

VOTER EDUCATION AND VOTING PARTICIPATION IN THE 2022 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN NAIROBI CITY COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Voter education plays a crucial role in the democratic process by providing voters with the necessary knowledge and skills to make informed voting decisions. Despite the efforts of the electoral commission and NGOs to promote voter education, the impact has been very limited as the voter turnout in Nairobi City County for the 2022 General Elections was much lower than anticipated. A considerable number of eligible voters did not participate or showed only a slight comprehension of the electoral process which led to questioning the success of the current voter training programs. For this reason, the research wanted to identify the impact of voter education on voting participation in Nairobi County during the 2022 general elections. The study specifically intended to assess the effect of civic education and voter information on the turnout in the 2022 general elections in Nairobi County. A descriptive research design was used and it was based on Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM) theory and Rational Choice theory. The target population included election officials who were actively involved in the 2022 general elections, constituting a census with all 154 elections officials being selected as respondents. It consulted primary and secondary data with a semi-structured questionnaire used as the primary data collection tool while election

publications comprised the secondary data source. Respondents were IEBC commissioners, returning officers and presiding officers, polling clerks, election supervisors, election observers and election agents. Statistical methods like mean and standard deviation were utilized to evaluate quantitative data while correlation and multiple regression analysis applied to interpret numerical trends and relationships. The study established that both civic education ($\beta=0.167$, $p=0.013<0.05$) and voter information ($\beta=0.124$, $p=0.032<0.05$) had considerable effect on voting participation in the 2022 general elections. The study concludes that civic education had the highest significant predictor of voting participation in the 2022 general elections. It was recommended that voter civic education should be an ongoing initiative at IEBC, even after the end of an election. IEBC can partner with agencies like Huduma Centres to ensure increased voter information which was seen to have significant effect on voting participation and also leverage the latest technologies including social media to enhance voter awareness.

Key Words: Civic Education, Voter Information and Voting Participation.

INTRODUCTION

Voter training is pivotal in making sure voters are knowledgeable, engaged and prepared to take part effectively in their civic obligations. Educating voters encompasses a wide array of activities aimed at informing and empowering them about the process of elections, their civil liberties, and significance of their vote (Donbavand & Hoskins,

2021). As argued by Hannon (2022), informed electorates in the United Kingdom are highly probable to take part in polls, as they better understand significance of their vote on administrative policy and governance. (Breux, Couture & Koop, 2022) studied voter behavior in municipal elections in Quebec, Canada and established that voter education directly correlates with higher voter turnout, as it reduces the knowledge gap and equips voters with the necessary capacity to make well thought decisions during elections.

However, this relationship is not uniformly accepted across the academic discourse. For instance, Havva, (2020) and Tuorto, (2022) in a study on how individual socio-economic status shapes voter turnout in contemporary Europe contended that voter education alone may not suffice to boost voting participation, other social and economic aspects like the level of education, earnings and community networks perform substantial contribution in determining voter turnout. They suggest that while voter education is essential, it must be coupled with broader efforts to address systemic inequalities that hinder electoral participation. In their view, without addressing these underlying issues, voter education programs may have limited impact on increasing voter turnout, particularly among marginalized groups.

Moreover, the extent to which voter training is useful in enhancing voter participation is context-dependent. In countries with advanced democracies like those in Europe, the process of educating voters may have the effect of making the current trends of the participation more pronounced (Havva, 2020). To add to this, in developing democracies or regions where literacy is not widespread, the implementation of voter civic programs might be confronting the problems of limited reach and misinformation. Suttman-Lea and Merivaki (2023) in their study of the impact of voter training on the voters' confidence during the 2020 U.S. presidential election concluded that the initiation of customized voter education programs that are aligned with the peculiarities and hurdles of the various groups is imperative. They maintain that a blanket approach to voter training will not probably be enough in promoting genuine voter participation, hence the necessity of contextualized approaches.

Without doubt, voter education programs play a pivotal role in the democratic process by making voters aware of their rights, responsibilities, the voting procedure, and the importance of their electoral participation. The initiatives are very important since they keep voters informed and the conduct of elections is smooth. Wanyama (2016), in his research on electoral violence during party primaries in Kenya, claimed that voter education resulted in electorates who were better informed, less violent during elections, and more likely to go to the polls. Acceptance of the election results is a process shaped by many variables, where voter education is one of the predominant factors. There are a number of studies indicating that the voters' being well-informed is associated with their participation and with their confidence in the electoral system going up (Jones, 2019).

In the United States, initiatives aimed at informing voters have not only increased but also made more equal across different demographic groups (Johnson, 2020). For

example, the Pew Research Center could show that the states with the most extensive voter education and outreach programs had correspondingly higher turnout of voters than those with minimal outreach (Pew Research Center, 2020). In Israel, the online education of the voters has contributed a lot to the public understanding of the electoral process and the candidates' main ideas (Levy, 2018). The Central Bureau of Statistics in Israel found that the voters who went online for information were 85% more confident in their voting decision than those who got their information through newspapers and other traditional means (Israel & Micah, 2020). In Pakistan, campaigns oriented towards educating potential voters about democracy and civic duties have been credited with a substantial pull in turnout rates (Shabbir & Haider, 2023). A study conducted by the Election Commission of Pakistan found that people who had the benefit of voter education interventions had 10% more participation in elections than those who were in other, non-intervention regions (Imran & Masood, 2020).

Nigeria has made progress in educating voters by the distribution of voters' guides and information booklets (Oluwasegun, 2019). A comparison of polling areas in Nigeria found that those with higher levels of voter education experienced faster and more efficient polling and voters were more satisfied with the overall experience (Oluwasegun & Bello, 2018). Marginalized communities in South Africa have been the main target of voter education campaigns and these have been significant steps in the fight against historical disparities in political participation (De Kadt & Lieberman, 2020). Schultz-Herzenberg (2020) concluded that women and youth-specific voter education interventions resulted in dramatic increases in both voter registration and voting turnout rates. In Uganda, the education of voters efforts have been critical in the battle against misinformation and the creation of informed voters (Ferrali, Grossman, Platas & Rodden, 2022). The voter education evaluation in Uganda revealed that direct messaging and interactive workshops lead to increased understanding of electoral procedures and the trust in their democratic process.

Elections in Kenya have been determined to be accompanied by non-readiness of a huge scale (Stacey & Miyandazi, 2021). This situation has, therefore, led to numerous complaints mainly regarding electoral offices and also occurrence of violence. The year 2013 was a watershed year in the elections in which the electoral management body (IEBC) set itself a high goal of registering 18 million voters across the country in one month. Nevertheless, the Commission could only register 14.3 million voters. The target to register all 18 million in the short timeframe proved unrealistic given the living conditions of the voters. Studies by Masiga (2018), Kemei (2019), and Mutanu (2019) have observed that voter education in Kenya has not reached the needed levels and a big part of the population is not adequately informed about the voting process and their rights and responsibilities in elections (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2018). This lack of information contributes to the low voter turnout and the prevailing mistrust of election outcomes.

Over the years, a large number of election lawsuits have been observed nationwide in Kenya after every general election which indicates the contestation aspect of electoral politics in the country (Kanyinga, 2021). The year 2013 elections registered approximately 188 electoral petitions filed countrywide. Complaints were about elections of all kinds: presidential, gubernatorial, senatorial, parliamentary, and county assembly. Notably, the presidential election itself was contested by the opposition, leading to a high-profile case that was ultimately decided by the Supreme Court by upholding the election outcome.

The general election of 2017 brought about even more petitions. This really showed how competitive things were between aspirants and with a lot of claims about unfair practices. After the voting, over 300 election petitions were actually filed all over the country. This included the landmark case where Supreme Court of Kenya annulled the outcome of election of the president and declared re-run, a historic decision that underscored the function of judiciary in Kenya's polling process (Daily Nation, 2017). Besides the presidential challenge, many other petitions questioned the results for different elective positions. Some of these results were actually changed, and new elections were ordered (Otieno & Wambua, 2020). These petitions highlight the ongoing shortcomings in Kenya's polling system, including issues of electoral integrity, voter education and public confidence in the election outcomes. Managing these shortcomings through effective voter enlightenment and electoral reforms continues to be a key consideration for guaranteeing the legitimacy and acceptance of election results in Nairobi County and across Kenya.

Nairobi County, comprising the capital City and being one of the most politically active regions in Kenya, has seen a significant number of election petitions. For instance, following the 2013 general elections, Nairobi experienced several high-profile petitions, including challenges to the gubernatorial, senatorial, and various constituency election results (Kivuva, 2018). Notably, the gubernatorial election was contested by Ferdinand Waititu, who challenged the victory of Evans Kidero. While exact figures vary, estimates suggest that Nairobi City County had around 20 election petitions in election of 2013.

Subsequently, the number of petitions in 2017 election in Nairobi increased, reflecting the heightened political competition and disputes (Waiguchu & Nyangito, 2021). Key petitions included those challenging the results of the gubernatorial election, where Mike Sonko's victory was contested by the incumbent Evans Kidero. Overall, Nairobi saw approximately 30 election petitions in 2017, covering various elective positions from Members of County Assembly (MCAs) to parliamentary seats.

Further, in the 2022 general elections, the trend of high numbers of election petitions continued, although there was a noted improvement in the handling of electoral process and transparency (Fundisi & Atanga, 2023). Nonetheless, disputes persisted, with several key gubernatorial and parliamentary results being contested through legal channels. This ongoing trend emphasizes the critical need for robust voter education and comprehensive

electoral reforms to address underlying issues of electoral participation, trust and procedural integrity in Kenya's electoral system. Article 88(4) (g) of the 2010 Kenya constitution assigns responsibility pertaining carrying out voter education to the IEBC. In fulfilling the role, the Commission must put in place systems to deliver ongoing civic education and ensure the development of a structured voter training program, as outlined in the election Act 2011 section 40. According to a 2013 article by The Associated Press, it was noted that the number of rejected and spoilt votes due to failure of following election rules in the 2013 general elections was quite high, raising criticism of voter education efforts (Verjee, 2013).

IEBC post-election evaluation reports for 2013, 2017 and 2022 indicate that the 2013 presidential election recorded 108,975 rejected votes countrywide, with 12,187 rejected votes in Nairobi County (IEBC, 2014). The 2017 presidential election registered a marked reduction with 81,685 rejected votes countrywide with Nairobi County registering 6,884 rejected votes (IEBC, 2020). The 2022 presidential election registered 113,614 rejected votes countrywide with Nairobi County registering 12,869 rejected votes (IEBC, 2022). This data therefore indicates that despite the concerted efforts by the IEBC, it is evident that quite a high number of voters in Nairobi County are still not well acquainted with the voting process.

Voter involvement is an important aspect of democratic governance, reflecting electorates' engagement in decision-making processes. According to the IEBC Post-election Report 2022, Nairobi County voter participation in 2022 General Elections was affected by various social, political and institutional aspects like education levels and income, age, gender, ethnicity, political efficacy, electoral system, election management, legal and institutional framework and increased level of political party contests (IEBC, 2022). Voter training takes an integral part in enhancing electoral involvement in informing voters concerning what rights they have, the voting procedure and their involvement's significance (Cheeseman et al., 2021). According to Githongo and Okoth (2022) when voters are well-informed, they are more probable to participate in elections, reducing cases of voter apathy and misinformation. Nairobi, being Kenya's capital, has a diverse electorate with varying levels of access to voter education programs, which in turn affected voter turnout and engagement in the 2022 elections.

Despite efforts by the IEBC and non-governmental organizations to enhance voter education, challenges such as misinformation, political disillusionment, and logistical barriers hindered optimal voter participation (Mutunga, 2022). Factors such as the perceived inefficacy of voting, security concerns, and distrust in electoral institutions contributed to voter apathy (Ndung'u & Wambua, 2021). Additionally, the youth demographic, which constitutes a significant portion of Nairobi's electorate, exhibited mixed levels of engagement, with some actively participating due to digital voter awareness campaigns, while others remained indifferent due to economic hardships and skepticism about political change (Ong'ayo, 2022). Addressing these challenges through targeted voter education strategies is essential for fostering long-term electoral

participation and strengthening democratic processes in Kenya. While the highlighted research inquiries provide useful findings into voter education and participation, they did not fully assess the association linking education of voters and their involvement in election of 2022 in Nairobi County, a highly urbanized and diverse region.

Statement of the Problem

Kenyan election of 2022 was characterized by intense political competition, with numerous candidates contesting for positions ranging from the presidency to local government seats (Okutta, 2023). In Nairobi County, it was important to discuss the function performed by voter education in preparing citizens to make informed choices in a highly complex political environment. As the capital city, Nairobi hosts a diverse electorate drawn from multiple ethnic, social, and economic backgrounds, which makes the delivery of targeted voter education campaigns necessary (Maina, Iravo & Ombui, 2021). Moreover, the use of new electoral technologies and a multi-level ballot with several elective positions heightened the need for adequate voter sensitization to help citizens understand voting procedures, their votes' significance as well as specific functions of different elective seats (Marjorie & Reuben, 2020).

Available studies have alluded to the fact that inadequate voter education has historically undermined electoral credibility in Kenya, raising concerns over the legitimacy of results and fueling political disputes (Kamau & Mwangi, 2016). These challenges weaken civic confidence in voting procedures and heighten risk of post-election instability. Despite recognition of the importance of voter education in shaping democratic participation, research has not fully explored its influence on critical aspects of electoral engagement. For instance, limited attention has been given to how voter education affects voter registration, verification of voter registers, and overall turnout during elections, which remain fundamental to strengthening democratic participation (Achieng, 2019).

Looking at the gaps, the present examination investigated voter education effects on voting participation in Nairobi County during the 2022 general elections. Specifically, it examined how civic education, voter awareness and voter information shaped voter registration, voter register verification, and actual voter turnout. By focusing on the Nairobi electorate, this investigation sought to give demonstrable facts on effect of voter education programs in a politically diverse and competitive context.

Research Objectives

- i. To examine the effect of civic education on voting participation in the 2022 general elections in Nairobi City County, Kenya.
- ii. To analyze the effect of voter information on voting participation in the 2022 general elections in Nairobi City County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section examined different schools of thought guiding the study together with empirical studies and conceptual framework. These are explained in detail in the following sub-sections:

Empirical Literature Review

In the section that follows, existing studies were examined by the specific objectives;

Voter Civic Education and Voter Registration

One of crucial aspects of democratic processes is education of voters, particularly in making sure voters are knowledgeable and inspired to take part in elections. Various researchers have explored civic education impact on voter registration, revealing significant findings across different contexts. Suttman-Lea and Merivaki, (2022) studied electors' education effect on mail vote approval in North Carolina. The study established that election officials can effectively reduce mail ballot rejections by providing voter education that addresses gaps in voter knowledge about the voting process. Analyzing how local election officials in North Carolina used Facebook to share information in the U.S 2020 voting, it was found that as these officials emphasized mail voting in their outreach, voters were more likely to submit ballots that met the necessary criteria for acceptance. This approach was particularly beneficial for young voters, racial and ethnic minorities. These findings offered practical guidance for election officials aiming to prevent voting errors and also provided insights into the broader impact of voting reforms. However, the study was done in US rather than in Kenya.

Suleiman (2022) did an examination on voter turnout influence on free and fair elections' integrity, using the 2019 AMAC Election in Nigeria. The investigation explored voter apathy effect on participation rates, evaluated how low turnout undermines the fairness of elections, and examined the role of both intra- and inter-party dynamics on voter engagement. The objective of this inspection was deepening understanding of democratic participation and highlighted the significance of open and legitimate election in reinforcing Nigeria democracy. Survey approach was utilized, with questionnaires distributed to participants in selected AMAC areas. The results showed that, despite 677,421 individuals being registered to vote in the 2019 AMAC election, only 98,543 cast their ballots, leading to a turnout of just 14.54%. The study identified poor political organization, inadequate voter education, low levels of education, widespread illiteracy, and voter apathy as key aspects underwriting the few numbers of those voting. However, this study was done within Nigeria rather than in Kenya.

Additionally, voter education's impact on voter registration is often mediated by the accessibility and inclusiveness of the programs. In regions with high illiteracy rates or limited access to information, voter education programs that employ local languages and culturally relevant materials have been particularly effective. A study conducted by Fujiwara, Meng, and Vogl (2016) in Brazil demonstrated that voter education initiatives that consider local contexts significantly improve voter registration outcomes. Oakes et

al (2020) in Mexico noted that when educational materials are tailored to the audience's linguistic and cultural backgrounds, the programs are more likely to resonate with the population, leading to higher registration rates.

Reynolds-Tylus and Schill (2022) carried out an investigation in the United States exploring the utilization of the theory of psychological reactance in registering and mobilizing college student voters. Findings showed that messages framed around loss or positive social norms heightened feelings of freedom threat and reactance during voter registration, aligning with prior studies. However, these effects were not observed in voter mobilization. In both contexts, increased reactance was associated with lower intentions to take actions like registration for voting or to actually vote. Whereas societal standards have proven effectual in campaigns for mobilizing, the present examination suggested subtle threats to freedom, especially in the likeness of positive societal norm messages, may lead to reactance amongst unregistered constituency members.

However, the success of voter education programs is not uniform across all contexts. Studies have shown that the effectiveness of these programs may be affected by political, economic as well as social aspects. For instance, Satriadi, Yusuf and Hasan, (2023) found that in Nigeria, voter education efforts were less effective due to entrenched political structures and socio-economic inequalities. In such environments, even well-designed voter education programs may face challenges in reaching the intended audiences and achieving desired outcomes. The study suggested that voter education initiatives must be complemented by broader structural reforms to maximize their impact on voter registration.

The long-term effects of voter education on voter participation remain an important area of study. While many studies have focused on immediate outcomes, such as the increase in voter registration rates following a campaign, fewer have examined the sustainability of these efforts over time. Research by Sondheimer and Green (2021) indicated that while voter education can lead to a temporary spike in registration, sustained increase requires continuous engagement and reinforcement in Western countries in Africa. The study argued that voter education should be part of a broader strategy that includes ongoing education and engagement to maintain high levels of voter participation in the long term.

Mutau, (2019) in the study on how voter education contributes to governance efficacy in Nairobi County discovered that methods used in voter education delivery, voter education program designs and access to information significantly influences voter behavior and participation during elections. Also, a study by Maalim (2023) on factors that shape voter turnout in Nairobi, Embakasi focusing on by-elections established that there exist an association between civic educational levels and turnout of voters. Voters who are more aware of how elections work, or have been part of civic education initiatives tend to have higher likelihood of turning out to vote Maalim, (2023).

Voter Information and Voter Register Verification

Voter information has been observed to be a serious aspect influencing accuracy and effectiveness of voter register verification. Suttman-Lea and Merivaki, (2023) argued that comprehensive voter education programs can significantly enhance the accuracy of voter registers by informing voters about importance of updating their registration details in Florida state in United States. According to their study, well-designed educational initiatives that include outreach through various media channels lead to higher levels of voter engagement and greater accuracy in voter registration data. This emphasized the role of education in not only motivating voters to participate but also in ensuring that their registration details are current and correct.

Further empirical evidence from Wilson (2022) supports the assertion that voter information directly impacts the process of register verification in North Florida. The research demonstrated that communities with robust voter education programs experienced fewer discrepancies in voter registers compared to those with limited educational outreach. Jones & Roberts, (2021) in Colombia argue that educational programs that include practical information about how to check and update registration status contribute to a more accurate voter register. They found that these educational interventions help mitigate issues such as outdated or incorrect voter information, which can otherwise compromise the election procedures' integrity. In an investigation focusing on developing countries, Mendez (2019) examined the association between voter training and the accuracy of voter registers in Costa Rica. The study showed that with low levels of voter education, there were significantly higher rates of registration errors and outdated information. The study emphasized the importance of targeted voter education campaigns that address specific local challenges and provide clear instructions on how to verify and update registration details. The findings suggested that tailored education programs are essential for improving the reliability of voter registers in diverse settings Mendez, (2019).

Additionally, Patel and Singh (2022) explored the role of technologically enhanced voter information in improving voter register verification in India. Their study found that digital platforms used for voter education, such as mobile applications and online portals, effectively engaged voters and facilitated easier access to registration information. The study noted that these technological tools not only streamline the verification process but also empower voters to take proactive steps in managing their registration status. This resonates with the broader tendency of incorporating technology into voter training strategies to increase their impact.

An analysis by Lee (2023) in United States on future of civic education in American Democracy background provided insights into how voter education impacts different demographic groups. The study emphasized that voter education programs tailored to specific demographics, such as young voters and marginalized communities, were particularly effective in improving the accuracy of voter registers. The study found that targeted educational efforts addressing the unique needs and barriers faced by these

groups resulted in more valid and updated voter information. This suggested that a uniform strategy may not be as meaningful as customized educational interventions.

Otache, Alfa and Ali (2023) examined the impact of voter education across different socioeconomic groups in Nigeria and established that wealthier and more educated citizens are more responsive to voter education initiatives than their less privileged counterparts. The study argued that this disparity is partly due to pre-existing differences in political knowledge and access to information. This finding emphasized the need for tailored voter education strategies that consider the unique barriers faced by various demographic groups to maximize their impact on electoral participation.

The advent of digital media has revolutionized voter education, making information more accessible and interactive. A study by Tariq, Zolkepli and Ahmad (2022) demonstrated that online voter education platforms significantly increase voter knowledge and engagement, particularly among younger populations in Somalia. The study found that digital tools, such as social media campaigns and interactive websites, are effective in reaching a broader audience and encouraging electoral participation. These findings are supported by more recent studies, like those by Boulianne (2020), which show social platforms can play important function in disseminating voter education content in Ethiopia, thereby boosting voter turnout among digital natives.

Masiga (2018) studied civic understanding's impact on voter involvement within Nairobi's informal settlement of Kangemi and established that public information, civil expertise and civic acts positively influence the involvement of voters. Most respondents in this study exhibited moderate levels of civic competencies and established that targeted civic education would enhance knowledge and help bridge the moderate knowledge levels observed. The study recommended increased civic education in informal settlements to improve citizens understanding of their civil and political rights. Civic competencies were found to significantly predict voter participation and therefore improving them could raise participation rates.

Githae (2019) studied factors that influence how young people in Kajiado County vote. The study established that aspects such as cultural influence, level of education and distrust in electoral processes influence voting participation in elections. The study also established youth's eroded confidence concerning how elections are managed and how community elders shape voting decisions of the youth. The examination advised amplified discussion and leadership training targeting the youth to regain faith in electoral processes.

Theoretical Review

The research was anchored on Civic Voluntarism model (CVM) and Rational Choice theory.

Civic Voluntarism Model

The Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM) was introduced by Sidney, Schlozman, and Henry in their seminal work *voice and equality* (1995). The model explains why some people take part in politics, like voting, while others do not. It focuses on three main factors: resources (time, money, skills), psychological engagement (political interest and efficacy), and recruitment networks (being invited to take part). Because these factors aren't evenly distributed, participation such as voting varies across the population. Heger and Hoffmann (2021) argue that people with higher income and education are more likely to have the resources and skills needed for political involvement. Other researchers stress the psychological side, arguing that believing your actions can influence outcomes political efficacy matters a lot (Geurkink, Zaslove, Sluiter & Jacobs, 2020). Recruitment networks like parties, educational institutions, social organizations, and peer group discussions also play a key role in mobilizing people to get involved (Paulis, 2020).

The civic voluntarism model has been critiqued, especially its emphasis on individual-level factors, and the idea that it may neglect structural and institutional influences on political participation. Critics argue that the model may not address systemic obstacles, such as voter suppression or unequal access to education, which can impact disadvantaged communities (Davis, 2023). Additionally, some scholars have argued that the model does not integrate the influence of socio-cultural conventions on civic action, especially in the Global South (Bornschieer, Häusermann, Zollinger & Colombo, 2021).

The Civic Voluntarism Model faced criticism but still was applicable in the present research, since it shed light on the matter of resources, psychological engagement, and recruitment networks in relation to voter education initiatives and their effect on registration of voters. To illustrate, political efficacy could be raised and people could be given the requisite knowledge and abilities through voter education programs, thus empowering them to enroll and vote. Civic Voluntarism Model was helpful in recognizing the different things which played a role during the general elections in evolving democracy of 2022. Through the dissection of the trio of situations that caused the citizens' apathy (resources like education access), (acceptance of importance of voting as a psychological engagement) and (community organizations being recruitment networks), the research unlocked not only the efficacy of voter empowerment programs but also the spaces for improvement in future elections.

Rational Choice Theory

Rational choice theory was introduced by Adam (1960) and later advanced and formalized by Gary and James Coleman (1984). The theory posits that individuals decide by rationally considering the risks and rewards of their actions, ultimately going with the option that intensifies their utility or satisfaction. Downs (2017) further developed the theory by applying it to voter behavior by suggesting that individuals vote based on a rational evaluation of which candidate or party offers them the greatest benefit. Becker (2023) emphasized that people act rationally by weighing the benefits of voting against

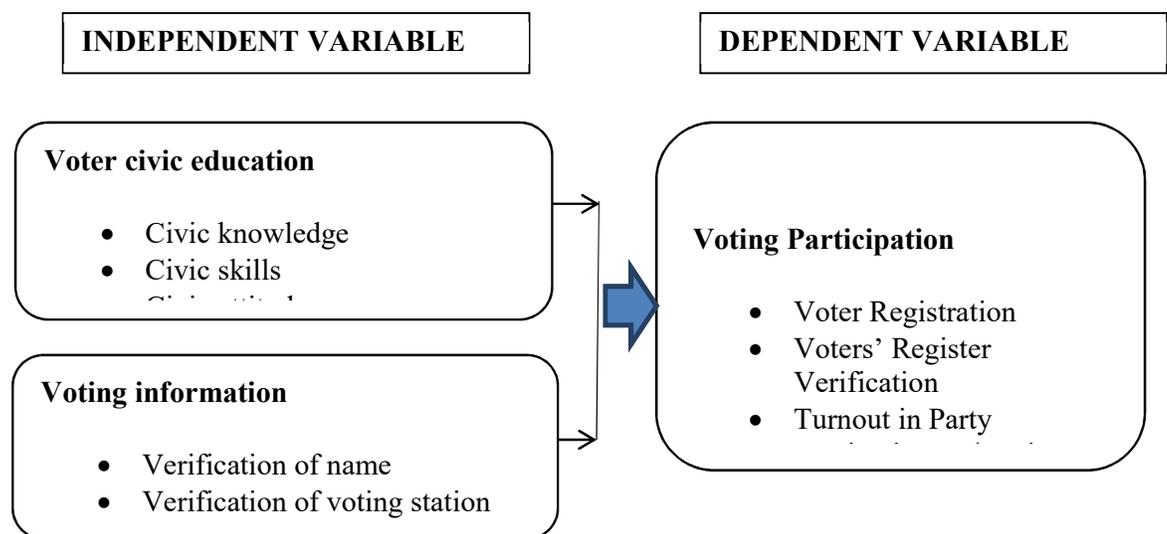
the costs, such as the time and effort involved. Brumund, (2020), argued that individuals might not participate in voting if they believe their single vote won't make a difference.

Rational choice theory has faced criticism for its assumptions of perfect rationality and utility maximization. Critics argue that individuals do not always have complete information or the cognitive ability to weigh costs and benefits accurately (Sharot& Sunstein, 2020). Muñoz-Murillo et al (2020) suggested people make decisions based on limited information and within the constraints of their cognitive abilities. Furthermore, critics like Amartya (2019) pointed out that human behavior is often driven by social norms, emotions, and altruism, factors that rational choice theory tends to overlook.

The rational choice theory was highly suitable to the study as it aided in understanding how voter education influences individuals' perceptions of the benefits and costs of registering and participating to vote. If voter education effectively communicates the importance and impact of voting, it could alter the perceived benefits, making individuals more likely to register and participate. Conversely, if the process of registration is seen as burdensome or costly, rational choice theory would predict lower registration rates unless voter education successfully mitigates these perceived costs. Rational choice theory suggests that voter behavior is propelled by a risk-reward comparison aimed at maximizing personal gain, where people weigh costs of voting against the perceived benefits. This agrees with the findings of Masiga (2018) that voters who are more aware of how elections work, or have been part of civic education initiatives tend to have higher likelihood of turning out to vote.

Conceptual Framework

Kothari (2004) describes conceptual framework as an optical illustration of key variables in research. It reflects the researchers' perspectives regarding these variables. In this research, the focus was on how voter education affects voting participation. The conceptual framework provided below guided this research.



As shown in the Figure above, this study conceptualized independent variables as voter civic education, and voting information. These affected the dependent variable which was voting participation explained by voter registration, voter register verification, turnout in party nomination and turnout in voting.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research study utilized a descriptive research design, as it enabled a systematic analysis of voter education initiatives and their effect on voting participation in 2022 general elections in Nairobi County, Kenya, without manipulating any variables. It aided collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, providing empirical evidence on civic education, voter awareness, voting information, and voting participation. This research focused on election officials actively involved in the elections at county level as the primary unit of analysis, with all the 154 elections officials being selected as the unit of observation and targeted respondents. These electoral officials included IEBC Chairperson, Commissioners, Returning Officers, Presiding Officers, Polling Clerks, election supervisors, election observers and election agents.

Since the target population consisted of only 154 respondents, it was small enough to justify conducting a census. Therefore, no sampling was necessary. According to Neal, Seth, Watmough, and Diallo (2022), a census is particularly appropriate when the sample group constitutes of fewer than 200 units, which aligns with the context of this study. A semi-structured questionnaire was employed in this research for collecting primary data straight from the field.

The research applied both descriptive and inferential statistical methods to study the link between voter education and participation in the general elections of 2022. By applying descriptive statistics (i.e., average and standard deviation), the researchers were able to reveal general trends of voter participation. The next step involved going beyond description and analyzing the correlation and regression methods to present the connection between voter education and turnout. The analysis was based on a statistical model that considered the turnout as the dependent variable while voter education was an independent variable.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Out of the 154 questionnaires that were administered to IEBC Chairperson, Commissioners, County and Constituency Returning Officers, Deputy Presiding Officers, Polling Clerks, election supervisors, election observers and election agents, 117 were completed and collected for analysis hence a feedback rate of 76%. This rate was consistent with Yin (2017) who suggested that response rate above 70% is ideal for analysis in a survey study.

Regarding positions held at IEBC, majority of respondents (29.91%) were polling clerks followed by Presiding Officers (17.95%). Election Supervisors, Commissioners and County Returning Officers were the least represented at 8.55%, 2.56% and 0.85%

respectively. This wide distribution of positions ensured that the study captured diverse perspectives, thereby strengthening the reliability of the findings. Creswell and Creswell (2018) emphasize the need for stratified responses by grouping respondents according to positions or roles in an organization or institution.

Data on Gender distribution indicated that the percentage of female participants (53%) was only slightly higher than the percentage of males (47%). This is important because gender representation is a central consideration in assessing the inclusivity and diversity of the electoral process. This near-equal gender distribution suggests the views of both females and males were adequately represented, in accordance with the Kenyan constitution which embraces gender inclusivity. This study affirms the work of Slade, Gross, Niwa, McKillop, and Guptill (2021) that gender is one of the most powerful drivers of data collection as it promotes diversity and inclusiveness in a study.

Data on age distribution indicated that most respondents were aged 31–35 (28.2%) and 36–40 (22.2%). Those in the 20-25 age range accounted for 19.7% of respondents, while the over 40 age group was the smallest at 9.4%. Age was an important factor for the study, as younger individuals are more likely to engage with digital platforms, or experiment with alternative voting technologies, whereas older individuals may prefer traditional voting method.

Data on education level indicate that majority of respondents (45.3%) held KCSE Certificates, followed by holders of Bachelor's degrees (29%), and Diplomas (15.4%). This indicates that most participants were well-educated, which is significant for the study because it suggests respondents had the capacity to critically evaluate voter education initiatives and their effect on voting participation.

First objective of the study was to examine effect of civic education on voting participation in 2022 General Election in Nairobi City County. Descriptive statistics summarizing mean and standard deviation were computed on Likert-based questions per objective variable in this study and outcomes were as summarized in subsequent sections.

Descriptive Statistics

Voter Civic Education and Voting Participation

First objective of the study was to examine the effect of civic education on voting participation in 2022 General Election in Nairobi City County. Descriptive statistics summarizing mean and standard deviation were computed on Likert-based questions per objective variable in this study and outcomes were as summarized in subsequent sections.

Table 1 below summarizes descriptive statistics on voter civic education.

Table 1: Voter Civic Education

| Statement | Strongly Disagree (1) | Disagree (2) | Neutral (3) | Agree (4) | Strongly Agree (5) | Mean | Std. Dev |
|--|------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Our civic education provides a clear and accurate information about the voter registration process | 10 | 18 | 35 | 70 | 42 | 3.63 | 0.794 |
| Our voter civic programs are effective in explaining the importance of participating in elections | 12 | 20 | 32 | 65 | 46 | 3.65 | 0.990 |
| Our civic education programs help citizens understand voting rights and responsibilities | 8 | 15 | 40 | 68 | 44 | 3.69 | 0.725 |
| Voter education programs addressed the barriers that could have discouraged citizens from voting | 15 | 25 | 38 | 62 | 35 | 3.58 | 0.969 |
| Voter education programs helped reduce misinformation about voter registration requirements | 9 | 14 | 36 | 72 | 44 | 3.70 | 0.742 |
| The accessibility of voter education materials (e.g., brochures, posters, digital content) helped to | 7 | 16 | 33 | 74 | 45 | 3.75 | 0.816 |

| Statement | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree | Mean | Std. Dev |
|---|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|------|----------|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | | |
| understand the importance of voter registration | | | | | | | |
| Community forums and public engagements on voter education increased knowledge about the voter registration process | 14 | 19 | 39 | 67 | 36 | 3.62 | 0.965 |
| Average | | | | | | 3.58 | 0.851 |

Source: Research Data (2025)

The findings in Table 1 above indicates, respondents were in concurrence that voter civic education programs encouraged young and first-time voters to register and participate in elections (M=3.8, SD=0.647) and that accessibility of voter education materials such as brochures, posters, and digital content enhanced understanding of the importance of voter registration (M=3.75, SD=0.816). This suggests that well-structured voter education programs improve participation and registration outcomes. These findings agree with Fujiwara, Meng, and Vogl (2016) who established that voter education initiatives tailored to local contexts significantly improve voter registration results, while Oakes et al. (2020) noted that programs using culturally and linguistically relevant content resonate better with citizens, leading to higher registration rates.

The study also established that voter education campaigns helped reduce misinformation about voter registration requirements (M=3.70, SD=0.742) and enabled citizens to understand voting rights and responsibilities (M=3.69, SD=0.725). This finding is consistent with Suttman-Lea and Merivaki (2022), who showed that voter training addressing knowledge gaps effectively reduced mail ballot rejections in North Carolina by ensuring voters complied with registration and ballot requirements.

Further, the findings indicated that voter civic education programs were effective in explaining the importance of participating in elections (M=3.65, SD=0.990) and in providing clear and accurate information about the voter registration process (M=3.63, SD=0.794). This aligns with Mutanu (2019), who observed that the design and delivery of civic education programs significantly influenced voter behavior and participation in Nairobi City County. Similarly, Maalim (2023) found that exposure to voter education

directly increased voter turnout in Embakasi South, as citizens who were well-informed about electoral processes were more likely to vote.

Respondents also agreed that voter education campaigns were conducted early enough to allow potential voters to register before the general elections ($M=3.62$, $SD=0.965$) and that community forums and public engagements improved citizens' knowledge about the registration process ($M=3.62$, $SD=0.965$). This is consistent with Sondheimer and Green (2021), who emphasized that voter education requires ongoing engagement and reinforcement to sustain participation rates over time.

While most respondents felt that voter education campaigns addressed barriers that could have discouraged citizens from voting ($M=3.58$, $SD=0.969$), there was disagreement on whether civic education adequately addressed challenges faced by marginalized groups ($M=2.78$, $SD=0.899$). This observation corresponds with Satriadi, Yusuf, and Hasan (2023), who found that entrenched political and socio-economic inequalities often undermine the inclusiveness of voter education programs, limiting their effectiveness for disadvantaged populations.

Overall, the study found that the average effect of voter civic education was moderately high ($M=3.58$, $SD=0.851$), reflecting a 71.6% mean score. This agrees with Suleiman (2022), who highlighted the centrality of voter education in strengthening democratic participation and reducing voter apathy, though contextual challenges such as illiteracy and poor political organization may still weaken its effectiveness in some regions.

Open ended questions were presented to respondents to indicate other concerns about voter civic education. Some respondents indicated that civic education empowers voters to exercise their democratic rights and suggested that those programs can be provided to voters through the state, political parties and even the civil society.

Voter Information and Voting participation

Second objective of this research was to analyse the effect of voter information on voting participation in the 2022 general elections in Nairobi County.

Table 2 below summarizes descriptive statistics on voter information.

Table 2: Voter Information

| Statement | Strongly Disagree (1) | Disagree (2) | Neutral (3) | Agree (4) | Strongly Agree (5) | Mean | Std. Dev |
|--|----------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| The voter information programs helped to understand how to check 5 and correct voter registration details | 12 | 18 | 40 | 25 | 3.93 | 0.872 | |
| The information provided on voter verification was clear and easy to understand 3 | 10 | 15 | 42 | 30 | 4.00 | 0.834 | |
| We receive timely updates about the voter verification process 8 through various communication channels | 14 | 20 | 35 | 23 | 3.62 | 0.890 | |
| Citizens were aware of the voter verification period and the deadline for 4 making corrections to voter registration | 11 | 17 | 44 | 24 | 3.86 | 0.822 | |
| The voter verification guidelines that are provided by the electoral 6 commission are accessible and user-friendly | 15 | 16 | 37 | 26 | 3.83 | 0.977 | |
| Media sources like radio, 2 television, newspapers, | 13 | 19 | 45 | 21 | 3.82 | 0.733 | |

| Statement | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree | Mean | Std. Dev |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|------|----------|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | | |
| and social media played significant role in informing citizens about voter verification | | | | | | | |
| Community meetings and public forums helped electorates to understand the significance of verifying voter registration details | 3 | 10 | 14 | 38 | 35 | 4.07 | 0.872 |
| Average | | | | | | 3.85 | 0.856 |

Source: Research Data (2025)

The findings in Table 2 above indicates, participants concurred that community meetings and public forums were effective in helping electorates understand the significance of verifying voter registration details (M=4.07, SD=0.872), and that the information provided on voter verification was clear and easy to understand (M=4.00, SD=0.834). This implies that voter information initiatives were essential in enhancing the accuracy of voter registration. These findings agree with Merivaki and Suttman-Lea (2023), who established that comprehensive voter education programs enhance the accuracy of voter registers by informing voters about importance of updating their registration details through media outreach.

Respondents further agreed that voter information programs were useful in guiding electorates on how to check and correct their voter registration details (M=3.93, SD=0.872), and that they had access to adequate voter information about the verification process before the 2022 general elections (M=3.90, SD=0.804). This highlights the role of educational outreach in minimizing registration errors. These results are consistent with Wilson (2022), who noted that robust voter education programs reduced discrepancies in voter registers, and Jones and Roberts (2021), who argued that practical voter education ensures accurate registers by helping citizens update their information.

Respondents were in agreement that citizens had awareness of the voter verification period and correction deadlines (M=3.86, SD=0.822), and that the guidelines provided

by the electoral commission were accessible and user-friendly ($M=3.83$, $SD=0.977$). This suggests that the communication of clear and timely guidelines enhanced the usability of the verification process. This agrees with Mendez (2019), who emphasized that clear and targeted voter education campaigns reduce outdated voter information and strengthen the reliability of registers, especially in developing countries.

Respondents also acknowledged media sources like radio, television, newspapers, and social media played a crucial function in informing citizens about voter verification ($M=3.82$, $SD=0.733$), while timely and reliable information from the electoral commission also contributed positively ($M=3.79$, $SD=0.763$). This finding confirms the importance of technology and media in reaching wide audiences with voter education. Patel and Singh (2022) similarly found that digital platforms, including mobile applications and online portals, improved voter verification in India by making information more accessible, while Tariq, Zolkepli, and Ahmad (2022) demonstrated that online voter education platforms enhanced engagement in Somalia.

Furthermore, the study indicated that respondents agreed that dissemination channels such as media, online media, and civic forums were effective in disseminating verification information ($M=3.66$, $SD=0.991$), and that electorates received timely updates about the process ($M=3.62$, $SD=0.890$). These findings emphasize role of communication in sustaining voter engagement. They are in line with Lee (2023), who highlighted the effectiveness of tailored voter education for specific demographics, and Otache et al (2023), who stressed importance of addressing socioeconomic differences in voter education initiatives to maximize impact.

Overall, the ten constructs recorded means ranging from 3.62 to 4.07, with an average score of ($M=3.85$, $SD=0.856$), representing a 77% agreement. This implies that voter education and information were perceived as effective in facilitating voter register verification in Kenya. This finding supports Boulianne (2020), who observed that social media enhances the dissemination of voter education, thereby boosting electoral participation, and aligns with Masiga (2018), who established that civic education improves voter knowledge and participation in Nairobi. Similarly, Githae (2019) noted that civic education initiatives are vital in addressing distrust in electoral processes and strengthening youth participation.

The section had open ended questions where respondents were asked to indicate other concerns on voter information. From the findings, some respondents indicated that access to adequate and relevant voter information empower voters to make sound decisions and exercise their democratic rights hence the basis of democracy. They also indicated that information is a powerful tool that can allow citizens to make rational judgments during the voting process, a great step towards growth of governance in the country.

Inferential Statistics

To establish variables relationship and effect, correlation and regression analysis was conducted and outcomes presented as indicated in subsequent sections.

Correlation Analysis

Table 3 outlines a breakdown of findings on correlation analysis:

Table 3: Correlation Results

| | | Voting Participation in the 2022 General Elections | Civic Education | Voter Information |
|---|---------------------|--|-----------------|-------------------|
| Voting Participation in the 2022 General Elections | Pearson Correlation | 1 | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | | |
| | N | 117 | | |
| | | | | |
| Civic Education | Pearson Correlation | .586 | 1 | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .021 | | |
| | N | 117 | 117 | |
| | | | | |
| Voter Information | Pearson Correlation | .560 | .414 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .038 | .097 | |
| | N | 117 | 117 | 117 |
| | | | | |

Source: Research Data (2025)

Findings in Table 3 above indicates, civic education had strong and positive relationship with voting participation in the 2022 General Elections ($r=0.586$, $p=0.021$). Fujiwara, Meng, and Vogl (2016) in Brazil demonstrated that voter education initiatives that consider local contexts significantly improve voter registration outcomes. The study noted that voter information was a strong and positive correlate of voting participation in

2022 General Election ($r=0.560$, $p=0.038$). Wilson (2022) supports the assertion that voter information directly impacts the process of register verification in North Florida.

Findings in table 3 also show existence of a strong positive relationship between voter awareness and voting participation in 2022 General Election ($r=0.540$, $p=0.042$). Cohodes and Feigenbaum, (2021) argue that voter education increases political awareness and civic responsibility, leading to higher participation rates in party primaries, an assertion agreeing with the findings of this study.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Analysis of Multiple regressions was done to explore effect of voter education and voting participation in 2022 General Election in Nairobi County, Kenya.

Table 4 displays model summary.

Table 4: Regression Model Summary

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|--------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | .777 ^a | .604 | .548 | 1.36725 |

Source: Research Data (2025)

From Table 4 above, value of adjusted R-square is reported as .548, meaning that 54.8% increase in voting participation in 2022 General Election in Nairobi County possibly explained by voter education.

Table 5 below breaks down ANOVA outcomes.

Table 5: Analysis of Variance

| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|--------------|-----------------------|------------|--------------------|----------|-------------------|
| Regression | 79.900 | 2 | 26.633 | 57.723 | .000 ^b |
| Residual | 52.342 | 114 | .463 | | |
| Total | 132.242 | 116 | | | |

Source: Research Data (2025)

Findings in Table 5 above indicates, value of F-calculated as 57.723 with p-value 0.000 meaning that on overall, the multiple regression model embraced in this research was substantial.

Findings of coefficients and significance are provided in table 6 below.

Table 6: Regression Coefficients

| | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | T | Sig. |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| (Constant) | 3.644 | 1.786 | | 2.040 | .491 |
| Voter civic education | .167 | .053 | .165 | 3.151 | .013 |
| Voter information | .124 | .057 | .282 | 2.175 | .032 |

Source: Research Data (2025)

From Table 6 above, the equation outlined below was predicted between study variables
 $Y = 3.644 + 0.167X_1 + 0.124X_2$

Where:

Y = Voting participation in the 2022 General Elections

X₁ = Voter civic education

X₂ = Voter information

The main objective of this study was to determine the effect of voter education on voting participation in the 2022 general elections in Nairobi City County, Kenya. Findings in Table 6 indicated that the two dimensions of voter education; civic education ($\beta=0.167$, $p=0.013<0.05$) and voter information ($\beta=0.124$, $p=0.032<0.05$) had statistically substantial effect on voting participation. This implies that voter education, when approached holistically, plays a crucial role in shaping electoral participation. For instance, civic education equips citizens with knowledge on the importance of voting and the procedures involved, which resonates with Bowers and Whitley (2020) and Pagán (2024), who found that targeted campaigns demystify the electoral process, reduce barriers, and encourage registration and turnout.

Similarly, the voter information component ensures that citizens are not only aware of their rights but also able to act on them by keeping their registration details accurate and up to date, a finding supported by Merivaki and Suttman-Lea (2023), Wilson (2022), and Mendez (2019). At the same time, raising awareness enhances civic responsibility and broadens participation beyond general elections to include party nominations, aligning with the arguments of Cohodes and Feigenbaum (2021) and Friedman (2020) that enlightened citizens have a higher probability of actively engaging elections.

Overall implication is that voter education through its interrelated aspects of civic education, information provision and awareness creation, is a strong predictor of voting participation in Nairobi City County. This conclusion agrees with Kamau and Mwangi (2016), who emphasized that voter education initiatives are designed to enlighten citizens of their civic duties, the voting processes, and the value of engagement. However, while effective programs have significantly improved voter engagement, ineffective or poorly

executed efforts may still lead to confusion, low turnout, or disengagement, highlighting the need for well-structured, comprehensive voter education strategies.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study concludes that voter education was effectively conducted during the 2022 General Election in Nairobi City County which significantly helped to reduce misinformation and allowed citizens, especially the young and first time voters to understand their voting rights and responsibilities and to register and participate in the election. Voter education also enabled voters to understand how to check and correct their registration details and enhanced understanding of party nomination processes. This confirms that voter education had strong positive relationship with voting participation.

Recommendations of the Study

For civic education, outcomes suggest that management team working at IEBC Kenya should improve on the existing voter education programs by designing content which is specific to the needs of different categories of voters. Voter civic education should be an on-going initiative at IEBC, even after the end of an election cycle. The National Treasury should allocate more resources to IEBC for supporting on-going voter civic education programs in the country at large.

Voter information and registration details should be easily accessible to voters and managers working at IEBC should leverage diverse sources and media to increase the volume of information available on voting. IEBC can partner with agencies like the National Government's Huduma Centres and NGOs to ensure increased voter information which was seen to have significant effect on voting participation.

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