





2024 Research Report on the:

The media visibility research for young women in politics: The Kenya Report



RESEACRI

2024

The media visibility research for young women in politics: The Kenya Report

	Preface	
	About the Study	6
W .	Partner Information	8.
	Research Team	9
	Definitions	10.
0	Introduction Study Outline	12 - 23 15
	Methodology	24-31
$\hat{\mathbf{C}}$	Data Analysis and Outputs	28
0-	Ethical Considerations Limitations	30 - 31
Z		
13.	Section 1: Online Print Media	
	Representation of Young Women	32 - 44
7	Politicians in Kenya	
	Sensiationalisation of Young Women in Politics	34-35
	Stories with a Human Face	36-37
S	Highlights of Challenges Young Women in Politics Face	38

	Section 2: Perceptions about Media	
> -	Coverage from Young Women in	45 - 66
W	Politics	
	Factors that Delay the Debut of Young Women into Political Leadership	47 - 51
	Challenges Faced by Young Women Pursuing Political Positions	51 - 52
0	Sexism and Women in Politics	64-65
	Summary of Perceptions About Media	
	Coverage From Young Women in	65-66
0	Politics	
Z		
	Reporting Young Women in Politics	67 - 71
	During The Electioneering Period	
Z	Media Coverage of Young Women in Politics During Pre-Election Period	69 - 70
	Media Coverage of Young Women in Politics	70
S	During The Election Period	
	Media Coverage of Young Women in Politics During The Post-Election Period	70 - 71

T A B	The Summary of Reporting Young Women During The Electioneering Period	72
	Importance of Media Visibility For Young Women in Politics	76
П	Social Media and Personal Branding of Young Women in Politics	76
0		
	Conclusion	_74-77
0	Recommendations	78-80
Z T	References	81 - 85
m Z	Our Partners	86 - 87
()		

ABOUT THE STUDY

The media visibility of any politician is a significant asset and a way to connect with their voters. This is more important for women, specifically young women, entering the political space. Voters rely on the media for political information, shaping their voting choices. This study explores media coverage of young women in politics, analysing trends and their experiences in the political landscape. The objectives of this study were broken down into the following research questions:

RESEARCH QUESTIONS



- **1.** What is the effect of media portrayal of young women in politics in Kenya?
- 2. How does the media visibility of young women politicians contribute to their elevation to leadership positions?
- **3.** How do young women politicians leverage social media spaces for personal branding to attract the attention of legacy media?
- 4. How often does the visibility of young women politicians in the media drive political discussion in Kenya?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES



- **1.** To analyse media stories featuring young women politicians in Kenya regarding adherence to journalistic standards, prevailing themes, and the use of frames.
- To explore the viewpoints of young women politicians in Kenya on media coverage of them and issues affecting their political participation through focus groups.
- 3. How can media better represent and support young women politicians in Kenya?

The study employed a mixed-method approach, beginning with a desktop literature review to explore historical contexts and trends portraying young women in politics. A media monitoring report based on stories about young women in politics from four legacy print media publications ensued. The aim was to explore the agenda-setting trends and priming editorial decisions in stories about young women in politics between the ages of 18 to 35. Purposive sampling of 46 articles that featured young women politicians were selected out of a population of 407 published between January 1, 2022, and August 31, 2022.

Using the snowball sampling technique, 15 women politicians and political actors between the ages of 18 and 35 were recruited for two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) examining their experiences with media coverage and key thematic areas they felt required coverage during the election period. Insights from two Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with experts in curriculum development and women's leadership informed the design of a training curriculum to increase the visibility of young women politicians across the electoral cycle.

The finding elicited emerging thematic areas faced by young women in politics in Kenya, which included the reasons for their delayed debut in political life, such as ageism; deception through 'consensus building' schemes at the political party level; practices that side-lined and blindsided the youth during elections; voter apathy amongst the youth; and financial constraints faced by young women politicians. With regards to working with the media, the findings demonstrated that young women in politics had inadequate media relations skills to lobby for coverage of their stories; they faced biased reporting and incidences that required bribing of the media. The young women politicians also shared about the challenges of mental health and sexism they faced as they navigated the political ecosystem.

The conclusions of the study indicate that most stories featuring young women politicians rarely seek to profile them and their achievements. They instead focus on generic issues that affect women to create an impression that they have a voice in the political arena. Using the tabloid approach, where most stories about young women politicians were deemed as sexist, primed gossip based on the physical appearance of young women. This did not help propel a positive image of them toward the public. All these factors have contributed to the early exit of young women from the political scene, which takes away the opportunity and benefits of visibility associated with being on decision-making tables.

The recommendations of the study suggest the need to embrace media advocacy to map, engage, and promote young women politicians as persons of interest. There is also a need to lobby the media to support the sustainable visibility of young women politicians through the adoption of dedicated report desks in the newsrooms. The research outcomes of this study have proposed the development of a seven-module curriculum outline that covers: voter engagement strategies for young women politicians; leadership development for young politicians; advocacy and negotiation skills for leaders; personal branding, visibility, and media relations; dealing with sexism in the political space; youth participation in policymaking; mental health and social well-being. It has further led to developing a media toolkit to guide journalists on strategies they can adopt in their work for the increased visibility of young women in politics.

PARTNER INFORMATION



LUMINATE

Luminate was established in 2018 by philanthropists Pierre and Pam Omidyar. For over a decade before this, the team worked on governance and citizen engagement issues as part of Omidyar Network. Luminate envisions a future where everyone has power to shape society. Our mission is to ensure that everyone – especially those who are underrepresented - has the information, rights, and power to influence the decisions that affect us all. We seek to increase the participation of underrepresented groups in civic and political life, to ensure those who challenge power can do so safely and effectively, and to improve the integrity of information and public debate. Across our work, we seek to ensure that technology works for, not against, democracy.

RESEARCH TEAM



DR YEMISI AKINBOBOLA

is an award-winning journalist, academic, consultant, and co-founder of African Women in Media (AWiM). She is a joint winner of the CNN African Journalist Award 2016 (Sports Reporting). Dr. Akinbobola ran her news website IQ4News from 2010 to 2014. Her media work is Africa-focused, covering stories from rape culture in Nigeria, to an investigative and data story on the trafficking of young West African football hopefuls by fake agents. She has freelanced for publications including the UN Africa Renewal magazine and has several years' experience in communication management in the third sector. Dr Akinbobola holds a PhD in Media and Cultural Studies from Birmingham City University, UK, where she is a Senior Lecturer and International Research Partnerships Manager. She has published scholarly research on women's rights, African feminism, and journalism and digital public spheres. She was an Editorial Consultant for the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 commemorative book titled 'She Stands for Peace: 20 Years, 20 Journeys'.

DR RACHEL-ANN CHARLES

is an international academic, consultant, and media practitioner. She holds a PhD in Media and Cultural Studies from Birmingham City University, UK, where she is a Course Director BA (Hons) Journalism. Her published work and research interests span media education, research-informed teaching, and Caribbean diaspora identity. Some of her previous work includes working at Caribbean news media organisations as well as at the United Nations Population Fund Trinidad and Tobago providing technical consultancy support for an array of projects and campaigns such as those centred around gender-based violence.

ROBI KOKI OCHIENG

is a career educator currently stationed at the United States International University's (USIU- Africa) School of Communications, Cinematics, and Creative Arts in the Journalism & Communication Program. Robi is currently the chairperson of the Centre of Media Viability and Development (CoMViD); a DW Akademie Media Viability Global Ambassador and Country Consultant currently contracted to support SME media houses to build capacity in designing human-centred journalistic content informed by audience research. Robi and her colleague Dr, Dorothy Njoroge have been Grantees and Managers for two programs for the Amplify Change Strengthening Grant: Building the Capacity of Civil Society Organisations for Strategic Advocacy-(2016 – 2019) and DAI Global, LLC for USAID dubbed Countering Violent Extremism Strategic Communication Pilot – (Jan-Aug 2017). She has also managed a USIU-Africa Internal Grant (May 2020 – Aug 2022) which is an exploration of the reportage of devolved governance in Kenya (2013-2017). Robi is a national and international media critic who has made 65 media appearances since 2015 on television and radio programmes on media houses such as the Kenya Televisions Network (KTN), Nation Media Group, TV47, BBC radio, and **Aljazeera**.

DEFINITIONS



Affirmative Action

Policies and measures designed to promote equal opportunities and representation for underrepresented groups, such as women in politics.

Gender Lens

A perspective that focuses on how gender impacts media coverage and representation.

Gender Quota

A requirement for a certain percentage of women's representation in leadership positions, often enshrined in laws or constitutions.

Media Coverage Quality

The depth, fairness, and meaningfulness of media reports about young women in politics.

Media Frames

The specific angles and perspectives used by the media when reporting on young women in politics.

Media Logic

The underlying principles and assumptions that guide journalists' reporting, including potential biases related to gender.

Media Sexism

Gender-based bias and discrimination in media content, particularly in young women in politics.

Media Stereotypes

Preconceived and oversimplified beliefs or ideas about young women in politics that may affect their portrayal in media.

Media Visibility

The extent to which individuals, particularly young women politicians, are featured in media coverage and how prominent their presence is.

Media Visibility Strategies Tactics and techniques used by politicians to attract media attention and enhance their visibility, including digital branding and social media engagement.

Representation

The portrayal and depiction of young women in politics in media content, including the accuracy and fairness of their portrayal.

Tokenism

The practice of nominating or appointing individuals from underrepresented groups as a symbolic gesture without genuine empowerment or influence.

FOREWORD

Since 2016, African Women in Media has been committed to promoting and supporting forward-thinking initiatives that advance gender equality in and through media. A commitment that has seen us deliver an annual conference, a range of training programmes that apply a women-first pedagogy via AWiM Learning, and the amplification of women's voices and perspectives through gender-angle stories on AWiMNews, our database of African women experts on SourceHer.org, and the lived experiences of women in media through our podcast Her Media Diary and several research reports.

This report on Media and Young Women in Politics in Nigeria and Kenya is part of a broader programme that marked our first partnership with Luminate.

Luminate has a mission to ensure that everyone – especially those who are underrepresented – has the information, rights, and power to influence the decisions that affect their lives. The Media and Young Women in Politics programme, contributing to this, aimed to build young women journalists' capacity and improve the visibility and accessibility of young women in politics. As such, the programme significantly advance's Luminate's two focal areas: Participation & Dissent, and Information Ecosystems

This report presents our findings on media coverage of young women in politics in Nigeria and Kenya. It analyses media stories on young women politicians in both countries to highlight the extent to which this is done fairly and equitably. It further highlights the lived experiences of these young women politicians regarding their media visibility.

As we reflect on these findings, the question for us is how media can better represent and support young women politicians in these two countries and across the continent. This is critical to fostering inclusive and equitable societies and media ecosystems genuinely.

As we reflect on these findings, the question for us is how media can better represent and support young women politicians in these two countries and across the continent. This is critical to fostering inclusive and equitable societies and media ecosystems genuinely.

Dr Yemisi Akinbobola,

CEO and Co-Founder, African Women in Media.

Bamidele Ogunleye,

COO and Co-Founder, African Women in Media.



THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

This study is part of the African Women in Media (AWiM) project that focuses on increasing the visibility of young women in politics in Nigeria and Kenya. The study contributes towards ensuring that young women in the African media space have equal access to adequate representation and opportunities for young women in politics in media. This study specifically explored the current state of reporting on young women in politics and their participation in civic life in Kenya.

Data for this study was collected through a media monitoring of stories from four legacy print publications in Kenya; an online self-administered survey and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) of 15 young women in politics between 18 and 35 defined as youth in Kenya. Based on the study's findings, a curriculum was developed to increase visibility, informed by interviews with two key expert informants. This report further informed the development of a media toolkit as a resource for journalists aimed at helping improve the visibility and media accessibility of young women in politics.

THE CRITICAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS ASKED IN THIS STUDY WERE:



- **1.** What is the effect of media portrayal of young women in politics in Kenya?
- 2. How does the media visibility of young women politicians contribute to their elevation to leadership positions?
- **3.** How do young women politicians leverage social media spaces for personal branding to attract the attention of legacy media?
- **4.** How often does the visibility of young women politicians in the media drive political discussion in Kenya?

The stories about young women in politics were well-reported, even though they often relied on a single source of information. Most stories also focused on generic perspectives about the role of the youth and young women in the political sphere. The stories articulated generic issues that affected women and highlighted milestones gained from more women in the political arena. Few stories highlighted success stories of young women in politics, as they were not treated as subjects who needed personalised attention. Media sexism was prevalent in most stories in conformance to societal norms that define gender roles assigned to men and women.

This report is sequenced as follows: the introduction, background of the study, and methodology of the study, which is followed by the findings. The findings contain three sections: media monitoring of stories about young women in politics; thematic profiling of issues discussed at the FGD sessions, and the results of a self-administered survey on issues that need reporting as aligned to the election cycle.

STUDY OUTLINE



The study applied the mixed-method approach guided by the exploratory sequential design that used five approaches outlined as a desktop literature review from academic publications to explore the history and trends of the representation of women in politics in the global, regional, and local contexts. This provided insights that informed the categorisation of data into various themes and patterns from stories. A media monitoring report further established patterns of the agenda-setting and priming editorial decisions depicted from the stories about young women in politics. The findings were shared with 15 women politicians and political actors in two virtual Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).

This was followed by two virtual Key Informant Interviews with women in leadership and a curriculum development expert to determine possible topics for capacity building to enhance visibility for young women in politics. The study also culminated with developing a media toolkit to guide journalists in writing stories that will increase the visibility of young women in politics. The media toolkit advises journalists on how to use empowering frames when telling stories about young women political actors, specifically regarding agenda-setting and priming decisions for coverage about them. It is hoped that this will contribute to the increased frequency and placement of stories in publications that are easily accessed by audiences.

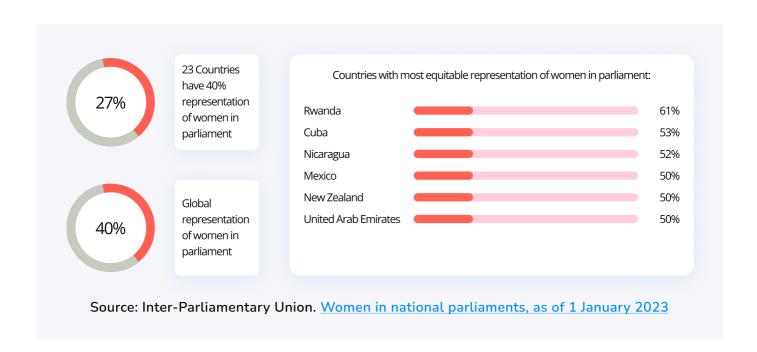
LITERATURE REVIEW



The participation of men and women in public life was never equal until more focus on women's participation was discussed and documented in the <u>Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995</u>. During the Beijing conference, a comprehensive blueprint was developed to set targets to ensure balanced political participation and power-sharing between men and women. <u>The 12 Beijing areas</u> focus on the following issues: women and poverty; education and training of women; women and health; violence against women; women and armed conflict; women and the economy; women in power and decision-making; institutional mechanisms; human rights of women; women and media; women and the environment; and the girl child.

This research focuses on target seven, which aims at capacity building for women to ascend to power and access decision-making spaces¹. The critical component of this target emphasises the successful implementation of the <u>Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)</u> which aims at eradicating stereotyped roles for women. CEDAW additionally aims at ensuring that women have equal participation in public life as men; according to women's equality before the law and eliminating all forms of discrimination in employment².

Over the years, achieving this target in nearly all countries has been a challenge³ The global trend in women's representation in leadership and representation of women in parliament stands at 26.5%. Six countries have over 50% representation of women in their parliaments. These countries are Rwanda (61%), Cuba (53%) and Nicaragua (52%), while Mexico, New Zealand, and the United Arab Emirates have 50% each.



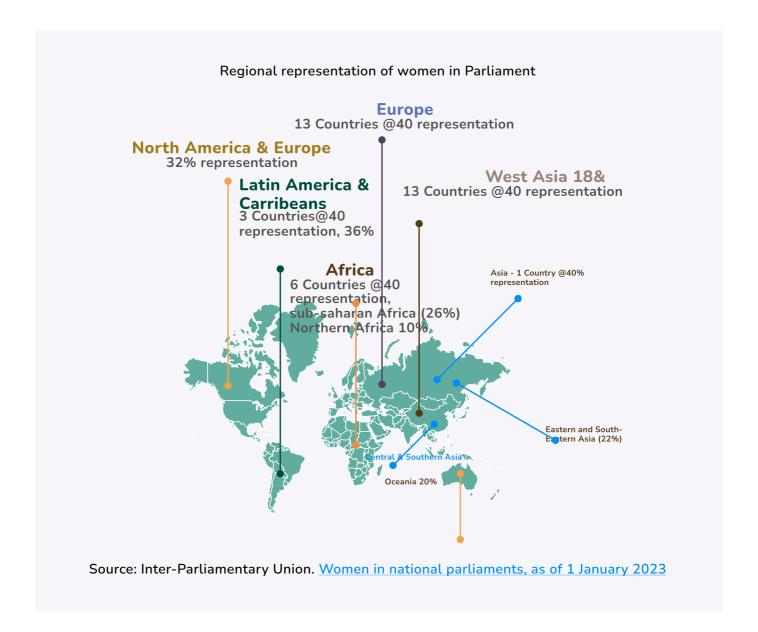
Other statistics indicate that only 23 countries have surpassed the 40% female representation in parliament broken down as 13 in Europe, 6 in Africa, 3 in Latin America and the Caribbean, and one in Asia. Regionally, women's representation in parliament stands at 36% in Latin America and the Caribbean; 32% in Europe and Northern America; 26% in sub-Saharan Africa; 22% in eastern and south-eastern Asia; 20% in Oceania; 19% in central and southern Asia; 18% in northern Africa and western Asia.

RESOURCES:

Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) (2021) Women in Power and Decision-Making infographic retrieved from https://pcw.gov.ph/assets/files/2021/05/8-9-433x1024.jpg

Equality & Human Rights Commission . (2023, 10 26). Monitoring & Reporting: International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD. Retrieved from https://humanrightstracker.com/en/: https://humanrightstracker.com/en/un-treaty/cerd/ old (https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/our-human-rights-work/monitoring-and-promoting-un-treaties/convention-elimination.discrimination

In the Kenyan context, there is a two-tier governance system that comprises the national government and 47 county governments. In the 2022 elections, more women were elected to leadership positions at national and county government levels compared to the results of the past polls. Although this achievement does not meet the two-third gender principle enshrined in the Constitution of Kenya 2010, there is marked progress towards equal representation by men and women in leadership.

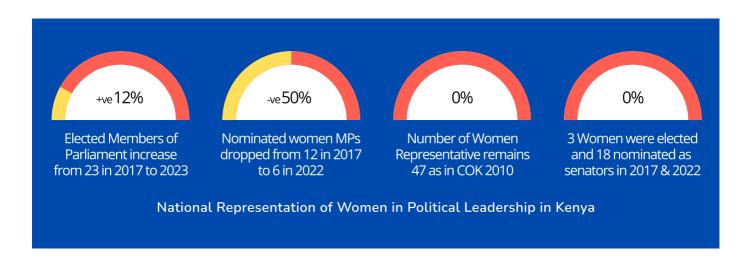


Women who were voted for the Member of Parliament (MP) position stood at 29, while those nominated were six. This is besides the existing 47 constitutional affirmative positions referred to as County Woman Representatives in Parliament. This gain translates to 23.5% of the elected female representation in the national assembly. Three women were elected as senators, while 18 were nominated. This is 31% of representation in the Senate, which meets the two-third gender representation quota⁴.

At the county government level, seven women were elected as county governors and 10 as deputy governors. This is up from three governors and down from 12 deputy governors elected in 2017. 752 of 2,062 Members of the County Assembly (MCAs) were women. This translates to 36% representation of women. Out of this number, 115 women out of 612 MCAs were nominated. This nomination pushed the number of MCAs up to 2,062 from 1,450 in 2017.

RESOURCES:

- United Nations Women Africa. (2022). In Brief: Women's performance in the Kenya elections. Retrieved from https://africa.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/12/in-brief-
- womens-performance-in-the-kenya-elections
- United Nations Women Africa. (2022). In Brief: Women's performance in the Kenya elections. Retrieved from
- https://africa.unwomen.org: https://africa.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/12/in-brief-womens-performance-in-the-kenya-elections
- Wako-Ojiwa Nerima (2022) The youth really took part in the 2022 elections retrieved from https://nation.africa/kenya/blogs-opinion/blogs/the-youth-really-took-part-in-the-2022-elections-4049912

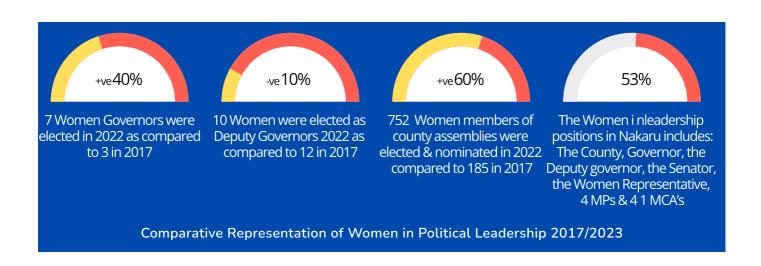


At the county government level, seven women were elected as county governors and 10 as deputy governors. This is up from three governors and down from 12 deputy governors elected in 2017. 752 of 2,062 Members of the County Assembly (MCAs) were women. This translates to 36% representation of women. Out of this number, 115 women out of 612 MCAs were nominated. This nomination pushed the number of MCAs up to 2,062 from 1,450 in 2017.

There was a marked improvement in women's representation specifically witnessed in The County of Nakuru, which is a capital city that is 157.47km away from Nairobi in Kenya. Women leaders garnered 15 out of all 68 elective positions in the county. This translates to 22% female representation. The women occupied the governor, senator, and women's representative positions. Other elective seats occupied by women were 11 MPs and 55 MCAs. With all these gains in women's leadership, the numbers still significantly were short of the one-third gender quota principle. Overall, there was an increase in the youth's representation leadership that went up to 355 in 2022 from 317 in 2017. Out of this number, only 14 leaders were young women⁵.

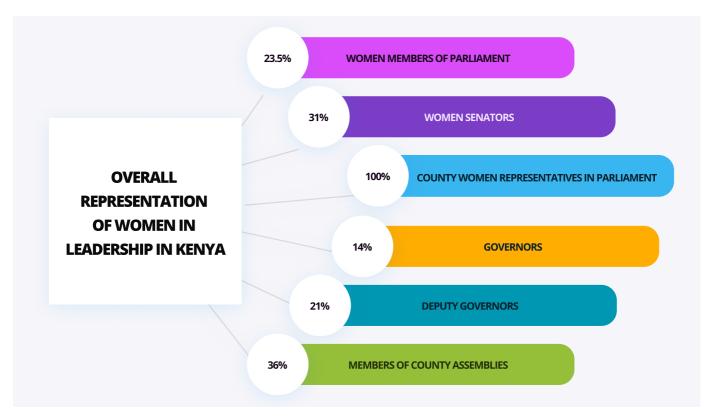
RESOURCES:

- United Nations Women Africa. (2022). In Brief: Women's performance in the Kenya elections. Retrieved from https://africa.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/12/in-brief-
- womens-performance-in-the-kenya-elections
- Wako-Ojiwa Nerima (2022) The youth really took part in the 2022 elections retrieved from https://nation.africa/kenya/blogs-opinion/blogs/the-youth-really-took-part-in-the-2022-elections-4049912



Some conditions that have propelled women into elective and nominative leadership positions include affirmative action that constitutionally safeguards women's representation in 47 counties and the 'springboard effect' inspired by the most powerful older women in politics⁶. There has been criticism about the criteria that political parties used to nominate women to parliament through tokenism or being politically correct. This props up women who lack merit to take up leadership positions. Despite these factors, there is a marked increase in the presence and visibility of women leaders in Kenya.

Just like for male politicians, visibility is an indispensable resource for female politicians in contemporary highly mediatised political climates. It is prudent, therefore, that young women in politics are keen to attract media attention by using effective branding and leveraging their digital assets for visibility. This will help in giving their project and achievements visibility during the electioneering period. According to the Belgian Association of Professional Journalists (AJP), the "News erases one in two women from their stories"7. This is despite the fact that high media visibility is vital to the success of any politician's life8. In modern times, a robust social media presence warrants the media's attention and provides assured exposure to their intended voters9. Voters depend on the media for political information and fodder for political discussions to inform their voting patterns10.



While substantial research explores media portrayals of women politicians overall, current scholarship lacks a specific focus on the experiences of young women in politics regarding media visibility and representation. Existing studies show there is a need to focus on quality rather than quantity of reports about women in politics¹¹. Even though women in politics are elite actors, they face similar challenging media reporting patterns in their coverage, such as being trivialised, sexualised, or commodified just like any other women¹².

This is contrary to the broadsheet approach that presents a sober tone when referring to men. This approach focuses on indepth coverage presented in longer texts; with less prominent headlines and fewer pictures¹⁴. Journalism is masculinised within its socially organised framework as it assigns men to economic and political roles while assigning women domesticated and reproductive roles¹⁵. Many stories about women follow a general pattern that pays attention to the woman's appearance, sartorial styles, emotional fragility, personal privilege, family relations, competencies, political stance, and power to influence policy that support women's issues¹⁶.

Given that women have traditionally been viewed as confined to domestic and reproductive roles, media coverage often passively propagates ideals and gender stereotypes that further reinforce these limiting traditional roles for women. Other ideals, such as nationalism and ethnic patronage, are included in these stories to reinforce structural, institutional, and cultural barriers to the entry of women into politics¹⁷. The sexist portrayals of women impact their participation as subjects and sources of stories. Media sexism drives stereotypical narratives that undermine women's status and upward mobility in society¹⁸.

These stereotypes make women vulnerable to negative criticism from their male counterparts and less attractive to their voters19. Not only do women put off their political careers because of obstacles that are prevalent during the electoral cycle, but also are influenced by media sexism. The media logic used by journalists presupposes that because women lack media relations skills, the media produce and reproduce sexism in its content and work environment²⁰. Because of this, journalists write their stories using "interpretative structures" rooted in gender stereotypes that are easy to understand and newsworthy²¹.

However, the impacts of these media representations remain under-examined for young women politicians specifically. This group encounters additional visibility barriers tied to their youth alongside gender, which intersects in understudied ways.

alongside gender, which intersects in understudied ways. Given recent advances in women's political participation globally, research urgently requires updated, youth-centred analyses on the media landscapes confronting emerging young women leaders. Examining visibility and media frameworks uniquely shaping this group can strengthen understanding of the obstacles and support needed for their vital public leadership roles.

Therefore, this study explored the media visibility of young women politicians and political actors in Kenya. The framework that guided this study focused on the electoral cycle and examined possible story angles that may occur during each stage. A gender audit report by Econet Kenya in 2022 outlines that an electoral cycle has three stages: the pre-election, election, and post-election stages. To give young women politicians a fair chance at media coverage, reporting should use a gender lens to focus on newsworthy topics at each stage of the electoral cycle.

The pre-election stage involves serious planning and logistical coordination for the election campaign period. Long before the campaigns, there is a need for the media to focus on proposed and implemented changes in constitutional requirements that impact women. Media reports must focus on selecting electoral officials, voter registration, and election preparedness.

RESOURCES:

- Ahmed, A., Elversson, E., & Höglund, K. (2022, December 20). The struggle for gender-equal representation:
- The 2022 election in Kenya. Retrieved from https://www.blogalstudies.com/post/the-struggle-for-gender-equal-representation-the-2022-election-in-kenya: https://www.blogalstudies.com
- Ross, K., & Margie, C. (.2012). The Rules of the (Leadership) Game: Gender, Politics and New. Journalism13(8) doi:10.1177/1464884911433255, 969–984

During the elections, the key issues that need to be covered are party primaries, nominations, and campaigning activities. Key stories during this period include, but are not limited to, clashes between rival supporters and among party officials, attacks based on the selection of electoral officials, attacks on politicians, election officials, and the role of electoral observers²².

During the election period, key observations should be made on the voting processes and issues that present vulnerabilities and challenges to women. These include adherence to special and external voting, voter counting, tabulating results, complaints, appeals, and announcing of official results. Key stories should focus on attacks on election personnel and observers at polling stations, limited turnout and intimidation of voters, and the physical destruction of election materials²³. Other stories of importance are those about the announcement of results, armed clashes, or violence between supporters and/or members of different political parties, vandalism, and physical attacks on the properties of candidates or party members.

RESOURCES:

- European Institute of Gender Equality. (2011). Awareness-Raising Campaigns for the French-Speaking

 Community of Belgium 2011 Making Belgium aware of its media's gender imbalance. Retrieved from https://
 eige.europa.eu: https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/good-practices/making-belgium-aware-itsmedias-gender-imbalance?language_content_entity=en
- Media Focus on Africa . (2021, August 11). Kenya 2022 Elections: Finding the Gender Balance. Retrieved from https://mediafocusonafrica.org/?news=coronavirus-and-covid19-pandemic
- Women In Media. (n.d.). Gender Balance and Kenyan Election Coverage. Retrieved from https://womeninnews.org/kenyan-elections-gender-balance-2022
- West European Politics 2022, VOL. 45, NO. 7, 1481–1492 Do European media ignore female politicians? A comparative analysis of MP visibility Daphne J. van der Pas Department of Political Science, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- Nduva, V. M. (2016). Media Portrayal of Women Leaders in Kenya: An. Nairobi: Department of Journalism and Media Studies
- Ross, Karen, and Margie Comrie.2012. "The Rules of the (Leadership) Game: Gender, Politics and News." Journalism13 (8):969–984.doi:10.1177/1464884911433255.



HOW WE WORK

METHODOLOGY

The post-election activities stories should include, but are not limited to, election audits and evaluations, proposed electoral institutional strengthening, legal reforms, archiving, and research. The media should feature the overall gender representation, critique institutional reforms, and research the well-being of politicians after the elections, among many other stories²⁴.

METHODOLOGY

MEDIA MONITORING

Stories under the thematic area of young women in politics were retrieved from the subscription portals of legacy print media archival services selected between January 1, 2022, and August 31, 2022. This was the period for the 2022 elections in Kenya. The selected publications for this study were The Nation Daily, The Standard, The Star, and People Daily. A purposive sample of 46 stories that featured young women politicians was selected out of a population of 407 stories about women in politics during that period.

A codebook was then developed as a guide to the specific code sheets that guide data collection from each story.

The codebook is divided into three sections that explore compliance with journalistic standards when reporting issues related to women categorised as youth; identifying thematic portrayal of young women in politics in print media, and the use of emphasis and equivalence frames in the stories that shape the portrayal of young women politicians.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FDGs)



(FGDs) - There were two FGDs of 15 women politicians and political actors aged 18-35 from various counties sampled using the snowballing technique from the researcher's political, civil society, and the women's movements networks. The FGD was guided by the findings of the media monitoring report and online self-administered survey findings about their views on what stories were covered about young women in politics during the electoral cycle.

THE ONLINE SELF-ADMINISTERED SURVEY



An online survey was shared with the respondents before the FGDs. This approach sought to gather their views on issues that they felt needed coverage during the election cycle. The survey focused on issues raised from the literature that should guide reporting about young women politicians as aligned to the pre-election, during the elections, and post-election periods of the cycle.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS (KII)



two interviews were held with consultants with expertise in curriculum development and women leadership and offered guidance on the content of the curriculum development for capacity building of the young women politicians.

DATA ANALYSIS AND OUTPUTS



By cross-referencing the findings of the different data collection methods, common themes were uncovered, and any disparities were identified. The amalgamation of all findings led to a comprehensive understanding of how young women in politics were portrayed by the media; the challenges they encountered during the cycle and the resulting recommendations. This structured approach ensured a comprehensive exploration of the portrayal and experiences of young women in politics.

RESOURCES:

- Preston, P. (2004). Tabloids: Only the Beginning. British Journalism Review, 15(1), 50-55. DOI: 10.1177/0956474804043839
- Osei-Appiah, f. S. (2019). Media Representations of Women Politicians: The Cases of Ghana and Nigeria. Leeds, West Yorkshire, The University of Leeds and Sally Osei-Appia
- Dan, Viorela, and Aurora Iorgoveanu. 2013. "Still on the Beaten Path: How Gender Impacted the Coverage of Male and Female Romanian Candidates for European Office." International Journal of Press/Politics 18 (2): 208–233.
- ∐bid
- Haraldssona, A. & Wängnerud, L. (2018). the effect of media sexism on women's political ambition: Feminist Media Studies, 525-541.
- Osei-Appiah, f. S. (2019). Media Representations of Women Politicians: The Cases of Ghana and Nigeria. Leeds, West Yorkshire, The University of Leeds and Sally Osei-Appia
- Haraldssona, A. & Wängnerud, L. (2018). the effect of media sexism on women's political ambition. Feminist Media Studies, 525-541.

This ultimately led to informed recommendations for improvement and action towards more media visibility for young women in politics. Integration of findings offers a holistic view of the research topic and reveals overarching themes and trends to help formulate recommendations that enhance media portrayal of young women in politics in Kenya. This addressed the challenges they faced in boosting the visibility of young women in politics. The specific methods for data analysis based on each tool are outlined below:

MEDIA MONITORING REPORT



The mixed method approach was used in the development of the media monitoring report, and it involved gathering articles from legacy print media archives. The collected articles were categorised into various codes as defined as the thematic areas of media coverage; adherence to journalistic standards; prevailing themes, and the utilisation of frames. A quantitative analysis is conducted to determine the frequency with which articles meet journalistic standards. This was further followed by the qualitative examination of the articles to identify common themes and frames used in the portrayal of young women in politics. These analyses yielded quantitative frequency data, qualitative thematic outcomes, and revealed the frames used in media portrayals.

The codebook is divided into three sections that explore compliance with journalistic standards when reporting issues related to women categorised as youth; identifying thematic portrayal of young women in politics in print media, and the use of emphasis and equivalence frames in the stories that shape the portrayal of young women politicians.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FDGS)



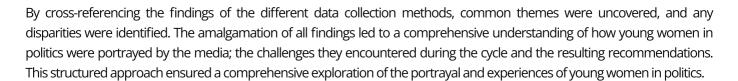
(FGDs) - There were two FGDs of 15 women politicians and political actors aged 18-35 from various counties sampled using the snowballing technique from the researcher's political, civil society, and the women's movements networks. The FGD was guided by the findings of the media monitoring report and online self-administered survey findings about their views on what stories were covered about young women in politics during the electoral cycle.

THE ONLINE SELF-ADMINISTERED SURVEY



An online survey was shared with the respondents before the FGDs. This approach sought to gather their views on issues that they felt needed coverage during the election cycle. The survey focused on issues raised from the literature that should guide reporting about young women politicians as aligned to the pre-election, during the elections, and post-election periods of the cycle.

DATA ANALYSIS AND OUTPUTS



This ultimately led to informed recommendations for improvement and action towards more media visibility for young women in politics. Integration of findings offers a holistic view of the research topic and reveals overarching themes and trends to help formulate recommendations that enhance media portrayal of young women in politics in Kenya. This addressed the challenges they faced in boosting the visibility of young women in politics. The specific methods for data analysis based on each tool are outlined below:

MEDIA MONITORING REPORT



The mixed method approach was used in the development of the media monitoring report, and it involved gathering articles from legacy print media archives. The collected articles were categorised into various codes as defined as the thematic areas of media coverage; adherence to journalistic standards; prevailing themes, and the utilisation of frames. A quantitative analysis is conducted to determine the frequency with which articles meet journalistic standards. This was further followed by the qualitative examination of the articles to identify common themes and frames used in the portrayal of young women in politics. These analyses yielded quantitative frequency data, qualitative thematic outcomes, and revealed the frames used in media portrayals.

The post-election activities stories should include, but are not limited to, election audits and evaluations, proposed electoral institutional strengthening, legal reforms, archiving, and research. The media should feature the overall gender representation, critique institutional reforms, and research the well-being of politicians after the elections, among many other stories²⁴.

METHODOLOGY



FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGDS)

There were two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) held with 15 respondents who were young women politicians and political actors. The discussions were transcribed on the Otter.ai transcription software and followed thematic coding and content analysis. This helped in gaining insights into the perspectives that were summarised into key discussion points about how the media covered stories about young women in politics.

QUESTIONNAIRE (ONLINE SURVEY)



Data cleaning of the survey responses was carried out to ensure for accuracy of the data collected. This was followed by a quantitative analysis of the responses to identify recurring issues faced by young women in politics. A comparative analysis process ensued to ensure that the findings of the survey were compared with themes derived from both the focus group discussions and media monitoring. The findings of the survey were presented as summary statistics and comparative assessments aligning with the themes identified in the FGDs.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS (KII)



Two Key Informant Interviews by a Gender Communications Expert and a Curriculum Development Expert were transcribed on Otter.ai for analysis of insights that led to the identification of key topics useful in the capacity development for young women in politics.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS



Ethical considerations for media monitoring hinge on the fundamental respect for the copyright and intellectual property rights of media outlets when accessing their content. It is imperative to handle data from these sources in a manner that upholds the original publishers' rights For Focus Group Discussions (FGDs); the cornerstone is securing informed consent from participants. The respondents were fully informed about the study's objectives, the role of the discussion, the use of the recordings, and data usage. The maintenance of anonymity and confidentiality was paramount to shield the identities and personal information of participants. The researcher demonstrated respect for participants' viewpoints, even when they differ from their own or others.

When conducting the online surveys, the participants were asked to provide informed consent. Data security was rigorously maintained to thwart unauthorised access, breaches, and the need for anonymity.

In Key Informant Interviews (KII), again, informed consent was obtained, and the interviewees were well-informed about the interviews' purpose and use of their input. Showing respect for interviewees' expertise and opinions, particularly in curriculum development and women's leadership, was critical. The content of these interviews remains confidential, except where interviewees expressly grant permission to share specific information.

LIMITATIONS

While the study offers a structured approach to gaining valuable insights into the media portrayal and experiences of young women in politics, it acknowledges several limitations. First, the study relies heavily on legacy print media archives, potentially failing to capture the entirety of media coverage. This is so in the digital age where online platforms play a substantial role in news dissemination. This could cause a limited representation of media content, creating a potential blind spot in the analysis.

Second, selection bias in the choices of media outlets, articles, and the recruitment of focus group participants may not have comprehensively represented the diverse perspectives and experiences of young women in politics. This could have skewed the findings and hindered a holistic understanding of the subject.

Finally, the study's coding process for articles involves a level of subjectivity, which introduces potential bias. Different coders could have interpreted content differently, leading to potential variations in the analysis. The study's narrow focus on media portrayal that have may miss the broader societal, cultural, and political factors that influence media coverage of the experiences of young women in politics. This could have limited the depth of contextual understanding of the portrayal of women in politics.



SECTION 1

Online Print Media Representation of Kenyan Young Women in Politics

ONLINE PRINT MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF KENYAN YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS



The media monitoring survey findings are presented in this section of the research. This section employed content analysis to establish the agenda-setting and priming of stories about young women in politics. The discernment of editorial decisions was examined through the analysis of various issues such as space location to stories about young women in politics; the number of words in a story; the frequency and number of stories on the issue, the by-line, length of stories and placement of the story within in the publication.

The population of the study was stories under the thematic area of women in politics retrieved from the subscription portals of legacy online print media archival services between the electioneering period of January 1, 2022, and August 31, 2022, in Kenya. To emphasise the role of young women in politics, the selection process utilised purposive sampling to identify and showcase 46 stories, out of a broader set of 407 stories about women in politics. The selected stories featured women between the ages of 18 and 35, as defined as youth in the Constitution of Kenya 2010. A theme analysis ensued, and the findings are highlighted below.

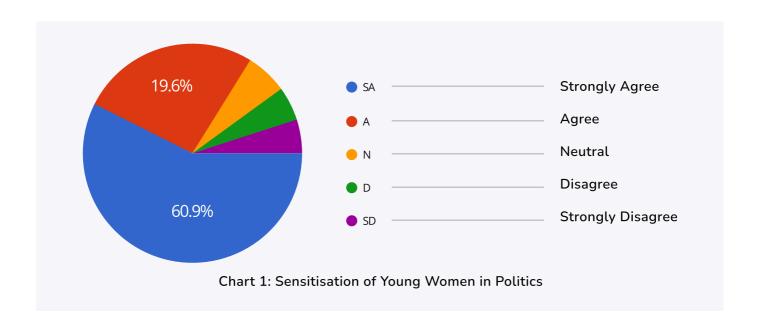
SENSATIONALISATION OF YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS



Approximately 81% of the stories presented factual information about young women in politics and their political contributions without using sensational language or exaggerations. The stories focused on profiling young women aspirants and the strides young women are making towards participating in the political spaces. They highlighted how the young women overcame challenges faced in the political scene. Examples of this are seen in the following headlines: Young, ambitious women causing ripples in Bomet politics'25, is powerful and empowering as it utilises positive adjectives like 'young' and 'ambitious' to portray these women as motivated and influential figures in the political landscape. Another example is Three women braving the tides in State House race'26

which conveys a sense of challenge and sparks interest regarding the determination with which the women candidates pursue the presidential state house. For example, the headline 'Green Party waives nomination fees for women aspirants'27 sheds light on the affirmative action taken by the party to promote gender equality in political participation.

Most of the stories highlighted female candidates' backgrounds, experiences, and aspirations for participating in the 2022 General Election in Kenya. They gave information about their professional accomplishments and leadership roles in various sectors. Stories like 'Nyambane's nod for State House race opens the door for our youth'²⁸ frame her as an inspirational figure who goes for the top seat in the county. The headline 'Bomet's Chepkorir Toto needs support, she is Kenya's future'²⁹ appeals to young readers' sense of civic responsibility towards taking part in the democratic process. This effort bears fruit in 'Toto' floors eight to clinch Bomet woman rep seat'³⁰ who remarkably secures the Bomet woman representative seat and ousts eight opponents.



The stories celebrated the increase in the number of women in elective posts. Factual information is shared on the rise in women's interest in vying for political positions and as political actors in their respective parties. This is communicated in the headline Tomorrow starts with a girl: Empowering the next generation of female leaders³¹, which underscores the vital role that young women play in shaping the future of leadership. The story, 'Female aspirants seek support to boost campaigns³² communicates the dedication of young women politicians towards running for political office through the recognition of their achievements. Another headline, Young women in politics ought to learn from those who blazed trail³³, further highlights the importance of mentorship for young women in politics from those who have already made significant strides in the field.

The stories uplift and encourage many young girls aiming for political seats in Kenya. Young women were presented as serious contenders as one young lady presented herself for clearance at the electoral body for the position of the president of Kenya. It was also witnessed that a few young women who vied for elective positions floored veteran male politicians, as seen in the headline Teresa Chebet confident of victory in epic Ainabkoi MP battle Friday³⁴. Such stories give hope to the young people of Kenya and inspire young girls to feel equally confident about pursuing their own political aspirations.

Stories further talked about the challenges faced by women in politics and the need for greater representation. Although there has been an increase in the number of women elected to political posts, women's representation remains small, at only 23.5%. Stories like 'Eight reasons why youths are not keen to take part in polls'³⁵, highlight the structural, systemic, and policy problems that continue to affect and discourage youth participation in elections. This thought is further perpetuated in the headline 'Observers blame low turn on youth's failure to participate in polls'³⁶, which addresses voter apathy amongst the youth, especially young women voters. It is clear in the news story titled Young voters' dilemma: they hate ethnic politics but feel trapped in it³⁷ that the youth are apprehensive about participating in traditional election campaigns that exhibit implicit ethnic hostilities that spread fears about the public's security.

The feeling that the youth feel ignored in policymaking and duped about being appointed to government positions is seen in the headline 'Next government must not short-change youth on state appointments'³⁸. Young female politicians, just like their male counterparts, felt manipulated by believing the empty promises made by politicians about being short-changed by sacrificing their pursuit of electoral positions.

STORIES WITH A HUMAN FACE



The findings indicated that 97% of the stories had a human face because they told the stories of various female political aspirants discussing their experiences and challenges while participating in the upcoming General Election in Kenya. The key themes in the stories highlighted their backgrounds, experiences, and aspirations as they entered the world of politics as seen in the headline 'Sadia Hussein: My stand on FGM cost me political post'³⁹, which highlights how Sadia's principled stance on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and the potential sacrifices influenced her results in the election. Another story titled 'Isiolo woman rep aspirant pledges intense war on drug abuse'⁴⁰ also shared a strong position against drug abuse in her county, a position that may have influenced her election results.

Other issues highlighted were the challenges the young politicians stood for, such as water provision, health coverage, and support for people with disabilities. The youth were presented as the voices of the alternative leadership spearheading change in solving political problems and ushering in the fifth liberation. The news story titled Youth have the responsibility to ensure their votes count⁴¹ highlights the need for young women in politics to be vigilant during the vote-counting process. This will help in fulfilling the vision of the Kenya National Youth Policy 2019, where the youth have an equal opportunity as other citizens to realise their full potential through productively participating in economic, social, political, cultural, and religious engagement.

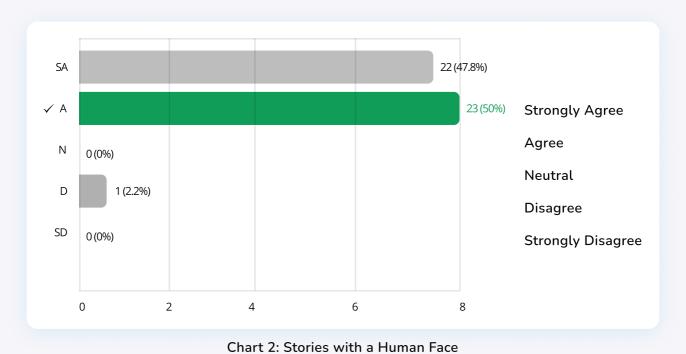


Chart 2. Stories with a riuman race

RESOURCES:

- 🍪 Kimutai, Vitalis. "Young, ambitious women causing ripples in Bomet politics." Daily Nation, 2 Apr. 2022.
- 🗱 Kamau Maichuhie."Three women braving the tides in State House race." Daily Nation, 1 Apr. 2022.

HIGHLIGHTS OF INSPIRATIONAL STORIES FOR YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS FACE

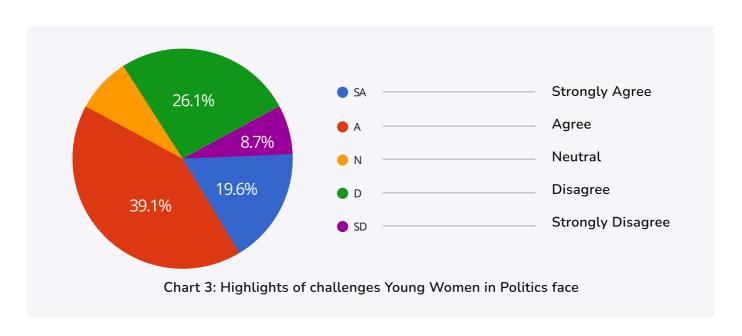


59% of the stories expounded on the plight of young women politicians that aimed at encouraging them to seek elective positions in Kenya. An illustration of this is seen in the fair and uplifting headline Tomorrow starts with a girl: Empowering the next generation of female leaders⁴², which aims at encouraging young women to seek elective positions in Kenya. The headline 'Rights lobby urges Kwale women to seek elective seats⁴³, further demonstrates appeals made to voters to support young women politicians in pursuing leadership roles. Finally, in taking a proactive stance, the headline 'As a young woman, I quit complaining and want to be considered among the great⁴⁴ offers encouragement to many young girls aiming to vie for political seats in Kenya. The findings indicated that youth, and especially young women, were largely neglected in ascending to national political spaces and needed to fight for leadership positions to participate in this space.

Young women politicians face ethnic-based discrimination as highlighted in the headline Young voters' dilemma: they hate ethnic politics but feel trapped in it as seen in the story⁴⁵, which indicates the fact that they detest ethnic and divisive politics.

They also feel that they are denied opportunities to be on the national decision-making tables where they can participate in developing youth-friendly policies and instill integrity in public service delivery.

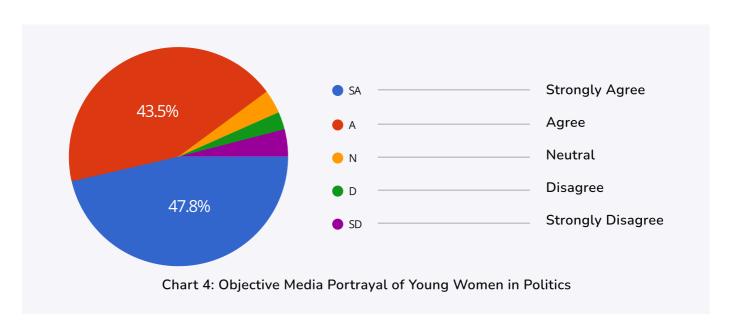
Political parties were urged to give opportunities to young politicians in the story 'It's time parties plugged youths into leadership⁴⁶, which suggests that political parties should actively involve young individuals in leadership positions. Efforts of political parties that had affirmative action for women were especially well appreciated in stories such as 'Green Party Waives Nomination Fees for Women Aspirants⁴⁷.



OBJECTIVE MEDIA PORTRAYAL OF YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS



91% of the stories were objective as they presented perspectives of different female political aspirants and their experiences with insights from various sources. The journalists used a positive and supportive tone that was void of negative comments or bias toward any political agenda as indicated in the following headline 'Female aspirants seek support to boost campaigns⁴⁸, while the headline 'Back young women politicians⁴⁹ pledges to support women aspirants during elections. The news story titled 'How young female aspirants fared in the elections⁵⁰ is an indicator that the media paid special attention to the plight of young women in politics.



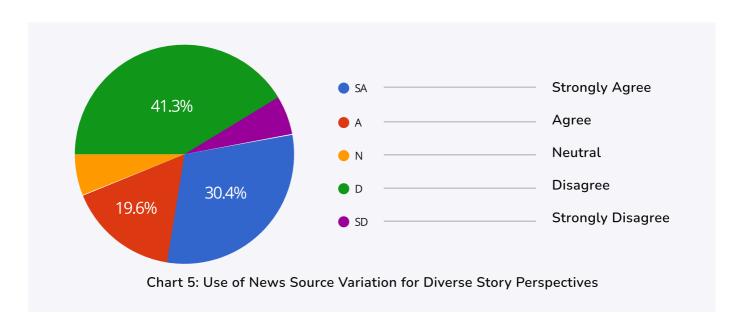
The stories focused on how the increase of young women in politics can influence policy, legislation, budgeting, and involvement of persons living with disabilities. By giving a comprehensive and balanced view of the political landscape, the stories indicated an improved political space that opened the window for as many women and youth to have their voices heard in the political arena. This is seen in the headlines Young, ambitious women causing ripples in Bomet politics' and '20 aspirants in race to succeed Bomet woman rep⁶¹ which tell of an inspirational story of several women who vied for elections.

USE OF NEWS SOURCE VARIATION FOR DIVERSE STORY PERSPECTIVES

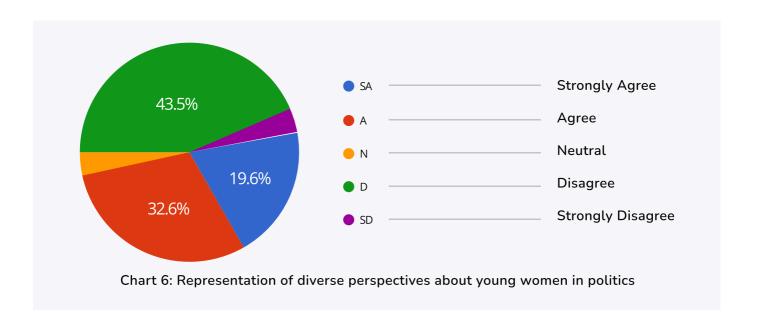


50% of the stories had one source, which may be indicative of the fact that half the stories had different perspectives from various to establish facts to report in the story. There was evidence of the use of statistics from various documents from organisations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), The National Gender and Equality Commission, Youth Alive Kenya; Kenyan Youth Policy of 2019, International Republican Institute, Kenya Youth Manifesto 2022, Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), The Institute of Education in Democracy and National Census reports.

There were also quotations from public servants, governance experts, political analysts, and politicians. From these documents, the stories derived relevant statistics and data to collate youth opinions about the status of young people who are considered minorities in assessing elective and nominative leadership positions at the county and national levels.



The findings indicate that 52% of the stories consisted of different perspectives about women in politics from individuals and organisations working to empower women, political analysts, aspirants, and experts. Using different perspectives explained the challenges that young women in politics face during the different stages of their political journey. For example, the news story titled 'Eva Njeri: I'm the biblical David in Mathioya MP race Monday' demonstrates her determination in overcoming odds as an underdog who challenges a seasoned politician. The story 'Linet Chepkorir clinches Bomet Woman Rep seat in landslide victory' celebrates the remarkable success of Linet Chepkorir in politics and, 'Triumphant Toto says she used Ksh. 100K in campaigns' demonstrates that despite the small amount of money that Toto spent, she emerged successful in the polls.

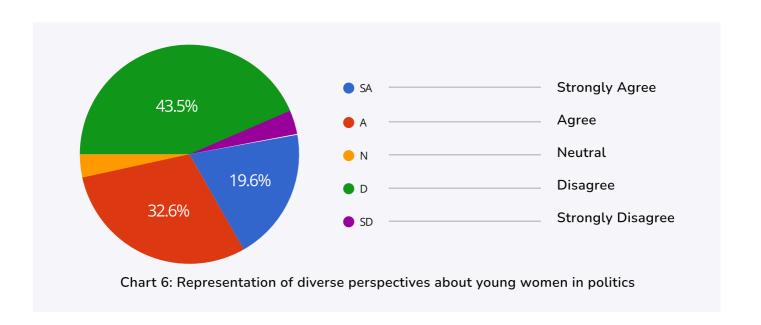


Other stories address youth that are inclusive of young women. These stories address improved political participation for young women. Participation in politics gives the youth an equal opportunity for economic, social, political, cultural, and religious engagements in stories that had the following headlines: *The Kenya Youth Manifesto 2022 vision'*; *Young women missing amid praises for progressive election'*; *Voter apathy: Elections are the problem, not youths'*; *Youth must view politics as an investment; Youth must resist manipulation in this year's election' and 'Another Vijana tugutuke ni time yetu' campaign needed'*.

THE PORTRAYAL OF YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS



48% of the stories used specific words or descriptions that portrayed a negative or positive image of a particular person, party, or group in discussing various aspects of the young women's plight to pursue political leadership. The young leaders were urged to be proactive in presenting solutions to problems they face. This included participating in creating a clear vision for themselves as elite actors in political parties. This can be seen in the stories: *Youth must begin to view politics as an investment'* and *Sermon to young and the young in spirit: Be voices of Kenya'* As the youth in these parties, they should seek to curb drive ethnic hostilities and fears of politically motivated violence within the parties as highlighted in the headlines *'Green party calls on youth to sanitise, shun divisive politics' and Young voters' dilemma: they hate ethnic politics but feel trapped in it'*.

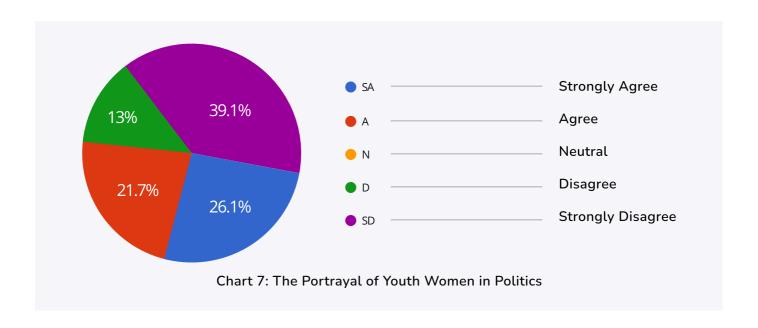


Other stories address youth that are inclusive of young women. These stories address improved political participation for young women. Participation in politics gives the youth an equal opportunity for economic, social, political, cultural, and religious engagements in stories that had the following headlines: *The Kenya Youth Manifesto 2022 vision'*; *Young women missing amid praises for progressive election'*; *Voter apathy: Elections are the problem, not youths'*; *Youth must view politics as an investment; Youth must resist manipulation in this year's election' and 'Another Vijana tugutuke ni time yetu' campaign needed'*.

THE PORTRAYAL OF YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS



48% of the stories used specific words or descriptions that portrayed a negative or positive image of a particular person, party, or group in discussing various aspects of the young women's plight to pursue political leadership. The young leaders were urged to be proactive in presenting solutions to problems they face. This included participating in creating a clear vision for themselves as elite actors in political parties. This can be seen in the stories: *Youth must begin to view politics as an investment'* and *Sermon to young and the young in spirit: Be voices of Kenya'* As the youth in these parties, they should seek to curb drive ethnic hostilities and fears of politically motivated violence within the parties as highlighted in the headlines *'Green party calls on youth to sanitise, shun divisive politics' and Young voters' dilemma: they hate ethnic politics but feel trapped in it'.*



Young politicians were accused of being stooges and foot soldiers for other politicians who are used for insulting other politicians and mobilise youthful voters to participate in politically instigated violence and they are asked to be cautious of this in the story *Youth must become wiser this election year otherwise their agenda will be skewed once again*. The youth was further criticised for not advocating the needs of their generation nor addressing the apathy to vote by the same group in stories such as: *Voter apathy: Elections are the problem, not youths*; *'Eight reasons why youths are not keen to take part in polls*; *'Observers blame low to turn on youth's failure to participate in polls' and 'Shunning handout politics benefits young aspirants'*.

THE SUMMARY OF THE MEDIA MONITORING SECTION



The media monitoring survey highlights the positive aspects and challenges young women face in Kenyan politics, which emphasised the need for objective reporting and greater representation in storytelling. Most of the stories about young women politicians followed journalistic dictums and were professionally written as they were factual, with few incidents of sensationalism. Most of the stories had a human face because they shared experiences and challenges female political aspirants faced during the election cycle. The stories were objective and presented perspectives from different female political aspirants from various sources, that included sources, government, international documentation, and research studies.

The stories focused on telling stories about the political journey of young women politicians by sharing their profiles; highlighting their contribution to the political arena and the challenges they face in pursuit of their political ambitions. Some stories spoke of the victory that some young women politicians had in defeating political bigwigs who have been influential for years. These stories emphasised the zeal with which young women fought for leadership positions and how they addressed challenges such as gender, ethnic, and age-based discrimination.

The stories highlighted challenges caused by the apathy of youth in participating in politics as voters and leaders, hence leading to their agenda being ignored in the decision-making spaces. Young politicians were portrayed as voices for change as they addressed issues like water provision, health coverage, and support for people with disabilities during the election campaigns. The stories highlighted how the increase in young women in politics could contribute to influencing policy, legislation, and public service delivery.



SECTION 2

Perceptions about Media Coverage of Young Women in Politics

PERCEPTIONS ABOUT MEDIA COVERAGE OF YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS



This section provides a thematic analysis of the key issues emerging from two virtual Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted with 15 young women politicians and political actors. The participants were from various parts of Kenya as sampled using the snowballing technique through networks in political parties, civil societies, and various women's movements. The findings of the media monitoring report informed the development of the protocol used during the FDGs. The recordings of the virtual FGDs administered on the Zoom platform were imported to Otter.ai for transcription.

FACTORS THAT DELAY THE DEBUT OF YOUNG WOMEN INTO POLITICAL LEADERSHIP



The participants in the FGDs attributed their delayed entry into political leadership to the older generation of politicians. They especially said the older women politicians did not mentor the young women in the field, which demonstrated their refusal to relinquish power as shared:



...YOU FIND THIS (PROCESS REFERRED TO AS) CONSENSUS, (is) what('s) disadvantaging female, young politicians." You find that when there is consensus (the party) wants (opponents) to agree (on) who (the older or younger lady) is going to run with the party ticket (most of the time). **(FGD 1 Respondent 1)**



The participants shared that ageism is often used to drive 'consensus' that persuades or even intimidates young women politicians to relinquish the party ticket to older women politicians. This strategy eliminated opportunities for these women to participate and fight for leadership positions, which comes along with the visibility associated with being on decision-making tables. This thought is further accentuated below:



...I CAN SAY THAT CONSENSUS

has been very harmful to (young) women.... The older women in politics (are considered) more experienced than the younger women (and they) tend to be given more priority. (FDG 1 Respondent 2)



This quote further highlights the insinuation that older women politicians conspired with senior male party officials to use 'consensus building' to ask the young women politicians to step down from leadership positions in their favour. Young women politicians were cajoled to step down as they were told that they were leaders of tomorrow ('viongozi wa kesho') and this narrative led to denying them access to party nomination and awards of certificates that would allow them to participate in running for elective positions:



... (THE YOUNG WOMEN ARE GIVEN) THE SAME REASON that (they) still have a chance next time.... But having a chance next time does not make me capable of doing what I'm supposed to do at that particular point. So, you end up feeling like (in) the next five years, my motivation (to lead) will end or I will shift my (ambition) because of the frustration that I got initially (in politics)." (FDG 2 Respondent 3)



This quote brings out the despair of young women politicians who feel that their drive and motivation to be leaders in the present day have been eclipsed. The politicians felt short-changed and given the resources and invested in a political career. They felt that because of this, they needed to pursue other careers to earn a living. They posited they would probably not be interested in a political career in the next five years when they will have supposedly matured as women as stated below:



.... SO, IT LEAVES US WITH NO OPTION but to just bow like yeah, I'm told that you will not have these tickets now. You will have after five years when you attain a certain age or maybe when they see that now you are a grown woman... (FDG 1 Respondent 3)



This quote demonstrates that ageism is used as a tool to demerit young women in politics as leaders, creating the notion that young women do not have leadership qualities. It is therefore unfortunate that when young women politicians are denied opportunities to vie for political positions, they lose the public and media visibility that is indispensable for the success of any politician. Literature highlights that the news erases two women as sources of stories⁵². This kind of visibility is not automatic for all women in politics, who suffer from editorial blacklisting⁵³.

This also indicates that political parties do not have youth-friendly policies that give the youth, and other minorities, safe spaces to vie for political leadership. Further frustration and exhaustion faced by young women in politics were shrouded in promises articulated in party manifestos that never bore fruit. The young women in politics shared that during every campaign cycle, they were side-lined, as they were denied opportunities to vie for political positions. They were further duped into believing that they would get nominative seats or government appointments, which never materialised:



...AND I WAS TOLD TO (STEP) DOWN, to let go of the seat in favour of the MP and I was told after that I'd be given the nomination to the Nairobi County. Then immediately after I left the seat, the same person who left the seat was interviewed and made sure I didn't get the nomination... (FGD 2 Respondent 2)



Similar sentiments were shared in the quote below:



WHAT AFFECTS WOMEN IS JUST ACROSS THE BOARD. On (the issue of) consensus, there is this issue of women being looked at as topups because of this two-thirds gender rule. So, instead of giving you a chance to run... instead of giving you a ticket... they sit you down and tell you support the candidate of choice and can nominate you to meet the two-thirds gender rule... (FGD 1 Respondent 4)



These quotes demonstrate the feeling that the young woman politician felt side-lined and blindsided. Not only have their dreams been taken away, but their aspirations for the future are thrown into disarray. They are further cajoled into supporting their competitors, hoping they will be nominated.

CHALLENGES FACED BY YOUNG WOMEN PURSUING POLITICAL POSITIONS



CULTURAL AND GENDER STIGMA THAT DEFINE THE IDENTITY OF YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS

The Young women in politics shared highlights of other forms of discrimination that made it difficult to break into mainstream politics. First, the women spoke about how traditional election campaigns exhibited implicit and explicit hostilities that may lead to violence, spread fears, and hamper their security as shared:



...PEOPLE THEY PREY ON YOUR WEAKNESSES, especially you being a woman, (especially) being a woman in an African country (where) women are the minority. You're going to be abused based on your sexuality. If you have a family, you are attacked based on the fact that you are a woman who should be at home cooking. They target you mostly because of your sex. And then now, there is the fact that you are a new person. So, it's like it's like a losing battle in a way...'(FGD 2 respondent 9)



These patterns are seen in how the media reports on young women and women in politics. This quote speaks to gender and cultural-related discrimination that young women in politics faced in their plight for leadership in the political spaces.

Journalism as a profession is masculinised within the socially organised framework. This framework assigns men economic and political roles while it assigns women domesticated and reproductive roles. Stories about the entry of young women into politics are likely to be mapped to reinforce structural, institutional, and cultural barriers54.

These quotes demonstrate the feeling that the young woman politician felt side-lined and blindsided. Not only have their dreams been taken away, but their aspirations for the future are thrown into disarray. They are further cajoled into supporting their competitors, hoping they will be nominated.

EFFECTS OF LOW PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH IN POLITICS.



The young women in politics attributed their slow entry to politics to the effects of low participation of the youth in political and civic engagement. Besides this, the youth have a sense of entitlement based on the constitutional right to political leadership as minorities in the Constitution of Kenya (2010). This is found in Chapter 4: Bill of Rights in Part 3 and Article 55[1]. Respondents emphasised the need for young women politicians and the youth in politics to stop blaming the older generations for blocking their paths to leadership. They were advised to instead sacrifice their comfort, and inject their energy and fresh ideas into the poorly performing governance system that exists through vibrant participation and determination, as expressed below:



(YOU) MIGHT BE POPULAR but you still have to know people in that party. So, for me, I need to emphasise that female politicians need to identify with parties. (We need) to know the political party's politics before even joining daily politics, I think... (FGD 1 Respondent 3)



This quote emphasises the fact that just being a part of constitutional minorities as prescribed by the constitution does not exempt them from learning how political parties work for one to get into leadership spaces:



...ONE BECAUSE SOME PEOPLE ARE making decisions. That is the top party organs that are making those decisions. And you find that in those third-party (spaces), unfortunately, the youth do not fit in those committees. Like at the NEC, you will not find young people. At the county level also, you will not find the youth at the top management of party affairs. So, our interest as youth, you will find that they are not being championed right from those who are decision makers...(FGD 1 Respondent 3)



This quote emphasises the lack of adequate structures for effective youth participation in the various sectors of development in Kenya. By gaining entry to the decision-making spaces in political parties, the youth can incorporate youth-related issues in the formulation of national development policies. Women, young and old, do not find a voice in the political party because they are not part of the leadership in the political parties County Election Committee (CEC) and National Election Committee (NEC). However, if they proactively engage in the process of navigating political spaces, they are likely to find points of entry to the decision-making tables.

VOTER APATHY OF THE YOUTH



The voter apathy trend amongst the youth is supported by statistics that show that 39.84% of the registered voters, which translates to 8.8 million, were youths aged between 18 and 34. This was an overall drop in youth registered as voters declined by 5.7%. The number of female youth voters declined by 7.75% and males by 2.89%/ compared to those in 201756. The lack of participation of the youth, which is a critical section of the Kenyan public, is detrimental to the progression of the youth into leadership. Again, a sense of entitlement based on the constitutional right to political leadership as minorities may contribute to the low engagement of the youth in politics, as shared below:



AND LASTLY, WHAT I LIKE TO SAY IS THIS BEING A YOUNG PERSON, or being a female is not a ticket for anyone to get elected or even to get nominated. What will define us as young people especially as young women is the hard work that we put into the party politics, either at the grassroots level (kwa ground) or even (like in) anything that you want to work with, you must work hard for it. We are not going to be given this political party tickets to run or to vie for any elective position just because we are women and because we are youth. We must show that we are capable, and we can do it... (FGD)

1 Respondent 3)



This quote demonstrates that despite efforts to address the non-participation of the youth in electoral processes through campaigns like "Vijana Tugutuke ni Time Yetu Campaign" (Youth must be Awaken because it is our time to campaign) that happened way back in 2007. This campaign sensitised the youth, not the need to be active in the political scene to contribute to the country's democratic, governance, and electoral processes⁵⁷. The youth need to register as voters and demonstrate their dismay at what is going on in the political realm by electing their preferred leaders. It is also important for curriculum developers to create a civic, voter, and political education programme to be taught from primary school to tertiary institutions. This helps to keep young children aware of their civil and political rights in Kenya.

FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS DURING POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS



It was of concern that youth leaders from wealthy backgrounds could buy votes. This is despite having integrity issues with their academic papers that render them ineligible to hold leadership positions. It is disheartening for the youth. One impediment to being elected is the need for strong financial support for young women as they lack finances as shared:

These quotes demonstrate the feeling that the young woman politician felt side-lined and blindsided. Not only have their dreams been taken away, but their aspirations for the future are thrown into disarray. They are further cajoled into supporting their competitors, hoping they will be nominated.



...REMEMBER, WE AS YOUNG WOMEN, don't have financial muscles. We don't have those cars we call sunroofs. So, nobody recognises you if you're not a celeb... (FGD 2 Respondent 5)





THE FINANCES WHICH HAVE BEEN GREATLY TALKED ABOUT by some members in their sentiments here. We are just at the beginning stages of making some little money so that we can get into (the political field). (This is) because of our politics today, if you don't have capital... if you don't have money then you are screwed. You cannot achieve your dreams. Yeah, it's next to impossible. So, it's a big challenge which I think, I don't know how we can go about it, but it's one of the biggest challenges that women... young people like me, who are in politics are facing. (FGD 1 Respondent 7)



These quotes indicate the exorbitant financial burden of participating in elections in Kenya. As an aspirant, there is a need to exhibit opulence to be trusted with leadership. It is even worse if one is vying as an independent candidate with no support from a renowned political party.

They became independent candidates as they were teased out of the popular political parties through consensus. The young women politicians incurred financial losses and lost the support and goodwill of their supporters. The financial losses after failure to win political positions led to mental health and trauma issues faced by young women in politics. Some of them dropped out of the political race because of physical and emotional bullying and mental abuse as stated:



...I DROPPED OUT ACTUALLY BECAUSE OF BULLYING as it has affected my health, mentally and emotionally. There's a lot of emotional and mental abuse. Like I think there's a lady who said that, among the many other problems. I think going forward, I might be a bit more able to deal with it. But at the time, it got a bit overwhelming for me, considering I have a family and I am also working full time. So, I'm going to work I am vying and I'm coming home to take care of my family. And I come home with all that unnecessary baggage... (FGD 2 Respondent 9)



The financial loss sustained during elections had a great negative impact on their lives. Most of the young women politicians fell into debt and could not sustain their lives. They fell into depression because of the shame of losing the elections, and abandonment by family and spouses. It is these unfortunate incidences that led to stories that the media shared and harmed their reputation.

FACTORS THAT INFORM MEDIA PORTRAYALS OF YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS



MEDIA MISREPRESENTATION OF YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS

The media reports women with bias as they do not present themselves as leaders nor highlight what they, as leaders, do for society. The media does not give women aspirants the same airtime as men. Media should research women politicians and give credit for what they do in the community. The media should make it easy for recognition at the national and community level. The media instead covers women only if the stories reflect on them negatively, as shared:

The media reports women with bias as they do not present themselves as leaders nor highlight what they, as leaders, do for society. The media does not give women aspirants the same airtime as men. Media should research women politicians and give credit for what they do in the community. The media should make it easy for recognition at the national and community level. The media instead covers women only if the stories reflect on them negatively, as shared:



...DONT THINK I DON'T SEE ANY REASON as to why the media can only cover men but not cover... young women....and it's not only young women, women all over. We in politics receive little visibility in terms of media. You'll find that the media will always want to go to men. And when they cover a female politician is when maybe she has done something wrong or something that does not augur well with men... (FGD 2 Respondent 3)



This quote affirms the assertion that the media extensively uses the tabloid approach to write stories about young women. By adopting this approach, the achievements of women leaders are undermined through sensationalised sexual misconduct or controversial issues. In contrast, the broadsheet approach is not used when reporting stories about men. This approach uses sober tones, longer texts, less prominent headlines, and fewer pictures⁵⁸. Featuring young women politicians using the former approach trivialises their achievements, leaving out their position about generic issues that affect women. The stories also do not focus on their personal political journey and achievements, which automatically translates to weakening women's voices in the political space.

Further, young women aspirants shared they needed to buy media attention, which they lost if their opponents could buy off the media to stop covering their events. They felt that the media also covered women politicians who were from wealthy families and had privilege because of their heritage as stated:



(JOURNALISTS WILL CALL YOU)... That is when they are looking for money. (Media personnel) would run after people who they highlight (knowing) that at the end of it, they are going to get a token or something like that...



This quote echoes the sentiments that most women politicians who feature in news stories are likely to be from well-to-do families. This is because they can afford to buy media attention or ride on family relations and personal privilege⁵⁹. It insinuates that women of little or no merit thrive in politics because of their privileges and not because they have demonstrated leadership qualities. Therefore, young women who have tried to build a political career will not have a competitive advantage if they lack the resources to brand themselves. This is unlike those who have prominent family and financial privilege to buy and warrant media attention as shared:



...WHAT IS THE MEDIA ADVOCATING FOR? Now, if they will change the narrative and stop focusing on these big groups, these famous people. Because all they do is they capture the popularity. They don't capture so much, of the content (about upcoming women politicians). **(FGD 2 Respondent 9)**



The media reports women with bias as they do not present themselves as leaders nor highlight what they, as leaders, do for society. The media does not give women aspirants the same airtime as men. Media should research women politicians and give credit for what they do in the community. The media should make it easy for recognition at the national and community level. The media instead covers women only if the stories reflect on them negatively, as shared:



...DON'T THINK I DON'T SEE ANY REASON as to why the media can only cover men but not cover... young women....and it's not only young women, women all over. We in politics receive little visibility in terms of media. You'll find that the media will always want to go to men. And when they cover a female politician is when maybe she has done something wrong or something that does not augur well with men... (FGD 2 Respondent 3)



RESOURCES:

- Dan, Viorela, and Aurora lorgoveanu. 2013. "Still on the Beaten Path: How Gender Impacted the Coverage of
- Male and Female Romanian Candidates for European Office." International Journal of Press/Politics 18 (2): 208–233.
- Government of Kenya (GoK) (2010). The Constitution of Kenya 2010. Nairobi: Government Printer.
- Wako-Ojiwa Nerima (2022) The youth really took part in the 2022 elections retrieved from https://nation.africa/kenya/blogs-opinion/blogs/the-youth-really-took-part-in-the-2022-elections-4049912

This quote affirms the assertion that the media extensively uses the tabloid approach to write stories about young women. By adopting this approach, the achievements of women leaders are undermined through sensationalised sexual misconduct or controversial issues. In contrast, the broadsheet approach is not used when reporting stories about men. This approach uses sober tones, longer texts, less prominent headlines, and fewer pictures[1]. Featuring young women politicians using the former approach trivialises their achievements, leaving out their position about generic issues that affect women. The stories also do not focus on their personal political journey and achievements, which automatically translates to weakening women's voices in the political space.

Further, young women aspirants shared they needed to buy media attention, which they lost if their opponents could buy off the media to stop covering their events. They felt that the media also covered women politicians who were from wealthy families and had privilege because of their heritage as stated:



(JOURNALISTS WILL CALL YOU)... That is when they are looking for money. (Media personnel) would run after people who they highlight (knowing) that at the end of it, they are going to get a token or something like that...



This quote echoes the sentiments that most women politicians who feature in news stories are likely to be from well-to-do families. This is because they can afford to buy media attention or ride on family relations and personal privilege[1]. It insinuates that women of little or no merit thrive in politics because of their privileges and not because they have demonstrated leadership qualities. Therefore, young women who have tried to build a political career will not have a competitive advantage if they lack the resources to brand themselves. This is unlike those who have prominent family and financial privilege to buy and warrant media attention as shared:

In this quote, the respondent expresses dissatisfaction with the media's preference for famous women politicians. It suggests that this focus overshadows the work and potential of upcoming female politicians. The media's tendency to prioritise popularity over substance faces criticism over the need for shifting the news focus and narrative to emphasise substance. According to the FGD respondents, a shift in the media's approach is necessary. They argue that lesser-known women politicians should receive more attention and visibility.

This recommendation stems from the acknowledgment of the media's significant role in shaping public perception and influencing political discourse. The selection criteria used by the media to cover young women in politics are further questioned in the following contribution:



...YOU'LL FIND THE MEDIA HIGHLIGHTING ALL THE WOMEN, so and so. I don't know why. Maybe because she comes from a well-to-do family and, they (journalists) know that there is money there... (FGD 2 Respondent 5)



This quote underscores the suspicion of the editorial decisions made on the selection of women politicians to cover. In their opinion, media coverage is influenced by other factors besides political abilities or achievements, such as a woman politician's family background and wealth. This implies that the media may focus on individuals from privileged backgrounds, possibly because of perceived financial advantages or connections.

The young women talked about the mental health and traumas that came about with their engagement in the political world. Some of them dropped out of the political race because of sexism, and physical, emotional, and mental abuse as cited:



...IF THEY (THE MEDIA) WERE TO FOCUS MORE ON UPCOMING AND THEIR VISION and reduce so much obsession with these big, famous people, then maybe we have a chance of even going (on with elections) because I dropped out actually because bullying affected my health, mentally and emotionally. There's a lot of emotional and mental abuse." (FGD 2 Respondent 9)



The pain from being mishandled as a woman politician is further shared in the quote below:



...WHAT ABOUT ME, especially since I'm talking on behalf of other women and upcoming women who have been molested and harassed. Let me say, for lack of better words, during those times, I would have liked the media (to) concentrate on the (stories) of upcoming (young women in politics)



SEXISM AND WOMEN IN POLITICS



Young women politicians were treated with suspicion about their motives for joining the political arena, which is usually associated with promiscuous intent. Women in politics face sexual harassment and advances as bait to get party tickets. If they refuse to cooperate, they are likely to be denied the ticket as cited below:



LIKE SERIOUSLY WE ARE NOT BEING RESPECTED mostly because we are seen as women who have some fishy things up on our sleeves... we (become) leaders because we have the ability to become leaders... (FGD 1 Respondent 8)



The young women leaders felt they were often perceived negatively or with suspicion. This could be linked to stereotypes that state that women might be less trustworthy or capable of leading compared to their male counterparts.

The young women feel they are not being respected. They attributed this to existing societal gender-based bias or prejudice. The young women further felt that the media played the bystander role in propagating traditional gender roles and the ideals of political gatekeepers. This justifies the use of media sexism as a lens to portray young women in politics as subjects and not as sources of stories. Media sexism perpetuates stereotypical narratives about women in society⁶⁰. This gravely undermines the status of young women in politics and hampers their status and upward mobility in society.

The young women in politics further highlighted sexual harassment as a conduit to gender discrimination in politics. The politicians are often pressured or subjected to sexual exploitation or harassment in exchange for political opportunities to obtain party tickets or nominations as shared:



... (WHEN A YOUNG LADY) IS TRYING TO GET A POLITICAL SEAT, (they) are told (that) they'll have to use their bodies so that they get party tickets or nominations.... We (young women) are not going to be given political party tickets to run or (opt) to run for any elective position. (FGD 1 Respondent 6)



This quote explains the degrading proposition that young women politicians face in sexual advances that require them to use their bodies to secure political opportunities. Young women politicians who join the political arena are treated with suspicion because it is believed their motivation and intent for joining the political parties is promiscuous.

These stereotypes explain why women in politics often face sexual harassment and unwanted advances as bait to get party tickets that are dangled to them as a benefit should they cooperate. However, there is also determination from young women politicians to challenge and reshape this narrative by advocating for merit-based selection and ending gender exploitation in the political sphere.

SUMMARY OF PERCEPTIONS OF MEDIA COVERAGE FROM YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS



In summary, the FGD findings shed light on the significant challenges young women in Kenyan politics face, including ageism, discrimination, financial constraints, mental health issues, and gender-based bias. These discussions aimed to highlight the need for greater support and inclusivity for young women in political leadership roles. The respondents attributed their delayed entry into political leadership to older generation politicians through ageism. The "consensus" tactic was used to persuade young women politicians to step aside in favour of older women who were reluctant to relinquish power to them.

Participants felt that young people, including young women, were not adequately represented nor mentored to join political party leadership. This contributed to little or no representation at the decision-making table and their interests were barely addressed. Besides not having influence and little support at the political party level, the young women in politics had to vie as independent candidates or join smaller political parties to get tickets. This reduced their chances of being elected and nominated for political positions.

The young women also had financial restraints that led to challenges such as not effectively paying for electoral processes and services of agents for media attention. So, despite their ability and qualifications to lead, those who could buy their way through the political processes got a chance to be leaders. The young women expressed concerns about media bias favouring men and women from wealthy backgrounds. They shared they would get coverage if they were involved in negative events and when the media focused on their weaknesses. The young women politicians talked about mental health challenges, emotional bullying, and trauma experienced in politics. They shared about how many of them fell into depression; faced personal attacks; and were abandoned by friends and family after losing the elections.

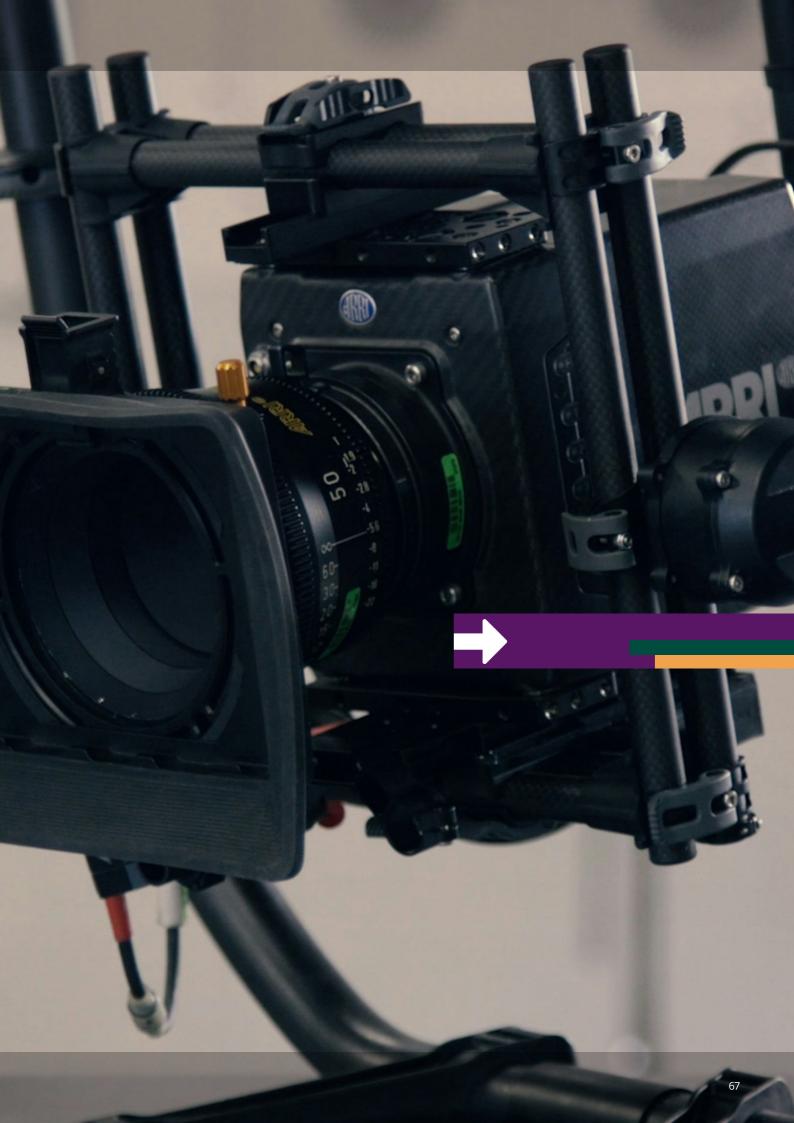
REPORTING YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS DURING THE ELECTIONEERING PERIOD



This section reports the findings from an online survey that was shared with the FGD participants on their views about issues that need coverage during the election cycle. The survey focused on issues raised from the literature that should guide reporting about young women politicians as aligned to the election cycle.

RESOURCES:

Haraldsson, Amanda & Wängnerud, Lena. (2018). The effect of media sexism on women's political ambition: evidence from a worldwide study. Feminist Media Studies. 19. 1-17. 10.1080/14680777.2018.1468797



MEDIA COVERAGE

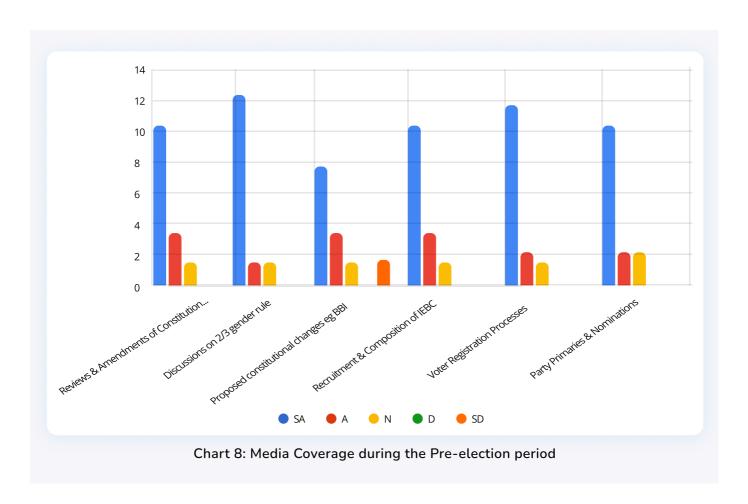
Reporting Young VVomen in Politics During The Electioneering Period

This section reports the findings from an online survey that was shared with the FGD participants on their views about issues that need coverage during the election cycle. The survey focused on issues raised from the literature that should guide reporting about young women politicians as aligned to the election cycle.

MEDIA COVERAGE OF YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS DURING THE PRE-ELECTION PERIOD



Duringthe pre-election period, young women in politics mentioned that stories incertain thematic areas were important to share, such as amendments to the Constitution related to the two-thirds gender agenda - this was proposed by 92% of survey respondents as needing coverage. The same percentage of the young womenpoliticians believed that the media needs to pay attention to the recruitment of the IEBC officials to analyse how the choices affect the outcome of theelection.



The young women politicians felt that the integrity of the voter registration process was a key story. 86% of the young women politicians were supportive of telling stories about proposed changes in constitutional, party primaries, and nomination changes. Other stories that needed coverage included malpractices conducted during the election period, security issues, financial restraints in affording party agents, intimidation, and discrimination during nominations.

MEDIA COVERAGE OF YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS DURING THE ELECTION PERIOD

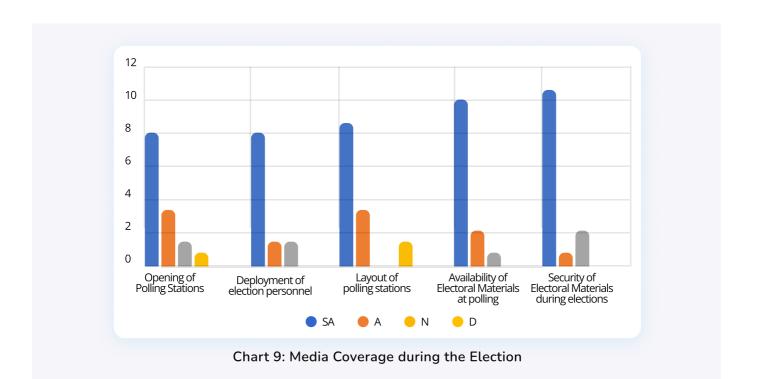


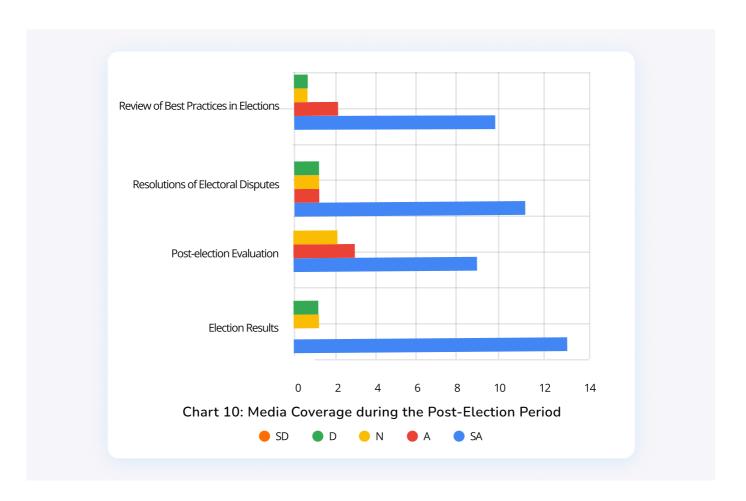
During elections, 92% of the respondents said stories about the layout of polling stations and the availability of Electoral Materials at polling were important. 86% said the opening of Polling Stations and the security of Electoral Materials during elections were vital. 79% thought stories about the deployment of election personnel were necessary during the election period. Other areas that need coverage were malpractices during the election period, a lack of finances to engage sufficient agents, insecurity, corruption, and intimidation during elections.

MEDIA COVERAGE OF YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS DURING THE POST-ELECTION PERIOD



During the post-election period, 92% of the young women in politics recommended stories that evaluated the election and how disputes about the election were handled. 86% of the 15 women agreed stories should be about the election results and best practices in the handling of elections. Other areas of coverage included the mental issues that affected aspirants and the effects of politics on their personal, social, and emotional well-being. A critique of the support women got and the financial setbacks after the elections was explored.





THE SUMMARY OF REPORTING YOUNG WOMEN DURING THE ELECTIONEERING PERIOD

The survey findings suggest the preferred topics that young women in politics raised important issues they faced throughout the election cycle, namely: the Pre-Election, The Election, and the Post-Election phases. Various elements of the electoral process and its consequences were examined in the findings. The respondents felt that in the Pre-Election Period, the media should focus on telling analytical stories about any policy, legislative, voter registration, or political changes that will affect the outcome of an election. This is especially relevant if these changes carry implications that could influence election outcomes for young women politicians.

During the election period, the respondents expressed the need for media coverage on the layout of polling stations; the availability of electoral materials; the timely opening of polling stations; and the sanctity of security measures during elections. These strategies usually ensure integrity in handling electoral materials and in protecting the lives of women politicians. The media needs to pay attention to the deployment of election personnel and highlight election malpractices, insecurity, and the hefty cost of party agents. It should also tell stories about corruption and intimidation during the election.

In the post-election phase, respondents recommended the media tell stories that evaluate the election process and examine how election disputes were handled. The stories should also focus on election results; best practices in election management and mental health issues affecting aspirants. Stories should further address the impact of politics on the personal, social, and emotional well-being of young women who participated in elective politics.



Conclusion and Recommendations

This section highlights the challenges young women in politics face because of media reports that impact their visibility, brand, achievements, and experiences in the political ecosystems. It speaks to the objectives of the study that looks at the media portrayal of young women in politics; the role of visibility in profiling them; the role of social media in creating mainstream media attention and, finally, the nature of gendered reporting of these politicians.

THE EFFECT OF MEDIA PORTRAYAL ON THE VISIBILITY OF YOUNG WOMEN POLITICIANS IN KENYA



The study reveals that stories featuring young women politicians do not effectively highlight their profiles and achievements.

MINIMISING WOMEN'S ACHIEVEMENTS IN POLITICS



The desk review conducted for this study indicates that media coverage frequently minimises women's political accomplishments by focusing on broad women's issues rather than profiling their distinct political experiences and successes. These stories aim to highlight an improved political landscape that accommodates both women and youth, hoping to lead to an increased representation of women's voices in politics.

HIGHLIGHTING MARGINALISATION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES



It is vital that media coverage highlights the marginalisation confronting young women politicians by consistently underscoring this issue. This will portray their participation in civic responsibilities as an opportunity for youth to engage in an array of societal aspects of economic, social, political, cultural, and religious dimensions. Young women in politics must be educated on how to assess equal opportunities to influence policy, legislation, and budgeting at both the national and county levels. At present, many stories about young women politicians belittle their accomplishments by focusing on their physical appearance and occasionally including indirect references to their sexuality.

THE IMPACT OF THE TABLOID VS. BROADSHEET APPROACHES ON THE VISIBILITY OF YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS



The prevalence of using the tabloid approach to present stories about women politicians centres on sensationalised sexual misconduct or controversial issues. This contrasts with the broadsheet approach, typically employed for stories about men, that offers more comprehensive coverage using smaller headlines, fewer images, and lengthier texts. These editorial choices put young women in politics at a disadvantage because stories do not effectively spotlight their achievements and experiences to the public.

IMPORTANCE OF MEDIA VISIBILITY FOR YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS



CHALLENGES OF MEDIA VISIBILITY FOR WOMEN POLITICIANS

Media visibility is essential for political success in today's highly mediatised political climate. Despite being in the modern era, women still face a lack of media representation compared to men, commonly known as "editorial blacklisting." This means that women are often excluded as sources of news stories, which effectively erases their presence in the news.

MEDIA'S REINFORCEMENT OF GENDER STEREOTYPES



The media often acts as a bystander that reinforces traditional gender roles and aligns with the ideals of political gatekeepers. This media bias justifies the use of a sexist lens when portraying women politicians as both subjects and sources of stories. Media sexism contributes to the creation of stereotypical narratives that undermine women's social status and upward mobility.

This leads to unwarranted suspicion and accusations, particularly towards young women entering politics.

BARRIERS AND STEREOTYPES IMPACTING WOMEN IN POLITICS



Strategies like "consensus building" that encourage young women to relinquish their leadership ambitions to older women can hinder young women's progress in politics. This practice denies them the opportunity to participate, fight for leadership positions, and gain visibility at decision-making tables. Young women politicians may also face ethnic discrimination. The youth are often excluded from contributing to youth-friendly policies and promoting integrity in public service delivery. This makes young women in politics and the youth vulnerable to negative criticism and have lesser appeal to voters. Consequently, women are often compelled to delay their political careers and pursue alternative professions because of prevalent obstacles during the electoral cycle.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND PERSONAL BRANDING OF YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS



A robust social media presence is crucial for young women politicians as it attracts attention from legacy media. Media outlets pay attention to individuals who have a well-established digital presence in online spaces. The study's findings indicated that young women politicians know well that the media, as well as their opponents and voters, closely monitor the information they share on social media platforms. This information can be easily misinterpreted or misconstrued. This potentially leads to the damaging of politicians' reputations and exposing them to mental challenges arising from cyberbullying. There is a need for capacity building in online content creation to address the challenges of curating and creating content that speaks to young women's political ambitions; showcases personal achievements and addresses the community empowerment projects they are involved in.

MEDIA VISIBILITY OF YOUNG WOMEN POLITICIANS AND PUBLIC DISCOURSE IN KENYA



GENDER ROLES IN REPORTING OF YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS

Journalism adopts a masculine perspective within its socially structured framework that assigns men economic and political roles and relegates women to domestic and reproductive roles. Because of this, journalists construct their stories using "interpretative structures" that are deeply rooted in gender stereotypes. These stereotypes are easy to understand and newsworthy. They are, however, destructive because they often perpetuate pre-existing biases and inequalities.

SEXISM IN MEDIA COVERAGE



This assumption results in the production and reproduction of sexism in stories about women in politics. Stories follow the typical pattern that emphasises aspects of women, such as their physical appearances, clothing choices, emotional vulnerability, personal privileges, family relationships, competencies, positions, and their influence over policies that support women's issues.

EMPOWERING YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS



Young women involved in politics need to enhance their skills in media relations. Media logic assumes that women lack the skills in media relations to navigate media effectively. This education equips them with the knowledge of how the media operates and creates content. This will challenge the young women in politics to control the narratives about them in the public domain.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations outline actionable steps media organisations, political parties, civil society groups, and young female politicians themselves can take to challenge entrenched marginalisation and move toward more inclusive political spheres. The recommendations are practical actions within two major categories: Media Industry and Media Policy Reforms.

MEDIA INDUSTRY IMPLICATIONS:



MEDIA ADVOCACY FOR REPORTING YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS

Media advocacy is the use of any form of media that helps to promote an organisation's or an individual's objectives or goals as derived from their vision and mission. There is a need to map and engage young women in politics aged between 18 and 35 to include them in the list of persons of interest. The list of young women politicians could be obtained from groups like the Parliamentary Women's Caucus, Kenya Women in Politics Association, civil society organisations, parliamentary bodies, and political party networks focused on supporting young female leaders.

LOBBYING SPECIALISED REPORTING DESKS FOR YOUNG WOMEN POLITICIANS IN MEDIA HOUSES



The next step is lobbying the media to advocate specialised reporting of young women politicians through a gender desk that focuses on the electoral cycle. The establishment of a platform for young women politicians to discuss their projects and personal journeys as leaders will greatly impact the way voters perceive them, ensuring sustainable visibility and influence.

SENSITISATION OF JOURNALISTS ON STORIES THAT PROMOTE YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS



The key themes of stories to cover the political lives of young women should highlight their backgrounds, experiences, and aspirations as they enter the world of politics. Other issues that need media attention are the issues the young women politicians stand for. The stories should highlight how issues like water provision, health coverage, and support for people with disabilities have a direct impact on women's lives.

Stories should be told about how young women politicians provide alternative voices to solve political problems and how this relates to fulfilling the vision of the Kenya National Youth Policy 2019, Vision 2030, and Sustainable Development Goals.

This is a way for young women in politics to productively participate in economic, social, political, cultural, and religious engagement in the country.

MEDIA POLICY IMPLICATIONS



SENSITISATION OF JOURNALISTS ON SPECIALISED ELECTORAL REPORTING FOR YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS

Media coverage of young women politicians needs to be mapped on the electoral cycle to ensure that the politicians are on the radar of the media throughout their political life. The coverage of media needs to focus on cross-cutting issues that face the young women politicians such as malpractices during the election period; security issues; intimidation, and discrimination during nominations. Other issues of concern include the financial constraints that young women in politics face during the electioneering period. To align media reportage to the electoral cycle, the following approach has been proposed:

PRE-ELECTION MEDIA COVERAGE OF YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS



- Stories about any reviews and amendments of constitutional changes; legislative changes on electoral laws; party primaries and nominations should be reported to establish how these changes affect the women's ascension to power.

 An example of a story of interest is the implementation of the two-thirds gender rule, which is an affirmative strategy that ensures equal access to leadership for all genders.
- **2.** Carry out an integrity analysis about the selection and recruitment of the IEBC officials who are likely to affect the integrity of election outcomes for young women in politics.
- There need to be stories that focus on a critical analysis of the voter registrations to aggregate them using demographics that will guide the young women on the strategies to communicate with various voters.
 - There is a need to report any anomalies and misdemeanours such as sexual harassment, bribery, and any form of
- **4.** discrimination based on ageism, gender, or disability that will interfere with the ascension of young women into electoral or nominative positions.
- There is a need to create visibility for the personal brands of young women in politics. The stories should highlight the
- **4.** politicians' journey into politics; the projects they have done in the community and the challenges they face in their political careers.

MEDIA COVERAGE OF YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS DURING ELECTIONS



- 1. There needs to be monitoring of any changes in the floor plans of polling stations that can be altered to confuse voters on which queues to follow and sometimes, could alter the names required to vote at the polling centre.
- Lis key for the media to confirm and monitor the availability, distribution, and movement of electoral material during Election Day. This is where most corrupt dealings, such as stuffing ballot papers and stealing votes, occur.

There is a need to note when polling centres are open and when they close. Observations to monitor the security within

3. the polling stations and as the ballot boxes are moved to regional centres for final tallying and safekeeping are key. It is also important to tell stories about the adequate deployment of staff and observers during election day.

POST-ELECTION MEDIA COVERAGE OF YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS



The following issues need coverage during the post-election period:

- 1. Media coverage should highlight stories involving electoral disputes from legal proceedings both inside and outside the court system.
- 2. Stories need to focus on success stories of young women politicians who get elected or nominated for various seats. This will inspire other young women to aspire to be leaders.
- The media needs to tell stories of the mental health and trauma that young women in politics have faced during their quest to be elected or nominated into various leadership positions. These stories should focus on their personal, social, and emotional well-being. There needs to be a critique of the socio-psychological support systems that young women politicians have access to after elections and the financial setbacks after losing the elections.

References

- 1. Acker, E. v. "Media Representations of Women Politicians." Policy and Society, vol. 22, no. 1n.d.
 - Ahmed, A., Elversson, E., & Höglund, K. "The Struggle for Gender-Equal Representation: The 2022 Election in Kenya."
- **2.** Blogal Studies, 20 Dec. 2022, https://www.blogalstudies.com/post/the-struggle-for-gender-equal-representation-the-2022-election-in-kenya.
- 3. Atkinson, C. "An Analysis of the Role of Gender in Political News Media." SIT Graduate Institute/SIT Study Abroad, 9 Nov. 2021.
- **4.** Bastos, M. T. "Digital Journalism and Tabloid Journalism." The Routledge Companion to Digital Journalism Studies, edited by Franklin, B., Routledge, 2016.
- 5. BBC Correspondent: "Triumphant Toto says she used Ksh100K in campaigns." People Daily, 16 Aug. 2022, by BBC.
- **6.** Brian, George. "George Brian." People Daily, 22 Mar. 2022.
- 7. Chege, Njoki."Toto' epitomises girl power in a very cruel world." Daily Nation, 23 Apr. 2022.
- **8.** Chimbi, Joys. "Teresa Chebet confident of victory in epic Ainabkoi MP battle Friday." Daily Nation, 15 Jul. 2022.
 - Committee of experts on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership (MSI-MED). "MEDIA, ELECTIONS AND
- **9.** GENDER: Study on media coverage of elections with a specific focus on gender equality." Council of Europe, Strasbourg, France, 2018.
- 10. Echo Network Africa. A Gender Audit and Analysis of Kenya General Elections 2022. Nairobi: Echo Network Africa, 2023.
- **11.** Equality & Human Rights Commission. "Monitoring & Reporting: International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)." https://humanrightstracker.com/en/, 26 Oct. 2023.
- **12.** European Institute of Gender Equality. "Awareness-Raising Campaigns for the French-Speaking Community of Belgium 2011 Making Belgium aware of its media's gender imbalance." https://eige.europa.eu, 2011.
- 13. Gathara, Patrick. "Voter apathy: Elections are the problem, not youths." The Star, 7 Feb. 2022.
- **14.** Gender desk team. "The young and restless." Daily Nation, 1 Apr. 2022..
- **15.** Gichana, Agatha. "Taking stock: What female candidates bring to the table of politics." Daily Nation, 4 May 2022, by Agatha Gichana.
- **16.** Gilchrist, Narrelle, Amanda Edgell, and Sebastian Elischer. "Dilemma! Kenyan youth dislike ethnic politics but feel trapped in it." The Star, 25 Jul. 2022.
- **17.** Githu, Njau. "Eight reasons why youths are not keen to take part in polls." The Standard, 6 Jun. 2022.
- **18.** Gitu, Njau. "Youth lethargy in elections revealed in voters register." The Star, 6 Jul. 2022.
- 19. Godwin, Shem. "Youth must resist manipulation in this year's election." People Daily, 16 Feb. 2022.
- 20. Government of Kenya (GoK). The Constitution of Kenya 2010. Nairobi: Government Printer, 2010.

- **21.** Haraldssona, A., & Wängnerud, L. "The Effect of Media Sexism on Women's Political Ambition." Feminist Media Studies, 2018, pp. 525-541.
- **22.** Kamau Maichuhie. 'Three women braving the tides in State House race.' Daily Nation, 1 Apr. 2022.
 - Karen Ross, M. J. "The Media World Versus the Real World of Women and Political Representation: Questioning
- **23.** Differences and Struggling for Answers." Comparing Gender and Media Equality Across the Globe, edited by M. D.-P. Edström, Nordicom University of Gothenburg, 2020, pp. 233-276.
- 24. Khakaba, Kennedy. "Youth have responsibility to ensure their votes count." People Daily, 21 Apr. 2022.
- **25.** Kimani, Veronica. "Tomorrow starts with a girl: Empowering the next generation of female leaders." Daily Nation, 8 Mar. 2022, by Veronica Kimani.
- 26. Kimutai, Vitalis. "Young, ambitious women causing ripples in Bomet politics." Daily Nation, 2 Apr. 2022.
- 27. Kimutai, Vitalis."20 aspirants in race to succeed Bomet woman rep." Daily Nation, 13 Apr. 2022,
- 28. Kipkemoi, Felix. "Toto' floors eight to clinch Bomet woman rep seat." The Star, 12 Aug. 2022.
- 29. Lagat, Faith. "Linet Chepkorir clinches Bomet Woman Rep seat in landslide victory." People Daily, 12 Aug. 2022.
- **30.** Matere, Alex. "The Kenya Youth Manifesto 2022 vision." The Star, 7 Jun. 2022.
- Media Focus on Africa. "Kenya 2022 Elections: Finding the Gender Balance." https://mediafocusonafrica.org/, 11 Aug. 2021.
- Menya, Walter. "Rigathi Gachagua's wife protests change of prayer venue from Nyayo to Kasarani." Daily Nation, 14 Jul. 2020, by Walter Menya.
- 33. Muganda, Clay. "Bomet's Chepkorir Toto needs support, she is Kenya's future." The Standard, 21 Jun. 2022.
- Muganda, Clay. "Youth must become wiser this election year otherwise their agenda will be skewed once again." The Standard, 6 Jun. 2022.
- **35.** Muiruri, Peter. "Observers blame low turn on youth's failure to participate in polls." The Standard, 8 Oct. 2022.
- **36.** Muli Grignon, Koki. "Another Vijana tugutuke ni time yetu' campaign needed." The Standard, 8 Jan. 2022.
- 37. Muli Grignon, Koki. "Nyambane's nod for State House race opens the door for our youth." The Standard, 5 Jun. 2022.
- **38.** Muli, K. "Another Vijana Tugutuke Ni Time Yetu' Campaign Needed." https://www.standardmedia.co.ke, 2022.
- **39.** Musau, Z. "African Women in Politics: Miles to Go Before Parity Is Achieved." https://www.theyouthcafe.com, 19 Apr. 2019.
- **40.** Mutunga, Willy. "Sermon to young and the young in spirit: Be voices of Kenya." The Star, 10 Jul. 2022.
- **41.** Mwangi, Alvin. "Youth must begin to view politics as an investment." People Daily, 19 Jan. 2022.
- **42.** Nation Team. "Eva I'm the biblical David in Mathioya MP race." Daily Nation, 18 Jul. 2022, by Anonymous.

- Apr. 2022. Nation Team. "As a young woman, I quit complaining and want to be considered among the great." Daily Nation, 16
- Nduva, V. M. "Media Portrayal of Women Leaders in Kenya: An." Nairobi: Department of Journalism and Media Studies, 2016.
- **45.** Nerima, W.-O. "The Youth Really Took Part in the 2022 Elections." Nairobi, Kenya, 10 Dec. 2022.
- **46.** Ng'ang'a, Grace. "Green Party waives nomination fees for women aspirants." The Star, 22 Feb. 2022.
- 47. Ngunjiri, Muthoni. "Young women in politics ought to learn from those who blazed trail." Daily Nation, 3 Feb. 2022, by Muthoni Ngunjiri.
- **48.** Obirira, Moraa. "Female aspirants seek support to boost campaigns." Daily Nation, 11 Mar. 2022.
- **49.** Obonyo, Oscar. "Young voters' dilemma: they hate ethnic politics but feel trapped in it." The Standard, 26 Jul. 2022.
- **50.** Obonyo, Raphael. "Back young women politicians." The Standard, 9 Feb. 2022.
- **51.** Obonyo, Raphael. "It's time parties plugged youths into leadership." People Daily, 18 May 2022.
- **52.** Oduku, R. O. "Tracking the Gender Equation in Kenya's August Elections." This is Africa, 3 Jun. 2022, https://thisisafrica.me/.
- **53.** Oduor, Stephen "Hussein, Sadia: "My stand on FGM cost me political post." Daily Nation, 16 Feb. 2022.
- Ombuor, R. "Kenya's Election Is Being Lauded as 'Historic' for Women That's Not True." https://www.opendemocracy.
 net/en/5050/, 23 Aug. 2022.
- **55.** Oruko, Ibrahim. "Next government must not shortchange youth on State appointments." The Standard, 5 Feb. 2022.
- Osei-Appiah, F. S. "Media Representations of Women Politicians: The Cases of Ghana and Nigeria." The University of Leeds and Sally Osei-Appiah, West Yorkshire, Leeds, 2019.
- **57.** Otieno, Brian. "Green party calls on youth to sanitise, shun divisive politics." The Standard, 23 Feb. 2022.
- 58. Owino, Vivian. "This is My Promise for Nairobi Central Ward." Daily Nation, 5 Jul. 2022, by Wanja Mbuthia
- **59.** Owino, Winfrey. "How young female aspirants fared in the elections." Daily Nation, 13 Aug. 2022.
- Philippine Commission on Women (PCW). "Women in Power and Decision Making." https://pcw.gov.ph/assets/files/2021/05/8-9-433x1024.jpg, 5 May 2021.
- Ross, K., & Margie, C. "The Rules of the (Leadership) Game: Gender, Politics and New." Journalism, vol. 13, no. 8, 2012, doi:10.1177/1464884911433255, pp. 969–984.
- **62.** Samuel, Neil. "Shunning handout politics benefits young aspirants." The Star, 1 May 2022.
- 63. Siago, Cece. "Rights lobby urges Kwale women to seek elective seats." Daily Nation, 17 Mar. 2022.
- **64.** Soina, Anita. "I am the Change Kajiado North Needs." Daily Nation, 4 Jun. 2022, by Joyce Chimbi.

- **65.** Teyie, Selina. "Young women missing amid praises for progressive election." The Star, 25 Aug. 2022.
- The World Association for Christian Communication (WACC). Global Media Monitoring Project. London, U.K., and Toronto, Canada: The World Association for Christian Communication, 2015.
- 67. This is Africa. "Tracking the Gender Equation in Kenya's August Elections." https://thisisafrica.me/, Jun. 2022.
- **68.** UN Women Kenya. "In Brief: Women's Performance in the Kenya Elections." https://africa.unwomen.org/, 2022.
- **69.** United Nations Women Africa. "In Brief: Women's Performance in the Kenya Elections." https://africa.unwomen.org/, 2022.
- 70. Waweru Wairimu. "Somali community urges Isiolo residents to elect young people." Daily Nation, 8 Mar. 2022.
- **71.** Waweru, Wairimu. "Isiolo woman rep aspirant pledges intense war on drug abuse." Daily Nation, 6 Jul. 2022, by Women rep pledges war on drug abuse.
- Wixom, C. "Media Representation Causes Challenges for Female Politicians." The Daily Universe, 8 Jul. 2021, https://universe.byu.edu/.
- Women In Media. "Gender Balance and Kenyan Election Coverage." https://womeninnews.org/, <a href="https://woweninnews.org/

Our Partners



