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Abstract

Youth participation in elective politics in most countries is widely recognized as one of the key pillars of democracy that ensure the needs and aspirations of the youth are incorporated in the decision making. However, despite the youths being majority of the population, they remain underrepresented in elective political leadership. A situation that is further exacerbated by the prohibitive cost of campaigning, as Kenya's general elections are among the most expensive general election in Africa; a factor likely to impede their electoral success. It in this backdrop that study sought to examine whether party financial support and candidate fundraising capacity influence campaign fund accessibility among youth aspirants participating in general elections in Kenya. The study was theoretically anchored on the resource mobilization and elite theory. A descriptive research design was employed, targeting a population of 12,454, from which a sample of 372 was determined through cluster sampling. The data employed a semi-structured questionnaire to gather primary data, which was descriptively and inferentially analysed. The study yielded mixed results, with some variables manifesting significant influence while others showing weaker influence. In particular, the study found out that though most political parties in Kenya have made numerous efforts to lower financial entry barriers to youth aspirants through subsidized nomination fees; this intervention has failed in solving broader campaign funding needs of youth aspirants. Moreover, the research established that direct campaign funding by the parties is erratic and inequitable; with incumbents being preferred more than the young aspirants left politically and financially vulnerable. Another notable finding is that though most youth aspirants recognize the significance of digital and crowdfunding in broadening youth campaign funding; still there exist noticeable variance in digital skills. The study recommends training of aspirants on crowdfunding, digital campaign funding, donor relationship management and encouraging joint campaigning among aspirants.

Keywords: *Youth campaign funding, youth political participation, innovative campaign funding*

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1.0 Introduction

Across continents, there is a renewed momentum on youth access to campaign funding due to the pivotal role it plays in growing youth participation in elective politics. In most countries, these youths constitute nearly 50% of the population yet they occupy only a small minority of parliamentary seats (UNDESA, 2024). This minimal representation implies that youth political interests are more likely be overlooked and structurally disadvantaged in both electoral and legislative processes, this necessitates more scholarly inquiry to investigate the barriers to campaign fund accessibility among youth aspirants to develop deeper understanding on the subject matter (UNDP, 2025).

The issue of youth underrepresentation in the United States is a systemic and deeply rooted structural challenge that has been witnessed in every election. In the 2025-2026 election; less than 8% of those elected in Congress were below 40 years with those 35 and below constituting less than 4%. The main reason attributed to this low representation is often linked to the constitutional age minimums that limits anyone under 25 and 30 years to seek for any position in the House of Representatives and Senate respectively. The other reason is incumbent advantage arising from their fame, proven track record, heightened publicity, effective donor and campaign mobilization abilities. In the senate, there is zero youth presence as most of the Senators are above 40 years; resulting to below average representation of youth issues and slow transition of political leadership to youths (UNDP, 2017; United Nations, 2022; International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2015).

Equally, in the United Kingdom the below average representation of youths in elective position, is a critical democratic issue that remains unresolved. For instance, in the House of Commons only about 4% are 35 years and younger; conversely the youths under 40 years constitute less than 28% of elected members of parliament; depicting a glaring structural age disparity. Equally, in the House of Lords less than 1% of the representatives are aged below 40 years (United Kingdom Electoral Commission, 2026). According to Derksen et al (2018) the overall youth representation in both houses in United Kingdom have not adequately improved in subsequent election cycles widely attributed to elevated financial barriers to entry, incumbency advantage, selection partiality, reduced political experience, and structural barriers in political ecosystem; warranting further empirical research to alleviate the current gaps (Snelling, 2015).

In India youth under presentation in the both Lower (Lok Sabha) and Upper House (Rajya Sabha) has been relatively low posing immense democratic challenge. In the 2024 Indian general elections the number of youths elected is less than 11% in the Lower House of Parliament with those over 55 years accounted to over 50% with the upper predominantly occupied by those above 35 years. This is despite India being the country with the largest number of youths that are approximated to be 65% of its 1.5 billion population; implying that the interests and aspirations of the youths in India are insufficiently mirrored in national policymaking (Sandeep, 2026). The low representations of youths in both houses: Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha show the structural and financial obstacles that hinder youth participation in political activities at party and national level; raising serious concerns about the inclusiveness and legitimacy of democratic processes in India and Asia in general. A situation that emphasizes the need for reforms geared at strengthening youth access to campaign funding, and opportunities to vie for political seats in the general election fostering inclusivity (Barman, 2026; Pankaj, 2025; Parakh, 2020).

A similar trend has been noticed in Indonesia, where youth access to campaign funding have been found to disadvantage youth aspirants in the general elections mirroring patterns evident in other developing democracies. Recent statistics from the just concluded general elections in Indonesia indicates that only about 5% of youths aged less than 30 years were elected as

member of parliament; with about 15% of them aged 40 years and below. This implies that the situation is same across middle income countries in Asia; a situation closely linked to financial and institutional barriers. Despite youths constituting significant portion of the Indonesian population, they are acutely underrepresented in legislature implying that unequal access to financial resources needed during electoral process could be a contributing factor, and should be investigated (Ridhoh, 2025; Nofriansyah & Aryansah, 2026).

The trend is also evident in Africa, with countries like South Africa have very limited number of youths at less than 3% elected in both houses; the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces. The insufficient number of youthful legislators in both houses implies that the laws and policies passed may fail to prioritize on the youth issues such as unemployment, housing and innovation; as the elderly legislators may focus on other issues that align with their generational needs leading to a democratic representation gap and intergenerational policy imbalances (Bekker, Runciman, & Roberts, 2022; (Booyesen, 2015). According to Kariuki et al (2021) the low representation arises due to party structures and campaign resources constrain.

The dire situation of youth underrepresentation in Africa, varies from one country to another; with some countries like Botswana, Zambia and Namibia are characterized with a complete absence of youthful legislators; implying that youth issues risk being under-prioritized in all levels of legislation. This persistent exclusion of the youths is likely to deter most of them from participating in political governance and electoral processes further widening the representational gaps; stifling innovative thinking especially in the wake of the fast-changing global innovation ecosystem (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2025).

In Kenya, the situation is no different, as the number of the youths under the age of 35 elected is all time low at less than 3% even despite them constituting three quarters of the Kenyan population; as evident in 2022 where only 17 (constituting 6% of total elected MPs) youths under the age of 35 were elected as member of parliaments and only 1 (2%) Women Representative (The Oslo Centre, 2025; Hassan & Minja, 2024; KNBS, 2025). This demonstrates how youths are underrepresented in Kenya and the need to assess the contributing factor to this problem. Evidence from the 2022 general elections shows that campaign expenditure has risen to alarming levels increasing financial burden, with aspirants seeking 1,882 elective positions requiring substantial financial resources, as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Campaign Expenditure incurred in 2022 General Election

Elective Position	Average Campaign Expenditure (Kshs)	No. of Elective Positions
President	2 billion – 10 billion	1
Governor	500 million– 1 billion	47
Senator	40 million – 50 million	47
Women Representative	40 million – 50 million	47
Members of Parliament	15 million – 20 million	290
Members of County Assembly	3 million – 10 million	1,450
Total		1,882

(Source: IEBC, 2022; KNBS, 2026)

While the campaign funding has been on rise, the financial ability of the political parties has not kept pace, due to declining membership subscriptions and declining statutory allocations. The ever-rising cost of election campaigns disproportionately affects youth aspirants who have less ability to mobilize the financial resources needed to carry-out competitive campaigns. Ahead of the 2027 General Election, the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission

(IEBC) has proposed campaign spending limit as part of broader electoral reforms geared at promoting equitable and transparent electoral competition. Nonetheless, questions have been raised with regard to practical enforceability of these campaign limits

1.1 Problem Statement

Across many democracies in the world, youths continue to be underrepresented in both Lower and Upper Legislative Houses despite the sustained effort by the government, legislature and non-governmental organization to strengthen youth participation through capacity building, mentorship programs, subsidized nomination fees, reserved seats for youths both in parliament and within political parties' leadership. This ceaseless underrepresentation of youths in legislative position implies that the current interventions alone are insufficient in solving challenges facing young aspirants. The persistent issue of youth underrepresentation suggests that there is likelihood of other underlying constraints; with impaired access to campaign funding being a probable factor that calls for an empirical inquiry (United Nations, 2025; Stockemer & Sundstrom, 2022; Inter-Parliamentarian Union, 2023).

The persistent exclusion of youths from elective positions in the country may undermine the legislative processes, decisions on public policies affecting them, political legitimacy of the legislation passed in parliament, and generational fairness. In Stockemer and Anla (2024) study the perpetual underrepresentation of the youths has been found to deter most youths from engaging in political activities and processes even after numerous efforts to build their capacities. The youths feel discouraged as their voice is never heard; their socio-economic interests are never given priority by the elderly legislators who often focus on issues affecting them; a situation that result to loss of trust with democratic institutions (Buscato, Entong & Bacang, 2024; Stockemer, Thompson, & Sundstrom, 2023). A problem if not adequately addressed may result to policy and legislative imbalances that may worsen the already dire situation of underrepresentation.

Youth participation in general elections is a key factor in not only bolstering democratic spaces in our society but also in ensuring sustainability of democratic institutions in today's fast paced society. Nonetheless, their involvement in political governance matters is largely tied to their level of engagement in general elections (Bolin, Backlund, & Jungar, 2023; Madueke & Enyiazu, 2025). According to data from IEBC (2022) the number of aspirants under the age of 35 contesting in the general elections has been relatively low a situation that has reduced their overall participation in political matters both at lower and upper house despite them being majority of the voters. Out of 3428 youth aspirants who participated in 2017 general election only 314 were elected in office translating to a 9.2% success rate. The same trend was witnessed in 2022 where out of 4,508 youths who sought to be elected only 335 won at a slightly lower success rate of 7.4%; this implies that there could be a factor hindering youths to successful run and manage their campaigns.

1.2 Objectives

The study aimed to accomplish the following objectives:

- i. To examine whether party financial support influence campaign fund accessibility among youth aspirants participating in general elections in Kenya.
- ii. To assess how candidate fundraising capacity influence campaign fund accessibility among youth aspirants participating in general elections in Kenya.

2.1 Theoretical Review

This research paper was anchored on two theories that collectively described the conceptual relationship between variables under probe. Firstly, resource mobilization that was developed

by McCarthy and Zald (1977), which postulates that the success of any organization or social movement lies with its capacity to acquire, manage and mobilize resources at their disposal. The theory argues that financial resources are lifeline of organizations and social movements; which require to achieve social and political objectives. The performance of these organizations and social movements depends on the availability of resources; material or non-material that determines their competitiveness.

The theory assumes that resources are very essential in the financial performance of organization and social movement groups; it also acknowledge that financial resources are not equally distributed to all; and there is need for effective leadership to bolster resource mobilization. The theory also assumes that the success of organization or social movement can be influenced by external aid from donors. The theory has been subject to ongoing academic debate and critique, particularly due to its over-emphasis on financial and material resources; as well as its underestimation of institutional and structural barriers.

The theory of resource mobilization is relevant to this research in the sense that it offers a framework for understanding the association between a candidate fundraising capacity and campaign fund accessibility in an effort to bolster youth competitiveness during elections. It underscores the significance of resource mobilization in explaining how resource mobilization impact on political participation of youths.

Secondly, the research paper was based on the elite theory that was proposed by Pareto and Mosca (1896); and later modernized by Mills (1956). This theory holds that in most societies, power is often concentrated in the hands of a small circle of the elites who control and make fundamental decisions affecting the society. The elites often control key decision-making institutions within a given country. The theory is anchored on the assumption that there exist disparities in how power and resources are shared; it also assumes that there exist a minority group of elites that control and shape public opinion in every society; they are more organized and resourceful than the rest of the citizens. However, this theory has been criticized due its overemphasis on the elite's dominance in the political leadership; and undermining democratic participation. The theory disregards the role of institutions and accountability mechanisms in curtailing the power of these elites; it also assumes political inclusivity. This theory of elites is appropriate in describing how political power and campaign funding accessibility is concentrated among the elites and incumbents. It explains why youth aspirants struggle to access financial resources required to bolster their competitiveness in general elections. The theory highlights how the elites use their power to influence party nominations; it also supports the argument that the low youth representation in elective positions is partly caused by elite dominance in resource management and distribution.

2.2 Empirical Review

In this section the paper delved into the existing empirical evidences on the research problem under probe, highlighting methodological techniques used and their findings particularly on the barriers to campaign fund accessibility among youth aspirants seeking for elective positions in Kenya.

2.2.1 Party Financial Support and Campaign Fund Accessibility

Across the globe, scores of scholars have carried out numerous empirical studies to explore determinants impacting on the study variables from diverse contextual, conceptual and methodological perspectives. The most notable study was undertaken by Put, Muyters and Maddens (2022) who in their probe on challengers and incumbents campaign funding dynamics deduced that most political parties in Colombia channelled significant amount of campaign funds and resources to incumbents than challengers in their quest to reward

institutional loyalty, and ensuring experienced incumbents are re-elected. Further, the study observed that most political challengers received higher private donations than incumbents; as most of challengers resort to private fundraising to counter biased party campaign funding that is always in favour of incumbents. Although the study provided useful perspectives, it did not explore youth aspirants, and largely based its findings in a single country investigation; it did not analyse youth representation in general elections, only limited itself with incumbency.

In a subsequent probe by Arriola et al. (2021) who while investigating party switching in new democracies and targeting legislative candidates in 2011 election in Zambia; using a blend of face-to-face survey and experimental framework; established that political parties candidates who expect to fund their campaigns from their personal finances were more inclined to switch to ruling parties that would significantly lessen their financial burden. The study found out that most political parties were inclined to those candidates with more financial muscles and could fund their own campaign without relying on the party; and it is a key determined used in party's nomination criteria. This practice often excludes first-timers' aspirants with impaired financial base. The wealthy political candidates use their financial soundness to manipulate nomination processes; as the nominations are granted to the highest bidder particularly the self-funding political elites impairing democratic representation. While this study yields valuable insights, it did not focus on youthful candidates and narrowly investigated campaign funding support.

A further study by Currie-Wood & Pruyers (2023) while investigating gendered dynamics in candidate recruitment in 2008 and 2011 federal elections in Canada; upon evaluating 1,845 Canadian federal candidates, found out that dominant or top-tier political parties offers additional funding assistance to selected number of candidates signifying the significance of parties' financial assistance to candidates during federal elections. While offering meaningful discoveries this study neglects youth participation as it primarily narrows on gender aspects, it was also conducted in a developed country which have different political, institutional, demographic and economic characteristics, limiting generalizability of its result in a developing country like Kenya.

In another separate study by Hicken et al. (2022) who while investigating the impact of electoral handouts in weak party states, and utilizing mixed methods approach using both surveys of voters and political brokers and aspirants involved in parliamentary elections in Indonesia; deduced that political campaigns in Indonesia are super expensive and require immense financial and non-financial resources. The study most specifically observed that money remain critical in electoral competition; and the success of candidates in election is largely determined by how well they are funded. Despite these revelations this study fails to focus on youth aspirants as it revolves around the stakeholders involved in election brokerage and clientelism; it narrowly focuses on how political financial assistance influence election of political candidates.

Equally, in another probe by Schuster (2020) who while reviewing United States Congressional election data using panel surveys to investigate the relationship between campaign spending and election outcomes; found out that campaign expenditure immensely heightens voter support, particularly among low-information voters. The study also established that campaign expenditure is critical in altering electorate turnout dynamics; emphasizing the significance of strategic intuition in campaign management. Although the study offers progressive knowledge, the analysis only examined campaign expenditure; it did not focus on party funding among youth aspirants as is the case with the current research. The reviewed empirical studies relating to party financial support and campaign fund accessibility present inconsistencies and knowledge gaps that warrant further empirical investigation.

2.2.2 Candidate Fundraising Capacity and Campaign Fund Accessibility

The most conspicuous study relating to this research is that by Bouton, Cage et al. (2022) which while examining small campaign donors in United States congressional candidates and evaluating data from 2005 to 2020 observed that though the small-scale donors are on rise in the period under review; they are still less impactful as compared with larger donors; especially in determination of election outcomes. The study also noted that the meagre donations that some candidates get are often motivated by candidates' ideology while that attributed to large donation is often geared towards exerting stronger political influence and dominance essential in determining electoral outcomes. Although contributing to the empirical base, this study did not extensively investigate party-controlled funding especially among youthful candidates; it focused on all the candidates.

A further study undertaken by Halcoussis (2024) while investigating the influence of candidate specific characteristics on United States congressional fundraising in 2017, 2018 and 2020 congressional elections; using a regression analysis found out that candidate specific characteristics largely impact on overall fundraising performance. More specifically, the study noted that candidates with powerful personal attributes were more likely to obtain high campaign funding, elevating their odds of being elected; as strong candidate attribute give the stronger candidates an upper hand over first-timers that are often disadvantaged. The study noted that most parties are more inclined to funding campaign of those candidates that it perceives them to be stronger or have more favourable characteristics; in that regard the opponent characteristics should always be considered, as influence donors' willingness to fund a candidate vying for any political seat. While this study offers incredible perspectives, it does not conclusively attribute candidate's fundraising ability to contribute to a candidate's success.

In a subsequent study by Albert, et al. (2024), which while examining the of election reforms on campaign finance in Alaska; established that the election reforms increased campaign expenditure among candidates broadening donor pools. This was largely because most serious aspirants did not participate in summer primaries they saved the money for the muddled general elections. There were no new donors and candidates had to split the existing donors; ballot did not compel new donors to fund campaigns of their favourite candidates. It was also noted that although ranked-choice voting influence the outcome of the election, especially on who wins; it does not diminish the power of money during campaign; and there is need to reform campaign finance laws and not just ballot rules.

In a study carried out in France on relationship between campaign finance rules and electoral outcomes by Broberg, Pons and Tricaud (2025), it was established that implementation of campaign rules diminishes the chances of incumbents from being re-elected as compared to first-timers. Correspondingly, in Sudulich, Trumm and Makropoulos (2024) study on gendered issues influencing campaign financing in 16 European countries, found out that there exist significant gender gaps in campaign financing; with women incurring relatively lower campaign budgets than their male counterparts; with the gap being acute among incumbents. It also observed that this gap increase campaign funding gaps as the party recruit more females in line with the gender quotas. While these two studies provide incredible perspectives, they do not focus on youths' campaign funding in developing countries, limiting applicability of their findings.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

This probe adopts a conceptual framework that demonstrates the influence of predictor variables on the outcome variable as illustrated in Figure 1.

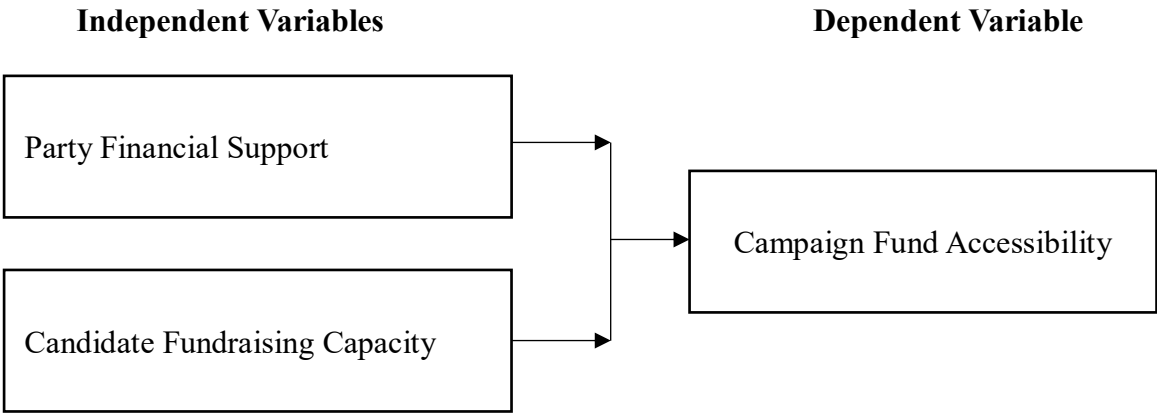


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3.0 Methodology

This subsection indicates the research methodologies employed in data collection, analysis and interpretation of the findings on barriers influencing campaign fund accessibility among youth aspirants participating in general elections in election. In particular, the study targeted youth aspirants especially those have vied since the New Constitution came into effect in 4th March 2013 as they have interacted with political parties and have valuable insights on barriers to campaign fund accessibility among youths drawn from 98 fully registered political parties as of June 2026 as demonstrated in the ensuing table. The inclusion criteria constituted of participants who were contestants in the general elections in 2013, 2017 and 2022: due to their experience in dealing with the political parties that participated in the general elections within the period under review.

Table 2: Study Population

Year/Category	Youths Elected	Youths Not Elected	Population
2013	294	3,486	3,780
2017	338	3828	4,166
2022	275	4233	4,508
Total	907	11,547	12,454

(Source: IEBC, 2013; IEBC, 2017; IEBC, 2022)

The sample in this probe was estimated using a two-step Cochran’s (1977) formula of sample determination that is suitable when dealing with finite population as it was the case in this study. The two-steps sample estimation included:

Step 1: Applying General Cochran Formula

Unadjusted Sample Size = $\frac{Z^2pq}{e^2}$

Unadjusted Sample Size = $\frac{(1.96)^2 (0.5)(0.5)pq}{0.05^2}$

Unadjusted Sample Size = 384

Step 2: Applying Finite Population Correction Formula

$$\text{Adjusted Sample Size} = \frac{n^0}{1 + \frac{n^0 - 1}{n}}$$

$$\text{Adjusted Sample Size} = \frac{384}{1 + \frac{384 - 1}{12,454}}$$

Final Sample Size = 372

After the ideal sample size was established, the study adopted a stratified sampling design to categorize the target population into three distinct sub-groups based on the year in which the general election was held: 2013, 2017 and 2022; with convenience sampling technique employed to recruit participants from each sub-group (stratum). To avoid duplication in selection of participants the study ensured that no participant was sampled more than once.

Table 3: Study Sample Size

Year/Category	Youth Candidates	Sample
2013	3,780	113
2017	4,166	124
2022	4,508	135
Total	12,454	372

(Source: IEBC, 2013, 2017, 2022)

The data was primarily collected through semi-structured questionnaires suitable in collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. The use of open and closed-ended questions allowed the research participants to give detailed explanations on their individual experiences as youth candidates during general elections in Kenya particularly on barriers influencing campaign fund accessibility. This method allowed for data triangulation providing a more robust interpretation of the results. The quantitative data was uploaded, coded and analysed using SPSS version 30.0. The descriptive statistics were utilized where frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation were employed to summarize the research participants biodata and the study variables. Equally, the study employed inferential statistics where multiple regression was used to investigate the relationships and determine the predictors of campaign fund accessibility among youth aspirants participating in general elections in Kenya. This type of regression was utilized as it allows for simultaneous assessment of multiple predictor variables enabling the investigator to separate the influence of each independent variable while controlling the effect of the other predictors.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

The analysis yielded several noteworthy findings on barriers to campaign fund accessibility among youth aspirants. The presentation of the findings commences with the response rate, followed by participant demographic and finally the result on hypothesized research variables.

The study attained an 88% (n = 327) response rate, implying that a significant number of respondents participated in the research. The relatively high rate of responses indicates that

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there was strong respondents’ engagement that lowered the chances of non-response bias bolstering validity and generalizability of the results.

Analysis of Respondents’ Demographic Profile

The study further examined the demographic characteristics of the research participants to find out the extent to which they represented the target population. The demographic analysis revealed that most of the research participants had at least secondary education with 62% having secondary education certificate, 25% having obtained tertiary education and 13% having completed primary education. The research also recorded a moderately balanced gender distribution, with females comprising of 45% and males 55% of the research participants. In terms of employment status, 37% of the research participants were unemployed, 35% were self-employed, with 26% formally employed and 2% were students. Regarding the elective positions contended in the previous general elections, a significant number of the participants (57%) had vied for the position of Member of County Assembly (MCA), followed by Member of national Assembly (23%), Women Representative (9%), Senator (8%) and other elective positions at 2%. Regarding the most dominant source of campaign financing sought by youth aspirants; support from family and friends emerged (55%), followed by business income (24%), casual employment (12%), farming (7%) and formal employment (2%).

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

The discussion now shifts from the respondent’s demographic characteristics to the analysis of political party financial support as the first study variable.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics on Political Party Financial Support

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	SD
The party nomination fees are affordable for youth candidates	38	26	12	14	10	3.68	1.33
Political parties often provide non-monetary campaign resources such as campaign t-shirts, caps and logistics	33	30	14	13	10	3.63	1.29
Access to party funding increase the competitiveness of youth aspirants	30	34	2	14	20	3.4	1.54
The parties have transparent criteria for allocating campaign funds	6	10	10	38	36	2.12	1.2

The descriptive analysis of the result on political party financial support and campaign fund accessibility yielded the following results:

On affordability of nomination fees, the results indicated that party nomination fees for youth aspirants are affordable in most of the parties (M = 3.68; SD = 1.33); this implied that most of the research participants agreed that affordable nomination fees improve youth participation in politics; as it alleviates financial barriers to those seeking party nomination. The finding further revealed that majority of the respondents at 63% agreed that political parties often provide non-monetary campaign resources such as campaign t-shirts, caps and logistics (M = 3.63; SD = 1.29); implying that most of the political parties largely support youth aspirants through assorted campaign merchandise lowering their campaign costs and promoting access to campaign funding. The results further indicated that the availability of party funding influenced the decision of youth aspirants contesting in general elections as noted by 64% of the respondents (M = 3.4; SD = 1.54); which implied that access to party financial support is a critical factor that influence their decisions to vie for elective positions, this emphasize the

significance of party funding in bolstering youth political participation. The other significant result was on whether political parties have transparent criteria in allocation of campaign funds; where the results indicated that majority off the respondents at 74% disagreed ($M = 2.12$; $SD = 1.20$) disagreed; implying that most political parties are not transparent in the manner in which they allocate campaign fund among youth aspirants and incumbents. This result demonstrates that even though most parties provide youth aspirants with some campaign materials; concerns on fairness and transparency may hinder equitable access to campaign resources for youth aspirants.

Candidate Fundraising Capacity

On the other objective on the influence of candidate fundraising capacity on campaign fund accessibility among youth aspirants in Kenya, the result yielded mixed results as illustrated in the ensuing table on descriptive analysis.

Table 5: Descriptive Analysis on Candidate Fundraising Ability

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	SD
Personal Financial Capacity							
Financial constraints reduce youth participation in general elections	35	30	12	14	9	3.68	1.39
Online platforms enable young aspirants to fundraise from a wide spectrum of supporters	37	22	12	14	15	3.52	1.50
If I had affordable sources for campaign funding I will contest	42	26	2	17	13	3.67	1.45
Ability to Fundraise from donors							
Youth aspirants mostly depend heavily on external financial support to be successful in their campaigns	38	33	5	18	6	3.79	1.28
I have strong network of individuals who are willing to contribute financially to my campaign	22	15	10	38	15	2.91	1.42
Community Fundraising							
Use of online fundraising tools lower financial barriers that youth aspirants encounter	33	35	6	16	10	3.65	1.36
Online platforms such as crowdfunding and social media are an effective source of campaign funding of young aspirants	33	32	5	26	4	3.64	1.31
I can effectively use digital platforms to mobilize campaign funds	26	22	16	15	21	3.17	1.54

The result indicated that the personal financial capacity of youth aspirants had the highest mean score of 3.62, implying that most of youth aspirants who participate in the general election feel that financial constraints impact on the overall election outcomes. Most youth aspirants strongly agreed that personal financial difficulties negatively influence their overall ability to seek for elective positions ($Mean = 3.68$; $SD = 1.39$) and often hinder their political aspirations ($Mean = 3.52$; $SD = 1.5$). There was a strong consensus among most of the respondents ($Mean = 3.67$; $SD = 1.45$) who felt that availability of affordable campaign funding sources would enable more youth to participate in general election. This means that there is need for electoral bodies and government to develop campaign funding schemes for youths and special interest groups to create a level playing ground between the youths and incumbents.

The youth aspirants’ ability to fundraise had a moderate aggregate mean of 3.10 yielding varied results on fundraising capacity. More specifically, it was observed that though most of the youth aspirants heavily rely on external campaign funding support (Mean = 3.79; SD = 1.28) they have diminished personal capability to get it; as they lack the relevant skills and experiences necessary for successful fundraising; suggesting the need for training and mentorship on donor engagement and campaign funding strategies. The result also indicated that most youth aspirants have weak donor networks (Mean = 2.91; SD = 1.42) that hinders their overall campaign activities. The overdependence on external campaign funding coupled with diminished individual fundraising ability increase their susceptibility to financial exploitation by election brokers diminishing their success rates in elections.

On community fundraising strategies the result yielded a moderate aggregate mean of 3.10, which indicated that though most youth aspirants could raise campaign funds from family and friends and online platforms most of the youths’ aspirants still are unable to fundraise enough campaign resources needed to contest. As noted by a significant majority who despite acknowledging that online fundraising tools may lower campaign funding barriers, they are still unable to use it successfully in their quest for elective positions (Mean = 3.65; SD = 1.36).

The use of digital platforms among youth aspirants recorded a high composite mean of 3.44; which implies that the use of online fundraising options such as crowdfunding have potential to generate campaign financing for young aspirants. Most of the research participants agreed that social media platforms are effective funding sources (Mean = 3.64; SD = 1.31) with potential to expand their campaign funding base. However, the results also revealed that most of the youth aspirants lack the necessary skills to effectively use digital platforms to mobilize the requisite campaign funds (Mean = 3.17, SD = 1.54); which implies that there is a wide variance in digital skills. The digital and crowdfunding options offer innovative ways of youth campaign funding that bypasses tradition campaign funding mechanism that often work in favour of the incumbents and elderly aspirants. To fully harness this potential, there is need to train youth aspirants on how to utilize crowdfunding and digital platforms available, as well as social media campaign strategies.

4.2 Inferential Analysis

The inferential analysis was done through multiple regression to examine the extent to which the predictor variables influenced the outcome variable. Prior to fitting the regression model, the researcher ensured all necessary diagnostic tests had been undertaken to examine whether all assumptions of regression had been upheld. The results indicated that all assumptions were met; implying the regression analysis was appropriate. The results of the multiple regression are as summarized in Table 6.

Table 6: Model Summary and Regression Coefficients

Model	R	R - Squared	Adjusted R Squared	Standard Error of the Estimate
1	0.785	0.620	0.787	0.426

The results indicated that the regression model adopted had strong explanatory power, explaining 62.0 % of the change in the outcome variable; implying that both party financial support and candidate fundraising ability jointly explained 62% of the variance campaign fund accessibility among youth aspirants. The adjusted R² of 0.787 indicated that upon adjusting for the number of independent variables, the multiple regression model remained a good fit.

Table 7: Regression Coefficients

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig
Constant	4.64	0.186		24.946	< 0.002
Party financial support	0.086	0.044	0.07	1.955	< 0.002
Candidate fundraising ability	0.182	0.048	0.164	3.792	< 0.002

The results indicated that both party financial support ($\beta = 0.07$) and candidate fundraising ability ($\beta = 0.164$) had a positive influence on campaign fund accessibility; nonetheless candidate fundraising ability demonstrated a relatively high influence as compared to party financial support, depicted through high standardized beta coefficients. This suggests that candidate fundraising ability is main factor influencing accessibility of campaign funding among youth aspirants; it exhibited a high predictive power. It also indicates that though the political parties have a role in funding aspirants in general elections it has a relatively low influence on access to campaign fundings as most of the parties are underfunded due to diminished member subscription, declining donor funding and delayed political parties funding. As a result, youth aspirants must diversify sources of their campaign funding to bolster their chances of winning the election that is highly linked to the extent of campaign funding.

5.0 Conclusion

The evidence gathered in this study demonstrated that youth participation in politics is largely influenced by campaign funding. The evidence shows that though most political parties in Kenya have made numerous attempts to lower financial entry barriers to youth aspirants through reduced or subsidized nomination fees still there exist campaign funding gaps that hinder their overall electoral competitiveness; an indication that this this intervention alone has been inadequate in solving broader campaign funding needs of these youth aspirants. Moreover, the research has shown that direct campaign funding is erratic and inequitable; with incumbents being preferred more than the young aspirants who are left politically and financially vulnerable diminishing their overall ability to campaign and their success rates during the general elections. Additionally, the study indicated that the campaign materials provided by most of the political parties are insufficient in meeting the actual campaign resource requirements for meaningful campaign engagement. As a result, most youth aspirants are faced with extreme campaign funding needs especially on acquisition of key campaign merchandise, public address systems, branded campaign vehicles, posters, banners and other logistical expenses.

The study further observed that even though there are subsidized nomination fees on youth aspirants, extreme campaign funding gaps still exist due to high cost associated with campaign and electoral processes in Kenya. The study found out that most political parties have no transparency in allocation of campaign funds; there is evidence of absence of clear youth campaign funding policy hindering equitable access to campaign funds. The study concludes that although most political parties offer financial and material assistance to youth aspirants in Kenya, the support is insufficient, and inconsistent hindering youth overall participation and competitiveness during general elections. It also concluded that though the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission have developed a campaign financing legal framework on campaign contribution limits and spending ceilings geared at bolstering fairness in electoral processes; it is still inadequate due to difficulties in its enforceability.

6.0 Recommendations

In the light of the results obtained this study make the following recommendations:

1. The political parties should develop a youth campaign funding model that dedicate portion of the aspirant's funds to youths enhancing their electoral competitiveness.
2. The parties should encourage joint campaigning across all elective positions to cut cost of campaigning that is extremely high and restrictive.
3. The parties should come up with a policy that bolsters equity in allocation of campaign funds among its aspirants more particularly to youth and other special interest groups just as it does with the incumbents who always have an upper hand of beginner or youthful candidates; reducing incidences of favouritism that hinders equitable access to financial support.
4. In the same way, political parties should allocate sufficient financial and material resources to youth candidates to promote campaign activities; direct funding lowers overreliance on personal resources and strengthen youth competitiveness.
5. The parties should offer campaign materials such as banners, posters, caps, t-shirts and logistical assistance to youth aspirants; to reduce their costs of conducting campaign enabling them to run successful campaigns.
6. To strengthen youth fundraising ability; political parties in collaboration with non-governmental organizations should train youth aspirants on fundraising strategies, campaign budgeting and innovative fundraising techniques; as they require this knowledge and skills to enhance their resource mobilization ability.
7. The youth aspirants should be introduced to all available crowdfunding platforms in an effort to broaden their campaign funding base to minimize overreliance on traditional campaign funding sources and techniques.
8. The political parties should partner with the private sector in an effort to support youth campaign activities through mentorship, financial sponsorship and campaign management.
9. The political parties should strengthen enforcement of campaign finance regulations that is critical in monitoring of campaign finance to ensure that youth candidates are in total compliance of all applicable laws.
10. Equally, the political parties, policymakers and researchers should continuously examine campaign funding mechanisms and practices especially those involving youth aspirants. It should adopt evidence-based reforms to alleviate challenges and improving overall access to campaign funding among youth aspirants.

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