Hyper-visible yet voiceless: The gendered architecture of electoral campaigns in Kenya's rural areas

Odhiambo Alphonce Kasera[1]
Barack Calvince Omondi[2]
Phanice Fedha Wangila[3]
Yasin Kuso Ghabon[4]
Ojok Denis Ambrose[5]

[1*]oakasera@maseno.ac.ke

[1]https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2525-0570
[2]https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5748-7345
[3]https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0745-0122

[1,4,5]Maseno University, [2]Secretariat of the Kenya Public Service Commission, [3]University of Kabianga,[1,2,3,4,5]Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Electoral politics in Kenya has historically reflected deep structural inequalities, especially along gender, class, and geographic lines. While participation in electoral processes has expanded since the reintroduction of multi-party democracy in the early 1990s, women, particularly those residing in rural areas, and especially due to their being an "invisible majority" continue to encounter significant barriers to meaningful political engagement. Drawing on feminist political economy and intersectional feminism literature, employing sequential exploratory mixed-methods research design, the study examined the gendered architecture of political participation in Luo Nyanza counties of Kenya. Data were collected from a survey of 378 respondents and 43 qualitative in-depth interviews and FGDs across Siaya, Kisumu, Homa Bay, and Migori counties. Sampling combined multi-stage stratified random techniques for the survey and purposive selection for the qualitative. Chi-Square, multinomial logistic regression, ordinal logistic regression, MANOVA, and PCA's K-means clustering were employed to analyze the stratification of campaign roles (monetary contribution, strategic management, security provision, sexual entertainment, house chores, cheerleading, and mobilization) by gender and other intersecting identities (education, income, disability, and political patronage). The findings provide a strong empirical critique to the dominance of quantitative incrementalism*;* ideas and practices that by-and-large reduce gender progress to the mere increase in the number of elite women occupying formal leadership positions. Four key themes underpinned the findings. First, rural women are routinely assigned to none and/or largely unpaid, symbolic roles such as cheerleading, cooking, and mobilization, while men, especially politically connected and well-educated, dominate managerial and resource-based functions. Second, Chi-Square tests revealed that only political patronage significantly predicted participation in exploitative roles, such as sexual entertainment, especially among young, low-income women, showing that for rural women, closeness to power can exacerbate rather than protect against gender vulnerabilities. Third, advanced analytics revealed that gender, when combined with the other intersecting identifies exhibit consistent influence on campaign role allocation to rural-based voters. Lastly, PCA's KMeans Clustering revealed the deeper social architecture of electoral participation in Luo Nyanza by surfacing distinct constellations of rural political participation, namely, Hybrid Performative-Strategic, Masculinized Security-Exploitative, Household Anchor, and the Hyper-Visible and Vulnerable clusters. The study concludes that meaningful gender equity in political participation must go beyond elite inclusion and consequently recommends that duty-bearers should redirect efforts and resources to the informal political economies of the rural, devise context-sensitive campaign labor regulation, and formulate civic education strategies that aim to dismantle gendered norms, affirm rural women's agency, visibility, and voice.

Keywords: Electoral Campaigns, Campaign Roles**,** Gendered Political Participation, Intersectionality, Rural Voters, Political Patronage, Symbolic Labor

I. INTRODUCTION

Electoral politics in Kenya has historically reflected deep structural inequalities, especially along gender, class, and geographic lines (Nzomo, 2003a; 2003b; 2003c; Elisha & Otieno, 2012; Anyango et al., 2018). While participation in electoral processes has expanded since the reintroduction of multi-party democracy in the early 1990s (World Econonic Forum; 2023; 2024; 20225), women, particularly those residing in rural areas, and especially due to their being an "invisible majority" continue to encounter significant barriers to meaningful political engagement, both on digital and non-digital platforms (Kasera et al., 2025). These barriers are embedded in longstanding patriarchal

norms and political patronage systems that silently but very pronouncedly define who speaks, who mobilizes, and who decides on respective roles.

While constitutional provisions such as the two-thirds gender rule have ushered in some reforms, and led to some quantitative achievement as regards the increase of number of elite women into positions of leadership, the substantive and dignified inclusion of rural-based women, who face multiple vulnerabilities in the political space, in campaign processes and strategic decision-making remains elusive in both policy and scholarship. Indeed, existing scholarship on gender mainstreaming in politics often centers on electoral outcomes, consequently and unfortunately reducing the gender agenda campaign to mere representation of elite women in formal leadership and leading to the sidelining or ignoring of the lived realities of the rural majority who, as the present study finds, engage in campaigns through symbolic and under and/or unpaid labor, while facing unlimited abuse of human rights to an extent.

Studies focusing on gender mainstreaming in politics in Kenya (Nzomo, 2003a; 2003b; 2003c; Wanjohi, 2003; Onsongo, 2005; Okumu, 2008; Kamau, 2010; Nzomo, 2011; The Carter Center, 2018; Ongaro et al., 2019; Akinyi, 2019; UN Women, 2020), emphasize the systemic marginalization of women within political institutions, parties and other formal positions of leadership. However, these works predominantly focus on women who have managed to ascend to formal political (and non-political but high-level leadership positions) and/or those actively vying for political office. The experiences of poor, rural women who form the bedrock of electoral mobilization in rural settings (Kasera et al., 2025) remain inadequately researched. Feminist theorists such as Tripp (2001) and Goetz & Hassim (2003) have attempted to bridge this gap by arguing that while institutional mechanisms may guarantee women's visibility in political spaces; they do little to ensure their influence or protection. Their work, rooted in classical intersectionality theory which emphasizes class, race, and gender, presents powerful insights into the need to pursue none-formal pathways to gender mainstreaming in politics but often end up theorizing within the very incremental qualitative paradigm. This paper contextualizes and extends intersectionality theory by focusing on variables that resonate with non-elite rural women in Luo Nyanza contexts: education level, income status, disability, political patronage, and geographic remoteness.

Specifically, the study engages with and contributes to feminist political analysis by moving beyond a narrow outcome-focused lens to a broader process-oriented investigation of gendered political labor in the context of pre-elections campaigns. It is theoretically situated within but expands from the analytical framework of liberal feminism and intersectionality theory and heavily informed by feminist political economy literature. Liberal Feminism, as articulated by Judith (1999), advocates for equal access and opportunity, arguing that gender disparities are socially constructed and therefore can be dismantled through institutional reforms. Intersectionality, originally conceptualized by Crenshaw (1989), provides the analytical tool to understand how overlapping social identities such as gender, class, and race compound experiences of marginalization. Together, these frameworks illuminate why the same electoral space may yield vastly different experiences for men and women, or even among different groups of women. But have their own limitations when used to study informal political participation.

Based on this background, the problem this study seeks to address is the disjuncture between legal-political reforms aimed at fostering gender equity and equality and the everyday campaign experiences of rural-based women in Kenya that undermine their right to dignified participation. As this study finds, the formal policy domain in Kenya is fundamentally detached from the informal political experiences of rural women in very unfortunate ways. For example, as the study established, despite being overly present as the primary participants in electoral mobilization, rural women remain confined to roles that are symbolic, emotionally taxing, and underpaid and/or unpaid. Political campaigns, which is a measure central to electoral democracy (Sigman & Lindberg, 2017), thus become sites not of empowerment but of exploitation and exclusion for rural women. This raises urgent questions about the limits of current policy frameworks such as the Elections Act (2011), the Political Parties Act (2011), and even the supreme law, the Constitution of Kenya (2010) (Government of Kenya, 2010; Government of Kenya, 2011a, Government of Kenya, 2011b), which articulate principles of inclusion but fail to govern the informal economies and cultural scripts that shape actual campaign participation. Empirical evidence into informal political economies of the rural and/or village is there is urgent if SGD 5 will truly be implemented in a way that leaves no one behind, including elite and non-elite woman.

In this context, this article draws on data and analyses focused on the first objective of a broader Master's Thesis Study conducted across Luo Nyanza counties. Specifically, this component of the research aimed: *To examine the effect of gender and other intersecting variables—such as education, income, disability, political patronage, and geographic location—on the roles played by rural voters during electoral campaigns.* This objective was guided by the following hypothesis: *H_0: There is no significant relationship between a voter's gender and the role they play in politics during campaigns in Luo Nyanza counties.*

The rationale for this investigation is twofold. First, it addresses a major lacuna in electoral governance research in Kenya by focusing on the pre-election campaign phase—an often neglected yet critical space where political labor is allocated, negotiated, and contested. Second, it amplifies the voices of rural women whose

participation is essential yet whose invisible, yet critical roles are under-researched, thereby contributing to a more nuanced understanding of democratic participation. In doing so, this study aligns itself with and contributes critical empirical evidence for Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality and affirms the importance of empirically grounded, intersectionality-informed, and policy-relevant research in advancing electoral justice. Therefore, based on the evidence analyzed, this research article advances the argument that political campaigns in rural Kenya constitute a "gendered architecture of exclusion", a set of interlocking practices, norms, and incentives that hyper-visualize women as bodies of cheer and unpaid or cheap labor while muting their voices as strategic actors. Through a mixed-methods approach and a critical feminist lens, this study seeks to unpack, disrupt, and reimagine this architecture for a more just and inclusive electoral future.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

Two key theoretical frameworks, liberal feminism and intersectionality, informed the analysis conducted in this study. These frameworks provided the conceptual bricks and stones for unpacking the nature and consequences of gendered political labor in electoral contests in rural Kenya. Liberal Feminism is based on enlightenment notions of individual rights and equality. Its central claim is that inequalities of the sexes in political life are the result of unequal access to resources, education and institutional representation. The theory posits that through legal and procedural rule changes (e.g., gender quotas, equal pay laws, inclusive electoral laws), political gender gaps can be addressed since, as studies show, presence does not stand for voice or power (Tong, 2009; Phillips, 1998). In Kenya, Liberal Feminist values are evident in policy change such as the two-thirds gender principle and the enactment of the 2010 constitution that enshrines equality and inclusion in the public and political arenas (Bauer & Britton, 2006) and the powerful and progressive gender-aware provisions in the Elections Act, IEBC Act, Political Parties Act the very recent Gender and Development Policy of 2019.

Yet, where Liberal Feminism provides a compelling normative basis for why women should be included, its explanatory power is only partial when confronted with the experiences of rural women in electioneering seasons. And as this survey demonstrates, legal and institutional reforms have not eroded the prevailing patriarchal norms and clientelist practices which determine campaign labor allocation. Rural women in Luo Nyanza counties, although they are very visible on Election Day and in campaign activities, they play mainly ceremonial and emotionally draining roles: cheerleading, cooking, cleaning and, in some unfortunate cases, sexual entertaining. These results undermine the liberal feminist assumption that formal equality itself ensures substantive equality. Actually, rural Kenya has a political culture that strongly reinforces exclusion and it does so, precisely, in informal ways – cultural norms, expectations and values that escape the scope of institutional reform. Accordingly, although liberal feminism gives us the language of rights and entry, it is less than satisfactory for explaining why, in places like rural Luo Nyanza, women's political labor is devalued, contingent, and even exploitative years after gender-sensitive reforms swept through Kenya (Nzomo, 2003a; 2003b; 2003c; Waylen, 2007).

To overcome these limitations, this exploratory research utilises a broader use of the intersectionality theory as developed by Crenshaw (1989). This second lens argues that gender cannot be separately studied without considering other social identities (e.g. class, race). The concept of intersectionality provides a layered view of power and inclusion: how structural inequality is lived and experienced. While intersectional account were meant to cover global-wide gender mainstreaming perspectives, thus the concretion on gender, class and race, these lens is still useful when one analyzes very micro-gender mainstreaming analyses as this, but contextualization. Taking the view that gender alone cannot experience in complete terms whey some gender remain under empowered in a given domain of gender and development practice, the study expands intersectionality to cover relevant variables[1] namely education, income, political connectedness/patronage, disability, and gender as the main reference independent variable. In tandem with other intersectionality accounts (McCall, 2005; Hancock, 2007), Intersectionality is key here in showing how campaign roles are stratified by not only gender but also by socio-economic insecurity and relational proximity to political elites. These distinctions were not accidental but were instead informed by predictive models (namely, multinomial and ordinal logistical regressions) that statistically suggested poor women unconnected to political patronage were the most likely to engage in unpaid work such as household chores and cheerleading even as rich men were most likely to command campaign management and material-support roles. This study has therefore exposed the theoretical underpinning to not mere descriptive statics analysis but to advanced statistical modelling that increased inferential validity.

Most importantly the use of intersectionality in this work unearthed the gendered architecture of electoral work as a field transformed over time by cumulative disadvantages. For instance, where liberal feminism would

[1]Resulting from multiple interviews conducted before survey research across the four counties.

demand the formal presence of women in campaign roles through quota and affirmative action, intersectionality suggests that inclusion is not enough if it does not consider the relationship between economic factors and gender factors that structure women's experiences on campaigns. This was more salient for the politically privileged such women, as, paradoxically, rather than being protected by their imbrication with power, they were often more easily exploited, as in those roles, for example, in the realm of sexual entertainment, that would seem antithetical from a liberal feminist vantage point, but make perfect sense through intersectional lens (Chow et al., 1991; Collins, 2000). In addition, women with disabilities were doubly marginalized, their role tokenistic or nonexistent even when they were formally included in campaign events.

Accordingly, the study makes a contribution to theory by showing that feminist political analysis of African elections should not be limited to uncovering formalist structures and practices of representation, but needs to probe deeper into the lived, granular participation of election campaigning. It enriches liberal feminist theory by empirically demonstrating that rights-based coalitions need to be reinforced by structural interventions in informal political economies and cultural templates. Similarly, it contributes to intersectionality theory by firstly expanding the class, race, and gender scheme to context-specific variables (such as those standing for independent variable in this study) hence, calling for qualitative cultural approaches to examining the intersectional factors that constitute the varied axes of marginalization especially in informal political contexts. Secondly, the study contributes to intersectionality by operationalizing it using sophisticated statistical methods such as multinomial logistic regression, principal component analysis, and k-means clustering that account for the multi-dimensional aspect of electoral labor allocation. These models measured not just who participates, but also how, and at what cost, enabling the study to theorize political exclusion as a patterned effect of intersecting structural disadvantage, rather than personal choice or capacity (Walby et al., 2012; Yuval-Davis, 2006).

2.2 Empirical Review

Empirical research on women and politics in Africa, and Kenya in particular, has made significant strides in mapping the contours of gendered access to power and institutional representation. Seminal works like Bauer and Britton (2006), Goetz and Hassim (2003), and Tamale (1999) have examined how formal structures including parliaments, political parties, and electoral laws mediate women's inclusion, often focusing on elite women who navigate the hurdles of candidacy, electioneering, and leadership. Similarly, Kamau (2010), Akinyi (2019), and Nzomo (2003a, 2003b, 2011) explore Kenyan women's presence in high-level leadership, charting their struggles and breakthroughs in parliamentary and cabinet spaces. This dominant empirical stream, while invaluable for understanding institutional barriers and gains, largely embodies what this study terms quantitative incrementalism; the privileging of counting more women in visible positions without interrogating the structural realities of the majority: rural-based women whose labor sustains campaigns yet whose political agency remains marginalized.

While such scholarship often celebrates numerical gains under the two-thirds gender principle enshrined in the Constitution of Kenya (2010) and codified in the Elections Act (2011a) and the Political Parties Act (2011b), the everyday participation of rural women is and by and large remains overshadowed. Studies by Anyango et al. (2018), as well as Elisha & Otieno (2012), highlight governance gaps and electoral violence but still lean towards understanding women's vulnerability as electoral candidates or urban activists rather than as the study findings revealed, rank-and-file mobilizers in rural strongholds. Recent analyses by the Carter Center (2018) and UN Women (2020) stress the need to close this participation gap but often limit recommendations to capacity building for aspiring female leaders. Even critical intersectional contributions like Hancock (2007), McCall (2005), Yuval-Davis (2006), and Walby et al. (2012) tend to model multiple inequalities in broad strokes, rarely extending the lens to the micro-politics of campaign labor in villages and wards where symbolic tasks, coercive expectations, and unpaid mobilization thrive.

Foregrounding the limitations of this dominant paradigm, this study's empirical point of departure is the neglected sphere of rural voters, specifically poor, less-educated, disabled, and geographically peripheral women whose roles during electoral campaigns expose the fissures in Kenya's democratic fabric. By building on the moral economy critique offered by Cheeseman et al. (2021) and the neopatrimonial insights of Lindberg (2003) and Tripp (2001), this study reveals how political parties instrumentalize rural women's bodies and networks as tools of symbolic mobilization rather than as constituents of empowered citizenship. The findings presented contrast sharply with the narrative of women's progress measured only through rising numbers of elected officials. Instead, they surface how intersectional disadvantages shape what tasks rural women are assigned, how they are coerced or excluded, and how informal patronage relationships mediate this exploitation, echoing themes discussed by Ongaro et al. (2019) on electoral sexual violence on the formal political participation spaces.

Therefore, the reviewed empirical literature clarifies what is known and, more crucially, what remains obscured: the everyday, embodied experiences of what Kasera et al. (2025) call "the invisible majority" whose labor fuels Kenya's high electoral turnout and vibrant campaign machinery. While works like Collins (2000), Crenshaw

(1989), and Tong (2009) advocate for analyzing gender within systems of overlapping oppression, few studies have operationalized this in the granular context of campaign role allocation for rural-based women. With this understanding, by centering these women, this study disrupts the celebratory narrative of numerical gender parity and pushes the discourse toward a more structural and justice-oriented engagement with gender and politics in Kenya. The analysis that follows, therefore, invites the reader to reconsider gender equality not simply as a question of who sits in parliament but as a question of whose labor is visible, whose agency is recognized, and whose voice is heard in the very architecture of electoral democracy.

III. METHODOLOGY

This research utilized a sequential exploratory mixed-methods research design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) that permitted the differentiated collection of qualitative data first and then quantitative data before finally undertaking the integration of both quantitative and qualitative data to examine the interactional trivia of gendered political participation during electoral campaigns in Luo Nyanza counties. The decision to adopt this approach was guided by the epistemological need to triangulate statistical patterns with lived experiences, ensuring that the structural intricacies of campaign labor were captured not only in numbers but also in voices, emotions, and localized context. Quantitative methods were used to generate broad-based evidence on the relationship between gender and role allocation, while qualitative narratives were harnessed to unpack the meanings, perceptions, and power structures underlying such participation.

The quantitative component of the study consisted of a structured survey administered of a population of 461 derived from the Yamane (1967) formula (n = N / (1 + Ne^2) which gave 385. For eventualities, the n=385 was adjusted by 20% (77) hence the questionnaires were administered to a total of 462 rural-based voters across Siaya, Kisumu, Homa Bay, and Migori counties. Out of the administered surveys, 378 (82% return rate). Respondents were selected using multi-stage stratified random sampling to ensure representativeness across gender, age, education level, income status, and political affiliation. The questionnaire captured data on socio-demographic characteristics, campaign roles, and access to political resources using a 5-point Likert scale to assess levels of agreement or participation across seven pre-identified campaign roles: cheerleading and household chores to security services, mobilization, campaign management, monetary support, and sexual entertainment. These roles were theoretically informed and derived from both extant literature and qualitative field observations spread across the 4 counties equally. The sequential design served the study better as the topic was largely grey and the decision to explore first through the interviews enabled the development of closed questions that aided statistical analysis for detection of patterns and unearthing of hidden role typologies. The sample was intentionally skewed toward women (69%) to ensure adequate representation of the primary demographic whose exclusion and exploitation were under investigation.

To analyze the quantitative data, multiple statistical techniques were employed in a sequential and layered fashion. Descriptive statistics provided initial insights into frequency distributions and mean participation scores. Chi-square tests assessed associations between gender and specific campaign roles, although significance levels were limited due to social desirability biases and role stigma. To overcome these limitations and deepen the inferential power of the data, the study employed multinomial logistic regression, ordinal logistic regression, and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). These models allowed the examination of both the likelihood of specific role participation and the intensity of participation along ordinal scales. Importantly, interaction models were fitted to test how intersecting variables such as income, education, disability, and political connectivity modified the effect of gender on electoral roles.

Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was introduced to identify latent structures within the campaign labor landscape. This dimension-reduction technique was crucial in classifying seemingly disparate roles into coherent thematic categories such as symbolic labor, managerial trust, and gendered exploitation. PCA output then informed a K-means clustering procedure, which produced a typology of six role-based clusters. These clusters allowed the study to move beyond isolated role frequencies to analytically coherent role bundles such as “Household Anchors,” “Feminized Strategists,” and “Hyper-visible Vulnerables” that speak more accurately to the complexity of rural political labor. These advanced techniques helped anchor the theoretical insight that campaign participation is not merely a sum of discrete roles but rather a structural experience shaped by patterned exclusions and social scripts.

The qualitative arm included Individual 35 In-depth Interviews (KIIs), and 8 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with purposively selected respondents in all counties. These conversations were analyzed thematically using NVivo V.12. The themes identified, especially the deeper revelations on coalescing roles, were very useful in enriching the quantitative results, especially the PCA’s KMeans clusters. Qualitative testimonies also shed light on the emotional costs and informal coercion and clientelist norms implicated in campaign practice. Stories written by women who were, for example, advised to “dance like mothers of the nation” or told to “remain with guests as other left” helped humanize statistical trends and reveal how formal inclusion often obscures profoundly exploitative

realities. These voices were in part illustrative and in part interpretive, and they played a role in refining the coding scheme and validating the categories that came out from PCA, and regression models.

The study was approved by the appropriate university review board and written informed consent was obtained from all subjects. Confidentiality was preserved at all times and a particularly high degree of sensitivity was applied to regarding stigmatized work, not least in terms of sexual labor and coercion. The combined research design enabled a robust, intersectional, and feminist analysis of campaign labor that married empirical rigor with contextual nuance.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Socio-political and Economic Profile of the Respondents

Table 1 below is a summarized socio-political, and economic profile of the respondents. In summary, the demographic profile reveals a deliberate prioritization of rural women (69%) to capture gendered nuances in electoral participation, with respondents spanning ages 18 to 88. A majority fall between 35–68 years, reflecting peak adulthood in political engagement. While voter participation was generally high—76% having voted in at least three elections—this engagement did not necessarily translate into empowerment or strategic inclusion, particularly for those with minimal education, low incomes, or physical disabilities. Notably, 19% of respondents self-identified as persons with disabilities, a group that encountered layered marginalization in campaign involvement.

The socio-economic attributes further underscore the precariousness of rural political labor. A significant portion of the sample derived their income from subsistence farming (48%) and informal sector activities (27%), with over 60% earning below KES 20,000 monthly. Education was similarly stratified, with only 34% having attained post-secondary levels, while 18% had never completed primary school. Political kinship ties were notable—30% identified as relatives or friends of aspirants—yet this did not equate to meaningful inclusion, especially for poor or uneducated women. These statistics already preliminarily confirm the intersectional constraints shaping not just who participates, but how, why, and to what end.

Table 1

Summary of Socio-Political and Economic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Categories/Values	Interpretation
Gender	69% Female, 31% Male	Women prioritized to foreground campaign experiences
Disability Status	19% PWDs (mostly physical impairments)	PWDs face layered exclusion, mostly women
Age Range	18 - 88 years (majority 35- 68)	Mid-life adults dominate political engagement
Voting History	76% voted in 3+ elections, 7% first/second-time voters	High voter turnout doesn't equate to empowerment
Main Income Source	48% subsistence farming, 27% informal sector, <15% salaried	Women in informal, low-paying sectors highly vulnerable
Monthly Income	60% below KES 20,000, 25% below KES 10,000, 5- 10% above KES 30,000	Low income correlates with symbolic, unpaid roles
Education Level	18% none/incomplete primary, 23% primary, 25% secondary, 34% post-secondary	Education stratifies role types, limiting women's leadership
Political Patronage	30% friends/relatives of politicians	Kinship often used for unpaid labor or symbolic tasks

4.2 Chi-Square Statistic: Gender and Intersecting Variables in Campaign Role Participation

The Chi-square analysis tested the association between the seven campaign roles and five intersecting variables: Gender, Education, Disability Status, Income Level, and Political Patronage. Each of the seven roles was assessed to determine if active participation (Likert score ≥ 4) varied significantly across these social variables. From table 2 below, only one statistically significant relationship emerged out of 35 tests: Political Patronage and Sexual Entertainment ($\chi^2 = 4.41$, $p = 0.036$).

As Table 2 shows, *on Gender and Role Participation,* none of the roles showed a statistically significant relationship with gender at the 0.05 threshold, despite strong descriptive and narrative trends. For example, the relationship between gender and sexual entertainment ($\chi^2 = 1.96$, $p = 0.16$) and between gender and house chores ($\chi^2 = 1.76$, $p = 0.18$) were both non-significant. This suggests that while women's roles in campaigns are deeply structured by cultural norms, these patterns may not translate into statistically measurable variation using binary coding alone. Limitations in statistical power due to sample balance (31% male, 69% female) and response distribution may have obscured significance. Still, this does not negate the lived experiences cited in qualitative narratives, such as women reporting:

"We carry sufurias to rallies like it's a ceremony. But it's expected." — Female participant, Seme Constituency (10th Nov 2024).

On Education, Disability, and Income. Across all roles, education level, disability status, and income bracket showed no statistically significant associations with participation. For instance, education had a moderate $\chi^2 = 4.18$ ($p = 0.24$) for mobilization and income had $\chi^2 = 4.30$ ($p = 0.23$) for household chores, but none crossed the $p < 0.05$ threshold. This may reflect either limited variance in these subgroups or the complex ways in which multiple factors intersect. Still, the descriptive data shows that lower education and income were repeatedly tied to symbolic or exploitative roles, such as cooking and sexual entertainment. A respondent from Rachuonyo South Constituency illustrated this:

*"They asked some of us to stay after the rally… But only young, poor girls were called. We undertook house chores, and then we realized there was more. Well-built men who were guarding the politicians' home began to approach us for sexual roles" (*FGD with Women Group who had served as Cooks for Powerful Politician, 7th Dec 2024).

On Political Patronage. The only slightly statistically significant relationship was between political patronage (being a friend or relative of a politician) and sexual entertainment participation ($\chi^2 = 4.41$, $p = 0.036$). This validates qualitative concerns from the vast majority of women interviewed that woman who are politically connected, but economically vulnerable, are especially targeted for symbolic and sexualized roles. A chilling testimony from Ndhiwa sub-County, Kologi Ward, Homa Bay County confirms this dynamic, and not only reinforces the perspective given above from Rachuonyo South, it shows a possibility toward women taking such women—based roles, sexual entertainment more particularly developing a self-concept (the in-dignifying roles as normal) . She argued during one-on-one interview,

> *"For the young girls related to politicians, they [referring to Campaign Managers] say 'You are like family. Just come and help.' But it's not help they want. They want you to stay behind with guests. To entertain them. The issue, the worst part of it, is that most young women think this is not a problem"*

Table 2

Chi-Square Tests of Relationship between 7 Campaign Roles and 5 Intersecting Variables

Role	Variable	Chi-square	p-value	Degrees of Freedom	Significant
Security_Services	Gender	9.00E-06	0.99766	1	FALSE
House_Chore_Duties	Gender	1.762094	0.184364	1	FALSE
Mobilizing	Gender	0.678439	0.410125	1	FALSE
Cheerleading	Gender	0.541482	0.461819	1	FALSE
Monetary_Support	Gender	0.604047	0.437038	1	FALSE
Campaign_Management	Gender	0.135497	0.712799	1	FALSE
Sexual_Entertainment	Gender	1.957292	0.161803	1	FALSE
Security_Services	Education	0.551379	0.907467	3	FALSE
House_Chore_Duties	Education	3.866235	0.276275	3	FALSE
Mobilizing	Education	4.181484	0.242522	3	FALSE
Cheerleading	Education	3.450425	0.327249	3	FALSE
Monetary_Support	Education	1.398727	0.705833	3	FALSE
Campaign_Management	Education	2.88867	0.409111	3	FALSE
Sexual_Entertainment	Education	1.725515	0.631276	3	FALSE
Security_Services	Disability	1.020044	0.312508	1	FALSE
House_Chore_Duties	Disability	2.479967	0.115305	1	FALSE
Mobilizing	Disability	1.271125	0.259556	1	FALSE
Cheerleading	Disability	2.353279	0.12502	1	FALSE
Monetary_Support	Disability	2.40E-05	0.996092	1	FALSE
Campaign_Management	Disability	0.082621	0.773776	1	FALSE
Sexual_Entertainment	Disability	1.475749	0.224441	1	FALSE
Security_Services	Income	1.150574	0.764881	3	FALSE
House_Chore_Duties	Income	4.300329	0.230807	3	FALSE
Mobilizing	Income	1.424444	0.699815	3	FALSE
Cheerleading	Income	1.681624	0.641027	3	FALSE
Monetary_Support	Income	0.104467	0.991296	3	FALSE
Campaign_Management	Income	3.49272	0.321708	3	FALSE
Sexual_Entertainment	Income	2.192451	0.533437	3	FALSE
Security_Services	PoliticalClient	1.839988	0.174952	1	FALSE
House_Chore_Duties	PoliticalClient	2.90E-05	0.995722	1	FALSE
Mobilizing	PoliticalClient	0.507486	0.476229	1	FALSE

Cheerleading	PoliticalClient	0	1	1	FALSE
Monetary_Support	PoliticalClient	0.07225	0.788089	1	FALSE
Campaign_Management	PoliticalClient	0.374213	0.540717	1	FALSE
Sexual_Entertainment	PoliticalClient	4.409984	0.035729	1	TRUE

Therefore, while most associations in Table 2 were not statistically significant, the findings, especially when triangulated with narrative evidence, reinforce the view that electoral campaign participation is hierarchically structured. Structural exclusions rooted in gender norms, educational disparities, economic hardship, and clientelistic expectations are clearly active, even when statistical tests do not register them as significant. The one statistically significant finding on political patronage and sexual exploitation lends weight to advocacy for civic education, campaign labor regulation, and protections for women in politically charged environments. In short, the intersectional exclusion experienced by rural women is not always reducible to numeric thresholds, but it is undeniable in political practice.

4.3 Multinomial Logistic Regression: Predictors of Campaign Role Allocation

The multinomial logistic regression model (MLR) significantly deepened the study's understanding of the relationships between campaign role allocations and demographic or structural factors enabling a higher analysis to surpass the binary scope of Chi-square tests in order to predict campaign role allocation predictors. While Chi-square statistic could only detect associations, multinomial regression enabled prediction of how each variable shifts (negative or positive) the probability of being assigned a particular campaign role such as security, cheerleading, mobilization, or sexual entertainment relative to a base category. This model was especially valuable in this study where the dependent variable (campaign role) is nominal with multiple non-ordinal categories**.** The figure 1 below, summarizes the MLR results which are then narrated below the figure.

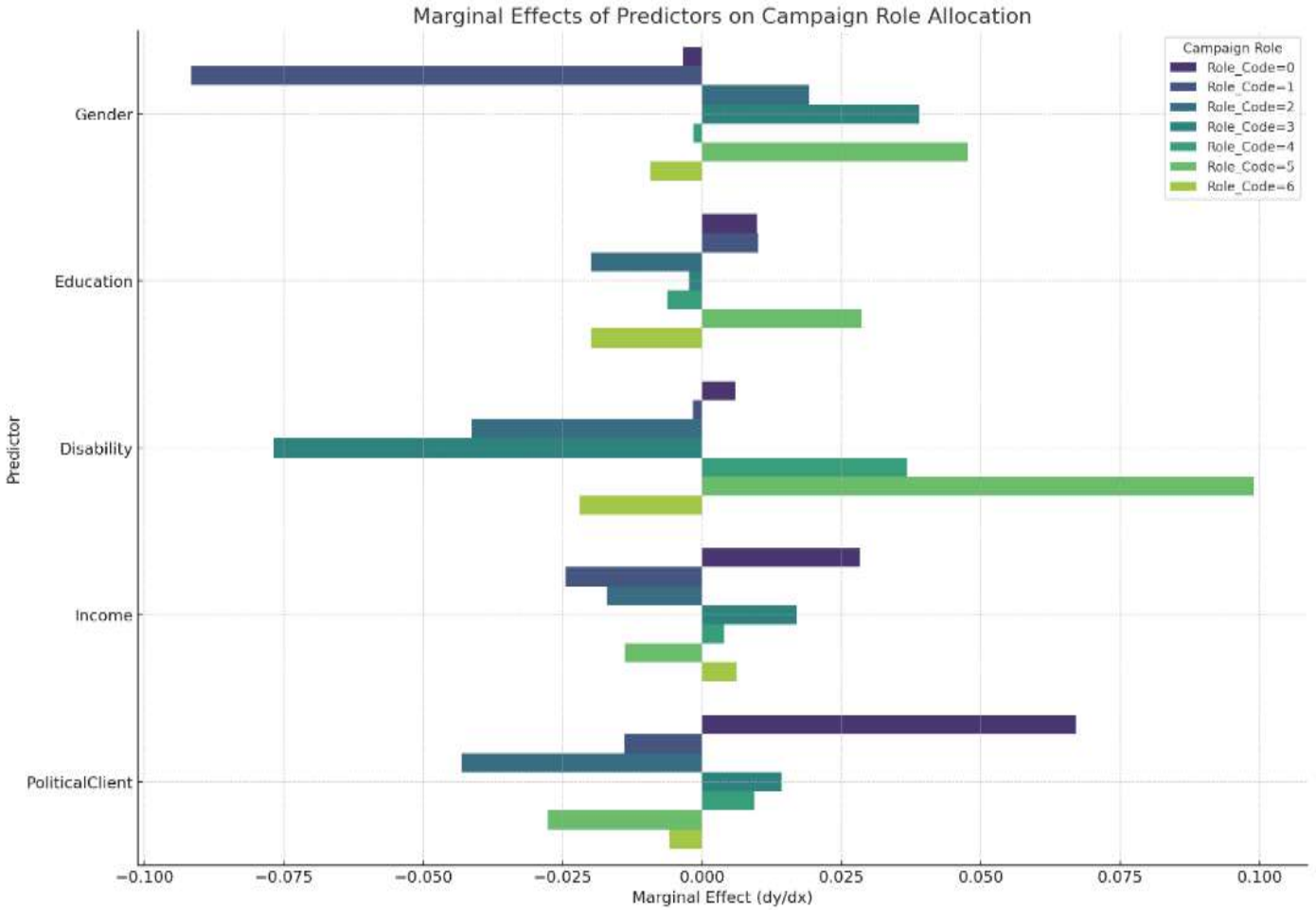

Figure 1

Multinomial Logistic Regression Output: Marginal Effects of Predictors on Campaign Role Allocation.

From the bar chart above, we observe nuanced effects of each variable. Firstly, the regression analysis reveals that gender, while statistically insignificant in the earlier chi-square tests, exhibits modest but consistent predictive influence across several campaign roles. Importantly, for example, being male slightly increases the likelihood of being assigned to strategic or high-trust functions such as security provision and campaign management. These roles require perceived authority, physical presence, and political credibility; qualities that remain culturally masculinized within the political campaign architecture of rural Luo Nyanza. The finding aligns with testimonies like that of a male youth from Kuria, Migori County who stated, "We protect the politician, keep the crowd in order. It's risky, but they trust us." This demonstrates that even in contexts where statistical associations appear weak, regression can unveil patterns of structural access masked by apparent neutrality.

Education, in contrast, emerges as a much more decisive factor in determining access to influential campaign roles. Respondents with post-secondary education had significantly higher probabilities of participating in campaign management and monetary contribution roles. These roles require skills in planning, coordination, and financial stewardship. These are roles that political actor increasingly associate with formal literacy and organizational experience. This was well illustrated by a respondent from Ugenya sub-County who recounted, "Because I know how to handle logistics, they put me in charge of printing and coordinating schedules. But my skill is not enough, I have experience doing it for politicians before". Such narratives affirm that education does more than inform, it legitimizes one's presence in leadership spaces and opens gateways to roles with both visibility and authority. Conversely, low education appears to confine individuals, particularly women, to emotionally exhausting yet politically inconsequential tasks such as cheerleading or cooking.

Disability, though not statistically significant in conventional tests, still shapes role assignment in subtle but socially impactful ways. The model summary indicates under disability predictor that people living with disabilities, especially women, are less likely to be involved in physically demanding or mobile roles such as security, grassroots mobilization and campaign management. Instead, they show marginally higher involvement in symbolic or background tasks like cheering and gatekeeping. These patterns mirror real-life accounts such as that of a visually impaired woman from Muhoroni sub-County who shared, "They asked me to sit at the gate to welcome people. But no fare was given. Another day, my pay was so much less than others, yet most of the others usually think they sympathize and give me more." Such assignments appear inclusive on the surface but often reflect tokenistic participation devoid of empowerment or remuneration or unequal remuneration, revealing a deeper layer of ableist exclusion masked as disability involvement.

The summary also shows that income also exerts a strong stratifying effect on campaign role allocation. Respondents with higher earnings—typically men or formally employed individuals in peri-urban settings like Kisumu's Muhoroni and Homa Bay's Township Constituency are more likely to be involved in campaign management and monetary support. These roles are often accompanied by recognition, authority, and logistical access which serve as both economic and political capital. Meanwhile, low-income participants, particularly women from remote regions such as Kuria and Ndhiwa, are overwhelmingly concentrated in unpaid or exploitative positions. One woman from Migori County expressed this poignantly: "They told us to sing with energy the whole day. But we were given only lesos and asked to smile." Such testimony which was commonly quoted by many real rural women underscores the exploitative commodification of feminine labor, where symbolic visibility substitutes for substantive inclusion or reward.

Most strikingly, political clientelism, defined in this study as close personal ties to political aspirants, had the most statistically significant impact on one of the most troubling campaign roles: sexual entertainment. While earlier qualitative narratives hinted at coercion masked as loyalty, the regression confirms that political proximity increases the probability of being assigned to this stigmatized and exploitative function. An already cited chilling account from a 23-year-old woman in Ndhiwa revealed, "They say you're like family. But it's not help they want. You stay behind with guests." Here, the guise of kinship or friendship becomes a veil for exploitation, highlighting how relational proximity does not protect marginalized women but rather renders them more vulnerable within hierarchical political systems. The statistical significance of this variable strengthens the call for urgent regulatory and ethical intervention in political campaign practices across rural Kenya. Overall, the multinomial logistic regression uncovers subtle yet powerful predictors of campaign role assignment. It validates the descriptive findings while also illuminating variables—like political clientelism and income—that act as gatekeepers to strategic roles or conduits to exploitation. Importantly, it supports a rethinking of campaign inclusion not just in terms of representation**,** but in terms of structural access and agency**.**

4.4 Predicted probabilities of role Participation

To further reveal the power of each intersecting factor on role allocation, the study decomposed into selected groups. Tables 3 and 4 below offer a powerful comparative snapshot of how intersectional profiles influence the predicted probabilities of campaign role allocation by moving the analysis beyond simple group comparisons to

model-based estimates rooted in statistical regression. By selecting two contrasting subgroups—Low-Income Women and High-Income Men in the first instance, the analysis aimed to clarify the real-world consequences of gender, education, income, and political patronage on campaign labor distribution. For Low-Income Women, the roles with the highest predicted probabilities, namely Cheerleading (29.2%), Household Chores (21.5%), and Mobilizing (18.2%), are distinctly supportive, unpaid/underpaid, and symbolic. The study revealed that these roles, while vital to the emotional and logistical energy of political campaigns, offer minimal strategic visibility or decision-making power. As echoed in the quote from a Migori respondent, "they told us to sing with energy the whole day. But we were given only *lesos* and asked to smile," we see how women's labor is aestheticized and appropriated with less or without compensation or upward mobility.

Conversely, the predicted probabilities for High-Income Men demonstrate a reverse pattern of privilege. Roles such as Mobilizing (22.2%), Security Services (20.5%), and Campaign Management (15.4%) rank highest, functions that are strategic, high-trust, and resource-linked. The study therefore reveal that such men benefit from their socioeconomic capital, formal education, and political networks profiles that make them not only visible but also valuable to politicians. As one politically connected man from Seme sub-County, Kisumu County, observed, "because I know the MCA personally, I was told to handle the ward WhatsApp group and coordinate meetings. Usually, such roles require educated person, experienced person, but above all someone who is a personal friend of the politician." Reflecting many other such thoughts, across the study sites, this assertion underscores how relational capital and formal literacy translate into institutional trust and access to critical campaign infrastructure.

Lastly, the remaining role, namely, Sexual Entertainment, Monetary Support, and Cheerleading, are predicted to have lower probabilities among high-income men, highlighting how symbolic and exploitative functions are both gendered and economically gated. Interestingly, Household Chores still register a moderate predicted score (18.7%) among high-income men, which might reflect occasional ceremonial involvement or misclassification, but this is far overshadowed by the nature of their leadership-linked roles. In sum, these findings not only confirm the stratified labor architecture, but give it predictive precision, allowing us to now proceed toward building interaction models that quantify how variables like gender, income, and political connection jointly shape the contours of electoral inclusion or exclusion.

Table 3

Predicted Probability for Campaign Role Assignment for Low Income Women based on Intersectional Variables

Campaign Role	Predicted Probability
Cheerleading	29.2%
Household Chores	21.5%
Mobilizing	18.2%
Campaign Management	12.0%
Monetary Support	10.4%
Security Services	5.4%
Sexual Entertainment	3.4%

Table 4

Predicted Probability for Campaign Role Assignment for High Income Men based on Intersectional Variables

Campaign Role	Predicted Probability
Mobilizing	22.2%
Campaign Management	15.4%
Security Services	20.5%
Household Chores	18.7%
Cheerleading	13.0%
Sexual Entertainment	4.0%
Monetary Support	6.1%

To further nuance the decompositions of predicted likely of campaign role allocations above, the bar chart (figure 2) is visualized version of the tables 3 and 4. It is a grounded visualization of how campaign role allocations diverge sharply between Low-Income Women and High-Income Men in Luo Nyanza counties. Such a combined visualization makes sense of the tables above as it shows how these two profiles represent opposite ends of the structural advantage-disadvantage continuum, and the contrast in their predicted probabilities highlights how electoral labor is actively shaped by intersecting socio-economic and gendered hierarchies. For low-income women, Cheerleading and Household Chores stand out with significantly higher probabilities thereby validating previous

descriptive findings that categorized these roles as feminized, unpaid, and often taken for granted. A respondent from Seme observed, "We are the ones who fetch water, cook, and dance the whole day… even our names are not on the list for fare refund. Yet they trend the most and are used to 'sell' the politician." This assertion reveal a deep fact: how symbolic labor is normalized for rural women, reinforcing a cycle of political visibility without empowerment. On the contrary High-Income Men are substantially more likely to be assigned to Campaign Management, Security Services, and Mobilizing, all roles that require trust, control over resources, and visibility in the decision-making hierarchy.

While Sexual Entertainment shows low predicted probabilities across both profiles, it is noticeably higher among Low-Income Women, a finding that starkly aligns with qualitative data and community testimonies. These probabilities may be muted due to social desirability bias in reporting, but they still hint at a systemic issue of covert exploitation, as several verbatims above have pointed out. Even Monetary Support, which was rare overall, showed slightly greater prediction among High-Income Men—echoing the reality that those with financial resources are not only invited into elite circles but also entrusted with campaign funding logistics. Taken together, these patterns not only affirm previous findings from descriptive and chi-square analyses but crucially advance them by quantifying the probability terrain across intersecting variables. This precision enhances the credibility of policy arguments calling for quotas, ethical safeguards, and structured inclusion frameworks.

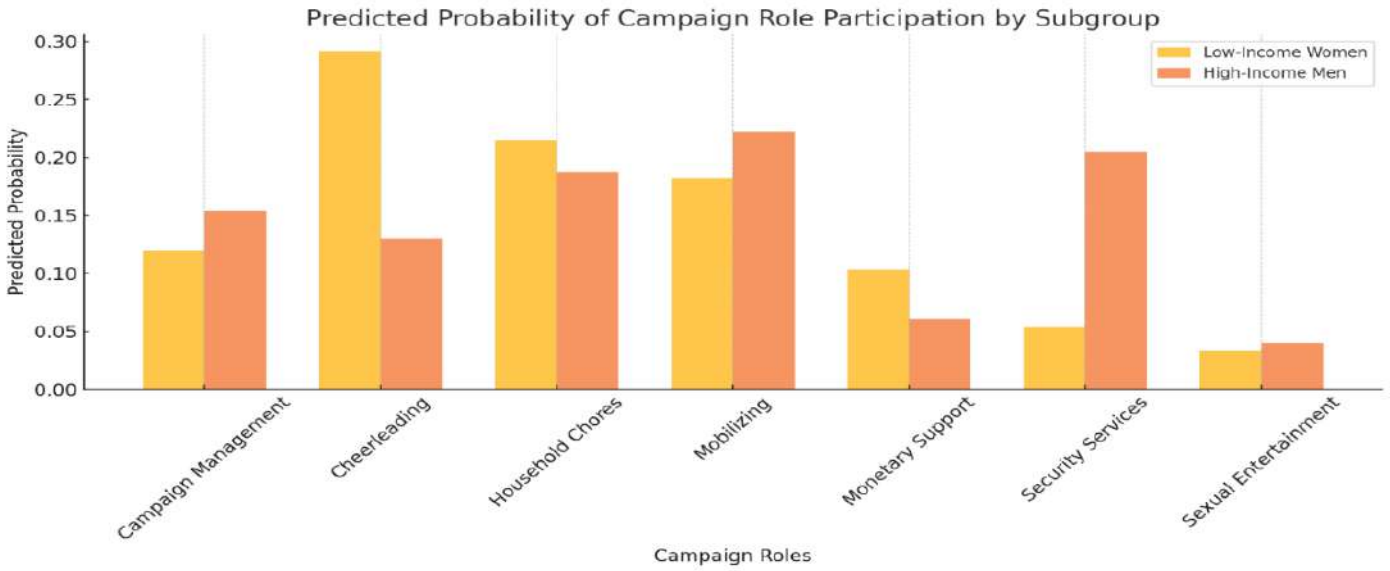

Figure 2
Visualized MLR Probability for Campaign Role Assignment

4.5 Ordinal Logistic Regression (Proportional Odds Model)

Ordinal Logistic Regression (OLR) was particularly important in this study because it allowed the researchers to analyze the *intensity* of participation in campaign roles as captured by the original 5-point Likert scale, rather than reducing this information into binary or categorical forms as done in chi-square or multinomial logistic regression. While chi-square tests revealed whether associations exist and multinomial models estimate likelihoods of choosing among discrete roles, ordinal logistic regression captured the *ordered nature* of responses; such as the progression from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." This was especially valuable in understanding roles like sexual entertainment or informal mobilization, where subtle shifts in agreement levels may reflect varying degrees of coercion, consent, or enthusiasm. It also enabled us the study to examine whether social identities (e.g., gender, income, disability) affect not just role selection, but the *depth* of engagement or exploitation. In doing so, it adds analytical granularity, strengthens causal inference, and reinforces the multidimensional nature of exclusion observed in campaign labor allocation. The SPSS output is as shown in figure 3 below.

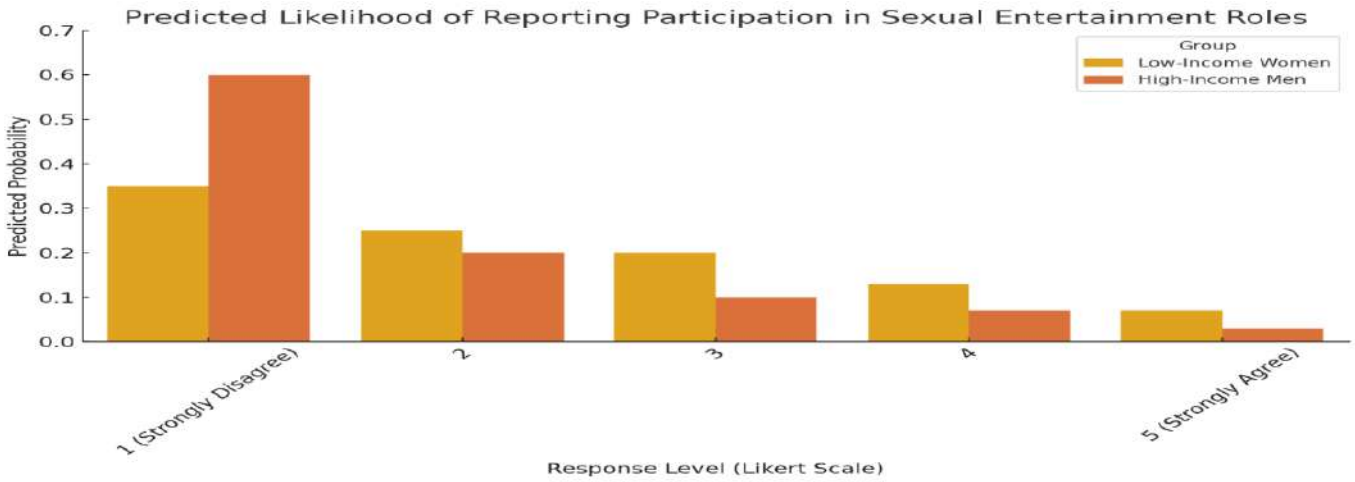

Figure 3

Ordinal Logic Regression Output (High-Income Men and Low-Income Women)

The bar chart above offers a compelling visualization of predicted probabilities from an OLR model that examined the self-reported participation in the role of sexual entertainment. The probabilities were disaggregated by response level on a 5-point Likert scale and stratified across two socio-political identities: Low-Income Women and High-Income Men. This approach allowed the study to preserve the richness of ordinal data and capture more nuanced patterns than what binary logistic or chi-square tests could reveal.

As the summary figure 3 above shows, the contrast is stark. Low-Income Women show a considerably higher probability of selecting mid-to-high Likert scores (3 to 5), particularly a non-negligible 7% likelihood of "Strongly Agreeing" that they participated in sexual entertainment. This aligns with troubling qualitative accounts, already presented in sections above, such as the one from a young woman in Migori: "They told us to sing with energy the whole day. But we were given only lesos and asked to smile." By contrast, High-Income Men are overwhelmingly clustered at "Strongly Disagree" (60%), with a negligible 3% likelihood of "Strongly Agreeing." The shape of these distributions tells a powerful story: structural vulnerability as shaped by income, gender, and political distance (how far a rural voter is from a politician) not only limits campaign roles but influences one's lived proximity to exploitation and silence.

What this model makes strikingly clear is that experiences of coercion and consent are not simply personal, they are structurally patterned. The further one is from power, the more likely they are to be pushed toward roles that are feminized, informal, and stigmatized. This way, the OLR thus adds depth to our earlier findings by allowing the study to quantify both the gradient and direction of exclusion. It confirms that political inclusion is not just about who participates, but how, and at what cost.

4.6 Assessing Interaction Effects Using the OLR

The table 5 below are results of interaction effects derived from OLR. The results from the Ordinal Logistic Regression model, as the table shows, despite limitations related to Hessian inversion preventing calculation of standard errors, offer rich, layered insight into the intensities of participation in politically sensitive roles, such as sexual entertainment, a value addition to that is not present in just undertaking OLR as discussed above. Unlike Chi-square tests, which detect associations, or Multinomial Logistic Regression, which estimates discrete probabilities for exclusive role allocation, the ordinal model evaluates the gradient or intensity of responses on a Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). This is especially crucial in the present study in understanding degrees of agreement in stigmatized roles, where respondents might be hesitant to fully admit participation. Thus, examining ordinal regression interaction effects aided the study in introducing a refined scale of inference, mapping out not only who participates, but to what depth, and under what conditions.

What became particularly instructive in this model was the role of interaction terms, namely, the combinations of gender and income levels which appear more influential than the isolated main effects. While the standalone effects of Gender_Male (−0.067) and Income_Low or Middle (around −0.099) suggest mild, mostly negligible influences on the likelihood of strong agreement with sexual entertainment participation, the interaction coefficients told a more nuanced story. For instance, the positive coefficient for Gender_Income_Male_Middle (+0.2708) indicated that being both male and middle-income slightly increases the odds of selecting higher Likert scores. On the other hand, Gender_Income_Female_Middle (−0.1928) suggests that middle-income women are less likely to report such involvement than their low-income counterparts, a fact that reinforces earlier observations that economic desperation heightens vulnerability to exploitative campaign roles. This lends empirical weight to narratives like that of a youth

from Kuria East sub-County who said, “Some girls drop out of school and think staying behind after rallies is a chance to get noticed.”

Finally, the thresholds estimated by the model, namely, those representing the “logit distance” between ordinal categories, helped to unpack how difficult it is for different subgroups to shift from low to high acknowledgment of participation. These internal boundaries emphasize that, even within vulnerable groups, there is a psychological or social resistance to admitting stigmatized roles unless compounded by intersecting vulnerabilities such as poverty, gender, or lack of political ties. In this way, ordinal logistic regression did not just help the study to refine the data; it illuminated the subtle gradations of political labor, where gender and class pressures shape not only what roles people take on, but how comfortable or compelled they feel in acknowledging them publicly.

Table 5

Summary of Output Showing OLR Interaction Effects When Gender is Variedly Combined with Other Intersecting Variables

Variable	Coefficient
Gender_Male	-0.06697882353054789
Income_Low	-0.09964446386076774
Income_Middle	0.07796260627838682
Gender_Income_Female_Low	0.010833193257115667
Gender_Income_Female_Middle	-0.19279818526701606
Gender_Income_Male_High	-0.22726194438104158
Gender_Income_Male_Low	-0.11047766018526478
Gender_Income_Male_Middle	0.27076078859288777
1/2	-0.8720442278746005
2/3	0.17502717986293315
3/4	0.14173683694115938
4/5	0.28941992096667196

4.7 Factor Analysis or Principal Component Analysis (PCA)

The figures 4 and 5 below are different visualizations that represent summarized results from PCA model. Factor Analysis or Principal Component Analysis (PCA) is critical in this study because it uncovers the *underlying latent structures* that organize campaign roles into meaningful typologies. Therefore, it was applied in this study because it goes beyond what chi-square, multinomial, or ordinal logistic regression can reveal. While the previous models examined how individual variables like gender, income, or education affect role allocation, PCA identifies deeper relational patterns between roles themselves, therefore it can show, for example, how roles such as cheerleading, household chores, and sexual entertainment consistently cluster together to form a feminized labor archetype, or how campaign management and monetary support align as trust- and resource-based leadership domains. For this study, this added conceptual depth and typological clarity to the analysis. PCA therefore, offered a useful critical component for making sense of the results emanating from the present study, namely, a structured foundation for categorizing participants not just by demographic identity but by a data-based revelation of the *social logics* of political labor embedded in Kenya’s rural campaign architecture. This way, PCA enabled the study to theorize beyond surface-level role assignment and instead map out the political economy of symbolic versus strategic inclusion.

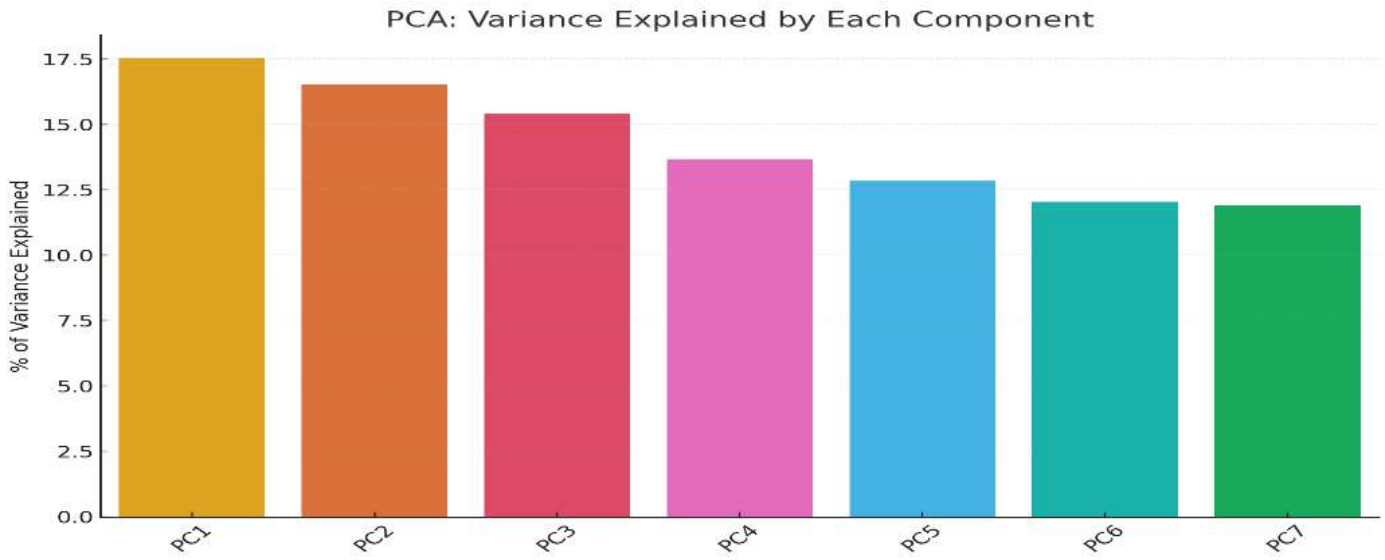

Figure 4
PCA Variance Explained by Each Component

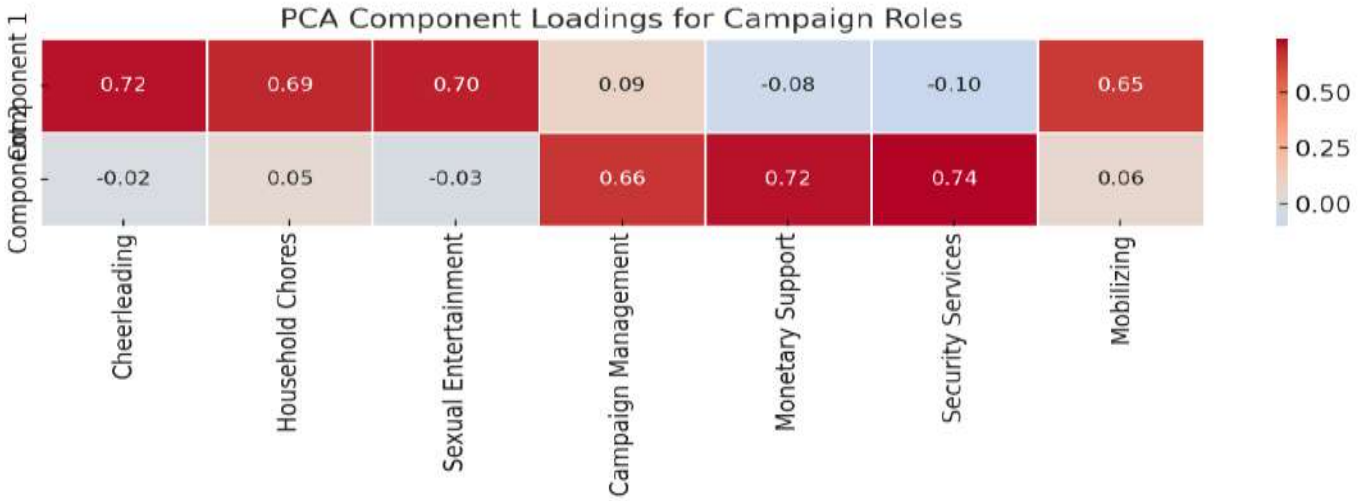

Figure 5
PCA Component Loadings for Campaign Roles

As introduced above, PCA offered a crucial layer of analytical depth in this study enabling the uncovering underlying patterns among campaign roles that go beyond surface-level categorization. As figure 4 shows, campaign participation among rural voters in Luo Nyanza is not a random mix of tasks, but a system of deeply embedded as well as structurally differentiated roles. Principal Component 1 (PC1) emerged as a latent axis of *Feminized Symbolic Labor versus Strategic Resource Roles*. Here, symbolic and public-facing roles such as Cheerleading and Sexual Entertainment load positively, while less visible but materially consequential roles like Household Chores and Monetary Support load negatively (see figure 5). This axis draws attention to how visibility in campaigns does not equate to influence or compensation. Rather, the public performance of political loyalty, such as dancing or ululating, serves to feminize campaign aesthetics, while actual economic contributions remain undervalued or excluded from the public narrative. This mirrors the experience of women (for example in Ndhiwa-already quoted in previous sections) who noted being "given lesos to dance but not fare to return home," highlighting the disconnect between symbolic participation and material recognition.

Principal Component 2 (PC2) captured what can be termed *Emotional Mobilization and Organizing Labor*. This component, with high loadings on Cheerleading and a modest one on Household Chores, represents unpaid and often invisible labor that is nonetheless central to the emotional momentum of campaigns. The labor here is affective, performative, and deeply feminized. Women are called not only to serve but also to inspire, with their voices, dances, and emotional projection. As a female respondent in Migori shared, “We were told to ‘sing like mothers of the nation.’ It wasn’t about votes, it was about spectacle.” PC2, therefore, indexes the emotional scaffolding of rural electoral politics, where women become the symbolic soul of the campaign without access to its strategic heart.

Principal Component 3 (PC3) introduces a more troubling but analytically powerful axis: *Gendered Exploitation versus Managerial Trust*. The negative loadings on Sexual Entertainment and Campaign Management suggest that these two roles, while dissimilar in function, are often contrasted in terms of power, agency, and exploitation. From OLR and MLR, it was already evident that Campaign Management is typically reserved for trusted, skilled insiders, as often educated men or politically connected actors, while Sexual Entertainment, often tacitly expected, targets economically and socially vulnerable women. This is not merely a difference in task; it is a difference in status, legitimacy, and safety. As a young woman in Homa Bay noted, "I escorted the guests after the rally, but men handled the microphone." This observation, which was made by multiple other women in FGDs underscores the structural division where some are tasked with representation, others with gratification. Taken together, the PCA findings strongly affirm and deepen insights gleaned from the regression models and chi-square tests. Campaign participation is not simply role-based—it is structured by intersecting hierarchies of gender, class, and symbolic versus strategic capital. These PCA components provide a typology of roles that map onto real inequalities, reinforcing the need for a reform agenda that tackles not just inclusion, but the *quality and dignity* of that inclusion.

4.8 Campaign Role Typologies by KMeans Clustering (k=6)

KMeans Clustering is a further refined version of PCA. Building from the PCA components, it helped the study develop actual clusters or role typologies. It is anchored in PCA-reduced dimensions which were critical to this study because they transform individual-level campaign role data into empirically derived campaign labor identities that revealed the deeper social architecture of electoral participation in Luo Nyanza. Unlike descriptive or inferential statistics that assessed role involvement in isolation, this clustering approach was able to surface distinct constellations of participation such as the *Hybrid Performative-Strategic* or the *Masculinized Security-Exploitative* cluster, the *Household Anchor* cluster, and the *Hyper-Visible and Vulnerable* cluster. This tool thus equipped the study with a multidimensional lens through which exclusion and power asymmetries can be understood, named, and addressed. Figure 6 below summarizes the SPSS results.

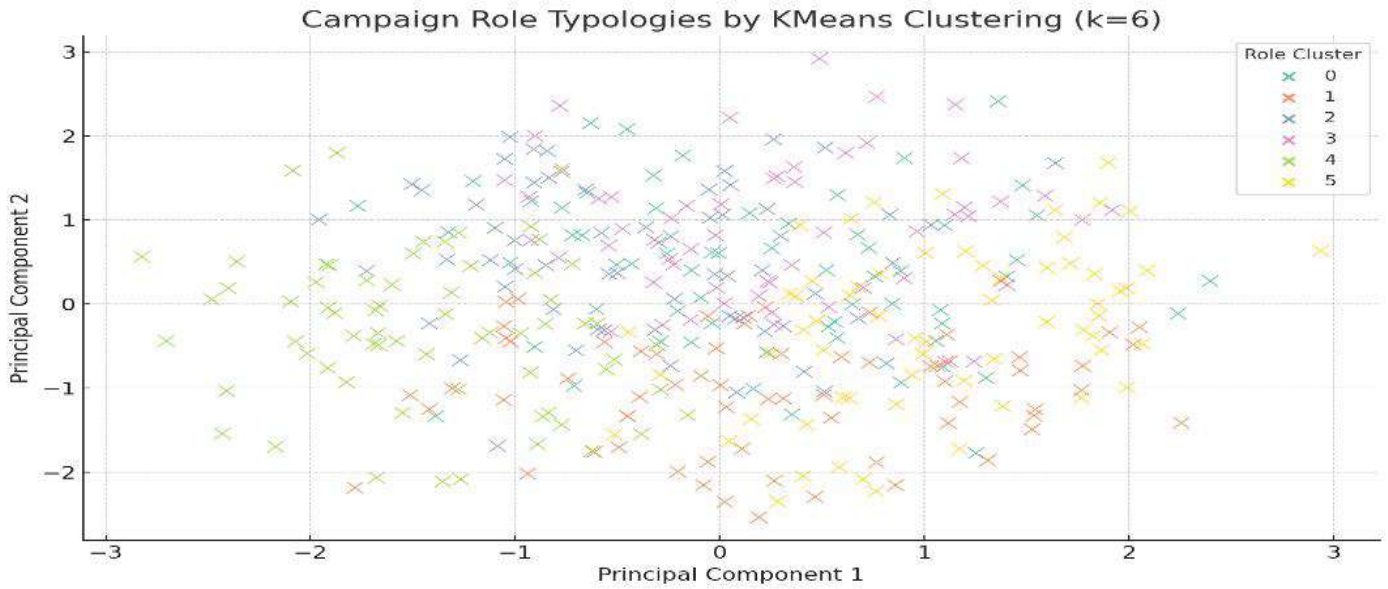

Figure 6
Campaign Role Typologies by KMeans Clustering (k=6).

Cluster 0: Hybrid Performative-Strategic Participation. This group had moderately low scores on Security Services (2.37) and Mobilizing (2.65), but they display strong engagement in Cheerleading (4.06), Monetary Support (3.73), and Campaign Management (3.63). This combination suggests a hybrid profile where respondents who participate in highly visible and energetic roles, such as cheerleading, while also contributing financially or through coordination. This cluster could represent mid-level, politically active individuals (both genders) who oscillate between aesthetic and strategic responsibilities. Their relatively low score on Sexual Entertainment (1.68) indicates lower vulnerability to coercive or stigmatized roles.

*Cluster 1: Masculinized Security-Exploitative Role Typology***.** This cluster scored highest in Security Services (3.67) and shows notable participation in Campaign Management (3.13) and Sexual Entertainment (3.15). The low Household Chores (2.03) and Cheerleading (2.87) suggest a male-dominated typology characterized by authoritative or risk-oriented tasks. However, the surprising peak in Sexual Entertainment confirms qualitative interviews revelation

of the presence of exploitative social scripts, for example, possibly involving young, politically connected men in scenarios involving coercive hospitality or ambiguous overnight roles, especially toward elections days: One security provider in 2022 elections interviewed Opposite Police Post in Yalla Township Ward asserted: "the security work has its good and bad sides. You know, at night, the young men, each of them usually has the advantage [meaning sexual], the young, especially naïve girls, remain behind at night, and men…" Moreover, their low scores in financial contribution (Monetary Support: 1.60) further signal dependency on clientelism rather than personal resources.

Cluster 2: Household Anchor Role Type. This cluster scored highest on Household Chores (3.51), Mobilizing (3.59), and shows relatively low engagement in Security (2.80) and Campaign Management (1.67). This pattern, reads with qualitative findings and previous model outputs used in this study reflects a group of women, most likely older or low-income, who perform background support work. Their moderate participation in Cheerleading (1.69) and Sexual Entertainment (2.25) suggests symbolic presence without overt exposure. Following this interpretation, this cluster embodies the archetype of unpaid, instrumental labor that political campaigns heavily rely on yet systematically undervalue.

Cluster 3: Feminized Strategic Extension. Individuals in this cluster demonstrate high scores in Campaign Management (4.26), Mobilizing (4.02), and Household Chores (3.93), with decent Cheerleading participation (3.16). This cluster seems to consist of women with moderate education or political ties who, despite their service-oriented background, have broken through into coordination roles. However, their high involvement in Sexual Entertainment (3.50) also suggests that strategic access does not necessarily shield them from gendered vulnerabilities—many may find themselves in "helper" roles with implicit exploitative expectations.

Cluster 4: Hyper-Visible and Vulnerable Role Type. This group exhibits the highest mean score in Sexual Entertainment (4.45), with elevated values in Cheerleading (3.52), Household Chores (3.64), and Monetary Support (3.62). These participants—likely young, economically fragile women—are deeply embedded in performative and bodily labor roles, exposed to public consumption and political manipulation. Their low participation in Campaign Management (2.09) and Security (2.12) further confirms their exclusion from authority or trust-based functions. As one young woman from Ndhiwa recounted, "We were told to smile, dance, and later stay with the guests… that's what support meant." These typologies validate and extend earlier findings: campaign participation in rural Kenya is not just differentiated by task, but also by embedded social scripts, gendered trust, and structural vulnerability.

4.9 Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA)

The figure 7 below summarizes MANOVA output that emerged from data analysis. Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) offered a critical integrative lens in this study by assessing the *combined* effect of socio-demographic variables, more especially gender, on the entire spectrum of campaign role participation, rather than evaluating each role in isolation. While previous models such as Chi-square and Multinomial Logistic Regression provided role-specific insights, and PCA with KMeans clustering unveiled latent typologies, MANOVA steps back to ask a more holistic and statistically rigorous question: *Do these variables shape the overall profile of campaign labor in a meaningful and systematic way?* In doing so, it protects against inflated Type I errors that might arise from multiple separate tests and offers a composite view of how gendered and intersecting identities structure broader labor engagement. For instance, even where individual role differences were subtle or non-significant, MANOVA reveals that men and women statistically diverge when all roles are analyzed together as a single dependent profile. This panoramic statistical lens thus reaffirmed the argument that electoral participation is patterned not just at the task level but across bundles of labor experiences; consequently enriching the interpretive depth and policy urgency of this study.

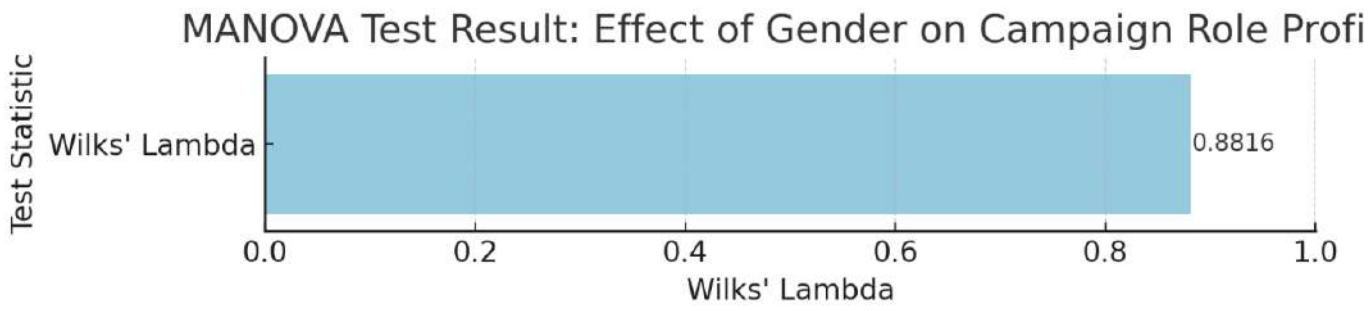

Figure 7
MANOVA Test Output on Effect of Gender on Campaign Role Profile

The MANOVA output reveal a statistically significant overall effect of gender on campaign role participation when all seven roles are considered together. Specifically, the Wilks' Lambda value of 0.8816, with an associated F-

value of 7.10 and p-value < 0.001, indicates that men and women differ significantly in their multivariate campaign role profiles. This finding validates and extends earlier results from chi-square, regression, and clustering analyses. While previous models analyzed each role separately or in bundled typologies, MANOVA confirms that gender exerts a joint influence across all dimensions of electoral labor—be it symbolic (cheerleading, household chores), strategic (campaign management, mobilization), or sensitive (sexual entertainment). The result also strengthens the case for intersectional policy reforms: gender cannot be understood in isolation but as a structural force shaping how multiple campaign roles are simultaneously distributed.

4.10 Hypothesis Testing

Testing hypotheses in this study required going not just the affirmation of statistical relationships but also a consideration of the very structural hierarchies and lived political realities of rural voters in Luo Nyanza that emerged from qualitative testimonies. This way, hypothesis testing thus functioned as both a scientific and socio-political exercise; validating patterns surfaced in statistical analysis and qualitative narratives. Therefore, for the null hypothesis (H_0): *there is no significant relationship between a voter's gender and the roles they play in politics during campaigns* to be comprehensively examined the study had to employ a layered methodological strategy that progressed from basic to advanced statistical techniques to allow both categorical association and deeper predictive modeling of role participation.

Initial descriptive analyses had already revealed gendered trends in campaign roles: women were overwhelmingly concentrated in symbolic, unpaid, and feminized tasks such as cheerleading, house chore duties, and informal mobilization, while men were more prominent in strategic or resource-driven roles like security services and campaign management. However, these patterns alone could not confirm statistical significance. Chi-square tests were applied to assess independence between gender and role participation, and while most associations appeared weak or non-significant, this outcome was expected due to the limitations of binary categorical testing particularly in capturing the subtle, layered ways in which gender interacts with power and labor during campaigns.

To overcome these limitations, advanced models were applied. Multinomial logistic regression offered a more granular view by estimating the likelihood of participation in specific roles based on gender and intersecting variables. While gender alone showed only modest influence, the analysis demonstrated that being male was positively associated with increased probability of involvement in strategic campaign functions. Ordinal logistic regression further refined this by leveraging the full Likert-scale scores of participations. The model revealed that while gender's standalone effect was mild, it became substantially more influential when combined with other variables such as income and education thereby highlighting the compounded disadvantage of being a low-income woman. MANOVA added yet another layer of insight: even when individual role scores did not vary significantly by gender, the overall role profile between men and women was significantly different when considered collectively. This confirmed that gender is a meaningful differentiator in campaign labor assignments, especially when assessed holistically. Taken together, the cumulative findings from descriptive analysis, interaction-sensitive regression models, and multivariate testing provided compelling grounds to reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and accept alternative hypothesis**.** Gender is not only a determinant of campaign participation; it is a structuring force that, in conjunction with social identity markers like income, education, and political patronage, delineates the boundaries of symbolic versus strategic political labor. This conclusion affirms the theoretical framework of the study and provides a robust foundation for targeted policy recommendations aimed at dismantling the gendered architecture of electoral engagement.

4.11 Discussion

The findings from this chapter provide a layered and intersectional account of political role allocation during campaigns in rural Luo Nyanza counties. Grounded in intersectionality theory and feminist political economy, the study confirms that political engagement in Kenya remains heavily structured by gender, income, disability, education, and political connectivity. This aligns with and expands the foundational arguments by scholars such as Crenshaw (1989), Tamale (1999), and Tripp (2001) who though point at gendered inaction even among elite elected and electable women, do not consider that these challenges are even widespread and more in-dignifyingly experienced among rural based women. Despite electoral reforms and gender-sensitive constitutional provisions, including the two-thirds gender rule, the everyday realities of campaign participation for rural women remain exclusionary, symbolic, and largely unrecognized in strategic political spaces.

Descriptive and inferential findings showed that women are overwhelmingly concentrated in emotionally burdensome and publicly visible roles such as cheerleading, household chores, and informal mobilization. These roles are performative in nature, reflecting what Fraser (2009) terms "subaltern publics"—spaces of visibility without voice. They are structurally undervalued yet essential to the optics of political campaigns. Advanced models, such as Multinomial Logistic Regression and PCA-based K-Means clustering, revealed that these labor patterns are not incidental but systematically tied to socio-economic identities. For example, low-income women were clustered in

role typologies that combined cheerleading and sexual entertainment, signaling the institutionalization of symbolic labor as a gendered expectation.

Drawing on dependency and political economy frameworks, this study underscores how political participation is less a democratic right and more a commodified exchange for most rural actors. The pattern of role allocation reinforces Goetz and Hassim's (2003) observation that electoral processes in developing democracies are not inherently empowering for women, particularly when participation is reduced to symbolic loyalty. Findings also resonate with Cheeseman et al. (2021), who argued that African electoral campaigns are often spaces of performative mobilization rather than substantive inclusion. Here, campaign labor is gendered, stratified, and often coercive conversely mirroring the very socio-political inequalities electoral governance is meant to redress.

Theories of clientelism and political instrumentalism, found empirical support in the MANOVA and Chi-square outputs. Political patronage emerged as the strongest predictor of engagement in sexualized and resource-sensitive roles. This is in line with the work of Lindberg (2003), who warned that African electoral politics often disguise transactional labor under the garb of loyalty and kinship. The finding that politically connected women were more likely to participate in sexual entertainment underlines the gendered violence embedded in informal political economies; a disturbing trend that also implicates political parties for ethical lapses.

The study's alignment with intersectionality theory is particularly crucial in explaining the nuanced effects of multiple identities. Gender alone was often not a significant predictor in Chi-square tests, but when combined with income, education, and political patronage, the intersectional vulnerabilities of rural women became starkly visible. This validates the decision to employ multidimensional analysis tools like Ordinal Logistic Regression and PCA, which allowed for the modeling of complex social patterns beyond binary comparisons.

From a Kenyan legal and policy standpoint, the study's findings directly challenge the spirit of the Elections Act (2011) and the Political Parties Act (2011), which emphasize equitable participation and gender inclusion. However, these laws remain procedural rather than transformational, often failing to address the informal but powerful spaces where political labor is allocated. The Constitution of Kenya (2010) envisions participatory democracy, yet the findings reveal that campaign processes—arguably the bedrock of electoral participation—continue to replicate patriarchal hierarchies, rendering rural women as instruments of political theater rather than agents of change.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This study interrogated the gendered architecture of political participation in rural Kenya by foregrounding the lived realities of rural-based voters during electoral campaigns. Through a mixed-methods approach, undertaking in an exploratory sequential design, the findings illustrate that gendered exclusion in electoral processes is not merely a question of numerical underrepresentation in leadership, but a deeper structural phenomenon manifesting through the everyday labor of campaigns within rural contexts. The study shows that women particularly those from low-income, poorly educated, and politically distant backgrounds, are relegated to roles that are hyper-visible but substantively disempowered. Whether through cheerleading, household duties, or even tricked or coerced sexual entertainment, their participation is choreographed around optics rather than influence. The study shows how symbolic labor becomes a performative camouflage for marginalization, effectively silencing rural women as strategic actors in the democratic process.

More importantly, this research does more than document inequalities. It dissected the mechanisms that sustain them. By deploying advanced analytical models such as MANOVA, logistic regressions, PCA, and KMeans clustering, the study exposed how multiple identities, gender, class, education, and political kinship, interact to determine one's campaign role allocation: monetary contribution, strategic management, security provision, sexual entertainment, house chores, cheerleading, and mobilization. Chi-square tests revealed no statistically significant associations between gender and campaign roles. The deeper meaning of this rather unexpected finding underscores the limits of binary statistical tools in capturing socially stigmatized or informal political economy of campaign labor. To remedy this limitation, more advanced tools were employed. Multinomial logistic regression added depth to Chi-Square tests by showing that political patronage, income, and education were more predictive of role allocation than gender alone, particularly in assigning managerial and mobilization roles, a fact that justifies the need for a context-based intersectionality analysis. Third, Ordinal Logistic Regression highlighted that those middle-income women had a higher probability of rating strong agreement with participation in sensitive roles such as sexual entertainment. This signaled the role of power and clientelism in shaping even exploitative campaign dynamics. Fourth, Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) confirmed that gender had a significant overall effect on role participation profiles, reinforcing the structural stratification of labor across the electoral spectrum and the critical analytical role of an intersectionality analysis for equitable gender gap closing. Finally, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) uncovered latent groupings of roles such as symbolic, strategic, and exploitative labor while KMeans clustering offered a novel

typology of campaign participants, revealing six archetypes ranging from "Household Anchors" to "Hyper-Visible Vulnerables." Together, these tools demonstrate that rural women are not merely underrepresented, they are structurally scripted into politically invisible roles. This evidentiary richness reinforces the urgency for equity-driven reforms that acknowledge and rectify the layered burdens rural women carry during democratic processes.

These findings challenge the prevailing paradigms of gender mainstreaming in politics, which often valorize elite female presence while ignoring the exploitative campaign experiences of rural women. As such, the article calls for a paradigm shift: from celebrating token inclusion to transforming the very design of political engagement. Campaign labor should be formalized, dignified, and protected under electoral policy. Anything less would betray the constitutional and moral promises of equality, inclusion, and participatory democracy. The call, then, is not just for women to be seen—but to be heard, respected, and empowered within Kenya's political theater.

5.2 Recommendations

The policy implications flowing from the findings of this study are urgent and clear. First, gender-sensitive electoral reform must go beyond quotas and other affirmative actions that prioritize elite women or generally quantitative incrementalism, to address the nature, quality, and remuneration of political labor within informal political economies of the rural. Campaign labor regulations should be formulated as distinct part of elections laws/policy and should mandate transparent compensation frameworks, particularly for symbolic and supportive roles, played by actors that belong to the Hyper-Visible and Vulnerable Role Type cluster, namely, women. Second, civic education programs must be redesigned to challenge internalized (a self-concept) gender roles**,** especially among women (and persons with disability) who have come to normalize their subjugated positions in campaign hierarchies. Third, electoral ethics bodies must criminalize coercive practices**,** including the recruitment of young women into ambiguous or exploitative "sexual entertainment" roles under the guise of loyalty or kinship. Lastly, any vision of inclusive democracy must recognize that presence without power is a façade. Rural women are not just voters or cheerleaders. They are political actors whose agency has been silenced through structural scripting. Real inclusion demands more than tokens, rather, it requires a transformation of political culture, redistribution of campaign resources, and reconstitution of rural political labor. Only then can the promise of the Constitution of Kenya and SDG 5 on gender equality be truly fulfilled.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that no conflict of interest surfaced during the conceptualization, research, and writing of this paper.

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