This is a positive impact of the pandemics and one of the silver linings that has resulted from the negative impacts that the pandemics have had on women. Thus, in the close to 40 years that Kenya has had to deal with HIV/AIDS, there has emerged a strong movement comprising women who are self-advocates; women's organizations that deal specifically with gender and health rights; and women's groups that offer support at different levels to women who have been infected and affected by the virus. This women's movement has worked closely with other civil society organizations that deal with the right to health more generally to further strengthen women's right to health. Thus, for instance, the civil society organizations concerned with the right to health have worked closely with women self-advocates to litigate issues relating to HIV/AIDS, resulting in the development of jurisprudence in this area (KELIN and UNDP, 2018).

6.0 Kenya's Responses to HIV/AIDS and Covid-19

This section looks at Kenya's responses to the pandemics generally and through women's eyes and demonstrates that where responses have been gender blind, the impacts of the pandemics on women and girls have been worsened.

6.1 Responses to HIV/AIDS

There is an established HIV/AIDS legal environment in Kenya. Article 27(4) of the Constitution prohibits discrimination based on one's health status, and this provision was largely informed by the country's experiences relating to discrimination because of a person's HIV status. In addition, Articles 2(5) and (6) provide for the domestic application of customary International Law and International Law instruments that Kenya is a party to. Kenya has ratified all major International Human Rights Law instruments, and this, therefore, allows for the domestic application of these instruments in the context of HIV/AIDS. The main legislation that addresses HIV/AIDS in Kenya is the HIV and AIDS Prevention and Control Act, which was passed in 2006. The Sexual Offences Act of 2006 and the Health Act of 2017 also contain provisions that are relevant in dealing with HIV/AIDS. Kenya also has in place the National AIDS Control Council, established as a state corporation through the National AIDS Control Council Order of 1999 (National AIDS Control Council). The National AIDS Control Council is the main institution that is mandated to deal with the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS.

Kenya has also put in place health interventions aimed at the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS. These include leveraging opportunities for testing for HIV, for example, during ante-natal clinics, addressing mother-to-child transmissions through testing, promoting exclusive breast feeding, and addressing opportunistic infections such as tuberculosis (National AIDS Control Council, 2014).

Further, there has been effective use of media campaigns to promote HIV prevention and control messaging (Onsomu, et al, 2013). For example, campaigns to promote condom use, voluntary testing, and exclusive breast feeding. The media has, therefore, played a fundamental role in creating awareness around HIV/AIDS, addressing stigma, and promoting non-discrimination.

Government support for civil society organizations that work towards promoting the right to health and prevention of HIV/AIDS has also been provided (National AIDS Control Council, 2014). While Kenya has witnessed periods of autocratic and authoritarian rule, which have had adverse effects on civil society and activism (Mati, 2020), the government has generally supported organizations that work on issues concerning the right to health and the control and prevention of HIV/AIDS in particular (UNAIDS, 2018) and this has had a positive impact in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

6.2 Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Kenya's responses to the COVID-19 pandemic were reactionary because the country did not have in place preparedness mechanisms to deal with a pandemic other than HIV/AIDS. Thus, interventions were put in place in an ad hoc and evolving manner. The COVID-19 responses were not as established as those relating to HIV/AIDS, and although they were anchored in law, these responses were temporary and in a constant state of fluidity. Indeed, through the regular briefings by the Ministry of Health and the occasional Presidential Speeches, new interventions were introduced, varied, or phased out, and although comprehensive legislation on the pandemic was proposed, the same was never passed by Parliament (Kameri-Mbote & Meroka-Mutua, 2020).

In addition to being ad hoc and fluid, the Kenya COVID-19 responses were also gender-neutral and were introduced in the context of prevailing gender inequalities. For these reasons, few responses were specifically aimed at addressing the gender impacts of the Pandemic, and further, the responses themselves produced gendered experiences (Kameri-Mbote & Meroka-Mutua, 2020).

6.3 Analysis of Kenya's HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 Interventions through Women's Eyes

In both cases of HIV/AIDS and COVID-19, women bore the brunt of the pandemic. In the case of HIV/AIDS, not only is the prevalence higher among women in Kenya (Ministry of Health, 2020), but the pandemic has also resulted in women's marginality and exclusion due to the worsening of already existing forms of gender inequality and discrimination (Avert, 2020). Indeed, in the years when the HIV/AIDS pandemic ravaged the country and resulted in the deaths of adults of childbearing age, children who were left orphaned were cared for by their grandmothers. Here we see the intersection between age and gender, where older women were saddled with the burden of caring for young children, (Mishra and Assche, 2008). The need for gender sensitivity in responses to pandemics and disasters in Kenya is not a new reality. Indeed, HIV/AIDS and responses to it over time should have resulted in the creation of awareness on the part of decision-makers of the fact that pandemics and other disasters occur in gendered contexts. Consequently, they cannot be addressed adequately through gender-neutral interventions.

Regarding COVID-19, while statistics indicated that there was a higher prevalence among men as compared to women (Ministry of Health, 2020), the pandemic still affected women disproportionately, primarily due to the gender-neutral containment measures that were adopted in the country (Kameri-Mbote & Meroka-Mutua, 2020). These measures failed to consider women's experiences because they were framed from a masculine perspective (Kabira and Kameri-Mbote, 2020). For this reason, the forms of exclusion that women faced in the context of COVID-19, such as the increased burden of unpaid care work, allocation of resources and labour towards supporting national hygiene, greater vulnerability to violence and sexual exploitation, increased threat of women and girls undergoing harmful cultural practices, were not adequately addressed. In the case of COVID-19, therefore, women's burden from their triple roles intersected with the threat the Pandemic posed to the enjoyment of their human rights.

Using Sen's (1999) analysis of development as freedom, whereby the protection of human rights has a direct impact on promoting development, the COVID-19 threat to women's human rights was likely to undermine the country's recovery efforts. In this regard, statistics from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2020) showed that women were more adversely affected by job losses and loss of income. At the same time, Kameri-Mbote and Meroka-Mutua demonstrate that COVID-19 measures were not responsive to gender-specific concerns, even though women were more adversely affected.

Despite the lessons Kenya has learnt from HIV/AIDS on the need to promote gender equality to effectively address the factors that create vulnerability in the context of the pandemic, the country's COVID-19 measures were distinctly gender-neutral. This is illustrative of the apathy and lack of gender awareness that exists among policy makers. It is also illustrative of the need to address gender inequality generally as a means of ensuring the country's overall preparedness to deal with pandemics. While Kenya has robust constitutional provisions aimed at addressing gender inequality, which we have seen have a direct impact in creating vulnerabilities among women in the context of pandemics, these constitutional provisions have not been fully implemented. In particular, provisions such as those on equal representation which require that not more than two-thirds of persons in elective or appointive office shall be of the same gender, have not been implemented since the Constitution was promulgated in 2010 despite numerous attempts by Parliament and challenges in court (Maraga, 2020).

Equal representation may be viewed in terms of Sen's (1999) analysis of freedom being both a means and an end to development. In this sense, equal representation is a means to women's equality in other spheres of life, including freedom from the factors that create gender vulnerability in the context of pandemics. It is also an end to gender equality because women have as much right to hold political and other offices as men do. Enhanced women's representation in politics is likely to promote women's enjoyment of socio-economic rights, such as the right to clean water, food security, and gender-sensitive health care provision which includes reproductive health services in

line with the women's health perspective and education. The enjoyment of these socio-economic rights is necessary in containing and preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS and COVID-19, as well as in promoting recovery efforts following the devastation caused by the pandemics. Gender equality is, therefore, a pre-condition in the fight against both pandemics, yet Kenya has failed to implement constitutional provisions aimed at achieving this ideal.

Kenya's experience with HIV/AIDS underscored the need for a comprehensive institutional, policy and legislative framework to address pandemics. In the case of HIV, the framework was established several years after the onset of the pandemic. Yet, when COVID-19 hit Kenya, the country had no overarching law and policy mechanisms to deal with the emerging pandemic. Despite having four decades of experience dealing with the HIV/AIDS pandemic, Kenya was unprepared to deal with another pandemic. This lack of preparedness worsened the situation of women by creating conditions that allowed for the clawing back of the gains that the country had made towards dealing with HIV/AIDS. Furthermore, the lack of preparedness exacerbated the marginality and exclusion that women face in the context of pandemics. For instance, while women are vulnerable to gender-based violence, harmful cultural practices, and sexual exploitation, the COVID-19 pandemic increased women and girls' susceptibility to these issues.

In line with Caroline Moser's Gender Planning Framework, a comprehensive disaster and pandemic preparedness mechanism informed by the country's experiences in dealing with HIV/AIDS would have allowed for planning and preparedness taking into account gender-specific concerns. This would have, in turn, mitigated the adverse effects that COVID-19 had on women and girls in Kenya. A comprehensive pandemic and disaster preparedness mechanism anchored in policy and legislation would also have allowed the country to address stigma more holistically, as opposed to the current siloed approach that only targets HIV/AIDS. Because Kenya lacks such a mechanism, she was unable to harness the experience acquired in stigma related to HIV/AIDS to address stigma in the context of COVID-19.

While Kenya has taken specific legislative and policy measures to mitigate the effects of HIV/AIDS and also to prevent its transmission, some of these are yet to be fully implemented. One such measure is the breast-feeding policy which promotes exclusive breast feeding to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS. Exclusive breast feeding for mothers who are HIV-positive is in line with the World Health Organization's (WHO) best practices (WHO, 2019), but as we have already seen, there is mixed messaging in Kenya, so that HIV-positive mothers are sometimes discouraged from breastfeeding their infants, based on their HIV status (Colombini, et al 2014). The country has yet to put in place measures that allow women to breast feed exclusively for the required six months. Childcare initiatives, such as the provision of crèche facilities receive little attention and investment, and indeed, there is little state support for childcare, so the burden is primarily on women to provide care for their infants. In addition, the Employment Act, 2007 and revised in 2012, provides for a maximum of three months of paid maternity leave for employed mothers, which means that after three months, employed mothers have to return to work, thus making it difficult for them to breast feed exclusively for the required six months.

In addition, Kenya has in place the Breast Milk Substitutes (Control) Act, 2012 which limits the marketing of breast milk substitutes in the country. This Act aims to promote exclusive breast feeding by limiting access to breast milk substitutes. However, it is, in fact, counter-productive to have in place a negative measure aimed at promoting breast feeding such as the limiting of access to breast milk substitutes by banning their marketing, while at the same time failing to put in place positive measures to promote breast feeding such as investing in state-supported child care initiatives for infants and maternity leave provisions that support mothers to breast feed exclusively for six months.

Other problematic legislative interventions include the criminalization approach to dealing with pandemics. In the context of HIV/AIDS, the use of criminal law in dealing with the willful transmission of the virus to one's sexual partners was problematic. In 2015, the High Court (AIDS Law Project v Attorney General & 3 Others) declared unconstitutional section 24(1) of the HIV and

AIDS Prevention and Control Act, which provided that a person aware of being HIV-positive would *"take all reasonable measures and precautions to prevent the transmission of HIV to others"* and to *"inform, in advance, any sexual contact or persons with whom needles are shared"* of their HIV-positive status. Subsection (2) prohibited *"knowingly and recklessly, placing another person at risk of becoming infected with HIV"*. Contravention of these provisions was a criminal offence punishable by imprisonment for up to seven years, and/or a fine. Under section 24(7), a medical practitioner who became aware of a patient's HIV-status could inform anyone who had sexual contact with that patient of their HIV-status.

This provision was particularly prejudicial to women living with HIV for a number of reasons. Firstly, women are more likely to be tested and to know their status, because of Kenya's policy to test women when they present for ante-natal care. This means that it is more likely for women to have knowledge of their status, which is a necessary ingredient of the criminal provisions of the impugned section 24(1). Further, the provision assumed that persons in sexual relationships have equal bargaining and negotiation power, as to allow for a situation where an infected person is able to disclose their status to their sexual partner. In reality, many women in abusive relationships actually do not have such bargaining and negotiation power to disclose their HIV status to their sexual partners without facing the threat of violence. Finally, section 24(7) was a breach of doctor-patient confidentiality and was more likely to affect women disproportionately, given that women are tested more than men are. Thus, the use of criminal sanctions as a way of containing pandemics may have gendered outcomes.

Despite these lessons from HIV/AIDS, Kenya continued to use criminal law approaches in the context of COVID-19, for example, by criminalizing the failure to wear facemasks in public spaces (Kenya Human Rights Commission, 2020).

It is also important to highlight the significance of tuberculosis (TB) in the context of both HIV/AIDS, where it is an opportunistic infection and COVID-19 because TB is also a respiratory illness. Due to the relationship of TB to both HIV/AIDS and COVID-19, there is a stigma around seeking treatment for it. In the case of HIV/AIDS, this is likely to claw back on the great strides that have been made in dealing with stigma, which has allowed more TB patients to seek treatment. Stigma related to COVID-19 clawed back on gains made towards the eradication of TB. The failure to address the intersections between HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 was likely to affect the extent to which TB was addressed given the new dimensions introduced by COVID-19. Further, there may also have been claw backs to gains made regarding treatment, management, and containment of TB. This represented a gap in the health interventions for both HIV/AIDS and COVID-19.

7.0 Conclusion And Way Forward

Lessons learnt in dealing with HIV/AIDS did not inform Kenya's approach to handling COVID-19, specifically regarding the gendered impacts of both the pandemic and responses to it. pandemics are threat multipliers and find men and women as they are. In contexts of gender inequality and discrimination, the impacts of pandemics are greatly amplified. As illustrated in this article, both HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 have made women's situation worse, both at the public and private spheres. Kenya has had experience with the gendered impacts of HIV/AIDS and put measures in place to counter these. Kenya also has robust equality and non-discrimination provisions in the Constitution which proscribe discrimination based on gender and health status. These provisions and the experience with HIV/AIDS did not influence Kenya's responses to COVID-19. The way COVID-19 unfolded calls for a re-evaluation of the framework for addressing pandemics at national and county levels. This framework must allow for cumulative learning from experiences the country has had and depart from the silo approach. It must also take on board the experiences of men and women.

The very gendered context in which pandemics happen calls for the adoption of a grounded approach as recommended by African feminists. This will allow women to tell their own stories rather than have them told by others. The removal of unfreedoms as proposed by Sen must be

informed by the lived realities of women and interventions to address pandemics must address gendered contexts in a way that empowers women and addresses their specific concerns.

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Deconstructing Gender-Based Violence from Kenyan Soap Narratives: Unveiling The Nexus Between Syndemics, Women's Health, and Transformative Change

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Abstract

This research aimed to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the interplay between media narratives, women's health issues, and gender dynamics through an analysis of two selected soap operas. The study reveals alarming trends within the narratives, indicating that soaps mirror social stereotypes and beliefs regarding gender and culture. These include trivialisation and normalisation of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), victimisation, objectification, gender imbalance and perpetuation of harmful gender stereotypes. Data analysis demonstrates a stark contrast in gender roles, with men portrayed as dominant, women as subordinate and victims as helpless, revealing stratifiers in GBV depictions. The exclusion of various faces of GBV such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and the erasure or underrepresentation of marginalised groups from the narratives denotes the omission of an intersectionality lens to the portrayals. Moreover, the socioeconomic disparity

between female actresses and male actors is evident, reinforcing gender inequalities off-screen and indicating syndemics influencing GBV. These findings underscore the significant impact of soap narratives in entrenching harmful gender stereotypes and normalising violence, indicating a syndemics perspective in GBV construction. The portrayal of GBV in a trivialised manner perpetuates a culture of violence, which has severe implications for women's well-being and empowerment. This article raises critical concerns regarding the potential negative consequences of media portrayals on societal attitudes and the perpetuation of violence which impacts women's health. It highlights the urgent need for responsible and empowering media representations to challenge marginalization and harmful gender norms towards transformative change. By addressing the complexities within soap narratives, the study aims to pave the way for a more equitable and empowering media landscape that uses a syndemics perspective in pursuit of social change.

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1.0 Introduction

In the realm of entertainment media, soap operas are a powerful medium of storytelling (Ford, et al, 2011). Kenyan soap operas wield considerable influence, serving not only as a source of entertainment but also as a reflection of societal values, norms, and attitudes (Akwala, et al, 2021). Within this captivating world of fiction, the portrayal of GBV and gender dynamics *"becomes a critical aspect that shapes perceptions of women's roles and influences societal attitudes"* (Akwala, et al, 2021, p. 154).

This research embarked on a journey to delve into the intricate tapestry of Kenyan soap narratives, with a primary focus on the representation of GBV and its connection to syndemics that impact gender relations and women's health. Through an analysis of purposively selected soap operas, the study endeavoured to unveil the underlying themes, dynamics, and messages conveyed through these narratives.

Beyond the fictional realm, this research also illuminated stratifiers behind the scenes (WHO, 2020), wherein female actresses face socioeconomic challenges in contrast to their male counterparts and gender imbalances in directors and composers (Smith, et al, 2023). Such imbalances in the media industry serve as a microcosm of broader gender inequalities, warranting a closer examination of how media representations influence and reflect societal values.

The study sought to ignite critical dialogue and advocate for responsible and empowering media representations, urging for transformative change that challenges damaging gender portrayals and fosters positive societal attitudes. Through this investigation, the study aspired to contribute to the broader discourse on the power of media narratives in shaping societal attitudes and the urgent need for more inclusive, empowering, and non-violent representations.

1.1 Research Gap

While previous studies have examined the portrayal of Gender-Based Violence in various media formats, there is a notable research gap regarding the intersection of syndemics, women's health, and media narratives of GBV in Kenyan soap operas. Existing literature focuses on individual health issues or single aspects of GBV representation, but there is limited research that comprehensively analyses the co-occurrence and interaction of multiple health challenges within the context of GBV portrayals in the soap opera genre. Additionally, few studies have explored how these portrayals may influence social perceptions of GBV, thereby hindering transformative change and women's empowerment in the Kenyan context. This research gap justifies the study as well as its contribution to epistemology and existing literature.

1.2 Objectives

The research objectives of the study were to:
  a) Analyse the portrayal of Gender-Based Violence in Kenyan soap operas, examining its frequency, nature, and context;

b) Examine the co-occurrence and interaction of multiple health issues in the narratives of GBV within the selected soap operas;

c) Explore the depiction of syndemics and their impact on women's health and well-being in the context of GBV portrayals;

d) Propose recommendations for responsible and transformative media representations that challenge harmful gender norms, promote women's empowerment, and contribute to positive social change.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Gender-Based Violence in Media Narratives

Gender-Based Violence, a pervasive and deeply rooted social issue, has been a subject of growing concern across various societies (Klugman et al., 2014). Within the context of media, numerous studies have investigated the portrayal of GBV, particularly in soap operas, and its potential impact on audience perceptions and attitudes (Phiri, 2024; Sinalo & Mandolini, 2023; Information Resources Management Association, 2023). Scholars have underscored the significance of media narratives in shaping societal norms (Bliuc & Chidley, 2022) and have called for critical examinations of GBV representations in popular culture (Cuklanz, 2019).

2.2 Gender Dynamics and Women's Health in Media

In exploring the intersection of gender dynamics and media representations, researchers have highlighted how gender roles are reinforced and constructed through soap operas (Ahmed & Khalid, 2012; Allen, 2001). These studies have identified the perpetuation of traditional and stereotypical gender norms within soap narratives (Smith, et al, 2023; Mcquail, et al, 2005). Such portrayals perpetuate harmful stereotypes that contribute to syndemics that impact women's mental health, perceptions of access to health care, self-esteem, and agency[10] (Bennett, 2016; Klugman et al., 2014).

2.3 Media Representations and Women's Empowerment

A significant body of literature has examined the relationship between media portrayals and women's empowerment (Klugman et al., 2014; Brown & Smith, 2020;). Scholars conclude that empowering media representations has the potential to challenge traditional roles and inspire positive social change (Information Resources Management Association, 2022). However, the media's perpetuation of harmful stereotypes may hinder women's empowerment efforts (Klugman et al., 2014; Okello-Orlale, 2006).

2.4 Gender-Based Violence in Kenyan Soap Narratives

Studies have revealed concerning trends of GBV trivialisation and normalisation in Kenyan soap operas, as well as the reinforcement of traditional gender roles (Akwala, et al, 2021; Kung'u & Gathigi, 2023; Mueni, 2013). These portrayals have been linked to potentially harmful implications for women's health and well-being (Ali & Rogers, 2023). The exclusion of crucial issues, such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), from the soap narratives has also been a topic of scholarly inquiry, indicating the need for equitable and empowering constructions of GBV (Association of Media Women in Kenya, 2019).

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[10] Agency refers to the capacity of individuals to act as independent agents, making choices and taking responsibility for their actions, within the context of their personal beliefs, values, and circumstances.

3.0 Definitions and Limitations

3.1 Syndemics and Women's Health

Syndemics as a concept was coined by the medical anthropologist Merrill Singer in the 1990s to describe the complex interplay of health problems that are often interconnected and mutually reinforcing (Singer, 2009). The syndemics framework recognizes that women's health involves the co-occurrence of multiple health challenges such as reproductive health issues, mental health disorders, infectious diseases, and chronic conditions (WHO, 2020) which are at times magnified and multiplied by poverty and lack of education (Ali & Rogers, 2023). Rather than addressing health issues in isolation, a syndemics perspective calls for comprehensive and multifaceted interventions that consider the interconnected nature of health problems and the underlying social determinants of health (WHO, 2020; Singer, 2009). Social and environmental factors influence the clustering and interaction of multiple health issues in women.

3.2 Social Determinants of Health and Syndemics in Women

3.2.1 Social Determinants of Health

Social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age. They include a range of factors such as socioeconomic status, education, employment opportunities, access to healthcare, social support networks, and exposure to discrimination and violence (WHO, 2020; Ali & Rogers, 2023). These determinants are not only influenced by individual choices but also reflect broader societal structures and inequalities.

3.2.2 Syndemics in Women

In the context of women's health, syndemics can involve the combination of various health challenges, such as reproductive health issues, mental health disorders, chronic diseases, and infectious diseases, all of which may be influenced by social determinants (Nakamura et al. 2023) or stratifiers (WHO, 2020).

3.2.3 Intersectionality

Intersectionality is an analytical framework that explores how different social stratifiers such as gender, class, race, education, ethnicity, age, geographic location, religion, migration, socioeconomic status, ability, disability, and sexuality interact to create different experiences of privilege, vulnerability and/or marginalisation (WHO, 2020). The concept of intersectionality recognizes that women's experiences of health and well-being are shaped by multiple intersecting factors or stratifiers. (Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectionality unveils how social determinants compound health disparities for marginalised women (Nakamura et al. 2023).

3.2.4 Poverty and Access to Healthcare

Poverty and limited access to quality healthcare services can lead to a higher prevalence of health issues in women (Singer, 2009). For example, women from low-income backgrounds may face challenges in accessing sexual and reproductive healthcare, mental health services, and chronic disease management, which can contribute to the clustering of health problems (Mendenhall, 2019; Nakamura et al. 2023).

3.2.5 Gender-Based Violence

GBV is a critical social determinant of health that disproportionately affects women. Survivors of GBV are at an increased risk of HIV/AIDS transmission, physical injuries, gynaecological problems, complications during pregnancy and childbirth, access to healthcare, disruption of education or employment, mental health issues, sexual and reproductive health challenges, stigmatisation and social isolation, and chronic diseases (Wood, 2007; Nakamura et al. 2023, p. 143). GBV can also exacerbate existing health conditions and lead to long-term health consequences (Ali & Rogers, 2023).

3.2.6 Social Support and Community Networks

Studies indicate that strong social support networks and community cohesion can function as protective factors against health challenges (Wood, 2007). Conversely, the lack of social support can contribute to increased vulnerability to syndemics (Singer, 2009). Supportive communities can help women cope with health issues and access resources for health promotion and disease prevention (Ali & Rogers, 2023).

3.2.7 Discrimination and Stigma

Discrimination and stigma related to gender, race, and other identities can negatively impact women's health and well-being (Funk & Funk, 2021; Nakamura et al. 2023). For example, the voices of disabled people are not invited into political and institutional processes, thereby exacerbating their poverty, abuse, and lack of voice and agency (Ali & Rogers, 2023). The stigmatisation of certain health conditions may deter women from seeking care, exacerbating the clustering of health issues. For example, child victims of diseases with visible manifestations like leprosy, TB, Ebola, Leishmaniasis[11], and Lymphatic filariasis[12] are not educated due to the economics of begging. This has an impact on the home and can cause chronic mental issues (WHO, 2020).

Addressing syndemics in women requires a comprehensive approach that considers the social determinants of health (Singer, 2009). Integrating an intersectional and gender-sensitive lens into health policies and interventions can help break the cycle of syndemic health challenges and promote better health outcomes for women (WHO, 2020).

3.2.8 Intersectionality and Syndemics

The combination of intersectionality and syndemics acknowledges that health disparities and syndemic health burdens are not uniform across all populations. Instead, they are shaped by the intersection of multiple identities and social determinants (Singer, 2009). Different populations may experience unique and compounded health challenges based on their specific social identities and lived experiences (Ali & Rogers, 2023). For example, migrant women workers are particularly vulnerable as the intersection of race, migrant status, work sector, caste, class, gender, and other social dynamics might amplify the discrimination and marginalisation they face (WHO, 2020; Ali & Rogers, 2023, p.353). Understanding the intersections between various identities and health issues is essential for identifying and addressing health disparities effectively (WHO, 2020).

4.0 Theoretical Grounding

The theoretical frameworks employed in this article are social constructivism, intersectionality theory and Critical media studies.

4.1 Social Constructivism

Social constructivism posits that meaning is produced (constructed) through interactions, shared understandings, and cultural norms rather than simply found (Hall, 1997). Individuals construct their understanding of reality through interactions with their social and cultural environments (Scheufele, 1999). Through the lens of social constructivism, we interpret the portrayal of GBV in Kenyan soap operas as socially constructed representations that reflect and perpetuate prevailing gender norms, power dynamics, and societal values (Akwala, et al, 2021).

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[11] Leishmaniasis is a vector-borne disease caused by parasites of the Leishmania genus. It is transmitted to humans through the bites of infected female sandflies. It is prevalent in tropical and subtropical regions and is considered a neglected tropical disease and primarily affects people living in poverty. Symptoms include skin lesions, fever, and weight loss.

[12] Lymphatic filariasis (Elephantiasis) is a parasitic tropical disease caused by filarial worms and transmitted through infected mosquitoes. It is prevalent in tropical and subtropical regions in parts of Africa, Asia, the Pacific Islands, and the Americas. It is also considered a neglected disease because it affects people in impoverished conditions.

In the context of GBV portrayals in soap operas, this theory guided the study to investigate how audiences actively engage with media narratives and interpret them based on their own experiences, beliefs, and cultural backgrounds (Ali & Rogers, 2023).

4.2 Intersectionality Theory

Developed by Crenshaw (1991), the intersectionality theory highlights the interconnected nature of social identities and power dynamics. It provides a valuable lens for understanding the complex relationship between syndemics and GBV portrayals in soap operas and their implications for women's health. According to the theory, health outcomes are not solely shaped by individual health issues but are influenced by the intersection of various social determinants and identities (WHO, 2020). Intersectionality emphasizes how individuals' experiences and vulnerabilities arise from interactions between multiple identities, including gender, race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and ability (Crenshaw 1991). In the context of syndemics and GBV portrayals, intersectionality examined how the convergence of multiple social identities can exacerbate health challenges and impact women's health in distinct ways. Applying the intersectionality theory to this study revealed how various social factors contribute to differential health outcomes and the perpetuation of harmful gender norms (Nakamura et al., 2023).

4.3 Critical Media Studies

Critical media studies offer a transformative perspective, inviting us to critically analyse the power structures and ideologies embedded within media representations (Funk & Funk, 2021; Ott & Mack, 2014). By adopting this theoretical approach, we deconstruct the soap operas' portrayal of GBV and examine the underlying messages, representations of violence, and power dynamics (Akwala, et al, 2021). Critical media studies question the motives behind the construction of such narratives (Akwala, et al, 2021; Ott & Mack, 2014) and their impact on women's health and empowerment (Klugman et al., 2014; Wood, 2007).

Through critical media studies, the researchers also scrutinized the social and political contexts that influence media content (Ngwanainmbi, 2019) and how GBV is depicted within soap operas (Cuklanz, 2019; Kung'u, 2023). This theoretical grounding encourages them to challenge the normalization of abusive behaviours, gender imbalances, and harmful stereotypes presented in the narratives. By critically engaging with media representations, the study aimed to contribute to broader societal conversations on GBV and foster positive social change.

5.0 Methodology

5.1 Research Design

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, incorporating content analysis of two selected Kenyan soap operas and six focus group discussions to triangulate data from diverse sources.

5.1.1 Sampling

For content analysis, two popular Kenyan soap operas, *Makutano Junction* and *Mother-in-law* were purposively selected. Probability and systematic sampling were done on all the episodes of the two soaps. The sample size was therefore 24 episodes of *Makutano Junction* and 114 episodes of 7 ½ minutes for *Mother-in-law*.

For Focus Group Discussions, probability sampling was used to identify a cluster sample of diverse groups of soap opera viewers from two universities. They were undergraduate students in the communication field. Quota sampling was used to identify an age stratum of 18–25-year-olds. Purposive sampling was then done to identify a homogeneous sample based on the gender and age of the participants. Six groups, evenly split by gender, with eight participants in each (24 males and 24 females), were identified.

5.1.2 Data Collection

A comprehensive coding scheme was developed by two coders based on the research objectives and relevant literature. The coded categories were pretested for intercoder reliability. The coder pretest was evaluated for inter-coder consistency using Cohen's kappa coefficient. Once agreement was grasped, and the coding classifications embraced, two coders completed the data coding individually. For the FGDs, after obtaining consent from all participants in each group, they were reminded of their ethical freedom and each discussion proceeded using an FGD guide.

5.1.3 Data Analysis

The coded data form content analysis was entered in Excel, cleaned, and imported into the SPSS for both descriptive and inferential analysis. The summary of individual variables and the correlation of variables were linked to the research questions. Data from the FGDs (notes, video, and audio recordings) was transcribed, coded, and cleaned on Excel. It was then imported into NVivo software for narrative and discourse analysis. Content analysis was used to identify the main themes that emerged from the discussions and responses given by the respondents. Main themes were identified for all the discussions and integrated into the text of the research report.

5.1.4 Ethical Considerations

The researchers sought and obtained an ethical permit No. P624/07/2021 from the institution's Ethical Board (KNH-UoNERC) as well as a research permit No. NACOSTI/1/P/22/15220 from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). This study was conducted according to International ethical codes and research standards. The rights of human subjects were protected. Data results were neither fabricated, falsified nor misrepresented. They also avoided plagiarism at all levels and have honoured copyrights, patents, and other forms of intellectual property.

6.0 Findings and Discussion

6.1 Portrayal of GBV forms

The findings presented in Figure 1 show that the most dominant GBV form was gender discrimination, which had 305 instances, accounting for 55% of the total cases observed. It was followed by IPV at 20.8%. Out of 554 gender-based violence instances in the soap episodes, only 27 depicted harmful traditional practices, with minimal portrayal of child abuse.

Portrayals of GBV forms in these soaps convey the comprehensive implications of GBV on women's lives, including social and economic impacts that contribute to syndemic health burdens. It also amplifies vulnerabilities related to women's health. When portrayed with other health challenges, it can shape how the audience perceives the interconnectedness of these issues in real life.
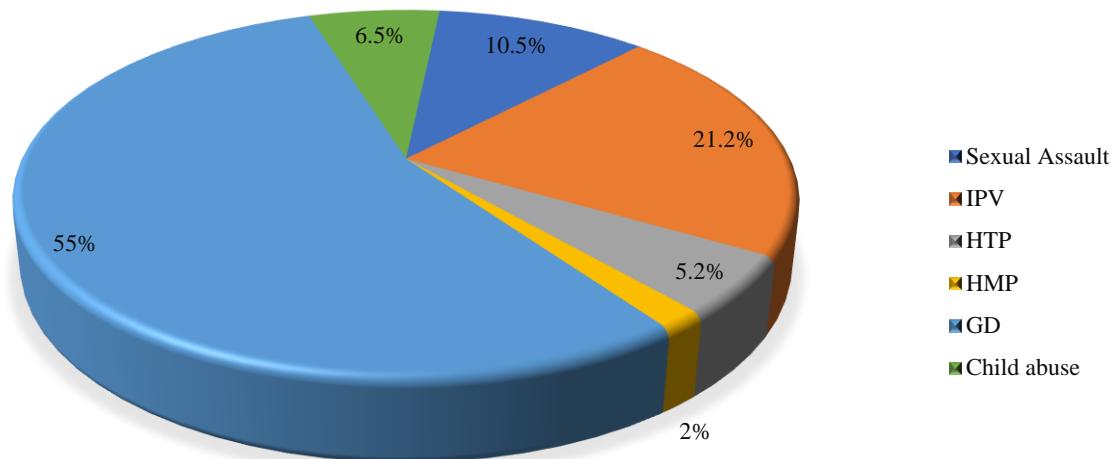
Prominent Forms of GBV Observed

Figure 1: Prominent forms of GBV

Key:
GD	: Gender Discrimination
HMP	: Harmful Modern Practices
HTTP	: Harmful Traditional Practices
IPV	: Intimate Partner Violence

6.2 Forms of Harmful Traditional Practices Portrayed

Harmful traditional practices which had been conceptualised as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), early marriage, forced marriage, infanticide and/or neglect, widow inheritance and disinheritance were observed in 27 of the 554 incidences observed in the two Soap operas, indicating that these practices have a cultural context and are portrayed as part of social narratives. However, FGM was erased together with widow inheritance and disinheritance. Even FGD participants did not mention FGM in the soap opera themes they discussed as viewers. Nevertheless, they did note a portrayal in the local soap *Selina*, where Selina's sister is betrothed to an elderly man reflecting a tendency by soaps to overlook or downplay these practices. The erasure also underscores the disconnect between media portrayals and reality because about two million girls every year (meaning 16,000 a day) undergo female genital mutilation (Wood, 2007; United Nations Statistics Division, 2015). The alarming statistics highlight the urgency of addressing this issue despite its absence from media representation. FGM is also a global issue (BBC, 2019), with estimates suggesting over two hundred million females are affected by it (Wood et al. 2021; Ali and Rogers 2023). This accentuates the scale and impact of FGM on women's health and well-being. In Kenya, it accounts for 27% of women aged 15- 49 (KNBS & ICF, 2023). The producers of *Mother-in-law* admitted that they have never considered portraying it for the audience. Figure 2 illustrates the portrayal.
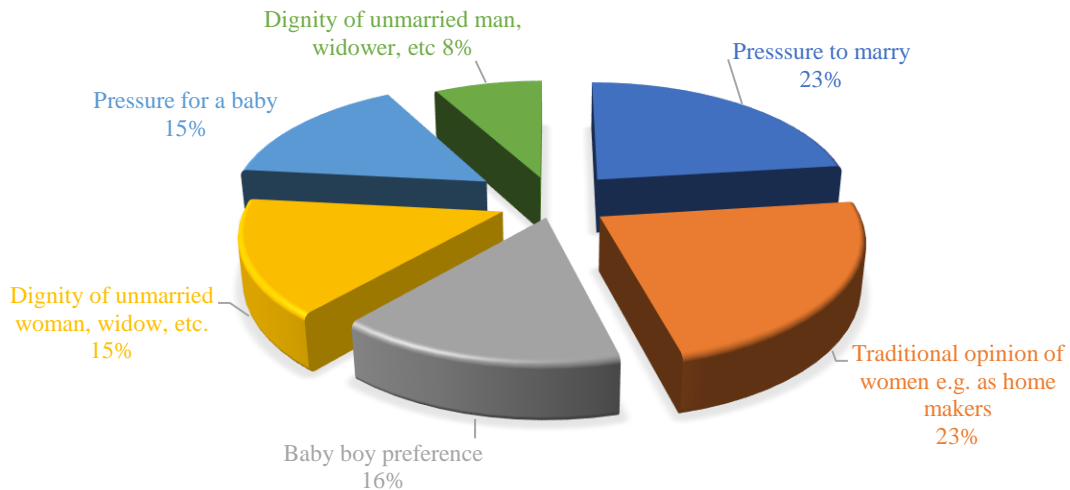
Forms of Harmful Traditional Practices

Figure 2: Forms of harmful traditional practices portrayed

6.3 Framing of the Violence

Of the frames observed, male dominance/aggression was the most frequent frame as it was portrayed in sixty instances (24.1 %). The production team and cast of the two soaps had more men than women. The same was reflected in the analysis of data from FGDs where participants noted that men are also dominant and professionals: all husbands are always in offices or away on business. These findings reflect the participants' observation that soaps mirror social stereotypes and beliefs regarding gender and culture. Figure 3 illustrates the framing.
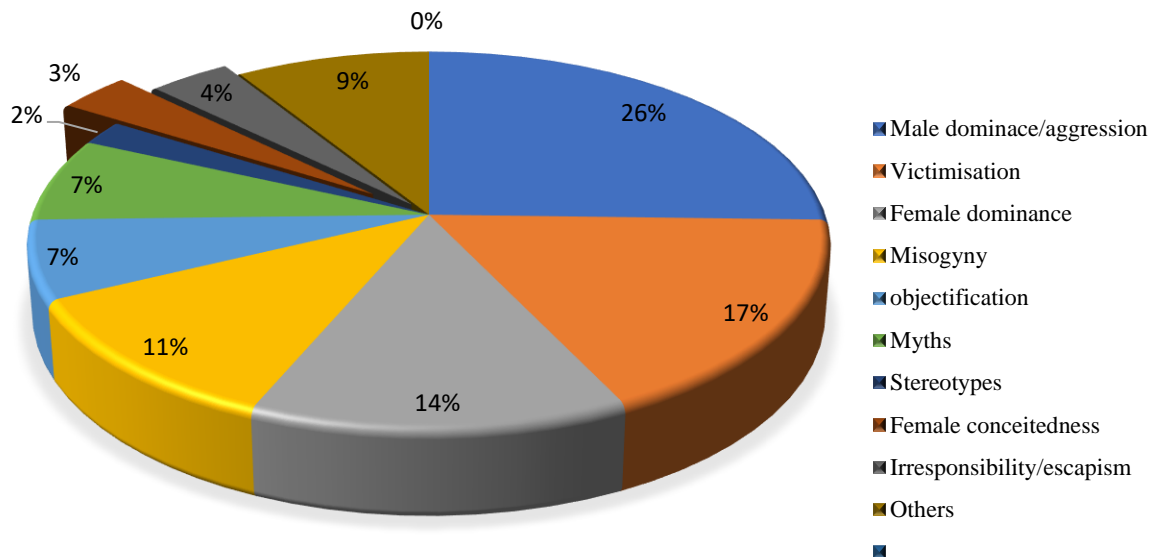
Framing of Gender Based Violence

Figure 3: Framing of gender-based violence in the soaps

When the soaps frame GBV from the angle of male dominance, they are normalising traditional gender roles and inviting the audience to perceive male dominance as the acceptable and expected behaviour in real life. This framing is perpetuating unequal power dynamics. Portraying women in subordinate roles and perpetuating male dominance may limit the representation of women's

empowerment and agency whose implication for women is different due to other social stratifiers like race, ethnicity, class, or disability.

Victimisation was used to frame the incidences of violence 17% of the time, indicating that these two soaps entrench the belief that victims are to blame for the violence that befalls them. Male participants in FGDs also blamed the victims for the violence. They gave an example that men work under pressure because of women, and '*if you cannot keep her, another man will.*' They concluded that women (the victims) were, therefore, to blame for the violence inflicted on them.

According to the intersectionality theory, these soap operas are marginalising survivors of GBV, particularly those from intersecting marginalised identities, when they perpetuate harmful gender norms and victim-blaming narratives. This can affect their mental and physical well-being. Notably, women from marginalised backgrounds, such as racial or ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+[13] and nonbinary[14] individuals, or those with lower socioeconomic status, face multiple intersecting health challenges. Smith, et al (2023) scrutinized 1600 popular films from 2007 to 2022, highlighting the substantial underrepresentation of marginalized groups. Their findings indicated that merely 2.1% of speaking or named characters in the top 100 grossing films identified as LGBTQ+, though the average was 1.1%. Astonishingly, 84 out of 100 films entirely omitted LGBTQ+ girls/women. Similarly, characters with disabilities constituted a mere 1.9% of the representation, primarily male. More than half erased characters with disabilities. For these women, the emotional and psychological impact of GBV can intersect with other health issues, leading to compounded health burdens often overlooked in media portrayals. Furthermore, these women have also been excluded from the soap operas.

6.4 Portrayal of Victim Characteristics

The results further show that victims were classified as either helpless[15] or empowered[16]. The results showed that 286 (52%) of the victims were helpless whereas 265 (48%) were empowered.

FGD participants concurred with this portrayal in Kenyan soaps that a substantial number of victims are depicted as helpless. However, they stressed that producers should create characters that victims can confide in, like influential figures who advocate for justice. This is because victims do not report or speak out about violations and if they do, it is after many years (Crenshaw, 2013).

Portraying victims as helpless and weak, and even unprofessional like Mama Mboga[17] in *Makutano Junction* is misogynistic and is meant to undermine the agency and resilience of victims. Again, if media narratives perpetuate victim-blaming or fail to address the root causes of gender-based violence, it can contribute to the stigmatisation of survivors.

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[13] Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer or Questioning which describe distinct groups within the gay culture (and sometimes Two spirit thus LGBTQ2+)

[14] A gender identity that does not exclusively align with the traditional binary categories of male or female.

[15] Helpless victims exhibit a lack of capacity or resources to protect themselves or control their circumstances. They can't navigate challenging situations because they're vulnerable and powerless.

[16] Empowered victims exhibit a sense of control and strength. They may access resources, support systems and opportunities to overcome challenges and advocate for themselves.

[17] A market woman or vegetable vendor who sells cabbages and other groceries in an open market.
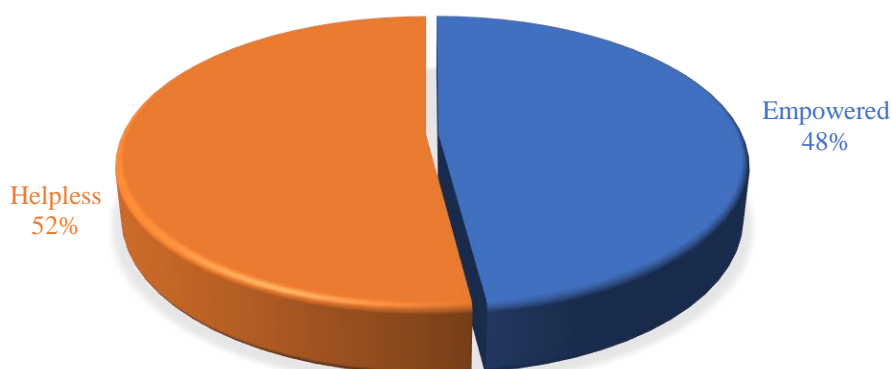
Empowered versus helpless victim

Figure 4: Empowered versus helpless victim

There are depictions of violence can trigger psychological distress, anxiety, and depression. This perpetuates stereotypes about the vulnerability of victims, hindering empowerment and social change. Moreover, this portrayal ignores multiple intersecting factors that contribute to women's vulnerability.

6.5 Physical Injuries Associated with the Violence

Results indicate that only 4% of the instances of violence across all GBV forms portrayed in the dramas indicated physical injury, and 96% did not.

This portrayal trivialises the crime of gender-based violence, that it is painless, and it is insignificant. Characters who exhibit no visible injuries portray to viewers a perception of invulnerability making them underestimate the severity and impact of the violence. Viewers fail to recognize the long-term consequences such as physical and psychological trauma, pain, and suffering experienced by victims of violence. Research conducted by Johnson et al. (2020) indicates that survivors of non-physical GBV may face stigma and encounter additional barriers to seeking help or support, as their experiences might be invalidated or dismissed due to the absence of visible injuries.

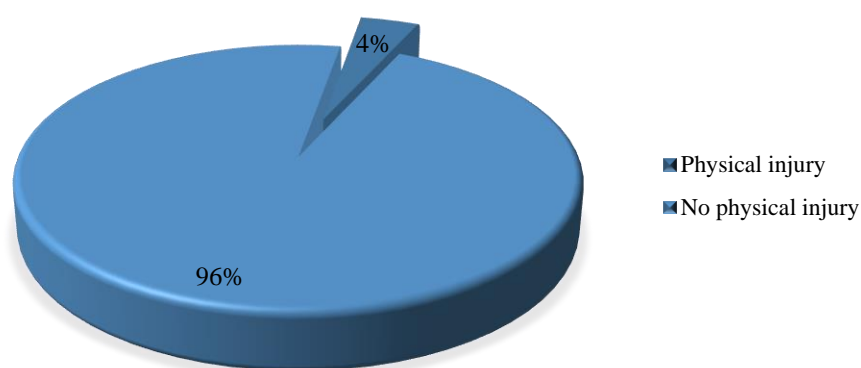## Portrayal of Physical Injury

Figure 5: Portrayal of physical injury in the episodes

This normalization can contribute to the acceptance of abusive behaviours in real-life relationships, hindering efforts to combat GBV and promote gender equality. GBV portrayals that lack physical injury may still have significant emotional and psychological implications for

women's health. They can inflict deep emotional scars, leading to anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other mental health issues. The emotional impact of GBV, when combined with other life stressors, may exacerbate syndemic health burdens, affecting women's overall well-being.

6.6 Portrayal of Justification for Violence

On the justification of the violent actions, only 15% of the violent incidences were justified, and 85% were not. The 15% provided some form of rationale or explanation for the violent actions within the narratives, while 85% lacked any explicit justification. While there can be no justification for violence whatsoever, the analysis explores the soaps' portrayal of violence without endorsing real-life justification for such acts.

Participants were also unanimous that no one is justified to be violent, no matter what has been done to them, and that people need to control their anger. Their perspective was that men overreact disproportionately in response to minor errors. This portrayal exacerbates syndemic health burdens for women in multiple ways. To begin with, it desensitizes viewers to its severity whereas the emotional toll of suffering violent acts can lead to anxiety, fear, and trauma, potentially contributing to syndemic health burdens.

Instances of Justified and Unjustified Violence
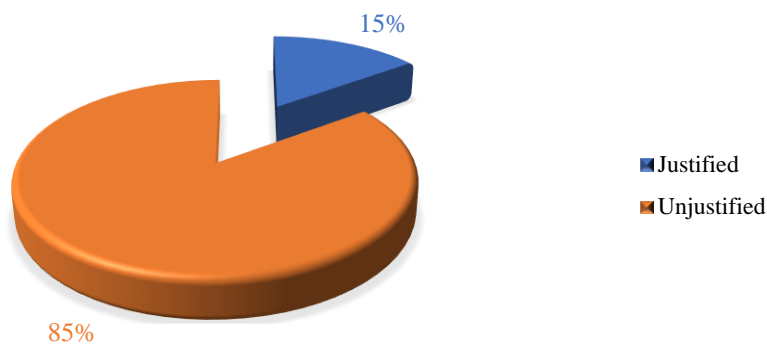

Figure 6: Instances of justified and unjustified violence

In addition, the representation perpetuates harmful gender norms and attitudes towards women by reinforcing the belief that women are deserving of mistreatment or that violence is an acceptable way to handle conflicts or disagreements. Furthermore, the intersectionality of women's identities can magnify the health impact. Lastly, Soap operas that consistently portray unjustified violence against women may lack diverse narratives that challenge harmful stereotypes and offer alternative representations of respectful and non-violent relationships.

6.7 Portrayal of Consequences for Violence

In relation to consequences related to violent acts, the results showed that among the 552 GBV cases, only 20 (4%) had consequences while the majority, 96% did not. Participants noted that perpetrators get away with violence very easily.

They also noted that women were the victims of male violence, poverty, beauty, of sacrifice for people, and society. For example, society blames women in case they are unable to conceive boys *ndio hawapati wavulana*.[18]

Participants noted that rarely were perpetrators held culpable for the violence because the soaps portrayed them as drunks (blame the drink or drugs) and were, therefore, not portrayed as

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[18] They are the ones who fail to give birth to male offspring.

accountable though judicially liable. For example, Charlie of *Mother-in-law* is always drunk, in another Kenyan soap, *Zora*, Fera rapes Alma when she is drunk. In *Maria*, Victor rapes Lornah when he was drunk. Participants also observed that GBV is trivialised because rape victims reconcile, fall in love, and marry their violators. Yet this is the exception, not the reality. A participant wondered: *"Mtu anakurape then unampenda. Mbona unampenda na amekurape?*[19]*"*

Just as the review of literature had indicated earlier, (NCRC, 2014), analysis of data indicated that victims do not report or speak out about violations (Crenshaw, 2013) and if they do, it is after many years. Many times, they are 'found.' For example, in *Mother-in-law*, Betty did not disclose the rape until Alpha, the son, was a teenager. In *Maria*, Lorna did not report the rape by Victor.

Moreover, the long-term consequences of violence on the victims were not portrayed. The instances of the types of violence portrayed indicated the violations as acceptable behaviour because the perpetrators were most frequently not penalised for the violations within the soap opera's narrative. Participants noted that in another soap, *Maria*, Kwame got away with killing his wife, Alma. Just like portrayal without justification, this portrayal of violence without realistic repercussions may lead to anxiety, fear, and trauma, potentially contributing to syndemic health burdens. It also normalises and trivialises the effect of GBV on victims and desensitises viewers to the seriousness of violence. The portrayal reinforces the belief that women's safety and well-being are not a priority, further entrenching power imbalances in relationships.

6.8 Gender of Script Writers and Directors

The findings indicated that most scriptwriters were male (16) while the females were only twelve, although gender parity was noted among directors. These observations highlight a significant gender gap in creative roles within the media industry. The higher number of male scriptwriters might contribute to gender biases in soap narratives, while equal director representation suggests the potential for balanced perspectives. These findings emphasize the role of gender dynamics in media production, affecting gender-based violence depictions and themes in soap operas. Notably, the gender ratio in the Smith, et al, 2023 study was 10.3 male directors for every one female director and one-woman screenwriter for every five male screenwriters highlighting a substantial gender disparity in the field of media production. This mirrors the broader context of gender inequality underscoring the imperative to address these gaps for more inclusive narratives.

Nonetheless, this study did not analyse casting directors, a stereotypically female role in Hollywood (Lauzen & Dozier, 2005), with a ratio of 4.4 females for every male (Smith, et al, 2023). Additionally, casting directors often reinforce stereotypes and rely on a limited talent pool, rather than reflecting the diversity of our real world. This omission underscores the multifaceted nature of gender dynamics within the media industry. Furthermore, previous research has demonstrated that such gender imbalances can significantly impact the narratives and representations portrayed in media (Frisby, 2015). For instance, films directed by women more often spotlight female characters and their narratives on screen than those solely directed by men (Smith, et al, 2023). As media holds the power to shape perceptions and influence societal norms, addressing gender disparities in the industry not only advances women's empowerment but also contributes to transformative change by fostering more inclusive narratives that reflect the complexities of the syndemics women face in today's world.

6.9 Portrayal of Actors by Gender

According to the intersectionality theory, GBV persists through power structures like traditional leaders, elders, religious figures, and sometimes healthcare providers within communities. These influential figures wield power dynamics that enforce and perpetuate harmful practices. Therefore, the researchers aimed to identify patriarchy indicators by examining gender role allocation. Findings were that of the 449 incidences analysed, the major characters were mostly male at 57.3%

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[19] Someone has raped you, yet you love them. Why should you love your rapist?

while female major characters were at 42.6%. Male minor characters were 49.8% while female minor characters were 50.1%. Figure 7 below illustrates the number of actors by gender.

This overrepresentation of men reinforces traditional gender norms and roles, depicting men in more dominant and powerful positions, while women are relegated to supporting or stereotypical roles. According to Smith, at al, 2023 study, the representation of girls and women on screen has remained constant at 32.8% since 2008. In the selection of the top 100 films in 2022, a mere 15% exhibited a balanced cast in terms of gender. Surprisingly, out of 1,600 films, 82 completely omitted white females from their screen, highlighting a pervasive issue of invisibility that extends to girls and women of colour. Furthermore, the ratio of speaking characters reflected a stark imbalance, with 1.89 male characters for every female character, despite women and girls comprising 50.4% of the US population.

Summary no. of cast members by gender

42.60%

57.30%

■Male major characters

■Female major characters
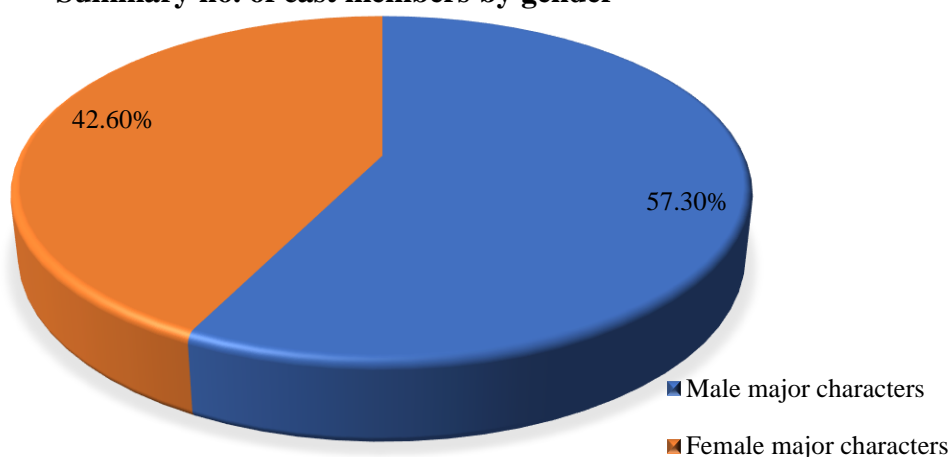
*Figure 7: Summary number of major actors by gender*

The underrepresentation of women and marginalized groups in media, both on and off screen, along with the persistently skewed gender ratios, mirror broader societal inequalities. Such disparities can contribute to the emergence of syndemics – interconnected health issues – by perpetuating harmful norms, stereotypes, and biases. These factors collectively influence women's health outcomes, as they shape attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions surrounding health, body image, and roles. The lack of equitable representation reinforces existing power dynamics and hinders progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment.

6.10 Allocation of Roles by Gender

The soap operas displayed traditional gender stereotypes, notably favouring male characters as professionals and achievers compared to females. In contrast, female roles emphasized interpersonal interactions like friendships and familial roles (mothers, daughters, wives). Remarkably, female actors took on main roles focused on interpersonal responsibilities (68.4%), while 45.6% of instances involved professional roles among fifty-two captured. Professional or business careers for women were at 22.8%, and subordinate roles appeared in 31.6% of instances. In minor roles, women mostly portrayed interpersonal roles (84.3%) and held subordinate positions (29.4%). These patterns mirror studies suggesting women often occupy caregiving roles more than men (Smith, et al 2023).

Notably, focus group discussions revealed further insights. Actresses were often depicted as beautiful yet economically disadvantaged housewives, mirroring characters in *Mother-in-law*. In *Makutano Junction*, they embodied *Mama Mboga* roles, while men were shown in office jobs. A recurring theme emerged, depicting women as reliant on men and incomplete without them, actively seeking male partners. Another notable finding was the frequent portrayal of men as more

successful than women in soap operas. Successful men appeared in 13.2% of instances, while successful women only in 3.6% of cases. Figure 8 illustrates the allocations.

Allocation of roles by gender


Figure 8:Allocation of roles by gender
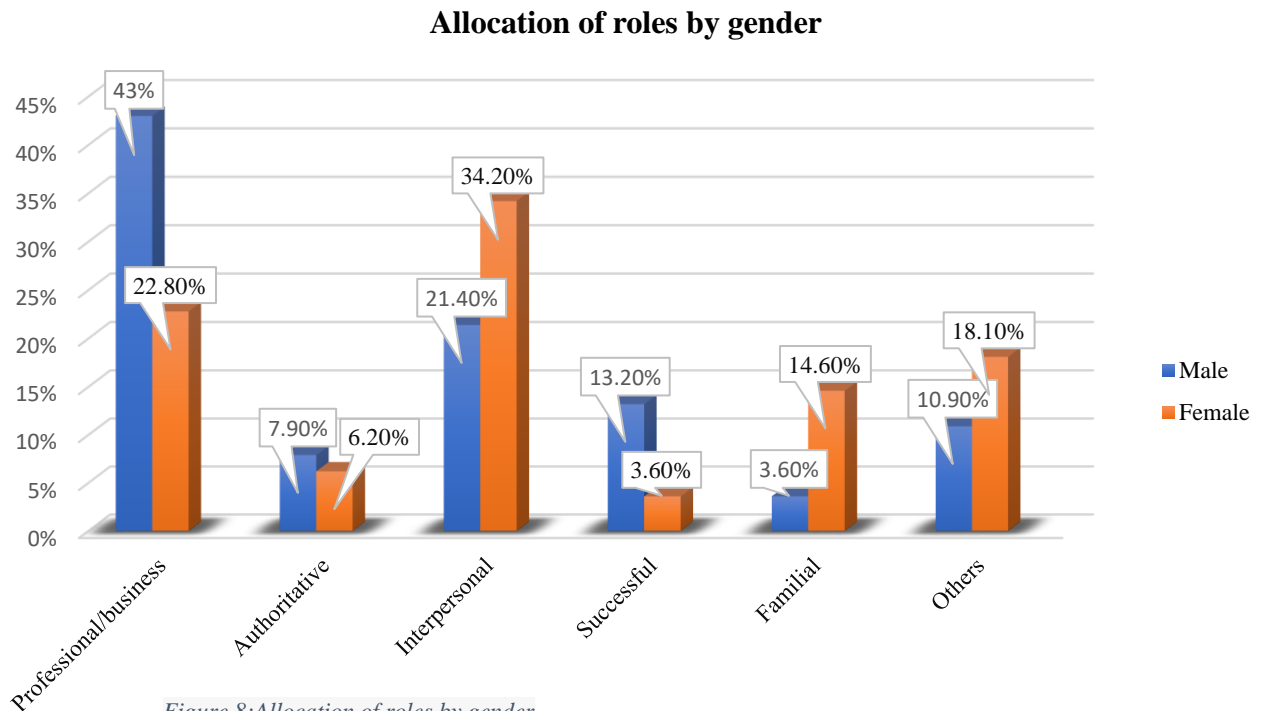
The portrayal of traditional stereotypes of men and women leads to emotional and psychological distress for viewers. When women are depicted as submissive, dependent, or solely focused on relationships, it reinforces limiting beliefs and expectations, potentially leading to anxiety, depression, and other mental health challenges. It also reinforces rigid gender roles and social norms which can restrict women's agency and opportunities, affecting their ability to pursue education, careers, and overall self-empowerment. Portrayals of women as passive or subordinate may limit discussions on consent, reproductive choices, and sexual health, potentially influencing real-life decisions and behaviours. The depiction of narrow beauty standards and traditional gender roles in soap operas can influence viewers' self-esteem and body image contributing to syndemic health burdens, especially if women feel pressured to conform to unrealistic and harmful ideals.

6.11 Framing of Male versus Female Actors

Of the 53 incidences that were analysed, male characters were mostly stereotyped an average of 48.2 % of the time while objectification occurred 2.8% of the time. The study had operationalised stereotypes of men as slender (lean), good-looking, tall, well-built, successful/ rich, and sexually

assertive.

Framing of male actors
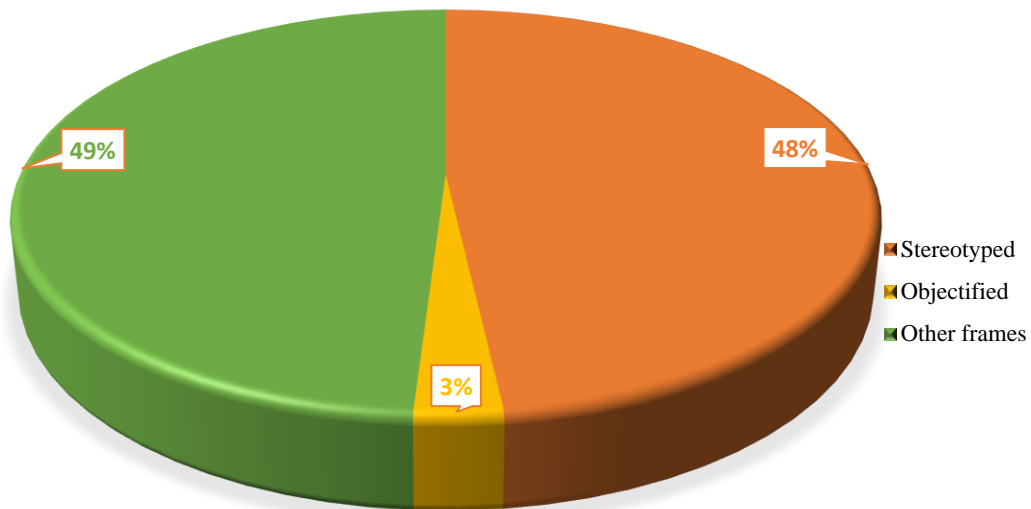
Male participants criticized the soaps for displaying exclusively handsome men, lacking '*sura personal'* (ordinary-looking folk). Most male actors were affluent; in *Mother-in-law*, Charlie hails from a wealthy family, *Makutano Junction's* Karis is a politician's son, and *Maria's* Kwame and Victor are well-off. This portrayal prompts inquiries into societal views of masculinity. On-screen, strength and success are spotlighted, yet real men exhibit diverse attributes like resilience and varying levels of success. While dramatic depictions have merit, they must not eclipse men's multifaceted real experiences. Men experience violations and poverty as well. Furthermore, research has linked exposure to media's unrealistic standards of attractiveness with body dissatisfaction and the risk of eating disorders in susceptible individuals (Benowitz-Fredericks et al., 2012). Such portrayals also affect women's relationship perceptions and partner preferences, causing discontent with real partners.

In comparison, actresses were stereotyped 33.4% of the time and objectified 40.4% of the time. This portrayal reinforces unrealistic beauty and success standards, setting unattainable expectations for men and women alike. Moreover, physically attractive individuals are frequently perceived more positively than less attractive ones on dimensions that may have weak or no direct connection to physical appearance, including intelligence, sociability, and morality (Smith, McIntosh & Bazzini, 1999). This can lead to social comparison and a constant striving for an ideal that may not align with reality, affecting mental health and overall well-being.
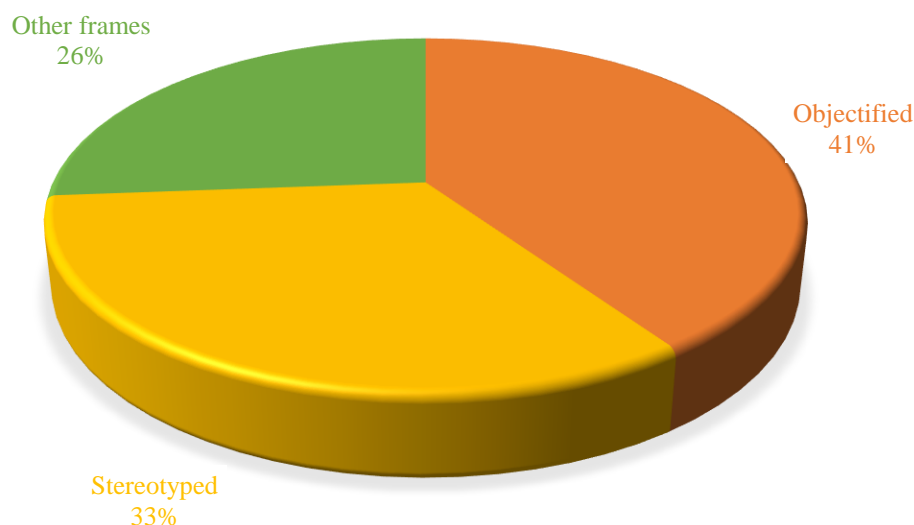
Framing of females (actresses)

Figure 10: Framing of females (actresses)

It is worth mentioning that women stereotypes were operationalized as young (below 30 years), slim, fair, attractive and behaving like ladies publicly. Participants in FGDs opined that soaps mirror social stereotypes and beliefs regarding gender and culture. They pointed out that in the soaps producers use objectified or stereotypical images of video vixens in shades, colours, and shapes, like the actress Celina in *Mother-in-law*. Again, it was found that only women are evil and that dark people are victims. Exposure to idealized images of women may lead to body dissatisfaction and emotional distress, potentially contributing to syndemic health burdens. It also reinforces unrealistic beauty standards which can lead to social comparison and a constant striving for an ideal that may not align with reality. It can also contribute to body dissatisfaction and may be a risk factor for the development of eating disorders in some individuals thus affecting mental health and overall well-being. Additionally, the focus on young women perpetuates ageism and devalues the experiences, perspectives, and contributions of older women. This can impact women's self-esteem as they age and may influence societal attitudes towards ageing and age-related health concerns.

The researchers noted the prevalent erasure of older women characters in media, except for cases like Charity in *Mother-in-law*. Smith, Neff, and Pieper's (2023) study from 2007 to 2022 found only 1.2% of female-identified leads and co-leads were aged forty-five and above. In the top 100 films, 23.9% of speaking characters aged 40 + were women, creating an imbalanced 3.2:1 ratio of older male to female characters. This exclusion shapes audience views on ageism, marginalization, and appearance, potentially fostering skewed beliefs. Excluding older women limits addressing their unique health concerns and experiences, reducing role model opportunities and awareness of age-related health issues. Such portrayals reinforce ageist attitudes, marginalizing older women in real-life contexts. The intersection of ageism with other determinants like ethnicity and disability compounds health challenges, making them vulnerable to syndemics. Moreover, reinforcing certain images affects perceptions of beauty and femininity affecting women's perceptions of their worth and value.

7.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study reveals the dynamic interplay between media narratives of GBV and women's health issues, identifying trends with transformative potential. An analysis of Kenyan soap operas uncovers the troubling normalization and trivialization of GBV, alongside persistent traditional gender roles and exclusion of vital gender concerns. Furthermore, the research has highlighted the underrepresentation of women and marginalized groups both on-screen and off-

screen. Notably, a pronounced gender imbalance favouring men persists in shaping media narratives. In addition, focus group discussions have provided valuable insights into the impact of GBV portrayals on audience attitudes. Therefore, the study advocates for an equitable media landscape merging intersectionality and a syndemics approach for societal change and women's empowerment. Equal representation not only addresses visibility but reshapes cultural narratives enhances empathy, and embraces diversity. Finally, by amplifying women's voices the media can drive transformative change, challenge harmful norms, improve women's health, and counter syndemic conditions.

8.0 Recommendations

Based on the research findings and conclusions, and considering the fourth objective of this study, the researchers propose some recommendations towards transformative change in media construction of GBV and women empowerment. To begin with, responsible media should promote content that avoids trivialising or normalizing GBV in soap operas through a collaboration between media practitioners, regulatory bodies, and advocacy groups to create guidelines that uphold ethical standards.

Moreover, enhancing character diversity in soap operas to authentically depict the intersectionality of GBV is crucial. Collaborative efforts between writers, content creators, producers, and experts can yield multi-dimensional characters from various backgrounds, fostering a more inclusive representation of GBV and fostering deeper comprehension of its intricate dynamics. Furthermore, it is essential to ensure that the progress in providing access and opportunities to women behind the camera will lead to lasting and impactful transformation. Achieving this requires guidance and consultation from experts, given the barriers certain groups face due to the glass ceiling prevalent in the media industry.

Equally important, policy makers can introduce ethical media awards to recognize and celebrate soap operas that demonstrate responsible representations of gender issues and promote women's empowerment. These awards can serve as incentives for media creators to prioritize responsible storytelling and accurate portrayals of GBV.

In addition, the provision of educational opportunities for media professionals can enhance their understanding of gender issues, women's health, and the potential impact of their portrayals. This can be done through collaboration with experts and organizations to develop accessible workshops, seminars, or training programs that offer valuable insights and tools for creating more informed and sensitive media content. In addition, there should be media literacy programs in schools and communities to equip individuals with the skills to critically analyse media content.

Moreover, there should be establishment of partnerships between media stakeholders and gender empowerment organizations to provide guidance and insights on developing empowering narratives that reflect women's agency, leadership, and resilience. There should be a policy framework that incorporates continuous research and monitoring of media portrayals to track progress in responsible representation.

Lastly, media companies should employ transparent criteria in hiring and casting procedures, such as interviews and auditions, to enable them to circumvent implicit and explicit biases that limit opportunities for marginalized individuals. This way, biases that consistently lead to the exclusion of talented individuals from diverse backgrounds can be avoided. Rectifying casting disparities for underrepresented women swiftly enhances the overall representation of marginalized groups.

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The Trilogy of the Coronavirus Disease, Religion, and The Health of African Women

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Abstract

The article discusses the trilogy of the Coronavirus disease, religion, and the health of African women. The aim of the article is to interrogate how the Coronavirus disease affected the health of African women and deteriorated their general well-being due to the prevailing religious-based gender inequalities. A qualitative research methodology was employed, namely interviews and literature review. The article argues that the COVID-19 pandemic revealed a gender bias against women because it amplified already existing gender inequalities and inequities which increased their vulnerabilities; affecting their health and general well-being in the following five areas: (1) gender disproportions; (2) domestic violence; (3) the well-being of women's sexuality; (4) women's hospitality; and (5) women's mental health. These issues *are detrimental to women's well-being, and they negatively impact their socio-economic participation in society. Thus, the intersectionalities of African women's health, religion, and the Coronavirus disease entails the inclusion of women in pandemic responses. The article proffers two main implications. Firstly, the inclusion and centring of women in the formulation of COVID-19 preparedness and response plans. The pandemic responses should be gender-conscious by recognising the multiplicity of their effect on both men and women; subsequently, leading to the formulation of tailor-made responses which address the unique needs of women. Secondly, pandemic responses should address how women are disenfranchised in the hospitality sector. This implies that women's economic empowerment (WEE) has enormous potential to eradicate gender disparities and create a viable and sustainable future for girls and women.*

Key words: *COVID-19, Gender, Health, pandemic, Religion, Women.*

7.0 Introduction

The article discusses the trilogy of the Coronavirus disease, religion, and health of African women. The article aims to interrogate how the Coronavirus disease affected the health of African women and deteriorated their general well-being due to the prevailing gender inequalities. A qualitative research methodology was employed, namely, literature review and interviews. The argument proffered is that the Coronavirus disease revealed a gender bias against women because it amplified

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already existing gender inequalities and inequities which increased their vulnerabilities; affecting their health and general well-being. Thus, the article calls for a formulation of an effective and equitable pandemic response based on a proper understanding of the influence of gender dynamics on how the Coronavirus disease, particularly, affected women.

In pursuit of the aim of the study, the article discusses the following themes: (1) the Coronavirus disease, religion, and health of African women; (2) gender disproportions; (3) domestic violence; (4) the well-being of women's sexuality; (5) women's hospitality; and (6) women's psychological well-being.

1.1 The Coronavirus Disease, Religion, and the Health of African Women

The Coronavirus disease heightened the intersectionalities of religion and the health of African women because of the unprecedented global disruption, untold suffering, deaths, and socio-economic turmoil (Mawerenga & Knoetze, 2022:2792). Velavan and Meyer (2020: 278) contend that the deadly effect of the Coronavirus disease was noticeable when the outbreak was initially reported in Wuhan, Hubei province, mainland China in December 2019. Davis, Lembo, Laurie et al. (2022:34) argue that the Coronavirus disease endangered the entire world as it exposed the inadequacies of biomedicine and the public health delivery systems and put into the limelight the frailty and helplessness of human beings, particularly African women.

Religion became a significant lens for perceiving and processing the meaning of life under the existential threat to life and wholeness which was stimulated by the Coronavirus disease. In this case, religion was a treasured resource which informed people's daily navigation of life, confirming the claim that African religiosity and spirituality determining factors for human existence in Africa (Platvoet & van Rinsum, 2003:123). Mbiti (1990) states that Africans are notoriously religious, and their spirituality and religiosity cannot be separated from them even during pandemics. A woman who participated in the study commented that:

> My whole life revolves around religion, and I used religion *to* make sense of the untold suffering and deaths caused by the corona virus disease and navigate daily obstacles. Religion provided encouragement, hope, faith, comfort, refuge, and resilience during the perilous times of the Pandemic.

Sibanda, Muyambo, and Chitando (2022:4) affirm that the connection between religion and the healthiness of African women during the Coronavirus disease either positively or negatively influenced the political and public health spheres. For instance, while most countries in Africa complied with the Coronavirus prevention measures as stipulated by the World Health Organization (WHO), Tanzania alarmed the entire world by declaring itself *"a COVID-19 free country in June 2020"* (Mtani and Ngohengo, 2023:1). The Tanzanian government encouraged people to use steam therapy, traditional medicine made of herbs such as ginger and lemon, and prayers as remedies for the Coronavirus disease (Shagembe, Kinanda, Senga et al. (2022:135). The former president of Tanzania, John Pombe Magufuli, downplayed the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic claiming that *"Coronavirus, which is a devil, cannot survive in the body of Christ... It will burn instantly"* (Hamisi et al., 2023:2).

Mtani and Ngohengo (2023:5-6) document a fivefold response by former president Magufuli to the Coronavirus disease. Firstly, he questioned the validity and reliability of the Coronavirus testing and later fired the Director of Tanzania's National Health Laboratory who was supervising the tests. He claimed that the imported test kits were flawed because they had produced positive results on non-human samples such as a pawpaw and a goat. Secondly, he also fired Faustine Ndungile, the country's former deputy health minister for advising against the use of steam therapy and herbal remedies. Thirdly, he reversed the closure of schools and universities by ordering the

resumption of educational and sporting activities in the country. Fourthly, he spoke against social distancing and the wearing of masks. Fifthly, he dismissed accusations of his government's mishandling of the COVID-19 response and claimed that faith, not fear, will win over the pandemic. Hence, Magufuli's pragmatic and popular rejoinder to the deadly disease was nuanced with religious connotations; subsequently, endangering Tanzania's public health, with a particular emphasis on women's health due to the prevailing gender inequities and socio-cultural disparities (Simba and Ngcobo, 2020: 570666).

African women's religiosity and spirituality were also affected when most African governments introduced several preventative measures to mitigate the spread of the Coronavirus (Isiko, 2020:77). Mawerenga (2021) lists the following preventative measures:

> "The closure of international airports; closing ground crossing points for passengers with the exception of cargo drivers; closure of schools and other *high* congregation points; freezing of public and private transport; outlawing all mass gathering events; outlawing and restrictions on religious gatherings; overnight curfew; and nationwide lockdowns" (p. 60).

Manyonganise (2022:232) argues that the closure of religious spaces such as churches, mosques, and other religious places of worship had a threefold negative effect on women. Firstly, women form most of the faith communities in Africa and the COVID-19 restrictions to physical spaces of worship diluted the significance of the religiosity and spirituality associated with these sacred spaces. Secondly, women were deprived of the opportunity to offload their burdens in the religious spaces where they get spiritual and psycho-social support. Thirdly, women were deprived of hearing sermons which provided religious edification and guidance for their lives (Oduyoye, 2001; Longwe, 2019).

The fore-going discussion has ecclesiological implications for women's religiosity and spirituality in view of the COVID-19 preventative measures which were implemented in most African countries. Pillay (2020: 17) gives a fourfold observation. Firstly, women had to grapple with the meaning of the church (the body of Christ) without physically going to church (a place of worship or a building). Secondly, women had to re-think the possibility of being and doing church without its obvious visibility. Thirdly, women had to appropriate the meaning and praxis of the invisible church. Fourthly, women had to re-imagine the idea of a fellowship or community (*koinonia*). Mawerenga (2021:69) argues that some churches employed virtual or digital ways to continue with their core ministerial activities using Zoom, Google Hangouts, Microsoft Teams, WebEx, WhatsApp, You Tube, TV, Radio, etc. However, for most women in African societies access to internet connectivity was a big challenge to maintain the viability and sustainability of an ecclesiological virtual community (Magezi, 2022).

Hankela (2015:366) highlights that the communitarian aspect of the church as a congregation of believers corresponds with *Ubuntu* which champions an African communitarian way of life. Chisale (2018:3) avers that *Ubuntu* expresses African interconnectedness, interdependence, community participation, and an all-embracing humanisation. Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic's restrictions disrupted African communal life by affecting people's gatherings in community events such as public worship, traditional initiation ceremonies, weddings, funerals, etc. (Mawerenga, 2021:60).

Mawerenga and Knoetze (2022: 2792) argue that African women's health was jeopardised by misleading theologies which were used to explain the meaning of the Coronavirus disease in several ways. Firstly, some religious leaders in Malawi defied the COVID-19 restrictions which limited religious gatherings to ten people only. They argued that they will maintain their church capacity to one hundred while observing the other preventative measures such as social distancing, hand

washing with soap or sanitiser, and putting on face masks (Chilanga, Dzimbiri, Mwanjawala et al., 2022: 3). Secondly, some religious leaders in Africa peddled anti-vaccine hesitancy; thereby, stifling the vaccination drive by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the African governments' initiatives (Dzinamarira, Nachipo, Phiri et.al., 2021:250). Thirdly, the construction of misleading theologies purporting that the COVID-19 pandemic signifies the fulfilment of eschatological events such as the end of the world, and a misreading and misinterpretation of Revelation 13:8 which wrongly identified the COVID-19 vaccination with the beast's stamp (666) (Mawerenga and Knoetze, 2022: 2792). Accordingly, these misleading theologies negatively impacted African women's health by increasing their risk of infection. Also, women's overall health-seeking behaviour, access to vaccines, and treatment were hindered because of the propagation of false theologies.

Writing at the peak of the plague of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on the African continent, Circle theologians, Phiri, and Nadar (2006:9) explain the connectivity of women's health and religion in the context of HIV/AIDS. Religion has a holistic influence on women in the pursuit of wholeness which embraces the spiritual, physical, emotional, economic, and psycho-social domains of life. Religion also has various resources that enhance women's health and fullness of life. Women are also informed by their religio-cultural heritage to engage in health-care provision in times of pandemics, peace, and conflict.

Therefore, the discourses concerning the healthiness of African women, their religion, and the Coronavirus disease provide a framework which helps us to retrieve lessons by hindsight from past pandemics and construct lessons by foresight for both present and future pandemics. Even so, focusing on the inclusion of African women's health and its subsequent re-positioning to the centre in the way African states respond to pandemics.

8.0 Methodology

The study employed a qualitative research methodology, namely, a literature review and interviews. Firstly, the author acknowledges the difficulties associated with conducting qualitative research during the time of the Coronavirus disease because the preventative measures constrained both researchers and participants of the study (Rahman, Tuckerman, Vorley, et al., 2021).

Secondly, primary data was also collected from six Focus Group Discussions conducted in Malawi. Ten people comprising five women and five men participated in each Focus Group Discussion in the following five districts: Lilongwe, Zomba, Blantyre, Phalombe, and Chikhwawa. The researcher created a free, open, and relaxed environment during the interviews that enabled maximum engagement from participants. The participants freely narrated their personal attitudes and perspectives concerning the Coronavirus disease, vaccine equity and distribution, main constraints and prospects, and lessons learnt that can inform us in developing public health responses that are inclusive of women. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed.

Thirdly, a multi-disciplinary literature review was conducted on the topic under investigation. This enabled the researcher to underpin the discussion with relevant theoretical and conceptual frameworks. It was also useful in identifying knowledge gaps that could be filled by the present study.

The data collected for the study were mainly qualitative and this demanded the employment of a thematic data analysis (Chandra & Shang, 2019:91). The collected data was then subjected to a process of transcription and translation from Chichewa into English. This was followed by the coding and identification of emerging themes, which were finally interpreted accordingly.

9.0 Discussion of Research Findings

The article sought to interrogate how the Coronavirus disease affected the healthiness of African women and deteriorated their general well-being due to the prevailing gender inequalities. The aim of the study was achieved by analysing five thematic areas: (1) gender disproportions; (2) gender

violence; (3) the well-being of women's sexuality; (4) women's hospitality (care-giving role); and (5) women's mental health.

3.1 Gender Disproportions

Simba and Ngcobo (2020: 570666) observe that pandemics entrench already existing gender disparities, subsequently, marginalising women's health. Kalinowski, Wurtz, Baird et al. (2022: 100140) argue that pandemics create and compound various inequalities which amplify vulnerabilities for women and girls. Baniol, McIsaac, Xu et al. (2019:1) state that gender disparities are further heightened because globally approximately 70% of the healthcare and social services employees are women; thus, broadening their risk of infection when responding to a pandemic. For instance, in the early stages of the development of the Coronavirus disease in the Hubei Province, in mainland China, it was reported that women comprised more than 90% of the healthcare labour force (Mo, Deng, Zhang et al. 2020: 1002). Hence, this development led to a twofold gendered impact on women health care workers who were making a frontline response to the Coronavirus disease. Firstly, women who lacked personal protective equipment (PPE) had a higher risk of infection (Jain, 2020). Secondly, women were highly susceptible to developing psychological issues such as depression, distress, nervousness, sleeplessness, etc. (da Silva and Neto, 2021:110057). This can be exemplified by the cry of a female nurse who was assigned to work in the COVID-19 isolation centre. She lamented:

> I was so much afraid when I was assigned to work in the COVID-19 isolation centre. Although I was wearing full personal protective equipment [PPE] I was very much anxious and worried about contracting COVID-19. I was just wondering if I had not been infected with the corona virus. A mere coughing or sneezing heightened the fear and distress of being infected with COVID-19.

Ahinkora, Hagan Jr., Ameyaw et al. (2021: 686984) intimate that the pandemic disclosed unequal gender roles and household inequalities in Africa. Haynes (2020) argues that one of the global barriers against women's socio-economic development is the burden of household care, which in most cases is characterised by unpaid labour. Sevilla, Phimister, Krutikova et al. (2020) acknowledge the universal effect of preventative measures against the spread of the Coronavirus disease such as the closing of schools, loss of employment, and working from home to avoid movement and contact with other people. Nonetheless, mothers bore the brunt of multiple tasks, e.g. formal or informal work, household work, and caring for children in comparison to their male partners. Ahinkora, Hagan Jr., Ameyaw et al. (2021: 686984) argue that young girls and women have an increased load of household and childcare responsibilities due to patriarchal biases which traditionally favour the male gender to the detriment of the female gender. Moreover, traditional hospitality roles placed upon girls and women may increase the care workload for the elderly, the unwell, relatives, and other vulnerable people in African society (Ayittey, Dhar, Anani et al., 2020:1210).

Parry and Gordon (2021: 797) argue that the connection between gender disparities and the Coronavirus disease also highlighted the plight of female-headed households in Africa. Wanjala (2021:1657) identifies an interplay of five factors between poverty and gender, subsequently, leading to an increase of poverty levels in women-headed family units more than those of their male counterparts. Firstly, women are trapped in a vicious cycle of extreme poverty because they are primarily involved in doing care work without pay. Secondly, women face many barriers in accessing wealth and capital in comparison to men. Thirdly, women are engaged in fewer income-generating activities as compared to men. Fourthly, women constitute most people who lack access to skills development initiatives; hence, they end up working as non-skilled labourers, with very

little income. Fifthly, women have a high probability of being occupied with part-time jobs because they devote most of their time towards voluntary care work. According to Kassen (2020), Nkosazana Dhlamini Zuma said that research findings had demonstrated that the lockdown contributed to poverty for African women. Commenting during the launch of a report entitled *"The Socio-Economic Impact Assessment of COVID-19 in South Africa,"* she said:

> Households headed by casually employed, Black African women, who had not completed secondary education, had a 73.5% chance of falling into poverty due to the Coronavirus lockdown (p.1).

Lepule (2020:1) narrates that women's predicament was heightened by the failure of some men to pay for their *"child maintenance"* during the Coronavirus disease, rendering mothers more vulnerable to poverty.

The Coronavirus disease put the world to be at the brink of a hunger pandemics (WFP, 2020:1). Simba and Ngcobo (2020: 570666) explain that girls and women were more likely to be affected by the hunger induced by the COVID-19 pandemics because statistics show that they comprise 60% of people who are food insecure in the world. Mahuku, Yihun, Deering et al., (2020:1) observe that lack of food at home sometimes causes women to sacrifice the available food for other members of the household and visitors. Unfortunately, this exposes women to malnutrition and vulnerability to various diseases. Thus, the Coronavirus disease was not gender blind, but necessitated a gendered response, particularly addressing its multi-faceted impact on girls and women (De Paz, Muller, Munoz et al., 2020:1).

3.2 Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

According to a report entitled *COVID-19 and Ending Violence Against Women and Girls*, the Coronavirus disease contributed to an increase in gender-based violence (UN Women, 2020:1). Gender-based violence (GBV) intensified because of "mandatory lockdowns, quarantine, and self-isolation, where security, health, and money worries heighten tensions and strains are accentuated by cramped and confined living conditions" (UN Women, 2020:1). Moreira et al. (2020:101606) argue that the Coronavirus disease precipitated intimate partner violence (IPV) culminating into a twofold projection. Firstly, instigating thirty-one million new cases of IPV by the end of 2020. Secondly, hampering the progress made towards the elimination of IPV with a one-third reduction by 2030 (Manyonganise, 2022: 234).

Leburu-Masigo and Kgadima (2020:16618) highlight the double effect of the lockdown restrictions on women and girls. Firstly, most women were confined to the home environment together with the perpetrators of abuse. Secondly, it brought a lack of access to people and hampered their use of available mechanisms or systems of victim support resources. Ansah et al. (2023:2) mention that IPV increased due to a combination of factors such as the prevailing anticipation of gender role performance, restraints associated with the lockdown, loss of employment and other income-generating activities, and mobility limitations. Joska, Andersen, Rabie, et al. (2020:2751) provide evidence of the severity of IPV in the first week of the lockdown in South Africa culminating in the 87,000 reported cases of violence against girls and women. Makhulu et al. (2020) add that the Coronavirus disease further compounded other types of violence against girls and women such as murder, bantering, manhandling, slapping, psychological, and sexual violence. A woman who was a victim of gender-based violence explained her ordeal:
Nakyazze (2020:92) argues that isolation and social distancing measures have compromised the support network for IPV victims creating a triple challenge of getting help, escaping, and finding safety. Kumar (2020) avers that before the COVID-19 pandemic,

> My experience is that GBV was heightened because of the duration in which we were confined together with my spouse during the lockdown. So, my partner was observing me closely, listening to my phone conversations, and always searching my social media chats. There was a lot of suspicion and jealousy which eventually boiled down to fights.

Nakyazze (2020:92) argues that isolation and social distancing measures have compromised the support network for IPV victims creating a triple challenge of getting help, escaping, and finding safety. Kumar (2020) avers that before the COVID-19 pandemic,

> a victim had at least four options for escaping a violent situation by seeking refuge at a neighbour's, family member's or friend's home or by reporting the incident to the authorities (p.192).

Thus, the safety networks of most women were greatly compromised, thereby leaving them trapped in a vicious cycle of domestic violence (Abrahamson, 2020). The WHO (2020:1) reported that victims of IPV had reduced access to vital resources, including those that maintain sexuality healthiness for violated African women. Moreover, we should bear in mind that any delay in providing treatment to sexually harassed women can inflict an irreversible health hazard in their lives.

Nyangweso and Olupona (2019:12) argue that pre-existing risks of IPV rooted in African religio-cultural practices affected women's general well-being during the epidemic. Leburu-Masigo and Kgadima (2020:16618) observe that containment measures against the spread of the Coronavirus restrained the availability of GBV amenities; thereby, affecting women's general well-being. According to a UNICEF (2020) report, the epidemic created a shadow and silent plague of general sexual violence against femininity and womanhood (UNICEF, 2020). Muluneh, Stulz, Francis, and Agho (2020:903) assert that GBV during the COVID-19 pandemic should be considered as a silent epidemic because victims rarely report their ordeal due to multi-faced barriers. Some of the factors that prohibit women from reporting GBV are apparent lack of law enforcement action, negative socio-cultural attitudes concerning GBV, fear of retaliations, disgrace, and humiliation, ignorance regarding the availability of victim support services, monetary constraints, and the negative influence of religious-cultural beliefs and practices.

Rajah and Osborn (2022:1373) add that women fail to report GBV because of their desire to protect the sacredness of the family unit and the home in line with African traditional religion and socio-cultural norms. This implies the privacy of GBV, which necessitates limited outside intervention. In some cases, the affected individuals can solicit the help of traditional mediators, who unfortunately condone GBV as normal in African society.

3.3 Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH)

Ahonsi (2020:22) argues that issues related to women's sexuality well-being were compounded during the Coronavirus disease in Africa because of two reasons. Firstly, most of the COVID-19 responses in Africa prioritised the containment and mitigation of the Pandemic's impact leaving behind SRH issues. Secondly, the management of the consequences of SRH-related behaviours such as prenatal care, sexually transmitted pathogens, sexual harassment, and GBV was greatly compromised at the time of the epidemic.

Afolalu, Anuforo, Odetayo et al. (2021:23) assert that the COVID-19 pandemic presented unique challenges for womanhood, especially around menstrual hygiene management (MHM). Kuhlmann, Henry and Wall (2017:356) relate that most girls and women faced a triple challenge in their effort to maintain good MHM during the pandemic e.g. the use of good menstrual hygiene products, how often to use them, and when to change these products? Rheinländer and Wachira (2015:1) write that women utilise various menstrual cleanliness kits i.e. sanitary pads, tampons, clothes, toilet tissue or articles, menstrual cups, and leaves to retain menstrual blood and maintain domestic hygiene. Asumah, et al (2022) mention that the unavailability of basic menstrual hygiene kits to women promotes unhygienic practices e.g. the use of articles, old clothes, socks, and dried leaves to collect menstrual blood and deal with their periods. Ajari (2020: em0045) argues that the use of unhygienic menstrual products aggravates the risk for urinary tract infections and bacterial vaginosis, vaginal itching, and white or green discharge. Odey, Amusile, Oghenetejiri, et al. (2021: 100196) highlight that the Coronavirus disease compounded the lack of access to proper MHM, thereby, compromising women's dignity, nobility, and prosperity.

Eghtessadi, Mukandavire, and Mutenherwa (2020:286) argue that the Coronavirus disease produced an increase in unintended pregnancies. Wadekar (2020) reports that thousands of adolescent girls became pregnant in Kenya during the lockdown period. According to the MSF (2020) report, SRH care options were reduced for many pregnant women due to the closure of health centres and the re-allocation of healthcare providers to combat the epidemic. The UNFPA (2021) anticipated that lack of access to SRH services will force young girls into early marriages with an alarming estimation of about thirteen million victims from 2020-2030. Eghtessadi, Mukandavire, and Mutenherwa (2020:286) highlight that access to HIV medicines by female patients of HIV/AIDS and the administration of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for female sex workers were affected at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Adams, Adams, and Koki (2021:86) note that water and hygiene insecurity heightened the epidemic's toll on girls and women. Lack of access to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), complicated by the epidemic deteriorated women's menstrual hygiene. Stoler, Miller, Brewis et al. (2021: 113715) argue that the lack of access to clean and portable water for most African women based in rural areas was deepened by the rigorous handwashing with water and soap as one of the precautionary measures against the spread of the Coronavirus. This was further compounded using water in maintaining women's menstrual hygiene (Adams, Adams, and Koki, 2021:86). A woman narrated her experience of maintaining menstrual hygiene when her area faced acute water shortage during the COVID-19 pandemic,

> I faced challenges in maintaining my menstrual hygiene because there were constant acute water shortages in my area, and it took a long time for the Water Board to fix the problem. Thus, I used the little water that I had for cooking and completely neglected bathing, and this greatly affected my self-confidence because I continually felt that I was unclean.

According to a brief by UNICEF (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic affected menstrual hygiene management and period poverty; consequently, impeding progress towards the advancement of dignity for womanhood,

An estimated 1.8 billion girls, women, and gender non-binary persons menstruate, yet millions of menstruators across the world cannot manage their monthly cycle in a dignified, healthy way. Even in the best of times, gender inequality, discriminatory social norms, cultural taboos, poverty, and lack of basic services often cause menstrual health and hygiene needs to go unmet. In emergencies, these deprivations can be exacerbated. The result is far-reaching negative impacts on the lives of those who menstruate restricting mobility, freedom, and choices; reducing participation in school, work, and community life; compromising safety; and causing stress and anxiety (UNICEF, 2020:1-2).

3.4 Women's Hospitality as Care Givers

Kanyoro (1996:149) avers that it is imperative to understand the religious and socio-cultural norms that shape the discourse of hospitality for African women. This helps us in recognising the different patterns of exposure to COVID-19 between men and women (Spagnolo, Manson, and Joffe, 2020:385). Turquet and Koissy-Kpein (2020) claim that the Coronavirus disease presented a unique care predicament which highlighted the feminisation of global health care. In this case, women invested a lot of time in doing both paid and unpaid care activities to daily negotiate with the disruptions of life brought about by the pandemic. De Paz, Muller, Munoz et al. (2020) argue that the global paid care work is characterised by imbalances which indicate that women make up two-thirds of the global care-workers. Tarquet and Koissy-Kpein (2020) write that women are also burdened by unpaid domestic care work in numerous homes globally; consequently, their workload increased. In some cases, older women cared for their sick partners, children, and grandchildren. Moreover, the lockdown measures increased the burden of home-based care for school-going children (Govender et al. 2020:504). In some scenarios, women were engaged in a twofold role of caregiving both at home and at work; thereby, rendering them more vulnerable to infection (Gausman and Langer, 2020:456). A woman who provided home-based care for her sick husband narrated her experience,

> It was not easy for me since I had to provide hospice care for my husband. We had to be sleeping in separate bedrooms and I was only leaving food on his door. I was constantly afraid of being infected while caring for him. It pained me because it took us about 6 hours before we discovered that he had died of COVID-19-related issues.

Gausman and Langer (2020:456) insinuate that women are over-represented in the frontline healthcare profession, and this subsequently raised their risk of infection, morbidity, and death based on their occupation. Mo, Deng, Zhang et al. (2020:1002) illustrate that female health-care workers faced at least three additional challenges in Wuhan, China. Firstly, if a female nurse was pregnant, there was a higher risk of infection for both the mother and her foetus. Secondly, women's movements were restricted by the wearing of personal protective equipment (PPE), and this affected movements such as going to the toilet and eating. Thirdly, female frontline healthcare workers who were on duty while menstruating felt uncomfortable and unable to regularly change their menstrual kits (Chang, 2020:803).

Oduyoye (2001) argues that the association of hospitality with African women is deeply rooted in African traditional religion and socio-cultural values. In other words, hospitality is

definitive of African women and constitutes a moral criterion for judging whether a particular African woman has humanity (*Ubuntu*) (Magezi and Khlopa, 2021:4). However, Oduyoye (2001) acknowledges the oppressive and dehumanising aspect of hospitality for African women by noting that a spirit of injustice affects the practise of hospitality in Africa. Phiri (2004:422) illustrates women's traditional burden of caregiving was put in the spotlight in Africa because of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. She notes that:

> the HIV/AIDS pandemic has increased women's workload, as AIDS patients require home-based care for a long time. Women have sacrificed their health, jobs, and time to nurse their dying relatives, children, and husbands in the name of African hospitality" (p.15).

Therefore, various calls have been made for the emancipation of African women from oppressive kinds of hospitality that encourage self-sacrifice while neglecting their own general well-being (Siwila, 2005:59).

3.5 Women's Mental Health

Mental health refers to:

> a state of well-being in which the individual realizes their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to contribute to his or her community (Edwards, et al., 2021:4).

Ojeahere et.al (2020: 100147) observe that the COVID-19 pandemic was initially considered to be affecting organs and tissues that assist in the breathing processes (respiratory system) such as the airwaves and lungs. However, research has demonstrated its effect on the nervous system (Mukerji and Solomon, 2021). A correlation has been established between COVID-19 disease and some mental health issues such as despair, nervousness, fear, lunacy, and disorientation. In addition, COVID-19 could either worsen previous psychological well-being issues or generate new psychiatric disorders (Giorgi et al., 2020:7875).

Wang, Pan, Wan et al. (2020:1729) explain that studies from China, conducted at the beginning phase of the Coronavirus disease, revealed that most women reported mental health symptoms such as worry, dejection, tension, distress, phobias, insomnia, and general psychiatric unwellness. Hao, Tan, Jiang et al. (2020:100) report that pre-existing bleakness and nervousness syndromes and GBV intensify in times of epidemics (Campbell, 2020: 100089). Almeida, Shrestha, Stojanac, et al. (2020:741) explain that certain epidemic-associated stressors uniquely affect women because of their procreative performance at various stages of life. For instance, women with the following reproductive conditions such as miscarriage, pregnancy, and postpartum depression had a higher propensity for developing psychological issues. Brooks, Weston, and Greenberg (2020:28) write that mental health problems can be heightened in pregnant women because of worries regarding their own general well-being in addition to the health of the foetus. This creates fear of the unknown and feelings of uncertainty regarding pregnancy and childbirth. Sedri, Zgueb, Ouanes et al. (2020:750) identify several mental health factors associated with the Coronavirus disease e.g. moodiness, helplessness, tenseness, dispiriting, nightmares, and general fear. A woman who experienced severe mental health problems narrated her nightmare,

> When I tested positive for COVID-19, I got distressed and couldn't concentrate on anything. I was in despair and concluded that I was going to die. I was moved from the isolation centre to the ICU and was helpless in the shadow of death. Fortunately, I recovered and was discharged but it took time for me to have mental-health stability. I was psychologically deranged and failed to cope with family and friends.

Banerjee (2020) argues that the global disruption caused by the epidemic created a psychological dilemma for women, rendering them vulnerable to loneliness, fear, panic, apprehension, and mass hysteria due to dysfunctional social relationships at the family and community levels. Grief for loved ones, bereavement, and isolation as a social distancing measure kept most women segregated from their loved ones and inhibited access to social support networks inevitably causing fear. Şimşir, Koç, Seki, and Griffiths (2022:515) establish a link between fear concerning the Coronavirus disease and psychiatric issues. Fear was singled out as one of the drivers of the contemporary mental health system. For example, fear of getting infected and being admitted to the intensive care unit (ICU), hospitalisation in the COVID-wards, loss of employment and income-generating activities, and fear of eventual demise (Rwafa-Ponela, Price, Nyatela et al., 2022:9217). Additionally, fear and uncertainty were heightened because of people's inability to visit family and churches during the lockdowns.

Restrictions on funeral gatherings and burial rites presented a big challenge in African society. Failure to conduct funeral ceremonies and accord proper burial rites according to African religio-cultural beliefs and practices contributed to mental health issues such as feelings of deep sadness, loss, distress, and guilt (Rwafa-Ponela, Price, Nyatela et.al., 2022:9217).

Semo and Frissa (2020:713) claim that African women's susceptibility to mental health issues was due to the following four factors. Firstly, the direct effect of the Coronavirus disease, especially near-death experiences. Secondly, stress is based on the news concerning high death rates of COVID-19 patients and the highly exposed frontline healthcare workers. Thirdly, the loss of loved ones, parents, guardians, workmates, or friends and the associated stigma and discrimination among survivors and affected families. Fourthly, uncertainty, stress, and fear, emanating from the loss of jobs and livelihoods, caused mental health problems for African women. Posel, Oyenubi, and Kollamparambil (2021: e0249352) argue that loss of employment and income-generating activities aggravated mental health issues. For instance, an estimation of approximately 2.8 million adults in South Africa lost their jobs from February to April 2020 when the lockdown was implemented. Subsequently, this loss of employment and other income-generating activities implies a reduced participation in the economic sphere; leading to raised depressive symptoms among South Africans.

10.0 Conclusion

The article has discussed the trilogy of the Coronavirus disease, religion, and health of African women. It has demonstrated how the Coronavirus disease affected the healthiness of African women and deteriorated their general well-being due to the prevailing religious-based gender inequalities in the following areas: gender disproportions, violence against women and girls, sexuality wellness for women, women's hospitality, and the psychological well-being of women. This article has highlighted that religion provides systemic and institutionalised influence that shapes gender discourses either positively or negatively in African society. Religion can be positively used as a tool for societal transformation. Hence, the religious variable should be seriously considered when dealing with the effect of pandemics such as the Coronavirus disease and other future pandemics on the general well-being of women.

The trilogy of African women's health, religion, and the COVID-19 pandemic proffers three main implications. Firstly, the urgency for initiating gender-sensitive conversations that intersect

the broader themes of African women's health, religion, and pandemics. Secondly, the inclusion of women and their various organisations in the formulation of a woman-centric pandemic response. This process should be informed by women's frontline engagement at home, work, and the community, based on their religious and social-cultural prescription of caregiving roles. In so doing, Pandemic responses will amplify the voices of womanhood and femininity and provide women agency in effectively combatting pandemics. Thirdly, pandemic responses should address the problems that prejudice women in their engagement with global care work. This entails the formulation and implementation of deliberate socio-economic policies which create pathways to African feminism and development. Thus, women's economic empowerment (WEE) has enormous potential to eradicate gender disparities and create a viable and sustainable development for all people.

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The Health Insurance Enrolment and Utilization of Maternal Healthcare Services among Women in Kenya

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Abstract

The Third Sustainable Development Goal of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) requires governments to provide good health for their populations by the year 2030. To achieve this, the Kenyan government has embarked on implementing various programmes targeting women. For instance, the government initially abolished the maternity services fee so as to enhance the utilization of maternal health care services. For efficient and effective management of the maternal healthcare services programme, the government transferred the services from the Ministry of Health to the National Hospital Insurance Fund. According to the Kenya Demographic Health Survey (KDHS) report, these policies led to an increase in enrolment in health insurance from 19.5 per cent to 26 per cent of women.

Despite the improvement in health insurance uptake, the mortality rates are still higher than seventy deaths per 100,000 live births. One of the probable causes of these mortality rates may be due to delivery at home. A woman who delivers at home may not get medical attention in case of an emergency. To improve maternal health outcomes, there is a need to investigate the relationship between enrolment in health insurance and utilization of maternal healthcare services among Kenyan women. To achieve this objective, the study uses secondary data sourced from the Kenya Integrated Household Budget Survey (KIHBS). The study estimates this relationship using the Propensity Score Matching method. The results reveal that women who have enrolled for health insurance are 3.6 per cent more likely to utilize maternal health care services than those not enrolled. The study, therefore, recommends the formulation of policies targeting the enrolment of women in health insurance schemes.

Key words: *Healthcare, Insurance, maternal service, Socio-economic characteristic.*

11.0 Introduction

Health is strongly correlated to the economic development of a country. Many countries have resorted to increased investment as a strategy to achieve socio-economic development. The road map to the economic development of a country includes the promotion of social development that covers several sectors. These sectors include health, environment, education, nutrition, and housing (Boris, Germain, Aloysius, and Edward, 2018). The implication of this is that health and health policies are important components in the economic development of a country (Boris, et al, 2018).

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Currently, health has attracted the attention of international organizations such as the United Nations. Human health is of great concern to this organization because of its contribution to the economic growth and development of a country. The importance placed on health care to the organization is manifested in its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It will be noted that out of seventeen SDGs, two put a lot of emphasis on health care. The third goal, good health and well-being aims at improving longevity and reduction in some of the common killers linked to high child mortality. This third goal also emphasizes the achievement of universal health coverage (UHC) and access to essential drugs and vaccines. The UHC is a situation where all individuals and communities get the health services they need without suffering financial adversity. This is a major component of policies guiding the provision of health care in both low and middle-income countries (World Health Organization, 2010). This third goal also seeks to end preventable deaths of newborns and children under five. The sixth goal, on clean water and sanitation, is aimed at ensuring countries reduce water-borne diseases and prevent death caused by hazardous chemicals, air and soil pollution and contamination. Moreover, the target of these SDGs is to decrease the world maternal mortality rate to seventy deaths per 100,000 live births by the year 2030 (United Nations, 2015).

To enhance maternal healthcare service utilization in developing countries, medical insurance has a role to play in ensuring that the masses can access health services without being blocked due to a lack of finances (Tang, et al, 2013). Many developing countries have embarked on implementing health reforms to improve healthcare-supporting mechanisms. These initiatives are meant to raise the utilization of healthcare services effectively (Dussault, et al, 2008).

Kenya has realized a reduction in maternal mortality rates. However, the maternal mortality rates are still high as compared to less than 70 as enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals. Figure 1 shows Kenya's mortality rate for the last two decades.
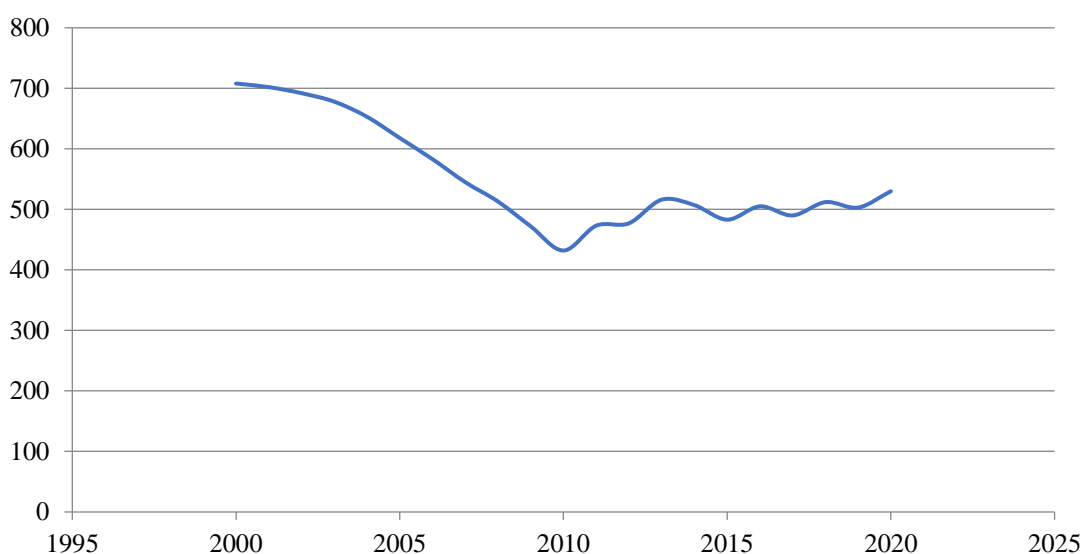
Figure 11: Kenya's maternal mortality rate for the last two decades
Source: World Bank (2022)

From Figure 1, it is observed that the maternal mortality rate (MMR) reduced to 432 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2010 from 780 deaths per 100,000 live births recorded in the year 2000. The MMR reduced to 503 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2019 from 512 per 100 0000 live births in 2018.

From 2011 to 2012, the maternal mortality rate took a positive trend though with fluctuations. However, the MMR reduced to 507 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2014 from 516 per 100,000 live births recorded in 2013. There was a further reduction to 483 in 2015. The MMR reduced to 503 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2019 from 512 per 100 0000 live births in 2018.

The mortality rate in Kenya can be linked to deliveries at home since complications arising from delivery may not be addressed adequately. According to Regassa, et al, (2022), home delivery was second highest among Kenyan women as compared to other women in Eastern Africa. The findings of this study showed that 37.5% of Kenyan women give birth at home compared to 34.7 per cent and 6.9 per cent for Tanzania and Rwanda, respectively. However, the choice for home delivery may be because of traditional beliefs in some cultural practices by pregnant women and society (Olungah, 2006). The author further indicates that women may choose to deliver at home due to the failure of the traditional society to embrace change. Traditional society views modernization as a deviation from the prescribed way of life.

To improve the health outcome in Kenya, the government has put in place various reforms. One of these reforms was the transfer of the management of free maternal healthcare services from the Ministry of Health (MoH) to a national health fund called the National Hospital Insurance Fund (NHIF). This action was aimed at improving efficiency, accountability, and effectiveness. The government further revised the programme to the 'Linda Mama' programme that extended the services beyond the public health facilities, in addition to expanding the benefits package. This involved NHIF signing contracts with private-for-profit and faith-based healthcare centres to offer delivery services (Owuor & Amolo, 2019).

The promulgation of the 2010 Kenyan Constitution led to the transfer of health services to county governments (Republic of Kenya, 2010). The county governments have put in place measures to improve the health of expectant women. For instance, Vihiga County implemented the Boresha Afya Ya Mama Na Mtoto programme aimed at supporting new mothers and infants. Kakamega County implemented the Imarisha Afya ya Mama Na Mtoto programme also aimed at supporting new mothers and infants (Development Pathways, 2019). Some counties also initiated enrolment of vulnerable people in the counties to medical insurance. For instance, the Marwa Kisumu Solidarity Health Cover, an affordable and accessible medical cover was implemented to provide health insurance to 90,000 poor households. Beneficiaries of the programme access both inpatient and outpatient care under the NHIF Supa Cover benefits package rolled out at initially forty-eight selected public health facilities that are evenly spread across the seven sub-counties of Kisumu County (International Labour Organization, 2023).

Although efforts have been made to increase health insurance uptake by Kenyan women, health insurance coverage is still low in Kenya. The Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS) of 2022 showed that 39 per cent of females in urban areas have health insurance as compared to 20 per cent of women in rural areas. The report revealed that most women had enrolled in the NHIF as compared to other forms of health insurance. The report showed that 18.9 per cent of females between the ages of 0 to 14 had enrolled in the NHIF. About 26 per cent of female Kenyans had enrolled in the NHIF. The report also showed that about 28 per cent of women above the age of 50 years had enrolled in the NHIF. The study revealed that less than five per cent of women in the three age groups had enrolled in private or commercial insurance schemes. Those who had enrolled in community-based insurance schemes were less than 1.5 per cent for each of the age groups (Republic of Kenya, 2023).

Enrolment in health insurance is meant to increase the utilization of health facilities by pregnant women during delivery. This can reduce the maternal mortality rate since complications that can affect the new mother can be addressed if she delivers in a health facility. Republic of Kenya Demographic Health Survey (2023) showed that many maternal deaths occur within 48 hours after delivery. The review of literature that is specific to Kenya shows differences in the approach and time of the studies. For example, three studies used the 2008–09 KDHS to study women and health insurance. Kimani, et al (2014) studied factors that influence the uptake of medical insurance among women in Kenya. Kitui, et al (2013) studied factors that determine the utilization of maternal healthcare services among women in Kenya. Lastly, Achia & Mageto (2015) examined the individual and community factors that influence the use of maternal prenatal healthcare services in Kenya. Were et al. (2017) investigated the relationship between health

insurance and institutional delivery among pregnant women. However, this study used the 2008-09 KDHS data before the start of the SDGs and enhanced government and county government health policies targeting childbearing women.

It is against this backdrop that this study investigated the effect of health insurance enrolment on maternal healthcare service utilization by Kenyan women using the most recent KIHBS data. The study argues that health insurance enhances not only the access to but also the utilization of health care services, thus improving maternal health. The argument is anchored on an economic theory suggesting that individuals buy health insurance to insulate themselves from high out-of-pocket expenditure. In addition, an individual buys health insurance as a way to get access to health care services that would otherwise be not affordable.

12.0 Methodology

2.1 Data and Variables

The study used cross-section data that was sourced from the 2015/16 Kenya Integrated Household Budget Survey (KIHBS) for analysis. The KIHBS is a nationwide representative survey which considered 24,000 households in their sample and collected detailed information on health and socio-demographic characteristics. The households were categorized into 5,360 clusters drawn from 96,000 enumerative areas of the 2009 Kenya Population Health Census (KPHC). The sample of women comprises 21,592 women aged between the ages of 15 and 49 years.

The final sample for analysis consists of women who reported two outcomes of this study's interest which is delivery in a health facility, that is, institutional delivery or at home. Institutional delivery takes place at a clinic, maternity home, or hospital. This implies that such a woman has access to birth specialists. According to the World Health Organization (2004), birth specialists include nurses, doctors, or trained midwives who attend to a woman during delivery. The independent variable is enrolment in a health insurance scheme (Yes/No). The 2015/16 KHIBS contains questions on one's enrolment in a health insurance scheme. However, enrolment in a medical insurance scheme is not random since people can choose whether to have health insurance or not and, at what time of the year they can enrol. Since enrolling on a health insurance scheme is not a random event, the study used selected covariates in this analysis. The covariates included marital status, age, number of children, education, household size, employment status, area of residence, exposure to media and household headship. The covariates give room for required regression modification and use of observed attributes in the construction of counterfactuals of the uptake of medical insurance based on Propensity Scores (PM).

2.2 The Empirical Model

The study could have required a counterfactual to estimate the effect of health insurance enrolment on the utilization of health care services for pregnant women, that is, how women could be, had there been no health insurance in this case. Randomization could have been the best way of achieving this counterfactual. However, enrolment in health insurance is not randomized and, therefore, this study which is observational uses non-experimental methods. First, the study estimated medical insurance enrolment and maternal healthcare services utilization by use of a logistic regression model. The study estimated the marginal effects after estimating the logistic regression model. The key concern of the study was the interpretation of the dependent variable as the probability of either having utilized maternal healthcare service or not given other explanatory variables as shown in equation 1.

We assume that there is a linear relationship between the latent variable y^* and explanatory variables (X_i). The structural model is illustrated as follows:

$$y^* = X_i\beta + \varepsilon \dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots 1$$

Where variable y^* is unobserved latent variable ranging from negative infinity ($-\infty$) to positive (∞), X_i is a vector of regressors indicated above, β is a vector of parameters for estimation and ε is error term. Also letting the following measurement equation links the latent variable y^* and the observed binary variable y:

$$y = \begin{cases} 1 & if \ y^* > k \\ 0 & if \ y^* > k \end{cases} \dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots.2$$

Where y is 1 if an individual utilized maternal healthcare service, 0 otherwise? K is the cut-off point, a critical level of the index y^* beyond which the individual utilizes maternal healthcare service.

However, since selection into health insurance is not randomized, making any empirical estimation of a causal relationship with enrolment in health insurance requires controlling for adverse selection. As a way of reducing selection on observables, the PSM method was implemented built on the conditional probability of health insurance enrolment given certain covariates. The covariates are given above. The estimation of propensity scores took advantage of the availability of the mentioned covariates in KHIBS and decreased the bias occasioned by the differences in the observed covariates thus balancing the covariates between women who have health insurance and those who do not. After applying the logistic model in the estimation of propensity scores (PS) and attaining the balance of PS between the individuals enrolled in health insurance and those not enrolled, the aim was to carry out an estimation of Average Treatment Effect denoted as ATE, that is, the effect of health insurance enrolment. ATE is obtained as a difference in the mean response for those women enrolled in health insurance and those not enrolled for the health insurance and can be written as illustrated in equation 3:

$$ATE = \sum_{i=0}^{n}(Y_{1i} - Y_{0i})) \dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots.3$$

Where n is the number of women, Y_{1i} is the outcome for those with health insurance and Y_{0i} is the outcomes for those without health insurance. However, equation 3 cannot be estimated since both Y_{1i} and Y_{0i} cannot be observed for every woman. In addition, since the study is an observational one, there is a high probability that the outcome of the study's interest, that is, the delivery in a medical institution and thus accessing services of a birth attendant depends on treatment, thus leading to a biased ATE. The study thus uses the obtained PM to estimate the causal link of health insurance uptake. Specifically, the study estimated and reported the Average Treatment Effect on Treated (ATT), that is, the average response to the treatment (health insurance uptake) for those women enrolled in medical insurance. From the ATE equation illustrated in Equation 3, the study estimated the ATT as shown in Equation 4.

$$ATT = E(Y_{1i} + Y_{10}|W, Z) = 1) \dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots.4$$

Where W is a vector of the covariates and Z is the concerned treatment, health insurance enrolment in this case. The estimation of ATT is anchored on the following assumptions (Morgan & Winship, 2007). First is that there is a stable unit treatment value assumption (SUTVA). This means that the treatment applied to one entity does not affect the outcome of any other. In other words, we mean there is no interference among pregnant women. The second assumption indicates the presence of non-zero probability in obtaining every treatment level, enrolling in health insurance in this case for the combination of the exposure values and the covariates among elements in the study population, women seeking maternity services in this case. This is called the positivity assumption. This assumption is made when each of the homogeneous elements can be subjected to treatment (enrolment in health insurance) or the control group (the uninsured women). The last assumption is that the treatment assignment mechanism is said to be unconfounded if the treatment

status T_i is conditionally independent of the potential outcomes, given a set of covariates X_i. This is represented as illustrated in equation 5.

$$T_i || Y_{0i}, Y_{1i} | X_i \dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots 5$$

These assumptions made it possible for the construction of the matched health insurance samples. This was built on a balancing score, that is, the PS (Rosenbaum & Rubin, 1983) and the estimation of the relationship of enrolling in a medical insurance scheme by kernel, stratification, and the nearest neighbour matching. Inverse probability weighting (IPW) was also conducted since this was an observational cross-sectional study with one treatment variable (Bender and Lange, 2001).

13.0   Results

3.1 Summary Statistics

The socio-demographic characteristics of the individuals who are enrolled in the health insurance and those not enrolled are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary Statistics

Variable	Overall Sample N = 21,598	Enrolment in Health Insurance N = 3,875	Not enrolled in Health Insurance N = 17,703
Age	28.21	30.02	27.82
Household head	0.21	0.23	0.19
Place of residence	0.39	0.37	0.38
Income	6799.19	6874.59	6780.80
Exposure to media	0.26	0.27	0.26
The Household Size	4	4	4
Number of children	1	1	1
Marital Status	0.55	0.68	0.54
Primary Education	0.37	0.36	0.37
Secondary education	0.16	0.26	0.13
Tertiary Education	0.061	0.181	0.035
Postgraduate Education	0.0010	0.0046	0.00023

Source 1: Computations of the author based on data from KNBS data

From Table 1 it is evident that on average, the women who have enrolled for health insurance are older than those who have not enrolled. Such a situation is correct because it is expected that those who are older could have finished their education and, therefore, have embarked on having a family. This, therefore, implies that most of the older ones will enrol for health insurance to access maternity services with ease.

The results also revealed that on average, families headed by a male parent have a higher probability of enrolling for health insurance as compared to female-headed families. This finding may be conforming to actual life situations because men are likely to be working and, therefore, are enrolled in health insurance by their employers. The rest of the family members are then covered by the health insurance as beneficiaries.

In addition, the results revealed that on average, families that are exposed to media, especially through having a television set, have a higher probability of enrolling for health insurance as compared to those that are not exposed to media. This finding supports the fact that those families that are exposed to media may access sensitization sessions about health insurance. They may also watch advertisements of various health insurance products thus making them a health insurance cover.

Further, it was revealed that on average, a woman who is married has a higher probability of enrolling for health insurance as compared to one who is not married. This finding supports the fact that the married may pool their income together and, therefore, will have a surplus to enrol for health insurance than those not married.

The results also revealed that on average, a woman who resides in a rural area has a higher probability of enrolling for health insurance as compared to one who resides in urban areas. This finding supports the fact that the many national government and county government health initiatives to cushion poor women are highly concentrated in rural areas. A good example of such programmes is the Universal Health Coverage by the National government that considered the rural counties Nyeri, Isiolo and Machakos in the pilot stage.

3.2 Empirical Results

Table 2 shows the results for marginal effects from the logistic regression model. Women who have primary-level education, secondary education, and tertiary

Table 2: Marginal effects Results from the logistic regression model in Equation 1

VARIABLES	MARGINAL EFFECTS	
Health Insurance	0.486***	(0.087)
Age	0.009***	(0.003)
Household Head	-0.006	(0.065)
Area of Residence	0.085	(0.069)
Income	0.007	(0.036)
Exposure to Media	-0.012	(0.094)
Household size	-0.000	(0.014)
Number of children	-0.108***	(0.021)
Marital Status	-0.300***	(0.074)
Primary Education	0.836***	(0.065)
Secondary Education	0.659***	(0.091)
Tertiary Education	0.645***	(0.131)
Postgraduate Education	0.162	(0.751)
Constant	1.626***	(0.343)
Observations	14,545	
Standard errors in parentheses *** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$		

Source 2: Computations of the author based on data from KNBS data

The marginal effects results shown in Table 2 indicated that having a medical insurance scheme is linked to an increased likelihood of using maternal healthcare services. For example, in the logistic model, women with health insurance are 48.6 percentage points more likely to use maternal healthcare services thus having access to skilled birth attendants. The coefficient is statistically significant at a 1 percent level of significance. This implies that health insurance is an important determinant of the utilization of maternal healthcare services.

The results indicated that being older is associated with an increased likelihood of using maternal healthcare services. Specifically, older women are 0.9 percentage points more likely to utilize maternal healthcare services. The coefficient of age is statistically different from zero, an implication that age is a key determinant of utilizing maternal health care services.

From the results, it was revealed that a high number of children is associated with a reduced probability of using maternal healthcare services. Specifically, it was revealed that women with more children are 10.8 percentage points less likely to consider using maternal healthcare services. education have a higher probability of utilizing maternal health care services. The probability of using maternal health care services by women increases by 83.6 per cent, 65.9 per cent and 64.5 per cent when a woman has primary, secondary and tertiary education, respectively.

The study used the explanatory variables to estimate the propensity scores. The results from these propensity scores were obtained are shown in Table 3.

Таблица 3: Results for generating the Propensity Scores

VARIABLES	MARGINAL EFFECTS	
Age	0.022***	(0.002)
Household Head	0.096***	(0.032)
Area of Residence	-0.049	(0.035)
Income	0.035*	(0.018)
Exposure to Media	0.012	(0.045)
Household Size	0.017***	(0.007)
Children	-0.081***	(0.011)
Marital Status	0.522***	(0.037)
Primary Education	0.488***	(0.031)
Secondary Education	1.005***	(0.037)
Tertiary Education	1.545***	(0.046)
Postgraduate Education	2.266***	(0.342)
Constant	-2.825***	(0.185)
Observations	14,542	
Standard errors in parentheses *** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$		

Source 3: Computations of the author based on data from KNBS data

From Table 3, it was established that the results that were used to estimate the propensity scores conformed with economic theory. Older women, those from households that are headed by male individuals, those with higher incomes, women with many children and women who are in marriage have a higher probability of utilizing maternal health services. The study further revealed that educated women, especially those with primary, secondary, tertiary, and postgraduate education have a higher chance of utilizing maternal healthcare services. However, it was revealed that women from urban settlements and those who have many children have a lower probability of utilizing maternal healthcare services.

The propensity scores were obtained, and the study was used to estimate the causal relationship of enrolling in health insurance. Specifically, the study estimated the 'Average Treatment Effect on the Treated' (ATT) with the Nearest Neighbour Matching method. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Average Treatment Effect on the Treated (ATT) with Nearest Neighbour Matching Method Results

Number of Treatment	Number of control individuals	ATT	Standard Error	t
2734	3014	0.036	0.008	4.248

Source 4: Computations of the author based on data from KNBS data

The results revealed that individuals who have enrolled for health insurance have a 3.6 percentage points possibility of using maternal healthcare services. As it is evident, the t value is greater than 2 implying that there are significant differences between women who have enrolled for health insurance and those who have not been utilizing maternal health care services. This finding conforms to the economic theory. The results are also in agreement with the Were et al. (2017)

study on the effect of health insurance on maternal healthcare utilization using Demographic Health Survey data and propensity score matching. However, their study looked at three countries with high levels of insurance coverage (Ghana, Indonesia, and Rwanda) unlike Kenya. The positive link between health insurance enrolment and utilization of maternal health services in this study complements the study by Were et al. (2017). As such, this study adds to the literature by showing that insurance is important and beneficial for maternal health outcomes. The study also highlights the value of health insurance in countries that have low health insurance enrolment rates, particularly among those of lower socio-economic status like Kenya. These findings are, therefore, important in informing reforms to be taken on healthcare financing in Kenya and beyond.

The results have suggested that access to insurance increases the chances of a woman using maternal healthcare services. These results, therefore, recommend that policy formulators should focus on putting many women under health insurance coverage.

14.0 Conclusion

Enrolment in health insurance by a pregnant woman makes her deliver at a health facility. This is unlike a pregnant woman who is not enrolled for health insurance. It is important to note that enrolment in health insurance has great benefits for pregnant women of lower socio-economic status in Kenya. The findings illustrate that healthcare financing reforms should be instituted not only in Kenya but also in other developing countries with similar settings. Specifically, health insurance enrolment programmes should be implemented to target pregnant women, particularly those of lower socioeconomic status.

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Is The Participation of Women Smallholder Farmers in a Food Production Program The Panacea to Household Food Security?

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Abstract

The quest to ensure food security at the household level in rural Africa continues to attract attention through robust research under the ambit of sustainable development goals. With the increasing subdivision of agricultural land, the smallholder farmers, many of whom are women, are now at the centre of the food production ecosystem. Thus, women's participation aimed at meeting family food needs can no longer be ignored. In response to this, this study set out to examine a specific strategy of prioritizing women household heads (WHHs) in the Bungoma County Farm Input Support Program (FISP). The study adopted a descriptive design guided by a theoretical perspective premised on a participatory framework. Data was obtained from 464 respondents including 450 beneficiaries whose responses gathered quantitative data while 8 key informants and 6 Focus Group Discussion (FGD) responses gathered

qualitative data. Systematic random sampling was used to select respondents, while purposive sampling was used to identify FGD members and key informants. The data were obtained using an interview schedule, FGD and Key Informant Interview (KII). Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics while qualitative data, by content analysis. The findings indicate that women's participation in the program has a positive impact on food production at the household level and that middle-aged women tend to be more productive. Furthermore, women beneficiaries used their involvement in the program to improve their social relationships more than men did. The study concludes that women's participation in an agriculture program increases the yield per household, thereby enhancing food security. The study recommends an increase in the number of women among the beneficiaries and, to provide psychosocial support through capacity building.

Key words: *Food Production, Food Security, Social Relations, Women Smallholder Farmers.*

15.0   Introduction

The Bungoma County Farm Input Support Program (FISP) is a community food security and empowerment program aiming to improve food production and build individual capacity in vulnerable households. The program was conceived and implemented by the county government

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under the devolution framework as espoused in Kenya's Constitution (GOK, 2010). Elements within the Constitution support the principles of FISP, namely, the use of participatory approaches in development and inclusivity, specifically targeting women and other vulnerable groups. Further, to ensure a grassroots reach and impact, the FISP is implemented at the ward level which is considered the most basic unit of electoral administration of the county government. This is because citizens who are residents in the ward live as one community and encounter similar challenges, including inadequate food production and consumption which affects food security. Thus, it is a pro-poor hunger safety net program through which resource-poor farmers are provided with fertilizers and certified seed subsidies. Additionally, it seeks to address the problem of food security and poverty by improving access to affordable key productive inputs for smallholder farmers, particularly the resource-poor ones, who in most cases are women (Singh, 2014; Shetty, 2015).

The policy framework for this program is designed in tandem with article 43(c) of Kenya's Constitution (GOK, 2010) stating that every person has the right to be free from hunger and to have food of acceptable quality. Similarly, it is designed to interface with the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) (GOK, 2018) of Bungoma County. The subsidy component is a one-off support envisaging a benefit to farmers in terms of accessing their own inputs after the crop cycle is complete. Farmers are then expected to graduate to the next category of self-supporting farmers, participate in commercial agriculture production, share good practices with their neighbours and ultimately contribute to food security within their communities.

16.0 Methodology

Most of the world's agricultural production takes place on small farms. Currently, 90% of the 570 million farms globally are small (less than two hectares) and being cultivated by 1.5 billion of the world's poor. In Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) where the problem of hunger and poverty is most severe, 80% of the food supply comes from smallholders. Thus, assuring the viability of smallholders in food production in any country is crucial in meeting their food security agenda (FAO, 2023; Tadesse & Greene, 2020). In Vietnam there are success stories in which smallholder farmers are the backbone of a revolution in agriculture, giving hope to developing countries by indicating the need to invest in smallholders. When supported, smallholder farmers, especially women, build their capacities for food production (Onyalo, 2019; Salami, Kamari & Brixiera, 2012). As such, in Vietnam, it took less than three decades for the country to begin exporting rice. Yet previously, it had been a net importer of the commodity. Similarly, in Malawi from 2006 to 2007 the investment in smallholders increased the amount of maize produced nationally. The Malawi program had targeted two million smallholder farm households who were supported to access seeds and fertilizers at a subsidized price. From the above cases, it can be observed that the development of smallholder agriculture is central to the structural transformation process in developing countries (FAO, 2023; Carlos, 2017). Growth in agricultural productivity at the grassroots can lead to surplus creation, leading to smallholder farmers participating in market supply. This, in itself, raises household-level income and has other welfare gains. These additional welfare gains congregate around women through agriculture as a practice which is central to their livelihoods, especially in Africa (Shetty, 2015; Singh, 2014). Any stress to an agricultural system such as policies, human conflict, or climate change, makes women exposed to food scarcity and will reduce their contribution to the world's agricultural output (FAO, 2023; Andrews, 2021 and Nyanuga & Mbugua, 2016).

As argued by Nyondo et al (2023) and Mwei (2016), participation in agriculture programs is a fundamental approach to empowering populations so that they, in time, become capable of meeting their own food needs as well as generating income from surplus produce. Currently, smallholder farmers are no longer viewed as recipients of development programs. Instead, they have become significant stakeholders and relevant participants in implementing and managing agriculture programs. A notable interest in the uptake of farming programs has been shown by several scholars and discussed within sociological paradigms focused on women as a subject, their

advantage of supporting nutrition, including their cultural statuses, ultimately depicting women as having agency and interest in the improvement of their visibility in private and public spaces and decision-making capabilities (Anangwe, 2015; Croppenstedt *et al*, 2013). Subsequently, supporting smallholder farmers in food security programs is a major strategy in community development globally. Considering that the participation of women in food production activities has traditionally been limited to land preparation activities such as hoeing, harvesting, transportation of the produce from the farms, and threshing, it is of great value to encounter a shift in women's engagement in more lucrative farming activities (Desalegn & Mideksa, 2020; Mbwana et al, 2019). Additionally, women tend to support water and soil conservation, domestication of animals and afforestation when given more value addition activities requiring decision-making (FAO, 2023; World Bank, 2020). Even if women's roles in agriculture vary widely by age, social relation, race/ethnicity, religion and region, their rate of participation in (Sub-Saharan Africa) SSA is the highest in the world. Similarly, in support of government policies such as Kenya's Vision 2030 and the Big Four Agenda, it is imperative to engage smallholder women farmers in any agricultural program. However, engaging women farmers in agricultural program implementation can be a challenge due to the myriad of barriers they face by virtue of their gender and social status. As such women participants must be patient, focused and energetic (Leddy et al, 2020; Pék, Fertő & Alobid, 2019).

In academic discourse, food security and agricultural activities can be categorized by gender to enable analysis of women's dynamic roles along the agriculture chain and from 'farm to fork'. This is because their key functions in production, processing and food marketing cannot be underscored (Leddy et al 2020; Asiedu et al, 2013). On the home front African women are responsible for nutrition and play decisive roles in family dietary diversity. Further, they are knowledgeable in vegetative propagation and seed selection which is important in family food security (Anangwe, 2015). Additionally, women are involved in animal domestication and plant production (Westholm and Madelene, 2019). According to Nyangara and Ogutu (2021), women comprise 40% of the total agricultural labour force across the globe, in SSA women make 50% in the food production chain.

The CIDP of Bungoma County (GOK, 2018), identifies higher gender gaps that disadvantage women in the access and control of resources within the county agricultural sector. Observations have been made in land, labour, information and technology, credit and infrastructure as used in the production of food. It is argued that the main cause is institutional and norm-based constraints that women in the western Kenya communities face where patriarchy is practised. Perhaps most debilitating and directly related to agriculture is that women do not own land (GOK, 2018). Agreeing, Adepoju et al (2020) and Farid et al (2009) observe that the underperformance of the agriculture sector in Africa is in part due to the difference observed in access to resources by women who are critical in the production and management of household food. Agreeing further, Amwata (2020) and Onyalo (2019) affirm that fewer women than men are involved in the profitable aspect of agriculture, despite providing more labour to the sector. Therefore, removing gender-based discrimination in social structures and processes, as well as in legal frameworks, and replacing these with gender-sensitive programs and policies that give women a greater voice in decision-making processes is a necessary step in mainstreaming food security.

In the recent past food security has posed a serious challenge in Kenya and in many countries in Africa. Food security exists when,

"All the people at all times have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dieters needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (Mungai et al, 2020; World Bank, 2020).

As per the above definition, World Bank (2009) argues that women's role in the three main food security components: production, distribution and utilization is pivotal. According to a Food Security Information Network Report in relation to the global food crisis (FSIN, 2017), the international food shortage rose in 2016 to 18,000,000 people from 8,000,000 people in 2015. The report posits that unless governments introduce friendly policies towards smallholder farmers to encourage food production, it foresees more people around the globe staring at food shortages. At the Conference of the Parties (COP22) meeting held in Egypt (Agri-links, 2022), the participants related the global climate crisis as also being a food security crisis. The Conference observed that in the last 60 years climate change has reduced agricultural productivity growth by an average of 21% and up to 40% in some regions, with the impact predicted to accelerate in the coming decades. Because of this, agriculture and food systems are gaining increasing attention in the international climate settings, and it is planned to be a theme in the anticipated COP27 since policymakers are recognizing the role smallholder farmers can play in both mitigating and adapting to climate crises as they meet their food needs. In relation to Kenyan agriculture, Amwata (2020) observes that for some time, Kenya's goal has been self-sufficiency in food supply, but this goal has remained unmet. As emphasized through various government documents, food and nutrition security are major issues of concern in Kenya as reflected in Vision 2030, the Big Four Agenda, the sustainable development goals (SDG) and the Agriculture Sector Development Goals (ASDG). The Bungoma County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) 2018-2022 (GOK, 2018), shows that the county has supported projects in the departments of livestock, agriculture, and fisheries intending to improve rural livelihood and establish food security among populations.

17.0   Problem Statement

In most African families, besides their other domestic chores, women are known to carry the burden of working long hours on farms to meet family food needs. However, the asymmetries in accessing and owning production assets such as credit, knowledge, farm inputs and land constrain women of all ages and status in the community and reduce their contribution to the production of food overall (Kelkar, 2014; Kameri-Mbote, 2013). The CIDP of Bungoma County (GOK, 2018), reveals that 70 percent of labour in the agriculture sector is provided by women, yet they have less than 35 percent of land ownership in the county. This imbalance in land use and accessibility not only heightens women's vulnerability in their households but also reduces their direct contributions to the overall food production. Whereas men play a crucial role in the production of food, it is notable that they face fewer constraints as compared to women (Nyangara & Ogutu, 2021). This is because men are more likely to access farm resources such as land, engage in extension services and credit, and in case of crop failure, they can easily leave their farms and families to search for employment to reduce deficits. Women do not have this alternative. A large amount of literature shows that many countries in Africa are observing an increase of female participants in the agricultural labour force, which can be associated with external exposure such as media, education, and migration.

Globally, it is smallholder farmers who are most highly involved in food production. Yet despite their high involvement, in the lower income countries, where more women make up smallholder farmers, they fare dismally due to the rapid growth of populations and therefore, food remains in high demand. Unfortunately, very rarely do women get encouraged towards farming activity for the economic development of the community as such societal transformation appears very slow and youthful populations seem to be shunning the activity because support for women smallholder farmers seems scarce. In this study, the implementation and success of FISP in Bungoma is premised on the reduction of stumbling blocks to women's empowerment. One tangible way to facilitate women is by providing structural and financial support to women in vulnerable households without emphasizing prerequisites such as land ownership, accessibility, or credit facilities. Thus, enabling women-headed households can be a game-changer in improving family food production. Hence, there is a need to examine the CIDP program approach of prioritizing

women heads of households to find out whether food security can be achieved significantly with several additional intended outcomes.

18.0   Methodology

The study was carried out in Bungoma County, Kenya in the central sub-county region which was purposively selected. The study used an ex-post group design. In this case, the study focused on both men and women who had been involved in food production through a stimulated program supported by the county government herein referred to as FISP. The design incorporated both quantitative and qualitative methods to collect data from farmers, key informants and FGDs. The mixed method was preferred because of its advantage of providing a wider scope for analysis. The interview schedule was administered to key informants while the FGDs were useful in gathering and exploring in-depth social insights (Frankfort-Nachmias et al, 2019)

4.1 Sampling

The study adopted a probability sampling technique giving every member of the population an equal chance to participate in the study. A representative sample was sought. Purposive sampling was used to select one out of nine Key Informants (KI) and FGD while systematic random sampling was preferred in selecting two administrative wards. Systematic random sampling was used to select beneficiary farmers for the study. All key informants and focus group discussion respondents were selected through purposive sampling. In total, the study sampled 450 beneficiaries as primary data respondents, 8 key informants and 10 FGD respondents (five per group), thus making a total of 468 respondents in the study ($2n = Z^2pq/d^2$ where n is the sample size, z is the standard confidence level, p is the population size, q=1-p and d is level of statistical significance)

19.0   Results Presentation and Discussion

The gender representation among beneficiaries is depicted in Table 1, showing that although respondents were picked randomly for interviews, 58.9% were female and 41.1% were male.

Table 5: Gender Distribution of Beneficiaries

		Frequency	**Percent**
Valid	Male	185	41.1
	Female	265	58.9
	Total	**450**	**100.0**

Source 5: Field Data (2023)

The interviews from the KIs and FGDs revealed the study program targets more women than men, showing concern for food needs and food production. The following are some of the responses sampled.

The response of the Ward Administrator (WA1) who oversees the program at the ward level, was:

"…*on our lists we have more women than men because our men prefer sending women for public participation meetings, we then end capturing their names as beneficiaries since you can't be a beneficiary if you are not in the Baraza (public participation forum) for identification*".

On finding out why men sent their wives for the public participation meetings, a farmer in one FGD responded,

> *"Men in our community fear being seen in public taking free farm inputs…. They will be laughed at by other men. They face public ridicule in social places..."*

Another Ward Administrator (WA2) added.

> *"…Some men are ashamed to pick the supply because if they are widowers, they most likely have abandoned their late wife's family and are married to another lady, so they wouldn't want to be seen as widowers and yet the program design Favors widows and widowers. "… in case they enrol and are given the support they will most likely want to give to their newest family and that may cause conflict between his new family and the latter's children…"*

The study considered gender differences in food production among households before and after joining the program. Table 2 shows that most families had an increase of six to nine bags of maize in the season they were on the program. Whereas this observation was obtained, women (67.5%) had the highest percentage when compared to men (49.2%). The concentration of WHH in this bracket as compared to the male-headed households (MHHs) is an indicator that focusing on improving food production and utilizing all the advantages of the program, including extension services bears fruit. Men have higher productivity in the brackets of 10-13 bags and >13 bags, which can be explained in terms of a gendered advantage. Men traditionally can spend more time on the farm while women have to divide their time on the farm with housekeeping and caring chores.

Table 1: Showing Increase in Food Production by Gender

Increase in the amount (bags of 90kg)	Female	Percent	Male	Percent
<2	5	1.9	3	1.6
2-5	64	24.1	29	15.6
6-9	179	67.5	91	49.2
10-13	16	6.1	51	27.6
>13	1	0.4	11	6.0
Total	**265**	**100.0**	**185**	**100.0**

Source 6: Field Data (2023)

The study went further into gendered differences in food production. Outcomes are as indicated in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 2: Showing Correlation Coefficient Test of Gender by Food Production

Correlation test	Value	Standard Error	Approximate t-value	P-value
Pearson's (R)	-281	.044	-6.202	.000
Spearman (Rho)	-275	.046	-6.062	.000
N Value of Cases	**450**			

Based on Pearson's (R) and Spearman (Rho) correlation coefficients, the study used cross-tabulation to indicate if there is a significant relationship between gender and food production in the program. The null hypothesis was that there was no relationship between gender and food production. With df of 2 and P value as greater than 005 the R value was -281 and the Rho value was -275 as revealed in Table 3 above. The P value for both correlations being less than .005 all point to the evidence of a significant relationship between gender and food production in the FISP program. Hence rejecting the null hypothesis.

Table 3: Showing Mann Whitney U Test Relationship of Food Production and Gender

Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann Whitney U
Male	185	263.11	48674.50	17555.500
Female	265	199.25	52800.50	
Total		**450**		**P-value =.000**

Based on Mann-Whitney U testing from Table 4, the P-value is .000 which is less than 0.05, thus, rejecting the null hypothesis again. We, therefore, conclude that there is a significant difference in food production when men and women are considered. Based on the above sum of ranks, women (52800.5) are producing more compared to men (48674.5). Hence giving a correlation value U of 17555.500. This shows that the women in the program have a higher capacity to produce more food when participating in the program than men.

Data from beneficiary interviews revealed that more women are participating in this program than men. The reason for this is women's receptiveness to new ideas:

> *"... during the popularization of this program done by village elders and chief's barazas, women are patient, follow meetings to the end than men...."*

The findings revealed that indeed more women are participating in the program than men at 58.9 percent. Thus, more women are being exposed to more opportunities in food production. Similarly, food produced by women per household is more common among women-headed households when compared to their male counterparts. This observation concurs with the findings by Nyanuga & Mbugua (2016) in a study conducted in the Kiambaa constituency of Kiambu County where they observed that women were preferred in a food security program and therefore, women need to be involved in the program's success. In fact, other findings by Khan & Bibi (2011) concur by arguing that if women are left out of projects, then the chances of a program succeeding decrease. The argument is that most projects worsen in performance scores when there is gender imbalance and subsequently women become victims of isolation. Shore (2005) and Amwata (2020) postulate that the participation of women affects program strategy, corporate culture, group commitment and program culture positively, thus driving the program to success.

The study also sought to evaluate the effect of age. The purpose was to relate member characteristics necessary for successful program implementation. Findings revealed that respondents who were household heads were 31 to 60 years old with the modal age bracket as 41-50 years at 33.8%, followed by 51-60years at 28.0% and 31-40 years at 20.7%, all totalling 82.5% indicated in Table 5. The mean age of respondents based on these statistics was 48 years. This implied that the respondents were mature and able to take instructions and responsible decision-makers. Given the age range, this program correctly meets its targets and meets the needs of the beneficiaries.

Table 4: Age of Respondents

Age brackets	Frequency	Percent
21-30 Years	7	1.8
31-40 Years	41	20.7
41-50 Years	96	33.8
51-60 Years	71	28.0
Above 60 Years	40	15.8
Total	**265**	**100.0**

Source 7: Field Data (2023)

The study measured if there is an association between food production and women's age as shown in Tables 6 and 7.

Table 5: Correlation Coefficient Tests Showing Relations Between Women's age and Food Production

Correlation Test	Value	Standard error	Approximate t-value	Approximate significance
Pearson's R	.775	.023	19.876	.000
Spearman Rho	.757	.025	18.812	.000
N of valid cases	**265**			

As per the correlation coefficients tests in Table 6, p=.000 which is lower than p=.05 indicates a relationship between age and food production. The R value of .775 and Rho value of .757 support that there is a strong relationship between age of the female beneficiaries and food production.

	Value	Df	Significance level
Pearson Chi-square	451.649	16	.000
Likelihood ratio	286.520	16	.000
Linear-by-linear association	58.436	1	.000
N of Valid cases	**265**		

The Chi-square test in Table 7 revealed that there is an association between the age of female respondents and the production of food in the program. First with a P value of .000, there is a relationship between the variables and with a chi-square value of 451.649 that food production is associated with the age of a participant. The linear-by-linear association of 58.436 shows that as one's age increases, there is a greater likelihood of producing more from the cultivated land under the program (likelihood ratio 286.520). Based on the above, program planners can be advised to consider age as a factor in the recruitment of women beneficiaries.

When planning agricultural programs, certain parameters need to be considered, among them marital status, age, and household size. FAO (2023); World Bank (2020) and Ribot et al (2019) posit that it is important to understand the unique needs and challenges of women. They often face discrimination due to their marital status, limited access to resources, and lack of control over land and assets by age. Widows with married sons, share ancestral land without the sons considering their mothers as equal beneficiaries.

In all, this program was designed to address the aforementioned challenges and directly support women to achieve their farm goals. The program is cognizant that social and cultural factors influence women's participation in farming activities. In many African communities, women do not have the same opportunities as men to access education, training, and resources. In this program, these factors were considered during recruitment to support women to overcome the barriers that they may face. Similarly, even though we live in the 21st century, women still tend to have limited access to information and technologies, which affects their ability to make informed decisions about their farming activities (Ribot et al, 2019; Nyanuga & Mbugua, 2016).

As argued by Andrews (2021) and Cadzow and Binns (2016), there are advantages to having women in a food support program since they include increased diversity, better representation, improved efficiency, women empowerment, and increased impact. Having more women involved in a farm input support program brings diversity into perspective, experiences, and skills. It led to more innovative solutions and better decision-making. Women are often underrepresented in the agriculture sector and having more women participating in an FISP helps to address the imbalances.

Studies have shown that women farmers often have higher rates of adoption of new technologies and practices than their male counterparts. Embracing good practices from the West could lead to improved efficiency and productivity on farms. On empowerment, FAO (2023); Amwata (2020) and Njobe and Kaaria (2015) posit that providing women with opportunities to participate in FISP helps to empower them and improve their socioeconomic status.

This leads to greater gender equality and social development in farming communities. In relation to increased impact, Njobe and Kaaria (2015) and Anangwe, 2015 observe that engaging more women in agriculture support programs increases program impact. This is because women often play a critical role in food production and household nutrition and supporting them will have a multiplier effect on their families and communities. Tadesse and Greene (2020) and FAO (2020), point out that women are often the primary caretakers of natural resources such as land, water, and forests, therefore, providing them with access to FISP can help them adopt sustainable agricultural practices, leading to environmental conservation and preservation. Notably, as women are often excluded from formal economic opportunities, providing them with access to farm input support programs can increase their income and contribute to economic development in their communities (Andrews, 2021).

The study examined how social relations serve both men and women in the program. Did program activities assist members in improving their social relations? The study measured this variable using the ability of beneficiaries to seek assistance from other beneficiaries and extension staff. As revealed in Figure 1, 37.0% of women beneficiaries requested assistance compared to 19.0% of men. From the societal perspective, women are perceived as weak, needing to be supported for the accomplishment of major tasks, giving them a head start in an informal forum. In this study seeking assistance or accepting help was based on one's association with their neighbourhood. Thus, improving their social relation and increasing their social capital increased their chances of assistance (Tadesse & Greene, 2020; Ribot *et al,* 2019). Unlike women, men resist requesting assistance which affects their ability to develop a better social relation as revealed in Figure 1.

	Female	Percent	Male	Percent
Yes	98	37	35	19
No	167	63	150	81
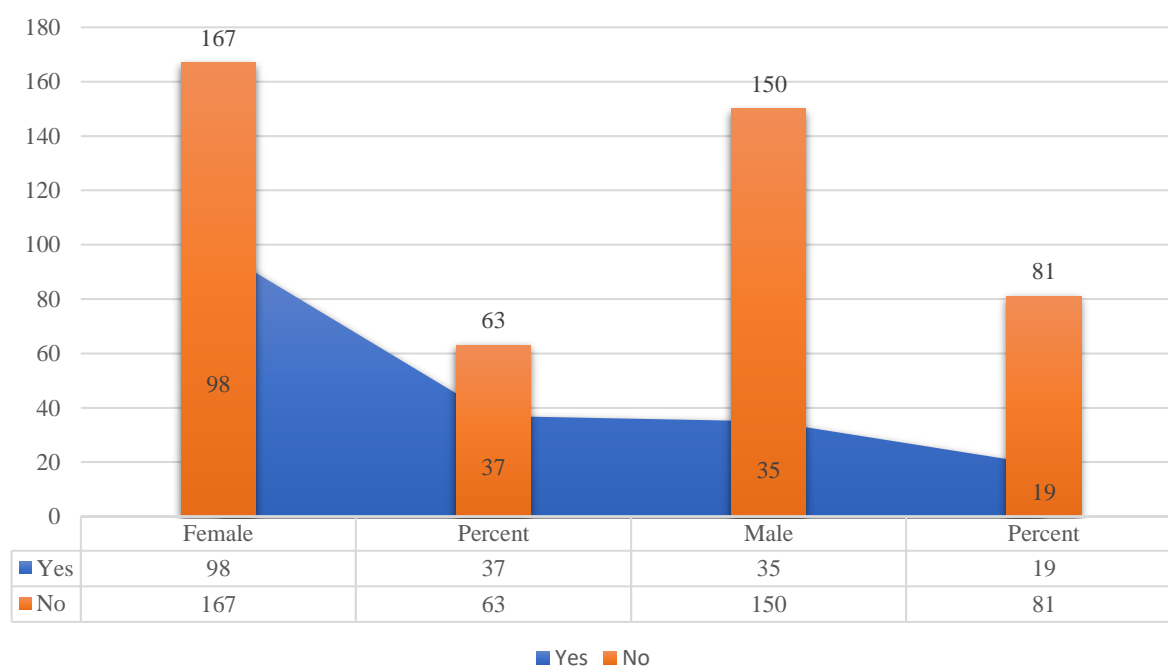
Figure 1: Assistance at any level of production by other program

The hypothesis in this section was that there is no relationship between being on the program as male or female and one's social relations. The study assumed asking for assistance is a way of building social capital and as a result improving self-social relations.

As revealed in Table 9, the P-value of .000 is below .05 value, implying that there is a significant relationship leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Using the test statistics in the table, there is a strong association between being on the program and developing social relations for both genders as revealed in the Mann-Whitney test =20085.00, Wilcoxon test=55330.00 and Z test= -4.127.

Table 6: Test Statistics

Test	Assistance
Mann-Whitney U	20085.000
Wilcoxon	55330.000
Z	-4.127
P-value	.000

From the above findings, the Mann-Whitney and Wilcoxon tests affirm that women play a significant role in shaping social relationships when active in FISPs. FAO (2023) & Andrews (2021) view these programs as being designed to provide women farmers with the necessary inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides to enhance agricultural productivity and improve food security. Additionally, women's involvement in these programs has a significant impact on social relationships, both within their households and in their communities. Firstly, women's involvement in FISP improves their social status within their households. Women who participate in these programs are often given more decision-making power regarding crop management and household finances, which leads to greater respect and recognition from their male counterparts. This also leads to improved communication and collaboration within the household, resulting in better family relationships. Since women are often the primary caregivers in their households, they are more likely to participate in and benefit from social networks formed through agricultural programs. Nyanuga and Mbugua (2016) & Ibnouf (2009) conclude that such networks may assist young mothers' access to pool babysitting that freeing their time for farming activities. Unlike men, women are often more willing to share knowledge and resources, which can lead to increased productivity and profitability. Equally, Andrews (2021) & Gomez et al (2020) identify women's participation as key to challenging gender norms and promoting gender equality within households and communities.

20.0 Conclusion

The increase in women headed households has necessitated the need for women to be targeted in household food security programs. It has been proposed that the involvement of more women in a farm input support program would be the solution to household food security. Based on the discussions, women's ability to multitask and concentrate on their goals gives them an advantage in carrying out their house chores while at the same time putting maximum effort into farming activities. Since women are more patient than men in following program procedures, this attribute works to their advantage. The study concludes that middle-aged women are more devoted to agricultural practice. The study concludes that women's caring ability advantages them towards creating good relationships with stakeholders and neighbours in the agriculture sector and in boosting the farm produce. More involvement with extension staff and neighbours adds to women's capacity.

Lastly, whereas the agricultural food production programs have traditionally been dominated by men, the decreasing size of land for household food production is pointing to a paradigm shift where more women are now involved as smallholders in food production. Women are most affected and distracted when families suffer from a lack of sufficient food for the family thus, they give household food needs a priority and are more likely to produce and preserve the crop for household use.

21.0 Recommendations

Whereas this program provides women beneficiaries with certified seeds and fertilizers, there is a need for access to additional resources such as pesticides and credit. Providing women with these resources will help them improve their farm management and hence boost productivity. Training is recommended since many women in SSA are illiterate and use wasteful traditional farming methods. Training in modern farming techniques helps in improving yields and the woman's self-

esteem. Whereas training is envisioned to take place during the public participation day of beneficiaries' selection, this aspect is not emphasized. Therefore, the study recommends the program schedule another day for training on best practices, new technologies and market trends to help women farmers improve their productivity. Also, partnering with local organizations, government agencies and other stakeholders through capacity building can help to increase the effectiveness of the program and ensure that women farmers receive the support they need. It is important to encourage women to form groups and work together for mutual benefits. Groups enable women to overcome low self-esteem, poor social relations, and low capability. Lastly, involving more women in decision-making at committee levels is good for the program's sustainability and efficiency. Women's perspectives and experiences can bring valuable insights into the programs. Involving women in decision-making processes, therefore, ensures that their needs and priorities are considered.

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Climate Smart Agriculture Policy Interventions for Inclusive and Sustainable Development

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Abstract

Climate change poses significant challenges to Kenya, impacting its agricultural sector through erratic weather patterns, including prolonged droughts and increased flooding. Climate Smart Agriculture has emerged as a strategy for adaptation and promotion of environmental sustainability and sustainable development. The Climate Change Act, 2016, National Climate Change Action Plan 2018–2022, and National Climate Change Framework Policy Sessional Article No. 3 of 2016 are among the policies Kenya's government has put in place to lessen the effects of climate change and encourage economic empowerment. Kenya's government is implementing the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to advance food security and social inclusion in equitable transition processes. In this article, climate change governance, as outlined in the policies, is evaluated. The article also examines whether gender-based inequality is promoted through policy shortcomings and roadblocks.

The article applied desk research, examining available literature, database analysis, and policy article reviews. The study assesses how these policies have affected gender parity in climate-smart agriculture. The results show that, while climate change legislation has supported resilience and a green economy, knowledge of gender-based inequality has not been raised. Since the policies do not support equal opportunities for men and women, climate-smart agriculture has contributed to increased gender-based inequities. The policies strongly emphasize climate-smart agriculture and enhance standards and productivity levels. However, they are insensitive to gender prejudices, and there are no provisions to enhance the working conditions for female labourers who provide their services for planting and harvesting. The study recommends fast-tracking implementation with effective monitoring and evaluation tools. In conclusion, climate change policies should target all actors to build sustainable development and adequate food security.

Key words: *climate-smart agriculture, gender parity, just transition, social inclusion, sustainable development.*

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22.0 Introduction

Climate change poses significant agricultural threats, impacting food security, livelihoods, and ecosystems (Santalucia & Sibhatu, 2023). In Kenya, where the agricultural sector plays a crucial role in the economy and livelihoods of its citizens, policy interventions for inclusive Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) are particularly relevant. Integrating climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies into agricultural practices is crucial for building resilience and sustainability in changing climatic conditions (FAO, 2022). However, achieving inclusivity in CSA requires addressing gender-specific challenges and social disparities (Kozicka, 2020; Akponikpè et al., 2018).

The agricultural structures in Kenya are very susceptible to climate change impacts since the systems are rain-fed and highly underdeveloped. Thus, women involved are very vulnerable since they are exposed to shocks such as drought and floods caused by changes in weather conditions (Derenoncourt, 2022). There is a need for a comprehensive policy approach to promote gender-sensitive CSA. The government has made efforts in this respect, including developing climate change policies. However, the policies have not been effective. Policy principles enshrined in the National Climate Change Framework Policy may have contributed since CSA is not gender-responsive.

Despite various efforts by the government, gender parity, access to resources, and social inclusion remain significant issues, leaving women exposed to discrimination and social disorder (Bryan, Kato & Bernier, 2021). The global community faces the difficulties posed by climate change and pursues sustainable development. However, the agricultural sector is at the forefront of addressing these pressing issues.

Kenya's efforts to implement inclusive CSA policies should align with international agendas for sustainable development, such as the United Nations 2030 Agenda (United Nations, 2015). Moreover, promoting CSA aligns with the country's commitment to international climate agreements, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, 2017). Thus, this article seeks to evaluate the Kenya government's policy interventions to support inclusive Climate Smart Agriculture that promotes sustainable development.

The Constitution of Kenya 2010, under the Bill of Rights, Article 42, has a provision for the right of every person to a safe and healthy environment where both current and future generations must preserve the environment (Orumo & Mwangi, 2023). Further, Chapter Five of the Constitution articulates that land and the environment matter. In addition, climate change is a priority under Kenya Vision 2030, a long-term national development blueprint. The government of Kenya influences Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) specific reforms and implements gender-responsive policies. Kenya encourages sustainable development by stepping up conservation efforts in both rural and urban areas (Pamuk et al., 2021). One of the targets in Kenya's emphasis on Climate Smart Agriculture is facilitating adequate food security.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2022), women comprise a huge percentage of climate-smart agriculture (CSA) labourers at 59% while men labourers are at 41%. Thus, entrepreneurs must prioritize compensation and social protection to make agri-food systems greener and climate-resilient. The main challenge is that the current policies have not provided regulations that empower young women in CSA practices. The policy gaps have led to increased gender-based inequalities and the exclusion of vulnerable groups. Hence, achieving globally recognized development targets such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement becomes impossible (Friedman et al., 2022). There are a number of policies that regulate climate change, including:

a) The Environmental and Management Coordination Act, 1999.
b) Climate Change Act, 2016 (No. 11 of 2016).
c) The National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP), 2018-2022.
d) Sessional Article No. 3 of 2016 on National Climate Change Framework Policy.
e) National Climate Change Response Strategy (NCCRS), 2010.

f) National Adaptation Plan, 2015-2030.
g) National Climate Finance Policy, 2018.
h) National Climate Change Policy, 2018.
i) Climate Risk Management Framework, 2017.
j) Thematic Plan for Climate Change, 2018.
k) The Kenya Climate Smart Agriculture Implementation Framework (KCSAIF), 2018-2027.
l) The Green Economy Strategy and Implementation Plan, 2017.
m) Kenya Climate Smart Agriculture Strategy (KCSAS), 2017-2026.
n) The Energy Act, 2019.
o) The Kenya Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) Strategy, 2017-2026.

Despite various policy interventions, Kenya continues to experience food insecurity, high poverty levels, environmental degradation, and discrimination against women in Kenya's agricultural landscape. Furthermore, the efficacy of CSA policies relies on effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure their successful implementation and impact on targeted outcomes (Phali et al., 2023). It is challenging to identify areas of improvement, measure progress, and make necessary adjustments to optimize the outcomes of CSA interventions without robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

The central problem lies in the need for comprehensive and inclusive policy interventions that address gender disparities, social inclusion, limited access to resources and technology, and the specific challenges small-scale farmers face in adopting CSA practices in Kenya. Additionally, there are no effective monitoring and evaluation systems to track the progress and impact of CSA policies. Thus, no evidence-based decision-making processes create exclusive and unsustainable development in the agricultural sector.

1.1 Problem Statement

Climate Smart Agriculture, though aimed at reducing the impacts of climate change in Kenya, has faced many challenges (Beal et al., 2021). Lack of access to technology, low levels of mechanization, gender-based discrimination in production, and poverty continue or persist despite the efforts of the government to have inclusive Climate Smart Agriculture. Climate change poses significant threats to agriculture in Kenya, impacting food security and the livelihoods of rural communities. As the agricultural sector faces increasing challenges due to unpredictable weather patterns and extreme events, there is a growing need to adopt climate-smart agriculture practices (Tesfaye et al., 2023).

Like many other countries, Kenya has responded to climate change challenges by adopting CSA practices. One such challenge is the limited access to climate-resilient technologies and inputs, such as drought-resistant seeds and precision agriculture tools (Government of Kenya, 2018). Small-scale farmers, who constitute a significant portion of the agricultural workforce, often lack the resources and financial capacity to invest in these technologies, which greatly hinders their ability to adapt to climate change effectively.

Furthermore, inadequate extension services and knowledge-sharing platforms thwart the dissemination of knowledge about best practices and information on CSA techniques (Tesfaye et al., 2023). Lack of accessible and reliable information restricts the farmers' ability to make informed decisions and adopt CSA practices that can bolster their resilience to climate shocks.

Another critical challenge in promoting inclusive CSA in Kenya is the gender disparities in the agricultural sector. Women, who contribute significantly to agricultural production and food security, often face barriers to accessing land, credit, and decision-making power (Babugura, 2021).

In addition to gender disparities, social inclusion issues arise in the CSA implementation. Vulnerable and marginalized groups may be excluded from decision-making processes and resource access (Phali et al., 2023). Ensuring the inclusion of these groups is vital for achieving equitable and sustainable agricultural development that benefits all segments of society.

1.2 Research Objectives

Against this background, this article evaluates policy interventions for climate-smart agriculture toward building inclusive and sustainable development.

General Objective

The general objective of this research was to examine Climate Smart Agriculture policy interventions for inclusive and sustainable development.

Specific Objectives

The specific objectives were to:

  a) To explore the policy interventions in Climate Smart Agriculture;
  b) To examine whether the CSA policies are gender responsive;
  c) To analyse gender-responsive reporting on Climate Change.

1.3 Research Questions

To achieve those three specific objectives, the study had to find answers to the following questions:

  a) How have policy interventions improved Climate Smart Agriculture policies?
  b) Are CSA policies gender responsive and to what extent?
  c) To what extent is Climate Change Reporting gender-responsive?

1.4 Justification and Scope

This study highlights the need for appropriate policy interventions for climate-smart agriculture that will lead to inclusive and sustainable development in Kenya. The study is crucial given the escalating global food security and livelihood challenges caused by climate change. Climate change-induced extreme weather events affect agricultural productivity (IPCC, 2022). The findings of this study will provide valuable insights into effective approaches adopted by governments, policymakers, and stakeholders to tackle the many problems caused by climate change in the agricultural sector (World Bank, 2023).

The significance of the study lies in its potential to contribute to global efforts to combat climate change and foster sustainable development. The study's insights can guide policymakers in developing holistic approaches. Understanding the challenges smallholder farmers face, especially women, and designing inclusive policies that address their specific needs can empower them to adopt climate-smart practices and enhance their resilience to climate change (FAO, 2022).

The comprehensive analysis of policy interventions for CSA in this study can serve as a foundation for evidence-based policymaking (Gikonyo, 2022). Governments and international organizations can draw upon the recommendations of this study to design effective interventions. By implementing well-informed policies, governments can foster a sustainable and resilient agricultural sector that addresses the challenges of climate change and supports the well-being of both present and future generations (Toukabri & Mohamed Youssef, 2023).

The scope of the study is on policy interventions for climate-smart agriculture. The study is limited to Kenya as a geographical location. Further, the study is limited as evaluations only cover Climate Smart Agriculture and do not cover other policy interventions.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The study uses the Socio-Ecological Systems Theory (SEST). According to Sorge et al. (2022), the SEST provides a holistic approach to understanding the interactions between social and ecological components within a system in a resilient and sustained manner. The framework will help to analyse how policy measures interact with various social, economic, and ecological elements.

Talubo, Morse and Saroj (2022) believe that the SES theoretical framework integrates policy analysis and sustainable development principles to comprehensively investigate the interplay between Climate Smart Agriculture policy interventions, gender responsiveness, and sustainable

development. This framework ensures a multidimensional understanding of how policy actions influence inclusive and sustainable agricultural practices while shedding light on gender dynamics and the importance of equitable climate change reporting (Liu et al., 2023).

23.0 Literature Review

The literature review will focus on three main areas: Policy Interventions for Sustainable Development; Climate Smart Agriculture; and Gender Parity and Social Inclusion.

2.1 Policy Interventions for Sustainable Development

Climate change poses significant challenges to agricultural practices worldwide, affecting food security and livelihoods, especially in developing countries like Kenya. In response to this pressing issue, policymakers and stakeholders have been actively implementing policy interventions to promote climate-smart agriculture (CSA) for economic empowerment and sustainable development in Kenya. The CSA strategy focuses on sustainable and inclusive practices that enhance the resilience of agricultural systems to climate variability and contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This article examines key policy interventions and their impact on fostering inclusive and sustainable development in the Kenyan agricultural sector.

A study by The Ministry of Agriculture sheds light on the progress of climate-smart agricultural practices in Kenya. According to the findings, over the past five years, the adoption of CSA techniques increased by 30%. This increase indicates a growing recognition among farmers and stakeholders of the importance of climate-resilient approaches to mitigate the impacts of climate change on agricultural productivity (Gikonyo, 2022).

To address the climate change challenge comprehensively, the Kenyan government has set ambitious targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the agriculture sector. By 2030, policymakers aim to achieve a 40% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions through implementing climate-smart practices. These measures mitigate climate change and play a vital role in fostering sustainable agricultural development (Ministry of Agriculture, 2020).

Smallholder farmers, who constitute a considerable proportion of Kenya's agricultural workforce, have been at the forefront of adopting climate-resilient farming techniques. In 2021, a study observed that smallholder farmers experienced a 15% increase in crop yields after implementing climate-smart practices. These practices included adopting drought-resistant crop varieties, improved water management, and soil conservation. This positive outcome enhances food security for farmers and their families and contributes to the country's overall economic growth (Barooah et al., 2023).

Livestock farming is another vital component of Kenya's agriculture sector, providing livelihoods for many rural communities. However, extreme weather events such as droughts and floods have increasingly affected livestock productivity and welfare. Climate-smart livestock management strategies were introduced to address the challenges. As a result, a notable reduction of 25% in livestock mortality rates due to extreme weather events was observed. These strategies include better animal husbandry practices, improved shelter and water availability, and early warning systems to prepare for extreme weather events (World Bank, 2023).

Policy intervention implementation for inclusive climate-smart agriculture in Kenya has shown promising results in fostering inclusive and sustainable development. The increased adoption of climate-smart agricultural practices, the commitment of the government to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and the positive outcomes seen in crop yields and livestock management all contribute to building resilience and promoting agricultural sustainability in the face of a changing climate. However, continuous efforts and collaboration between policymakers, farmers, researchers, and other stakeholders will be essential to overcome the challenges posed by climate change and ensure a prosperous and inclusive agricultural sector in Kenya.

2.2 Climate Smart Agriculture

The emphasis on Climate Smart agriculture is on redeploying agricultural development to be significantly more climate change resilient (Toukabri & Youssef, 2023). The main aim of the CSA initiative is to provide food and nutrition security and create employment. Some of the policies in the sector include the Kenya Climate Smart Agriculture Implementation Framework (KCSAIF), 2018-2027 and the Kenya Climate Smart Agriculture Strategy (KCSAS), 2017-2026.

The CSA policies and plans aim to raise standards and productivity levels per acre. Kenya's policies, for instance, help farmers grow corn by boosting resilience to plant corn that can adapt to long and short-term stresses such as low and high levels of rainfall (Musafiri, 2022). A major threat to the agricultural sector of Kenya is climate change Bryan (2021), necessitating the adoption of Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) as a transformative approach. CSA aims to ensure food and nutrition security, generate employment opportunities, and promote sustainable agricultural practices (Government of Kenya, 2017).

The Government of Kenya, under the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA), has implemented several policy interventions and strategies, such as The Kenya Climate Smart Agriculture Implementation Framework (KCSAIF), 2018-2027 and the Kenya Climate Smart Agriculture Strategy (KCSAS), 2017-2026, to achieve inclusive and sustainable development (Tesfaye et al., 2021; Government of Kenya, 2018). By promoting the cultivation of drought-resistant and flood-tolerant crop varieties, CSA programs aid farmers in adjusting to a changing climate and securing their livelihoods (Phali et al., 2023).

The policy interventions in CSA contribute to inclusive and sustainable development by targeting various dimensions of agricultural growth (Derenoncourt, 2022). Friedman, the interventions include addressing the population's basic needs, ensuring access to adequate and nutritious food (Government of Kenya, 2017), and creating employment opportunities within the agricultural sector. However, gender disparities persist in the agricultural sector, with women facing limited access to resources and lacking decision-making power (Friedman et al., 2022). To fully realize the potential of inclusive and sustainable development through CSA, policies should incorporate gender-sensitive approaches to promote women's participation and empowerment (Orumo & Mwangi, 2023).

Moreover, small-scale farmers may encounter barriers to accessing the necessary information, technologies, and finance (Bryan, 2021). Policymakers should prioritize providing extension services, knowledge-sharing platforms, and financial support to empower smallholders and ensure their effective participation in CSA practices (Government of Kenya, 2018).

Climate Smart Agriculture represents a promising approach to building inclusive and sustainable development in Kenya's agricultural sector (Musafiri, 2022). The policy interventions, including the Kenya Climate Smart Agriculture Implementation Framework, 2018-2027 and the Kenya Climate Smart Agriculture Strategy 2017-2026, emphasize resilience, productivity, and food security (Orumo & Mwangi, 2023). However, addressing gender disparities and the needs of small-scale farmers is crucial to maximizing the impact of these policies (Beal et al., 2021; Government of Kenya, 2018). By integrating inclusive and gender-sensitive approaches into CSA initiatives, Kenya can unlock the full potential of its agricultural sector to create a resilient, prosperous, and sustainable future for all.

2.3 Gender Parity and Social Inclusion

Based on the views of Derenoncourt (2022), gender parity can be attributed to the equal contribution of males and females in all dimensions of life, including having equal opportunities. Gender parity entails equality when the proportions of men and women are calculated (Friedman et al., 2022).

On the other hand, social inclusion entails establishing systems and structures to improve how a person and groups of people can participate in a community's life and activities Nortje et al. (2023), describe social inclusion as a process that enables and creates opportunities for specific people or groups to live a decent and dignified life rather than being disadvantaged or excluded

based on their identity. In CSA, the groups can include young women or women who are poor and deprived. Further, the socially excluded people include persons with disabilities and HIV/AIDS affected, among other groups (Singh, 2022).

Barooah et al. (2023), believe that access to resources denotes the capacity to use and profit from a particular resource. On the other hand, control of resources can be described as having the power to decide on the use and benefit of a resource. Effective CSA can only happen when both genders have access to and control resources (Nortje et al., 2023). Gender-responsive policies refer to laws, regulations, and guidelines that fill gender relations, roles, and norms. These policies promote gender parity, social inclusion, and resource access (Huyer & Chanana, 2021).

According to Bryan et al. (2021), the Social Inclusion Agenda contributes significantly towards equality and gender-based empowerment in the practice of CSA. The policy review reveals a considerable gap in the drafting and implementation of the policies. For example, The National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP), 2018-2022, does not recognize the adaptive capabilities of men and women. The policies do not consider the use of technology and best practices that enhance an enabling environment for women to thrive in CSA.

Huyer & Chanana (2021), have developed an innovative approach, Gender Smart Agriculture. The approach promotes aspects such as improving the control of vulnerable persons over resources and other agricultural productive assets. Climate Smart Agriculture requires capacity development for policy actors (Bryan et al., 2021). The capacity development will help to integrate gender equality in country-based and global climate change policies. The policymaking process for the National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP), 2022-2027, will require gender experts to make the clauses gender sensitive and to promote social inclusion.

24.0 Discussion of Findings

In this section, I will seek answers to the research questions I posed at the beginning of the study, namely:

   a) How have policy interventions improved Climate Smart Agriculture policies?
   b) Are CSA policies gender-responsive and to what extent?
   c) To what extent is Climate Change Reporting gender-responsive?

3.1 Policy Interventions

The results of this study shed light on the existing policy frameworks for Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) and their implications for gender-responsive approaches toward building inclusive and sustainable development. A review of the policies indicates huge gaps since they are gender-neutral and do not have specific considerations on any gender. Further, there are other gaps in the policy processes as follows:

❑ There is a multiplication and duplication of policies;
❑ The policymaking processes are not clear;
❑ The policies are gender biased;
❑ There is poor policy planning;
❑ Lack of involvement of policy actors;
❑ Poor implementation of the policies;
❑ Lack of monitoring and evaluation structures;
❑ There is a gap in the coordination between agricultural institutions;
❑ Minimal research on women's and men's roles in CSA.

The study reveals that while some policies acknowledge the importance of gender-responsive CSA, implementing these policies remains a significant challenge. One of the key issues identified is that existing policies are generally gender-neutral, lacking specific considerations for addressing the unique needs and challenges faced by men and women in the agricultural sector. This gender

neutrality perpetuates existing gender disparities and hinders women's full participation and empowerment in CSA initiatives (FAO, 2020).

A critical gap identified in the policy processes is the multiplication and duplication of policies. This fragmentation can lead to confusion, inefficiency, and conflicting objectives among policy frameworks, hindering effective implementation (U.N. Women, 2019). Moreover, the lack of clear policymaking processes further exacerbates the challenges, making it difficult to align objectives and resources effectively. As a result, the agricultural sector may face inconsistent or poorly coordinated efforts to promote CSA and achieve sustainable development goals (World Bank, 2023).

Gender biases in existing policies are another significant concern. The study highlights that many policies do not adequately address CSA's gender-specific roles, needs, and constraints. Women, who play a crucial role in agricultural production and food security, often face unequal access to resources, land, credit, and decision-making power (IFAD, 2022). Neglecting to recognize and address these gender disparities can limit the potential benefits of CSA and hinder progress toward inclusive and sustainable development.

The lack of comprehensive policy planning is also evident in the findings. Moreover, the study identified inadequate policy planning, leading to ineffective policy outcomes and missed opportunities for maximizing the impact of CSA interventions (IPCC, 2022).

Additionally, the study reveals the limited involvement of policy actors and stakeholders in formulating and implementing CSA policies. Engaging key actors, such as government organizations, civil society, academic institutions, and business people, fosters ownership, consensus, and effective policy implementation (Gikonyo, 2022). The absence of strong collaboration and coordination between these actors can hinder the successful execution of CSA initiatives.

Furthermore, the study identifies insufficient monitoring and evaluation structures in existing policies. Monitoring and evaluation are vital to track progress, identify challenges, and ensure accountability in policy implementation (FAO, 2022). The absence of robust monitoring mechanisms can lead to a limited understanding of the real impact of CSA interventions and hinder evidence-based decision-making.

Finally, the research highlights a significant gap in the availability of research on women's and men's roles in CSA. Inadequate research hinders the understanding of gender-specific contributions and constraints in climate-smart agricultural practices (IFAD, 2022).

The findings of the study emphasize the critical importance of addressing the identified gaps in policy interventions for climate-smart agriculture. Policymakers must focus on developing gender-responsive policies, enhancing policy coordination, and involving relevant stakeholders to foster inclusive and sustainable development. Inclusivity will optimize the impact of policy interventions and ensure progress toward building a resilient and equitable agricultural sector.

3.2 Gender Responses in The Climate Change, Act 2016

Under the Climate Change Act, 2016 Art 6 (d), the National Climate Change Council (NCCC) shall approve gender and intergenerational responsive public education awareness strategy and implementation program. The strategy is still pending. The government has developed NCCAP 2013-2017 and NCCAP 2018-2022. Thus, there is a need to develop the gender strategy along with NCCAP 2023- 2027

Article 7 (6) of the Climate Change Act, 2016 stipulates that the president shall, in appointing members, ensure compliance with the two-third gender principle. The article emphasizes Article 81 of the Constitution of Kenya 2010. There is a need for strict adherence and compliance with the two-third gender principle. Further, Article 8 (c) stipulates that the Cabinet Secretary must formulate a National Gender and Intergeneration responsive public education and awareness strategy. The strategy is yet to be formulated.

Under Article 21, educational institutions must collaborate with the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development to integrate climate change into various disciplines. There is an appeal for climate change to be integrated with gender studies. There has been progress, since in September 2022, the Kenya School of Government launched a county climate change fund (CCCF) Mechanism Curriculum and a facilitators guide.

In Kenya's Climate Change Act of 2016, notable gender responses have been integrated to address the unique challenges faced by men and women in the context of climate change. The act explicitly recognizes gender as a critical consideration in climate change policies and strategies. It emphasizes promoting gender equality and empowering women in climate change mitigation, adaptation, and disaster risk reduction efforts. The act mandates the integration of gender perspectives in the development, implementation, and monitoring of climate change programs and projects, ensuring that the specific needs and priorities of both men and women are considered (Republic of Kenya, 2016). By explicitly acknowledging gender as a cross-cutting issue, the Climate Change Act, 2016 aims to foster gender-responsive policies and actions that build resilience and enhance sustainable development in Kenya.

Kenya's Climate Change Act, 2016 also establishes mechanisms for gender mainstreaming and gender analysis in climate change-related decision-making processes. The act requires gender-sensitive planning, budgeting, and reporting on climate change initiatives to ensure that gender considerations are not merely an afterthought but are systematically integrated throughout the policy cycle (Republic of Kenya, 2016). This approach helps address gender disparities in the access to resources and opportunities in decision-making in the context of climate change. Additionally, the act promotes gender inclusivity in climate governance and action by encouraging institutions and stakeholders to enhance their capacity and raise awareness of gender problems. Kenya's Climate Change Act 2016 underlines the nation's commitment to fostering gender equality and acknowledging the crucial role of women in climate change adaptation through these gender responses and sustainable development efforts.

3.3 Gender Responses in Kenya's Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) Strategy, 2017-2026

In Kenya's Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) Strategy 2017-2026, gender responses are evident as the strategy recognizes the importance of promoting gender equality and empowering women in agricultural development and climate change resilience. The strategy explicitly acknowledges the roles, contributions, and vulnerabilities of men and women in the agriculture sector and their capacity to adapt to and mitigate climate change impacts. It emphasizes addressing gender disparities in access to resources, technology, and agricultural decision-making (Ministry of Agriculture, 2020).

The CSA Strategy aims to promote gender-responsive approaches in the planning and implementation of agricultural interventions, ensuring that women's voices and perspectives are integrated into climate-smart practices. By recognizing the centrality of gender equality, the CSA Strategy seeks to harness the potential of women as agents of change and contributors to building a climate-resilient agricultural sector in Kenya (Huyer & Chanana, 2021).

Moreover, Kenya's CSA Strategy 2017-2026 fosters gender-responsive policies by promoting women's inclusion and leadership in climate-smart agricultural practices. The strategy aims to enhance women's access to information, extension services, and financial resources to support their participation in CSA initiatives (MALF, 2017).

Additionally, the CSA Strategy emphasizes capacity building and awareness-raising on gender issues among stakeholders involved in agriculture and climate change adaptation. By integrating gender considerations across the strategy's implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, the CSA Strategy demonstrates a commitment to gender-responsive agricultural development, ensuring that climate-smart practices are equitable and inclusive for both men and women.

3.4 Gender Responsive Reporting on Climate Change

Nationally Determined Contributions are reports produced by the Government of Kenya in accordance with the Paris Agreement (Pamuk, 2021). They include Kenya's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) in July 2015 reported on adaptation and mitigation contributions. Further, Kenya's Updated National Determined Contribution December was developed in 2020.

Section 3 of the Report Adaptation, on Loss and Damages aims to bridge the implementation gaps, especially in productive sectors of the economy, but there is no highlight of women. Despite the underrepresentation, Table 2 on Prioritized Adaptation programs mentions gender and youth among vulnerable groups: P38 Develop social safety net structures for women and other vulnerable populations, P41 Consolidate successful technologies and develop transfer strategy for women.

The Sessional Article No. 3 of 2016 on the National Climate Change Framework Policy seeks to promote gender transformative approaches and interventions for gender parity and social inclusion. The other intelligent policy intervention is to lower emissions and encourage forestation to absorb carbon from the atmosphere. The Kenya Climate Change Act 2016 Art 17 (C) requires the National Environmental Authority to regulate, enforce, and monitor compliance with levels of greenhouse gas emissions.

The dialogue organizers seek submissions related to five thematic workshop areas that indicate how they affect the different target groups, such as vulnerable and resource-poor communities, particularly women, youth, the elderly, indigenous peoples, the marginalized, and the differently abled people. The applications should include innovations and strategies to improve the situation in each case (Barooah et al., 2023).

3.5 Gender-Insensitive Climate Smart Agriculture

The policy analysis of the Climate Change Act, 2026; the Kenya Climate Smart Agriculture Strategy 2017-2026; Kenya's Updated National Determined Contribution December 2020, and Sessional Article No. 3 of 2016 on the National Climate Change Framework Policy establishes the policy gap since the policies do not consider the differences between men and women or the roles and knowledge differences between the two genders. Four key aspects can make Climate Smart Agriculture practices and policies gender sensitive by sustainably increasing productivity and income, maximizing gender-specific advantages, and highlighting key actors such as women, youths, young men, mothers, and fathers.

The study findings reveal that existing CSA policies lack sufficient gender-responsive measures, leading to inadequate consideration of women's specific roles, needs, and challenges in the agricultural sector. This gender insensitivity can hinder women's meaningful participation in CSA initiatives, limit access to resources and decision-making, and perpetuate existing gender disparities in agriculture (FAO, 2020; IFAD, 2016). Policymakers must prioritize gender-responsive approaches that empower women in agriculture, enhance their resilience to climate change impacts, and foster equitable and climate-smart agricultural practices.

Further, the findings highlight the presence of gender biases and discriminatory practices that hinder women's equal participation and benefits from climate-smart agricultural initiatives. Compared to their male counterparts, women farmers have less access to land ownership, lending facilities, and extension services which restricts their ability to adopt climate-resilient practices (FAO, 2022; World Bank, 2023).

Moreover, gender discrimination in policy implementation can result in unequal distribution of resources and benefits, further exacerbating gender disparities in the agricultural sector. Policy interventions must adopt a transformative approach that challenges traditional gender norms, promotes women's empowerment, and ensures that women have equal opportunities and access to resources to engage in climate-smart agriculture actively and contribute to sustainable development goals.

3.6 Economic Inequalities in Climate Smart Agriculture Policies

The policy interventions for Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) towards building inclusive and sustainable development in Kenya have made significant strides in recognizing the importance of gender-responsive approaches and promoting inclusive agricultural practices. However, a policy analysis reveals a lack of sufficient economic empowerment measures targeting women in the agricultural sector which is a critical issue. Despite recognizing women's vital role in agriculture and climate change resilience, existing policies have not adequately addressed the gender disparities in access to economic resources and opportunities. The failure to address economic empowerment hinders women's ability to fully participate in CSA initiatives and realize their potential as change agents in climate-smart agriculture.

Kenya's climate-smart agriculture policies emphasize integrating gender considerations into planning and implementation (MALF, 2017). While this recognition is essential, policy analysis reveals a gap in translating these gender-responsive aspirations into concrete actions for women's economic empowerment in agriculture. Women farmers often face challenges in accessing credit, land ownership, and financial resources, which are crucial for investing in climate-smart technologies and sustainable farming practices (IFAD, 2022). Without targeted policies and programs that address these gender-specific barriers, women cannot fully participate in CSA and contribute to developing climate resilience in the agricultural sector.

The lack of economic empowerment measures for women in CSA policies also has broader implications for achieving inclusive and sustainable development goals. Women make up a substantial portion of Kenya's agricultural labour, and their economic empowerment will boost agricultural output and will thus contribute to the eradication of poverty and the general economic growth of the country (World Bank, 2019). Investing in women's economic empowerment in agriculture is a major factor in sustainable development, food security, and poverty reduction (FAO, 2020). Consequently, policy changes encouraging women's access to finance, extension services, and markets are crucial for creating an equitable and climate-resilient agriculture economy in Kenya.

Policy interventions for Climate Smart Agriculture in Kenya have taken positive steps toward recognizing gender responsiveness in the agricultural sector. However, the lack of economic empowerment measures targeting women poses a significant challenge in fully realizing the potential of CSA for inclusive and sustainable development. To address the gap, policymakers must design and implement targeted policies and programs promoting women's economic empowerment in agriculture. By ensuring women's access to resources and opportunities, Kenya can harness the full potential of women as key stakeholders in climate-smart agriculture, contributing to the building of a more resilient and sustainable future.

25.0 Recommendations

The study provides the following recommendations for both national and county governments in Kenya, development partners and other key stakeholders:

a) Enhance capability through technical training: provide technical training and education systems that empower women and men in agriculture, focusing on gender-specific needs and challenges.

b) Merge and redraft legislation: consolidate acts related to agriculture and climate change into comprehensive, user-friendly legislation with explicit gender-responsive provisions for inclusive CSA policies.

c) Review regulations on precarious jobs: evaluate regulations on casual employees, contracting, piece work, etc., to ensure fair labour practices and equal opportunities for women in CSA.

d) Increase access to resources: develop targeted measures to improve women's access and control over resources such as land, credit, and technology for better participation in CSA.

e) Include women as an underrepresented gender in leadership: encourage women's participation and leadership in CSA decision-making and institutions to bring diverse perspectives for effective climate-smart practices.

f) Strengthen gender monitoring and evaluation: implement robust gender monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track the impact of policies and interventions on gender equality in CSA. Regular assessments will help identify shortcomings and ensure that gender considerations are effectively integrated throughout the policy cycle.

26.0 Conclusion

The backbone of Climate Smart Agriculture lies in the inclusion of vulnerable groups such as women, youths, and persons with disabilities. The policy interventions in the climate change and CSA policies have not been gender sensitive. The involvement of all actors and coordination of CSA activities will lead to more productive and resilient agricultural practices. Inclusivity is crucial to CSA, along with increased productivity and resilience.

The success of climate-smart agriculture hinges on the inclusive participation of all vulnerable groups, including women, youths, and persons with disabilities. The existing policy interventions in climate change and CSA have fallen short of ensuring gender sensitivity and inclusivity. It is imperative to enhance these policies by incorporating gender-responsive measures and providing equal opportunities for both men and women in CSA initiatives.

Active engagement and coordination among all stakeholders in the agricultural sector will foster more productive and resilient practices. By prioritizing gender inclusivity and economic empowerment, Kenya can unlock the full potential of CSA, leading to improved livelihoods, enhanced food security, and a more climate-resilient agricultural sector.

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Media Framing of Women in Business: An Analysis of Mainstream Newspapers' Coverage in Kenya

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Abstract

This study focused on the framing of women business leaders in mainstream newspapers in Kenya. The study was guided by three research questions: What is the frequency of coverage of issues female business leaders in Kenya have? How has mainstream media framed coverage of female business leaders in Kenya? What is the implication of this framing for sustainable development? The study adopted a descriptive research design. It targeted women business leaders who have attained that status either because their companies are listed on the Nairobi securities exchange, or because their companies compare to such companies through performance, size, capitalization, and formal structure. The theoretical foundations of the study are the agenda-setting and framing theories. Data collection was through content analysis.

Data collected was analysed and findings were presented using narrative analysis procedures. The study found there was minimal coverage of women business leaders in mainstream newspapers in Kenya. In addition, the little coverage that there was, was negative or indifferent. The study found that main frames used to cover women were patriarchal, gender-descriptive roles, feminized images, and allusion to men. It concluded that this framing has a detrimental effect on the ascension of women to positions of power in business and hinders natural economic development. The research recommended that women business leaders proactively take charge of their narrative as opposed to leaving it to the media to control as they wish. This gives them more control over the amount and tonality of coverage across mainstream media.

Key words: *Female leadership in business, Media Framing, Women business leaders, Women in Business, Women-owned businesses, Women & SME.*

27.0 Introduction

Women-owned businesses today form a major part of the global engine of business that drives growth and development. Around 37 percent of formal enterprises worldwide are owned by women. This is a market that both companies and policymakers should pay keen attention to (Antonacopoulos et al., 2013; VanderBrug, 2013). According to the International Finance Corporation (2006, p. 1),

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"*Women-owned businesses are making a significant contribution to the Kenyan economy. Their businesses account for about one-half (48 percent) of all micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), which contribute around 20 percent to Kenya's GDP. Of the 462,000 jobs created annually since 2000 in Kenya, 445,000 jobs have come from the informal sector, where 85 percent of women's businesses are found.*" Yet, apart from a very small circle very few people know that these women-owned businesses exist.

Many of these business owners subsist in an area of low visibility, which denies them access to financing, credit, networks, and other benefits that come with being in the public eye. Visibility is central to identity construction and perceptions of legitimacy. Moreover, it determines access to resources and networks; it also influences the way these actors perceive themselves as legitimate business people and thus feel motivated and more likely to innovate and modernize their business, thus gaining access to funding (Marshall et al., 2020).

Visibility, or lack of it is closely tied to media coverage, especially in mainstream media. Visibility is gained through representation and portrayal. This article thus sets out to examine the visibility of women business leaders in the country. It is an extraction from a larger work that sets out to establish the mainstream media coverage situation for women in business in Kenya, more so, those in leadership positions, and the framing of this coverage. The study defines a Female Business Leader as a woman who owns, runs, manages, or engages in a business at the apex of seniority. In the study, this term is mainly used to refer to a female person who is the Managing Director or Chief Executive Officer of a large formal sector company or organization involved in business. A large business in this context has high publicly declared capitalization or is listed on the securities exchange. This may include banks, manufacturing industries, other financial institutions, or groupings of businesses and business lobbies.

This study is significant because it enhances critical thinking and introspection on the part of the media as to why they cover women business leaders the way they do, if at all, and whether this has an impact about that coverage, on the one hand, and on the audience and society, on the other. It seeks to find out what frames are applied in the coverage; how they shape the coverage; the subsequent portrayal; and what effect this has on national development.

The framing of a certain specific actor both excludes and/or includes some aspects of the social system they exist in. These inclusions and exclusions form part of a certain *'narrative'* that portrays the world and individuals in a particular manner, justifying strategies, actions, and interventions required to achieve set goals (Stirling et al., 2007)

This means that the media today in Kenya is well placed to have an overbearing influence on the thoughts, beliefs, perceptions and conceptions of their audience and wider society by extension. The mainstream media's coverage of the lived experiences of women business leaders is thus critical to national development hence the need to assess how it is being done.

While there has been extensive research conducted into the representation of women in leadership in the political space and their portrayal from a gender lens in general in Kenya, little has been done to establish how women leaders in business are covered and why. The approach of this study will then be to establish how female business leaders in Kenya are covered and how their coverage is framed. Are they adequately, fairly, and accurately portrayed? What has been the impact of this portrayal on their standing in contemporary society and business and what impact has this had?

1.1 Problem Statement

In a break with tradition and with the patriarchal African society, the field of business economy and finance in Kenya is increasingly seeing more and more women rise to executive positions, taking up the roles of Cabinet Secretaries, Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), Managing Directors and Board Members in various companies. Despite this, today women appear in headlines more often if they are involved in politics, entertainment, crime, or fashion (Omari, 2008).

Their growth and development are NOT proportionately represented in the media and not even the consistency of their growth has been able to sway coverage and portrayal in favour of women in the business workplace. Simply put, in the field of business and entrepreneurship, despite significant developments, the media has continued to view and portray business and the economy as the preserve of men. Why is it that when the coverage of women does occur, it will also be accompanied by a label; often seen as suitable or fitting to justify a successful woman in business as an exception rather than the norm?

Gysae, Le Roux & Van der Merwe in Cai, (2023) aptly describe this two-sided aspect of women's representation in the media whereby they only show some aspects of women but fail to show the other side of the coin. This perspective highlights the fact that the problem is not just a question of the quantity of coverage, but even more importantly, one of quality, tonality, perspective, depiction, description, and framing.

The amount and tone of coverage have a direct impact on the future perception of business ownership, leadership, and business for women. In fact, in Kenya, as in much of the rest of the world, business activity is closely correlated with views of capability and opportunity, implying that women are more inclined to try business if they believe they may succeed and receive support (Antonacopoulos et al., 2013).

1.2 Research Questions

The article thus sets out to answer three main questions:
   a) What is the frequency of coverage of issues related to female business leaders in Kenya?
   b) How has mainstream media framed coverage of female business leaders in Kenya?
   c) What is the implication of this framing for sustainable development for the business ecosystem?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The study seeks to find answers to these questions to enable content producers, editors, writers, and other intermediates of news to ask themselves these critical questions about the quality, quantity and thrust of media coverage of female business leaders in Kenya.

Here then is the question of *"Who makes the news?"* (Who is covered?). This question is often asked in the search for equality and parity in the news and is often visible in the pursuit of feminism and the answer lies in *"Who makes it into the news and how?"* In answering these questions, the content producers themselves are motivated to assess the various metrics that are utilized to select the subjects that they cover in their stories and introspect on their processes, their results, and their outcomes. The very act of counting, measuring and tallying these *'indicators'* raises people's awareness of the prevailing gender representation situation, the tone, and the perspective and, therefore, has an impact on their actions, output, and content. It forces them to consider fresh approaches to producing original content that pushes boundaries and establishes new benchmarks through innovation, diversity, ambition, creativity, and variety. These new standards of work in media will enable stakeholders to achieve new levels of parity and gender diversity not only in Kenya but also, by example, across the region, in Africa and across the globe.

1.4 Justification of the Study

In the past, while there was research on how women are covered in various aspects such as politics, sports, and general news in Africa and more so in Kenya, there was, however, very little research into the coverage of women in business and the economy in the country and how they are portrayed.

According to The GMMP (2015), the world's largest study of Gender in News Media noted that globally, women hold approximately 40% of all paid employment, yet only about 20% of all news about the formal sector workforce is related to them. The report contends that clearly worldwide, there is a *'jaded or oppressive'* gender lens that is used in deciding who to cover, highlight, profile, depict or interview. According to the report, in Africa, the situation is worse. In

Kenya, the situation is just as bad as nearly anywhere else in Africa, with statistics showing that media coverage is not only male-centred but also skewed towards a particular kind of dominant and overbearing masculinity in selecting subjects for all other types of views in media, from *'expert'* opinion to *'ordinary'* person testimonies. Men are present in everything, from *'Manels'* (interview panels full of men and no women), to witnesses and *'Vox pops'* while women are largely absent or persistently ignored.

This study sought to verify if this is really the case. The findings will be useful in enabling media practitioners to gauge whether they are covering business women, especially those in leadership positions fairly, exhaustively, and sustainably and empowering women business leaders to agitate better for more and better coverage.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study was limited in scope to assessing mainstream print media coverage of female business leaders. The study was limited to the female business leaders highlighted, covered, or portrayed in the selected media in their own individual and collective narratives.

The study was limited to print media, with a focus on two mainstream newspapers as the main purveyors of in-depth business news. Under the law in Kenya, mainstream newspapers are defined as newspapers with a nationwide reach and published seven days a week. Using this definition, the study narrowed down to the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard*, with a focus on the Monday to Friday editions. Weekend editions generally do not carry traditional business news as formal business platforms such as the stock market are closed. Weekends are also not formal business days. This definition also ruled out the *Business Daily* as it is published just five days a week and targets a more business-specific audience and would thus produce skewed data.

Due to the large amount of data available to assess, and the restrictions of time and resources, this study is limited to examining six months of editions of both these newspapers, that is 180 copies of each, (360 newspaper editions in total) and conduct an in-depth content analysis to gauge the quantity and quality of coverage of female business leaders vis a vis total business coverage overall. The study will also assess the tone of coverage and how the coverage has been framed.

28.0   Theoretical Framework

Two theories were critical in guiding this research: the Agenda Setting Theory as adduced by McCombs & Shaw (1972) and the Media Framing Theory as initially developed as Frame Analysis by Goffman, (1974). The two theories are related to the extent that the Framing theory is sometimes regarded as a subset of the Agenda Setting Theory or a second level of the Agenda Setting Theory.

2.1 Agenda Setting Theory

The Agenda Setting Theory is primarily based on two main assumptions, with the first being that the media selects, filters and shapes whatever the audience is seeing rather than just directly transmitting stories to the audience in their primary form. The filters and shapes may take many different forms, with some being as simple as the placement and prominence of stories.

One fitting example of this is the media deciding to give prominence to a sensational story rather than effectively highlighting more important but not as sensational news items or stories. An illustration of this is when sensational or controversial news appears at the top of a broadcast rather than one that occurred more recently or has a larger audience, such as an impending storm or parliamentary tax reform.

The second assumption dwells on the fact that if the media gives more prominence or attention to an issue consistently highlights it or keeps coming back to it or repeats it often, the public will encounter it more often, making it more top of the mind and start to consider the issue as being more important (B. Scheufele, 2006). This, however, does not mean that the media organizations are telling their audiences how to think or feel about a story or issue. Rather, by giving prominence

to some stories while denying that prominence to others, they influence us on what to think about or make it top of our mind.

2.2 Framing Theory

The second theory that this article is built upon is the Framing Theory. The Framing Theory considers the way news media covers events and issues, and how individuals in the audience make sense of these events and issues, drawing partially on media representations and their own circumstances. According to D. A. Scheufele (1999), the Framing Theory holds that how issues or events are offered to the audience, which is referred to as a frame, impacts how people decide to interpret the information they encounter or get. He further defines it as a procedure, in which aspects of reality that are selected are given greater importance or emphasis at the expense of others.

M. McCombs, (2005) argues that framing is a conceptual extension of agenda setting, while Matthew C Nisbet & Mooney, (2007) define frames as principles of interpretation that allow people to *"locate, identify, perceive, and events, label"* issues, and topics. They are abstractions that help organize or structure message meaning; frames will be present in the sender of the message, the message and in the audience due to a range of factors.

Thus, frames have an impact on how individuals interpret and give meaning to a certain topic or issue. In this context, a frame refers to the way media as gatekeepers organize and display the ideas, events, and issues they cover. Framing may be both a deliberate and unconscious decision made by journalists. Framing, according to (Ryan, 2013), is the act of deciding what details to include and leave out while communicating about a subject, person, or event. In this way then Frames and framing have a key role to play in the way issues are covered and in how audiences perceive and make sense of them.

Closer home, (Okere & Sam-Okere, 2013) define media framing, saying it may be used to refer to the act of selecting and presenting the perceived reality by the media which informs the way the audience regards and interprets the said reality. He uses this approach to analyse the coverage and portrayal of women entrepreneurs in Nigeria. This study takes a similar approach. It is descriptive in nature and is intended to characterize the distribution of one or more variables without considering any causal or other hypotheses (Aggarwal & Ranganathan, 2019).

29.0   Research Methods

The study approached the task at hand from a mixed methods perspective, applying both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The mixed methods research approach traces its origins to cultural anthropologists and fieldwork sociologists working early in the twentieth century (Creswell, 1999)

Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner, (2007) define the mixed methods approach as a process of bringing together elements of both the quantitative and qualitative research methods combining the use of enumeration, collection of viewpoints, collection of the data itself, its analysis and the techniques used for inference to lend depth and breadth to the exercise.

The study employs Content Analysis, as the primary data collection method, with the data being analysed and presented in both quantitative and descriptive formats to garner the mixed methods approach in an attempt to investigate the elements and tone of coverage that it seeks to investigate.

Using this, the study investigated the selected newsprint material covering a selected period of six months from 1st January 2020 to June 30th, 2020, to provide data to enable the inference of quantity and quality of coverage of women business leaders in Kenya as a percentage of all the total coverage. It also examined the tone of coverage as well as the use of certain stereotypical gendered references that may point to the utilization of a gendered media frame in coverage.

30.0   Presentation and Discussion of Findings

The study identified, enumerated, and analysed articles on women in leadership positions in the world of business in Kenya under several broad themes, starting with the presence or absence of coverage, before delving into how the construction of the identity of the woman business leader has been achieved. This was achieved by assessing several things, including the imagery used in reportage terms of pictures and their focus and physical framing, gender labelling, descriptive terminology, and comparison to men. These themes were found to broadly represent many of the issues that were emergent in the analysis.

4.1 Thematic Clustering of Content Analysis Data

A theme may be described simply as an element, a property, a descriptor, or a notion. It is generally an implicit aspect that groups several ideas that are repeated and help researchers respond to the research question (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen & Snelgrove, 2016). It includes codes with a shared frame of reference and a high level of generality that harmonizes concepts pertaining to the research topic. It is regarded as a thread of underlying significance implicitly uncovered at the interpretative level and components of participant subjectivity.

According to Vaismoraldi, *"Theme"* is the main product of data analysis that yields practical results in the field of study. In this study, the themes that were found to best define the attributes being codified in the data are outlined in Table 1.

Table 7: Table outlining coded themes

Tone of coverage	Stereotypical Descriptive Terminology	Images used	Allusion to Men

These themes were further explored by further breaking them down into categories. A category entails the descriptive level of text in the content being analysed and is an explicit manifestation of the data encountered in the research. Categories are descriptors of themes (Draucker et al., 2007). In this case, a category is the main product of analytical procedure and possesses a descriptive identity and may be utilized at the commencement of the development of themes as part of the process to classify the findings that have been arrived at (Gale et al., 2013).

Researchers develop categories at the beginning of the data analysis process to simplify the process by which they arrive at the abstract level of the analysis. Along the lines of analytical theme development, the study utilized a process outlined by Constas (1992) for categorization that has its basis in 3 main components: origination, verification, and nomination.
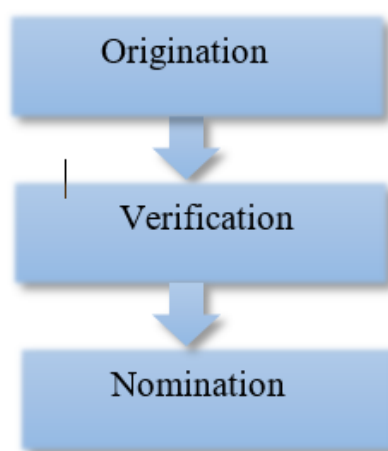
Figure 1: Outline of the categorization process
Source: Constas, 1992

Data for this study was collected by analysing 364 editions of the Daily Nation and the Standard Newspapers over 6 months between January 2020 to June 2020. Out of this, analysis was conducted to identify and eliminate those of the editions not conforming to the definition of newsprint that would contain target stories. This elimination exercise comprised removing from the sample those newspapers that ran on weekends and national and religious holidays, thus eliminating a total of 106 newspapers from both brands over the period as the study was focussed on examining all the issues of the two dailies running on weekdays: Monday to Friday and carrying business news pages over the 6-month sample period. The analysis thus purposively excluded public holidays and weekends to yield consistent data leaving me with a total of 258 newspapers that were eligible for further examination.

4.2 Absence/Presence of Coverage

In total, the 258 copies of both the *Daily Nation* and the *Standard* examined for this study yielded a total of 2021 (two thousand and twenty-one) individual articles or stories in the business pages that were enumerated and analysed to assess if they touched on women business leaders. Of the 2021 individual business stories analysed, just twenty-three stories or a paltry 1.13 percent were found to be focussing on issues of women business leaders as shown in Figure 2.
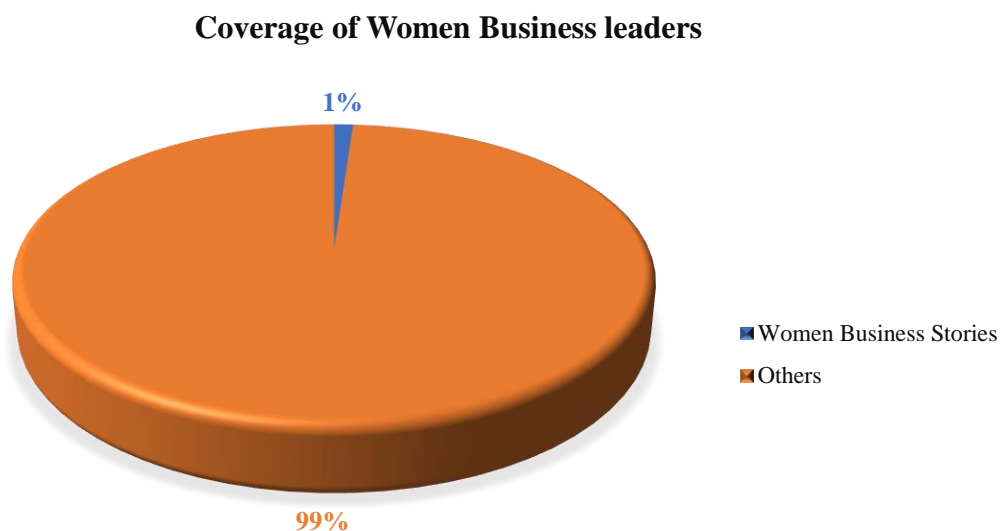
Coverage of Women Business leaders

Figure 2: Coverage of women business leaders

On the other hand, Table 2 outlines the distribution of stories that highlight women business leaders in business pages over the months that the data was analysed. Note that in May 2020, both the *Daily Nation* and the *Standard* did not publish a single story on women in positions of leadership in business on their business pages.

Table 8: Distribution of stories

Month/Year	Daily Nation	The Standard
January 2020	7	1
February 2020	-	1
March 2020	2	-
April 2020	3	3
May 2020	-	-
June 2020	5	1
Total	17	6

While establishing that the amount of coverage is drastically small, especially as a fraction of the total business coverage, this study did not dwell on why this is the case. The study, however, notes that the presence of even this small number of stories indicates that there is indeed a measure of effort to find stories that will highlight women business leaders editors and reporters. What is alarming, however, is how low the frequency of application of this effort is. The scarce nature of stories focussing on women business leaders throughout the research period would lead one to conclude that there has been negligible effort at increasing or growing the number of stories over the period covered by the study. There is a clear lack of a discernible pattern in the growth of coverage over six months covered by the study. The random nature of the occurrence may indicate that there is no appreciation of a possible problem and hence no effort to tackle it as such.

4.3 Tone of Coverage

Other than the amount of coverage, an outstanding aspect of major importance in framing of stories about women business leaders is the tone of coverage (Henderson, 2021). This relates directly to the question of how the identities of women business leaders have been constructed in the publications examined and whether they are being portrayed positively or negatively.

Were the stories crafted and framed to portray the women business leaders in a positive, negative, or even neutral light?

Table 9: Tabulation of stories and tonality

Story	Newspaper	Identifier	Tone
Lobby seeks Seven-year tax holiday for 'youth firms'	Daily Nation	<u>Beneficial</u> to youth and women	Positive
Zep Re gets the Highest Credit Rating on tax exemption	Daily Nation	Company in the <u>best</u> position to pay debt	Positive
Higher Taxes choke BAT Profits	Daily Nation	<u>Decline</u> in Gross Profit	Negative
Eveready Loss Triples due to reduced sales	Daily Nation	The <u>struggling</u> firm booked a loss	Negative
Leafy suburbs or vertical gardens? Kenya's rich vacate posh environs	Daily Nation		Neutral
Trade Chamber hunts for new Chief Executive	Daily Nation		Neutral
Credit Bank Boss records statement in Fraud probe	Daily Nation	This is a <u>serious complaint</u> touching on <u>fraudulent</u> acquisition of property	Negative
Private firms get virtual AGM'S nod.	Daily Nation		Neutral
Kenyans stock up on long life milk as Virus sparks anxieties in output	Daily Nation	<u>Decline</u> in production Prices <u>unlikely</u> to rebound	Negative
Family Bank books 85% rise in profit on improved lending	Daily Nation	Increase in lending <u>positively</u> impacted bottom line	Positive
Imports from China fall as Coronavirus disrupts supplies	Daily Nation	We will work to <u>mitigate</u>	Positive
Reprieve for Keroche in war with KRA	Daily Nation	<u>Attachment</u> of Keroche's accounts and <u>forcible</u> transfer of cash	Negative
KEPSA, Private firm offer technical assistance to women enterprises	The Standard	Set to get a <u>boost</u>	Positive
Virus halts Alios acquisition deal	The Standard	Multi-million plan now in <u>Limbo</u>	Negative

Analysts push for debt refinancing	The Standard		Neutral
KAM launches plan for industry growth	The Standard		Neutral
Women up equality fight in Trade	The Standard		Neutral

Source 8: Daily Newspapers

These findings can be tabulated as follows:

Table 10: Table on the overall tone of stories

Tone	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Number	6	6	5
Percentage	35.29%	35.29%	29.41%

Examination of this data points to the fact that it seems there is no overbearing negative or positive tone of coverage. Rather it is almost an indifferent approach or lack of any affirmative action towards reporting stories to do with women business leaders in the two dailies explored. This may point to the Spartan nature of engagement that reporters have with their subjects. Combining both the negative and neutral will lead one to conclude that just 29.4% of all stories published over the research period cast women business leaders in a positive light. This means that the remaining 71% were either negative or indifferent to how this portrayal impacted the subject.

As a result of this outcome, this article will attempt to distil how leadership itself is framed as a concept and how leadership identity is constructed by the mainstream print media in Kenya. This interpretation or definition of leadership as arrived at by mainstream print media in Kenya, was used in this article to explore how the identity of women as leaders in the field of business was constructed. The outcome of this introspection presents two overarching themes; the first theme is that of leadership itself as a concept while the second points to the personality in question and how they exercise leadership. Taking this together, one can then assess how this interaction influences both the persona of the woman business leader and their concept of leadership. The outcome of this analysis reflects what the media encounters during interaction and forms the basis for what they transmit to the audience.

This interaction landscape is depicted in Table 5.

Table 11: Types of leadership and their landscape

LEADERSHIP	
Male leadership: Heroic/Strong/Authoritative - Traditional - Conservative	Female leadership Post Heroic/Collaborative/Consultative - Contemporary - Progressive

Using this perspective, the study found that though media framing of leadership in Kenyan mainstream print media has often included both the traditional/conservative and contemporary/progressive iterations of leadership, many journalists unwittingly retain just the conservative attributes of the traditional heroic leadership in mind when constructing a leadership identity, which they then use to measure women business leaders against.

In this school of thought leadership is seen as strong and authoritative and almost always masculine (Meindl et al., 1985). It celebrates personal and individual approaches to success and growth. This understanding of leadership derives from a show of masculinity with the male individual dominating and taking charge in a show of power (Rippin, 2007). Here the male business leader is seen as bold, adventurous, authoritative, and thus, in charge.

By the same token, this definition of leadership often detracts from other softer attributes of power and leadership and the other ways it is exercised like collaboration, teamwork, consultation,

and empathy, especially in the Kenyan and African settings. Often these qualities are associated more with women than men (Fletcher, 2004). These qualities, and others like them, are seen as soft and feminine and often the opposite of authoritative and in control and thus, weak.

In this school of thought, where feminine qualities are viewed as weaknesses, the writers then consider removing any trace of this femininity from the woman business leader, retreating to conservative and traditional thought, and in doing this, they feel they are doing her a favour or affirmative action in getting her to look more in control and authoritative (or more like a man). Women in this position will thus be aligned with or given attributes usually used to describe authoritative men and will be stripped of most, if not all, feminine attributes and in effect will be neutered/spayed.

In the study, in many of the stories identified, the women depicted were typically asexual and completely devoid of any femininity, leading the researcher to conclude that in mainstream Kenyan print media, conservative depictions of leadership, abound with male attributes seen as the epitome of leadership.

The study found that at such times, the leader's femininity is erased by removing their persona and reverting to the official title of their office such as *'the CEO'* or *'the Managing Director'* enabling the writers to hide the women business leaders behind a veil that attributes their actions to their offices in General.

31.0   Conclusion

The study found that the mainstream media have largely failed to play their role effectively in correctly framing the coverage of women business leaders in Kenya. In addition, when it comes to determining the merits of coverage, often the media will set one bar for men and another for women, meaning that in many cases women have to work extra hard as compared to their male counterparts to merit the same levels of coverage.

The findings from this study give   insight   and dimensions to the conceptualization of   the issue of leadership and how this is at play in the frames applied by writers either as pre-conceived notions or learned concepts. The research found that while women were able to match men and even surpass them in leadership in business, their methods or techniques were defined as softer and more discursive and thus dismissed as weak in the face of the more traditional authoritative techniques employed by men. This mode of interpretation is based on the Theory of Performativity under which behaviour that can be defined as leadership or not is driven mostly by normative cultural expectations or gendered norms. Performativity also holds that language can serve as a tool for social action and influence change (Cavanaugh, 2015).

Thus, the definition of how leadership is performed changes, depending on who is applying what technique to achieve leadership as an end or a goal. This is seen as better than ascribing straight jacket qualities and norms that are then the reference point for the concept of leadership and thus its portrayal.

32.0   Recommendations

Based on the findings outlined in the previous section, this study outlines the recommendations as follows:

First, women and women business leaders, especially those in positions of power and influence, should take charge of their narrative as opposed to leaving it open to the media to control as they wish. A proactive and carefully cultivated image, as well as a well-crafted narrative surrounding their persona and regarding their work, will go a very long way to turning the framing of their stories into a flattering and useful coverage akin to, if not better than that of their male counterparts.

Secondly, there is room for training of journalists to resist their biases to drive better coverage of women in all spheres. This may be led by organizations such as the BBC, who, through their 50/50 balanced coverage project, illustrate that they have already recognized that men get more

coverage than women in 'normal' situations. In addition, in Kenya, while the area of study of Framing is now fairly well researched, the area of leadership as a concept and social construct is still relatively new. This study found that while women are often held up to a manly or male standard of leadership for comparison, the definition of the notion of manliness as leadership or the Alpha male as the leader may be missing the mark as outlined in the leadership and framing literature encountered.

This study was not able to dwell at length on whether new and contemporary definitions of leadership that encompass more traits displayed by women leaders would garner an increased amount or more positive coverage. It would be interesting to gauge just how much this contributes to the current problem of poor and negative coverage of women business leaders.

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Women Experiences With Religion in The Novels of Three Kenyan Women Writers

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Abstract

The article analyses several novels by three distinguished Kenyan women writers from the viewpoint of the attitude of the authors (through their characters) to the role of religion in the life of Kenyan women and, on a larger scale, Kenyan society. While Margaret Ogola in her novels shows the revolutionary role of the Christian religion in the lives of Kenyan women (The River and the Source), and its role as the last resort for desperate situations in life (Place of Destiny), Pat Ngurukie focuses on the role of religion in marriage (The CEO Wife), and Rebeka Njau in her novel The Sacred Seed draws a semi-fantastic picture of the confrontation between good and evil forces, supported by supernatural powers. The study concludes that in the discussed novels religion is presented as a symbol of the forces that play a constructive role in the life of human beings and, on a wider scale, human societies, as opposed to the destructive powers, embodied by various negative characters, mostly of male origin, since the social ailments that are condemned by the authors are associated with the ideology of male dominance. The discussed novels also advocate constructive relationships between sexes, featuring positive male characters, that assist the heroines to overcome life hardships, and most of them are religious people. However, the authors' role models are those personages (primarily female) for whom religion is a driving force which enables them to follow a straight road in life, to vanquish many snares and obstacles, and to inspire future generations.

Key words: *Kenyan literature, Kenyan novel, religion in contemporary world, women's literature.*

33.0 Introduction

Even at a brief glance at Kenyan women's novels, one would notice that religion and religious experiences can hardly be deemed as one of the central themes. Thus, it may be worthwhile to attempt at least an initial research on those novels by Kenyan women writers, which reflect religious experiences as important and helpful factors in their characters' lives. This research may be even more relevant in the context of modern times, when religion, religious values and experiences appear to play a growing role in many African societies, Kenya not being an exception. This study attempts to analyze the novels by three well-known Kenyan women writers to trace the role of

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religion, its values and experiences in the lives of these novels' characters and its extrapolation to the life of the entire societies in which the described events take place.

34.0 Margaret Ogola

It appears that, among women writers, the most pronounced recognition of the role of religion in the life of Kenyan society and its members can be found in the novels of Margaret Ogola, one of the most prominent figures in modern Kenyan women's writing, who sadly passed away in 2011. Besides being a distinguished author and a medical doctor, Margaret Ogola was also a practising member of the Opus Dei, a Catholic organization *"whose members seek to implement* Christian ideals *in their occupations and in general society"* (Encyclopedia Britannica). Thus, it appears almost natural that in her books Dr. Ogola has paid considerable attention to the role of Christian religion and its various manifestations in the lives of her characters and the societies they live in. This can be traced already in her first and arguably the most known novel *The River and the Source* (1994), in which Christianity is shown as one of the main moving forces in the life of several generations of the Sigu family – and especially its female members. In fact, it may be stated that the novel traces the history of Christianity in Kenya, particularly in the author's native community of the Luo – from sheer surprise and incredulity *("Their god had a son! What sort of madness is that?"* – 53) to acceptance and embracement.

The family's devotion to Christianity, in fact, starts nearly from *"the source"*, Nyabera, the daughter of the family's matriarch Akoko. Nyabera, who inherited her mother's courage and intelligence, led the life of an exemplary traditional woman, mother and wife, but this did not bring her happiness, because the unfortunate death of her husband, that left her with only a daughter and no son, made her a pariah in her community - until the day (this part of the novel is set in the 1930s) when her village is visited by a Christian preacher.

> "Nyabera felt full of bitterness, and she decided that a change was necessary. […] She would cut herself off from her people. She would seek another life, a different way. […] Now in that village, a man had once come dressed in a white robe and speaking of a new God who made meaning out of sorrow and suffering and who particularly liked the poor, the orphan, and the widow. The man said the latter two were poor in spirit, for having no earthly support, they could better trust in God. In fact, he said that this God so loved people that he had sent his only son to live, suffer and die like man. Nyabera had had to leave at that point to attend to her chores. In any case she had only listened with half an ear, but having a retentive mind, she had occasionally mulled over his words wondering what he might have meant" (92).

Later, after talking at length with one of the new converts, Nyabera realized that she was ready to accept *"the new religion of Kristo"*. With her mother's blessings, she made her way to a nearby Catholic mission, where she was accepted and given the Christian name of Maria. *"The ritual and symbolism of the Catholic church were balm to her wounded soul"* (101), and soon she managed to persuade her mother and her younger relatives to join her at the mission. In their life journey, Christianity really played a decisive role and enabled them to overcome all the restrictions of traditional patriarchal society and become *"the source"* for several generations of independent and open-minded Kenyans. All their descendants retained the same piety towards religion, however, to a different extent, which can be illustrated by an episode when Maria's nephew Peter, who became a priest, is about to be ordained as a bishop. The family members accept the news with equal delight but with a varied degree of piety. *"Soon you will be a cardinal and then you can choose the Pope or be Pope yourself,"* declared Tony with proprietary pride. […]

> His mother, mission-bred as she was and still a firm Catholic after all these years, was all for it. Mark had his doubts. It wasn't that he was not a good Catholic; it was just that he did not believe as fervently as his wife did, though he thought that religion on the whole was a good thing. Like many other quite decent people his religion had become a convenient and unquestioning habit. Although he had four sons, he would have been reluctant to give one up, especially a clever and determined fellow like Tony. Like so many he had a notion at the back of his mind, never quite given voice, that only those who were a bit daft could possibly want to be priests. Yet he liked and respected Father Peter and liked a good sermon as much as anyone else. Such are the contradictions of human nature" (173-4).

However, Father Peter's example of dedicating his life to people through God inspired one of the young women in the family - Vera, the daughter of that same Mark (Maria's son-in-law) for whom religion was only *"a convenient and unquestioning habit"*. Unlike him, for his child and Maria's granddaughter Vera, an engineering student at the university, religion also became a real "*life jacket*" in one of the hardest moments of her life, after a breakup with her fiancé and harsh disappointment in her beloved but dissolute sister Becky. Upset and desperate, Vera pours her heart out to her best friend and room-mate Mary-Anne, who, in an attempt to console her, takes her to the religious ceremony of recollection, held *"for young single professional women or female university students"* by Opus Dei, which gives Vera a new understanding of the role of faith in her life and in the lives of other people. Impressed, she joins Opus Dei "as a non-marrying member" and decides "*to dedicate her life and her work to God, and there was no turning her back*" (249).

In light of the above description of Vera's personality and her religious devotion, a notable episode in the novel is the discussion about religion between Vera and her sister-in-law Wandia, the wife of her brother Aoro. In that exchange, Wandia, a medical doctor, sounds rather sceptical about religion, showing an almost atheistic stand, which Vera, although politely, tries to shatter.

> "As for God – hasn't he been completely forgotten if he ever existed?"
> "No," answered Vera with quiet conviction. "You can run away but you cannot forget. The memory of Him is deep there within you."
> "Oh!" Wandia looked into her subconscious, but no such memory stirred. "I can feel nothing."
> "Don't worry. There will be a day and a place" (262).

"The day" for Wandia comes soon – when she discovers that her son is seriously ill, and the dreadful disease of leukaemia is suspected. And then she finds out that fortunately *"it was not the most aggressive form, and there was even the possibility of a cure."* On hearing that Wandia abandoned her agnostic stance and went to church, a place whose doors she had not darkened since her wedding day […].

> 'God, I know you and I have not been great friends, but I have tried not to harm anyone, and I have served many others. This is my son who was born maimed but whom I love dearly. It is said you are loved. If that is true, then you should understand how much I love him. Please let my son be cured and from now onward, I shall regularly go to church and see to it that all the four children know You.' She could think of nothing else to say, but she stayed there kneeling for a very long time, head bowed before the tabernacle. Even she did not understand the significance of this act, for her knowledge of religion was almost non-existent (270-71).

Ogola's novel *Place of Destiny* (2005), the last one published during her lifetime, is marked by an even more personal attitude of the author to religion, since the life story of the character, a business lady Amor Lore, who desperately battles with cancer, considerably resembles that of the writer herself. Initially, Amor, a highly intelligent, self-conscious, and independent woman, displays a rather calm and detached attitude to religion.

> After a childhood filled with sermons of hell so graphic that one could feel the flames licking the hairs on one's skin, I find that I am now hardly moved by such reasons. Besides I have long since jettisoned my parents' faith – which I found simplistic and requiring constant fever-pitch emotionalism as a demonstration of being a true believer […] My father, an elder of the church and mindful of his position as head of the family, and his reputation of a righteous man, at first tried cajolement. But meeting stiff resistance from his puny teenage daughter, he finally called pastor Abraham Yoha Abishai and a mob of believers to pray over me. […] Soon, I was in high school as a boarder and at least my family didn't have to deal with my rebellion on a daily basis. However, this early experience was to determine my attitude towards religion for many years and I became more or less agnostic.
>
> My husband, on the other hand, being a convinced Catholic, has insisted on having the children baptized, catechized, and generally brought up Catholic. […] As for me, my creed has basically been – do whatever appears for the good, try to do no harm" (21-23).

However, "the day" comes for Amor as well – but alas, the reason is that one day she discovers that she is terminally ill. Facing an impending and near death, she inevitably puts to herself the questions that otherwise she may never have thought of.

> I looked at my body disintegration from within. My spirit – where is it?
> What of religion? Is it merely a grasping at straw – a denial of the bitter reality of the meaninglessness of life? What is truth? Is it merely relative or is it transcendental? Where does one turn to understanding? Why is religious sentiment the most pervasive reality and motive of almost all cultures? (51).

Unable to find the answers by herself, she turns to the person whom she always trusted more than anyone else – her beloved husband, a university professor of humanities and, as mentioned above, a devout Christian.

I need to talk. What else at this point can be of as great an importance for me as this final departure, this going away? But from what to what and why? Do we die like animals, unknowing, unaware? Tell me my love – what have the historians noted, the philosophers taught, the great religions hoped? Please talk to me (53).

Amor's husband, who, as she herself confesses, *"more than I has been a believer, with well thought-out concepts of understanding being and its purpose"*, in his answer is *"burdened by the weight of neither wanting to cause pain, nor to give false, starry-eyed affirmations in the face of the finality of death"* (53). Thus, he says:

Throughout known history, even the most primitive of humankind have pondered this subject. It appears that the collective human instinct has tended towards the concept of an afterlife. People have staked great fortunes and even life itself on the belief that after this life there is continuity in some state of being, whether understood as a circumscribed consciousness, a personal self-knowing spirit, or an actual physical existence in a different though material place. Of course, this may only be an extension of the powerful survival instinct that all living things appear to possess. And for us humans this world, with all its problems, is the only world we really know and feel safe in.

He was silent for a while. Then, abandoning History, Philosophy and Comparative Religion and his elegant exegesis, he says quite simply: *"But for me, the simple truth is that I cannot believe that after you die, I would never see you again."*

And this statement appears to me to be the quintessential, self-evident truth. *"The spirit is the receptacle of knowledge and love. And love and knowledge endure"* (53-54).

Amor's final revelation about the life of the spirit after physical death is confirmed further in the novel by Igana Mago, a young physician who works in the hospice for cancer patients – where Amore spent the last weeks of her life.

There are few atheists in this place of destiny. I personally have never met any. I suppose that this is because by the time one reaches here, there is neither room nor time left for posturing of any kind. At the very least there are hopeful atheists - *"atheists"* hoping that somehow, they have been wrong and there is, after all, some continuation of the powerful experience of having lived. Such persons are, by then, rather more agnostic than atheist, atheism being the bleakest of creeds. Materialism, scientific or humanistic, is cold consolation when one is dying" (78).

As noted above, it is not surprising that Margaret Ogola, who was a practising Christian and an active member of Opus Dei, makes the religious experiences of her characters one of the prominent themes in her books. She convincingly demonstrates how the Christian religion transforms the lives of African women, giving them new horizons, perspectives and choices. The author also shows how her characters, alienated from spiritual values by the vicissitudes of modern life, find the way back to their spirituality – which, however, on many occasions happens in the gravest moments of their lives, when faith becomes their last resort. It is also notable that Ogola did not draw an absolutely ideal picture of the role of religion in Kenyan society. In her posthumously published novel *Mandate of the People* (2012) she commented on how religious rhetoric is used for political purposes. Still, religion in its true sense in her works remains the strengthening power, reinforcing the lives of many.

35.0   Pat Ngurukie

Pat Wambui Ngurukie is one of the most prolific Kenyan women authors, who started her writing career already in the 1980s, having authored several novels. Unlike Ogola, Ngurukie does not treat religious experiences as one of the central themes in her works; however, in some of her novels, this theme is given considerable attention. As an example, one can refer to the novel *The CEO* Wife, published in 2007. The novel narrates the story of Wanja Warui, an exemplary wife and a devout born-again Christian, who suddenly discovers the unfaithfulness of her husband, Fred. For Wanja, life has nearly ended – she cherished her marriage most of all in her life – and she is at a complete loss. Naturally, she seeks a solution in religion – first talking to the people who share her beliefs and convictions, such as her best friend Margaret, with whom they met when involved in the Christian Union rallies at the main campus.

> "How, just how could Fred do that? Are you sure it is not a hoax, a made-up story?"
> Margaret was shocked and confused. It took a long time before the two ladies calmed down and prayed together. Wanja felt a lot better after sharing and praying with her long time prayer partner and trusted friend, Margaret.
> "I always knew that in this world, God had given me physical shoulders to cry on and that's you. Without a doubt I knew I would count on you. Thanks Margaret."
> "That is what Sisters-in-Christ are for," Margaret replied. "The Bible encourages us to bear one another's burden, for that way, the burden is made lighter for the one carrying it," she paused. "It is my sincere prayer that all this is going to be solved amicably and Fred will come back and both of you will continue with life as usual" (19-20).

Similar support is given to Wanja by Margaret's husband Otieno, who, *"a civil engineer by profession, embraced Christianity as a little boy in primary school and he had never looked back"*. His last advice to Wanja before she left their home was to remember that those who trust in Jesus will not be put to shame. *"It may look like your world has crumbled but be of good cheer. Jesus is very near. He will never leave not forsake you. Trust Him to handle this situation his way and not your way"* (21).

At the same time, Fred, once a *"born again, Holy Spirit filled, and a Bible Study Coordinator in his university days"* (7), neglects his previous Christian convictions, namely, those concerning Christian marriage, and tries to force Wanja into admitting his young lover Njeri as Wanja's co-wife. Wanja's desperation grows, and that is when the divine force itself comes to her assistance.

At the end of the decisive conversation with her husband, when he contemptuously throws his wedding ring at her feet – "me and you *finito, kwisha kabisa*" (33) – she again rushes to her last resort: *"Lord Jesus, help me. Don't let me pass out please."*

"My child, do not be afraid. I am with you in joy and in pain. I will never leave or forsake you." The reassuring still voice spoke back to her. This gentle whisper in the depths of her soul brought only a fraction of relief, but it was enough to ease the pain and allow her to breathe (33). This divine voice speaks to Wanja several times, for instance, when she visits Julie Njambi, another one of her friends, who advises her to share her difficulties with Pastor Anthony Onyango, a known preacher who helped many people. Conversations with him became a real salvation to Wanja. It was Pastor Onyango who convinced Wanja that her Christian duty was to try to put her broken marriage together. With this in mind, and God at heart, Wanja starts the necessary attempts – first of all, she tries to reason with Fred, which is in vain. Desperate with her failure, she locks herself in her bedroom.

With head bowed, body convulsing in sobs, she buried her face in the bedspread and cried out to the only One who could make sense of her life.

"Lord, I need a miracle… I am at the end of my rope."

"My child, my grace is sufficient for you."

The scripture passage came to mind again, and this time she remembered the rest of the verse: "for my power is made perfect in weakness."

Having cried to God, she could feel His presence. God was there with her. He saw how weak she was. And he knew what she needed… not just one miracle, but many of them. *"First, that Fred would stop his wayward lifestyle and return to her"* (119).

Meanwhile, Fred – with the "help" of his young lover Njeri – starts drowning his sore conscience in alcohol (with a family record of alcohol addiction), and in one of his rare moments of sobriety the miracle happens – he starts questioning himself, how he, a once devout Christian, caring husband and father, has turned into what he is now. Stabbed by the conscience, he decides to leave his lover and return to his wife – and, not knowing how to arrange it, calls Pastor Onyango and asks for his assistance. After a chain of vicissitudes (among them Fred's drunken escapades, ending with him sneaking, in Wanja's absence, into their bedroom and falling into a jagged sleep with Wanja's photo in their hands – in which state Wanja catches him when she comes back), Fred and Wanja reconcile, and their family life starts anew, with active support of Pastor Onyango and family psychologist Mbithi. However, Fred's former lover Njeri in her own turn grows desperate about Fred returning to his wife and tries to get Fred back, faking the story of her pregnancy. Fred, worried about Njeri, arranges a meeting with her for the final "having out" – and on his way to her house meets his death. Njeri's former lover Njogu, a gangster and a criminal leader, realizing that Njeri would not return to him, decides to take revenge on her by killing his rival. He ambushes Fred at Njeri's house and shoots at him several times with a silenced gun. Severely wounded, Fred is found by patrolling policemen and taken to Nairobi Hospital, where after a while he dies.

In our view, it would be the most appropriate to interpret Ngurukie's novel from the perspective of Christian religious views, since the novel clearly advocates most of the guiding Christian values, which are embodied in the novel's positive characters – Wanja and her friends, Pastor Onyango, family psychologist Mbithi and some others. Fred, Wanja's husband, presents a classic image of a "lost sheep" - once a devout Christian, he is seduced by the evil forces (apparently embodied in the novel by Njeri and Njogu), and not only succumbs to them but, moreover, being blinded by evil, cruelly mistreats his loving and devoted wife and abuses his once firm Christian convictions. Fred's death at the novel's end may be interpreted in two ways – as the revenge of the evil forces for his attempt to return to the right track, but also – as a divine punishment for

mistreating such an angel-like creature as Wanja and neglecting a considerable while the Christian faith. It is also notable that closely related to Fred's death is the value of repentance – before his death, he comes to conscience, and sufficient time is given to him by the divine powers to repent his sins and ask the Almighty for forgiveness.

> The Lord God Almighty is a God of redemption for anyone who repents and turns to him. And as he repented to the depth of his fading soul, a divine conversation was going on deep inside him even as he lay unconscious to the rest of the world.
> "I have summoned you by name," the words came loudly.
> "Yes, Lord," Fred answered in his spirit.

As his heartbeat slowed, as he drew his last breath, Fred was overwhelmed with a sense of deep sorrow, deep regret for all he had allowed himself to be, for all the times he had chosen to go his own way instead of following the Lord. And yet even at the heart of his sorrow, he could feel a ray of light begin to shine; spreading knowledge of love and peace that were deeper and more infinite than anything he had ever known.

> "You are mine. Fear not."
> "Oh Lord, God Almighty, forgive me. I am sorry for all what I have done. I've been a prodigal son. But now Lord I am coming home," he repented in his heart.
> "My child, I have redeemed you," the voice intoned.
> "Yes, my Father. Thank You."
> "You are mine and I will never leave nor forsake you."
>
> As Fred moved away from all he had known in this life, his sorrow combined with the deeper peace and love… love that would guide him into his Father's arms.
> His last thoughts were both simple and profound" (229-230)

Also obvious in the novel is the motif of heavenly reward – first of all for Wanja for her devotion, patience, sympathy and faithfulness to Christian values. During her undesired separation with Fred, she runs by chance at a function into Philip Maina, the old flame of her youth, whom she used to date before meeting Fred – but Maina went for studies abroad and made a successful career in Canada, deciding at one point to return to the land of his birth. Maina, himself a devote Christian, on learning about Wanja's plight, does everything to console her in a brotherly way. He soon realized that their old attraction is back, but tries his best to assist Wanja in restoring her marriage. Fred's demise opens a new way in their lives – after the mourning period finishes, they hope to contract a marriage – as put by Maina, *"let me be there for you and the children; give me a chance to be used by God to help bring joy and laughter in your lives"* (250-1). Wanja also decides to further her education for the benefit of other people, and to study counselling and Christian writing at a Christian university.

36.0   Rebecca Njau

An unusual example of depicting the relations between women characters and religious beliefs can be found in the novel *The Sacred Seed* (2003), written by a veteran Kenyan author Rebecca Njau, who became famous with her novels and plays already in the 1970s. To start with, the novel does not focus on Christianity – rather, the author puts into the centre a certain synthetic religion, based on African traditional notions of the supernatural.

The book tells the story of resistance of a village community, leading a peaceful and spiritual life in the sacred forest under the guidance of two courageous women – Mumbi, a forest prophetess, and her assistant Tesa, the main character of the novel, musician and artist. The community, supported by supernatural powers and obviously symbolizing tradition in its positive aspects, and the forces of good, is endangered by badly used and oppressive modernity, or the forces of evil, embodied in the novel by the figure of dictator President Chinusi, dwelling in the capital city of Raiboni (an anagram of Nairobi) in his fortified residence called The Castle. Chinusi and his henchmen (among them the local pastor, who was waging long-term war against Mumbi's community) want to get hold of the forest in order to demolish it and use the land for their own purposes. However, through their own courage and with the help of divine interference, the members of the community manage to overthrow the hateful dictator and give the people of the country (whose name is not specified in the book) hope for a brighter future.

In the novel Njau extensively uses mythology, both traditional myths of her native people of Kikuyu and mythology-based images of her own creation. As noted by Lucy Maina,

Njau exploits myths to envisage a moral society that is free from vices… She uses myths to criticise and to condemn immorality even in the highest institutions in society, namely the church and the state… As an advocate for moral living she utilizes myth to reward the virtuous and at the same time punish evil doers irrespective of their social status" (292-3).

Mythology and oral tradition abundantly provide the novel fabric with its specific features. On the level of plot structure, the novel also closely follows the mythological scheme of the quest. On the level of narrative mode, the third-person narrative is frequently and artfully interspersed with first-person told songs and folktales.

Supernatural powers manifest themselves in the novel indirectly; being frequently mentioned in myths and stories told by the author and the characters. "Physically" these powers take the shape of near-natural phenomena and appear only in crucial moments – mainly, to send severe warnings to the negative characters of the story and to inspire the good ones. For example, women, who are supporting Tesa and Mumbi in their struggle against the evil president, are given a sign confirming that the ancestral powers are with them – Mumbi gives to Tesa a castor seed, which she calls sacred and which, when planted, will give a fantastic crop that will symbolize the beginning of a new life for the people. Tesa plants the seed, and in an amazingly short time, the crop ripens – it is only one gourd, but of unusual size and decorated with beautiful natural (rather, supernatural) ornaments. Unfortunately, the gourd is stolen by the accomplice of evil forces, the pastor, and given as a present to the president himself. Ellen, the pastor's assistant, plants the seeds taken from the gourd – but only one seed grows, and it grows into a frighteningly looking ugly plant. Although the plant is covered with large gourds of a similar look, when Ellen cuts them, she finds that all the gourds are rotten inside and filled with worms. Moreover, on the next day, she finds that her legs are covered with blisters containing similar worms; no modern medicine can heal this strange disease, but when Ellen comes to Mumbi's forest, repents and disjoins from the forces of evil, Tesa washes Ellen's

legs with the water from the sacred pond, and the blisters disappear overnight. Meanwhile, the ugly plant, which remains in the yard, in the end, falls and ruins the pastor's house, and pthe astor also finds his feet covered with worm-filled blisters. The gourd, which was given by the pastor to president Chinusi, not only inflicts similar blisters on the president's body, but turns Chinusi's dreams into horrifying nightmares. Pastor repents his sins to the community's people just before his death and dies at least with hope; Chinusi does not repent – and dies painful and ignominious death, on the brink of insanity, behind the walls of his deserted Castle. Thus the divine forces, after series of warnings, spared the good and punished the evil ones.

Such examples of supernatural interference are multiple in the text; even in the ones quoted above it is more or less easy to discern the symbols with multiple and interrelated meanings – for example, the gourd is rather reminiscent of the one which is given to an obedient and a disobedient boy in many African tales; if used properly, it brings prosperity, if not – it inflicts death. At the same time, the gourd is also well reminiscent of a pumpkin from Okot P'Bitek's famous poem *Song of Lawino* – the pumpkin which shall not be uprooted and which symbolizes the traditional African culture, the culture of myths and divinity, after all. But what is even more notable is the fact that this mythological layer of the text is tightly interwoven in the novel with episodes set in recognizable modern African reality – people's strikes, political rallies, the author vividly describes receptions in the president's palace, his inspectional visits of the city streets, his plans to win the coming elections (which, he is afraid, Tesa might ruin), etc., etc. All this is done in a recognisable mode of political satire – and this is another layer, both stylistic and ideological, easily discernable in the book.

Along with that, the book appears to contain yet another layer – that of an ethical parable, prescribing the readers the pattern of behaviour in a situation similar to the described one. You will be supported by ancestral powers only if you rely on your own courage, says the writer – in the decisive moments of the novel President Chinusi orders sending bulldozers and even the police force in order to eliminate the forest and the community; however, the people, being sure that the divine powers are with them, form a live shield around the forest; their strength and the persuasive speeches of Tesa and Mumbi drive the machines and the policemen away. Because of their semi-divine origin and, mostly, because of their inner courage and faith in their cause the characters are able to enlist the support of supernatural forces, and in the end the forces of good prevail.

In light of the above, Njau's novel could essentially be deemed a mythological parable about evil forces being punished by the forces of good – only this parable is set in the political reality of modern Africa, and while the evil forces are pursuing *political* evil aims (dictatorial rule), the forces of good are determined to carry out *politically* positive program (overthrowing of the dictator and establishing the people's rule in the country). The leaders of both forces are also of semi-divine origin, which is indicated by their names and magical powers they possess. Chinusi bears the name of a man-eating sea spirit from the Swahili folklore (and the novel contains his biography confirming that Chinusi is in fact a descendant of this evil spirit); he is also an evil magician – at night he is able to turn into animals, such as chameleon and tortoise. Mumbi's name indicates her link with the legendary foremother of the Kikuyu people; she knows the language of animals, is helped by the divine bird Fina and can heal all diseases, both mental and physical. Tesa's name is derived from Swahili verb "-tesa" meaning "to torture" – and in fact, her life in the novel is rather torturous: in the city she was raped twice by Chinusi, who, in full accordance with his evil mythological origin, increases his strength and abilities when he rapes strong and talented women – that is exactly what makes Tesa leave the city and seek protection in Mumbi's forest; but even in the forest her trials do not end – her magical abilities, which she inherited from her foremothers (she is also the healer but, at the same time, can inflict deadly curse) do not allow her to marry the man she loves; thus Tesa has to sacrifice her private life for the benefit of her people.

In relation to the role of religion in Njau's novel, one question comes almost inevitably: does this book condemn Christian religion, embodied by the figure of the pastor, in favor of traditional religious beliefs? We suggest not – the figure of the pastor rather represents the abuse of religion for evil purposes; namely,

putting it to the service of the political regime (and politically oriented misuse of religious rhetoric is, as noted above, a well-known phenomenon in many societies, Kenya not being an exception). In fact, the pastor is shown in the novel as a rather civic person, who pretends to exercise his clerical duties of fighting the *"pagan"* forest community only for the purpose of pleasing Chinusi, in order to partake in the machinations of the dictator – and he is punished by the forces of good for betraying them. Njau, coming from a strong Christian background (her mother was an evangelist, and Njau herself worked with the National Council of Churches of Kenya, where she was the editor of the council's magazine *Target*), seems, as Ogola did, to reject totally the use of religion for any purposes except its true ones – to cleanse people's souls, to give them strength and moral orientations. In that sense, for Njau any religion that serves this primary purpose is worth following, be it ancient or modern. Njau rather clearly stated her position about religion in her interview with Tom Odhiambo in the journal *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*, which she described using an example:

> Now that we are talking about the church, I worked with the church for fifteen years. I remember when I came to settle here, there were preachers around and they'd put on their music very, very loud so that we can hear them. And one day I was seated here writing and there was a church here that had started, and they would put the loudspeaker facing here. […] And when I went out and looked at the congregation, there were only four people in that *kachurch*. Do you know what I did? I took the speaker and turned it to face them. So, later they came here—a man and his wife—to talk to me. To tell me that am I not afraid of going to hell because what I did, God does not like. And you know what I told them? In the end of times when it comes and we are being shown where to go, there'll be a big wide road and a tiny one. The big wide road, maybe it will be pointed out to me where all those people who have been helping people, who have been living well, good ones, would be directed to. And you, pastor, and your wife, you'll be surprised because you'll be led to a road that leads to Jahannam, everlasting fire.
>
> I preached to them. I told them even in the olden times, our grandfathers, our fathers, they went to pray under the tree. Either Mugumo or whatever, and there they were quiet. They knew it was a holy place they were in. Here in your church, you go in people are shouting, laughing, talking, you do not even respect the house of God. I wanted them to learn about the old people of the past. They believed in god, whoever they thought was god, and they respected him. These ones here, you hear them shouting to the highest, they are not really interested in you; they want to be heard outside so that more and more people can go to their church. So, I feel sad about the church because it should be at the forefront of the struggle against suffering (23).

37.0 Conclusion

It can be concluded that in the novels discussed above, religion, be it Christianity, as in the novels by Ogola and Ngurukie, or a certain imaginary religion, based on African tradition, as in the novel by Njau, is presented as a symbol of all the positive forces that play a constructive role in the life of human beings and, on a wider scale, human societies, as opposed to the destructive powers, embodied by the recognizable characters of *"real"* scoundrels, created by Ogola and Ngurukie, or a symbolic villainous figure of Chinusi, whose human vices are *"enforced"* by evil magical powers. This contraposition takes a special meaning in women's literature, because the positive forces in the discussed novels, supported by religious values, are represented by main female characters, since women are the real and main constructive force in the life of any community, starting from the level of its physical creation. Social ailments that are condemned by the authors – tribalism,

sexism, patriarchy, gender discrimination, violence –up to now (and maybe now especially) are associated with the ideology of male dominance, embodied in the discussed texts by the negative characters of male origin. It should be noted that, that women authors do not intend to *"pay revenge"* on the opposite sex or to glorify women over men – they advocate constructive relationships between sexes, based on parity and equality. The discussed novels also feature positive male characters, which are really abundant in the novels by Ogola and Ngurukie, and are represented a bit more modestly in Njau's book; these characters assist the heroines tin overcoming life hardships, and most of them are religious people. The authors also create negative female characters (e.g., Becky in Ogola's first novel), who ignore or neglect values brought by religion – and are inevitably punished for this. And of course, the authors' role models that they offer to their readers are those personages (primarily female) for whom religion is not even *"a convenient and unquestioning habit"*, but a driving force which enables them to follow a straight road in life, to vanquish many snares and obstacles, and to inspire future generations.

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Enhancing Sustainable Housing Through Women's Cultural Skills, Experiences, and Knowledge

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Abstract

This article focuses on women's thoughts and experiences in relation to sustainable development in the Maasai community. Women in the Maasai culture have been perceived as the key change agents in housing as they transfer design and construction knowledge from one generation to the other. However, the elements of globalization and modernization have transformed the housing sector design and construction to embrace the Western approach, thus creating a cultural requirement gap in the housing design and construction as upheld by the Maasai. This study determines the role of women as change agents in housing in the conventional sector; assesses the relevance of cultural identity presented in the housing design and development; and looks at the threat posed by modernity in conventional housing design and development among the Maasai culture. Qualitative research approach and content analysis were considered as the best methodological approach for the study.

The study selectively identified and analysed reports on housing characteristics in Kajiado County, as presented by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) and the Society for International Development (SID), 2013 Reports. The assessment criteria identified housing building materials such as, for roofing: tiles, grass, makuti, corrugated iron sheets, tin, asbestos sheets, mud/dung, concrete, among other roofing materials; for the walls: stone, bricks/block, mud/wood, mud/cement, wood only, corrugated iron sheets, grass/reeds, tin, and other; and for the floor: cement, tiles, wood, earth, household, among other materials. Therefore, due to the strong cultural practices that have been relayed over the years, the role of women in housing design and construction is still strong in the Maasai community. However, globalization and, especially urbanization bringing in industrial housing products and legal frameworks and policies that change women's role in housing, have presented a number of challenges to the Maasai women while undermining the local culture.

Key words: *change-agent, cultural identity, housing, social identity, sustainability, women.*

38.0 Introduction

Adam, Othman, and Halim (2021) identify Indigenous knowledge as a recognition of information that is especially associated with unique Indigenous tribes or groups. This knowledge is usually

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conveyed to generations through statements or actions. In the conventional days, the information used to be relayed through verbal communication platforms such as dances and folk songs, rituals, and folklores. As a result, the Indigenous groups or communities participated in the essential role of maintaining cohesive and dynamic association with biodiversity. Ogar et al. (2020) advocate for Western systems to adopt Indigenous knowledge in solving challenges presented in modern emerging issues, such as biodiversity. Therefore, Indigenous knowledge has been deemed critical in the management of natural resources and the conservation of biodiversity in modern days. According to Paniagua-Zambrana et al. (2016), during periods of change and disturbance, Indigenous knowledge transfer is as important as Indigenous knowledge itself as the process benefits the Indigenous people's livelihoods.

The United Nations, through a document titled "*Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*" support the process of connecting indigenous and modern knowledge through the three sustainable levels of development: environment, social, and economic management as stipulated in 169 objectives and 17 goals (Leal-Filho, 2018). Waage et al. (2015) believe that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) approach focuses on governance, environmental justice, and partnership among member states. This study will focus on knowledge transfer and Sustainable Development Goal number 11 and 13. The United Nations (2016) Report identifies SDG 11 to address issues of human settlements with more focus on vulnerable populations and accessibility to a sustainable environment. This approach emphasises the use of local building materials to boost the local construction firms. In addition, knowledge transfer in local settings is also presented in SDG number 13, advocating for the management of change and the effects of climate change through the introduction of knowledge transfer strategies such as education, training, and capacity-building programs for climate change control.

Women in traditional African settings played a special role in maintaining culture and relaying the same information to the future generation. The Maasai culture mandates women to be at the centre of *manyatta* housing construction where they function as architects and developers of housing. The globalization era has altered traditional cultural requirements in housing construction, thus making it challenging for the locals to ensure the protection of the environment and support sustainable development. Globalization has led to high gender inequality in the modern-day Maasai housing environment because the place of women as key change agents in housing construction has been reduced to being passive participants. This shift in cultural requirements goes against the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, Article 17 (Joseph & Castan, 2013); as well as Articles 17 and 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 (Lauterpacht, 1948); Article 13 and 16 of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women 1966 (Union, Inter-Parliamentary, & United Nations, 2003); and Article 43, Section 1b of the Kenya Constitution 2010. As a result, the cultural knowledge in housing has been eliminated or static while Western housing culture has been adopted by most members of the Indigenous community in Kajiado County. This study will attempt to address the challenges Maasai women face as housing change agents in their quest for knowledge transfer in existing and future generations in the globalized world.

1.1 The Historical Reflection of Culture in the Construction of Houses

Vuong, et al. (2019) affirm that there has been a slow pace in cultural evolution, especially architectural designs and housing development. The historical reflection of the culture in the construction or design of structures can be seen in the Anglo-American rural cemetery design, the Soviet housing structures under Stalin's leadership, and the wooden longhouses across the Pacific Northwest Coast, among others. The French occupation of Hanoi and Vietnam in 1859 paved the way for the creation of French Indochina in 1887 and thereafter, in 1919, the formulation and implementation of the Cornudet Law to guide urban planning and building of the colonies. This Law advocated for the integration of the modern Western construction approach with native aesthetics as well as considering the humid tropical climate, thus crafting an Indochina style. The

Indochina style fused the conventional Vietnamese housing culture design with the European housing construction design elements for both practical and aesthetic purposes. Vietnamese architecture from the conventional period to modern-day though has faced challenges from European and Chinese culture, especially in interior design, the indigenous housing design has been consistent over the years (Vuong, et al. (2019). In this context of colonialism, Vale (2008) believes that buildings should be in a position to *"express the political balance of power in the society that produces them"* (p. 13). In addition, architecture assists the locals in expressing the importance of issues in a plural and complex society and thus acts as a platform for freedom or democratic ideals.

Shi (2006) identifies that the Chinese culture in architecture has been neutralized by war, political upheaval and Westernization leading to the destruction of the youngest Turk's artwork. There were traces of flourishing modernist art linked with *'the Shanghai-based Breakers Society (Juelan She)'* and some coteries sharing the same interest in the 1930s and 1940s. However, despite the existence of traces of this culture in Shanghai, modernist architecture barely gets registration from histories and architectural guides. The main reason for the lack of listing of the architecturally designed building is due to the belief that conventional architecture should be composed of ancient images or revivalist structures with Baroque, mock-Gothic, or upturned, characterizing Chinese roofing, or neoclassical details. The Chinese in the 1920s and 1930s were able to maintain conventional architectural knowledge by fusing traditional knowledge with modern knowledge in colleges such as Pennsylvania and Beaux Art Bastion. However, the role of women in this culture was limited in transmitting traditional architectural knowledge to future generations.

According to Steinhardt, Jeffrey, and Tony (2011 architecture is among the foundations of Chinese cultural treasures and modernity is only affected by its decorative details. The culture played a key role in shaping the cultural, national, and social identity from 1900 to 1949, portraying a strong cultural heritage across China. Wang (2016) also confirms that during the 1900 to 1949 period Chinese architecture was influenced significantly by foreign culture despite architecture playing a key role in influencing nationalism, national identity, and collective memory. However, Chinese culture was maintained through the development of regulations that governed the construction of houses. Moreover, investing in education for conventional cultural knowledge transfer in building construction designs ensured that the Chinese culture had little foreign infiltration (Carter & Sarvimaki, 2018; Weston, 2002).

Gao and Wu (2017) acknowledge the emergence of global crises in housing development in rural areas as well as in the rural way of life in developing countries in the contemporary world. From 2012 to 2016, there were more than 4000 villages which were designated as national conventional villages in which some of the villages were listed as World Cultural Heritage sites such as Hongcun, Kaiping Dialogue and Xidi (Zhou, Zhong & Liu, 2015). The uniqueness of these villages is that they have artistic, architectural, cultural, and historical value that represents the Chinese way of life in modern society. Despite the government setting up policies governing the construction and design of these houses, globalization has become a major challenge to protecting these cultural village houses as more people move to urban centres in search of greener pastures.

One of the major impacts of colonial rule in the post-colonial globalized world was associated with restructuring the role of women and girls in African society. In this context, Wang (2016) acknowledges that women are able to engage in some tasks, which were initially a reserved for men. However, the Maasai have been among the major African cultures that have been able to resist the modernization effect on culture in the post-post-colonial era. This study focuses on the Maasai women's knowledge sharing in developing houses in consideration of sustainable cultural practices in the globalized world.

1.2 Problem Statement

Knowledge sharing has been a key element in African society, used to preserve and relay cultural practices to future generations. This issue affirms Lenku's (2019) analysis stating that omitting cultural knowledge transfer into modern institutions is a practice that most governments and other

actors do not consider. As a result, the place of women as housing change agents in society has been reduced through the elimination of culture in housing construction despite the effort Maasai women have engaged in through information sharing over the years.

1.3 Goal of the Study

The goal of this study is to analyse the Maasai women's role as housing change agents through cultural knowledge and skill transfer over the generations and its implication in modern housing well-being.

39.0   Literature Review

2.1 Diverse Social-Cultural Beliefs on Housing

Heydaripour, Hesamizade and Esfahani (2017) report that what is perceived as quantity and quality by different communities' settlements to be composed of diverse cultural beliefs gradually changes into societies' lifestyle components. Therefore, culture can be defined as an incredibly important aspect of building construction and design. In this context, any house that does not meet the cultural standards in the spatial division is usually rated as improper and thus leads to the locals adjusting some elements in the housing plan. This adjustment is to consider the different sexes, ages, and public or private spaces that are deemed important in housing design and construction (Heydaripour, Hesamizade, & Esfahani, 2017). The approach assists in bringing out the elements of human mentality and habits, lifestyles, as well as adjustment to different environments. In addition, Agboola and Zango (2014) believe that the process of housing should be founded on environmental factors such as the human life cycle, building materials, or physical needs. This view supports Agboola and Zango's (2014) analysis that housing will only be deemed complete when there is population existence that supports the cultivation of close family relationships; and biological, physical, and material needs. The guiding concept behind *wuros*' construction is the pastoralist ecological niche that places focus on community land ownership.

Due to the historical importance of the place of culture in housing, "The City Summit" in 1996 introduced the element of culture in the global debate on urbanization to be part of sustainable development (Duxbury, Hosagrahar, & Pascual, 2016). The Summit believed that conventional culture should be a critical component in building local well-being and promoting equity in society. Therefore, this approach promoted an integrative culture where the locals feel part of the global community via the cultural touch integrated into developing houses. In this context, culture is an essential component that should be considered in dynamic urban development that is in a position of advocating for a participatory construction process by availing local knowledge in the construction of city houses with specific localities (Duxbury, Hosagrahar, & Pascual, 2016). As a result, the integration of cultural elements in city development can support environmental sustainability and unlock locals' inspiration to add local knowledge in improving the environment.

Tjahjono (2000) identifies the emergence of modern construction approaches has exposed local communities to cultural housing behaviours. The major factor that affected the sustainable development advocated by local cultures in the modern-day construction industry, is the notion of equating contemporary housing development to modernity while conventional housing practices are strongly associated with backwardness. This detachment of cultures has led to slack in information relay from one generation to the other in the construction of indigenous houses using Indigenous knowledge thus exposing the future generation to information limitation and lack of positivity towards blending traditional housing knowledge with modernity (Tjahjono, 2000).

The touch of culture was evident in the Fulbe clan of a Nigerian' Fulani pastoral community constructed of tiny tents as well as hamlets as their home to blend with their lifestyle (Daramola, 2006). The homestead design, called *Wuro*, started with a single hut within a larger or smaller compound to form a village, an urban setup or a town. However, the structure would only be considered complete when a woman is engaged in the process of house development. According to

Kintz (1989), a home has a special asset when women infuse their emotions and labour to invest in its physical structural development over the years. Therefore, for a house to become a home, the skills and sensibilities of a woman are needed to design it to be a more intimate environment of reproduction and hierarchy, and this is the knowledge that women relay over generations. Kintz (1989) identifies Fulani women to be at the centre of designing and developing *Wuro* in the conventional practice while also attempting to blend conventional knowledge with modernity through training at colleges.

Chege et al. (2015) describe that the Maasai families reside in a Manyatta-type of enclosed housing where thorny bush fences are erected to protect the community and livestock from predators and intruders. The homestead is surrounded by 10 to 20 huts (*Inkajijik* or *boma)*. In the process of design and construction of the homestead men and women have special roles. According to Chege et al. (2015), women are mandated to not only design but also to construct houses, milk the cows, gather firewood, fetch water, and prepare food for the families while the young men look after livestock and maintain security with the guidance of the elders who manage the community's daily operations.

In relation to the Maasai cultural practice that supports women's role in housing development, Ayubu, Cleempoel, Kombe and Janssens (2019) identify a wholesome society culture that includes such aspects as knowledge, art, belief, identity, customs and other practices and capabilities practised by members of the society. In the same context, Ayubu et al. (2019) describe culture as a multifaceted interlinked phenomena that involves the psychological perspective (what individuals think through beliefs, attitudes, and values) and the physiological aspects (what individuals do through life activities, artefacts, cultural products, and artworks). The cultural relevance is presented in its ability to permeate the functional and physical elements of the Maasai homestead. This is supported by the fact that culture assists individuals to associate with their physical phenomenon. Ayubu et al. (2019) affirm that the indigenous Maasai houses, constructed by women, are tangible reflections of the employment of culture to coherently entrench the coexistence of humans and the fragile natural environment.

The sharing of knowledge and experience in the structuring and organization of indigenous Maasai homesteads are usually dictated by social ties, environmental dynamics, cultural practices, folklore, rituals as well as symbolic values (Ayubu et al., 2019). These elements that are shared through generational knowledge of Manyata housing development revolve around the cultural axis "*Kopkop*." In this context, the cultural axis defines the homestead's main gate "*Kishomi o nkishu*" orientation. This is where the design on the main gate subdivides the homestead into two perspectives; the right perspective involves "*entaloishi e tatene*" usually built by the first wife, while on the left side known as *"entaloishi e kedyange*" built by the second wife. There is alternation of wives on either side through a culturally designed structure. The symbolic twig also known as "*Oltim,*" represents the elder homestead, the main gate, and the Kraal also known as "*boo o nkishu*" is linked by an axis. On the other hand, the homestead organization designs an ideal homestead to include a fence, a dwelling unit, as well as the livestock's security area organized into three concentric circles for security reasons to restrict attack from potential enemies and carnivores. The third level of hierarchy, presents the cattle kraal as the most sacred environment among the Maasai community, which emerges from Maasai folklore. In this context, the kraal defines the homestead design by presenting the shape, size, and central position, thus Maasai principles requiring one third of the livestock kraal and calves' pen to occupy a quarter diameter of the livestock kraal. Finally, House forms present the last level in Maasai construction where every woman builds her own house.

2.2 Women's Skill and Knowledge Sharing in Housing Design/Construction

Mottaki and Imani (2017) observe that the involvement of women in housing construction is associated with designers of homes. Therefore, the construction of homes is a platform where the Maasai women exchange their Indigenous knowledge in construction (intangible heritage) to future generations. The major types of houses constructed among the Maasai communities are *enkaji*

emodioi (cow dung developed homes); the *enkaji orkujita* (the round thatched homes) and the *enkaji o lamburui* (rectangular thatched huts). However, the oblong-shaped cow dung houses are more common in Kenyan Maasai while the round thatched huts are common along Ngorongoro Tanzania.

The Maasai sub-culture has been identified as one of the most elaborately developed cultures thriving in the modernized world. The women in the Maasai community, with the exclusion of the expectant and the elders in the society, are responsible for the design and construction of family houses. In this process of home building, the elderly in this society act as the custodians of most of the community knowledge, including the design and construction of houses, thus relaying the same information to future consecutive generations of young women in the society. The concept of design and building of manyatta houses gives elderly women an opportunity to teach and give directives to the younger generations on the process of developing good, stable structures. This key information in the design and construction of Manyatta housing ensures that the semi-permanent structures use natural resources such as cow dung, water, mud, small branches, and poles, among others. This housing trend has functioned as a medium for upholding the locals' cultures. However, the semi-permanent structures have been exposed to challenges such as manipulation from the external world, limited space, improper sanitation, security, health, and gender issues (Lenku, 2019). Therefore, there is an urgent need to improve the manyatta houses into more secure, reliable structures using modern technology, and, while eliminating some of the challenges facing Maasai community women, to still maintain some favourable cultural norms like the design. The elderly and expectant are exempted from the responsibility of constructing a house for the family, but they function as a source of knowledge for the young women, teaching and providing direction on how to construct stable and good structures.

40.0   Research Methodology

The study employed quantitative research methodology where content analysis was conducted on available data on housing characteristics from the Kenya National Bureau of Statics and the Kenya Demography and Health Survey reports of 2014 (Republic of Kenya, 2014). The assessment considered the housing characteristics: roofing materials, floor materials, and walling materials as well as the structural design of the housing informed by Maasai cultural requirements. The selective identification of the KNBS 2015 reports the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) and the Society for International Development (SID) 2013 report as essential for the data collection because these are the only available inclusive reports on housing that integrated modern housing technology and conventional knowledge on housing structures in Kajiado County. The content of the report was subdivided into themes such as housing and household characteristics (mud, cement, tiles, wood, grass-thatched, iron sheets, stones, and bricks).

41.0   Data Findings and Analysis

4.1 Conventional and Modern Flooring Housing Technique in the Maasai Community

The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), in collaboration with the Society for International Development (SID) (2013) Report, as shown in Table 1, analysed the characteristics of materials used to build house structures in Kajiado County to reflect the level of both designers and developer's deviation from traditional housing practice as practised by women in Maasai community.

The KNBS/SID (2013) assessment engaged 8,493,380 houses in Kenya. The Report shows that Kajiado County has experienced considerable transformation caused by globalization and modernization. This has led to a shift from traditional architectural design to modern architectural housing design where the use of modern flooring materials, such as cement, was preferred to conventional cultural building materials, such as mud/soil, in floor construction. This is evident where high cement usage in floor construction was witnessed at Kajiado North (80.9%); Kajiado East (72.0%); Kajiado Central (37.5%); Kajiado West (34.3%); and Kajiado South (27.5%)

respectively. In general, Kajiado County's level of modernization on the floor was marked by 57.0% of houses having cemented floors. This is a clear indication of limited cultural integration between modern and conventional architectural and construction approaches in Maasai culture. Therefore, women's engagement in the process of housing construction and design in modern-day Kenya might have reduced greatly the use of cement, thus rejecting foreign cultural influence in construction.

Table 1 also reveals the existence of some conventional architectural design and construction of conventional housing using culturally oriented materials, such as earth, in flooring, commonly used by Maasai women to construct houses. In Kajiado South 71.4% had used earth as a flooring material; in Kajiado West - 63%; in Kajiado Central - 61.3%; Kajiado East - 24.4%; and the lowest being Kajiado North at 10.4%. Therefore, a substantial percentage of the rural regions of Kajiado use a high rate of integrative or retain conventional practices such as soil/mud in floor construction while a significant percentage of regions embracing urbanization experienced the adoption of modern building materials for flooring.

This Report clearly indicates that areas that have embraced modern building techniques have eliminated the conventional approaches used in housing, such as *Manyattas,* while those areas with less penetration or adoption of modernity still embrace the conventional earth building material. This is a clear indication that Maasai women's role in knowledge and skills sharing in conventional architectural and housing design in the modern setting has been limited. Therefore, the traditional cultural settings are left out in the transformation of housing in modern society.

Table 12: Flooring materials used in Maasai households

	Cement	Tiles	Wood	Earth	Other	Household
Kenya	41.2	1.6	0.7	56.0	0.5	8,493,380
Rural	22.1	0.3	0.7	76.5	0.4	5,239,879
Urban	72.0	3.5	0.9	23.0	0.8	3,253,501
Kajiado County	57.0	3.6	0.3	38.5	0.4	170,129
Kajiado North	80.9	7.7	0.4	10.4	0.6	56,678
Kajiado Central	37.5	0.8	0.2	61.3	0.2	22,398
Kajiado East	72.0	3.1	0.2	24.4	0.2	36,689
Kajiado West	34.3	1.4	0.3	63.6	0.4	25,232
Kajiado South	27.5	0.3	0.4	71.4	0.4	29,132

Source 9: (KNBS, 2015)

4.2 Conventional and Modern Roofing Housing Technique in Maasai Community

Table 2 strengthens Table 1 by affirming that conventional housing design on roofing was constructed using mud/dung.

Table 13: Roofing materials used in Maasai households

	Corrugated Iron Sheets	Tiles	Concrete	Asbestos sheets	Grass	Makuti	Tin	Mud/ Dung	Other	Household
Kenya	73.5	2.2	3.6	2.2	13.3	3.2	0.3	0.8	1.0	8,493,380
Rural	70.3	0.7	0.2	1.8	20.2	4.2	0.2.	1.2	1.1	5,239.879
Urban	79.0	4.6	9.1	2.9	2.1	1.5	0.3	0.1	0.9	3,253,501
Kajiado County	67.0	3.9	3.4	3.2	10.6	0.4	0.4	10.2	0.9	170,129
Kajiado North	82.5	7.7	5.8	3.0	0	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.6	56,678
Kajiado Central	48.9	0.7	0.1	2.5	11.5	0.2	0.1	34.8	1.1	22,398

Kajiado East	77.9	3.0	5.7	4.6	1.7	0.2	0.3	6.3	0.3	36,689
Kajiado West	48.1	3.5	1.3	2.2	18.7	1.0	0.9	23.0	2.2	25,232
Kajiado South	53.3	0.6	0.1	3.0	34.5	1.0	1.1	5.1	1.1	29,132

Source 10: KNBS & SID Report, 2017

The use of the conventional roofing material, that is, mud/dung represented similar distribution trends as those for the conventional floor materials. Kajiado South recorded 5.1% of mud/dung used as a roofing material; Kajiado Central - 34%; Kajiado West - 23.0%; Kajiado East - 6.3%; and Kajiado North only 0.1%. The diversity reflected between the highest-rated sub-county, Kajiado South and Kajiado West, and the lowest-rated sub-county, Kajiado East and Kajiado North, reflected the conventional Manyatta roofing to be only achievable in areas with low levels of modernization. However, the number of houses with roof structures constructed using *Makuti* was also very limited. This a clear indication that the knowledge might be adopted by some residents, but the approach is not a cultural practice among the Maasai community though locally available somewhere else.

The Maasai women are, therefore, in a position to implement cultural architecture in the construction of rural homes and should be supported with technology that makes the construction easier and faster. However, the urbanized areas show a clear indication that women's capability in conventional knowledge transfer of cultural architecture approaches is limited, allowing the adoption of modern alternative roofing materials (corrugated sheets, tiles, Asbestos, and concrete) into the sub-counties and other rural areas.

The major determinant of a shift in roofing materials from culturally conventionally preferred was informed by the level of urbanization in these counties, as presented in Kajiado South and Kajiado North sub-counties which revealed the lowest number of mud/dung roof houses. However, the transformation to modernized roofing materials undermines the Maasai women's skills and knowledge transfer on the relevance of designing Manyatta housing using mud/dung. These resources were aligned to the environment and climatic conditions of the area and thus suitable for the semi-arid environment as they are cool, habitable houses. Moreover, these materials are easily accessible, within the environment and more economical to the pastoral community due to resource abundance. This informed the women to design the mud/dung thatched Manyatta roof into dome shape. This shape differs from the available modernized roofing materials, which deviate from the Manyatta housing architectural designs that adopt the western housing styles that do not take into consideration the local environment and cultural trends.

4.3 Conventional and Modern Walling Housing Technique in Maasai Community

Table 3 identifies the conventional cultural architecture and housing development skills and knowledge consistency relayed by Maasai women and the materials they used to build the walls over the years.

Table 14: Distribution of homes by wall materials

	Stone	Bricks /Blocks	Mud /wood	Mud/Cement	Wood Only	Corrugated Iron Sheets	Grass/Reeds	Tin	Other	Household
Kenya	16.7	16.9	36.5	7.7	11.1	7.0	3.0	0.3	1.2	8,493,380
Rural	5.7	13.8	50.0	7.6	14.4	2.5	4.4	0.3	1.4	5,239,879
Urban	34.5	21.9	14.8	7.8	5.8	13.3	0.8	0.3	0.9	3,253,501
Kajiado County	27.7	7.5	22.6	3.3	8.2	26.6	2.0	0.5	1.6	170,129
Kajiado North	52.4	4.8	1.6	0.9	4.1	35.3	0	0.2	0.7	56,678

Kajiado Central	12.7	10.9	46.7	0.9	1.1	13.0	3.3	0.2	3.0	22,398
Kajiado East	28.8	14.2	13.4	2.6	1.6	38.0	0.4	0.6	0.4	36,689
Kajiado West	12.9	5.1	36.8	4.0	4.0	26.0	6.8	0.4	3.7	25,232
Kajiado South	2.4	3.8	44.4	4.1	4.1	6.0	3.0	1.1	1.9	29,132

Source 11: KNBS & SID Report, 2017

The existence of a substantial house population that considered conventional cultural walling design and construction using mud/dung as their preferred walling material was most prominent in Kajiado Central (46.4%); followed by Kajiado South (44.4%); Kajiado West (36.8%); Kajiado East (13.4%) while Kajiado North trailed at only 1.6%. The trend in using industrial manufactured walling material for housing construction and design among the Kajiado residents is an indication of the influence of globalization over the Maasai women's conventional cultural knowledge transfer capability beyond the rural setting. However, there are some elements of grass as a locally available walling material but not preferred by the Kajiado Maasai women in the construction of culturally oriented homes. Though the place of women still exists in the rural setting, the urban setup promotes the adoption of Western housing culture and design. Thus, a substantial erosion of conventional cultural knowledge in housing is experienced in some sub counties such as Kajiado South (6.0%); Kajiado East (38%); Kajiado North (35%); and Kajiado Central (13%) which prefer to use iron sheets for walling. This trend of adopting modern technology in the construction of western-oriented buildings is a clear indication that the local cultural knowledge is not trained in colleges to integrate Western and local cultural knowledge in housing design and construction.

42.0 Discussion

The study findings revealed a strong existence of Maasai culture over the years, despite the existence of globalization that has affected most African cultures. This is reflected where out of the five counties: Kajiado North; Kajiado Central, Kajiado East, Kajiado West, and Kajiado South only Kajiado North had a low level of houses that embraced local cultural architecture and building approaches. This sub-county adopted mostly the Westernized or industrialized influenced materials and architecture that support modernized construction of buildings. Lenku (2019) supported this argument by noting the existence of a well-structured information flow channel is essential within this community, where elderly women take on the crucial role of teaching and guiding the younger generation in the art of constructing strong, semi-permanent homes using locally available materials. This educational structure has not only preserved their culture but also elevated it to a prominent position among the dominant cultures of the modern world. In addition, the advocacy by women to use locally available products that have limited effect on the environment assists in conserving the environment and reducing the climate change impact that might be associated with industrialization (Duxbury, Hosagrahar, & Pascual, 2016).

However, the rest of the sub-counties, except for Kajiado East, formed the highest number of houses that embraced local cultural-oriented building and construction design using locally available materials. This is a clear indication that the Maasai women's potential in knowledge transfer has been highly effective over the years. On the contrary, globalization has affected its influence in urban centres, thus leading to the adoption of new technology-oriented skills and western-oriented architecture and construction approaches, using industrially produced products. Gao and Wu (2017) found that globalization and modernization negatively influence the construction of culturally oriented houses and the use of locally available materials as more people move in search of better pastures and embrace urbanization. However, though the foundation of Chinese culture in architecture was influenced by colonialism, their will to promote nationalism led the Chinese to use American institutions to advance their knowledge in culturally oriented designs and buildings, using locally available materials.

Vuong et al. (2019) advocated for the creation of legislation by colonial powers as well as governments of the day which should be the major guiding platform for the engagement of the locals and the government in the protection of the local cultural heritage through construction and architecture. The absence of government legislation to guide and support the use of local culture housing knowledge has led to the emerging Western knowledge not considering local culture and preference in building houses in the local environment. Thus, the emergence of urbanization and modernization in the globalized society has undermined women's role and knowledge transfer to the next generation.

The place of women as change agents is being replaced by engaging men in the process of construction, using industrial products to develop local houses. The adopted Western housing knowledge does not consider the environmental and socio-cultural factors governing the construction and design of houses nor does it consider the use of specific locally available materials. The approach of replacing local culture with new culture has been reflected to be an approach embraced by the colonial powers in their colonies, however, the unique element that colonialists like France did to Vietnam was to introduce cultural synergy between local and modern culture to assist in preserving the local practice while considering the political, environmental and socio-cultural factors. This aspect has been absent in the government of Kenya and its agencies in trying to produce a synergistic approach to ensure the Maasai culture and knowledge in housing is considered. This will possibly promote advancing women's knowledge through training and admitting them to higher learning institutions to advance the local cultural practices in housing at the local level.

43.0 Conclusion

Knowledge and skills sharing has been a major communication and means of storing information from one generation to the other, apart from written documents. The African community, such as the Maasai women, functioned as the custodians of housing design and construction information that was relayed from one female generation to the other. This practice has overcome so many challenges associated with globalization, that there is a need for the Kenyan government to collaborate with the local communities to preserve their cultural heritage which is reflected through the design and construction of houses to preserve cultural practices. Therefore, the rapid adoption of the modern model of housing construction should include a cultural touch to ensure that the locals feel that their identity as pastoralists is appreciated by both the government and non-governmental actors engaged in construction.

44.0 Recommendations

There is a problem in bridging the gap created by modern knowledge of housing design and construction that leaves out the element of culture and gender responsibility. Therefore, women's role as change agents in traditional settings and the conventional knowledge and skills transfer should be integrated into the modern knowledge in higher learning institutions and other skill transfer avenues.

The traditional architectural and construction housing approaches among the Maasai community considered factors such as the environment, climate, terrains and lifestyle, an approach equally shared in contemporary knowledge and skills sharing in the building and construction sectors. Therefore, the building construction policies and acts should integrate the local knowledge to protect the cultures of the locals from extinction. This will ensure that the women who are custodians of culture in housing construction among the Maasai community are able to participate in advancing the architectural design, planning, and development of houses in the country while supporting local communities.

There should be well-structured legal and policy frameworks that support the proper development of houses that promote a cultural touch in modern housing design and approaches.

The presence of the right frameworks will assist in strengthening the role of women as change agents in housing not only in Kajiado County but also in other countries and globally.

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Social Interactions and Women's Labour Market Outcomes in Kenya

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Abstract

We analyse labour market participation and income among 15-49-year-old women in Kenya. Our covariates are number of sexual partners, marital status, post-secondary school training, and the Program. The Program separates direct beneficiaries of Free Elementary School Education from non-beneficiaries. We utilize the 2022 Kenya Demographic and Health Survey in a fuzzy regression discontinuity design. We test for robustness using quantile regression at the 10th, 50th, and 90th labour income quantile. Program participation raises single years of schooling by 4-5 months but does not affect labour incomes significantly. Women's labour incomes decline significantly among women in the 50th labour income quantile. Post-secondary training significantly raises labour incomes. The longer the period a woman spends furthering studies beyond grade 12, the fewer the sexual partners. Reductions in women's earnings due to non-husband sexual partners are driven by unmarried women. We recommend that the Government of Kenya and its developmental partners invest in enhancing the enrolment and completion of further studies, notably; college, TVET, and university.

Key words: *education, female labour force participation, labour incomes, sexual partnerships, social interactions.*

45.0   Introduction

Extant literature analyses labour market outcomes along various dimensions. These include gendered occupational alignment/career trajectory and representation (Cortés & Pan, 2020). This dimension sheds light on the under-representation of females as well as the extent to which parenting/childcare and social norms and expectations affect their outcomes on the labour market (Mijs & Roe, 2021). The second dimension considers the pay gap/wage differentials, job quality, and duration of work (Jones et al, 2023; Denier & Waite, 2019; Brown et al, 2019; Bursztyn et al, 2017). Developments along this dimension unearth how female labour market outcomes are affected by discrimination and innovations, e.g., the inception of the contraceptive pill. The third dimension focuses on marital status, sexual identity, partnerships, partnership types, and friendships (Lleras-Muney et al, 2020; Martell, 2021; Delhommer, 2020; Waite et al, 2020; Brown et al, 2019). Scholarship along this line analyses the partnership/friendship/marriage premium/penalty that females face, e.g., forgone wages due to a stay-at-home status, or housewife and househusband.

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A largely ignored area of focus has been the sociology of work, especially, how social interactions/ networks affect gendered labour market outcomes[34]. In this article, we focus on sexual partnerships and friendships as outcomes of social interactions. Although [not] having a partner affects labour market outcomes, the quality, and number of one's sexual partners are under-investigated. With 1 in every 2 hires being made possible via referrals and recommendations, it is fruitless to ignore network mobilization (Pedulla & Pager, 2019). Even then, individuals strategically choose with whom to socialize, and whom to have a sexual partnership[35] (Moeeni, 2021). This is decided upon alongside the longevity of such a relationship.

Interestingly, some individuals match with their sexual partners within the job environment (Bursztyn et al, 2017). In some circumstances, sexual partnerships depend upon an individual's position on the job market. Recent labour market turbulence occasioned increments in females' participation rate (Lim & Morgan, 2021). Simultaneously, there is an ever-increasing proportion of men getting disconnected from the labour market (Halpern-Meekin & Talkington, 2022). While this disconnect reflects a general decline in hours worked, e.g., during coronavirus (COVID)-19 pandemic period, it alters the organization of family life (Halpern-Meekin & Talkington, 2022). Reductions in male labour market participation rates offsets undesirable outcomes within social networks. Halpern-Meekin & Talkington (2022) link a disconnect among males with inability to provide materially in romantic relationships. This, in turn, prolongs the time-to-marriage while rendering some men unmarriageable (Halpern-Meekin & Talkington, 2022). It is a matter of time before inability to find a romantic partner is declared a disability.

Labour market participants constantly attempt to balance between work and romantic commitments, and entanglements (e.g., marriage) (Nelson et al, 2021). A work-life imbalance paves way for conflict and discord among sexual partners (Lim & Morgan, 2021). This is further worsened because the identification of sexual partners is a highly selective process[36] (Mijs & Roe, 2021). However, screening for partners is often imperfect[37] due to distorted signals (Bursztyn et al, 2017). The authors reveal single female MBA students underreporting labour market ambition[38] when observed by their male counterparts. This underreporting safeguarded their marriage prospects (Bursztyn et al, 2017).

Against this background, we analyse how gendered labour market outcomes are affected by sexual partnerships in Kenya. Unlike Lleras-Muney et al (2020) that identify friendship premiums, we consider heterogenous friendship valuations that characterize heterogeneous sexual partnerships. These partnerships are assumed to be not fully reciprocal[39] but reflect 'friendships with benefits[40].' We make two-fold contributions. First, we bridge the data gap by basing our analyses on a dataset compiled from the 2022 Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS). The KDHS was conducted by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), the Ministry of Health, and the DHS Program ICF (hereafter KNBS et al, 2023). This survey contains granular data on the number of [hetero-]sexual partners (lifetime and short-term), and the frequency that a man/woman had a sexual affair. Second, we consider the number of [wo]man's sexual partners, and marital status. On average, married women have fewer non-husband sexual partners compared to unmarried women.

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[34] These include being employed, occupational position/career trajectories, unemployment spells, and labour earnings.
[35] Thus, individuals do not always look for partners for sexual gratification.
[36] This is dictated upon by one's position on the labour market.
[37] Especially among females
[38] i.e., lower salary expectations and lower willingness to work over extended periods
[39] Sometimes we identify with people who do not identify with us. Thus, perceived position in an individual's life (e.g., as a close friend) may not coincide with actual position.
[40] This suggestion was given by Davis Ombane.

46.0 Literature Review

This section discusses some of the key concepts, and theoretical views, alongside a review of previous studies. Key concepts are discussed under the conceptual literature whereas related studies are captured under related empirical evidence. Conceptual literature introduces existing debates that are considered relevant to this article.

2.1 Conceptual Literature

Understanding gendered labour market outcomes benefits from frameworks that model the economic empowerment of women. These frameworks fall into two broad categories. The first category emphasises job market considerations and the state of the job market. These outcomes, in turn, shape extra-household networking possibilities, sexual partnerships, and other outcomes[41] (Heintz, 2021; Halpern-Meekin & Talkington, 2022). The second category focuses on reverse engineering. In this scholarship, job market outcomes are explained by educational reforms and attainment, and social interactions/stratification (Enfield, 2019; Lleras-Muney et al, 2020). Improved educational access raises the number of educated females. This, in turn, exerts upward pressure on the labour market while raising equality of access to opportunities (Klasen, 2019). Similarly, reforms such as job targeting[42] raise the participation of targeted groups in the labour market. Where job-targeting is insufficient, individuals fall back on explicit job referrals[43]. Referrals are also common in forging sexual partnerships whereby potential partners are matched through third-party referrers.

Existing structural rigidities necessitate an interrogation of women's shared perspectives. School systems that are entrenched in cultural norms and gender non-reversal propagate the subordination of women (Longwe, 1998). This undermines the gains in bargaining power realized through women's access to better schooling opportunities. Thus, women and men may face similar challenges and struggles, yet experience them differently. This is aggravated by physiological and psychological differences that place women at a comparative disadvantage[44]. When agrarian societies shifted from hand-held hoes to ox-drawn ploughs, more men and boys tilled farms (Alesina et al, 2018)[45]. For instance, a shift from using a hand-held hoe (which was better suited to women and girls) to an ox-drawn plough (suitable for boys and men) led to more men and boys tilling the farm (Alesina et al, 2018).

In many households, cultural norms undermine the autonomy of women in making key decisions. These include asset ownership, healthcare plans, labour market participation, and sexual partners (Jayachandran, 2021; Enfield, 2019; Olarewaju & Fernanado, 2020; Olarewaju et al, 2019). Heintz (2021) indicates the burden of unpaid work falls disproportionately on women. This, in turn, reduces women's autonomy substantively relative to paid employment (Jayachandran, 2021). Women accept less autonomy to prevent male sexual partners from feeling threatened by their affluence (Cortés & Pan, 2020). As a result, women forge sexual partnerships up the socio-economic status ladder to guarantee the stability of the partnership (Karney, 2021). Some societies find it acceptable, and okay for women not to work but frown upon the idea of a woman working while the husband does not (Annan et al, 2021).

Career choice and job market aggressiveness are entrenched in societal dictates and expectations (Cifre et al, 2018). In some societies, stereotyping presents men as breadwinners while reneging women to caregiving. These stereotypes anchor women's actions, including further studies

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[41] E.g., income sources, educational attainment, and marriage

[42] E.g., job openings explicitly 'encouraging women to apply'

[43] This is affected by referral biases, e.g., qualified female candidates being less likely to be recommended by males (Pimkina & de la Flor, 2020).

[44] Valentine Dibondo argues that "While boys were playing, girls were seated; they were seated observing." Thus, girls may have an upper hand to boys in observational tasks.

[45] Women/girls and men/boys had a comparative advantage in using hoes and ploughs, respectively (Alesina et al, 2018).

and career advancement, on the approval of the partnering men (Cifre et al, 2018; Cortés & Pan, 2020). This stifles equal footing in the job market (Banerjee, 2019). Besides, marital politics that gag women's freedom to participate in the labour market distorts the attractiveness of marriage (Galiè et al, 2022). At times, workplace discrimination and 'sexism' limit women's participation in the labour market through the normalization of harassment (Banerjee, 2019). This is further aggravated by ringfencing certain jobs as a reserve for men, thereby locking out women.

Many labour markets and romantic relationships rely upon educational attainment as a screening tool. Higher levels of educational attainment raise an individual's exposure to economic opportunities (Gebreyes, 2019). Through the 'tagging effect' and the 'sorting effect,' an individual's education level dictates the operational social circle (Le & Nguyen, 2021). Moeeni (2021) and Tanaka et al (2021) argue that girls/young women are less likely to have sexual partners with comparably low levels of education[46]. Endogenous educational choices affect the time of entry into long-term sexual engagements, and the labour market (Sunder, 2019; Tanaka et al, 2020).

Sometimes, labour market outcomes are affected by time allocation towards household production, e.g., childcare. Cortés & Pan (2020) reveal that the entry of the first child drastically alters the household-labour market dynamics. The authors argue that mothers devote disproportionately more time towards primary caregiving, and less time working outside the home. However, it is not automatic that mothers dominate primary caregiving[47]. Rising female labour earnings raise the opportunity cost of caregiving, thereby raising labour hours supplied by females outside the home (Moeeni, 2021).

Households face various shocks that [in]directly affect labour market outcomes. Job losses among breadwinners coerce secondary[48] breadwinners to raise the labour hours supplied (Pimkina & de la Flor, 2020). This arises from the 'added worker effect' (Rose & Shem-Tov, 2023). When breadwinners lose jobs, secondary breadwinners are coerced.

Exposure to shocks and household financial turmoil have disruptive effects on the labour market. Negative job market shocks such as mass layoffs or job displacement characterized by sole breadwinners (e.g., husbands) losing jobs coerce secondary breadwinners (e.g., wives) to increase hours of labour supplied through the 'added worker effect' (Pimkina & de la Flor, 2020; Rose & Shem-Tov, 2023). Broad-based shocks, however, disincentivize secondary breadwinners from working. As a result, labour hours supplied fall (Pimkina & de la Flor, 2020). Prolonged wage unemployment spells[49] render wage employment less attractive (Olarewaju et al, 2019).

Many individuals dedicate their adulthood to pursuing romantic relationships, working, or looking for gainful employment. Characteristic of adulthood is task-sequencing[50], and exposure to perturbation[51]. Labour market disturbances disrupt household incomes. This, in turn, affects participation in the labour market, and the pursuit of sexual partnerships. Since individuals associate higher labour earnings with greater worker productivity, earnings serve as a screening tool in sexual partnerships. The more productive at work a man is, the likelier he is to select into marriage/sexual partnership (McDonald, 2020).

2.2 Related Empirical Evidence

Mulwa & Gichana (2020) reveal that employment within the formal private sector declines significantly in educational attainment among females in Kenya. However, females' employment

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[46] Sapiosexuality notwithstanding, educated women attract educated men, but educated men attract [un]educated women (Sunder, 2019; Tanaka et al, 2021).

[47] If a wife has comparative advantage working, then the husband ends up as primary caregiver (Cortés & Pan, 2020; Borrowman & Klasen, 2020).

[48] In the absence of unemployment benefits, secondary breadwinners serve as insurance for breadwinners.

[49] In some countries, e.g., China, and North Africa, job scarcity [e.g., during recessions] elicits opposition to female employment (Ibourk & Elouaourti, 2023; Xiao & Asadullah, 2020).

[50] i.e., individuals seek employment prior to forging sexual partnerships.

[51] E.g., individuals land jobs only to leave them (Rose & Shem-Tov, 2023); and sexual partners free themselves from entanglements.

within the informal or the formal public sector rises significantly in educational attainment. The authors argue that education equips females with skills needed in the labour market, thereby incentivizing them towards labour market participation[52]. The findings further suggest general employment and formal private-sector employment rising in social capital[53]. This arises from social gatherings facilitating the sharing of information on available job opportunities[54][55]. Geographically, rural residents were significantly more likely to be employed, and worked within the informal sector, compared to their urban counterparts[56].

Borrowman & Klasen (2020) analyse occupational and sectoral segregation in 69 countries through the Duncan (dis)similarity index. The authors find significant reductions in sectoral segregation as female labour force participation rises. However, occupational segregation has risen significantly. Increasing female-male education ratio and average male education widens sectoral and occupational segregation, respectively. The authors argue that rigid labour market hierarchies erode gains realized via greater female labour force participation. Segregation is further widened by risk aversion and gendered preference heterogeneities.

Ibourk & Elouaourti (2023) associate reductions in labour force participation with educational attainment[57] within North Africa. Among the married, participation rises in female education but declines in male education. The findings are attributed to 'purity' considerations that undermine labour force participation among educated females. Among males, the authors reveal rising reservation wages among the educated, contraction of the public sector, and sluggish rate of private sector expansion. These jointly reduce the number of available jobs for educated males.

Xiao & Asadullah (2020) establish China's labour force participation is significantly rising in both good English skills and years of education. Nevertheless, female Chinese have low participation rates relative to their male counterparts. Relatedly, Tanaka et al (2020) report an ambiguous effect of years of education on labour force participation among Bangladeshi females. Over some bandwidths, an additional year of education significantly reduces female participation. Participation is insignificantly affected over other bandwidths.

A trade-off exists between childcare and labour market outcomes that are anchored on career adjustment/workplace flexibility. Cortés and Pan (2020) analyse income dynamics between men and women in the United States (US). Entry of the first child widens income gap in the early years. Although male parents' earnings remain fairly stable relative to childless males, childbirth erodes earnings among female parents. Thus, female partners experience a child penalty[58]. Relatedly, Klasen et al (2021) analyse cross-country heterogeneities arising from child presence. The observable differences arise from heterogeneities in returns to children's upbringing and schooling[59]. In Brazil where the average number of children per woman was much lower, the authors reveal a higher female labour force participation rate relative to Tanzania, Bolivia, Indonesia, India, and Jordan.

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[52] The authors ignore initial [dis]advantages yet they matter. Enfield (2019) indicates gendered differences across Nigeria's career landscape. This is attributed to greater schooling possibilities among the affluent and low rates of primary school completion among girls relative to boys.

[53] Proxied by social gatherings participation

[54] It is questionable that information-sharing benefited only formal private sector employment. Social gatherings, e.g., funerals and weddings, are not anchored on the dissemination of job market-relevant information.

[55] Sometimes, workers rely on social networks. In Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, well-connected women worked on high-renumeration tasks whereas the less-connected women served in less-rewarding posts in the gold mines (Rutherford & Buss, 2019).

[56] This could be driven by prevalence of unregistered rural farm enterprises. Tanaka et al (2020; 2021) show that non-farm job opportunities are limited in rural areas.

[57] Educational attainment is categorized as at least secondary or otherwise.

[58] This nudges females into occupations allowing intermittent labour market participation or ones with part-time option (Borrowman & Klasen, 2020).

[59] Characteristics of the household head also matters (Klasen et al, 2021).

Clark et al (2019) analyse subsidized daycare in the Korogocho informal settlement within Kenya's Nairobi city. Receiving daycare vouchers[60] significantly raises the likelihood of a mother being employed. Voucher recipients are also less likely to be unemployed. The authors argue that subsidized daycare incentivized mothers to work[61].

In the literature, other factors shaping labour market outcomes include migration status (Gebreyes, 2019), religion, household size, [non] farm income source, age and age at marriage, wife's fertility, household income, retirement age (Klasen, 2019), ethnicity (Hassan et al, 2023), community social norms, and marital status. Previous studies largely ignore the importance of the number of sexual partnerships. This article leverages the number of sexual partnerships from a large representative dataset of women in Kenya.

47.0 Methodology

We define labour force participation based on time allocation. For a comprehensive methodology, see https://drive.google.com/file/d/1b434iuJY3N6O_KAZYWfuu3i07cRfpfLF/view?usp=sharing An individual is in the labour force if, in a four-day period, he/she spends a minimum of one hour on any activity that generates income (Tanaka et al, 2020). For the descriptive, we categorize married women and their partners/husbands who are employed into occupations based on ISCO-08. This categorization enables us to identify segregation across occupations based on the Duncan dissimilarity index, D:

$$D = 0.5 \sum_r \left| \frac{B_r}{B} - \frac{G_r}{G} \right|, D \in [0, 1] \qquad (1)$$

Where the total numbers of women and men working in sector r are G_r and B_r, respectively, and G and B are the total number of women and men in the labour force. D=0 suggests absence of segregation whereas D=1 indicates perfect inequality in the sectoral distribution of women and men (Borrowman & Klasen, 2020). This index is sensitive to the sectoral size (Borrowman & Klasen, 2020). Utilizing the 2022 Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KNBS et al, 2023) dataset, we report a dissimilarity index equal to 0.15 for the sub-sample of married women and their partners/husbands[62].

For the baseline, we estimate the model:

$$V_k = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Z_k^b + \beta_2 A_k + \beta_3 Z_k^b A_k + \beta_4 Z_k^E + \beta_5 P_k + \beta_6 Z_k^E P_k + \beta_7 Z_k^b Z_k^E + \beta_8 Z_k^b Z_k^E A_k P_k + \theta_k M_k + \epsilon_k \qquad (2)$$

Where the labour market outcome V for woman k is explained by a woman's age (A), number of sexual partners (P), alongside interactions and other factors (M); β and θ are regression coefficients, and the nuisance term ε is a white noise. P and A are assignment variables, respectively, for single education years (that hint at social interactions) and age (indicative of [not] being in the free primary education). Treatment dummies are defined by:

$$Z_k^b = \begin{cases} 1(A_k \leq 37) \\ 0(A_k > 37) \end{cases} \text{ and } Z_k^E = \begin{cases} 1(P_k^E > 12) \\ 0(P_k^E \leq 12) \end{cases} \qquad (3)$$

Where single years of education are captured by P^E, and dummies Z^b and Z^E denote the 1985 (and post-1985) birth cohort, and the post-secondary school education cohort, respectively. With

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[60] Or vouchers plus improved daycare quality.
[61] This excludes uncompensated childcare offered by female kin.
[62] Potential self-selection is discarded because of low occupational segregation. Therefore, occupational choice does not explain gendered differences in labour market outcomes.

this in mind, we centre at cut off point (37 years and 13 years, respectively, for age and single years of schooling[63]).

Z^b is assigned 1 for individuals that benefited from free public primary school education (hereafter, the Program), and 0 otherwise. The Program was introduced in 2003. It enabled pupils that would otherwise have dropped out due to fee-related challenges to stay in school. However, inter-pupil differences in exposure to the Program at its infancy are inevitable[64]. Z^E is assigned 1 for holders of at least college diploma, and 0 otherwise. Z^E captures education premium that is assumed to affect both sexual partnerships and labour market outcomes. That is, educated females attract well-connected male partners. These, in turn, raise females bargaining power on the job market[65]. Imperfect compliance[66] is addressed in a fuzzy regression discontinuity design (fuzzy-RDD).

Lastly, we employ two robust checks. In the first check, we estimate two auxiliary equations for single years of education and number of sexual partners given by:

$$P_k^E = a_0 + a_1 Z_k^b + a_2(A_k - 37) + u_k \qquad (4)$$

And

$$P_k = b_0 + b_1 Z_k^E + b_2(P_k^E - 12) + v_k \qquad (5)$$

With the treatment effect being given by a_1 and b_1 whereas u and v are respective disturbances. Secondly, we estimate the labour income equation using quantile regression by considering the 10th, 50th, and 90th quantiles.

48.0   Empirical Findings

This section presents results from the analyses alongside a discussion. The analyses entail descriptive statistics, and regression analyses. The descriptive statistics are analysed on the basis of occupational dissimilarities, and employment dynamics. Regression analyses are captured under "Main Results".

4.1 Occupational Dissimilarities

We utilized the 2022 KDHS dataset (KNBS et al, 2023) on 15-49-year-old married women, and women living with partners. This constituted 18294 married Kenyan women. Occupational distribution by gender is captured in **Error! Reference source not found.**. Occupational segregation is low. However, occupational gaps exist among craft and related trade workers, and plant/machine operators and assemblers. These occupations are least pursued by married women but attract a considerable proportion of husbands/partners. Disturbingly, women are thrice as likely to be unemployed as their partners.

Table 15: Occupational disaggregation

Occupation	Married women/ living with partners	Husbands/ partners

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[63] The average and median age of an elementary school in Kenya have declined over the years. The average grade 1 in the 2010s was much younger compared to a counterpart in the early 1980s. An average grade 8 pupil is a 12-14-year-old. We add a 4-year markup to obtain an outlier whereby the oldest grade 8 pupil is 18years. Backdating this gives 1985 as a conservative year of birth for one in elementary school in 2003. The individual was 18 and 37years old, respectively, in 2003 and 2022. Similarly, an individual with post-secondary training has at least thirteen single years of education.

[64] Not all pupils benefited equally from the Program; e.g., a pupil in grade 2 at the time enjoyed 7 years of free elementary school education whereas a grade 8 counterpart only had a few months.

[65] Alternatively, the longer the schooling duration, the likelier an individual is to forge friendships and partnerships that directly affect labour market outcomes.

[66] Some pupils switch school type in response to the Program, e.g., from public to private schools, and vice versa.

Observations	18294	18225
Not working in the past 12 months	39.42	13.53
Managers	7.51	6.62
Professionals	3.33	4.95
Technicians & Associate Professionals	5.52	7.19
Clerical support workers	0.93	0.88
Services and sales workers	11.98	11.81
Skilled agricultural, forestry & fisher	16.41	15.84
Craft & related trades workers	0.78	9.62
Plant & machine operators, & assemblers	0.39	11.31
Elementary occupations	13.73	17.95
Armed forces	0.02	0.29
Dissimilarity index	0.1461	

Note 1: Those not working are excluded from the dissimilarity index

We reconcile unemployment disparity by matching women's employment status with the husband's. **Error! Reference source not found.** reveals approximately one-third of married women being unemployed while their husbands/partners worked weekly. This exceeds the 1 in 10 married women that did not work and whose husbands also did not work[67].

Table 16: Wife-husband employment dynamics

Married woman/living with partner	**Husband/ partner**				
Working	Did not work	worked last 7 days	worked last 12 months	Do not know	Total
No	10.50%	32.97%	2.29%	0.12%	45.87%
Yes	2.97%	48.91%	2.09%	0.16%	54.13%
Total	13.46%	81.88%	4.38%	0.28%	100.00%

We suspect the type of earnings contributed to unemployment. Unpaid work or in-kind payments could disincentivize unemployed women from seeking employment. **Error! Reference source not found.** indicates 19% of employed women received no payment. However, this does not infer causality.

Table 17: Earning Type and place of work for women

Type of earnings	**Place of work**			
	Family	Someone else's	self-employment	Total
not paid	3.842%	0.877%	14.210%	18.930%
cash only	1.543%	43.159%	31.351%	76.052%
cash and in-kind	0.143%	1.955%	2.340%	4.439%
in-kind only	0.097%	0.195%	0.287%	0.579%
Total	5.626%	46.186%	48.188%	100.000%

Error! Reference source not found. regresses the wife's unemployment against the husband's, and vice versa. Unemployment of a married woman and that of a husband significantly

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[67] Neither substitutability nor complementarity between women's and husbands' employment is inferred.

cause each other. There could be potential confounders that raise the likelihood of husbands being unemployed simultaneously with their wives.

*Table 18: Wife-Husband Unemployment Regressions*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Linear probability model		**Probit marginal effect**	
VARIABLES	**Married woman**	**Husband**	**Married woman**	**Husband**
Husband	0.403***		0.384***	
	(0.0102)		(0.00929)	
Married woman		0.197***		0.179***
		(0.00495)		(0.00472)
Constant	0.340***	0.0572***		
	(0.00372)	(0.00311)		
Observations	18,312	18,312	18,312	18,312
R-squared	0.079	0.079		

4.2 Main Results

Error! Reference source not found. utilizes a subsample of 2766 married women/living with partners. Panel I reveals higher average monthly incomes in the pre-1985 birth cohort relative to post-1985. In Panel II, the average teenage women in the 1985 birth cohort are seasonal/occasionally employed. However, adult women worked either all year or seasonally. Panel IV indicates concentration of education at 9-10 single years of schooling. In the 1985 cohort, average sexual partners rise from 1-2 among 15-19-year-olds to 3-4 among 25-35-year-olds.
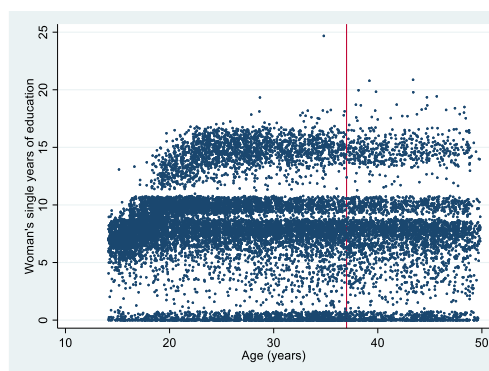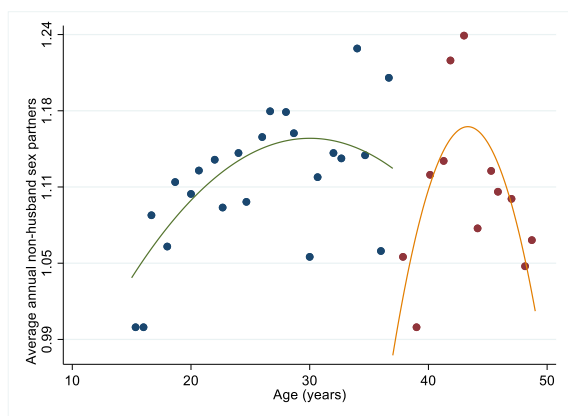

Note: cutoff set at 37 years

I

Employment Longevity
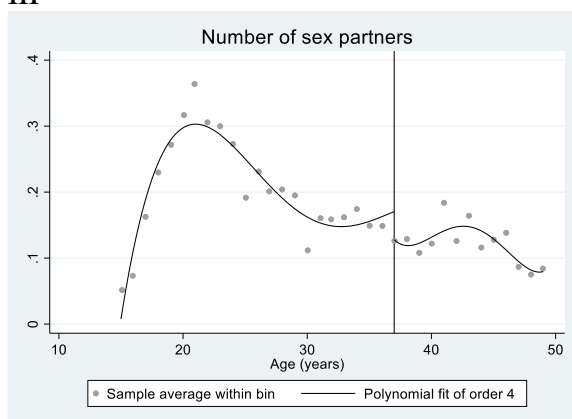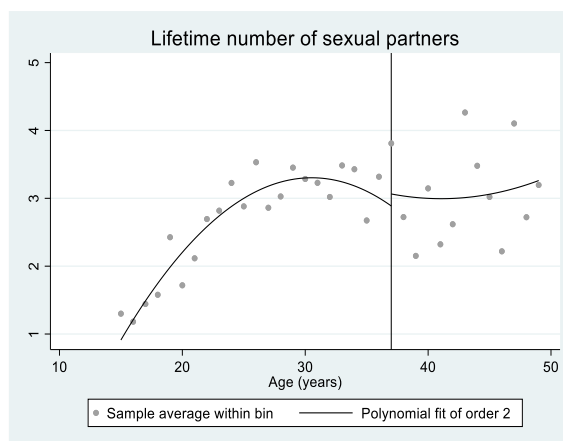
Note: 1-all year, 2-seasonal 3-occasional
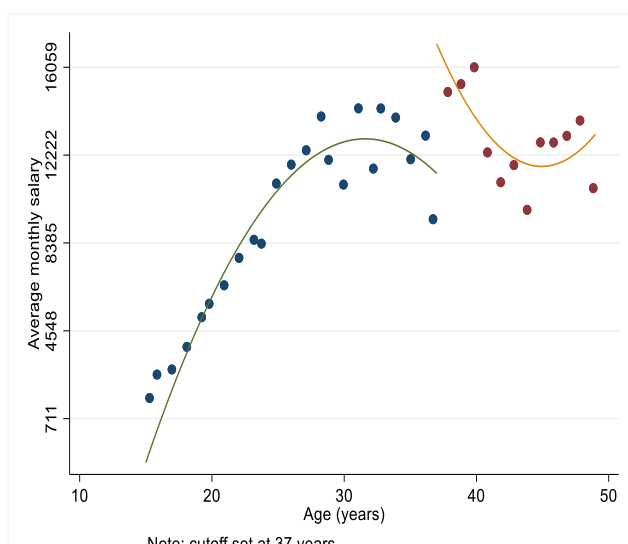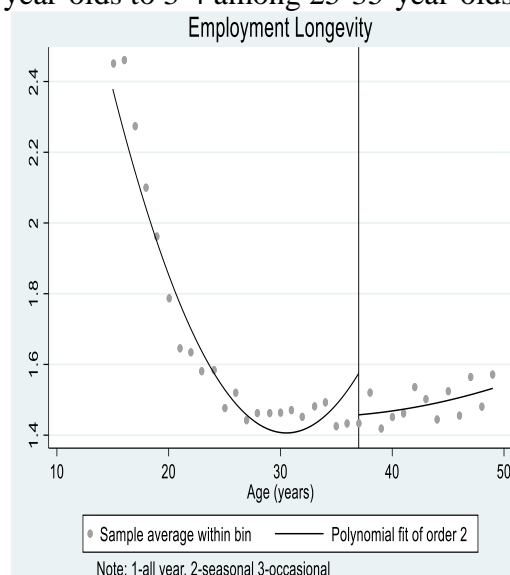
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VI

4.3 Causal Relationships

In the full women sample in **Error! Reference source not found.**, the Program significantly raises labour incomes (column 1). The effect withers away when post-secondary training is considered (column 3). Among married women (column 4), the Program insignificantly affects incomes. The statistically significant results arose from a failure to account for post-secondary training and the unmarried.

Age ambiguously affects labour income. Generally, labour incomes rose significantly with age. However, age insignificantly affects incomes among married women who benefitted from the Program. This is also true when post-secondary training is considered (columns 3 and 6).

The average woman with any post-secondary training earns at least Kenya Shilling (KSH) 23597 more compared to a counterpart with none. Married women gain KSH 2710 above the average trained woman. Post-secondary training both equips women with additional job market-relevant competencies and catalyses social interactions. The number of non-husband sexual partners insignificantly raises labour incomes. Accounting for post-secondary training, an additional non-husband sexual partner reduces incomes by KSH 3989 to KSH 4225 in the full women sample. This effect is statistically not different from zero in the married women's sample. Unmarried women offset the detrimental effect of non-husband sexual partners on women's labour incomes.

Table 19: Labour Income among Women

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Full women sample			Married women/ living with a partner		
1985 birth cohort	2,886***		8.043	1,960		-76.21
	(827.6)		(1,443)	(1,225)		(2,024)
Age	176.1***		154.7	240.6***		362.9
	(35.79)		(179.3)	(57.64)		(248.3)
Pre-1985 birth cohort's age	-		-	-		-

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	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
(rf)						
Age for the 1985 birth cohort	246.0***		178.9	186.6		-53.12
	(81.96)		(193.9)	(139.2)		(277.8)
At least 13 single years of education		23,597***	23,736***		26,307***	26,553***
		(888.4)	(889.2)		(1,161)	(1,162)
Number of non-husband sexual partners		431.7	1,248*		89.17	945.8
		(748.6)	(755.6)		(2,797)	(2,793)
Number of sexual partners for those with fewer than 13 years of education (rf)		-	-		-	-
Number of sexual partners for those with at least 13 years of education		-4,225***	-3,989***		-7,421	-7,449
		(1,494)	(1,490)		(6,514)	(6,496)
Constant	11,972***	6,343***	7,810***	13,155***	6,554***	7,327***
	(312.8)	(432.0)	(1,248)	(453.3)	(576.0)	(1,713)
Observations	12,361	6,578	6,578	7,610	4,028	4,028
R-squared	0.005	0.110	0.117	0.004	0.115	0.121

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Note 2: the explanatory variables age and single years of education are centred. 1985 birth cohort captures those born not earlier than 1985.

4.4 The Mechanism

Error! Reference source not found. presents quantile regression estimates for the 10th, 50th, and 90th quantiles in the distribution of labour incomes. In the full women sample, the average woman with at least thirteen single years of education earns KSH 3154 more compared to a counterpart with fewer years in the 10th quantile. This effect intensifies with the average woman's labour income in the 50th and 90th quantile, respectively, being 4.1 times and fourteen times more than in the 10th quantile. Married women with post-secondary training earn 1.14-1.28 times the average woman's earnings.

The number of sexual partners significantly erodes women's average labour incomes in the 50th quantile. Earnings lost by married women from an additional non-husband partner are 2.04 times the average woman's loss. Earnings are unaffected by a woman's age, and birth cohort.

Table 20:Quantile labour income regressions

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
		Full women sample			Married women/living with partner	
VARIABLES	10th	50th	90th	10th	50th	90th
At least 13 single years of education	3,154***	12,900***	44,167***	4,000***	16,400***	50,333***
	(156.4)	(348.1)	(1,537)	(166.6)	(356.6)	(2,055)
Number of non-husband sexual partners	253.8*	1,200***	1,250	0	1,000	333.3
	(132.9)	(295.8)	(1,306)	(400.5)	(857.5)	(4,942)
Number of sexual partners for those with fewer than 13 years of education (rf)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of sexual partners for those with at least 13 years of education	-773.1***	-2,650***	-4,792*	250	-5,400***	-15,333
	(262.0)	(583.2)	(2,576)	(931.5)	(1,994)	(11,494)
1985 birth cohort	67.95	66.67	2,083	-62.50	-600	2,333
	(253.7)	(564.9)	(2,495)	(290.2)	(621.3)	(3,581)
Age	11.11	-33.33	416.7	18.75	0	666.7
	(31.53)	(70.19)	(310.0)	(35.61)	(76.22)	(439.4)
Pre-1985 birth cohort's age (rf)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Age for the 1985 birth cohort	8.120	83.33	-0	-18.75	0	-435.9
	(34.10)	(75.92)	(335.3)	(39.84)	(85.28)	(491.6)

Constant	566.7***	4,033***	13,750***	562.5**	3,600***	12,667***
	(219.5)	(488.7)	(2,158)	(245.7)	(525.9)	(3,031)
Observations	6,578	6,578	6,578	4,028	4,028	4,028

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Note 3: the explanatory variables age and single years of education are centred. 1985 birth cohort captures those born not earlier than 1985.

Last, we investigate suspected drivers of women's single years of education and the number of non-husband sexual partners in **Error! Reference source not found.** The Program raises a woman's single years of education by 4.8 months with the impact being domiciled among unmarried women. Older women in the 1985 birth cohort have significantly fewer single years of education compared to their pre-1985 birth cohort counterparts. Post-secondary training insignificantly affects the number of non-husband sexual partners among married women but significantly rises in the full women sample.

As years of education rise among women with post-secondary training, the number of sexual partners significantly declines. Being unmarried provides post-secondary trained women with the impetus to have as many sexual partners as they desire[68]. The more time a woman spends accumulating post-secondary training, the likelier she appreciates that it is not all about having many sexual partners.

Table 21: Education and the number of sexual partners

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Single years of education		Number of sex partners in a year	
		Married/ living with partner		Married/ living with partner
1985 birth cohort	0.401***	0.114		
	(0.0801)	(0.111)		
Age	-0.0353***	-0.0311***		
	(0.00287)	(0.00493)		
Pre-1985 birth cohort's age (rf)	-	-		
Age for the 1985 birth cohort	0.0299***	0.0237**		
	(0.00611)	(0.0113)		
At least 13 single years of education			0.0824***	-0.0137
			(0.0258)	(0.0136)
Years of education			0.0174***	0.00143***
			(0.00112)	(0.000521)
Years of education fewer than 13 (rf)			-	-
Years of education for those with at least 13			-0.0354***	-0.000178
			(0.00843)	(0.00433)
Constant	7.679***	7.491***	0.256***	0.0340***
	(0.0329)	(0.0428)	(0.00683)	(0.00352)
Observations	32,156	18,312	16,901	9,650
R-squared	0.006	0.002	0.024	0.001

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Note 4: the explanatory variables age and single years of education are centred. 1985 birth cohort combines those born in 1985 and after 1985.

49.0   Discussion

This article analysed how labour market outcomes among 15-49-year-old women in Kenya are affected by social interactions. Social interactions were proxied by the number of sexual partners. Post-secondary training and benefiting from free public elementary education (the Program) were

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[68] Marriage constrains married women/women living with partners.

used as treatment variables. Fuzzy regression discontinuity design was estimated. The model was tested for robustness in quantile regressions.

The Program mattered insignificantly when post-secondary training is considered; among married women, the Program was insufficient in driving a wedge in labour incomes. Post-secondary training significantly affected labour incomes among women. Labour incomes declined in the full women sample for an additional non-husband partner among women with at least thirteen single years of schooling. Married women's labour incomes were insignificantly affected by non-husband sexual partners. Incomes declined significantly and massively among women within the 50th quantile. The number of non-husband sexual partners declined significantly in single years of schooling among post-secondary trained women. A wife was likely to be unemployed if the husband was unemployed, and a husband was likely to be unemployed if the wife was unemployed.

Unlike Mulwa & Gichana (2020) who reveal that education in general raises the labour market participation rate, we argue that it is post-secondary training that matters a lot more. We find no reason to believe that a woman's socioeconomic status during childhood was definitive. This is because the 1985 birth cohort that fairly benefitted from free public elementary school education earned almost similar wages to the pre-1985 birth cohort when post-secondary training is accounted for. While we appreciate that affluence presents an individual with initial advantages that raise the chances of schooling (Enfield, 2019), we find insignificant differences in single years of schooling between the 1985 and the pre-1985 birth cohorts.

Similarly to Ibourk & Elouaourti (2023) and Jones et al (2023), we attribute the high labour incomes reported among post-secondary trained women relative to their counterparts with lower educational attainment to high reservation wages. Besides, only a small fraction of individuals enrol in and graduate from post-secondary training (Jones et al, 2023). Hence, individuals with post-secondary training receive a labour income premium. Lastly, our hypothesis that labour market outcomes among women are affected by the number of sexual partnerships is discarded. We treat such partnerships as convenience arrangements and pleasure-seeking endeavours rather than initiatives strategically exploited to shape labour market outcomes.

50.0   Conclusions and Recommendations

We conclude that education subsidies targeting lower educational levels such as the Free Public Elementary School Education in Kenya have minor effects on single years of schooling not exceeding 5 months. Similarly, the number of sexual partners drastically erodes labour incomes only for women in the 50th quantile. Much of the observed women's labour income wedge in Kenya depends on post-secondary school training and the years spent furthering a woman's study beyond grade 12. We suggest that the Government of Kenya and its developmental partners invest in enhancing the enrolment and completion of further studies, notably, college, TVET, and university.

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Women, War and Terrorism: An African Feminist Critique

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Abstract

This article examines war and terrorism discourses from an African feminist perspective. It focuses on the male-centric nature of war and terrorism discourse. The article argues that although women play critical roles in war and terrorism, their voices are not integrated into counter-terrorism interventions because of the patriarchal nature of war and terrorism. The article critiques the dominant historical, philosophical, and theoretical perspectives that masculinise war and terrorism discourse. It explores three key questions, one: in what ways have men been masculinised into war and terrorism discourse; two: in what ways have women been excluded from war and terrorism discourse; and three: what contributions do women bring to efforts against terrorism based on their lived experiences. This article examines social theories that justify men's dominance in discourse on terrorism. It coins the African feminist theory Nafsi that acknowledges the power and vulnerability that inform women's knowledge and experiences of terrorism. The article is based on a 2021 study in the Majengo slums of Nairobi, Kenya, and uses a narratological approach to capture the knowledge and experiences of mothers of male al-Shabaab recruits to terrorism discourse. It concludes by exemplifying women's continued contribution to fighting terrorism and calls for a gender-inclusive approach to terrorism discourse.

Key words: *exclusion, gender, masculinity, terrorism, war.*

51.0 Introduction

> *"They showed us contempt because we are women and they overlooked the fact that we are the ones who have information, more than the men."* Yasmin, 2020 -2021 female study respondent in Majengo, Nairobi.

Women are often overlooked. This is because society considers them *'irregular'* warriors (Bouta, Frerks, Bannon, 2005). This invisibilisation of women stems from the historical socialisation of the man being seen as heroic and a protector, versus the cowardly woman. This patriarchal socialisation thus plays multiple roles in the concept of war and terrorism protected women (Workman, 1996). Moreover, it puts men in a position of being the women's protectors, and when they do not enter this role, they are treated

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by members of society with mockery and disdain for not being *'man-enough'* (Zur and Glendinning, 1987). Society expects women to uphold their maternal roles and dissociates them from any forms of violence. Similarly, in the war and terrorism discourse, women are viewed through the lens of domesticity (Shapiro and Maras, 2018).

As Christensen and Rasmussen (2015) note, this attitude has historically and continuously positioned men as aggressors, and women as pacifiers. In addition, in both war and terrorism, the enemy is feminised, denoting that they are a weaker gender, easier to kill, destroy, or harm. This feminisation of the enemy results in femininity being mocked and humiliated. As seen in the Afghanistan war, captured boys are made to wear women's clothes and to dance in front of armed soldiers (Rikheim, 2022). In agreement, Workman (1996), states that the practice of terrorism and war is biased towards a patriarchal misogynistic underbelly that views the woman as the man's enemy and equates the war enemy to the crushing of a woman. It calls on the man to kill the woman within him to be able to engage in war, making war and terrorism femicidal in their conception (Workman, 1996). This is despite widespread acknowledgement by both state and non-state actors, that war and terrorism are gendered phenomena (Chinkin, Kaldor, & Yadav, 2020).

This article seeks to challenge these notions that promote war and terrorism as a men's affair and to specifically promote a gendered approach to terrorism discourse. Towards this end, efforts have been made with the passing of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 of 2000 on women, peace, and security, which called for women's full participation in all peace processes, including prevention, management, and resolution. (UN Women, 2017). In addition, the UNSCR 2242 (2015) calls for the integration of women in counterterrorism efforts. The inclusion of women is likely to yield increased effectiveness in efforts against terrorism. As Traoré (2021) and UNODC (2020), note, a gender-inclusive counterterrorism approach renders it both effectual and holistic and promotes broader human rights and development.

1.1 Research Gap and Justification

Until now existing knowledge, literature, and practice on countering terrorism have failed to include the experiences of women, specifically, mothers of male al-Shabaab recruits. These mothers have been viewed by policy actors and practitioners as victims or contributors to terrorism and not as key stakeholders in the fight against terrorism. This is even though women, including mothers, have played crucial roles in supporting antiterrorism efforts. By responding to three key questions, one: in what ways have men been masculinised into war and terrorism discourse; two: in what ways have women been excluded from war and terrorism discourse; and three: what contributions do women bring to efforts against terrorism based on their lived experiences, this article aims to capture the knowledge and experiences of mothers of male al-Shabaab recruits as a contribution to an African feminist perspective towards gender-inclusive counterterrorism efforts.

52.0 Literature Review

Existing literature has continued to link notions of masculinity to violence. This is embedded in socialisation processes that reinforce men's domination in terrorism discourse and peripheralize women. This section explores historical gender-dichotomous approaches to war and masculinised and gender-stereotypical perspectives of terrorism, building towards an understanding of the ubiquitous exclusion of women from terrorism discourse.

2.1 The Gendered Dichotomies of Men, Women, and War

War is about gendered processes of socialisation and imbalanced power relations skewed in favour of men. Micheletti, Ruxton, and Gardner (2018) observe that war has traditionally been majorly a purview of men, with men being the combatants and women playing supportive roles. Workman (1996) further claims that the characterisation of manliness and womanliness has contributed to the constitution of war as a male affair that requires masculine traits and the subservience of women. Ferguson (2020) adds that

men's propensity to war is one of protectionism, they lean towards protecting what they consider to be their own.

What men claim to be protecting may be authority, opportunities, positions, power, resources, children, or women, against the perceived other, the enemy (Ferguson, 2020). This reveals that men's engagement with war is about winning, dominance, power, and control. As Amman and Staudacher (2020) posit, African men are often associated with abuse of power, domination, and violence with expectations placed on them to live up to these perceived ideals of manhood.

This notion emerges strongly through gender-differential socialisation processes. According to Ferguson (2020), man is socialised to be brave, to fight against the enemy, to feminise them. In this regard, a male child, the American Psychological Association (2018) states, expresses frustration through violence, which is encouraged, and as they grow older, acts of violence translate to power over another, a show of might and dominance. Prugl (2003), observes that in most societies, men are discouraged from showing cowardice even when they are fearful, and they are pushed into war and rewarded for their toughness. Violence is what separates boyhood and manhood; it is the bridge that needs to be successfully crossed.

Men, Prugl (2003) continues, are enculturated towards this through rites of passage from boyhood to manhood, which signify bravery, honour, courage, skill, and discipline, all of which are characteristics required on the battlefield. Men thus achieve their masculinity through destruction and violence. States legitimise violence through wars and justify men's involvement. This explains why most militaries are male-dominated. Christensen and Rasmussen (2015), argue that states practise structured masculinised socialisations of war, by asking men to join the military as a noble cause, to protect their countries because they possess both rational thought and the physical stature to fight.

The practice of war has also been about men protecting people, especially vulnerable groups such as women and children, and property, from their enemies. Chuter and Gaub (2016) observe that in pre-colonial Africa, in some communities, young men were sent out to war, to protect the interests of their in-groups or for social-cultural reasons such as cattle rustling. Additionally, Løvgren (2015) postulates that the violence of young African men is seen as their revolt against structural and systemic challenges in African societies, which frustrate and humiliate them. Their engagement in violence earns them respect because they are responding to societal expectations of them (Løvgren, 2015).

War also gives men a shared identity. It is something that they do together as men, away from the women but presumably for their sake. LaMothe (2017) submits that an invitation for men to go to war gives them a sense of purpose, a shared identity, a mission to fulfil, and a chance to protect their own.

However, when it comes to women and war, the discourse shifts. Where young men's engagement in war is viewed with pride, Løvgren (2015) asserts that women's involvement in violence is seen as increasing their social vulnerabilities. This is a misconception because historically women have also played active roles in war practices. This has been as sympathisers, encouragers, financiers, and fighters. As war supporters, as Prugl (2003) indicates, women have historically and culturally bolstered the 'man of war' by encouraging them with song and dance on their way to the battlefield and celebrating and honouring them with gifts when they come back victorious. Women also contribute to violence by taking up supportive roles that contribute to the continuance of wars. As the ICRC (2003) notes, women become the heads of households when the men go out to war. Women also engage in war as active combatants.

Regrettably, when they do, they are considered sexually inadequate or dysfunctional as a justification for their war engagement in what Sjoberg and Gentry (2008) term the whore narrative. This sexualisation of women involved in war provides a plausible societal explanation for what is considered *'abnormal'*. This singular sexualised lens of women's engagement in war disenfranchises them from engaging in discussions on resolving wars because war is seen as a male affair. This same male-centric war thinking is also prevalent in terrorism discourse.

2.2 The Masculinisation of Terrorism

According to Banks (2019), the history of terrorism (1880 to date) portrays the terrorist as male. On the other hand, Rapoport (2014) proffers four gender-neutral waves of terrorism, namely the anarchist wave (the 1880s) that focused on the assassination of key political leaders; the anti-colonial wave (1920s) that

targeted colonial masters and had a nationalist agenda; the new left wave (the 1960s) characterised by both a radical and nationalist agenda with an underlying short-lived revolution agenda; and the religious wave (1980s) that saw an intersection of religious and ethnic identities and a return to the use of the term terrorist as an identity marker.

In his inputs, Rapoport (2014) provided a broader outlook on terrorism, but Parker and Sitter (2015) introduced a new perspective and proffered that instead of waves, these are strains, specifically, the four horsemen of terrorism. In this way, they masculinised the terrorism discourse. In inferring from this, the maleness of terrorism is not likely to disappear even with the next strain of terrorism and instead, there needs to be a deliberate attempt to infuse women's knowledge into understanding and addressing terrorism. As Tunde (2015) reflects, women's involvement in terrorism can be traced back to the 19th century in groups like the Russian Narodnaya Volya, the Peru Shining Path Group, and the Palestinian Hamas, thus their exclusion from terrorism discourse is unjustified.

The notion of masculine power and dominance, similarly to war discourse, strongly emerges in terrorism discourse. Dier and Baldwin (2022) assert that masculinity epitomised by societal expectations of manhood and what it should look like translates into male power, dominance, entitlement, and privilege over other men and women and a normalisation of misogyny that propositions men as innately superior to women, in terrorism discourse. Direct engagement in terrorism has also mainly been a male affair and this can be explained through socialisation processes that link men to violence. As Noonan (2018) observes, terrorist actors have tended to be male with men conducting 2,335 terror attacks between the period 1982 and 2016, and only 217 attacks attributed to female terrorists in comparison.

This, says Noonan (2018), is not coincidental but enshrouded in the concept of masculinity that conditions men to show heroic characteristics by displaying their courage, strength, and efficacy by engaging in terrorist acts. Additionally, Noonan (2018) puts forward that this concept of manhood has defined terrorism as a man's world because it is where men get to assert their agency, establish their political identity, and reaffirm their masculinity. This need for male establishment of authority fits in well with terrorist agendas. Dier and Baldwin (2022) note that terrorist groups offer hypermasculine imagery that provides men with an opportunity to reclaim their honour, sexual prowess, social status, economic power, and political relevance.

In this way, terrorism provides a meeting point between masculinity and disenfranchisement that supports men's traditional roles as protectors and providers (UNDP and UN Women, 2020). Additionally, Dier and Baldwin (2022) reflect that it re-establishes their manhood and gives them a sense of belonging to the brotherhood, and a restoration of pride and identity which is often emasculated through economic, political, and social disenfranchisement as seen in Afghanistan with the Taliban, and in Somalia with al-Shabaab and ISIL.

For men, their dominance in the terrorism discourse is key as it gives them power and relevance in society through a falsified notion of brotherhood on one hand, and one of causing pervasive fear and destruction on the other.

2.3 Gendered Stereotypes and Presumptions of Womanhood

The perceived social benefits of terrorism for men, feed into the continued justification of women's exclusion. Pearson (2018) justifies the maleness of terrorism discourse by submitting that women are aligned to their female characteristics of being caring, chaste, and maternal. This is in contradiction to terrorism which is associated with concepts of manhood like bravery, dominance, power, and subordination of fellow men and women.

The viewing of women from a feminine perspective as mothers, and nurturers, denies them agency to be key actors in terrorism discourse. Noonan (2018) observes that when women engage in terrorism, it is often sensationalised and overemphasised, as it is considered a rarity, going against the norm, against what is acceptable of a woman, and this lessens her identity as a female terrorist and a woman.

Emphasising this, Kaufman, and Williams, (2013) state that when women are deeply involved in terrorism, as combatants or suicide bombers, it is seen as an abomination that goes against expected gender norms, with conclusions peremptorily made that a male figure must have influenced her extremely violent behaviour. In agreement, Talbot (2001) proffers that the terms 'woman' and 'terrorism' are

viewed from an opposing perspective, with women involved in terrorism viewed as not being feminine enough to take up a role that is a presumed preserve of men.

Yet, violent extremist organisations negatively utilise women's agency as an assertion of male power to suit their needs. As Makanda, et.al (2018) observe, male terrorists use women to accomplish their mission because women navigate better, evade detection, and spread terrorist propaganda. Fink, Zeiger, and Bhulai (2016) reiterate, that in terrorist groups, girls and women are often relegated to sexualised or household roles as seen in ISIS and Boko Haram.

2.4 The Resultant Blind Spot - Women

Terrorism discourse has invisibilised women. Repo (2006) alleges that security has historically and consistently been masculinised, and men's views and opinions are taken as superior, universally acceptable, and shared. Similarly, state policies on terrorism are gendered with the male perspective being dominant and the delegitimization and depoliticization of women's experiences in this arena considered standard practice (Repo, 2006).

As the OSCE (2013) indicates, the misconception of women as too timid to be involved in terrorist acts has resulted in their exclusion from the policy sphere addressing terrorism. Moreover, Davis, West, and Amarasingam (2021) submit that when it comes to the knowledge sphere, women's role in terrorism has not been sufficiently captured because it is viewed as women going beyond the spaces where socialisation and patriarchy have confined them. The reliance of policymakers and practitioners on available written data makes knowledge political, resulting in women's knowledge of terrorism often being left out and rendering efforts against terrorism ineffective (Davis, West, and Amarasingam, 2021).

Pearson (2018) asserts that in terrorism studies, women are made invisible because even when they lead or engage in terrorist acts, their engagement is not equated to female agency and power, instead it is viewed as going against the norm. The media, which has a huge following that influences mindsets and beliefs has also excluded women. Sjoberg (2009) observes that media reports and scholarly works on terrorism in the last decade which inform discourse and response, have not included a gender dimension, the contributions of women to terrorism, and the implications of terrorism on women. When women are mentioned, they are referred to as women terrorists not just terrorists making it an out-of-the-norm discussion.

Davis, West, and Amarasingam, (2021) note that out of 3,442 journal articles on terrorism published between 2007 and 2016, only 232 focused on women in terrorism with 448 in the period 1996-2020. Although this indicates a slightly increased interest in scholarship on women and terrorism, women-specific knowledge on this issue still evidently remains peripheral.

The removal of women from discourse and narratives on terrorism by state actors, violent extremist organisations, and scholars is systematic. It portrays women as helpless spectators and victims. As UNDP and UN Women, (2020) posit, it suppresses their roles as combatants and military leaders as this goes against socialised and normalised gender roles because acts like aggression, strength, and violence are considered a man's domain.

This, indicates Sjoberg (2009), enables society to continue their idealisation of femininity and womanhood to meet societal expectations and contributes to a lack of proper interrogation of the role of women in terrorism and their role in addressing it.

Studies reveal that it is also important for knowledge on terrorism to be shared extensively with women as well. Fink, Zeiger, and Bhulai (2016), note that in France, mothers knew that Salafists were radicalising their sons who were vulnerable due to economic and social marginalisation, they knew the Salafists' strategies, location of radicalisation, and timings, but were unaware of the official channels to direct their knowledge to, resulting in a lost intervention opportunity.

Despite the exclusion of women from the field of terrorism, as noted above. There is still an opportunity to include the voices of women including African women. As Wight (2009) reflects, the field of terrorism is still faced with a myriad of challenges including a lack of definitional agreement, almost no access to actual terrorists, the secretive nature of security agencies working on terrorism, over-focus

on policy due to the availability of funding for this particular aspect and a lack of objectivity due to its emotive nature borne out of political and personal interests.

It is within this quagmire that a gender-inclusive lens can be added to enhance the effectiveness of efforts against terrorism. This requires a capturing of women's voices, including mothers of al-Shabaab recruits who bring in diverse nuances based on their lived experiences. Women can and have contributed to terrorism both positively and negatively and leaving them out of the terrorism equation, renders efforts to address terrorism ineffective.

53.0   Theoretical Framework

This article uses a dichotomous theoretical framework, the first one looks at theories that have furthered and entrenched women's inclusion in war and terrorism discourse, and the second, a grounded African feminist theory coined in this article, *Nafsi* African feminism, which aims to reclaim the place of women in terrorism discourse.

3.1 Social Contract Theory

Laskar (2013) states that the social contract theory as advanced by Thomas Hobbes takes further the notion of protection and preservation, embedded in an absolutism of authority and power, domiciled in one man or a group of men. The man has the sole responsibility of not only protecting the woman but also preserving his position of power in society.

Pateman (1998) adds that the social contract theory is one of men's freedom, women's suppression, men's leadership, and women's subjugation, effectively establishing men's political rights over women's agency. Although the social contract theory comes across as one intent on maintaining social order, it disenfranchises women's voice and agency. It reinforces women's exclusion from war discourse. In this way, women's contribution not only to war but to war prevention and resolution is disregarded.

3.1.1 The man of war – theoretical underpinnings

In war discourse, Young (2003) proffers, that man is portrayed as the protector, the one that ensures the woman is safe from external threats and dangers, and the woman is perceived as the one that needs protection. This relegates the woman to a position of powerlessness, and neediness, reliant on the man's protection. Young (2003) reemphasises, that the man, in war discourse, is viewed from a patriarchal frame as authoritarian and paternalistic and the woman as subservient and obedient to the man, appreciative of man's protective nature. This is a fallacy, as in reality, when men go to war, women are left to head households and protect the family members left behind, especially the most vulnerable, children, the elderly, and those with disabilities. The social contract theory, though, expounds on how this idea of male protectionism is advanced and justified.

3.1.2 The 'man of terror' – theoretical underpinnings

Terrorism discourse continues the same trajectory and foregrounds men as the main actors. Theoretical perspectives on terrorism and masculinity help us to understand why man is the main actor in undertaking terrorist acts as literature reveals. These include theories like toxic masculinity and the development of machismo, aggression theory, social constructionism theory, and social learning theory.

They portray societal expectations of men to be aggressive, powerful, and antifeminine. These theoretical perspectives also highlight, as Pearson (2019) notes, that the focus on the *'man of terror'* renders the woman invisible in discussions on terrorism and how best to deal with it. This article focuses on the social learning theory.

3.2 Social Learning Theory

Pearson (2019) says the social learning theory indicates that man's role in terrorism is a result of bolstered socialisation into a culture of violence as heroism and prowess. In agreement, Nabavi and Bijandi (2012) advance that behaviour is learned and fortified through frequent interactions within a given social context. Banarjee and Bandura, (2007) in addition, allege that, in social learning theory, learning takes place through observation, imitation, modelling, and experiencing what occurs around them. They state

that the process of social learning reinforced over some time requires attention to, retention, and reproduction of, the learning acquired, and a motivation to adopt this learned behaviour.

This results in those who have gone through the social learning process adapting particular behaviours like violence and acting on them through terrorist acts. As per the social learning theory, the observation and experience of violence are linked to the domination, power, respect, and reverence given to the individual committing the violence (Hughbank and Hughbank, 2007.) As Hughbank and Hughbank (2007) argue, in terrorism studies, violent behaviour is learned through observation and interaction toward the achievement of a defined goal.

The radicalisation process that entices individuals to join terrorist groups through frequent interactions with recruiters also models social learning. This, according to Pritchett and Moeller (2022) is through collective persecution of the presumed enemy and a focus on retaliation based on perceived shared grievances.

This article will, in its discussion section, draw on examples from the Majengo slum of Nairobi to show how the social learning theory was used to advance terrorism.

African Feminist Grounded Theory – Nafsi (Essence of Being) Feminism

The *Nafsi* African feminist theoretical perspective claims that women's knowledge is borne out of a convergence of their power and vulnerability which makes it unique and of added value to terrorism discourse. Lorentzen (2021) observes that in terrorism discourse, women have mainly been viewed as victims rather than knowledgeable contributors. This article coins the '*Nafsi'* (essence of being) African feminist theory through a grounded theory approach. *Nafsi* African feminism connotes that women's knowledge of terrorism is based on their lived experiences including both their power and vulnerabilities.

In an African context, the woman's power is linked to her societal responsibilities. Women's role as nurturers of their homes and children, coupled with the challenges they experience in their daily lives, influences not only what they know about terrorism but also how society views what they know as women.

Her vulnerability is based on her dire life experiences including patriarchy, poverty, sexual and gender-based violence, homelessness, drugs, and substance abuse. This is complicated further by the social context in which she resides, for instance, the informal settlement of Majengo, Nairobi where the mothers of the male al-Shabaab recruits live. The broader society looks at the woman through a vulnerability lens and as a result fails to acknowledge her power as a knower when it comes to terrorism discourse.

As indicated by the 2021 research undertaken in Majengo, Nairobi with mothers of al-Shabaab recruits, their knowledge of terrorism is influenced by their context and their lived experiences. *Nafsi* African feminism espouses that the vulnerability of the women in Majengo that invisibilizes them, combined with their power, provides a holistic view of women's knowledge of terrorism.

Through an exploration of this power and vulnerability, *Nafsi* African feminism will, through the women's knowledge, seek to influence and inform terrorism discourse in the discussion and findings sections.

54.0 Methodology

This study was undertaken in Majengo, Nairobi in 2021-2022 and covered the period 1998-2018 when several young men left the area to join al-Shabaab in Somalia. The informal settlement of Majengo, Nairobi has been described as a 'hotbed of terrorism' and a human resource base for the Somalia-based al-Shabaab violent extremist group (Wario, 2018). Muslim sectarianism has been identified as the entry point for al-Shabaab into Majengo, Nairobi who used religious narratives based on their erroneous interpretations of Islamic teachings (Metre, 2016). In 2009, Majengo, Nairobi hosted al-Shabaab's in-country branch through the Muslim Youth Centre at the Pumwani Riyadh Mosque, which resulted in youths from the area leaving for Somalia in their hundreds (UN, 2012).

An African feminist approach is used in this article to highlight the exclusion of women in terrorism discourse. It adopts African feminist narratology as its method to capture and validate as knowledge, the

experiences of mothers in Majengo, Nairobi. These are women whose sons left Majengo, Nairobi to join the al-Shabaab terrorist organisation in Somalia. As Keetley et.al (1995) argue, this approach gives power and agency to the subject to represent her own views that inform broader societal experiences without losing her unique voice.

African feminist narratology not only captures the subject's standpoint based on her lived experiences but is also cognisant of their political and social-cultural contexts (Hunsu, 2015). According to Code (1991), it examines social-cultural limitations that influence women's ways of knowing. The African feminist autobiographical method foregrounds the exclusion of African women from terrorism discourse because of the dominance of men as knowers.

The article uses a descriptive research design based on primary data from personal conversations (interviews) with 21 mothers of male al-Shabaab recruits and two focused group discussions with women, directly affected by terrorism, in Majengo in 2020-2021. Purposive sampling was used to assess the respondents based on social relations due to the sensitivity of the subject matter. The article includes inputs from relatives, neighbours, state actors, civil society, and media representatives in Majengo, Nairobi to strengthen the argument for women's inclusion in terrorism discourse. The article also captures secondary data by interrogating existing literature. The data was analysed using the NVivo software tool that coded the information and led to the emergence of themes that informed the study's findings.

The 2021-2022 study observed ethical considerations and sought consent from all the respondents. The language utilised and the location for the interviews was at the discretion of the respondent, who also had the option to stop the conversation or request that certain information not be revealed. Due to the securitised and sensitive nature of the study, the names of respondents have been anonymised. The data collected was validated with respondents through focused group discussions to ensure it was a true reflection of the information shared.

55.0 Discussion and Findings

This study revealed that in Majengo, Nairobi, social learning processes were significant in promoting terrorism. Through this study, the mothers also reveal their knowledge of the terrorist organisation, al-Shabaab, and the strategies they used to mobilise the young men of Majengo to join and travel to Somalia. In addition, the mothers knew the whereabouts of the al-Shabaab recruits, their sons, after their departure to Somalia and continued communicating with them. The study also shows that women's knowledge, including that of mothers, goes unnoticed, creating gaps in counterterrorism efforts.

5.1 Mother's Knowledge of al-Shabaab Recruitment Strategies

A sense of brotherhood. Al-Shabaab recruiters inculcated a sense of brotherhood. As Saidi, one of the al-Shabaab recruits' shares,

> "The recruiters' teachings at the Mosque were intense. Fathers were urged to sacrifice their sons to go to Somalia to support their Muslim brothers. They were convinced that if their sons died, they would die as martyrs and arise as heroes on judgement day. If Ahmad Iman, the main recruiter, at the time, told you to do something, and your mother told you not to, you would follow him. During that time, we, young men looked up to him. He was our role model. It was difficult to listen to our mothers." (Field notes, 01 May 2021).

Hope vs Discrimination: The recruiters used the discrimination and marginalisation narrative to convince the young men to join al-Shabaab. Nadia shares,

In addition, the recruiters gave promises of a better life, taking advantage of the situation of poverty and other social challenges including crime, early marriage, school dropouts, drugs, and substance abuse, to manipulate the young men to join al-Shabaab.

Religion and religiosity: The radicalisers also used religion and religiosity as entry points as shared by the mothers in the study. Jamila said, *"My son used to love religion a lot. He duped me that he was going to further his religious education. Then he left and went to Somalia."* (Field notes, 10 April 2021). Latifa, a mother, adds

"The radicalisation of young people took place inside the mosque where there were extreme Islamic teachings. They became deeply religious. The al-Shabaab recruiters had the support of the young people. They promised them job opportunities, a sense of belonging, brotherhood, and a deepened Islamic faith.

"One time there was a nationwide police recruitment. My son was among the potential recruits. Most young Muslim men were informed that they did not qualify. The al-Shabaab recruiter used this opportunity to go to areas where young Muslim men used to spend their time. He lamented to them that the government was deliberately discriminating against Muslims. He called on Muslims to learn to depend only on themselves. He told the youth that he could take them somewhere where they did not need a national identification card or academic qualifications. A country where they could wear uniforms, and the only requirement was a desire and passion to handle a firearm. He reemphasized the notion that the Kenyan government did not care about Muslims. In this way, the recuiter managed to get a lot of youth to join al-Shabaan in Somalia.

During that period, young people would sleep together at the mosque, and the mothers believed that their sons had transformed for the better." (Field notes, 27 March 2021).

Trust-building: The al-Shabaab strategically employed the element of time to build trust with the community members and the young people. Respondents noted that it was after one and a half years, that young people began disappearing from Majengo, Nairobi, one after another. They claimed they were heading to Somalia to fight 'Jihad,' the holy war, as their contribution towards the implementation of Sharia law. The al-Shabaab, in line with the social learning theory, took time to indoctrinate their recruits. Shaheema, a mother, remarks

"I did not realise at the time that after the evening prayers at the Mosque, some men would invite my son to go to 'Maratib' to spend the night there. This is where meetings of *'shura'* to radicalise them would happen. My son spent many nights there attending these lessons. This is how he ended up going to join al-Shabaab in Somalia".

Meeting of needs: The al-Shabaab also used generosity to lure in the youth. They did an in-depth context assessment and identified and met the needs of the young people. Shariff, a study respondent, submits,

The power dynamic: Through the teachings of al-Shabaab, the young people in Majengo began to feel empowered. They wanted to restore Majengo to its Islamic religiosity. As Saidi recalls,

Resultantly, those joining terrorist groups see it as a response, a reclamation of power that enables them to regain their status, and their rightful place in society.

5.2 Mothers' Knowledge of Their Sons' Intentions to Join Al-Shabaab

The study revealed that some of the mothers of al-Shabaab recruits were aware of their son's plans to go to Somalia. This information is important in supporting prevention efforts against terrorism through an

> "When the al-Shabaab recruiters came to the Mosque, they made the sessions lively to attract young people. Food was provided on trays in plenty. They took the young people out for money. Others they would go for religious education to Kisauni and New land and perish of these. One time they went to Mashada Marslambe at (Field notes, 26 June 2020) out female sex workers. The youth claimed that they were reclaiming Majengo as an area that lives up to Islamic ideals." (Field notes, 01 May 2021).

exploration of how the mothers knew. Hadija expresses,

> "I had heard that my son's friend had gone to Somalia and died there. I told my son that I did not want him to meet the same fate. He said he was only going to Nguluni to study religion for three months and come back. I said no, but a month after our conversation, he came to me and told me that he wanted to go to Somalia. He said there is no joy in this world, and it is better for one to go to Somalia and die there, they would have died fighting for their religion. I told him there is no 'Jihad,' that the war in Somalia is amongst Somalis fighting each other. My warnings did not bear fruit, he still left for Somalia soon after." (Field notes, 20 March 2021).

5.3 Mothers' Knowledge of Their Sons' Departure to Somalia

The mothers shared that after their sons had left for Somalia, they knew. This information is useful in tracking the routes taken and the specific locations to support prevention and early intervention in counterterrorism. Manar says,

> "My son told me, mama, I am going to Madrasa. He never came back home. Later, I heard rumours that he had gone to Somalia. After about five days, I received a phone call from an unfamiliar number. When I picked up, it was my son. We spoke and he informed me that he had travelled to Somalia. Since he left, I have never laid my eyes on him again." (Field notes, 21 April 2021).

Aisha similarly shares, *"My son called me after three days. He told me that he had left for Mombasa to go and study religion."* (Field notes, 23 April 2021). Munira shares a similar script, she says, Hadija says

5.4 Mothers Continued Communication with Their Sons

Following their sons' departure to Somalia to join the al-Shabaab violent extremist group, some of the mothers were in communication with them. This information is useful to support early intervention efforts that include rescue, repatriation, rehabilitation, and reintegration of al-Shabaab recruits. The study showed that 99% of the women kept in communication with the youths from Majengo, Nairobi after they had joined al-Shabaab in Somalia. Ubah indicates,

> "My son called me after two years. In all this time, I had neither seen him nor heard from him. I remember it was raining when he called. He greeted me and told me he had gone to Somalia. I was so surprised by the call. I was unable to utter a single word..." (Field notes, 20 March 2021).

> "My son's friend came to my house and informed me one day that my son Hassan had gone to Somalia. He had requested his friend to inform me after a few days. He had paid the rent for this house before he left. And this friend told me that I could find stay there. When I got back to the youk and it was in shock. I was unable to speak." (Field notes, 27 March 2021).

5.5 Women's Knowledge of Terrorism Disregarded

Some of the Majengo women, including mothers whose sons had gone to Somalia, tried to raise their concerns to security actors and community leaders to take preventive measures but were largely ignored. This speaks to the endemic practice of leaving women's voices out, considering their knowledge as mere opinion, and ignoring it, yet this knowledge is critical in rendering efforts to address terrorism effective. Several women in Majengo, Nairobi made attempts to report the matter to the authorities and to get their voices heard but this went largely ignored. Salma says,

> "My son called me from Somalia after one and a half years. I reported this to the Anti-Terror Police Unit (ATPU). I thought they would assist me to find my son. Instead, I was picked up from my house and taken in for interrogation. After this, they published my son's photo in the news articles and labelled him a terrorist. I told the ATPU that this was wrong, as I feared that my son would be killed if anyone came across him, and I would not get the chance to bury my son. They ignored me." (Field notes, 21 April 2021).

Aisha adds

> "In 2008 when the young people started going to Somalia from Majengo, Nairobi. We gathered as Majengo women to raise our concerns on al-Shabaab through a peaceful demonstration that was covered in mainstream media. We were accused of being prostitutes and making unnecessary noise. We went to government offices to report. This was before the issue got out of hand. They said …what are you telling us? And ignored us." (Field notes, 23 April 2021).

5.6 Women's Knowledge of Money Intricacies

The study shows that there were some financial transactions between the al-Shabaab recruits and their mothers. The movement of money aids in tracing the whereabouts of terrorist organisations and supports

> "Each time my brother called me, I warned him not to, as I was afraid of being arrested and taken in for questioning. He would urge me to go to Somalia. My brother used to send my mother money. I feared that this would get us into trouble with the government. I lived in fear, as security personnel would randomly trail me. I was never taken in for interrogation on my brother's whereabouts." (Field notes, 17 February 2022).

prevention efforts and the fight against terrorism at large. The state, however, did not speak to the women in Majengo to gather their knowledge on the financial aspects of terrorism to understand better the terrorist economy. According to Asma, the government is intimidating and very secretive. She recalls,

5.7 Mothers' Efforts to Address Terrorism

Some of the mothers acted. They tried to intervene and find their sons, but the authorities did not give them the needed support. Actions against terrorism need a collaborative approach to be effective. Zainab stresses

> "I did not keep quiet. I heard rumours that young people were leaving Majengo, Nairobi for Somalia and that they were mostly transported at night. On that night, when my son did not come back home by 9:30 p.m., I went to my neighbour Amina and requested her to take me to the police station to check if my son was there. I was worried because my son had left the house without a sweater. Upon arrival at the Shauri Moyo police station, the police officer checked and informed me that my son was not there. He told me that perhaps he had gone to Somalia as there had been several cases. He did not seem overly concerned. I left and went to the California police post and did not find my son there either. I told my friend we should go back home, and in the morning, go back to Shauri Moyo police station and maybe we will find a policeman that is more eager to assist." (Field notes, 17 February 2022).

Shaheema shares,

> "I never gave up on finding my son after his departure to Somalia. I tried different contacts. One day, a woman called me and invited me to go to Nyayo house at 3:00 p.m. for information on my son's whereabouts. When I got there, I met with security actors and other parents, both Christian and Muslim, whose children had travelled to Somalia. We were all sharing, how our sons came to join al-Shabaab, how they looked, and their ages. They told us that now that they have these details if they got any information, they would let us know. There were about twenty parents. That is the last time I heard from them." (Field notes, 10 April 2021).

56.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The gendered show of manhood in war and terrorism has in some instances been taken to the extreme. Gruesome violence, subjugation, raping, and mutilation of women have been seen in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, and the Sudan-South Sudan wars (Trenholm et al, 2013, Ferguson, 2020). This makes it difficult to bring a gender dimension into discussions on violence including terrorist violence, as women's engagement is still considered out of the norm.

The downside of the projection of the man of war, the man of terror is harmful to both men and women. It propagates toxic masculinity and denies men protection even when they suffer sexual violence during war (Rikheim, 2022). These gender-blind spots result in a situation where there are no winners, only losers. When there are skewed gender lenses, they hamper the effectiveness of efforts to address terrorism.

Despite being systematically side-lined, women are not just waiting on the side-lines but are acting with limited financial, and technical support. Women have set up organisations to address the challenge of terrorism including the Moroccan Association of Victims of Terrorism, Djazaïrouna in Algeria (Fink, Zeiger and Bhulai, 2016), Women without Borders in Austria, Sisters Against Violent Extremism in India (WWB, 2023), PAIMAN Trust in Pakistan (Peace Direct, 2020), Women Without Walls Initiative in Nigeria (WOWWI, 2023), and the Gender and Responding to Violent Extremism Network (GARVE, 2020).

Women are not only active participants in terrorism but are also critical actors that need to be considered in all efforts to address terrorism, including decision-making, prevention, and response actions (Daniel, 2022). This article explored three key questions, one, it showed how through social learning and social contract theories, men are socialised into war and terrorism discourse; two, it revealed the ways that women have been excluded from war and terrorism discourse, and through its study findings, it made visible the knowledge of women on terrorism based on their lived experiences.

The study revealed three key aspects by capturing the knowledge of women in Majengo, Nairobi based on their lived experiences. One is that women in Majengo hold critical information that would have aided in prevention and response efforts, and informed policy formulation against terrorism. Two, that despite having this information, the women's voices are largely ignored by the *'powerholders'*, the decision-makers, and mainly men. Three, this exclusion of women's voices from terrorism discourse has resultantly rendered efforts to address terrorism ineffective.

The mothers' knowledge is potentially beneficial to government actors, including security agencies, researchers on terrorism, civil society actors, and community leaders. It can aid prevention and early intervention efforts on terrorism. Yet, because of women's exclusion from terrorism discourse as knowers, their knowledge remains imperceptible. The inclusion of women in terrorism discourse will enable a gender-informed response that considers the differential impact of terrorism on women and men and enhance the effectiveness of counterterrorism efforts.

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