

**EVALUATION OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES USED  
TO SHAPE VOTING BEHAVIOR IN RURAL SETTINGS: A CASE OF  
SHINYALU CONSTITUENCY DURING THE 2022 GENERAL ELECTIONS.**

**Brian Juma Khisa**

**Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment for the award of Master of Science in  
Communication Studies in the School of Arts and Social Sciences, Masinde Muliro  
university of Science and Technology**

**November, 2025**

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This thesis is my original work prepared with no other than the indicated sources and support and has not been presented elsewhere for a degree or any other award.

**Signature:**..... **Date:**.....

Brian Juma Khisa

Registration No. BJM/G/14-54981-2020

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The undersigned certify that they have read and hereby recommend for acceptance of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology a thesis, **‘Evaluation of Interpersonal Communication Strategies used to Shape Voting Behavior in Rural Settings: A Case of Shinyalu Constituency During the 2022 General Elections’**.

**Signature:**..... **Date:**.....

**Prof. Egara Kabaji**

Department of Journalism and Mass Communication

Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology

**Signature:**..... **Date:**.....

**Dr. Lydia Anyonje**

Department of Journalism and Mass Communication

Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology

**Signature:**..... **Date:**.....

**Dr. Joyce Kasili**

Department of Language and Literature Education

Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to my family: my inspiring Father Isaac Khisa, my loving mother Rose Wamalwa, my lovely wife Dorothy, my children Adiel, Abdiel and Adiella. I wish them God's blessings.

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## ABSTRACT

Many studies have been undertaken on the role of interpersonal communication in elections in different countries. However, the role and efficacy of this mode of communication in politics has not been fully interrogated. This ignorance may lead to undesirable or negative outcomes contrary to expectation of the contestants, making it difficult to tap into the gains that could be availed through this means of communication. The study evaluated the use of Interpersonal Communication Strategies in shaping voting behavior among the residents of Shinyalu Constituency during the 2022 general elections. Specifically, it sought to examine the communication strategies used during the 2022 general elections in Shinyalu Constituency; to establish factors that influenced the voting behavior in Shinyalu constituency during the 2022 general elections and to determine the perceptions of voters regarding the use of interpersonal communication as a strategy in shaping voter behavior in Shinyalu constituency during the 2022 general elections. The study adopted the Elaboration Likelihood Theory which explains how persuasive messages can lead to attitude change. The study adopted a mixed method approach and utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. The population of the study was 76,978. A sample population of 398 respondents was arrived at by use of the Slovin's formula. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used to collect data. The quantitative data from questionnaires was analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented by way of frequency tables, charts and graphs, means, modes, and percentages. Qualitative data from interviews was analyzed thematically. The findings established that political candidates in Shinyalu Constituency utilized a variety of communication strategies to engage with the electorate. In addition, the findings revealed that a range of socio-economic and political factors influenced how voters made decisions during the 2022 elections. The study further found that various forms of interpersonal communication significantly shaped voter perceptions and electoral decisions. The study can aid policymakers and electoral bodies such as the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) to formulate policies that encourage transparent and effective communication. Political candidates and campaign managers could adopt direct, personal communication strategies such as house-to-house visits and participation in community events.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

ANC	Amani National Congress
DA	Democratic Alliance
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
IC	Interpersonal Communication
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IDT	Interpersonal Deception Theory
IEBC	Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission
MCK	Media Council of Kenya
NGOs	Non- Governmental Organizations
NID	National Institute of Democracy
RA	Research Assistant
TV	Television

## **OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS**

**Broadcast media-** In this study broadcast media refers a form airing sounds or images through an electronic media such as radio, television or social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Tiktok or Instagram. In this study this form of media is used by politician to reach young citizen and elites in the society who subscribe to the internet in order to woe a vote.

**Communication strategies-** A plan or a process of sending a message to a targeted audience with aim of influencing them to do things the way you want. In this study, communication strategy is used to refer to well-planned process or message design used by politician to influence a vote.

**Earned Media-** In this study earned media is used to refer to a privilege a candidates or politician from the media through free coverage of their events. This is where media coverage is done on campaigns or political party events for free with media expecting support from the candidates in case they win an election.

**Global village-** In this study global village has been described or referred to a situation where modern technology connects all people in the world through a media platform for the purpose of sharing information and experience without being together physically. Global village is supported by the new media in this study.

**Globalization-** Globalization in this study refers to a way which the whole world has been connected by technology for the purpose of economy, culture and political system. Globalization has been used to describe how technology and trade has made the world one in terms of connection and interdependent and it encompasses various process which include economy, culture and political system.

**Internet-** In this study it refers to an electronic communication network which connects electronic gadgets around the world computers and phones.

**Interpersonal communication-** The term has been used in this study to refer to interpersonal communication as a process in which a person communicates, sends and receives a message from another person or audience. Here, interpersonal communication is not limited to a face-to-face interaction through verbal communication. In this study interpersonal communication can also be enhance electronically through google meeting, zoom meetings, WhatsApp group discussions and twitter discussions with an aim of getting immediate feedback from the audience.

**Media-** In this study the term media has been used to refer to communication designed tool for a purpose of delivering information and influence a large

audience. This form of media includes newspapers, television, radio, and social networking sites.

**New Media-** In this study term is used to describe different forms of electronic communication that is designed to use internet through computer and other digital technology. New media include websites, social networking, video and audio streaming for the purpose of reaching a large audience. In the study this form is commonly used to reach the young citizens and the elite in the community.

**Paid Media-** This term is used in this study to refer to away which political parties or candidates hire different media platforms to air their events. Here campaign managers and political party have to pay for by purchasing advertising time or space from different media houses.

**Persuasion-** In this study, the term is used to mean an act of inducing a belief to people to make them believe whatever you are saying is true.

**Political Campaign-** This term has been used in this study to refer to an organized effort which politician use to seek popularity and influence decision making progress within a specific group. This is a process where politicians dive into different form communication strategies in order to reach a specific group.

**Print media-** In this study print media is used to refer to a platform that uses the written word or graphic on paper, such as magazines, newspapers, billboard, flier and posters for the purpose of advertising. It is a form of media used by politicians to advertise their parties and manifestos to the purpose of wooing a vote or gaining popularity.

**Self-help group-** These are social groups formed within a community to support each other financially through various projects.

**Traditional Media-** In this study traditional media has been used to refer to a means of mass communication introduced and used long time ago before the introduction of new media. This has been used to mean face to face communication for the purpose of persuading an audience.

**Voter Behaviour-** In this study, the term is used to refer to how people make a decision when choosing leaders in any democratic space.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 Overview**

This chapter presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, justification of the study, significance of the study, limitations and delimitations of the study.

#### **1.1 Background of the study**

Studies by Liaw et al (2022), Obradović et al. (2022), Iqbal et al. (2019), among many others confirm that interpersonal communication occurs between individuals through the face-to-face mode. However, other studies have also revealed that interpersonal communication can be made electronically through computer aided gadgets and platforms. Kenya, one of the fastest growing countries in Africa in terms of technology consumption, is perceived to be embracing new media communication in political campaigns especially in the urban areas and interpersonal communication in rural settings (Asante, 2020).

Different studies have indicated that the main goal of interpersonal communication is to persuade a given audience to think in a certain way (Obradović 2022 and Iqbal et al, 2019). In the current study, the researcher explored how interpersonal communication influenced the voting behavior in Shinyalu Constituency, an area that is classified as one of the rural regions in Kenya. The researcher equally drew comparisons on how different forms of communication were used in different countries globally to communicate political information.

In politics, contestants, who are often affiliated to political parties, look forward to achieving victory in elections. They thus need to communicate persuasively to convince voters to agree with their ideologies (Asante, 2020). Voters, on their end, feel persuaded when they receive information from contesting candidates especially through one- on- one conversations regardless of the channel of communication. In the rural areas, voters strongly believe that when one communicates face to face, whatever is being alleged is most likely true. This mode of reaching out is also perceived to be a form of recognition and gratitude to the masses (Stromer-Galley, 2019).

Globally, different candidates choose different channels of communication depending on their target audience. In the urban regions, electronic communication, which is supported by internet and computer, works well as many people can easily access internet as compared to the rural setting where residents experience short-comings (Rajab, et al 2024). These challenges are as a result of, among other causes, poor infrastructure, lack of internet connection, high poverty levels and high levels of illiteracy.

Rajab et al (2024) point out that the main goal of persuasive communication is to bring together different people or groups of individuals to a common thinking. Consequently, politicians in the rural areas utilize interpersonal communication strategies to communicate political messages. Voters choose their preferred leaders when they believe in the ideologies marketed to them. Political candidates spend most of their time to advance their manifestos so that they can be pleasing and attractive to voters. In a democratic space, political campaigns are carried out through persuasion. Through political campaigns,

voters are persuaded to choose representatives whom they feel can bring change in the society.

Every act of political communication strategy is geared towards influencing the public to think in a certain way (Edgerly & Thorson, 2020). According to Obradović (2022), a campaign message contains ideas that candidates want to share with voters. Further, the candidates usually repeat the summary of the main ideas to create a lasting impression among voters.

Communication is vital in any political space and takes place in various forms, namely, formal or informal, private or public and mediated or unmediated (Cardey, et al 2024; Edgerly & Thorson, 2020). Edgerly & Thorson (2020) postulate that in every election, there is need for a proper channeled communication for the purpose of persuasion. This is because every decision of a voter towards the choice of a political leader depends on the level of persuasion engaged by the candidate or political party.

The United States of America has been hailed as a country that uses high technology. However, most of the political campaigns in this country have also embraced Interpersonal Communication as a method of political persuasion. This happens through conferences and town hall meetings which provide an opportunity to the potential leaders to meet people and have a robust discussion on issues affecting them and propose ways of mitigating the concerns. These meetings have been active in all campaigns in the elections of 2008, 2012, 2016, 2020 and 2024 in USA.

In recent years, there has been a speedy development of a new information network and technology commonly known as social media. There exists a number of social media sites,

namely, Facebook, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, and X , each having millions of users (Cardey, et al 2024; Alalwan *et al.* 2017). For more than a decade, social media has been an important media of political communication especially after the 2008 and 2012 political campaigns of Barack Obama in the United States of America (Obradović & Vujović, 2022).

In 2008 and 2012, President Barack Obama was particularly known for the use of the internet to rally his supporters and make his policies known to the public. This was as a rise of the social media platforms, which were then used to share his policies to govern the state. He was the first US president to effectively use the internet and especially social media for a successful political outcome. This has since raised the bar and is now a presidential standard. Apart from the use of technology through the internet, Barrack Obama, John Biden and Donald Trump also embraced conferences and town hall meetings to rally votes in different states. Open rallies were also organized during the campaigns besides the internet.

In Africa, particularly in South Africa, during 2019 and 2024 general elections, interpersonal communication played a crucial role in elections. South African leading political parties, the African National Congress (ANC) and the Democratic Alliance (DA) adopted the use of interpersonal communication as an effective tool for political campaigns. The purpose for the use of such communication was to encourage the public to engage in the political discourse (Waisbord & Amado, 2017). These authors confirm that South Africa is a leading country in Africa in terms of technological tradition followed closely by Nigeria and then Kenya. Different studies have confirmed that Africa is a social continent and therefore face to face communication cannot be ignored. Dabula (2017)

states that this form of political advertising in South Africa was used to mobilize people in participating in elections and to persuade them to vote for a particular candidate. The ultimate goal of political campaigns was to influence the election (Waisbord & Amado 2017). Dabula (2017) points out that speeches made by political party leaders within the framework of rhetorical principles contain persuasive expressions.

In Kenya, according to the MCK survey of 2022, 58% of its citizens, approximately 17 million people aged 15 years and above, watched television daily. This means that a good number of Kenyans can access information through television. For this case, new consumption through television is good in the urban areas but in the rural areas, it is still a challenge. The survey further showed that in 2020, the figure stood at 74%. In comparison to 2022, there was a significant 16% drop in TV viewership. However, the survey indicated that in 2021, Kenyans spent more of their time on screens to access information and never relied on their social media platforms as was the case in the year 2020. In the same survey, it was noted that respondents spent approximately 3 hours per day commenting, posting, liking, tweeting and sharing information on social media handles, a longer duration than the global average time of two hours and twenty-four minutes.

Currently, many people can access information online due to technology and globalization. However, there is still a gap since not everyone accesses the platforms due to various reasons. According to a report by the Media Council of Kenya in January 2022, individuals who could not access online content relied on family, friends or even social influencers and bloggers to share the same with them as compared to the year 2021 where information was frequently accessed only on television.

The elderly people tend to believe information relayed by elites and youths in the society. This information influences the choice of candidates in an election. Despite this overwhelming preference for this mode of communication, scholars have demonstrated that interpersonal communication is not only superior and prominent among other forms, but it is also highly prevalent and distinctively featured in other modes, such as mass, traditional, group, and public communication (Kulachai et al, 2023).

Elections are essential in democracy and are always regarded as a major step in the development of a democratic society. They bring to light different aspects of human behavior and aid in identifying the factors and considerations when choosing a leader. These factors might shape political dispositions and voting habits. Iqbal et al (2019) emphasize that the public have the powers to decide who rules the country, how resources are allocated and how capital is shared. This author further adds that an election serves as an opportunity for national wide mobilization of people, competing political parties' ideologies alongside promoting round the clock political and social networking all over the country. The use of mass media, especially radio, posters, fliers, road shows and interpersonal communication remain the leading form of messaging during political campaigns in any elections.

In Kenya, most people use their phones to access information for 1-3 hours per day. The acquisition of information, entertainment, and social interactions are among the motivations for using social media. However, users of social media in Kenya have encountered challenges such as fake news, cyberbullying, and bombardment of graphic images of sex and advertisements (Mbithi, 2022).

In 2022, misinformation and propaganda were weaponized during elections and beyond, particularly on digital platforms that bordered on defamation and the publication of false content. The majority of the websites that disseminated misinformation were designed to make consumers believe they were reading credible sources (Buchanan, 2020).

Shinyalu Constituency, one of the twelve electoral constituencies in Kakamega county in Kenya, is semi-rural. According to the Kenya census report of 2019, the Constituency has an approximate population of 167,641. Shinyalu Constituency has an approximate area of 445.4 km square km (Sub Counties – County Government of Kakamega, 2015).

Shinyalu constituency has 6 wards namely Isukha north, Murhanda, Isukha central, Isukha south, Isukha east and Isukha west (Sub Counties – County Government of Kakamega, 2015). During the 2022 general elections, the utilization of interpersonal communication shaped the results in the elections and therefore influenced the outcome.

Shinyalu Constituency had a competitive election between the Hon. Fredric Ikana an ANC candidate and Hon. Justus Kizito an ODM candidate. In this case, Fredric Ikana utilized interpersonal communication to gain popularity among residents by intensifying house to house meetings, utilization funeral gatherings, using local social forums, organizing sporting events, financing projects through self-help groups, open air market rallies and organizing town hall meeting so as to reach the target population. Justus Kizito, who was the incumbent, relied on party popularity, use electronic media through the local radio stations, billboards, posters and roadshows. Through the use of the highlighted strategies Hon. Fred Ikana was able to win elections.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Persuasive communication in semi-rural areas is a challenge, compelling politicians to explore multiple strategies of communication to persuade their supporters to cast votes in their favor. One of the major causes of unproductive communication for persuasion to shape voting behavior in rural areas is failure to identify a proper communication strategy. If this problem persists, the voters are likely to encounter challenges in their bid to attain their democratic rights.

In rural areas such as Shinyalu Constituency, the terrain poses a challenge of internet access for residents who wish to communicate through online platforms, leaving interpersonal communication as the only strategy for persuasion. Although this mode of communication proved effective in shaping voting behavior in Shinyalu Constituency during the 2022 general elections, its efficacy and role in politics has not been fully interrogated.

Further, interpersonal communication is an inexpensive means of persuasion yet its gains cannot be effectively tapped if the users are not aware of its unique role in political campaigns and voting. This ignorance regarding the viability of the interpersonal communication strategies may lead to undesirable or negative outcomes contrary to expectation of the contestants.

This study evaluated the use of interpersonal communication strategies as a tool of political persuasion.

### **1.3 Objectives of the study**

The study sought to evaluate the use of Interpersonal Communication Strategies as a tool to shape voting behavior among Shinyalu residents during the 2022 general elections.

#### **1.3.1 Specific objectives**

The study specifically sought to:

1. Examine communication strategies used during the 2022 general elections in Shinyalu Constituency.
2. Establish factors that influenced the voting behavior in Shinyalu Constituency during 2022 general elections.
3. To determine the perceptions of voters regarding the use of interpersonal communication as a strategy to shape voter behavior in Shinyalu Constituency during the 2022 general elections.

#### **1.3.2 Research Questions**

1. Which communication strategies were used during 2022 general elections in Shinyalu Constituency?
2. Which factors influenced the voting behavior in Shinyalu Constituency during the 2022 general elections?
3. What are the perceptions of voters regarding the use of interpersonal communication as a strategy to shape voter behavior in Shinyalu Constituency during the 2022 general elections?

#### **1.4 Justification of the Study**

This study evaluated the use of interpersonal communication strategies which shaped voting behavior among residents of Shinyalu Constituency, Kakamega County, Kenya during the 2022 general elections. Several studies have been done on the role of interpersonal communication in an election but they have not interrogated the success factors of the use this particular mode of communication. Fujishin (2019) explains that in every election campaign, interpersonal communication is used to influence the voting pattern thus affecting vote outcomes and therefore influencing results. While interpersonal communication is hailed as one of the best tools for persuasion, researchers have not shown why this is so especially in this era of digital explosion in communication.

Ashmore, Farrington & Skerratt (2017) explain that in the urban regions, new media works well as many people can easily access internet as compared to the rural setting where they experience a myriad of challenges. Urban areas have better infrastructure as compared to those in rural areas among which, poor roads, lack of electricity and internet connectivity. This makes interpersonal communication strategy a better option as a tool for communication to be used by the political class to persuade voters. However, the researchers do not address the nitty gritty of how this mode works out to lead to successful vote outcomes.

#### **1.5 Significance of the study**

This study expounded on the use of interpersonal communication in elections and created grounds for the adoption of this mode of communication.

The findings may help the politicians to acknowledge the social, economic and political factors that influenced how voters made decisions during the 2022 elections in Shinyalu Constituency. Policymakers and electoral bodies such as the IEBC need to formulate policies that encourage transparent and effective communication in any elections. These policies may include developing guidelines that promote community interaction, enhance inclusive participation, and mandate the use of simple, comprehensible and convenient language/s in crafting messages contained in campaign materials. This study seeks to enlighten the potential political leaders and campaign managers to adopt direct and personal communication strategies such as house-to-house visits and participation in community events. These methods are likely to foster voter trust and significantly influence perceptions. The results of this study could contribute to the uptake of interpersonal communication strategies for political persuasion.

### **1.6 Limitations of study**

The researcher encountered challenges that posed as limitations to the study. Reluctance of the respondents in giving information was a major challenge. This challenge may have been attributed to the highly sensitive information contained in the questionnaires and interview schedules. To counter this reluctance, the researcher informed the respondents that the information they were to give would be treated with confidentiality and anonymity and that it was solely for the use of the study and not any other use. The researcher reinforced this with the help of area politicians, chiefs and assistant chiefs. Participants not being available to take part in the study was another challenge. To counter this challenge,

the researcher provided more time to allow participants who had different schedules to respond during the time that was convenient to them.

Language used on the questionnaires was also an anticipated challenge especially to the elderly respondents and those who could only communicate in their native language/s. To solve this problem, the researcher, with the help of research assistants, interpreted the questions from English to Kiswahili and native languages of the respondents. To resolve the challenge on the constraints of time, the researcher dedicated more time to the research so as to meet set deadlines.

### **1.7 Theoretical Framework**

The study was anchored on the Elaboration likelihood theory. This theory was used to reinforce the objectives pursued in the study. It provided a foundation inquiry on the utilization of interpersonal communication and its influence on voters' voting behavior in rural Kenya. This theory delved deeper into the interrogation of communication strategies used in the case of 2022 general elections in Shinyalu Constituency, Kakamega County in pursuit of electing a member of parliament to lead the constituency.

#### **1.7 Elaboration Likelihood Theory**

The Elaboration Likelihood Theory was developed by Richard Petty and John Cacioppo in 1980. This theory describes how persuasive messages can lead to the change of attitude. It proposes two main channels of persuasion, namely, central channel and peripheral channels. This theory outlines ways by which people are persuaded to change their mind. According to El Hedhli & Zourrig (2022), the central route involves the enthused processing and evaluation of messages while the peripheral route involves more posturing

aspects of the message. These authors further explain that the central route involves thinking about the qualities of the argument and weighing the pros and cons, pointing to the fact that persuasion through this channel leads to long-lasting change.

The peripheral route involves other elements of the argument, such as how attractive the speaker is when articulating the message, not the qualities of the argument itself. In persuasive communication, the audience receives information depending on how attractive the speaker is when sharing the message (Rosenberg, et al. 2022). In the political arena, campaign managers use speakers who are likely to persuade voters to cast a vote in their favour. This further asserts that voting behavior depends on political party preference, political orientation, candidate's popularity, candidate's image and candidate's credibility. The ELM can be used to integrate the above variables in a coherent framework for describing voting behavior. When people process information through the central process route, their expectations rise with regard to what is communicated to them. The voters carefully evaluate the message argument, ponder implication of communicators idea and relate the information in their own knowledge and value before making decisions.

This theory has faced criticism since its development such as not clearly articulating its hypothesized processes hence there is lack of a clear and consistent framework make it very difficult to test and falsify the Elaboration Likelihood Model. Secondly, since its introduction in 1983, the elaboration continuum, which claims that the central route and the peripheral route are two sides in a continuum of elaboration, hasn't undergone comprehensive testing. Thirdly, central and peripheral processing does not appear to take place at the same time in the theory leading to criticisms. Finally mediating variables in the

theory is an issue. For instance, the variable of affect has been shown to be used in both the central and peripheral route, yet much research still views affect as solely the domain of the peripheral route.

Politicians should choose clear communication strategies through which they can clearly articulate their information. Interpersonal communication that may be made in individuals houses, church services, local social forums or sporting events can render the communication more attractive. The central route of this theory is applicable as voters process and evaluate information in order to make informed decisions.

The political class should consider the factors (social- cultural factors, political factors and psychological) that may influence the voting behavior before choosing a communication strategy. Such factors include income, social identity, media reports on corruption, ethnicity and race, media reports on bursary allocation, media influence, media reports on climate change concerns, social networks, communication campaign strategies, media reports on age, candidate emotional intelligence, media reports on health experience, candidates' interpersonal characteristics, media reports on education. Contestants in elections have a responsibility to undertake research on factors that influence the voting behavior. Considering the aspect of central and peripheral routes in the ELM model the political message should be quality and attractive leading to persuasion.

This theory reinforces the central route of processing information. When voters make decisions, its either for or against the contestant. This is all about their perception of the political candidate.

## **1.8 Conceptual Framework**

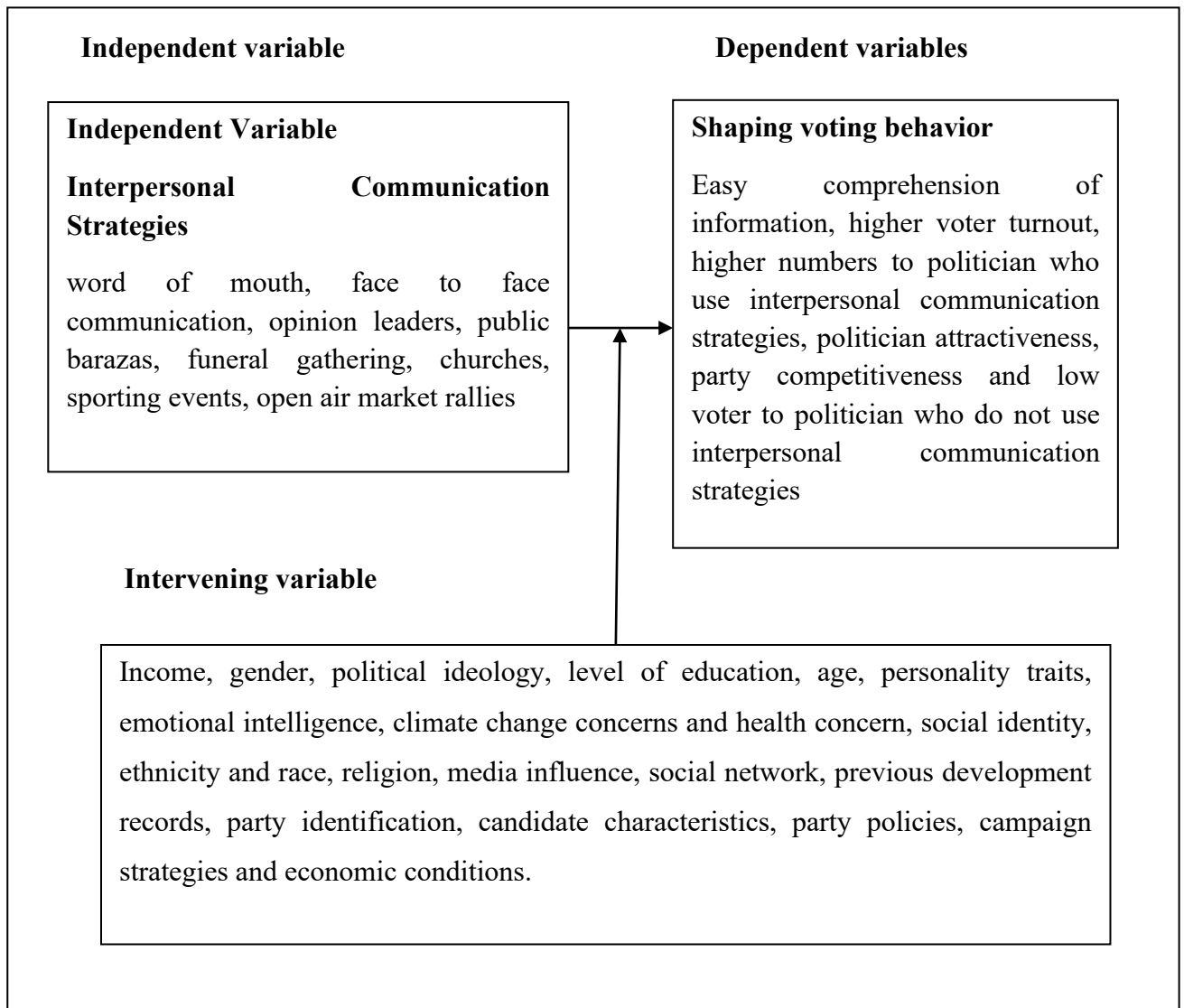
Adom et al. (2018) explain that conceptual framework is a structure which the researcher believes can best explain the natural progression of the phenomenon to be studied. The authors further add that it is a tool that researchers use to guide their inquiry; It's a set of ideas used in a research to guide in answering the research questions, in designing literature review, in determining the methods of data collection and analysis. A conceptual framework guides one or more theories as well as other concepts or empirical findings in the literature and shows how these ideas relate in the study.

In this study the independent variable was the utilization of Interpersonal Communication which includes face to face communication, opinion leaders in the community, public barazas, mobile phone. These independent variables are used to influence behavior and attitude of the public who are eligible to vote. The dependent variable was shaping voting behavior among residents of Shinyalu Constituency during the 2022 general elections. Dependent variables are those that depend on other factors. In this case the voting behavior of residents of Shinyalu Constituency during the 2022 general elections depended on the utilization of interpersonal communication.

In between the Independent and dependent variables, there are intervening variables which increase or decrease the attitude depending on the interpersonal communication, the independent variable. Intervening variables are also known as moderators and explain the whole process through which the variables relate and as moderators they affect the strength and direction of that relationship. The intervening variables confirmed that indeed they shaped and influenced the perception and attitude of the public. These intervening

variables are categorized into individual factors, social cultural factors and political factors. Individual factors included; income, gender, political ideology, level of education, age, personality traits, emotional intelligence, climate change concerns and health concern. Social cultural factors included; social identity, ethnicity and race, religion, media influence, social network. Political factors include; previous development records, party identification, candidate characteristics, party policies, campaign strategies and economic conditions. See Figure 1 below of the Conceptual Framework which clearly highlight the variables in the study.

See Figure 1 below of the Conceptual Framework which clearly highlight the variables in the study.



**Figure 1.1: Conceptual framework**

### **1.9 Chapter Summary**

This chapter explored the study background, statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, justification of the study, significance of the study, limitations and delimitations of the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter reviews relevant existing literature on the study from books, journals, websites, surveys and reports on the role of interpersonal communication on elections. The relevant literature also explores interpersonal communication strategies and its effects on voter behavior during elections. Since this study is deeply exploring the role of interpersonal communication in elections and anchoring the study in the rural settings, most of the literature is its effect on voting behavior. This chapter focuses on the use of the interpersonal mode of communication in elections, both globally and locally. It further discusses the electoral process in Kenya and relates it to the interpersonal communication as a process of communication during elections. Finally, it explores various factors which can directly or indirectly influence the behavior of voters in any given election.

#### **2.1 Understanding Interpersonal Communication**

Globally, Politicians explore multiple strategies of communication to persuade their supporters to cast votes in their favor. Kenyan politicians are not an exception to this reality. Depending on the geographical location and other infrastructural considerations, some communication strategies work better in some areas and not others. For instance, in urban settings, candidates and political parties target to reach bigger masses through new media which is powered by internet. However, rural areas such as Shinyalu face a myriad of challenges including high levels of illiteracy, poverty, poor infrastructure poor or no

internet connectivity (KAMEGA CIDP 2018-2022). This leaves room for interpersonal communication strategies more viable as a means of communicating to masses.

Different studies have confirmed that interpersonal communication plays a key role in every election cycle as it influences the voters to cast their votes in a certain way. One form of this mode of communication is advertisements made through new and traditional media for the purpose of persuasion (Korenkova et al. 2020). Understanding interpersonal communication is essential in political communication since it involves sharing ideas and feelings among individuals. Interpersonal communication as a strategy can be improved through appropriate knowledge, practice, feedback and reflections.

According to Fujishin (2019), interpersonal communication is growing globally, nationally and locally and plays a key role in the political space. This author postulates that in every election campaign, interpersonal communication is used to influence the voting pattern thus affecting voter outcome. Interpersonal communication is preferable to multitudes since it enables them to get information more clearly as compared to communication through other forms. This form of communication has been greatly embraced by politicians. Although the consumption and use of technology is growing very fast in developed countries, interpersonal communication has not been ignored in election campaigns. Africa, a social continent, practices interpersonal communication as people believe in a one-on-one conversation.

Interpersonal conversations occur between individuals either by face-to-face interactions or through technology and mostly targets opinion leaders who eventually propagate the information to the rest of the community (Liaw et al. 2022). Different studies confirm that

interpersonal conversations often serve to moderate or mediate political messages from both campaigns and news sources (Gilkerson et al. 2015). According to these authors, opinion leaders play an important role in influencing the attitudes and behaviors of others within the social network. Political candidates often convey their messages through various media channels like newspapers, televisions, internet, posters, fliers and outdoor forums. Rodrigues (2020) says that communication on political matters is relayed through advertising, social media forums, YouTube, Instagram and Facebook. These modes enable the candidates to reach out to their electorate with the aim of gaining their support in elections (Mares, 2015).

According to Paxson (2018), interpersonal communication is effective since it enables the election of men and women to the nation's offices to exercise control over the direction and activity of the government. It is therefore important to evaluate the effectiveness of communication modes in order to maximize the benefits and applicability of their use. These communication strategies in any campaign should be aligned to a media plan, which encompasses digital, print, traditional, new, earned and paid media.

As the interpersonal communication strategies take center stage in election cycles, online media has not been left behind. Mitchell et al. (2019) point out that the rise of new online media and especially social media is associated with a major increase in the circulation of false news stories. This false information can also be channeled out during the electioneering period, in form of propaganda, to the disadvantage of some candidates and to the advantage of others. The authors argue that there is no systematic study of whether false news is more or less prevalent in the current era than in the past. Further, false

rumors, false stories, and deliberate propaganda is based on false facts and that this equally featured in traditional media well before the internet era.

According to a report by Weidmann and Rød (2019), communication through the internet has proved effective in many elections including the Arab spring, the Obama elections, the popular rebellions against regimes in countries such as Iran, Turkey, Hong Kong and Myanmar. The report further indicates that for any communication to be effective, feedback from the audience is necessary. The authors of the report argue that communication should be simple and easily interpreted by the audience for constructive feedback and that communication that does not attract feedback is not communication at all.

Globally, the internet has been hailed as one of the most effective media of communication given that it sends out information to a larger audience in the global village especially in the current digital era. According to Alexander et al. (2011), the term ‘globalization’ is used so freely by politicians, activists, journalists and academics that it has become rather over-familiar. These authors argue that the term is not new to all individuals on the globe. Obradović & Vujović (2022) posit that for more than a decade, social media has been a crucial medium of communication in the political setting including in the year 2008 during the campaigns of Barack Obama in his bid for presidency of the United States of America. Further, these authors explain that Obama was a pioneer USA president to effectively use the internet and especially social media during campaigns, a move that led to a positive outcome. This has now been adopted as a trend in every election, making the internet key in any given political campaigns in the country.

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have been primarily used for communication in politics. Additionally, the rapidly growing popularity of Instagram has conditioned political entities to adapt to the visual concept of communication with the citizens reinforcing the fact that Trump's campaigns were highly effective due to the use of Twitter, which enabled him to reach more voters than the opponent. (Weidmann & Rød, 2019). The National Institute of Democracy guidelines (NID 2022) highlights the steps that are involved in developing a strategic communication plan which include: determining objectives, defining key audiences and identifying media outlets for a given campaign. These guidelines equally propose the creation of a tactical outreach plan of events and activities designed to generate coverage on the platforms used in order to reach targeted audiences.

A communication strategy can be effective if the user understands the message they wish to convey to voters. Designing a communication strategy that does not take into consideration needs of the targeted audience risks confusing voters, misrepresenting information or even alienating voters. This is corroborated by Rahmawati & Munir (2022) who indicate that a well planned strategy provides an overview of the direction that is supported by various existing resources. According to the NID (2022), a strategic communication plan or media strategy is necessary since it enhances adequate coverage through the media that targets voters. The report further highlights that a strategy should seek to maximize media opportunities. The media strategies should also support a campaign's overall goals and should incorporate all other aspects of a campaign, such as voter contact and fundraising. A contestant's attempt to connect with voters and grow

grassroots support for a campaign is a step towards success and therefore a communication strategy should incorporate such efforts (NID, 2022).

Around the world, the prevalence of social media is posing a transformative and often ill-understood impact on democracy (Shackle, 2018). Shackles (2018) postulates that as elections approached in South Asia, the case of July 2018 for Pakistan, and 2019 in India, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp all had a radical impact on public discourse. Shackles indicates that these platforms have the capacity to vastly increase political participation, particularly for marginalized groups apart from being a tool of public discourse.

Iqbal (2019) acknowledges that there are a number of factors that influenced voting behavior in Pakistan thus influencing the outcome of results. According to Iqbal (2019), voting is a collective action that influences political behavior alongside strengthening a political system. Iqbal (2019) further adds that it is a significant opportunity that provides voters to become active citizens instead of inactive subjects. Families, friends, peers, are influenced by the media by campaign networks so as to get result during election season. Spread of disinformation on WhatsApp in India has been linked to at least 30 deaths this year, most of which was provoked by misleading information spread through videos related to child kidnapping, which spawn panic and mob attacks (Shackle, 2018).

Shackle (2018) further argues that while Pakistan has not experienced this kind of violence, hoax videos and photographs spread in much the same way causing experts to express concern that something similar could happen. He observes that as elections in approached in Pakistan and in India, all the main political parties focused on their online

presence but there arose an increasing worry about the role of bot accounts in promoting propaganda and propagating abuse. Media thus continues to provide real time news on all diverse topics such as health, education, nutrition and governance. Germany presents an interesting case, one of the early studies examining potential connections between the use of Twitter in a subsequent electoral process in the year 2009 (Jungherr, 2013).

Political Campaigns are characterized by key features such as predictability, coordination, and goal-directedness . An election campaign can be described as a special form of campaign characterized by particular forms of communication (Powell, L., & Cowart, J. 2015). These include the application of basic political language strategies such as ethical maxims, basic strategies (such as orientation to addressees, appraisal and devaluation, and media-related strategies) as well as social media rhetoric. Powell & Cowart (2015) note that it is possible to describe specific forms of communication and election campaign texts whose responsibility lies with electoral to combat actors, the media or the citizens. These authors add that the citizens in particular are developing strategies of protest, for example through forms of election poster busting or television-accompanying communication on social media and TV.

Politicians and political parties commit their resources for the purpose of convincing and persuading citizens to vote for them. Political parties and politicians use different forms of media to communicate their manifestos and future plans to the electorates during elections through interpersonal communication (Asemah *et al.* 2012). Additionally, in order to campaign for something or somebody, there is need to advocate or speak loudly for it or him to convince the electorate that the candidate is the best option, given that a political

campaign is an organized effort, which seeks to influence the decision making process within a specific group.

In democratic spaces, political campaigns are often defined as electoral campaigns whose representatives are chosen or referendums are decided (Asemah *et al.* 2012). Here, the message of the campaign contains the ideas that the candidate wishes to share with the voters. These ideas, often summarized are frequently repeated in order to create a lasting impression on the voters. Previously, election candidates and political parties used various forms of conveying messages to the public. These forms of conveying messages included the use of television, radio, newspapers, posters, Billboards and roadshows. However, in the elections of 2022, political parties and candidates have switched to door to door campaigns, organizing seminars where they meet opinion leaders in the society, form groups on whatsApp forums and use of YouTube channels to reach their targeted audience.

Door to door campaigns were effective for the less privileged citizens which include the elderly and women who are not vast with technology. In the rural areas, most of the residents are illiterate and majority tend to believe in listening to the candidate or opinion leader physically and at close range in order to make a decision. This is reinforced by Mancosu (2019), who indicates that interpersonal communication is appropriate to women, the elderly and illiterate members in the society. This author suggests that this is as a result of participatory involvement, social learning, cultural exchange, cultural sensitivity and local sensitivity and that interpersonal communication is fundamental in life and that no human can thrive without it. The author suggests that it is very important to empower the community to enable them to take initiatives towards addressing their needs.

In Kenya, interpersonal communication strategies are important platforms that can be used to persuade voters. Interpersonal communication is enhanced through bodily language including facial expressions. Interpersonal communication usually involves verbal and nonverbal modes of communication and call for immediate feedback. Face-to-face communication is the best way to convey emotions and attitude and gives synchronous feedback between two or more persons besides (Venter, 2019). Fujishin (2019) explains that the current communication studies have extended this definition beyond the face-to-face context. Every campaign has objectives purposed to sell an idea to individuals or to an institution. During political campaigns, people popularize ideas to others with the aim of involving them as active participants in the building of a better society (Asemah *et al* 2012).

## **2.2 The Electoral process in Kenya**

The role and effectiveness of interpersonal communication as a strategy is shaping results in Kenya elections and therefore cannot be underestimated. Interpersonal communication plays a major role in determining how the electorate votes for the candidates. According to Paxson (2018), communication takes place everywhere, every day and every time. This author indicates that each and every individual engages in interpersonal communication with others at home, in offices, schools, work places and in many other spaces. Communication is therefore part and parcel of human existence and activity. Paxson (2018) argues that without a well-structured communication, business transaction, social interaction, religious orientation and knowledge acquisition cannot occur. In Kenya, political processes involve a series of activities such as political parties' registration, voter

registration, electorates civic education, political parties/candidates manifesto campaigns, legislative processes, political rallies, political tours and the final voting exercise. All these can be achieved through a well-structured communication.

**Political Parties registration-** During election period, political parties' registration is crucial in determining the one who vies and wins an election in some areas. During campaigns and grass-root mobilization forums, political parties and candidates strive to register members in given political parties. This is achieved through interpersonal communication strategies, informing the the public on their stand and manifesto of the parties.

In the rural areas members of the public mostly subscribe to interpersonal communication as they trust more on face to face communication. Political parties' agent strives high to ensure all sets of people are accommodated it parties through registration. In the rural areas, a large population are the elderly and women. The elderly and women are always engaged in other activities and therefore have no time to find information on other forms of media which include the new media.

**Electorate Civic Education-** Other forms of media which include both new and traditional media are applied at this stage but interpersonal communication is more effective. In Kenya, the electoral body, political parties, civil societies and Non- Governmental Organizations(NGOs) organize seminars, focus groups, town hall meetings and even one on one sessions with the members of the public to enlighten them on the entire electoral process. The rural setting faces a myriad of challenges which include poor internet

coverage, poor road networks, high illiteracy levels rendering interpersonal communication more suitable and effective for voter civic education.

**Voter Registration-** Mass media as a process is used in most cases in this exercise. Members of the public are enlightened on the importance of registering as voters, highlighting constitutional rights. The voting exercise is key in the development of a given society. Many people believe that they attain more development and obtain employment opportunities when they vote for their own candidate. By virtue of interpersonal communication, the voter registration officers guide the electorate and answer their questions immediately concerning the process.

**Candidate Manifesto-** This is a very important part in any political process. At this stage candidates unfold their plans and programmes to the voters in order to convince them to vote for them. For this to be achieved, the face to face interaction is key. Most candidates organize seminars and town hall meetings with opinion leaders in the society who later take part in the selling of the candidates' manifestos to the entire public. Interpersonal Communication in face to face settings offers an opportunity to the candidates to read how the public perceives their manifestos and this enables them to make quick decisions as they carry on with their campaigns.

**Political Parties Campaigns-** During elections, candidates need to design a proper master plan to reach the target audience either physically or through opinion leaders in order to sell their agenda. Most candidates use barazas, social media walls, seminars... just to convince the public why they should vote in their favor. In rural areas, the political class is opting for interpersonal communication as it works in their favor.

**Voter decision-** Information from various studies indicates that interpersonal communication is effective and convenient as compared to other forms of communication. Traditionally, many candidates preferred the use of mass media which includes use of televisions, radios, newspapers and social media but are now switching to the interpersonal communication strategies. It has been established that the final decision of voters is largely dependent on the influence of the social class, parents, groups or peers/friends (Paxson, 2018).

**Legislative process-** Many legislative processes like sponsoring of the bills, raising and counter of motions, impeachment processes and approval of budgets are made complete by the interpersonal communication. This is the case since most of the issues are addressed through physical interaction.

**Money politics-** In Kenya, money plays a role in the vote outcomes. Voters are easily influenced by what they receive from the potential leaders. During every election period, politicians engage in voter bribery as a way of influencing their decisions. Traditionally, politics was thought in the line of international seminars, writing attractive manifestos and having a larger gatherings but today it's run with money. The whole process in Kenya has been characterized by give and take. Pain in the process is monetized at every stage including the last stage of voting. To access the grassroots populace, mass media can not suffice as a mode of communication, calling for reinforcement with other modes communication.

### **2.3 Persuasion and modern politics**

Communication is a way of expression to humans by allowing them to relay, convey, and give feedback on their thoughts, feelings, and desires (Asemah *et al*, 2012). These authors

explain that at the end of every communication, there must be feedback, which enables the communicator to assess the degree of reception. Communication is influenced by perception and Power and therefore interpersonal communication has a role to play here. In the digital era, communication means a lot ranging from the use of electronic media, oral reports to face to face communication. In the political arena, politicians choose an appropriate form of communication to relay a message. This message is always purposed to persuade and influence voters. In the modern politics, it has been perceived that politicians mostly use electronic media but also they are embracing interpersonal communication.

In the corporate world, a proper channeled communication is key and therefore managers communicate to their staff by direct reports clearly in order to plan, strategize, and to organize activities to be undertaken, This is the same with politics. According to Asemah *et al* (2012), the ultimate goal of any communication is to change how one person thinks concerning a subject. For this goal to be accomplished, everyone should be on the same page through effective communication. According to Harman, *et al.* (2019), all of these aspects of power include the status that partners hold in relation to one another. The authors add that the control they exercise over one another within the relationship and the influence over one another that is apparent in their interactions is explored in the research on power and interpersonal communication in close relationships. Additionally, the status people hold in the society determine who they interact with.

In the rural setting, people tend to believe the information of the scholars and the wealthy in the society. The scholars are regarded as opinion leaders or decision makers and are

always chosen to represent them during public barazas. Political parties and candidates use the elites in the societies to pass their messages to the ordinary members in the society. Power is also influenced by perception where both verbal and non-verbal communication methods can affect a listener's perception of what is said that is the meaning in different ways. Depending on the status, the people in control may use either verbal or non-verbal communication to communicate to the audience. In verbal communication, face-to-face or long distance communication typically provides means for the context to be established thus showing perceptions of what is being conveyed to be aligned so that everyone is on the same page (Harman et al., 2019).

Non-verbal communication through writing does not give an opportunity to the reader to obtain more information from the writer since the reader interacts with the written content in the absence of writer. On the contrary, the use of non-verbal communication allows the locutor and the interlocutor to get more information one another. This information is passed through non verbal cues such as tone, gestures, or facial expressions which are however not explained but they are communicative. Nonetheless, emotions can be used to convey more of what someone is inferring, and can thus provide context.

#### **2.4 Economic, Social cultural and political factors of interpersonal communication on voting behaviour**

In this study, economic factors included income, gender, political ideology, level of education, age, personality traits, emotional intelligence, climate change and health concerns. Social cultural factors included social identity, ethnicity and race, religion, media influence and social networks. Political factors included previous development records,

party identification, candidate characteristics, party policies, campaign strategies and economic conditions.

#### **2.4.1 Candidate emotional intelligence**

According to Sunindijo & Maghrebi (2020), political skills and emotional intelligence are considered to be crucial skills in managing complex interpersonal relationships in the political space. Voter perception is measured according to the emotional intelligence of a candidate. Emotional voting is when political decisions are made on opinions rather than logical thinking and objective assessment of policies or candidates (Cwalina & Drzewiecka, 2019). Voters ask themselves questions like, who are the political leaders we are looking for? How does the candidate position himself or herself in leadership? The voter then decides whom to vote for.

Cwalina & Drzewiecka (2019) further point out that voting is often driven by personal values, identity, fears, or hopes rather than careful deliberation and that emotions such as anger, fear, optimism, or loyalty can significantly influence voting behavior. Voters may be reluctant to vote for a candidate who has anger as they feel the candidate may not lead them well. Fear is also a factor as voters always admire leaders who are bold and can articulate their issues. The authors also argue that while emotional voting fosters passionate political involvement and strong attachment to candidates or causes, it also has shortcomings and that the decisions based on emotions can be uninformed, biased, and overly simplistic, potentially harming individuals and society.

Voter behavior refers to how people decide who to vote for in any given election based on factors which influence their decision. Individuals' attitudes and some factors which

include social-cultural and economic factors have a part to play in this decision making. According to Sunindijo & Maghrebi (2020), political skill and emotional intelligence are considered to be crucial skills in managing complex interpersonal relationships in the political space. Voter perception regarding any political is measured according to the emotional intelligence of a candidate.

The voter's attitude includes individual ideological differences, political party differences, previous government service records and public policy differences. Globalization has given an opportunity and possibilities to study in different countries with different backgrounds of cultural diversities and language (Rzepka et al., 2021). According to these authors, globalization creates the culture of real interaction through the use of various ways of communication. They add that globalization creates an interactive society and makes a big influence on social, economic, political and cultural life of society. Every society has a belief system and a language that govern it. This system and language determine how individuals interact with each other and how they perceive information. Rzepka et al. (2021) further mention that culture points out people's goals which help them to understand create their communities.

Cultural background also shapes attitudes and this is categorized in terms of gender. Communities view gender differently hence affecting reception of information. In some communities, women are not taken seriously thus affecting the transfer of information. In society, people trust information from opinion leaders following the choice of words they use when communicating to the electorate.

### **2.4.2 Age and politics**

Geys et al. (2022) confirm that ageing is often believed to induce a movement towards the right of the political spectrum and that the relationship between age and voting behavior has been of a long-standing concern to social scientists. In many studies, age has been identified as a factor which is likely to influence voter behavior in various elections and has been identified as an important factor which can shape political opinions on the globe. The younger and older citizens have different preferences with regards to the choice of leaders in a given election. According to Holland (2013), the influence of sociodemographic characteristics such as gender and race cannot be underestimated in any election. However, literature has not explored the role of age in elections outcomes.

In the 2008 and 2013 U.S. presidential elections, age was a factor among citizens who chose their preferred candidate in the two elections (Holland, 2013). This was attributed to technology which mostly attracted the youth. In these elections the USA campaign team used twitter, Youtube and Instagram to reach out to the populace. The author highlights that in 2008, young people aged between 18 and 29 years overwhelmingly voted for Barack Obama compared to John McCain which was at 66 percent to 32 percent, while older people aged above 65 years chose McCain over Obama which 53 percent to 45 percent.

Holland (2013) further explains that in fact, this age gap was larger than the gender gap in 2008 where men voted for Obama and McCain at virtually the same rate which was 49 percent to 48 percent, while women preferred Obama which was 56 percent to 43 percent. And, the age gap was again larger than the gender gap in the 2012 U.S. presidential general election (Holland,2013). Holland (2013) adds that in that year, young people ages 18-29

preferred Barack Obama to Mitt Romney which was 60 percent against 37 percent, while older people ages 65-plus chose Romney over Obama which was 56 percent against 44 percent.

### **2.4.3 Ethnicity and race**

The decision the voters make is influenced by the communication strategies employed to convey information. In this communication, ethnicity and race cannot be ignored as they play a key role in politics. In Kenya, regional politics, determined by ethnicity and race is not unique to some regions in the country. Many researches have shown that racial and ethnic identities play a crucial role in shaping political preferences and voting behavior. For instance, Kulachai et al (2023) highlight that members of marginalized racial or ethnic communities may more likely support policies addressing issues such as discrimination, immigration, or criminal justice reforms.

In Kenya, the 2010 Constitution requires that a presidential candidate acquires 50% +1 of cast votes to win an election, a move that has since created passionate ethnic mobilization politics (Kisaka & Nyadera, 2019). According to these authors, this decision was arrived at due to the realization that a presidential candidate could not win a national election by merely depending on their own ethnic blocs. They further suggest that this is because even the largest ethnic groups in the country make about 10–18% of the total population. Kisaka & Nyadera (2019) posit that in the 1999 population census, the following communities were considered as the largest with each having more than 10% of the population: Kikuyu (17.15%), Luhya (13.82%), Kalenjin (12.86%), Luo (10.47%), and Kamba (10.07%).

#### **2.4.4 Media reports on religious diversity and elections**

The place of religion in Kenya is imperative and so in times of crisis, political leaders, who are mainly seen to visit churches to use the dais for political gains and call on prayer days throughout the nation (Kilonzo & Omwalo, 2021). Places of worship have been seen as fertile vote-hunting area where politicians probably frequent to search for votes. Different studies have confirmed that religion can significantly influence individuals' voting decisions adding that the religious beliefs and affiliations to political preferences significantly impact voting behavior.

Religion is closely linked to politics in a number of ways. In the traditional society, religious leaders were both temporal and civil leaders (Gentile, 2020). According this author, religion has always influenced policy making process and decision-making in government and so in many parts of the world, religious leaders influence the political class to enact policies that are in line with the provisions of religious beliefs.

According to Kenya and United States Department of state report of 2023, the government estimates that as of 2019, approximately 85.5 percent of the total population was Christian and 11 percent Muslim. The report further postulates that groups constituting less than 2 percent of the population included Hindus, Sikhs, Baha'is, and those adhering to various traditional religious beliefs.

Kenya and United States Department of state report of 2023 further shows that non-evangelical Protestants account for 33 percent of the population, Roman Catholics accounts for 21 percent. According to the report, Christian denominations which include evangelical Protestants and African instituted churches (churches started in Africa

independently by Africans) account for 32 percent. The Kenya and United States Department of state report of 2023 further highlights that according to the Kenya 2019 population and housing census, 755,000 persons identified themselves as atheists or having no religion.

In Kenya Most of the Muslim population lives in the northeast and coastal regions, with significant Muslim communities in several areas of Nairobi and the western part of the country (Kenya - United States Department of State, 2023). This is linked to the ethnicity of Somali and Swahili community who mostly are found in the northeast and coastal regions. According to the Kenya - United States Department of State, 2023 report, the five largest ethnic groups (the Kikuyu, Luhya, Kalenjin, Luo, and Kamba) are predominately Christian.

#### **2.4.5 Rural Kenya education and politics**

Technology has influenced the world in many positive ways as it is a great tool for communication when it comes to connecting friends and families who live far away. Today, many people in the society take technology with seriousness as the majority cannot remember when they missed a phone around them. The invasion of electronic mails and cell phones has led to the erupting of more new ways of communicating through technology. With the invasion of smartphones in the market, one can be able to access the internet and can therefore do a lot on the phone. Technology has simplified the connection of people through various platforms which include twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and text messaging.

Different scholars have gone further to define interpersonal communication not limiting it to face to face indicating that it can also be facilitated through technology. This happens through organizing meetings through Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube where the politicians can express views. Different research shows that technology, especially mobile technology limits social interactions to face to face communication.

Technology has its disadvantages. The older generation, mostly in the rural setting, find it hard to use. In the urban zones technology has not been well utilized in voter mobilization but instead used to facilitate cyberbullying and cyber skyping. Internet through various platforms like WhatsApp, YouTube and Instagram are used as tools of not only spreading news about candidates but also propaganda among candidates during elections. This mode is not reliable as it relies on internet and therefore disadvantages the rural folk since internet seems to be poor due to poor infrastructure. Communication is thus less personalized.

#### **2.4.6 Gender differentiation in elections**

Men and women are viewed differently in society given their own physical differences. The two gender have different ways of communication in society. Rzepka et al. (2021) explain that men are less emotional, tend to keep problems to themselves and move past disagreements as compared to women who are more emotional, discuss problems with fellow women, are relationship oriented and carry on disagreements which eventually affect their relationship.

During political campaigns, men and women are approached differently in order to convince them to accept an idea. Men are too analytical and they need to be given time to

understand policies and manifestos of a given candidate as compared to women who accept easily. Politicians use opposite gender to look for votes as women naturally pay attention to men in any speech as compared to fellow women. In the Luhya communities, opinion leaders play a key role in decision making hence they are used in reaching out for votes.

#### **2.4.7 The Language use in political communication in Kenya**

In the political space, politicians and parties use opinion leaders in various communities to communicate on their behalf since these opinion leaders better understand the cultural beliefs and languages communities. Culture plays a major role in communication as every community has its way of communicating either verbally or nonverbally. In some communities, languages start from the body appearance, dress code, tone and even gender. Opinion leaders clearly understand how to present the messages. The advantage of culture in communication is that it helps one to identify the cultural basis of beliefs and also helps one to identify cultural behaviors. Communication blended with culture also helps to improve on the skill of working with others, makes one a better communicator and enabling career progression (Team, 2021). Moreover, the belief system and morality both have a great impact on how people communicate with those of different cultural beliefs. Even if culture naturally makes communication efficient, it also reduces its efficacy. Language, gestures, tones, words, phrases may differ in different settings.

Different communities use different language accompanied by different tones and words and if not used carefully, they may lead to miscommunication. Languages also affect communication due to different translation, colloquialism, Jargon and Slang. Kakamega

County is a home of Luhya from the Bantu community and carries up to 16% of the Kenyan total population with 10 subtribes each speaking a different dialect of the Luhya language. In Shinyalu Sub County, the majority are the Isukha subtribe and they speak Isukha dialect (Simiyu et al., 2019).

#### **2.4.8 Social network, social identity, class diversity and politics**

Economic factors are very key in any election as they play a very important role in shaping politics in any election setting. Lewis-Beck & Stegmaier (2018) postulate that economic conditions can have a significant impact on voting decisions. Voters often consider the state of the economy and their personal financial situations when evaluating political candidates and making their electoral choices. Populations are aligned to different classes . The poor and the rich are persuaded differently since they have different opinions on matters of politics.

Income can be a significant factor influencing individuals' voting decisions. Every candidate in a given elections targets his or her audience and so to choose a certain audience, candidates always consider the income status. Research has shown that income levels can shape political preferences and voting behavior in various ways. Several studies have found a positive correlation between income levels and political participation, including voting. The use of interpersonal communication as a platform always targets the low income audience as they do not afford the more sophisticated and expensive media of communication which are computer aided. Higher-income individuals tend to be more politically engaged and more likely to vote compared to those with lower incomes (Levin-Waldman, 2013). The less privileged trust verbal communication as they feel recognized

and therefore can be easily persuaded. The poor also are likely to be bribed by receiving tokens so as to be persuaded. The rich always need a more detailed persuasion full of information as most of them are informed and tend to compare information from different sources. The rich can access information from different media and reports.

These economic factors include class alignment and previous government policies and service delivery track records. In this era, the art of voter preference is continuously increasing day by day with the influence of various factors including the economic factors. The significance of voter preferences in the purpose of political power within the scope of political marketing is increasing with each day (Armutcu & Tan, 2021).

According to Häusermann and Kriesi (2015), the factors that affect voter preferences seem to be a provoking issue in different literatures emphasizing that voter preferences may differ from country to country depending on the levels of development and growth of countries. The authors postulate that the most influential factor in voting is economy related. Armutcu & Tan (2021) further explain that while making decisions to choose leaders in any election, voters support political parties which benefit them first most. Voters advocate for political parties that they believe can overcome economic problems by evaluating their past and future performances (Häusermann & Kriesi, 2015). Many voters scrutinize the past development achieved or failed in by politicians before making a formed decision to support.

#### **2.4.9 Media reports on climate change concern**

It is evident that issues of climate change have grown clear and pervasive and therefore it is now a phenomenon that influences how people vote. Any politician who is not ready to

speaking about climate change cannot influence how people vote. In the rural areas, climate change is affecting the populace but due to its setting, information does not reach politicians to cause them to address issues of climate change. Politicians who are aggressive use the opportunity to include climate change in their policies so as to win the hearts of the electorate. In the rural areas, politicians have embraced personalized modes of communication to speak about drying dams and rivers, depleting forest covers and extended drought thus affecting food production. A study by Norbury (2023) found that concern for climate change is a significant predictor of voting behavior, especially for younger voters who are likely to bear the brunt of climate change impacts.

#### **2.4.10 Media reports on health experience**

Issues of healthcare are very important in political discussion as they influence voter decisions. Voters face health challenges regularly and are ready to speak at a ballot depending on whether the candidate advanced any health care to them or not. In the rural areas where they face myriad challenges of healthcare, politicians focus on health care issues so as to influence voters.

#### **2.4.11 Media influence**

Media influence plays a key role in shaping how people vote or influences the voting behavior in a given election. Media influence is categorized as an individual level influence on voting behavior as many people always rely on media for information preference. Different researches have consistently demonstrated the impact of media on political preferences and voting behavior. Numerous studies have shown that media exposure can shape individuals' attitudes, knowledge, and perceptions of political

candidates and issues (Tobias-Mamina et al., 2021). Media has for a long time played a role as a primary source of information for politicians and voters and therefore the media chosen to share information is crucial. Different media outlets have the power to share ideologies whether fake or biased but with the intention of influencing how voters make decisions.

Individual who associate themselves with a particular politician always have strong beliefs as to why they should vote for that candidate. In the rural setting, candidates have embraced direct contacts with voters for them to believe in their manifestos. According to Kulachai et al (2023), factors such as personal beliefs, social networks, and other information sources also interact with media and have an influence on the voting behavior and hence media influence significantly shapes voting decisions.

#### **2.4.12 Information on party policy position and manifesto**

Party policy positions in any given elections are a crucial factor that influences voting decisions. Every party has its policies that tend to help them in governance and so those who subscribe to a certain party are tasked with the dissemination of the party manifesto. Before any voter makes a decision regarding where to cast their vote, they first wish to know what a politician is putting on the table, the manifesto. The candidate has to choose the best platform to reach the targeted audience. People in rural areas which are under developed are always keen to know if the party policies are development oriented and so the candidates are supposed to furnish them with information. Voters in the election scenario often consider the policy positions and stances of candidates when determining their support in elections (Kulachai et al, 2023).

According to Tobias-Mamina, et al (2021) the alignment of a candidate's policy positions with the preferences and values of voters can significantly impact their decision to vote for a particular candidate. In both the global and local election scenes, voters evaluate candidates based on their positions on key issues, such as the economy, healthcare, education, environment, national security, social issues, and many more. These stances are very key and therefore are a priority in the drafting and marketing of the party to the voters. Tobias-Mamina et al (2021) indicate that voters who prioritize economic issues may carefully evaluate candidates' positions on taxation, job creation, income inequality, and economic growth and similarly, voters concerned about environmental issues may consider candidates' positions on climate change, energy policies, and conservation. Political candidates and parties often deliberately communicate their policy positions and manifestos to appeal to different sections of the electorate with the goal to gain support and secure votes.

#### **2.4.13 Communication campaign strategies**

Campaign strategies in elections play a crucial role in shaping voting decisions. These strategies need to be formulated carefully by politician in order to reach a targeted audience to convince them to vote in a certain way. One of the core goals of any electoral actor, whether they are parties or individual candidates, is to secure votes in elections, from which they gain legislative seats and, if they secure enough votes, office and the ability to enact their preferred policy (Johnston et al 2023). These authors however say that to continually get enough votes to achieve the objectives, electoral actors need to be adaptable, willing to change over time to not only survive and remain relevant, but also to

succeed in their political goals. In this research, different campaign strategies were applied to ensure the winning candidate occupies the office to represent the electorate.

According to Kulachai, W. et al (2023), political candidates use various schemes and strategies to communicate their messages and to mobilize supporters, persuading undecided voters to vote their way. These approaches can influence voters' perceptions, attitudes, and ultimately their decision to support a particular candidate.

A proper channeled communication strategy is fundamental when designing a communication plan with a target of reaching a certain audience. Candidate always analyze their target audience and therefore use various channels such town hall meetings, social media, debates or reaching the audience directly so as to communicate their policies and manifestos.

Johnston et al (2023) suggest that understanding the impact of campaign strategies on voting decisions provides insights into the dynamics of elections and voter behavior and consequently an effective campaign strategy can shape the political landscape, mobilize support, and influence the outcomes of elections.

## **2.5 Research Gap**

Interpersonal Communication is taking shape in the political space at a very fast pace since the system is being adopted. It has become key in any political dialogue. Many studies have been done on the broad communication relating it to global politics, Kenya included, but few studies have narrowed to Interpersonal Communication(IPC) especially in the rural environs. From the studies reviewed in this study, the power of persuasion is very important in politics as it shaped the way people reason. Many studies have revealed how

communication is a very important tool in elections and influences how people perceive each other. Studies have also revealed that communication, especially Interpersonal Communication, is influenced by several factors which include age, gender, religion and levels of knowledge.

These studies helped to understand how to cope with challenges that influence interpersonal communication and how to address them. While these studies have not attempted to shed light on the use of Interpersonal Communication in political communication, they have not fully interrogated this mode of communication. This study focused on evaluating the use of interpersonal communication to shape voting behaviour in Shinyalu Constituency in the 2022 general elections.

## **2.6 Chapter Summary**

This chapter discussed literature review as informed by the objectives of the study. This study specifically evolved on communication and political campaign in a global context, role of interpersonal communication on electoral behavior in shaping election results in the Kenyan context, understanding interpersonal communication, factors that influence interpersonal communication on voter behavior which include individual level factors, political factors and social-cultural factors e.g age, ethnicity, religion, education, gender, language and perception etc. This chapter has also discussed two theories which are social exchange theory and interpersonal deception theory which make the study more academic and scholarly in nature. Lastly, the chapter has identified the several research gaps and offered various recommendation on how to address the gaps.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This Chapter focuses on the methodology used in the study. Specifically, it covers research design, area of study, population of study, sampling techniques and methods of data collection and analysis as well as ethical considerations in research.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

According to Tomaszewski et al (2020), a research design is the master plan or a conceptual framework within which research is conducted and can be thought of as a structured environment for data collection and analysis in a way that aligns with a purpose of the study. A research design can also be defined as an analytical and strategic way that a researcher chose to use or to logically integrate different study components to ensure that the research problem is thoroughly investigated (Sileyew, 2020; Ishtiaq, 2019).

The study adopted a mixed method research approach which utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis in order to get a scientific as well as in-depth inquiry into the research problem.

#### **3.2 Study Area**

The study was conducted in Shinyalu Constituency, Kakamega County, Kenya. The constituency is among the twelve administrative units in Kakamega County. According to the Kenya census report of 2019, the constituency has an approximate population of 167,641 residents. Its area is approximated at 445.4 km square km (Sub Counties – County Government of Kakamega, 2015). The Sub Counties- County Government of Kakamega

report of 2015 further indicates that Shinyalu constituency has 6 wards, namely, Isukha north, Murhanda, Isukha central, Isukha south, Isukha east and Isukha west.

### **3.3 Study Population**

Murhekar et al (2021) define population as a set or group of all the units on which the findings of the research are to be applied. In this research, the population was drawn from Shinyalu Constituency, Kakamega county- Kenya. The study population consisted of both male and female residents of the Sub County aged 18 years and above who were eligible to vote. In 2022, Shinyalu Constituency had 76,978 registered voters (IEBC, n.d.). According to Willie (2024) a study population in research is very crucial as it defines the purpose of the study and why a study is being undertaken.

### **3.4 Sampling Techniques (Quantitative)**

Sampling is the process of selecting a sample population from the target population (Elfil & Negida (2017). Shinyalu constituency has 6 wards, namely, Isukha north, Murhanda, Isukha central, Isukha south, Isukha east and Isukha west.

**Table 3.1: Registered voters**

<b>Ward</b>	<b>Registered voters</b>
Isukha Central	16111
Isukha South	16003
Murhanda	12994
Isukha North	11965
Isukha West	9724
Isukha East	10181
<b>Total</b>	<b>76,978</b>

*Source: Independent Electoral and Boundary Commission voter register of 2022 general elections*

As shown by the voters' numbers presented in the above table, the wards had varying numbers of registered voters. Therefore, in order to avoid bias and ensure an equal chance for each ward to participate in the study, proportionate stratified sampling was undertaken based on the number of voters in each Ward. The table shows Proportionate Stratified Sampling in the 6 Wards in Shinyalu Constituency.

**Table 3.2: Proportionate Stratified Sampling**

<b>Ward</b>	<b>Registered voters</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Number of residents to respond to questionnaires</b>
Isukha Central	16111	21%	83
Isukha South	16003	21%	83
Murhanda	12994	17%	67
Isukha North	11965	16%	62
Isukha West	9724	13%	53
Isukha East	10181	13%	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>76978</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>398</b>

### 3.4.1 Sample Size

A sample size is a subset of a larger population that is selected for study (Gumpili & Das, 2022). The size of the sample influences statistical properties, namely, precision of our estimate and the power to draw a conclusion. In this study, the entire population of 76,978 voters was large and therefore a smaller sample was required. In line with Stephanie (2013), Slovin's formula was used to calculate the sample size as follows:

Equation:

$$n = N \div (1 + Ne^2)$$

n= Number of samples or sample size

N= Total population

e= Margin of Error (0.05)

Where N is

$$n = 76,978 / (1 + 76,978 \times 0.05^2)$$

$n = 76,978 / 193.44 = 397.94$ . Therefore, the sample size was 398.

### **3.4.2 Sampling Techniques (Qualitative)**

The researcher purposively selected two (2) Parliamentary Seat contestants and Opinion leaders from each Ward, making a total of 12 key informants. These were people who were rich in information regarding voting behaviour and elections in Shinyalu Constituency. They were selected to participate in interviews.

### **3.5 Data Collection Tools**

Data collection is the process of collecting, measuring and analyzing different types of information using a set of standard validated techniques. The main objective of data collection is to gather information-rich and reliable data, and analyze them to make critical decisions. (Duggal, 2023). In this study both primary and secondary data was collected through questionnaires (for quantitative data) and interview schedules (for qualitative data).

#### **3.5.1 Questionnaire**

In this study questionnaires were administered among the 398 respondents according to the research objectives. The Questionnaire was divided into four sections namely; A, B, C and D. Section A, sought information on respondent's demographic data. The demographic section included age, gender, nationality, language, religion, education level, and residence. Section B catered for objectives one which was to determine the communication strategies used during the 2022 general election in Shinyalu constituency. This section covered communication strategies for both interpersonal communication and other forms of media. The respondents were asked the best medium used to disseminate information among the residents in Shinyalu constituency. Section C accommodated objective two which focused

on the factors that influenced voting behavior. Section D addressed objective three which was to establish the voter perception regarding the use of interpersonal communication.

### 3.5.2 Interviews

In this study, interviews were conducted among parliamentary seat contestants and opinion leaders. These respondents were sampled purposively and interviewed to elicit qualitative information. According to Campbell (2022), purposive sampling is key in research as it allows the researcher to select participant who are able to provide relevant information to answer the questions. The researcher in this study divided the questions into three sections according to objectives. The table below shows how the number of respondents scheduled for interviews

**Table 3.3 : Interviews Schedules**

<b>Category</b>		<b>Number per Ward</b>	<b>Total</b>
Parliamentary contestants	Seat	1 for each Ward	6
Opinion leaders		1 for each Ward	6
<b>Total</b>		<b>12</b>	

### 3.6 Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments

According to William (2024), validity and reliability testing is a fundamental aspect of research methodology, serving to evaluate the consistency and stability of measurement instruments working in a study. Validity represents the degree to which a test measures what it claims to measure. Reliability represents the degree to which a test is able to reproduce similar results also known as the consistency of a test. In the context of this

study, ensuring reliability was imperative to ascertain that the tools utilized for data collection specifically questionnaires yielded reliable results.

High reliability is indicative of the extent to which the measurement instruments accurately capture the constructs they are designed to assess, thereby enhancing the validity and trustworthiness of the study's findings. Establishing reliability is particularly crucial in studies that seek to measure complex constructs, such as perceptions and behaviors, as it ensures that the conclusions drawn are based on dependable and consistent data (Zohrabi, 2013). Table 3 shows the reliability test.

**Table 3.4: Reliability test 1**

<b>Cohen's Weighted Kappa</b>						
Ratings	Weighted Kappa <sup>a</sup>	Asymptotic			95% Asymptotic Confidence Interval	
		Std. Error <sup>b</sup>	z <sup>c</sup>	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Objective 1 – Objective 2	.934	.010	27.956	.000	.915	.953
Objective 1 – Objective3	.950	.007	28.131	.000	.937	.964
Objective 2 – Objective 3	.989	.004	28.922	.000	.982	.996

a. The estimation of the weighted kappa uses linear weights.

b. Value does not depend on either null or alternative hypotheses.

c. Estimates the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis that weighted kappa is zero.

The results of the reliability test, evaluated through Cohen's Weighted Kappa, indicated a robust level of agreement among the assessed variables for quantitative research. The findings are summarized as follows: communication strategies used during the 2022 general elections in Shinyalu Constituency and factors influencing voting behavior in Shinyalu constituency had a weighted Kappa of 0.934 (95% Confidence Interval: 0.915 - 0.953), communication strategies used during the 2022 general elections in Shinyalu and perceptions of voters regarding forms of interpersonal communication had a weighted Kappa of 0.950 (95% Confidence Interval: 0.937 - 0.964)

Finally, factors influencing voting behavior in Shinyalu Constituency and perceptions of voters regarding forms of interpersonal communication had a weighted Kappa of 0.989 (95% Confidence Interval: 0.982 - 0.996).

All comparisons yielded statistically significant results ( $p < 0.001$ ), indicating exceptionally high reliability across the measurement instruments. A Weighted Kappa value exceeding 0.90 was interpreted as reflecting excellent agreement, thus supporting the robustness and reliability of the instruments employed in this study. This resonates with the established guidelines set forth by Landis and Koch (1977), which delineate the interpretation of Kappa values. Consequently, the high Weighted Kappa values obtained in this study not only affirm the consistency and reliability of the data collection instruments but also enhance the overall credibility of the research outcomes. Weighted Kappa values provide a solid foundation for the subsequent analysis and interpretations, ensuring that the conclusions drawn are both valid and reliable.

Validity is the extent to which the score on a measure truly reflects the construct and it is supposed to measure while reliability is the extent to which a measurement is free from

error Suetta, et al (2019). According to Aikens et al (2020), in any research, a reliable measure is supposed to give a researcher the same answer when you measure the same construct several times and that a 2.5% of the sampled population is appropriate for a pilot.

### **Pilot survey**

A pilot survey was carried out in Sirisia Constituency in Bungoma County. Besides being a different geographical area, Sirisia County also had similar demographics as the study location. To estimate the reliability of the instrument, a pilot survey involving the research instrument (questionnaire) was done using a small and representative sample of 10 respondents which was a 2.5% representation of the sample size.

### **Trustworthiness of the research (for qualitative data)**

In this study, trustworthiness was also used as a reliability test for the qualitative data from interview schedules. In qualitative research, reliability is measured through trustworthiness and is assessed through strategies such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Ahmed, 2024). The criteria ensures that research findings are believable, applicable to other contexts, stable over time, and able to be confirmed by other researchers.

Credibility is good for internal validity and ensures that findings are accurate and represent participant views. In this research, the researcher had a prolonged engagement with the participants. Korstjens & Moser (2018) posit that some of the key strategies that researchers may use to ensure credibility include prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation and member checking. In this study the researcher shared findings with participants to confirm accuracy and interpretation.

Transferability which is also known as external validity or generalizability was key for providing a detailed account of research contexts and thick descriptions. This was achieved through by ensuring that the reader was able to determine if the findings can be applied to other situations and providing a detailed account of participant setting and data collection methods to allow judgement of transferability.

Dependability was enhanced through an audit trail, replication logic and reflexivity. In this research, there was maintaining a detailed record of all research processes and being aware of how personal biases might influence the research process. Confirmability entailed the use of peer de-briefing.

### **3.7 Data Collection Procedures**

Prior to the data collection process, the researcher obtained a permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation, which was presented to participants before beginning the study. The researcher then administered the questionnaires and interviewed the key informants with the help of research assistants.

### **3.8 Data Analysis**

Data was analyzed according to the study objectives. The researcher conducted both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

#### **3.8.1 Quantitative Data Analysis**

Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics presented in frequencies, percentages, tables and figures. This is because tables easily show the comparison among variables and can easily show patterns that exist among the variables.

### **3.8.2 Qualitative Data Analysis**

The researcher transcribed the data collected from the in-depth interviews conducted among key informants in Shinyalu Constituency. After coding, data was categorized into themes which were then interpreted and presented thematically.

### **3.9 Data Analysis and Presentation**

Quantitative data from the respondents was analyzed descriptively, by way of frequency tables, charts and graphs, and percentages. In this study, qualitative data was analyzed thematically. The themes were categorized as per the research objectives of the study. Thematic analysis is good as it allows generation of precious data for research and explores research questions in an in-depth analysis (Kabaji & Mukanzi, 2018). Data from interviews obtained from opinion leaders, local administration and elected leaders was recorded, transcribed, organized into retrievable sections, coded and organized into themes and sub-themes.

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

The study sought an informed consent from the respondents who participated in the study. The researcher explained to the respondents why the research was being conducted and assured them of confidentiality. The study also involved the principle of voluntary participation which requires that respondents are not coerced into participating in the research.

A letter from the institution and a research permit were sought from the University and the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), respectively. These were presented to the Local administration e.g Assistant County Commissioner,

Area Chiefs and other opinion leaders including candidates and elected leaders from the region.

### **3.10 Chapter summary**

This chapter discussed the steps the study used to realize its objectives; research design, population of the study, sampling procedure, sample size, instrumentation, data collection tools, data analysis and ethical considerations.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

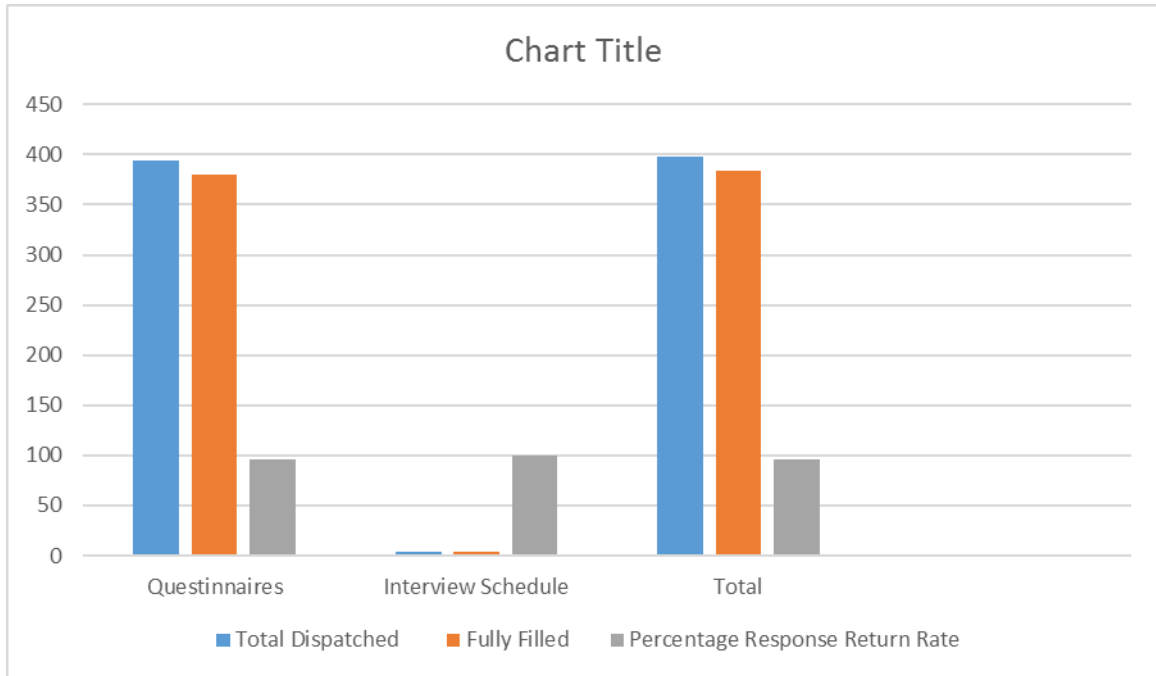
#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter is focused on the presentation of demographics, findings and discussion. Data collected by questionnaires and by interview schedules is presented concurrently. This is followed by interpretation and discussion. The findings are presented in accordance with the objectives of the study.

##### **4.1.1 Response Return Rate**

The response rate for questionnaires was 380 (96.4%) out of the 398 questionnaires which were administered. A high response rate is desirable because it enhances the representativeness of the sample, reduces non-response bias, and increases the reliability of findings (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2020). This study used a sample size of 398 respondents from Shinyalu constituency.

Figure 2 summarizes the response return rates for both the questionnaires and interview schedules.



**Figure 4.1: Response Rate Summary**

The response return rate for questionnaires was 96.4%, with 380 out of 398 dispatched questionnaires being fully filled and returned. This high percentage indicates a strong level of engagement among the respondents, suggesting that the data collected is likely to be representative of the population being studied. Achieving a response rate above 96% aligns with best practices in survey research, where rates above 75% are generally considered excellent (Baruch & Holtom, 2020).

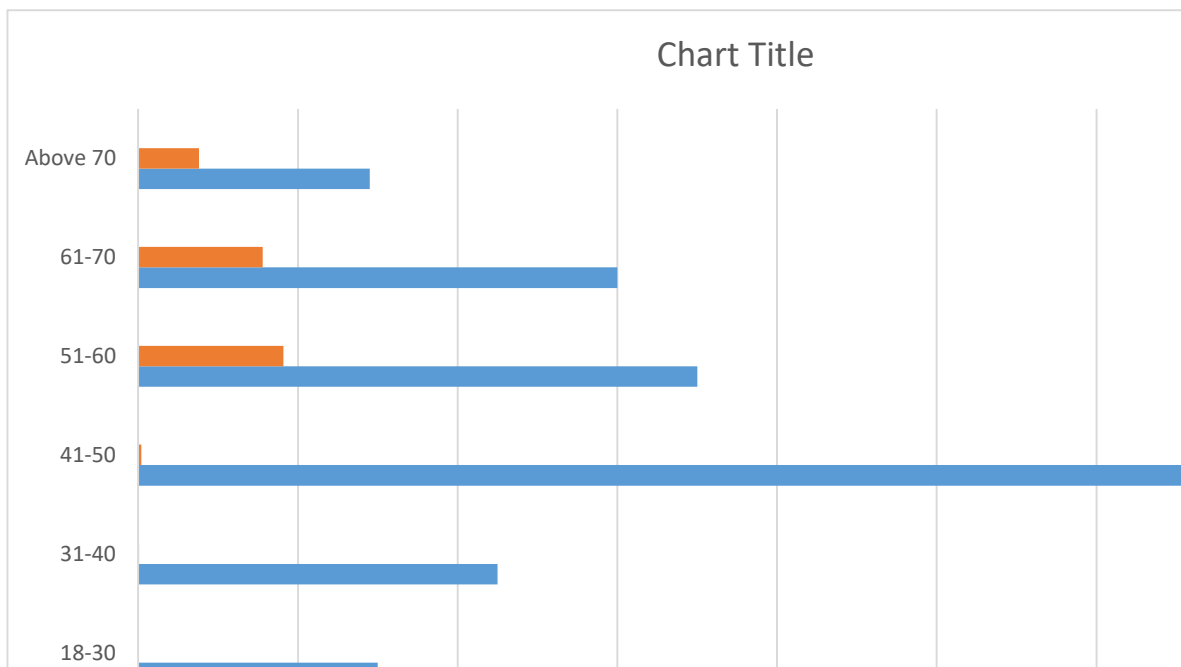
#### **4.1.2 Demographic Data of Respondents**

Demographic data serves to contextualize research findings, offering observations into the characteristics of respondents that may influence their perceptions and behaviors. Such information enables researchers to identify patterns, tailor communication strategies, and interpret results within the relevant social, cultural, and economic frameworks (Kumar, 2021).

In this study, demographic variables such as age, gender, nationality, language, religion, educational level, and ward were collected so as to understand the profile of respondents in Shinyalu constituency. This was presented as follows:

#### 4.1.2.1 Age of Respondents

Understanding the age distribution of respondents is fundamental in research as it allows for analysis of how different age groups perceive or are affected by the subject of study. Age can influence respondents' experiences, behaviors, attitudes, and preferences. By capturing this data, the study identified trends and ensured that findings are relevant across different life stages. The findings are presented in Figure 3.



**Figure 4.2: Age Distribution of Respondents**

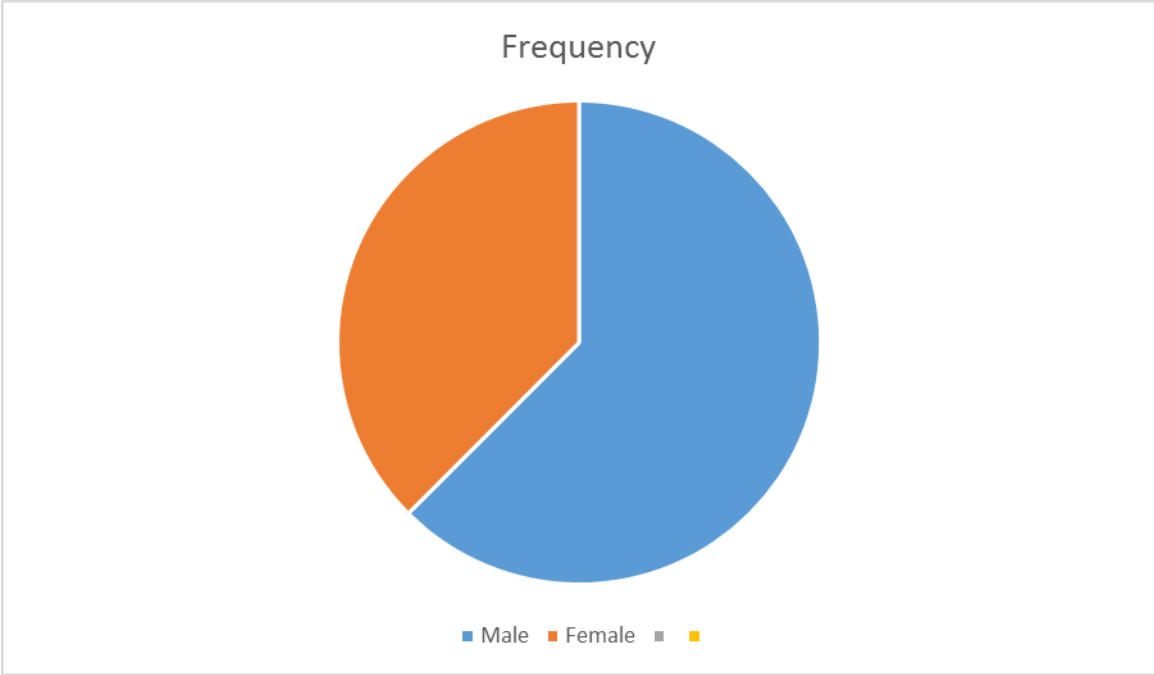
The predominance of respondents aged between 41-50 years 149 (39.1%) underscores that middle-aged adults formed the core of the electorate in Shinyalu, aligning with findings

from Odinga (2021), who observed that middle-aged voters are often the most active participants in rural electoral processes due to their economic stability and social influence.

The relatively small representation of youth (18-30) years 30 (7.89%) and older adults (above 70) years 37(9.73%) suggests that the study's insights predominantly reflect the perceptions of middle-aged voters, who are often key targets in interpersonal communication campaigns during elections (Mutua, 2022). This distribution emphasizes the importance of tailoring communication strategies that resonate with this age group, as they are likely to be the primary influencers and decision-makers in rural voting contexts.

**4.1.2.2 Gender of Respondents**

The gender of the respondents is presented in Figure 4 below.

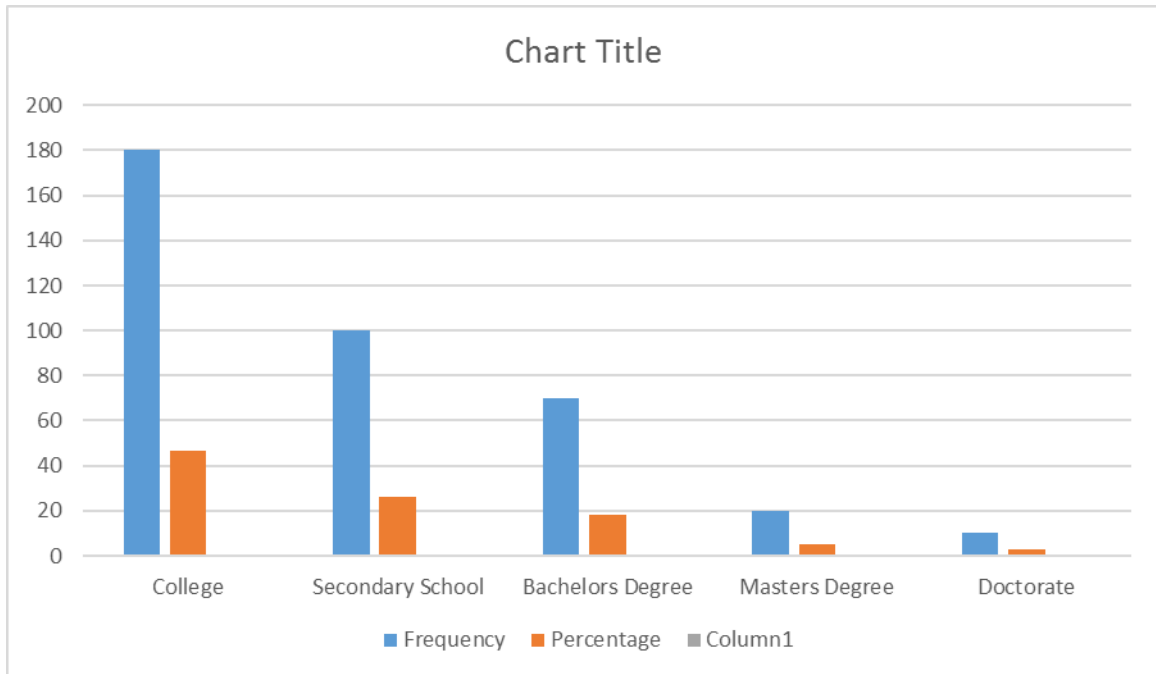


**Figure 4.3: Gender Distribution of Respondents**

Out of 380 returned questionnaires which is a representation of 96.4%, male respondents were 238 at the rate of 62.5% with female respondents response at 142 representing 37.5%. As shown in figure 4, more male respondents were willing to respond to the questionnaires compared to the females. The higher representation of males 238(62.5%) aligns with previous studies in rural Kenyan settings where men tend to participate more actively in survey responses related to voting behavior (Wambua & Ngunjiri, 2020). This gender imbalance could shoot from societal norms that often assign men as primary decision-makers and community leaders, especially in rural areas such as Shinyalu. Such a demographic profile indicates that interpersonal communication strategies might need to consider gender-specific preferences and channels, as men and women may respond differently to political messaging (Karanja, 2021). Recognizing this imbalance ensures that any gendered differences in voting behavior are appropriately analyzed and addressed.

#### **4.1.2.3 Education Level**

As indicated in figure 5 below, respondents with secondary school level education were 99 representing 26%, those of college level were 178 representing 46.8%, bachelors degree level were 70 representing 18.4%, masters level were 17 representing 0.04% and doctorate level were 3 representing 0.007%. More responses were received from college level respondents as compared to other levels.



**Figure 4.4: Education Level of Respondents**

A significant proportion of respondents (46.9%) have attained college education, which aligns with recent trends indicating increasing educational attainment in rural Kenya (Kipkulei, 2022). Higher education levels often correlate with greater political awareness and receptiveness to interpersonal communication strategies aimed at influencing voting behavior (Wangari & Wainaina, 2020). This educational diversity provides an opportunity for tailored messaging that considers varying levels of literacy and critical engagement, echoing findings from Ngugi and Karanja (2021) that emphasize the role of education in shaping political perceptions.

#### **4.2 Communication Strategies used during the 2022 General Elections in Shinyalu Constituency**

The first objective of the study was to examine communication strategies used during the 2022 general elections in Shinyalu Constituency.

The respondents were asked whether they participated in the general elections of 2022. A total of 312 (82%) participants responded in the affirmative. Similarly, out of the twelve interviewees, 8 (67%) indicated that they participated in the general elections. This finding reveals important insights into voter engagement. Majority of the respondents actively participated in the elections indicating high voter turnout and engagement in the electoral process. This indicates that were used were effective in reaching out to potential voters in Shinyalu Constituency.

When asked what prompted them to vote, the participants responded as shown in the table below.

**Table 4.1: Reasons for voting**

<b>Reason/s for voting</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
I was impressed with the manifesto of my preferred candidate	63	17
My preferred candidate shared his/her manifesto from house to house	82	22
The language used by my preferred candidate was easily understood	91	24
My preferred candidate supported our self-help group financially	50	13
I interacted with my preferred candidate during sporting tournaments organized by him/her in the constituency	83	22
My preferred candidate was easily reachable and he/she participated in funerals in the constituency	97	26
My preferred candidate visited our church and shared his/her manifesto	78	21
My preferred candidate shared his/her manifesto in all organized local social forums	76	20
My preferred candidate gave me money/food stuffs	89	23

My preferred candidate was a family member	33	8
My preferred candidate was my friend	12	3
My preferred candidate belongs to my party	73	19
My preferred candidate supported projects in my village	61	16
My preferred candidate was humorous and interesting to listen to	85	22

The table above indicates that a majority of the voters (26%) made their decision to vote for their preferred candidate after listening to them during funerals in the constituency. 24% of the respondents indicated that the language used by their preferred candidates was easily understood while 23% of them said that they voted for their preferred candidate since they received money and food stuffs prior to voting. Further, 22% revealed that their preferred candidate was humorous and interesting to listen to. These findings suggest that the electorate were reached and that the interpersonal communication by the candidate to the electorate was a deciding factor in voting.

The interviewees were asked to state the reasons why some of them did not vote. Some of their responses were as follows:

K I 1: *I was not around on the voting day*

K I 8: *I was not interested in voting*

K I 12: *I have been voting in the previous elections but no development*

On whether they received information why they should vote for a particular candidate, 351 (92%) of them revealed that they had received information. This means that the voters in Shinyalu Constituency had access to information regarding the political candidates during the 2022 general elections.

The participants were asked to state the communication platforms/forums on which the information was shared. They responded as recorded in table 6 below.

**Table 4.2 : Communication platform/s used to share information**

<b>Platform/s</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
House to house visits	87	22.9
Funeral gatherings	89	23.4
Self-help group meetings	67	18
Organized sporting events	64	17
Church gatherings	56	15
Open air market rallies	76	20
Television	45	12
Radio	88	23.2
Newspapers	37	10
Social media	54	14
Posters	31	8
Banners	41	11

From table 6 above, the most popular platforms through which the candidates reached the respondents were funeral gatherings at 89 (23.4%), radio at 88 (23.2 %) and house to house visits at 87 (22.9%). This indicates that personal engagement strategies were effective in reaching the electorate.

Similarly, all the 12 key informants indicated that funerals and house to house visits which entailed personalized communication strategies were the most used platforms to reach them.

Asked why they thought politicians preferred using particular platforms/forums, the respondents gave the following reasons:

**Table 4.3: Reasons for platforms**

<b>Reason</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
Easily accessible	78	20.5
Voters trusted the information shared through interpersonal communication	87	22.9
Reduces boredom	88	23.2
Affordable	45	11.8
Others prefer it	46	12.1
Information is easily understood	88	23.2
Easy to receive immediate feedback	67	17.6
Did not require internet connection	87	22.9

From the findings in table 7 above, voters indicated that the said platforms were preferable because they reduced boredom (88, 23.2%), the information was easily understood (88, 23.2%), voters trusted the information shared through these platforms (87, 22.9%) and they did not require internet connection (87, 22.9%). This underscores the fact that the modes of communication were interactive and therefore deemed best suited for both the candidates and voters in Shinyalu.

The key informants had the following to say regarding why they thought politicians preferred using particular platforms/forums:

*K I 4: They were interesting and made us laugh*

*K I 7: The candidates used idioms and proverbs that were related to the information they were giving us*

Participants were asked what their most preferred forums were. They responded as indicated in table 8 below.

**Table 4.4: Communication forums**

<b>Forums</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
House to house meetings	102	26.8
Funeral gatherings	123	32.4
Self-help groups	67	17.6
Organized sports events	66	17.4
Open air meetings	54	14.2
Town hall meetings	53	13.9
Local social forums	89	23.4

The table reveals that funeral gatherings at 123 (32.4%), house to house meetings at 102(26.8%) and local social forums at 89 (23.4%) were the most preferred forums. This could be attributed to the fact that the voters preferred more personalized communication modes.

Which message was communicated through interpersonal communication platforms/forum?

**Table 4.5: Message in the forums**

	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
Political party manifesto	132	34.7
Candidate Previous development record	93	24.5
Opponent Previous development records of the candidates	56	14.7
Real issues affecting the public	144	37.9
Case studies	53	13.7
Solution to the current issues affecting the public	102	26.8

The findings point to a tendency for voters to gravitate towards political leaders who address real issues affecting the public at (144, 37.9%), who ably present their political party manifestos at (132, 34.7%), who find solutions to the current issues affecting the public at (102, 26.8%) and who share their previous development records at (93, 26.4%). This is indicative of the fact that voters evaluate social and economic value of political leaders before deciding to vote for them, based on what they hear from the candidates.

The participants were asked how the messages were packaged through the communication platforms/forums. They responded as indicated in the table below:

**Table 4.6: Packaging of the messages**

	F	%
Used my native language	97	25.5
The message was clear	89	23.4
The message was communicated in an engaging manner	134	30.0
The message was communicated in a comical way	144	37.9
The candidate used case studies	89	23.4

The findings in table 6 above indicate that the messages were presented in a comical way (144, 37.9%), the messages were communicated in an engaging manner (134, 30 %), the messages were communicated in voters native languages (97, 25.5%), and the messages were communicated in a clear manner (89, 23.4%). This then means that the manner in which the information was communicated had a great influence on the voting pattern in Shinyalu Constituency. Comedy, delivery style, language features, and the language used were important in the reception of the political messages conveyed by potential political leaders.

The key informants said the following towards the same question:

K I 10: *The politician used my mother tongue*

K I 11: *The candidate was a master comedian; he told us many stories*

These findings resonate with those of the respondents. The politician packaged the information in such a manner that it was appealing and attractive to the target audience of voters. The highly persuasive language features used are often employed when

communicating through more personalized interactions also known as interpersonal communication strategies.

These findings tie in with the Elaboration Likelihood Theory developed by Richard Petty and John Cacioppo in 1980 which stipulates that persuasive messages can lead to change of attitude. In the case of Shinyalu, voters voted in favor of particular candidates due to the persuasive and humorous nature of the communication style when addressing voters. Additionally, this mode of communication is preferable since real-time information communicated by politicians elicits real-time feedback and this avails more gains in the political space.

#### **4.3 Factors that influenced the voting behavior in Shinyalu Constituency during 2022 general elections.**

The second objective was to establish the factors that influenced the voting behavior in Shinyalu Constituency during 2022 general elections.

Participants were asked which economic factors influenced their voting behavior during the 2022 general elections in Shinyalu Constituency. Their responses are recorded in the table below:

**Table 4.7: Economic factors**

<b>Economic factors</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
Income	123	32.4
Media reports on Corruption	134	35.3
Media reports on bursary allocations	89	23.4
Media reports on Climate change concerns	76	20.0
Media reports on Health experience	65	17.1

These findings show that among the economic factors that influenced voting in Shinyalu Constituency, media reports on corruption (134, 345.5%), economic factors (123, 32.4%), media reports on bursary allocations (89, 23.4%) and reports on climate change concerns (76, 20.0%) stood out.

The key informants responded as follows:

*K I 6: Yes, yes. We did not vote for corrupt leaders*

*K I 5: Politicians who brought money got many votes*

This means that the electorate are enlightened enough to know that they need leaders who can transform the community economically, who are not corrupt and who deal with natural calamities such as disasters and health issues as well as climate change. The voters wish to transform their livelihoods by voting in the right leaders. This is in tandem with what Lewis-Beck & Stegmaier (2018) assert when they posit that the performance of the economy and perceptions about its trajectory can shape voters' perceptions, attitudes, and preferences.

These findings correlate with those of Banda (2024) who asserts that voters' personal encounters with the healthcare system, whether satisfying or disappointing, and their perception of the system's overall performance hold considerable sway over their voting choices. Since healthcare is crucial in a political sphere, politicians have embraced house to house conversations strategy in order to sway votes.

When asked which social-cultural factors influenced the voting behavior during the 2022 general elections in Shinyalu Constituency, the respondents indicated as follows:

**Table 4.8: Social factors**

<b>Factors that influenced voting behavior</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
Social identity	149	39.2
Ethnicity and race	154	40.5
Religion	68	17.9
Media influence	167	43.9
Social network	156	41.1
Education	87	22.9
Age	74	19.5
Candidates emotional intelligence	121	31.8

The social cultural factors that influenced voting in Shinyalu include Media influence (167, 43.9%) Ethnicity and race (154, 40.5%), Social identity (149, 39.2%), candidates emotional intelligence (121, 31.8%). This means that the voters are keen on the track record of potential leaders, which is often communicated through media and other fora. Media coverage determined candidates' likelihoods to be voted for. Additionally, a candidate whose social identity is positive more popular to the electorate and is more likely to be voted for. Ethnicity is still a big determinant in the outcomes of elections in Shinyalu.

The participants were asked which Political factors influenced how they voted during the 2022 general elections in Shinyalu Constituency. They responded as recorded in the table below.

**Table 4.9: Political factors**

<b>Factors which influenced voting</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
Media reports on the politicians' previous track records	98	25.8
Information on the Party from various media and other sources	97	25.5
Candidate's interpersonal characteristics	169	44.5
Party manifesto	106	27.9
Communication Campaign strategies	177	46.6

Communication Campaign strategies at 177 (46.6%), candidate's interpersonal characteristics at 169, (44.5%), party manifesto at 106 (27.9%) and Media reports on the politicians' previous track record at 98 (25.8%) were the most outstanding among the political factors that had an influence on voting outcomes in Shinyalu Constituency.

This reveals that the planning and implementation of communication campaigns is key in determining the outcome of an election. This concurs with the recommendations of Strömbäck & Kiouisis (2014) regarding strategic political campaigns in politics.

#### **4.4 The perceptions of voters regarding the use of interpersonal communication as a strategy to shape voter behavior in Shinyalu Constituency during the 2022 general elections.**

The third objective sought to establish the perceptions of voters regarding the use of interpersonal communication as a strategy to shape voter behavior in Shinyalu Constituency during the 2022 general elections.

Participants were asked to rate the efficiency of the language/s used in elections in Shinyalu Constituency in the 2022 general elections. Their responses were as indicated in the table below:

**Table 4.10: Voter percepton**

	<b>Very suitable</b>	<b>Suitable</b>	<b>Somewhat suitable</b>	<b>Not suitable</b>
English	21 ( 5.6 %)	41( 10.8 %)	78 ( 20.5%)	123 (32.4%)
Kiswahili	147 ( 38.7% )	130 (34.2%)	122 (32.1%)	11 (2.9%)
Both English and Kiswahili	78 ( 20.5% )	62(16.3%)	21 (5.6%)	23 (6.1%)
Other (Specify) Mother tongue	178 ( 46.8% )	143(37.6% )	84 (22.1%)	09 (2.4%)

The preferable language of political campaigns in Shinyalu Constituency during the general elections of 2022 was isukha at 178 (46.8%) followed by Kiswahili at 147 (38.7% ). The key informants also indicated that politicians who spoke the native language of the voters and Kiswahili were seen to have effectively communicated their agenda to the voters.

This means that political candidates must endeavor to utilize languages that are undrstandable by the voters. Native languages and their unique repertoire of language features that usually accompany it the languages enable the leaders to pass the desired

information to their targets. Kiswahili, the national language also features prominently in political communication in Shinyalu.

When asked if the information they accessed on interpersonal communication platforms/forums influenced how they voted during the 2022 general elections, a majority of them i.e. 322 (84.7 %) responded affirmatively while 58 (15.3) % responded negatively. This shows that the voters in Shinyalu were influenced by the information they accessed on the interpersonal communication platforms.

#### **4.5 Chi-square Tests**

The Chi-Square test is a statistical method used to determine whether there is a significant association between categorical variables. It assesses how expected frequencies compare to observed frequencies in a contingency table. The test is particularly useful in social sciences, including communication studies, where researchers often seek to understand relationships between different factors, such as communication methods and voter perceptions.

In the context of this study, conducting a Chi-Square test was essential to evaluate the relationships between various forms of interpersonal communication (e.g face-to-face conversations, social media interactions) and voters' perceptions regarding candidates during the 2022 General Elections in Shinyalu Constituency. By examining these associations, the test helps to identify whether specific communication methods significantly influenced voter perceptions and decisions, providing valuable insights for candidates and campaign strategists. The findings were presented in Table 11 below.

**Table 4.11: Chi-Square test**

<b>Test Statistics</b>			
	Communication Strategies used during the 2022 General Elections in Shinyalu Constituency	Factors Influencing Voting Behavior in Shinyalu Constituency	Perceptions of Voters regarding Forms of Interpersonal Communication
Chi-Square	578.453 <sup>a</sup>	383.484 <sup>b</sup>	859.263 <sup>c</sup>
Df	8	5	9
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000	.000
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 42.2.			
b. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 63.3.			
c. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 38.0.			

The Chi-Square statistic of 578.453 with 8 degrees of freedom and an asymptotic significance (p-value) of .000 indicates a strong association between different forms of communication and voter perceptions. The p-value being less than the conventional alpha level of 0.05 suggests that we can reject the null hypothesis, concluding that there is a statistically significant relationship between communication methods and how voters perceive candidates. Similarly, the Chi-Square statistic of 383.484 with 5 degrees of freedom and a p-value of .000 suggests a significant association between various factors influencing voter behavior and their perceptions. Again, the p-value indicates that this relationship is statistically significant, reinforcing the importance of these factors in shaping voter decisions and lastly the Chi-Square statistic of 859.263 with 9 degrees of freedom and a p-value of .000 indicates an even stronger association between voter perceptions and the factors analyzed. The result confirms that the perceptions voters hold

about candidates are significantly influenced by the communication methods and other factors considered in the study.

The results indicate that 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5 for all three tests, meaning that the sample sizes were adequate to provide reliable results. The minimum expected cell frequencies were 42.2, 63.3, and 38.0 for communication, factors, and perception, respectively. This ensures that the assumptions of the Chi-Square test were met, further validating the findings.

The Chi-Square test results demonstrate significant associations between interpersonal communication methods, various influencing factors, and voter perceptions. These findings underscore the importance of understanding how communication strategies can effectively shape voter opinions and decisions in electoral contexts. The statistical significance of these relationships provides critical insights for candidates and campaign strategists aiming to enhance their voter engagement efforts.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The chapter presents a summary of the major findings of the study, followed by conclusions drawn and relevant recommendations. The chapter is guided by three core objectives of the study: to analyze the communication strategies used during the 2022 General Elections in Shinyalu Constituency, to examine the factors that influenced voting behavior, and to explore voters' perceptions regarding forms of interpersonal communication. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research, with reference to implications for policy, practice, and theory.

#### **5.2 Summary of Findings**

The summary of findings was based objective one, two and three which include to examine the interpersonal communication strategies used during the 2022 general elections in Shinyalu Constituency, to determine factors that influenced the voting behavior in Shinyalu Constituency during 2022 general elections and to determine perceptions of voters regarding the use of interpersonal communication as a strategy to shape voter behavior in Shinyalu Constituency during the 2022 general elections.

##### **5.2.1 Communication Strategies Used During the 2022 General Elections in Shinyalu Constituency**

The study established that political candidates in Shinyalu Constituency utilized a variety of communication strategies to engage with the electorate. Statistics revealed high levels of

voter engagement, with respondents reporting that they participated in the elections. Funeral gatherings, radio and house-to-house visits and were cited as the most used platforms to reach them. Additionally, the voters decided to vote for their preferred candidate after listening to them during funerals in the constituency. Further, the language used by their preferred candidates was easily understood while some voted for their preferred candidate since they received money and food stuffs prior to voting. It was revealed that their preferred candidate was humorous and interesting to listen to and that interpersonal communication strategies were used by the candidate to reach the electorate and this had an influence on voting.

### **5.2.2 Factors Influencing Voting Behavior in Shinyalu Constituency**

The study revealed that a range of socio-economic and political factors influenced how voters made decisions during the 2022 elections. Economic factors among which media reports on corruption, bursary allocations and reports on climate change concerns were the most outstanding pointing to the fact that the electorate are enlightened enough on which leaders to vote in for the betterment of their livelihoods.

### **5.2.3 Voters' Perceptions Regarding Forms of Interpersonal Communication**

The study found that various forms of interpersonal communication significantly shaped voter perceptions and electoral decisions. Face-to-face conversations with candidates, discussions with friends and family and attendance at community meetings emerged as the most influential forms of engagement. Additionally, social media interactions, telephone conversations, informal gatherings, and WhatsApp group discussions all recorded high scores indicating their relevance in the campaign environment.

Qualitative data supported these observations. Respondents stated that personal interactions built familiarity and trust, allowing voters to ask questions and gauge candidates' intentions. Social media was acknowledged as a growing platform for political engagement, especially among younger voters. The study's chi-square tests further validated these relationships, showing statistically significant associations ( $p < 0.001$ ) between communication strategies, influencing factors, and voter perceptions.

### **5.3 Conclusions of the Study**

The summary of conclusions was based on objectives which included: to examine the interpersonal communication strategies used during the 2022 general election campaigns in Shinyalu Constituency, to determine factors that influenced the voting behavior in Shinyalu Constituency during 2022 general elections and to determine the perceptions of voters regarding the use of interpersonal communication as a strategy to shape voting behaviour in Shinyalu Constituency during the 2022 general elections.

#### **5.3.1 Communication Strategies and Voter Engagement**

It can be concluded that communication strategies employed during the 2022 General Elections in Shinyalu Constituency were effective in mobilizing and engaging voters. Candidates who engaged in house-to-house campaigns, participated in local events, and disseminated clear and concise information were more likely to be perceived positively by the electorate. This finding reinforces the importance of strategic, accessible, and context-sensitive communication in electoral campaigns.

### **5.3.2 Influencing Factors and Voting Behavior**

The study also concludes that voter behavior is influenced by a combination of economic, social-cultural, and political factors. Economic conditions, social identity, media influence, and emotional intelligence of candidates were all found to have substantial influence on voting decisions. These findings suggest that voters in Shinyalu do not make decisions solely based on party affiliations, but also on tangible and relational factors such as past development records, emotional resonance, and personal connections.

### **5.3.3 Role of Interpersonal Communication**

The study further concludes that interpersonal communication plays a vital role in shaping voter perceptions and choices. Whether through traditional means such as community forums or modern platforms like WhatsApp and social media, voters placed significant value on interactive and credible communication channels. These modes of communication created opportunities for voters to express their concerns, seek clarification, and validate information received from other sources.

## **5.4 Recommendations**

In this study the researcher made recommendations targeting policymakers, practice, theory and further studies.

### **5.4.1 Recommendations for Policy**

Policymakers and electoral bodies such as the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) could formulate policies that encourage transparent and effective political communication since this body is a crucial entity in elections in Kenya .

Every voter in an election setting always anticipates that their vote counts and therefore transparency and accountability should be enhanced. This may include developing guidelines that promote community engagement. The community engagement could be narrowed down to the local through social forum, sporting events, local barazas etc. The policies could also ensure inclusive participation to involve all levels regardless of age, gender, education level, religion and nationality.

Policies could be mandated to make use of simple and comprehensible language in campaign materials. The IEBC could recommend to the politicians to use languages which are easily understood by residents. Additionally, electoral policies could support civic education initiatives aimed at enhancing voter awareness and decision-making capacity.

#### **5.4.2 Recommendations for Practice**

Political candidates and campaign managers could adopt direct, personal communication strategies such as house-to-house visits, funeral gatherings, open air rallies, sporting events, local social forums and participation in community events. These methods foster voter trust and significantly influence perceptions. In the rural setting where people are social, direct communication is highly recommended. People in the rural setting value one on one communication rather than new media which works better in urban areas.

Furthermore, campaign teams could invest in well-designed, user-friendly materials and utilize digital tools strategically to reach different segments of the electorate, especially the youth. In the rural areas, digital communication is also slowly being adopted especially among the youths and the educated residents. This study recommended that campaign teams invest in training their agents on digital communication. Campaign volunteers and

representatives could be trained in effective interpersonal communication to maximize the impact of outreach activities.

### **5.4.3 Recommendations for Theory**

From a theoretical perspective, the findings of this study support up-to-date models of political communication that emphasizes emotional connection, credibility, and social identity. For instance, in Shinyalu Sonstituency residents subscribe to communication which enhances emotional connection. When any politician visits their social gatherings like Chamas, local barazas and churches, they always feel recognized and connected.

They also need credible communication and for this case interpersonal communication is the best. Scholars and researchers could consider integrating these factors into existing frameworks of electoral behavior. Future theoretical models could also explore the interplay between traditional interpersonal communication and emerging digital platforms in shaping modern political behavior.

### **5.5 Recommendations for Further Studies**

In light of the findings, further research is recommended to deepen understanding and broaden the application of this study. From a policy perspective, future studies could evaluate the effectiveness of communication regulations and campaign finance laws in promoting fair and equitable access to voters. From a practice standpoint, researchers could explore the impact of communication strategies on specific voter demographics such as youth, women, and rural populations, or conduct comparative studies across different constituencies or regions in Kenya.

From a theoretical lens, more research is needed on how emotional intelligence, digital engagement, and social identity interact within voter decision-making models. Additionally, future studies can examine the lasting influence of interpersonal communication on political participation and democratic consolidation.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX I: INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

**STUDY TITLE: UTILIZATION OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES TO SHAPE VOTING BEHAVIOR IN RURAL SETTINGS: A CASE OF SHINYALU CONSTITUENCY DURING THE 2022 GENERAL ELECTIONS.**

INVESTIGATOR: Brian Juma Khisa (Masters student, MMUST)

#### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF STUDY**

The study titled as indicated above is being conducted for academic purposes by Mr. Khisa who is a Masters student in the department of Journalism and Mass Communication at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. The study seeks to investigate the utilization of Interpersonal Communication Strategies to shape voting behavior. The study is to be conducted in the county of Kakamega, Shinyalu constituency. The respondents for this study are the parliamentary seat contestants in the 2022 general elections in Shinyalu constituency, local administrators, opinion leaders and voters in the 2022 general elections in Shinyalu constituency. The findings of this study seeks help residents of Shinyalu constituency to distinguish between fake news and true information both on social media and other forms of communication. Also help political strategists to know a best platform to use when reaching out to voters during campaigns. Lastly, the study may be adopted by different government institutions for this case the Ministry of Information Communication Technology and Digital Economy on policy framework.

**CONFIDENTIALITY AND RISK:** To enhance confidentiality and alleviate any risk accompanied with your identity as the bearer of the information. I would use pseudonym or avoid indicating

names at all during data presentation. The information is treated with confidentiality and thus can not make you feel uncomfortable or threatened.

WITHDRAWAL OF PARTICIPATION: You can decide to withdraw at any time during the discussions, interview or questioning process that you no longer wish to participate and this can not cost you any prejudice.

COST BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDY: the study has no direct cost except for missing the 30minutes of your work time. In relation to benefits, your contribution help in bringing greater attention to this issue.

#### REQUEST FOR MORE INFORMATION

You can ask for more information about this study by contacting:

Brian Juma Khisa on phone no: 0712647107, Email: [briankhisa@gmail.com](mailto:briankhisa@gmail.com)

Or

The director, directorate of postgraduate studies, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology P.O Box, 190-50200, Kakamega.

I confirm that the purpose of this study, study procedures, risks as well as benefits of this study have been explained to me and all my questions have been answered and I have hereby agreed or disagreed to participate in the study.

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Respondent's sign

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Date

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Research assistant's sign

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Date

**APPENDIX II: QUESTIONNAIRE**

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

code

paper

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Interview Date ...../...../2025

MASINDE MULIRO UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION

Dear Respondent,

My name is Brian Juma Khisa, a Masters student (Masters of Science in Communication) at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST). I am carrying out research on *Utilization of Interpersonal Communication Strategies to shape voting behavior in rural settings: A case of Shinyalu constituency during the 2022 general elections*. This information is strictly for academic purposes and is treated with full confidentiality so feel free to answer the questions.

Thank you for your co-operation.

**SECTION A. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

(Tick the appropriate box)

1. Age (Years)

- a) 18-30
- b) 31- 40
- c) 41- 50
- d) 51- 60
- e) 61- 70
- f) Above 70

2. Gender

- a) Male
- b) Female

3. Nationality,

- a) Kenyan
- b) Non Kenyan

4. Which language do you speak?

- a) English
- b) Kiswahili
- c) Both English and Kiswahili

d) Others, Specify.....

5. Religion

a) Christian

b) Muslim

c) Others, specify.....

6. Education level

a) Primary School

b) Secondary School

c) College

d) Bachelor's degree

e) Master's degree

f) Doctorate

g) Others, specify.....

7. Ward

a) Isukha Central

b) Isukha South

c) Isukha North

d) Isukha West

e) Isukha East

f) Murhanda

**SECTION B. COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES USED DURING THE 2022  
GENERAL ELECTIONS IN SHINYALU CONSTITUENCY**

8. Did you vote in the 2022 general elections?

a) Yes

b) No

8a. If yes, what prompted you to vote?

- i. I was impressed with the manifesto of my preferred candidate
- ii. My preferred candidate shared his/her manifesto from house to house
- iii. The language used by my preferred candidate was easily understood
- iv. My preferred candidate supported our self-help group financially
- v. I interacted with my preferred candidate during sporting tournaments organized by him/her in the constituency
- vi. My preferred candidate was easily reachable and he/she supported funerals financially in the constituency
- vii. My preferred candidate visited our church and shared his/her manifesto
- viii. My preferred candidate shared his/her manifesto in all organized local social forums

- ix. My preferred candidate gave me money/food stuffs
- x. My preferred candidate was a family member
- xi. My preferred candidate was my friend
- xii. My preferred candidate belongs to my party
- xiii. My preferred candidate supported projects in my village
- xiv. My preferred candidate was humorous and interesting to listen to

8b. If no, why?

- i. I did not receive any information from any politician on why I should vote in his or her favor
- ii. I was not around on the voting day
- iii. I was not interested in voting
- iv. The polling station is far from my home
- v. I have been voting in the previous elections but no development
- vi. Others, specify.....

9. Did you access information on why you should vote for a certain politician during the last 2022 general election campaign?

- a) Yes
- b) No

9a. If **yes**, on which communication platforms/forums was the information shared?

- i. House to house visits
- ii. Funeral gatherings
- iii. Self-help group meetings
- iv. Organized sporting events
- v. Church gatherings
- vi. Open air market rallies
- vii. Television
- viii. Radio
- ix. Newspapers
- x. Social media
- xi. Posters
- xii. Banners
- xiii. Others (specify).....

9b. If no,  
 why? .....

.....

.....

.....

.....

10. Which platforms/forums were used by politicians to share information during the 2022 general election campaign?

- i. House to house meetings
- ii. Funeral gatherings
- iii. Church gatherings
- iv. Self-help groups meetings
- v. Organized sporting events
- vi. Open air meetings
- vii. Town hall meetings
- viii. Local social forums
- ix. Others (specify).....

11. Why do you think politicians preferred using the above platforms/forums?

- i. Easily accessible
- ii. Voters trusted the information shared through interpersonal communication
- iii. Reduces boredom
- iv. Affordable
- v. Had impacted on the way voters vote
- vi. Others prefer it
- vii. Information is easily understood
- viii. Easy to receive an immediate feedback
- ix. Did not require internet connection
- x. Others, specify.....

12. What were your most preferred communication forums?

- i. House to house meetings
- ii. Funeral gatherings
- iii. Through self-help groups
- iv. Organized sports events
- v. Open air meetings
- vi. Town hall meetings
- vii. Local social forums
- viii. Other, specify.....

13. Why did you prefer the above communication platforms/forums?

- i. Easily accessible
- ii. Trusted the information shared
- iii. Reduces boredom
- iv. Affordable
- v. Had impacted on the way I always vote
- vi. Others prefer it
- vii. Easily understood the information
- viii. Easy to give an immediate feedback
- ix. Did not require internet connection
- x. Trusted the information from the platform
- xi. I could not afford to purchase a smart phone
- xii. Easily understood the information on the tool
- xiii. I did not have internet network

- xiv. Trusted the person who shared the information
- xv. I meet friends in those forums
- xvi. Other, specify.....

14. Which message was communicated through platforms/forums?

- i. Political party manifesto
- ii. Candidate Previous development record
- iii. Opponent Previous development records of the candidates
- iv. Real issues affecting the public
- v. Case studies
- vi. Solution to the current issues affecting the public
- vii. Others, specify.....

15. How was the message packaged through the communication platforms/forum?

- i. used my native language
- ii. The message was clear
- iii. It was clear
- iv. The message was in an engaging manner
- v. it was in a comic way
- vi. The candidate used visual aids eg diagrams and charts
- vii. The candidate used case studies
- viii. The candidate focused of real issues affecting the public
- ix. Others, specify.....

16. How often did you access information through the above selected the communication platform?

- i. Daily
- ii. Twice a week
- iii. Weekly
- iv. Twice a month
- v. One a Month
- vi. Once in three months
- vii. Yearly
- viii. Never received

17. What was the average time spent on communication platforms/forums to access information?

- i. Less than 30min
- ii. 30min- 1hour
- iii. 1hour- 2 hours
- iv. 2hours- 5 hours
- v. more than 5 hours

**SECTION C. FACTORS THAT INFLUENCED THE VOTING BEHAVIOR IN SHINYALU CONSTITUENCY DURING 2022 GENERAL ELECTIONS.**

18. Which economic factors do you feel influenced your voting behavior during the 2022 general elections in Shinyalu constituency?

- i. Income
- ii. Media reports on Corruption
- iii. Media reports on bursary allocations
- iv. Media reports on Climate change concern
- v. Media reports on Health experience
- vi. Other, specify.....

19. Which social-cultural factors do you feel influenced the voting behavior during the 2022 general elections in Shinyalu constituency?

- i. Social identity
- ii. Ethnicity and race
- iii. Religion
- iv. Media influence
- v. Social network
- vi. Education
- vii. Age
- viii. Candidates emotional intelligence
- ix. Other, specify.....

20. Which Political factors do you feel influenced how you voted during the 2022 general elections in Shinyalu constituency?

- i. Media reports on the politicians' previous track record
- ii. Information on the Party from various media and other sources
- iii. Candidates interpersonal characteristics
- iv. Party manifesto
- v. Communication Campaign strategies
- vi. Others, specify.....

**SECTION D. PERCEPTIONS OF VOTERS REGARDING THE USE OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION AS A STRATEGY TO SHAPE VOTER BEHAVIOR IN SHINYALU CONSTITUENCY DURING THE 2022 GENERAL ELECTIONS.**

21. Which language was used when communicating through communication platforms?

- i. English
- ii. Kiswahili
- iii. Both Kiswahili& English
- iv. Others  
(Specify).....

22. Of the language chosen in question 21 above, rate its efficiency with the below representations.

- 1 Very efficient
- 2 Somehow efficient
- 3 Efficient
- 4 Not efficient

	Very efficient	Efficient	Some efficient	Not efficient
English				
Kiswahili				
Both English and Kiswahili				
Other(Specify)				

23. Using the scale representation below state the level of agreement on the following factors on the influence of voting behavior during the 2022 general election?

- 1 Completely disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neither disagree nor agree
- 4 Agree
- 5 Completely agree

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Completely
<b>Economic factors</b>					
Income					
Media reports on Corruption					
Media reports on bursary allocations					
Media reports on climate change concern					
Media reports on health experience					
<b>Social-Cultural Factors</b>					
Social identity					
Education					
Gender					
Age					
Candidates					

emotional intelligence					
Ethnicity and race					
Religion					
Media influence					
Social network					
<b>Political Factors</b>					
Media reports on the politicians' previous track record					
Information on the Party from various media and other sources					
Candidates interpersonal characteristics					
Communication campaign strategies					
Party manifesto					

24. Did the information you accessed on the communication platforms/forums influence how you voted during the 2022 general election?

- i. Yes
- ii. No

25. If yes, what was your perception concerning the following?

- i. I trusted the information share on the platform
- ii. The candidate used our native language to communicate his/her manifesto
- iii. The candidate was reachable
- iv. Even without any electronic gadget I was able to get information
- v. The candidates' ideas about development were convincing
- vi. The candidate attended our self-help group meeting to share his/her manifesto
- vii. The candidate sponsored tournaments in the region
- viii. The candidate attended funeral gatherings
- ix. Other, specify.....

26. If the information you accessed on communication platforms/forums did not influence how you voted during the 2022 general election, state why?

- i. I had already decided whom to vote for
- ii. I was keenly assessing the candidates' previous development records

- iii. I compared information about the candidate on all platform both  interpersonal and online platform
- iv. My relationship with the candidate influenced me to vote in his/her favor
- v. I did not have time to engage in a one on one conversation with the candidate
- vi. Others, specify.....

27. Use the parameters below to rate the extent to which communication influenced your voting behavior.

- 1 Greatly
- 2 Moderately
- 3 A little
- 4 Very little
- 5 Never

	<b>Greatly</b>	<b>Moderately</b>	<b>A little</b>	<b>Very little</b>	<b>Never</b>
House to house visits					
Local social forums					
Church gatherings					

Funeral gatherings					
Self-help group meetings					
Sporting event					
Town halls					
Conferences					

28. Were the interpersonal communication tools effective during the 2022 general election in Shinyalu constituency?

- i. Very effective
- ii. Somehow effective
- iii. Not effective

29. What is your opinion on the use of interpersonal communication tools to influence voting behavior?

30. Was the last 2022 general election in the constituency won based on the use of interpersonal communication platforms for campaigns?

- i. Yes
- ii. No

31. If the answer is Yes for question 28 above, which interpersonal communication platforms were most visible?

Thanks

**APPENDIX III: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE QUESTIONS- PARLIAMENTARY SEAT CONTESTANT**

Interview Date ...../...../2025

Dear Respondent,

My name is Brian Juma Khisa, a Masters student (Masters of Science in Communication) at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST). I am carrying out research on Utilization of Interpersonal Communication Strategies to shape voting behavior in rural settings: A case of Shinyalu constituency during the 2022 general elections. This information is strictly for academic purposes and is treated with full confidentiality so feel free to answer the questions.

Thank you for your co-operation.

**Objective one: Communication strategies used during the 2022 general election campaigns in Shinyalu constituency.**

1. Which communication strategies did you use to share information during campaigns in the 2022 general election campaigns in Shinyalu constituency?
2. Which interpersonal communication platforms did you use to share information during 2022 general election campaigns?
3. Why did you prefer using interpersonal communication platforms to share information during 2022 general election campaigns?

4. Which interpersonal communication platforms worked well among residents of Shinyalu constituency when accessing information during 2022 general election campaigns?
5. In your thought, why did the residents prefer using interpersonal communication platforms to access information?
6. Which message was communicated through interpersonal communication platforms/forum?
7. How was the message packaged through the interpersonal communication platforms/forum?
8. How frequent did you share information on other mediums apart from the interpersonal communication form?
9. How frequent did you share information on the interpersonal communication platform?
10. What average time do you think residents spent on interpersonal communication platform to access information?

**Objective two: Factors that influenced the voting behavior in Shinyalu constituency during 2022 general elections.**

1. Which factors did voters consider before selecting the best platform to access political information during the 2022 general election?

2. Which factors did you considered when choosing a platform to share information during the 2022 general election?
3. Which economic level factors do you feel influenced how you voted during the 2022 general election?
4. Which Social-cultural factors do you feel influenced how you voted during the 2022 general election?
5. Which Political factors do you feel influenced how you voted during the 2022 general election?

**Objective three: Perceptions of voters regarding the use of interpersonal communication as a strategy to shape voter behavior in Shinyalu constituency during the 2022 general elections.**

1. Which language did you use while sharing information on interpersonal communication platforms/forums?
2. Of the language chosen in question 1 above, rate its efficiency the following representation; Very efficient, Somehow efficient, efficient and not efficient
3. Using the scale following representation state the level of agreement on the factors on the influence of voting behavior during the 2022 general election? Completely disagree, Disagree, neither disagree nor agree, agree and completely agree.
4. Did the information accessed on interpersonal communication platforms/forums influence how residents voted during the 2022 general election?

4a. If yes, what was your perception concerning the use of interpersonal communication platforms/forums

4b. If the information voters accessed on interpersonal communication platforms/forums did not influence how they voted during the 2022 general election, state why?

5. Use the following parameters rate the extent to which interpersonal communication influenced your voting behavior; greatly, moderately, a little, very little and never.

6. Were the interpersonal communication tools effective during the 2022 general election in Shinyalu constituency? very effective, somehow effective, not effective

7. What is your opinion on the use of interpersonal communication tools to influence voting behavior?

8. Was the last 2022 general election in the constituency won based on the use of interpersonal communication platforms for campaigns?

**APPENDIX IV: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE QUESTIONS- OPINION LEADERS  
AND LOCAL ADMINISTRATION**

Interview date...../...../2025

Dear Respondent,

My name is Brian Juma Khisa, a Masters student (Masters of Science in Communication) at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST). I am carrying out research on Utilization of Interpersonal Communication Strategies to shape voting behavior in rural settings: A case of Shinyalu constituency during the 2022 general elections. This information is strictly for academic purposes and is treated with full confidentiality so feel free to answer the questions.

Thank you for your co-operation.

**Objective one: Communication strategies used during the 2022 general election campaigns in Shinyalu constituency.**

1. Which communication strategies did politicians use to share information during campaigns in the 2022 general election campaigns in Shinyalu constituency?
2. Which interpersonal communication platforms did politicians use to share information during 2022 general election campaigns?

3. Why did politicians prefer using interpersonal communication platforms to share information during 2022 general election campaigns?
4. Which interpersonal communication platforms worked well among residents of Shinyalu constituency when accessing information during 2022 general election campaigns?
5. Why did the residents prefer using the above interpersonal communication platforms mentioned in question 4 to access information?
6. Which message was communicated through interpersonal communication platforms/forum?
7. How was the message packaged through the interpersonal communication platforms/forum?
8. How frequent did politicians share information on other mediums apart from the interpersonal communication form?
9. How frequent did politicians share information on the interpersonal communication platform?
10. What average time do you think residents spent on interpersonal communication platform to access information?

**Objective two: Factors that influenced the voting behavior in Shinyalu constituency during 2022 general elections.**

1. Which factors did voters consider before selecting the best platform to access political information during the 2022 general election?
2. Which factors did you considered when choosing a platform to share information during the 2022 general election?
3. Which economic level factors do you feel influenced how you voted during the 2022 general election?
4. Which Social-cultural factors do you feel influenced how you voted during the 2022 general election?
5. Which Political factors do you feel influenced how you voted during the 2022 general election?

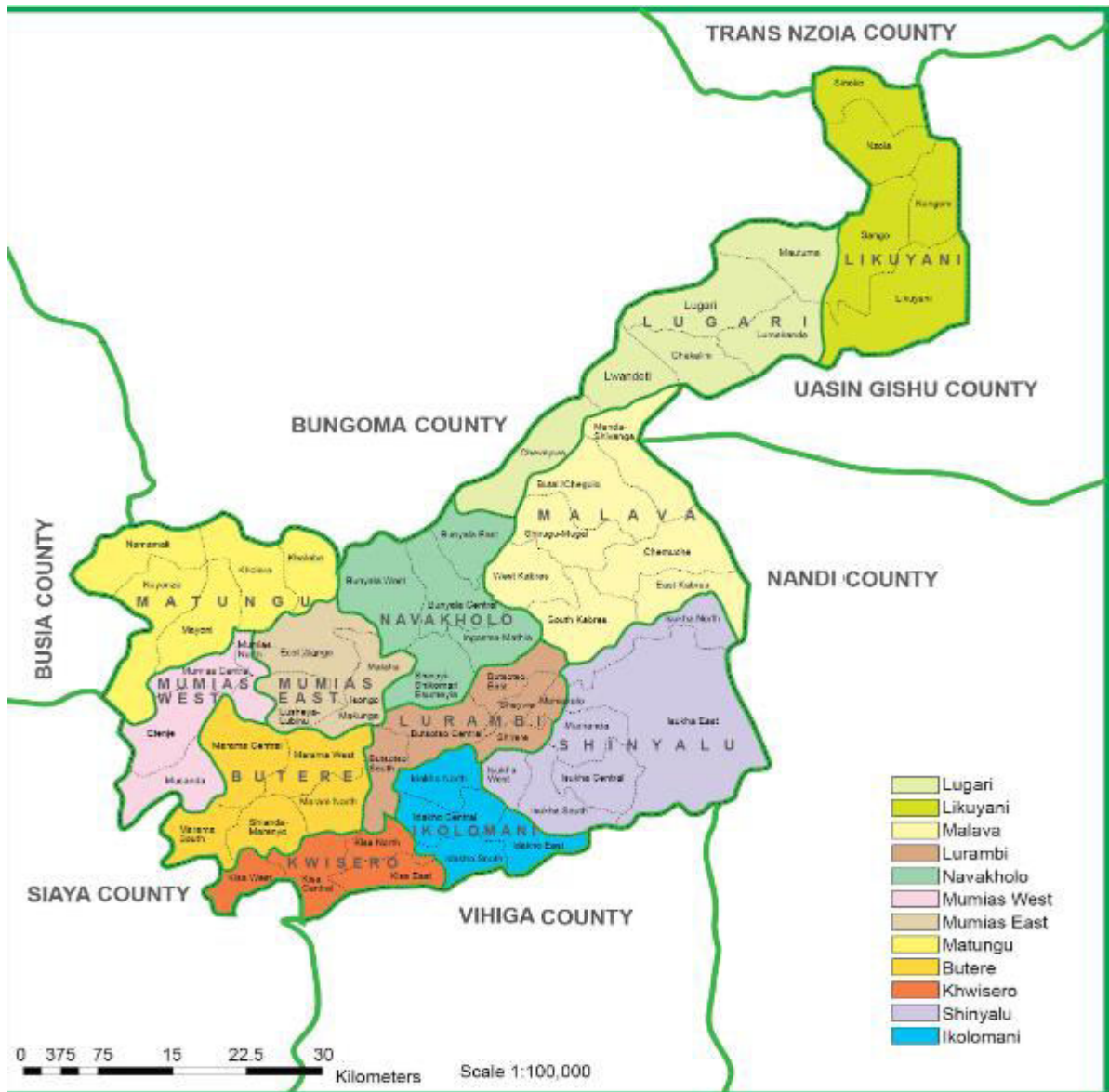
**Objective three: Perceptions of voters regarding the use of interpersonal communication as a strategy to shape voter behavior in Shinyalu constituency during the 2022 general elections.**

1. Which language did politicians use while sharing information on interpersonal communication platforms/forums?

2. Of the language chosen in question 1 above, rate its efficiency the following representation; Very efficient, Somehow efficient, efficient and not efficient
  
3. Using the scale following representation state the level of agreement on the factors on the influence of voting behavior during the 2022 general election? Completely disagree, Disagree, neither disagree nor agree, agree and completely agree.
  
4. Did the information you accessed on interpersonal communication platforms/forums influence how you voted during the 2022 general election?
  - 4a. If yes, what was your perception concerning the use of interpersonal communication platforms/forums
  
  - 4b. If the information voters accessed on interpersonal communication platforms/forums did not influence how they voted during the 2022 general election, state why?
  
5. Use the following parameters rate the extent to which interpersonal communication influenced your voting behavior; greatly, moderately, a little, very little and never.
  
6. Were the interpersonal communication tools effective during the 2022 general election in Shinyalu constituency? very effective, somehow effective, not effective
  
7. What is your opinion on the use of interpersonal communication tools to influence voting behavior?

8. Was the last 2022 general election in the constituency won based on the use of interpersonal communication platforms for campaigns?

**APPENDIX V: KAKAMEGA COUNTY MAP LOCATING SHINYALU CONSTITUENCY**



Source: [Shinyalu.ngcdf.go.ke](http://Shinyalu.ngcdf.go.ke)

## APPENDIX VI: UNIVERSITY LETTER FOR PROPOSAL APPROVAL



### MASINDE MULIRO UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (MMUST)

Tel: 056-30870  
Fax: 056-30153  
E-mail: [directpost@mmust.ac.ke](mailto:directpost@mmust.ac.ke)  
Website: [www.mmust.ac.ke](http://www.mmust.ac.ke)

P.O Box 190  
Kakamega – 50100  
Kenya

#### Directorate of Postgraduate Studies

Ref: MML/COR: 509099

11<sup>th</sup> July, 2025

Brian Juma Khisa  
BJM/G/14- 54981/2020  
P.O. Box 190-50100,  
KAKAMEGA.

Dear Mr. Khisa

#### RE: APPROVAL OF PROPOSAL

I am pleased to inform you that the Directorate of Postgraduate Studies has considered and approved your Masters proposal entitled "*Utilization of Interpersonal Communication Strategies to Shape Voting Behavior in Rural Settlements: A Case of Shinyalu Constituency during the 2022 General Elections*" and appointed the following as supervisors:

- |                       |        |
|-----------------------|--------|
| 1. Prof. Egora Kabaji | -MMUST |
| 2. Dr. Lydia Anyouje  | -MMUST |
| 3. Dr. Joyce Kasili   | -MMUST |

You are required to submit through your supervisor(s) progress reports every three months to the Director Postgraduate Studies. Such reports should be copied to the following: Chairman, School of Arts and Social Sciences Graduate Studies Committee and Chairman, Journalism and Mass Communication Department. Kindly adhere to research ethics consideration in conducting research.

It is the policy and regulations of the University that you observe a deadline of two years from the date of registration to complete your Masters thesis. Do not hesitate to consult this office in case of any problem encountered in the course of your work.

We wish you the best in your research and hope the study will make original contribution to knowledge.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr. Jane Sitana  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR, DIRECTORATE OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

## APPENDIX VII:NACOSTI