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**Barriers of Effective Political Communication and Youth Behavior during 2022 Elections
in Kisumu County, Kenya**

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Abstract

Purpose: The study sought to establish barriers of effective political communication and youth behavior during 2022 elections in Kisumu County, Kenya. The existing gap in knowledge was the understanding of how barriers of effective political communication can influence youth behavior during election campaigns.

Methodology: The study was conducted using the descriptive design, with the mixed methods approach. Quantitative data was collected from 400 respondents of Kisumu County, Kenya, while qualitative data obtained through 10 in-depth interviews and 30 respondents for Focus Group Discussions.

Findings: The study findings revealed that even though youth play a critical role in various stages in future leadership, they can be used as a source of unity as well as source of division. If youth are not used productively during electioneering periods, they have negative impact on themselves, families and society at large affecting voter turnout, voting trends and inter-ethnic relationships. The study further found that barriers of effective political communication influence youth behavior.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The study was informed by Speech Act Theory, Theory of Political Propaganda and Mediatization of Politics Theory. The study recommends the need for political class to follow laid down legislations by avoiding the use of barriers of effective political communication for proper youth engagement in political matters without causing mayhem among themselves in the society through use of hate, propaganda, stereotype and discriminatory political messages.

Keywords: *Barriers, Political Communication, Youth Behavior*

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INTRODUCTION

Political communication involves interactive processes in which information is exchanged between political actors, especially politicians; the media; and the public who are voters, (Mihaliki, Garaj, & Bardovic, 2022). The flow of information itself is realized in several directions and various talking points, (Norris, 2015). Its importance for society is indirectly visible through the great interest of the authors in this area. In addition, it merges and is directly linked to other areas of political life, such as the political campaign, which opens up other topics and sub-themes of study, (Bardovic, 2018). A study by Mihaliki et al 2022 is framed in the field of political communication, and specific attention is paid to the form of communication of youth political organizations within Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and the European level on the social network Facebook. Recent years have brought fundamental technological innovations that have also affected political communication and opened a new paradigm in its research especially among the youth political engagements, (Allcott & Matthew, 2017). As a result, an important part of the exchange of information between politicians and voters has gradually moved to the online environment.

Barriers of effective political communication are political messages; these are statements made in oral or written forms, verbally or non-verbally, implicitly or explicitly, and intentionally or accidentally which contains political load, (MasterClass, 2021). Political Messages are the messages that are intended for a political purpose and it pertains to an issue of public policy of possible concern to the electorate. Political Messages are not solely for commercial purposes. Political message is the overall image, narrative and ideology that a political campaign tries to communicate on behalf of a candidate. Political messages are intended to achieve a goal, to motivate people as well as to mobilize and persuade voters on important issues on the background of candidate's position, (Kreiss, 2016; Enli, 2017 & Larry, 2019). Political campaigns in the United State spend a great deal of effort and time coordinating a multi-front communications strategy to drive campaign message, (Teenie, 2012). There are different elements that make up campaign message; one need to understand each of these messages and how they relate to each other in order to craft strong messages that can persuade young voters.

Barriers of effective political communication such as propaganda usually present 'organized myth' that limits chances to discover the truth, (Marshall, 2015 & Mercier, 2017 & Brown, 2020). For example, propagandists; politicians, political parties and other opinion leaders can present a propaganda messages full of myths and misconceptions to the public so as to stop the latter from discovering the truth. In the opinion of the researcher, this can clearly manifest during political campaigns and electioneering periods. Prosecutions of speech crimes at International Criminal tribunals over the past twenty years highlights the role of propaganda messages in enhancing war; courts lack sufficient empirical data on the effect of propaganda on inter-group change of behavior, (Gillet & Wilson, 2018 & Kiper et al., 2019). Political statements such as negative stereotypes lower in-group and out-group understanding. Such negative inter-group attitudes are associated with social problems; exclusion that can promote inter-group conflict. (Beilmann & Heinemann, 2014).

Study by Mutz in 2022 on "Effects of Changes in Perceived Discrimination During BLM on the 2020 Presidential Election" evaluated whether and in what direction the Black Lives Matter

movement affected the small percentage of voters whose presidential votes changed from 2016 to 2020, (Mutz, 2022). Six waves of nationally representative probability surveys are used to establish that significant increases in the extent to which Americans perceived discrimination against Blacks and to which people favored more government efforts to address racial inequality both occurred in 2020. The study found out that increases in perceptions of racial inequality significantly increased the probability of vote switching toward the Democratic candidate. The study also found out that attention to racial injustice also well-informed voters to rely more heavily on this issue when evaluating candidates. Therefore, few Americans change their choice of presidential candidate to a different political party from election to election.

Youth, the transition between childhood and early to middle adulthood, from a critical part of human existence, independent social participation, vocational skilling, devoted to education, career and marriage, (Bishakha, 2023). As a result, this makes the youth an interesting phase of encounter with institutions such as civil society, government, economy, religion and the law. It also makes the youth an important participant in the various programs and policies of the government of a nation-state. The political participation of the youth is nonetheless subject to challenges such as anti-institutional sentiments, misinformation, violence, apathy and lack of trust in the politics and institutional processes of the preceding generations, (Malafaia et al., 2021; Henn et al., 2022 & Papaioannou, 2022). Media such as social media has also been a game changer in youth politics offering a platform to millions of young people in the society to raise their voices but has been a major source of fake news and hate speech in youth politics. Malafaia et al., (2018), there should be interventions that may inspire youth participation in politics, train them in political processes and ensure their active and knowledgeable participation in policymaking and politics.

Young Africans participate less in elections than their older counterparts, (Someshwar & Ogawa, 2020). With Africa's growing youth bulge, this constituency represents an arithmetically important voting bloc, and their lower involvement in elections could undermine the legitimacy of the region's democratic trajectory. Africa's youth can be classified as belonging to two categories; those aged 18 to 24 and those aged 25 to 35. Determinants of the youth's voting behavior include their access to information and political knowledge as well as their party system and perceptions of the electoral context, (Danielle & Danielal, 2013; Belschners, 2018 & Daly, 2021). The efficacy and fairness of elections and the degree of partisanship increase the youth's decision to vote and the length of party incumbency is a deterrent to turnout, (Mansouri, 2020). Africa's youth not only need to be exposed to greater fora for learning about the party options and political processes but also that political parties in the region need to become more relevant to this constituency.

Young populaces between the ages of 15 and 25 constitute a fifth of the world's population, (United Nations Development Programme, 2013 & Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021). While they are often involved in politically relevant processes informally such as activism and civic engagement, they are not formally represented in national political institutions such as parliaments and many of them do not participate in polls. This impact on the quality of democratic governance. The inclusion of youth in formal politics is important since fresh ideas and new leadership can help to overcome authoritarian practices in various nations of the world, (Cambodia, 2011). This has been demonstrated through popular uprisings and youth's occupation of movements that act as countries' transitions. In cases where youth-led protests have forced authoritarian regimes from

power, significant frustrations are likely to arise if youth are not included in new formal decision-making. This can threaten democratization and accelerate conflict dynamics. The international community has recognized the importance of youth participation in political arrangements including through several international conventions and resolutions. In line with these commitments, youth can also be viewed as a positive force for transformative social change that aims to help enhance youth participation in political matters, (Wyness, 2001 & White, 2011).

Support for the political participation of young people should extend across the electoral phase, (Bishakha, 2023). Capacity development for young candidates has proven to be more operational as a continuous effort than as a one-off event three months before an election, (Jabari, 2022). Youth who participate actively in their community from early on are more likely to become involved citizens and voters, (Malafaia et al., 2021). Youth political engagement needs to be meaningful and effective that goes beyond gestures, (Boulianne, 2020). This emphasizes on strategic interventions beyond the polling event. Capacity development is an integral measure, and while building individual capacities is crucial, the capacities of organizations and the degree to which an environment enables individuals and institutions to participate in political processes can also be considered.

In India 900 million eligible voters, 45 million voters are under the age of 25 in which 15 million of them are first time voters, (Bishakha, 2023 & JACINTA, 2024). This is the group of Indian citizens electing the next generation of leadership. With such a large number of young voters, they could hypothetically be game changers in future elections. India with the world's largest youth population is soon becoming the youngest country in the world with an average age of 29 along with an ever-increasing workforce. This not only indicate the specific demographics which are going to be most impacted by economic and political turbulence but it also highlights the population which should care the most about their vote, (Bagri, 2019 & Mesa, 2024). There have been increased efforts from numerous political parties and organizations to mobilizing youth votes, as their vote matters most. It was realized that youth are resources in the nation-building in the world and this made most countries lower the eligibility age of voters from 21 to 18 years. This change hoped to bring out push the youth to take responsibility for their country.

Statement of Problem

Barriers of effective political communication such as propaganda usually present 'organized myth' that limits chances to discover the truth, (Marshall, 2015 & Mercier, 2017 & Brown, 2020). For example, propagandists; politicians, political parties and other opinion leaders can present a propaganda messages full of myths and misconceptions to the public so as to stop the latter from discovering the truth. In the opinion of the researcher, this can clearly manifest during political campaigns and electioneering periods. Prosecutions of speech crimes at International Criminal tribunals over the past twenty years highlights the role of propaganda messages in enhancing war; courts lack sufficient empirical data on the effect of propaganda on inter-group change of behavior, (Gillet & Wilson, 2018 & Kiper et al., 2019). Political statements such as negative stereotypes lower in-group and out-group understanding. Such negative inter-group attitudes are associated with social problems; exclusion that can promote inter-group conflict. (Belemann & Heinemann, 2014).

In political processes, youth behavior has continued to be a serious issue facing contemporary democracies that needs to be understood better, (Kitanova, 2019). Various demographic and social factors determine youth participation in politics, (Fox, 2015). The message's context matters in shaping levels of participation in politics among the youth in society even as factors determining youth participation in politics are crucial. Demographic maturity influences patterns of political participation on youth, (Allen & Birth, 2015; Sloam, 2016 & Gallup International, 2017).

Youth, the transition between childhood and early to middle adulthood, form a critical part of human existence, independent social participation, vocational skilling, devoted to education, career and marriage, (Bishakha, 2023). As a result, this makes the youth an interesting phase of encounter with institutions such as civil society, government, economy, religion and the law. It also makes the youth an important participant in the various programs and policies of the government of a nation-state. The political participation of the youth is nonetheless subject to challenges such as anti-institutional sentiments, misinformation, violence, apathy and lack of trust in the politics and institutional processes of the preceding generations, (Malafaia et al., 2021; Henn et al., 2022 & Papaioannou, 2022). Young Africans participate less in elections than their older counterparts, (Someshwar & Ogawa, 2020). With Africa's growing youth bulge, this constituency represents an arithmetically important voting bloc, and their lower involvement in elections could undermine the legitimacy of the region's democratic trajectory.

The effects of Changes in Perceived Discrimination During BLM on the 2020 Presidential Election, evaluated whether and in what direction the Black Lives Matter movement affected the small percentage of young voters whose presidential votes changed from 2016 to 2020, (Mutz, 2022). Waves of nationally representative probability surveys were used to establish that significant increases in the extent to which American youth perceived discrimination against Blacks and to which people favored more government efforts to address racial inequality. Increases in perceptions of racial inequality significantly increased the probability of young votes switching toward the Democratic candidate Joe Biden as the preferred presidential candidate. The attention to racial injustice also well-informed voters among them the youth majority to rely more heavily on this issue when evaluating candidates. Therefore, this makes the youth of America to change their choice of presidential candidate to a different political party from election to election.

The behavior of the youth in any electoral arrangement can be source of harmony, ethnic prejudice i.e in-group, out-group, intergroup and intragroup, disagreement and lack of peace. Intolerance behavior among youth in the society has been witnessed before especially during election periods, (Abdulhameed et al., 2018 & Matara, 2020). This is after they are exposed to political messages; propaganda, hate, stereotypes and discriminatory messages. According to this study, these political messages are categorized as barriers of effective political communication that influence youth behavior during election campaigns. This may affect voter turnout and voting trends among people. During the 2017 general elections, vices among them ethnic rivalry were witnessed in the society from different communities, (Magara, 2020).

Objective of the Study

To assess the influence of barriers of effective political communication on youth behavior during 2022 elections in Kisumu County, Kenya.

Research Hypothesis

H₀₅: Barriers of effective political communication have no influence on youth behavior during 2022 elections in Kisumu County, Kenya.

Theoretical Framework

This study was informed by the following theories: Theory of Political Propaganda, Speech Act Theory and Mediatization of Politics Theory which are discussed below;

The Theory of Political Propaganda

This theory was promulgated and advanced by Herold Dwillight Lasswell in 1927, (Lasswell, 1927;Naveed, 2016 & American Psychological Association, 2023). The theory states that propaganda is the management of collective attitudes by manipulation of various significant symbols. Rice 2012 defines the term attitude symbol as a tendency to act according to certain valuation patterns, (Rice S. , 2012). The theory states that the existence of an attitude may not be a direct determinant of experience but also inference from signs which have a conventionalized significance. The valuational patterns upon which this inference is founded may be primitive gestures of the face, body, or more sophisticated gestures of the voice.

Propaganda is information that is predominantly used to influence audience and further the agenda, (Brown, 2018 & Mary, 2020). The information may not be objective and it may present facts selectively to encourage a particular synthesis. The perception is brought about by use of a loaded language to produce an emotional response to the information presented, (Pavlov, 2015). Propaganda is often associated with materials prepared by governments, activist groups, companies, religious organizations, political parties and political candidates, (Louise, 2015). The media and individuals can also be a source of propaganda. The politicians concerned employ the use of propaganda techniques such as sharp voice and powerful phrase in relation to a given culture.

The theory states that the propagandists apply significant symbols while expressing the attitudes and they are also capable of being employed to redefine attitudes, (Cambridge University, 2013). Thus, significant symbols employed have both expressive and propagandist functions in the life of the public. The propagandist gains access to the individual's private stock of meanings and becomes capable of exploiting them rather than the group's standard meanings in which the individual is a member, (Brown, 2018 & Mary, 2020). The theory by Herold D. Lasswell 1927, further indicates that in cultural terms, the strategy of propaganda involves the presentation of an object in a culture in such a manner that certain cultural attitudes will be organized towards it, (Lasswell H. D., 1927). In the context of communication and of this study, object refers to the ideas and statements presented by the designed propagandist to the audience, (Pavlov, 2015). For example, politicians during elections address supporters by presenting some statements considered divisive.

The theory further argues that the purpose of the propagandist is to intensify the attitudes favorable to his own desired purpose, to reverse the hostile attitudes to it and also to convince the rebels, (Rice S. , The Theory of Propaganda, 2013). Every cultural group has its unique values which include the possession of claims to ceremonial defense, (Rice S. A., 2012). The statement or object

that is aimed at promoting hate, incite and divide the group against another is presented by the propagandist in a way that is against the values provided, (Pavlov, 2015). The propagandists choose wisely statements that are meant to manipulate one from another, (Cody, 2018). This theory informed the study in that, it elaborates more on various aspects of propaganda as a form of political communication message which is one of the key indicators of independent variables. In this regard, this theory was used to explain how propagandists use words to influence youth electorates and their behavior.

Speech Act Theory (SAT)

The Speech Act Theory developed by a British Philosopher J.L Austin in 1975, (Musa & Willis, 2014 & Barrero, 2023). The theory was further developed by the American Philosopher J.R Searle. Speech Act Theory seeks to explain language in reality as well as how it is used to perform acts. It considers language as a sort of action rather than a medium to convey and express, (Nordquist, 2020). The theory emphasizes that utterance or speeches have a different and specific meaning depending with the contextual language employed. Speech is defined as human vocal communication using language communication, or the expression of thoughts in spoken words, (Constantino & Simon, 2018).

According to the theory there are two kinds of utterances; constative and performative, (Musa & Willis, 2014 & Barrero, 2023). Constative utterance describes the situation in relation to truth or falsehood, whereas, performative utterance, is considered to have a meaning of its own, (Brisset, Models as Speech Acts; The Feeling Case of Financial Models, 2018). Language defines the ethnic groupings and also a means to organize people and direct their own behaviors, (Ayeomoni & Akinkuolere, 2012). Austin further expounds his theory pointing that there are three basic components of a speech act; Locutionary act, Illocutionary act and Perlocutionary act, (Nakai, et al., 2017). The Locutionary act is the act of saying something with a certain sense and reference, whereas, Illocutionary act is the act performed in saying something, for example, the act named and identified by explicit performative verb and the Perlocutionary act is the act performed by as a consequence of saying something, (Kimotho, 2016).

Language does not only define an ethnic group but also to a larger extent, it is a means of organizing people and directing their behavior, (Ayeomoni & Akinkuolere, 2012). People particularly political figures, use language to persuade or to dissuade and even to criticize the electorates to support them, (Austin J. , 2020). This theory was relevant to inform the study since the barrier of effective political communication message; hate speech in one of the indicators independent variables under study. Understanding what people say, and how they say it might impact on the lives and actions of those being addressed, (Cohen-Almagor, 2013 & Kimotho, 2013).

This theory is fundamental to enable one understand ethnic hate speech, (Cohen-Almagor, 2013; Brisset, 2018). This study utilizes Austin's Speech Act Theory (SAT). Speech Act Theory in summary argues that to say something is to do something, (Searle, 1979; Constantino & Simon, 2018; Karin, 2020). SAT determines that a person does not only say things with words but also do these things. With political communication; political parties, political class and other opinion leaders, pronounce some sentiments that maybe considered provocative, (Austin J. , 2020). The

negative sentiments might possess the capability to promote division and conflict among various communities, especially with various political affiliations, (Deutscher, 2006). This might result into change of behavior of the people including vices such as ethnic intolerance and other virtues. For example, politician may say, “kill someone when they joke with you” in the presence of supporters. In the mental state of this politician, his speech can be perceived by the listeners as an act of killing. This theory was used in the study to explain how political communication can be provocative and prompt listeners to believe in a predicative way.

Mediatization of Politics Theory

The theory was propounded by Esser and Stromback in 2014 to refer to a long-term change process in which the media’s distinctive ways of regarding the world are said to be becoming increasingly influential in political matters, (Stromback & Esser, 2014; Blumler, 2015 & Schulz, 2015). As the media become the most significant source of information about politics and society at large; as they become independent from social institutions and politics; as their coverage of political matters is increasingly guided by a media rather than a political logic then the logic of media institutions will increasingly shape politician’s publicity efforts and colonize political institutions as policy-making sources.

Interms of politics, the mediatization of politics has been defined as the long-term process through which the importance of the media and their spill-over effects on political processes, institutions, organizations and actors has increased, (Stromback & Esser, 2014; Blumler, 2015 & Schulz, 2015). Mediatization is a process whereby the mass media influence other sectors of society, including politics, business, culture, entertainment, sport, religion and education. Mediatization is often understood as a process of change or a trend, similar to globalization and modernization, where the mass media are integrated to an increasing degree into other sectors of the society. Political actors, opinion makers, business organizations, civil society organizations, and others have to adapt their way of communication to a form that suits the needs and preferences of the mass media the so-called media logic. Any person or organization who wants to spread their messages to a larger audience has to adapt their messages and communication style to make it attractive for the mass media.

The theory proposed a useful guide to empirical communication research, designed to specify what kinds of material that politicians tend to make available for public consumption, (Stromback & Esser, 2014; Blumler, 2015 & Schulz, 2015). This happens when the politicians tailor their publicity to journalistic news values, work ways and cultures. The media have a major influence not only on public opinion, but also on the structure and processes of political communication, political decision-making and the democratic process. This is not a one-way influence. While the mass media have a profound influence on government and political actors, the politicians are also influencing the media through regulation, negotiation and selective access to information, (Esser & Matthes, 2013).

Conceptual Framework

Conceptual framework is a representation of the relationship between variables of the study, (Swain & George, What is a Conceptual Framework?, 2023). It illustrated the expected relationship between variables in a study. It defines diagrammatically the relevant objectives for

research process in a study and maps out how variables came and drew coherent conclusions. The diagram below depicted the conceptual framework that guided the study;

Conceptual Framework

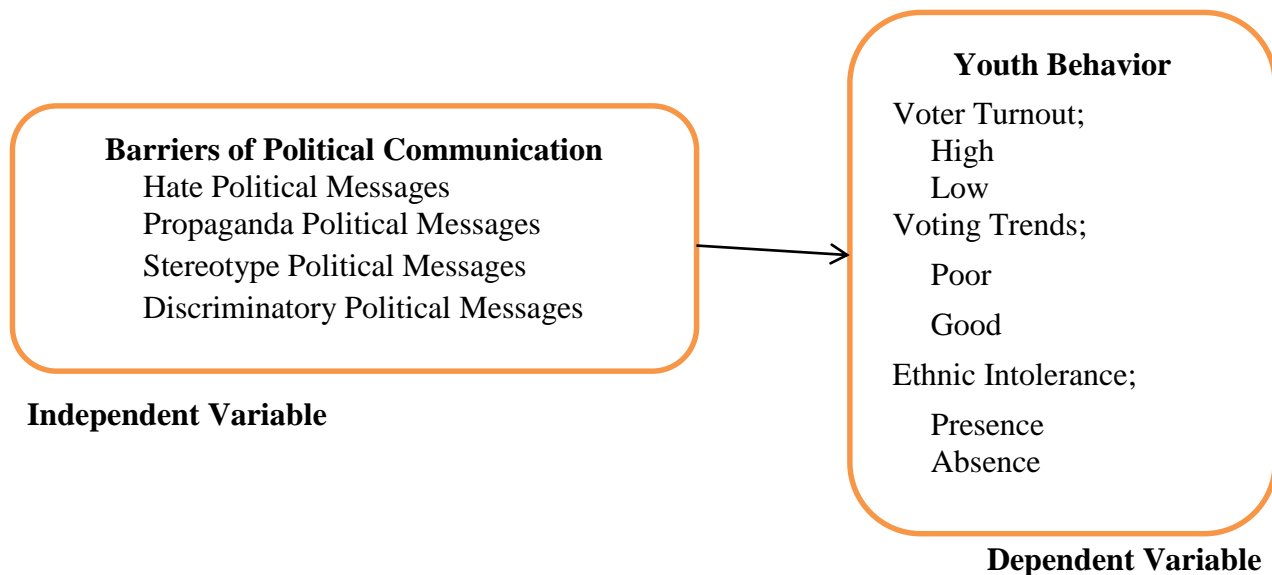


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The figure above illustrated the relationship between independent variable; Barriers of Political Communication; Hate Political Messages, Propaganda Political Messages, Stereotype Political Messages and Discriminatory Political Messages while the dependent variable is youth behavior which involved three categories; voter turnout (high or low voter turnout), voting trends (poor or good trends and ethnic intolerance (intragroup, intergroup and unity).

METHODOLOGY

The study was done using a mixed method research design where both quantitative and qualitative data was collected and analyzed. Quantitative data helps to infer statistical results that are meaningful from samples to population, whereas, qualitative data aids in gathering extensive information on the subject of study, (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The combination of both quantitative and qualitative research helps draw on the strengths of each, (Creswell, Klassen, Clark, & Smith, 2011).

The population of the study was residents sampled from four sub counties; Kisumu East, Kisumu West, Kisumu Central and Nyando constituencies in Kisumu County, Kenya. The sample size was 400 residents aged 18 years and above. They were sampled through convenient sampling, simple random sampling and stratified sampling techniques. The target population also consisted of ordinary residents who are voters, media station reporters and political candidates’ agents. Political candidates’ agents, local administrators and opinion leaders were also purposively sampled and interviewed in 10 interview sessions. The other section of target respondents (30) were also sampled and engaged through focus group discussions.

To test validity and reliability of the study instruments, a pilot test of the survey questionnaire was conducted using a small sample of residents of Seme Sub-County in Kisumu County that was not selected as part of the final respondents in this study. Two interviews were also conducted on sampled respondents to complement the survey questionnaires. Mugenda and Mugenda from 2019 recommend that a pre-test sample of between 1-10% depending on the sample size, (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2019). Pre-test should be as similar as possible to the final group, representative but with extreme as well as typical respondents, or more succinctly, should mirror the composition of the main survey, (Oduor, Kilika, & Muchemi, 2021). For this study, the researcher selected 20 participants in line with the study. The main purpose of pilot test was to assess the appropriateness of the research tools in addressing study objectives. The study employed Internal Consistency Reliability. The study used the most broadly perceived measure known as Coefficient Alpha often known as Cronbach's Alpha (α) which is created by Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 22 test for reliability. The necessary changes were made to research tools and all ethical considerations were adhered to before proceeding to the field.

The researcher collected 320 questionnaires which were sufficiently filled, representing 80% response rate which was sufficient and acceptable, and thus used for data analysis. The in-depth interviews done with 10 key informants as well as 30 respondents for focus group discussions that comprised of between 6-8 respondents per group.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study objective sought to establish the influence of barriers of effective political communication on youth behavior in Kenya during 2022 elections in Kisumu County, Kenya. To achieve this objective, the following research hypothesis guided the study:

Ho1 Barriers of effective political communication have no influence on youth behavior during 2022 elections in Kisumu County, Kenya.

It was imperative to establish if barriers of effective political communication influenced behavior of the youth in Kisumu County, Kenya. The following attributes of barriers of effective political communication were used as a guide to achieve the specific objective; hate political messages, propaganda political messages, stereotype political messages and discriminatory political messages in a Likert scale of 1-5 1. SD=strongly disagree 2. D=disagree 3. N=neutral 4. A=agree 5. SA=strongly agree, was used and the mean, standard deviation and response rate from respondents calculated. The descriptive statistics for the nature of political messages are presented in table 1.0 below;

Barriers of Effective Political Communication and Youth Behavior

Hate Political Messages

Table 1: Hate Political Messages

Statement	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation (σ)
Use of hate message possesses a negative effect on youth behavior	0	0.9	0.9	12.2	85.9	4.83	0.465
Hate political message can easily influence relationship between people from different ethnic groups resulting to change of behavior such as incitement	0	0	3.1	19.7	77.2	4.74	0.505
Political actors can use hate messages to negatively influence supporters	0	0.9	2.5	15.3	81.3	4.77	0.534
Hate message among youth of different communities can direct them to vote on ethnic groupings	0	0.9	0.6	50	48.4	4.46	0.564

Weighted Average: 4.7

Based on Table 1 above, use of hate message possesses a negative effect on youth behavior, results, 0% of respondents strongly disagreed, 0.9% disagreed, 0.9% were neutral, 12.2% agreed while 85.9% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement. The results had a mean of 4.83 and standard deviation of 0.465. This implies that majority of respondents agreed that use of hate messages during elections have negative influence on youth behavior, however, responses were varied about the mean. On whether hate political messages can easily influence relationship between people from different ethnic groups resulting into change of behavior such as incitement, results showed that 0% strongly disagreed, 0% disagreed, 3.1% of respondents were neutral, whereas, 19.7% agreed and 77.2% strongly agreed with the statement. The results had a mean of 4.74 and standard deviation of 0.505. This suggests that majority of respondents agreed that hate political messages is a source of incitement among people in a society. However, their responses were varied about the mean.

Some respondents interviewed 7 out of 10 (70%) confirmed that hate political messages influenced youth behavior during election campaigns in Kenya. Also 25 out of 30 Focus Group respondents (83.3%) also confirmed the same. This is as elucidated in the following excerpts below;

Interview 5, “...barriers to effective political communication especially hate political messages break reputation of individuals and groups, academic background as well as perceptions...”

Interviewee 10: “...our political leaders use hate speech while campaigning and we as voters, adopt the same and we send our business friends away who are not part of us in our community. So for me hate speech is a vice in the society that breeds conflict and I never encourage anyone to use it especially during campaigns...”

Respondent 10: "...in 2007 I was younger than I am today. Hate speech messages made me to attack and loot from my boss who had employed me since 2003 in his workshop. I am among the people who went and removed him from his home and participated in sending him and his family away. Hate speeches easily bleed a society that once worked together..."

The findings were in line with Kante, (2014), Mwokeke & Jayum, (2015) arguments that hate speech is all forms of expression which spread incite, promote and also justifies hatred in terms of race, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of hatred based on intolerance.

On whether political actors can use hate messages to influence youth negatively, results showed that 0% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, 0.9% disagreed, 2.5% were neutral, 15.3% agreed while 81.3% strongly agreed with the statement. The results had a mean of 4.77 and standard deviation of 0.535. This hints that majority of respondents agreed that hate messages from political actors influence youth's negative behavior such as ethnic intolerance among other vices in the society during election periods. On whether hate message among youth of different communities can direct them to vote along ethnic groupings, results showed that 0% strongly disagreed, 0.9% disagreed, 0.6% were neutral, 48.4% agreed while 48.4% strongly agreed with the statement. The results had a mean of 4.46 and standard deviation of 0.564. This denotes that majority of respondents agreed that hate messages during election periods influence the youth to vote along ethnic groupings in the society. However, the responses were varied about the mean.

Some respondents interviewed 9 out of 10 (90%) confirmed that hate political messages influenced youth behavior during election campaigns in Kenya. Also 19 out of 30 Focus Group respondents (63.3%) confirmed the same. This is elucidated in the following excerpts below;

Interviewee 10, "...for me I strongly believe that hate speech related messages have been the major issue causing violence during elections especially if the messages infiltrate into our young people in the society..."

Interviewee 9: "...As a result of hate messages spreading all over during elections, in 2007 if it were not of police rescuing me, I would be dead and forgotten today. Where I was which I don't want to mention, such messages from trusted opinion leaders, incited people from that other community against us who were like non locals in that area..."

Respondent 10: "...I told you earlier about my boss who employed since 2002 in a workshop. Actually he was a Kikuyu and the fact that he was from Kikuyu community, the slogan was they have to be chased away from our lands since they were also chasing and killing our people from Naivasha among other places..."

The findings were in line with Akubor, (2015) argument who opines that hate message is the speech that is full of discriminatory epithets to insult and stigmatize others on the basis of their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender and other forms of group membership.

The descriptive statistics on whether hate messages influence youth behavior during election periods results had a weighted mean of 4.7. This implies that majority of the respondents agreed with the statements however, their responses were varied about the mean. The respondents confirmed that hate message is a dangerous phenomenon in the society and a dangerous tool when applied among the youth especially during campaign periods. These findings were in line with an

argument by Busolo & Ngigi, (2018), who argue that hate messages use of threatening, abusive or insulting words and behavior or display of any written or published material which intends to promote hatred against a group of persons by reference to ethnic background, nationality, color and race.

Propaganda Political Messages

Table 2: Propaganda Political Messages

Statement	SD(%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation (σ)
Propaganda message during campaigns can be source of division among youth	0	0.9	1.6	41.9	55.6	4.52	0.581
Propaganda use by politicians can easily influence supporters against others	0	0.6	4.1	38.1	57.2	4.52	0.608
The use of Propaganda message can easily misrepresents the message	0	0	4.4	44.4	51.2	4.47	0.581
Propaganda message is employed by political actors to infiltrate into people's minds which influences voting trends among the youth	0	0.9	2.2	74.7	22.2	4.18	0.499

Weighted Average: 4.42

Based on Table 2 above, propaganda message during campaigns can be source of division among youth, results had 0% of respondents strongly disagreed, 0.9% disagreed, 1.6% neutral, 41.9% agreed while 55.6% of respondents strongly agreed. The results had a mean of 4.52 and standard deviation of 0.581. This implies that majority of the respondents strongly agreed that during campaigns, use of propaganda by political class is a source of division among young people. On whether propaganda use by politicians can easily influence supporters against others from another political group, results had 0% of respondents strongly disagreed, 0.6% disagreed, 4.1% neutral, 38.1% agreed while 57.2% strongly agreed with the statement. The results had a mean of 4.52 and standard deviation of 0.608. This implies that majority of respondents strongly agreed that during campaign periods, propaganda messages use easily influence supporters of one political group to mount a fight with an opposing camp.

Among respondents interviewed 9 out of 10 (90%) confirmed that propaganda political messages influenced youth behavior during election campaigns in Kenya elucidated in the following excerpts;

Interviewee 10, “...*I hate so much this issue inaitwa propaganda. It makes a good leader to lose and also make a bad leader to be voted in. What I know is that propaganda enhances bad blood between young people during election times ...*”

Interviewee 3: “...*Propaganda is a tool that most politicians in Kenya and even in the world at large use as a weapon to make voters develop hate against their opponents for no good reason. For example, when there was some war in Rakwaro in Migori County, the opponents who were contesting for governor position threw blames at each other...*”

Interviewee 6: “...*I have seen instances where during elections, a candidate just lost popularity and lost elections because of mere propaganda that was staged against them. This made youth to change mind and stopped supporting the candidate who then lost...*”

The findings are in line with Megan & Davis, (2020) & Malik, Imran & Mamdouth, (2023) study findings that opine that, propaganda was initially linked with psychological warfare and influence therefore, carries negative implication among people in the society.

On whether use of propaganda message during campaign periods can easily misrepresents the message, results showed that 0% of respondents strongly disagreed with statement, 0% disagreed, neutral were 4.4%, 44.4% agreed while 51.2% strongly agreed with the statement. The results had a mean of 4.47 and standard deviation of 0.581. This indicates that majority of respondents strongly agreed that propaganda messages use during campaign periods misrepresents a message to the people. Once the message is misrepresented, it influences youth behavior in that if they interpret the message in a negative way, they are likely to be influenced negatively and vice versa.

On whether propaganda message is employed by political actors to infiltrate into people’s minds which influences voting trends among the youth, results indicated that 0% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, 0.9% disagreed, 2.2% were neutral, 74.7% agreed whereas, 22.2% strongly agreed with the statement. The results had a mean of 4.18 and standard deviation of 0.499. This hints that majority of respondents (74.7%) agreed that propaganda messages as used by political actors, infiltrate into people’s mind hence, influences voting trend especially among young people.

Among respondents interviewed 8 out of 10 (80%) confirmed that propaganda political messages influenced youth behavior during election campaigns in Kenya as elucidated in the following excerpts;

Interviewee 9, “...*barriers to effective communication such as propaganda can misrepresent messages during campaigns hence, causing confusion during election times but also expose certain leaders’ true colors...*”

Interviewee 8, “...*I really got distracted with some mere propaganda from one of our opponents for MP seat that misrepresented our candidate with mere propaganda which made us lose our popularity toward election period actually two weeks to election...*”

The findings corroborated with McDonald & Lorenzo, (2019) & Baugut & Neumann, (2019), study findings that state that propaganda involves attempts to shape collective perceptions and performances; it can therefore, be considered problematic especially if the propagandist’s intention is inspired by a radical political ideology. Marshall in her 2015 study further indicates that

propaganda is quite a dangerous type of message especially when utilized in a negative manner in a society, (Marshall, Media Persuasion and Propaganda, 2015).

The descriptive statistics on whether propaganda messages influence youth behavior during election periods results had a weighted mean of 4.42. This implies that majority of respondents agreed with the statements however, their responses were varied about the mean. The respondents confirmed that propaganda to an extent misrepresents the message hence, stopping people from discovering the truth. The major aim of propagandist is to manipulate people's perception on another candidate as well as series of events. The findings were in line with study findings by Marshall, (2015) & Mercier & Brown, (2020), that found out that propaganda usually presents 'organized myth' that limits chances to discover the truth among young voters in the society. For example, propagandists; politicians, political parties and other opinion leaders can present a propaganda messages full of myths and misconceptions to the youth so as to stop the latter from discovering the truth and to act in the propagandist's intended manner.

Stereotype Messages

Table 3: Stereotype Messages

Statement	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation (σ)
Stereotype Messages by politicians can easily mobilize the youth along ethnic lines	0	0.9	5.3	38.4	55.3	4.48	0.643
The use Stereotype Messages during campaigns can result into discrimination of a community	0	0.9	4.4	49.1	45.6	4.39	0.619
Stereotype Message describes in a bad light a community from another which may influence voter turnout/voting trends	0.9	0	1.9	62.5	34.7	4.3	0.601
Stereotype Message can Influence positive change of behavior among the youth	1.9	9.7	15.6	13.1	59.7	4.19	1.13

Weighted Average: 4.34

Based on Table 3 above, stereotype messages by politicians can easily mobilize the youth along ethnic lines, results showed that 0% of respondents strongly disagreed, 0.9% agreed, 5.3 were neutral, 38.4% agreed while 55.3% strongly agreed with the statement. The results had a mean of 4.48 and standard deviation of 0.643. This implies that majority of respondents agreed that stereotype message used by politicians easily mobilize youth along ethnic lines. On whether use stereotype messages during campaigns can result into discrimination of a community, results indicated that 0% strongly disagreed with the statement, 0.9% disagreed, 4.4 were neutral, 49.1% agreed whereas, 45.6% strongly agreed with the statement. The results had a mean of 4.39 and standard deviation of 0.619. This indicates that majority of respondents agreed that during campaigns, use of stereotype messages against a community due to their voting patterns results into discrimination of the same community.

Among respondents interviewed 6 out of 10 (60%) confirmed that stereotype political messages influenced youth behavior during election campaigns in Kenya as elucidated in the excerpts below;

Interviewee 3, *“...stereotypes can distort the intended meaning of political messages during campaigns.*

Interviewee 4, *“...stereotype is likely to make the youth to isolate each other as well as discriminate other groups who are not members of their political affiliations...”*

Ndonye et al., (2015), in a study states that even if stereotypes have commonly been used in form of jokes, they have become entrenched within Kenyan politics and have been used as an instrument to fuel vices in the society especially during election periods.

On whether stereotype message describes in a bad light a community from another which may influence voter turnout/voting trends, results indicated that 0.9% strongly disagreed with the statement, 0% disagreed, 1.9 were neutral whereas 62.5% were in agreement and 34.7 strongly agreed with the statement. The results had a mean of 4.3 and standard deviation of 0.601. This shows that majority of respondents agreed stereotype messages usually describe a community in a bad light from another. Once a community feels not wanted by others, they change their voting trends hence, influencing voter turnout. On the other hand, whether stereotype message can influence positive change of behavior among the youth, results exhibited that 1.9% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, 9.7% disagreed, 15.6 were neutral, 13.6% were in agreement, however 59.7% strongly agreed with the statement. The results had a mean of 4.19 and standard deviation of 1.13. This implies that majority of respondents strongly agreed that stereotype message possesses a positive change of behavior among the youth. This means that if stereotype messages are used positively during campaigns, they influence the youth positively. For example, positive use of stereotype messages during election campaigns influences people to turn out in large numbers and vote as well as positive change in voting trends.

Among respondents interviewed did confirm that stereotype political messages have influence on youth behavior during election campaigns in Kenya as elucidated by the excerpts below;

Interviewee 4, *“...stereotype is likely to make the youth to isolate each other as well as discriminate other groups who are not members of their political affiliations...”*

Interviewee 10, *“...once i got stereotyped by some of my friends that I am a Luhya and I will vote for UDA because of Wetangula and Mudavadi, I decided to stay away from polling station and I did not vote and even next time I won't vote...”*

The finding is in line with Wood & Eagly, (2023), who argue that stereotype is about negative or positive beliefs that one holds about the characteristics of a social group. People may use pre-conceived beliefs to guide their actions toward a people from another group.

The descriptive statistics on whether stereotype messages influence youth behavior during election periods results had a weighted mean of 4.34. This implies that majority of respondents agreed with the statements however, their responses were varied about the mean. The respondents confirmed that stereotype messages influenced to behavior of the youth. The change can either be positive or negative depending with the intention of the political actor who employs stereotype to engage the people during election periods. The findings are in line with study finding by Kuppens et al., (2017), dubbed, “In-Group Bias and Ethnic Stereotyping among Secondary School Teachers in

Kenya,” that states that even though stereotypes may be positive, stereotyping is commonly associated with social exclusion, discrimination and inter-group conflict.

Discriminatory Political Messages

Table 4: Discriminatory Political Messages

Statement	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation (σ)
Discriminatory Messages against a group of people during electoral campaigns can make them change their voting pattern	0	2.2	6.6	34.4	56.9	4.46	0.716
The use of Discriminatory Messages can result into hatred among the youth hence, affecting voter turnout	0.9	0	5	16.9	77.2	4.69	0.653
Discriminatory Message can Influence negative change behavior among the youth	0	0.9	4.1	30	65	4.59	0.617
Discriminatory Message can Influence positive change of behavior among the youth	0.9	7.2	14.4	33.4	44.1	4.13	0.971

Weighted Average: 4.46

The Table 4 above is indicative that, discriminatory messages against a group of people during electoral campaigns can make them change their voting pattern, results revealed that 0% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, 2.2% disagreed, 6.6% were neutral, 34.4% agreed, however 56.9% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement. The results had a mean of 4.46 and standard deviation of 0.716. This implies that majority of respondents strongly agreed that discriminatory messages between groups of people during election periods, change the voting pattern of the youth in Kisumu County, Kenya. When a group discriminates another on the basis of their political affiliations, they shy away on voting day hence influencing the voting pattern where discriminated groups turnout in small numbers to vote.

On whether use of discriminatory messages can result into hatred among the youth hence, affecting voter turnout, results displayed 0.9% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, 0% disagreed, 5% were neutral, 16.9% agreed while 77.2% strongly agreed with the statement. The results had a mean of 4.69 and standard deviation of 0.653. This shows that most of respondents

agreed that discriminatory messages use during election periods is the cause of hatred among youth and the society at large.

Among respondents interviewed 5 out of 10 (50%) confirmed that discriminatory political messages influenced youth behavior during election campaigns in Kenya as elucidated by the excerpts below;

Interviewee 1: *“...discriminatory political messages break reputation of individuals and groups, academic background as well as perceptions of people against one another...”*

Interviewee 2: *“...For me I am not a local of this place and my home place is elsewhere. In the 2022 general elections, I was stereotyped because of the community I come from that we do not have a position in any election. I felt so much discriminated due to discriminatory remarks that for sure I did not vote yet I am a registered voter in this area...”*

The findings are in line with Hobbs & Lajevardi, 2018 study findings on, “ Letter: Effects of Divisive Political Campaigns on the Day-to-Day Segregation of Arab & Muslim Americans” investigated the de facto effects of President Donald Trump’s campaign rhetoric and vague policy positions extended the direct effect of his executive orders, (Hobbs & Lajevardi, 2018). The study found that Arab and Muslims Americans reduced their online visibility and retreated from public life.

On whether discriminatory message can influence negative change of behavior among the youth results indicated that 0% of respondents strongly disagreed, 0.9% disagreed, 4.1% were neutral, 30% agreed and 65% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement. The outcomes had a mean of 4.59 and standard deviation of 0.617. This implies that majority of respondents agreed that discriminatory message influence negative change of behavior among the youth in the society. Again, discriminatory message can influence positive change of behavior among the youth. Results showed that 0.9% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, 7.2% disagreed, 14.4% were neutral, 33.4% strongly agreed while 44.1% strongly agreed with the statement. The results had a mean of 4.13 and standard deviation of 0.971. This indicates that majority of respondents believe that discriminatory message influence positive change of behavior among young people in Kisumu County, Kenya.

Some of the respondents interviewed 5 out of 10 (50%) confirmed that discriminatory political messages influenced youth behavior during election campaigns in Kenya as elucidated the following excerpts;

Interviewee 6: *“...according to me discrimination can both be positive and negative depending with the context in which it is applied and the intention of the user...”*

Interviewee 2: *“...infact my own friends we do Jua Kali together hated me after they started discriminating me based on where I come from. They believed that the region I come from, took a different political stand as opposed to them. They stopped inviting me and calling me when they get contracts for some jobs...”*

The findings are in line with Mutz (2022) study findings on, “Effects of Changes in Perceived Discrimination During BLM on the 2020 Presidential Election” evaluated whether and in what direction the Black Lives Matter movement affected the small percentage of voters whose

presidential votes changed from 2016 to 2020. It found out that increases in perceptions of racial inequality significantly increased the probability of vote switching toward the Democratic candidate. At this point, it positively worked for democratic candidate and negatively for President Donald Trump and his Republican party.

The descriptive statistics on whether discriminatory messages influence youth behavior during election periods results had a weighted mean of 4.46. This implies that majority of respondents agreed with the statements however, their responses were varied about the mean. The respondents confirmed that discriminatory messages influenced to behavior of the youth during election periods. Generally, discrimination has the potential to cause change of youth behavior during campaign periods. For example, if a message used by a politician contains elements that aim at discriminating an individual or group in relation to their political stance during election, it is likely to breed hate that can result into intolerance that in turn influence voter turnout in a negative manner.

In 2007/2008 post-election, it is the aspect of discrimination and use of discriminatory messages that fuelled some communities to start fighting one another who were residing inside them. The findings are in line with study findings by Mutz in 2022 on, “Effects of Changes in Perceived Discrimination During BLM on the 2020 Presidential Election” evaluated whether and in what direction the Black Lives Matter movement affected the small percentage of voters whose presidential votes changed from 2016 to 2020. It found out that increases in perceptions of racial inequality significantly increased the probability of vote switching toward the Democratic candidate. The study also found out that attention to racial injustice also well-informed voters to rely more heavily on this issue when evaluating candidates. Therefore, few Americans change their choice of presidential candidate to a different political party from election to election.

Regression Analysis

Multivariate regression analysis was used to determine the multiple regression model hypothesized in chapter three held. It was also used to determine how the independent variables influenced the dependent variable collectively. The analysis was also meant to establish the extent to which each independent variable affected the dependent variable in such a collective set up and which were the more significant factors. The results are presented focusing on two models, that is, Model 1 before moderation and Model 2 after Moderation.

Regression Analysis Model Summary (Before Moderation)

The study first performed the regression analysis of the variables and the results are summarized in Table 5 below;

Table 5: Model Summary (Regression Model Summary)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.840 ^a	.705	.701	.1972907	1.437

a. Predictors: (Constant), Barriers to effective political communication
b. Dependent Variable: Youth behavior

The regression analysis in Table 5 shows that the relationship between the dependent variable and all the independent variables pooled together had a model correlation coefficient = 0.840^a. The

adjusted r-square ($R^2_{Adj} = 0.701$), further, indicates that the model could explain upto 70.5% variations in the influence on youth behavior during 2022 elections in Kisumu County, Kenya. It also suggests that the model could improve when more predictive variables were incorporated into the model.

Summary of ANOVA

Hair et al., (2020), that the appropriateness of the multiple regression model as a whole can be tested using F test. Therefore, the study also performed an ANOVA on the independent and dependent variables and the results are summarized in Table 6 below;

Table 6: Summary of ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	29.268	5	5.854	150.386	.000 ^b
	Residual	12.222	314	.039		
	Total	41.490	319			

a. Dependent Variable: Youth behavior

b. Predictors: (Constant), Barriers to effective political communication

The results in Table 6 indicate that there is a significant difference between means of variables predicting youth behavior during 2022 elections in Kisumu County, Kenya. The regression model was significant, $F(5, 314) = 150.386$, $p < .000^b$, explaining a substantial portion of the variance in youth behavior during 2022 elections in Kisumu County, Kenya.

The model's detailed analysis indicated that the sum of squares due to regression (SSR) was 29.268, with degrees of freedom (df) of 5, resulting in a mean square (MSR) of 5.854. The sum of squares due to error (SSE) was 12.222, with a df of 314, leading to a mean square error (MSE) of .039. The total sum of squares (SST) was 41.490 with a total df of 319. These results underscore the significant predictive power of barriers of effective political communication on the youth behavior during 2022 elections in Kisumu County, Kenya.

Multiple Linear Regression Model

The regression analysis is sought to understand barriers of effective political communication and youth behavior among youth behavior during 2022 elections in Kisumu County, Kenya. The model included these predictors and was evaluated for statistical significance and predictive power.

The results are given in Table 7 provides a summary of the multiple linear regression analysis correlation coefficients.

Table 7: Multiple Linear Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	.095	.165		.579	.563		
Nature of political messages	.044	.057	.043	.775	.439	.299	3.347
Verbal political messages	.132	.049	.133	2.670	.008	.377	2.652
Visual political messages	-.059	.043	-.063	1.386	.167	.452	2.211
News media coverage	.368	.039	.373	9.405	.000	.597	1.675
Barriers to effective political communication	.519	.056	.472	9.208	.000	.356	2.806

a. Dependent Variable: Youth behavior

The constant term in the regression equation, representing the expected value of the youth behavior was significant, with an unstandardized coefficient $B=0.095$, standard error (SE)= 0.165 , $t=0.579$, $p=0.563$. This indicates a baseline level of youth behavior that is significantly different from zero, suggesting that factors beyond the scope of the current model also contribute to the youth behavior during the 2022 elections in Kisumu County, Kenya.

Barriers of effective political communication in the regression equation show a statistically significant influence, unstandardized coefficient $B=-0.519$, standard error of $SE=0.056$. The influence was statistically significant, $t(254)=9.208$, $p=0.000$. The standardized coefficient ($\beta=0.472$), collinearity statistics tolerance of 0.472 and a variance inflation factor of 2.806 . The analysis suggests that, within the context of this model, barriers of effective political communication; hate, propaganda, stereotype and discriminatory messages significantly influence youth behavior during election campaign. The barriers of effective political communication elements were found to have strong negative influences to youth behavior during election campaigns. The findings in Table 5.4 highlight the significant role that barriers of effective political communication play in influencing youth behavior during election periods.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, the analysis concluded that barriers of effective political communication characterized with attributes; hate political messages, propaganda political messages, stereotype political messages and discriminatory political messages, significantly influences youth behavior during elections. However, there exists a notable gap between the expected standards of barriers of effective political communication and change on youth behavior. This gap underscores the necessity for interventions aimed at controlling and censoring barriers of effective political communication applied by political actors to align more closely with youth

behavior during elections, thereby potentially increasing youth engagement in political matters.

Recommendations

The study recommends the need for political class to follow laid down legislations by avoiding use improper use of barriers of effective political communication such as propoganda, hate messages, discriminatory messages and stereotype messages, for proper youth engagement in political matters without causing mayhem among in the society. As they engage in debates and other political discussions, they should avoid sentiments that cause hatred among youth, sentiments that discriminatory, stereotyping to a group of people and those that are filled with propoganda that are likely to make youth change their behavior negatively since it affects the society as has been witnessed in the previous elections.

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