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Original Article

## Examining the Role of Media Literacy in Promoting Civic Participation in Migori County, Kenya

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In today's media-driven world, having media awareness is crucial. This study explored how media literacy can be utilized to promote strong civic participation in Migori County, Kenya. Despite the importance of media literacy, there is limited literature explaining its role in fostering civic participation in Migori County. The main objective of this study was to evaluate the role of media literacy in supporting civic participation among the citizens of Migori County. The research was based on Social Capital Theory (SCT), which highlights the significance of social networks and groups in facilitating specific behaviours of individuals. The study used a mixed research methods approach, employing a descriptive survey design. The research population included residents of Migori County, young leaders in civic engagement, and the Sub-County information officer. The survey respondents provided data through questionnaires. Information from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) was collected utilizing a FGD guide, whereas the Key Informant was interviewed using an interview guide. The Statistical Package for Social (SPSS) Version 26 was used for analyzing quantitative data, which was then presented in tables, and charts. Thematic analysis was conducted on qualitative data and then combined with quantitative data through triangulation for interpretation and understanding. The findings of the study indicated a positive and significant relationship between civic participation and media literacy. The results established that only 34.5% financially supported a political course, and 28.7% participated in civil activities like protests, marches, or demonstrations in the past two years. An overwhelming majority of 91.1% of the respondents believe in the power of media literacy to comprehend their role as responsible citizens. Only 39.3% of people agreed that media literacy helped them to volunteer during campaigns and elections. The study recommends that the government and other relevant stakeholders heighten awareness regarding media literacy to foster a mindful consumption of media and enhance civic participation within our contemporary, media-driven civic sphere.

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## INTRODUCTION

In this study, the researcher dealt with the role of media literacy in building everyday civic participation. The researcher strived to point out the importance of citizens having strong media literacy skills and competencies in the modern hyper-mediated society. This kind of reasoning was prompted by heightened civic and political communication that involves the use of different media in modern societies worldwide. Since in the modern social reality media and media content cannot be avoided or ignored, it is necessary for citizens to have media literacy skills to enable them to execute their civic responsibilities effectively.

The proliferation of media technologies, beginning from books, newspapers, cinema, radio, and television, all the way to computers and the internet has always aroused interest, discussion, and opposing views in all cultures. Being aware of the need to get informed, citizens turn to content in the media, and this strengthens their dependence on media to inform and believe in their content. Communication strengthens people's identity and at the same time gives it variability and mobility (Ivanović, 2014, p. 439). Media informs on all aspects of life including civic life, but not just as a part of society in which they operate, but there are equally important factors influencing that society (Buckingham, 2007).

Although the media greatly inform the relationship between an individual and the society they dwell in, it must not be forgotten that people

need skills and competencies to utilize media content successfully. There is a need to have knowledge of what media content really means, what the intention of their source is, and why a certain message has been constructed. This is vital for a better understanding and recognition of mediated information and its meaning. Therefore, media literacy would help a person live their life successfully on the media including their civic life.

The media and their content can be applied to civic participation at all levels of society. They are used to pass civic education to the citizenry, and in turn, the citizenry uses the same media and media content to communicate their civic messages to each other and to different authorities. They are widely used to communicate political and government messages which are the main sources of civic messages. Nevertheless, as media technology rapidly develops, the citizenry is rapidly connected by means of communication. Thus an effective citizen who really participates fully in their civic duties is the one with stronger media literacy skills (Mathews, 2014).

Media literacy education involves teaching methods and approaches that emphasize theoretical and practical aspects of media literacy. This research stems from a history of using media and technology in education during the 20th century and the development of interdisciplinary collaboration between media studies and education. Hobbs (2021) also mentions that media education is expanding in various countries including Great Britain, Australia, South Africa,

Canada, and the United States, as well as gaining interest in the Netherlands, Italy, Greece, Austria, Switzerland, India, Russia, and many other nations. UNESCO has been crucial in promoting media and information literacy by urging the creation of national policies for information and media literacy, particularly in education. UNESCO has created educational materials to assist teachers in incorporating information and media literacy into their lessons, offering suitable teaching techniques and curricula (Cunliffe-Jones *et al.*, 2021).

Ultimately, therefore, media literacy needs to be recognized as a fundamental human right. Every individual needs to comprehend their responsibilities as citizens, and since media is a key tool for socializing, it is important for them to possess the ability to engage with media effectively through Media Literacy (ML) skills (Buckingham, 2001; CMIL-Kenya, 2020; Martens & Hobbs, 2015). For the citizens to enjoy their civic rights proclaimed by the Kenyan constitution, and hence to have informed participation in the processes that govern their lives, media literacy must be seen as a fundamental entitlement for all.

In their 2017 publication, Petranová, Hossová, and Velický investigated the diverse regional approaches to media literacy and media issues across Europe. They argue that the European Union has adopted a holistic approach to impart media literacy skills, implementing projects to advance media education and literacy among its citizens. Petranová *et al.* (2017) highlight the EU's focus on classifying different types of literacy, including media literacy, critical evaluation of media content, digital and information literacy, film literacy, news and reading literacy, Internet literacy and online safety, digital game literacy, and media communication literacy. According to the authors, each form of literacy is uniquely addressed to enhance the civic life of the union members.

Various regions in Western democracies have been taking coordinated steps to address communication-related issues on a broader scale

rather than individually. In January 2018, the High-Level Expert Group on Fake News and Online Disinformation was established by the European Commission. According to Sádaba and Salaverría (2023), this group produced a report with recommendations such as promoting transparency, enhancing media literacy, developing tools to counter disinformation, safeguarding media diversity, and encouraging continued research on disinformation in the EU. After that, the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO) was established during the summer of 2020. The European Digital Monitoring Organization (EDMO) is engaged in locating verification agencies in Europe, coordinating disinformation research projects at the European level, establishing a public portal to combat misinformation and promote media literacy, creating a secure infrastructure for academic disinformation research, and assisting national authorities in monitoring key online platforms to regulate the dissemination and impact of disinformation (EDMO, 2024; Sádaba & Salaverría, 2023). Apart from a regional approach to media literacy, countries in Europe have also realized that some issues are specific to each country. For example, Britain has robust media literacy programs for its citizens.

Before completing its withdrawal from the Union, the United Kingdom initiated a five-point action plan to combat disinformation (Sádaba & Salaverría, 2023). The proposed measures aim to address the challenges faced by the media industry in the digital age. This includes subjecting internet platforms to regulatory oversight to ensure compliance with established standards. Moreover, the implementation of codes of conduct aims to address the power imbalances between media publishers and digital platforms, promoting a fairer partnership. Furthermore, the creation of an independent institute is envisioned to offer vital support to local, regional, and public interest news outlets in navigating the evolving media landscape. Tax breaks aimed at incentivizing the payment for news content in digital media are expected to stimulate investment in high-quality journalism. Lastly, the development of a media

literacy strategy seeks to empower individuals with the critical skills needed to navigate an increasingly complex media environment (Sádaba & Salaverría, 2023).

In recent times, false and misleading information has led to various harms to individuals and groups across Africa. Misinformation about different topics ranging from calamities, politics and campaign communication (Mwita, 2020) to other social and economic issues has been spread within the continent originating from both inside the continent and outside. However, the region lacks a clear philosophy and strategy to combat this issue. According to the findings of Cunliffe-Jones *et al.* (2021) in their report titled "The State of Media Literacy in Sub-Saharan Africa 2020 and a Theory of Misinformation Literacy," the study revealed that out of the seven countries examined, media literacy is scarcely integrated into educational curricula. Moreover, only one country incorporates limited aspects of misinformation literacy education. This lack of emphasis on media and misinformation literacy is particularly concerning given the increasing recognition of the detrimental impact of misinformation on both political leaders and the public.

In the state schools of six out of the seven countries analyzed - Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, and Uganda - only a few elements of comprehensive media literacy are incorporated into the curricula. Despite recent updates to the curricula in Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, and Nigeria, substantial elements of media literacy were not integrated (Olewe, 2018; Newman *et al.*, 2020). In the context of curriculum development, it is noteworthy that Kenya's new education curriculum encompasses a wide range of subjects, making it the most comprehensive. This includes a particular focus on digital literacy and critical thinking skills, reflecting a forward-looking approach to education. Conversely, countries such as Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Senegal have not given significant attention to these aspects within their curricula, as indicated by Cunliffe-Jones *et al.* (2021). It is worth emphasizing that although

media literacy has been a topic of discussion in the African continent since the 1990s, the incorporation of these components into formal education systems is a relatively recent development. Moreover, it is interesting to note that media literacy initiatives in these countries are primarily driven by individual awareness campaigns rather than being integrated into mainstream educational frameworks.

The schools in South Africa, the United States, and select European nations have intentionally included extensive media literacy and misinformation literacy initiatives in their educational programs. This integration extends beyond general media literacy awareness campaigns, equipping students with the critical skills necessary to navigate and evaluate media in today's digital landscape (Newman, 2020). By June 2020, South Africa's national curriculum had integrated an extensive news literacy component, indicating a commitment to fostering critical thinking skills among students. Yet, a key drawback was identified regarding the curriculum's focus on precision. Furthermore, in January 2020, the education department in the Western Cape Province made a proactive move by implementing a new curriculum that specifically emphasizes online safety. This innovative syllabus includes modules aimed at promoting 'click restraint,' which educates students about exercising caution when interacting with online content. Furthermore, it provides guidance on identifying fake websites and discerning false information on the internet, thereby equipping students with essential digital literacy skills (Cunliffe-Jones *et al.*, 2021).

Due to the importance of media literacy to the citizenry, it was deemed necessary to establish the Center for Media and Information Literacy in Kenya (CMIL-Kenya) to spearhead Media and Information Literacy Campaigns in the country (CMIL-Kenya, 2020). CMIL-Kenya plays the role of promoting civic participation and citizen involvement in governance and development activities (CMIL-Kenya, 2020). This is aimed at fulfilling the Constitution of Kenya 2010 where



public participation in the national development agenda is highly recommended (Constitution of Kenya, 2010). This can only be achieved if the citizenry is empowered to “fully utilize their constitutionally guaranteed freedom of expression and access to information by demanding and using responsible and accurate information from relevant sources to enable them actively and positively participate in public governance processes” (CMIL-Kenya, 2020).

Citizen participation, on the other hand, gives citizens the chance to contribute their ideas and knowledge to issues that touch on their lives at all government levels especially the devolved levels that are close to them (Bwire, 2019). For this to happen, Kenya needs a concerted effort to come up with a Media Literacy policy that may guide citizen participation. As of now, there is no MIL policy in Kenya (Bwire, 2019; CMIL-Kenya, 2020).

Ogenga (2021) emphasizes the importance of media literacy in promoting peace and resolving conflicts in Kenya's democracy. He points out that political competition driven by ethnic affiliation, ethno-political extremism, and hate speech on social media platforms has become prominent. Despite the negative impact of social media on inciting violence, Ogenga also acknowledges its potential for peacebuilding. He advocates for collaborative efforts to enhance media literacy and promote responsible use of social media for democratic purposes (Ogenga, 2021). The current emphasis on social media literacy highlights the importance of understanding and critically evaluating information shared on digital platforms. However, it is imperative to recognize that a more comprehensive approach to media literacy is essential for the smooth and effective functioning of any modern democracy. This broader approach should encompass the ability to critically analyze and interpret various forms of media, including traditional news outlets, online sources, and social media. By developing a nuanced understanding of media literacy, individuals can better navigate the complex media landscape and make informed decisions as

responsible citizens within a democratic society. This is due to the significant impact of media on shaping democratic deliberation. Media plays a crucial role as a tool for socialization within a democracy, and citizens rely on media information to responsibly fulfil their civic duties. Therefore, a broader understanding of media literacy is essential for the proper functioning of a democratic society.

## **ASSESSMENT OF RELEVANT LITERATURE**

Media literacy encompasses various literacies based on the medium, production skills, technological expertise like digital or visual literacy, and ethics and aesthetics linked to media. An individual who is media literate understands their role as a media consumer and a member of media culture, making them more capable of safeguarding themselves against detrimental media impacts. Alternatively, media literacy can enhance an individual's independence, critical and innovative thought, appreciation for beauty, awareness of societal issues, self-worth, influence, and responsibilities as a buyer and member of society (Kupiainen & Sintonen, 2009, p. 94–95).

As society transitions into an information-based culture, media literacy is becoming more essential for citizens to participate in society as an inherent right (Livingstone, 2010). Livingstone continues by stating that literacy is mainly a way to achieve ideals related to self-fulfilment, cultural representation, and artistic innovation. She argued this over a decade ago and as of the moment, we are living fully in the information society. Despite her assertion, she does not state clearly how media literacy aids civic responsibility. This is a gap that this study aimed to bridge.

Scholars are increasingly interested in media literacy, with a growing body of research indicating that individuals with greater media literacy are more equipped to navigate the constant stream of media content and become more engaged, empowered, informed, and active consumers of media content (Ashley, Maksl, and Craft, 2017). There has been a growing interest in

media literacy and its role in civic participation. Part of these debates concerns whether media literacy is a significant influencer of civic participation. Kupiainen and Sintonen (2009), and Livingstone (2010) are trying to argue out the vital role media literacy plays in an individual's life. Though they have enumerated many roles, they have not explicitly argued for civic participation.

Additionally, Martens and Hobbs (2015, p. 3) posit:

Citizens not only need access to information, they also need the means and motives to process that information effectively. In particular, media literacy programs in American high schools can support the development of young people's ability to use, analyze and create media messages. A constellation of competencies, including knowledge about the media, message analysis skills, and composition and collaboration skills are thought to be valuable as students learn to be active participants in responding to news and current events. Previous research has already shown that civic engagement is associated with both social demographic variables and media use habits.

As alluded to above, there is a link between media literacy and civic participation and this paper study tried to link the same to Migori County citizens. Furthermore, the above scholars have not discussed the civic participation of the citizens through the use of several media and different patterns of media content consumption.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The researcher adopted the Social Capital Theory (SCT) to help ground the importance of citizens working with others to achieve the goals of civic life. The fundamental proposition of this theory is that social networks or groups are worthy as they contain important resources that enable certain actions of participants within the networks. This theory was popularized by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in 1986 (Bourdieu 1986; Putnam, 2002). Although the concept of social capital can be traced back to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and is connected with scholars such as Tocqueville,

Durkheim, Marx, Weber, and Locke, among others (Yang, Lee, & Kurnia, 2009), the most prominent early theorists who actually coined the theory was Bourdieu who focused his analysis on the network structures which facilitate social connections.

### **METHODOLOGIES**

This was a descriptive study which utilized a convergent mixed methods approach (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018, p. 300). It involved blending quantitative and qualitative data, incorporating both and utilizing distinct designs that may incorporate philosophical beliefs and theoretical frameworks (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018, p. 41). In this study, the researcher gathered qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously using different research tools. The researcher collected qualitative data through an informant interview guide and an FGD guide, while quantitative data were collected through questionnaires. Similar concepts or variables yielded both qualitative and quantitative data. In this research, more quantitative data was collected as questionnaire items (survey respondents) were more than those administered to the FGD and the KII. According to Cresswell and Cresswell (2018, p. 301), the unequal datasets were not an issue since qualitative and quantitative data served different purposes—whereas the qualitative data was used for a deep understanding, the quantitative data was for population generalization, both offering sufficient information.

The study population included the youthful population between the ages of 18 and 40 years, who were the survey and the FGD respondents, and one (1) sub-county information officer in the research area, who was the key informant. The upper age limit of 40 years was selected in order to accommodate people who were elected or appointed into youth leadership positions while still in their youth years but their term is yet to expire despite them being over 35 years old. The study involved a total of 403 respondents. Seven (7) respondents participated in Focus Group Discussions (FGD), one (1) individual took part in

a Key Informant Interview, and 395 respondents participated in the survey.

### Questionnaire Response Rate

The researcher administered 395 questionnaires to the respondents out of which 374 (94.7%) questionnaires were returned and after data cleaning, 369 questionnaires were found to be completely filled and therefore valid for analysis, representing a validity of 98.7%. The five questionnaires that were not included in the analysis were either not completely filled or had difficulty in identifying details of the respondents. Mugenda (2013) insists that a response rate of 50% is acceptable in survey research.

### FINDINGS

Valid questionnaires for the survey respondents were 369. Regarding the gender of the respondents, male were 214 (58%) and female 155 (42%). Concerning age, the majority of the respondents were in the age bracket of 21-25 years old comprising 113 (30.6%) respondents. This was followed closely by the age bracket of 26-30 years comprising 96 (26.0%) respondents. The third category was the age bracket of 18-20 years comprising 77 (20.9%) respondents. The fourth category was that of the age bracket of 31-35 years comprising 46 (12.5%) respondents. The age bracket with the least representation was that of 36-40 years which had 37 respondents standing at

10.0%. The majority of the respondents had secondary school education standing at 123 (33.3%) respondents, followed by 99 (26.8%) respondents who had their first degree. Those with a diploma level of education were 95 (25.7%), while those with primary education were 32 respondents representing 8.7%. Master's degree holders were 18 (4.9%). Those who had attained a certificate level of education were 2 respondents representing 0.5%. Occupation was divided into nine categories. Students were the majority standing at 113 (30.6%) respondents, followed by self-employed respondents 107 (29.0%). There were 45 (12.2%) teachers, 18 (4.9%) medical practitioners, and 17 (4.6%) civil servants. The lawyer and lecturers were the least represented with 5 (1.4%) respondents each.

The researcher analyzed how media literacy enabled citizens to participate voluntarily in many activities, or not much voluntarily, for the benefit of others outside their immediate self or family, and often for the common welfare or public good or interest. Many studies since the early 1990s focused on social capital and the decline in civic participation (Cnaan, 2016). Our study evaluated how media literacy supports civic participation in Migori County. To accomplish this goal, the researcher presented a set of nine (9) statements. The results are documented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Civic Participation**

	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	No comment	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	St. Deviation
1	Media literacy education is important for citizens to navigate the influence of media on politics	28.2	61.0	7.6	1.9	1.4	1.87	0.735
2	Media Literacy makes me know which political information I should share and shouldn't share online	28.2	54.2	10.6	5.7	1.4	1.98	0.860
3	Media literacy enabled me to work as a volunteer for a candidate running for national, county, or ward office during the 2022 election	11.9	27.4	16.5	23.3	20.9	3.14	1.343
4	Did you make a financial contribution to an individual candidate, a party group, a political action committee, or any other organization that supports candidates in elections during 2022?	7.9	26.6	13.0	29.3	23.3	3.34	1.303
5	I understand my responsibilities as a citizen through media literacy	48.0	43.1	6.2	2.2	0.5	1.64	0.742
6	Did you work informally with others in the community to deal with some issue or problem in the past year?	14.4	45.0	17.3	13.3	10.0	2.60	1.183
7	Did you volunteer or give money to a political organization in the past year?	7.6	16.8	15.7	33.1	26.8	3.55	1.257
8	Did you take part in a protest, march, or demonstration in the past two years?	6.2	22.5	14.6	30.1	26.6	3.48	1.269
9	Has media literacy enabled you to engage your elected leaders through the media?	14.6	39.0	11.9	22.2	12.2	2.78	1.282
<b>Aggregate scores</b>							<b>2.71</b>	<b>1.108</b>

**Source:** *Researcher (2024)*

When the researcher posed the first statement, "Media literacy education is important for citizens to navigate the influence of media on politics" an overwhelming majority, 89.2%, of the respondents agreed with the statement. Those who remained neutral were only 7.6%, whereas a mere 3.3% disagreed. It is clear that the statement resonates with the vast majority of people, making it a compelling and widely held opinion. This indicated that media literacy helps people understand more how media affects politics through civic participation.

The second statement, "Media Literacy helps me understand which political information to share and which not to share online," received an affirmative response from 82.4% of respondents.

A minority of 7.1% disagreed with the statement. Meanwhile, 10.6% had no comment to make on the statement. Having media literacy skills is crucial in today's world, especially when it comes to participating in civic communication. The respondents in this study have demonstrated that they possess such skills, which is a positive sign that they are well-equipped to engage responsibly in public discourse.

The third statement was "Media literacy enabled me to work as a volunteer for a candidate running for national, county, or ward office during the 2022 election." According to the study, 39.3% of people agreed that media literacy helped them to volunteer during campaigns and elections, while 16.5% remained neutral. On the contrary, 44.2%



of the respondents disagreed with this statement. This indicates that most of the respondents did not believe that media literacy played a significant role in preparing them to volunteer during campaigns and elections.

Based on the qualitative data analysis, it was found that there was a low level of volunteerism among the discussants. Out of the six participants, only two reported that they had engaged in volunteer activities related to campaigns and political issues. Moreover, despite acknowledging that their media literacy skills could be relevant for civic volunteerism, only two of the discussants had actively participated in such activities. One FGD participant reported that:

*I generally do not engage in volunteer activities within the community. Additionally, during the last election, I solely voted and then promptly returned home. (FGD Participant 5, December 13, 2023)*

The researcher also wanted to know if the respondents participated in giving or donating in any kind for civic purposes, especially towards political campaigns. To ascertain this, the researcher posed the fourth statement: "Did you make any financial contributions to an individual candidate, a party group, a political action committee, or any other organization that supported candidates in elections during 2022?" The results show that only 34.5% answered in the affirmative, while 13.0% remained neutral. More than half of the respondents (52.6%) disagreed with the statement.

The study findings reveal that an overwhelming majority of 91.1% of the respondents firmly believe in the power of media literacy to comprehend their role as responsible citizens. This was gauged through posing the fifth statement. This indicates that a significant proportion of the population understands the importance of staying informed and equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the complex and rapidly evolving media landscape. Only a small proportion of 6.2% chose

to remain neutral, while a mere 2.7% expressed disagreement with this statement.

The study also asked participants if they had collaborated informally with others in the community to address any issue or problem in the past year. The results showed that 59.4% of the respondents had indeed worked together with others to tackle a problem affecting their society. Further, in response to this statement, 17.3% of the respondents remained neutral and did not express any opinion on the matter. On the other hand, a significant 23.3% of the participants disagreed with the statement and did not collaborate with others to address any issue or problem.

As part of the study, the researcher asked the participants whether they had actively participated in any protests, marches, or demonstrations in the past two years. This was gauged by posing the eighth statement as shown in Table 1. Out of all the respondents, 28.7% confirmed their participation in such events, indicating a significant level of civic engagement. Meanwhile, 14.6% chose not to comment on the matter. However, it is noteworthy that the majority of the respondents stated that 56.7% expressed their disagreement with the statement. These findings suggest that while some individuals are actively engaged in civic activities, many others may not be interested or may have different ways of engaging with their communities.

To conclude this section, the researcher posed a question, seeking to determine if individuals had been able to leverage media literacy to interact with their elected political representatives. This was gauged by posing the ninth statement as shown in Table 1. The results were quite intriguing as 53.6% of the respondents confirmed that media literacy had facilitated their ability to engage with their elected political leaders through media channels. On the other hand, 11.9% of the respondents remained impartial, neither affirming nor denying the statement. However, it is noteworthy that a significant proportion of the

respondents (34.4%) reported that they had not engaged their elected leaders through the media.

Citizen participation involves citizens coming together at the local level to organize and collaborate through community organizations outside of the government in order to impact decision-making. Citizens become most engaged in this process when it directly affects them (Holdar & Zakharchenko, 2002). Moreover, citizen involvement takes place when all those involved work together to bring about necessary changes (Mathews, 2006). Citizen participation can be evidenced through self-identification, identifying the solution, framing and reframing the issues and deliberating on the issues in order to come up with an amicable and workable solution (Mathews, 2014). Effective achievement occurs when individuals form strong connections within their immediate community groups and also expand their networks to include individuals outside of their immediate groups, using a process known as bridging. Weak connections linking network members to outside groups define bridging social capital. They are referred to as weak ties because they link people who are not part of the same group and do not share a similar context or emotional connection (Sánchez-Arrieta *et al.*, 2021). Understandably, some members share similar characteristics and are connected to others in one group, trusting and supporting one another. They exchange resources and are often identified by their network density and closeness (Matto *et al.*, 2017).

The researcher evaluated how media literacy influences or informs activities that form civic participation. Some of the activities the researcher evaluated were: (1) association participation, (2) donating or giving, (3) volunteering for others, (4) responsible media behaviour, (5) political and social behaviour, (6) supporting or helping individuals, and (7) engaging or holding the elected leaders accountable (Cnaan, 2016). To achieve all these general activities, it is only possible if people participate as a collective informed from the individual level. Thus, civic

participation originates from an individual but with an impact on the entire society.

It is rather worrisome that the survey respondents seem to lack the understanding or confidence to financially support their preferred candidates during election campaigns. In Kenya, there is a prevailing trend where voters rarely provide campaign funding and instead rely on handouts from those seeking elective positions. This culture undermines the democratic process and the accountability of elected officials. It is imperative for citizens to recognize the influence they hold in shaping the political landscape and to actively participate in supporting candidates based on their vision and policies, rather than through transactional handouts.

As responsible and engaged citizens, individuals have the opportunity to actively participate in the political process by advocating for and financially supporting the candidates they believe in. By contributing to the campaigns of their preferred candidates, citizens can play a crucial role in ensuring that the most qualified and representative individuals are elected to public office. This not only allows for the amplification of their voices but also fosters a more inclusive and responsive democratic system. Ultimately, civic participation serves as a cornerstone for ensuring that the interests of the broader community are upheld and advanced for the betterment of society as a whole. This will enable the electorate to have the authority to ensure that their leaders are answerable and responsible for their actions and decisions.

## CONCLUSION

The study established that media literacy enables citizens to participate in civil activities. The results show that only 34.5% that answered in the affirmative financially supported a political course financially. The study also found low participation of the respondents in civil activities like protests, marches, or demonstrations in the past two years at 28.7%. An overwhelming majority of 91.1% of the respondents firmly believe in the power of media literacy to comprehend their role as responsible citizens.

Further, only 39.3% of people agreed that media literacy helped them to volunteer during campaigns and elections. The results were quite intriguing as 53.6% of the respondents confirmed that media literacy had facilitated their ability to engage with their elected leaders through media channels.

The research finds that civic participation was predicted by the independent variables (media literacy). This finding was backed by a P-value of 0.000, lower than the typical significance level of 0.05, along with an F statistic of 47.83. The overall model in this study was statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ). Therefore, the study concludes that having media literacy skills plays a crucial role in promoting civic participation. However, despite this positive impact, the majority of respondents were found to be non-participants in certain civic activities, such as protests, financing political activities, and volunteering during campaigns and elections. This suggests that while media literacy can increase awareness and knowledge, it may not necessarily translate into active engagement in all forms of civic participation. Thus, there is a need for more awareness creation on media literacy.

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