2024

Research Report on the :

*The media visibility
research for young
women in politics:
The Nigerian Report*

RESEARCH

2024

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

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ABOUT THE STUDY

Visibility of Young Women in Politics in Nigeria investigates the level of visibility the media ascribes to young female politicians. Based on content analysis and a Focus Group Discussion (FGD), the study's outcome highlights the reportorial styles and thematic representations that journalists use to portray young women in politics. It further analyses perceptions of young female politicians regarding how the media reports them, including recommendations for best practice. The report considers the following research questions and objectives.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How much visibility does the media give to young women in politics in Nigeria?

2. What reportorial styles and thematic representations does the media use to portray these young women?

3. How do young women in politics conceptualise their visibility in the Nigerian media?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To provide empirical data on the visibility that the media accords to young women in politics, including reportorial styles and thematic representations.

2. To highlight the perceptions of young female politicians on how the media reports them, the challenges they face, and how they would like the media to report them as part of contributing to recommendations.

3. To proffer best practice standards that the media can adopt in providing greater visibility to young women in politics as a first step to developing a media toolkit for journalists.

In answering the research questions, the report found that young women in politics have very low visibility in the media. Content analysis of the editions of four national newspapers across six months showed that only eight stories were devoted to young women in politics, the likely implication being the normalisation of the view that young women have no place in politics. Findings further reveal the reportorial styles and five thematic representations of young female politicians in the eight stories. The five themes include young women as political leaders, young women as political actors, young women as dependent on the older generation, young women as influential trailblazers, and intimidation and young women as victims of society.

For the FGD, six young women in politics discussed their perception of media visibility for young female politicians and the issues connected to this visibility. The discussion yielded five themes: sexism and bias in media coverage, portrayal of young female politicians as incomplete without men, inadequate mentorship and support from other women, youth condescension and the influence of money politics, and media and strategic support for young women's visibility. The implications of the focus group findings point to a reduction in the participation of young women in politics that is likely to continue in the future, a tokenistic approach to addressing young women's underrepresentation in politics, and a trivialising of young female politicians and their contribution – all because of a perception of problematic media portrayal of young women in politics.

The target audience for the study includes journalists, editors, and other media professionals who decide about media content and the visibility that young women in politics have. The report will also support the work that gender advocates and civil society actors carry out, especially concerning the representation of young women in politics, and provide relevant data and insights for researchers.

PARTNER INFORMATION

LUMINATE

Luminate was established in 2018 by philanthropists Pierre and PamOmidyar. 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 under represented 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.

African Women in Media (AWiM) is an international non-governmental organisation that aims to positively impact the way media functions in relation to African women. AWiM collaborates with a variety of partners to achieve our vision that "One day African women will have equal access to representation and opportunities in media industries and media content." AWiM activities create opportunities for knowledge exchange, building networks, and economic empowerment of women in media through their Pitch Zone and Awards.

RESEARCH TEAM

DR YEMISI AKINBOBOLA

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: 20Years, 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 isa 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 centered around gender-based violence.

DR VINCENT OBIA

is a researcher and Commonwealth Scholar who completed his PhD at Birmingham City University in the UK. He lectures at the Department of Mass Communication, University of Lagos, where he carries out research with interests in new media regulation, social media policy, and AI governance particularly in Africa and the Global South. He has worked on research into media representation of the kidnapped Dapchi school girls in Nigeria, has been part of a media literacy research project with the London School of Economics, and has contributed to UNESCO policy and declarations around media and information literacy.

DEFINITIONS

The definitions of some key terms in the report include:

YOUNG WOMEN

For this report, we define young women as those between 18 and 35. This is according to Nigeria's 2019 National Youth Policy. It is similar to the African Youth Charter and ECOWAS, which define youth as people between 18 and 35.

YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS

These primarily include young women who play active roles in partisan politics, mostly in running for elections at local, state, or national levels. It also includes young women who hold positions in political party structures in Nigeria. The report further expands the definition of young women in politics to include women between the ages of 18 and 35 who are decision-makers at all levels, who are involved in national and local governments, who play leading roles in governmental and non-governmental organisations, or those who play prominent roles in international organisations such as the UN or in civil society bodies.

MEDIA VISIBILITY

This relates to what is visible in the media about something or someone and the process that makes it possible (Scheid, 2022). It includes the media's spotlight on people or objects, such that high visibility points to maximum exposure and low visibility to near erasure or absence from public consciousness.

REPRESENTATION

It is the production of meaning through language. To represent something is to describe or depict it, to call it up in the mind by description, portrayal, or imagination (Hall, 2013). Concerning the media, therefore, representation points to how the media depicts people or objects, and the portrayal that comes with this description.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following key terminologies, which are used throughout this report, align with the official definitions from UN Women Africa1 regarding gender-based violence and various forms of violence against women and girls:

CEDAW   Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

FGD   Focus Group Discussion

INEC   Independent National Electoral Commission

PLAC   Policyand Legal Advocacy Centre

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 AWiM News, 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

Introduction

Nigeria performs poorly in figures on political representation and media visibility of women in politics. We see this in statistics on political representation, where data shows that in the seven election cycles the country has witnessed since 1999, women's representation in the national parliament has barely exceeded 10% (Oluyemi, 2015). It is, therefore, unsurprising that Nigeria ranked 23rd out of 52 African countries in the gender equality index, which, among other things, considers women's participation in politics (African Development Bank, 2015). The country also ranked 140th out of 158 countries on the global Gender Equality and Governance Index, highlighting Nigeria's poor outcome on gender equality and women's political representation (Lopez-Claros et al., 2022). These figures broadly consider women's participation, with virtually no attempt to distinguish between older and younger women, underscoring a tendency to overlook outcomes for young women in politics.

A similar trend is noticeable for figures on media visibility for women in politics, where existing data only show that media visibility for female politicians remains limited (Omojola and Morah, 2014). Based on this, it is tenable to surmise that media visibility for young women in politics will equally be limited, if not completely non-existent. But we cannot be sure without the evidence that empirical research provides. This is why this report is vital. It seeks to investigate the visibility the Nigerian media provides to young women in politics, first in relation to quantitative figures on media representation and second in terms of reportorial styles and thematic portrayals. It further seeks to give young female politicians a voice by highlighting their perspectives on how the media covers them. The report essentially recognises the critical role the media plays in representing young female politicians, since to be invisible in the media is to be absent from public consciousness (Ette, 2017).

In light of this, the report aims to provide recommendations that government and media bodies can follow to address issues of low political representation and visibility for young women in politics. The report outcomes also inform the development of a media toolkit for media professionals. The toolkit is expected to guide how journalists represent young women in politics and highlight specific training resources to aid young female politicians in their dealings with the media.

STUDY OUTLINE

The report begins with a literature review that highlights what the existing body of research says about the political representation of women in Nigeria and the visibility of these women in the media. Next is the methodology, which comprises content analysis and FGD. The content analysis is based on the review of four national newspapers in Nigeria in the six-month period from November 2022 to April 2023. This period coincides with the 2023 general elections. The FGD contains the perspectives of six young women who are active in Nigeria's political and policy circles. Following the methodology is the presentation of findings in the key analysis sections. The first section discusses the content analysis results to underscore the frequency of reports on young women in politics, as well as the reportorial styles and thematic analysis. In the second section, young female politicians' perspectives on media portrayal and the obstacles they encounter are examined. The report ends with an outline of recommendations divided into the role of formal and informal policies and media structure and content.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Here, the report considers previous scholarship on the reality of women's participation in politics, policy, and governance before discussing studies on the visibility that the media ascribes to women in politics. The literature broadly shows that low visibility for women is both a cause and an effect of poor women's participation in politics. A search of the literature also yielded no results on the political participation or media visibility of young women in politics, highlighting the relevance of the present study.

POLITICAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN NIGERIA

There is agreement in the literature on the importance of promoting women's participation and empowerment at all stages in politics, public policy, and governance (Economic and Social Affairs,2010; Lopez-Claros et al., 2022). Lopez-Claros et al. (2022), for instance, shows that in countries like France, Sweden, South Africa, and Rwanda where more women are elected, there is likely to be an increase in family-friendly and diverse policies, improved service delivery, and proposals for structural reforms. The need for women's empowerment and freedom from discrimination is also captured in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979), a global document which promotes the principle of equality between men and women, including a commitment to abolish or reform laws and customs that constitute discrimination against women(see Article 2, CEDAW, 1979). Article 7 also contains the responsibility that nation-states have to eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life to ensure that women hold public offices and perform all public functions at all levels of government.

Although this exists in principle, actual examples show that women still face discrimination in their attempts to participate in politics (Ette, 2017; Kelly,2019), a reality reflecting women's underrepresentation in politics. We see this in West Africa, where, as of 2021, only 16% of national parliamentarians were women, the worst regional performance on the continent (Africa Barometer,2021). This is compared to a global average of 26% and a continental average of 21%. Within West Africa, Nigeria is one of the worst performers. Okoye et al. (2022), for instance, show that with the advent of the democratic Fourth Republic in 1999, female representation in the National Assembly did not exceed 6.3%, and no woman was running to be state governor. Kelly (2019) further notes that in Nigeria, the proportion of women in elected positions increased from an average of 2.3% in 1999 to 7.8% in 2007.

FIG 1: PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN THE NIGERIAN SENATE

● Women　　● Men

97.25	96.33	92.66	93.58	92.66	93.58	97.25
2.75	3.67	7.34	6.42	7.34	6.42	2.75
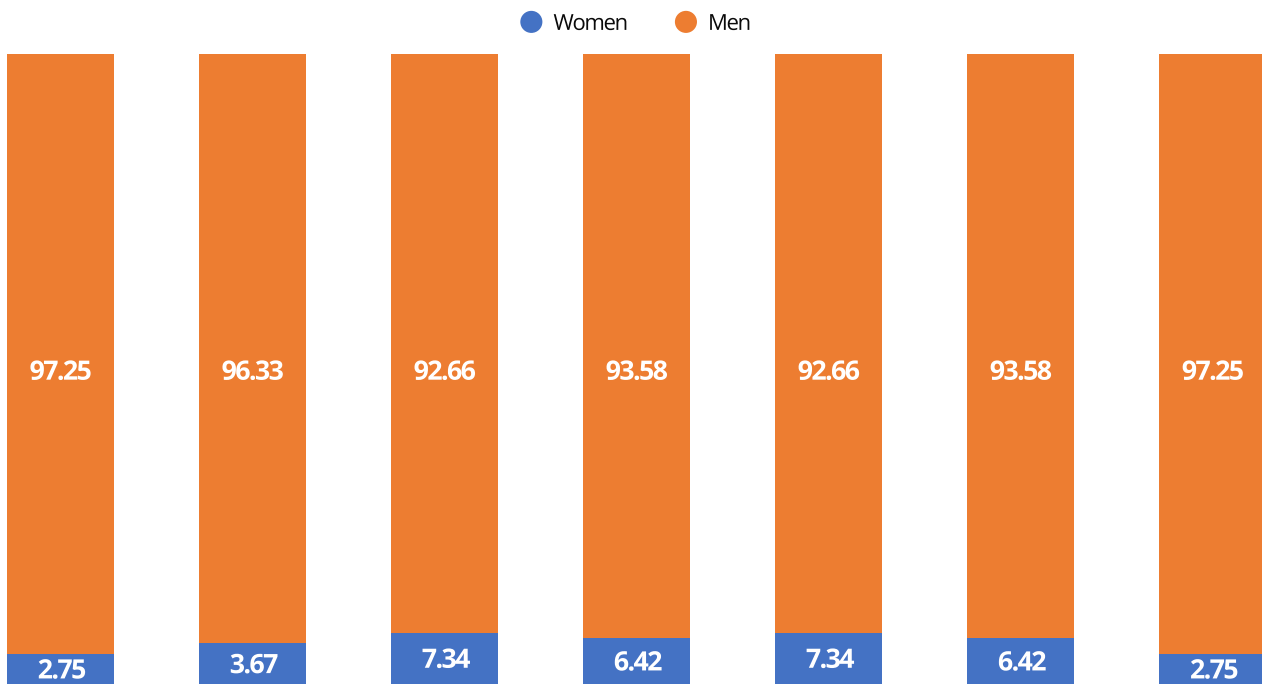
Source: Oluyemi(2015), Eke (2022), and PLAC (2023)

In Figures 1 and 2, we see that in the1999 election, the number of women in the Senate (which has 109 members) was 3(2.75%); it became 4 (3.67%) in 2003, increased to 8 (7.34%) in 2007, reduced to 7 (6.42%) in 2011, and went back to 8 (7.34%) in 2015 (Oluyemi, 2015), pointing to at most a 7.34% women representation in the federal upper chamber. For the House of Representatives, which has 360 members, the number was 12 women(3.33%) in 1999, 21 (5.83%) in 2003, 23 (6.39%) in 2007, 26 (7.22%) in 2011,and 19 (5.28%) in 2015 (Oluyemi, 2015), pointing to at most a 7.22% women representation in the federal lower chamber. For the state houses of assembly, out of 990 seats across 36 states, there were 12 women (1.21%) in 1999, 38women (3.84%) in 2003, 52 women (5.25%) in 2007, and 62 women (6.26%) in 2011(Oluyemi, 2015), indicating at most a 6.3% women representation. There has been no female President or governor, but there were four female deputy governors in2015 out of 36 states (Oluyemi, 2015).

FIG 1: PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN THE NIGERIAN SENATE

● Women　　● Men

96.67	94.17	93.61	92.78	94.72	96.94	95.28
3.33	5.83	6.39	7.22	5.28	3.06	4.72
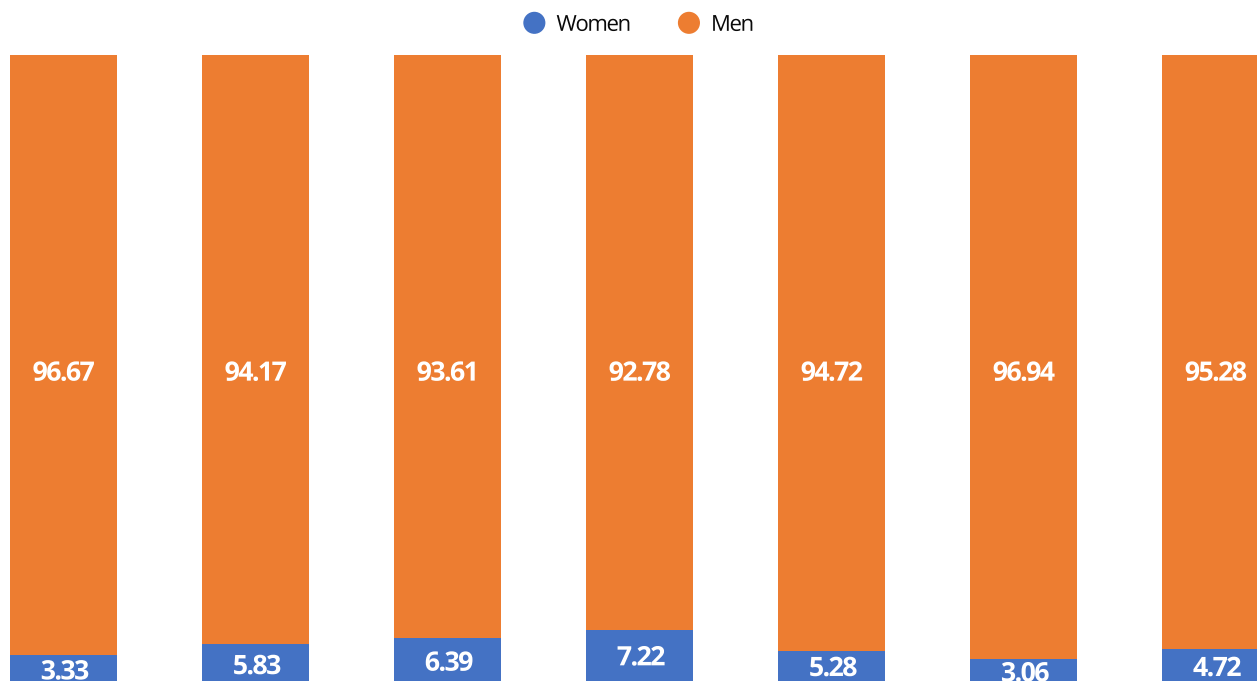
Source: Oluyemi(2015), Eke (2022), and PLAC (2023)

This trend of low female representation continued in the 2019 election, which produced seven female senators (6.42% out of 109 senators) and 11 female federal representatives (3.06% out of 360 representatives) (Eke, 2022). For the2023 election, the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre [PLAC] (2023) shows that figures have remained worse, as only 3 (2.75%) of those elected to the Senate and 17 (4.72%) to the House of Representatives were women. This is far lower than the average for sub-Saharan Africa, which was put at 26% as of 2023 (Nkereuwem, 2023) – indicating the consistent underperformance of Nigeria, contrary to the continental outlook. The difference is stark when we compare Nigeria with Rwanda, where, as of 2015, over 50% of seats in the federal parliament were held by women (African Development Bank, 2015). Other countries in Africa with commendable figures on women's representation in politics in2015 include South Africa, Namibia, Mauritius, and Malawi – these countries have the best gender equality index score in Africa, as opposed to Nigeria(African Development Bank, 2015). The 2022 Gender Equality and Governance Index also ranks Nigeria 140th out of 158 countries globally (Lopez-Claroset al., 2022), showing how poorly Nigeria performs regarding gender equality, particularly female representation in politics.

What, then, are issues responsible for low female participation in politics? Scholars attribute the factors to formal and informal practices (UN Women, 2013; PLAC,2018; Kelly, 2019; Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, n.d.; Ette and Akpan-Obong, 2023). The formal factors include laws and institutional structures, such as how the media functions. By contrast, the informal factors include norms, cultures, and traditions that are harder to pinpoint and address. For instance, Kelly (2019) notes that the main barriers to women's participation in governance in Nigeria include a sexist and patronage-based culture combined with gendered economic and household inequalities. Other

issues are tied to the lack of effective government action to deal with the problem of violence at elections, which deters women from participating. Okoye et al.(2022) describe this as political thuggery, adding that societal conventions and beliefs hinder women's political representation. For Gabriel (2015), the greatest challenge women face regarding low representation in politics is financial constraints. The costs of elections are very high, and politics in Nigeria also require patronage. Women are, therefore, disadvantaged in these areas, given that they earn less than men and are typically not in charge of household finances (Gabriel, 2015). Additionally, women often cannot tap into the same financial resources that men have (Lopez-Claros et al., 2022).

Women further face issues of bullying and intimidation by godfathers and party leaders, who are men, given the patriarchal nature of the party structure in Nigeria (Ette and Akpan-Obong, 2023). Underlying this reality is the fact that female politicians do not receive as much mentorship support as men (Akpan,2018). Voters are also likely to miss the point regarding why women should be represented in politics, believing that women who contest elections are overly ambitious(Akpan, 2018). This is linked to the verbal abuse that women face, what Ette and Akpan-Obong (2023, p. 1297) call the "politics of insult," where male politicians berate and cast aspersions on female politicians, including accusations of promiscuity. Evident here are the effects of cultural norms and social discrimination, where female politicians are subjected to verbal and sexual assault, threats, and media harassment (Lopez-Claros et al., 2022). It also reflects in women's use of social media, which comes with personal dangers that often force women to de-platform themselves (Africa Barometer, 2021), further reducing women's avenues for self-expression.

For Nkereuwem (2023), the factors responsible for poor outcomes for women include political party gatekeeping, conservative norms and culture, and the effect of novice candidature. This is because women are more likely than men to be new to politics and may not have the staying power to be persistent through electoral cycles, including defeats. The issues start at the primary election phase, where women face high attrition, leading to fewer women who make it to contest positions, and fewer still who are elected, if at all (Nkereuwem, 2023). For women who cannot brave the torrents, it becomes more feasible to vie for deputy positions such as Vice President or Deputy Governor. It highlights why more women run for deputy positions than the number one slot (Nkereuwem, 2023),pointing to the lack of financial, social, and political capital preventing women from aiming higher. It might also explain why women's political representation is tokenistic, for instance, in the roles that first ladies play(Kelly, 2019).

Nonetheless, we see a contrary viewpoint in PLAC (2018), which shows that poor women's participation in politics in Nigeria is tied to discrimination against women, not women's lack of resources – meaning the problem lies squarely with Nigeria's political institutions. Therefore, PLAC (2018) notes that the solution will include quotas to aid the election of female candidates and policies that support gender equity in the political arena(PLAC, 2018). Countries like Rwanda and Tanzania have constitutional quotas for women in the national legislature (African Development Bank, 2015) – a possible reason for their success in women's representation in politics.

However, even quotas may not be adequate to solve the problems highlighted above. The UNDP (2022) makes this clear in its report on women's representation in Europe and Central Asia (ECA), where 13 out of 18 countries have quotas for women in national parliaments. Still, there are challenges. For instance, women are still not viewed as trustworthy and capable leaders because of gender and cultural norms. The UNDP also notes that women in politics are judged more harshly than men in politics, leading to a double standard where women face heavier criticism and scrutiny. And when women do hold portfolios in the executive, these are in ministries that have remits for the family, children, youth, the elderly, and people with disabilities – pointing, again, to a tokenistic approach to women representation in policy circles. Regardless, the UNDP sees the need to continue the practice of quotas and ensure that women enter politics at the local level to build trust as they progress (UNDP, 2022).

In Nigeria, quotas exist, but they have not been met. For instance, there is the National Gender Policy (2006), which recommends 35% affirmative action to secure female representation in both elective and appointive posts (Oluyemi,2015). This is higher than the 30% affirmative action of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995). However, Nigeria has consistently fallen short of the target, mainly because of patriarchal practices embedded in society (Oluyemi, 2015). Oluyemi (2015) adds that other challenges relate to the stigmatisation that women face, low level of education, anti-social hours for political meetings, high costs of political campaigns, the violent nature of politics in Nigeria, and religious and cultural barriers – factors which have been expanded on above.

MEDIA VISIBILITY OF FEMALE POLITICIANS IN NIGERIA

These factors further point to the visibility that the media renders to female politicians in Nigeria, which is the focus of this report. Media visibility here is crucial, given that the extent to which the views of female politicians are reflected in the media is a powerful indicator of their voice (Africa Barometer, 2021). Consequently, the fact that women constitute less than a quarter of news sources globally (Africa Barometer, 2021) is a pointer to their limited visibility. Underlying this is what Omojola and Morah (2014) call the logic of commercialism, which explains how increased visibility usually applies to those who have the means of purchase, and they are men. Men also play leading roles in media ownership, staffing, and content consumption (Omojola and Morah, 2014), which means media power is in male hands (Ette, 2017). A 2017 survey also shows that the Nigerian media is male-dominated, up to a ratio of 10 to 2 in some cases(Report Women, 2018). The significance of this is that there is an entrenched patriarchal political and media culture, which then reduces the chances that female politicians have to influence their visibility (Osei-Appiah, 2019).Osei-Appiah (2019) also shows that, for political stories, most of the media focus is on a few high-profile politicians, to the exclusion of less-known politicians, who are women.

We see this in figures on the number of political stories published in some Nigerian media outlets between 1999 and 2003, where out of 648 political stories, 131 (21.2%) were related to women (Omojola and Morah, 2014). Ette (2017) also studied the media coverage of four high-profile women during the 2015 Nigerian elections. She found and analysed 21 stories of the four women, indicating how low the visibility was. Her study shows that women in politics occupy limited spaces in the media and are marginalised in political news despite the advocacy for gender equality. The effect of this pattern of representation, she notes, reinforces the notion that 'only men do politics.' Hence, she concludes thus:

THEPOWERFUL RHETORIC

conveyed through coverage of politics suggests that women are outsiders and undeserving of visibility because to be invisible in the media is to be absent in public perception.... [Hence], women's limited visibility in media space[s] reduced their chances of electoral victory and located them in a place of powerlessness(Ette, 2017, p. 15-16).

The suggestion might, therefore, be that this limited visibility correlates with poor figures on women's participation in politics. This reasoning would indicate that media visibility for female politicians would increase if more women were elected to public offices. However, Ross et al. (2020) show that this is not the case. They note that women who hold top political offices, such as President or Prime Minister, are underrepresented in the media, despite their position. And that when these women are represented, it is done in trivialised, sexualised, and commodified ways. Their findings mainly show that an increase of women parliamentarians by 1% across the world results in a 0.3% increase in their visibility in the media(Ross et al., 2020). It underscores the fact that low women's visibility in the media is not necessarily attributable to poor women's representation in politics. Buttressing Ross et al.'s (2020) findings, Courtney et al. (2020)also show that increased women's participation in politics in Ireland during the 2016 election corresponded with reduced visibility for female politicians. They suggest that the cause of the reduced visibility of female politicians is implicit media bias against female politicians. It is essentially the failure of the media to institutionalise equal coverage of men and women politicians and the implicit bias of individual journalists (Courtney et al., 2020).

METHODOLOGY

vander Pas (2022) further makes the bold argument that low visibility for female politicians leads to poor women's representation in politics. This is because media attention is a valuable electoral asset for political candidates, and less visibility for women reduces their chances for electoral success, potentially contributing to low participation in politics. The suggestion, therefore, is that low media visibility for female politicians is not just an effect but also a cause of low female representation in politics. They conclude that "media coverage likely affects opportunities for women to reach the highest echelons of politics" (p. 1489). Overall, what these studies underscore is the nuance that exists in debates on low visibility for women in the media and how it interrelates with low women's representation in politics in places like Nigeria. The literature also focuses on female politicians, without particular attention to young women in politics. It points to a gap that this study fills, as it considers the visibility of young women in politics in Nigeria, to identify areas for intervention in media and policy spaces based on a methodology that combines content analysis and FGD.

3.0. METHODOLOGY

To address the research questions, the report utilises two methods. Media monitoring is the first technique, and it involves analysing the content of newspaper reports. The report uses this method to identify the visibility that the media ascribes to young women in politics in Nigeria. The method involved collecting and analysing newspaper materials published before, during, and after the 2023 general elections. Four national daily newspapers were selected for this purpose: The Punch, Vanguard, The Guardian, and the Daily Trust. The first three newspapers were chosen because they are the top three most trusted newspapers in Nigeria.[1] They are also considered southern newspapers since they have their headquarters in Lagos, South-West Nigeria. The Daily Trust, however, is considered a northern publication, given that it is headquartered in Abuja, which is nestled between Nigeria's North Central and North-West geo-political zones. Therefore, the report selected Daily Trust as the fourth newspaper to ensure that the data reflects patterns of media visibility of young female politicians across the north and south of Nigeria.

RESOURCES:

❋ See the Reuters Institute report, which containsdata on the most trusted media organisations in Nigeria: https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2021/nigeria

After selecting the four newspapers, the report reviewed all the copies of editions published over six months between 1 November 2022 and 30 April 2023. This period was selected because the Presidential and National Assembly elections were held on 25 February 2023. The report aimed to review newspaper copies published three months before and after the elections to have a manageable dataset. The time selection meant there was an allowance of over three months before and over two months after the elections. It also enabled the inclusion of media reports on the governorship and state legislative elections, which held on 18 March 2023. Based on the review, the report found that 232 stories focused on women in politics, out of which only eight were about young women in politics. The report quantitatively analysed all the eight stories, which formed the population of the content analysis segment.

One limitation of this method is that the analysed data did not include figures on media coverage of male politicians, whether young or old, to aid comparison with figures on media coverage of female politicians. Regardless, it is needful to remember the scope of the study only allowed for a focus on young women in politics, and consideration of male politicians would have made the analysis unwieldy.

The second part of the methodology was the use of Focus Group Discussion (FGD).This was to identify the issues that affect the visibility of young women in politics in Nigeria. The discussion took place on Microsoft Teams on 16 October2023. Six young Nigerian women who are active in Nigerian political or policy spaces participated, all between the ages of 18 and 35. They include:

Participant 1   Leader of a non-profit and an international non-governmental organisation

Participant 2   Recently ran for a state legislative office

Participant 3   Policy expert

Participant 4   Emerging expert in politics, policy, and governance. Also, an entrepreneur and data analyst.

Participant 5   Expert in advocacy, governance, and accountability

Participant 6   NGO expert in sustainable development in Africa

Based on the data analysis, the findings are discussed below.

KEY ANALYSIS SECTIONS

The findings of the report are presented along two lines. First is a media monitoring investigation based on content analysis of newspaper reports on young women in politics (Section 4). Following this are findings from an FGD on the issues that young women in politics face regarding their visibility in the Nigerian media (Section 5).
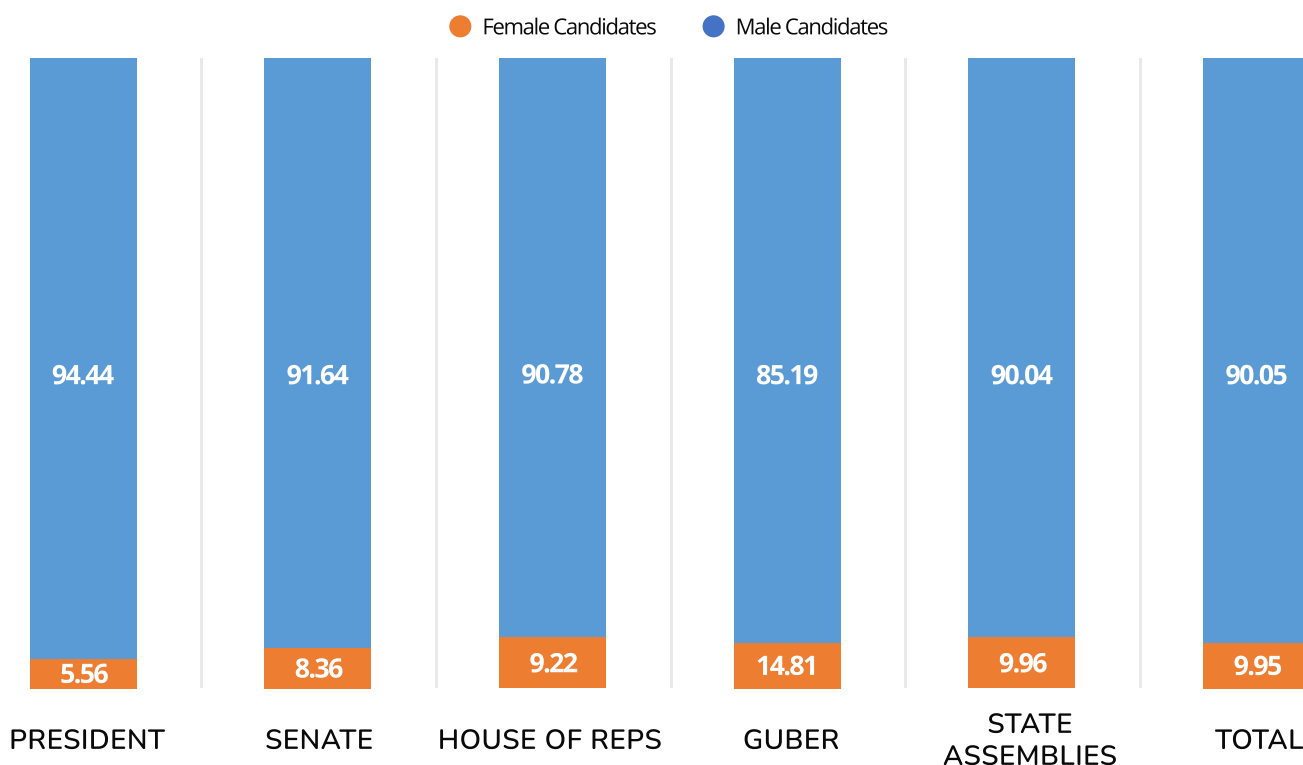
4.0. Findings – Media Monitoring Analysis

KEY ANALYSIS

For the media monitoring, the report reviewed the editorial items published across the four newspapers during the six months. The report found overall that 232 editorial items related to women in politics. This was the first step towards ascertaining the data on the visibility of young women in politics, which is the central objective of the report. This finding on low visibility for women in politics highlights the central outcome of the study, which is that female politicians had very low visibility in the Nigerian media. And even more so during an election season, when politics takes center stage in national discourse. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the pattern of reportage likely corresponds to the data on female participation in the elections. We see this in Figure 3, which is based on figures from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) that were collated from a report in The Punch.[1]The figure shows women comprised less than 10% (1,524 candidates) of the (at least) 15,309 people who contested for various positions in the 2023 elections, with men taking up the remaining percentage.

FIG 3: PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE AND MALE CANDIDATES IN THE NIGERIAN 2023 ELECTIONS

● Female Candidates ● Male Candidates

	PRESIDENT	SENATE	HOUSE OF REPS	GUBER	STATE ASSEMBLIES	TOTAL
Male Candidates	94.44	91.64	90.78	85.19	90.04	90.05
Female Candidates	5.56	8.36	9.22	14.81	9.96	9.95

Source: INEC figures quoted in The Punch newspaper

The situation is most acute in the Presidential election, which was contested by only one woman (5.56%) out of 18 candidates; the other categories also recorded figures below 10% for women, except for the governorship/deputy governorship (guber) category, where women made up nearly 15% (124 candidates) out of a total number of 837 contestants.

Still, the report findings indicate that the media visibility of women in the 2023 election was significantly low.[3]
We see this in the number of editorial items that focus on female politicians daily in the period under study.
This figure is 1.28 editorial items across the four newspapers (derived from dividing 232 total editorial items by 181 total daily editions from November 2022 to April 2023). Although the report did not include figures on the total number of stories that focus on male politicians (it was outside the scope of the research), scanning of the editorial items showed male politicians had far more than one or two stories focused on them. For example, in the February 1 edition of Daily Trust alone, seven editorial items were explicitly devoted to male candidates. If we extrapolate this across the 181 editions of Daily Trust, male candidates will have 1,267 editorial items. If the extrapolation is extended across all four newspapers, the figure will be 5,069 editorial items. Compared to the 232 items that the report found for reports on women in politics, the difference is evident – it means that the editorial items focused on women made up 4.58% of those focused on men. This is roughly half of the 9.95% of women who contested the elections, pointing to the low visibility of women in politics in the Nigerian media.

It buttresses Ross et al.'s (2020) findings, which note that increases in media visibility for female politicians are slower than increases in women's political participation. As shown in the literature review above, some factors responsible for the low visibility include an implicit bias that media professionals hold against female politicians (Courtney et al., 2020) and societal norms that relegate women to the private sphere (Ette and Akpan-Obong,2023).

Having established this, the following is a summary of what the report found in the reading of the 232 editorial items. The summary includes:

1. There were few female politicians for media professionals to report on.

2. The stories had a negligible focus on young women in politics. The few stories on women focused on women above 35 years old because there seemed to be more women in this age group than younger women in politics.

3. The focus was on the actions of First Ladies in the Federal and State Executive Branches, pointing to tokenistic reportage(see Kelly, 2019).

4. Some newspapers had 'Women' sections (for instance, The Guardian had 'Guardian Women'). Still, these focused on professionals or business women, or else they focused on beauty, style, and fashion.

5. The stories featured content on how stylish or fashionable female politicians are.

6. The reports had a considerable focus on Aishatu Binani, the APC governorship candidate of Adamawa State, North-East Nigeria. Also, on Ireti Kingibe, the Labour Party senatorial candidate for the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

7. Rukayat Motunrayo Shittu, the 26-year-old who won a House of Assembly seat in Kwara State, North-Central Nigeria, was the focus of some reports.

The situation is most acute in the Presidential election, which was contested by only one woman (5.56%) out of 18 candidates; the other categories also recorded figures below 10% for women, except for the governorship/deputy governorship (guber) category, where women made up nearly 15% (124 candidates) out of a total number of 837 contestants.

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Having established this, the following is a summary of what the report found in the reading of the 232 editorial items. The summary includes:

8. The Presidential election, where there was only one female candidate out of 18, received a lot of attention.

9. Occasionally, there were stories and analytical reports on the total number of women participating in a particular election, e.g., governorship elections across the country.

10. Some reports focused on women's rallies, which were usually held to support male candidates.

11. A considerable number of reports focused on politicians; not much was done to give particular focus to young women in politics.

12. A few stories focused on the impact of women and their political work.

13. Some stories gave attention to female marginalisation and low female representation in politics.

14. Some reports featured male politicians promising to appoint women into their cabinets.

15. Among all newspapers, Daily Trust granted the highest visibility to female politicians.

The fact that Daily Trust had the highest representation of female politicians can be seen in Figure 4, where out of 232 editorial items, the newspaper accounts for 99 reports. Vanguard and The Punch showed almost similar figures – 48 and 47, respectively. The Guardian had the lowest frequency count: 38.

FIG 4: REPORTS ON WOMEN IN POLITICS IN THE PAPERS

● Nov-22   ● Dec-22   ● Jan-23   ● Feb-23   ● Mar-23   ● Apr-23

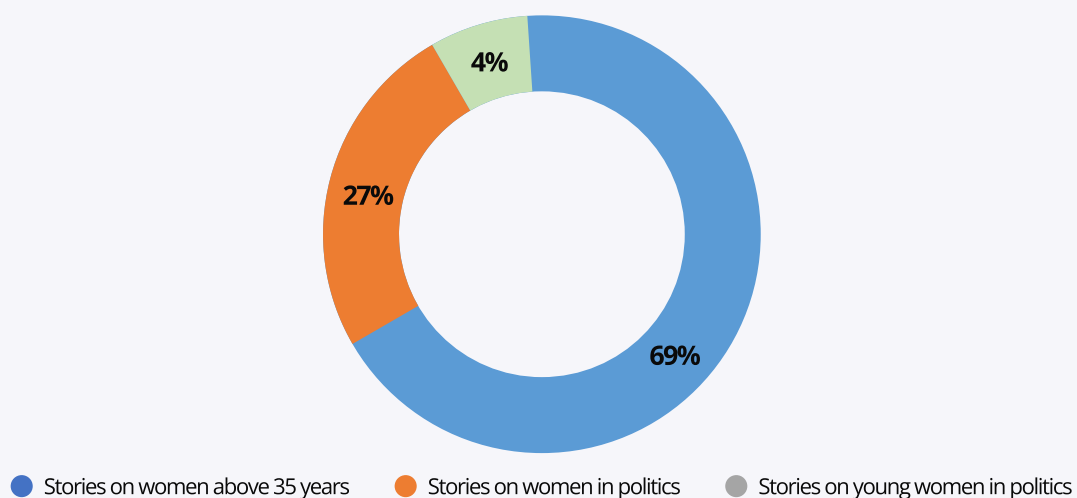| THE PUNCH	VANGAURD	THE GUARDIAN	DAILY TRUST
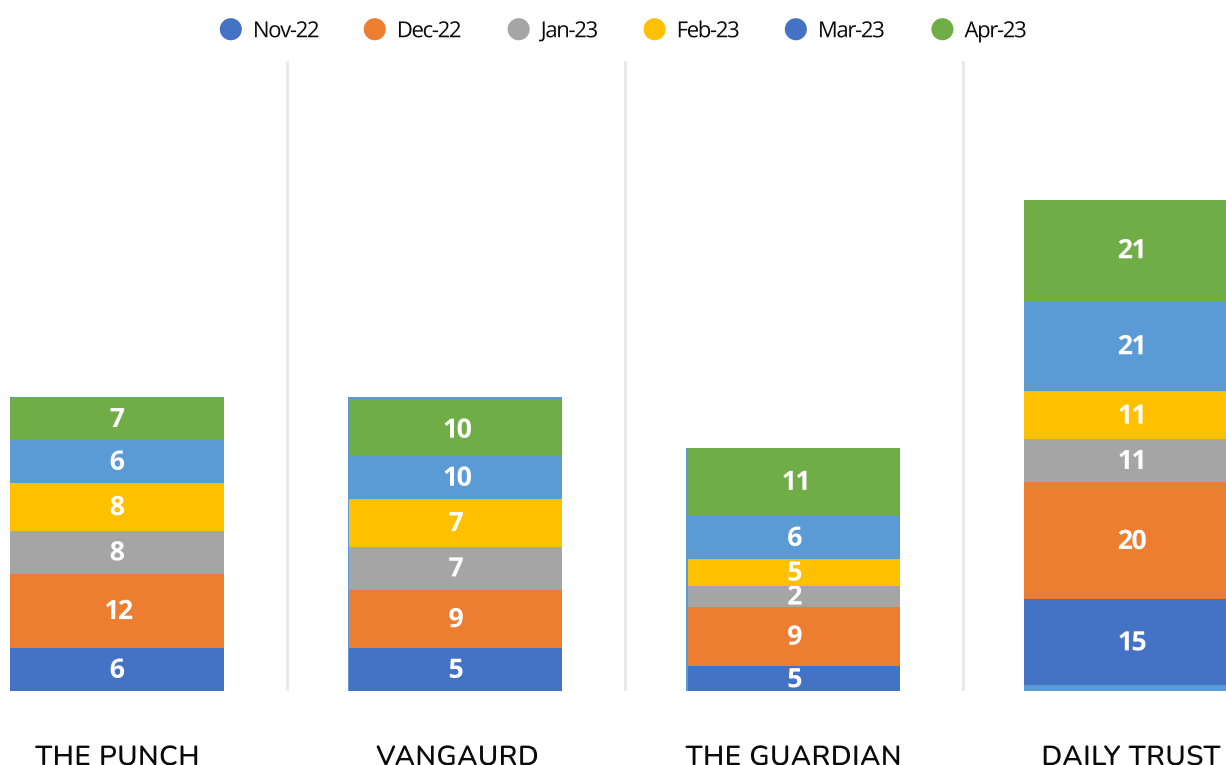
Figures show that December 2022 accounted for the highest number of editorial items across the months. December accounted for this high number primarily because of reports on the controversy between Aisha Buhari, wife of the former President, and Aminu Mohammed, a university student who was said to have insulted her on Twitter.[4] Still, it is surprising that February had one of the lowest frequency counts, given that it is the month of the Presidential and National Assembly elections. This points to the low visibility given to women in politics. While it is expected that the representation of women in the Presidential election would below, since only one woman contested that election, the same cannot be said for the National Assembly elections, where 92 women contested Senate seats, and 288 women contested for House of Representative positions. Put together, it shows that the number of women who vied for National Assembly seats was more than the total number of stories that cover women in politics – again highlighting the fact that an increase in women's participation in politics does not automatically correspond to a ris ein media visibility for them.

4.1. VISIBILITY OF YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS

The report has thus far discussed the visibility of women in politics. Still, the point of the study is the visibility of young women in politics. In this regard, the report found(as shown in Figure 5) that out of the 232 editorial items focused on women, only 8 (4%) relate to young women in politics between the ages of 18 and 35, 63(27%) were on female politicians with no specification of age, and 161 (69%) were on female politicians older than 35.

FIG 5: BREAKDOWN OF EDITORIAL ITEMS ON WOMEN VS YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS

- Stories on women above 35 years
- Stories on women in politics
- Stories on young women in politics

RESOURCES:

✧ See the report: https://punchng.com/1524-women-contest-seats-in-2023-polls/

✧ It perhaps underscores Ross et al.'s (2020) point that low visibility for female politicians is not necessarily attributable to low women representation in politics.

✧ See: https://dailytrust.com/breaking-student-who-criticised-aisha-buhari-sent-to-suleja-prison/

If the eight stories specifically about young women in politics were analysed similarly to the 232 stories discussed previously, it would highlight the almost negligible visibility of young women politicians by starkly contrasting the coverage amounts. It would mean that, on average, there were some months that the newspapers had no report on young women in politics – this again in an election season. But one should note that women who contested the elections were older. For instance, the news report[5] that was presented in Figure 3 does not reveal the ages of the candidates, but a reading of the stories across the four newspapers indicates female politicians are likely to be above 35years – pointing to the low participation of young women in politics and elections.

The low participation of young women is related to broader issues around the barriers to young people's participation in the Nigerian political process (see the literature review above). One of these barriers is the age limit for elective offices, which civil society groups such as YIAGA Africa highlighted in their #NotTooYoungToRun campaign.[6] The major aim of the campaign was the demand that five years be removed from the age requirement to run for the Presidency (40 years), Senate (35 years), Governorship (35 years), House of Representatives (30 years), and State Houses of Assembly (30 years).[7] This led to the Age Reduction Bill, a constitutional amendment, which President Muhammadu Buhari signed on 31 May 2018. As a result, the Presidential age requirement was reduced to 35 years, the Senate to 30 years, the governorship to 30 years, the House of Representatives to 25 years, and state Houses of Assembly to 25 years. However, it is still unclear whether this has led to more youth participation in elections, partly because of the cost of running elections (see Gabriel, 2015; Lopez-Claros et al., 2022) and the fact that independent candidacy is illegal under the constitution.[8] Issues such as these underscore the structural advantage that older people and men have with participating in elections in Nigeria, a reality that reflects, to some extent, the visibility that the media gives to young women in politics.

RESOURCES:

❄ See: https://punchng.com/1524-women-contest-seats-in-2023-polls/

❄ For more on the #NotTooYoungToRun campaign, see:https://www.thecable.ng/not-young-run-story-people-power-democratic-renewal

❄ See: https://punchng.com/how-we-got-nottooyoungtorun-bill-to-trend-become-law-mbamalu-yiaga-africa-co-founder/

❄ Cynthia Mbamalu, co-founder of YIAGA Africa, notesthat they had campaigned also for independent candidacy as part of the#NotTooYoungToRun campaign, but this did not succeed.

With the breakdown of the eight stories that focus on young women in politics, we see again that the Daily Trust recorded half of the reports, reinforcing the dominant role that the newspaper played (see Table 1 below). The Punch and Vanguard followed, with two reports each. The Guardian had no entry. Half of the reports were published in March 2023, mainly focusing on young women elected to state assemblies – such as Rukayat Shittu, the26-year-old who won a seat in the Kwara State House of Assembly in Nigeria's North-Central region. Other stories considered the impact of the #NotTooYoungToRun campaign on the election, an exposition on youths seeking elective posts, and issues related to the participation of young people before and after the election. Some of these reports were based on interviews with Rinu Oduala, the 25-year-old high-profile political activist and Cynthia Mbamalu, the 35-year-old co-founder of YIAGA Africa, an election monitoring and civil society group. These other stories highlight issues affecting not just young female politicians but young people.

RESOURCES:

❖ For more on the #NotTooYoungToRun campaign, see:https://www.thecable.ng/not-young-run-story-people-power-democratic-renewal

❖ See: https://punchng.com/how-we-got-nottooyoungtorun-bill-to-trend-become-law-mbamalu-yiaga-africa-co-founder/

❖ Cynthia Mbamalu, co-founder of YIAGAAfrica, notesthat they had campaigned also for independent candidacy as part of the#NotTooYoungToRun campaign, but this did not succeed.

TABLE 1: EDITORIAL ITEMS FOCUSED ON YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS

Story	Media	Story Headline	Date	Placement	Type	Length
1	The Punch	#EndSARS protests awakened political consciousness in youths - Oduala	10/02/23	Page 7	Interview	Full Page
2	The Punch	Not too young to run: Rookies set for the hallowed chambers	02/04.23	Front Page and Pages 17, 20 & 29	Feature	Frontpage & two-page spread
3	Vanguard	46 days to go: Elections threatened in Borno, Imo, Ebonyi, Rivers, Zamfara, Sokoto, Kaduna, Yobe, and others - Mbamalu, YIAGA boss	08/01/23	Page 25	Interview	Full Page
4	Vanguard	Feb 25: Nationally, only 44 percent of polling units commenced election at 9:30 am - Mbamalu, YIAGA Africa Programme Director	05/03/23	Page 10	Interview	Full Page
5	Daily Trust	2023: Inside the world of youths seeking elective positions	17/12/22	Page 57	Feature	Full Page
6	Daily Trust	26-year old woman wins assembly seat in kwara	20/03/23	Page 10	News	Less than a quarter page

Story	Media	Story Headline	Date	Placement	Type	Length
7	Daily Trust	Meet 48 women who made it to state assemblies	25/03/23	Front Page and Pages 5, 6 & 10	News	Pages Spread
8	Daily Trust	I know i'll make a change 26 year old female lawmaker elect	25/03/23	Page 10	Interview	Full Page

The Table also shows that the stories on young women in politics were published as feature stories (3 items), interviews (3 items), and news stories (2 times).There were no op-ed pieces or editorials. All the reports had bylines. Concerning placement, the findings indicate that stories on young women in politics mainly were allocated inside pages. Only two reports had front-page prominence, implying that stories on young female politicians are not likely to be given top salience. However, the stories were considerably lengthy. Only one was less than a quarter page, with the remaining seven being full-page articles or multiple-page spreads. It reflects the fact that most of the stories were feature articles or interviews – which are more likely to be given full-page status, not necessarily because of an intensified focus on young women in politics.

4.2. REPORTORIAL STYLES IN STORIES ON YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS

To analyse the reportorial styles in the editorial items on young women in politics, the report adapted the framework developed by Ochieng (2024), who researched the Kenyan case study for this project.[9] This includes the nine media monitoring reportorial styles, except "young women's role" and "young women's portrayal" – two subsequent thematic categories that the report considers. That leaves us with seven media monitoring reportorial styles presented in Table 2. The finding here is broken down according to whether there was sensationalism in the stories about young women in politics, whether the stories had human faces, whether they were objective, whether they drew from various sources, whether there was fact-checking, whether the stories drew from various perspectives and whether language was used to present a bias against young women in politics.

TABLE 2: REPORTORIAL STYLES IN THE STORIES ON YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS

Reportorial Style	Story 1	Story 2	Story 3	Story 4	Story 5	Story 6	Story 7	Story 8
Sensationalism	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Human Face	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Objectivity	N/A	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Source Variation	N/A	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	No	Yes	N/A
Fact Checking	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Varying Perspectives	N/A	No	N/A	N/A	Yes	No	Yes	N/A

To present the findings, the report uses the Yes/No format. Also, note that N/A in the Table refers to Not Applicable –these pertain to interview stories that do not lend themselves to objectivity (an interview is inherently based on the interviewee's opinion), source variation, or varying perspectives (an interview draws from one source and perspective). Having introduced the reportorial styles, the report discusses each of them below.

SENSATIONALISM

Here, we see that the editorial items on young women in politics were mostly non-sensational. This was because half of the items were based on interviews with young women such as Rinu Oduala (Story 1) and Cynthia Mbamalu (Stories 3 & 4), who presented facts and figures in stating their opinions. Other stories used biographical facts (Story2) and electoral figures (Story 6). It was only Story 8 that featured instances of sensationalism, such as the description of Rukayat Shittu's success as something that gained "global attention" – pointing to the use of hyperbole in language.

HUMAN FACE

All the stories had human faces – they centred on real people (young women in politics), highlighting their successes and challenges. The stories focused on the following young women: Rinu Oduala (Story 1), Rukayat Shittu (Stories 2, 5, 6, 7, & 8), and Cynthia Mbamalu (Stories 3 & 4). Stories 7 also profiled 48 women who won seats in the various state Houses of Assembly, but without mentioning all their ages. We find something similar in Story 5, which reports on Oshaloto Abidemi, a female politician running for a House seat in Kogi State (North-Central Nigeria). Still, the story says nothing about her age.

OBJECTIVITY

Only four stories were analysed for objectivity; they were either news stories or features/profiles. All four stories are categorised as objective, mainly because they reported hard facts. These included the results of the election for Rukayat Shittu (Story 6) and biographical details used to profile female candidates (Story 7). Others also drew generously from interviews with the candidates (Stories 2 & 5). Consequently, the stories served as a medium for direct expression by the candidates, with little analytical descriptions by journalists.

SOURCE VARIATION

Three of the four stories in this category had source variation. For example, Story 2, given its manner of presentation, is likely to have used biographical details drawn from several sources. However, the story does not indicate what these sources are. Nonetheless, the story uses a quote by Rukayat Shittu, which was reproduced from another news outlet (acknowledgement was done correctly).Others, like Stories 5 and 7, present quotations from different female candidates. Story 7 goes further to include the views of four experts, alongside figures on elections both within and outside Nigeria.

FACT-CHECKING

None of the stories had fact-checking. This is understandable, to some extent, since some items used election figures or facts sourced directly from INEC. For others like Story 8, fact-checking could have been done; for instance, in the claim regarding Shittu – whether she was the youngest lawmaker-elect in Nigeria's history. The journalist asking the question was not sure, nor was Shittu, yet fact-checking was not done.

VARYING PERSPECTIVE

This is broadly similar to the finding on source variation. The only difference is with Story 2. Although the story indicates it draws from various sources for biographical details, it remains primarily based on a few perspectives - those of the journalist and, perhaps, Shittu herself, since her quote was used in the report.

BIAS IN LANGUAGE

For most stories, language was not used to present bias against young female politicians. Again, this was because they featured biographical details, electoral outcomes, and interview quotes. Only in Story 8 were traces of bias found in the wording used to describe the intimidation that Shittu might have faced in contesting the primaries against a highly-placed male politician. There was also a sense that Shittu, being a successful young female politician, was expected to influence other young women and serve as their role models. However, to its credit, the questioning had nothing related to marriage, childbearing, or domesticity.

4.3. THEMATIC PORTRAYALS OF YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS

To present the thematic portrayals of young female politicians, the report merges the findings on the "role of young women in politics" and the "portrayal of young women in politics" (adapted from Ochieng, 2024). Overall, five major themes are identified. The analysis was qualitatively done because of how few the stories are.

4.3.1. YOUNG WOMEN AS POLITICAL LEADERS

What this theme underscores is the portrayal of young women as political leaders, political contenders, experienced political actors, major stakeholders, or people interested in politics. It is the most salient form of representation in the dataset. It includes portraying young women as political contenders, as seen in Rukayat Shittu's assertion that "Nothing good comes easy. We just have to fight for our space and if God crowns our efforts, we will be elected" (see Story 5 – "2023: Inside the world of youths seeking elective positions" – Daily Trust). It shows that young female politicians have accepted this label, recognising that elections come with their challenges – challenges that they, as young female politicians, must expect and be ready for.

The theme also includes the representation of young women as not just contenders, but also political leaders. We find examples of this pattern of representation in Story 2 ("Not too young to run: Rookies set for the hallowed chambers" – The Punch). Presented as a mini-biography, the story highlights Shittu's electoral success at a young age, describing her as likely the "youngest candidate in the history of her constituency." Story 6 ("26-year-oldwoman wins assembly seat in Kwara" – Daily Trust) also carries a similar portrayal of Shittu as a young political leader – it describes Shittu as the youngest lawmaker in Kwara State and perhaps the youngest in Nigeria. As part of highlighting her leadership potential, Story 2 further underscores Shittu's track record of leadership, as seen in the fact that she was the first female Senate President of her university students' congress. By so doing, the story portrays Shittu as someone who, though young, has had some experience with leadership, especially of the legislative kind. We also find a similar pattern of portrayal in Story 5, where Shittu's experience as a university political leader is mentioned. Story 7 ("Meet 48 women who made it to state assemblies" – Daily Trust)extends this framing to not just young women but female politicians and their role as political leaders who have just been elected to public offices.

Beyond Shittu, the stories also highlight other young women's roles as experienced political leaders. One of these is Story 4 ("Feb 25: Nationally, only 44per cent of polling units commenced election at 9:30am – Mbamalu" – Vanguard),which portrays Mbamalu as someone knowledgeable about electoral matters in Nigeria, highlighting her vast experience as a political actor, even if not in partisan politics. The story reinforces Mbamalu's position as the head of YIAGA, highlighting her grasp of the issues that happened on election day and what could have been done better. This framing relates to Mbamalu's portrayal in Story 3 ("46 days to go: Elections threatened in Borno, Imo, Ebonyi, Rivers, Zamfara, Sokoto, Kaduna, Yobe, others – Mbamalu" – Vanguard) as a major stakeholder whose views are valued in Nigerian politics. In demonstrating this, the story includes references to insecurity and violence in Nigeria and Mbamalu's perception of Nigeria's readiness for the elections. An instance of the role of young women as major stakeholders is also the work that Mbamalu (and YIAGA Africa) did in launching an election manipulation risk index. The story draws on her knowledge of political and electoral matters, voter education, and preparations for the election. These serve the purpose of portraying Mbamalu as a young woman who is active in the Nigerian political scene.

Additionally, the reports underscore the portrayal of young female politicians as passionate and interested in politics and governance. Examples can be found in Story 2, which highlights Shittu's interest as someone who is "known to exude a raw passion and commitment to Nigeria that has been described as contagious." Her interest in the political process is then presented as an avenue for transmitting influence, given that the story portrays her as someone who will "challenge" other Nigerians to become involved nation-builders. Shittu reinforces this portrayal in Story 8 ("I know I'll make a change – 26-year-old female lawmaker-elect" – Daily Trust) by saying, "I have been involved in politics. It has been my dream to serve.... I have interest in politics" (Story 8). And by expressing the determination to overcome political challenges (for instance, in Oshaloto Abidemi's statement in Story 5), we also see the portrayal of young women as people who are interested in governance and who have "good intentions for my people."

4.3.2. YOUNG WOMEN AS POLITICAL ACTORS

Similar to the theme of young women as political leaders, this theme considers the portrayal of young women not as political candidates, but as citizens. It includes representing young women (and young people) as voters, activists, and organic foot soldiers. This portrayal primarily comes from Story 1 ("#EndSARS protests awakened political consciousness in youths – Oduala" – The Punch),which is based on an interview with Rinu Oduala, a political activist. There presentation underscores the youths' power to shape political realities in Nigeria. It does not refer to young women in particular, but youths as a general class that includes men and women. But what is more important is that Oduala is 25 years old. Hence, the representation of the general youth in the story can be interpreted in many ways as the portrayal that she ascribes to herself, which the story, by extension, conveys.

First in the story is the representation of young people as voters. This categorisation comes as an identity marker, highlighting youths' power, given that they make up the largest voting bloc in Nigeria. The story further shows how being a student is used as an identity marker for young people. Students are described as comprising a high percentage of newly registered voters and as those who make up a quarter of all registered voters. Therefore, they are portrayed as people with the power to determine electoral outcomes.

Second is the identity marker of youths as activists, given the influence that the #EndSARS[10] movement had on young people's psyche (Oduala herself was one of the leading figures of #EndSARS). These youths are then presented as "redefining governance" such that "politicians and leaders are awakening to a new politically conscious society." The assumption here is that these leaders belong to the older generation, pointing to the perception of low youthful involvement in leadership. In the story, however, Oduala combines both portrayals, as she ascribes to the youth the role of the activist-voter who turns "protest songs" into "thumbprints on the ballot" and whose placards are their voters' cards (see Story 1). Story 3 also relates to young women's role as leading activists. For instance, the story presents Mbamalu as someone involved in campaigns. This includes the point made by Mbamalu herself on the role that she and others played in opposing the appointment of some electoral commissioners that they saw as having questionable character.

Third, the youth are presented as people who are to "deliver the desired vote[s]" to candidates running in the election. This can be seen in the interviewer's question in Story 1. The question reads, "Many young people online appear to be devoted to a single candidate and political party. Do you think the young population can deliver the desired vote to their candidate?" It suggests that youths (including young women) are to serve as organic foot soldiers for the leading candidates in the Presidential election. In the broader sense, examples of this include the tags that were ascribed to youths – tags such as "BATified" for Bola Ahmed Tinubu of the All Progressives Congress (APC),"Atikulated" for Atiku Abubakar of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), and "Obidients" for Peter Obi of the Labour Party. Young women are then expected, with young men, to work towards the electoral success of the major candidates, who are male.

4.3.3. YOUNG WOMEN AS DEPENDENT ON THE OLDER GENERATION

The portrayal here shows that young female politicians may struggle to achieve electoral success. Instances of this can be found in Story 8, where Shittu is portrayed as someone dependent on the governor of the state. Shittu made this assertion when she said, "My strength and conviction come from God, then the governor" – pointing to the patronage-based political culture, especially for women (Kelly, 2019). It further connects to the notion that the younger generation needs the support and leverage of the older generation. In this case, it was Shittu who needed the governor's support. She also added that funding for her campaign came from the support of people, further appreciating the support of other older women, saying Aisha Buhari (wife of the former President) was "like a mother" to her during the election process (Story 8).

Story 1 also highlights the portrayal of young people as those who need the older generation for support and leverage to achieve political visibility. It is seen in the assertion that young people want to be involved in politics, "but they have never been given the chance to do so" (Rinu Oduala in Story 1) – a passive construction which suggests that young people are on the receiving end of actualising political participation. This theme is also evident in the interviewer's question relating to the actions that the youths need to take to "win the older generation." The story suggests that youth are better placed to serve as leaders who are "dynamic" and who have the physical and mental stamina needed to understand the complex global environment and Nigeria's relation to it – but only if they are given the chance. The story shows young people need leverage because of the cost of running elections. Without this support, the story implies that youth participation in elections will remain low despite passaging the #NotTooYoungToRun Act, as Rinu puts it:

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has become incredibly expensive. How can we expect young people in Nigeria, where the majority are unemployed or underemployed, to bear the cost of political work with a 60% youth unemployment rate? (STORY1)

Rinu, however, draws on the controversy around the lazy Nigerian youth, which President Muhammadu Buhari initiated when he said Nigerian youths were lazy.[11] Rinu uses the report to show that young Nigerians were not lazy, given "our participation in mass movements with energy and passion."

4.3.4. YOUNG WOMEN AS INFLUENTIAL TRAILBLAZERS

In this theme, the few young women who have attained political success are portrayed as influential role models for the next generation of female leaders. The portrayal centers on Shittu, who in Story 2, is quoted as saying:

> **I WANT THE** future to speak for me and identify me as a role model for the youth. I believe my candidature will encourage and pave way for more young people who are willing to participate in electoral contests.

This pattern of representation continues in Story 8, where Shittu, after winning her election, presented herself as someone who will serve as a trailblazer for women coming behind her, saying, "I am here for the generation to come, to put down a legacy for the womenfolk." She also saw herself as a role model for the next generation, intending to be "a reference point for other youth and women in Nigeria." This portrayal is based on self-representation, where Shittu saw her role as mentoring other young women, saying that other young women can achieve similar feats through mentorship and support.

The theme also includes portraying young female politicians as people who could not afford to fail. We see in the self-representation that Rukayat Shittu gave herself in Story 7, pointing to the weight of responsibility that the few successful female politicians bear.

4.3.5. INTIMIDATION AND YOUNG WOMEN AS VICTIMS OF SOCIETY

This final theme points to the representation of young women as victims of patriarchy, culture, religion, and tradition, an area that the literature emphasises (UN Women, 2013; PLAC, 2018; Ette and Akpan-Obong, 2023). It also underscores how young women are portrayed as people who should feel intimidated to participate in politics.

We find the portrayal of young women as victims in Story 7, which features an interview with Mufuliat Fijane, chief executive officer of the Nigeria Women Trust Fund. The story shows the portrayal of female politicians as victims of patriarchy in Nigeria. It also touches on issues relating to low women's participation in politics, highlighting the need for legislation that earmarks the number of legislative seats women should occupy and other issues such as culture and the monetised electoral environment. In this way, it portrays female politicians as victims of not just patriarchy but also culture, religion, and tradition.

When it comes to intimidation, we see this in Story 8 in one question the journalist asked Shittu. The questioning, when quoted, reads: "You contested the primary against politicians like the chairman, House of Assembly Committee on Appropriation, Ibrahim Ambali, were you not intimidated?" (Story 8). Underlying this, therefore, was the sense that Shittu, as a young female politician, might have been afraid to challenge an older politician, one that was male and highly placed, highlighting inequalities around the intersection of gender and power.

SUMMARY OF THE SECTION

This first section of the findings focused on media monitoring to examine the representation and portrayal of young female politicians in the Nigerian media. Data for the analysis was drawn from editions of four newspapers (The Punch, Vanguard, The Guardian, and Daily Trust) published over six months from 1 November 2022 to 30 April 2023. The outcome showed that women in politics have low visibility in the media. There were only 232 editorial items that focused on these women. Analysis of the findings in line with the literature suggests that factors responsible for the low visibility include not just poor women's participation in politics but also implicit media bias against female politicians.

The reality is even worse for young women in politics – there were only eight stories in this category. Likely implications of the low visibility for young female politicians could include a normalisation of the perception that young women have no place in politics, underscoring why increased visibility for young female politicians is vital.

Given how few the editorial items on young women were, the report analysed them qualitatively, first in reportorial styles (adapted from Ochieng, 2024) [RC1] and second concerning themes. Analysis of the reportorial styles indicated that the eight stories broadly complied with the practice of good journalism. This meant the stories were not sensational, had human faces, were objective, largely had source variation and varying perspectives, and did not use language to present bias. However, the stories had no fact-checking. With regard to themes, five of them were identified, the first of which centred around the role of young women as political contenders, political leaders, and those passionate about politics. Second was the identity of young female politicians as voters, activists, and foot soldiers. Third was the portrayal of women as dependent on the patronage and support of the older generation. Fourth was the portrayal of young women as trailblazers and the weight of responsibility they bear. And fifth was the representation of young women politicians as victims of cultural norms and society more broadly.

All these indicate the visibility that the media ascribed to young women in politics, both in negative and positive ways, with the crucial finding being that young female politicians have low visibility in the media – something that young female politicians in Nigeria agree on. It is this that I discuss in the next section of the findings.

5.0. Findings – Thematic Analysis of Issues Affecting the Visibility of Young Women in Politics

This second part of the findings is based on an FGD on the views of six young women in politics. The discussion centred around the challenges that young women face with engaging in Nigerian politics and their dealings with the media, the issues that they want media practitioners to be mindful of in their coverage of young women in politics, and the kinds of training that young women in politics need in their relationship with the media, including social media. Based on the analysis of the discussion transcript, five themes were developed. They include issues around sexism and bias in media coverage, the portrayal of young female politicians as incomplete without men, inadequate mentorship and support from other women, youth condescension and the influence of money politics, and the need for media and strategic support on the visibility of young women in politics.

5.1 SEXISM AND BIAS IN MEDIA COVERAGE OF YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS

This was the most salient theme that the discussants highlighted – it suggests that the media is biased in the visibility it ascribes to young female politicians. Included here is that the media, in its report, focuses disproportionately on the personal lives and physical appearance of young female politicians instead of their track record, skill, or competence. It comes with the suggestion that the media presents young women based on their appearance, not on the value they offer. A reason for this pattern of coverage of female politicians is the media's profit motive and the desire to attract more subscribers through sensational reportage (Illah et al.,2012; see above, Omojola and Morah's (2014) point on the logic of commercialism). The suggestion, therefore, is that the situation is different concerning coverage of male politicians, who garner media visibility, not because of their looks but the attention they command as impact makers. This further relates to findings in the media monitoring section above, where newspaper reports on female politicians (mostly older women) concentrate on their appearance and issues around fashion and style. Participant 3 buttressed this point, noting:

WHY IS IT

that if [I] comes out right now to say I want to run for [the] office of President, the first response that we get whether from the media or even our circle and community groups will not be, 'To what extent is [she]qualified for [the] office of the President' and make our checks and balances along that line? The focus is always beside that point. It's always things like 'Is she married?' It's always things like that. Sometimes the conversation can even be about the kind of hair you are wearing or the kind of dress or make-up.

The participants showed that this pattern of coverage is also reflected in internet searches for young female politicians, where search results are likely to highlight the content that young women post on social media platforms like Snapchat rather than reports on their work. This, they observed, points to bias in reporting since the media do not replicate the same in their coverage of male politicians. It underscores a double-standard approach, given that women face harsher criticisms from the media and, by extension, the wider society (see UNDP, 2022) for perceived moral shortcomings, such as being found in a sex toy shop. Concerning this, one participant (Participant3) highlighted the case of Elisha Abbo, a male senator who hit a woman in a sex toy shop. She noted that the criticism that Abbo received would have been more substantial if he had been a woman – where the media conversation would have shifted to issues around marital status and sexual orientation. It implies the imbalance in the reporting between male and female politicians:

MEDIA COVER MEN

and women politicians and candidates differently. In Nigeria, there is a gender bias in the amount of coverage of politicians in proportional electoral systems, where women politicians lag behind men in media attention. Women politicians receive more attention on stereotypical issues and trait coverage. (PARTICIPANT1)

Issues of stereotype are what Participant 2 describes as "figure eight," saying, "They (the media and society at large) just look at our figure eight; they don't look at the inner man in us." What we see here is the perception that media coverage objectifies and sexualises young women in politics, signifying the need for the media to "stop carrying our personal lives" (Participant 2). Here, Participant 2 refers to the tendency of the media to focus on past scandals that young female politicians might have been involved with, noting that what is important are the present aspirations that they, as young women in politics, have.

There is also the existence of what Participant 5 calls "cosmetised vulnerability" in the way that young female politicians deal with the media. Participant 2described this in the struggles she had with her personal media handlers, who were always seeking the "packaged" candidate, one that was flawless, refined, and laidback. Here, stories that show the everyday struggles of the female politicians and the ordinary people she interacts with are retouched or done away with. The female politician is also told not to attack when she is attacked by the media. The focus is on presenting an idealised portrayal of the young female politician, where her vulnerabilities are brushed over to fit the expected norm.

One factor responsible for this idealised portrayal and the hyper-focus on young women's personal lives, the participants noted, is the control that men wield over the media, highlighting what the literature records (Omojola and Morah,2014; Ette, 2017; Report Women, 2018; Osei-Appiah, 2019). It relates to the effect of the "male gaze" and the idea that men in the media are likely to first see female politicians as "fashion icons" (Participant 1). This is because "powerful people in the media over time have been men, and men have the power to tell stories" (Participant1). The suggestion is that female professionals are underrepresented in the media workforce, indicating that young women in politics are subject to the representational patterns that men dictate.

5.2. PORTRAYAL OF YOUNG FEMALE POLITICIANS AS INCOMPLETE WITHOUT MEN

Media coverage also comes with the notion that young female politicians are incomplete without men. The suggestion is that young women cannot attain political success if they do not have male backers, whether on the home front or in the political space. On the home front, the media discourse relates to whether young female politicians are married – whether they have husbands who provide family cover. As a result, unmarried female politicians may be rejected on this ground. Participant 2 puts it this way: "[There is] fear of me not having a crown on my head – [that] I'm not yet married. So, they have that belief that so far as I don't have a man on my head, it is very possible that I'm not submissive."

In the political space, the conversation shifts to the powerful male elites who provide leverage for young women, with media portrayal suggesting that women will be unsuccessful without this leverage.

AS A WOMAN

who is the man behind you? I think that's really something we should talk about when we talk about media representation of women. There's no account of any woman in politics that doesn't end with, 'Oh, and she's not married.' 'Oh, she was married and is divorced.'
'Oh, she's been associated with one, two, three, four powerful men, and they make the way for her.'
(PARTICIPANT1)

Hence, for women who make it in politics, the perception is that media portrayal usually links them to the governors, federal ministers, or National Assembly representatives from their localities– all of whom are almost always men. As a result, "there's never a conversation that just starts and ends with [a female politician] – there's always an allusion to the man behind her or the men behind her" (Participant 1). Participant 2 buttressed this, noting that media and societal representations come with the insinuation that "I have to have these big men behind me before I can be able to do some things with money."

The theme of the incomplete woman further relates to the idea that young women are not suited for the public sphere. This points to the distinction between the public and private spaces that women occupy, and the feeling among the participants was that women have been socialised into thinking that they belong to the private sphere. The consequence is that women have become unsure about participating in politics.

ONE OF THE

things I've found is that before women even go into politics, there is a concern that lingers over her head, which is that women tend to think twice or three times before bringing themselves into any kind of public space, whether it is political or even apolitical or otherwise.... Women are seen as those that should be at home, raising kids, nurturing, and so on and so forth. So that seems to follow us everywhere that we go. (PARTICIPANT3)

This type of socialisation not only happens at the media level but also in the family setting, where older women raise young girls and women to believe that they belong in the private sphere.

THEY(OLDER WOMEN)

will tell you, you are supposed to be in the house. You are meant to sit down [in] the house, that when you are exposed, you will not do well, you will be proud to your husband, you will not be respectful. Little fame will just come to you.
(PARTICIPANT 2)

We also see the subtle distinction between the public and the private in women's roles in national political life, where they serve as federal ministers, for instance. Here, Participant 1 gives the example that women are more likely to be assigned "compassion issues such as humanitarianism, poverty, education, healthcare, and the environment," while men are assigned "tough issues such as security and foreign policy" – pointing to tokenism in political appointments for women (see UNDP, 2022). This then relates to media coverage, given that reporting on male politicians is done with masculine lenses, while reporting on women is done with feminine lenses (Participant1).

One solution to this overall pattern of socialisation is for women to be more balanced in how they raise both boys and girls, Participant 5 noted. It is a call for women to "change the narrative from the home front to say, 'You know what, in this house, regardless of your gender, you can do it. Male can take on this responsibility, female can take up this responsibility.' We'll begin to see that shift."

5.3. INADEQUATE MENTORSHIP AND SUPPORT FROM OTHER WOMEN

Besides issues around socialisation, from the media and otherwise, the participants further drew attention to the lack of support that young women in politics get from other women, including their female mentors. The discussants broadly agreed that women do not support one another, so women are unlikely to support their fellow female electoral candidates. The situation, they noted, is attributable to gender differences, since their male friends are quick to show their support during campaigns and elections. What this points to is a "women-vs-women" scenario (Participant 3), highlighting the hindrances that young women in politics face, as Participant 2 noted:

WHEN WE GO

out for our campaigns and…[when] I want to do my official visitation…I'm always seeing [that] out of my female friends, just like two is turning up, and I'm having all my male friends there, coming down with their cars, coming with convoys. So, the other thing is that we women, we don't support ourselves – I got to realise that. But when it comes to the male, you will see them having thousands of females at their back.

Participant 2 continued by saying:

IT WAS A

personal colleague, a male friend, that bought me my form. And I was like, but I have female friends – they don't post it. They say this thing that females are enemies of each other. I don't believe that, but literally, it is true; we don't support each other.

When young female politicians face opposition in this way, whether inside or outside of politics, the hindrance becomes almost personal, making it hard to succumb, given that "when a woman is standing in the way of another woman, you are pretty much going no where, because it is like fighting yourself. And I see this happen all the time" (Participant 3).

The challenge also relates to the lack of support from older women in politics, who are more experienced. Participant 2 observed that these older women "are not ready to support you as a daughter." It underscores the lack of mentorship from older female politicians (see similar findings in Akpan, 2018). Participant 3 attributed this lack of support to a "scarcity mindset" – the fact that only a few women occupy top public offices, whether elected or appointed. These women are concerned more with self-preservation than supporting the next generation of female public officeholders.

I ALSO WANT

to talk about a scarcity mindset, that I see. And I see that... scarcity mindset addresses the fears that... [Participant 2] spoke about – that women are seemingly afraid. So, when a woman has been successfully platformed, and gotten into a space, you would always find it difficult to have that woman holding the hand of another woman, and trying to bring her up.... And I think that that comes from a place of scarcity. (PARTICIPANT 3)

Participant 3 added that the situation is different with her male mentors, who feel more secure in being willing to support her with opportunities. But for female mentors, the scarcity mindset implies that "she (the mentor) has to exhaust the resources available in that room and be safe" before thinking of supporting other women – women whom she (the mentor) sees as her "competitor[s]." What this indicates is the reality of male dominance, which suggests that opportunities for political advancement or security are more likely to go to men, which then means that the few women who occupy prominent positions have to scramble to retain their spots, while also pushing for elevation. In cases such as this, therefore, mentorship is not likely to be of topmost concern to older women in politics.

Regardless, the participants identified the need for a shift from this scarcity mindset, noting that it was mostly "psychological" (Participant 3). Participant 5 also agreed with the submission on poor mentorship for young women in politics. She observed that young women tend to have more mentors than men, but the challenge lies with support – older women do not usually provide the support younger women need. According to her, the solution is finding ways to "convert this mentorship relationship and leverage the network of these mentors to canvass for support for elective positions" (Participant 5).

There is also the role that the media could play in building bridges between young female politicians and their older female mentors. The discussion among the participants suggests that the media often fails to highlight stories of solidarity between women leaders across generations, thus leading to a situation where perceptions of antagonism prevail. One way that the media can correct this is to give greater spotlight to young female politicians (Theme 5below expands on this). That way, the foundation can be laid for news reports that highlight the common issues that younger and older female politicians face, and the ways that one can support the other. This underscores the opportunities that exist within the media for more conscious reporting to address the challenges of young female participation in politics.

5.4. YOUTH CONDESCENSION AND THE INFLUENCE OF MONEY POLITICS

Another challenge young women in politics face is that stakeholders, both men and women, often look down on them. Participant 2, for instance, recounted her experience at the start of campaigning for the House of Assembly election when she went to her hometown to galvanise her base. "The first [thing] they would say was 'odo ni,' like' she is a youth; she cannot win, she can't represent us.'" This sentiment points to the condescending manner in which stakeholders assess young people, often concluding that they (young people) lack the financial and structural muscle needed to win elections in Nigeria.

In terms of structural muscle, Participant 1 highlighted how inequality affects women in particular, given the influence of patriarchal forces in the Nigerian political system:

THE [ORGANISATIONAL] STRUCTURE

of the political parties systematically disempowers and disincentivises women in Nigeria. Women are rarely involved at the formation stage of parties but are subsequently introduced for feminine roles. Nigerian parties do not make room for women.

With regard to financial strength, Participant2 pointed to the influence of money politics. This is where the candidate who has more money to spend and give to political jobbers and voters is likely to win the election. Young women tend not to have that leverage, one more reason for stakeholders to look down on them. In some sense, this theme connects to the earlier theme (Theme 2) about young female politicians needing the resources of the powerful men around them to succeed. It presupposes that young female politicians need all the money they can get to attain political success.

POVERTY IS IN

grassroots politics; that is where you'll see godfatherism, you will see the leaders, you will see the stakeholders. All they want is money, money, money – no matter how brilliant or skilful you are. If you don't have money in this Nigerian politics, no matter how you play it very well, my sisters, it is a no. (PARTICIPANT 2)

It underscores the impact that poverty has on people, what Participant 2 refers to as a "brainwashing" effect. It explains why people "prefer 2,000 naira[12] than for you building a school for them – a free school." This also has agender dimension, since people expect that male politicians have more money to spend than female politicians, again highlighting the condescension that people hold towards young women in politics. Lack of financial resources could further lead to low visibility for young female politicians, given that the consequences of low participation in politics translate to fewer avenues for the media to report on young women in politics. Additionally, it implies that young female politicians are significantly disadvantaged in buying media space or airtime through promotional adverts, for instance, further contributing to low visibility outcomes for them.

There are also issues around media patronage and corruption, where media professionals receive financial or material benefits in exchange for favourable news coverage, for instance (Adeyemi, 2013). Given the comments of the participants, the suggestion is that older (and male) politicians are likely to be the ones able to buy corrupt media patronage, considering the advantage they hold in the money politics equation. This then translates to more coverage and visibility for older male politicians at the expense of young women in politics. One way to correct this will be for the media to shun corrupt patronage practices and be more mindful of the need to accord visibility to young women in politics. This visibility could also contribute to shifting the pattern of youth condescension in Nigerian politics.

> ## POVERTY IS IN
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5.5. MEDIA AND STRATEGIC SUPPORT ON THE VISIBILITY OF YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS

In this final theme, the participants observed the need for the media to be more deliberate in the visibility it renders to young women in politics. First is the importance of having a balanced reportage that has not been coloured to portray young female politicians negatively. This is needed, because, as Participant 2 observed, "Social media and media and everything in general, they love sieving. You'll say something, the way they'll twist it, and you'll be like, 'this is not what I was saying.'"

The belief, therefore, is that media reportage in this way correlates with the perception that people have about young women in politics:

RESOURCES:

❈ Approximately 2.62USD (based on theexchange rate of 746.74 naira to 1USD on 16 October 2023). Figures are based onrates from the Central Bank of Nigeria: https://www.cbn.gov.ng/rates/exchratebycurrency.asp

The call is for the media to focus more on projecting young women, rather than dwelling on negative portrayals and sensational scandals. Participant 2 noted that this is one fear that young female politicians have – the fear that the media can dig up some of their past disgraceful conduct for smear campaigns. This underscores the drive that media have to increase engagement and patronage.

Such a driving need for patronage is further reflected in the "hyper focus" that the media give to women who are already established, as opposed to young women in politics, who are less known (Participant 3) – something that Osei-Appiah(2019) alludes to. The focus on high-profile women further relates to the profit motives of media proprietors, Participant 3 noted, since they estimate readers will be more interested in news about known people. It all represents a call for the media to be intentional about the visibility it renders to young female politicians, highlighting how important it is for the media to go the extra mile to spotlight them using stories of impact.

Beyond the intentional media visibility of young women in politics, the participants also pointed to the importance of strategic support for young female politicians. In Participant 4's view, this includes women creating a system that makes it possible for them to identify the young women who are more likely to achieve political success, and to support them.

SOMETHING THAT I

think I'll really want to say is the fact that not every woman is meant to be a leader, as well as not every man is meant to lead in a public space. I feel it'll be best for women to identify women who have the skills, who have the capacity. So, it's not about, 'women should be in this, women should be in that.' What about women who don't have the capacity and you are just pushing them, and at the end of the day, they mess up…. So, how about finding women with these qualities? Then we back them. (PARTICIPANT 4)

The lack of strategic support also connects to themes on the problematic socialisation of women (Theme 2) and youth condescension (Theme 4), given that society cannot be organised to support women if there is a prevailing belief that young women do not belong in the political arena. It is perhaps for this reason that Participant 4 added that it is important for young women to secure the support of their family members and others at the grassroots level. Participant 5 agreed, noting that "strategic support for people at the grassroots is the building blocks; you don't just appear and expect support." Participant 1,however, reiterated the structural and patriarchal constraints that young women face, pointing to the need for policies that provide "safe spaces for women[to] use their agency and strategised pathways through patriarchal structures. "It is a call for women not to be judged for their work in trying to be strategic in their drive for visibility and success in the Nigerian political space.

SUMMARY OF THE SECTION

This second part of the findings concludes the presentation of the results. It is based on an FGD with six young women in Nigeria who play recognisable roles in political or policy circles. The discussion focused on the challenges that young women in politics face in Nigeria and the issues that they want the media to be mindful of when reporting on young women in politics. Overall, the outcome yielded five interconnected themes, the first highlighting a perception of sexism and bias in media coverage of young female politicians. This connects to objectified, sexualised media coverage portraying women through the male lens dominating news operations, as well as the practice of showing 'cosmetised vulnerability' -where young female politicians receive coverage depicting them in unrealistic, idealised terms. The report further noted that issues around objectified and sexualised coverage point to the effect of patriarchal power structures and the influence that men wield over media operations and content. The second theme considered media portrayal of young female politicians as incomplete without men.

This incompleteness applies in the home front, where young female politicians are expected to be married and play domestic roles at home, and in the political space, where young female politicians are portrayed as people who need the leverage of powerful men in politics.

The third theme underscored the inadequate mentorship and lack of support from other women that young women in politics have to deal with. There is a perception among young women regarding a general lack of support from other women. Older women also do not provide the mentorship that young female politicians need, largely because of what the participants described as a 'scarcity mindset' – where older women are more concerned about maintaining their positions than helping younger women climb the political ladder. This leads to the fourth theme on youth condescension and the influence of money politics, pointing to the challenges young women face in a patriarchal and patronage-based political system. The final theme showed the media and strategic support that could aid young women's visibility in the media. It calls for the media to be factual in its reports on young female politicians and not give attention to sensational coverage. It also points to the need for the media to give greater attention to young female politicians who are making a societal impact (or who have the potential to do so), rather than devote their coverage only to high-profile figures.

Overall, the implications of the focus group findings are far-reaching. The participants' conclusions on biased and objectified media coverage are consequential for the broader participation of women in politics. It could also potentially mean that even if women gain access to leadership roles, these are likely to be tokenistic, given the effect that sensational and problematic media coverage have on the way that women (and their contribution) are trivialised. This underscores why it is important for researchers, media professionals, and civil society groups to monitor media representation of young female politicians to identify areas where changes are needed – to promote the visibility of young women in politics.

6.0. Recommendations

The key analysis of the findings has outlined the content analysis of media portrayal of young women in politics and the FGD on how young female politicians perceive their visibility in the media. The recommendations draw from the findings to highlight steps needed to address challenges related to the visibility of young women in politics in Nigeria. These challenges were discussed in the literature and findings sections. They include formal (e.g., laws) and informal (e.g., norms)socio-political factors that hinder young women from participating in politics, the influence of male ownership of and control over media structures, and the problematic portrayals of young women in politics – that is, in the few cases where they are represented in the media. To address these issues, the recommendations outline vital measures in two broad areas: policies that are needed to reshape the political and cultural landscape and the role of media structure and content.

6.1. THE ROLE OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL POLICIES

Findings from the FGD and the reading of the literature show that the following changes are needed to address the formal and informal factors that affect the participation of young women in politics:

1. At the formal level, the Nigerian government should do more to implement international principles on women's empowerment, such as CEDAW, particularly regarding female participation in politics. One key policy that should be implemented is the National Gender Policy, which specifies 35%of female political representation. This figure has never been met, and more should be done to actualise it, just as we see in countries like Rwanda.

2. To actualise the Gender Policy quota on women's representation in politics, political parties should be mandated or encouraged to set quotas for women of not less than 35% in all elective and appointive posts. The Constitution can also be amended to ensure that women have no less than 35% representation in the national and state assemblies.

3. More women should be appointed to positions in areas considered "masculine", such as security, and not only to "compassionate" portfolios, such as family and women affairs.

4. Particular attention should be given to young women in politics. Findings from the media monitoring show that where women participate in politics, they are far more likely to be older than younger. Consequently, civil society groups and the government should intensify efforts to encourage more young women to be active in politics and take up opportunities to run for political offices, starting from the grassroots.

5. Measures should be taken to address the financial burden of running for elections and the influence of money politics so that more young women can run for political posts. This will help to reduce the influence of patronage, patriarchy, and godfatherism in Nigerian politics.

6. The media should advocate for formal policy changes on issues affecting young women in politics through the intentional and sustained use of solution journalism, agenda-setting, investigative reporting, story formats, and civic awareness-building capabilities.

7. At the informal level, the focus group participants called for a redefinition of how children are socialised. Boys and girls should be raised to believe that women can hold public offices just as well as men. This will help to normalise the prospect of increasing young women's representation in politics – to show that women also belong in the public sphere.

8. There is a need to eradicate the politics of insult so that young women who participate in politics do not face emotional, verbal, or sexual assault.

9. Greater support should be provided to young female politicians in terms of mentorship from older women. These older women should be encouraged to look beyond the "scarcity mindset" and take steps to promote young female representation in politics.

10. Female colleagues should be more active in forming a sisterhood supporting young women's participation in politics.

11. The media should do more to highlight stories of solidarity between younger and older female politicians as a way to address perceptions of hostility between both groups.

12. The media should use solution journalism, agenda-setting, investigative reporting, and storytelling to advocate for informal policy changes that ultimately enhance the visibility of young women vying for political office.

13. Overall, there is a need to address the sexist, patriarchal, and patronage system of Nigerian politics to encourage more young women to participate in politics and provide a level playing field for them.

6.2. MEDIA STRUCTURE AND MEDIA CONTENT

Regarding media visibility, the findings show that action is needed in two key areas:media structure and media content.

1. For media structure, it is vital to address the power that men disproportionately hold over media operations. There are far too few women in the Nigerian press (Women Reports, 2018). Hence, there is need for more women employment and involvement in junior, middle, and top positions in the media.

2. Beyond female involvement in the media, however, there is a need to address implicit bias in the media to ensure that journalists, whether men or women, do not discriminate against young female politicians through stereotypical reporting.

3. Senior managers in the media should institute a process that checks for bias against young female politicians in media coverage.

4. This process should include a conscious effort to improve the visibility of young women in politics. Our findings show that 232 stories and eight stories were devoted to women in politics and young women in politics, respectively, over six months in an election season. These figures are far too small, pointing to low visibility that should be corrected.

5. The process should further include measures to ensure that journalists do not continue the default practice of providing visibility to high-profile politicians, who tend to be older men. Particular focus should be given to young female politicians who have the potential to make an impact, even if that impact is not yet apparent. If need be, special newspaper pages and broadcast airtime should be devoted to young female politicians.

6. Concerning media content, the media should ensure that stories about young women in politics are not based on sensationalism, stereotypes, or objectification. Focus should not be on the appearance of young female politicians but on their track record, skill, and performance.

7. The media should beware of "cosmetised vulnerability" – which is the practice of representing young female politicians in idealised ways and holding them to that standard.

8. The media should do more to highlight stories of solidarity between female politicians across generations to contribute towards addressing the gap in mentorship and the "scarcity mindset" that the FGD participants described.

4. The media monitoring findings show that the media portrayed young female politicians as political contenders, political leaders, activists, and voters. More of this kind of coverage should be encouraged.

5. Media professionals should be made to understand the importance of improved visibility for young women in politics. This includes knowing that low visibility has a high chance of leading to poor women's representation in politics.

7.0. Conclusions

The report aimed to investigate the visibility of young women in politics in Nigeria. Consideration was given to the barriers that young women face when participating in elections in Nigeria and the patterns of visibility that the media renders to them. Evidence in the literature showed that women face barriers along formal and informal lines that prevent them from participating effectively in politics. Previous studies further showed that media visibility for women in politics is low and is influenced by sexist and patriarchal factors. None of these studies considered media visibility for young women in politics – this is one intervention that the report makes to fill a gap in the literature. In making this intervention, the report utilised media monitoring and FGD, with evidence showing that media visibility for young women in politics is extremely low – only eight editorial items over six months during Nigeria's 2023 elections. Findings of the media monitoring were presented along reportorial styles and five themes such as the representation of young women as political contenders and political leaders, young women as voters and activists, young women as dependent on the patronage and support of the older generation, young women as political trailblazers, and young women as victims of society.

In the FGD section of the findings, the report showed that young women viewed media representation as sexist and biased. There was also the perception that the media portrayed young female politicians as incomplete without men, that there was inadequate mentorship and support from older women, that there was youth condescension and influence of money politics, and that there was a need for media and strategic support to enhance the visibility of young women in politics. Based on these findings, the report recommended that action be taken in two key areas. First is the need to institute formal and informal policies to address barriers to young women participation in politics. Second is the importance of redefining media structure and content to reflect adequate visibility for young female politicians.

These recommendations are vital in ensuring that the media significantly improves the visibility it grants to young female politicians and that this is done in objective rather than biased or sensational ways, given the effect that this will have on female participation in political and leadership roles. We hope these recommendations will be acted upon in the interest of gender equity in political participation and media visibility for young women in politics in Nigeria. Having done this study, we recognise that it carries forward the discussion in the extant literature, by, in particular, filling a gap in research on the visibility of young women in politics. Future research will be needed to take the conversation even further to categorically outline the factors that account for low visibility of young female politicians in the media – by, for instance, asking media professionals themselves to highlight the issues and challenges they face and the opportunities for addressing them. Empirical work should also examine the impact of low visibility (whether it actually leads to poor women representation in politics as van der pas (2022) suggests) and reasons that explain why more female participation in politics corresponds to reduced media visibility (whether it is tied to implicit media bias as Courtney et al. (2020) argues). These further studies will add to our research and its aim of addressing low media visibility for young women in politics.

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