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ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN SELECTED COUNTY GOVERNMENTS KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Women are the single largest demographic group in Kenya and thus constitute the majority of the Kenyan population. Women empowerment is not only a human right but also essential in a democracy. Governments around the globe are increasingly supporting women ministries, policies and programmes, and there seems to be greater appreciation that women are the future of their country's development. Devolved governance is increasingly being pursued across the world as a means to improve the women empowerment in the devolved states. The general objective of this study was to examine the relationship between devolved governance practices and women empowerment in selected county governments in Kenya. The study pursued the following specific objectives; to establish the influence of economic governance on women empowerment in county governments in Kenya and to examine how gender mainstreaming moderates the relationship between devolved economic governance and women empowerment in county governments in Kenya. The study was based on the Empowerment Theory. A conceptual framework was developed which was used in the study and depicted the interrelationship between the study variables. The independent variables is; Economic governance. The Economic governance is moderated by the gender mainstreaming. The dependent variable is the women empowerment. The study adopted a descriptive research design. For the purpose of this study, the unit of observation was 252 (women representatives, opinion leaders, Women entrepreneurs and chairpersons of women groups) drawn from the selected county governments in Kenya. The study findings showed that each of the independent variable (Economic Governance) had a strong positive significant influence on the dependent variable, Women Empowerment in both cases i.e., when alone and when they were combined. The findings further indicated that Devolved Governance (Economic Governance, Political Governance, Socio-cultural Governance, and Administrative Governance) positively and significantly explained 78.7% to the total variability in the dependent variable, Women Empowerment. Therefore, considering that only 21.3% of the total variability in the dependent variable, women empowerment could not be explained, this study recommends the implementors of women empowerment engage more devolved governance through Economic Governance, Political Governance, Socio-cultural Governance, and Administrative Governance in their implementation.

Key Word: Economic Governance, Gender Mainstreaming, Women Empowerment.

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BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Devolved governance, exemplified by Kenya's ambitious devolution process since the adoption of its 2010 Constitution, aims to increase local participation, electoral accountability, and bureaucratic performance and innovation (Lind, 2018; Karogi, 2019). This transformative approach has empowered local units with significant authority and financial autonomy, making counties the focal point for service organization and delivery (Mumbi & Gikandi, 2019; Sha, Aziz & Ahmad, 2021). However, the success of devolved governance hinges on achieving women's empowerment, a complex process essential for women to participate fully in social, political, and economic spheres (Cerna, 2023). Women's empowerment involves enabling them to make strategic life choices, exercise agency, and achieve equal representation, thus challenging existing gender disparities (USAID, 2020; Kabeer, 2019). While devolution offers opportunities for better projects and development, its efficacy in promoting women's empowerment varies across countries and depends on political will and simultaneous implementation of various governance systems (OECD, 2020; Indeché & Ayuma, 2021).

Statement of the Problem

Women are the single largest demographic group in Kenya and thus constitute the majority of the Kenyan population. KIPPRA (2019) reports indicate that women empowerment is not only a human right but also essential in a democracy. Governments around the globe are increasingly supporting women ministries, policies and programmes, and there seems to be greater appreciation that women are the future of their country's development (UN, 2020). Devolved governance is increasingly being pursued across the world as a means to improve the women empowerment in the devolved states (Kivoi, 2020). The Institute of Economic Affairs (2021) contends that there is a positive relationship between devolved governance and women empowerment. This was reinforced by the World Development Report (2019) report which indicated that devolved governance recognizes the contribution of women and effective enforcement of the performance of devolved states. Mumbi and Gikandi (2019) opine that effective devolved governance embrace women participation in county governments in Kenya. Karogi (2019) states that devolved governance geared towards women empowerment is critical for the successful devolved governance and has been realized in developed countries such as UK, USA, India and South Africa.

However, Kenya's women have remained at the periphery of the country's affairs for decades since independence and their needs and aspirations have not been accorded due recognition (World Youth Report, 2023). Women's empowerment in counties throughout Kenya remains disappointingly low, as reported by studies conducted by reputable international organizations like the World Bank and Transparency International. Data gathered by the latter revealed that approximately 58% of citizens expressed dissatisfaction with devolved governance's ability to spur women's empowerment (Transparency International, 2018). Alarming, Kenya ranks poorly concerning gender inequality, with a score of 64.9%, indicating substantial disparities between men and women (WEF, 2019). As a result, females face considerable hardships in securing decent employment, acquiring quality education, and attaining adequate healthcare.

According to official statistics, female-headed households represent around 30% of Kenya's total, wherein roughly half of these homes exist below the poverty line (Republic of Kenya, 2019; World Bank, 2020). Despite forming the bulk of the populace, women in Kenya endure a precarious existence marked by rampant discrimination in various domains, including politics, economy, culture, and social stratum (UN, 2020). Limited access to land, credit, education, technology, and markets further exacerbates women's vulnerabilities, rendering them incapable of fully realizing their inherent potential. Hence, urgent action must be taken to rectify these inequities and uplift the status quo for good.

Further, Kabugua (2020) study sought to establish factors influencing women's economic empowerment in Kirima sub-location, Kenya. Tumo (2019) study was to determine factors influencing women empowerment through microfinance programmes in Central Division, Narok North Sub County. Kiptarus (2019) found out

that women are disadvantaged as they do not have equal access to opportunities as do their counterparts. Women have been marginalized in all aspects of social, economic and political development. In addition, Gitegi and Iravo (2019) established that despite quality devolved systems, women empowerment in county governments is still wanting. A few studies have been carried out to examine the women empowerment and governance. Drawing on empirical research, Shah, Aziz and Ahmad (2021) critically analyzed the role of policy, legal and institutional framework on women participation in governance. In Kenya, the study revealed that policy, legal and institutional framework as the major issue affecting women participation in governance in Kenya. Moreover, Bouka, Berry and Kamuru (2019) and Obiero (2020) studies are narrow and suffered from conceptual gaps since they only addressed merits and demerits of women and governance. Therefore, mentioned empirical studies have yielded both conceptual and contextual gaps. This research study seeks to fill the void as it will focus on devolved governance and women empowerment in county governments in Kenya.

Research Objectives

- To establish the influence of economic governance on women empowerment in selected county governments in Kenya.
- To examine the moderating role of Gender Mainstreaming on relationship between economic governance and women empowerment in selected county governments in Kenya, Gender Mainstreaming, Women Empowerment

Research Hypothesis

- **H₀₁:** Economic governance does not positively and significantly affects women empowerment in county governments in Kenya.
- **H_{a2}:** Gender mainstreaming does not positively and significantly moderates the relationship between Economic governance and women empowerment in county governments in Kenya.

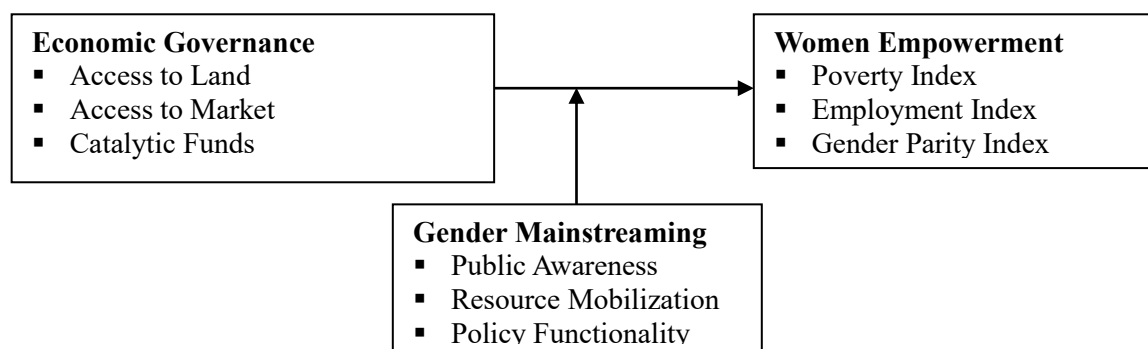
LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Empowerment Theory

Kabeer's (1999) conceptualization of empowerment as "the enlargement in people's ability to make strategic life choices" holds particular significance in the context of women's empowerment, emphasizing three fundamental dimensions: resources, agency, and achievements. Resources encompass material goods, knowledge, and social support, acquired through various institutional domains like the family, market, state, and community. In the realm of women's empowerment, policies enacted by implementation bodies play a crucial role in providing necessary resources such as funding, markets, and technical expertise, thereby facilitating interactions between women's groups and these bodies to address historical power imbalances. However, mere provision of resources is insufficient; enhancing women's agency, involving decision-making and negotiation capacities, is equally vital. Empowerment programs should focus on building women's agency by promoting self-efficacy, leadership skills, and collective action. Ultimately, women's empowerment requires both resource expansion and agency enhancement, with achievements reflecting the outcomes such as increased income, improved health, or greater political representation. Embracing all three dimensions of empowerment fosters sustainable change, promoting gender equality and enabling women to make strategic life choices (Kabeer, 1999).

Conceptual Framework



Independent Variables

Moderating Variable

Dependent Variable

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Economic governance

"Economic governance" encompasses macroeconomic and microeconomic management policies adopted by governments to regulate the economy (Prasad, 2020). While macroeconomic policies focus on aggregate fiscal management, microeconomic policies deal with the private-sector operating environment. Microeconomic reforms, often more contentious, require opportunistic support for politically feasible changes, whereas macroeconomic stabilization remains crucial during crises. However, there's been a tendency for aid programs to prioritize macroeconomic issues over downstream expenditure or microeconomic reform (Dawson, 2021). Regarding women's empowerment, policy frameworks alone are insufficient and fail to address underlying power dynamics. Continuous critical review of existing frameworks is necessary to enhance women's strategic choices (Onditi & Odera, 2019; Saqib, 2019).

The National Land Policy (2019) in Kenya aims to promote land rights, including gender equity, through transparent governance. It mandates legal reforms to protect women's land rights, repeal discriminatory laws, and facilitate joint spousal registration and inheritance rights. County governments are tasked with public education to combat cultural barriers against women's land inheritance and ensure women's representation in land institutions (Abwao & Awuor, 2019; Kaumbulu, Muathe & James, 2020). Additionally, initiatives like the Women Enterprise Fund (WEF) and Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO) aim to economically empower women. However, the effectiveness of these funds in achieving women's empowerment remains unclear due to the lack of consistent measurement and coordination mechanisms (Ponge, 2023).

Gender Mainstreaming

The discourse surrounding gender and development emphasizes the need to move beyond traditional stereotypes, acknowledging that both men and women contribute to development based on their adaptation to the environment and social responsibilities (Moser & Moser, 2021). Gender studies highlight the existence of multiple gender identities and advocate for gender-atypical involvement in development, stressing that roles should be allocated based on gender rather than sex (Behra & Gupta, 2019). To address gender inequality in development, there is a call for enhanced capacity building and resource allocation for gender mainstreaming initiatives at all levels (Pialek, 2019; Greed, 2019). Furthermore, tackling gender biasness in policies requires structural transformation and a commitment to incorporating gender equality perspectives into policy processes (True & Mintrom, 2020; Roux, 2021). Effective policy implementation hinges on contextual awareness and commitment at all levels of governance (Roux, 2021).

Women Empowerment

The concept of empowerment, stemming from Paolo Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed," underscores individuals' capacity to control their circumstances and achieve their goals, emphasizing self-determination and self-efficacy (Manuere, 2018; Adams, 2018). Specifically for women, empowerment involves a redistribution of social power and resources, enabling them to overcome powerlessness and participate in decision-making processes (Singh, 2019; Rahman, 2023). Despite global recognition of the importance of women's economic empowerment, women remain marginalized, particularly in developing countries, necessitating policy efforts to promote their participation in economic activities (UN, 2019; Mmbengwa et al., 2020). Empowering women economically not only benefits them individually but also contributes to broader societal development goals, including poverty reduction, economic growth, and increased efficiency (Golla, 2011; Dash et al., 2019). However, societal norms and institutional barriers continue to hinder women's economic participation, underscoring the importance of addressing gender inequalities at both structural and individual levels (Martin, 2021; Buvinic & O'Donnell, 2019).

Empirical Review

An empirical literature review is a comprehensive survey of previous inquiries related to a research question. Although it can often be wide in scope, covering decades, perhaps even centuries of material, it should be narrowly tailored, addressing only the scholarship that is directly related to the research question (Miller & Cox 2021). The variables under study namely: economic governance gender mainstreaming and women empowerment are discussed below.

Economic Governance

Legis (2020) investigated the impact of social entrepreneurship on women's empowerment in Kajiado County, focusing on mentorship, training, financial access, and networking. The study, employing a descriptive research design, surveyed 370 women social entrepreneurs and found that mentorship, training, financial access, and networking significantly influenced women's empowerment, with 196 participants responding positively. Similarly, Gichuhi and Njuguna (2019) examined the effect of devolution on women's empowerment in Nakuru County, revealing that substantive women representation, development programs, and improved service accessibility positively affected women's empowerment. Notably, the introduction of development programs emerged as the most influential factor in empowering women in the county.

Nabayinda (2020) explored the impact of access to loans on changing gender responsibilities among women in Ddwaniro sub-county of Rakai district. Using qualitative methods, the study revealed a positive correlation between women's access to loans and increased household responsibilities, emphasizing the need for husbands' support to prevent these responsibilities from becoming burdensome. Additionally, Chepngetich (2019) investigated the role of county governments in empowering women, highlighting the importance of implementing national government laws at the county level and providing women with access to credit and business facilities. The study found that respondents believed the county government played a crucial role in empowering women, particularly through education, policies facilitating access to credit facilities, and the nomination of women to political positions.

Women Empowerment

Women's empowerment is increasingly recognized as essential in devolved governance practices in Kenya, where power and authority are transferred from centralized government structures to regional or local levels. Devolution aims to enhance inclusive decision-making, improve service delivery, and stimulate grassroots economic growth. The involvement of women in leadership roles within county governments is crucial, as it challenges traditional gender norms and promotes diverse decision-making bodies. Additionally, targeted funding mechanisms mandated by the Kenyan Constitution ensure that women's needs are prioritized in budget allocations, leading to the establishment of initiatives like women's funds that support socioeconomic

empowerment. Moreover, devolved governance facilitates access to vital services such as healthcare and education, contributing to the reduction of gender disparities in health and educational outcomes. Lastly, women's participation in policy formulation and implementation processes ensures that their perspectives are considered, fostering greater accountability and transparency within county governments (UNDP, 2019; Constitution of Kenya, 2010; Siaya County Government, n.d.).

However, challenges such as cultural norms, limited resources, and inadequate legal frameworks persist, hindering the full realization of women's empowerment in devolved governance. Efforts are needed to address these barriers and promote gender equality effectively. Studies examining the impact of devolution on women empowerment in Nakuru County and the role of county governments in empowering women in Kericho County highlight the potential benefits and challenges associated with devolved governance in Kenya. Additionally, research on gender-related programs in Hurungwe District, Zimbabwe, underscores the importance of involving both men and women in gender empowerment initiatives to address gender-based disparities effectively (Gichuhi and Njuguna, 2019; Chepngetich, 2019; Mutanana and Bukaliya, 2021).

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted positivism philosophy because the study variables were based on facts derived from the empirical literature review and also the theoretical premises highlighted in chapter two. The research design for this study was an explanatory survey research design; this is by and large a positivism approach, under objectivism ontology and epistemology, a methodological philosophy in quantitative research where we apply the methods of natural sciences to discover the study of social science (Hammersley, 2019). The study used theories and hypothesis to account for the forces that caused a certain phenomenon to occur (Cooper and Schindler, 2011).

The population for the study comprises of the unit of analysis and unit of observation and they are important measures that explain the subjects and objects under study. For the purpose of this study, the unit of analysis was women representatives, opinion leaders, women entrepreneurs and chairpersons of women groups in the selected 14 county governments in Kenya. On the other hand, the unit of observation which is the unit described by the data that one analyzes. The sample size of 155 respondents was determined based on the criteria of efficiency, representativeness, reliability, and flexibility, with each stratum/category representing 10% of the target population to ensure optimal representation. This study collected primary data using a structured questionnaire. Data analysis was performed with the aid of SPSS version 29.0 (Hayes and Matthes, 2009) using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

Data Analysis

In the study, a total of 126 out of the 155 sampled responded to the study questionnaire. This translates to a response rate of 86.29%. The response rate of 86.29% gave the study high degree of representativeness that could be relied upon confidently to generalize the respondents' views. According to Portney (2020), a response rate of 50% is considered average, 60-70% is considered adequate while anything above 70% is considered to be excellent response rate. This response rate was, therefore, considered good representative of the respondents to provide information for analysis and derive conclusions, representing a response rate within the acceptable range for scientific investigations, as suggested by Sekaran (2017).

Descriptive Analysis

Economic governance

The study sought to find the descriptive statistics for Economic Governance, and the results in terms of percentages, mean and standard deviation were presented in Table 1. From the table, 36.5% agreed that the county government had enabled women to make investment decisions, 34.9% agreed that the county government had ensured that women are given a priority on 30% access to government procurement opportunities, 42.1% agreed that the county government facilitates women to participate in the Uwezo and

women enterprise fund, 34.9% agreed that the county government ensure that activities of stakeholders helps women access credit facilities, 34.1% agreed that the decision making processes on the new projects contributes to the success of the undertake women programmes, and 37.3% agreed that the county government ensures that there is equitable sharing of proceeds the women group economic activities.

Table 1: Percent Descriptive Statistics for Economic Governance

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
The county government has enabled women to make investment decisions	0.8	12.7	23.8	36.5	26.2	3.75	1.011
The county government has ensured that women are given a priority on 30 access to government procurement opportunities	0.0	12.7	29.4	34.9	23.0	3.68	.969
The county government facilitates women to participate in the Uwezo and women enterprise fund	2.4	10.3	19.8	42.1	25.4	3.78	1.019
The county government ensure that activities of stakeholders helps women access credit facilities	5.6	22.2	22.2	34.9	15.1	3.32	1.143
The decision making processes on the new projects contributes to the success of the undertake women programmes	3.2	13.5	27.8	34.1	21.4	3.57	1.069
The county government ensures that there is equitable sharing of proceeds the women group economic activities	2.4	13.5	23.0	37.3	23.8	3.67	1.058

The study sought to find out how economic governance influenced women empowerment in their counties, in terms of access to land and other productive resources, access to markets/ease of doing business, as well as catalytic funds (Uwezo, Youth Enterprise Fund, Women Enterprise Fund). The respondents indicated that access to land had provided good opportunities to women. They were able to get access loans which they used for investment. With the new Land Acts in place women can now inherit land from their parents. The availability of land also provided a chance for women to farm and earn income, the income was used to feed families. In term of access to markets, the respondents said it had led to growth of women led enterprises. A lot of micro and SME enterprises are now run by women which has contributed to economic empowerment. There has also been the growth of women registered groups and chamas in which women are able to make investment decisions. On the catalytic funds (Uwezo, Youth Enterprise Fund, Women Enterprise Fund), the respondents said that there had been an increase in the uptake of catalytic funds by women for enterprise development. The increase in uptake had been brought on through public participation and awareness.

Gender Mainstreaming

The study generated a descriptive statistic for Gender Mainstreaming and the findings were summarized in Table 2 in terms of percentages, mean and standard deviation. The table shows that a majority (42.9%) of the respondents agreed that the staff undergo continuous gender awareness trainings to encourage the development of correct attitude, 42.9% agreed that gender perspective is integrated into on-going and future programs, 38.1% agreed that government offers capacity building opportunities to strengthen the knowledge on gender issues, 41.3% agreed that resource mobilization for gender mainstreaming has been fully achieved by the county government, 42.1% agreed that the county government has flexible terms and conditions and other benefits to encourage women to join and build their careers, 41.3% agreed that county government has policies that promote gender equality and respect of diversity, 44.4% strongly agreed that the county government considers gender mainstreaming in its policies and programs, 31.7% agreed that internal gender audits are conducted in departments in order to identify gaps and take necessary action.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Gender Mainstreaming

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
Gender perspective is integrated into on-going and future programs	1.6	7.9	19.8	42.9	27.8	3.87	.963
Government offers capacity building opportunities to strengthen the knowledge on gender sensitivity	2.4	12.7	20.6	38.1	26.2	3.73	1.061
Resource mobilization for gender mainstreaming has been fully achieved by the county government	5.6	7.9	17.5	41.3	27.8	3.78	1.109
The county government has flexible terms and conditions and other benefits to encourage women to join and build their careers	1.6	9.5	19.0	42.1	27.8	3.85	.988
County government has policies that promote gender equality and respect of diversity	3.2	11.1	15.1	41.3	29.4	3.83	1.074
Internal gender audits are conducted in departments in order to identify gaps and take necessary action	2.4	7.1	18.3	31.7	40.5	4.01	1.047

The study sought to find out how gender mainstreaming influenced women empowerment in the counties in terms of Public Awareness, Resource Mobilization and Policy Functionality. The findings revealed that on Public Awareness, the counties had attempted to sensitise women through campaigns on the need to come out and make contributions to development by taking part in the economic, political and socio-cultural environment. Through these efforts many women are no longer intimidated. On Resource Mobilization, the respondents said that there has been a lot of meetings held within the communities to encourage women to take up funds from the counties. There has also been a push to have micro enterprises register for AGPO to enable them get procurement opportunities within the counties.

Women Empowerment

The study generated a descriptive statistics table in terms of percentages, means and standard deviations for the variable Women Empowerment and presented the results in Table 3. The table shows that a majority (33.3%) of the respondents agreed that they had access to financial services, 32.5% agreed that women's opinions are valuable and should be considered when household decisions are made, 40.5% agreed that they had a specific plan/goal that they were saving up for, 35.7% agreed that women's opinions are valuable and should always be considered when household decisions are made, 31.7% agreed that they combine money and decide when to spend it, 38.9% agreed that they participate in merry-go-rounds, 35.7% agreed that they have signed up for vocational training to enrich their skills, 39.7% agreed they can make their own independent investment decisions.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Women Empowerment

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
I operate a bank account	2.4	7.9	26.2	33.3	30.2	3.81	1.033
My opinions are valuable and always considered when household decisions are made	1.6	7.1	23.8	32.5	34.9	3.92	1.009
I participate in merry-go-rounds	2.4	10.3	28.6	38.9	19.8	3.63	.993
I combine my money together and decide where to spend it when expenses come up.	2.4	10.3	29.4	31.7	26.2	3.69	1.047
I have taken up vocational training to enrich my skills to provide opportunities for me in future	1.6	6.3	27.0	35.7	29.4	3.85	.972
I can make my own independent investment decisions	1.6	15.1	22.2	39.7	21.4	3.64	1.031

Correlation Analysis

The study computed Correlation analysis to determine the strength and the direction of the relationship between the variables being studied. If the correlation values are $r = \pm 0.1$ to ± 0.29 then the relationship between the two variables is small, if it is $r = \pm 0.3$ to ± 0.49 the relationship is medium, and when $r = \pm 0.5$ and

above there is a strong relationship between the two variables under consideration. Table 4 presents the findings obtained.

Economic governance is also seen to have a positive significant relationship with Women empowerment in selected county governments in Kenya, ($r = .785^{**}$, $p < 0.05$). Since the p-value (.000) was less than the selected level of significance (0.05), the relationship was considered significant. This therefore suggests that Economic governance affects Women empowerment in selected county governments in Kenya. The observed positive significant relationship between Economic governance and the Women empowerment in selected county governments in Kenya, aligns with previous research findings.

Several studies have explored the relationship between economic governance and women's empowerment, with many finding a positive association between the two. For example, a recent study examining the relationship between economic governance and women's empowerment in selected county governments in Kenya found a strong positive correlation between the two variables (Njeru & Kabiru, 2021). This suggests that improvements in economic governance may contribute to enhanced women's empowerment in this context.

Similarly, other studies have reported positive associations between economic governance and women's empowerment in various settings. For instance, a study analyzing data from 46 countries found that better economic governance, as measured by lower levels of corruption, higher government effectiveness, and more regulatory quality, was positively associated with women's empowerment (World Bank, 2022). Another study investigating the link between economic governance and women's empowerment in South Asia revealed that improvements in economic governance, such as reduced bureaucratic red tape and improved business regulations, were significantly correlated with increased women's participation in the labor force (Asian Development Bank, 2017).

Table 4: Correlation Analysis

		Women empowerment in selected county governments in Kenya,	Economic governance
Women empowerment in selected county governments in Kenya,	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	126	
Economic governance	Pearson Correlation	..785***	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	126	126

Regression Analysis

Test of Hypotheses

Test for Hypothesis One

H_{01} : Economic governance does not positively and significantly affects women empowerment in county governments in Kenya.

Regression between Women Empowerment and Economic Governance

The study generated a model summary table using SPSS and the findings were presented in Table 5. From Table 5, R-Square was found to be .616 meaning that 61.6% of the total variance in the dependent variable, Women Empowerment could be explained by Economic Governance.

Table 5: Model Summary Table for Women Empowerment and Economic Governance

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.785 ^a	.616	.613	.54489
a. Predictors: (Constant), Economic Governance				

The study further sought to test for the hypothesis to determine there was a positive significant relationship between economic governance and women empowerment in Kenya. From the ANOVA Table 6 generated using SPSS, the study established that p-value was .000 meaning that the null hypothesis was rejected and alternative hypothesis accepted.

Table 6: ANOVA Table for Women Empowerment and Economic Governance

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	59.056	1	59.056	198.904	.000 ^b
	Residual	36.816	124	.297		
	Total	95.872	125			

a. Dependent Variable: Women Empowerment

b. Predictors: (Constant), Economic Governance

The study generated a coefficient table from the dataset using SPSS and the findings were summarized in Table 7. From the table, Economic Governance was found to contribute .791 for every unit increase in the dependent variable, Women Empowerment. This implied that the model equation; $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$ became; $Y = .890 + .791X_1$.

Table 7: Coefficients table for Women Empowerment against Economic Governance

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.890	.209		4.256	.000
	Economic Governance	.791	.056	.785	14.103	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Women Empowerment

Several studies have documented a significant relationship between women empowerment and economic governance. One such study conducted by Olajide (2020) used multiple regression models to analyze the determinants of rural women's empowerment in Nigeria. The author found that economic factors, such as income and control over resources, had a significant impact on women's empowerment, explaining nearly 50% of the total variations observed.

Similarly, another study examining the linkage between women's empowerment and economic growth in Ghana discovered that a 1% improvement in economic governance resulted in a 0.34% rise in women's empowerment scores (Asare-Nsiah et al., 2017). This suggests a moderate but consistent positive relationship between economic governance and women's empowerment in sub-Saharan African countries.

Additionally, a cross-sectional study undertaken by Sharma (2018) investigated the effects of economic governance on women's empowerment in India. Utilizing hierarchical multiple regressions, the study concluded that favorable economic conditions led to higher levels of autonomy, self-esteem, and agency

among Indian women, corroborating earlier works demonstrating a causal pathway between economic governance and women's empowerment.

Test for Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: Gender mainstreaming does not positively and significantly moderates the relationship between Economic governance and women empowerment in county governments in Kenya..

Moderating Effect of Gender Mainstreaming on the relation between Devolved Governance and the Dependent Variable (Women Empowerment)

In order to establish if there was a moderating Effect of Gender Mainstreaming on the relationship between the combined Independent Variables and the Dependent Variable (Women Empowerment), the study generated a model summary table using SPSS and presented the results in Table 8. From the model summary Table 8, R-Square was found to be .769 up from .758 implying that Gender Mainstreaming had a 1.1% positive moderating effect on the relationship between Women Empowerment and the Devolved Governance (Economic Governance, Political Governance, Socio-cultural Governance, and Administrative Governance).

Table 8: Model Summary Table for Women Empowerment and Devolved Governance moderated by Gender Mainstreaming

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.871 ^a	.758	.750	.43772	.758	94.842	4	121	.000
2	.877 ^b	.769	.751	.43688	.011	1.094	5	116	.368

a. Predictors: (Constant), Administrative Governance, Socio-cultural Governance, Political Governance, Economic Governance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Administrative Governance, Socio-cultural Governance, Political Governance, Economic Governance, Gender Mainstreaming, Gender Mainstreaming and Administrative Governance, Gender Mainstreaming and Political Governance, Gender Mainstreaming and Economic Governance, Gender Mainstreaming and Socio-Cultural Governance

Through hypothesis five, the study further sought to test if gender mainstreaming positively and significantly moderates the relationship between devolved governance and women empowerment in Kenya. From the ANOVA Table 9, the study established that p-value was .000 meaning that the null hypothesis was rejected and alternative hypothesis accepted.

Table 9: ANOVA Table for Women Empowerment and Devolved Governance moderated by Gender Mainstreaming

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	72.688	4	18.172	94.842	.000 ^b
	Residual	23.184	121	.192		
	Total	95.872	125			
2	Regression	73.732	9	8.192	42.923	.000 ^c
	Residual	22.140	116	.191		
	Total	95.872	125			

a. Dependent Variable: Women Empowerment

b. Predictors: (Constant), Administrative Governance, Socio-cultural Governance, Political Governance, Economic Governance

c. Predictors: (Constant), Administrative Governance, Socio-cultural Governance, Political Governance, Economic Governance, Gender Mainstreaming, Gender Mainstreaming and Administrative Governance, Gender Mainstreaming and Political Governance, Gender Mainstreaming and Economic Governance, Gender Mainstreaming and Socio-Cultural Governance

The study generated a coefficient table from the collected data using SPSS and presented the results in Table 10. From the table none of the independent variables (Economic Governance, Political Governance, Socio-Cultural Governance and Administrative Governance) was found to contribute significantly to the variability in the dependent variable, Women Empowerment. This implied that the moderating variable, Gender Mainstreaming did not have a significant moderating effect on the relationship between the individual independent variables (Economic Governance, Political Governance, Socio-Cultural Governance and Administrative Governance) and Women Empowerment in Kenya. Therefore, the study did not develop any optimal model equation for the moderated relationship as none of the variables was statistically significant

Table 10: Coefficients table for Women Empowerment against Devolved Governance moderated by Gender Streaming,

		Coefficients ^a				
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.082	.217		-.378	.706
	Economic Governance	.252	.079	.250	3.192	.002
	Socio-cultural Governance	.175	.077	.145	2.266	.025
	Political Governance	.383	.082	.364	4.664	.000
	Administrative Governance	.223	.077	.217	2.912	.004
2	(Constant)	1.213	.973		1.247	.215
	Economic Governance	.041	.363	.040	.112	.911
	Socio-cultural Governance	.200	.373	.166	.536	.593
	Political Governance	.422	.416	.400	1.014	.313
	Administrative Governance	-.085	.271	-.082	-.313	.755
	Gender Mainstreaming	-.330	.252	-.346	-1.310	.193
	Gender Mainstreaming and Economic Governance	.051	.098	.340	.515	.608
	Gender Mainstreaming and Political Governance	-.007	.090	-.040	-.073	.942
	Gender Mainstreaming and Socio-Cultural Governance	-.022	.108	-.144	-.201	.841
	Gender Mainstreaming and Administrative Governance	.088	.081	.613	1.093	.277

a. Dependent Variable: Women Empowerment

The study by Poorhosseinzadeh et al. (2020) contributes significantly to the discourse on women's empowerment by highlighting the multifaceted nature of governance's impact on this phenomenon. Their findings, which establish a clear link between economic, socio-cultural, political, and administrative governance and the empowerment of women in Malaysia, echo the importance placed on these governance dimensions in fostering women's advancement. By emphasizing the interplay between governance and women's empowerment, Poorhosseinzadeh et al. underscore the need for comprehensive governance frameworks that address various aspects of women's lives to achieve meaningful empowerment.

Similarly, Tabo's (2023) examination of challenges affecting women's empowerment further reinforces the critical role of governance in this context. By identifying economic governance, political governance, socio-cultural governance, and administrative governance as key challenges, Tabo highlights the complex and interconnected nature of governance factors that impact women's empowerment. This aligns with the broader understanding that effective governance, across all dimensions, is essential for creating an environment where

women can fully participate, contribute, and benefit from development processes. Together, these studies provide valuable insights into the importance of governance in shaping women's empowerment agendas and underline the need for holistic approaches that address governance challenges comprehensively.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the data analysis presented, several conclusions can be drawn regarding the relationship between economic governance and women's empowerment in Kenyan county governments. First, the study had a high response rate of 86.29%, indicating a high degree of representativeness and confidence in generalizing the respondents' views. Second, the descriptive analysis showed that a considerable percentage of respondents believed that the county government had enabled women to make investment decisions, given priority to women in government procurement opportunities, facilitated women's participation in Uwezo and women enterprise funds, helped women access credit facilities, and promoted equitable sharing of proceeds from women group economic activities.

Moreover, the correlation analysis demonstrated a strong positive significant relationship between economic governance and women's empowerment ($r = .785^{**}$, $p < 0.05$). This result indicates that improvements in economic governance, such as ensuring access to land, markets, and catalytic funds, have contributed to enhanced women's empowerment in the selected county governments. Additionally, the regression analysis supported this conclusion, revealing that economic governance contributes significantly to women's empowerment, accounting for 61.6% of the total variance in the dependent variable. Overall, the study provides robust evidence supporting a positive relationship between economic governance and women's empowerment in Kenyan county governments.

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations can be proposed to improve women's empowerment in Kenyan county governments. Policymakers and implementers at the county level should prioritize improving economic governance by addressing areas such as access to land, markets, and catalytic funds for women. Specifically, measures should be put in place to streamline the process of acquiring land titles for women, ease access to markets and business opportunities, and expand the reach of catalytic funds such as Uwezo and youth and women enterprise funds. Moreover, concerted efforts should be made to raise public awareness about the importance of women's empowerment and involvement in economic activities. This can include organizing community workshops and seminars, leveraging media platforms to amplify women's voices, and encouraging private sector partnerships to foster inclusive economic growth.

Second, it is important to continue investing in gender mainstreaming initiatives aimed at integrating gender perspectives into ongoing and future programs, offering capacity building opportunities to strengthen knowledge on gender issues, and implementing policies that promote gender equality and respect diversity. Internal gender audits should also be conducted regularly to identify gaps and take necessary actions. By adopting a gender mainstreaming approach, county governments can help bridge the gender gap and create an enabling environment that promotes equal opportunities and treatment for all citizens. Finally, further research is required to explore other potential factors influencing women's empowerment beyond economic governance and gender mainstreaming, such as cultural norms, education, and political representation. Such insights will inform more targeted policy interventions aimed at advancing women's empowerment and achieving gender equity in Kenyan county governments.

Future Research

While the present study sheds light on the positive relationship between economic governance and women's empowerment in Kenyan county governments, there is still room for further investigation. Here are some suggestions for future research:

First, researchers could investigate the influence of additional factors on women's empowerment, such as cultural attitudes towards gender roles, access to education and healthcare, and political representation.

Understanding the interaction between these factors and economic governance would provide a more nuanced picture of women's empowerment and suggest more targeted policy interventions. Furthermore, comparative studies exploring regional differences in women's empowerment could reveal unique challenges faced by women in certain regions and inform tailored strategies to address those challenges.

Second, longitudinal studies tracking changes in economic governance and women's empowerment over time could offer insight into trends and patterns, helping to evaluate the effectiveness of policies and interventions aimed at promoting women's empowerment. Qualitative methods such as interviews and focus groups could complement quantitative surveys to capture rich, detailed accounts of women's experiences and perceptions of empowerment. By combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, researchers can generate a more complete understanding of the complex dynamics underlying women's empowerment in Kenyan county governments.

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