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IMPROVING WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT THROUGH DEVOLUTION IN KENYA: THE CASE OF NAIROBI AND KAKAMEGA COUNTIES

Sylvester Ngome Chisika[1], Chunho Yeom[2*]

[1]International School of Urban Sciences, University of Seoul, Republic of Korea https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3417-6325 ✉ sylvesterchizika@gmail.com
[2]International School of Urban Sciences, University of Seoul, Republic of Korea https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4382-5323 ✉ chunhoy7@uos.ac.kr

Abstract: *This study aimed to investigate the progress of women's empowerment through employment opportunities in Nairobi and Kakamega Counties in Kenya between 2013 and 2017. Despite the increasing policies that aim to mainstream social equity and equality, there is still a significant gap between policy commitments and practices. The study evaluated whether the implementation of devolved governance in the two counties has improved women's empowerment. The study's framework included an in-depth review of policy documents, official records, and reports from official websites to understand women's economic empowerment status in Nairobi and Kakamega. The study analyzed qualitative and quantitative data from County Integrated Development Plans and other secondary sources. Specifically, it examined compliance with the 30% gender rule, requiring women to hold at least 30% of all elective and appointive positions. The study found that Nairobi commands the largest share of formal sector wage employment in Kenya, and women's access to employment opportunities remains slightly lower than men in both counties. Despite implementing the 30% gender rule, the study revealed the need for more comprehensive policies that promote gender equality and women's economic empowerment in both Nairobi and Kakamega.*

Keywords: *Gender Representation; Employment; CIDPs; Sustainable Development; Gender Rule*

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, significant efforts have been devoted to championing women's empowerment toward sustainable development in many developing countries. These empowerment efforts culminated in formulating policies aimed at mainstreaming social equity and equality, with particular emphasis on improving the conditions of women and other underprivileged societal groups. In Kenya, issues of women's empowerment, including affirmative action, are now deeply entrenched in many policy documents following the promulgation of the 2010 constitution, which introduced a two-tier system of governance. Devolved governance requires that both men and women are accorded equal rights and opportunities for self-advancement as they contribute to the country's sustainable growth.

However, recent reviews of these policy efforts indicate that. In contrast, tremendous achievements have been realized, and an emerging body of knowledge suggests a vast gap between policy commitments and practices at the county level. Therefore, this paper explores the current practice of women's empowerment in Nairobi and Kakamega Counties in Kenya to determine whether the first devolution cycle has improved women's empowerment for the

period 2013-2017 or not while using qualitative and quantitative data from the County Integrated Development Plans for 2013-2017 and 2018-2022 and other secondary data sources.

Further, this study acknowledges that women's empowerment involves various issues, including education, governance, health, media, and employment. However, this study will explore the employment spectrum of empowerment to evaluate the progress being made by counties to empower women by complying with the 30% rule on women in all appointive and elective positions enshrined in the constitution of 2010, as reported by the County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs) and County Public Service Board (CPSB) annual reports. To adequately respond to the research objective, this paper will first review the concept of women's empowerment from the perspective of sustainable development and devolution before examining the two cases to provide the study implications.

THE CONCEPT OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment has emerged as a "development buzzword" defined depending on the social spheres, such as management, historical ecology, etc. For this paper, empowerment is determined from an individual's perspective. An empowered person has high self-worth and self-confidence and can analyze their social, political, and economic environment to exercise control over decisions surrounding them. From this definition, therefore, women's empowerment refers to a process that grants women control over their lives by knowing and claiming their rights and opportunities at different levels of society. There are six components of empowerment; cognitive, psychological, economic, social, and legal (Stromquist 2002; Stromquist 1995; Golla et al. 2011). These components are fulfilled differently depending on different countries' socio-cultural, political, and economic contexts.

Moreover, many arguments support women's empowerment. Gichuhi and Njuguna (2017) explain that "women's economic empowerment is the most important enabler of other empowerments" (p. 55). Golla et al. (2011) associate women's economic empowerment with achieving development outcomes in poverty reduction, health, education, and welfare. World Bank (2003) argued that since women form the most significant proportion of the population, they should be allowed greater access to resources to reduce poverty, improve productivity, and enhance economic growth. Fraser (2019) indicated that more men are employed than women. So (2019) emphasized women's empowerment related to the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG). Mahmud and Becker (2012) and Aguirre et al. (2012) argued that since women constitute the majority of the world's poor, women's empowerment represents the most viable route to claim women's rights and opportunities in society rightfully. There are many interventions for achieving women's empowerment.

Numerous organizations and protocols have been instituted globally, including world conferences in Mexico in 1995 and Copenhagen in 1980. Further, to demonstrate the need for gender equality and women's empowerment, the United Nations established the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) as a separate fund from United Nations Development Program. In 1985, a third conference was held in Nairobi, Kenya, before the 1995 Beijing meeting, where women's empowerment issues were further concretized. More recently, during the Rio De Janeiro conference of 2012, where sustainable development goals were formulated,

the need to promote inclusive development was reiterated. In fact, after this conference, the United Nations has since carried out many capacity-building interventions aimed at equipping women with skills for participating in government tenders.

The United Nations (UN) is working to increase the representation of women at senior levels of the Organization. The UN Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, has put gender equality at the center of his ambitious reform agenda and has launched the system-wide Gender Parity Strategy. Similar efforts have been replicated on the African continent, as Stacki (2002) indicated. However, these interventions' impacts generally remain scattered and less documented.

There are many ways of measuring women's empowerment. Kulkarni (2011) explains that the Human Development Index (HDI) developed by the United Nations has been widely accepted as a measure of empowerment. HDI measurement uses income, level of education attained, and life expectancy at birth as the parameters of empowerment. During the evaluation, zero (0) represents the least empowered, while 1 represents the most empowered. HDI is better than Gross Domestic Product (GDP) because GDP does not quantify the identified variables. However, the Human Development Report office (2015) advocates for the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) because apart from quantifying the identified HDI variables, GDI evaluates existing gender inequality on a scale of zero (0) to one (1), just like HDI. This paper will evaluate most of the HDI parameters in the cases to be considered.

Nevertheless, existing studies increasingly report improved and deteriorating women's empowerment scenarios. Kabeer (2012) has reported an increasing inability for women to access productive resources due to institutional and market failures that have privileged men in accessing critical information. World Bank (2010) indicates that some countries' governance laws discriminate against women. Besides, formalized discrimination and attitudes prevent women from accessing economic opportunities. According to Oya (2010), in Mozambique, Mexico, and Tanzania, women are not allowed by their husbands and father to engage in other paid economic ventures because they might contact other men. However, this paper notes that despite these few cases of women's disempowerment, there is a need to overcome these myths and involve more women in entrepreneurial activities that generate sustainable income and employment in urban and rural developing countries.

THE CONCEPT OF DEVOLUTION

In Kenya, devolution is one of the interventions to promote women's empowerment. Devolution can be defined in various. According to Dacks (1990), decision-making power is transferred from the central government to lower-order governments. Multiple forms of devolution include deconcentration, delegation, and privatization. Bennett (1992) defined devolution as a multi-dimensional approach to governance that defines state power and manages it through many methods. Even though devolution has far-reaching implications for the governed, culture and values are the hallmarks of successful political devolution. According to Ribot (2009), devolution policies have been pursued in some developing countries for six objectives: to promote national unity; to down-size or dismantle national governments; to shed off "risks" and "burdens" by the national government in efforts to consolidate central power; to

increase local participation in democracy; to improve efficiency and equity in the delivery of services, and; to strengthen local government. According to OECD (2001), most individuals and governments favor devolution because it sometimes transcends national and regional borders by eliminating the challenges of central government bureaucracy and managerial incapacity. The empowerment framework for devolution is anchored on the ability of individuals to choose as influenced by the agency (individual's abilities to transform the agency into actions) and the opportunity structure (existing formal and informal institutional context for choice). One of the four critical attributes of devolution is women's empowerment (Kudva and Misra 2008).

The allocative efficiency theory guides the study by Motta (2004), which reckons decentralization improves resource allocation efficiency. Some protagonists of devolution argue that individuals favor decentralization because the local governments are seen to be closer to the people than central governments, thus improving welfare more than central governments (Azfar 2007; Musgrave 1959). Moreover, local governments are said to respond better to people's demands. Hence, there is a tendency among sub-national governments to compete in providing a variety of services to meet these needs.

DEVOLUTION AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN KENYA

Many programs promote women's participation in development. The Kenya National Policy on Gender and Development (KNPGD) 2010 establishes the framework within which girls, boys, women, and men can participate and benefit equally from Kenya's development processes. These efforts culminated in the formation of the Department of Gender and Social Development in December 2006, whose mandate is to promote gender equality and women's empowerment through capacity building and provide information on other entrepreneurial opportunities.

Also, the Public Service Commission (PSC), the sole government staffing institution, is mandated to ensure equality and equity in allocating opportunities for empowerment to both men and women. To promote fairness, the PSC establishes job grades implemented in the country. According to PSC regulations (2018), jobs are classified as PSG with a numeral and a letter of the alphabet. PSG 1 (highest grade) corresponds with job group V, and PSG 17 (lowest grade) corresponds with job group A. PSG 6, or job group Q to R, represents senior management and functional heads. PSG 5 represents job groups S, T, U, and V represent top management and executives. PSG 9 to 19 represents junior management implementing decisions communicated from the top.

Similarly, the social pillar under Kenya's Vision 2030 seeks to promote equitable empowerment of both men and women. However, the constitution of 2010 is absolute. It demands that 30% of women be in all elective and nominated positions in the country. Moreover, according to article 235 and section 57 of the County Governments Act (2012), all counties are expected to establish a County Public Service Board. The board must submit an annual report to the County assembly showing the progress of implementing devolution. A random check of these reports uploaded on the official county websites indicates that only two reports were prepared for 2013-2017. The existing report for most counties is the Annual Report for the years 2015 and 2017.

Interestingly, there seems to be no standardized reporting template for this progress. Among other things, the report highlights; the level of compliance in staff recruitment, staff training, and promotion, staff employed per job group, regional representation of employed staff, the ethnic composition of county staff, and gender representation, indicating the proportion of men and women holding different positions in the county hierarchies. In general, the implementation of these policy provisions has not been easy. Even though studies seem scattered at the national level, they indicate that more should be done on gender representation targeting women.

Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) (2017) reports that even though Kenya's economy is fast growing and poverty is declining as a result of devolution, which established 47 county governments and brought services closer to the people, these economic development benefits are not equitably shared as women remain disadvantaged socially, economically and politically. According to the Report, women are underrepresented in decision making have low access to higher education, land, and employment opportunities. The report indicates that women provide over 80% of farm labor and manage 40% of smallholder farms in Kenya. However, they only own roughly 1% of agricultural land and receive 10% of the available credit.

However, Gichuhi and Njuguna (2017) found that significant progress was being made in the counties to empower women economically. The study noted that introducing development programs in Nakuru County positively impacted women's empowerment but called for specific projects targeting women.

Moreover, Kyuvi (2017), while applying case study methods, established that women's empowerment had gained momentum. The study reckons that women groups were powerful tools for fostering women empowerment in Mathare Valley in Nairobi County. These women's empowerment cases seem to point to the fact that county governments are making significant strides toward women's empowerment. Still, more policies need to be formulated to support these efforts.

METHODOLOGY

This study seeks to investigate women's economic empowerment through the distribution of employment opportunities due to devolution in Kakamega and Nairobi Counties. This study has chosen Nairobi because it is the most populous capital city and is perceived to have the highest HDI in Kenya. In contrast, Kakamega has been selected because it is the second-most populous county and represents a rural county with a perceived lower HDI. It will, therefore, be interesting to compare the application and level of compliance with the 30% gender rule and the outcomes of women's empowerment. A conceptual framework indicated in Figure 1 was constructed to adequately address this goal alongside an in-depth document content review of specific legal and policy documents and official records or reports retrieved from official websites presented in Table 1. Three research questions were asked. First, what is the current economic empowerment status in Nairobi and Kakamega Counties? Secondly, is the distribution of employment opportunities (economic empowerment) between men and women in line with the 30% gender rule outlined by the constitution of 2010? Thirdly, what are the policy implications of this study?

Obtained data were analyzed qualitatively with the hind lenses of the Human Development Index (HDI) by describing the similarities and differences in women's access to employment opportunities in the two counties. Moreover, descriptive statistics were used to summarize women's access to employment opportunities.

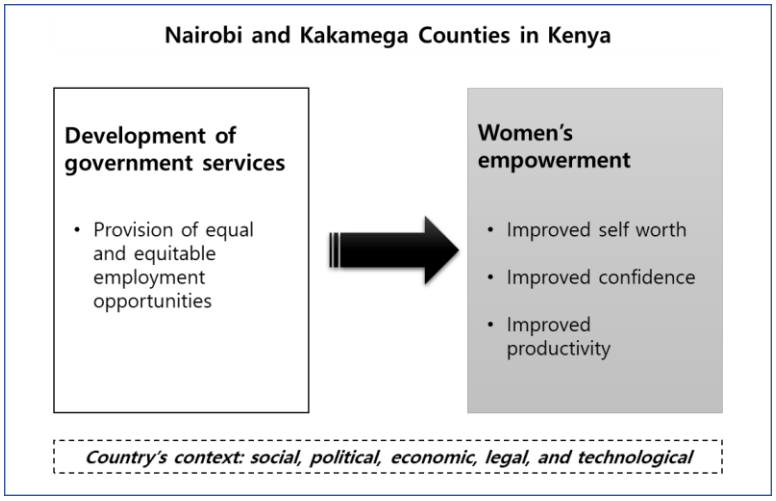


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework (Source: Authors' depiction)

Figure 1 highlights that in a given country context (social, political, economic, environmental, legal, and technological) holding other factors constant, the devolution of government services through the provision of equal opportunities for employment results in women's empowerment as reflected through improved self-confidence, and participation in decision making.

Table 1: Key Documents Consulted (Source: Authors' depiction)

Document	Information	Source
The Constitution of 2010	Sets the threshold for gender empowerment at 30% of either gender in elective or appointive positions	www.kenyalawreporting.org
The County Governments Act of 2012	Requires that annual County PSB reports be prepared to show development progress, including women's empowerment	www.kenyalawreporting.org
Kakamega CIDP 2013-2017	Elaborates the county plans and strategies for achieving women's empowerment in the period 2013-2018	www.kakamega.go.ke
Kakamega CIPDD 2018-2022	Elaborates the county plans and strategies for achieving women's empowerment for the period 2018-2022	www.kakamega.go.ke
Kakamega CPSB Report 2014/2015	Records of county achievements on women's empowerment in the financial year 2014/2015	www.kakamega.go.ke
Kakamega CPSB Report 2016/2017	Records of county achievements on women's empowerment in the financial year 2016/2017	www.kakamega.go.ke
Nairobi CIDP 2013-2017	Elaborates the county plans and strategies for achieving women's empowerment in the period 2013-2017	www.nairobi.go.ke
Nairobi CIDP 2018-2022	Elaborates the county plans and strategies for achieving women's empowerment in the period 2018-2022	www.nairobi.go.ke
Nairobi CPSB Report 2015/2016	Records of county achievements on women's empowerment in the financial year 2014/2015	www.nairobi.go.ke
Nairobi CPSB Report 2016/2017	Records of county achievements on women's empowerment in the financial year 2016/2017	www.nairobi.go.ke
Kenya Vision 2030	Highlights the importance of the social pillar in achieving economic development in Kenya	www.vision2030.go.ke

CASE STUDY

Nairobi City County

According to Nairobi City County CIDP, Nairobi is one of the 47 counties in Kenya. The county has a total area of 696.1 Km2 and is located between longitudes 360 45′ East and latitudes 10 18′ South. It lies at an altitude of 1,798 meters above sea level. It is divided into seventeen constituencies/sub-counties. In 2009, the county population was projected to be 3,138,369 and is expected to rise to 4,941708 in 2018, 5,433,002 in 2020, and 5,958,338 in 2022, respectively. The female population projections from age cohorts 0-4, 5-9, 10-14, 15-19, and 20-24 remain slightly higher than that of males except for those under five, where the number of boys is higher than girls. Nairobi commands the largest share of formal sector wage employment in Kenya, with 453,000 people. The manufacturing industry accounts for the highest wage employment, followed by trade, restaurants, and hotels. The construction, transport, and communications industry also generate wage employment. Other important sectors include finance, real estate, and business services. Nairobi's main formal employment zones are the Central Business District (CBD), the industrial area, Mombasa road, Thika road, and Dandora.

According to KNBS (2019), Nairobi County had a labor force of 2,148,605, comprising 1,034,009 females and 1,114,596 males. Of the 2,148,605 persons in the labor force, 1,832,751 were classified as employed, while 315,844 were seeking employment. The youthful proportion of the labor force consists of 561,457 males and 648,756 females. The level of unemployment in Nairobi stands at 14.70%, with the female unemployment rate standing at 18.99 percent while that of males is at 11.55%.

The County Public Service Board (CPSB) 30-page annual report for the year 2015/16 indicates that Nairobi County has 12,967 staff. There are 2,371 employees under job group C, the highest in the county. Further, the report indicates the employee numbers and terms of engagement, staff that has separated with the county, and the skill profile of staff. Interestingly, from the report, the county recruited 542 new staff in 2015 but did not desegregate the data based on gender representation, making it difficult to evaluate women's empowerment efforts. The 16 paged CPSB report for 2016/17 illustrates the job qualifications per job and notes that many lower cadres staff are unskilled. Besides, the reports highlight the employee numbers and terms of engagement, with a majority under the permanent and pensionable category (11,936). A separation matrix also shows staff who have ceased to work with the county. The majority are retirees (231). The report has also highlighted staff on disciplinary matters, but all this reporting lacks data disaggregation based on gender representation.

Nonetheless, some attempts were made in the same period when 62 new staff were recruited. Data indicates that 18 females and 44 males were engaged, indicating a 29% female employment rate. It will be interesting to find out what happens to accurate gender reporting in successive years as the country implements devolution.

While admitting this inequity and inequality, the CIDP 2018-2022 concludes that gender inequality affects women's access to and control of resources and political positions in Nairobi County. The gender ratio in primary schools stands at 1:1, and the gender parity index of the

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gross enrolment ratio in secondary schools stands at 0.8 compared to 0.834 for the country. At parliamentary representation, the female representation stands at 37.5%, and the unemployment ratio for males to females stands at 1:1.2. Out of eight parliamentary constituencies in the county, there were only three female Members of Parliament (in the tenth Parliament 2013-2017), all of whom served in the cabinet. The CIDP recommends that there is a need for the county government to empower women through training to equip them with relevant skills to enhance their productivity. The CIDP also reports that increased violence against women, physically, sexually, or psychologically, is a challenge to achieving gender balance. There is a need to establish a gender-based violence desk at the sub-county level to address issues affecting both men and women and children. Financial services should be enhanced to enable them to access funds for their small enterprises. Community mobilization should be scaled up to have more women receive funding from the Women Enterprise Fund (WEF). Healthcare services that address women of reproductive age should be scaled up to promote maternal and child health.

Kakamega County

According to the CIDP 2018-2023, Kakamega County is located in the county's western region with an area of 3,051.3 km2. It has an estimated population of 2,079,669 with a density of 682/km2. It is divided into twelve sub-counties, sixty wards, one hundred and eighty-seven Village Units, and four hundred Community Administrative Areas. Politically, it comprises twelve constituencies and sixty wards. The climate is conducive to many on-farm activities, including crop and animal production.

The county had a population of 1,660,651, comprising 800,896 males and 859,755 females, giving a population distribution of 48% male and 52% female (KNBS 2019). This population is projected to grow at an annual growth rate of 2.5%. Based on this annual growth rate, the county population is projected to be 2,078,327 people by 2018 and grow to 2,184,885 and 2,296,907 by 2020 and 2022, respectively. Agriculture employs over 80 percent of the population in the county, mainly in rural areas. More wage earners are in environmental protection, water, housing, energy, infrastructure, and ICT sectors. They mainly rely on casual employment on farms, factories, house construction, water protection, drilling, communal labor, cane weeding, and the boda-boda trade. According to the 2009 census report, the number of people employed per sector included 756,711 in agriculture, 34,052 in other sectors, and 2,554 in wage employment. Expansion of these sectors through subsidies and incentives to spur growth will expand the employment base in the county. Appropriate training in relevant fields will enhance job creation and absorption.

The county has an estimated 793,371 people in self-employment, mainly in Agriculture and Rural Development sectors. Other sectors that form many self-employed persons include the Jua Kali artisans, cottage industries, and boda-bodas. According to the 2009 Population and Housing Census, the self-employed males were 338,187, while females were 359,333 equals 697,520. Those with skills and are seeking employment but self-employed in either one of these sectors were 37,125 males and 36,492 females, a total of 73,617. Of these self-employed persons, most of them are engaged in agricultural labor. The rest of this group is involved in

mining, forestry, brickmaking, and construction. However, a substantial number of self-employed might be under disguised unemployment.

According to the 2009 Population and Housing Census, the county's labor force stood at 825,276 and was projected at 889,552 in 2012. It constitutes 471,779 males and 417,773 females, representing 26.5 percent and 23.5 percent of the county's projected population in 2012. By 2022, the labor force will be estimated to be 1,007,994 persons. The county must create investment opportunities, exploit the untapped potential, and enhance skill development.

According to the Population and Housing Census of 2009, the county's unemployed population stood at 196,938, representing 22.04 percent of the total labor force. However, it is worth noting that those seeking employment are 37,125 males, while the females are 36,492, equal to 73,617. Those seeking employment are essentially the youthful population. These represent those people with the necessary skills and qualifications who reported that they were qualified two weeks before the census and actively pursued the jobs.

The CPSB report for 2015/16 is a 55-page document that indicates that 507 new staff were recruited. The report concludes that compliance with the constitutional requirements on gender and youth representation was achieved in 62% of youths. Still, overall there was 61.97% male against 38.03% female representation of the employed staff. Among the contract staff, the female gender dominated the selected staff due to the nature of the jobs skewed towards the said gender. Moreover, the report presents information on the ethnic composition of staff recruited in 2015, with the Luhya constituting 89.34%. The report also shows the regional representation of employed staff, with 77% being residents of Kakamega County. Moreover, apart from disaggregating data on a gender basis, the report presents a detailed account of the gender representation of staff employed in its 12 sub-counties.

Moreover, the report shows the staff composition per contract type based on gender representation. From the data, 99.6% represent female employees on contracts for Early Child Development Education, 39% under regular employees, and 79% as contract nurses. Males seem to dominate the regular employee category more than the contract. The report also lists all job opportunities advertised in 2015, those shortlisted, interviewed, and selected, but fails to desegregate the data based on gender representation. In 2016/17, CPSB's 55-page report indicates that 292 new staff were recruited, with 58.21% as males and 41.7% as females. Ethnic representation is also shown, which means the Luhya had 94.53% of the slots. The staff's representation per sub-county, regional representation, and distribution per job group was also tabulated, but in this case, no desegregation based on gender was done.

Interestingly, a breakdown of promotion conducted in the year indicates that under health services, with 918 staff promoted, 602 females were promoted. Staff training conducted was disaggregated in gender terms. Generally, in the two reporting timeframes, there seems to be a lack of consistency in gender reporting, which may negatively impact progress toward women's empowerment.

Nonetheless, as of 2018, the CIDP 2018-2023 reports that the county staff establishment was 57.5% female and 42.5% male, comprising youths (18-35 years) at 76.2% and 23.8% (36 years and above). Compliance of the Board with Constitutional requirements on gender and youth representation was achieved at 62% youth, 61.97% male against 38.03% female representation of the employed staff in the year. The CIDP concludes that the general situation

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of indicators in the county shows a general improvement in the status of sustainable development, including roads, access to clean and safe water, access to quality healthcare, energy access, education, and food production.

DISCUSSION

Kenya has robust legal and policy mechanisms for entrenching women's empowerment in sustainable development. The constitution and the country's Vision 2030 have outlined bold and deliberate intentions toward incorporating women in development, as shown in Table 1. Moreover, the County Governments Act of 2012 is quite unequivocal. It compels every devolved unit in the country to comprehensively submit an annual report regarding development progress covering all socio-economic aspects. This finding contrasts sharply with World Bank (2010), which found that most developing countries' governance laws are geared towards discriminating against women.

Interestingly, this study found that despite the vast differences in environment and socio-cultural contexts, the CIDPs and the CPSB annual reports for Kakamega and Nairobi Counties covering 2013-2017 have many similarities and differences. In general, they indicate that even though there is a commitment in these counties on their quest to realize women's empowerment through county employment opportunities as required by national policy on gender balancing, there is still a long way to go to actualize real empowerment. These findings seem to agree with what Gichuhi and Njuguna (2017) found in the case of Nakuru County and Kyuvi (2017) in the case of Mathare in Nairobi, who reported that women's empowerment momentum was gathering despite many challenges.

Moreover, even though both counties prepared their first and second CPSB Annual reports in the financial year 2015/16 and 2016/17 under section 59(1)d of the County Governments Act, 2012 covering human resource planning, results indicate that the reporting practice varies considerably. For example, while the annual CPSB reports for Kakamega appear to be more detailed and are presented in 50 pages for the financial year 2016/2017 and 55 pages in the year 2015/2016, the CPSB reports for Nairobi are reported in 30 pages for 2015/2016 and 16 pages for the year 2016/2017 and provide scanty information on gender representation in general.

Similarly, in both counties, the CIDPs for the period 2018-2022 review the achievements of the CIDPs for the period 2013-2017 but provide inconsistent and scanty information on the actual status of women's empowerment in the two counties. Interestingly, the two counties conclude on their women's empowerment progress by reporting the gender representation statuses of their counties for the period 2013-2017. In Kakamega County, the CIDP 2018-2022 concludes that the county staff establishment was 57.5% female and 42.5% male, comprising youths (18-35 years) at 76.2% and 23.8% (36 years and above). Whereas for Nairobi County, the CIDP 2018-2022 concludes that gender inequality affects women's access to and control of resources and political positions in the county. In both cases, gender representation is equated to women's empowerment. This paper submits that such seemingly clandestine reporting on gender may have the impact of disempowering women by denying them access to opportunities despite their vast numbers. World Bank (2003) and Mahmud and Becker (2012)

posit that women form the most significant portion of the global population and hence should be allowed greater economic opportunities.

However, according to IDLO (2019), the rate of women's empowerment could be hastened if more women were in the decision-making positions of organizations. This study notes that human resource planning must establish deliberate measures to achieve the desired state. For instance, IDLO (2019) indicates that 50% of women are in senior management positions in the UN Secretary General's office, and planning to increase this number shortly. Kakamega County may have followed IDLO's (2019) footsteps, as indicated by their women representation of 57.5%. The county seems to have adopted a bolder approach to reporting gender representation by disaggregating staff recruitment, training, and promotion, among others, based on gender. Disaggregation of staff based on gender continues to the sub-county levels in efforts to comply with the constitution's provisions, which require all elective and appointive positions to reflect 30% women representation. Nevertheless, more efforts to empower women are required in Kakamega County because women or females, apart from dominating the contract employment type in the county, constitute 50.6% of the county labor force and 49.5% of the labor force seeking employment in Kakamega County.

In Nairobi County, efforts have also been made to empower women through equal employment opportunities, as shown in the case study. In 2015/16, up to 542 new employees were recruited under 43 different jobs, with 301 staff constituting 55.5% female. However, when the PSG job classification is applied to the outcome and assuming that Medical Officers and Pharmacists, as written in the report, represent officers in lower management or decision-making category, Nairobi County had 31 women representing 51.67% if the authors add that to the list of chief officers and directors indicated in the report. Unfortunately, with the same assumption, 270 women also represented 55.9% of women in lower cadres. Nonetheless, because of the vast and unemployed female population, more opportunities should be available for women's empowerment. These findings agree with CIDP 2018-2022 conclusion that there is a need to address gender inequality in Nairobi County with more emphasis on women's empowerment.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Study results have shown that one of the devolution's significant attributes is promoting women's empowerment. Following the introduction of devolution, the two counties have made positive progress towards women's empowerment in compliance with the 30% women representation in elective and appointive positions and other policy provisions. Moreover, findings have shown that women represent much of the labor force in the two counties.

However, due to inconsistent reporting across the two counties, available data on county employment statuses appear insufficient, thus providing a limited basis for ascertaining the actual condition of women's empowerment through devolution processes in the counties examined. Nonetheless, given the enormous women population and unemployment rate, this paper concludes that there is a need to expand opportunities for women in the counties. Further, besides recommending a GDI and standardized gender representation reporting

template, there is a need to collect and collate additional data from the private sector to holistically address women's empowerment issues in counties.

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