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INFLUENCE OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT ON WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS IN BAIDOA, SOMALIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of educational attainment on women's political participation in Baidoa, Somalia, where women face significant barriers to political engagement despite national and international calls for greater inclusion. In Somalia's patriarchal society, with its complex clan-based politics, women's representation in governance remains below 25%, with even lower rates in rural and conflict-affected regions like Baidoa. Educational disparities compound these challenges, with women disproportionately underrepresented in both primary and secondary education. Using a descriptive research design that integrated qualitative and quantitative approaches, the study collected data from 86 respondents including voters, political leaders, community leaders, and local authority representatives. Data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics, with regression analysis revealing a strong positive relationship between educational attainment and women's political participation ($\beta = 0.421$, $p = 0.000$). The findings indicated that education serves as a catalyst for breaking down barriers to women's political participation (mean = 4.2674) and empowers women to engage confidently in political activities (mean = 4.419). Educational attainment explains approximately 69.5% of variation in women's political participation ($R^2 = 0.695$), suggesting its critical role in equipping women with the necessary skills, confidence, and awareness to effectively engage in politics. The study recommended increasing women's access to quality education in Baidoa, particularly in rural areas, implementing policies to remove barriers to education for women, and conducting community awareness campaigns to challenge socio-cultural norms that hinder women's political participation.

Keywords: Educational Attainment, Women's Political Participation, Gender Equality, Somalia, Baidoa, Human Capital Theory, Political Representation, Socio-Cultural Barriers

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INTRODUCTION

Women's participation in politics has been an enduring issue globally, with significant implications for governance, gender equity, and social progress. In the context of Somalia, particularly in regions like Baidoa, the political participation of women has faced numerous obstacles, despite national and international calls for greater inclusion. Baidoa, a city that serves as the administrative capital of the South West State of Somalia, is emblematic of the broader challenges that Somali women face in entering the political arena. These challenges include socio-cultural norms, security concerns, limited educational opportunities, and an ongoing lack of political empowerment for women (UN Women, 2020; Samatar, 2020). The sociopolitical landscape of Somalia, including Baidoa, is deeply shaped by patriarchal traditions, which often place women in secondary roles in both public and private spheres. While there have been legal frameworks in Somalia aimed at increasing women's participation in politics, such as the introduction of gender quotas in national and local elections, the practical implementation of these frameworks has been inconsistent. Nationally, women's representation in the Somali Parliament remains below 25%, and even less in the rural and conflict-affected regions, including Baidoa (UNDP, 2020). In the case of Baidoa, these barriers are amplified by the city's history of conflict and the complex interplay of clan-based politics, which tend to marginalize women in local governance processes (Hersi, 2021; Rashid & Hassan, 2020).

Education, often regarded as a fundamental tool for political empowerment, plays a central role in the participation of women in political life. In Baidoa, educational attainment among women is disproportionately low compared to men, with multiple factors contributing to this disparity. According to the Somali National Education Policy (2017), the region faces challenges in providing equitable educational opportunities for girls, including the persistence of early marriage, poverty, and the lack of educational infrastructure, all of which disproportionately affect women (World Bank, 2020). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2020) notes that educational access in Baidoa remains a critical barrier, with girls being underrepresented in both primary and secondary education. This educational disparity not only limits women's socio-economic mobility but also hampers their ability to engage in informed political discussions, thus restricting their participation in governance (Amad & Hassan, 2019).

The lack of educational opportunities for women in Baidoa is compounded by broader socio-cultural attitudes that prioritize male education and restrict women's social roles. As a result, women often lack the necessary skills and knowledge to run for office, participate in elections, or even advocate for gender-sensitive policies. This educational gap reinforces the gendered divisions of power within Somali society, where women continue to be relegated to traditional roles, both at home and within the political sphere (Menkhaus, 2021). However, there is growing recognition that improving women's education could have transformative effects on both their political participation and overall social inclusion. According to a study by Khalif (2021), women who are educated are more likely to engage in political activism, vote, and run for office, making educational attainment a key lever for enhancing women's representation in Baidoa's local governance. Baidoa's political structure, like much of Somalia's, is influenced by clan-based politics, which often exclude women from the decision-making processes. Clan elders, who hold significant sway in local governance, tend to prioritize male participation, leaving women with limited opportunities to take part in political discussions (Sambala & Adero, 2019). Even in cases where formal political frameworks such as quotas for women exist, informal cultural and political structures continue to act as significant barriers, limiting women's ability to influence policy or secure leadership positions. In Baidoa, these barriers are further exacerbated by the region's insecurity, which affects both the provision of education and women's safety in the public and political spheres (Munyao, 2019).

Despite these obstacles, there have been notable strides towards improving women's access to education in Somalia, driven by both governmental and non-governmental efforts. According to the Somali Ministry of Education (2018), various educational initiatives are being implemented to close the gender gap in primary

and secondary education. Additionally, the Somali government has also worked with international organizations like UN Women and the World Bank to promote gender-inclusive education and political engagement. While these efforts have yielded some positive outcomes, their impact has been uneven across regions. In Baidoa, the combined challenges of cultural conservatism, economic hardship, and insecurity continue to pose significant barriers to the educational and political empowerment of women (Rashid & Hassan, 2020; World Bank, 2020). As education is a critical determinant of political engagement, understanding how improving female educational attainment in Baidoa could lead to higher levels of women's political participation is central to this study. There is significant evidence suggesting that educated women are more likely to engage in governance and decision-making processes. In regions where women have greater access to education, such as Mogadishu, women's participation in local politics has increased, indicating that education can play a pivotal role in enhancing women's political visibility and involvement (UNDP, 2019). This study examined how educational attainment can contribute to increasing women's participation in the political processes in Baidoa, with a focus on both formal education and the cultural contexts that shape educational outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

Baidoa, Somalia, represents a unique yet emblematic case of the broader challenges that women face in political participation, particularly in post-conflict regions. Despite efforts at the national level to increase women's participation in political processes, women in Baidoa continue to face systemic barriers that prevent their active engagement in governance. These barriers are deeply rooted in cultural practices, political structures, and educational disparities, all of which hinder women's access to leadership roles and political decision-making. Educational attainment is one of the key factors influencing women's political engagement, yet in Baidoa, women's educational opportunities remain severely limited. According to UNESCO (2020), Baidoa faces persistent educational inequalities that disproportionately affect women. Traditional beliefs about gender roles often restrict women's access to education, particularly in rural areas. As a result, many women in Baidoa lack the basic education necessary to navigate the political landscape, run for office, or even engage in political discourse. This educational disparity not only limits women's socio-economic opportunities but also restricts their ability to participate in the political process and advocate for their rights.

Additionally, the clan-based political system in Baidoa further exacerbates the problem. Clan elders and male-dominated structures continue to exert significant control over political decisions, often sidelining women from leadership roles. Even with national policies aimed at increasing women's political representation, such as gender quotas, the implementation of these policies is often inconsistent and ineffective in regions like Baidoa. Without a broader transformation in both educational and socio-cultural norms, women in Baidoa will continue to be underrepresented in politics, which limits the overall inclusiveness and effectiveness of governance in the region. This research aimed to explore the influence of educational attainment on women's political participation in Baidoa, with a focus on identifying the specific educational, cultural, and political barriers that women face.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to determine the influence of educational attainment on women's participation in politics in Baidoa, Somalia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory (HCT), initially developed by Gary S. Becker in 1964, posits that individuals acquire education, skills, and knowledge as forms of capital that enhance their productivity and enable their participation in economic, social, and political spheres. Becker (1993) argues that education plays a central

role in human development by increasing individuals' capabilities, making them more competitive and active contributors to society. The theory suggests that investments in education yield higher personal and societal benefits, including increased employment opportunities, improved decision-making abilities, and enhanced civic engagement. In the context of women's political participation in Baidoa, Somalia, HCT provides a framework for understanding the role of education in empowering women to engage in governance. Education equips women with the necessary knowledge, confidence, and leadership skills to navigate political environments effectively (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2020). Studies have shown that in regions where women attain higher levels of education, their political involvement increases due to improved awareness of their rights and responsibilities as citizens (Kabeer, 2018). Additionally, education fosters critical thinking and enhances women's ability to challenge patriarchal structures that limit their political engagement (Dahlerup, 2018).

Despite its relevance, HCT has notable limitations. One critique is that it primarily focuses on individual agency while neglecting structural barriers that may prevent women from entering politics. In patriarchal societies such as Somalia, even highly educated women face socio-cultural constraints, including gender discrimination and restrictive electoral laws (Rao & Tienda, 2021). Furthermore, the theory assumes a linear relationship between education and political participation, ignoring other intersecting factors such as economic independence, access to political networks, and cultural attitudes toward female leadership (Nussbaum, 2020). Nonetheless, HCT remains instrumental in advocating for policies that promote women's education as a key enabler of political participation. Governments and international organizations can leverage the theory to support initiatives such as scholarships for female students, leadership training programs, and mentorship opportunities for aspiring women politicians. If Somalia prioritizes female education as a national strategy, women's representation in political institutions can improve, thereby fostering inclusive governance and sustainable development. Therefore, Human Capital Theory strongly supports the study objective by illustrating how educational attainment influences women's political engagement.

Empirical Review

Educational Attainment and Women's Participation in Politics

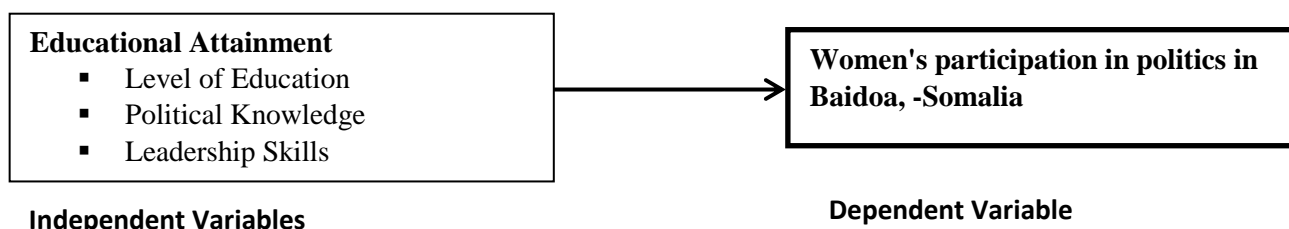
In 2020, Hessami, and da Fonseca (2020) conducted a study in India examining the impact of educational attainment on women's political participation. Utilizing a cross-sectional research design, the study targeted women aged 18 and above across various states. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure representation from different educational backgrounds. Data analysis involved logistic regression to assess the likelihood of political participation based on education levels. Findings indicated that higher educational attainment significantly increased women's participation in political activities. However, the study noted a research gap in understanding the role of informal education and political engagement. Ogasawara (2023) explored the correlation between women's education and their representation in Japan's legislative bodies. The study adopted a longitudinal research design, focusing on female politicians over two decades. The target population included all female candidates in national elections during this period. Purposive sampling was used to select participants with varying educational backgrounds. Data were analyzed using time-series analysis, revealing that women with higher education levels were more likely to secure legislative seats. The research identified a gap in understanding the impact of cultural factors on this relationship.

Kim (2022) conducted a study in South Korea to assess how educational attainment influences women's political empowerment. Employing a mixed-methods research design, the study targeted female members of political parties. A combination of random sampling for surveys and purposive sampling for interviews was utilized. Data analysis included both quantitative statistical methods and qualitative thematic analysis. Findings suggested that higher education levels enhanced women's confidence and capability to engage in politics. The study highlighted a gap in exploring the intersectionality of education with other socio-economic factors. Hessami and da Fonseca (2020) examined the impact of educational policies on women's political

participation in Germany. The study used a quasi-experimental research design, focusing on regions with varying educational initiatives. The target population comprised women aged 20-40. Cluster sampling was employed to select participants from different regions. Data analysis involved difference-in-differences estimation, revealing that regions with progressive educational policies had higher rates of female political participation. The research gap identified was the long-term effect of these policies. Kiess (2022) investigated the relationship between women's education and electoral participation in France. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted, targeting women voters in urban and rural areas. Systematic random sampling ensured diverse representation. Chi-square tests were used for data analysis, indicating that women with tertiary education were more likely to vote. The study noted a gap in understanding the motivations behind non-participation among educated women.

Conceptual Framework

In this study, the dependent variable is the Women's participation in politics in Baidoa, -Somalia while the independent variable is educational attainment as seen in Figure 1, a conceptual framework illustrates the link between the independent and dependent variables.



METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive research design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches to explore the impact of socio-cultural barriers on women's political participation. A descriptive research design was used to systematically examine variables and their relationships. The target population included 100 male and female voters, 10 political leaders, 10 community leaders, and 5 local authority representatives from Baidoa, Somalia. Stratified random sampling was employed, resulting in a sample size of 95 respondents. Data collection was carried out using structured questionnaires, incorporating both closed and open-ended questions for a comprehensive data set. A pilot study was conducted in Mogadishu to test the research instrument's effectiveness. Data analysis combined descriptive and inferential statistics, with regression analysis used to examine relationships between socio-cultural barriers and women's participation. Findings were presented through tables, charts, and thematic analysis of qualitative data, utilizing a multiple regression model to establish causal relationships.

FINDINGS AND PRESENTATION

Respondents Rate

The respondents were grouped into voters, political leaders, community leaders, and local authority representatives. This allowed deeper interrogation of the influence of Educational Attainment on Women's Participation in Politics in Baidoa, Somalia. Summary of the response rate is provided in table 1.

Table 1: Response Rate

Category	Sample Size	Response Rate	
	Frequency (N)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Voters	75	69	92
Political leaders	8	6	75
Community leaders	8	7	88
Local authority representatives	4	4	100
Total	95	86	91

The study achieved a response rate of 91%, with 86 out of 95 respondents completing the survey. The response rates for various categories were as follows: voters (92%), political leaders (75%), community leaders (88%), and local authority representatives (100%). These high participation rates from diverse groups reflect strong engagement and ensure a comprehensive analysis of how educational attainment and socio-cultural barriers impact women's political participation in Baidoa, Somalia.

Descriptive Statistics

Educational Attainments and Women Participation in Politics

The first objective of the study was to determine the influence of educational attainment on women's participation in politics in Baidoa, Somalia. As illustrated in Table 2, seven statements were used to measure this variable based on a 5-point Likert scale.

Table 2: Influence of Educational Attainment on Women's Participation in Politics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Women with higher levels of education are more likely to actively participate in politics.	86	4.12	.887
Education empowers women to engage confidently in political activities.	86	4.419	.7891
Lack of access to quality education limits women's involvement in politics.	86	4.1744	.67199
Educated women are better equipped to understand political issues and make informed decisions.	86	4.1163	1.08918
Education serves as a catalyst for breaking down barriers to women's political participation.	86	4.2674	.78851
Increasing educational opportunities for women can lead to greater representation in political leadership roles.	86	4.0617	1.26832
Educational disparities contribute to inequalities in women's access to political participation.	86	4.2558	.87024
Valid N (listwise)	86		

Table 2 indicates that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that education empowers women to engage confidently in political activities, as shown by the mean of 4.419 and a standard deviation of 0.7891. This suggests that education plays a significant role in boosting women's confidence, enabling them to actively participate in politics. The majority also strongly agreed that education serves as a catalyst for breaking down barriers to women's political participation, as shown by the mean of 4.2674 and a standard deviation of 0.78851. The study also revealed that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that educational disparities contribute to inequalities in women's access to political participation, as shown by the mean of 4.2558 and a standard deviation of 0.87024. The respondents agreed that a lack of access to quality education limits women's involvement in politics, as shown by the mean of 4.1744 and a standard deviation of 0.67199. The study also revealed that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that women with higher levels of education are more likely to actively participate in politics, as shown by the mean of 4.12 and a standard deviation of 0.887. The respondents agreed that educated women are better equipped to understand political issues and make informed decisions, as shown by the mean of 4.1163 and a standard deviation of 1.08918. The respondents agreed that increasing educational opportunities for women can lead to greater representation in political leadership roles, as shown by the mean of 4.0617 and a standard deviation of 1.26832. The results are in line with the findings of Inglehart and Norris (2003), who revealed that higher educational attainment among women is strongly associated with increased political participation.

Women Participation in Politics

Women participation in politics is still at the lowest level in Baidoa, Somalia, as demonstrated in the findings. Table 3 presents summary of the results.

Table 3: Dynamics of Women Participation in Politics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Women's representation in political decision-making processes is crucial for democracy.	86	3.6047	1.02072
Empowering women to participate in politics leads to more inclusive and effective governance.	86	4.1512	1.14293
Increasing women's political participation enhances the legitimacy and accountability of government institutions.	86	3.7442	1.09744
Gender equality in politics is a fundamental human right and a cornerstone of democratic societies.	86	4.1047	1.01783
Women bring unique perspectives and experiences to political discourse, enriching policy-making processes.	86	3.9070	1.14407
Achieving gender parity in political leadership is essential for achieving sustainable development goals.	86	3.9419	1.01000
Valid N (listwise)	86		

Table 3 indicates that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that empowering women to participate in politics leads to more inclusive and effective governance, as shown by the mean of 4.1512 and a standard deviation of 1.14293. This finding underscores the importance of women's involvement in political processes in fostering governance structures that accommodate diverse perspectives and needs. The majority also strongly agreed that gender equality in politics is a fundamental human right and a cornerstone of democratic societies, as shown by the mean of 4.1047 and a standard deviation of 1.01783. Their research demonstrates that societies with higher levels of gender equality in politics tend to have stronger democratic values and more stable political systems. The study also revealed that the majority of respondents strongly agreed that achieving gender parity in political leadership is essential for attaining sustainable development goals, as indicated by the mean of 3.9419 and a standard deviation of 1.01000. The respondents agreed that women bring unique perspectives and experiences to political discourse, enriching policy-making processes, as shown by the mean of 3.9070 and a standard deviation of 1.14407. The study also revealed that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that increasing women's political participation enhances the legitimacy and accountability of government institutions, as shown by the mean of 3.7442 and a standard deviation of 1.09744. The respondents agreed that women's representation in political decision-making processes is crucial for democracy, as shown by the mean of 3.6047 and a standard deviation of 1.02072. This result is in line with the findings of Phillips (2020), who revealed that societies with higher levels of women's political participation tend to experience more stable and effective democratic governance structures.

Model Summary

As shown in Table 4, the coefficient correlation (R) and coefficient of determination (R²) were calculated to assess the fit of the model in explaining the relationship between Educational Attainment and Women's Participation in Politics in Baidoa, Somalia.

Table 4: Coefficient of Correlation (R) and Coefficient of Determination (R²)

Model	R	R Square (R ²)	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.702 ^a	0.695	0.681	3.011

a. Women participation in politics

b. Predictors: Educational Attainment

Based on the statistics in Table 4, the coefficient of correlation (R) is 0.702, indicating a strong positive relationship between educational attainment and women's participation in politics. The model has an R² of 0.695 and an adjusted R² of 0.681, meaning approximately 69.5% of the variation in women's political participation (the dependent variable) is explained by the predictor variable (educational attainment). This

suggests that besides educational attainment, other factors—such as cultural, social, and economic barriers—may contribute to the remaining 30.5% of variation in women’s participation in politics.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Regression Model

To determine the significance of the relationship between educational attainment and women’s political participation, an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted.

Table 5: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Source	Degree of Freedom	Sum of Square	Mean Square	F calculated	P-value
Model Regression	5	1,482.50	296.50	24.21	0.000 ^b
Residual Error	80	979.9	12.25		
Corrected Total	85	2,462.40			

As shown in Table 5, the P-value is 0.000, which is less than the significance threshold of $P = 0.05$, indicating that the regression model is statistically significant. The F-statistic of 24.21 exceeds the critical F-value, further supporting the significance of the relationship between educational attainment and women’s participation in politics in Baidoa, Somalia.

Regression Analysis of Variables

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the degree of correlation between educational attainment and women’s political participation.

Table 6: Regression Coefficients of Social Cultural Barriers

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		β	Std. Error	Beta		
1	Constant	3.332	0.112		5.09	0
	Educational attainment	0.421	0.044	0.432	3.12	0.000

From the regression analysis, the model established is:

$$Y = 3.332 + 0.421X_1$$

Where:

Y = Women’s Participation in Politics

X_1 = Educational Attainment

The regression results indicate that educational attainment has a positive and significant effect on women’s political participation ($\beta = 0.421$, $p = 0.000$). This means that as women’s educational levels increase, their involvement in political activities becomes more likely. In line with the findings of Inglehart and Norris (2003), education increases political awareness, critical thinking, and leadership capabilities, all of which enhance women's confidence and readiness to engage in politics. Additionally, as emphasized by Dahlerup (2006), higher education reduces gender disparities in political representation by equipping women with the skills and networks needed to navigate political barriers, including social and cultural challenges. Therefore, enhancing women’s educational opportunities is crucial for increasing their political participation and breaking down traditional barriers to their involvement in politics.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study found that educational attainment significantly influences women's participation in politics in Baidoa, Somalia. Descriptive statistics revealed that respondents strongly agreed that education empowers women to engage confidently in political activities, with a mean of 4.419. Regression analysis indicated a

positive relationship between educational attainment and women's political participation ($\beta = 0.421$, $p = 0.000$), explaining 69.5% of the variation in participation ($R^2 = 0.695$). These findings highlight the critical role of education in increasing women's political engagement and overcoming socio-cultural barriers.

The study concluded that educational attainment is a key determinant in enhancing women's political participation in Baidoa, Somalia. Higher educational levels were found to positively impact women's involvement in political activities, as education equips women with the necessary skills, confidence, and awareness to engage effectively in politics. These findings support the argument that education can mitigate gender disparities in political representation, providing women with the tools needed to overcome socio-cultural and structural barriers in politics.

The study recommended that efforts should be made to increase women's access to quality education in Baidoa. Providing educational opportunities for women will equip them with the knowledge and skills needed to participate in political processes. Additionally, policies should focus on removing barriers to education for women, particularly in rural areas, to ensure that they are well-prepared to engage in political leadership roles. Furthermore, community awareness campaigns should be conducted to challenge socio-cultural norms that hinder women's participation in politics.

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