Online Platforms and Political Voices: An Examination of Political Representation Practices through the Social Media Pages of Women Politicians in Kenya

Nancy Gakahu

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Leeds
School of Media and Communication

May 2024

Intellectual Property Statement

I confirm that the work submitted is my own work and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

The right of Nancy Gakahu to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by her in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

© Nancy Gakahu and the University of Leeds.

Acknowledgments

This academic journey took a village. As a believer, I am grateful to God for his unending grace and guidance through my PhD journey.

I am indebted to the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission (CSC), and its partnership with the University of Leeds for offering me a generous scholarship that granted me the academic freedom to concentrate on my studies without having to worry about financial constraints. I am also grateful to MMUST for offering me a study leave.

My sincere gratitude to my PhD mentors, Dr Yuan Zeng, and Prof Chris Paterson. Your mentorship, expertise, and unwavering support have been the cornerstone of my academic journey. Dr Yuan, you have a unique ability of seamlessly merging 'the personal' and the academia. Prof Chris, your attention to detail is unparalleled. I wouldn't have wished for a better team. I also appreciate academic insights from other lecturers at the school of Media and Communication, university of Leeds, especially Dr Todd Graham, Dr Sally Oppiah, and Prof Coleman. Dr Giles Moss, thank you for your support and understanding.

To my parents, brothers, sisters, nephews, and nieces, thank you for your encouragement and support. Rob and Jane, you will never be forgotten. Megan, this is for you.

To Susan Kadima, you pushed me to explore the UK for my Ph.D. It was all worth it. Dr Dan Omanga, I am forever indebted to all the references I needed from you – which you provided promptly without tiring. Linda and Wisdom, thank you for the dinners and the walks back to my flat. To Nyongesa and Elvis, I appreciate all the errands you ran for me in MMUST.

To everyone who contributed to the successful completion of this program, directly or indirectly, I recognize that this achievement is a collective triumph full of encouragement, resilience, and shared commitment. I carry with me the lessons learned, the relationships forged, and the impact of your support. May God bless you all.

Abstract

This study investigates the utilization of social media platforms, specifically Facebook and Twitter, by women politicians in Kenya as avenues for political communication and representation.

Highlighting the significance of women's voices in fostering a robust representative democracy, the study adopts a constructivist approach to explore political representation practice. It scrutinizes the representative assertions made by these women leaders on their social media platforms, analyzing the strategies they employ, and the identities they project. Furthermore, the underlying ontological foundations upon which this practice is based are examined, alongside the challenges that these women leaders encounter in online engagements. Ultimately, the study concludes with an examination of the political representation modes that emerge out of this inquiry.

The study integrates diverse data sources to explore the landscape of political representation in Kenya. Specifically, it leverages social media data retrieved from the Facebook and Twitter (Currently known as platform X) pages of 20 women politicians through web scraping. This data is complemented with semi-structured one-on-one interviews with 10 women politicians, 12 citizens and 5 social media administrators. Additionally, the study conducts 3 FGDs involving 25 citizens from distinct locales: an urban setting, a peri-urban area, and a rural setting, for the purpose of capturing the varied perspectives of Kenya's citizenry regarding political representation in the country.

Subsequently, the study employs a combination of discourse and thematic analyses to scrutinize the data. Discourse analysis is leveraged to examine social media data, scouting for underlying meaning within the texts and analyzing the meaning of these texts in the Kenyan context. Thematic analysis, on the other hand, is employed to explore patterns and overarching themes that emerge out of the interviews and FGDs.

The findings of this study reveal a complex and multifaceted online political representation practice. Notably, the study reveals that women leaders in Kenya engage with an array of representative issues on these platforms including infrastructure and development, sustainability, and governance. Moreover, the study notes that these leaders employ a

spectrum of strategies in political representation including performative self-representation strategies, clientelism, and evidence-based politics. The study also unveils communal undertakings and spiritualism as fundamental ontologies that shape the practice of political representation in Kenya. Ultimately, it is evident that while digital platforms offer a liberating avenue for the expression of women's voices in Kenya, they also impose significant constraints stemming from cultural norms.

Table of Contents

Intellectual Property Statement ..... **i**

Acknowledgments ..... **ii**

Abstract ..... **iii**

List of Tables ..... **ix**

List of Figures ..... **i**

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms ..... **i**

Chapter 1. Introduction **1**

1.1 Understanding Political Representation: Approaches and Modes 1

1.2 Linking Political Communication and Political Representation 6

1.3 Operationalizing Political Representation 9

1.4 Understanding Communication within the Context of Africa 11

1.5 Gender, Culture, and Political Communication in Africa 15

1.6 Kenya's Political Landscape: Tracing Women's Leadership 17

1.7 Gaps in Existing Research 21

1.8 Research Questions 22

1.9 Thesis Structure 23

1.10 Conclusion 27

Chapter 2. Review of Literature **28**

2.1 Women and Political Representation: Africa and Beyond 28

2.2 Challenges Faced by Women in Political Representation 31

2.3 The Place of Social Media in Political Representation 34

2.4 The Needs and Expectations of Citizens from Political Representatives 41

2.5 Performative Politics 46

2.6 Conclusion 50

Chapter 3: Methodology **53**

3.1 Research Paradigm 53

3.2 Research Design 54

3.3 Research Questions 57

3.4 Population and Sampling 57
3.4.1 Sampling of Women Politicians 57
3.4.2 Sampling of Citizens 59
3.4.3 Sampling of Social Media Platforms 61
3.5 Recruitment of Participants 62
3.5.1 Recruitment of Women Politicians 62
3.5.2 Recruitment of Citizens 62
3.5.3 Recruitment of Social Media Administrators 63
3.6 Methods of Data Collection 63
3.6.1 Web Scraping of Facebook Posts and Tweets 63
3.6.2 Interviews with Women Politicians 65
3.6.3 Focus Group Discussions 65
3.6.4 Individual Interviews with Citizens 67
3.6.5 Interviews with Social Media Administrators 67
3.7 Methods of Data Analysis 68
3.7.1 Discourse Analysis of Social Media Posts 68
3.7.2 Thematic Analysis of Interviews and Focus Group Discussions 70
3.8 Ethical Considerations and Fieldwork Reflections 73
3.9 Conclusion 75
Chapter 4: Substantive Representation Issues in Kenya's Online Spaces 77
4.1 Sustainable Living 77
4.1.1 Water and Food Supply 78
4.1.2 Healthcare 81
4.1.3 Economic Sustainability 84
4.2 Infrastructure and Development 86
4.3 Governance and Civic Engagement 89
4.3.1 Political Campaigns 90
4.3.2 Electoral Integrity and Justice 93
4.3.3 Electoral Results 96
4.4 Conclusion 99
Chapter 5: Discursive Strategies in Political Representation 101
5.1 Performative Strategies of Political Representation 101

5.1.1 Populism 101
5.1.2 Personalization of Politics 107
5.2 Clientelistic Tendencies in Political Representation 117
5.3 Political Technicization: Numerical Discourse and Evidence-Based Representation 122
5.4 Conclusion 126
Chapter 6: The Ontologies Shaping Kenya's Political Representation 129
6.1 Ubuntu 129
6.1.1 Communalism and Collaborative Governance 129
6.1.2 Ethnopolitical Representation 133
6.2 Spiritual Stewardship: Religion as Political Representation Strategy 137
6.2.1 'Religio-Cultural' Political Representation 138
6.2.2 Religion as a Tool for Political Campaigns in Kenya 142
6.3: Conclusion 144
Chapter 7: Probing the Effectiveness of Online Political Representation in Kenya 146
7.1 Politician's Social Media Content in Relation to Citizen Expectations 146
7.3 Reciprocity and Feedback between Citizens and Political Representatives 162
7.4 Cultural and Ethical Contentions in Political Representation 168
7.5 Do Citizens Feel Well Represented by Women Politicians in Kenya? 173
7.6 Conclusion 177
Chapter 8: Emerging Political Representation Modes 180
8.1 Participatory/Collaborative Representation 180
8.2 Issue-based Representation 183
8.3 Trustee Representation 186
8.4 Delegate Representation 187
8.5 Symbolic Representation 188
8.6 Conclusion 189
Chapter 9: Conclusion 191
9.1 Overview of the Study 191
9.2 Key Findings from the Research Questions 192
9.2.1 Substantive Issues on Social Media Platforms 192
9.2.2 Online Representation Strategies 195
9.2.3 The Ontological Foundations of Political Representation 199

9.2.4 The Effectiveness of Online Political Representation in Kenya 202
9.2.5 Political Representation Modes in Kenya 203
9.3 Empirical Connections: Political Representation, Social Media, and Gender 204
9.3.1 Connecting Theoretical Constructs with Real Political Practices in Kenya..... 205
9.3.2 Actionable Policy Recommendations 207
9.4 Key Contributions to Knowledge..... 208
9.5 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research 211
9.6 Concluding Remarks and a Highlight of Core Issues 211
List of References 214
Appendices 255
Appendix 1: Geopolitical Categorizations of Electoral Areas Included in the Study 255
Appendix 2: A List of Women Politicians who were Included in Study 255
Appendix 3: A List of Citizens Selected for the FGDs..... 256
Appendix 4: A List of Citizens Selected for the Interviews..... 256
Appendix 5: Women Politicians' Interview Guide 257
Appendix 6: FGDs Interview Guide 259
Appendix 7: Interview Guide for Citizens Interviews 259
Appendix 8: Interview Guide for Social Media Administrators 259
Appendix 9: Consent Form(s)..... 261
Appendix 10: FB Posts and Tweets Selected for this Study. 265
Appendix 11: Thematic Issues Across the two Representational Periods (2020/2022)..... 270

List of Tables

Table 1: Women Representatives in Kenya's National Assembly (1963-2022) …… 19

Table 2: A Summary of the Study's Research Design…….55

Table 3: The Nexus Between Religious Posts and Citizens' Religious Inclinations…….140

Table 4: Challenges Faced by Women Politicians in Social Media Communication……155

Table 5: The Effectiveness of Social Media Representation…….174

List of Figures

Figure 1: An Overview of the Study……...26

Figure 2: The Application of DA in the Analysis of Social Media Post…….70

Figure 3: Thematic Analytical Approach Adopted in the Study…….72

Figure 4: Posts on Water and Food Supply…….78

Figure 5: Posts Depicting Economic Sustainability……85

Figure 6: An Illustration of Diverse Content in Different Representation Periods…….90

Figure 7: An Illustration of Electoral Integrity and Justice…….94

Figure 8: Posts Depicting Electoral Results……97

Figure 9: Citizens' Views of Political Personalization……...116

Figure 10: Citizens' Views of Evidence-Based Communication……...125

Figure 11: Perceived Citizens' Needs……147

Figure 12: Should Women Politicians Address Women's Needs?.....153

Figure 13: Citizens' Perceptions of Online Feedback……...164

Figure 14: Citizens' Views of Representation Effectiveness……171

Figure 15: Mixed Perceptions on Representation Effectiveness……175

Figure 16: Issue-Based representation……...184

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

IEBC	The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission
U.S.	United States
U.K.	United Kingdom
KNBS	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
CCK	Communications Commission of Kenya
FDGs	Focus Group Discussions
SIMElab	Social Media Consumption and Analytics Research Lab
URL	Uniform Resource Locator
FBCE	Facebook Comments Extractor
DA	Discourse Analysis
ID	Identifier
NVivo	Enriching Qualitative Data Analysis
FAHC	Faculty of Arts Humanities and Cultures
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
MP	Member of Parliament
Aug	August
Sept	September
Rep	Representative
NGAAF	The National Government Affirmative Action Fund
NG-CDF	National Government Constituency Development Fund
KeRRA	Kenya Rural Roads Authority
RQ	Research Question

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Understanding Political Representation: Approaches and Modes

Foundational Representation Approaches: Pitkin and Hobbes

Hannah Pitkin's (1967) seminal work, '*The Concept of Representation,'* is a cornerstone of the contemporary study of political representation. Pitkin's text underscores the pivotal role of incorporating citizens' voices and perspectives into the political processes by delineating four distinct models of representation namely: formalistic, descriptive, symbolic, and substantive modes of representation (Pitkin, 1967; Sande, 2020).

Before delving into the nuances of these concepts, it is crucial to acknowledge that Pitkin's text cited above constitutes a critique of Hobbes' (1929) seminal work '*Leviathan,'* published during the English Civil War, and which addressed the political turmoil that engulfed the English state. Thomas Hobbes posited that to transcend the harsh realities of the state of nature, individuals must enter a social contract, relinquishing their sovereignty to a governing authority, in exchange for security and order. This authority was to be vested with absolute power over the populace aimed at preserving peace and averting chaos (Hobbes, 1929; Branstetter, 2017). Pitkin challenged Hobbes' idealized depiction of tyranny inherent in the proposed representation process due to its blatant disregard for popular input (Pitkin, 1976, p.4). Consequently, while the seminal nature of Pitkin's work remains ambiguous, it fundamentally reconfigures the notion of representation, shifting from a paradigm rooted in a dominant, authoritarian, male political class, to a democratic pursuit where citizens actively participate in the democratic process.

The typology of political representation delineated by Pitkin above serves as a cornerstone for dissecting the multifaceted landscape of political representation. This framework not only elucidates the diverse modalities through which individuals and groups are represented within political systems (Steel and Miyaki, 2021), but it also furnishes a repertoire of criteria for evaluating the performance of political representatives as noted by Dovi (2018). Within this framework, formalistic representation emerges as a pivotal construct, encapsulating the procedural underpinnings that precede actual manifestations of representation, such as electoral processes. It is through this model of representation that political representatives

derive their political mandate from the citizens, thus invoking the principle of authorization (Dovi, 2018). Consequently, citizens retain the prerogative to inhibit or constrain the authority wielded by the representatives, should they deviate from their roles. This instigates the principle of accountability (Dovi, 2018; Pitkin, 1967, p.55).

The second mode of political representation that is fronted by Pitkin is symbolic representation, which entails the notion that the political representative serves as a metaphorical embodiment of the represented. This model of representation evokes parallels with the kind of symbolism that is inherent in monarchs, who epitomize the essence of a nation (Stokke and Selboe, 2009). In contrast to descriptive representation, which hinges on direct resemblances, the bond between the political representative and the represented group in symbolic representation is rooted more in emotional resonance rather than likeness (ibid). According to Forman-Rabinovici and Beeri (2024), symbolic representation is the cultural significance invoked by the representatives in those that they represent.

Pitkin's third dimension of representation is descriptive representation, which refers to the extent to which a political representative mirrors the demographic and interest-based attributes of their constituents. Pitkin (1967, p. 87) cautions that achieving a comprehensive description of a populace is inherently challenging due to the manifold differences between individuals. Substantive representation on the other hand delves into the actions undertaken by representatives in the best interests of those they represent. From Pitkin's perspective, all these modes of political representation serve as mechanisms for legitimizing democratic institutions and fostering governmental responsiveness to the citizenry.

While Pitkin lays a solid groundwork for understanding political representation, the applicability of these models to diverse government contexts remains underexplored. Notably, Pitkin overlooks the nuances of representation in political contexts that may not have fully democratic structures, including transitional and autocratic regimes, where formalistic representation may not always be prevalent (Duan, 2019). Furthermore, Pitkin's framework fails to address the post-election dynamics wherein citizens' ability to confer leadership does not necessarily translate into control over politician's actions thereafter. Crucially, there is a

gap in explaining how citizens influence the agendas and issues pursued by their political representatives between electoral cycles.

Also, in the contemporary representational landscapes marked by digital communications and subsequently the emergence of digital intermediaries, Pitkin's representational models fall short of capturing the fact that issues supposedly presented by political representatives may sometimes reflect the perspectives of these intermediaries rather than the politicians themselves. It is, however, understandable that Pitkin's models failed to acknowledge this dimension of representation, given that her seminal work emerged before the internet age. Nevertheless, this is a crucial gap in contemporary representational research, and which this study seeks to fill by examining the views of social media administrators who manage the pages of women politicians in Kenya.

Additionally, Pitkin's model of descriptive representation assumes that mere demographic resemblance between the representative and the populace ensures effective representation. However, the effectiveness of numerical representation in policymaking remains unverified, especially in regions like Africa. For instance, while Rwanda boasts the highest numerical representation of women in the world, the extent to which this translates to substantive policy outcomes has not been explored. The subject and practice of political representation in Africa is still stuck on descriptive representation, with a focus on the numbers and percentages of women in political offices, as well as gender quotas in politics (see Karubi and Wasudawan, 2020; Bauer and Burnet, 2013; Okodele, 2021; Etim and Iwu, 2019). The role of African women politicians in substantive representation warrants scrutiny. In the section below, I examine the writings of contemporary theorists to try and uncover whether they have addressed the issues that Pitkin's study overlooked.

Contemporary Political Representational Theories and Concepts

Having examined the foundational contributions of Hannah Pitkin and Thomas Hobbes in the preceding section, I will now introduce some contemporary perspectives on political representation, drawing from the works of Mansbridge (2003), Rehfeld (2006), and Saward (2006; 2010). Notably, while there are other contemporary scholars in this field such as Urbinatti and Warren (2008), Dovi (2002; 2006; 2007; 2018; 2020), and Lovenduski (2005;

2012; 2020), who have extensively explored the subject of political representation, their contributions appear to enhance the ongoing discourse on representation rather than fundamentally challenging established representation theories. For instance, Urbinati and Warren's publication, *'The Concept of Representation in Contemporary Democratic Theory'* appears to extend Pitkin's (1967) seminal concepts of authorization, accountability, and responsiveness, adapting them to contemporary democratic contexts. Identifying a distinct point of departure where Urbinati diverges from Pitkin's concepts proves challenging. Similarly, Dovi's research primarily focuses on women and representation, while Lovenduski examines feminism and representation, both building on the discourse of descriptive representation.

Mansbridge (2003) offers a departure from conventional views of representation such as the trustee and delegates models by introducing novel concepts including promissory, anticipatory, gyroscopic, and surrogate modes of representation. In these modes of representation, she presents an empirically quantifiable approach to political representation which stands in contrast to the descriptive ontological framework proposed by Pitkin (McLoughlin, 2019). She also contends that while these modes may not entirely adhere to the traditional standards of democratic accountability, they nevertheless constitute legitimate forms of representation (p 515). Mansbridge prompts scholars and practitioners to re-evaluate the dynamics of representative-constituent engagement within contemporary democratic settings.

According to Mansbridge (2003, p. 522), promissory representation revolves around the electoral promises made by political representatives to their constituents, which may or may not be fulfilled post-election. Anticipatory representation, on the other hand, hinges on retrospective voting, where representatives prioritize actions, they believe will garner approval in future elections. This mode of representation primarily relies on the foundation of trust, with citizens expecting representatives to honour their commitments upon assuming office. In Gyroscopic representation, the autonomy of the political representative in decision-making is emphasized, drawing upon their personal beliefs, experiences, and internal judgements, deviating from conventional forms of accountability to voters. Finally, surrogate representation occurs when representatives advocate for constituents beyond their electoral districts, expanding the scope of their representation beyond local boundaries. According to

Mansbridge, in surrogate representation, political representatives often find themselves, circumstantially, representing constituents with whom they 'lack an electoral relationship.'

In contemporary political representation scholarship, Mansbridge's theoretical constructs, particularly the surrogate model, hold the power to reshape the understanding of how social media platforms intersect with political representation practices. The expansive reach of these platforms allows individuals and groups to amplify their political voices and interests on a broader scale (Schildkraut, 2016). Also, building on this concept, contemporary citizens possess the urgency to engage with numerous representatives across diverse social media sites, transcending the confines of their own designated representatives. Furthermore, political representatives can serve as 'surrogates' for marginalized factions, such as women, irrespective of their geographical locations by advocating for their concerns (Wigginton, 2021). Despite these strengths, Mansbridge's Theory of *'Rethinking Representation'* still fails to fully encompass the intricacies of political representation in non-democratic, autocratic, and hybrid political systems.

Andrew Rehfeld's theory '*Towards a General Theory of Political Representation'* (2006) presents a framework for the analysis of political representation on a global scale. By proposing a general theory, Rehfeld not only expands the scope of inquiry beyond conventional boundaries but also facilitates its application in diverse political contexts, including those devoid of electoral mechanisms and democratic structures. This inclusivity becomes imperative in contexts where elections are limited, marred by corruption, or even absent (Judge and Leston-Bandeira, 2017). Rehfeld further notes that these contexts are becoming increasingly relevant in global politics (Rehfeld, 2006). Above all, Rehfeld particularly challenges the conventional assumptions about political representation, particularly regarding the foundation of this practice on territorial electoral constituencies and concludes that representative assemblies may not fully capture the complexity of political representation.

Finally, Saward (2006; 2010) diverges from the conventional approaches that normatively analyze representation within democratic frameworks, a trajectory pursued by earlier theorists discussed above. Instead, he adopts a constructivist perspective, delving into the intrinsic nature of political representation and its fundamental characteristics. Saward takes a pragmatic

approach to representation aimed at understating what political representation does, rather than what it is. Saward (2010) explores the essence of representation at its core, examining its connection to, or detachment from the state, depending on contextual factors (McLoughlin, 2019). Central to his argument is the assertion that representation is essentially a claim (Saward, 2010, p. 39), a concept subject to creation, performance, and contestation. This constructivist lens offers a nuanced understanding of representation beyond normative frameworks, shedding light on its dynamic and adaptable nature.

1.2 Linking Political Communication and Political Representation

There exists an intricate relationship between political communication and political representation, wherein both concepts and practices intersect and mutually influence each other within democratic frameworks. Central to this dynamic is the recognition that political communication serves as a linchpin of political representation, facilitating connections among the diverse actors involved in the representation process (McLoughlin, 2019; Strommer-Galley, 2000). Furthermore, Coleman (2005a, p.178) characterizes political representation as a fundamentally communicative endeavour, while Karlson (2013) asserts that virtually all normative ideals of a representative democracy hinge on some form of communication between citizens and their political representatives. Intriguingly, McLoughlin (2019) raises a philosophical enquiry about the type of communication that can be deemed as representational, observing that both the represented and the representative should have common communicative goals in the representation process.

Collectively, the above insights underscore the pivotal role of communication in the realization of political representation and prompt an examination of the mechanisms through which political communication fosters interactions among diverse actors involved within the representational process. Additionally, they invite some consideration of the proposition that political representation cannot subsist independently of political communication. Furthermore, they stimulate an enquiry of communication not as merely an explicit transaction of information between representational actors, but also as a realm of implicit information transference, as suggested by Mcloughlin (2019). Below, I delineate these concerns.

To fulfil its normative objectives, the practice of political representation requires diverse forms of interactive communication, encompassing the cultivation of accountability, inquiry, and connectivity between representatives and constituents (Karlsson, 2013). Specifically, political communication serves as a conduit for representatives to engage with constituents, eliciting their perspectives and ideals to inform policy-making processes (Karlsson, 2013; Trombe, 2016; Jackson and Lilleker, 2020). Conversely, citizens utilize communication to articulate their values and convey their preferences to political representatives while also requiring information to assess the politicians and make informed decisions regarding their choice of representatives (Coleman, 2009).

The dynamic interactions between political representatives and their constituents manifest through two primary communication modalities. These modalities include the direct representation model, as posited by Coleman (2005a), wherein representatives derive their actions from personalized communicative engagements with constituents, and conversely, citizens influence the actions of the representatives. Also, there is the mediated communication model, elucidated by Chan et al., (2016) and Coleman (ibid), which operates through intermediary channels such as third parties, and technological pathways. These paradigms of engagement illuminate distinct approaches to the intricate fabric of political communication in political representation within contemporary democratic systems.

For political communication endeavours - whether direct or indirect - to effectively facilitate representation, several prerequisites ought to be met. Primarily, as posited by Shane (2018), there must be an inclusive dissemination of information conducive to fostering collective problem-solving, coordination, public accountability, and interconnectedness among the stakeholders involved in the representation pact. Wasserman (2010) advocates for the cultivation of autonomy, professionalism, and communicative proficiency among the array of actors engaged in the political communication process. Additionally, Huhtanen (2015) underscores the imperative of innovating methodologies to augment political communication, thereby enriching democratic and representative mechanisms. Furthermore, Soo et al (2020) contend that the velocity and caliber of political interactions among these actors should be manifested in a way that can significantly impact the democratic vitality of a polity. Cumulatively, these attributes synergistically contribute to the cultivation of a robust political

communication milieu between policymakers and constituents within the framework of representative governance.

Having highlighted the role of political communication in the actualization of political representation and having delved into the mechanisms by which political communication facilitates interactions among various stakeholders engaged in the representational process, the focus now shifts to the concept of representational communication, highlighted by McLoughlin (2019), which suggests communication between political representatives must embody a representative function. To exemplify this point, I present Pitkin's and Saward's perspectives on the criteria for effective representation, from a communicative viewpoint.

Pitkin (1976, p. 48) suggests that one of the modes through which political representation occurs is through political actors symbolically representing and acting on behalf of others, a concept exemplified in descriptive representation. According to Pitkin's descriptive and symbolic frameworks, if a group of political elites resembles the demographic composition of the populace, then regardless of citizens' awareness, they are well represented. This implies that citizens do not have to be cognizant of the representation, thereby downplaying the role of information, awareness, and communication within the representation process. However, Saward (2010) contends that citizens must be aware and must acknowledge the 'claim' of the descriptive representation for it to be effective; otherwise, representation remains obsolete. Pitkin's and Saward's insights highlight significant perspectives on what exactly constitutes representative communication.

The preceding deliberations and perspectives seek to expand the scope of political communication and representation within the framework of this study, moving beyond an examination solely focused on the verbal communicative expressions of political representatives. Instead, it aims to delve into additional nuances such as the identity and actions of the representatives and the contextual foundations that underpin their representational endeavors. In the subsequent section, I outline the operationalization of the concept of political representation, while addressing the aforementioned concerns.

1.3 Operationalizing Political Representation

Political representation is a complex and multi-faceted concept whose precise delineation is challenged by its array of competing dimensions and implications (Dovi, 2018). On the one hand, this concept is construed as an interplay between two primary facets, including substantive representation which involves acting in the interest of the represented constituency, and descriptive representation which involves embodying or symbolizing the constituency through shared characteristics and identities (Pitkin, 2004; Ceccarini, 2019). Several scholars such as Pitkin (1967); Pennock and Chapman (1968); and Schwartz (1988) have endeavored to define this elusive concept, with Pitkin's seminal work of 1967 offering the most straightforward definition of 'making present again' (p. 241). What Pitkin's definition does, however, is to further complicate the conceptualization of this concept by introducing a paradoxical dynamic, wherein representation is both conceived as a presence and absence concurrently, engendering diverse and at times contradictory interpretations (Pitkin, 2004)

Various writings by scholars of political representation have elucidated the challenge of achieving a precise definition of representation. The academic exchanges of Jane Mansbridge and Andrew Rehfeld - which Saward (2014, p. 725) aptly characterizes as 'unpacking of a concept to a breaking point' - exemplify the intricate challenge surrounding the fundamental nature of political representation. In 2003, Mansbridge incited a re-evaluation of the traditional notions of representation by inviting scholars to scrutinize and reconsider the multifaceted dynamics of this concept in contemporary political contexts, by emphasizing the interactive processes through which representatives engage with their constituents to fulfil their mandates (Mansbridge, 2003). In response, Rehfeld (2009) proffered a critique, advocating for the isolation of the constituent elements of representation. Subsequently, Mansbridge (2011) and Rehfeld (2011) engaged in reciprocal critiques, each challenging the other's assertions. Notably, Rehfeld (2006) had earlier critiqued Pitkin's (1967) arguments, challenging the notion that political representation is tethered to democratic principles.

Frustrated by the concept's contentious interpretations and lack of conceptual clarity, there are scholars such as Urinate (2009) who have delved into the genealogy of representative democracy, in a bid to trace its evolution over time, while Saward (2010) introduces novel

perspectives, accentuating the fluidity of representative claims. Others have avoided direct engagement with the concept altogether, opting instead to focus on the broader subject of democratic politics (Vieria & Runciman, 2008, p. 4). However, in this study, I have opted to retain the term 'political representation' albeit with a conceptual definition tailored to the specific analytical framework employed in this study.

I have approached political representation from a multi-level perspective. At the macro level, political representation is understood from the basis of what politicians claim to do and what they claim they are, which is a constructivist approach advanced by Fossen (2019) and Saward (2006). Saward refers to this facet of political representation as 'claim making,' and further contends that it constitutes the essence of political representation because it informs substantive representation (p. 301). This means that the study remains confined within the realms of claim-making, and it does not progress to the pragmatic level that would have ascertained whether these claims are enacted or not. Given that this is a digital media study, it was deemed logical to operationalize political representation as a claim making process because the study did not go to a further step of ascertaining whether the online assertions made by political representatives manifested into tangible actions.

At the micro-level, political representation is operationalized as a communicative activity that encompasses both concrete and conceptual aspects of communication that encompass political representatives speaking to, with, for, and about the needs of citizens, a concept that has been borrowed from Coleman (2005) and Neblo (2010). In this examination, the intention is to gauge whether citizens' needs are met, and thereby to capture further the facet of political representation advanced by Pitkin (1967, p. 209) that representatives must act in the interest of the represented 'in a manner that is responsive to them.'

Utilizing the operational framework presented above, this study delves into an investigation of how female politicians in Kenya leverage social media platforms as tools and avenues of their political representation endeavors. However, to grasp the intricacies of this practice within the Kenyan and the broader African contexts, it becomes imperative to understand the dynamics of communication within Africa. Having construed political representation as a claim-making process, and with representation and communication inherently intertwined, as explained in

sections 1.2 and 1.3 above, then an elucidation of communication within the African context with Kenya as its focal point becomes even more important. In the ensuing section, this discussion is provided.

1.4 Understanding Communication within the Context of Africa

Within the context of Africa, communication emerges as a tapestry interwoven with cultural, social, linguistic, ideological, and historical elements, each exerting a profound influence on interpersonal interactions and political discourses. Specifically, this dynamic interplay encompasses oral traditions, rhetorical strategies, hierarchical structures, communal values, and cultural sensitivity. It is important to acknowledge and grasp these multifaceted dimensions of the African culture to gain insight into the complex terrain traversed by political leaders in their communication and representational endeavors.

However, before embarking on this discourse, it is imperative to confront a pivotal inquiry that often surfaces when discussing the concept of an 'African culture,' prompted by debates about the expansive nature of the continent, spanning fifty-four countries. Simply put, the vastness of the continent, as well as the diverse tribes and communities in Africa, conjures doubts about the possibility of having an overarching 'African culture.' In the ensuing section, I attempt to provide insights into this inquiry before delving into an examination of communication within the African context. I employ the historical dimension of governance in Africa to offer insights that may address this inquiry.

The Historical Dimension

In the 19th century, European missionaries embarked on exploratory ventures in Africa, a continent characterized by expansive kingdoms and tribes. Specifically, there were three major groups of people in Africa known as the Bantus, Nilotes, and Cushites (Patin et al., 2017; Bostoen, 2018; Chami, 2021). Between 1884 and 1914, there was a massive scramble for Africa, precipitated by the Berlin Conference, during which thirteen European nations orchestrated the colonization of the continent (Frankema et al., 2015; 2018). By the end of 1914, the African continent had been taken over, partitioned, and apportioned among these European powers, resulting in the delineation of borders, which did not exist prior, and the subsequent imposition of colonial rule. Consequently, kingdoms and territories were renamed

and redefined (Okoth, 2006). For instance, the *'Wanga kingdom,'* which stretched from the coast of East Africa towards central Africa was taken over by the British Empire and subdivided into what is currently known as 'Kenya' and 'Uganda' as documented by Moindi (2023) as well as Nasongo et al., (2023). Similarly, the subdivision of the Congo River basin resulted in the Belgian Congo (currently known as the Democratic Republic of Congo), Angola which was taken by the Portuguese, and Namibia, among others (Rutz, 2018). These new geopolitical formations resulted in ethnic groups such as the 'Maasai' and the 'Luo' spanning multiple countries, and the Bantu people spreading across every nation in sub–Saharan Africa (Ogot, 2012; Althoff, 2013).

However, the imposition of geographical boundaries and the establishment of distinct nations did not result in the eradication of the African culture that was in pre-existence. Before the continent's colonization, African societies had experienced centuries of proximity and worldviews - factors that have proved resilient to external interventions. For example, the Bantu people, Africa's largest social group comprising 240 million speakers who are spread across the continent, are identified as 'Bantus' due to linguistic similarities (Marten, 2020) as well as genetic and cultural affinities (Li et al., 2014; Montinaro et al., 2016). Supporting the notion of an African cultural identity with an example of the Bantu people, Oduor (2019) contends that it would be anomalous for a linguistic community to share only language and no other cultural attributes (p. 100). This, however, does not imply that the African culture is monolithic, but there exist overarching generalizations and cultural dimensions that permeate across the continent, and which would be labelled as 'African.' In the subsequent discussion, these dimensions are elucidated, shedding light on their implications for communicative discourse within the continent.

Communal Primacy and Its Influence on Communication

Communal values, collectivism, and interconnectedness constitute the bedrock of African societies and are deeply ingrained within the social and cultural fabric of the continent. The prioritization of communal bonds, evidenced by robust social support networks (Burholt et al., 2017), stands in stark contrast to the individualistic ethos prevalent in Western cultures. Here, 'individualistic' cultures are not defined in terms of egotism, but rather as embodying the prioritization of the freedom of the individual over societal authority, as documented by Oduor

(2019, p. 100). It is important to note that this characterization does not imply the absence of liberal ideas in Africa, nor does it suggest that communalistic ideas are foreign to the Western world. Rather, as Oduor (ibid) notes, the emphasis lies in the pre-eminence of one over the other, with this pre-eminence significantly influencing political perspectives and communicative behaviors in these regions, as elucidated later in this subsection.

The communal values that dominate African cultures shape the social norms, ethical standards, problem-solving approaches, and decision-making processes within African societies (Chigwendere and Louw, 2022; Lesteka, 2013). Collectively, they establish the foundation of the African worldview commonly denoted as 'Ubuntu' or 'Afriethics' (Gibrilu, 2023), as further elaborated below.

Ubuntu, a concept often translated as 'human kindness' or 'humanity towards others,' originates from the Bantu languages of Southern and Central Africa and has played a significant role in shaping African social norms and values (Mangaroo-Pillay and Coetzee, 2022, p. 119). It embodies the African philosophy of interconnectedness, emphasizing the belief that an individual's well-being is intricately linked to that of the broader society. According to this worldview, personhood is not only defined by one's relationship with others, but it is also devoid of meaning outside of a communal context. This philosophy promotes community engagement, partnership, an ethic of care, solidarity, and mutual growth within societies (Letseka, 2013; Bobo and Akhurst, 2019). It also encompasses values such as love, caring, kindness, responsibility, helpfulness, respect, sharing, spirituality, and empathy (Mangaroo-Pillay and Coetzee, 2022). Ubuntu encapsulates the notion of 'being-ness with others' (Lesteka, 2013, p. 352), simply put as 'I am because we are, and because we are, therefore I am' as posited by Mbiti (1969, p. 141). Among the Zulu in South Africa, this philosophy is deconstructed as *'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu'* meaning 'I am a person through other people' (Letseka, 2013). Similarly in Kiswahili, Kenya's national language, this concept is conveyed as '*mtu ni watu'*, translating to 'a person is made of people' (Oduor, 2019, p. 113). Among the Agíkúyú, Kenya's largest ethnic group, Ubuntu is epitomized as '*andú nío indo*,' loosely translated as 'The (physical, social, spiritual) wellbeing and completeness of an individual is only found from their integration within the community. Overall, according to many African societies, a human being has no identity outside that of his community, where

both explicit and implicit expectations shape interpersonal obligations (Layefa et al., 2022). The excerpt below is a good summary of this African ontology.

> '.. as the ordinary African affirms, in his everyday conversations, the notion that he is tied to his kinship by the bonds of a (invisible) contract (Ekeh, 2004, p.35)

The philosophy of Ubuntu exerts significant influence on communication dynamics across the African continent. A notable implication is a prevalent use of 'we' over 'I,' as individualistic assertions may be perceived as egotistical and self-centered. This linguistic convention is not confined to interpersonal discourse but extends to broader social-cultural and political arenas. Oduor (2019) provides insights into this phenomenon through a comparative analysis of Westernized vs Africanized modes of expression based on his encounters, illuminating the distinctive communication styles as they are shaped by cultural norms and values.

> At a personal level, I am closely acquainted with the contrast between the communalist outlook of African people and the individualist outlook of people from the West. When, for example, my Western friend asks me, 'Have you had your lunch?', my African friend asks, 'Have you had lunch?' Note that my African friend does not lay emphasis on my ownership of the lunch. Similarly, when I am with two friends in a car, one Western, the other African, my Western friend will ask, 'Have you closed your door?', while my African friend will ask, 'Have you closed the door on your side?' When my Western friend is shocked by some news, he or she will say, 'O dear me!', while my fellow (African) Luo will say, '*Yawa!*' or '*Jowa!*', both of which mean 'My people!' (p. 113) and I am aware of several similar expressions in other African languages.

Although, at a glance, the above illustrations may be perceived as inconsequential, they offer profound insights into the communication dynamics within the African context. In political spheres, for instance, African leaders often employ language in a manner that prioritizes the people and the community. They will, for instance, use phrases such as 'my office will' or 'we will' in the place of 'I will,' to remove the urgency from themselves. When the term 'my' is used, it is contextualized within a communal framework, emphasizing collective ownership and responsibility, such as 'my people.' Furthermore, political communication in Africa underscores the ethos of kinship and allegiance to social groups as argued by Dulani et al., (2020); García-Rivero and Clari (2022); Harris (2022), and the subsequent voting along ethnic lines rather than on party manifestos.

Hierarchical Societal Structures and how they Influence Communication

In addition to the collective consciousness evident in communication practices across Africa as discussed above, communication dynamics are also shaped by hierarchical structures as noted by Khosh et al., (2020). Within the African communication contexts, there exists a notable emphasis on respect towards elders and authority figures. This reverence towards the older members of society is grounded in the belief that they possess wisdom and authority accrued over time. These cultural traditions exert significant influence on various facets of societal life, including politics.

In political discourse, older individuals are often accorded more prominence and authority in public discussions, leadership roles, and decision-making processes due to the cultural reverence that is accorded to the elders (Khosh et al., 2020). This inclination for older individuals to exert influence over public conversations and spaces within African political contexts is further shaped by power dynamics and longstanding traditions that prioritize the voices of senior members of society (Khosh et al.,2020). However, this dominance may inadvertently marginalize younger individuals, stifling their contributions and limiting their opportunities for active engagement in political discourses.

In addition to the age-related communication disparities, there exists a distinction in communication patterns between men and women within the broader African context. These disparities are primarily influenced by prevailing social and cultural norms and are elaborated upon in the subsequent section.

1.5 Gender, Culture, and Political Communication in Africa

In the broader societal framework of traditional African societies, there was a distinct pattern in role dynamics, wherein men were commonly seen to dominate the public sphere (Matotoka and Odeku, 2018; Layefa, et al., 2022). Conversely, women were perceived to exert influence within the private domain where they were expected to engage in nurturing, familial relationships, and managing households (Chisale, 2020). This gendered division of labour was, and is, still deeply entrenched within the traditional, cultural, and social fabric of the African communities (Ngunjiri, 2016).

In contemporary times, these deeply ingrained gendered divisions of labour significantly influence the communication and social interactions of both men and women within the African society. This impact is particularly evident in the realm of political discourse, where traditional gender roles shape the issues advocated by female and male candidates during political campaigns. For instance, because of the association of women with the private sphere, they are perceived as more adept at addressing subjects related to family concerns such as healthcare, poverty alleviation, and education. Notably, female politicians in Kenya, for instance, have been seen to strategically integrate aspects of their personal lives such as children and family into their political discourse to align with the gender stereotypes and resonate with the populace (Nyabola and Pommerolle, 2018). The same has been documented in Zimbabwe by Chadambuka (2022). According to Chadambuka, (2022, p.51), the strategic use of 'family' and 'care' rhetoric by African women politicians is rooted in the societal construction of women as caregivers and the concept of 'mother politics' in the region. On the other hand, men are typically expected to focus on public matters such as the ones on economic policies, trade, agriculture, and development (Nyabola and Pommerolle, 2018).

Notably, leadership and politics within the African region are often linked with traits traditionally perceived as tough and assertive. Paradoxically, female leaders are not exempt from these expectations, as they are simultaneously pressured to communicate in a nurturing and compassionate manner while also demonstrating assertiveness to showcase their leadership capabilities. However, this delicate balancing act poses challenges, as women who display aggressive communicative behaviours may face backlash for deviating from societal norms and appearing too masculine, potentially undermining their candidacy. Consequently, female leaders find themselves navigating a complex terrain where they must exhibit a blend of both masculine and feminine communicative traits to be deemed politically competent (Aalberg and Jensen, 2007).

It could be argued that the inclination towards a nurturing kind of communication, coupled with the imperative to foster a sense of belonging, drives women leaders in Africa to embrace a communication style characterized by humanism, inclusivity, accommodation, and collaboration, as posited by Naidoo and Perumal (2014), Bluhm, et al., (2011), and Brion and Ampah-Mensah (2021). These scholars assert that adopting a participatory communication and

leadership approach enables women in Africa to navigate the intricate web of gender and cultural constraints and expectations within society. Additionally, this approach encourages women to stand in solidarity and collectively resist societal challenges.

In most scenarios, however, men tend to dominate public discourse, while societal expectations often compel women to maintain a more reserved demeanour in public settings. This dynamic is particularly accentuated within cultural contexts that prioritize male perspectives and voices. The prevalence of male dominance in public discussions across African societies suggests that men wield considerable power in local decision-making processes and state bureaucracies, consequently perpetuating the marginalization of women and reinforcing male authority within political discourse (Bjarnesen, 2023). As a result, men exert significant influence in shaping political narratives and decision-making frameworks, while women encounter formidable obstacles that restrict their participation in political spheres (Nwafor and Amusan, 2022). This imbalance within African political landscapes skews political discourse in favour of the male voices.

1.6 Kenya's Political Landscape: Tracing Women's Leadership

In this section, I chronicle the leadership journey of women in Kenyan politics from 1963, a pivotal period coinciding with Kenya's attainment of independence from British rule, up to the present day. Within this narrative, I interweave the intricate interplay of descriptive representation of women politicians in Kenya alongside the socio-cultural norms, systemic challenges, political dynamics, and resilience. This exploration offers valuable insights into the multifaceted landscape that women have transversed throughout the decades of political involvement and provides a nuanced understanding of the myriad issues confronting women in leadership positions. Details in this section showcase that the narrative of women in the Kenyan political arena is one characterized by obstacles, resilience, and determination.

Between 1963 and 2002, the presence of women in Kenya's parliament was notably scarce. The inaugural parliament, for instance, did not have any elected women. Subsequent parliamentary sessions witnessed a modest increase to between two and six female representatives with the number dropping considerably between 1983 and 1992 as noted by Nyabola and Pommorolle, 2018), and as shown in table 1 below. Thiong'o (2017) attributes

this meagre descriptive representation of women to entrenched patriarchal attitudes prevalent in the country, exacerbated by the dominance of a single-party political system that hindered democratic practices in Kenya.

So much was patriarchy embedded within Kenya's political system that when Ruth Habwe, the pioneering woman to seek elective office, sought an independent electoral position without the endorsement of her political party, she faced disparaging remarks from the MPs of that era who admonished her to 'go back to the kitchen and cook for her family' (Bailey and Bundeh, 1993, p. 170). At around the same time, Wambui Otieno, a woman from the Kikuyu tribe, married to a man from the Luo tribe, encountered significant obstacles in her quest for political office solely due to her inter-ethnic marriage. Correspondence directed to Wambui advocated for a temporary dissolution of her marriage during the electoral cycle to enhance her prospects of securing an electoral position (Otieno, 1988, p. 104).

The scenarios depicted in Habwe and Wambui's experiences resonate with those of numerous women aspiring to hold political offices in Kenya, even in present-day contexts. The entrenched patriarchal structures and pervasive ethnic political dynamics prevalent in the nation continue to disenfranchise and marginalize women, effectively constraining their participation in the democratic processes.

Table 1: Women Representatives in Kenya's National Assembly (1963-2022)

Election Year	No. of Elected women	No. of Nominated women	Representation of Women in Percentage
1963	0	0	0 %
1969	1	1	1.2%
1974	4	2	3.5%
1979	5	1	2.9%
1983	2	1	1.7%
1988	2	0	1.1%
1992	6	1	3.0%
1997	4	5	1.4%
2002	10	8	7.1%
2007	16	6	7.25%
2013	16	21 nominated + 47 reserved for the position of women Representative	18.57%
2017	29	23 nominated + 47 reserved for the position of women representative	21.78%
2022	39	25 nominated + 47 reserved for the position of women representative	23.43%

Sources: Kenyatta (2023); IEBC

In 1992, a significant turning point occurred in Kenya's political landscape with the transition to a multi-party system, making a pivotal shift toward democracy. Concurrently, the convening of the National Women's Convention that year emerged as a seminal event in advancing women's participation in politics. Women galvanized their efforts, advocating for the expansion of democratic avenues. These concerted efforts resulted in a notable increase in the number of women elected to political offices, reaching a total of ten (Kenyatta, 2023). Subsequently, following the Beijing conference of 1995, women legislators in Kenya spearheaded the first affirmative action motion, aiming to secure a minimum of eighteen parliamentary seats (Kenyatta, 2023). Regrettably, the proposal faltered, underscoring a lack of substantive commitment to gender parity by the predominantly male legislature.

Currently, despite the observable increase in the descriptive representation of women in Kenya's political sphere as illustrated in table 1 above, the nation has yet to demonstrate a steadfast commitment to achieving the 30% gender representation threshold mandated by the 2010 constitution of Kenya. The enactment of a new constitution introduced a provision stipulating that no more than two-thirds of the members in elective or appointive positions should be of the same gender (Kenya Constitution 2012, Article 27 (8)). Nevertheless, both the cabinet and the Supreme Court have failed to adhere to this requirement even after fourteen years. Furthermore, the constitution failed to provide a comprehensive mechanism through which two-thirds distribution of electoral positions would be achieved. These representational huddles underscore the persistent systemic challenges in embracing women's leadership roles in Kenya.

Overall, the marginalization of women within Kenya's democratic framework extends beyond gender insensitivity within political institutions. Indeed, these challenges are deeply rooted in the social and cultural contexts, wherein ethnicity and tradition intersect with political processes. In essence, electoral dynamics are not solely shaped by political agendas, but also by intricate networks that are influenced by traditional and cultural hierarchies. For example, within the Somali communities of Northeastern Kenya, political candidates are selected and approved by the council of elders. Similar practices are observed among the Ameru, the Luo, and the Abaluhyia tribes, with other groups in Kenya implicitly engaging in analogous electoral processes. Consequently, election outcomes are often predetermined before ballot casting – an issue that is not officially documented or acknowledged, but which is extremely rampant. Notably, the Njuri Ncheke[1] council of Elders among the Ameru people have frequently wielded their influence by threatening to disown and curse politicians who marginalize them from decision-making (Nyabola and Pommerolle, 2018). In matters on women's leadership, these council of elders, leveraging their authority, have exhibited minimal support for female candidates and have, at times, actively dissuaded women from running against their male counterparts (Nyabola and Pommerole, 2018, pp. 55-56)

1.7 Gaps in Existing Research

Given the contextual background that has been laid, as well as other general aims of this study, this study addresses several notable gaps within the realm of political representation research. Firstly, the study acknowledges the limited scope of existing studies in digital political representation, which have predominantly focused on the global North (see studies such as Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler (2005); Baer (2018); Hohmann (2019); McLoughlin (2019); Cardo (2021), and Rheault (2019). While these studies have yielded valuable insights, their applicability to the understanding of the African context is often constrained. This limitation arises due to the inherent disparities in the cultural, social, economic, and hybrid and transitional democratic societies in the Southern regions (Willems and Mano, 2017). As such, it is proper to explore the interplay of social media and politics in the global South. Theoretically, therefore, this study extends the subject of women, social media, and political representation to the global South, and to Kenya in particular.

Secondly, since the Beijing conference in 1995 that called for gender equality in politics and leadership, nations worldwide implemented significant measures to enhance female representation in political roles, notably through strategies like gender quotas. Bauer (2012), for instance, traces the progress of eight sub-Saharan states, propelling them into the top thirty countries with the highest levels of presentation in the globe, with Rwanda leading the world in women's political representation (Burnet, 2019). Notably, scholarly inquiries into women and political representation have predominantly centred on descriptive accounts. However, with almost three decades having elapsed, there arises a critical imperative to shift focus from numerical metrics towards an examination of substantive political engagement among the women leaders.

Empirically, there exists a notable dearth of comprehensive studies on digital political representation that adopt a multifaceted approach, incorporating perspectives from diverse stakeholders such as political representatives, citizens, digital datasets, and various time dimensions within a single study. This deficiency may stem from methodological challenges, as it is often more convenient to collect and analyze data from a singular source rather than engaging in the complex process of triangulation, as highlighted by McLoughlin (2019). In the

same vein, Studies on political representation have focused so much on electoral politics perhaps given the centrality of elections in political representation (see for instance Hartney and Hayes, 2021; Bossetta, 2018; Stier et al., 2018; Enli, 2017)). While elections serve as the cornerstone of political representation, it is essential to explore the dynamics of representation once elected officials assume office. This study addresses this gap by triangulating data from both electoral and non-electoral periods, providing a comprehensive understanding of the processes of political representation beyond the electoral cycle.

In Kenya, the proposed study addresses the role of social media in facilitating the engagement of women in the country's politics, a platform that had previously - and still is – dominated by the male gender, owing to historical, socio-cultural, structural, and technological factors. I am convinced that digital media present a significant shift in the dynamics of political communication, and consequently in the practice of political representation in Kenya. For instance, these media afford both genders the opportunity to participate in public discourse, especially for women who have been confined to the private sphere. I am also aware, however, that every media platform comes with its own challenges, and that digital platforms are not an exemption. This complex and evolving communication landscape, and how it has influenced gender communication within the African context warrants an investigation.

1.8 Research Questions

Based on the study's background and the rationale elaborated in the previous sections, the following research questions were formulated.

RQ 1: What representative issues are addressed on the social media pages of women politicians in Kenya?

RQ 2: Which strategies are utilized by women politicians when engaging in political representation in Kenya?

RQ 3: Which ontologies shape the practice of political representation in Kenya?

RQ 4: To what extent can online political representation in Kenya be said to be effective?

RQ 5: Which political representation modes emerge out of this study?

1.9 Thesis Structure

This thesis comprises nine chapters, each aimed at enriching the understanding of digital political representation within Kenya and the broader African context. Chapter 1 lays the groundwork of the thesis, establishing its rationale and contextual backdrop. It explores the theories and modalities of political representation while delving into the nuanced interplay between political communication and political representation. Central to the discourse is the assertion that communication acts as the conduit through which political representation finds its expression. Moreover, the chapter operationalizes the concept of political representation within the parameters of this study, while scrutinizing varied communication dynamics pertinent to the context of Africa, thus contributing to a broader understanding of the practice of political representation in Kenya.

Chapter 2, serving as the literature review, offers a synthesis of the multifaceted interplay between women politicians and their use of digital media in Kenya's political representation practice. The chapter is structured into five subsections. The first segment analyzes the status of women in political representation both within Africa and globally, with a specific focus on both descriptive and substantive dimensions. Subsequently, the second subsection explores the challenges confronted by women politicians in the realm of political representation, encompassing physical, psychological, structural, and systemic hurdles. The third subsection investigates the significance and impact of social media in shaping political representation, elucidating both the opportunities and the challenges inherent in this dynamic. Proceeding from this, the chapter undertakes an examination of citizen needs within the context of political representation, positing that the effectiveness of representation hinges upon its ability to address the needs of the populace. This section concurrently acknowledges citizens as pivotal actors in the representation process. Finally, the chapter scrutinizes the subject of performative politics, drawing upon Saward's (2010) assertion that political representation is inherently performative. Ultimately, the chapter culminates in a conclusion.

Chapter 3 is the methodological linchpin of this study, serving to reaffirm the research questions, methods of data collection, and methods of data analysis. Herein, an explication of how these enquiries are addressed is provided, employing a synthesis of the constructivist/interpretivist research paradigm along with a qualitative research design. The

chapter extends its discourse to the triangulation of diverse data collection and analytical methodologies, encompassing data triangulation, participant, time, and the triangulation of analytical methods. The rationale underpinning this methodological framework is delineated, substantiating its applicability in resolving the study's principal problem. Additionally, the ethical considerations undergirding the study are underscored.

Chapter 4 marks the inception of the empirical investigation, delving into the substantive political representation endeavours that women politicians in Kenya address on their social media platforms. This chapter aligns with the first overarching question of this study. The chapter's findings reveal a spectrum of issues encompassing sustainable living, infrastructure and development, governance, and civic engagement. Through this exploration, insights emerge into the multifaceted landscape of political representation in Kenya's political sphere.

Chapter 5 delves into addressing RQ 2 which scrutinizes the strategies employed by women politicians in their online political representation practice. The study identifies four distinct representational strategies encompassing performative representation practices such as populism and the personalized nature of politics. Additionally, the chapter unveils the clientelist inclinations within the domain of political representation. Lastly, it discusses the utilization of numerical discourse and evidence-based representation as formidable strategies within the realm of Kenyan politics. By unearthing these strategies, the study garners valuable insights into how women politicians navigate Kenya's online political landscape.

In Chapter 6, the ontological underpinnings shaping the practice of political representation in Kenya are examined. Analysis of data uncovers two ontologies that permeate the practice, the first one centering on the African worldview of Ubuntu, and which is characterized by collaborative governance structures and ethno-political representation practices. This African philosophy emphasizes the interconnectedness of humanity and the necessity for communal solidarity. The second ontology entails the integration of religion and spirituality as pivotal elements of political practice. The exploration of these two ontologies sheds light on the intricate interplay between political practices in Kenya and the worldview of the Kenyan people.

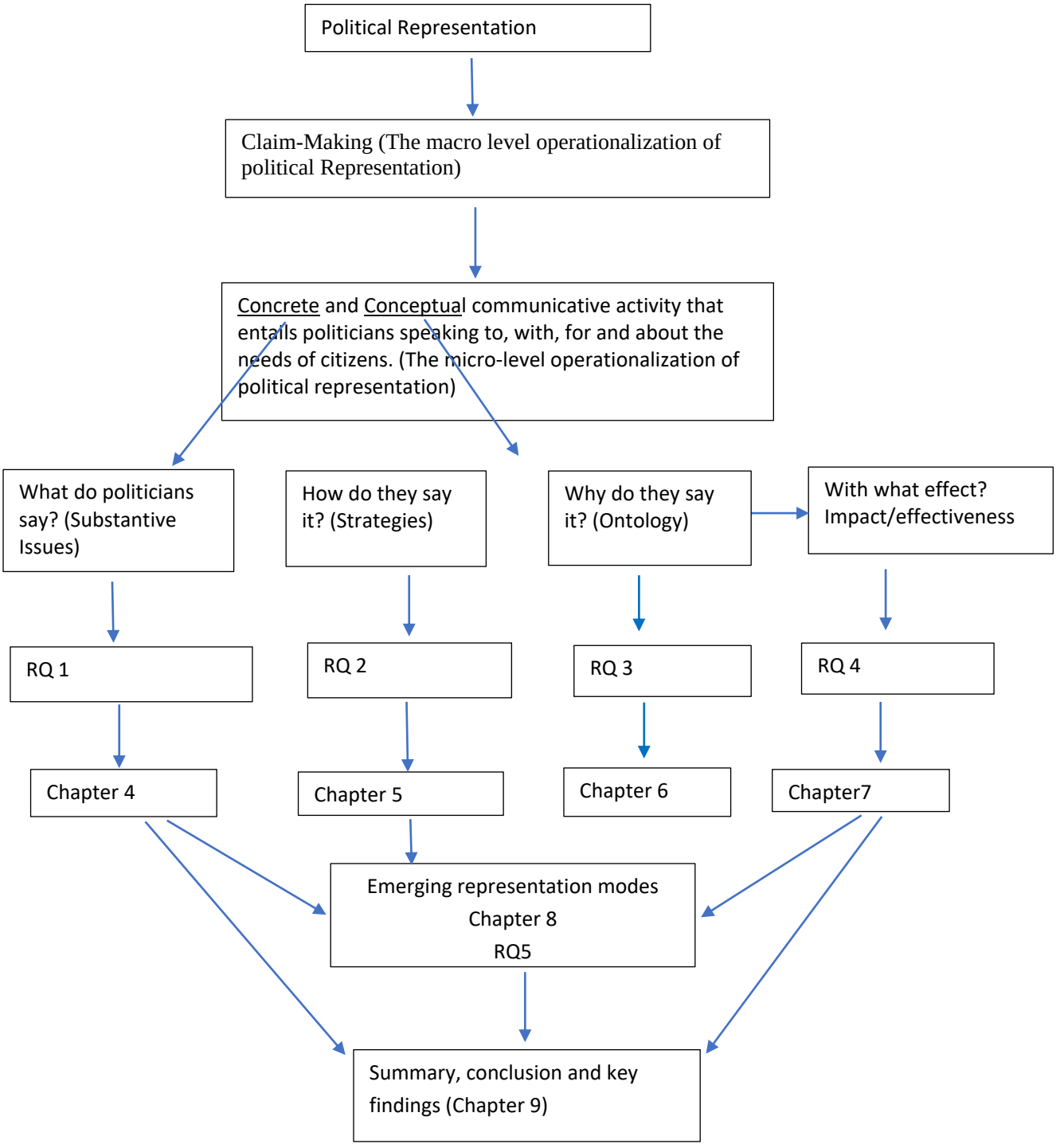
Chapter 7 probes into the effectiveness of online political representation practice in Kenya. This evaluation hinges upon several key factors including the responsiveness of political representatives to citizen's needs, the dynamics of dialogue and reciprocity, the overarching expectations of the represented populace, and the identification of challenges and deficiencies in online communication and representation. The findings in this chapter reveal mixed results. While online political representation demonstrates effectiveness to a certain extent, particularly in the identification of certain citizens' needs, it falls short in fostering dialogue and feedback, highlighting a crucial area for improvement.

Chapter 8 adds a conceptual dimension to the study by exploring the diverse modes of political representation that can be deduced in this study. Integral to synthesizing information from chapters 4-7, the chapter amalgamates insights drawn from social media data, interviews, and focus group discussions to elucidate the apparent and implicit manifestations of political representation modes. The comprehension of these modes of political representation is imperative in situating the practice of political representation in Kenya within the broader global representation framework.

Chapter 9 summarizes and draws the conclusions from the study. Within this chapter, the pivotal findings derived from both the empirical and conceptual chapters are delineated. Specifically, the chapter systematically presents the key findings, pertinent to each of the research questions. Furthermore, the empirical, methodological, and the theoretical contributions of the study are highlighted. In the figure below, the study's essence is encapsulated.

Figure 1: An Illustrative Summary of the Study

In this figure, I present a comprehensive overview of the study, elucidating its various components ranging from the focal concept under investigation to the research questions and their respective discussions within corresponding chapters.



1.10 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the study's foundation, elucidating the theories and modalities underpinning the practice of political representation. Within this chapter, the traditional theories of political representation underscored by Hannah Pitkin and Thomas Hobbes are presented. Furthermore, contemporary political communication theorists such as Jane Mansbridge, Rehfeld, and Michael Saward, who challenge the traditional notions of political representation are highlighted.

Secondly, the chapter has delved into the intricate interplay between political communication and representation, highlighting that political communication is the essence of political representation. Here, the elusive operationalization of the concept of political representation as pertains to this study has been detailed. Also, the chapter contextualizes communication within the African continent emphasizing that communication in Africa is hinged on cultural, social, linguistic, ideological, and historical elements. Specifically, it is noted that communication in Africa is characterized by oral traditions, rhetorical strategies, hierarchical structures, communal values and cultural sensitivity. The chapter highlights the African worldview of Ubuntu which is born out of Africa's communalistic cultures and which highly shapes communication encounters in the continent.

The chapter then moves on to the subject of gender and communication in Africa, highlighting how it is shaped by hierarchical structures, cultural norms, and communalistic orientations. Furthermore, the chapter traces the place of women in Kenya's political sphere from independence to the contemporary time, discussing the opportunities and challenges that women have been faced with in leadership endevours. Lastly, the gaps that emanate from this contextual background are highlighted, and the research questions that stem out of theses gaps are stated. Having detailed these contextual issues in this chapter, I delve into a review of pertinent literature in the subsequent chapter.

Chapter 2. Review of Literature

In the preceding chapter, I have established the framework for this study, laying a foundation for political representation practice as it is done by women politicians in Kenya's online spaces. In this chapter, I now position the study within the theoretical discourse of women's political leadership, their place and responsibilities in political representation, and their utilization of social media for political engagement. Specifically, the chapter delves into an examination of pertinent literature including a discussion of how these women leaders engage in political representation in Africa and beyond, the online obstacles they confront in executing their representational duties, their utilization of social media for political engagement, and the essential considerations regarding citizenry that these political figures must heed to effectively discharge their representational responsibilities.

2.1 Women and Political Representation: Africa and Beyond

The practice of political representation for women is significantly influenced by many factors, some of which are contextual. In established democracies for example, the advancement of the number of women occupying political positions is attributed to factors such as the maturation of democratic processes, constitutional amendments, socio-economic conditions, and party ideologies (Hesami and da Fonseca, 2020; Stockemer, 2015). Conversely, in transitional democracies like those found in many African nations, the surge in female representation is primarily linked to mechanisms such as gender quotas and the spillover of democratic values (Clayton, 2020; Kang and Trip, 2018). Regardless of the context, however, there has been a notable increase in women's descriptive representation across the globe.

For scholars and analysts specializing in gender and political communication, there has been a question about whether the increase of women in political positions matters. According to Celis and Childs (2020), the inclusion of women in political positions enhances the legitimacy of democratic institutions, symbolizing principles of justice, inclusion, recognition, and fairness. Moreover, Mackay (2004) as well as Childs and Krook (2009) note that the presence of women in politics is not only significant in a symbolic sense, but it also helps in the shaping of

legislative discussions, proposals, debates, and outcomes. In Argentina, for example, an increase in the number of women in legislature is reported to have fostered enhanced discussions on pertinent gender related issues such as penal laws, maternity leave, pregnancy legislation, and sexual education (see Amanda and Par, 2018). Similarly, Sweden has experienced a similar phenomenon, with the substantial presence of women in legislative bodies collating with the advancement of diverse policy agendas encompassing women's economic autonomy, childcare, and gender equality initiatives (British Council, 2018). The same case is observed in Pakistan, where female legislators demonstrate notable levels of engagement and contribution in assembly deliberations, often surpassing their male counterparts (Khan and Naqvi, 2020).

The considerations highlighted above underscore a paradigm of gender-responsive governance and representation, which has been illuminated by Bratton and Ray (2002); Childs (2004); Lippmann (2019); Baskaran and Hessami (2019); and Hessami and Fonseca (2020). These scholars posit a consequential interplay between gender dynamics, political decision-making, and policy formulation. They assert that female leaders are inclined to prioritize issues that address the welfare of society's most vulnerable segments, including but not limited to childcare, poverty alleviation, healthcare, and education. Moreover, Hessami and Fonseca (2020) contend that female representatives often emphasize these concerns due to their firsthand experiences with deprivation and entrenched gender roles associated with caregiving.

Within the African context, Hessami and Fonseca's assertions regarding deprivation and traditional gender roles above, hold particular resonance. Studies by Droti, et al., (2019) and Gottlieb, et al., (2016) have reported that African women in positions of leadership exhibit distinctive policy preferences compared to their male counterparts, drawing from their intimate understanding of the challenges that confront marginalized communities. These preferences often manifest in prioritizing issues related to family and poverty alleviation. Furthermore, the glaring inadequacies in essential resources such as medicine and trained healthcare personnel, which exacerbate maternal and child health challenges, impel women leaders in Africa to advocate for policies aimed at enhancing healthcare provisions (Droti, et al., 2019).

Beyond legislative roles, values and priorities, there exists compelling evidence pointing to the unique communication styles that women contribute to political discourse. Research conducted by Maltz and Borker (2018); Funk (2015); and Cardo (2020) illustrate that in leadership, women tend to embrace a communication approach that is characterized by relational dynamics, inclusivity, active listening, heightened sensitivity, and nurturing. Furthermore, they promote other people's contributions in communication by encouraging turn-taking. Considering these insights, contemporary democratic environments hold the potential for enriched governance through the inclusion and integration of diverse leadership styles exhibited by women.

On the other hand, is a body of research including studies by Dingler, et al., (2019); Mechkova, et al., (2022); Pereira (2021); Sevenans, et al., (2022) and Franceschet, et al., (2024) who challenge the assertion that women's descriptive representation invariably leads to policy congruence. Similarly, Mechkova, et al., (2022) caution against solely relying on descriptive representation as a guarantor of policy congruence. Pereira (2021) argues that political elites, who populate government positions, may lack direct insight into the challenges faced by marginalized groups. Moreover, Franceschet, et al., (2024) contend that in nations such as Belgium, Canada, and Israel, political responsiveness to men's priorities persists, irrespective of the gender composition of the legislative bodies. Examining Rwanda and Cuba, countries with some of the highest female legislators in the world, Apap, et al., (2019) observe no correlation between gender and policy by asserting that these countries show no discernible improvement in addressing fundamental citizens' concerns such as political liberties.

The prevailing perspective from the theoretical findings presented above is that heightened female participation in political representation (presence), and substantive output (impact) are not always in tandem. This insinuates that effective political representation extends beyond numerical description, and that the endeavour to increase women's involvement in politics constitutes merely a fraction of the multifaceted process necessary for fostering democratic governance.

The lack of congruence between descriptive representation and substantive representation especially within the broader context of Africa, and Kenya in particular, may be explained by

the fact that women's political representation hinges upon a myriad of factors surpassing numerical quotas, to encompass issues such as cultural norms, political contexts, institutional frameworks, and systemic dynamics. Consequently, comprehending women's political engagement necessitates nuanced examinations of these factors that impact on governance, and realizing that women participate in politics not just as political agents but also as social beings.

2.2 Challenges Faced by Women in Political Representation

As forementioned in the preceding section (2.1), women occupying political offices encounter a myriad of factors that may impact their representative duties. The engagement of women in political representation is enmeshed within a labyrinth of socio-cultural, institutional, political, and structural dynamics, which can exert considerable pressure on their capacity to articulate their perspectives and influence politics. Consequently, the responsibilities of a woman politician become particularly challenging. While this phenomenon is more entrenched in environments characterized by pronounced patriarchal norms and fragile government structures, where ingrained masculine political paradigms govern public engagement, female politicians in established democracies also confront a spectrum of these challenges as part of their routine duties.

Commencing with the context of many African and transitional democratic settings which are predominantly entrenched in patriarchal frameworks, the engagement of women in political domains confronts a multifaceted challenge of harmonizing cultural norms with their leadership roles. Embedded within these settings are intricate social structures, ingrained societal norms, and biases that significantly shape perceptions regarding women's suitability for leadership roles. Aspects such as marital status, age, and attire -which are not in any way related to political competence - are closely intertwined with the assessment of women's leadership capabilities (Kamlongela, 2018; Kiamba, 2009; Krook and Sanin, 2020). Fundamentally, women's private and public identities become fodder for public scrutiny, serving as both tools for endorsement and grounds for disparagement.

Moreover, women leaders are often expected to conform to prescribed notions of docility and governability as noted by Ebila (2015), with assertiveness paradoxically construed as masculine, unfeminine, and thus unsuitable (ibid). Ncube (2020, p. 24) posits that African

female leaders, as long as they play according to the patriarchal political script described above, are endearingly referred to as 'Ashai' (mothers). But once they assert their voice and appear to decenter male dominance, they are shunned by society and labelled as 'whores,' 'witches,' and unruly. This is a common form of harassment against women in leadership, and it manifests across other various dimensions, encompassing psychological, sexual, and even physical forms (Terah, 2008; Kellow, 2020).

The prevailing patriarchal doctrines in Africa promote distinct gender roles and obstruct the advancement of women's meaningful involvement in political processes (Ara, 2017). Moreover, negotiating these impediments within the leadership domain proves challenging for women. In Kenya, Musandu (2008, p.14) offers an illustration of the predicament faced by female politicians by observing that these women must navigate a complex intersection of ethnic and national dynamics, with their political viability contingent upon adeptly balancing these competing interests. Similarly in India, Prodip (2021) reports that due to cultural norms, a significant proportion of female politicians' resort to proxy representation[1], a pervasive barrier that undermines their active engagement in political affairs. This trend is echoed in Bangladesh, (Begum 2012; Prodip 2015, 2021) and Pakistan (Hossain 2012, Khan and Naqvi, 2020). In Sudan, women have found themselves not only isolated and marginalized within their parties and in the legislature but also have faced significant levels of verbal insults and other types of harassment (Naqvi, 2020).

Although not facing the same degree of scrutiny found in many developing countries, several studies have identified the prevalence of violence, harassment and intimidation of women politicians in established democracies such as in Australia (see Sawer, 2013; Crawford, 2013; O'Flaherty, 2005), the UK (James, et al., 2016), New Zealand (Every- Palmer, et al., 2015; James et al., 2016), Canada (Adams, et al., 2009) and the United States (Bellstrom, 2016). This violence is characterized by aggressive and intrusive behaviours towards public figures including physical attacks, threats, stalking, property damage and inappropriate communications (Krook and Sanin, 2020). Mostly, women politicians are 'punished' for 'violating' gender roles and ideals by their refusal to be submissive, to shun public attention,

[1] Proxy representation refers to absolute passivity in political representation, coupled with a general lack of agency. It denotes invisibility in identity as a political representative.

and for raising their voices in the public domain. A notable instance from Japan illustrates this dynamic, where a female member of a local council faced ridicule from her male counterparts who disparagingly urged her to ‘go and get married and give birth’ during an event of augmenting female participation in the workforce (Lies, 2014). Eventually, the main aim of gender-based violence in politics is generally to exclude women from the political sphere and disrupt political processes as a means of reinforcing gendered hierarchies (Krook and Sanin, 2020).

The challenges that women leaders encounter in leadership fronts go beyond the socio-cultural settings. Mainstream media have also been seen to play a huge role in the biased and stereotypical portrayal of female politicians (Watuka, 2017). This portrayal of women politicians has been studied from different angles such as diminishing their visibility and downplaying their official role in politics (Aaldering, et al., 2018), the tone adopted by mainstream journalists in the coverage of women (Van der Meer, et al., 2016), the specific women traits emphasized by mainstream media (Aaldering, et al., 2018), and the coverage of women leaders on these media (Luhiste and Banducci, 2016). According to Ross (2016), mainstream media tend to focus on women’s attributes such as their physical appearance, familial status - or lack thereof -, and their association with traditional gender roles. Luhiste and Banducci (2016) lament the invisibility of women leaders in mainstream media observing that women politicians receive less media coverage compared to their male counterparts. Eventually, this kind of coverage has a negative effect on women, hindering their electoral prospects, and jeopardizing their political careers (Van der Pas and Aaldering, 2020).

Having delineated the challenges faced by women politicians both in actual political arenas and within mainstream media, it becomes essential to explore the potential for digital media to serve as avenues for navigating these challenges. One strand of enquiry is whether digital platforms, particularly social media, with their emphasis on user-generated content and minimal barriers to entry, can empower women leaders to circumvent traditional political obstacles and sidestep conventional gatekeepers. Additionally, there are inquiries about whether digital media offer avenues for redressing the representation gaps that stem from the systemic barriers that women encounter in politics. Also, it is imperative to explore the

challenges that come with social media communication. These subjects have been explored in the subsequent section

2.3 The Place of Social Media in Political Representation

Amid the widespread adoption of digital and social media in contemporary political systems, social media have emerged as indispensable instruments for political representation and communication. Politicians have found themselves increasingly leveraging these platforms to actively interact with citizens, disseminate personalized campaigning, offer timely updates on public pronouncements, highlight opinion polls, mobilize support, and bolster transparency and accessibility in political proceedings (Bright, et al., 2019; Ceron & D'Adda, 2016; Rossini, et al., 2018; Damayanti, et al., 2021). On the other hand, however, social media platforms have introduced challenges to political engagement, which include incivility, online harassment, polarization, as well as the propagation of fake news and misinformation, alongside the creation of echo chambers and filter bubbles. These issues have extensively been explored in academic literature, as evidenced by studies conducted by Bode (2016), Rajkhowa (2020), Kosmidis and Theocharis (2020), Rossini (2022) and Melkonyan (2022). Below, I explore the democratization functions of social media in political spheres, incorporating illustrations from diverse political landscapes, including, but not limited to the African milieu. I also discuss the shortcomings of social media in political practice.

The Democratization Potential of Social Media

Social media platforms possess numerous characteristics that render them conducive for political communication and representation. Firstly, scholars such as Cammaerts (2015), Adeiza and Howard (2016), Vraga (2019) and Alfred and Wong (2022), highlight that these platforms exhibit a multi-dimensional nature, blending various communication traits such as immediacy, real-time interactions, and instantaneity, thereby facilitating political discourse. In specific national contexts such as Nigeria and Kenya, Twitter has been observed to accelerate political engagement and interaction between politicians and citizens during electoral campaigns as noted by Opeidi (2019) and Kamau (2017) respectively. This immediacy is closely linked to increased exposure to political information and enhanced information sharing, as emphasized by Kim and Ellison (2021).

Apart from the creation of immediacy and real-time interactions, Jungherr, et al., (2019, p. 17) posit that social media platforms possess the capability to broaden the spectrum of participants in political engagements. These platforms enable these participants to introduce, amplify, maintain topics, and frame political discourse in their own ways. Consequently, individuals and groups previously marginalized by traditional media structures can now actively engage in political discourse and action. This democratization of participation is facilitated by the low-cost engagement opportunities afforded by these platforms, which allow individuals who were previously unable to afford the expenses associated with political involvement, such as campaign costs, to participate (Bode, 2017). Within the context of Africa, such newfound participants include women, who, due to socio-economic marginalization, were historically excluded from political processes but can now partake in them (Moraa, et al., 2020; Abakah, 2018).

Thirdly, social media platforms have been recognized for their capacity to cultivate an informed and deliberative citizenry, particularly in autocratic regimes and transitional democracies where mainstream media is constrained by state control (Mare, 2018). In such environments, social media emerges as a crucial alternative source of information (Chan, et al., 2018), and catalyst for reshaping the dynamics of engagement between politicians and their constituents (Asante, 2018). In Zimbabwe for instance, Ncube (2021) underscores the significance of digital platforms in circumventing government censorship prevalent in mainstream media channels. Similarly, in South Africa, Mutsvairo and Ronning (2020) highlight the potential of social media to bolster participation in contexts where state-owned mainstream media and powerful entities dictate the narrative, thus limiting the diversity of information that is available to citizens. The same findings have been reported in China by Gobel and Steinahdt (2022) and in Kenya by Kamau (2017) who notes that citizens in this country maintain a heightened interest in online political affairs, carving out spaces on social media platforms to seek and express their political opinions without censorship and restrictions.

Finally, Marquart, et al., (2020) underscore the capacity of social media to facilitate direct communication between politicians and citizens, thereby enhancing transparency, accessibility, connectiveness, and responsiveness. Building on this, Van Noot, et al., (2016)

argue that political candidates who engage more on social media tend to attract greater voter support compared to their less interactive counterparts. Similarly, Kruikemeier, et al., (2013) and Kalsnes et al., (2013) posit that candidates who demonstrate higher levels of online interaction achieve the highest levels of perceived closeness and parasocial relationships with constituents.

For women politicians, the ability to employ social media platforms for interactive engagement is enhanced, given that these leaders wield direct control over their messaging. In their examination of Twitter engagement among congressional candidates in the lead-up to the 2012 U.S. elections, for instance, Evans and Clark (2016) reported that social media platforms offered advantage for female candidates who were able to tailor their discourse to encompass as many or as few issues as they preferred, while also dictating how they presented themselves to the public. In a separate investigation, Cardo (2021) scrutinizes the utilization of Twitter by women politicians in the UK, the US, and New Zealand. Her findings indicate that prominent female politicians in these countries employed sophisticated communication strategies on Twitter, showcasing communication prowess that would have otherwise been constrained in mainstream media and other conventional forums.

Overall, the above studies underscore how social media, when utilized to their fullest potential, can cultivate a form of relationship between citizens and representatives, and potentially shape the agenda of political representation. Also, these media may facilitate the democratization of the political landscape by levelling the playing field for all candidates. But while social media can serve to bolster democratic discourses and facilitate the inclusion of diverse perspectives, there exist challenges linked to their role in political engagement, as elaborated below.

The Challenges and Limitations of Social Media in Political Engagement

In the realm of political representation and engagement, a prevalent challenge regarding the utilization of social media revolves around a widespread hesitancy among political elites to fully leverage these platforms for political representative gains. McLoughlin (2019) and Bosch et al., (2020) assert that politicians predominantly employ one-way communication strategies, and display hesitancy in engaging in meaningful dialogue with their constituents through these platforms. This trend persists across both established and transitional democratic contexts.

McLoughlin's (2019) examination of political representatives' interactions with citizens on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter in the UK confirmed a prevalent unidirectional 'broadcast strategy' in communication, with limited efforts directed towards fostering personal dialogue. Similarly, In Australia, Grant, et al., (2010) noted that while Australian politicians maintained high levels of activity on Twitter, they rarely engaged in substantive dialogue with citizens. Analogous observations have been made in the contexts of Kenya and Zimbabwe (see Bosch, et al., 2020), Cameroon (Ngomba, 2016) and South Africa (Bosch, 2018). In Kenya and Zimbabwe, Bosch, et al,. (2020) reports that citizens actively seek online engagement by posing questions, initiating discussions, and raising pertinent issues. Regrettably, Bosch, et al., (ibid) observe that this proactive engagement goes unanswered, leaving citizens to converse amongst themselves online, in a horizontal form of communication.

In addition to the challenge posed by one-way communication in political engagements, a second significant concern, as highlighted by Sustein (2018) and Prior (2013), pertains to social media's propensity to cultivate echo chambers. This phenomenon entails individuals forming connections and relationships predominantly with others who share similar political beliefs. Research by Cinelli, et al., (2021), Halberstam & Knight (2016), and Sustein (2017), indicates that such echo chambers impede encounters with divergent opinions, promote the dissemination of biased information, and impede exchanges across ideological lines. Viewing echo chambers from an alternative perspective, (Windeck, 2010) observes that in Kenya, online political discourse centers on personality cults. This phenomenon entails citizens aligning themselves with politicians not on the basis of the content of their messages, but rather on the basis of party and ethnic affiliations. Consequently, individuals tend to follow the online political affiliations of their ethnic group, irrespective of the merits of a candidate or political party.

Echo chambers exert significant implications on political representation. Primarily, they inadvertently limit individual's exposure to diverse political perspectives, hindering engagement with political representatives who hold contrasting viewpoints, thereby potentially diminishing the effectiveness of political discourse (Cardenal, et al., 2019). Additionally, echo chambers exacerbate the dissemination of propaganda, hoaxes, and misinformation, while fostering polarization within political factions (Prasetya and Murata, 2020; Currin, et al, 2022).

Moreover, they contribute to heightened polarization, and radicalization of political discourse (Cota, et al., 2019).

Another significant challenge of social media communication lies in their propensity to facilitate the dissemination of misinformation, fake news, and consequently, the proliferation of political misperceptions (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017). Due to the rapid and expansive spread of information on social media, often devoid of fact-checking mechanisms or editorial oversight (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017), these platforms have exacerbated concerns about the impact of fake news on democratic discourse (Wasserman, 2017). As such, it is not guaranteed that audiences will receive factual, real and objective political information on these platforms. In contexts such as Burundi, there are a handful of individuals who serve as information brokers, wielding considerable influence in shaping online opinions and determining whose voices are amplified to a disproportionate extent (Falisse and Nkengurutse, 2019). Similar dynamics are observed in Kenya (see Patel and Diepeveen, 2019), South Africa (Wasserman, 2017) and Nigeria (Nkwachukwu, 2015).

In the realm of political representation, misinformation, disinformation, and the proliferation of fake news across social media platforms have been seen as significant factors that erode confidence in democratic systems thereby undermining political processes and fostering distrust (Austin, et al., 2021). Furthermore, these elements have been observed to exert influence on decision-making processes within political representation practices including voting behaviours, public opinion, electoral outcomes and policy discussions (Cantarella, et al., 2019). Additionally, they contribute to the distortion of public discourse leading to confusion, apathy, and disengagement from political affairs (Neyazi, et al., 2021)

Finally, the phenomenon of incivility pervades online interactions between politicians and citizens, posing a significant challenge to the preservation of democratic norms. This issue manifests through various forms of disrespectful behaviour, including but not limited to online impoliteness, insults, trolling, and the use of pejorative language. The prevalence of incivility is exacerbated by the affordances of social media platforms, which facilitate engagement between individuals who have shared interests but often with limited personal connections (Oz, et al., 2018). Furthermore, features such as anonymous communication and the use of

pseudonyms contribute to uncivil behaviour (Sun, et al., 2021; Trifilo, et al., 2021). Additionally, the design of social media platforms which rewards certain behavious such as virality of incivility further compounds this issue (Heseltime and Dorsey, 2022).

Theocharis, et al., (2016) illuminate the complexities of online incivility within the realm of political discourse on twitter, examining instances in Spain, Greece, Germany, and the United Kingdom leading up to the 2014 European Parliament elections. Their findings indicate that incivility is a major cause of broadcast political communication. Elsewhere, Lu, et al., (2022) posit that incivility undermines political efficacy and potentially demobilizes electorates. Moreover, incivility in online interactions can influence individuals to reciprocate with incivility, especially when the initial message aligns with their political predispositions (Shmargad, et al., 2021) resulting to polarization and conflict. Such a hostile environment discourages meaningful dialogue in political spheres (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2020).

Notably, online incivility exhibits a gendered dimension, with women politicians disproportionately bearing its brunt across various social media platforms (Rheault, et al., 2019; Theocharis, et al., 2020). This disproportionate targeting of women is attributed to the societal expectation of women to adhere to higher standards both in their public and personal spheres, thus creating an environment conducive to online trolling and harassment (Barnes and Beaulieu, 2019). Regarding the nature of uncivil messages, the majority of the messages directed to women exhibit misogynistic attributes, challenging their leadership positions, undermining their candidacy, objectifying them, and perpetuating stereotypical representations of their identities (Tomas-Veleinte, 2023). Furthermore, evidence shows the existence of sexist biases against women leaders (Reich and Bachl, 2023) alongside age -based trolling wherein older women are bullied for being their age while younger ones receive sexist harassment (Carlos et al, 2024).

Mantilla (2015) posits that in Britain, social media platforms serve as arenas for targeted abuse against women leaders, marked by a barrage of generic trolling, sexualized and gender-based insults, and sexist humour. Other studies by Manne (2018) and Bjarnegard (2018) have documented instances of death and rape threats against women leaders. Similar patterns have been observed in Canada (CBS News, 2014), South Africa (Krook, 2018b) and Italy (Feder, et

al., 2018). During the 2022 national elections in Kenya, incidents of networked violence were rampant, with dedicated online platforms created specifically for harassing political aspirants. Reports by Krippahl (2022) and Elversson and Hoglund (2022) suggest systematic efforts to bully women politicians based on factors such as marital status and age. Al Atri and Soi (2023) attribute this phenomenon to shortcomings in social media architecture, which often fail to promptly address offensive content. These scholars also contend that online violence targeting women lacks the requisite level of seriousness in both platform and legal spaces, which are ill equipped with laws to penalize online offenders. Consequently, women politicians' resort to deactivating their social media accounts or withdrawing from political races altogether.

Having scrutinized the utilization of social media platforms in political representation, several pertinent issues emerge, that necessitate further empirical investigation. Primarily, it is apparent that while existing literature has acknowledged the significance of social media in political engagement, elucidating its merits and drawbacks, there exists a conspicuous scarcity of focused empirical investigations on this subject, especially within the context of Kenya. In Kenya, women politicians can be regarded as 'political newcomers' whose role in political representation remains largely unexplored. Consequently, there is pressing need to investigate how these women politicians relate to, engage with, and communicate online with Kenyan citizens in their capacity as political representatives. Of particular importance are studies delving into how these women leaders champion societal issues and address citizens' needs. Furthermore, it is imperative to scrutinize the dynamics and characteristics of these online engagements.

Secondly, it has come to attention that a notable proportion of research endevours have focused on exploring the limitations of social media platforms as tools of political engagement predominantly examining their utilization during electoral periods, especially in campaigns. There exists a need to delve into how these platforms are utilized during normal representational periods and the resultant effects of such utilization on political representation, with a specific emphasis on women leaders in Kenya.

In the following subsection, I explore the requisites and anticipations that citizens harbour regarding the processes of political representation. This is grounded in the premise that the

practice of political representation remains deficient without the active involvement of citizens. Moreover, the effectiveness of political representation can only be assessed by evaluating the degree to which political representatives fulfil the needs of the citizens.

2.4 The Needs and Expectations of Citizens[2] from Political Representatives

The significance of citizens in a representative democracy is a crucial yet overlooked aspect of governance (Griffin and Flavin, 2011; Harden, 2016; Carman, 2006). This oversight arises from misconceptions that view political engagement merely as activities imposed upon the populace (Coleman, 2021; Harden, 2016; Neblo et al, 2010), thereby prioritizing the actions of representatives over those of the represented. However, it is imperative to recognize that citizens play a deliberative role in political representation and should be regarded as partners alongside their representatives. In essence, optimal representation entails collaborative endeavours undertaken 'with the people' (Neblo, et al., 2010, p. 4).

Political representatives can only work with the people when they fully understand citizens' needs. As Coleman (2021) points out, there is a need for representative scholarship and practice to shift from asking whether political systems are serving democratic citizenship, to asking what citizens want and expect from representative democracy. Without knowledge of what citizens need, Liagat (2020) asserts that even the most well-meaning politicians would be unable to provide the public goods that citizens desire. Put in another way, political responsiveness is equated to knowledge (Stokes, et al., 2013). But for political responsiveness to take place, citizens must have the opportunity and the channels to express these needs to their representatives as noted by Miller, (2009).

In this subsection of the literature review, it is recognized that citizens' needs and expectations exhibit diversity, varying from individual to individual, and across different societal groups, often manifesting in multifaceted ways (Celis, et al., 2008). While acknowledging the inherent limitations in capturing the entirety of citizens' needs, this study highlights pertinent needs that may cut across different demographics, while at the same time bringing out regional

[2] The use of the word 'citizens' in this review of literature may elicit different normative interpretations because it tends to leave out 'non-citizens' who may be living within electoral jurisdiction. However, in this study, the word 'citizen' has been used to refer to anyone with legitimate claim on the political representational activities of any given elected official that is of interest to this study.

differences as far as citizens' needs are concerned. Notably in Africa, the examination of citizens' needs in political representation has received intermittent attention. The objective of this review is to affirm that citizens indeed possess discernible needs within the representational dynamic they share with their political representatives.

So, what do citizens expect from the process of representative democracy? Which needs do they expect their political representatives to provide and act upon in order to feel well-represented[3]?

As noted in chapter 1 subsection 1.1, the concept of citizens' needs in political representation was first highlighted by Hannah Pitkin in her seminal study of representation. According to Pitkin (1967, p. 209), a representative must not be found to be persistently at odds with the wishes of the represented. The opinions and actions of a political representative should—to some extent—reflect the wishes and needs of the people that they represent. In the same vein, Powell (2004) argues that the actions of any policymaker must be responsive to the wishes of citizens who ultimately are the beneficiaries of policymaking. According to Coleman (2009), any parliament that claims to be democratic must be seen to connect with and represent the values and interests of the citizens who voted it into existence. Dovi (2009) cements the above arguments by ascertaining that the language of 'needs' is the theoretical currency that representatives must put into consideration if they were to claim to represent their constituents wholesomely. Fundamentally, these arguments assert that proficient representation is only achieved when political representatives recognize and address the interests of the constituents that they purport to represent.

Overall, different scholars have put forth different diagnostic tools that help in gauging the interests of citizens in representation. First of all, citizens want to engage in communication with their representatives. According to Coleman (2005), representation should be based on a conversation between the two sides of political actors. Not only should communication take place, but according to Neblo, et al., (2010), it should be quality and constant. In essence, representational democracies require mechanisms for the free expression of political voice so

[3] Good representation entails political representatives responding to citizens needs and expectations. Citizens are well represented when their needs are met and addressed by their representatives

that citizens can relay information about their experiences, needs, and preferences and hold public officials accountable for their conduct in office. A respectful, inclusive, two-way communication not only helps in establishing perceptions of legitimacy and warranted trust in representative democracy, but it also creates a partnership with citizens.

Representative communication goes beyond expressing views to embracing the practice of listening (Buber, 2002; Macnamara, 2016). Citizens want to feel that they have been 'heard' by their representatives in a meaningful way. Being 'heard' or 'listened to' refers to the citizens feeling that their message has been received, interpreted, and understood (Husband, 2000), and responded to in some way. This, however, does not imply that every comment and suggestion should be acted upon.

Unfortunately, 'speaking' has been observed to dominate online democratic participation, at the expense of 'listening' (Crawford 2009, p. 526). Studies of online election campaigns and e-democracy in the US, UK, and Australia by Gibson, et al., (2010); Macnamara & Kenning (2011) and Macnamara (2014) found that social media are mainly used for the transmission of information and messages rather than listening and engaging. The same scenario has been observed in Kenya and Zimbabwe by Bosch, et al., (2020). The disregard for feedback in social media communication raises questions about the efficiency of social media in mediating transformative and progressive politics.

In his Australian study, Petter (2021) presents four different types of activities that citizens expect their political representatives to engage in, in order for them to feel well represented. These activities include policy, allocation, service, and symbolic responsiveness. According to Arnold (1990), policy responsiveness is manifested by the ability of a politician to match his/her legislative actions to the policy preferences of the citizens. In allocation responsiveness, citizens expect their political representatives to secure tangible, particularized assistance from the state and its bureaucracies (Koop, et al., 2018), and allocate these government goods and resources to them. Service responsiveness is reflected in a politician's aptitude to assist citizens in their personal interactions with the government, while symbolic responsiveness is reflected in symbols and gestures that evoke meanings and aid in strengthening constituency support and trust. In symbolic responsiveness, citizens look out for emotional attachment towards their

representative, or towards the representative system in general. Citizens expect their representatives to connect with them by demonstrating empathy and cultural competence (Fenno, 2003).

Elsewhere, Lapinski, et al., (2016) argue that while citizens evaluate political representatives on all activities presented by Costa above, in contemporary political environments, citizens are more drawn towards politicians who reflect their own views and represent them on salient issues of the day. Essentially, citizens expect political representatives to prioritize current issues while at the same time working towards serving their constituents in other ways such as providing constituency services, or by symbolic representation (Doherty, 2013).

While the quality of representation is based on the extent to which politicians respond to citizens' substantive needs and expectations, it is worth noting that citizens prioritize their needs differently (Grifin and Flavin, 2011). In other words, citizens do not assign value to the above-mentioned spheres of representation in the same manner, and with the same significance. For instance, a study by Carman (2007) reports that in the UK, citizens who are economically disadvantaged and who are a racial minority have fewer expectations for elected officials than their native and economically endowed counterparts. Even when they have representational expectations, economically disadvantaged citizens are not fixated on politicians' policy choices as such (Carman, 2007). This view is shared by Tate (2003) and also Grifin and Flavin (2007), who observe that in the United States, African Americans – unlike White Americans- differ in prioritization of policy responsiveness.

The discrepancies in citizens' priorities may be attributed to differences and variations in the life experiences and world views of various economic social groups (Griffin and Flavin, 2011). The wealthy, higher income and higher educated members of a society are likely to place greater weight on politicians' policy responsiveness as compared to the poorer members of society. This is attributed to the former having likely invested in obtaining policy-relevant knowledge, feeling more competent to provide policy input to political leaders, and having better preparedness to monitor elected officials' implementation of their preferences (Arnold, 2004; Hutchings, 2001).

In other findings, (see Costa, 2021), there is a section of citizens who are interested in political representatives engaging in negative discourse as compared to focusing on policy issues. With hostile discourse and affective representativeness among political elites gaining prominence in the digital age (Gainous and Wagner, 2014; Prior, 2013; Russell, 2017), there are citizens who hold political representatives accountable based on the extent to which they meet such criteria. Citizens who champion negative politics are drawn together by an intense hatred of certain individuals and ideologies and they need a middleman or a political representative who acts as a glue and a leader to steer this hatred. Studies in the United States of America, for example, by Abramowitz and Webster (2016), Gallup (2020), and Russell (2017) found that in hyperpolarized political contexts, citizens prefer and reward political representatives who cater for their affective identities and who advocate for in-group loyalty while expressing out-group animus.

However, there are scholars and analysts (such as Romney, 2016; Andrews and Bender, 2019; Winberg, 2017; Martin and Haberman, 2020) who have cast doubt on the extent to which affective appeals and ideology are endorsed by citizens. According to these analysts, it is impossible to know for sure whether affective partisan appeals are favoured or disfavored by citizens because much of the information on these appeals is either anecdotal or observational data that lacks generalizable empirical evidence. Costa (2021) stresses that while social–psychological theories about group identities may explain how people view other individuals, it does not imply that citizens prefer negative identities especially if they come at the expense of policy positions or quality service responsiveness. Politicians who often take part in expressive and negative politics may thus be out of line with what their constituents want.

It is crucial to acknowledge that citizens' needs are context-dependent, shaped by numerous factors including the level of ideological alignment between citizens and their representatives, the social-political contexts of representation, the cultural attributes of the represented population, and the perception of the populace regarding their political representatives among other factors. Given that this study is conducted in Kenya, exploring the needs of citizens within this specific context, and the underlying determinants of these needs, promises to yield valuable insights.

2.5 Performative Politics

The concept of performative politics garners varied interpretations among scholars. Kimura (2014) posits that at its core, performative politics revolves around the theatrical and symbolic elements of political communication actions, utilized by political actors to construct narratives, establish identities, or frame issues in a manner resonant with the intended audience. According to Kimura (2014), these performances manifest through diverse channels including public speeches, social media posts, or other strategies that are crafted to elicit specific emotions, reactions, or associations. Vertessen and Landtsheer (2005) characterize performative politics as 'style' and argue that it holds significance in politics by fostering connections among political actors. Saward (2010), on the other hand, expands the concept beyond mere communication dynamics, asserting that 'political representation, in its entirety, is a performance' (p. 302). He specifically characterizes political performance as the encapsulation and portrayal of both the self (the politician) and others (citizens), asserting that these performances encompass aesthetic and cultural dimensions and are fundamental components of substantive representation (pp. 299 -300).

In essence, performative politics entails the strategic deployment of symbolic actions, communication strategies, theatrical performances, cultural expressions, self-branding, and image crafting by political actors. The reasons for engaging in performative politics are to mobilize support, shape perceptions, advance political agendas and influence political discourse (Kakisina, et al., 2022). Performance politics is also used to challenge dominant narratives, enable marginalized groups, and draw attention to social issues (ibid). This dimension of politics is particularly relevant in the contemporary age of digital media where image, symbolism and rhetoric often carry as much weight as substantive politics as noted by Kimura (2014) and Kakisina, et al, (2022). Given the expansive nature of performative politics, this review of literature explores some of its manifestations, and the underlying motivations driving its enactment.

One prevalent method of enacting performative politics involves the utilization of symbolic language to convey political messages. In the realms of political communication, the symbolic potency of language plays a pivotal role in shaping political realities, influencing public opinion, and garnering support for political agendas. Vertessen and Landtsheer (2005) assert

that politicians in Belgium employ metaphorical language during elections to establish resonance between their worldview and that of the electorates. In Indonesia, Susila, et al., (2020) argue that political representatives leverage cultural references and symbols to appeal to young voters who resonate with such communication symbolism. In this context, language is seen to serve as a branding tool in electoral communication. Moreover, in Hungary, Riauan (2019) identifies the use of religious language in political messaging by political candidates to woo voters.

Political discourse encompasses not only verbal expressions but also extends to non-linguistic phenomena such as actions, gestures, and behaviours, which carry significant political connotations (Graham and Ward, 2023). The utilization of non-linguistic elements in shaping political narratives is a widespread practice, employed by political actors to elicit emotions, simplify complex issues, and add dramatic flair (Lalancette and Raynauld, 2017). Ncube (2014), for instance, underscores the significance of popular culture in Zimbabwean politics, emphasizing the role of political songs, advertisements, and sports as prevalent modes of communication, particularly during elections. He observes that these performative acts are aimed at connecting with the general populace and bolstering politicians' standing within a cultural context that is drawn to such symbolic expressions. Similarly in Nigeria, Ademilokun and Olateju (2016) have examined the utilization of visual artefacts such as attires in political campaigns, highlighting their intrinsic role in political communication. According to Ademilokun and Olateju (2016), traditional attire in Nigeria is used to establish an identity of nationalism, which is endearing to the electorates. Additionally in Spain, Zamora-Medina (2023) has investigated the spectacularization of politics through music and dance by analyzing the TikTok accounts of major Spanish political parties, concluding that these visual narratives foster high levels of engagement between political actors. Within this context, music and dance create a reflection of oneness between political elites and the citizens.

Beyond the observable expressions of political performances explored above, there exist nuanced forms of emotionalized and affective political performances that amalgamate tangible and intangible elements of political communication and practices to connect with audiences. These emotionally driven manifestations leverage affective performances to craft narratives that touch on political challenges, thus forging cohesive groups united by strategic political

actions (Constantopoulou, 2017). Such manifestations encompass acts such as populistic strategies and clientelism - political strategies that mirror each other.

Populism, for instance, is commonly perceived as a manifestation of performative politics, employing crisis narratives, the depiction of ordinary citizens as disenfranchised and oppressed, and the cultivation of anti-establishment positions to resonate with the political public (Kazharski and Macarychev, 2020). Populist leaders utilize rhetoric, symbolic influence, and organizational tactics to further their political agendas and garner public support (Kerr, et.al., 2022). According to Homolar and Lofflmann (2021) and Cleen, et al., (2018), populism harnesses affective politics including humiliation tactics against opponents and establishments to cultivate emotional bonds with audiences.

Political communication scholars exemplified by Roberts (2016), argue that populism tends to emerge and flourish within environments characterized by democratic deficits and social challenges, particularly evident in many developing nations and nascent democracies. In Africa, for instance, Rensick (2012) observes that populist strategies often align with the policy priorities of urban disadvantaged populations, focusing on issues such as job creation and service delivery. However, other studies reveal that populism is not a regional phenomenon. Rather, it occurs in all countries, but it is driven by political contexts. In the United States, for instance, Salmela and Scheve (2017) associate populism with socio-economic transformations spurred by globalization and deregulation. Similarly, within the same context, Levi, et al., (2020) highlight how populist leaders denounce elites, ostensibly championing for the interests of the 'American people.' This form of populism in the U.S. also encompasses narratives of blaming other nations, immigration rhetoric, and the cultivation of national victimhood that resonates with supporters (Huber, et al, 2020). Across Asia, populist political strategies manifest diversely depending on the nation. In Southeast Asia for example, leaders make redistributive promises which encompass not only populism but also clientelism (Shukri and Smajljaj, 2020). In Indonesia, political candidates leverage secular nationalism as an ideational element within their communication strategies, particularly during election periods (Ahmad, 2020). Meanwhile, in the Nordic countries, Herkman (2017) asserts that populism manifests through rhetoric challenging political and economic elites, appealing to the native population against perceived 'others.'

Clientelism presents another dimension of performative politics, entailing reciprocal relationships between political figures and their constituents, wherein benefits are exchanged for political backing. These transactions are characterized by personalized and bilateral relationships, where politicians furnish specific advantages such as distributive goods and services, along with symbolic acts of solidarity, in exchange for political loyalty (Pierskalla and Sacks, 2019). Additionally, clientelism often intersects with demands for political acknowledgement, as citizens seek social recognition from their leaders (Klaus, et al, 2023). In this context, citizens strive to assert their influence within the political arena by advocating to be acknowledged, respected and included in the decision-making process (Klaus, et al., 2023).

Clientelism is regarded as a facet of performative politics due to its reliance on narrative construction and identity portrayal, depicting political actors as guardians and benefactors of the community, thus perpetuating the dependency of constituents. These narratives and performances surrounding clientelistic engagements serve as means of upholding and perpetuating these relationships.

Similar to the diverse manifestations of political performances outlined earlier, the characteristics of clientelism vary based on the contextual settings in which it unfolds, as highlighted by Landini (2012). Contextual elements like deficient institutional structures and autocratic governance also significantly influence the dynamics of clientelistic practices (Smets, 2019). Additionally, other contextual determinants, such as affective connections and normative associations further exacerbate clientelistic tendencies (Cinar, 2016).

Studies such as Wood (2018) as well as Nichter and Nunnari (2022) associate clientelism with factors such as limited national development, deficient political structures, and inadequate provision of public goods, suggesting that nations with low-income levels are more prone to engaging in clientelistic practices. On the other hand, alternative studies by Kitschelt and Kselman (2012) and Weitz-Shapiro (2012) argue that clientelism transcends democratic maturity and economic advancement.

Having explored the subject of performative politics, this study aims to fill several gaps that have merged from this subsection. Firstly, the study aims to explore and uncover the prevalent

forms of political performances within the Kenyan political sphere, given the contextual nature of performative politics. The study engages in a nuanced examination of how political actors utilize political performances to shape public discourse, construct identities, and mobilize support.

Secondly, as a gender-focused political communication study, this study also aims to investigate whether women politicians in Kenya engage in distinct performative acts that are gender-specific. The study probes the gender patterns or troupes within political performances, shedding light on how gender influences performative political acts within the Kenyan context.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the key theoretical trajectories and arguments surrounding the practice of political representation have been explored. Delving into the multifaceted realm of women's participation in political representation, both in terms of descriptive and substantive aspects, the study has provided insights into the challenges that these women leaders encounter. These challenges span a spectrum encompassing sociocultural barriers, psychological and emotional hurdles, as well as systemic impediments, all of which underscore the intricate landscape of political representation for women leaders. Recognizing the pivotal role of addressing these challenges, this chapter highlights how these obstacles may impinge upon the effectiveness of political representation.

Furthermore, the chapter has delved into the dynamic landscape of social media platforms in the realm of political representation, examining their merits and demerits in fostering political engagement. Within this discourse, social media platforms have been characterized as arenas for enriching political dialogue and diversifying political engagement. Additionally, the discussion has underscored how these platforms provide opportunities for previously marginalized voices to be heard. For women, particularly, who have been historically relegated to political periphery, it has been argued that they have an opportunity to social media platforms in political engagement to circumvent conventional gatekeepers and hierarchical representational structures, engaging directly with citizens in a democratic manner. However, it has been noted that social media platforms have brought forth challenges to political engagement, encompassing issues like incivility, online harassment, polarization,

misinformation, and the proliferation of fake news, echo chambers, and filter bubbles, potentially encumbering the effectiveness of political representation.

Moreover, an exploration of the place of citizens in political representation has been highlighted. The study posits that citizens are equal actors in this process, and that their voices need to be heard and their needs addressed. Notably, the effectiveness of political representation is hinged on the extent to which the needs and expectations of these citizens are addressed. Political representatives must however be aware that citizens' needs are diverse and contextual. Additionally, the chapter has explored performative politics as an inherent facet of representation, encompassing tangible, intangible and affective dimensions of performative politics.

This chapter illuminates several pertinent issues. Primarily, it underscores the imperative to transcend descriptive representation, a predominant feature of gender and political representation studies, towards an exploration of the substantive political practices of women leaders. This imperative becomes particularly pronounced in African contexts, wherein women leaders are currently emerging as political novices. Moreover, within this context, there is need to broaden the inquiry of women's leadership from the prevailing numerical metrics of representation, characterized by gender quotas and parliamentary percentages to an examination of actual policy representation.

Secondly, in African contexts where women face significant challenges to political involvement exacerbated by socio-cultural, systemic, structural and political barriers, there is need to investigate, empirically how women have utilized social media platforms to leverage their involvement in political processes. However, the challenges that come with these platforms must be examined, as well as how they impact political representation practices. Additionally, because most studies are pegged on how political actors utilize social media during electoral periods especially during campaigns, there exists a need to delve into how these platforms are utilized during normal representational periods and the resultant effects of such utilization on political representation.

Furthermore, within African contexts where women encounter formidable obstacles to political engagement compounded by socio-cultural, systemic, structural and political

impediments, there is a need to empirically investigate the utilization of social media platforms as means for enhancing their participation in political processes. This will include scrutinizing both the opportunities and challenges presented by these platforms as well as their impact on political representation.

Moreover, given the predominant focus of existing research on the utilization of social media by political actors during electoral periods, especially during political campaigns, there is a necessity to explore how these platforms are used for political communication and representation during non-electoral periods.

Having underscored the significance of performative politics in political representation practice and recognizing that performative politics are inherently shaped by cultural and contextual factors, it becomes necessary to examine the prevailing manifestations of political performances within the Kenyan domain, and their influence on public discourse. Furthermore, it is essential to interrogate how gender dynamics intersect with and impact performative acts within the Kenyan context.

Having laid a theoretical foundation to this study through the review of literature, I now move to the next chapter that presents the methodological framework that underpins this study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In the preceding chapters, I have established the foundational theoretical framework upon which this study rests. In this chapter, the discourse pivots towards the exposition of the methodological framework adopted in this study. The chapter is structured in the following manner. First, I elucidate the research paradigm upon which this study is based. I then present the research design, outlining the research questions, population and sampling, recruitment of participants, methods of data collection, and methods of data analysis. The chapter concludes with a presentation of the ethical considerations for this study as well as fieldwork reflections.

3.1 Research Paradigm

A research paradigm denotes a fundamental framework consisting of abstract perspectives that orient the researcher's comprehension of reality and act as a guide to conducting research and generating knowledge within that reality (Gretschel, et al., 2023). Research paradigms act as conceptual bedrocks upon which the researcher constructs the entire design, approaches the research questions, and interprets the findings (Kamal, 2019).

This study was grounded in constructivist[4] and interpretivist[5] epistemological frameworks, a multi-paradigm approach that reflects a pluralistic approach to knowledge formation. This is in line with the arguments of several scholars such as Edwards (2012) who advocates for the adoption of diverse paradigms in qualitative research, to enrich scholarly discourse and deepen understanding of phenomena. Given the qualitative nature of this study as detailed in section 3.2 below, this paradigm was deemed suitable. Additionally, Gottlieb, et al., (2020) recommend this paradigm for researchers seeking to delve deeper into the information shared by participants to unveil intricate insights and comprehend the nuanced experiences of research participants within their social, cultural, and historical realities. Because I was concerned with exploring the subject of political representation from multiple viewpoints, uncovering

[4] Some of the key principles of the constructivist approach include the social construction of knowledge as well as the contextual understanding of information. Using this approach, researchers explore meaning creation through an understanding of the language, discourse, and shared practices of individuals. This approach also posits that knowledge is constructed by individuals and is influenced by their social and cultural contexts. In this study, meaning of social media texts in interpreted from a Kenyan and the wider African perspectives, incorporating African ideologies, philosophies, worldviews, and cultures.

[5] Researchers who employ the interpretivist approach are driven by the need to explore underlying structures that shape knowledge, and the need to uncover deeper layers of reality. In this study, the researcher sought to uncover the underlying meaning of social media messages.

underlying meanings in social media discourse, and situating my study within the Kenyan and the larger African context. This paradigm was considered appropriate for this study.

3.2 Research Design

In this study, I adopted a qualitative research design that triangulated social media data, semi-structured one-on-one interviews with selected women politicians, social media administrators, selected citizens, as well as focus group discussions with citizens.

I employed a qualitative design in this study because of its appropriacy in answering my broader research question which involved delving deeply into the dynamics of political representation practice in Kenya. My objective was to explore and scrutinize the intricacies of this practice from diverse perspectives. While adopting a qualitative design, I was aware of the critiques levelled against qualitative studies such as their lack of methodological quality, rigour, and objectivity as noted by Yournas, et al., (2023); Moravcsik (2013); Patterson, et al., (2022), and Cope (2013). I was also aware that proponents of qualitative research have rebutted such criticisms. Johnson, et al., (2020), for instance, extol the adaptable nature of qualitative research, while Morse, et al., (2002) contend that qualitative research is sound as long as verification strategies for achieving credibility and rigour are employed. One of the recommended strategies is triangulation, advocated by Donkoh (2023) and Nefes (2020), and which I utilized in this study.

I employed Denzin's (1970) triangulation method which advocates for the use of multiple data sources, methods, and theories in research. Specifically, I employed time triangulation by collecting data from two political representational periods, namely 2020 and 2022. The year 2020 was a focal point for this study due to its positioning between election cycles[6], representing a period devoid of active campaigning or post-election activities among political representatives. Consequently, I anticipated that data collected during this time would offer insights into raw and routine political representation activities and communication strategies. Conversely, the year 2022, being an election year, was selected for two primary reasons.

[6] In Kenya, elections are conducted after every 5 years, during the month of August. Recent elections were therefore conducted in August 2017 and then in August 2022. Thus, August 2020 would be the center most period between elections.

Firstly, the study required more current data, and secondly, it aimed to facilitate a possible juxtaposition of representational dynamics during a standard representational period against a campaign period. This study also utilized data triangulation by drawing from diverse data sources and techniques, including input from women politicians, citizens, and social media administrators, as well as social media engagements across platforms such as Twitter (currently platform X) and Facebook. Methodological triangulation entailed analyzing data through discourse and thematic analyses. The aim was to gain a comprehensive understanding of political practice from different viewpoints, and thereby accord credibility, reliability, and validity to the study.

Table 2: A Summary of the Study's Research Design.

Research Qs	**Sources of Data**	**Methods of Data Collection**	**Methods of Data Analysis**
RQ1 What representative issues are addressed on the social media pages of women politicians in Kenya?	4 months' worth of Facebook posts and Tweets by women politicians (textual posts with the highest commentary) July and August 2020, July and August 2022 Women politicians	Web Scraping of posts using FBCE (Facebook Comments Extractor from Code Canyon that extracts both posts and comments. In this study, it was used to scrape Facebook posts. Manual extraction of Tweets. Semi-structured interviews with female politicians.	Simply, the intention here is to answer the question of 'what do political representatives say on social media platforms. Thematic analysis of social media posts – thematic classifying selected posts and tweets into themes (using Nvivo and manual analytical classifications). Listing the topics and themes that emerge Discourse Analysis of each of the selected posts. Scouting for underlying messages in these posts and tweets such as implicit social and cultural issues, policies, and theoretical explanations. Identify latent manifestations of political representation practice. Thematic analysis of interviews with women politicians to clarify the issues emerging from social media data. The intention is to hear from them regarding the representational issues that they address on their platforms and the motivations behind these choices.
RQ2 Which strategies are utilized by women politicians when engaging in political	Facebook posts and Tweets of Female politicians	Web Scraping of posts using FBCE (Facebook Comments Extractor from Code Canyon that extracts both posts and	Here, the simple question is 'How do they say it? Which communicative tactics do they use?

representation in Kenya?	Women politicians Social media administrators	comments. In this study, it was used to scrape Facebook posts. Manual extraction of Tweets. Semi-structured interviews with female politicians. Semi-structured interviews with selected social media administrators.	Discourse analysis of social media posts to identify implicit strategies of political representation in those posts Thematic analysis of posts and interviews to identify specific trends and themes utilized by women politicians. This was done to identify strategies and tactics incorporated into political representation practice. Where relevant, thematic analysis of information emanating from interviews with social media administrators to clarify social media data as well as information derived from women politicians and citizens. eg how did they decide on the information to post? which posts did they think citizens wanted to engage with? why?
RQ 3 Which ontologies shape the practice of political representation in Kenya?	Facebook posts and Tweets of Female politicians Women politicians	Web Scraping of posts using FBCE (Facebook Comments Extractor from Code Canyon that extracts both posts and comments. In this study, it was used to scrape Facebook posts. Manual extraction of Tweets. Semi-structured interviews with female politicians.	Here, the simple question is 'why do they say it? Based on what ontologies and worldviews?' Discourse analysis of social media posts to identify underlying worldviews. Thematic analysis of posts and interviews to identify specific worldviews behind representational manifestations.
RQ 4 To what extent can online political representation in Kenya be said to be effective?	Women politicians Social media administrators citizens	One-on-one interviews with women politicians One-on-one interviews with social media administrators One-on-one interviews with citizens Focus group discussions with citizens.	Thematic analysis of interviews with politicians, citizens, and social media administrators; as well as focus group discussions with citizens Scouting for subjects such as feedback, online challenges such as questions of civility
RQ 5 Which political representation modes emerge out of this study?	Facebook posts and Tweets Discussions in chapters 4-7	Deducing insights from social media data Deducing insights from the discussions in chapters 4-7	Discourse analysis of social media posts. Looking for underlying approaches, modes, and styles of political representation

3.3 Research Questions

Within the framework elucidated in the prior sections of this study, the research questions are formulated. The initial four questions have an empirical dimension to them while the fifth research question adds a conceptual layer to the study. These questions include the following.

RQ 1: What representative issues are addressed on the social media pages of women politicians in Kenya? The discussion pertaining to this research question is elucidated in Chapter 4.

RQ 2: Which strategies are utilized by women politicians when engaging in political representation in Kenya? The debates stemming from this question are delineated in chapter five.

RQ 3: Which ontologies shape the practice of political representation in Kenya? The findings emanating from this research question are presented in chapter six.

RQ 4: To what extent can online political representation in Kenya be said to be effective? The results of this research question are highlighted in chapter seven.

RQ 5: Which political representation modes emerge out of this study? The findings of this research question, which combines the depictions of political representation modes that can be deduced from chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7, and which take a conceptual stance, are discussed in chapter eight.

3.4 Population and Sampling

3.4.1 Sampling of Women Politicians

Kenya is a bicameral[7] state, which, at the time of data collection, had a total of 76 female politicians at the national and county level governments. These statistics are based on Kenya's national electoral data of 2017, which is presented in chapter 1 subsection 1.6, table 1. This

[7] A system of government in which the legislature comprises of two houses (the upper house and the lower house). The upper house is the senate, and it represents the counties, while the lower house is the national assembly and its represents the constituencies responsible for making laws at the national level. Thus, Power is distributed between the national government and the county government. There are 47 counties in Kenya. Each county is managed/led by a governor. Each county also has a senator and a woman representative. Within the counties are constituencies that have elected members of parliament. Governors lead the counties, senators decide on national and county revenue allocation, they also debate and approve bills concerning counties. Members of parliament (MPs) represent constituents at national level and are tasked with legislation and oversight. Women representatives promote the interests of women and girls within their counties.

cohort comprised 23 Members of Parliament (MPs), three senators, 3 governors, and 47 women representatives as reported by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission[8] (www.iebc.or.ke). Additionally, I included one woman leader who contended for the post of deputy president in 2022, having previously held prolonged gubernatorial and MP positions. Her candidacy for the second most eminent executive position in Kenya's politics warranted her inclusion, thereby augmenting the total cohort of women leaders under examination to 77 (n=77). Notably, some of these women leaders moved to other dockets after the 2022 elections, while others lost the elections.

It was deemed important to include a diverse range of women politicians in this study to gain valuable insights into various aspects of leadership and governance. Additionally, I aimed at enhancing the breadth of representational issues in this study. Moreover, given that this study also delved into citizens' perceptions of political representation in the wider Kenyan context, this delineation of political leaders was imperative.

Being largely a social media study, the subsequent step involved ascertaining the prevalence of active Twitter and Facebook accounts among the sampled politicians. A social media account was regarded as 'active' if it had regular and frequent posts that ranged from daily to weekly updates. To achieve this, I accessed a comprehensive roaster of the 76 politicians from the Kenya Government website served as the sampling frame. Subsequently, I conducted a manual assessment to determine the number of women politicians who possessed active Facebook and Twitter pages. Among them, nineteen women politicians maintained active Facebook accounts, 50 had inconsistent[9] postings, 5 had inactive[10] accounts, while 5 had no Facebook accounts. Regarding Twitter, 11 politicians maintained active accounts, 51 had inconsistent accounts, ten had no accounts, while four accounts were inactive. The 11

[8] The IEBC is an independent electoral body in Kenya that is mandated with conducting and supervising referenda and elections. The IEBC has names of all registered voters in the country per constituency. These names are downscaled to wards. The wards are equivalent to a village in Kenya, making it easy for a researcher to locate the people with the help of local authorities. I intend to write to the IEBC chairman in order to access the list of voters from the selected constituencies for purposes of research. After identifying the respondents as explained in the sampling procedure, I will work with local authorities to reach particular respondents for the study

[9] Social media pages were considered inconsistent if they lacked continuity of updates, failed to maintain regular posting, and had a fragmented online presence eg, some social media pages took months to be updated

[10] Pages were considered inactive if they lacked engagement over an extended period of time, or those that appeared obsolete. In this study, some women politicians had social media pages that were last updated in the last election period, some had a whole year without updates.

politicians who had active Twitter accounts were among the cohort that had active Facebook accounts. Consequently, the cohort eligible for this study comprised 20 women politicians (19 of whom had active FB and twitter accounts plus the one who was vying for position of deputy president), n=20

3.4.2 Sampling of Citizens

Citizens who participated in this study were sourced from the 20 electoral areas that housed the politicians who were selected for this study. This was a deliberate choice that aimed at fostering democratic accountability. ie, it was presumed that this methodology would facilitate a parallel understanding of the perspectives and experiences of both citizens and politicians operating within the same political context. Citizens were engaged in the study by way of focus group discussions and one-on-one interviews.

The selection of citizens who would participate in the focus group discussions was a systematic process that involved selecting the electoral areas of study to start with and then selecting citizens from those electoral areas. Initially, the 20 electoral areas were stratified into three distinct categories namely 'urban[11]', 'semi-urban[12]' and 'remote[13]' categories, referencing the geographic classifications of Kenyan regions from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) [14] of 2019. This stratification rested upon three guiding principles. Firstly, consideration was given to the variance in internet access and penetration across different regions of Kenya, with urban and peri-urban areas generally exhibiting higher levels of internet connectivity compared to rural locales (CCK[15] and KNBS, 2018). Being a social media study that required participants to have access to social media, this consideration was deemed significant. The second principle was rooted in the safety and enhanced accessibility of the research areas by the researcher, in line with the ethical considerations of this study. Thirdly, it was imperative to select constituencies that were cosmopolitan in terms of residence habitation, to reflect a diverse ethnic mix. The focus on ethnicity was grounded in the fact that Kenyan politics are ethnically driven, as documented by Mati (2019); Kisaka and Nyadera

[11] Areas in and around cities or towns that are easily accessible by road
[12] Towns that are in remote areas that are not easily accessible
[13] The countryside, very remote and almost inaccessible
[14] Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
[15] Communications Commission of Kenya

(2019); Harris (2022); and Ndonye (2019). Thus, targeting areas that had diverse ethnicity implied that the researcher would obtain balanced data, with multiple perspectives. Areas that had a higher internet penetration, were deemed safe, and accessible, and had cosmopolitan compositions were considered for study. These considerations pointed to urban and peri-urban areas, downscaling the eligible constituencies from 20 to 10 as seen in Appendix 1. Out of these, 2 constituencies, one from the urban category (Nairobi), and another from the peri-urban category (Eldoret), were randomly selected for study. Subsequently, the recognition of the need for data diversity resulted in the inclusion of a constituency from the 'rural category' (Murangá), making a total of three electoral areas selected for study (n=3). Despite this last electoral area falling under the rural cohort and therefore not meeting the specified criteria above, it held significance as the researcher's home area. Consequently, it was purposively selected for study, with safety concerns being of secondary importance.

From each of the three aforementioned electoral regions, a single electoral ward was randomly sampled, utilizing the IEBC register referenced above as a sampling frame. Wards, akin to villages, represent the smallest electoral units in Kenya. Specifically, Nairobi Central was chosen for study from the pool of 85 wards in Nairobi, Huruma from the sixteen wards in Eldoret, and Samar from the 35 wards in Murang'a. Consequently, ten citizens per ward were selected to participate in the focus group discussions (FGDs) via volunteer sampling, resulting in a sample of 30 citizens across the three selected wards (n=30). Details of how volunteer sampling was carried out are explained in section 3.4.2 where I detail the recruitment of citizens.

Citizens who were included in face-to-face interviews were randomly selected from the members of the focus groups as detailed in section 3.4.2. The objective was to enlist approximately 4 participants from each focus group, totaling twelve interviewees (n=12). The rationale behind conducting face-to-face interviews was multifaceted. Firstly, this methodology aimed to facilitate a more in-depth exploration and argumentation of insights gleaned from focus group discussions. Additionally, face-to-face interviews were employed as a means to address inherent limitations associated with FGDs such as the tendency to conform to ideas out of peer influence and withholding of information to align with group consensus

and attract social desirability, especially within an African context where group cohesion is paramount.

3.4.3 Sampling of Social Media Platforms

As previously explicated, this study adopts a cross-platform to investigate political representation in Kenya. Facebook and Twitter were selected as the main social media platforms for study, a decision underpinned by several factors. Firstly, literature by Manyala, et al., (2020); Kwanya, et al., (2021); and Ndavula, et al., (2015) attest to the dominance of these platforms in Kenya's political discourse. Specifically, Kenyan citizens use social media platforms as civic places for political debate (Bosch, et al, 2020), with politicians extensively utilizing Facebook and Twitter as tools for direct communication with the citizens (Kipkoech, 2022)

In addition to being the prevailing digital platforms for political engagement in Kenya, these platforms exhibit architectural distinctions. For instance, Facebook offers greater flexibility in message length, contrasting Twitter's concise format, which encourages succinct political messaging (Stier, et al., 2020). Additionally, Twitter facilitates communication with strangers without the need for mutual agreements, thereby fostering political engagement beyond personal networks (Stier, et al., 2020). This is unlike Facebook which revolves around reciprocal connections, providing a space for intimate and personalized political conversations (Bosch, et al, 2020). Additionally, within the Kenyan context, Facebook is recognized as a communication platform catering to a broad demographic, as evidenced by SIME lab (2019), with its popularity spanning across gender, age, and professional affiliations as noted by Pew Research Centre (2018) and YouGov (2019a). Conversely, Twitter is perceived as a platform predominantly accessed by elite users as argued by Ndavula (2018). Thus, it was posited that the integration of both platforms in this study would facilitate a comprehensive understanding of communicative modalities, in terms of message structures, audiences, and modes of interaction, in a bid to examine the practice of political representation in Kenya.

3.5 Recruitment of Participants

3.5.1 Recruitment of Women Politicians

To enlist female politicians for participation in this study, I employed a comprehensive recruitment strategy. Initially, I dispatched emails to the targeted female politicians, inviting them to participate in face-to-face interviews. Additionally, where available, I utilized telephone communication to reach out to the politicians, a customary and acceptable mode of contact in Kenya. Furthermore, I leveraged referrals from various sources including other female politicians, their male counterparts, and journalists who were known to me, as the researcher. From the cohort of twenty women politicians who had been selected for this study, ten of them agreed to be interviewed. The remaining individuals did not respond to the invitations, and they proved unreachable despite further attempts to reach out to them through posting letters. Notably, irrespective of whether they consented to the interviews or not, their public social media pages were still included in the study. I have provided the list of the women whose social media pages were selected for study as Appendix 2, while those who consented to the interviews are listed in Appendix 3.

3.5.2 Recruitment of Citizens

To recruit citizens for the FGDs, I employed a volunteer sampling technique by designing posters and displaying them in strategic positions such as the shopping centres, towns, and churches within the selected wards as explained in section 3.4.2, inviting interested individuals to volunteer for participation in the study. These posters prominently featured the researcher's contact details, which were exclusively designated for recruitment purposes. Following the recommendation of Nyumba, et al., (2018), which advocates for a maximum of 12 participants in an optimal FGD setting, the first 10 volunteers from each electoral ward were selected for participation in this study, making a total of thirty participants (n=30). The rationale behind this number of participants was to facilitate the desired depth of discussion necessary for the study's objectives. However, only 25 participants turned up for the discussions as fronted in Appendix 4.

From each of the three focus groups, I selected approximately 4 citizens using systematic sampling where every even-numbered participant was selected for subsequent one-on-one

interviews (participants had been accorded numbers as identifiers during the FGDs). Given that the FDGs typically comprised an average of eight participants per cohort, the decision to choose approximately 4 participants from each cohort was considered as representative of the total population, thus deemed appropriate for the study. Overall, 12 participants participated in one-on-one interviews (n=12). Five from the urban cohort, 3 from the peri-urban cohort, and 4 from the rural cohort. This information is provided in Appendix 5.

3.5.3 Recruitment of Social Media Administrators

Determining the precise count of social media administrators responsible for managing the pages of women politicians in this study posed a challenge. This was primarily due to certain politicians disclaiming the involvement of intermediaries in managing their pages, thereby complicating the identification process. Moreover, eliciting confirmation from individuals regarding their roles as page administrators proved to be challenging. Efforts to identify social media administrators through referrals succeeded in recruiting a total of five social media administrators who were included in this study (n=5). All the social media administrators who participated in this study sought anonymity, therefore their identification details are not listed in this study.

3.6 Methods of Data Collection

This study utilized diverse methods of data collection, contingent upon the different sources of data, encompassing the social media platforms and the human participants including women politicians, social media administrators, and the citizens. The subsequent sections delineate the varied and detailed approaches utilized to collect data.

3.6.1 Web Scraping of Facebook Posts and Tweets.

To retrieve social media data, a semi-automated web-scraping method was utilized. Specifically, I employed the Facebook Comments Extractor (FBCE) for extracting Facebook posts. Notably, although the web scraper read ‘comments extractor,’ I was also able to extract posts using it. In contrast, I employed a manual approach to retrieve the Tweets. Notably, only the public Facebook and Tweets of each politician were selected for study, covering the periods of July and August 2020, as well as July and August 2022.

The retrieval process unfolded as follows: Initially, I launched the post scraper, employing FBCE for Facebook posts. Subsequently, I input the URL (Uniform Resource Locator) of the respective politician's social media profile into the scraper, as sourced from facebook.com. The scraper extracted a maximum of five posts per operation, necessitating iterative scraping and saving, until all posts within the designated period were collected. For the Tweets, I employed a manual copy and pasting technique. The extracted posts, including their metadata, such as the number of comments per post, were then stored in a clearly labelled Excel file and stored in my university's OneDrive account to safeguard the data.

The next step involved the manual selection of the actual posts and tweets for inclusion in this study. Specifically, posts receiving the highest citizen commentary in 2020 and 2022 were targeted for examination, under the presumption that these posts contained particular elements or subject matter that piqued the curiosity of Kenyan citizens (see Appendix 11 for the full list of posts). Drawing from insights into political communication, it was understood that social media messages attracted audience engagement for diverse reasons. According to Fatema et al (2022), some citizens engage with messages that resonate with their personal beliefs, while others are attracted to controversial or even divisive posts (see Hassell and Weeks, 2016; Edenberg, 2021; Sunstein, 2017, Rega and Marchetti, 2021). Further, Dehghan et al (2020) posit that social media activity may signal the weight, significance, and relevance of the content presented to the audience. However, in this study, I refrained from analyzing specific reactions of citizens' engagement with politicians' social media posts nor did I attempt to measure the weight of political messages. Rather, my primary focus was on the visibility of the posts regardless of the subject matter, following Saward's (2006) assertion that a political claim is only relevant when it is seen, heard, or read by the intended audience (p 312). Once the audience encounters a claim, they may accept, reject, or engage with it in other ways (p 302). I used Saward's theoretical claim as a justification for investigating these social media posts that garnered high citizen visibility and engagement.

The final cohort of posts was saved in a different Excel file, labelled with the politician's name and timestamp, and again, stored within my university's OneDrive account in line with the university's data safety regulations, and preparation for subsequent analysis.

3.6.2 Interviews with Women Politicians

To supplement social media data, I conducted semi-structured one-on-one interviews with women politicians on various dates in November and December 2022. This period was considered an opportune time to conduct the interviews because individuals had recuperated following the elections that had taken place in August of the same year. These interviews adhered to an interview guide comprising questions aligned with the study's main research questions (refer to Appendix 6). Moreover, I occasionally referenced segments of the participant's online posts, prompting the participants to provide further insights. The interviews were conducted interactively and conversationally, employing thoughtful questioning and probing techniques as advocated by Salmons (2017). The purpose of this sensitive probing was to elicit detailed responses from the participants.

Efforts were made to maintain uniform protocols across all participants, to facilitate later analysis. For instance, the same interview guide was utilized for all female politicians, ensuring consistency in the line of questioning. Notably, this was only done with the general questions, but adjustments were made where necessary to address emergent issues in the course of individual interviews and while referring to specific social media posts. This methodological approach aimed at ensuring a systematic and comprehensive exploration of the research topics across all participants. On average, each of the interviews took approximately 45 minutes.

3.6.3 Focus Group Discussions

In the first focus group discussion that was carried out in Nairobi, Kenya's capital, representing the 'urban' cohort, all the 10 individuals who had volunteered turned up. The second FGD took place in Eldoret, a town in the Western region of Kenya. During this focus group discussion, 8 individuals initially turned up, yet only seven of them participated. One of the participants excused himself before the beginning of the session, rejoining post-discussion. Group three was carried out in central Kenya, in Murang'a, which was the rural cohort. Eight participants showed up for this discussion. In total, therefore, the number of participants in FGDs was twenty-five (n=25), and this list is presented in Appendix 3. The FGDs took place in August 2022 and comprised both male and female participants (see Appendix 3 for details). Each discussion took the form of open-ended questions, lasted approximately one hour, and aimed

to assess citizens' perceptions of political representation in Kenya, serving as a means of triangulating information obtained from other sources such as social media data, interviews with politicians, social media administrators and from one-on-one interviews with citizens.

I utilized Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009) approaches to gathering information in FDGs[16] aiming to elicit the pre-existing beliefs, opinions, and attitudes of the participants regarding political representation in Kenya. In these discussions, I alternated between the peripheral role of a facilitator as recommended by Hohenthal et al (2015), and a centre-stage role, which is suggested by Hohenthal (ibid), and which argues that a researcher should adopt a facilitative role during FGDs, and refrain from becoming the central focus of the conversation. I utilized this role to promote interactive exchanges among participants, with minimal interference. However, I occasionally intervened to steer the conversation and to mitigate against the power dynamics that have been discussed below.

Power dynamics in the focus group discussions were a critical consideration in this study, given the diverse composition of the participants in terms of gender, age, and education levels. (see Appendix 4). In Africa's interpersonal relationships, these factors significantly influence communication dynamics, with men often dominating discussions in public settings (Bjarnese, 2023; Nwafor and Amusan, 2022), younger individuals showing deference to older ones (Khosh, et al., 2020), and more educated participants potentially assuming leadership roles, or deferring to others depending on the context. Recognizing the potential impact of these power dynamics in focus group discussions, I implemented specific strategies to mitigate their effects. These mitigations included verbal invitations and encouragements for quieter participants to avoid domination of the discussion by the more outspoken individuals, setting

[16] Kvale and Brinckmann distinguish between two approaches that can be utilized by a researcher while collecting information from focus group discussions. The researcher can take a position of a 'miner' or a 'traveler' (p.48). These two approaches are used in a metaphoric sense. For the miner, knowledge is equivalent to 'buried metal' (p.48). Here, the role of the researcher is to unearth this knowledge as cleanly as possible by digging it out of the discussant's mind without using a lot of leading questions. This approach is used when the intent of the researcher is to collect real, objective data. When the researcher adopts a traveler's approach, he/she 'wanders together with' the respondent (P.48). This is done by asking questions and encouraging the discussants to tell their own experiences. Information here is not simply mined from the minds of the respondents, but it is actively created an active and interactive process of questions and answers.

up strategic seating arrangements before the onset of the discussions so that specific individuals such as females and younger participants did not feel 'trapped' between the males and the older participants respectively, and facilitation of turn-taking during the discussions. Additionally, participants were reminded of the importance of mutual respect at the onset of each discussion. The interview guide for these discussions is provided as appendix 7.

3.6.4 Individual Interviews with Citizens

In addition to conducting focus group discussions with citizens, face-to-face interviews were carried out with selected individuals in September 2022, after the focus group discussions, which had taken place in August of the same year. In terms of content, the questions posed during the one-on-one interviews with the citizens remained largely consistent with the ones posed during the FDGs. This was done to facilitate triangulation during the analysis of data. Nonetheless, minor adjustments in wording were made to prevent redundancy, particularly because the same participants had engaged in the FGDs. The primary objective of these interviews was to elicit information that could not have been collected from FGDs due to the limitations inherent in such group discussions, such as conformity bias, particularly within the context of Kenya where group norms often take precedence over individual autonomy. Through one-on-one interviews, I aimed to create a more controlled environment, enabling participants to freely express their thoughts and views without the influence of group dynamics.

Content-wise, I sought to explore the perceptions of individual citizens concerning the practice of political representation by women politicians In Kenya. This included examining how citizens communicated with their political representatives and finding out the extent to which they felt their concerns were adequately addressed (see the interview guide in Appendix 8). On average, the interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes each.

3.6.5 Interviews with Social Media Administrators

Another integral aspect of data collection in this study entailed doing one-on-one interviews with social media administrators who managed the social media pages of the politicians. The rationale for engaging these administrators stemmed from the assumption that politicians often rely on professionals to manage their social media accounts because they may not always have

the time, professional, or technological expertise to manage these pages (Theocharis, et al., 2020). Thus, social media administrators were regarded as key stakeholders in shaping Kenya's political discourse.

The intention of conducting these interviews was to gain an understanding of the implicit details regarding the online activities and presence of the politicians. Specifically, the interviews were structured to delve into the issues that women politicians addressed on their social media platforms, the strategies they utilized, and the reasons they engaged in such issues and strategies (see Appendix 9 for the interview guide). In total, 5 social media administrators were engaged in these interviews, each lasting approximately 30 minutes.

3.7 Methods of Data Analysis

3.7.1 Discourse Analysis of Social Media Posts

The underlying meaning of each of the selected social media texts was construed using Potter and Wetherwell's (1987) tradition of Discourse Analysis (DA) known as interpretative repertoires[17]. This analytical framework espoused a constructivist and interpretivist philosophy discussed in section 3.1 and helped in the unearthing and exposing of social media texts' latent significations through the processes of abduction[18], induction[19], and deduction.[20] Not only did I employ interpretative repertoires to unveil the layers of meanings of social media texts and deal with the ontological depth of political representation in Kenya, but I also utilized this strand of DA to enrich social media analysis and develop the much-needed, deeper exploration of this qualitative data.

[17] Interpretative repertoires are frameworks, lenses, and perspectives that individuals draw upon to make sense of the world around them. These repertoires are not mutually exclusive, and their interpretation depends on contexts. In DA, interpretative repertoires is a strand of analysis that explores how language reflects and is shaped by social realities. Its focus is on the social and cultural implications of language. The utilization of interpretative repertoires in this research was deemed appropriate because it aligned with the goal of investigating the significance of social media communication in Kenya's political representation landscape with regard to contextual factors such as the social and cultural frames and narratives that Kenyan politicians utilize in their messages to the electorates.

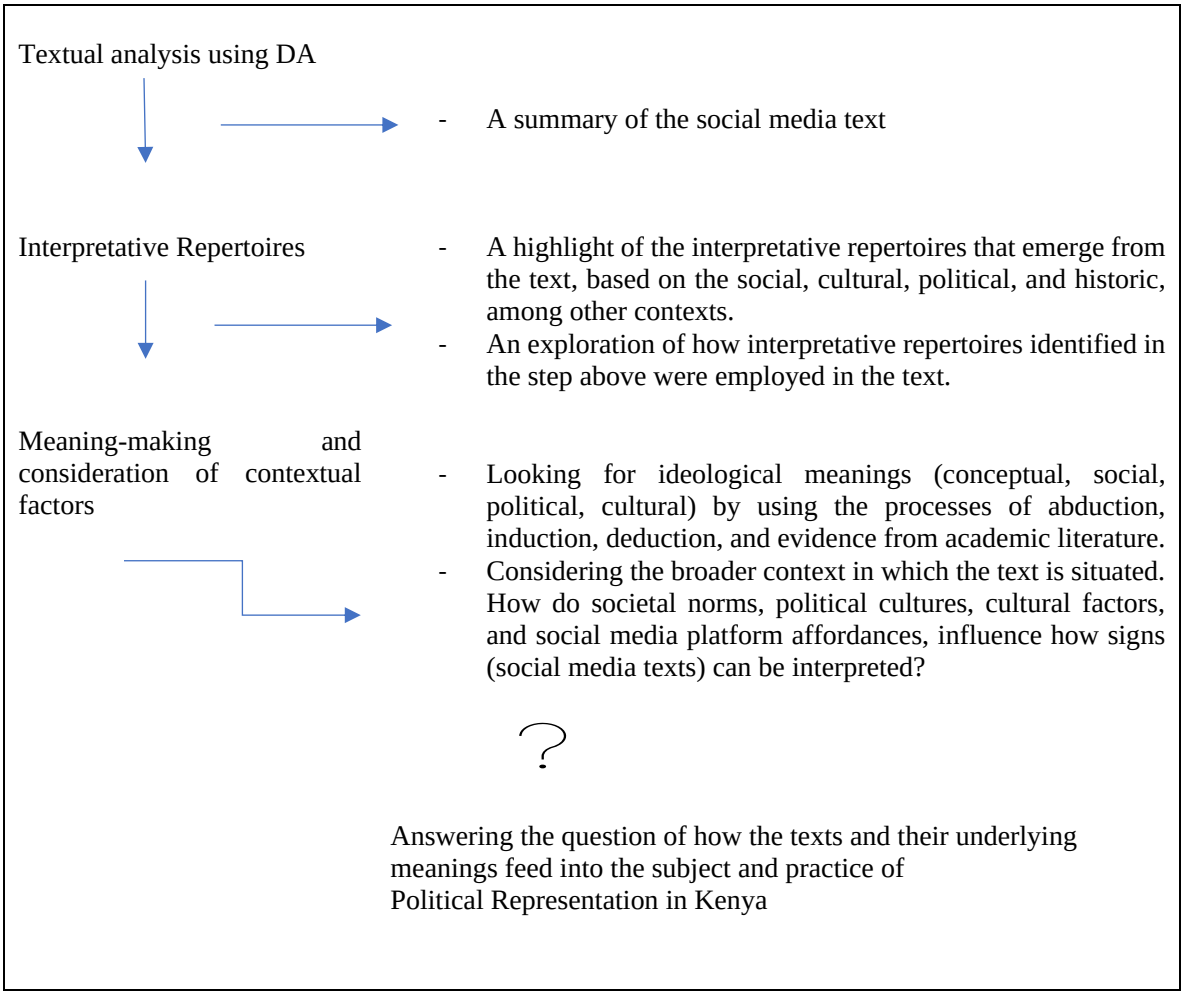
[18] Abduction is a process of forming hypotheses to explain phenomena, and it is triggered by abductive inference.

[19] In deduction, readers or interpreters draw logical conclusions based on known premises. We move from specificities to broader conclusions.

[20] Induction involves generating plausible explanations for a set of observations. It involves generalizing issues from specific observations. In this study, inductive inferences are drawn from scholarly work.

The analysis delved into how the Facebook posts and tweets, which were composed of discursive elements (such as words, phrases, metaphors, and other linguistic elements), were intertwined with the subject matter or content, as well as contextual factors (such as cultural references, political and social contexts, and individual interpretations) to construct, illuminate, negotiate, and communicate fundamental political concepts, values, and perspectives, from a Kenyan and the broader African perspective (see a summary of this infusion in figure 2 below). Following the arguments by Dijk (1993, 2006) and Deschrijver (2023) that an understanding of the context in which discourse takes place is crucial for interpreting the nuances of language use, I dissected social media messages and scouted for underlying cultural, social, and political presumptions that emanated from these texts and consequently interpreted how they helped in the understanding of political representation in Kenya. The major motivation for doing this was the realization that political communication is context-bound, is not value-free, and that politics is given direction, shape, and impetus by the context in which it is shaped, as posited by Edigheji (2006), Omotoso (2013, 2017).

Figure 2: The Application of DA in the Analysis of Social Media Posts



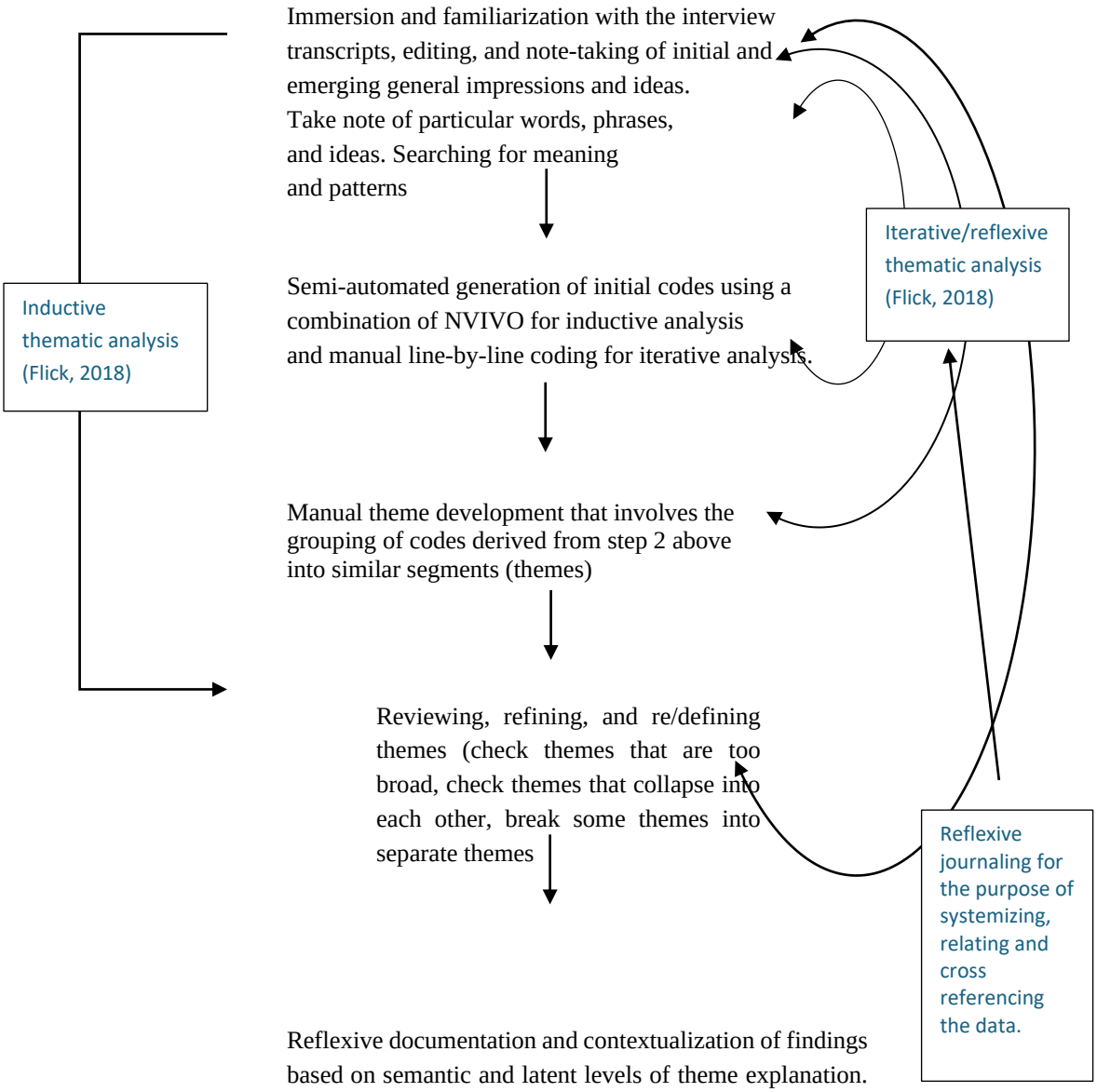
3.7.2 Thematic Analysis of Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

Analysis of data from interviews and focus group discussions, using thematic analysis, took a multi-step process. Firstly, I transcribed the audio recordings verbatim, using the Amberscript transcription service. I opted for Amberscript due to its multi-language support capabilities, particularly considering the tendency of Kenyan participants to code-switch between English and Swahili (Swahili is Kenya's national language), an issue that was prevalent during the interviews. Following the transcription, I engaged in a manual verification process to ensure the accuracy of the transcripts. Subsequently, I stored the transcripts in Excel format, because this format enabled me to incorporate and organize not only the transcripts, but also accompanying metadata such as the participants' IDs, Interviewer notes, and timestamps. I

would later transfer these transcripts to Nvivo as separate files, in anticipation of the subsequent step of analysis.

For the actual thematic analysis, I utilized an analytical approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) and concurrently incorporated the inductive and reflexive analytical foci of thematic analysis suggested by Flick (2018). I have illustrated this process in Figure 2 below. The two processes of thematic analysis suggested by Flick (ibid) were incorporated into the study because they complemented each other, enabling a rigorous process of theme generation. For instance, the inductive process, which was automated using NVIVO software program version 14, allowed patterns and themes to emerge organically from the data, without any pre-existing coding frame, concepts, or prior preconceptions of the data output, thus reducing data subjectivity. Also, it enabled the generation of unanticipated insights that added a layer of complexity and depth to the analysis, enabling a more robust interpretation of the results as recommended by Powell et al (2017). On the other hand, the reflexive process, which was a manual undertaking, allowed me to have a personal and critical engagement with the data. This is because I was able to continually reflect upon and refine the codes that emerged from the automated process, based on my understanding of the study's research questions, as suggested by Creswell (2014). More importantly, the manual process of analysis ensured that no codes were missed by the automated process and that overlapping themes were merged, thus achieving precision in the analysis as recommended by Byrne (2021). The back-and-forth engagement with emerging codes, themes, theory, and research questions provided nuanced insights that could have been missed by dwelling solely on an automated inductive approach.

Figure 3: Thematic Analytical Approach Adopted in the Study.



(A modified version of the steps of thematic analysis borrowed from Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The codes and issues generated from the above process were then used to substantiate the discoveries in this study by backing up social media data. In some instances, they were presented as data in their own right in the presentation and discussion of findings. Additionally, where applicable, data that had been collected from interviews and FGDs was used in the empirical discussions in the form of direct quotes, paraphrased texts, interpretative summaries, as well as diagrammatic mappings, to avoid the redundancy and monotony that are associated with over-reliance on direct quotes in thematic presentation, an analytical tactic proposed by Jovanovic et al, (2019).

3.8 Ethical Considerations and Fieldwork Reflections

To adhere to the University's regulations and ethical policies, ethical approval for this study, reference number FAHC-21-081, was requested from the Faculty of Arts, Humanities, and Cultures research ethics committee at the University of Leeds. The approval was obtained on May 13th, 2022, before the commencement of data collection.

Ethical approval was necessary for the reason that the study involved human adult subjects who were deemed low risk. A written consent was obtained from each of the participants, outlining the purpose of the study and their involvement. Where feasible, consent was obtained before the study's commencement, allowing participants time for reflection. In instances where prior consent was not possible, consent was obtained at the commencement of the interviews and FGDs. A copy of the consent form is provided as Appendix 10. Participants were also made aware that these discussions would be recorded and required to give consent. These recordings were securely stored on the University of Leeds OneDrive cloud, protected by a password, and compliant with the institutional information safeguarding requirements. These files will be deleted upon completion of the PhD.

Participants were also informed that they had the option to withdraw from the study within two weeks of the commencement of data collection. They were assured that withdrawal would incur no penalty and that if they withdrew within the given timeframe, their data would be deleted. However, no participants opted to withdraw from the study. Additionally, participants were informed that they could decline to answer any questions during the interviews, but none

chose to exercise this option. Although this information was provided in the participation information sheets, it was also made verbally before the commencement of the discussions.

Participants' anonymity was also a significant issue in this study. Given the public and elite status of the politicians, anonymity was deemed unnecessary for them. However, they were still offered the option of remaining anonymous but none of them opted for that. For the citizens, data was anonymized to remove any identifiable information, due to the sensitive nature of politics in Kenya, ensuring that participants felt comfortable sharing their perspectives without fear of reprisal. Participants' names were replaced with pseudo-labels (eg participant 1), and extensive quotes emanating from these discussions were only used in this study with prior approval from interviewees.

The interviews and FGDs were conducted in publicly accessible venues to ensure the safety and comfort of both the researcher and the participants.

Regarding social media data, I exclusively gathered information from the public pages of female politicians, refraining from accessing data from their private pages. For instance, a Facebook page that required an individual to ‘connect’ with the political leaders before access was considered private. As for the public pages, there was no need to gain consent from the owners before accessing the data because they were considered to be in the public domain. To scrape the data, I adhered to the social media regulations permitting the scraping of publicly available information as recommended by Williams (2018) as well as Mancosu and Vegetti (2020).

During field data collection, several reflections emerged. Firstly, contrary to my expectations, women politicians exhibited reluctance to participate in interviews, posing a significant challenge in securing their involvement in the study. A significant number of emails and letters calling for their participation went unanswered. This was surprising, given the study’s aim of providing them with a platform to voice their insights and perspectives about political engagement in Kenya. On the contrary, citizens displayed a notable eagerness to participate in the study. Moreover, citizens exhibited a greater understanding of digital media usage in politics compared to the political leaders, and they demonstrated a remarkable ability to

articulate their expectations from political representatives, whereas politicians appeared uncertain about citizens' expectations.

3.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have detailed the methodological framework that I employed in this study, encompassing the research paradigm and design, research questions, methods of data collection, data analysis techniques, as well as ethical considerations, and fieldwork reflections. Specifically, I have elucidated the rationale behind the chosen design, the criteria for participant selection, the procedures for collecting different data sets, and the specific analytical methods applied to these datasets.

I employed a I adopted a qualitative research design that triangulated social media data, semi-structured one-on-one interviews with selected women politicians, social media administrators, selected citizens, as well as focus group discussions with citizens. Specifically, I collected data from the Facebook and Twitter pages of 20 women politicians through web scraping. I then complemented this data with semi-structured one-on-one interviews with 10 women politicians, 12 citizens and 5 social media administrators. Additionally, I conducted 3 FGDs involving 25 citizens from an urban setting in Kenya, a peri-urban area, and a rural setting, for the purpose of capturing the varied perspectives of Kenya’s citizenry regarding political representation in the country.

Subsequently, I analysed the data using a combination of discourse and thematic analyses. I used discourse analysis to examine social media data in depth by scouting for implicit meaning within the texts and situating the meaning of these texts within the Kenyan context. On the other hand, I employed thematic analysis to explore patterns and overarching themes that emerged out of the interviews and FGDs.

As noted in the chapter, I secured ethical clearance from the University of Leeds Ethical research committee prior to embarking on my fieldwork, ensuring adherence to ethical principles throughout the study. Fundamental ethical considerations included provision for anonymity to the participants, the autonomy of the participants to withdraw from the study within a stipulated timeframe, and the facilitation of interviews in secure environments,

safeguarding the well-being of both the researcher and the participants. Notably, while the identity of the politicians was not concealed given their public prominence, they were afforded the opportunity to request anonymity, which none of them did.

Chapter 4: Substantive Representation Issues in Kenya's Online Spaces

This chapter presents the findings that arose from examining the first research question of this study (RQ 1), which probed into the substantive issues addressed by women politicians on their social media platforms within the context of political representation in Kenya. Analysis of data unveiled a range of issues which are discussed below in the following format. Firstly, the discourse delves into the subject of sustainable living, encompassing concerns surrounding water and food supply, public healthcare, and economic sustainability. Secondly, attention is directed towards a discussion on infrastructure and development. Lastly, the chapter explores matters pertaining to governance and civic engagement, delineated into sub-categories including political campaigns, electoral integrity and justice, and the ramifications of electoral outcomes. Finally, the chapter culminates in a conclusive summary.

In the ensuing sections, these issues are discussed within wider frameworks, emphasizing their intersectionality with other factors such as gender roles and gender power relations.

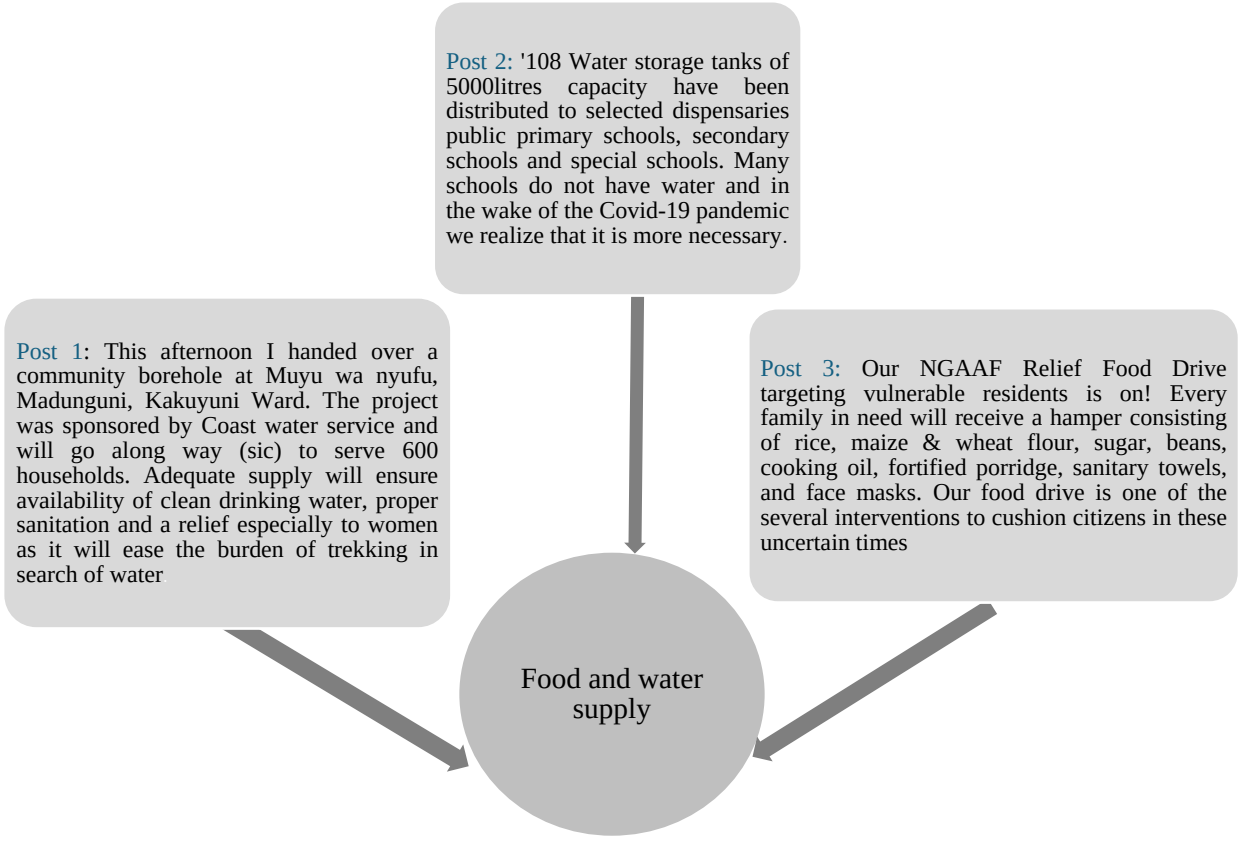
4.1 Sustainable Living

The first predominant political representational issue that emerged from the analysis of data in this study was the subject of sustainable living. The conventional understanding of sustainable living revolves around individual and community lifestyles and their environmental implications (Quarahasanlou et al., 2022). These lifestyles are characterized by practices such as sustainable consumption, waste management, energy efficiency, and environmental social responsibility (Qureshi, 2020). However, this study extends the discourse of sustainable living beyond environmental considerations to embrace a novel paradigm of regenerative sustainability which emphasizes the creation of systems - social, economic, and environmental - that enhance individual well-being (Gibbons, 2020; Gibbons et al., 2018). Consequently, the focus of this analysis lies in examining the interventions employed by political representatives to enhance the quality of life for citizens in Kenya. As noted in the introduction above, the analysis of data revealed prevalent topics underscored by politicians in this study including the provision of food and nutrition to communities, water supply, healthcare, and the subject of economic sustainability through employment opportunities. These subjects are elaborated upon in the subsequent discussion.

4.1.1 Water and Food Supply

The discourse surrounding the provision of safe and adequate water to citizens intersected with discussions on the supply of food and nutrition. In this study, these two issues were intricately linked due to the complex relationship between water supply and food security in Kenya (see Rono et al., 2023; Shisanya et al., 2017). Moreover, both water and food availability exert significant influence on the overall societal well-being of society as discussed by Miller et al., (2021) and Mulwa et al., (2020). The following Facebook posts serve to illustrate this thematic concern.

Figure 4: Posts on Water and Food Supply



The emphasis placed on the subjects of food and water supply on social media platforms as highlighted in the posts above underscores political representatives' acknowledgement of the immediate needs of their constituents, thereby illuminating their attentiveness to citizens' needs. The identification of citizens' needs constitutes a central element of political

representation as discussed in the review of literature within section 2.4. Notably, water scarcity is a pertinent issue in Kenya, with the country classified among the world's water-scarce nations, boasting a per capita water availability of $1000m^3$ (Mulwa et al., 2021), in contrast to the global standard per capita range of $1700m^3$ per year (Jones, 2014). Likewise, food availability, quality, and security in the country are a significant concern as noted by Abodi et al., (2021); Asige and Omuse (2022), and Wafula and Odula (2018) who shed light on the role of governance in enhancing food security in Kenya. Given this context, the endeavours of political representatives to address water and food supply needs in Kenya are both logical and necessary, and they serve as political declarations of what needs to be availed to electorates.

Identification of citizens' needs is inherently contextual, as discussed in section 2.4 of this study, and it is informed by the political, social, and economic environments in which representation occurs. In post 2 for instance, the interplay between water provision in educational institutions and health facilities within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic is evident. Mizrahi et al., (2021) posit that citizens' needs undergo spontaneous shifts, particularly in times of crisis, to address immediate exigencies, such as the COVID-19 situation. Throughout the pandemic, inadequate water supply posed a significant threat to healthcare-associated infections in Kenya, with approximately 40% of Kenya's population unable to adhere to handwashing guidelines due to the absence of running water (Anim and Afori-Asenso, 2020). This heightened the risk of disease transmission among students and school staff. Therefore, improving water infrastructure during this period constituted a crucial representational endeavour in mitigating the health risks confronting the Kenyan society. Crisis undertones are also echoed in post 3 as evidenced by the mention of fortified porridge, which is provided to children with nutritional deprivation, signifying a state of societal vulnerability. Furthermore, the politician's assertion to safeguard citizens amidst unpredictable circumstances alludes to a social environment characterized by volatility and instability.

Embedded within the framework of sustainable living discussed above is the subject of gender roles and gender inequality in Kenya, particularly concerning water and food scarcity. In Kenya and across Africa, water scarcity exhibits a gendered dimension, disproportionately affecting women compared to men as reported by Gender and Water (2019); Bukachi et al.,

(2021) and Graham et al., (2016) who note that water scarcity in the region is not gender neutral, with 62% of female children responsible for water collection compared to 38% of male children. This disparity is attributed to cultural norms and societal expectations which dictate that women are primarily responsible for collecting water, especially in rural areas (Fleifel et al., 2019). Such tasks often entail lengthy and strenuous journeys, imposing significant physical, mental, and time burdens on women and girls (Pommells et al., 2018). These scholarly enquiries offer insights into the underlying message conveyed in post 1 wherein the political leader asserts that the provision of water in these communities will alleviate the burden on women.

Similarly, a gendered undertone is discernible in post 3, although not explicitly stated. Notably, the mention of NGAAF[21] holds significance in this post. One of the roles that NGAAF plays in Kenya is to advocate for gender equality and empowerment through initiatives that bolster the socio-economic well-being of marginalized groups. The post revolves around food provision, thereby unveiling the intricate relationship between gender and food security particularly in Africa (CARE 2020, Ingutia and Sumelius, 2022). In many African societies, including Kenya, the scarcity of food places additional pressure on women to secure and provide food for their families (Berresaw and Ndiritu, 2014). The challenge is exacerbated when young children are involved, as women assume a significant role in ensuring children's nutrition. By hinting at a nutritional challenge for young children in this post, the politician brings to the forefront the nurturing role undertaken by women within the Kenyan society.

Notably, while it is a commendable political representational practice to provide water and food supplies to constituents, it is also notable that African politicians sometimes personalize government projects by strategically presenting themselves as the architects behind these projects even when their actual involvement is minimal (see Agbor, 2021 and Arriola et al., 2021). These leaders employ this tactic to accrue political capital and enhance their public image. In posts 1 and 2 above, for example, language is used in an ambiguous sense, rendering

[21] NGAAF (The National Government Affirmative Action Fund) is a government initiative, which operates under the ministry of public service, youth, and gender affairs. It aims at providing financial support to empower and uplift the vulnerable and marginalized groups in Kenya, particularly the youth, women, persons with disability and the elderly. It provides loans and grants to support projects and initiatives that contribute to the economic empowerment, social inclusion, and overall wellbeing of the targeted groups.

it challenging for readers to discern whether the provision of these supplies is the result of politicians' personal initiative or a government-led effort. In this study, a social media administrator substantiated this claim, asserting that while politicians demonstrated genuine concern for their constituents, they occasionally took credit for activities that were government-sponsored. Although this excerpt is development-oriented, it serves as a suitable illustration for this argument.

> It is true they (politicians) are concerned about development issues like the construction of roads. But often they pose as if they are the ones sponsoring the project. Eg in Kenya, roads are constructed by KenHA under the national govt. When these projects are done in their constituencies, they pose as if they are the ones who influenced the roads to be constructed simply because they have lobbied for these development issues in parliament.

4.1.2 Healthcare

The second sub-issue within the overarching subject of sustainable living that emerged in this study pertained to healthcare. Analysis of data revealed that women politicians prioritized matters aimed at enhancing the mental, emotional, and physical welfare of citizens. Additionally, these political leaders shared social media content focusing on initiatives supporting community well-being and healthcare services, as well as the distribution of health and hygiene-related essentials like sanitary items and face masks to citizens, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The subsequent Facebook posts serve to illustrate this sub-issue.

> After more than 8 hours of surgery, I am pleased to report that the maxillofacial operation done at Kitui Referral Hospital to correct the growth on Ms. Pendo Masonga's face was a success! We thank God 🙏. Ms Pendo will now recuperate under close monitoring by the doctors. After recovery, the next phase will be to assist assimilate Ms. Pendo back into society, this time round without the painful burden and stigma of the malignant tumor that was on her face. Special thanks to the Kitui Referral Hospital Medical team. We pray for her speedy recovery.

> Today, I joined Prof. Margaret Kobia, CS for Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs at the NYS Headquarters to receive donations from her Ministry consisting of sanitizers, face masks, sanitary towels, buckets etc. In attendance were Hon. Lilian Gogo, Mp Rangwe Constituency, Hon Alice Wahome, Mp Kandara Constituency, Hon.Sarah Lekorere, Mp Laikipia North Constituency, Hon.Martha Wangari, Mp Gilgil Constituency, Hon.Jessica Mbalu, Mp Kibwezi East Constituency, Hon.Edith Nyenze, Mp Kitui West Constituency and Hon. Rachael Nyamai, Mp Kitui South Constituency

In the first post above, a female politician announces the successful completion of a medical procedure, highlighting aspects such as recovery challenges, empathy, spiritual and faith-based repertoires, and societal reintegration of an individual following health adversities. Similarly, in the subsequent post, political collaboration among female leaders is showcased, as they unite their efforts to advance community healthcare.

The subject of public health was not just confined to social media posts in this study. Rather, it was a pertinent discussion during both individual interviews with politicians and focus group discussions with citizens. Eight out of ten women politicians who were interviewed in this study cited health, education, and family issues as some of the subjects they focused on in their social media content. Likewise, when prompted to discuss the content that they sought from the social media pages of women politicians, citizens from all three focus group discussions cited enhanced women's healthcare, child healthcare, improved maternity services, and the necessity for the construction of additional hospitals. The collective advocacy for healthcare by both politicians and citizens underscored a significant concern in this study concerning the state of the healthcare system in Kenya. Furthermore, in the focus group discussions, the debate surrounding healthcare assumed a gendered dimension, with citizens asserting that women bore the brunt of health crises when the health of a nation was in jeopardy, because they assumed the role of carers and nurturers, as illustrated below.

> They should push the government to put up more hospitals, healthcare, healthcare for women, maternity and whatever, and also hospitals for our kids, because they're the one suffering. Mostly, when children are sick, it is the women who take care of them. So, we need them to open more hospitals and also advocate on the rights of women.

The topics discussed above signify a gender-responsive kind of political representation where women politicians claim to provide tangible services such as water, food, and healthcare services that directly appear to affect the female demographic. This finding corresponds to the theoretical discussion of section 2.1. where scholars including Bratton and Ray (2002); Childs (2004); Hessami and Fonseca (2020); Lippmann (2019), and Baskaran and Hessami (2019) contend that there exists a relationship between gender, politics, and policy choices. These scholars argue that women leaders are inclined to prioritize issues that benefit society's most vulnerable, such as welfare, childcare, poverty alleviation, healthcare, and education. Furthermore, Hessami and Fonseca (ibid) suggest that female representatives prioritize these

issues based on their experience with deprivation and traditional gender roles of caregiving. Within the context of Africa, Nkgowe (2022); Cherotich and Njoroge (2022), and Kaluai and Muathe (2020) studies in Botswana and Kenya respectively support these discussions by emphasizing the critical role of female representation in advancing women's empowerment and gender equality.

Despite the gender-responsive representation claims highlighted above; the focus group discussions conducted in this study unveiled conflicting perspectives among citizens regarding whether women leaders should prioritize women issues in their representational roles (refer to section 7.1). Discussions drawn from both urban and rural-based FGDs, as well as with individual citizens in this study had some citizens contending that a political leader, regardless of gender, serves the entire nation, and should not restrict their focus solely to women's concerns. Another section of citizens argued that while a gender-neutral approach to politics is commendable, recognizing the gender of politicians and its potential impact on political involvement is paramount. Neglecting this aspect could inadvertently overlook the unique experiences that women bring to the political arena, a subject that was also contended by seven out of the ten women politicians during one-on-one interviews. In the excerpt below, one of the women politicians asserted that,

> Women leaders are the ones who bring to legislation issues related women, for instance issues to do with healthcare, water access, issues relating to childcare, and things that relate to families. It is women who have a keen understanding for such legislative matters.

This assertion aligns with the arguments of Sawer (2000) as well as Baker (2017) who contend that women in legislature make substantive difference to political debate and decision-making, and they are in a unique position to present women substantively. According to these scholars, women leaders can enhance women's issues in a better way.

These debates from citizens and politicians, touching on the intersection between gender and substantive representation mirror the scholarly debates in sections 2.1 and 2.3 where political representation scholars including Celis et al (2008), Celis (2008b), Childs (2004), Celis and Childs (2018), and Caroll (2002) engage in discourse on whether women leaders inherently represent women and if female leadership diverges from male leadership in shaping legislative agendas. Essentially, the question of whether women leaders stand in a unique position to

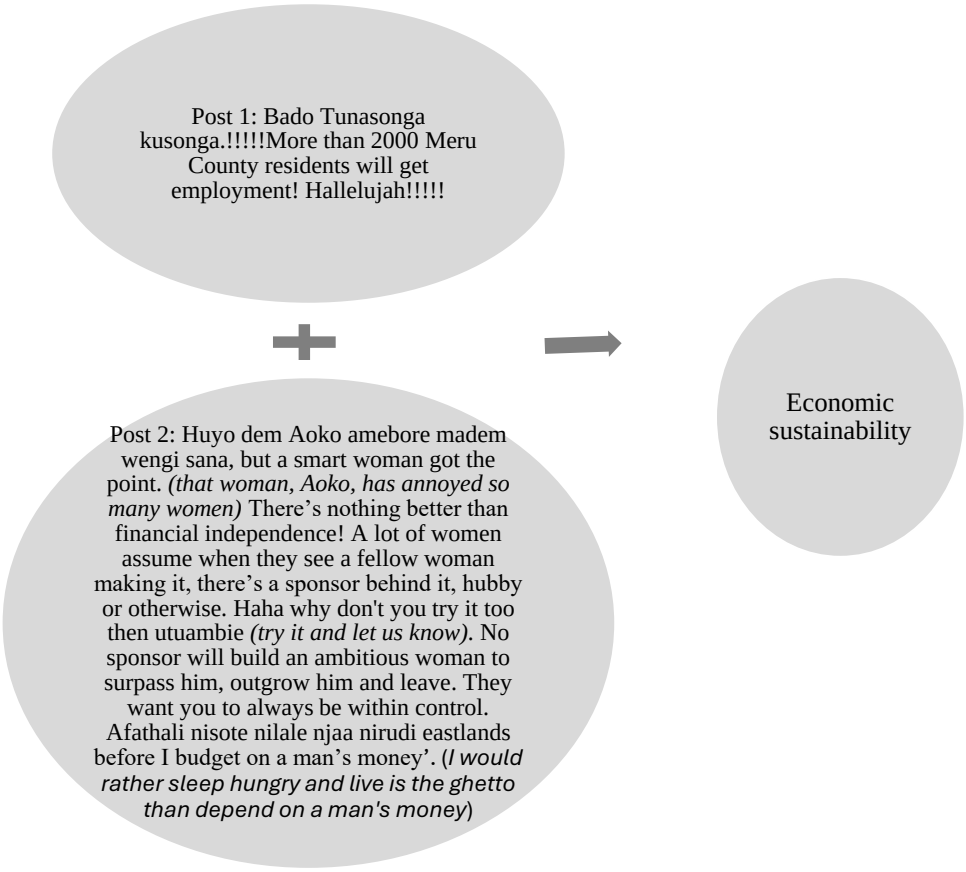
advocate for women's interests and agendas remains contentious, and definitive conclusions are elusive. This highlights the intricate nature of political representation dynamics, gender, and substantive representation.

4.1.3 Economic Sustainability

The third facet of sustainable living that emerged from the analysis of data in this study is the subject of economic sustainability. This issue was evidenced by political representatives' engagement with topics such as employment and job opportunities for citizens, financial inclusion, and the empowerment of women through economic success. The illustrative Facebook posts below exemplify how female politicians conveyed nuanced messages pertaining to economic sustainability in seemingly different ways. For instance, in post 1, a political representative announces the procurement of employment opportunities for residents of Meru County, where she holds political office. In her message, she incorporates layers of interpretants including considerations of economic impact, prosperity, personalization of politics, positivity, optimism, and religious connotations.

In a country characterized by high levels of employment (Onsomu, 2022, UN, 2022), the creation of job opportunities is seen as a significant accomplishment for politicians. By highlighting the provision of jobs to approximately 2000 residents, the politician showcases her efforts in addressing the economic needs and improving the livelihood of her constituents.

Figure 5: Posts Depicting Economic Sustainability



In the second post, the discourse on economic sustainability shifts to a message emphasizing financial independence, particularly aimed at women. Within this context, a female leader intertwines the themes of women's economic empowerment, their right to autonomous financial decision-making, and the elements of gender equality to underscore the concept of women's financial empowerment and autonomy. Here, she confronts patriarchal societal norms that suggest that women can only achieve financial freedom with the assistance of their male counterparts. The political leader emphasizes a firm stance, expressing a preference for facing financial hardships, hunger, or residing in economically disadvantaged areas in Kenya, popularly known as Eastlands, over depending on a man for financial autonomy. This statement holds significant implications within the broader discourses surrounding relationships, gender roles, and power dynamics in Africa, where traditional norms have positioned men as primary providers.

By integrating her message with Swahili, Kenya's national language, along with Sheng[22], as well as injecting religious connotations into her post, the political leader contextualizes her message to resonate with the cultural sensibilities of her constituents signifying an effort to establish rapport with a younger demographic, positioning herself as a relatable figure capable of offering relevant guidance in a manner that is understandable to them.

4.2 Infrastructure and Development

Beyond the subject of sustainable living discussed in section 4.1, the second major representational issue that emerged from the analysis of data was the topic of infrastructure and development. Within social media posts, this issue was delineated as encompassing various initiatives, activities, and undertakings geared towards fostering community development and enhancing overall community well-being. In Kenya, and the wider African continent, it is common for politicians to focus on issues that touch on development and infrastructure, considering the prevalent challenges of under-development in the region as espoused by Osewa et al., (2022) and Agbude et al., (2014). The following Facebook post serves as an exemplification of this subject.

> NG-CDF AND KeRRA PROJECTS INSPECTION, BIASHARA WARD.
>
> Today I inspected several projects we have undertaken through Naivasha NG-CDF and KeRRA in Biashara ward. My interaction with my bosses (Naivasha people) during the process was great.
>
> NG-CDF projects in Biashara ward;
> 1. Rutere Primary school- Renovation of classrooms and construction of an ablution block.(complete)
> 2. Rutere Secondary school- Construction of an ablution block(complete)
> 3. Kirima Chief's office- construction of the Chief's office, ablution block, gate and fencing(complete).
> 4. Ndoroto Secondary school- Construction of two classrooms, and two ablution blocks(complete). We started the school from scratch in 2018.
> 5. Kinamba primary school- Construction of two classrooms (ongoing)
> KeRRA projects in Biashara ward.

[22] Sheng is a language which originated from urban areas in Kenya before being adopted in the whole country. It incorporates grammar and syntax from English, Swahili, and the indigenous languages in Kenya. It is normally used in informal settings, where it is used as a means on socialization, and it denotes belonging to a certain peer group.

This post is a textual documentation of a project inspection conducted by a woman politician within her electoral constituency. She showcases various completed and ongoing development projects, particularly renovations and school constructions. The successful execution of these numerous initiatives exemplifies the politician's proactive stance towards representation, personal initiative, and a commitment to positive progress with her electoral jurisdiction. Additionally, the recognition and highlighting of the organizations that have funded the project, namely the National Government Constituency Development Fund (NG-CDF)[23] and the Kenya Rural Roads Authority (KERRA)[24] are notable. As discussed in chapter six subsection 6.1.1, as well as in chapter eight, such recognition of collaboration between local and national entities underscores a form of collaborative governance, a characteristic often associated with women leaders in political spheres.

In this study, the subject of infrastructure and development was a contentious political and representational topic. Two out of the five social media administrators asserted that the Kenyan populace showed minimal interest in development-oriented content on the social media pages of women politicians. According to these administrators, Kenyans were drawn to personal and sensational content, a subject that has been discussed in detail in chapter seven subsection 7.1. On the other hand, one social media administrator argued that citizen preference for political representation depended on factors such as age. According to this administrator, older citizens were more concerned with development-oriented topics compared to the younger and youthful citizens, as illustrated in the following interview excerpt.

> As social media administrator, I can say that it (issue preference) depends on the age group. Older people are interested in development issues and policy. Younger people are interested in entertainment and personal messages (personalization of politics and its relation to age of the audience- majority of Kenyans on social media are young people

However, contrary to these assertions by the social media administrators, insights emanating from both individual interviews with citizens and focus group discussions presented a different narrative. During these interactions, citizens, regardless of age, conveyed a strong preference for political representatives to prioritize discussions centered on development and policy. This

[23] NG-CDF, formally known as the constituency development fund in Kenya (CDF), was established to enhance infrastructural and socio-economic development at the constituency level.
[24] Kenya Rural Roads Authority (KERRA) is a government agency in Kenya that is responsible for the rehabilitation and maintenance of rural roads in the country.

preference was emphasized more by citizens from the rural-based cohort. Specifically, this rural group expressed a very strong desire to encounter content on social media platforms that pertained to infrastructure initiatives such as road construction, access to electricity, alongside other development endeavors. One citizen from the rural-based FDG has this to say,

> What we want to see on these (social media) pages are development issues. Their pages should be development oriented. We want to see them implementing the manifestos that they had promised during campaigns. If in that manifesto you indicated that you're going to tarmac like 300 kilometers of roads, we want to see that. If you said you are going to connect electricity, then we expect to see you do that.

In another instance, a citizen called for political representatives to move beyond rhetoric and actively focus on tangible policy and development matters and build a promising future for the country. This citizen underscored the need for politicians to focus on development and economic formations as noted below.

> I expect our politicians to stop talking too much and focus on things that matter for our nation, like economic development, building of hospitals and come up with policies that are beneficial for citizens beyond the five years that they are in office.

According to Price et al., (2018), it is reasonable for citizens to expect their political representatives to address development concerns such as road infrastructure and access to electricity, because these projects play a pivotal role in fostering economic advancement and enhancing the general well-being of the populace. Additionally, the emphasis placed by rural residents on developmental issues like electricity provision and networks in this study further supports the assertions of scholars such as King et al., (2017) who argue that citizens, particularly those residing in rural settings, are inclined to prioritize issues that directly impact their daily lives, such as improved road access to and electricity availability. Furthermore, there are disparities in Africa's infrastructural development, with urban having better infrastructure compared to rural areas (see Guneralp et al., (2017); Zimbalist (2017); Lekhaya and Mason (2014), and Azolibe (2021). As such, it is comprehensible for citizens in rural areas to call for development projects from their political representatives.

Overall, the above discussions argue for the need for political representatives to prioritize initiatives centered around nation-building, long-range vision, policy formulation, development, and economic advancement. This argument concurs with the theoretical scholarly discourse in sections 1.1 and 2.4 of this study, which emphasize the significance of

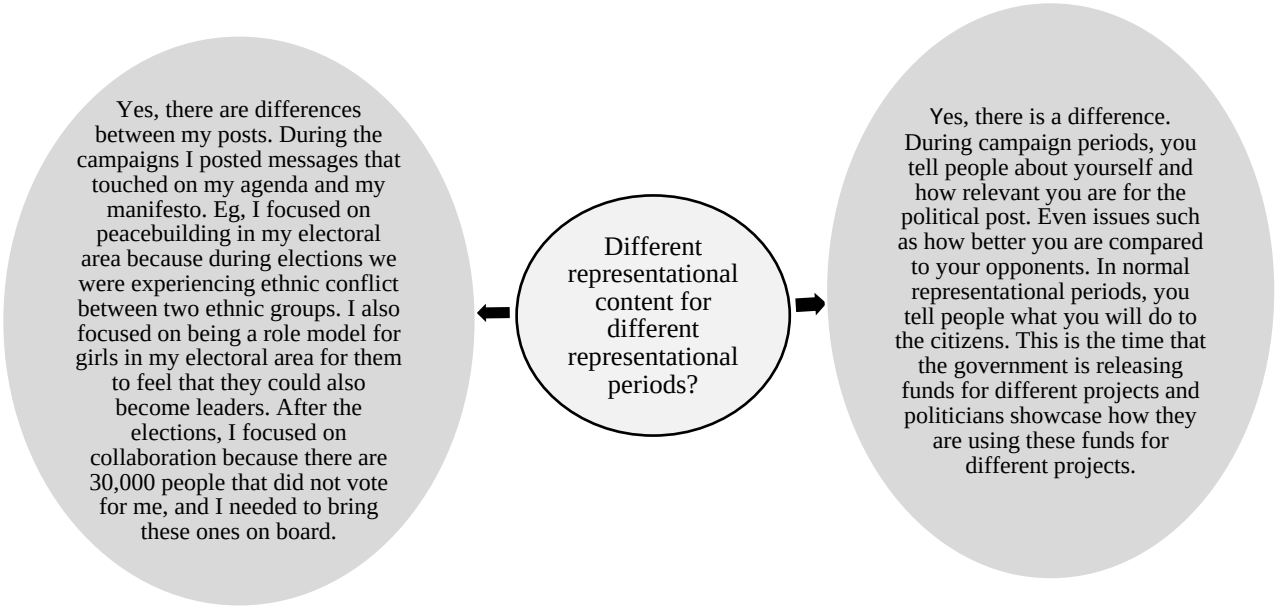
political authenticity and consequential politics. It also accentuates the responsibility of representatives in tackling socio-economic obstacles, advancing development, and providing public amenities. This call aligns with the discussions by African scholars such as Fosu (2021) and Fourie (2018), who have highlighted the significance of policymakers prioritizing substantive matters and implementing policies that foster sustainable development, diminish poverty, and enhance the overall well-being of citizens – issues that are much needed in African societies.

4.3 Governance and Civic Engagement

The third, and last prominent issue addressed by women politicians on their social media platforms in Kenya pertained to governance and civic engagement. This was a significant subject in 2022, which was a year of national elections in Kenya. Analysis of data revealed a notable shift in the focus of social media content by women politicians from issues such as development, sustainable living, and constituency work in 2020, to heightened attention to political campaigns and election-related topics in 2022. Specifically, in 2022, seven out of ten themes that emerged from social media data centered on governance and civic engagement, comprising twenty out of twenty-six social media posts examined (see Appendices 11 and 12).

This content shift between different political representation phases is a common occurrence in political fronts, according to Boulliane (2016) who notes that different political representational phases, though important in equal measure, have different logics of political engagement. Moreover, according to Grossman and Michelitch (2018), ordinary periods of political representation are characterized by long-term planning goals while electoral periods have a focus on short-term and immediate concerns that resonate with voters at that time. These insights were apparent in this study as seen in Appendix 12. Also, all the ten women politicians who were interviewed in this study admitted addressing different issues on their social media pages depending on different representational periods. The following statements, selected from feedback from two female politicians, are illustrative of this subject.

Figure 6: An Illustration of Different Content in Different Representation Periods.



Having introduced the broader subject of governance and civic engagement above, I then break it down below into several sub-issues namely electoral campaigns, electoral integrity, electoral justice, voting process and results, as they emerged in this study. As seen in the discussion, these issues are intertwined with the subjects of celebration and gratitude, religion, and gender.

4.3.1 Political Campaigns

In 2022, women politicians predominantly utilized their Facebook and Twitter platforms for political campaigning. This content coincided with the activities leading up to the national elections of 2022 in Kenya, confirming the argument presented in section 4.3 above that representational priorities vary depending on the representational periods. The social media posts of these political leaders had attributes such as candidate and party promotion, campaign updates and messages, voter engagement, endorsements, and opposition critique, among other attributes that aligned with the essence of political campaigns. Below, I offer examples of such

posts with a Facebook post and two tweets from three different politicians to illustrate how electoral representation issues were depicted.

> 1st Tweet: Some guy kicked out his wife & kids & moved in another woman & her kids. Now he needs the family's support to accomplish a task. His 'new family' has refused to help. Should his old family
> A. Hold their noses and help him
> B. Watch the show unfold
> C. Show him the middle finger

> 2nd Tweet: If you cannot respect women, you cannot respect anybody else- Because it is from women you come. @WilliamsRuto, you can INSULT WOMEN all you want. BUT IN THIS ELECTION, WOMEN WILL MAKE A MAJOR STATEMENT

> 1st FB post: What a warm, wonderful reception in Kakamega today! Despite our national challenges, there is HOPE. We can all turn it around with the right choices next month. The people of Kakamega believe in Azimio and invite you all to join in their march to prosperity.

The first illustrative tweet above offers a cryptic reflection of the general political environment in Kenya during election periods, such as the 2022 elections examined in this study. In this tweet, a political representative draws parallels between a family analogy and the political context of Kenya's national elections. On a surface level, the tweet discusses a moral dilemma involving a man who abandons his wife and children for a new relationship. The tweet then calls on the citizens' opinion on the appropriate response to the behaviour of the perceived man. The underlying message, however, is a political dilemma that stems from party hopping, a common practice in Kenya's political arena (see Mboya, 2020 and Shihalo, 2014). This practice, influenced by factors like political party loyalty and ethnic voting patterns has been explored in detail in section 6.2.2. Politicians in Kenya hop between political parties depending on their assessment of the party from which they can garner more votes and depending on the party that their ethnic group associates with.

This tweet invites multiple interpretations and discussions regarding electoral representation in Kenya by highlighting various electoral subjects such as voter preferences, political engagement, strategic manoeuvres, political candidates' conduct, and voter skepticism.

Employing humorous commentary and political allegory, it delivers an indirect message, a common tactic in political communication of critiquing adversaries without confrontation. Furthermore, such cryptic messages in political communication discourse often serve to resonate with supporters who can decipher the intended meaning, creating an ingroup solidarity and an outgroup exclusivity. From a discourse analysis viewpoint, the utilization of cryptic messages to critique political adversaries in Africa's political sphere may be attributed to a need for discretion especially in political contexts where confrontation may not be feasible or safe. Moreover, it may be an attempt to maintain message ambiguity to circumvent the flagging of messages due to digital media regulations.

The second tweet offers a different dimension to political campaigns in Kenya, namely, the subject of women's descriptive representation in Kenya's political space. The tweet integrates components of gender advocacy, empowerment, assertiveness, mobilization, and social media activism. In this context, the author acknowledges women as a collective force in the context of the elections of August 2022. She suggests solidarity among women voters and their ability to use a collective voice and influence election outcomes. The author projects a desire for women to be adequately respected and represented in the political arena. With women comprising over 50% of the Kenyan population (Musalia, 2018), the politician's caution to Dr Ruto - a presidential aspirant - that a disregard for women could tilt the electoral outcome is feasible. In essence, there is an underlying claim that the voice of women in political campaigns is paramount.

Turning to the first illustrative Facebook post above, the political representative addresses two main issues: the reception of a politician in Kakamega, a town in Kenya, and an invitation for citizens to join Azimio, a political party. The political candidate expresses enthusiasm when discussing her campaign efforts in Kakamega. The reference to a warm reception is, presumably, a communication tactic designed to stimulate interest and engagement around her campaign and to depict herself as a likeable, trustworthy candidate who can appeal to potential voters and earn their support.

In this post, the politician acknowledges the prevalent national challenges faced by the country but also provides optimism for the future. This is a common campaign tactic in Kenya where political leaders highlight societal problems while promising a better tomorrow. By

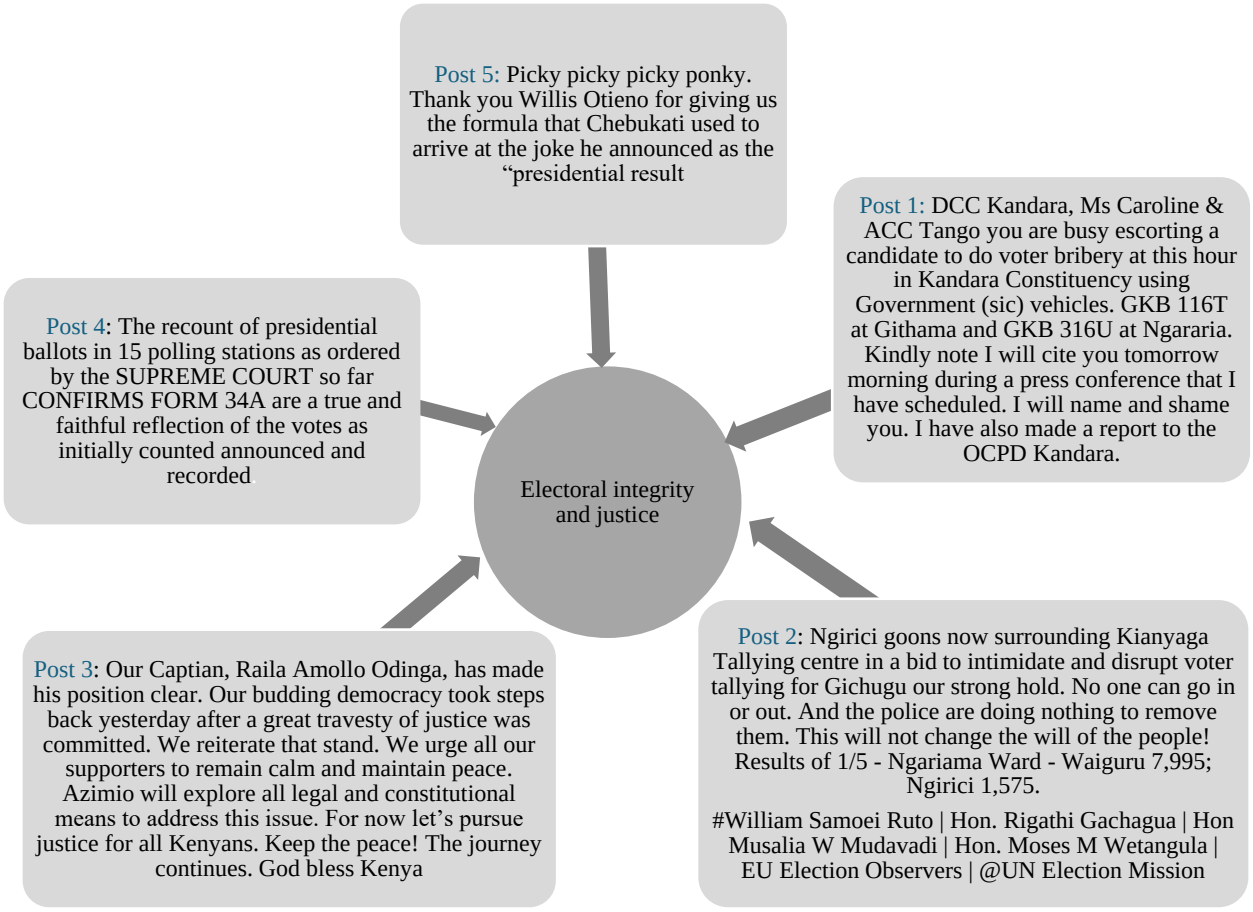
acknowledging citizens' challenges and offering solutions in her communication, the politician positions herself as empathetic and capable of addressing citizens' needs and concerns. Furthermore, the use of inclusive language such as 'we,' 'our,' 'people of Kakamega,' and 'you all,' fosters a sense of unity between the political representative and the citizens, appealing to the African values of the community, unity, and cooperation as discussed by Agada and Egbai (2018) and highlighted in sections 1.4 and 6.1.1 of this study.

While the three social media posts above vary in content and style, they share commonalities in their engagement with political campaigns and electoral processes in Kenya in terms of appeal to voter sentiment, mobilization and call to action, and political messaging. Beginning with an appeal to the sentiment of the electorate, the first tweet attempts to provoke thought and possibly sway voter opinion. The second tweet insinuates voters' vote swing, while the third post strives to uplift and inspire voters by highlighting hope amidst challenges. Secondly, all the posts prompt voters to consider their stance on political issues. Thirdly, all the posts convey political messages through employing different tactics.

4.3.2 Electoral Integrity and Justice

In this subsection, the intricacies of Kenya's electoral processes as derived from analysis of data are presented and discussed. These intricacies touch on the subjects of electoral integrity and justice. As highlighted in section 4.3, electoral processes constitute a pivotal phase in the realm of political representation, serving as the cornerstone of a functional representative democracy by bestowing mandate to the democratic process, underpinning the legitimacy of the elected officials, and cementing the trust reposed by citizens in their government (McDonald et al., 2012; Powell, 2019; Ferland and Golder, 2021). Specifically, the various topics that emerged from this analysis, and which were categorized under the broader subjects of electoral integrity and justice include transparency and accountability, allegations of corruption, misconduct and abuse of power, and the specter of intimidation and disruptive tactics witnessed during voting processes. These issues were highlighted in the Facebook and Twitter posts of women politicians, and they are elucidated below.

Figure 7: An Illustration of Electoral Integrity and Justice



Posts 1 and 2 above provide information about alleged voter bribery, misconduct, impropriety, and abuse of power during the 2022 campaign period in Kenya. These posts are characterized by different interpretative repertoires including accusations of corruption within the government, a demand for transparency and accountability in the political process, the expectation of legal action, political motivation and rivalry, intention to inform the public, threat of public exposure and consequences for the accused individuals of electoral malfunctions, political rivalry, and intimidation of disruptive tactics.

Malpractices in electoral processes have been a longstanding concern that has often compromised the integrity and fairness of elections in Kenya (see KAF report, 2016). These electoral malpractices have profound impacts on political representation. To begin with, they undermine a level playing ground for candidates because when elections are tainted by

electoral fraud, the will and ability of the people to pick their desired political representative is tampered with (Adesanya, 2020). Consequently, the quality of democracy where such malfunctions occur diminishes (Aluaigba, 2016). Secondly, there is also erosion of public trust, with citizens losing confidence in political processes, and becoming disillusioned with political representation. The result is citizen apathy and disengagement. In Kenya for example, more than 90% of citizens had a lot of trust in the electoral process in 2011. By 2019, the number had dived to approximately 60% (Brechenmacher and Sambuli, 2022). By 2022, Kenya failed to meet her target voter turnout with the Electoral Independent and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) registering only 12% of an estimated 4.5 million young voters (ibid). These are patterns of diminishing political engagement fueled by many factors, among them electoral fraud.

In spite of electoral malpractice allegations, it is plausible that the politician in post 1 is drawing attention to the perceived unfairness and corruption within the campaign process to present herself as a better representative. Thus, this may be a strategic populist maneuver that may serve to differentiate her from competitors and establish a reputation for ethical conduct and integrity. As highlighted in the literature review in section 2.5, such performative acts have the potential to resonate with voters who prioritize honesty and integrity in their political representatives. Similarly, in post 2, the political leader employs language aimed at diminishing the credibility and legitimacy of her opponent, branding herself as an individual with integrity, competence, and stability, in contrast to her opponent. Essentially, she utilizes rhetoric to establish a dichotomy of 'us' versus 'them,' employing populist strategies delineated in sections 2.5 and 5.1.1 of this study. Furthermore, in both instances, the politicians provide concrete references to aspects such as number plates of vehicles, as well as the citation of exact vote counts, which can boost credibility by offering concrete information. This strategic move of providing numerical evidence in political communication is discussed in detail in section 5.3 of this study as a tactic for cultivating trust and believability in citizens.

Posts 3, 4, and 5 all center around the aftermath of contentious presidential election results in Kenya. While posts 3 and 5 subtly suggest flaws in the election process, the deviation from the principles of electoral fairness and transparency, and consequently, the politicians' apprehensions regarding democratic setbacks, post 4 offers a contrasting narrative by affirming the credibility and integrity of the electoral process. It asserts that the recounted ballots in form

34A[25] accurately reflect the voter's choices, thereby upholding a crucial tenet of political representation. Notably, is the stylistic departure in post 4, where the politician deviates from the formal tone adopted in posts 3 and 5, opting instead for playful language to question the validity of the electoral process. Employing popular nursery thyme, she employs a satirical, sardonic, dismissive, and critical commentary to insinuate that the chair of the electoral commission, Mr. Wafula Chebukati, arbitrarily selected the president without adhering to proper procedures. The reference to the presidential result as a 'joke', implies its perceived inaccuracy and underscores the call for Kenyan citizens not to take the results seriously.

Overall, these social media posts bring to light two major issues. Firstly, they highlight the intersection between leadership, electoral justice, electoral integrity, and political representation in Kenya. Post 3, for instance, underscores the pivotal role that leaders play in political representation, not only as representatives, but also as guides through the intricacies of governance, democracy, and political systems, a subject discussed by Gerring et al., (2023). The politician references Raila Odinga as a captain of the people, implying that he possesses the necessary skills and experience to guide Kenyan citizens through a complex political landscape. However, this reference conjures a common tendency in Africa where political leaders are often presented as extraordinary individuals who should be greatly admired or even revered (see Ighotomo and Orji, 2022; Resnick 2017). Secondly, these social media posts bring to question the validity and maturity of democratic representation in Kenya by showcasing a distrust of electoral officials, a critique of transparency in the electoral process, discontent with political establishments, and a general flaw in electoral accountability.

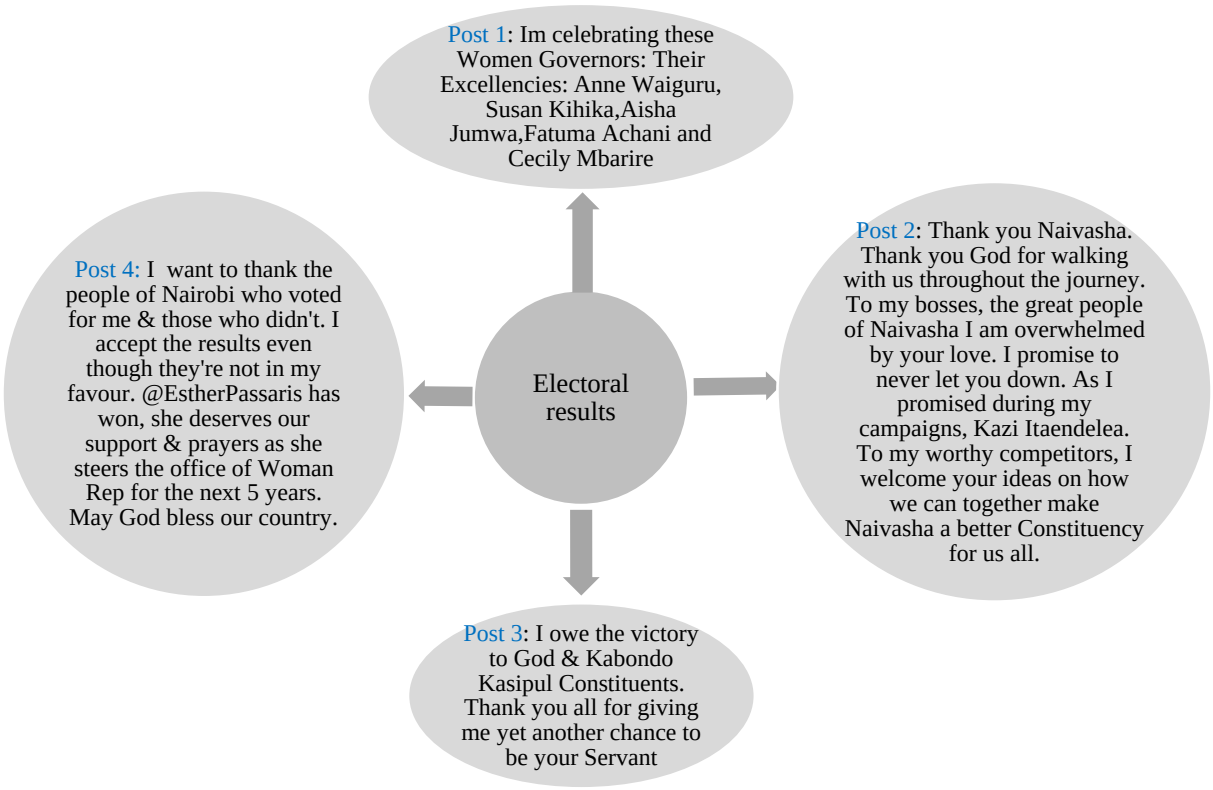
4.3.3 Electoral Results

In the broader context of governance and civic engagement, the discussion of electoral results takes centre stage as a critical component of political representation. This subsection delves into the portrayal of electoral results by women politicians in Kenya through their Facebook posts and tweets, shedding light on how these political leaders utilize digital platforms to articulate their perspectives on electoral outcomes. Through a presentation of the content and

[25] In Kenya, form 34A refers to an official document that is used to verify election results at each polling station before they are transferred to the national level for aggregation (see IEBC 2017, Warner, 2021). It is used for the purposed of electoral transparency.

rhetoric employed in these social media posts, I present the nuanced dynamics that emerged from analysis of data regarding electoral results representation and offer insights into the intersection of these representations with other aspects such as gender, power dynamics, celebrations and gratitude, religious rhetoric, and governance in the Kenyan political landscape.

Figure 8: Posts Depicting Electoral Results



Post I, a tweet, applauds the election of five female governors in Kenya and acknowledges their success in attaining gubernatorial positions. By specifically mentioning their names and addressing them as 'their Excellencies,' the politician achieves multiple objectives. Firstly, she highlights and brings attention to their individual achievements, granting them visibility, and recognizing their official status. Secondly, she implicitly addresses the concept of descriptive representation, which concerns the proportion of elected officials belonging to specific demographics, in this case, women. Acknowledging the significance of women in leadership is crucial, particularly in Kenya's political landscape, which often faces challenges in accepting

women in prominent roles. This issue is extensively explored in the literature review in section 2.1. Additionally, by spotlighting successful leaders, the political figure may inspire other women to strive for excellence and contemplate pursuing leadership roles. Also, female politicians in positions of authority can serve as role models for young women and girls, encouraging them to pursue careers in public service and consequently fostering to a more diverse and inclusive political representation. This is an issue that was highlighted during focus group discussions as exemplified in the excerpt below.

> For a long time, politics in our country have been male-dominated. So these women who are coming to positions of leadership should act as pacesetters – something like a ladder. We expect to see them holding the hands of other upcoming ladies who are coming into this space of leadership.

Posts 3 and 4 have repertoires of gratitude and appreciation to the citizens for their contribution to the electoral success of the politicians. Additionally, these posts convey messages of accountability, pledges to fulfil promises made to citizens, and a call for collaboration. They also incorporate religious sentiments, reflecting the importance of religion in Kenya's political discourse, as discussed in section 6.2.1 where it was noted that religious underpinnings are a frequent integration in Kenya's political discussions, necessitated by a need to appeal to and connect with a populace that shares similar religious values and beliefs.

Notably in post 4, which is a tweet, despite not emerging victorious in the elections, the politician extends gratitude to all citizens of Nairobi who participated in the electoral process, regardless of their voting preferences. The tweet encompasses repertoires of gratitude, political accountability, opponent support, religious reference, and political commentary. Additionally, this political leader mentions the winner's Twitter handle, further showcasing support for the elected representative. Her acceptance of the election outcome underscores a sense of democratic maturity, a trait often associated with women leaders (see Clayton et al., 2021; Arceneaux and Truex, 2022). However, this gesture may also serve as a strategic move to preserve political capital, which in turn can be an invaluable asset for future political endeavours. This gesture indicates an anticipatory political representation mode which is explored in more detail in chapter 8.

Overall, these social media posts showcase women's triumph in their quest for political positions. The posts showcase elements of respect for fair competition, a sense of community,

solidarity, and shared identity. Additionally, they exemplify collaborative governance, as women leaders extend invitations to their political rivals and acknowledge their abilities and expertise, thereby reinforcing democratic principles.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has scrutinized the political representational issues that women politicians in Kenya address on their social media platforms in line with the first overarching question of this study. These issues include sustainable living, infrastructure and development, governance, and civic engagement. The issues were examined within the broader contextual frameworks, including their intersectionality with gender dynamics, clientelism and populistic approaches. Furthermore, the overall discussions in the chapter also looked into the various subjects that were incorporated into the study to cater for triangulation such as distinct political representational phases and how they impact the practice of representation, as well as how diverse citizen demographics shape representational expectations.

The discussions in this chapter unveil several findings. Firstly, it is evident that women leaders bring on board-specific representational issues such as health, family, childcare, and general societal empowerment into the political representation process. This finding is consistent with political representation studies that have been detailed in section 2.1 of this study, which underscore the interconnectedness between gender, leadership, and policy concerns. These studies include Gwazda (2021); Espirito-Santo et al., (2018); Celis and Childs (2018); Celis et al., (2008); Celis (2008b); Childs (2004), and Caroll (2002) that argue that policy preferences in political representation are linked to the gender of the political leaders.

However, by addressing the subjects of infrastructure and development, economic sustainability and electoral processes, the study disputes the arguments by scholars such as Samuel-Arzan and Yarchi (2023); Butler et al., (2022) and Slegten and Heyndles (2019) who equate such ‘hard policy political concerns’ to male politicians, while asserting that women leaders tend to prioritize ‘soft policy domains’ in political representation.

Secondly, the findings in this chapter confirm that different political representational periods engender varying representational agendas. For instance, in 2020 women politicians predominantly in Kenya engaged in digital representational discussions surrounding

sustainable living, development, and economic sustainability, as substantiated by the data presented in Appendix 12. Conversely, in 2022 the focus on representation discourse shifted towards electoral campaigns and elections, aligning with the national electoral context of that year in Kenya. Also, it was realized that during normal political representation periods, political leaders focused on long-term representational goals while election periods focused on short-term goals. This finding underscores the susceptibility of political representation to contextual influences.

Thirdly, the study elucidated the divergence in representational expectations among various segments of the citizenry. Findings from the rural focus group discussions for instance underscored an anticipation for political representatives to prioritize development and infrastructure issues on their social media platforms - a concern less pronounced among urban residents. It was noted in this study that this need stemmed from infrastructural disparities that characterize African countries, with urban areas being more developed than rural areas. This disparity underscored the nuanced and varied demands placed on political representatives by different constituents, necessitating tailored approaches in political representation practice.

In the next chapter, I discuss the strategies that women politicians employ in Kenya's political representation.

Chapter 5: Discursive Strategies in Political Representation

This chapter is dedicated to addressing RQ 2 which delves into an examination of the strategies employed by women politicians in their online political representation practice. To encapsulate, the focus is on 'how' female political leaders in Kenya engage in political representation. The study uncovered four political representation strategies. Firstly, the study explores performative aspects of political representation, encompassing populism and personalization of politics. Secondly, it focuses on clientelistic tendencies in political representation. Lastly, the study discusses the use of numerical discourse and evidence-based representation as potent strategies in Kenyan politics. These strategies are elucidated below.

5.1 Performative Strategies of Political Representation

Analysis of data uncovered two major performative strategies employed by women politicians in Kenya's online political representation practice, including populism and personalization of politics. Saward (2006) characterizes these strategies as 'performative' due to the imaginative and creative aspects involved in their execution (p. 310). Additionally, Moffit and Tomey (2014) note that when engaging in these political strategies, politicians tend to 'slip in and out of style' (p. 393). Furthermore, these political tactics involve elements of perception, symbolization, and enactment of issues. Kariseb (2021) and Rensick (2019) note that once a Western political ideology and practice, populism and personalization of politics have gained momentum in sub-Saharan Africa. In this section, I explore how these practices manifest in Kenya's political representation practice.

5.1.1 Populism

As discussed in section 2.5 of this study, the dimensions and characteristics of populism are highly contested by scholars, with some scholars such as Urbinatti (2019); Caramani (2017); Gaus et al., (2020), and Espinosa et al., (2022) concentrating solely on its political and democratic facets, while others such as Norris and Inglehart (2019), Uyhend and Montier (2020) and Jami and Kemmelmeier (2021) extend the scope to include the social and cultural dimensions of a given society. What is agreeable about populism however, and what is adopted as the definition of populism in this study, is Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser's (2013) argument

that populism is a political tactic utilized by politicians to position themselves as champions of the common people against an established ruling class. Populism revolves around a reflection of a permanent representational crisis (Roberts, 2016), tapping into public dissatisfaction with the state of governance (Gomez, 2018), and invoking an emotional appeal from a dissatisfied populace (Pirro and Taggart, 2022), to distance themselves from the perceived shortcomings of the broader government establishment, and to vilify a dominant political caste (Barr 2009, Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2013). In essence, it adopts a citizen-centric and anti-elitism strategy where citizens are projected as oppressed, marginalized, and vulnerable (de Vreese et al 2018).

For a populace perceiving marginalization within the political domain, the prospect of being 'rescued' by a political figure resonates deeply (Resnick, 2017). Within the African context, societal inequality engenders a dynamic in which political leaders capitalize on this perceived imbalance by creating a political demand and supply situation and thereby leveraging populism as an opportunistic ploy (ibid). Paradoxically, the vast majority of political leaders cannot be unequivocally classified as outsiders to the prevailing political and economic establishment in any given context (Resnick, 2017, p. 111). Thus, populism emerges as just a performative aspect of political discourse.

Evidence gathered from the analysis of data in this study revealed that almost 50% of the Facebook posts and tweets analyzed had manifestations of populist tendencies. Firstly, women politicians positioned themselves as advocates for the common people, challenging established political norms, and championing the rights of ordinary citizens through anti-poverty rhetoric. Secondly, they denounced the economic and political marginalization perpetuated by the ruling elite. The third dimension of populism identified in this study, and which was regarded as authentic to the African context (see Resnick, 2017), revolved around socio-cultural performances such as the use of linguistic appeals inform of code-switching, religious sentiments, as well as identity appeals. (The 'Africanness' of this dimension is examined alongside the discussion of code-switching and religious populism in the sections below). Furthermore, this study identified additional populist tendencies such as the utilization of emotionalism and sensationalism, as well as the maneuvering for political relevance. The most noticeable mode of populism, however, that emerged out of this study, was 'empty populism',

advanced by de Freese et al (2018, p. 2) where politicians employed rhetorical claims to appeal to the general public without providing concrete solutions to their plight. Overall, populism manifested either as content or as a style. These forms of populism are expanded upon in the subsequent sections.

As stated in the preceding paragraph, twenty-eight of the fifty-eight posts analyzed in this study were populist. This number comprised of Facebook posts 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 30, and 31 and tweets 38, 41, 42, 44, 46, 49, 51, 55, and 56 (see appendix 12). The illustrative Facebook post below, representative of numerous populistic posts and tweets analyzed in this study, serves as an example. This post elucidates the various variants of populism that have been highlighted in the preceding section including the subjects of economic, political, and cultural exclusions. The post also addresses the subject of poverty, as well as the notion of empty populism.

> Extremely saddened to have witnessed the very inhumane way the Government has forcefully evicted families in Marioshoni Ward, Molo Sub-County. One wonders what the urgency is in carrying out this displacement excises during a very rainy season and while our people are already suffering due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. We have called on the government to stop any further evictions until an amicable solution is found. Our people must be treated with dignity and proper procedures followed for those with Title deeds for their land and sufficient notice given to those living past the cut line. The government through the ministry of environment must also come clear on the forest boundaries to avoid punishing people living on legally acquired land. As a country, we must learn to respect title deeds issued by the relevant government departments. It beats logic to claim the residents are living on forest land while the same government has constructed schools, hospitals, and offices of the Chief to serve the same residents.

In its entirety, this Facebook post employs two major populist styles referred to as populism in content (PiC) and populism in style (PiS), which are advanced by Stanyer et al., (2016) and expanded upon in detail in section 2.5 of this study. By adopting populism as content, a woman politician critiques government actions on its citizens, highlighting perceived government indifference to citizens' welfare, disparities in government services, land rights, property ownership and resource allocation. The depiction of individuals residing in government-designated areas as squatters without land ownership, and the subsequent eviction of this group during the COVID-19 pandemic, evokes imagery of economic hardship, financial instability, vulnerability, homelessness, and emotional distress. The politician's contextualization of these evictions within the backdrop of the pandemic serves to underscore

government insensitivity and raises ethical, and humanitarian concerns regarding its treatment of citizens.

While addressing the plight of this community, the politician employs specific linguistic choices to position herself as a part of the people, while distancing herself from the political class. Here, she adopts a populist by-style (PiS) stance. She, for instance, references ‘our people,’ to present herself as a champion of the afflicted community and to appear to relate to them. The subject of linguistic choices in populist rhetoric is underscored by Aalberg et al., (2017) as well as Schmuck and Hameleers (2019) who posit that any reference to ‘the people’ is a key element of populism that is aimed at incorporating anti-establishment rhetoric.

Additionally, language in this post is used to express an emotional stance, depict authority, and impose obligation. The political leader employs linguistic amplifiers to strongly express the intensity of ‘emotions that she is experiencing’ due to the injustice that is done to the citizens. These amplifiers are also used to heighten the magnitude of the issue at hand and evoke an emotive aura to the situation, by for instance, emphasizing the government’s coldness and disregard for societal welfare. The subject of emotionalism as a populist tactic is discussed extensively in section 2.5 where scholars such as Cramer (2017) posit that politicians are attention merchants who understand that emotionally charged content tends to attract public attention, leading to an epic scramble to capture it. Cramer (ibid) adds that for such political leaders, politics is about them and not about citizens.

In this study, citizens decried this self-centeredness by political leaders. One citizen for instance observed that politicians were too keen to showcase their actions in the place of citizens’ needs. The citizen lamented that only one female politician in the country was concerned about citizens' wants and that she was not a representative of how political representation was practiced in Kenya. From a gender perspective, this observation stands in contrast with studies such as Barnes and Córdova (2016); Lawless (2004); and Bauer and Cargile (2023) who posit that female leaders exhibit greater responsiveness to citizens’ needs compared to their male counterparts because they project heightened empathy, approachability, and trustworthiness, rendering them more adept at addressing the concerns of the citizens. This observation also reinforces the discourse of employing emotionalism as a populist strategic ploy, and not a genuine concern for citizens, as discussed above.

Citizens also lamented the tendency of certain representatives to prioritize controversial and emotionally charged issues to garner attention, while neglecting pressing societal concerns. To digress, one citizen, for instance, recounted an incident in which a politician commissioned a road but shared a photo of herself, dressed in a manner considered inappropriate by Kenyan standards, with the caption, 'commissioning a road.' Subsequently, public discourse predominantly focused on her attire rather than the actual project. This phenomenon of utilizing contentious and emotive issues as populist strategies to attract attention is addressed by scholars such as Johnson (2006) and Benes (2016) in section 2.5, who analyze the intricacies of attention and visibility in politics, highlighting the lengths that political leaders will go to, to command public attention. When queried about this issue, social media administrators contended by saying.

> They(politicians) are concerned about popularity - 100%. They want to be seen, to be heard, to remain relevant. Sometimes they post controversial issues.

Back to the subject of empty populism, what qualifies the sentiments in the above social media post to be regarded as a facet of empty populism in this study is due to a pervasive absence of clear and definitive procedures outlined by the representative to hold the government accountable for its actions. The manner in which these residents are ultimately aided to alleviate their dire circumstances remains ambiguous. This highlight aligns with Kurmar's (2014) contention that this form of populism lacks the requisite specificity to translate rhetorical promises into actionable policies. Furthermore, as noted by Ouedraogo (2022), and Aalberg et al., (2017), empty populism represents a prevalent communication strategy in Africa, characterized by politicians' emphasis on a standard set of key messages that may not necessarily correspond with the necessary actions.

During individual interviews and focus group discussions, the subject of empty populism garnered disapproval from citizens. A significant portion of participants advocated for political representatives to transcend mere rhetoric and prioritize tangible political issues. These citizens criticized politicians for creating a representation façade, highlighting a perceived lack of genuine service to constituents. Consequently, there emerged a collective demand for political authenticity and consequential action. The excerpt provided below exemplifies these sentiments.

> I expect our politicians to stop talking too much and focus on things that matter. I want them to know that representation means representation. They create an illusion that they are representing, and they are not.

Another populistic mode identified in this study was the subject of 'politicking for relevance.' In this context, political representatives utilized their online platforms to amplify and maintain their relevance. They, for instance, engaged in attention-grabbing content, and selective engagement with issues that were likely to attract public interest and enhance their public profiles. Such politicians were accused by citizens of neglecting important issues that could stimulate meaningful discussions, and instead, focused solely on issues that were likely to bolster their popularity. For instance, citizens recounted an incident in which a Rwandese diplomat was attacked by bikers after causing a road accident in the capital city. Subsequently, women leaders rallied behind the diplomat solely because the incident garnered public attention. There was a general perception that the same leaders would not extend similar support to an average Kenyan woman because such an incident would not generate comparable levels of attention as exemplified in the following excerpt,

> All I see most of them doing is just politicking until an issue that makes them relevant comes up. Its (sic) like going to a party and dancing to a specific tune until something that will attract the attention of citizens comes up. For instance, a Rwandese woman driver was attacked by boda boda guys (bikers) and they all rallied to protest against this attack simply because it gained public attention, and also because she was a diplomat. If it was an ordinary citizen, they would not react. That's what they do.

This perceived selective responsiveness highlights the prioritization of presentation tactics and personal prominence over genuine political substance, a populist tactic that faced significant criticism from citizens as illustrated above. According to Bronstein et al., (2018), this tendency to engage in selective activities to maintain prominence in the eyes of the public, regardless of their effectiveness in political representation, hurts the essence of political representation. If genuine, however, populism can potentially promote inclusivity in democracy because it is anchored on the premise that leaving disadvantaged citizens out of the system goes against the principle of democratic representation (Scantamburlo, 2019; Roberts, 2016; Koc-Michalsa and Klinger, 2021; de Vreese et al., 2018).

The results of this investigation also revealed that populist tactics were employed during both regular and electoral periods of representation. This finding contradicts the assertion made by Kariseb and Kasita (2021), as well as Nyadera and Agwanda (2019), who argue that in sub-Saharan Africa, there exists a causal relationship between populism and elections. Specifically, the study found that there were more instances of populist claims in 2020, considered a normal representation period in this study, compared to 2022 which was an electoral period. To illustrate, among the twenty-eight posts exhibiting populist tendencies, (see appendix 11), approximately 64% 28 posts) were observed in 2020, while 36% (10 posts) were recorded in 2022.

5.1.2 Personalization of Politics

The second performative strategy that was employed by politicians in this study is personalization of politics. This strategy entails shifting the focus of political discourse from wider political ideologies and party platforms to the personality, personal life, appearance, behaviour, values, and lifestyle of politicians (Leidecker-Sandman, 2021; Starke et al., 2020). It is an infusion of a politician's attributes into the public domain, mostly to garner political advantages (Otto et al., 2019). Personalization of politics is influenced by several factors including personal dispositions, cultural contexts, and even political contexts (Blais et al., 2021; Day et al., 2023; Pedersen and Rahat, 2019). Building on this foundational premise, this analysis reveals personalized political acts and interactions that emerged from this study.

Analysis of data unveiled a notable trend among women politicians in Kenya: the integration of diverse personal elements into the practice of political representation. Primarily, these political representatives employed distinct self-presentation strategies, portraying themselves as strong, resilient, optimistic, radiant, and attractive. Furthermore, they projected an image of independence through linguistic choices and personal descriptions. Additionally, personal milestones such as birthdays and other celebrations were seamlessly interwoven into their social media content. The tweet below exemplifies the harmonized manifestations of the aforementioned aspects of political personalization.

> Thanking God for this far. I want to be like a sunflower so that even on darkest days
> I will stand tall and find the sunlight. Happy birthday to me.

In the above illustrative tweet, a politician extends a birthday wish to herself. Drawing from discourse analysis, this wish is interpreted as a form of self-affirmation. The motivation for self-affirmation is not explicitly stated in this tweet, and discerning the rationale behind the employment of self-affirmation proves challenging, primarily due to the absence of a comprehensive contextual backdrop within the message – a constraint of social media content. However, this motivation can be explained by Steel's self-affirmation theory (1988) which suggests that individuals engage in self-affirmative actions to assert their self-worth, to protect themselves from potential threats, and maintain their self-integrity (see also Lyons et al., 2022). Within the context of Africa where women leaders often face heightened skepticism regarding their leadership competency, it is comprehensible for a female political leader to utilize self-affirmation as a communication strategy, either to promote her self-integrity as argued by Binning et al., (2015), protect her social identity (see Cohen et al., 2020), or even to preempt criticism or attacks (Sherman and Cohen, 2006).

Skepticism towards female leadership in Africa reflects a multi-faceted issue that interacts with various socio-cultural, political, and gender dynamics. Across many African nations, entrenched gender roles and patriarchal structures play a significant role in shaping perceptions of leadership, often reinforcing the notion that leadership is inherently a male domain. Consequently, doubts regarding women's capacity for effective leadership persist (Khosa, 2022). Moreover, prevailing cultural norms often associate leadership with masculine traits such as aggression, authority, and toughness, thereby creating significant challenges for women leaders who are expected to embody contrasting characteristics (Khosa, 2022). This perpetuates a cycle of systemic stereotypes and biases against women in leadership roles, contributing to gender inequality within leadership spheres which reinforce androcentric biases (Omotoso, 2022). Within such cultural and political environments, women leaders are unable to assert authority and make public decisions without undue scrutiny. In chapter seven, subsection 7.2 for instance, there is a prevalence of claims regarding personal attacks directed towards women politicians in Kenya, perhaps due to some of the reasons outlined above. It is, therefore, logical for a female leader to engage in self-affirmation as a means to uphold her self-integrity as showcased in the tweet above.

Another prevalent approach that women politicians employed in this study to project their personal attributes on social media platforms involved emphasizing their beauty and radiance. While this characteristic manifested across various social media posts, such as posts 10, 11, 16, and 20 (See Appendix 11), the tweet above is still illustrative of this tactic. Here, the political leader uses language in a metaphorical sense by likening herself to a sunflower – a symbol connoting warmth, radiance, and attractiveness. This metaphoric expression serves as an aspect of self-branding that accentuates her personal qualities of warmth, optimism, strength, and relatability. Below, I elucidate these traits and elaborate on the possible reasons for their integration into political representation practice.

To begin with, relatability in communication practice is seen as a persuasive tactic that fosters a positive emotional appeal to audiences (Moses and Gonzales, 2014; Caiani and Cocco, 2023). According to Eberl et al., (2020), this tactic which is projected by employing elements of positivity in communication contexts, taps into the emotions of citizens and enhances the likeability and trustworthiness of a political actor, which is one of the goals of personalizing politics. During one-on-one interviews with citizens, participants, both male and female, and drawn from both rural and urban areas, cited emotional connectivity, relatability, and psychological proximity as an endearing trait in women politicians. One of the citizens, and a communication consultant in Nairobi, explained that he found women politicians to be more approachable and friendlier. He asserted that women politicians perceived the populace (citizens) in a manner analogous to their self-perception without bringing the view of 'I am the one in charge here'. Additionally, he highlighted that these female leaders had an emotional appeal to citizens, which he found as very attractive. This perception was shared by participant 22, another citizen from a focus group discussion in Murang'a. In her own words, she asserted that she 'felt psychologically closer to women (leaders)'.

The sentiments of the citizens above illuminate the interpersonal influence theory by Carson (1969) and Kiesler (1983) which emphasizes that approachability and relatability are essential qualities for building connections. In political communication, this theory has been used to explore the relationship between politicians and citizens by scholars including Lilleker (2010), Bene (2016), and Ohme (2019). On the other hand, however, these sentiments may be examined from the perspective of expectancy-violation theory that equates political relatability

with gender. Studies by Beltran et al., (2020), Karl and Cormack (2021), as well as Storie and Marschlich (2022) employ this theory to argue that women politicians are likely to strategically present themselves in a relatable and approachable manner to fulfil societal expectations, perceptions, and norms. A woman politician confirmed this argument during individual interviews by contending that personalization of politics facilitated the establishment of a rapport with citizens by granting them a sense of shared identity. This politician posited that by sharing and detailing mundane everyday activities such as partaking in common meals, she cultivated a relatable identity with citizens, fostering a sense of commonality with them, as exemplified in the statement below.

> Sometimes I post my daily activities, like when I am having the simplest meal in Kenya, I just post. 'today I am having 'Githeri[26]', or today I am having 'ugali'[27] and 'sukuma'[28]. I know this because I also follow other politicians online and I see citizens appreciating politicians who are just like them.

Back to the forms of political personalization tactics that emerged in this study, I focus on the use of celebratory events as an example. In a Facebook post below, for instance, a female politician uses a birthday post to showcase her personal attributes which include humour, age, family life, and personal emotions. This humanization and informalization of politics make politicians appear more relatable and authentic on social media platforms, as noted by Manning (2016) and Mendiburo-Seguel (2022). By sharing such an important personal milestone, the female politician portrays herself as an ordinary individual, which is a crucial strategy in political representation (Aichholzer and Willman, 2020), because it allows political representatives to foster better connections with the people they serve (Coleman, 2006).

> Hallo, 37! (though we aren't counting this year)) so thankful to God, for life, for love, for health and for family. Looking forward to many more. Asante Mola

In non-western political communication studies, such as in Kenya, relatability in women leaders fits into this subject of societal norms, expectations, and stereotypes where women are expected to be approachable (see Storie and Marschlich, 2022). While this approachability by women in leadership is castigated in some political domains and contexts because it is regarded as 'political softness', it is considered an admirable trait in most African contexts, where

[26] A traditional dish that is consumed by various communities in Kenya.
[27] A staple food in East Africa
[28] A leafy green vegetable in Kenya, also known as collard green in the rest of the world.

cultural manifestations of nurturing and care are considered ideal representations of African womanhood as argued by Acholonu (1995), Alemayu (2020), and Kioko et al., (2020). Moreover, these scholars posit that the nurturing and warm characteristics of an 'ideal African woman' serve as Afrocentric alternatives to Western Feminism. Thus, within Africa's political realm, these traits are not only confined to cultural contexts, but they are also used as strategic political communication tactics and modes of political survival in a societal context that views female warmth, softness, psychological proximity, approachability and motherliness as qualifiers for a woman's political ability (Musandu, 2008; Chuku, 2018; Oyewumi, 2020). To the eyes of electorates, therefore, these qualities may increase the chances of women being regarded as better political representatives.

Another political personalization attribute that was evident in social media posts such as in the illustrative tweet above was the mark of beauty and charm. According to Msuya (2019), many African cultures place importance on the physical features of women leaders such as beauty. Women politicians may thus leverage these qualities such as it has been done in this tweet, to align themselves with cultural ideals and garner visibility, recognition, and support from communities that value them. Information garnered from citizens drawn both rural and urban focus group discussions revealed that female politicians in Kenya used their physical appearance and beauty to attract crowds. While this suggests that beauty plays a role in their following, these citizens emphasized that they were more concerned with these women's policy stances than their physical appearance, a subject that has been detailed in chapter 7 subsection 7.4. This stance by citizens from focus groups is reflected in Barisione's (2009) argument that effective leadership is complex, and it transcends beyond popularity and charm to encompass a range of attributes and behaviours such as self-confidence, competence, emotional intelligence, and exceptional performance.

But even though 'feminine traits' such as the ones discussed above are admirable in women and emphasized in the socio-political contexts of Africa, leadership, in the continent, is associated with masculinity as argued prior in this section, and noted by (Canudo and Ali, 2017). Consequently, what the populace expects from women leaders overlaps and converges with masculine characteristics (ibid). In response to these expectations, women leaders find themselves compelled to cultivate, exhibit, and emulate a demeanour that conveys strength

within the framework of traditional male norms, thereby asserting their capability for leadership. This phenomenon is integral to political communication dynamics, providing convenient cognitive frames for citizens to rely on when analyzing the qualities of a political representative (Franciso et al., 2014; Aminulloh, 2019). In the tweet above, the woman politician's act of metaphorically likening herself to a sunflower that 'blossoms in harsh weather', symbolizing resilience and strength even in the face of adversity, may be attributed to this societal dynamic. Here, while she depicts herself as charming, beautiful, and radiant, she also strives to align herself with masculine constructs of strength and optimism. This brings this discussion to the third trait of political personalization, which is the depiction of strength.

Politics is often associated with masculinity and strength as discussed by Kanthak and Woon (2004) as well as Stark and Luyt (2018). Studies, such as DiMunccio and Knowles, (2022) demonstrate a robust correlation between masculinity, dominance, and political aggression, with men often utilizing politics to affirm their masculinity. Bauer (2019) contends that female politicians who fail to embody these conventional attributes associated with politics, struggle to garner voter confidence. As such, most women are likely to brand themselves as strong and resilient to showcase that they possess the necessary qualities to be effective leaders as done in the tweet above. Also, within a culture where traditional gender roles and expectations are prevalent, women politicians navigate these norms and prove their worth as leaders by emphasizing qualities that are traditionally associated with masculinity. This subject was confirmed in focus group discussions with citizens. In these discussions, citizens expressed admiration for women politicians who exhibited strong qualities both in personality and in leadership. For instance, when asked what motivated them to follow women politicians online, one citizen said that she was compelled by the leadership traits of some women who exhibited strong leadership skills. She said,

> Participant 8: I follow some women (online) because of their leadership styles and the issues they stand for. That's the reason I began following women politicians like Martha. Martha means what she says. She stands for what she stands for. No wonder she is referred to as the iron lady.

The mention of 'the iron lady' above confirms that some citizens are drawn to women leaders who manifest strong, unyielding leadership traits, and who were unwavering in the commitment to the values and principles that they espoused. This is in line with Young (2020)

who argues that electorates are drawn to politicians who showcase themselves as strong, decisive, and capable of leading effectively.

Having delineated the diverse techniques and strategies enacted by women politicians in Kenya to personalize and humanize their politics, I then ventured into the overarching query regarding the appropriateness of personalizing politics. Data analysis revealed that there existed divergent views regarding the custom of personalizing politics in the realm of Kenya's online political representation. Certain politicians and citizens were in favor of this practice, while others were not. The following excerpt illustrates the sentiments of one of the citizens who expressed favour for this political strategy.

> Participant 1: Social media are relaxation sites, so I want to see the other side of them, the human side of them (the politicians). When we see them in parliament, they are too serious. When we see their social side, it gives us a glimpse that they are just like us.

However, not all citizens concurred with the illustrative stance above. There was a section of citizens, majorly from the urban-based FGD who disregarded personalization of politics in its entirety. These citizens voiced their discontent regarding the disproportionate attention that elected officials placed on their personal qualities, actions, and social media presence. To them, personalization of politics was seen as a detraction by politicians from substantial discussions surrounding policy issues, societal challenges, and their duty as legislators. Politicians were scrutinized for prioritizing self-promotion, individual narratives, and lifestyle-oriented material. In essence, these citizens asserted that political representatives had neglected their primary roles by exhibiting their personal lives on social media. The following excerpt, from participant 5, a university student in Nairobi, based in Kenya’s capital city, serves as a prime example of this conduct.

> I don’t like them telling us every detail of everything they do. They dwell so much on their daily routine. They tell us things like, ‘I have just woken up, I have gotten into my range rover, I am now in my office taking a cup of tea.’ come on! As a citizen I have not even had a cup of tea because I can’t afford it. Then I reach out to my phone, get into social media using the little airtime that I have, only to find that you posted a range rover. I will unfollow your page. I voted for you to see the ideas you have for the nation and the citizens. That’s what I want to see, not your daily routine.

The significance of citizens in urban areas disregarding personal-oriented politics becomes evident when considering the alignment of citizen needs and wants within their geographical

location. Urban areas, particularly those situated within regions such as sub-Saharan Africa, exemplified by the case of Kenya, encounter multifaceted challenges encompassing transportation, housing, and infrastructure (Guneralp et al., 2017). Consequently, citizens in these locales may feel that focusing on policy and legislation, as demonstrated in the above excerpt, is essential for tackling these challenges effectively. Moreover, individuals with a higher level of education such as the university student referenced above, may exhibit higher levels of political consciousness, and be more inclined to engage in policy discussions and anticipate that their leaders to demonstrate proficiency and expertise (Ihme and Tausendpfund, 2017).

Closely related to the above argument was a number of other citizens who were concerned that in their attempt to humanize politics, politicians in Kenya posted social media content that portrayed lavish lifestyles, in contrast to the challenges that were faced by ordinary citizens. They expressed displeasure with politicians' actions of posting extravagant lifestyles and events, palatial residences, and luxury brands among other displays that were in contrast with the economic realities of citizens. This subject went beyond the subject of political personalization to touching on the issue of economic inequality between political representatives and the represented, the disconnected nature of the wealth gap and living standards between the two, the probable misuse of public resources at the expense of the citizens, as well as the question of responsiveness. This subject of economic disparities between citizens and politicians in Africa is documented by Gibbons et al., (2017). There was an underlying call for political representatives to connect with the realities and concerns of the electorate. In an excerpt below, participant 11, a resident from the Eldoret FGD, raises this concern.

> Where do they get the energy to post lavish lifestyles whereas the common mwananchi (citizen) is suffering out here?

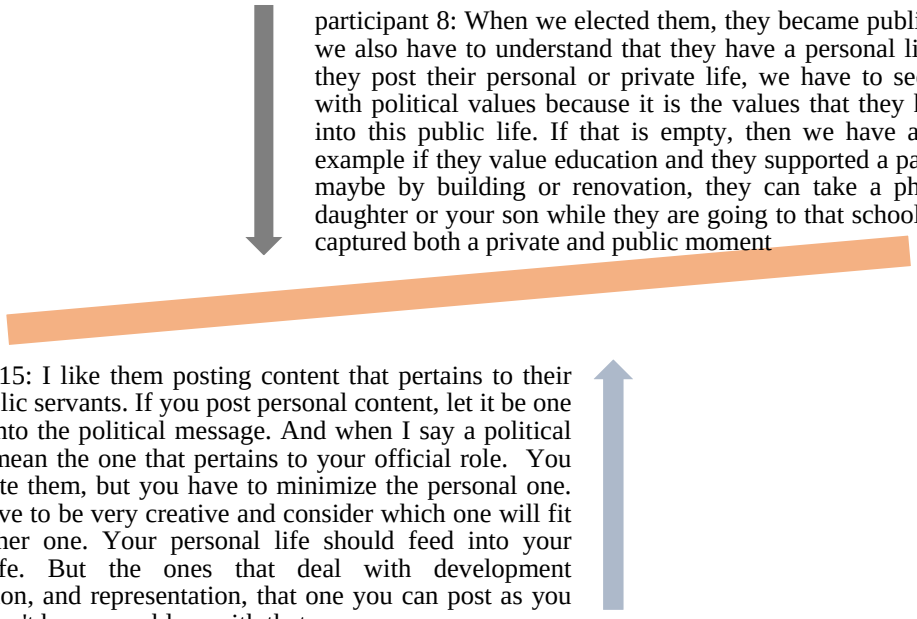
To echo the sentiments of citizens as expressed above, some women politicians claimed that despite the potentiality of this strategy in accruing political mileage, politicians who engaged in personalization of politics were not serious political leaders. One of the women politicians categorically labelled politicians who engaged in personalization of politics as 'political socialites.' This suggestion implied a call to return to the embodiment of the qualities

traditionally associated with earnest and substantial political leadership, as illustrated in this statement,

> Politicians who get personal on social media are few. But it gives politicians political mileage. But I don't regard them as serious political leaders. To me, these are political socialites, not political leaders.

But what stemmed out of this debate, from the majority of citizens, was the call to political representatives to strike a balance between personal and public life. These citizens argued that even though personalization of politics was necessary, there was a need for clear distinction and balance between politicians' personal and public lives on social media platforms. This category of citizens expressed that in an ideal world, they would prefer to engage with content that pertained to the public roles of politicians in the political arena. However, they contended that this public role was inseparable from the private space of the politicians and hence, there was a need to balance the private and the public. Two citizens from two distinct focus group discussions explained this subject explicitly below.

Figure 9: Citizens' Views of Political Personalization



Noteworthy, however, were individuals who believed that personalization of politics should be exclusive to nominated women politicians rather than the elected on the subject of humanizing politics extended to dissecting women representatives based on their electoral status. They suggested that elected politicians bear the responsibility of reporting back to constituents, necessitating greater caution in their social media content, compared to their nominated counterparts. Essentially, these citizens appeared to accept online personal information from nominated women leaders. Participant 6 is one of the citizens that drove this stance.

> Personally, I am not interested in the personal life that they keep posting on these pages. Most women who are not in elective positions (nominated) have very casual conversations on their pages because they have no definite electorate to report to compared to elected politicians and experienced women politicians.

In political representation practice, the statement implies that electoral accountability plays a crucial role in influencing the online behaviour of politicians. It suggests that political representatives, who have an electorate to answer to, are likely to customize their content according to the preferences and expectations of their audience and electorate, as discussed by

Seyd (2014). Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of professionalism and accountability to citizens in political representation practice.

In conclusion, there are several issues that emerged from the subject of humanizing politics in this study. Firstly, it was realized that personalization of politics on Kenya's social media platforms had blurred the line between the private and public, a trend referred to as a 'liquidated state of politics' by Fusch (2014). Drawing from Fusch (ibid), the boundaries between play and labour, private and public life, and home and office have become more permeable in Kenya's social media space. For political representation, this shift towards a more personal approach to politics served as a compelling factor for some citizens to gravitate towards female politicians who possessed humanistic qualities such as charm and likability. Because of this gravitation, some politicians worked to present themselves as popular leaders by utilizing personal techniques on social media platforms to connect better with the public. This trend was perceived to be reflective of a broader interest in political representation practice as argued by Kaal (2018), Wood et al., (2016), Metz and Plesz (2023).

On the other hand, there were arguments by a section of citizens and politicians that too much humanization of politics overshadowed broader policy issues and societal concerns. These citizens advocated that political representatives should use personal elements to reinforce their political messages and policies. This strategy, which is known as strategic personalization, helps representatives reach a wider range of constituents because they are able to relate on both personal and professional levels (see Pederson and Rahat, 2019; Raynauld, 2017). Thus, these political actors advocated for the need to balance the private and public identities in Kenya's political front, a subject supported by Mellon and Proser (2017) and Pedersen (2022), who suggest that there is a need to strike a balance between the personal and political to ensure effective representation.

5.2 Clientelistic Tendencies in Political Representation

Clientelism is a political practice in which an individual or group (patron) bestows favours upon less powerful individuals or groups (the clients) in exchange for their support, loyalty, or political allegiance (Klaus et al., 2023). Often, it takes the form of distributive politics whereby political representatives leverage their privileged access to state resources to maintain a form

of relationship with the electorate (Ghergina, 2021). These representatives provide material and non-material incentives such as patronage goods, infrastructural projects, jobs, services, protection, and other promises to citizens. In return, politicians seek political support such as votes, public endorsement, loyalty, and other forms of political backing from the electorates.

Analysis of data in this study revealed that women politicians in Kenya employed numerous clientelistic tendencies in their political representation practice. These tendencies took the form of direct transactions, indirect transactions, enactment of cultural norms, and emotional transactions. Direct transactions, as delineated by Protsyk and Matichesku (2011), refer to the overt and direct exchange of both tangible materials and normative benefits between political actors. These transactions are characterized by their immediacy, often taking place in close proximity to electoral events as highlighted by (Ansell, 2018, Habibi 2021). This implies that they are a form of vote solicitation. In this study, women politicians engaged in direct reciprocal political transactions with citizens by promising goodies to them in exchange for political support and loyalty. This exchange was exemplified in social media posts. In the post below, a woman leader pledges to donate buses to several schools contingent upon her successful election to office. This particular interaction exemplifies a direct, transparent, and conditional transaction within the realm of political exchanges.

> Alhamdulilah, I have fulfilled the promise I made to the students, parents, and the great people of Habaswein to deliver a school bus. I wish to sincerely thank the president of the Republic of Kenya, H.E Uhuru Kenyatta. This is the first school bus received in the vast Wajir south constituency through my effort. I make a pledge to the other deserving secondary schools in Wajir if am elected to office.

The social media post above has all the facets of clientelism which include emotional, cultural, direct, and indirect trade-offs. The emotional and cultural transactions are manifested in the greeting. By beginning the post with an Arabic expression used by individuals of the Islamic faith to express gratitude to God, the politician adds a cultural and religious dimension to her message. Wajir County, which provides the context of this post, has a predominantly Muslim population, and the politician who made the post is also Muslim, making it reasonable for her to begin with an Islamic greeting. Given this context, the use of this phrase would likely resonate with the local population. The use of the phrase ‘Alhamdulillah’ may also be a conscious, strategic, and deliberate means of tapping into the emotions and psychic demands

of the citizens, which is a contemporary practice in clientelistic transactions as argued by Klaus et al., (2023). In the course of individual interviews, a woman politician acknowledged employing such expressions as a deliberate strategy to establish relatability with the populace, driven by the perception that such sentiments aligned with the preferences of citizens. This politician acknowledged that she did not belong to the Islamic faith, but when she visited her constituents who professed this faith, she used words such as Alhamdullilah, Inshallah, etc. Concurrently, another political leader asserted that the utilization of such language by politicians served to strategically 'play with the psychology of the citizens.'

Implicitly, the politician in the illustrative post above highlights the significance of this donation by asserting its distinction as the first school bus received within the expansive Wajir county. By alluding to the country's vastness, the politician accentuates the impact and significance of the donation. Given the context of the post coinciding with the national elections of 2022 in Kenya, it was inferred that the political candidate was subtly leveraging this donation to bolster her electoral prospects. Drawing from the arguments advanced by Gadjanova (2017) and Ghergina (2021), this strategic manoeuvre was interpreted as an indirect attempt by this woman politician to undermine her opponents. Within this framework, such electoral practices can be viewed as a transactional exchange between politicians and citizens, wherein the vote is awarded to the highest bidder.

In other social media posts in this study, clientelism emerged as an indirect transaction where political representatives did not openly offer conditions for goods and services provided to the citizens. Rather, they posed as genuine representatives who were concerned about the needs of the citizens. In the illustrative social media posts below, we see politicians offering goods and services to needy electorates, yet the political representatives do not indicate the source of the goodies. This form of clientelism is exacerbated by limited access to resources especially in rural and marginalized communities that have no access to essential services and development projects, coupled with poverty and inequality as noted by Yuda (2021). In such contexts, politicians engage in clientelism to distribute benefits directly to 'needy' supporters while discretely seeking and hoping for electoral support. In line with this, discussions in focus groups indicated that citizens wanted to see politicians addressing issues affecting the marginalized in society.

> Our NGAAF Relief Food Drive targeting vulnerable is on! Every family in need will receive a hamper consisting of rice, maize & wheat flour, sugar, beans, cooking oil, fortified porridge, sanitary towels, and face masks. Our food drive is one of the several interventions to cushion citizens in these uncertain times.
>
> Bado Tunasonga kusonga.!!!!!More than 2000 Meru County residents will get employment! Hallelujah!!!!!
>
> '108 Water storage tanks of 5000litres capacity have been distributed to selected dispensaries public primary schools, secondary schools and special schools. Many schools do not have water and in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, we realize that it is more necessary.

In other instances, clientelism took on a semblance of championing the concerns of the citizenry. An illustrative case of the phenomenon occurred during the electoral campaigns of 2022, wherein the discourse of land distribution emerged as a salient political instrument, strategically employed by politicians to accrue voter support. The political campaigns presented a strategic opportunity for politicians to position themselves as champions of society's interests and grievances. They portrayed themselves as advocates for the welfare of the marginalized and underprivileged communities, as evidenced in the tweet below.

> Martha's evasive on this debate including on south Ngariama land. She knows we can provide evidence on her family benefitting on it while she was cabinet minister. That is why they will not allow us to complete titling the land.

In this tweet, there are several underlying issues which include the issue of justice, ethnicity, inequality, and state control. However, the tweet also has an aspect of distributive politics and clientelism. The problem of land distribution in Kenya has always been contentious and highly politicized (Boone, 2012; 2014). Around election periods, political elites have constantly used the subject of land distribution to maintain political support by providing land rights to their supporters and revoking them from opponents (Hassan and Klaus, 2021). In essence, elites use the land as a clientelistic tie.

The practice of clientelism has consequences for political representation. To begin with, it poses a threat to democratic engagement since political representatives are selected based on their ability to offer incentives rather than their capability to represent (Nzau and Guyo, 2021). This results in the election of unqualified individuals. During the focus group discussions, citizens for instance, noted that there was a tendency by electorates to expect handouts from

political representatives instead of listening to the policies that these representatives had to offer. There was a general concern among the citizens that such acts were detrimental to political representation in Kenya.

Secondly, it impedes democratic governance by allowing for undemocratic behaviours such as lack of transparency and accountability, as noted by Habibi (2021), Bakre et al., (2017), and Stokes et al., (2012). Politicians may misuse public resources for personal gain or to maintain client relationships, which ultimately undermines the legitimacy of political representation. Additionally, clientelism may prioritize patronage over meritocracy (Pierskalla and Sacks, 2019), further undermining effective governance and representation, and leading to disillusionment among citizens who feel their votes do not result in meaningful representation (Weitz-Shapiro, 2012).

Due to the instant gratification that clientelism provides for politicians and citizens, it results in lower long-term accountability in political service, because clientelistic politicians prioritize short-term tangible benefits over long-term policy solutions. Their focus is on distributing short-term favours to secure support, which diverts attention from broader societal issues, further undermining representational duties (Masemola and Selepe, 2022). On the other hand, however, clientelism may be used to fulfil democratic tasks as posited by Anciano (2017). Anciano (ibid) argues that within the African political context, clientelism holds moments of democracy by providing access to goods and services to previously marginalized groups.

In conclusion, this discussion has presented several approaches to clientelism in Kenya. These approaches include direct transactions that focus on the ways that politicians distribute selective goods in exchange for political support. They also use indirect transactions where political leaders build on the logic of citizens by capitalizing on contexts of scarcity to secure livelihood goods for the less vulnerable members of society. According to Auyero (2000), politicians provide these incentives to keep voters under-resourced and dependent. Additionally, cultural transactions emerged where political leaders intertwined clientelistic strategies with cultural norms in a bid to tap into the emotional demands of the electorates.

5.3 Political Technicization: Numerical Discourse and Evidence-Based Representation

In a further investigation into the strategic construction of social media messages by political representatives in Kenya, an observation surfaced highlighting the utilization of numerical discourse and evidence-based representational strategies by these leaders. Analysis of social media data unveiled a notable trend among women politicians, which included incorporating quantitative expressions such as statistical constructs and numerical data in their social media communication. Additionally, visual displays as well as figures were also employed as forms of evidence-based communication and representation. Overall, it was deduced that evidence-based communication and numerical discourse was particularly employed to impact credibility to information and cultivate citizen trust within a political context characterized by pervasive mistrust stemming from factors such as corruption within the political sphere.

The incorporation of quantitative dimensions into the discourse of communication aligns with the concept of the 'technicization of politics' as fronted by Muller and Rose (2008, p. 77). Chassapis (2017) alternatively refers to this communication dynamic as 'techno-mathematical discourse' (p. 47). These authors argue that political quantification serves to enhance the perception of truth among audiences. In the ensuing section, I present a discussion on how this communicative and representational strategy was implemented in this study, shedding light on both the perspectives of politicians and citizens, as well as its application in social media data.

Posts 1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 21, 28, 33, and 41, employed this quantitative dimension to political communication (see Appendix 11). These posts indicate that numerical discourse and evidence-based representation were employed in several instances, ranging from specific citations of the amount of money allocated to various institutions within constituencies to mentioning the number of jobs that women leaders had created in their electoral areas. Additionally, there was numerical evidence from Facebook posts and tweets that showcased electoral results that culminated from the national elections of August 2022, supported by the number of votes that had been cast for different candidates. Below, I scrutinize these issues.

In the Facebook post below, a politician references the number of households that will benefit from water supply in a given locality. The reference to 600 beneficiary households serves as a numerical expression that is meant to add precision, believability, and credibility to the

politician's statement in accordance with the principles of discourse analysis (Chassapis, 2017). Furthermore, in political communication, numerical discourse is employed to provide evidence and support reasoned arguments (Chassapis, ibid, p. 47), a communication strategy which may prove to be particularly significant in political contexts like Kenya where corruption levels are high (see Rij, 2021). In such contexts, political leaders may need to provide additional proof of political undertakings to confer objectivity and authenticity to their political messages.

> This afternoon I handed over a community borehole at Muyu wa nyufu, Madunguni, Kakuyuni Ward. The project was sponsored by Coast water service and will go along way (sic) to serve 600 households. Adequate supply will ensure availability of clean drinking water, proper sanitation and a relief especially to women as it will ease the burden of trekking in search of water.

In another instance, a political leader communicates the acquisition of employment opportunities for a section of Meru County residents, a region under her political jurisdiction by employing numerical data. Expressing the sentiment 'bado tunasonga kusonga' which is a Swahili sentiment loosely translated as 'we are still forging ahead,' the politician heralds the provision of employment to approximately 2000 residents. This numerical expression serves as a manifestation of the leader's endeavours to mitigate unemployment challenges within her constituency. In a country that has a high level of unemployment (see Onsomu, 2022; UN, 2022), job creation is construed as a substantial accomplishment for political representatives. In this case, by claiming her potential to deliver tangible economic benefits to her constituents, the political leader solidifies her qualification as a dependable representative.

> Bado Tunasonga kusonga.!!!!! *(we are still forging ahead*). More than 2000 Meru County residents will get employment! Hallelujah!!!!!

As indicated under the introductory section of this sub-topic, the use of numerical and evidence-based communication serves to enhance message authenticity. Political scholars such as Gili et al., (2020); Weinburg (2023); and Rudolph (2017) connect this attribute to political representation practice by asserting that representational practice must rely heavily on credibility and believability because this greatly determines how the public perceives both the politicians and the political messages. Elsewhere, Gili et al, (ibid), contend that political trust is the cornerstone of politics and governance (p. 288). Building on this, Weinburg (2023) and Rudolph (2017) underscore the crucial role of trust in democratic systems, highlighting a

consensus that citizens rely on trust to assess whether support government actions or not. This subject of believability, and trust, and its nexus with evidence-based communication emerged during individual interviews with citizens as well as in focus group discussions. A section of the citizens affirmed that representation that was grounded in data facilitated political messages to be perceived as genuine. In the sentiment below, for instance, a citizen emphasizes that the accentuation of visual proof by political leaders, integrated within the paradigm of data-driven communication, was essential for validating the authenticity of political messages. The citizen had this to say,

> Participant 11: I like messages that have visual proof that these politicians did what they claim they did. It gives authenticity.

Building on the above argument, Weinburger (2023) reports that in many African countries, data-driven communication may prove to be a powerful tool for promoting trust-building and transparency in political practice. The argument brought forth by Weinburg is that lack of established political accountability mechanisms results in citizen skepticism and mistrust towards government actions. By sharing numerical data, therefore, political representatives offer concrete evidence to support their claims and win citizen trust. During the focus group discussions, there were citizens who maintained that politicians should showcase proof of data, facts, and information that could support their representative's claims and actions. The following statement by Participant 18, is a good example.

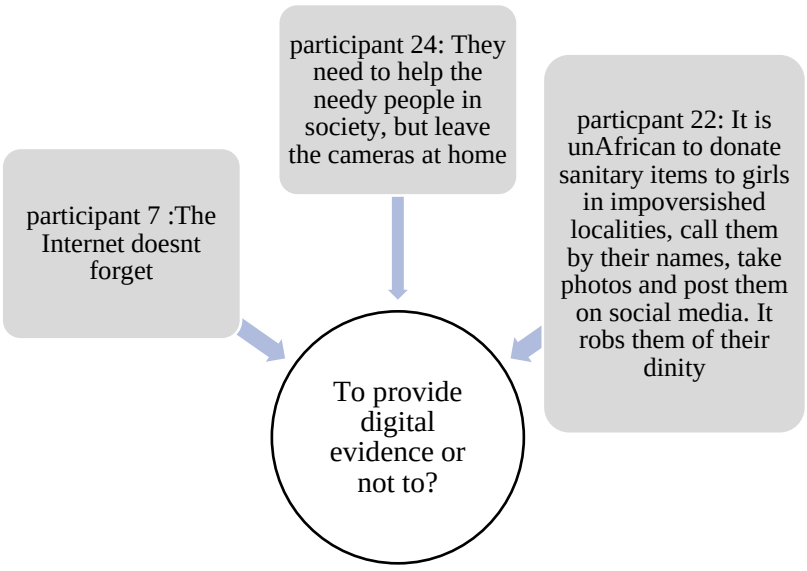
> I want to see images of what they are doing. And when I say images, I'm not saying these nice poses where the social media administrators take good photos of the politicians and post them on social media. But I'm looking at, for example, if you are launching a particular project, that photo with the people of that locality that proves that you've launched it. If you are meeting some development partners, there is a need for us to see who are these people? If you are going to initiate a new project or you are visiting an ongoing project or a project is coming to a close, then we need prove that they were there, and that you are standing up for something.

As evidenced by the sentiment above, citizens tend to process political information with skepticism and confirmation bias. This issue has been discussed by Hill (2017), who argues that it is important for political communicators and representatives to provide evidence to eliminate this bias. This is especially crucial in social media environments rife with fake news and propaganda. Citizens expect transparency, accountability, and tangible evidence from

political representatives. Meeting these expectations is crucial for maintaining public trust and democratic legitimacy (Ullah and Shah, 2022; Albaladejo and Jose, 2019).

But while some citizens in this study advocated for evidence-based political representation as highlighted above, there was a section of them who felt that political leaders in Kenya were either overdoing it, and thereby overwhelming the audiences, or they were providing evidence in unethical ways. During the focus group discussions, one citizen from the peri-urban cohort recommended that politicians should leave the cameras at home while doing representative duties. According to this citizen, some political activities such as the dissemination of sanitary items to girls did not warrant showcasing evidence because it was considered socially unethical. Within the Kenyan context, there are societal norms such as secrecy and silence that surround the subject of menstruation (see MacLean et al., 2020 and Chebii 2018). To document and showcase activities surrounding this subject therefore is to disregard societal ethics. On a similar note, another citizen from the urban group indicated that politicians posted too many photos without focusing on the relevant agenda. The citizens lamented that while evidence-based communication was important, some politicians posted too many visuals in a single activity, some of which were sometimes similar, and which had no correlation with what was happening on the ground. The conversation below serves as an illustrator.

Figure 10: Citizens' Views of Evidence-Based Communication



The above discussion provides a conflicted viewpoint of evidence-based communication in Kenya's political representation landscape. While arguments have been brought forth of the need for tangible proof of political activities by politicians for public accountability, there are alternative perspectives arising from certain segments of the citizenry. This cohort of citizens contends that political leaders should exercise discretion when engaging in evidence-based communication strategies, especially on social media platforms. The implicit message here is that such acts are performative and opportunistic.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the strategies that women politicians in Kenya employ in their online political presentation practice. The content of this chapter was aimed at answering RQ 2.

Analysis of data unveiled three distinct strategies including performative aspects of political representation such as populism and personalization of politics. Secondly, it was realized that political leaders in Kenya utilized clientelistic tendencies to leverage relationships with constituents. Finally, political representatives employed numerical discourse and data-based evidence to communicate with constituents.

As far as populism is concerned, the study realized that women politicians in Kenya overwhelmingly employed a combination of different populistic tendencies, with 50% of the social media posts analysed having populism overtones. These tendencies included advocating for the common citizens' whereby political leaders positioned themselves as advocates of the common people, challenging political elitism. Secondly, they capitalized on the economic and political marginalization of ordinary citizens and claimed to stand as advocates against these forms of marginalization. The third dimension of populism identified in this study revolved around socio-cultural performances such as the use of linguistic appeals in the form of code-switching, religious sentiments, as well as identity appeals. According to Resnick (2017), this form of populism is authentically African, necessitated by multilingualism in the region, the religious influence on politics, as well as the significant weight that ethnicity puts on individuals, especially those who aspire for positions as political representatives.

Other populist strategies uncovered in this study included the utilization of emotionalism and sensationalism while addressing issues such as societal plight, as well as the manoeuvring for political relevance. The most noticeable mode of populism, however, that emerged out of this study, was 'empty populism', advanced by de Freese et al (2018, p. 2) where politicians employed rhetorical claims to appeal to the general public without providing concrete solutions to their plight.

The findings of this study, which indicated that populist tendencies were more rampant during normal representational periods as compared to electoral periods, contrasted the studies by Kariseb and Kasita (2021), as well as Nyadera and Agwanda (2019), who argue that in sub-Saharan Africa, election periods provide a fertile ground for populism to be enacted.

Concerning personalizing their political image, women politicians strategically portrayed themselves as relatable, resilient, and radiant, presumably aiming to leverage these personal attributes for political gain. The portrayal of relatability was particularly notable, aligning with the cultural ideals of nurturing and care associated with African womanhood. This self-portrayal was not only culturally resonant but also served as a strategic communication tactic in a society that values female approachability as an indicator of political competence. Additionally, female politicians emphasized their strength and resilience, conforming to cultural expectations that equate leadership with fortitude. Moreover, an emphasis on beauty and radiance emerged as another prevalent tactic, reflecting societal norms that place value on physical appearance, particularly for women in public roles. These strategies highlight the intersections of cultural norms and strategic considerations for political survival within the Kenyan context.

The second sub-issue examined in this chapter pertained to the utilization of clientelism as a political communication and representation strategy, wherein political leaders engaged in distributive politics to cultivate and maintain relationships with the electorates, ultimately seeking to secure electoral support. Analysis of data unveiled a prevalence of clientelistic practices manifested in the form of direct transactions, indirect transactions, adherence to cultural norms, and engagement with political leaders, leveraging citizen vulnerabilities such as poverty and marginalization to garner support.

Finally, women politicians employed numerical discourse and evidence-based representational tactics in their social media communication. examination of social media data a discernible pattern among the politicians, characterized by the integration of quantitative elements such as statistical constructs and numerical data into their online discourse. In a political context rife with corruption, citizen mistrust, propaganda, and misinformation, evidence-based representation emerged as a crucial practice. Consequently, political leaders utilized this strategy to substantiate political messages and foster trust among the citizens.

Chapter 6: The Ontologies Shaping Kenya's Political Representation

This chapter is based on RQ 3 which seeks to explore the ontologies upon which the practice of political representation in Kenya is based. Through analysis of data, the study elucidates two prominent ontologies prevalent in the country's political representation practice. The first encompasses communalistic approaches to political representation practice, collaborative governance structures, and ethnopolitical representation tactics, all grounded in the philosophical underpinnings of Ubuntu [29] . This African ethos underscores the interconnectedness of humanity and the imperative of communal solidarity. The second ontology involves the deliberate incorporation of religion and spirituality as instrumental components of political representation. Where applicable, the place of gender in these ontologies is highlighted.

6.1 Ubuntu

The African philosophy of Ubuntu, extensively explored in section 1.4 of this study, offers a distinct alternative to the Western liberal political model[30], profoundly influencing the socio-political dynamics across the continent. Scholars such as Oduor (2019) Hallen (2010), and Bénit-Gbaffou and Katsaura (2014) have extensively discussed its influence on political discourse and rhetoric across the wider African community as highlighted in section 1.4. In this study, the philosophy of Ubuntu manifested as a political representation strategy that emerged in three different facets including collaborative governance, communal values, and ethnopolitical practices. Subsequent discussions elaborate on each of these facets and their enactment within the study's context.

6.1.1 Communalism and Collaborative Governance

Across several social media posts in this study, such as posts 1, 4, 7, 13, and 17, 20 among others, as well as in data emerging from interviews and focus group discussions, communalism and collaboration among various stakeholders were evident. Women politicians were seen to engage in collective and communal acts in a significant number of social media posts, fostering

[29] Ubuntu is a term that originates from the Nguni Bantu languages of Southern Africa, that has been used to shape African social norms and values. This term is used to describe the African philosophy of interconnectedness and the belief that an individual's well-being is intricately related to the well-being of the wider community.

[30] Simply put, the Western liberal democratic model emphasizes the autonomy of the individual over the authority of the society. Although there is more to liberal democracy, this facet aligns with the argument in this study

a collaborative, collective and participatory stance to governance. In a Facebook post below, for example, elements of inclusive governance where citizens become part and parcel of security issues in Wajir county, in Northeastern Kenya, form the context of the post. Within this post, the political leader airs her concerns about the state of security in her county of jurisdiction and the need for the inclusion of various stakeholders in the achievement of security in this region. She recognizes the attendees of the meeting, which is a significant cultural attribute within a collectivist cultural society characterized by a strong emphasis on group decision-making norms and practices, and identifies the ones who have been excluded, thereby questioning the validity and legitimacy of the meeting. The political leader alludes to the fact that security implementation should be a communal undertaking.

> My attention has been drawn to a purported security meeting taking place in Wajir Town, attended by Wajir County Security Committee, a section of residents, a section of politicians and a community across the Kenya-Somali border. Whereas discussion on border security is a critical subject matter requiring to be addressed, any approach must envisage broad-based participation of all stakeholders, be they communal or political leadership level, so that any outcomes are grounded on and/or supported by all border communities and their respective political leaders through mutually agreed framework for engagement. The organizers of Wajir meeting deliberately excluded key stakeholders; it therefore does not represent the views, concerns, and considerations of all Wajir communities, political & cultural leaders, women & youth groups and is consequently nonbinding and counterproductive. As a matter of fact, the meeting invited communities from Somalia side of the border, thus breached Presidential and Ministry of Health Guidelines towards the containment and mitigation against the spread of Covid-19 pandemic. I call upon the County Security Agencies to be cautious about the kind of events they associate themselves with, in order to protect their image and avoid being drawn into partisan political mechanizations.

Given Kenya's collective cultural landscape, it is not uncommon for security issues in Kenya to take a collective effort and participation from local communities, an act known as community policing[31], especially in areas where security is a major concern. Security-wise, law enforcement agencies team up with local communities for crime detection and prevention. The locals have a deep understanding of the area including knowledge of the terrains, local customs, crime networks, and smuggling routes among other factors, even more than the security agencies themselves (Nzau and Guyo, 2021). Excluding locals, therefore, is to curtail rapid response and mobilization, and even to cultivate mistrust between security agencies and

[31] In Kenya, community policing is a method of law enforcement that stresses cooperation and teamwork between security organizations and the communities they serve. This approach aims to foster trust, communication, and a mutual sense of responsibility between law enforcement officials and the locals.

the community. Additionally, as far as conflict resolution is concerned, collectivist cultures are keen on group management of conflict (Wong et al., 2017), as portrayed in this social media post.

The pervasive communalistic undertaking described in this social media post is not an isolated phenomenon within the Kenyan and the broader African culture. Broadly, Africa, and Kenya in particular, is inherently characterized by collectivist cultural ethos, underscored by entrenched norms and practices that emphasize group decision-making (Lesteka, 2013). Central to this cultural paradigm is the concept of communalism, illuminated by Oduor (2019), who identifies it as integral to the 'African thought' or worldview (p. 108). Communalism posits that individual fulfilment can only be achieved upon collaboration with the wider group, prioritizing collective interests over individual pursuits. Indigenous African worldview, epitomized by the philosophy of Ubuntu, which is deconstructed as 'I am because we are, and because we are, therefore I am' (Mbiti, 1969, p. 141), perceives the community as the cornerstone of genuine personhood. In Kiswahili, Kenya's national language, this concept is articulated as 'mtu ni watu', translating to 'a person is made of people' (Oduor, ibid). In essence, the African philosophy of Ubuntu underscores the meaninglessness of personhood outside of a communal context.

A further examination of data in this study revealed that communalism was not confined to social media posts. Insights garnered from individual interviews and focus group discussions showcased manifestations of inclusive representational and democratic norms. During one-on-one interviews with women politicians, for example, these leaders recognized and acknowledged the importance of engaging with the collective consciousness, values, and challenges of society, and being attuned with the pulse of their own communities. Citizens also expressed a preference for content that highlighted collaborative efforts with partners. These citizens echoed the values of participatory and inclusive governance, which prioritized partnerships and collaborations in the decision-making process. One of the citizens had the following to say,

> Participant 3: In Kenya, we have a lot of partnerships when we do our activities. If a politician does a project in collaboration with other partners, I need to see them (the partners) portrayed visually or textually. I want them to be acknowledged.

The sentiments made by the citizen above can be understood from the principles of ubuntu which emphasize that collaboration, cooperation, and recognition of contributions are integral components of political engagement. This citizen's assertion underscores the expectation that political leaders should showcase these values in their interactions and communications, an issue that is reflected in the second illustrative tweet below. In this tweet, we are shown a collaboration of female leaders who have come together in an effort to receive health and hygiene-related items for distribution to the community. The major underlying interpretation of this post is a message of cooperation and unity among government officials working together to better the community. By extension, the post has a communal context to it, which is emphasized by the fact that these female leaders hail from different constituencies and have come together for a noble cause of community support.

> Today, I joined Prof. Margaret Kobia, CS for Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs at the NYS Headquarters to receive donations from her Ministry consisting of sanitizers, face masks, sanitary towels, buckets etc. In attendance were Hon. Lilian Gogo, Mp Rangwe Constituency, Hon Alice Wahome, Mp Kandara Constituency, Hon.Sarah Lekorere, Mp Laikipia North Constituency, Hon.Martha Wangari, Mp Gilgil Constituency, Hon.Jessica Mbalu, Mp Kibwezi East Constituency, Hon.Edith Nyenze, Mp Kitui West Constituency and Hon. Rachael Nyamai, Mp Kitui South Constituency.

While examining the communal nature of this tweet, this discussion steers the debate away from the cultural perspective adopted in the preceding section, to a gender lens. Here, the study acknowledges the interrelationship between gender, culture, collaboration, and political representation, all of which have been discussed under section 1.5 of this study, and which touch on the concerted and inclusive leadership style that women leaders tend to bring into political environments. Apart from the collaborative approach to political representation that is depicted here, this tweet is also characterized by feminine engagement attributes which are discussed by Rosenthal (2001), Karan and Lovinduski (2005) and Anzia and Barry (2009) in section 2.1 of this study. These scholars argue that women leaders tend to embody democratic ideals and work in more participatory and collaborative manner compared to their male counterparts. According to Karan and Lovenduski (ibid), women leaders strive for collaboration amidst challenges such as partisan environments, political tensions, ethnic and religious differences or even differences in electoral areas. Within the political context of Africa, Naidoo and Perumal (2014), Bluhm et al., (2011), and Brion and Ampah-Mensah (2021) posit that a participatory approach to communication and leadership by women is a

tactic for navigating gender and cultural challenges and expectations in society which push women to stand in solidarity to resist societal challenges.

Whether from a cultural or gender lens, it is evident that the centrality of group inclusivity, group deliberations, as well as efforts to create space for various stakeholders, are significant strategies adopted by various political actors in this study. These values are inherent in various facets of life in Africa, and they extend their influence into the realm of political thought and practice, with a significant impact on political representation as showcased in the above discussions. Political representatives who disengage from citizens and from society experience a backlash from citizens and are scolded for having individualistic and self-centered tendencies. This group- involvement in the decision-making processes, signals a model of governance that considers the collective will and aspirations of the people.

6.1.2 Ethnopolitical Representation

Ethno-political representation encompasses the act of political leaders embodying the interests and identity of specific ethnic or cultural groups and portraying themselves as symbols of collective representation, to gain societal support. It delves into the impact of ethnic identity on political behavior and outcomes (Abbs, 2020; Kisaka and Nyadera, 2019). In Africa, the ethnopolitical landscape is a distinct terrain revealing the interplay between party systems, electoral institutions, cultural institutions, and electorates (Mozaffar and Scarrit, 2005), shaping governance and political-decision making processes (Raleign and Wigmore-Shepherd, 2020).

There exists an intricate relationship between ethnopolitical representation and communal ideology in Africa. Oduor (2019) notes that African societies have very strong ethnic bonds, promoting the representation of group interests in the political arena. Thus, many African voters' choices are influenced by their solidarity with their ethnicity (Oduor, 2019, p. 113). It is because of this ethnic dynamic that attempts to dissuade Kenyan citizens from preoccupation with ethnic loyalty in their voting patterns have borne no fruits (Koter, 2023; Oduor, ibid). This scenario is also manifested in other Africa societies such as in Ghana (see Fanu and Graham, 2017), in Nigeria (Akinyetun, 2021;, Aderayo and Olawumni, 2022), South Africa (Mlambo and Masuku, 2023), Rwanda (Heim et al., 2018) among other African societies.

Analysis of data in this study revealed that ethnopolitical representation took several forms. Firstly, it took the form of political kinship that was characterized by political loyalty and leadership. In this facet of ethnopolitics, political representatives expressed loyalty to certain individuals or political parties for the purpose of appealing to their co-ethnics. These leaders expressed support to 'their own' regardless of political policies. Secondly, it took the form of discreet and overt verbal appeals to ethnicity, especially during campaign periods. In the subsequent section, I discuss how these forms of ethno-political representations are manifested in this study and what various political actors thought about them.

Political Kinship and Loyalty

In the social media post below, a political leader takes a firm and assertive political stance in unwavering support of the then president, contrary to perceived misrepresentation in a local newspaper. This post is characterized by repertoires that include loyalty assertions, political alignment, refutation of a report, challenge to misinformation, and ethnicization of politics. This politician belongs to the ethnic group of the then president, and that automatically makes her express loyalty to the president in order to appeal to the electorates of that region. One of the requirements of ethnic politics is unquestioning loyalty. In this post, loyalty is highlighted by the assertion that the president is in charge, and his direction is undoubtedly the direction of the political leader.

> I wish to state categorically that as far as I am concerned, Mt Kenya leaders who support the handshake and President Uhuru Kenyatta's political guidance have not yet adopted or groomed any other Mt Kenya Kingpin as earlier reported by the Daily Nation on Monday 20th July. As far as I'm concerned, President Uhuru is in charge (sic) and his direction is undoubtedly my direction. Anybody quoting me otherwise is misinformed.

With more than 40 ethnic groups, Kenya, like most African countries, is a diverse society. Ethnic identity is a key driver in Kenyan politics, and it plays a significant role in shaping political allegiances and voting patterns.' So much so that any politician that is viewed as deviating from the wishes of his ethnic group in his political quests is likely to lose citizen support. Ethnic allegiance plays a key role in political communication messages, political campaigns, and eventual leadership choices, with politicians leveraging this identification to secure a loyal voter base and support based on shared ethnic identity and interests. Furthermore, it enables them to position themselves as representatives who understand and

identify with the unique concerns of their ethnic group. The above illustrative post was made in 2022, before the elections, and was therefore deemed a campaign strategy.

Ethnic and individual loyalty are not preserved for the elites, rather, they also manifest strongly in the political preferences of Kenyan citizens. This was revealed in individual interviews conducted for this study where allegiance to politicians based on geographic representation was evident, with some citizens expressing that they followed women politicians online solely based on the fact that they were based in the citizens' respective constituencies. A clear example was provided by participant 14, who confirmed that he followed Gladys Wanga (a county governor for Homabay region in Kenya) for the sole reason that she was his county governor. While it is appropriate for the citizen to follow his county governor online, the act of solely following her page based on the single reason of her governance suggests a form of political allegiance. Additionally, ethnicization of politics was apparent in citizens' desire for 'cultural-specific' social media content. When asked about the kind of content that politicians posted on social media that was unappealing to citizens, one citizen responded by saying that he did not appreciate 'content that did not resonate with his culture.' This example provides a nuanced intersection between political representation and cultural identity in the online political sphere.

The significance of ethnic and kinship identification in Africa's political representation practice cannot be overstated. Primarily, it holds the capacity to exert influence on service delivery and the equitable allocation of resources to ethnic minorities as posited by Theisen et al., (2020). Additionally, it serves as a catalyst for addressing historical grievances and rectifying power imbalances within the political sphere as indicated in the works of Schertzer (2018) and Raleigh and Wigmore-Shepherd (2020). To substantiate, within a political context such as that of Kenya, where governance has been decentralized to county levels since 2010, allegiance to one's community may prompt leaders to advocate for the communities that they represent, which may have been historically marginalized.

But while communalism and ethnopolitical representation can contribute to a sense of belonging and identity, it also poses democratic challenges such as the potential for ethnocentrism, inter-group tensions, inter-divisive identity politics, and exclusionary practices. Such political downsides have been experienced in Kenya (see Bratton and Kimenti, 2008;

Long and Gibson 2015), Sudan (Furukawa, 2022) and Ethiopia (see Mekonnen, 2019; Gardachew et al, 2019).

In this study, inter-divisive identity politics, characterized by ethnic polarization, power dynamics, class divisions as well as a perceived conflict between the state and the general populace was noted in social media posts. In the tweet below, for example, a woman politician expresses a desire to preserve the nation and citizens' integrity by protecting them from the threats of the 'deep state.' She rallies 'her people' to vote for a certain presidential candidate so that their (economic) interests are protected. By identifying with a specific ethnic group, the politician aligns herself with a certain cultural identity, thus highlighting the significance of identity and political alliances in Kenya. Notice how she refers to her ethnic group as a 'nation', and how it must be preserved at 'all costs' through political alignment.

> Going forward the System in this country shall protect the State in order to preserve the Nation. The people shall Conquer the Deep State[32]. Mutahi Ngunyi, I am a member of the GEMA[33] Nation. Before you advice That we hang together or die Together, who told you we are together. "The rich and the Dynasties[34] are alone and Hustlers[35] alone. The GEMA vote is for Ruto. Swallow the bitter pill.
>
> @MutahiNgunyi, @moseskuria_MP

In conclusion, this segment of the analysis has delved into the intricate dynamics of communalism, collaborative governance, and ethno-political representations within Kenya's political landscape. The exploration of these practices has provided insights into how the philosophy of Ubuntu fosters robust bonds between various political actors due to the ethos of shared collective values and collective decision-making. But although collaborative governance and representation have been hailed for their significance in building a sense of belonging for citizens trust, their effectiveness in collectivist cultures hinges significantly on adept facilitation and leadership as noted by Sørensen et al., (2020). As such, this study

[32] The term 'deep state' is a 20th-century term that has its roots in Turkey where it was originally referred to as 'derin devlet in Turkish. It was used to describe a secretive network of influential individuals within the Turkish government and military who wielded significant power over state affairs. This term was popularized during the 2022 electoral campaigns in Kenya to refer to a group of powerful and influential individuals who have significant control over the country's affairs and resources.

[33] GEMA is an abbreviation of the Gikuyu, Embu, Meru, and the Akamba ethnic groups in Kenya.

[34] In Kenya, the term 'dynasty' implies a continuity of political control and leadership that is concentrated in a few families. It is a term used to critique political systems that seem to perpetuate and confine power within specific family networks.

[35] This is a term that was popularized in 2022 campaigns that was used to refer to 'the common citizen.' It was used as an anti-elite narrative of a struggling yet ambitious average Kenyan.

underscores the need for strategic leadership that serves as a catalyst for positive political engagement.

6.2 Spiritual Stewardship: Religion as Political Representation Strategy

Religion and spirituality play an important fixture in Africa's political communication as noted by Ikem et al., (2021), with spiritualization of politics spanning across political manifestos, voting patterns and policy executions in the continent (Ayantayo, 2009). Throughout this analysis, there emerged numerous instances of religious discourse in social media posts, with political representatives incorporating salient religious sentiment and rhetoric in social media content.

In this study, the utilization of spiritual and religious discourse was regarded as a significant tactic in political representation practice. Specifically, the study explored how politicians strategically weaved religious themes, values, and beliefs into their online content to connect with a citizenry that strongly identifies with religious values and affiliations. By aligning themselves with sacred values, politicians leveraged the cultural resonance of African spirituality to construct specific identities. Prior studies by Abbink (2014), Gez et al., (2021), and Igboin (2021) have all touched upon this strategy in Africa's political engagements.

The findings revealed that politicians employed religious rhetoric in social media content in multiple ways. Firstly, they used religion as a cultural frame that aligned with the societal social compass. Secondly, religious posts were utilized to appeal to societal values and establish a sense of solidarity with citizens who prioritized such values when electing their representatives. Finally, religious rhetoric aided in representatives' identity formation, which was then used as a strategic tool for fostering trust among citizens by cultivating a shared sense of identity. Further insight into these conceptual tactics and influences is provided in the following sections.

6.2.1 'Religio-Cultural' Political Representation

The religious heritage of African societies is steeped in history that predates the arrival of missionaries on the continent. Mbiti[36] (1975), while describing the African as 'notoriously religious' (p 27), refers to religion as a fundamental aspect of African life. Nieder-Heitmann (1981) further highlights that religious ontology permeates every aspect of African life and culture. Additionally, Mbaya and Cezula (2019) concur that religion and spirituality are deeply ingrained in the African culture and expressed through social customs, norms, and traditions. Elsewhere, Ellis and Haar (2007) posit that most Africans interpret the world through the prism of religion, and that religion has a pervasive influence on politics.

Because of this ontological inclination, religion and spirituality have found their way into the political fabric of the African continent. Van Klinken (2018) refers to this influence of religion on the African political culture as 'religio-cultural' (p. 645), where religion and politics are deeply intertwined to the extent of inseparability. This symbiotic relationship results in blurred boundaries between the secular and the religious as well as religion and the state (van Klinken, ibid). This observation was highlighted in the following statement, made by one of the politicians during one-on-one interviews when asked why political leaders in Kenya indulged in religious rhetoric in their political communication endeavours.

> Across history, religions and governance have been closely intertwined. It is out of the fear of God, that actually men behave. So, it's almost impossible to separate the two.

The analysis of social media posts was in tandem with the above discussion. It was realized that political representatives did not make communicative distinctions between political and religious contexts, nor did they make distinctions between religious and political utterances. There were instances that social media posts were inherently religious even when there was no explicit connection between the religiosity of the post and any political event. Implicitly though, discourse analysis revealed that even when religious posts did not have political

[36] John, S. Mbiti is an African religion expert, theologian, and philosopher best known for his groundbreaking exploration of African religious beliefs and practices. He played a significant role in bridging the gap between Western academia and the traditional beliefs and practices of African cultures.

overtones, they could still be attributed to political intentions, as shown in a Facebook post below.

> "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." - Isaiah 65:24 KJV

This Facebook post above emphasizes the proactive nature of a higher being (God) in his ability to listen to (his) people and hear their needs. Language is employed in this post to convey the belief that God is aware of people's needs even before they are vocalized. Contextually, the post conveys a close relationship between the politician and her God, where she underscores her belief in the divine attributes of God, and implicitly conveys a message that she follows the tenets of Christianity.

Contextually, referencing religious verses such as in the social media post above is a communication strategy used in Kenya by politicians to establish their credibility and moral authority. Politicians use scriptures to appear to align with religious principles such as trustworthiness, empathy, and compassion, among others, thus enhancing their image and reputation. Again, as mentioned earlier, they use religious sentiments to identify with a populace whose cultural tradition is deeply intertwined with spiritual belief systems.

Within the scope of this study, certain political representatives blended cultural components with religious sentiments in their online communication. As an example, one representative initiated a religious quote with a customary greeting, signaling her awareness of her audience's cultural context. This melding highlights the unyielding interplay between religion, politics, and culture in this unique setting.

> Good morning. 1 Corinthians 2:9 [9]. That is what the Scriptures mean when they say, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him." Above all God is God.

Customary greetings are an integral part of interactional discourse in Kenya and Africa. According to Schiefer et al., (2021), greetings serve the purpose of showing respect, building positive social connections, and establishing relationships within the community. It is also considered a mark of adulthood and competence to master the art of greetings within the Kenyan and larger African community. Ignoring this communication protocol results in societal disapproval because it is regarded as a bleach of politeness (Nephawe and Lambani,

2022). By adhering to these societal norms and beginning her message with a greeting, the political leader above presents herself as a respectful and competent member of the community, a subject discussed by Agyekum (2008). Following the greeting, which is a prelude to her message, she then proceeds to share a scriptural text highlighting God's greatness, which is the core message of her post. This communication approach underscores the nuanced intersectionality of culture, religion, and identity in Kenya.

In this study, the nexus between religious sentiments, politics and culture extended to the geographical demographic composition of citizens. It was observed that political representatives strategically tailored their online messages to align with the prevailing religious beliefs of their electoral constituencies. An analysis of their social media content revealed a clear pattern - a significant interplay between religious messaging and the predominant demographic cultures of the areas they represented. For instance, when a political representative hailed from a region with a predominantly Christian population, they tended to communicate Christian messages on their platforms. Similarly, in regions with a predominantly Islamic population, politicians tended to align their messaging accordingly (see Table 2 below). This deliberate and strategic alignment between political representation and cultural demographics is a testament to the significant influence of religious beliefs on the cultural identity of electorates.

Table 3: The Nexus Between Religious Posts and Citizens' Religious Inclinations

Politician	Post/Tweet	Religious inclination of the post	Constituency	Religious dominance of the politician's constituency
Pol 10	Thanking God for this far. I want to be like a sunflower so that even on darkest days I will stand tall and find the sunlight. Happy birthday to me	Christian	Murang'a	Christian
Pol 16	Hallo, 37! (though we aren't counting this year)) so thankful to God, for life, for love, for health and for family. Looking forward to many more. Asante Mola	Christian	Gilgil	Christian
Pol 2	It's a Sunday. He is Worthy of our Worship and Praise. Be Blessed	Christian	Kandara	Christian
Pol 3	"And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." - Isaiah 65:24 KJV	Christian	Nairobi	Christian
Pol 8	Good morning . 1 Corinthians 2:9 [9]That is what the Scriptures mean when they say, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no	Christian	Embu	Christian

	mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him." Above all God is God			
Pol 4	Alhamdulilah, I have fulfilled the promise I made to the students, parents and the great people of Habaswein to deliver a school bus. I wish to sincerely thank the president of the Republic of Kenya, H.E Uhuru Kenyatta. This is the first school bus received in the vast Wajir south constituency through my effort. I make a pledge to the other deserving secondary schools in Wajir if am elected to office.	Islamic	Wajir	Islam
Pol 13	I owe the victory to God & Kabondo Kasipul Constituents. Thank you all for giving me yet another chance to be your Servant	Christian	Homabay	Christian
Pol 14	EVERYONE WILL KNOW IT WAS GOD! ZA RUTO NI MBWEGZE	Christian	Nairobi	Christian
Pol 10	God is up to something!	Christian	Kirinyaga	Christian
Pol 19	Asalaam aleikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatu! On this auspicious occasion of Eid-ul-Adha, I wish the great people of Ijara and Muslims across the world Eid Mubarak. May the Almighty bless you all and accept your good deeds during the last days of this blessed month. Eid Mubarak!	Islamic	Ijara	islam
Pol 4	The smile of hope and justice, victory is coming home Inshaalah	Islamic	Wajir	Islam
Pol 9	Thank you God and the people of Samburu West. Mbele Pamoja and as always Mungu Mbele.	Christian	Kajiado	Christian
Pol 10	Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth. ... Our God says, "Calm down, and learn that I am God!	Christian	Murang'a	Christian
Pol 16	It was a Thursday like today 39 years ago Thank you God for this far. I have seen you fight my wars. All the time. I pray for many more. INSHALLAH	Christian and Islamic	Gilgil	Christian

While aligning social media content, religious rhetoric, and culture is considered to stem out of the African worldview in this study, this approach raises important questions about the impact of inclusivity in governance and representation. When messages are intentionally designed to appeal to the majority, they may inadvertently marginalize and alienate minority groups in the constituency, as argued by Motyl et al., (2019). As such, the findings from this analysis call for a thoughtful consideration of the balance between political responsiveness to cultural diversity and the need to foster an all-inclusive political landscape that transcends religious divides. One positive example of this balance can be seen in politician 16 from the table above, who manages to blend Christian and Islamic sentiments in her social media posts despite coming from a Christian-dominated constituency.

6.2.2 Religion as a Tool for Political Campaigns in Kenya

Religious rhetoric in Kenyan politics has deep roots in the country's religiosity and cultural integration, as explained in section 6.2.1. However, it is also used as a form of campaign tool in the country. Although, at a glance, it may not be immediately clear whether politicians incorporated religion into their social media communication for cultural or political campaign purposes, data analysis indicated that religion and spirituality were sometimes used as online political tactics and forms of personal branding in the study. Given that 83% of the Kenyan population identifies as Christian, and 11% as Muslim (Katenda, 2022), politicians are keen on appealing to this significant religious voting bloc during election periods.

The study noted that during the 2022 election campaign period, politicians' social media data was dominated by religious messages, compared to data from 2020, as seen in Appendix 11. This data/time association signified a deliberate attempt by political representatives to use religious narratives as forms of personal identities and tools for political campaigns. Religion was used as a tool to mobilize the masses, with one political camp accusing the other of 'not being religious enough' to lead the country. The tactic proved successful, with Aljazeera reporter Oromo Egbejule noting the 'holy fever' that had gripped Kenya. Egbejule reported, 'They may not be on the ballot or possess Kenya's citizenship, but the names God and Jesus Christ are all over the politics of this East African Nation' (Egbejule, 2022, p. 1). This information projects an understanding of the emotional and symbolic power of religion in influencing the values and beliefs of the Kenyan people.

The religio-political atmosphere highlighted above is not an isolated case in Kenya's national elections. It is customary in Kenya, for example, for mainstream churches with their strong influence on the country's politics and governance, to endorse political candidates, mobilize voters against 'non-religious' candidates, and affect public opinion (Deacon, 2015, Kenga 2014). Religious affiliations of candidates are constantly debated during campaigns and elections, as failure to have a religious affiliation can result in a loss of credibility with citizens, as it happened in 2022. In essence, religion acts as a moral authority in Kenya and the wider African society (Amoah and Peprah, 2022). In such a strong religious environment, politicians always fall back on religion to seek support and garner legitimacy and alliances.

The significant power that religion holds on the African voter, especially in the choice of political representatives was made clear during one-on-one interviews with women politicians. Asked why political leaders flooded their communication with religious and spiritual overtones during election periods, a woman politician confirmed that this was done to woo a demographic that placed religious beliefs at the forefront when electing and backing their political representatives, as illustrated in the following statement.

> That's what the masses want to hear (religiously inclined messages), and most politicians will go with what the masses want to hear. Kenyans are very religious and politicians switch to that language to entice the people. You speak the religious language of where your votes are. In northern Kenya, which is predominantly Islamic, you will hear politicians saying things like 'Inshallah! Alhamdullilah! etc. you appear to people as if you are a Godly person. I have also found myself saying 'Inshallah' (laughter) and I am not a Muslim. At that point I am thinking 'I just said that because that's what they want to hear'. It makes people relate to you.

It is evident from the above illustration that political figures exploit the association between religion, moral values, ethics, and righteousness to enhance their public image and project trustworthiness to the masses. By so doing, they position themselves as individuals with a strong moral compass, thereby earning the trust of voters.

The subject of the interconnectedness between religiosity and trust was also confirmed in one-on-one interviews with citizens. Data analysis revealed that citizens favoured social media content and politicians who upheld social values that were associated with religious beliefs. The analysis indicated that messages with religious undertones and ethical principles were well-received. For example, during one-on-one interviews, participant 4 highlighted the admiration that Kenyans have for political leaders who uphold religious values. He stated,

> Women are statistically more religious than men and have a strong foundation in religion. I would feel comfortable voting for someone who relies on God and the bible in their personal life. This is the kind of person I want to represent me because they will protect the values that I believe in.

What is apparent from the discussion in this subsection is that in Kenya's political communication and representation, religion serves as a crucial aspect of politicians' identity, acting as a framework for them to comprehend the world around them, and mould an identity around themselves. And because of the overwhelming trust in religion by the wider African masses as noted by Katende (2022), political leaders often embrace this 'culture' and employ religious language, symbols, rituals, and practices in their daily discourse to connect with the

masses, construct their personal image, and earn credibility. Thus, for political representatives, religion becomes a form of image and identity formation and a form of self-branding in African politics.

6.3: Conclusion

This chapter has examined the underlying ontological frameworks that underpin the practice of political representation in Kenya. The study identified two distinct worldviews. Firstly, the Ubuntu worldview, characterized by communalistic approaches to political representation, collaborative governance structures, and ethnopolitical representation practices. The second ontology encompassed the integration of religion and spirituality as integral elements of political representation. Where relevant, the role of gender in these ontologies has been highlighted.

The study highlights that Kenya, which is a collectivist cultural society, exhibits deeply ingrained norms and customs that prioritize collective decision-making, a principle and practice that permeates into political arenas. The study observed manifestations of this practice in social media posts, wherein political leaders collaborated to support the community, partnered with other organizations for similar endeavours, and engaged citizens in governance and decision-making processes.

In addition to Ubuntu serving as an African worldview shaped by communal societal norms, this study highlights the intricate interplay between gender, culture, collaboration, and political representation. Through collaborative efforts exemplified by female leaders, the research substantiates arguments put forth by Rosenthal (2001), Karan and Lovinduski (2005) and Anzia and Barry (2009), who contend that women leaders have a natural inclination to participatory in their leadership practice. Within the context of Africa, however, where women have to navigate the expectations imposed by gender and culture, participatory networks allow women to stand in solidarity with other individuals as noted by by Naidoo and Perumal (2014), Bluhm et al., (2011), and Brion and Ampah-Mensah (2021).

The study also illustrated the profound interconnectedness of religion and spirituality with political messaging, political acts, and the identities of the political representatives. Through empirical evidence, the study elucidated how political representatives utilized religious

language, symbols and practices in their daily discourse to forge connections with the populace and establish credibility within a population that upholds religious values as a culture.

Chapter 7: Probing the Effectiveness of Online Political Representation in Kenya

This chapter addresses RQ (Research Question) 4 which examines the effectiveness of online political representation in Kenya. The effectiveness of political representation was evaluated based on several criteria. These criteria included the responsiveness of political representatives to citizens' needs through online engagement, the dynamics of dialogue and reciprocity, the overall expectations of the represented population, and the identification of challenges and shortcomings in the realm of online representation. This evaluation framework was drawn from the theoretical insights of Coleman (2021), Liagat (2020), Stokes et al., (2013), Siegel (2017) and Miller (2009) whose views have been discussed in section 2.4. These scholars contend that political representation achieves effectiveness when political representatives demonstrate awareness of citizens' needs and expectations. They further argue that this knowledge is fostered through meaningful dialogue and engagement.

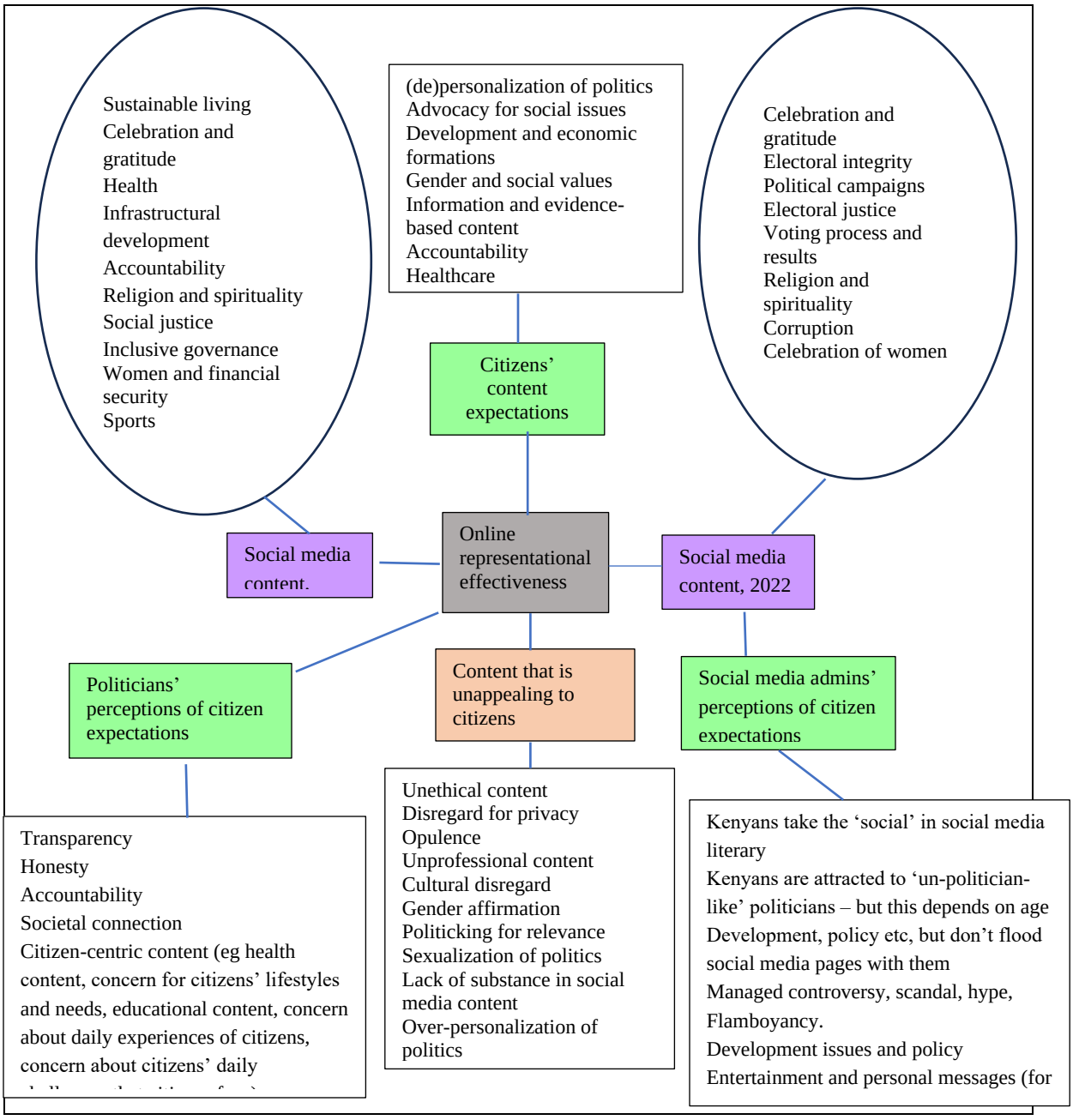
7.1 Politician's Social Media Content in Relation to Citizen Expectations

The first method that was employed in this study to assess the effectiveness of political representation involved analyzing the social media content posted by women politicians on their platforms and comparing it with the issues that citizens anticipated them to address. The objective was to ascertain whether political representatives' conception of representation aligned with or diverged from citizens' concerns and expectations. This analytical approach draws from the perspective of Hjortskov (2020) who suggests that the quality of political representation can be elucidated by examining the content sought by citizens from their political representative's social media pages. This discussion is structured into two primary subsections. The first addresses areas of convergence, where citizens' expectations align with politicians' perceptions of representation, and the second subsection amalgamates areas of divergence and grey areas. Areas of divergence focus on differing representational expectations and interpretations between politicians and citizens while grey areas comprise ambiguous aspects.

In the figure below these subjects are illustrated.

Figure 11: Perceived Citizens' Needs

This figure illustrates citizens' perceived needs, as derived from social media posts, the perspectives of politicians, social media administrators, and the citizens themselves. I have included the content that citizens find unappealing on the social media platforms of women politicians to give more perspective to this topic.



Areas of convergence

Data analysis uncovered several areas of alignment between the perceptions of politicians regarding the context expected by citizens on their social media platforms and the actual citizen expectations. These shared concerns were evident in interviews, FDGs, and in the content of social media posts. For instance, there was a consensus between politicians and citizens regarding the importance of social development, infrastructure, and economic matters. Additionally, both parties agreed on the significance of transparency, honesty, and accountability, as well as health-related issues and healthcare. Lastly, there was mutual acknowledgement of the necessity for connectivity and collaborative engagement between these political actors.

In the realm of development and economic discourse, there existed a widespread consensus among both political representatives and constituents regarding the imperative to address socio-economic challenges, promote developmental agendas, and deliver public amenities to their respective constituencies. Data analysis revealed a notable trend in social media posts centered on discussions of road infrastructure, the establishment of educational and healthcare facilities, the installation of boreholes in communities, and the facilitation of employment opportunities. Similarly, when questioned about the preferred content for social media platforms, many political leaders emphasized the significance of infrastructural development and economic initiatives. In the same vein, citizens echoed this sentiment, expressing a preference for content pertaining to nation-building, strategic vision, policy formulation and economic progress. Specifically, they expressed interest in subjects like job creation, infrastructural projects like road expansion and electrification, and other initiatives aimed at fostering development. The following Facebook excerpt is illustrative of this subject.

> Today I inspected several projects we have undertaken through Naivasha NG-CDF and KeRRA in Biashara ward. My interaction with my bosses (Naivasha people) during the process was great.
> NG-CDF projects in Biashara ward;
> 1. Rutere Primary school- Renovation of classrooms and construction of an ablution block.(complete)
> 2. Rutere Secondary school- Construction of an ablution block(complete)
> 3. Kirima Chief's office- construction of the Chief's office, ablution block, gate, and fencing(complete).

> 4. Ndoroto Secondary school- Construction of two classrooms, and two ablution blocks(complete). We started the school from scratch in 2018.
> 5. Kinamba primary school- Construction of two classrooms (ongoing)
> KeRRA projects in Biashara ward.

The developmental issues raised on social media platforms as well as by politicians and citizens underscores the debate presented in section 2.4 regarding the responsibilities of politicians and the expectations of citizens in transitional and less mature democracies such as in Kenya. These expectations are highlighted by scholars such as Osewa et al., (2022), Agbude et al., (2014), Fosu (2021), and Fourie (2018) who have emphasized the importance of policy makers in prioritizing substantive issues such as fostering sustainable development, alleviating poverty, and enhancing the well-being of citizens. This emphasis is particularly salient given the continent's persistent challenges with underdevelopment.

Despite the consensus between political leaders and citizens regarding the subject of policy and development, social media administrators held the belief that inundating the social media pages of women politicians with discussions pertaining to development and policy failed to capture the attention of viewers. The administrators noted that Kenyans were more drawn to personal content, entertainment, and sensationalism. Despite this allegation, data gleaned from focus group discussions and individual interviews with citizens contradicted this assertion. In fact, citizens confessed that they were not attracted to entertainment-focused representation, a subject that has been explored in section 7.4 of this study. The following sentiment exemplifies citizen's sentiments on development and policy.

> Participant 17: What we want to see on these (social media) pages are development issues. Their pages should be development oriented.

The second consensus between these representational actors was on transparency, honesty, and accountability. Women politicians felt that Kenyan citizens wanted to see a higher degree of openness from their political representatives. Citizens, on the same note, cited that they preferred to see a showcasing of political activities and accomplishments, truthfulness in content, straightforwardness, and realistic content, as well as a clear demonstration of politicians' dedication to public service. As far as honesty was concerned, both political actors agreed that social media content that was truthful and realistic was imperative. Under this issue, these political actors affirmed that straightforwardness in social media communication was a

desirable trait. In the following statement from an interview with a woman politician, this subject is encapsulated.

> I feel they (citizens) like hearing the truth. I do not tell lies that politicians are used to telling. I have discovered that citizens don't appreciate people who do not tell them as it is. They want to hear realistic messages.

Still on this subject, citizens generally expected politicians to use social media platforms to uphold their promises and demonstrate accountability to their constituents. Within this analysis, the demand for the fulfilment of campaign pledges, as emphasized in the following statement, was construed as a manifestation of accountability.

> We want to see them implementing the manifestos that they had promised during campaigns. If in that manifesto you indicated that you're going to tarmac like 300 kilometers of roads, we want to see that. If you said you are going to connect electricity, then we expect to see you do that.

In the realm of political representation, the significance of transparency, honesty, and accountability cannot be overstated because they serve to bolster credibility and trustworthiness in the political process, consequently fostering enhanced governance standards (Bertsou, 2021). Furthermore, these virtues play a pivotal role in cultivating trust with the electorate, effectively counteracting the proliferation of deceptive narratives that have the potential to erode public confidence. When there is mutual recognition and appreciation for these principles as they emerged in this analysis, political representation is perceived as effective and beneficial to the democratic processes.

Grey and divergent Areas

Certain aspects of this study introduced a degree of ambiguity regarding the alignment between politician's perceptions and citizens' preferences concerning their desired mode of representation. The prominent areas of contention centered on personalization of politics, transparency, and gender-related subjects. Political representatives contended that personalizing their engagement humanized them and fostered unity with citizens, a subject largely supported by many citizens as explored under subsection 5.1.2. Despite this consensus, substantial debate emerged on this issue. A significant portion of citizens, if not the majority, expressed disapproval of the extent to which female politicians in Kenya showcased their personal lives on social media platforms. However, despite the ambiguity, there was a general

concession that the optimal approach to the subject of political personalization entailed striking a balance between the political and the personal dimensions of representation.

Similarly, a lack of consensus arose on transparency. Both women politicians and citizens concurred on the paramount importance of transparency as outlined within this same subsection above, (7.5). Nonetheless, citizens expressed apprehension regarding the delicate balance between transparency and professionalism as elucidated in subsection 7.4. A prevalent concern among the citizens was the potential encroachment upon individual privacy and communication ethics posed by a certain degree of openness and transparency in online discourse. Consequently, there emerged a collective call for political representatives to navigate the digital sphere with a sense of responsibility, upholding the principles of truthfulness and transparency while respecting personal boundaries.

But the issue that generated a lot of ambiguity in this analysis was the subject of women and gender issues. This analysis revealed a trend where social media posts had messages that pointed towards gender-related aspects, attitudes, and perspectives. Majorly, there was a focus on gender roles and norms, inclusivity, and celebration of women. While women politicians celebrated the milestones that their fellow women had made in Kenya's leadership positions, there was a section of citizens who concurred with this subject. These citizens maintained a steadfast dedication to following female politicians on digital platforms, driven by their belief in the promotion of gender equality and the importance of amplifying women's voices in politics. For them, online monitoring of women in politics represented a form of support for women's political inclusion and advocacy for equal opportunities. In a political arena where men tend to occupy the majority of positions, the presence of women in politics was regarded by these participants as a unique attribute, as alluded to in the statement below.

> Participant 3: Politics has been male dominated. Whenever you see a woman in politics, she distinguishes herself from the rest of the group and she catches my attention.

Also, citizens called for women to advocate for more positions in parliament, as stipulated within Kenya's constitution. The following example offers a good illustration of this topic.

> Participant 15: They need to advocate for gender equality and participation in governance. We saw the other day, they've selected the cabinet and the president really tried to balance between the genders, but we are not yet there, and we haven't

> achieved the promise of a 50/50 cabinet balance between the genders. The constitution of Kenya has a 2/3rds gender rule that was never implemented. I don't see why women leaders are quiet on such issues.

The explicit reference to the 2/3rds gender rule in the illustrative statement above showcases citizens' awareness of policy intricacies that involve gender parity in Kenya's governance. By calling for an increase in the proportion of female representation in governance, citizens implicitly highlighted the need for descriptive representation perhaps with the notion that more women in governance implied better representation, as argued by Wolak (2019)

However, a section of the citizens rejected gender-based affirmative action and instead, advocated for due electoral process. According to these citizens, the reservation of some seats for certain individuals undermined the essence of democracy. The affirmative action policy requires that a certain percentage of parliamentary seats be allocated to women (see Berry et al., 2020). In line with this, the Kenyan constitution stipulates that if women do not secure at least one-third of parliamentary seats through elections, nominations must be made to ensure that this threshold is met.

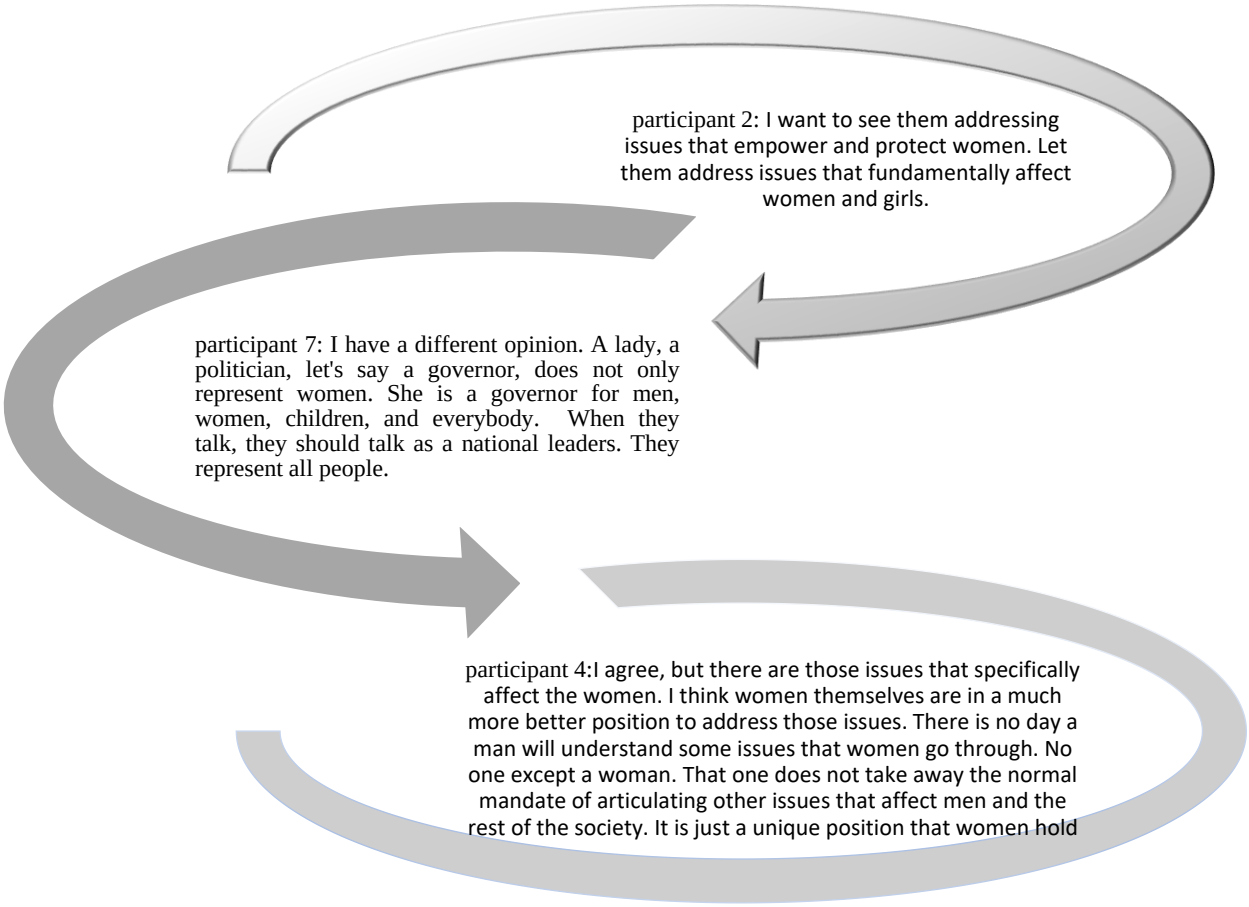
> Participant 9: I do not support the 1/3rd gender rule in Kenya that women keep pushing for. People should be competitively elected into office. We need to get to a democratic maturity by electing people instead of reserving positions for them. That beats democratic progression.

The rejection of affirmative action by some citizens brought to question the larger debate surrounding gender equality, inclusivity, and representation. The reference to 'democratic maturity' in this sentiment implies that citizens view a merit-based election system as a hallmark of a mature democracy. This raises important questions about how democracy should be measured. Specifically, it evokes the question of whether democracy should be based solely on competitive elections or on broader measures of inclusivity. This question brings into perspective scholarly arguments by Labelle et al., (2015) who posit that reserving positions for women may not necessarily lead to democratic progress or maturity because women leaders may be chosen on the basis of filling quotas rather than on their qualification and merit.

Beyond the subject of descriptive representation, there was a disagreement among citizens on the actual role of women politicians in leadership. A section of citizens argued and were hopeful that the presence of women in political offices implied that women would address issues that men had previously ignored. However, in this discourse that was centered around

women's leadership and substantive representation, certain individuals contended that women politicians ought to address not only women-specific issues but also those that affected all members of the society, given that women represented humanity. Yet other participants maintained that women possess a distinctive vantage point to comprehend and tackle issues that affect women, thereby emphasizing the need to concentrate on such concerns. Below, I present a snippet of this discussion.

Figure 12: Should Women Leaders Address Women's Issues?



Although there was a debate on the question of whether women should focus solely on women's issues or the issues of society, the sub-issues in this topic emphasized a collective desire for a robust and inclusive discourse on gender-related matters, emphasizing the need for women politicians to champion women's rights and women's empowerment.

7.2 Challenges of Women Politicians in Social Media Representation

The subject regarding the challenges faced by women politicians in social media engagement was explored to determine the impact that these challenges had on political communication and representation, and consequently, gauge their implication on effective representation. As Rheault et al., (2019) and Krook (2017) note, women in politics are more affected by online challenges, which constitute a serious detriment to their virtual activities. Elsewhere, Erikson et al., (2021) argue that while male politicians who are exposed to online challenges tend to leave office, women politicians tend to stay, but they feel that their ability to act independently and influence events and issues is restricted in some way. These discussions raise crucial questions in this subsection of the study regarding the challenges that women politicians in Kenya face in online representational endeavours, what political leaders, as well as citizens, feel about these challenges, and how these challenges may impact political communication and representation.

Overall, women politicians cited gender-based judgements, degrading comments and behaviour, as well as the impact that negative content had on their political careers as some of the challenges that they faced during online communication (see Table 3 below). These issues were also highlighted by social media administrators and citizens during interviews and focus group discussions. The issues mentioned in this study are similar to the challenges discussed theoretically under section 2.2 where James et al., (2017), Belstom (2016) and Knook and Sanin (2020) have highlighted inappropriate communication such as intimidation, violence, and harassment as some of the intrusive behaviours that are normally directed towards political figures in online spheres, and which had an impact on political careers. In the following section, I describe the challenges that were mentioned by women politicians in this study, and what these politicians, social media administrators, as well as citizens, felt about them with regards to their impact on political communication and representation.

Table 4: Challenges Faced by Women Politicians in Social Media Communication

Guiding question	Emerging codes	Emerging themes
What kind of challenges do you encounter in online communication?	Harassment Negative stereotypes Unrealistic expectations for women Unrealistic portrayal Harsh judgement Attacks Body shaming Sexism and ageism Objectification	Gender-based judgements
	Career position Career destruction Characters assassination Moral standing Ending careers Disservice to women Limited content due to fear of harassment	Impact on political careers

Diverging theme: Preference for traditional communication modes

Gender-Based Judgements

Under this theme, women politicians reported encountering numerous gender-based challenges and various forms of harassment during social media engagements, an issue that was reiterated by citizens and social media administrators. Specifically, these forms of harassment included age-based judgements, negative stereotypes, unrealistic expectations for women, negative portrayals regarding their gender, sexualization and objectification, among other issues. These forms of harassment ranged from direct verbal attacks to more subtle forms of gender-based discrimination.

The term ‘gender-based harassment’ implies that women leaders are targeted just for being women (Lu and Luqui, 2023). This definition is expounded on by Vogels (2021) who posits that both men and women face online harassment, but while men may be harassed because of their political views, women are harassed simply because they are women. Erickson et al., (2021), while focusing on what constitutes gender-based harassment conclude that it has three dynamics namely frequency, character, and consequences. To expound on this, Erickson and

her colleagues argue that women politicians are overrepresented in online harassment, they are targeted as women, and their ability to engage in online activities is curtailed because of the harassment. Some of the issues discussed by the above scholars were prevalent in this study.

In the excerpt below, for example, a woman politician captures the gender-based challenges faced by women leaders in the realm of online political communication and representation in Kenya. Her statement highlights elements such as the skewed nature of harassment towards women as compared to men, age-based harassment, the frequency of harassment, sexualization of women leaders, and a general disregard for women's policy inclinations.

> When you are a woman leader, not everyone embraces you or what you are doing. We are judged too much and more harshly. When you are a young lady, you are harassed sexually, when you are older you are regarded as being old school. We are judged by the way we dress; from the way we talk etc. women are not taken so kindly by the public. They don't even look at you from the position of leadership. This is unlike men. Men of all ages are taken positively regardless of the age.

The intersectionality of gender and politics in the above illustration is evident, based on the claim that the harassment faced by women is disproportionate to and different from the harassment directed towards male politicians. The statement above reflects the inherent bias and resistance that women leaders endure in digital representation engagement. This politician presents a stark contrast to the manner in which her male counterparts are handled. The nuanced judgements faced by women at different ages as indicated in the above sentiment, for example, reveal the continuous intersectionality of challenges that women are faced by at different levels and ages of their political career. The scrutiny goes beyond political ideologies to encompass personal attributes such as clothing and speech.

In other similar statements, cultural attributes were brought into play, with different women politicians concurring that inappropriate gender-based judgements towards women on social media platforms stemmed out of 'African cultural orientations.' In one instance, a female politician posited that a lot of attacks on women politicians in social media occurred within the Kenyan communities that still grappled with women's leadership. This statement was underscored by some citizens who agreed that they were still getting accustomed to women's

leadership in Kenya[37]. In an instance during focus group discussions, one of the one of the citizens who hailed from the Ameru social group in Kenya, which is a highly patriarchal group (see Kinyua, 2020), asserted that he did not follow the social media pages of women politicians because he believed 'their politics were inferior.' In one-on-one interviews, another citizen argued that the various forms of harassment that women politicians experienced on social media platforms were 'self-inflicted,' by the virtue that these female leaders posted very personal content that was a 'threat to their personalities.' Additionally, another citizen commented that while women leaders have the freedom of speech, the problem lies with citizens' perceptions and reception of information that stems from women leaders. According to this citizen, women leaders are generally not taken seriously by their audiences.

The claims that women have inferior politics, that they are not taken seriously, and that the forms of online harassment directed towards women leaders are self-inflicted as stated by some citizens above, were attributed to a cultural mentality that is built on the notion that public places, including the political domain, are male spaces. Therefore, a woman who ventures into these spaces is perceived as an intruder and to a certain extent, incompetent. When she is harassed for being in these spaces, therefore, it is regarded then she must have invited that to herself. This relationship between gender harassment, culture, and leadership is explained under the theoretical discussions in section 2.2 of this study where Krook and Restrepo (2016, p. 466) note that incivility towards women leaders is attributed to 'gender role enforcement' that stems out of gendered cultural roles. In their argument, Krook and Restrepo (ibid), contend that women who 'intrude' into a traditionally perceived 'male domain' tend to trigger negative reactions from a public that is inclined to uphold established gender roles. This subject has also been discussed by Early and Karau (2002), Rudman and Phelan (2008), and Shimanoff (2009). Within the African continent, Ncube (2020), Ette (2017) and Chadambuka (2022), assert that gender role enforcement is especially prevalent in societies that have clear-cut gender roles.

[37] In 2010, Kenya implemented constitutional reforms that aimed at promoting gender parity in the country. One of the reforms introduced was the 2/3rds gender principle, which ensured that no gender would hold more than two-thirds of the seats in any public office. This principle was further reinforced in politics by setting aside nominated seats for women. As a result, the number of women in leadership positions has increased, with the 2013 and 2017 national elections witnessing the highest number of women in Kenya's legislative and executive offices (see Kenyatta, 2023).

The victim blaming mindsets and practices not only reinforce gender stereotypes but also override the inherent right of women to participate fully in the public sphere without fear of intimidation. This issue was asserted by one of the female politicians who highlighted that the harsh online environment in Kenya limited women's communication because they tended to hold back on issues that they would have voiced, in an otherwise healthy online environment. This politician said,

> Social media has its own downside. For instance, what I used to post before I got to politics is so different from what I post right now. First of all, my content is much limited right now. Social media has even changed my content. I am too careful about what I post. Before I click that post button I am thinking 'what will people say? What will people think? How will people react, how many votes will I lose when I post this? this has even affected what I post on my private page. This is unlike men. They do not have a lot to be bashed about. Its more hard (sic) on women. We get judged more and we ate attacked too much. You might be careful about your content, but you will still get someone to get something negative to say. You could be innocently going on your life innocently and all of a sudden you are attacked.

The subject of voice and content limitation, as highlighted by a woman politician above, was further underscored by a social media administrator, who posited that online incivility in Kenya posed a significant constraint on women's capacity to engage with substantive issues on their social media platforms. The administrator contended that women politicians were compelled to post 'neutral and feminine content' on their platforms as a means of safeguarding themselves from potential harassment and backlash. Furthermore, the social media administration attributed this inclination by women leaders towards 'safe topics' such as health and gender to a desire by these women to avoid contentious issues that would attract unwarranted attention or provoke controversy. Moreover, the administrator alleged a deliberate avoidance of 'masculine topics' such as adopting a confrontational stance and adhering to traditional political norms such as 'practicing politics the way it should be practiced' was a common strategy that were employed by women politicians to mitigate against online incivility. Specifically, he alleged that women leaders, for instance, preferred posting a photo on development rather than speak about it on social media platforms. This reluctance by women politicians to engage with certain subjects was framed within the broader contexts of Kenya's patriarchal societal norms as discussed under sections 1.5, 2.1 and 2.2 of this study where it was noted that cultural norms hindered women's political participation, not just in Kenya but in other global areas as well.

Another form of gender-based harassment that emerged in this study was sexism and ageism. out of the 10 interviewees, 7 of the women politicians in this study reported facing degrading sexist and ageist messages which included proposals for marriage from strangers, the insinuation that they could not make good representatives because they were not married, were older, or even younger, body shaming, among other issues. The following statement from a woman politician illustrates this subject, with the politician lamenting that such forms of online trolling made it extremely difficult for women politicians to participate fully on digital spaces.

> There are some serious issues that we can discuss online, for instance, development issues. But someone comes into your page and says 'are you married? Can I propose? You know, some kind of sexualized messages. It's a joke! I had someone come into my page to tell me that I am a very proud woman. It is so difficult for women politicians on social media platforms. The negative comments are so degrading.

The above illustration illuminates the subject of feminism and politics that has been discussed under sections 2.1 and 2.3 of the review of literature in this study. From a feminist standpoint, the persistent inquiries of the marital status of women politicians reflects a form of objectification of women in politics. It underscores the tendency to reduce women's identity to their relationship status. Ncube (2020) captures this issue with precision. She points that social media platforms in Africa have become spaces where women face sexist and misogynistic harassment, including questioning their marital status, sexualization, and objectification. For a citizen to reach out to inquire about marriage, and even to make a proposal, is to reinforce gendered expectations that imply that a woman's place is within the domestic sphere, and thereby diverting attention from her political agency.

There were mixed reactions from citizens and social media administrators regarding the prevalence of sexism in online platforms. While a section of citizens voiced their discontent with the pervasive online trolling that targeted women and cited age and marital status as unfair grounds for discrediting women, a social media administrator articulated that there was, nevertheless, an ingrained societal expectation that women leaders should exhibit a strong family orientation particularly concerning marriage. This administrator underscored the societal perception that a woman's ability to fulfil familial responsibilities is intrinsically linked to her capability to effectively serve the public. This discourse was elucidated within the review of literature, specifically in sections 2.1 and 2.3, where scholars including Zigomo (2022), Alemayu (2020), Oyewumi (2020), and Musandu (2018) position the subject of

marriage and motherhood within Africa's political realm, with Musandu (2008. p.14) stating that women politicians in Kenya often find themselves at cultural and national political crossroads in their leadership Endevours.

Impact on Political Careers

Apart from the online trolling and incivility directed towards women politicians as described in the preceding paragraphs, there were concerns expressed by the participants of this study that social media had the potentiality of negatively impacting on women's careers either by silencing them, limiting their communication and engagement, and even putting their political careers at jeopardy. During individual interviews, certain women politicians underscored the prevalence of social media users who employed tactics such as character assassination, asymmetrical scrutiny, destruction of their moral standing, and disproportionate judgement, ultimately constraining the scope of their online political representation practices. This apprehension resonated with certain members of the citizenry, who highlighted specific instances where some female political figures had encountered significant disruptions to their careers because of uncivil online practices as evidenced in the ensuing excerpt.

> Citizen 1: Social media is doing a disservice to women politicians. For instance, social media ended the career of politician X when her photos were leaked. She lost her moral standing. And this is not an isolated case. Social media have either built or destroyed the political careers of women in this country.

In the excerpt above, the subject of leaked photos exemplifies the potential of social media to dismantle political careers, revealing the fragility of political positions in the digital age. Here, the fragility of women's political careers in the face of online scrutiny is highlighted. This issue is contended by Duffy and Hudd (2019) who argue that online discussions that overly focus on gendered aspects subject women to heightened scrutiny resulting to a possible destruction of their careers. Erikson et al., (2021) contends to this argument by saying that the public nature of online engagement opens women up to ridicule and hate, potentially affecting their professional standing and career prospects.

But not all citizens agreed with the notion that social media spaces were avenues through which women's careers were jeopardized. Some citizens argued that social media could not build or

destroy a politician. The argument brought forth by these citizens is that society judged people (women leaders) by the manner in which they portrayed themselves in public spaces. It was the opinion of these citizens that if women conducted themselves well, social media spaces had minimal chances of destroying their careers. This argument resonates with the discourse on social media affordances as expounded in section 2.4 where theoretical deliberations scrutinize the dynamic interplay between social media and society, debating whether one exerts control over the other or vice versa. Within the framework of social constructivist theory highlighted in this section, human agency dominates technological influence. This implies that women politicians can strategically navigate technological spaces for their advantage. However, it is imperative to acknowledge the presence of other actors in this equation, who possess the capacity to exploit social media platforms to the detriment of political representatives, as evidenced by instances in the preceding discussion.

Within this discussion, some women politicians sidestepped the question of the challenges that they faced during online engagements and instead stated that in normal circumstances, they would prefer the traditional face-to-face modes of communication. By not explicitly detailing online challenges, this assertion denotes a set of unspoken challenges in the digital sphere. For these politicians, their preference for social media was interpreted as a reflection of a pragmatic compromise between the ‘ideal’ of face-to-face engagement and the political constraints inherent in contemporary political landscapes. The sentiment below illustrates this theme.

> If it was possible, I would meet citizens directly on face-to-face basis compared to online. That’s what I find more fulfilling. But sometimes there is not time to do this so I have to resort to social media platforms.

In conclusion, this study concurs with Reich and Bachl (2023) and Raj (20203) arguments that gender-based harassment contributes to gender inequity in political fronts because it solidifies masculine norms in politics and deters women from engaging in political discourse. According to these scholars, this form of harassment not only impedes women's ability to participate in the digital world, but it also affects their well-being. When the online space becomes a breeding ground for disrespectful discourse, the dignity of women leaders is compromised. Additionally, these uncivil online sentiments give rise to a toxic and hostile online environment that hampers constructive dialogue and diverts attention from substantive issues.

7.3 Reciprocity and Feedback between Citizens and Political Representatives

The subject of feedback and reciprocity between the various political actors in this study was another topic that was regarded as a crucial determinant of the effectiveness of online political representation in Kenya. The exploration of this subject was pegged on the arguments of scholarly insights of Trombe (2016), Fernandez and Valiente (2021), Knops and Cleen (2019), as well as Coleman (2005) who emphasize the pivotal role of feedback in shaping political representation. Trombe (2021, for instance asserts the indispensable nature of feedback in political representation because it facilitates dialogue between politicians and citizens, thereby strengthening democratic processes. Furthermore, he emphasizes its role in fostering trust between political representatives and their constituents and providing valuable policy insights from both stakeholders. Similarly, Fernandez and Valiente (2021) and Knops and Cleen (2019) maintain that feedback serves as a crucial mechanism in democratic processes, allowing citizens to articulate their concerns, needs, and priorities, while enabling politicians to make informed decisions in representing their constituencies. According to Coleman (2005), an ideal representation should be based on a conversation between the two sides of political actors.

Analysis of data revealed a predominant broadcast-oriented mode of social media communication in Kenya, aligning with the theoretical discourse presented under section 2.3 where scholarly works such as those done in the UK, Kenya, US, Zimbabwe and Australia indicated that social media communication between politicians and citizens was a one way engagement (see Rosenstiel & Mitchell, 2012; Gibson, Williamson & Ward, 2010; Macnamara & Kenning, 2011 and Macnamara, 2014; Bosch et al., 2020). In Kenya for instance, Bosch et al., (2020) asserts that social media platforms in Kenya predominantly serve as channels for

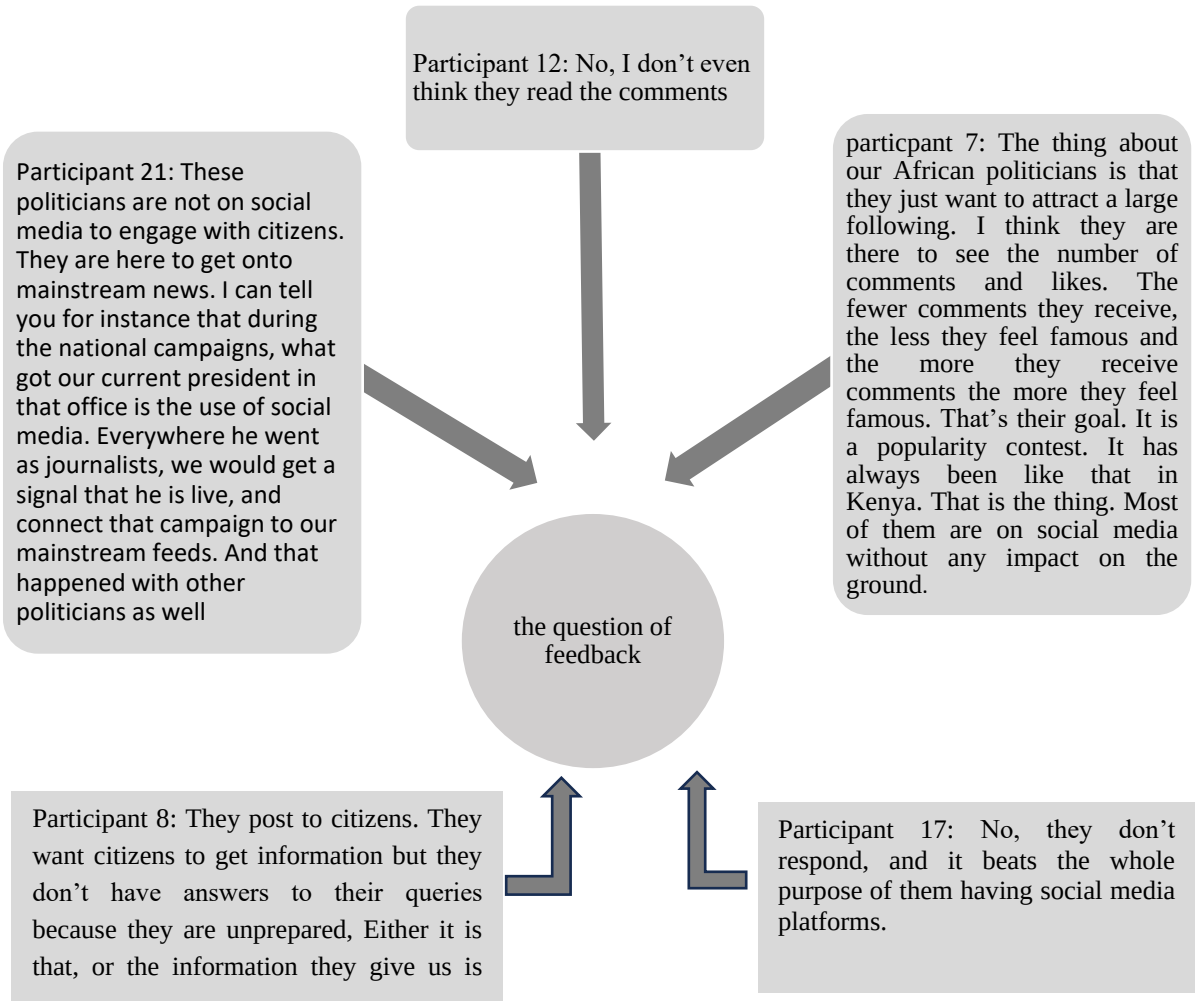
politicians to disseminate information to citizens, rather than facilitating active listening and engagement. Bosch et al's findings align with the findings of this study.

When queried whether women politicians provided feedback on their social media platforms, 24 out of 25 citizens in this study responded in the negative. Similarly, 9 out of 10 women politicians collaborated this assertion. Again, all the 5 social media administrators confirmed that feedback was not given. For women politicians, the inability to offer feedback to citizens was attributed to the overwhelming volume of citizen comments as well as time constraints. This assertion is related to Ogon (2023)'s argument that the dynamic nature of social media and the rapid dissemination of information makes it difficult for politicians to provide timely and accurate responses to citizens' queries. The subsequent excerpt features a woman politician's elaboration on this issue.

> I try to at least 'like' each comment and avoid responding to any. The comments by citizens are too many and I don't want some citizens thinking I did not respond to them yet I responded to others. To avoid that I simply 'like' the messages.

But while political representatives attributed their lack of reciprocal engagement with citizens to the volume of comments and time constraints, most attributed this deficiency to other factors. These factors included a general hesitancy by politicians to respond to citizens queries, instances of social media trolling, uncertainties regarding politician's direct involvement with the running of their social media pages, the influence of social media managers, and the underlying objectives guiding politicians' online presence. Furthermore, certain citizens believed politicians were responsible for seeking feedback from constituents, rather than the reverse. The sentiments below, that stemmed out of a focus group discussion with citizens, are illustrative of what citizens felt regarding online feedback.

Figure 13: Citizens' Perception of Online Feedback



Insights gleaned from the citizens above reveal a shared perspective on how Kenyan citizens viewed political discourse on social media. They asserted that politicians tended to prioritize self-promotion and popularity over meaningful engagement with the public. These citizens discredited politician's allegations of lack of time to engage, citing that the main reason that the politicians were on social media in the first place was for publicity purposes. They also expressed their dissatisfaction with politicians who appeared to avoid engaging with citizens online, probably because of their inability of political leaders to authenticate information. Bene (2016) agrees with this assertion. According to Bene, politicians may refrain from providing

feedback if they are unable to authenticate or verify information they gave earlier, as doing so would damage their credibility and reputation. These perspectives underscored a deficiency of dialogue in Kenya's digital political communication and representation, as citizens craved more authentic and responsive interactions with their political representatives. Regrettably, such opportunities were not readily available to them, leaving them feeling disengaged from their leaders.

Citizens also felt that the insufficiency of feedback on the social media pages of women politicians stemmed from the fact that these political representatives did not manage their own pages. It was widely agreed that social media administrators were accountable for managing these pages, resulting to minimal and negligible interaction with constituents. However, the subject of social media administrators proved to be contentious. While all the interviewed social media administrators asserted that politicians seldom managed their own pages, all the politicians, except one, maintained that they were the sole administrators. But given the time constraints mentioned by these politicians, it is understandable that they would delegate the management of their social media presence. Nevertheless, the assertion that they directly managed their social media pages was interpreted as an attempt to maintain credibility and assert ownership over the information disseminated on these platforms.

It is customary in politics to assign communication duties to others, as outlined in Cook (2015) as well as Suzor et al's (2018) discussion. Social media administrators can contribute positively to the efficiency and strategic communication of politicians for several reasons. First, they can manage large volumes of communication on behalf of politicians, enabling politicians to prioritize their core responsibilities while maintaining an online presence (Singer, 2005). Secondly, social media administrators can achieve effective image management for politicians by curating content, responding to comments, and shaping specific narratives (see Gilardi et al., 2021). By filtering and moderating content, these professionals can maintain a constructive online environment that minimizes the spread of misinformation and mitigates the impact of potential crises. Ultimately, their efforts may help to promote a positive representation of their clients. In fact, one of the women politicians who consented to having entrusted her social media platforms to an administrator cited the need for expertise as the singular rationale of delegating the running of her social media space. The subject of engaging social media

administrators for professionalism purposes was also highlighted by one of the citizens who urged political representatives to enlist the skills of these experts for the purposes of improving political communication and representation in Kenya.

> They need to get professionals to run their social media pages because I know they do not run these pages. They need to focus on social media literacy. Most of them for instance post a photo and think they have communicated enough. But what does that photo mean? Are these people trained on how to handle issues? In fact, some of them hire bloggers to hype their pages.

On the flipside, however, although the use of social media intermediaries may enhance political engagement in many ways, it also poses a challenge to political credibility and authenticity. When citizens feel that they are not directly interacting with their political representatives, their perception of representation may suffer (Pedersen, 2022; Trombe, 2016). Again, on the same point of authenticity, different political actors shape communication in different ways. Social media administrators will shape political communication differently from political representatives. This sentiment was echoed during personal interviews with citizens. Citizens held the perception that social media managers responsible for these pages prioritized viewership over representation, and aesthetics over content, potentially compromising meaningful representation. This assertion cast doubt on the effectiveness of social media as a means of political representation and a means of fostering engagement between politicians and citizens. One citizen aptly summarized this overarching issue as follows.

> All what these managers want is viewership. Sometimes they don't even focus on current issues. They might just be posting cute photos when the country has burning issues like poverty. We might be blaming the politician but she doesn't even know what is posted on her page. Most of these politicians don't even have time to check what has been posted on their pages.

Despite the popular belief and prevailing perception of many citizens that social media communication should be cyclical, there were citizens who held a distinct viewpoint on the matter of communication between politicians and the public. These individuals believed that politicians are servants of the people and have a responsibility to actively seek feedback from their constituents, rather than the other way around. According to these citizens, the role of politician's social media pages is for citizens to inform their political representatives, and once this is done, communication is considered complete. In essence, communication was supposed to be a one-way dynamic and citizen initiated. This argument reflects a desire for an

empowered citizenry, where politicians were expected to prioritize their service accordingly by serving the citizens. These sentiments are supported by Amin and Ritonga (2022) as well as Goubin (2018) who suggest that politically aware citizens are political processors who actively engage in informing politicians.

> I think that many social media platforms are there for me to inform these politicians. They are not there for me to seek a feedback loop from them. It is a feedback loop from their (politician's) side. So, it should work from their side like, Hey David, you are the government! so, we are responding to you. This is what we need as citizens. My work as a citizen is to inform them. And I am sure they read what we post.

Overall, what stemmed out of this discussion was a pervasive prevailing sentiment of hopelessness regarding the subject of feedback and reciprocity, with some citizens admitting that they refrained from leaving comments on the platforms of their political representatives due to their belief that they would not receive any response, as highlighted by some citizens remarks below. These citizens exhibited a sense of disenchantment and disinterest regarding the effectiveness of social media as a tool for dialogue between the representative actors. Their sentiments echoed a larger problem of citizens feeling disconnected from political systems, a subject that has been discussed widely by scholars such as Pilet et al., (2022), Hussey (2011), and Leeper (2020).

> I don't comment on their pages because there is no need. They won't respond, and it beats the purpose for them to be on these platforms.

> No, I don't write on their pages. Even if I put my ideas on these platforms, am not 100% sure that they will be addressed. And I wouldn't say I am in a state of apathy, its kind of really not knowing what should be done.

The resignation by citizens, at some point, took a higher notch where one of the citizens drew parallels between the communication tactics of Kenyan politicians and those used by colonialists in the past. The citizen noted that politicians only engaged with citizens only when online communication took a confrontational or combative form, and when they were faced with mounting pressure. Regrettably, such responses were typically elicited only through aggressive and impolite demands. This comparison between modern political governance and communication in Kenya to a colonial era raises questions regarding the stimuli and driving forces behind social media political participation in the country.

> Digital communication in Kenya is one way. And Kenyan politicians are like colonialists of the time. And the reason why I say that is because the language that colonialists understood from Kenyans was only when Kenyans reacted with violence. So for Kenyan politicians to respond, there must be violence of some sort in the social media. Yes, kind of an outcry like, hey, this is online war. It must trend and it must trend on the bad side. That is when they feel like, yea, this is serious. But if it is this kind of healthy communication, you know, the civil way, they don't want to respond to that.

In conclusion, the discussion of feedback and reciprocity in this study highlights critical issues concerning the place of mutual engagement between politicians and citizens in political communication and representation. The arguments projected above reflect the arguments brought forth by Husband (2000) in section 2.4 where he posits that in political representation, citizens want to be heard. They want to feel that their message has been received, interpreted, understood, and responded to. The arguments underscore the need to close the responsiveness divide between political representatives and their constituents to improve political representation and engagement. The underlying issue in this discussion is that the inability to offer feedback to citizens by political leaders has an implication for political representation. It, for instance, erodes credibility and trust in the representation process as noted in this study and supported by scholars such as Enli and Rosenberg (2018) and Starke et al., (2020). Lack of feedback may also be perceived by citizens as a disregard for citizens' concerns, thus undermining perceived trustworthiness of politicians and the political system as noted by Halmburger et al., 2019.

7.4 Cultural and Ethical Contentions in Political Representation

In this study, cultural and ethical contentions were perceived to be major determinants of the effectiveness of political representation, based on analysis of data. Analysis emerging from interviews revealed citizen's expressions of dissatisfaction with social media content that diverged from the Kenyan and the broader African cultural and ethical norms, advocating instead for a political representation that was aligned to societal values. The analysis further indicated that content which deviated from these values tended to disengage citizens from political processes. Consequently, an exploration ensured into how adherence to or deviation from cultural norms and societal ethical standards in political practice may influence the effectiveness of political communication and representation. This discussion was grounded on

the centrality of societal cultural norms and values in African politics outlined in section 1.4 and expounded on by Muers (2018), Omotoso (2017), and Masele (2022). Muers contends that citizens gravitate towards political representatives who exhibit familiarity with societal norms and values, perceiving them as more authentic, respectful, and relatable. Similarly, Omotoso emphasizes the importance of adhering to African communication ethics in political fronts, an attribute highly desired by citizens. Masele posits that information sharing in Africa is governed by contextual norms, values, and belief systems that dictate its utilization and reception.

Overall, the subject of cultural and ethical contentions in Kenya's online political representation practice focused on three major subjects. Firstly, it focused on politicians' adherence to cultural norms as a form of professionalism in politics. Secondly, it debated the sexualization of politics and its perpetuation of gender stereotypes, and how this impacted the audience's reception of political communication and women's leadership competence. Finally, it discussed privacy and ethical considerations associated with disseminating information on public platforms.

As far as cultural considerations and political professionalism are concerned, the citizens interviewed in this study voiced their disapproval of social media content that deviated from the cultural norms, values, and ideals of Kenya and the broader African society. The conversation centered on the significance of cultural sensitivity, professionalism, public perception, and political representation. When prompted to state the things that were done by political representatives that were unappealing to the citizenry, citizens pointed to a myriad of issues of which the most common was misplaced communication priorities. Here, citizens noted that political representatives were unable to situate their communication within the right community set-ups. In an except below for instance, a citizen laments the tendency of politicians to politicize events that should not have been politized in the first place.

> Mostly they have misplaced communication priorities. They for instance go to funerals and turn the whole event into a political circus. That p***s me off!. I unfollow such politicians. Instead of even picking a piece of the departed person's achievement and posting it on their social media pages, they will totally pick something in the political sphere and post it. To me that is off. We have norms and we have ideals that need to be upheld. But again, when we have incompetent politicians, then that means that the fundamental issues of our society are not going to be looked at.

The statement above reflects the sentiment of most citizens concerned about political incompetence in cultural expressions, values, and political professionalism. It emphasizes the need for more substantive and issue-based political discourse, with a focus on the appropriateness of content and its impact on politicians' credibility. The concern for politicians to project content that is context and cultural appropriate highlights a broader concern about the behavior of political representatives in the Kenyan society.

In another instance, participant 6 attributed the disregard for societal norms to politicians' obsession with 'trending,' on social media and gaining popularity. This citizen noted that political representatives will go to great lengths, including a general disregard for decency just to gain visibility. The citizen also provided examples of political representatives who attended important events such as commissioning of roads, and they shifted the focus from the substantive issues at hand to superficial aspects such as capturing self-attention-seeking and indecent photos. These photos were then shared on social media platforms with captions unrelated to the actual event. The citizen observed that comments on such photos tended to veer away from discussing the actual event. The preoccupation with trending over decency was seen as a departure from cultural norms, with the citizen expressing frustration by saying "these people offend family set-ups and societal decency."

When prompted about the subject of professionalism and upholding cultural norms and values vs visibility, a social media administrator confirmed that politicians were concerned with the latter.

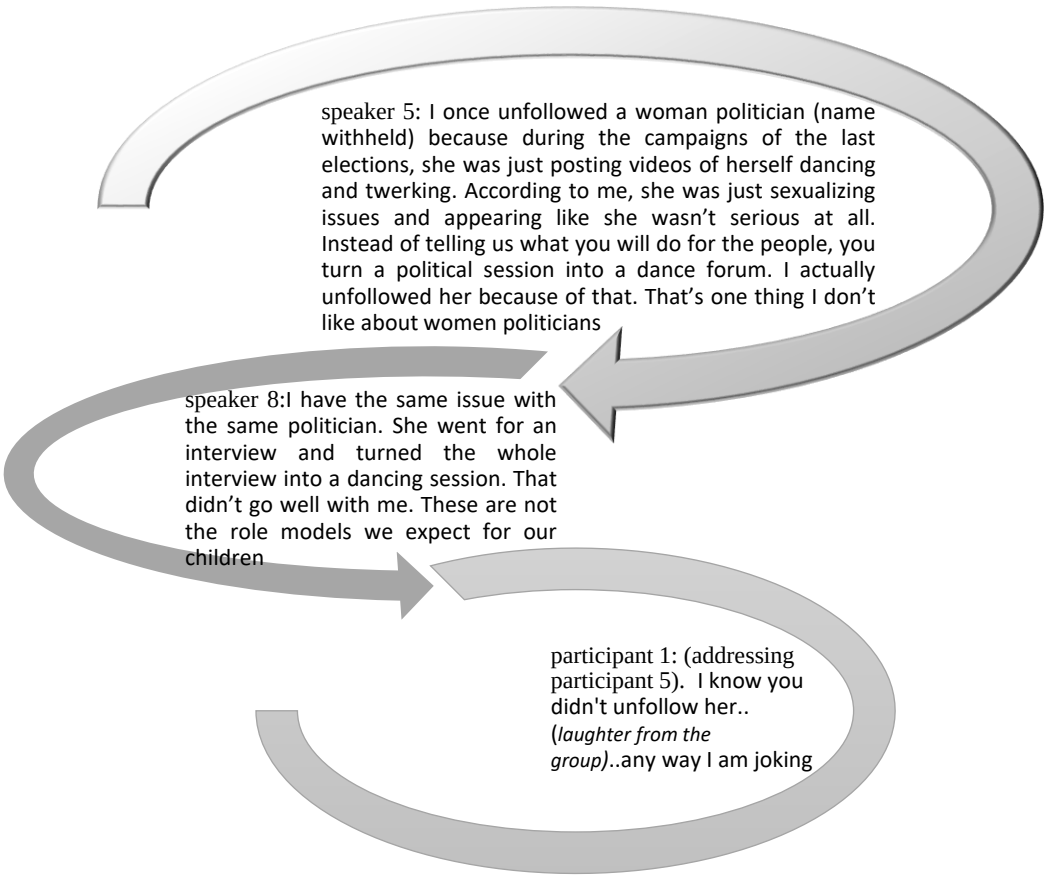
> They are concerned about visibility - 100%. They want to be seen, to be heard, to remain relevant. Sometimes they deliberately post controversial issues and they are basically interested in the debate that stems out of this controversy. I had a politician calling me to post a very controversial issue. They want the shares, the likes. When it gets heated, they ask the administrators to pull the post down. But they have achieved visibility.

The second issue emerging out of this analysis was the subject the sexualization of political content by female politicians, a topic that sparked significant attention and debate from citizens across the board, prompting explanations from both politicians and social media administrators. Citizens in individual interviews voiced their frustration with political

conversations in social media being overshadowed by visually alluring and entertainment-driven representation. The citizens expressed apprehension over the detrimental effects such content had on its viewership, and how it perpetuated gender roles and stereotypes associated with women in positions of power.

The same subject arose during the focus group discussions. In the focus group conversation, however, this issue was approached from a more extensive and potentially contentious viewpoint. While some citizens attributed responsibility to politicians for promoting such content, others held fellow citizens accountable for accepting and in a way, legitimizing it. The discussion signified the necessity for a move towards a more meaningful political discussion and less superficial content both by political representative and the citizens.

Figure 14: Citizens' Views of Representatives' Professionalism



The example showcased above highlights a citizen's decision to unfollow a politician on social media due to the presence of sexualized content. This action suggests that such content is perceived by citizens as detracting from the gravity of political engagement. Additionally, another citizen's account of a media interview with the politician devolving into a dance session underscores a perceived misalignment of communication priorities by the political representative. However, the group's laughter, coupled with a comment about the possibility of not unfollowing the politician's page, indicates that such behaviors are becoming normalized in politics. In fact, one of the citizens threw back the ball to citizens and accused them of tolerating and encouraging such acts. This raises concerns about evolving expectations for political leaders. Also, it in a way, confirms the public's attraction to sensationalism and controversy, as claimed by some social media managers.

All in all, the majority of the citizens expressed their disappointment in women politicians who are regarded as public figures and societal role models for their failure to prioritize the real concerns of the general public over entertaining content on social media. Moreso, a section of the citizens was disappointed that women leaders fed into and reinforced gender stereotypes. The irony of it, as emphasized by the citizens lay in the fact that women leaders were expected to eliminate these stereotypes, yet they were perceived, by citizens, to be perpetuating them. It was noted that gender stereotypes sustain gender inequalities and diminish the political impact of women. Therefore, female politicians were expected to strive towards dismantling these harmful stereotypes instead of reinforcing them, a subject that has been discussed by Reich and Balch (2023) as well as Chilolo and Mlambo (2020).

The last issue of contention identified in this analysis was the subject of privacy and ethical considerations, especially pertaining to the sharing of online content. Citizens pointed to various dimensions of digital engagement such as a general disregard for dignity in charity work and philanthropy, the potential misuse of information on these social media platforms, data sharing, informed consent, anonymity and privacy, violation of individual dignity, and other ethical considerations when sharing online content. In essence, citizens decried the lack of respectful online practices and the inability of political representatives to foster responsible political discourse. There was a call for political representatives to navigate the digital

landscape in a responsible and ethical manner. The statement below, made by one of the participants, best summarizes this theme.

> For me, I feel sometimes when they are doing charity work, even from the government side, they have to be very careful on which kind of image will come forth to the people and which one will just remain unprojected. I have seen some of them donating sanitary items to girls in schools where poverty is very rampant. And you know, they call the name of the girl, and people take photos of them. They are basically robbing these girls of their dignity, and these girls will have to deal with this image for the rest of their lives because social media doesn't forget. This is very unAfrican, and I don't I don't think that is right. That doesn't appeal to me at all. Well, maybe in some cultures it's fine, but in Africa it's not. Anyway, it's a conflicted conversation.

The statement above summarizes the concerns of the subject of privacy and ethical considerations. Here, the concerned citizen delves into the complex interplay between political representation, digital communication, ethics, culture, and privacy. The argument put forth under this statement is multifaceted. Firstly, there is an underlying suggestion that Kenyan citizens were concerned about the potential exploitation of charitable activities for political gain and self-promotion by political representatives. Secondly, there was unease among citizens regarding the internet's long-term memory and the lasting impact of information that was shared online. They were apprehensive about how digital content was collected, stored, utilized, and its permanence on these platforms. Specifically, citizens were worried about the use of data-driven political engagement, especially when politicians misused such information for their own gain. In political representation, such concerns have the potentiality of eroding in politics and online engagement by citizens, impacting on digital political representation, a subject that has been discussed by Bannerman et al., (2022) and Hartanti et al., (2021).

7.5 Do Citizens Feel Well Represented by Women Politicians in Kenya?

In addition to exploring diverse subjects to evaluate the effectiveness of online political representation in Kenya as delineated in subsections 7.1 to 7.4 above, this study embarked on a direct inquiry, soliciting citizen's perspectives on whether they perceived adequate representation by women politicians. The responses were diverse, with citizens acknowledging the accomplishments of notable female political representatives, while also highlighting disparities in political representation among women leaders. In essence, the feedback received was a mix of constructive criticisms and positive contributions. The various issues raised by citizens were categorized into several sub-issues, which included concerns about the influence

of social media managers and the underutilization of social media platforms. Below, I present and elaborate on these debates.

Table 5: The Effectiveness of Social Media Representation

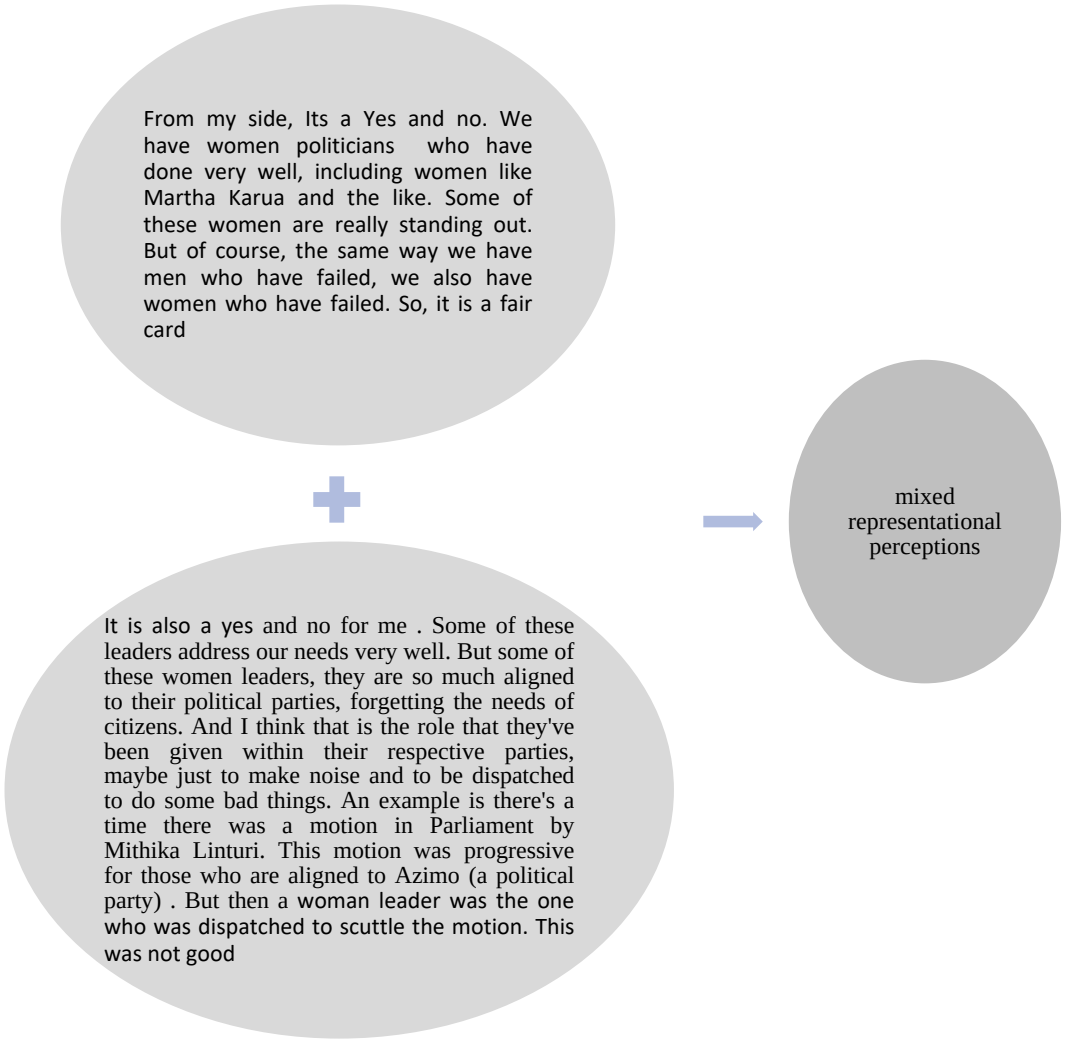
Guiding question	Emerging codes	Emerging themes
Do citizens feel well represented by women politicians in social media platforms?	Yes and No Some were good representatives Variations in representation There were challenges of representation	Mixed representational perceptions
	Politicians not running their own pages Managers focus on viewership, not representation Some managers neglect current issues	Influence of social media managers
	Failure to leverage social media influence for societal good Inability to use social media to influence international communities	Underutilization of social media platforms

To begin with, citizens expressed mixed perceptions when asked whether they felt well-represented by their political representatives. The majority of respondents answered with 'yes and no,' and cited various reasons for their responses. These sentiments reflected the dual nature of citizens' evaluations, emphasizing that while some women leaders adeptly addressed societal needs, others were perceived to do the opposite. For example, women politicians like Martha Karua were acknowledged for excelling in their representational duties, but concerns were raised about other women leaders aligning with political party interests at the expense of addressing citizens' concerns.

On the same subject, there were some citizens who argued that certain women politicians were used, either by political parties or by individual politicians, to obstruct progressive motions in parliament. Citizens believed that this was an example of women politicians being caught in a

dilemma between supporting their political parties and supporting their constituents, highlighting the conflicting roles that these leaders have to navigate when it comes to serving the broader public. According to the citizens, obstructing progressive parliamentary motions was seen as impeding democratic processes. To illustrate these arguments, I have provided an example below.

Figure 15: Mixed Perceptions on Representational Effectiveness



These mixed reactions were seen as a critical lens through which citizens navigated the complexities of women politicians in political representation by acknowledging both the successes and challenges within this dynamic practice.

Secondly, citizens expressed dissatisfaction with online political representation in Kenya, citing the role of social media managers in this practice. One notable concern that was raised was the perception that these pages were not managed by the female leaders themselves, but rather by intermediaries. This sentiment was seen to indicate a broader issue surrounding the credibility and authenticity of political representation in the digital realm. The role of social media managers was also perceived by citizens to be a major impediment to direct engagements between citizens and politicians, as it has been discussed under subsection 7.3, disputing the notion that social media communication enables direct engagements between politicians and citizens as suggested by Dimitrova and Matthes (2018) Mathe (2022) as well as Gray and Gutierrez -Mannix (2021). One citizen aptly summarized this overarching theme as follows.

> Slightly, we are well represented. Just slightly. But let's put in mind that these women may not even be running their own pages. All what these managers want is viewership. Sometimes they don't even focus on current issues. They might just be posting cute photos when the country has burning issues like poverty. We might be blaming the politician but she doesn't even know what is posted on her page. Most of these politicians don't even have time to check what has been posted on their pages.

Implicitly, this theme suggested an underlying concern regarding the gap between politicians' thoughts, efforts, and insights versus the social media content 'they' published. This concern was substantiated by a set of interconnected issues. To begin with, constituents felt that politicians were not taking an active role in administering their personal social media accounts. This perceived detachment raised doubts and questions about the credibility and honesty of the information that was disseminated via these platforms. Additionally, the concern implied a lack of direct interaction between politicians and their followers via social media, which caused people to question the authenticity of the interaction and 'information exchange' on these platforms.

Lastly, it emerged from this analysis that citizens in Kenya were concerned about the underutilization of social media platforms by women politicians. This issue was highlighted

under two related codes: the first being the failure of these politicians to harness the power of social media for the benefit of society, and the second being their inability to use these platforms to advocate for their cause on an international level.

In the first code, the citizens pointed out that there was a perceived disconnect between the potential influence of women politicians on social media and their actual contribution to societal welfare. In this context, social media platforms were seen as powerful tools for advocacy and there was a suggestion that they could be better utilized. Citizens felt a perceived absence of substantial and meaningful information by politicians on these platforms. For the citizens, the information on these platforms was superficial. Issues that were cited to support citizens' claims included a general disregard for relevant content, excessive focus on visual elements, misplaced communication priorities, and perceived absence of seriousness in political communication. In relation to this, citizens accused politicians of lacking social media literacy. These citizens suggested that social media literacy involved more than just posting content, requiring an understanding of platform dynamics, interpreting audience responses, and the preparedness of politicians in navigating the digital landscape, elements that were lacking in Kenya's social media representation. According to Karlsson (2013) and Dryzerk and Niemeyer (2018), the lack of substantive political content, coupled with low levels of literacy in digital communication impacts political representation negatively because it strains deliberations in representation, hinders the ability of citizens to hold their representatives accountable and consequently erodes the legitimacy of political systems.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter has delved into an assessment of the effectiveness of online political representation in Kenya, predicated upon the degree of responsiveness exhibited by political representatives towards the expressed needs of citizens in the digital media platforms. The chapter has scrutinized the interactive dynamics of the two political representation actors, emphasizing dialogue and reciprocal engagement, while also considering the overarching expectations of the represented population. Furthermore, this analysis has extended to the identification and analysis of prevalent challenges and deficiencies within the domain of online representation.

The question of responsiveness to citizens' needs elicited mixed responses from both political representatives and the citizens. Overall, there was a general agreement between politicians and citizens concerning the subjects of socio-economic needs, the promotion of development agendas, the subject of honesty, accountability, and the delivery of public amenities to the constituents. However, both politicians and citizens differed on transparency, political personalization, and gender-affirmation in politics. Specifically, some citizens believed the nomination of women into political positions was an encroachment into democratic principles.

The second major finding in this study pertained to the discourse surrounding feedback mechanisms on the online platforms. There was a prevailing sentiment that political representatives exhibited a conspicuous absence of responsive engagement on these platforms. Instead, they predominantly adopted a unidirectional broadcast communication approach on these platforms, overlooking the perspectives and apprehensions of the citizens. Consequently, citizens harbored feelings of being disregarded and overlooked, raising significant question of the effectiveness of online political representation which largely depends on the interactions between the different actors of political representation.

Thirdly, the study delved into the online impediments encountered by women politicians during their digital interactions. The results uncovered a pervasive hostility directed towards these female leaders encompassing forms of emotional abuse, trolling, gender-based violence, and even threats to their professional trajectories. It was inferred that such a hostile digital milieu has the capacity to significantly hamper the capacity of the women leaders to discharge their responsibilities in online representation practice.

Finally, an examination of professionalism, ethical conduct, and behavioral norms, and their relationship with online representation effectiveness engendered considerable discourse within this study. Broadly, citizens lamented the absence of respectful online practices

Finally, the subject of professionalism, ethical practice, and behaviors elicited a debate in this study. Overall, citizens decried the lack of respectful online etiquette and criticized political representatives for failing to cultivate respectful political dialogue. Specific grievances included unethical data sharing practices, the perpetuation of sexualized political narratives, cultural insensitivity, and a disregard for individual dignity and privacy. Citizens noted

politicians’ preoccupation with social and media visibility and the pursuit of popularity over professional integrity. Social media administrators underscored that such occurrences stemmed from politicians' prioritization with visibility at the expense of professionalism.

Chapter 8: Emerging Political Representation Modes

This chapter introduces a conceptual layer to this study by delving into the various modes of political representation that emerged out of data analysis. Addressing research question five (RQ 5), it examines and discusses the prevalent modes of political representation observed in this research. Integral to the synthesis of information derived from chapters 4 -7, the chapter fuses various insights gleaned from social media data, interviews, and focus group discussions to bring out the practical and implied manifestations of political representation practice in Kenya.

As outlined in chapter one subsection 1.1, political representation modes encapsulate the diverse approaches through which political representatives advocate for citizens within political systems as well as how they engage with them (see also Frenkiel, 2020). The modes identified in this analysis include participatory/collaborative representation, issue-based, trustee, delegate, and symbolic representational modes - all of which shed light on how political representation is conducted in Kenya. While these modes are not necessarily distinct and were seen to overlap in some instances, each one is discussed exclusively below.

8.1 Participatory/Collaborative Representation

The first mode of political representation deduced in this study is participatory representation, also known as collaborative representation. This model of governance involves various stakeholders, including politicians, citizens, interest groups, policymakers, and various institutions working together to make decisions and shape policies (Koski et al., 2016; Stiman, 2021). Proponents of this representation mode stress the importance of inclusivity, transparency, shared decision-making, partnerships, and dialogue among stakeholders to tackle complex societal challenges (Évéquoz et al., 2022; Nagar and Ali, 2003). It employs mechanisms such as citizen assemblies, referendums, and participatory budgeting, among other activities, to facilitate active citizen participation in political processes (Bandeira and Ferraro, 2017). Essentially, this is a people-centric approach to representation that aims to uphold democratic ideals.

This study identified several attributes of participatory representation as evidenced in various social media posts. In posts 1, 3, 4, 7, 13, 30, 32, 51,57 and 39, for instance, political representatives emphasized the involvement of community members and other institutions, such as community-based organizations and even non-governmental organizations in decision-making and service provision (refer to Appendix 11 for all social media posts included in this study). In post 1 for example, the politician acknowledges the role of Coast Water Services in providing water to citizens, while post 3 highlights the role of NGAAF in providing supplies. Elements of these posts have been discussed in chapter four subsection 4.1.1. Similarly, post 13, which is illustrated below, showcases women leaders from different ministries and constituencies in Kenya collaborating to offer community services. While this post exhibits communal repertoires typical of African societies and reflects collaborative traits often associated with women as discussed in section 6.1.1 of this study, the significance of collaborative governance in this post cannot be overlooked. These instances of engaging various stakeholders in community service activities align with the principles of participatory representation.

> Today, I joined Prof. Margaret Kobia, CS for Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs at the NYS Headquarters to receive donations from her Ministry consisting of sanitizers, face masks, sanitary towels, buckets etc. In attendance were Hon. Lilian Gogo, Mp Rangwe Constituency, Hon Alice Wahome, Mp Kandara Constituency, Hon.Sarah Lekorere, Mp Laikipia North Constituency, Hon.Martha Wangari, Mp Gilgil Constituency, Hon.Jessica Mbalu, Mp Kibwezi East Constituency, Hon.Edith Nyenze, Mp Kitui West Constituency and Hon. Rachael Nyamai, Mp Kitui South Constituency

Indications of collaborative representation surfaced not only within the social media data but also during interviews. For instance, in the ensuing interview excerpt where political leaders were queried about their preferred social media platforms, a woman politician asserted her preference for Twitter, citing its capacity to facilitate engagement with various stakeholders. While the inquiry focused on social media platform preference, it serves here to exemplify an aspect of collaborative governance within the study.

> You know, for me, I prefer Twitter, not just to reach the electorates but other organizations like campaign funders. Twitter is a bit more professional, and I can use it both to speak with my people and also to engage other organizations because in politics, policies matter too, not just relationships.

In this excerpt, the mention of Twitter's capacity to facilitate engagement with a broad spectrum of stakeholders suggests the capacity for this platform to foster networking and

expansive engagement. It also highlights an understanding by political representatives of the need to engage in diverse dialogues and connections beyond the immediate electorates

The subject of collaborative governance was also highlighted by citizens. During one-on-one interviews, some citizens brought attention to the concept of collaborative governance. These citizens expressed a preference for political content that highlighted collaborative efforts with various stakeholders. This reflects citizens' endorsement of participatory and inclusive governance principles, which prioritized partnerships and collaborations in the decision-making process, as illustrated in an excerpt below.

> In Kenya, we have a lot of partnerships when we do our activities. If a politician does a project in collaboration with other partners, I need to see them (the partners) portrayed visually or textually. I want them acknowledged.

In political discourse, participatory representation is often lauded for its democratic efficacy because it facilitates interactions between the state and its citizens (Dupuy and Defacqz, 2022). Additionally, it engenders greater trust in political processes and promotes transparency, accountability, and responsive governance (Baiocchi and Ganuza, 2014). However, collaborative representation also presents challenges including disparities in political engagement. This mode of representation elicits questions of voice, power dynamics, and negotiations among all the stakeholders that get involved in decision-making processes (Rosenthal 2019, Stiman 2021). Moreover, managing complex issues can become cumbersome when a multitude of voices are brought to the decision-making table, making it harder to reach a consensus on issues as noted by Klingemann and Weldon (2012). Furthermore, articulation of individual perspectives, especially by electorates, may be a challenge, undermining the very essence of political representation. Thus, in collectivist cultures such as in Africa, the effectiveness of collaborative governance largely depends on effective facilitation and leadership as everyone strives to be included in the decision-making process as noted by Sørensen et al (2020).

Notably, concerning the broader Africa's political representation practice, collaborative, democratic, and participatory modes of political representation coincide with collectivist cultural norms that characterize African societies. Thus, the discussion of political

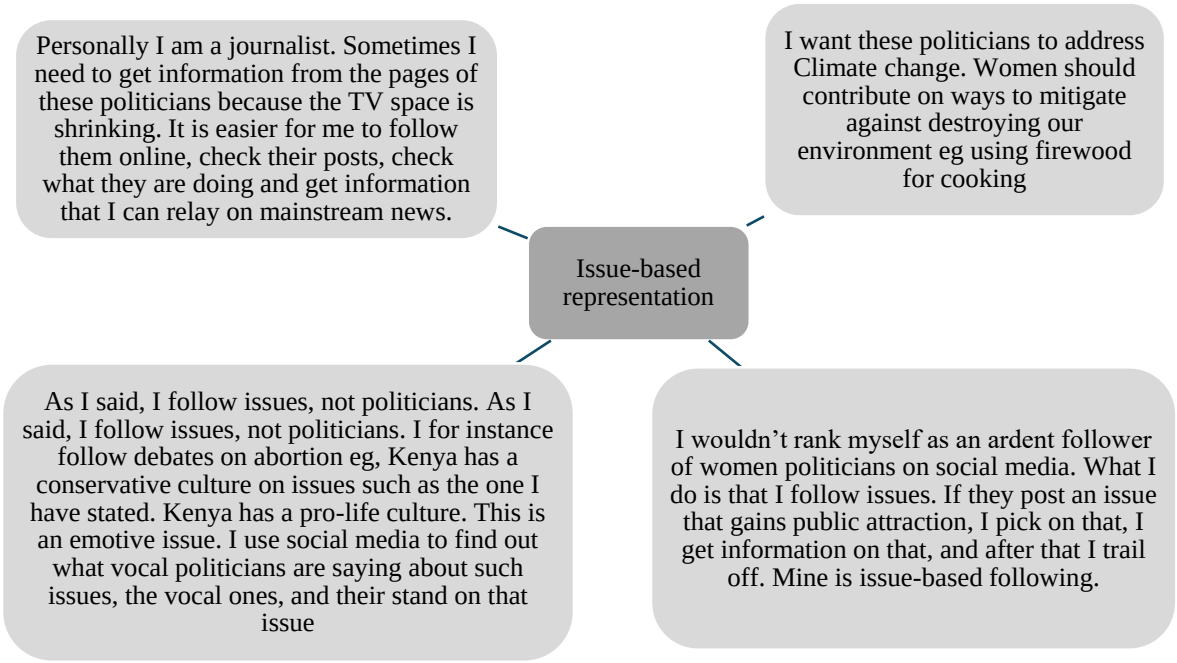
representation modalities in Kenya, particularly collaborative governance, should be conceptualized within these broader socio-cultural frameworks.

8.2 Issue-based Representation

Issue-based political representation mode entails a form of representation centered on the prioritization of specific policy issues within the political landscape, aiming to elevate certain topics on the political agenda (Cameron et al., 2023). It deviates from the traditional modes of political representation that predominantly focus on broader constituency interests. In this study, this mode of political representation emerged prominently in one-on-one interviews with citizens. Through thematic analysis, it became evident that certain citizens favoured political representatives and political content that concentrated on particular policy concerns rather than broader political objectives. These participants expressed interest in advocacy that championed pressing societal issues including environmental preservation, climate change, elevation of marginalized groups, and contentious issues such as abortion and the right to life.

Notably, Citizens who advocated for issue-based representation were generally professionals in their respective fields. Apart from seeking general information, these citizens acknowledged their inclination to follow the pages of women politicians to acquire specific insights relevant to their areas of expertise. For example, one participant with a legal background disclosed utilizing social media platforms to gain insights into how women politicians addressed social issues from a legal perspective. Similarly, a mainstream journalist attested to using politicians' pages as a source of information before reporting it through mainstream traditional media channels. Elsewhere, another participant with a legal background too, but devoutly Christian, asserted that his engagement with politicians' social media pages was driven by their focus on specific issues, such as abortion, rather than mere following. He asserted that he engaged with these platforms only as long as the issue remained topical, indicating a selective approach to representational content. Overall, for these professionals, social media served as supplementary tools to traditional communication methods, furthering their professional development, and satisfying their quest for specialized information - a subject that has been supported by Mustapha et al (2022). The excerpts below illustrate this point.

Figure 16: Issue-Based Representation



The preference to follow 'issues' rather than 'individuals' on social media platforms, as suggested by a section of the citizens above, unveils several significant aspects within the realm of social media political communication and representation. Primarily, it signifies a critical and discerning approach to political engagement rooted in pragmatism. In this approach, citizens opt not to align their online followings with politicians' identities (such as being women,) or based on partisan affiliations, but rather on the substance and the relevance of issues discussed on their social media platforms. Essentially, it is a pointer towards a yearning for substantive political discourse, attention to critical public matters, and a focus on the pertinence of political communication and representation, rather than mere engagement for the sake of it – a notion supported by Marquart et al., (2020).

Secondly, it offers a glimpse into how social media communication shapes political engagement by allowing citizens to curate political information consumption and discard

information that is not needed. By extension, this is an element of citizens' attempt to deal with information overload, a subject that is discussed theoretically under section 2.3 of this study.

Additionally, the assertion by one of the citizens that once 'he gets information, he trails off,' the participant foregrounds the fleeting nature of social media communication and engagement where individuals focus on issues on a short time basis before these issues are overtaken by other incoming issues. It also underscores the fast-paced, transitional, and dynamic nature of social media discourse, a social media affordance that is useful for individuals who seek instant social media engagement (Khan and Khan, 2020), and who engage in detail-level engagements (Carpenter et al, 2018).

Overall, the subject of issue-based representation can best be summarized by a statement from one of the participants in this study who said the following,

> I prefer when women politicians stand up for issues that don't have popular appeal but are beneficial to citizens.

Although this statement addresses the subject of issue-based representation, it also encapsulates the principle of responsive representation in political practice. It underscores the significance of politicians being cognizant to the concerns and requirements of all citizens, including those who may not have as much visibility or popularity. This model of representation guarantees that the perspectives of marginalized and less prominent groups are acknowledged and given the necessary attention and thought (Marchetti, 2014). The statement acts as a prompt for political representatives to give priority to initiatives that improve the overall quality of life and welfare of their constituents on their social media platforms, even when these issues are not widely recognized.

It is apparent from interviews with citizens that an issue-based approach to political engagement resonates with the principles of responsible citizenship, as well as informed and participatory citizenry where individuals seek meaningful information to make informed decisions in a democratic society. According to Reis et al (2020), citizens who adopt this form of social media engagement are more likely to meaningfully contribute to public debates, hold politicians accountable, and make informed decisions in political communication.

8.3 Trustee Representation

Trustee political representation mode advocates for elected officials to exercise their discretion in making decisions that are in the best interest of their constituents. This political representation model finds support from scholars such as Rehfield et al (2009) and Esmer (2018). Proponents of this representational model, including Edmund Burke and Hannah Pitkin, contend that elected officials possess superior knowledge and expertise regarding the needs and preferences of their constituents. As such, political representatives acting as 'trustees' prioritize competence over congruence, as posited by Fox and Shotts (2009). Additionally, they typically refrain from involving citizens in decision-making processes, because they believe they have been ‘entrusted’ to represent citizens based on their discernment.

In this study, the social media posts that were seen to embody a trustee model of representation include posts 1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 19, 20, 25, and 41 (See Appendix 11). These posts depict political representatives acting on constituents' behalf without explicitly indicating whether citizen input was solicited or considered. Furthermore, the language employed in these posts and tweets accentuates community needs, concerns, and welfare, rather than focusing on the personal interests of politicians. These attributes coincide with the trustee model of political representation.

Findings emerging from interviews with citizens indicated that a subset of the populace gravitated towards political representatives who adopted a trustee model of representation. These individuals were inclined towards leaders who actively pursued initiatives aligned with the collective welfare and the common good of citizens. Their preference reflected a citizen-centric approach to political communication and representation, rooted in the trustee model where political representatives prioritize citizen well-being without necessarily burdening citizens with solicitation of opinions on societal issues. The excerpt below illustrates this point.

> I follow those women politicians who care about the citizens. To me, the agenda of a woman politician must reflect the common good/general welfare of citizens. I check on the content. Yeah. Like, what's that she has? Like, what is the agenda? Is it reflecting the common good of the nation? or the general welfare of all citizens? Then to that extent, then I am inclined to follow her social media page.

However, not all citizens endorsed this mode of representation. Some citizens expressed the view that the failure of politicians to engage citizens in the practice of political representation

reflected a form of egocentrism on the part of these leaders. Concerns were raised regarding the potential prioritization of personal interests and agendas by these politicians at the expense of public welfare. Additionally, there were apprehensions about the possible disparity between politicians' understanding of citizens' needs and the preferences of the general public. According to Bøggild, (2020), discrepancies between the political representatives' perception of citizen needs and the actual preferences can adversely impact the practice of representation.

> It would be good to see how they pay more attention to what people really want rather than concentrating on telling us what they are doing themselves. For them its about what they are doing, rather than asking me (citizen) what I want to be done.

The concerns raised by the citizen above are in line with the principle of government-citizen congruence, which underscores the significance of aligning citizens' interests with governmental actions and officials' behavior as discussed by Stecker and Tausendpfund (2016).

8.4 Delegate Representation

The delegate model of representation, elucidated by Jean-Jacques Rosseau and Edmund Burke, posits that political representatives function as delegates of the people. Delegate representation stands in contrast to the trustee model of representation in that representatives who are trustees exercise their judgment in representing constituents, while delegate representation entails representatives strictly adhering to the preferences of the electorate who elected them (Dovi 2018, Rehfeld 2009). Posts 20, 25, 30, and 59 all fall under this category where political representatives perceive themselves as 'servants' of the people, insinuating that they are fully answerable to the people that they serve. Below, I illustrate this mode of representation using post 30, which is a tweet.

> I owe the victory to God & Kabondo Kasipul Constituents. Thank you all for giving me yet another chance to be your Servant.

In this tweet, the political leader adopts a linguistic choice to suggest a servant-leadership approach to representation, emphasizing that her role is to work and serve on behalf of the citizens rather than exercise power and authority over them. This linguistic choice challenges the traditional power dynamic in politics, and positions citizens as the ultimate decision-makers and source of political authority, thus empowering them in the process. Similarly, in post 25, the political leader refers to citizens as 'her bosses,' thereby projecting power dimensions and

hierarchical representations. By referring to the citizens as bosses, she places them on a higher pedestal than herself as a political leader, an attribute that is typical in delegate representation.

> Thank you Naivasha. Thank you God for walking with us throughout the journey. To my bosses, the great people of Naivasha I am overwhelmed by your love. I promise to never let you down. As I promised during my campaigns, Kazi Itaendelea *(we will continue working).* To my worthy competitors, I welcome your ideas on how we can together make Naivasha a better Constituency for us all.

From a critical point, however, these claims might be perceived as populist communication ploys where the politicians present themselves not as political elites, but as representatives and champions of the people, a subject that is discussed in section 5.1.1, rather than a people-centric approach to political representation.

8.5 Symbolic Representation

The analysis of data in this study unveiled a further political representation mode known as symbolic representation. This mode of representation encompasses various facets. Firstly, political representatives function not only as delegates tasked with advocating for the interests of their constituents, but they also act as symbols or reflections of the broader society that they represent. Essentially, representatives embody and promote certain ideals, cultural identities or historical narratives that resonate with their constituents (Stokke & Selboe, 2009). These identities may include ethnic, gender, racial, religious, or socio-economic identities that characterize their constituents. Secondly, symbolic representation transcends these descriptive representations outlined above to evoke the symbolic meaning and impact that comes with having certain groups, especially the marginalized ones being represented in decision-making bodies. It underscores the notion that the mirroring of these groups represented in governance enhances their connection to political systems (Mansbridge 1999, Alexander 2012, Abels 2022).

Posts 1, 5, 10, 14, 16, 19, 22, 26 ,42, 43, 44, 46, 48, 52, and 54 exhibit characteristics indicative of symbolic representation. These posts embody the gender, religious affiliations, ethnic and socio-economic status of citizens by political representatives. It was observed that in these posts, political representatives employed linguistic claims and political acts to identify themselves with, or even actively support the concerns of their constituents.

The predominant theme observed in the majority of the posts that fell under symbolic representation are the ones that embodied religious motifs. As detailed in sections 6.1.1 and 6.1.2, the Kenyan populace exhibits a profound association with religious beliefs and associations. Consequently, many political representatives align themselves with sacred valued to capitalize on the cultural significance of African spirituality and to construct distinct identities that resonate with the constituents.

Another way in which women politicians demonstrated symbolic representation was by identifying with the challenges faced by women constituents. Notably in post 1 and Tweet 54 (see appendix 11), women politicians strongly advocated for women's rights through provision of services and advocacy efforts. While Tweet 54 has elements of descriptive representation by the virtue that it underscores the responsibility of elected leaders to address the diversity within the populations that they serve particularly regarding to gender (see Ooms, 2021 for further information on descriptive representation), it also portrays women as a unified force in the context of the elections of August 2022. This signifies a call for women's concerns to be duly acknowledged and represented in the political sphere – a quality typically associated with symbolic representation.

In the realm of African politics, and in this case the Kenyan context, symbolic representation holds considerable sway in nurturing inclusivity, shaping identity, and fostering social cohesion in heterogenous societies such as the ones typical in Africa. In such a setting where gender, ethnicity, religion, and political often intersect, symbolic representation mechanisms often serve as a means of affirming the multifaceted identities of individuals within the populace.

8.6 Conclusion

This chapter has looked at the political representation modes that emerged out of this study. As explained in the preceding section, the modes that emerged prominently include participatory representation, issue-based, trustee, delegate, and symbolic representation modes.

Although there is no single mode of political representation that can claim superiority over others, a combination of different models in democratic governance is necessary for optimal

political representation. For instance, a combination of delegate and trustee representation ensures that while politicians have discretion to make decisions, they also consider the preferences of the citizens (Kartik et al, 2017). The most observable aspect in this study is that throughout, these modes of representation were observed to be fluid, and occasionally overlapping, suggesting an integrated approach to political representation practice, and underscoring Mansbridge's (2003) assertion that in practice, representative behaviour embodies a blend of various representation modes. However, as Mansbridge (2003, p. 515) contends, analyzing each mode individually, as done in this study, facilitates the identification of power dynamics inherent within each form. Morevover, the adoption of a multi-method approach to representation by women politicians in Kenya suggests a form of optimal representation.

Furthermore, the study acknowledges that the various modes of political representation depicted in this study are situated within broader frameworks that shape political representation practice in Kenya. For instance, the participatory and collaborative model of representation resonates with the collectivist cultural norms that characterize the Kenyan and broader African culture. On the other hand, the promissory model embodies the clientelistic tendencies observed within Kenya's political practice. Thus, the discussion of political representation modalities in Kenya should be conceptualized within these broader socio-cultural frameworks.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1 Overview of the Study

In this study, I examined the practice of political representation as it is done in the social media spaces of women politicians in Kenya. Focusing on Facebook and Twitter, I analyzed the issues that women politicians addressed on these social media pages, the strategies they adopted in their representational practice, the underlying ontological frameworks guiding their representational endeavours, and how effectively they engaged with their constituents. Furthermore, the underlying political representation modes that emerged from this study were discussed.

I operationalized political representation on a dual level, namely, the macro and micro levels, which I merged to form a holistic concept. At the macro level, political representation was operationalized as a claim-making process, drawing from the theory of '*The Representational Claim'* by Saward (2006). Here, I examined what politicians claim to do and what they claim to be, as advanced by Fossen (2019) and Saward (2006), rather than a more pragmatic approach that would explore what they do or what they are (see Räber, 2019). On the micro level, I operationalized political representation to be a concrete and conceptual communicative activity which involves politicians speaking to, with, for, and about the needs of citizens. This conceptualization was adopted from Neblo (2010) and Coleman (2005). The decision to operate at two levels of operationalization was prompted by the complexity of the concept under study, the need to capture its nuances, and the desire to analyze it on different scales.

In the methods section, I adopted a qualitative research design that triangulated data from social media platforms, namely Facebook and Twitter, alongside one-on-one interviews with women politicians, social media administrators, and citizens. Additionally, I collected data from citizens through focus group discussions. Specifically, I collected social media data from the accounts of 20 women politicians, while interviews were conducted with 10 women politicians, 5 social media administrators and 12 citizens. A total of 25 citizens participated in the focus group discussions. My research design was based upon a constructivist-interpretative

paradigm stance that allowed me to examine the research questions in a more in-depth manner, make sense of the findings within the social, cultural, and political context of the study's participants, and consequently understand the practice of political representation within the Kenyan context.

In data analysis, I employed a methodological framework that integrated thematic and discourse analyses. Thematic analysis, delineated by Braun and Clarke (2006) formed the cornerstone of examining interview transcripts and focus group discussions, augmented by the inductive and reflexive approaches advocated by Flick (2018). This synthesis aimed to ensure a rigorous theme identification and interpretation. Concurrently, discourse analysis was employed to scrutinize social media posts using a strand of DA known as interpretative repertoires, which is posited by Potter and Wetherell (1987). The aim of using DA was to elucidate the underlying ideological constructs embedded within the social media texts.

In chapters four through eight, I presented the findings that emerged from each research question and elucidated their significance to the scholarship on women politicians' political representation practices through digital media platforms. Subsequently, I offered a conclusion to the study, emphasizing the key findings emanating from the discussions.

9.2 Key Findings from the Research Questions

9.2.1 Substantive Issues on Social Media Platforms

In the first research question (RQ1), I aimed to uncover the substantive issues that women politicians addressed on their social media platforms in Kenya. Overall, it emerged that women leaders addressed the broader subject of sustainable living, encompassing sub-issues such as food and water supply, healthcare, and economic sustainability. Secondly, they delved into the issue of infrastructure and development. Moreover, the subject of civic engagement and governance featured prominently in this study. Below, I present the key findings from this RQ.

Specifically, two major pertinent issues related to this finding emerged. The first issue was the phenomenon of fluctuating political content depending on the period of political representation while the second issue was the interconnectedness between gender dynamics and the content of political representation.

Concerning the issue of content variation based on the period of political representation, an observable pattern in theme variation was observed in this study. In 2020 - considered a standard representation period between electoral cycles - discussions on the social media platforms of these political leaders predominantly revolved around the theme of sustainable living and infrastructural development, characterized by subthemes of water and food supply, healthcare, and economic sustainability. Contextually, it is unsurprising that women politicians would engage in topics such as food and water supply, healthcare, and economic sustainability, considering that these issues present immediate concerns for citizens residing in developing nations like Kenya as documented by Behnassi, et al., (2021), Tuomala and Grant (2022), Azevedeyo and Azevedeyo (2017). Conversely in 2022, political discourse on these platforms shifted towards governance and civic engagement. As illustrated in Appendix 12, seven out of the ten themes identified in 2022 revolved around the subjects of governance and civic engagement, comprising 20 out of the 26 of the social media posts analyzed. Having been an electoral year, a shift in political discourse towards themes related to political campaigns and electoral outcomes was expected in this study. Within this thematic domain, sub-themes of electoral justice and integrity featured prominently. Given Kenya's historical backdrop of electoral challenges as documented by Shah (2015), Ng'oma (2016), and Sanmac, et al., (2021), particularly concerning gender-based disparities in election processes (see Mueller-Hirth, et al., 2023; Kenyatta, 2023), the prevalence of discussions around electoral injustice among these politicians in 2022 was not unexpected.

The variation in issue dominance across the two representational periods in this study aligned with the scholarly arguments of Boulliane (2016) as well as Grossman and Mitchelitch (2018) who contend that shifts in political content between various phases of political representation are a common phenomenon. These scholars argue that different representational phases exhibit distinct logistics of political engagement from the various political actors. In particular, Grossman and Michelitch (2018) posit that whereas ordinary representation periods are marked by long-term political goals, electoral representational periods prioritize immediate concerns. I found this trend to be evident in this study, with social media content transitioning from long-term pursuits in 2020, characterized by activities such as the push for economic sustainability and infrastructural development, to protracted aims such as political campaigns in 2022.

A second major finding within the framework of this RQ pertained to the nexus between gender and substantive representation, with women politicians highlighting the issue of sustainable living underscoring a form of gender-responsive representation. This finding corresponded with the scholarly arguments in chapter four exemplified by Bratton and Ray (2002); Childs (2004); Hessami and Fonseca (2020); Lippmann (2019); Nkgowe (2022); Baskaran and Hessami (2019); Cherotich and Njoroge (2022), and Kaluai and Muathe (2020), which posit a correlation between gender dynamics, political processes, and policy preferences. These scholars, represent both Western and African political contexts. In the context of African scholarship, the correlation between gender and policy inclination is attributed to women's confrontations with adversity and entrenched gender norms, particularly those associated with caregiving duties. This perspective finds validation in this study, where both female leaders and citizens, particularly in FGDs asserted that unlike male politicians, female leaders have an inherent ability to possess the empathy and insight required to comprehend the challenges faced by women, children, and the broader Kenyan society. This understanding is grounded in the proximity of women leaders to their communities, as necessitated by prevailing gender norms.

In this finding, however, there was a twist to the subject of gender and its relationship with substantive representation. Notably, women politicians in this study did not only concern themselves with 'soft policy issues' such as sustainable living, but they also engaged with 'hard policy subjects' such as infrastructure and development, economic sustainability, as well as the subject of active campaigns. This finding signified a departure from the arguments presented by scholars such as Samuel-Arzan and Yarchi (2023); Butler, et al., (2022) and Slegten and Heyndles (2019) which claim that women leaders tend to prioritize 'soft policy domains' in political representation, leaving the hard domains to the male politicians.

Still on the subject of the substantive issues that women leaders address on their social media platforms, there emerged a notable discrepancy of this subject from the social media administrators who manage these pages. When asked about their perception on the issues that Kenyan citizens prefer women leaders to address on their social media platforms, approximately 4 out of the 5 administrators asserted that the Kenyan populace exhibited minimal interest in development-focused content. However, insights gleaned from both

individual interviews with citizens and focus group discussions presented a different narrative. These citizens conveyed a strong preference for political representatives to prioritize discussions centered on development and policy. However, this preference was emphasized more by citizens hailing from the rural-based cohort. Specifically, this rural group expressed a very strong desire to encounter content on social media platforms that pertained to infrastructural initiatives such as road construction, access to electricity, alongside other development endeavors – a concern also raised by the urban and peri-urban citizens, but less salient.

The divergence in the perception of issue preference as highlighted above highlights two salient concerns. Primarily, it emphasizes the multifaceted and heterogeneous demands incumbent upon political representatives from different constituents, necessitating tailored approaches in the execution of political representation. The present study posits that the variance in citizen preferences may stem from infrastructural disparities that characterize African countries, where urban areas often exhibit higher levels of development compared to the rural areas, as noted by Guneralp et al., (2017); Zimbalist (2017); Lekhaya and Mason (2014), and Azolibe (2021). As such, it is comprehensible for citizens in rural areas to call for development projects from their political representatives. Secondly, this variation in issue perception underscored the lack of communication among key stakeholders in political representation, where female politicians and their respective page administrators remain oblivious to the exigencies of their populace. The discussion in section 7.3 furnishes empirical substantiation of this reciprocal engagement deficiency between political actors.

9.2.2 Online Representation Strategies

In RQ 2, I examined the strategies that were utilized by women politicians in packaging their political representation content. These strategies are presented and discussed in chapter five. I found that women politicians employed strategies such as populism and personalization of politics which I categorized under the broader realm of performative dimensions of political representation. Furthermore, these women leaders engaged in clientelist strategies in their interactions with the Kenyan populace. Finally, these politicians had a proclivity to utilize numerical discourse and evidence grounded in numerical data in their social media posts. Below, I break down the specific findings.

Firstly, regarding the subject of populism, this study confirmed that political leaders championed the needs of common citizens by positioning themselves as advocates of their constituents while challenging political elitism, a form of populism espoused by scholars such as de Vreese, et al., (2018); Pirro and Taggart (2022); Roberts (2016); and Urbinatti (2019) among other scholars, whose discussions have been highlighted in chapter five. Notably, a key finding lies in the contextualization of populism, with most of the politicians centering populistic acts on social-cultural performances. In this study, women politicians were observed to employ linguistic appeals in their communication through code-switching, invoking religious sentiments in their messages, and utilizing identity appeals to presumably appeal to the constituents by appearing as 'one of them'. According to Rensick (2017), these manifestations of populism are authentically African, necessitated by the region's multilingualism, the intertwining of religion and politics, and the salience of ethnicity in political dynamics.

This study also identified additional populist tendencies, including the deployment of emotionalism and sensationalism in addressing societal challenges, as well as political maneuvers aimed at maintaining political relevance. Of significance, in this study, is a conspicuous form of populism that was observed, referred to as 'empty populism' by de Freese, et al., (2018, p. 2) wherein political leaders relied on rhetorical assertions to appeal to the public without conspicuously offering substantive solutions to address the grievances of the communities. Although this study hinges on political representation as a claim-making process and it does not test whether claims translate to actions, it was anticipated that these claims would also insinuate substantive solutions for citizens grievances. The empirical findings, however, did not align with this expectation

Findings from this subsection of the study also revealed that contrary to the assertions highlighted in chapter five where Kariseb and Kasita (2021), as well as Nyadera and Agwanda (2019) contend that electoral cycles in sub-Saharan Africa serve as fertile grounds for the enactment of populism, this study revealed a greater prevalence of populist inclinations in Kenya during regular representational phases as opposed to electoral periods. Specifically, the study found a higher frequency of populist rhetoric during the year 2020, deemed a typical representational period in this study, in comparison to the electoral period of 2022. For

instance, among the twenty-eight instances of populist tendencies documented in this study, approximately 64% (18 posts) were identified in 2020, whereas 36% (10 posts) were documented in 2022.

Concerning the second performative strategy in this study namely the personalization of politics, which involves redirecting political discourse away from broader ideological frameworks and party agendas towards the individual attributes, personal lives, lifestyles, appearances, values and behaviours of politicians, an array of distinct self-presentation tactics were observed among the political representatives under study. These tactics involved political representatives portraying themselves as resilient, optimistic, radiant, and attractive, projecting an aura of strength and independence through their linguistic choices and personal narratives. Out of this finding, it was inferred that given the heightened skepticism surrounding women's political leadership prowess within many African contexts, it was understandable for female political leaders in Kenya to adopt the aforementioned demeanor, presumably to align themselves with the traditionally masculine traits associated with leadership ability.

Other personal qualities accentuated by women politicians in this study encompassed attributes such as beauty, charm, and radiance, potentially to underscore their feminine attributes. As noted by Msuya (2019), numerous African cultures attach significance to the appearance of women, especially their femininity and beauty. Consequently, it was deduced that women politicians may have capitalized on these characteristics to align themselves with these cultural norms, enhance their visibility, acknowledgement, and endorsement, from communities that value such traits. Although the projection of feminine traits by these leaders stands in contrast with the argument in the preceding paragraph that women leaders tend to adopt a masculine demeanour to fit within the masculine dictates of leadership ability in Africa, Musandu (2008) asserts that in Kenya, the political survival of women politicians depends on their ability to balance the two identities, i.e., feminine and masculine identities. On the same note, according to Ncube (2020), failing to demonstrate feminine uptightness by women in Africa implies being labelled unruly and unfeminine by patriarchal and masculinist dictates, and consequently losing out of politics. It is this political crossroad that women leaders in Kenya and the broader African context have to grapple with for their self-presentation.

Lastly, female politicians engaged in personal acts such as sharing their birthdays online and documenting their daily activities, including their preferred meals which mainly consisted of staple foods in Kenya. These practices were perceived as means of fostering rapport with citizens, projecting a shared and common ground, and cultivating relatability with the populace. As such, citizens drawn from both FGDs, and interviews cited emotional connection, relatability, and psychological closeness as endearing qualities in female politicians. Within the Kenyan and broader African context, relatability in women leaders aligns with societal norms, expectations, and stereotypes wherein women are expected to be approachable, as argued by Storie and Marschlich, (2022). Furthermore, within this context, approachability among women is esteemed as an admirable trait, as it resonates with cultural notions of nurturing and care (see Acholonu 1995; Alemayu 2020; and Kioko et al., 2020). Notably, however, there was a call by the citizens for the politicians to strive for balance in their public and private lives.

Apart from the performative aspects of politics that have been presented above, the second strategy of political representation that was identified in this study was the strategy of clientelism, where political leaders engaged in distributive politics by providing material and non-material incentives such as patronage goods, infrastructural projects, jobs, services, protection, and other promises to citizens. In return, these political leaders sought political support such as votes, public endorsement, loyalty, and other forms of political backing from the electorates, both implicitly and explicitly.

The study revealed that women politicians in Kenya employed numerous clientelistic tendencies in their political representation practice, taking the form of direct transactions, indirect transactions, enactment of cultural norms, and emotional transactions. In direct transactions, politicians openly solicited support and promised political goodies such as school buses, land, and social amenities. In indirect transactions, they refrained from openly offering conditions for goods and services provided to the citizens. Rather, they posed as genuine representatives who were concerned about the needs of the citizens. In the enactment of cultural norms, political leaders employed cultural tactics such as religious greetings especially in 2022 during the campaign period to resonate with local populations and implicitly seek endorsement.

The final strategy utilized by women politicians in their political representation practices involved integrating quantitative expressions such as statistical constructs and numerical data, into their social media communication. These communication methods served as forms of evidence-based communication and representation. Examples of such communication included citing specific allocations of funds to various institutions within their constituencies, highlighting the number of jobs they had helped create in their electoral regions and presenting electoral outcomes from the national elections of 2022 by explicitly disclosing the tally of votes cast for different candidates.

In this study, it was contended that numerical discourse and evidence-based communication play a crucial role in furnishing substantiation and bolstering reasoned arguments within the realm of political communication as asserted by Chassapis (2017). Specifically, within a political context such as in Kenya, where corruption levels are pronounced, this communication strategy may prove particularly consequential for the believability of political representatives, as advocated by Rij, (2021). In such an environment, political leaders may find it imperative to furnish supplementary evidence of their political activities to confer objectivity and authenticity upon their political messages.

While a majority of the citizens in this study advocated for evidence-based political representation, a segment of the populace expressed reservations regarding how political leaders in Kenya employed evidence-based communication strategies on social media platforms. These citizens believed that politicians either excessively utilized such strategies, overwhelming their audiences, or employed these strategies in unethical ways. Specifically, they pointed out that these leaders inundated their social media feeds with numerous photographs unrelated to pertinent agendas and that they showcased photographs of their electorates in a culturally unethical manner. Ultimately, some citizens perceived evidence-based representation to be too performative and opportunistic.

9.2.3 The Ontological Foundations of Political Representation

In RQ3, which investigated the underlying ontological frameworks that shape political representation in Kenya, two prevailing ontologies were identified, each reflecting distinct approaches to the practice of political representation by women politicians. The first ontology

entailed the embracing of communalistic methodologies and collaborative governance practices, interwoven with ethnopolitical representation worldviews, all rooted in the overarching philosophical tenets of Ubuntu. As explained in chapters one and six, Ubuntu is an African worldview which emphasizes the interconnectedness of humanity and the significance of communal solidarity. It underscores the meaninglessness of personhood outside of a communal context, and it has been deconstructed by the African philosopher John.S. Mbiti as 'I am because we are, and because we are, therefore I am' (Mbiti, 1969, P. 141). Kenya, being a collectivist cultural society, characterized by a strong emphasis on group decision-making norms and practices serves as an ideal context for Ubuntu. The second ontology entailed the integration of religion and spirituality as foundational elements of political representation. Below, I offer a brief explanation of how these ontologies were utilized in this study.

In a significant number of social media posts, women politicians were seen to engage in collective and communal acts fostering a collaborative, collective and participatory stance to governance. There were numerous manifestations of inclusive representational and democratic norms where women politicians collaborated with each other, organizations, and institutions to address the needs of their constituents. These acts involved the provision of water, food items, as well as health and hygiene-related items to constituents, thus recognizing and acknowledging the importance of engaging with the collective consciousness and values of the Kenyan society. Although these acts were also interpreted as a form of inclusive leadership style that women leaders tend to bring into political environments, the cultural aspect of these acts were not downplayed.

Aside from adopting a communal approach to governance in political representation, female politicians were seen to champion the interests and identities of specific ethnic groups from which they originated, a phenomenon referred to as ethno-political representation in this study. In Kenya, as noted in chapter six, ethnicity exerts a considerable influence over governance and political decision-making processes, stemming from robust ethnic affiliations among societal members as documented by Oduor (2019). Ethnic identity serves as a pivotal force in Kenyan politics, shaping political loyalties, informing information communication strategies, guiding campaign tactics, and ultimately influencing leadership positions. More importantly,

politicians leverage this ethnic identification to cultivate a dedicated voter base and garner support grounded in shared ethnic identity and interests. Moreover, it allows politicians to portray themselves as representatives who comprehend and align with the distinctive ethnic constituents' voting preferences.

In this study, it was found that ethnopolitical representation pervaded various aspects of political practice, manifesting in multiple forms. Primarily, it manifested as political kinship, marked by unwavering allegiance to leaders and ethnic affiliations within party politics. In this dimension of ethno-politics, political representatives exhibited fidelity to particular individuals and political factions, ostensibly to resonate with their fellow ethically aligned constituents. Secondly, it manifested through subtle and overt appeals to ethnicity, particularly evident during the 2022 campaign period. In this study, it was realized that ethnic politics extended beyond the realm of the political elites. Citizens too admitted to following the social media pages of specific politicians solely because of their cultural background, further underscoring the intricate intersection between politics and cultural identity within Kenya's digital political sphere.

The second major ontological foundation underpinning the dynamics of political representation, as evidenced in this study, revolved around religion and spirituality. According to Nieder-Heitmann (1981), religious ontology deeply permeates all facets of African existence. Ellis and Haar (2007) further argue that a majority of the African people interpret their reality through a religious lens, with Mbiti (1975) characterizing the average African as 'inherently religious' (p. 27). Against this backdrop, it is evident that religion and spirituality are more likely to exert a pervasive influence on African politics.

Political leaders, for instance, overwhelmingly integrated religious themes, values, and beliefs into their online content, an act that these leaders, through one-on-one interviews, admitted to engaging in, to establish a connection with a populace deeply rooted in religious values and affiliations. These political leaders employed religious rhetoric in social media content in multiple ways. Firstly, they utilized religion as a cultural framework to resonate with the societal ethos. Secondly, religious posts were employed to appeal to societal values and foster a sense of solidarity with citizens who prioritized such values in their electoral choices, as it

emerged from FGDs and individual interviews with the citizens. Lastly, religious rhetoric was used by these leaders to harness the significance of African spirituality in shaping their online identities. These politicians, for instance, cited scriptures on their social media platforms to create for themselves an image of trustworthiness, empathy, and compassion, thereby bolstering their reputation among a citizenry that claimed to be attracted to more religious politicians.

9.2.4 The Effectiveness of Online Political Representation in Kenya

In the fourth research question (RQ) 4, I probed the extent to which online political representation in Kenya could be said to be effective. The assessment of political representation effectiveness was examined through various criteria, including the dynamics of dialogue and reciprocal communication between politicians and the citizens, the general representative expectations of the citizens and the extent to which citizens' representative needs were met, as well as the challenges and deficiencies stemming out of online representation practice. This evaluative framework was derived from the scholarly works of Coleman (2021); Liagat (2020); Stokes et al., (2013); Siegel (2017), and Miller (2009) who assert that political representation achieves effectiveness when representatives exhibit awareness of citizens' needs and expectations, a knowledge which is nurtured through meaningful dialogue and engagement.

Drawing from the framework outlined above, the overall findings emanating from this study presented contrasting findings. Political representation practice, to a certain extent, exhibited aspects of effectiveness, yet it also demonstrated instances of ineffectiveness. For instance, notable congruence existed between the perceptions of politicians and citizens regarding the subjects of development and economic matters, as well as the principles of transparency, honesty, and accountability. Both parties agreed that these aspects were paramount considerations in political representation practice. However, discernible disparities emerged between politicians' perceptions and citizens' preferences of personalizing politics, transparency, and the subject of gender in political representation. To explain further, in certain instances, politicians perceived the personalization of politics as a means of establishing relatability with the constituents. Conversely, citizens perceived personalized political acts as extravagant and unrepresentative of the average citizen. Furthermore, while politicians aimed

to convey information authentically through evidence-based communication, citizens perceived these efforts as sometimes unethical and opportunistic especially when the privacy of citizens was not upheld. Lastly, regarding gender and political representation, some citizens viewed affirmative action as undemocratic whereas female leaders regarded it as a significant milestone in women's leadership.

Concerning the obstacles and challenges encountered by women politicians in the online sphere, and which were interpreted as having the potentiality to constitute a serious detriment to their virtual activities, it emerged that women politicians encountered online trolls such as gender-based judgements and derogatory remarks and behaviours. These political leaders were concerned with the adverse impact that negative content had on their political trajectories. Also, it emerged that online political communication and representation in Kenya followed a broadcast-oriented paradigm, with citizens lamenting that they barely received feedback from these political representatives. Although it may be presumed that women leaders avoided engaging online to escape the trolls, this study concludes that for political representation practice, the failure of political leaders to provide feedback to constituents has negative implications. This deficiency to engage, for instance, undermines the credibility of the representation process, a notion echoed in this study and supported by scholars such as Enli and Rosenberg (2018) as well as Starke et al., (2020). Moreover, the absence of feedback in this study was perceived by citizens as a disregard for their concerns, thereby diminishing the perceived trustworthiness of politicians and the political system as a whole, a subject addressed by Halmburger et al., (2019).

9.2.5 Political Representation Modes in Kenya

The last research question (RQ 5), which added a conceptual dimension to this study, investigated the various modes of political representation that emerged out of this study. This inquiry was motivated by Guasti and Geissel's (2019, p. 100) assertion that to adequately comprehend the complexity of political representation, it is imperative to utilize both empirical and conceptual methodologies in its examination.

Although not explicitly stated in the empirical findings, these modes of representation were inferred from the information gathered from the discussions in chapters four through seven.

The emerging modes identified in this analysis encompassed participatory/collaborative representation, issue-based, trustee, delegate, and symbolic representational modes – each offering insights into the dynamics of political representation in Kenya. Throughout this study, these modes were observed to be fluid, and occasionally overlapping, suggesting an integrated approach to political representation practice, and underscoring Mansbridge's (2003) assertion that in practice, representative behaviour embodies a blend of various representation modes. However, as Mansbridge (2003, p. 515) contends, analyzing each mode individually, as done in this study, facilitates the identification of power dynamics inherent within each form.

Within this research question, a significant observation pertained to the correlation between Kenya's political cultural frameworks and certain modes of representation identified in this study. Particularly noteworthy was the alignment of collaborative, democratic, and participatory representation modes with the collectivist cultural norms prevalent in the Kenyan society. Consequently, it was deduced that the discourse surrounding political representation modalities in Kenya, notably collaborative governance, should be contextualized within these over-arching socio-cultural paradigms.

9.3 Empirical Connections: Political Representation, Social Media, and Gender

Having presented the findings on the utilization of social media platforms for political representation by women politicians in Kenya, this study now establishes an empirical connection between the three main components of the study namely political representation, social media communication, and gender, within the Kenyan context. By elucidating the role of social media communication through a gendered lens, this connection serves two main purposes. Firstly, it bridges the study's theoretical framework with the lived realities of political engagement in Kenya, providing a context-specific understanding of political representation practice that may not be fully captured in political representation studies in other global contexts. Secondly, the empirical connection provides a potential foundation for actionable policy recommendations regarding gendered digital political representation in Kenya.

9.3.1 Connecting Theoretical Constructs with Real Political Practices in Kenya

One of the issues that this study uncovered was the relationship between the substantive issues addressed by Kenyan women politicians on their social media pages and their relationship to gendered communication. The study found that women politicians in Kenya addressed an array of topics including governance, development, civic engagement, and sustainable living on their social media platforms. Specifically, there was a significant focus on health, family, childcare, and broader societal empowerment topics. These topics reflect a gendered approach to political representation as noted by studies such as Gwazda (2021): Espirito-Santo et al., (2018); Celis and Childs (2018) - studies which link policy preferences in political representation to the gender of political leaders.

Notably, however, what emerged as unique in the context of Kenya's political representation was that women politicians also prominently addressed other 'hard-policy topics' traditionally associated with the male gender in political representation by studies such as Samuel-Arzan &Yarchi (2023) and Butler et al., (2022). These topics included infrastructure and development, economic sustainability, and electoral processes. This blend of 'soft/feminine' and 'hard/masculine' policy concerns by women politicians in Kenya illustrates a unique 'gender-neutral' approach to political representation, deviating significantly from the traditionally established gendered political representation norms. This highlights the evolving nature of women's political roles in Kenya.

Secondly, concerning the strategies employed by Kenyan women politicians in online political representation, the study identified three primary approaches: performative politics, clientelistic relationships, and data-driven communication. Performative representation was evident through populism and the personalization of political identity, where women politicians strategically depicted themselves as relatable, resilient, and radiant. This depiction was understood as a deliberate effort by these leaders to enhance their political credibility within a poli-cultural context that rewards and values such 'feminine' attributes in women. Simultaneously, however, these women were also seen to accentuate traits of strength and resilience, an act that was interpreted as an attempt to align themselves with leadership qualities traditionally associated with masculinity in the Kenyan and the broader African context. Consequently, the amalgamation of both feminine and masculine leadership traits underscored

the intricate interplay between gender, cultural norms and expectations, and political strategy among Kenyan women politicians.

Thirdly, the study examined the ontological foundations underpinning the digital political representation practices of Kenyan women politicians. Two distinct frameworks emerged: Firstly, the Ubuntu worldview, characterized by communal and collaborative governance, and secondly, the integration of religion and spirituality into political representation. Whereas the communal aspect of the Ubuntu perspective reflects the larger Kenyan collectivist culture, the study also noted that within the context of Kenya, collaborative efforts are crucial, particularly for women leaders, who must navigate traditional gender expectations and political biases. Within this context, women are likely to maintain solidarity with each other, or with other stakeholders, to be able to wade against a political and cultural system that is biased against their leadership endeavours. This finding supports arguments by Naidoo and Perumal (2014), Bluhm et al. (2011), and Brion and Ampah-Mensah (2021) regarding the cultural pressures that African women leaders face in navigating political landscapes.

The study further highlighted the intersection between gender, social media communication, and spirituality as a distinctive aspect of the political representation practice by women leaders in Kenya. While the integration of spirituality into Kenya's political discourse underscores the place of spirituality in the Kenyan culture, its employment as a political practice by women politicians was seen as a strategy by these leaders to leverage their connection to societal values, thereby enhancing their legitimacy and relatability among constituents who upheld this poli-cultural norm. Thus, this communication strategy was seen as not only an attempt by these women to reinforce their identity as leaders who embodied moral and ethical cultural standards, but it was also seen to serve as a strategic tool for navigating cultural biases against women leadership in political fronts. Notably, within a social-political context where leadership is still predominantly regarded as a male domain, spirituality provides a means for women leaders to assert their legitimacy and appeal to cultural norms, effectively blending traditional religious values with modern political engagement facilitated by digital platforms.

Finally, the effectiveness of online political representation in Kenya, as assessed through variables such as responsiveness, feedback, and adherence to ethical communication practices

between the political representation actors, revealed challenges tied to online gender harassment. A pervasive hostility - including emotional and psychological abuse, trolling, and direct threats to women leaders - was observed and confirmed. Specifically, there was gendered online harassment which included targeted attacks on physical appearance, age, leadership capability, character and the credibility of the women leaders. From a gender perspective, online hostility in Kenya reveals the persistent patriarchal attitudes that push against the presence of women in leadership roles. Such attitudes, when expressed through social media platforms, serve to reinforce the traditional gender norms that regard leadership as inherently male.

Despite these challenges, the study highlighted efforts by women politicians to navigate a hostile digital landscape by adopting strategies such as selective engagement and using digital platforms primarily for broadcasting information rather than fostering a two-way interaction to minimize exposure to abuse. While these strategies reflect the adaptability of women leaders in Kenya in the face of online adversity, it is clear that these practices impede the ability of women politicians to effectively engage in digital spaces. Online hostility contributes to a climate of intimidation that discourages meaningful interaction, stifles open discourse, discourages authentic representation, and impedes the broader goal of inclusive political representation. Thus, social media platforms which would have served as democratizing tools for direct engagement with constituents by women leaders instead become avenues for stifling wholesome political representation in Kenya.

9.3.2 Actionable Policy Recommendations

The above analysis of the intersection between gender, political representation and social media communication in Kenya reveals some opportunities for policy makers in Kenya. These actionable policy recommendations are intended to enhance the role of social media as a democratic tool for women leaders, support their online engagement, and foster an inclusive political culture in Kenya.

Firstly, there is need to develop and enforce gender sensitive social media policies such as social media regulation as well as reporting and support mechanisms. Platforms should establish stringent context-based penalties aimed at reducing online harassment, particularly

for offences involving gendered abuse and targeted trolling of women politicians. By context based, I mean that platforms should collaborate with governments to establish various forms of harassment in various contexts including the use of local languages (such as Swahili in Kenya) to harass other individuals on online platforms. Closely related to this is the need to establish more effective reporting mechanisms that allow women politicians to report harassment and receive timely action, especially within the context of Kenya where legal frameworks for addressing online harassment are weak.

Secondly, there is need to promote digital literacy among women leaders as well as citizens in Kenya. For women politicians, such training should cover programs such as understanding privacy settings, dealing with trolls, maintaining mental health, balancing engagement with personal protection, and prioritize issue-oriented political debate in the place of personal politics. Also, within a communal context such as in Kenya, there is need to introduce mentor initiatives between more experienced women leaders with emerging female politicians to provide guidance on navigating the challenges of digital political representation, especially with regards to incivility. For citizens, they should be encouraged to engage in ethical social media practices, be made to understand the impact of trolling on the welfare of other individuals and the repercussions that it has on effective political representation, as well as the judicial consequences of online bullying. Also, an emphasis on the role of women in political representation could help shift public perception regarding women in leadership roles. Emphasizing responsible communication mechanisms may promote healthy discourse on social media.

Overall, actionable policy recommendations point to an urgent need for policies that address online harassment, improve digital literacy, and foster a more respectful online political environment. Such measures are crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of social media as a tool for equitable political representation in Kenya, enabling women politicians to fully harness its potential without fear of incivility.

9.4 Key Contributions to Knowledge

Overall, this study offers significant contributions to the field of gendered political communication in diverse ways. Firstly, it represents, to the best of my knowledge, the

inaugural examination of the utilization of social media platforms by women politicians to address the needs of citizens by speaking to, with, for and about the citizens, within the Kenyan and the broader African region. While I remain open to the possibility of having similar studies in other nations across the African continent, a thorough academic search failed to uncover such research. This highlights the novelty and significance of this study.

There are some close studies, however, that I have come across, including Mastilele and Nkoala's (2023) examination of the social media usage patterns of selected women politicians in South Africa. Mastilele and Nkoala's study, however, takes on a quantitative approach, and it specifically investigates the frequency of these leaders' Twitter activity and the typologies of messages they employ on this platform. Other notable research endeavours in Africa such as those by Madsen (2020); Oppiah-Osei (2019) and Mannya (2013), have examined the representations of women politicians in Africa, but in a different light. For instance, Madsen's edited volume delves into the descriptive representations of women across selected African nations, examining factors such as how formal and informal instructions in the continent influence these numerical representations. Osei-Appiah's doctoral study, whose focus is on Nigeria and Ghana, examines women politicians' representation through the lens of how these leaders are depicted in the mainstream media of both countries. Likewise, Mannya's Master's dissertation investigates the portrayal of black female politicians in South Africa by online news outlets.

None of the studies cited above, even within the broader African context, have delved into the comprehensive details that I have encapsulated in this study, including:

(a) I have undertaken an in-depth qualitative analysis of online political representation by women politicians in Kenya, (b) conceptualized political representation as a process of asserting claims, which entails political representatives speaking to, with, for, and about the needs of citizens, (c) analyzed two social media platforms as utilized by these women leaders, (d) examined the practice of political representation across two distinct representational periods, (e) investigated various political actors encompassing politicians, citizens, and social media administrators and (f) triangulated methods of data collection including one-on-one interviews, FGDs, and scraping of social media, (g) utilized triangulated analytical methods including thematic and discourse analyses, (h) sub-triangulated thematic analysis to

incorporate three distinct strands of analysis namely the inductive and reflexive analytical foci of thematic analysis suggested by Flick (2018) alongside Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis approach, to enhance rigor and address concerns raised by researchers such as Roberts et al., (2019) and Nowell et al., (2017) who argue that thematic analysis is deficient in rigour.

Drawing upon this intricate methodology, I am confident that my study presents a thorough empirical framework which highlights the significance of employing diverse methodologies to tackle research inquiries within the social sciences, particularly qualitative investigations that are often criticized for their perceived methodological shortcomings. Thus, I have demonstrated that a qualitative study can be accorded the rigour and viability that it deserves. Additionally, this methodology facilitates a deeper understanding of the complexities inherent in the practice of online political representation practice by female politicians in Kenya and across the broader African landscape.

Also, by centering on substantive political representation, this research tilts the attention of studies within the realm of politics and women away from numerical representation, symbolism, and descriptive analyses, which have traditionally dominated Africa's political scholarship. Instead, it elucidates the concrete, tangible, and transformative impacts that female leaders can exert on governance.

Theoretically, my study stems from a multidisciplinary approach, drawing upon insights from diverse fields including political communication studies, political theory, cultural studies, feminism studies, and digital studies. This comprehensive integration of theories and perspectives enriches the study, offering a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Apart from adopting a multidisciplinary theoretical approach, this study broadens the discourse of women, digital media, and political representation beyond the confines of the global north to an understanding of this discourse in the global south, particularly in Kenya. While research from northern contexts has yielded significant insights, and to a greater extent has been referenced in this study, they may not fully facilitate an understanding of the complexities of the African political context due to the divergent cultural, social, economic, and political landscapes. As highlighted by Willems and Mano (2017), democratic societies in the global

north differ from the hybrid and transitional democracies in the global south in practice. Therefore, it was imperative to explore this subject within a global south context.

9.5 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

Having acknowledged the contributions of my study, it is imperative to address certain limitations that warrant consideration, thus offering avenues for further research.

Firstly, I recognize that my study adopted a 'claim-making' stance in examining digital political representation in Kenya. This approach entails evaluating political representation based on what politicians assert to do and how they present themselves, rather than a more pragmatic approach that would scrutinize their actual actions and attributes. Consequently, I propose further investigation that extends beyond claim-making to assess whether these leaders indeed execute what they claim.

Additionally, my study examined the utilization of digital platforms by women politicians in Kenya within the realm of political representation. This presents an opportunity for comparative analysis to examine whether male politicians employ digital platforms in analogous or disparate manner in political representation practice.

9.6 Concluding Remarks and a Highlight of Core Issues

In this study, I employed a multi-methodological approach to investigate online political representation practices of women politicians in Kenya, by triangulating social media data with one-on-one semi-structured interviews with women politicians, citizens, and social media administrators. I also employed FGDs to gather more information from citizens. Out of this data, the study yields salient insights that are crucial for elucidating the dynamics of political representation in Kenya.

Firstly, the findings in this study illuminate the nuanced role of social media platforms in political representation by highlighting how they both facilitate and hinder representational efforts by women leaders in Kenya. Empirical evidence indicates instances where politicians have effectively used social media platforms to address citizens' needs, and also a prevailing failure among majority of the politicians to fully utilize these platforms for effective representation. The ineffectiveness of online political representation stems out of an absence

of reciprocal engagement between political representatives and their constituents, exacerbated by the intermediation on these platforms, depriving citizens of direct interaction with their elected officials. Furthermore, these representatives have been criticized by citizens for neglecting pertinent content, mis prioritizing communication efforts on social media, and their inability to interpret audience concerns. Conversely, the study unveils online trolling, gender-based harassment, and lack of enough time from the side of politicians as significant factors that hinder full engagement on these platforms.

Ultimately, it appears that within the Kenyan context, the anticipated transformative potential of social media platforms in enhancing representative democracy, as envisioned by scholars such as Coleman (2005a), Mathe (2022), and Gray and Gutierrez (2021), remains fully unrealized. Despite the expectations of social media to foster direct and reciprocal engagements between citizens and political representatives, significant challenges persist. However, there remains optimism that these platforms can yield positive outcomes if the barriers to effective representation are addressed.

The second major highlight in this study concerns the subject of gender and responsive representation. Notably, women leaders in Kenya demonstrate a comprehensive approach to representation by addressing a wide spectrum of issues, encompassing both ‘soft-policy’ such as healthcare, food and water supply, gender-related concerns, and the subjects of marginalization, as well as ‘hard-policy ‘issues like economic sustainability, infrastructure and development. This finding challenges the assertions made by scholars such as Burtler, et al (2022) and Samuel-Arzan and Yarchi (2023) who associate hard policy issues to male leadership. Within the context of Kenya, characterized by entrenched gender roles that confine women to family and community-oriented domains, this discovery presents a significant insight by shedding light on the evolving role of the African woman in politics and leadership.

The third highlight in this study is the contextualization of political representation strategies by women politicians in relation to their gender. The interplay between gender, context, and political strategy becomes notably apparent in the personalization of politics where women leaders appear to leverage certain gender-specific attributes presumably to bolster their leadership traits within the Kenyan context. For instance, the emphasize on qualities such as strength, resilience, charm, and beauty solidify these women’s leadership positions in a socio-

political landscape that traditionally associates leadership with fortitude, and which value femininity, beauty and charm in women. For women leaders to emphasize these traits is to project a strategic maneuver aimed at navigating prevailing gender norms, and ultimately securing societal approval in political representation.

Finally, there emerges, in this study, a distinctive facet of political representation characterized by a fusion of ethno-political and religio-cultural elements. This novel facet delineates a nuanced convergence of African cultural norms and worldviews into the realm of political representation. This unique manifestation of political practice is rooted in the communalistic ethos inherent to African societies, where individual identity finds significance only within the context of community, imbued with religious undertones and a strong emphasis to kinship ties. Consequently, this framework fosters the infusion of ethnic allegiance, communal solidarity, and religious discourses into political process, thereby engendering a model of representative governance marked by collaboration, ethnically oriented representation, and the integration of spirituality into political representation practices.

List of References

Aalberg, T. and Jenssen, A. 2007. Gender Stereotyping of Political Candidates: An experimental Study of Political Communication. Nordicom Review 28(1): 17-32

Aaldering, L. and Van der Pas, D. J. 2018. Political Leadership in the Media: Gender Bias in Leader Stereotypes During Campaign and Routine Times. British Journal of Political Science

Aaldering, L., Van der Meer, T., and Van der Brug, W. 2018. Mediated Leader Effects: The Impact of Newspapers' Portrayal of Party Leadership on Electoral Support. The International Journal of Press/Politics, 23(1), 70–94.

Abakah, E. 2018. Participation Without a Voice? Rural Women's Experiences and Participation in Local Governance Activities in the Abura–Asebu–Kwamankese District of Ghana. Cogent Social Sciences, 4(1)

Abbink, J. 2014. Religion and Politics in Africa: The Future of "The Secular. "Africa Spectrum, 49(3), 83-106.

Abbs, L. 2020. The Language of the Unheard? Ethno-Political Exclusion and Ethnic Riots in Africa. Journal of Global Security Studies, 6(2).

Abels, G., Ahrens, P., Jenichen, A., and Och, M. 2022. The 2021 Federal German Election: A Gender and Intersectional Analysis. Politics, 42(3), 249-266.

Abramowitz, Alan. and Webster, S. 2016. "The Rise of Negative Partisanship and the Nationalization of U.S. Elections in the 21st Century." Electoral Studies 41: 12

Adams, S. J., Hazelwood, T.E., Pitre, N.L., Bedard, T.E., and Landry, S.D. 2009. "Harassment of Members of Parliament and the Legislative Assemblies in Canada by Individuals Believed to be Mentally Disordered." Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology 20(6): 801–14.

Adeiza, M. and Howard, P.N., 2016. New Social Media practices: Potential for development, democracy, and anti-democratic practices. The Palgrave Handbook of International Development, pp.577-594.

Ademilokun, M. and Olateju, M. 2016. A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Some Visual Images in the Political Rally Discourse of 2011 Electioneering Campaigns in Southwestern Nigeria. International Journal of Society, Culture & Language, *4*(1 (Special Issue on African Cultures and Languages)), pp.1-19.

Aderayo, A. A. and Olawunmi, K. 2022. Ethnic Politics and National Integration in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. African Journal of Philosophy, 38:1, 108-122

Agyekum, K. 2008. The Pragmatics of Akan greetings. Discourse Studies, 10(4), 493-516.

Ahmad, N. 2020. Populist Political Ideation and Communication of Gubernatorial Candidates in Indonesia's 2018 Gubernatorial Elections: Anti-establishment Views, Secular Nationalism, and Islamism as Ideational-Populist Elements. Asian Journal of Comparative Politics, 7(1), 73-94.

Aji, A. P. and Sapto, A. 2020. Incivility and Disrespectfulness in Online Political Discussion. Masyarakat, Kebudayaan Dan Politik, 33(3), 278.

Akinboye, K. 2017. The Intersection of African Culture and Modern Business Ethics. Retrieved from https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/intersection-african-culture-modern-business-ethics-kolawole-akinboye on 5th January 2024

Akinyetun, T. S. 2021. Identity and Identity Politics in Nigeria: A Reflection on the Indicators. Društvene I Humanističke Studije (Online), 6(4(17)), 263-286.

Al Atri, K. and DeSoi, C. 2023. "Violence Against Women in Politics. International KnowledgeNetwork of Women in Politics." iKNOW Politics, https://www.iknowpolitics.org/en/discuss/e-discussions/violence-against-women-politics. Accessed 6 April 2023.

Alexander, A. C. 2012. Change in Women's Descriptive Representation and the Belief in Women's Ability to Govern: A Virtuous Cycle. Politics & Gender, 8(04), 437-464.

Alfred, J. J. R. and Wong, S. P. 2022. The Relationship Between the Perception of Social Media Credibility and Political Engagement in Social Media Among Generation Z. Journal of Communication, Language and Culture, 2(2), 18-33.

Allcott, H. and Gentzkow, M. 2017. Social media and Fake news in the 2016 Election. National Bureau of Economic Research working paper 23089. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Althoff, L. 2013. Identities and the colonial past in Kenya and Tanzania (Doctoral dissertation, BA Dissertation published as a CERS working paper on the MGR archive).

Alzuabi, A. Z. 2016. Socio-Political Participation of Kuwaiti Women in the Development Process: Current State and Challenges. Retrieved from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5062044/ on 18th March 2022

Amoah, R. O. and Peprah, A. K. 2022. The Foundation and Nature of Traditional African Morality: A Review of Selected Literature. E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, 279-285. https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.2022373

Ansell, A. 2018. Clientelism, Elections, and the Dialectic of Numerical People in Northeast Brazil. Current Anthropology, 59(S18), S128-S137.

Anyango, B. O., Alupo, B. A., and Opoku, M. P. 2018. Women in Politics in Kenya: An Analysis of Participation and Barriers. Multidisciplinary Journal of Gender Studies, 7(1), 1506-1530

Apap, J. Claros, E. and Zamfir, L. 2019. Women in Politics: A Global Perspective. European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), European Union

Ara, F. 2017. Women's Political Participation in the Context of Modernization: A Comparative Study of Australia and Bangladesh. PhD thesis, Murdoch University, Australia.

Arceneaux, K. and Truex, R. 2022. Donald trump and the Lie. Perspectives on Politics, 21(3), 863-879.

Asante, J., 2020. African Politics in the Digital Age: A Study of Political Party-Social Media Campaign Strategies in Ghana (Doctoral dissertation, University of Westminster).

Asige, M. L. and Omuse, O. D. 2022. Influence of Post-harvest Technology on Food Security in Narok East Sub- County, Kenya. Interdisciplinary Journal of Rural and Community Studies, 4, 1-15.

Aslanidis, P. 2015. Is Populism an Ideology? A Refutation and a New Perspective. Political Studies, 64(1_suppl), 88-104.

Audemard, J. 2020. Objectifying Contextual Effects. The Use of Snowball Sampling in Political Sociology Bulletin de Methodologie Sociologique, Vol. 145 30–60. Sage

Auri, J. and Lauri, M. 2023. Selling Feminist Stories: Popular Feminism, Authenticity and Happiness. European Journal of Cultural Studies, 136754942211373.

Auyero, J. 2000. Poor People's Politics: Peronist Survival Networks and the Legacy of Evita. Duke University Press, Durham, NC 2000. Hicken, Clientelism.

Avanza, M. 2019. Using a Feminist Paradigm (Intersectionality) to Study Conservative Women: The Case of Pro-Life Activists in Italy. Politics & Gender, 16(2), 552-580.

Ayantayo, J. K. 2009. 5 - Religious Factors in the Nigerian Public Sphere: Burdens and Prospects. Africa Development, 34(3-4).

Azolibe, C. B. 2021. Analysis of The Two-way Causal Nexus Between Macroeconomic Factors and Infrastructure Development: The Experience of Selected African Countries. Journal of Economic and Administrative Sciences, 39(2), 322-339.

Baer, H., 2018. Redoing Feminism: Digital Activism, Body Politics, and Neoliberalism. In Digital Feminisms (pp. 25-42). Routledge.

Bailey J., Bundeh G. 1993. Kenya, The National Epic: From the Pages of Drum Magazine. Nairobi, Kenway Publications.

Baiocchi, G. and Ganuza, E. (2014). Participatory Budgeting as if Emancipation Mattered. Politics & Society, 42(1), 29-50.

Baker, K. (2017). Great Expectations: Gender and Political Representation in the Pacific Islands. Government and Opposition, 53(3), 542-568.

Bakshy E, Messing S, Adamic LA. 2015. Exposure to Ideologically Diverse News and Opinion on Facebook. Science 348:1130–32

Banducci, S.A., Donovan, T. and Karp, J.A., 2004. Minority Representation, Empowerment, and Participation. The Journal of Politics, 66(2), pp.534-556.

Barberá, P., and Zeitzoff, T. 2017. The New Public Address System: Why do World Leaders Adopt Social Media? International Studies Quarterly, 62(1), 121–130.

Barberá, P., Casas, A., Nagler, J., Egan, P. J., Bonneau, R., Jost, J. T., & Tucker, J. A. 2019. Who Leads? Who Follows? Measuring Issue Attention and Agenda Setting by Legislators and the Mass Public Using Social Media Data. American Political Science Review, 113(4), 883–901.

Barnes, T. D. and Córdova, A. 2016. Making Space for Women: Explaining Citizen Support for Legislative Gender Quotas in Latin America. The Journal of Politics, 78(3), 670-686.

Bauer, G. (2012). "Let there be a Balance": Women in African Parliaments,' Political Studies Review, 10, pp. 370-384.

Bauer, G. and Burnet, J.E., 2013, November. Gender Quotas, Democracy, and Women's Representation in Africa: Some insights from Democratic Botswana and Autocratic Rwanda. In Women's Studies International Forum (Vol. 41, pp. 103-112). Pergamon.

Bauer, G., & Tremblay, M. 2011. Women in Executives: A Global Overview. New York, NY: Routledge.

Bauer, N. M. 2019. A Feminine Advantage? Delineating the Effects of Feminine Trait and Feminine Issue Messages on Evaluations of Female Candidates. Politics & Gender, 16(3), 660-680.

Bauer, N. M. and Cargile, I. A. M. 2023. Women Get the Job Done: Differences in Constituent Communication from Female and Male Lawmakers. Politics &Amp; Gender, 19(4), 1110-1133.

Bawa, S. and Sanyare, F. 2012. Women's Participation and Representation in Politics: Perspectives from Ghana. International Journal of Public Administration, Vol 36 issue 4. Pp 282-291

Begum, A. 2012. Women's Participation in Union Parishads: A Quest for a Compassionate Legal Approach in Bangladesh from an International Perspective. South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies 35(3): 570–595.

Bellstrom, K. 2016. "Trump Supporters are Selling 'Trump That Bitch' T-Shirts Featuring Hillary Clinton." Fortune, April 25

Bengtsson, Å. 2012. Citizens' Perceptions of Political Processes: A Critical Evaluation of Preference Consistency and Survey Items. Revista Internacional de Sociología 70 (2): 45–64

Bessone P, Campante F, Ferraz C, Souza P. C. 2019. Internet Access, Social Media, and the Behavior of Politicians: Evidence from Brazil. Workshop Paper, Mass Institute of Technology, Cambridge

Bhalla, N. 2021. Africa Lags on 2030 Global Goal of Gender Parity in Politics. Reuters: Thomson Reuters Foundation

Bjarnesen, J., 2023. Back in Youth: Social Unbecoming in the study of West African masculinities. Africa Spectrum, 58(3), pp.247-266

Bjarnesen, J., Boulton, J., Kovač, U., Mbah, N., Whitehouse, B., & Wyrod, R. 2023. Of Masks and Masculinities in Africa. Africa Spectrum, 58(3), 191-200.

Blais, J., Chen, P. G., & Pruysers, S. 2021. Editorial: Political Psychology: The Role of Personality in Politics. Frontiers in Political Science, 3.https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2021.737790

Bode, L. 2016. Pruning the News Feed: Unfriending and Unfollowing Political Content on Social Media. Research & Politics, 3(3)

Bosch, T.E, Admire, M. and Ncube, M. 2020. Facebook and Politics in Africa: Zimbabwe and Kenya. In Media, Culture and Society. Vol 42 (3), 349-364. Sage

Bosch, T., 2018. Digital Media and Political Citizenship: Facebook and Politics in South Africa. Perspectives on Political Communication in Africa, pp.145-158

Bosch, T., 2017. Twitter Activism and Youth in South Africa: The Case of# RhodesMustFall. Information, Communication & society, 20(2), pp.221-232.

Bosch, T., 2013. Youth, Facebook and Politics in South Africa. Journal of African Media Studies, 5(2), pp.119-130.

Bosch, T., 2010. Talk Radio, Democracy and Citizenship in (South) Africa. In Popular Media, Democracy and Development in Africa (pp. 91-104). Routledge.

Bosseta, M. 2018. The Digital Architectures of Social Media: Comparing Political Campaigning on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat in the 2016 U.S. Election. Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, Vol. 95(2) 471–496. Sage

Bostoen, K. 2018. The Bantu Expansion. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History. https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.191

Branstetter, J. 2017. The Leviathan's Conscience: Hobbesian Human Nature and Moral Judgment. Political Research Quarterly, 70(4), 778-789.

Bratton, M. and Kimenyi, M. S. 2008. Voting in Kenya: Putting Ethnicity in Perspective. Journal of Eastern African Studies, 2(2), 272-289.

Bright, J., Hale, S. A., Ganesh, B., Bulovsky, A., Margetts, H., & Howard, P. 2019. Does Campaigning on Social Media Make a Difference? Evidence from Candidate use of Twitter During the 2015 and 2017 UK Elections. Communication Research, 47(7), 988-1009.

Browne, K. 2005. Snowball Sampling: Using Social Networks to Research Non-heterosexual Women. International Journal of Social Research Methodology 8(1): 47-60.

Bruns, A. 2019. After the "APIcalypse": Social Media Platforms and their Fight Against Critical Scholarly Research. Information, Communication & Society, 22(11), 1544–1566.

Burgmann, D. M. 2000. "And the Winner is....": The Earnie awards as a Community Event. In K. Deverall. Ed. Party Girls: Labor Women Now. pp. 78-87. Annandale, N.S.W: Pluto Press

Burnet, J. E. 2019. "Women's Political Representation in Rwanda". Anthropology Faculty Publications. 15.

Burton, R. M., & Obel, B. 2011. Computational Modeling for What-is, What-might-be, and What-should-be Studies – and Triangulation. Organization Science, 22, 1195-1202.Cambridge University Press.

Cameron, C.M., Canes-Wrone, B., Gordon, S.C., Huber, G.A., eds. 2023. The Importance of Issue Representation in a Polarized Congress. In 'Accountability Reconsidered: Votes, Interests, ans Information in US Policymaking. Cambridge University Press. 15-41

Cameron, S. 2020. Government Performance and Dissatisfaction with Democracy in Australia. Australian Journal of Political Science, 55, 170–190

Cammaerts, B. 2015. Social Media and Activism. In Mansell, R. and Hwa, P. eds. The International Encyclopedia of Digital Communication and Society. Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015, pp. 1027-1034.

Canudo, M.A. and Ali, F.A. 2017. Exploring Feminine Political Attributes and Women's Campaigns During the 2017 General Elections in Kenya. In Nyabola, N. and Pommerolle, M.E. eds. Where Women are. Open Edition Books, pp 116-138

Cardo, V. 2020. Gender Politics Online? Political Women and Social Media at Election Time in the United Kingdom, the United States and New Zealand. European Journal of Communication, 36(1), 38-52.

Cardenal, A. S., Aguilar-Paredes, C., Cristancho, C., & Majó-Vázquez, S. 2019. Echo-chambers in Online News Consumption: Evidence from Survey and Navigation Data in Spain. European Journal of Communication, 34(4), 360-376

Carman, C. J. 2006**.** Public Preferences for Parliamentary Representation in the UK: An Overlooked Link? Political Studies: 2006 Vol 54, 103–122

Carroll, S. 2002. Representing Women: Congresswomen's Perceptions of their Representational Roles. In Women Transforming Congress, Edited by Cindy Simon Rosenthal. Congressional Studies Series, Vol. 4. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, pp. 50–68.

CBS News. 2014. "Sheila Copps: I was Raped and sexually Assaulted." November 10.Google Scholar

Ceccarini, L. 2019. Could the internet be a Safety-net for Democracy in Crisis? Italian Political Science Review/Rivista Italiana Di Scienza Politica, 50(1), 125-141.

Celis, K. 2008a. Representation. In Politics, Gender, and Concepts: Theory and Methodology,

Celis, K. and Childs, S. 2018. Conservatism and Women's Political Representation. Politics & Gender, 14(01), 5-26.

Celis, K., Childs, S., Kantola, J., & Krook, M. L. (2008). Rethinking women's substantive representation.

Cerón, A. and d'Adda, G. 2016. E-campaigning on Twitter: The Effectiveness of Distributive Promises and Negative Campaign in the 2013 Italian Election. New Media & Society, 18(9), 1935-1955.

Chadambuka, P. 2022. Feminist Scholarship, Femocracy and the Glass Ceiling in Zimbabwean politics. Journal of Higher Education in Africa, 20(1), 43-65.

Chadwick, A. 2011. The Political Information Cycle in a Hybrid News System: The British Prime Minister and the "Bullygate" Affair. The International Journal of Press/Politics, 16(1), 3–29.

Chadwick, A. 2017. The Hybrid Media System: Politics and Power. Oxford University Press

Chami, F. A. 2021. The Geographical Extent of Azania. Theoria, 68(168), 12-29.

Chan, M., Chen, H., & Lee, F. 2016. Examining the Roles of Mobile and Social Media in Political Participation: A Cross-national Analysis of Three Asian Societies Using a Communication mediation approach. New Media & Society, 19(12), 2003-2021.

Chaney, P. 2013. The Substantive Representation of Women—Does Issue-salience Matter? Party Politicization and UK Westminster Elections 1945–2010. The British Journal of Politics and International Relations, 16(1), 96-116.

Chaney, P. 2015. Manifesto Discourse and the Substantive Representation of Ethnic Minorities:

Chan, M., Chen, H., & Lee, F. 2018. Examining the Roles of Political Social Network and Internal Efficacy on Social Media News Engagement: A comparative Study of Six Asian Countries. The International Journal of Press/Politics, 24(2), 127-145

Chebii, S.J., 2018. Menstrual Issues: How Adolescent Schoolgirls in the Kibera Slums of Kenya Negotiate their Experiences with Menstruation. Women's Reproductive Health, *5*(3), pp.204-215

Cherotich, B. C. and Njoroge, J. 2022. Women Leadership and Economic Empowerment in Kajiado County, Kenya. International Journal of Advances in Scientific Research and Engineering, 08(06), 25-42.

Chigwendere, F. B. and Louw, L. 2022. Towards Intercultural Communication Effectiveness (Congruence) in Sino-African Interactions. Communicare: Journal for Communication Studies in Africa, 37(2), 48-65.

Childs, S. 2004. Women Representing Women, New Labour's Women MPs. London: Routledge

Chisale, S. S. 2020. 'Deliver us from Patriarchy': A Gendered Perspective of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa and Implications for Pastoral Care. Verbum Et Ecclesia, 41(1).

Çınar, K. 2016. A Comparative Analysis of Clientelism in Greece, Spain, and Turkey: The Rural–Urban Divide. Contemporary Politics, 22(1), 77-94.

Cinelli, M., Morales, G. D. F., Galeazzi, A., Quattrociocchi, W., & Starnini, M. (2021). The Echo Chamber Effect on Social Media. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 118(9).

Claire, D. & Samuel, D. 2022. Citizens and the Legitimacy Outcomes of Collaborative Governance: An Administrative Burden Perspective, Public Management Review, 24:5, 752-772.

Clayton, A. 2014. Women's Political Engagement Under Quota-mandated Female Representation. Comparative Political Studies, 48(3), 333-369.

Clayton, A. 2021. How do Electoral Gender Quotas Affect Policy? Annual Review of Political Science. 24. 235-252

Clayton, A., Josefsson, C., Mattes, R., & Mozaffar, S. 2018. In whose interest? Gender and Mass–elite Priority Congruence in Sub-Saharan Africa. Comparative Political Studies, 52(1), 69-101.

Clayton, K., Davis, N. T., Nyhan, B., Porter, E., Ryan, T. J., & Wood, T. J. 2021. Elite Rhetoric can Undermine Democratic Norms. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 118(23).

Cleen, B. D., Glynos, J., & Mondon, A. 2018. Critical Research on Populism: Nine Rules of Engagement. Organization, 25(5), 649-661.

Clinton in the 2016 US Presidential Election. European Journal of Communication, 32(1), pp.50-61.

Coleman, S. 2021. Jay G. Blumler – An intellectual Legacy: Wanting Better, European Journal of Communication. Vol 36 (5), Pp 439-445. Sage

Coleman, S. 2011. Representation and mediated politics: Representing Representation in an Age of Irony. In Political Communication in Postmodern Democracy: Challenging the Primacy of Politics (pp. 39-56). London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Coleman, S. 2008. Making Parliamentary Democracy Visible: Speaking To, With and For the Public in an Age of Interactive Technology. In Chadwick, A. And Howard, P.N. Eds. Routledge Handbook of internet Technology. Pp 87-98. London: Routledge

Coleman, S. 2005a. New Mediation: And Direct Representation: Reconceptualizing Representation in the Digital Age. New Media & Society, 7 (2): 177 – 198.

Coleman, S. 2005. Direct Representation: Towards a Conversational Democracy. London, UK: Institute for Public Policy Research

Constantopoulou, C. 2017. Theatricalization Of Politics: Aspects of Politics in Media Scenes – Introduction. Open Journal for Sociological Studies, 1(2), 37-42.

Cope, D. G. 2013. Methods and meanings: credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research. Oncology Nursing Forum, 41(1), 89-91. Https://doi.org/10.1188/14.onf.89-91

Cornwall, A. And Goetz. A. M. 2005. Democratizing Democracy: Feminist Perspectives. Democratization, Vol.12, No.5, December 2005, pp.783–800, Taylor & Francis

Costa, M. 2021. Ideology, Not Affect: What Americans Want from Political Representation. American Journal of Political Science. Vol. 65, No. 2, Pp. 342–358

Cota, W., Ferreira, S. C., Pastor-Satorras, R., & Starnini, M. (2019). Quantifying Echo Chamber Effects in Information Spreading over Political Communication Networks. EPJ Data Science, 8(1)

Crawford, K. 2009. Following You: Disciplines of Listening in Social Media. Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies, 23(4), 525–535.

Crawford, M. C. 2008. Gender and the Australian parliament (PhD thesis), Queensland University of Technology, Queensland

Creswell, J.W. 2014. Research Design: Qualitative, Quantities, and Mixed Methods Approaches. London: Sage.

Currin, C., Vera, S. V., & Khaledi-Nasab, A. 2022. Depolarization of echo chambers by random dynamical nudge. Scientific Reports, 12(1)

Cuthbertson, L., Kearney, A., Dawson, R., Zawaduk, A., Cuthbertson, E., Gordon-Tighe, A., & Mathewson, K. W. 2019. Women, Politics and Twitter: Using Machine Learning to Change the Discourse.

Cyr, J. 2017. The Unique Utility of Focus Groups for Mixed-Methods Research. American Political Science Association, 1028-1042

Damayanti, N., Santoso, P. Y., & Hamzah, R. E. 2021. Viral Political Campaign: Supporters of Jokowi-amin in Indonesia Presidential Election. Proceedings of the 1st ICA Regional Conference, ICA 2019, October 16-17, Bali, Indonesia.

De la Rey, C. 2005. Gender, Women and Leadership. Agenda, 65, 4-11.

Denzin, N. K. 2012. Triangulation 2.0. Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 6, 80-88

Deschrijver, C. and Georgakopoulou, A. 2023. Context in Discourse Analysis. The Cambridge Handbook of Language in Context, 71-92.

Dijk, T. A. V. 1993. Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis. Discourse &Society, 4(2), 249-283.

Dijk, T. A. V. 2006. Ideology and Discourse Analysis. Journal of Political Ideologies, 11(2), 115-140.

Dimuccio, S. And Knowles, E. 2022. Something To Prove? Manhood Threats Increase Political Aggression Among Liberal Men.

Dingler, Sarah C., Kroeber, Corinna, And Fortin-Rittberger, Jessica. 2019. "Do Parliaments Underrepresent Women's Policy Preferences? Exploring Gender Equality in Policy Congruence In 21 European Democracies." Journal Of European Public Policy 26 (2): 302–21.

Doherty, David. 2015. "How Policy and Procedure Shape Citizens' Evaluations of Senators." Legislative Studies Quarterly 40(2): 241–72.

Donati D. 2019. Mobile Internet Access and Political Outcomes: Evidence from South Africa. Barcelona, Spain

Donkoh, S. 2023. Application of Triangulation in Qualitative Research. Journal of Applied Biotechnology &Amp; Bioengineering, 10(1), 6-9.

Donovan, B. 2012. Intersectionality and the Substantive Representation of Migrant Interests in Germany. German Politics and Society, 30(4), 23-44.

Dovi, S. 2018. 'Political Representation,' The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Edward, N.Z. (Ed). Https://Plato.Stanford.Edu.Archives/Fall2018/Entries/Political-Representation/

Dovi, S. 2002. Preferable Descriptive Representatives: Will Just Any Woman, Black, or Latino Do? American Political Science Review, 96(4), Pp.729-743.

Dovi, S.2006. The Concept of Constituency: Political Representation, Democratic Legitimacy, and Institutional Design. Perspectives On Politics, 4(4), Pp.763-764.

Dovi, S. 2007. Theorizing Women's Representation in The United States. Politics & Gender, 3(3), Pp.297-319.

Dovi, S. 2016. Measuring Representation: Rethinking The Role of Exclusion. In Political Representation (Pp. 170-186). Routledge.

Dovi, S. 2020. What's Missing? A Typology of Political Absence. The Journal of Politics, 82(2), Pp.559-571.

Dovi, S. 2018. 'Political Representation', The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Edward, N.Z. (Ed) https. Plato. Stanfortd. Edu/Archives/Fall2018/Entries/Political-Representation/

Droti, B., O'Neill, K., Mathai, M., Dovlo, D., & Robertson, J. 2019. Poor Availability of Essential Medicines for Women and Children Threatens Progress Towards Sustainable Development Goal 3 in Africa. BMJ Global Health, 4(Suppl 9), E001306.

Dulani, B., Harris, A. S., Horowitz, J., & Kayuni, H. 2020. Electoral Preferences Among Multiethnic Voters in Africa. Comparative Political Studies, 54(2), 280-311.

Ebila, F., 2015. 'A Proper Woman, in the African Tradition': The Construction of Gender and Nationalism in Wangari Maathai's Autobiography Unbowed. Tydskrif Vir Letterkunde, *52*(1), Pp.144-154.

Egbejule, E. 2022. Touch Not My Anointed: Holy Fever Grips Kenya in Election Season. Retrieved From https://Www.Aljazeera.Com/Features/2022/8/8/Holy-Fever-Grips-Kenya-In-Election On 23rd December 2023

Egon, K. 2023. The Impact of Social Media on Political Communication. https://Doi.Org/10.31219/Osf.Io/Kehsd

Ekeh, P. 2004. Individuals' Basic Security Needs and The Limits of Democracy in Africa. Berman, B., Eyoh, D., Kymlicka, W. eds. Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa. Oxford: James Currey Ltd

Elfversson, E, And Höglund. K. 2022. "Martha Karua is Taking Centre Stage in Kenya's Elections: What it Means for Women in Politics." The Conversation, 5 August 2022, Https://Theconversation.Com/Martha-Karua-Is-Taking-Centre-Stage-In-Kenyas-Elections-What-It-Means-For-Wom En-In-Politics-188237. Accessed 6 April 2023.

Ellis, S. And Haar, G. 2007. Religion and Politics: Taking African Epistemologies Seriously. The Journal of Modern African Studies, 45(3), 385-401.

Erikson, J., Håkansson, S., & Josefsson, C. 2021. Three Dimensions of Gendered Online Abuse: Analyzing Swedish MPs' Experiences of Social Media. Perspectives on Politics, 21(3), 896-912.

Espinosa, A., Janos, E., Pacheco, M., Juárez, J., & Chaparro, H. 2022. Populism In Peru: Populist Attitudes and Perception of The Populist Offer and Its Relationship with Political Cynicism and Attitudes Toward Democracy. Frontiers In Psychology, 13.

Espírito-Santo, A., Freire, A., & Serra-Silva, S. 2018. Does Women's Descriptive Representation Matter for Policy Preferences? The Role of Political Parties. Party Politics, 26(2), 227-237.

Ette, M. 2017. Where Are the Women? Evaluating Visibility of Nigerian Female Politicians in News Media Space. Gender, Place &Amp; Culture, 24(10), 1480-1497.

Etim, E. and Iwu, C.G., 2019. A Descriptive Literature Review of the Continued Marginalisation of Female Entrepreneurs in Sub-Saharan Africa. International Journal of Gender Studies in Developing Societies, 3(1), pp.1-19.

Évéquoz, F., Rochel, J., Keswani, V., & Celis, L. E. 2022. Diverse Representation Via Computational Participatory Elections - Lessons from a Case Study.

Every-Palmer, S. Barry-Walsh, J., and Pathé, M. 2015. "Harassment, Stalking, Threats, And Attacks Targeting New Zealand Politicians." Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry 49(7): 634–41.

Faanu, P. And Graham, E. 2017. The Politics of Ethnocentrism: A Viability Test of Ghana's Democracy? Insight on Africa, 9(2), 141-158.

Fazekas, Z., Popa, S. A., Schmitt, H., Barberá, P., & Theocharis, Y. 2021. Elite-Public Interaction on Twitter: EU Issue Expansion in The Campaign. European Journal of Political Research, 60(2), 376– 396.

Feder, J. Nnardelli, A., and De Luca, D.M. 2018. "Meet the Politicians Getting Death Threats for Campaigning for Women's Rights in Italy." Buzzfeed, February 24. https://www.buzzfeednewscom/article/lesterfeder/italian-elections-racism-sexism

Feezell, J. T. 2018. Agenda Setting Through Social Media: The Importance of Incidental News Exposure and Social Filtering in The Digital Era. Political Research Quarterly, 72(2), 482–494.

Ferland, B. And Golder, M., 2021. Citizen Representation and Electoral Systems. In Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics.

Forman-Rabinovici, A. And Beeri, I. (2024). Descriptive And Symbolic: The Connection Between Political Representation and Citizen Satisfaction with Municipal Public Services. The American Review of Public Administration. 54:1, 3-18

Fountain, M. 2017. Social Media and its Effects in Politics: The Factors that Influence Social Media Use for Political News And Social Media Use Influencing Political Participation. Research Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment of The Requirements for Graduation with

Research Distinction in Political Science in The Undergraduate Colleges of the Ohio State University

Franceschet, S., Lucas, J. And Rayment, E. 2024. Do Women Politicians Know More About Women's Policy Preferences? Evidence From Canada. Politics & Gender, Pp.1-19.

Frankema, E., Williamson, J. G., & Woltjer, P. 2018. An Economic Rationale for the West African Scramble? The Commercial Transition and The Commodity Price Boom Of 1835–1885. The Journal of Economic History, 78(1), 231-267.

Freelon, D. 2018. Computational Research in The Post-API Age. Political Communication, 35(4), 665–668

Frenkiel, É. 2020. Participatory Budgeting and Political Representation in China. Journal of Chinese Governance, 6(1), 58-80.

Funk, K. D. 2015. Gendered Governing? Women's Leadership Styles and Participatory Institutions in Brazil. Political Research Quarterly, 68(3), 564-578.

Furukawa, M. 2022. Creating a Safe Space for Peaceful Coexistence Through National Sporting Events in South Sudan. Journal Of Peacebuilding & Development, 18(1), 68-83.

Gainous, J., And K. Wagner. 2014. Tweeting to Power: The Social Media Revolution in American Politics. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Gallup. 2020. Presidential Approval Ratings —Donald Trump. Washington, DC: Gallup

García-Rivero, C. And Clari, E. 2022. Ethnicity And Governing Party Support in Africa: A Longitudinal Multilevel Analysis. Party Politics, 29(2), 322-334.

Gardachew, B. D., Kefale, G. M., & Kumie, G. A. 2019. The Pitfalls of Ethnolinguistic-Based Federal Experiment in Ethiopia. RUDN Journal of Political Science, 21(4), 661-672. Https://Doi.Org/10.22363/2313-1438-2019-21-4-661-672

Gaus, D., Landwehr, C., & Schmalz-Bruns, R. 2020. Defending Democracy Against Technocracy and Populism: Deliberative Democracy's Strengths and Challenges. Constellations, 27(3), 335-347.

Geer, John. 2008. In Defense of Negativity: Attack Ads in Presidential Campaigns. Chicago, IL: University

Gez, Y., Beider, N., & Dickow, H. 2021. African and not Religious: The State of Research on Sub-Saharan Religious Nones and New Scholarly Horizons. Africa Spectrum, 57(1), 50-71.

Gherghina, S. 2021. Political Parties, State Resources and Electoral Clientelism. Acta Politica, 56(4), 591-599.

Ghonim W. 2012. Revolution 2.0: The Power of The People Is Greater Than the People In Power: A Memoir. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

Gibbert, M. & Ruigrok, W. 2010. The "What" And "How" Of Case Study Rigor: Three Strategies Based on Published Work. Organizational Research Methods, 13, 71-737.

Gibbons, L., Cloutier, S., Coseo, P., & Barakat, A. 2018. Regenerative Development as an Integrative Paradigm and Methodology for Landscape Sustainability. Sustainability, 10(6), 1910.

Gibrilu, A. W. 2023. Indigenizing Journalistic Objectivity in an African Context: How 'Indigenous' Journalistic Practices (Re)Define Professional Norms. Global Media and Communication, 19(3), 335-355.

Gibson, R., Williamson, A., & Ward, S. 2010. The Internet and the 2010 Election: Putting the Small 'P' Back in Politics. London, UK: Hansard Society.

Gilardi, F,. Gessler,T., Kubli, M,. And Müller,S. 2021. Social Media and Political Agenda Setting, Political Communication. Routledge: Tylor And Francis

Göbel, C. and Steinhardt, H.C., 2022. Protest Event analysis meets autocracy: Comparing the Coverage of Chinese Protests on Social Media, Dissident Websites, and in the News. Mobilization, 27(3), pp.277-295.

Gottlieb, J., Grossman, G., & Robinson, A. L. 2016. Do Men and Women Have Different Policy Preferences in Africa? Determinants And Implications of Gender Gaps in Policy Prioritization. British Journal of Political Science, 48(3), 611-636.

Gottlieb, M., Sebok-Syer, S. S., Bawden, A., Shah, M., & Jordan, J. 2022. "Faces on a Screen": A Qualitative Study of The Virtual and In-Person Conference Experience. AEM Education and Training, 6(6).

Graham, P. and Ward, A. 2023. Music as Symbolic Action. Discourse & Society, 35(1), 66-82.

Gretschel, P., Ramugondo, E., & Galvaan, R. 2023. Linking Paradigms and Methodologies in a Qualitative Case Study Focused on Exploring the Operation of Power in Human Actions During the Design of a New Occupational Therapy Intervention. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 22.

Griffin, J. And Flavin, P. 2011. “How Citizens and Their Legislators Prioritize Spheres of Representation.” Political Research Quarterly 64 (3): 520–33. Comparative Political Studies 2018, Vol. 51(7) 868–899.University of Utah: Sage

Growe, R. & Montgomery, P. 2000. Women And the Leadership Paradigm: Bridging the Gender Gap. National Forum, The Phi Kappa Phi Journal, 17E, 1-10.

Guest, G. Namey, E. And Mckenna, K. 2016. How Many Focus Groups Are Enough? Building An Evidence Base for Non-Probability Sample Sizes. Field Methods. Vol 29(1) 3-22. Sage

Güneralp, B., Lwasa, S., Masundire, H., Parnell, S., & Seto, K. C. 2017. Urbanization In Africa: Challenges And Opportunities for Conservation. Environmental Research Letters, 13(1), 015002.

Guriev S,Melnikov N, Zhuravskaya E. 2020. 3G Internet and Confidence in Government. CEPR Working Paper 14022, Centre for Economic Policy. London

Gutiérrez-Romero, R. 2013. To What Extent Did Ethnicity and Economic Issues Matter in the 2007 Disputed Kenyan Elections? Development Policy Review, 31(3), 291-320.

Gwiazda, A. 2021. Analyzing The “What” And “When” Of Women’s Substantive Representation: The Role of Right-Wing Populist Party Ideology. East European Politics, 37(4), 681-701.

Habibi, M. 2021. A Regional Head Election’s Political Corruption and New Styles of Clientelism. Masyarakat, Kebudayaan Dan Politik, 34(4), 417.

Håkansson, S. 2023. The Gendered Representational Costs of Violence Against Politicians. Perspectives On Politics, 1-16.

Halberstam Y, Knight B. 2016. Homophily, Group Size, and the Diffusion of Political Information in Social Networks: Evidence from Twitter. Journal of Public Economics. 143:73–88

Hallen, B. 2015. “Personhood In a Communitarian Context.” Thought And Practice: A Journal of The Philosophical Association of Kenya, New Series 7(2): 1–10.

Halperin, S., & Heath, O. 2012. Political Research: Methods And Practical Skills. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hara, A. E. 2018. Populism In Indonesia and Its Threats to Democracy. Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Social and Political Sciences (ICSPS 2017).

Harden, J. 2016. Multidimensional Democracy: A Supply and Demand Theory of Representation in American Legislatures. New York: Cambridge University Press

Harmer, E. And Southern, R. 2021. Digital Microaggressions and Everyday Othering: An Analysis of Tweets Sent to Women Members of Parliament in the UK. Information Communication & Society, 24(14), 1998-2015.

Harris, K. 2022. Explaining The (Local) Ethnic Census: Subnational Variation in Ethnic Politics in Kenyan Elections. The Journal of Modern African Studies, 60(2), 149-173.

Hartley, J. 2018. Ten Propositions About Public Leadership. International Journal of Public Leadership, 14(4), 202-217.

Hartney, M. T. And Hayes, S. D. 2021. Off-Cycle and Out of Sync: How Election Timing Influences Political Representation. State Politics &Amp; Policy Quarterly, 21(4), 335-354.

Heale, R. And Forbes, D. 2017. Understanding Triangulation in Research. Evidence Based Nursing, Vol 16 (4) P 98

Heim, L., Elbert, T., Baltes-Götz, B., & Schaal, S. 2018. Still Not One People: Implicit Ethnic Perception of Tutsis in Rwanda. Peace And Conflict: Journal Of Peace Psychology, 24(2), 225-229.

Hennink, M.M., Kaiser, B.N. And Weber, M.M. 2019. What Influences Saturation? Estimating Sample Sizes in Focus Group Research. Qual Health Res 29(10) 1483-1496. Published Online, Doi: 10.1177/1049732318821692 Accessed On 3rd March 2022 From cnbi.nlm.nih.gov

Heseltine, M. and Dorsey, S. 2022. Online Incivility in the 2020 Congressional Elections. Political Research Quarterly, 75(2), 512-526

Hessami, Z. And Da Fonseca, M.L. 2020. Female Political Representation and Substantive Effects on Policies: A Literature Review. IZA – Institute of Labor Economics, Germany

Hobbes, T. (1929). *Leviathan*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Höhmann, D. 2019. When Do Female MPs Represent Women's Interests? Electoral Systems and the Legislative Behavior of Women. Political Research Quarterly, 73(4), 834-847.

Homolar, A. And Löfflmann, G. 2021. Populism and the Affective Politics of Humiliation Narratives. Global Studies Quarterly, 1(1).

Honorene, J. 2017. Understanding The Role of Triangulation in Research. Scholarly Research Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies. Vol 4(31) 91-95

Hossain, M.A. 2012. Influence Of Social Norms and Values of Rural Bangladesh on Women's Participation in The Union Parishad. Indian Journal of Gender Studies 19(3): 393–412.

Huber, R., Fesenfeld, L. P., & Bernauer, T. 2020. Political Populism, Responsiveness, And Public Support for Climate Mitigation. Climate Policy, 20(3), 373-386.

Huhtanen, T. 2015. Can Political Parties Evolve If the Political System Does Not? European View, 14(1), 59-67.

Husband, C. 2000. Media And the Public Sphere in Multi-Ethnic Societies. In S. Cottle. Ed. Ethnic Minorities and The Media. Pp. 199–214. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press

Igboin, B. 2021. 'I Am an African'. Religions, 12(8), 669.

Ihme, T. A. and Tausendpfund, M. 2017. Gender Differences in Political Knowledge: Bringing Situation Back In. Journal of Experimental Political Science, 5(1), 39-55.

Ikem, P., Oladejo, A., & Udegbunam, K. (2021). The Spirituality Approach to Electoral Politics in Africa: Evidence from The Presidential Elections in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. The International Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Society, 12(1), 33-52.

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), 2021. Women's Political Participation: Africa Barometer 2021. Accessed From https://Www.Idea.Int/Publications/Catalogue/Womens-Political-Participation-Africa-Barometer-2021 on 9th Nov 2021

Ipinyomi, F. I. 2016. The Impact of African Philosophy on the Realization of International Community and The Observance of International Law. International Community Law Review, 18(1), 3-33.

Jackson, N. And Lilleker, D. G. (2020). Microblogging, Constituency Service, and Impression Management: Uk Mps and The Use of Twitter. The Impact of Legislatures, 414-433.

James, D. V, Farnham, F.R, Sukhwal, S. Jones, K. Carlisle, J. And Henley. S. 2016. "Aggressive/Intrusive Behaviours, Harassment, and Stalking of Members of The United Kingdom Parliament." Journal Of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology 27(2): 177–97

Johnson, J. L., Adkins, D., & Chauvin, S. W. 2020. A Review of The Quality Indicators of Rigor in Qualitative Research. American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education, 84(1), 7120. Https://Doi.Org/10.5688/Ajpe7120

Judge, D. And Leston-Bandeira, C. 2017. The Institutional Representation of Parliament. Political Studies, 66(1), 154-172.

Jungherr, A. 2014. The Logic of Political Coverage on Twitter: Temporal Dynamics and Content. Journal of Communication, 64(2), 239–259.

Jungherr, A., Posegga, O., & An, J. 2019. Discursive Power in Contemporary Media Systems: A Comparative Framework. The International Journal of Press/Politics, 24(4), 404–425.

Kalsnes, B., Larsson, A.O. and Enli, G., 2017. The Social Media Logic of Political Interaction: Exploring Citizens' and Politicians' Relationship on Facebook and Twitter. First Monday, 22(2).

Kaluai, F. K. And Muathe, S. M. A. 2020. Project Management Practices and Performance of Women Economic Empowerment in Kiambu and Nairobi Counties, Kenya. Business Management and Strategy, 11(2), 22.

Kamal, S. S. L. B. A. 2019. Research Paradigm and The Philosophical Foundations of a Qualitative Study. PEOPLE: International Journal of Social Sciences, 4(3), 1386-1394.

Kamau, S.C. 2017. Democratic Engagement in the Digital Age: Youth, Social Media, and Participatory Politics in Kenya. Communication 43(2): 128–146.

Kamlongera, A.P., 2008. Malawian Women's Participation in State Politics: What Are the Constraints? Gender & Development, 16(3), Pp.471-480.

Kang, A. J. And Trip, A. M. 2018. Coalitions Matter: Citizenship, Women, And Quota Adoption in Africa Perspectives. Politics 16(1):73–91

Kanthak, K. And Woon, J. 2014. Women Don't Run? Election Aversion and Candidate Entry. American Journal of Political Science, 59(3), 595-612.

Karlsson, M. 2013. Representation as Interactive Communication. Information Communication & Society, 16(8), 1201-1222.

Karpf, D. 2012. The Move-On Effect. New York, NY: Oxford University Press

Katz, J.E., Venezuela, S. And Halpern, D. 2017. We Face, I Tweet: How Different Social Media Influence Political Participation through Collective and Internal Efficacy. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, Volume 22, Issue 6, 1 November 2017, Pages 320–336

Kazharski, A. And Makarychev, A. 2020. Populism In Estonia and Slovakia: Performances, Transgressions, And Communicative Styles. Populism, 3(2), 165-185.

Kellow, T. 2010. Women, Elections, And Violence in West Africa. London: International Alert

Kenya ICT Board. 2010. Digital Kenya: A Study to Understand the On-Line Life Of Kenyans: Key Findings. Retrieved From Http://Www.Ict.Go.Ke/Oldsite/Images/Pdfs/Digital%20kenyakeyfindingsmarch%202010.Pdf, On 7th Nov 2021

Kenyatta, G. N. 2023.The Political Participation of Women in Kenya. Journal of International Women's Studies: Vol. 25: Issue. 2, Article 5.

Kepios, 2022a. Digital 2022: Kenya. [Online] Datareportal – Global Digital Insights. Available at: https://Datareportal.Com/Reports/Digital-2022-Kenya.

Kerr, R., Robinson, S., & Śliwa, M. 2022. Organizing Populism: From Symbolic Power to Symbolic Violence. Human Relations, 77(1), 81-110.

Khan, A. & Naqvi, S. 2020. Dilemmas of Representation: Women In Pakistan's Assemblies, Asian Affairs, 51:2, 286-306

Khosa, D. 2022. Leadership Development Framework for Women in Policing in South Africa: Overcoming Leadership Barriers. International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science (2147- 4478), 11(7), 110-120.

Khosh, N. K., Khalil, A. A. A., & Alhaded, H. H. S. 2020. Cultural Values and Norms of Communication: A View from the Middle East. Proceedings of ADVED 2020- 6th International Conference on Advances in Education.

Kiamba, J.M., 2009. Women And Leadership Positions: Social and Cultural Barriers to Success. Wagadu Volume 6 Journal of International Women's Studies Volume 10: 1, P.89.

Kim, D. H. and Ellison, N. B. 2021. From Observation on Social Media to Offline Political Participation: The Social Media Affordances Approach. New Media & Society, 24(12), 2614-2634

Kimura, T. 2014. A Review of Political Skill: Current Research Trend and Directions for Future Research. International Journal of Management Reviews, 17(3), 312-332.

King, G., Schneer, B., & White, A. 2017. How The News Media Activate Public Expression and Influence National Agendas. Science, 358(6364), 776-780.

Kinyua, A. H. G. 2020. In Opposing Community Wisdom: Exposing Lexicon Choices in Kimeru Folklore as Agents of Patriarchy and Gender Bias. East African Journal of Arts and Social Sciences, 2(1), 21-32.

Kipkoeach, G. 2022. Connections Between Internet, Social Media News Use and Political Participation in Kenya. Social Science Computer Review, Sage Journals

Kisaka, M.O. And Nyadera, I.N. 2019. Ethnicity And Politics in Kenya's Turbulent Path to Democracy and Development. Journal of Social Policy Conferences. 76:159-180

Kitschelt, H. And Kselman, D. M. 2012. Economic Development, Democratic Experience, and Political Parties' Linkage Strategies. Comparative Political Studies, 46(11), 1453-1484.

Kivoi, D.L. 2014. Factors Impeding Political Participation and Representation of Women in Kenya. Humanities And Social Sciences. 2(6): 173-181

Klaus, K., Paller, J. W., & Wilfahrt, M. 2023. Demanding Recognition: A New Framework for The Study of Political Clientelism. African Affairs, 122(487), 185-203.

KNBS. 2014. Geographic Classification and Geo-Coding in Kenya. Retrieved From Http://Ggim.Un.Org On 5th March 2022

Koc-Michalska, K. And Klinger, U. 2021. Populism As Communication: Political Campaigning on Facebook.

Konte, M. And Kwadwo, V.O. 2019. Political Empowerment of Women in Africa: Influence or Numbers? In Equal Rights, Politics and Foreign Affairs, Issues

Koop, R., Bastedo, H. And Blidook, K. 2018. Representation In Action: Canadian MPs in The Constituencies, Vancouver, UBC Press.

Koski, C., Siddiki, S., Sadiq, A., & Carboni, J. L. 2016. Representation In Collaborative Governance: A Case Study of a Food Policy Council. The American Review of Public Administration, 48(4), 359-373.

Kosmidis, S. and Theocharis, Y., 2020. Can Social Media Incivility Induce Enthusiasm? Evidence from survey Experiments. Public Opinion Quarterly, 84(S1), pp.284-308.

Koter, D. 2023. Africa And Ethnic Politics. State of the Field. Nationalities Papers. 51:2, 245-257

Kress, G. .2011. Multimodal Discourse Analysis From: The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis. Routledge

Krippahl, C. 2022. "Kenyan Election: Female Candidates Face Violence, Abuse – DW – 08/03/2022." DW, 3 August, Https://Www.Dw.Com/En/Kenyan-Election-Female-Candidates-Face-Violence-Abuse/A-62697361. Accessed 6 April 2023.

Krook, M. And Restrepo, J. 2016. Violence Against Women in Politics. A Defense of The Concept. Politica Y Gobiero 23 (December): 459–490.

Krook, M. L. And Sanin, J.R. 2020. The Cost of Doing Politics? Analyzing Violence and Harassment Against Female Politicians. Perspectives On Politics. Vol. 18 No. 3pp 740-755

Krook, M.L. And Sanín, J.R., 2020. The Cost of Doing Politics? Analyzing Violence and Harassment Against Female Politicians. Perspectives On Politics, *18*(3), Pp.740-755.

Krook, M. L. 2018a. "Violence Against Women in Politics: A Rising Global Trend." Politics & Gender 14(3): 1–3.10.

Krook, M.L.2018b. Westminster Too: On Sexual Harassment in British Politics. Political Quarterly 89 (1): 65-72.10.1111/1467-923X.12458

Kumar, A. 2014. Looking Back at Obama's Campaign In 2008: "True Blue Populist" And Social Production of Empty Signifiers in Political Reporting. Journal of Communication Inquiry, 38(1), 5-24.

Lalancette, M. And Raynauld, V. 2017. The Power of Political Image: Justin Trudeau, Instagram, and Celebrity Politics. American Behavioral Scientist, 63(7), 888-924.

Landini, F. P. 2012. Peasants' Social Representation of Politicians in a Clientelist Rural Context. Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 23(2), 115-127.

Lapinski, J. Levendusky, M. Winneg, K. And Jamieson, K.H. 2016. What Do Citizens Want from Their Member of Congress? Political Research Quarterly 1–11. University Of Utah Reprints and Permissions: Sage

Lawless, J. L.2004. Politics of Presence? Congresswomen And Symbolic Representation. Political Research Quarterly, 57(1), 81-99.

Layefa, G., Ezenagu, N., & Esoso-Agbor, J. 2022. Revisiting Kinship in Contemporary West African Societies: The Case of Role-Relationship. F1000Research, 11, 965.

Lee, J., Choi, J. and Kim, J., 2022. Effects of Online Incivility and Emotions Toward In-groups on Cross-Cutting Attention and Political Participation. Behaviour & Information Technology, 41(14), pp.3013-3027.

Legard, R., Keegan, J., And Ward, K. 2003. "In-Depth Interviews", In J. Ritchie; J. Lewis (Org.), Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers. SAGE Publications, London

Lekhanya, L. M. And Mason, R. 2014. Selected Key External Factors Influencing the Success of Rural Small and Medium Enterprises in South Africa. Journal Of Enterprising Culture, 22(03), 331-348.

Letseka, M. 2013. Anchoring Ubuntu Morality. Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences. https://Doi.Org/10.5901/Mjss.2013.V4n3p351

Lever, R. 2012. Twitter Shakes Up US Election Campaign. Retrieved From Http:// Phys.Org/News/2012-08-Twitter-Election-Campaign.Html

Li, S., Schlebusch, C. M., & Jakobsson, M. 2014. Genetic Variation Reveals Large-Scale Population Expansion and Migration During the Expansion of Bantu-Speaking Peoples. Proceedings of The Royal Society B: Biological Sciences, 281(1793), 20141448.

Liaqat, A. 2020. No Representation Without Information: Politician Responsiveness to Citizen Preferences. Working Paper

Liaqat, A. 2020. No Representation Without Information: Politician Responsiveness to Citizen Preferences. Working Paper

Lilleker, D.G. And Michalska, K.K. 2013. Online Political Communication Strategies: Meps, E-Representation and Self-Representation. Journal of IT and Politics. Routledge: Taylor And Francis. 10:2, 190-207

Liu, S. And Estampador-Hughson, S. 2023. Why Does Political Representation of the Marginalized Matter? Teaching Classic Literature Using Intersectional and Decolonial Approaches. European Political Science, 22(4), 496-510. London: Routledge.

Long, J. E. And Gibson, C. H. 2015. Evaluating The Roles of Ethnicity and Performance in African Elections. Political Research Quarterly, 68(4), 830-842.

Lovenduski, J. 2005. Feminizing Politics. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Lovenduski, J. And Norris, P. 2003. Westminster Women: The Politics of Presence. Political Studies, 51(1), 84-102.

Lovenduski, J. 2005. State Feminism and Political Representation. Cambridge University Press.

Lovenduski, J. 2012. Feminizing British Politics. The Political Quarterly, 83 (4), Pp. 697-702

Lovenduski, J. 2020 The Political Representation of Women: A Feminist Institutionalist Perspective. In Research Handbook of Political Representation. Pp 201-221. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Lu, S. and Luqiu, L. R. 2023. When Will One Help? Understanding Audience Intervention in Online Harassment of Women Journalists. Journalism Practice, 1-19.

Lu, S., Liang, H., & Chen, G. M. 2022. Selective Avoidance: Understanding how Position and Proportion of Online Incivility Influence News Engagement. Communication Research, 50(4), 387-409

Lühiste, M. and Banducci, S. 2016. Invisible Women? Comparing Candidates' News Coverage in Europe. Politics & Gender, 12(02), 223-253

MacLean, K., Hearle, C. and Ruwanpura, K.N., 2020, January. Stigma of Staining? Negotiating Menstrual Taboos Amongst Young Women in Kenya. In Women's Studies International Forum (Vol. 78, p. 102290). Pergamon.

Macnamara, J. 2014. The 21st Century Media (R)Evolution: Emergent Communication Practices (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Macnamara, J. 2016. Organizational Listening: The Missing Essential in Public Communication. New York: Peter Lang

Macnamara, J., & Kenning, G. 2011. E-Electioneering 2010: Trends in Social Media Use in Australian Political Communication. Media International Australia, 139, 7–22

Madsen, D.H. Ed., 2020. Gendered Institutions and Women's Political Representation in Africa. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Maltz, D.N. And Borker, R.A., 2018. A Cultural Approach to Male-Female Miscommunication. In The Matrix of Language. Pp. 81-98. Routledge.

Mancosu, M. And Vegetti, F. 2020. What You Can Scrape and What Is Right to Scrape: A Proposal for A Tool to Collect Public Facebook Data. Social Media and Society July-September 2020: 1–11, Sage

Mangaroo-Pillay, M. And Coetzee, R. 2022. A Systematic Literature Review (Slr) Comparing Japanese Lean Philosophy and The South African Ubuntu Philosophy. International Journal of Lean Six Sigma, 13(1), 118-135. Https://Doi.Org/10.1108/Ijlss-11-2019-0118

Manne, Kate. 2018. Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny. New York: Oxford University Press.

Mannya, M.M., 2013. Representation Of Black, Young, Women Politicians in South African Online News Media: A Case Study of Lindiwe Mazibuko (Doctoral Dissertation, Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University)

Mansbridge, J. 1999. Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent "Yes". The Journal of Politics, 61(3), 628-657.

Mansbridge, J. 2003. Rethinking Representation. American Political Science Review, 97(4), Pp.515-528.

Mansbridge, J. 2011. Clarifying The Concept of Representation. American Political Science Review, 105(3), Pp.621-630.

Mantilla, Karla. 2015. Gender Trolling: How Misogyny Went Viral. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.

Manyala, Q.A., Adams, Y. And Achieng, A.L. 2020. Pragmatic Exploration of Social Media Images on Interpretation Aiming at Facebook Users in Kenya: Political Discourse. Journal Of African Interdisciplinary Studies, 4 (7), 113-124

Marcheti, R. 2021. The Strategic Use of Incivility in Contemporary Politics. The Case of the 2018 Italian General Election on Facebook. The Communication Review2021, Vol. 24, No. 2, 107-132. Routledge: Tylor And Francis

Mare, A. 2018. Politics Unusual? Facebook And Political Campaigning During The 2013 Harmonized Elections in Zimbabwe. African Journalism Studies 39(1): 90–110.

Marquart, F., Ohme, J., & Moeller, J. 2020. Following Politicians on Social Media: Effects for Political Information, Peer Communication, And Youth Engagement. Media And Communication, 8(2), 197-207.

Marten, L. 2020. Bantu and Bantoid. The Oxford Handbook of African Languages, 205-219.

Martin, J. And Haberman, M. 2020. “Trump Keeps Talking. Some Republicans Don’t Like What They’re Hearing.” New York Times

Masolo, D. A. 2010. Self And Community in a Changing World. Bloomington: Indiana University Press

Masroor, F., Khan, Q. N., Aib, I., & Ali, Z. 2019. Polarization and Ideological Weaving in Twitter Discourse of Politicians. Social media and Society, 5(4), 205630511989122.

Mati, J.M. 2019. Ethnicity And Politics in Kenya. The Palgrave Handbook of Ethnicity. Pp 265-281

Matotoka, D. and Odeku, K. O. 2018. Transformative Interventions Fostering Mainstreaming of Black South African Women into Managerial Positions in The Private Sector. European Review of Applied Sociology, 11(16), 36-50.

Matsilele, T., and Nkoala, S. 2023. Meta voicing, Trust-Building Mechanisms and Partisan Messaging: A Study of Social Media Usage by Selected South African Female Politicians Information, Communication and Society, 26 (13), 2575-2597.

Mbiti, J. S. 1969. African Religions and Philosophy. London: Heinemann

McDonald, M., Budge, I., & Best, R. 2012. Electoral Majorities, Political Parties, And Collective Representation. Comparative Political Studies, 45(9), 1104-1131.

Mcevoy, C. 2016. Does The Descriptive Representation of Women Matter? A Comparison of Gendered Differences in Political Attitudes Between Voters and Representatives in The European Parliament. Politics & Gender, 12(04), 754-780.

Mcgregor, S. C. 2019. Social Media as Public Opinion: How Journalists Use Social Media to Represent Public Opinion. Journalism, 20(8), 1070–1086

Mcloughlin, L.D.G. 2019. How Social Media Is Changing Political Representation in the UK. University Of Salford, Manchester

Mechkova, V., Dahlum, S., & Petrarca, C. 2022. Women's Political Representation, Good Governance and Human Development. Governance, 37(1), 19-38.

Mekonnen, G. 2019. The Politics of Ethnic Nationalism in the Ethiopian Statehood: Its Challenges and Prospects. Journal of Culture, Society and Development.

Melkonyan, V. 2022. Political Disinformation and Hate Speech on Facebook: The Attitude of Young Armenians Towards Modern Cyber Challenges. Journal of Political Science: Bulletin of Yerevan University, 1(1), 40-68.

Merkel, W. 2014. Is There a Crisis of Democracy? Democratic Theory. 1 (2), 11

Metzgar, E., & Maruggi, A. 2009. Social media and the 2008 U.S. Presidential Election. Journal Of New Communications Research, 4, 141-165.

Mishra, L. 2016. Focus Group Discussions in Qualitative Research. Techno Learn Vol 6 No1 P 1-5

Mlambo, V. H. And Masuku, M. M. 2023. Tribalism And Ethnophobia Among Black South Africans. Journal Of Ethnic and Cultural Studies, 10(1), 125-140.

Mohanan, N. 2021. Negotiating Political Power at ‘Critical Junctures’: Women and Constitution Drafting in South Africa and India. Journal Of Asian and African Studies, 57(3), 559-573.

Moindi, K.M., 2023. Kingdoms, Politics, And State Formation in Pre-Colonial Kenya. In The Palgrave Handbook of Kenyan History (Pp. 55-67). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Montinaro, F., Busby, G. B., Gonzalez-Santos, M., Oosthuitzen, O., Oosthutizen, E., Anagnostou, P., & Capelli, C. 2016. Complex Ancient Genetic Structure and Cultural Transitions in Southern African Populations.

Moraa, O. R., Lillian, C., & Josephine, O. 2021. Socio-economic Factors Affecting Participation of Young Women in Political Processes: Case Study of Nyamira South Sub County, Kenya. Advances in Sciences and Humanities, 7(4), 102.

Moravcsik, A. 2013. Transparency: The Revolution in Qualitative Research. Political Science & Politics, 47(01), 48-53.

Morozov, E. 2011. The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom. New York: Perseus

Morozov, E. 2013. To Save Everything, Click Here: Technology, Solutionism, and the Urge to Fix Problems That Don't Exist. London: Penguin.

Morse, J. M., Barrett, M., Mayan, M., Olson, K., & Spiers, J. 2002. Verification Strategies for Establishing Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 1(2), 13-22.

Motyl, M., Prims, J., & Iyer, R. 2019. How Ambient Cues Facilitate Political Segregation. Personality And Social Psychology Bulletin, 46(5), 723-737.

Mozaffar, S. And Scarritt, J. R. 2005. The Puzzle of African Party Systems. Party Politics, 11(4), 399-421.

Mudde, C., & Kaltwasser, C. R. 2013. Exclusionary Vs. Inclusionary Populism: Comparing Contemporary Europe and Latin America. Government And Opposition, 48(2), 147–174

Mudde, C., & Rovira Kaltwasser, C. 2017. Populism: A Very Short Introduction. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press

Mukhongo, L.L. 2020. Participatory Media Cultures: Virality, Humour, And Online Political Contestations in Kenya. Africa Spectrum. Vol. 55(2) 148–169

Muonwe, M. 2020. Women In Igbo Traditional Religion and Politics: Prospects for Women's Political Leadership Role in Nigeria. UJAH: Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities, 20(3), 1-19.

Mutsvairo, B. and Rønning, H., 2020. The Janus Face of Social Media and Democracy? Reflections on Africa. Media, Culture & Society, 42(3), pp.317-328.

Nagar, R. And Ali, F. 2003. Collaboration Across Borders: Moving Beyond Positionality. Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography, 24(3), 356-372.

Nasong'o, W.S., Amutabi, M.N. And Falola, T., 2023. Introduction: Kenya In Historical Perspective. In The Palgrave Handbook of Kenyan History (Pp. 1-9). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Natascha, M., Vertigans, S., Gibson, N., 2018. Women's Gendered Experiences of Political Instability: Kibera During The 2017 Kenyan Elections, Women's Studies International Forum, Volume 96, 2023, 102668, ISSN 0277-5395.

National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA Kenya), 2018. A Gender Analysis of the 2017 Kenya Elections.

Ncube, M., 2021. Social Media and Democracy in Africa: A Case Study of the Zimbabwe 2018 Harmonised Elections.

Ncube, G. 2020. Eternal Mothers, Whores, or Witches: The Oddities of Being a Woman in Politics in Zimbabwe. Agenda, 34(4), 25-33.

Ncube, L. 2014. 'Bhora Mugedhi Versus Bhora Musango': The Interface Between Football Discourse and Zimbabwean Politics. International Review for The Sociology of Sport, 51(2), 201-218.

Ndavula, J.O., Mberia, H.K. and Mwangi, M.K. 2015. Online Campaign in Kenya: Implementing the Facebook Campaign in the 2013 General Election. International Journal of Education and Research Vol. 3 No. 7

Ndonye, M. M. 2019. Emergence of Ethnopolitical Journalism in Kenya: Lessons from the 2017 Televised Political Analyses Shows. Editon Consortium Journal of Media and Communication Studies, 1(1), 36-51.

Nduna, M. 2020. Examination of Analysis of Research-Participant Power Dynamics in Focus Group Discussions. PINS 60, 83-98

Neblo, M.A. Nestering, K.M. Kennedy, R.P. Lazer, D.M.J. And Sokhey, A.E. 2010. Who Want to Deliberate – and why? American Political Science Review, Vol 104. No 3

Nefes, T. S. 2020. Using Content Analysis to Study Political Texts: Notes on Turkish Parliamentary Debates. Mediterranean Politics, 27(2), 264-271.

Nephawe, F. T. And Lambani, M. N. 2022. Examining Politeness in The Explanation of English and Tshivenda Apologies and Greetings. Technium Social Sciences Journal, 27, 747-759.

Ng'oma, A. M. 2016. Challenges of Democratic Consolidation in Africa: Implications for India's Investment Drive. India Quarterly: A Journal of International Affairs, 72(2), 107-119.

Ngunjiri, F. 2016. "I Am Because We Are". Advances In Developing Human Resources, 18(2), 223-242.

Nichter, S. And Nunnari, S. 2022. Declared Support and Clientelism. Comparative Political Studies, 55(13), 2178-2216.

Norris, P. And Inglehart, R. 2001. Women And Democracy: Cultural Obstacles to Equal Representation. Journal Of Democracy 12(3): 126–140.

Norris, P., & Inglehart, R. 2019. Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, And Authoritarian Populism Cambridge, United Kingdom:

Nowell, L., Norris, J., White, D., & Moules, N. 2017. Thematic Analysis. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 16(1), 160940691773384.

Nwafor, I. M. And Amusan, L. 2022. An Assessment of Women's Participation in South Africa's Foreign Policy Decision-Making and Execution. Politicon: Jurnal Ilmu Politik, 4(2), 159-182.

Nyadera, I. And Agwanda, B. 2019. Untitled. International Journal of Political Studies, 5(2).

Nyumba, T. O., Wilson, K. A., Derrick, C. J., & Mukherjee, N. 2018. The Use of Focus Group Discussion Methodology: Insights from Two Decades of Application in Conservation. Methods in Ecology and Evolution, 9(1), 20-32.

O'Brochta, W. 2022. Ethnic Representational Priorities and Political Engagement in Deeply Divided Societies. Nations And Nationalism, 28(3), 777-787.

Oduor, R.M.J. 2019. Liberal Democracy: An African Critique, South

O'Flaherty, V. A. 2005. A Very Dim Light, A Very Steep Hill: Women in The Victorian Branch of The Australian Labor Party (Ph.D. Thesis), Victoria University, Melbourne

Ogot, B.A., 2012. Essence of Ethnicity: An African. Ethnic Diversity and Economic Instability in Africa: Interdisciplinary Perspectives, P.91.

Okedele, A., 2021. Women, Quotas, and Affirmative Action Policies in Africa. The Palgrave Handbook of African Women's Studies, pp.449-463.

Okoth, A., 2006. A History of Africa: African Societies and The Establishment of Colonial Rule, 1800-1915 (Vol. 1). East African Publishers.

Olaniyi, K. 2017. Politeness Principle and Ilorin Greetings in Nigeria: A Sociolinguistic Study. International Journal of Society, Culture and Language, 5(1), 58-67.

Oleyumi, O. 2002. Conceptualizing Gender: The Eurocentric Foundations of Feminist Concepts and The Challenge of African Epistemologies. Journal Of Culture and African Women Studies. Vol 2 No. 1. African Resource Centre

Omotoso, S. A. 2022. 5 - Barriers To Middle-Level Academic Leadership for Female Academics in Nigerian Higher Education. Journal Of Higher Education in Africa, 18(2), 77-98.

Opeibi, T., 2019. The Twittersphere as Political Engagement Space: A study of Social Media Usage in Election Campaigns in Nigeria. Digital Studies/Le champ numérique, 9(1).

Osiakwan, E.M.K. 2017. The KINGS Of African's Digital Economy. In Ndemo, B. And Weiss, T. Eds. Digital Kenya: An Entrepreneurial Revolution in The Making. London: Palgrave Macmillan, Pp 55-83

Otieno W. 1998. Mau Mau's Daughter. A Life History. London, Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Otto, L., Glogger, I., & Maier, M. 2019. Personalization 2.0? – Testing The Personalization Hypothesis in Citizens', Journalists', And Politicians' Campaign Twitter Communication. Communications, 44(4), 359-381.

Oz, M., Zheng, P. and Chen, G.M., 2018. Twitter versus Facebook: Comparing incivility, impoliteness, and deliberative attributes. New media & society, 20(9), pp.3400-3419.

Papacharissi, Z. 2009. The Virtual Geographies of Social Networks: A Comparative Analysis of Facebook, Linkedin and a Small World. New Media & Society, 11, 199-220.

Patin, É., Lopez, M., Grollemund, R., Verdu, P., Harmant, C., Quach, H., & Quintana-Murci, L. 2017. Dispersals And Genetic Adaptation of Bantu-Speaking Populations in Africa and North America. Science, 356(6337), 543-546.

Patterson, E. W., Ball, K., Corkish, J., & Whittick, I. M. 2022. Do You See What I See? Enhancement Of Rigour in Qualitative Approaches to Inquiry: A Systematic Review of Evidence. Qualitative Research Journal, 23(2), 164-180.

Paxton, P. And Kunovich,S. 2003. 'Women's Political Representation: The Importance of Ideology', Social Forces, Vol. 82, No. 1. Pp. 87– 114.

Pellicer, M., Wegner, E., Bayer, M., & Tischmeyer, C. 2020. Clientelism from the Client's Perspective: A Meta-Analysis of Ethnographic Literature. Perspectives On Politics, 20(3), 931-947.

Peng, Y. 2021. What Makes Politicians' Instagram Posts Popular? Analyzing Social Media Strategies of Candidates and Office Holders with Computer Vision. International Journal of Press/Politics 26(1): 143–166.

Pennock, J. R. And Chapman, J. eds. 1968. Representation. New York: Atherton Press

Pereira, M. M. 2021. "Understanding And Reducing Biases in Elite Beliefs about the Electorate." American Political Science Review 115 (4): 1308–24.

Petter, P.H.2021. Against The Void: Constituency Work and Connection Building Evidence from Australia. Oxford University Press

Pew Research Center, 2018. "Who Uses Facebook, Instagram, Linkedin and Twitter". Available At: Https://Www.Pewinternet.Org/Chart/Who-Uses-Facebook-Instagram-Linkedin-And-Twitter/

Pew Research Center, 2021. "Charting Congress on Social Media in The 2016 And 2020 Elections." Retrieved From Www.Pewresearch.Org, On 11th Nov 2021

Pierskalla, J. H. And Sacks, A. 2019. Personnel Politics: Elections, Clientelistic Competition and Teacher Hiring in Indonesia. British Journal of Political Science, 50(4), 1283-1305.

Pirro, A. And Taggart, P. 2022. Populists In Power and Conspiracy Theories. Party Politics, 29(3), 413-423.

Pitkin, H. 2004. Representation And Democracy: Uneasy Alliance. Scandinavian Political Studies, 27(3), 335-342.

Pitkin, H. F. 1967. The Concept of Representation. Berkeley: University Of California Press.

Popa, S. A., Fazekas, Z., Braun, D., & Leidecker-Sandmann, M.-M. 2020. Informing The Public: How Party Communication Builds Opportunity Structures. Political Communication, 37(3), 329–349

Powell, G. B. 2019. Ideological Representation Achieved and Astray – Elections, Institutions, and the breakdown of Ideological Congruence in Parliamentary Democracies. Cambridge University Press

Powell, Jr G.B. 2004. Political Representation in Comparative Politics. Annual Review Political Science. 7:273, Pp.471-496.

Prasetya, H. A. and Murata, T. 2020. A Model of Opinion and Propagation Structure Polarization in Social Media. Computational Social Networks, 7(1)

Price, H., Okotto, L. G., Okotto-Okotto, J., Pedley, S., & Wright, J. A. 2018. A Participatory Methodology for Future Scenario Analysis of Sub-National Water and Sanitation Access: Case Study of Kisumu, Kenya. Water International, 43(5), 591-602.

Prior, M. 2013. "Media And Political Polarization." Annual Review of Political Science 16: 101–27

Prodip, M.A. 2015. Women's Participation and Decision-Making Power After the Local Government Act Of 2009: A Study of Local Government (Union Parishad) In Bangladesh. Master's Dissertation, Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand.

Prodip, M.A. 2021. Cultural Obstacles to Women's Political Empowerment in India and Bangladesh: A Comparative Perspective. Asian Journal of Comparative Politics 1–17. Sage

Proksch, S.O., & Slapin, J. B. 2015. The Politics of Parliamentary Debate: Parties, Rebels, And Representation. Cambridge University Press.

Protsyk, O. And Matichescu, M. L. 2011. Clientelism And Political Recruitment in Democratic Transition: Evidence from Romania. Comparative Politics, 43(2), 207-224.

Puwar, N. 1997. Reflections On Interviewing Women MPs. Sociological Research Online. 2(1). Available Online At: Http://Www.Socresonline.Org.Uk/2/1/4.Html

Qureshi, S. 2020. Learning By Sustainable Living to Improve Sustainability Literacy. International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education, 21(1), 161-178.

Raj, S. 2023. Digital Media and Women's Political Participation in India. Media Watch, 14(3), 366-385.

Rajkhowa, A. 2020. The Concept of Authorial Legacy in Polarised Debate on the Ethics of social media-driven Activism. Media, Culture Society, 43(3), 561-569.

Raleigh, C. And Wigmore-Shepherd, D. 2020. Elite Coalitions and Power Balance Across African Regimes: Introducing the African Cabinet and Political Elite Data Project (Acped). Ethnopolitics, 21(1), 22-47.

Rehfeld, A. 2011. The Concepts of Representation. American Political Science Review, 105(3), Pp.631-641.

Reich, S. And Bachl, M. 2023. Do Sexist Comments Hinder Participation in Online Political Discussions? Journal Of Media Psychology, Representation and Democracy. *American Political Science Review*, 103(2), Pp.214-230.

Resnick, D. 2012. Opposition Parties and The Urban Poor in African Democracies. Comparative Political Studies, 45(11), 1351-1378.

Rewizorski, M. 2020. Backlash Against Globalization and the Shadow of Phobos. Fudan Journal of The Humanities and Social Sciences, 14(1), 123-141.

Rheault, L., Rayment, E., & Musulan, A. 2019. Politicians in the Line of Fire: Incivility and The Treatment of Women on Social Media. Research & Politics, 6(1).

Riauan, M.A.I., 2019. Islamic Symbols on Political Messages in Newspapers in Riau. Study In Regional Head Election 2017). Budapest International Research and Critics Institute-Journal (BIRCI-Journal), 2(1), Pp.254-262.

Richards, B., 2004. The Emotional Deficit in Political Communication. Political Communication. 21(3), Pp.339-352.

Roberts, K., Dowell, A., & Nie, J. 2019. Attempting Rigour and Replicability in Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Research Data; A Case Study of Codebook Development. BMC Medical Research Methodology, 19(1).

Rocha, V. 2021. From Theory to Analysis: An Introduction to Using Semi-Structured Individual Interviews in Political Science. Accessed From https://Www.Researchgate.Net/Publication/348335061_From_Theory_To_Analysis_An_Introduction_To_Using_Semi-Structured_Individual_Interviews_In_Political_Science On 10th November 2021

Rosenstiel, T., & Mitchell, A. 2012, August. How The Presidential Candidates Use the Web and Social Media. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center Project for Excellence in Journalism. Retrieved From Http://Www.Journalism.Org/Analysis_Report/How_Presidential_Candidates_Use_Web_And_Social_Me Dia

Rosenthal, M. 2019. When Does Descriptive Representation Become Substantive? Systematic Luck, Social Power and The Allocation of Resources. Ethnicities, 19(6), 1015-1037.

Rossini, P., 2022. Beyond Incivility: Understanding Patterns of Uncivil and Intolerant Discourse in Online Political Talk. Communication Research, 49(3), pp.399-425.

Rossini, P., Hemsley, J., Tanupabrungsun, S., Zhang, F., & Stromer-Galley, J. 2018. Social Media, Opinion Polls, And the Use of Persuasive Messages During The 2016 Us Election Primaries. Social Media and Society, 4(3), 205630511878477.

Rudman, L. A. Phelan, J. E. 2008. Backlash Effects for Disconfirming Gender Stereotypes in Organizations. Research In Organizational Behavior 28(January): 61–79.

Russell, A. 2017. “U.S. Senators On Twitter: Asymmetric Party Rhetoric In 140 Characters.” American Politics Research 46

Ruth, S. P., & Hawkins, K. 2017. Populism And Democratic Representation in Latin America. In R. Heinisch, O. Mazzoleni, & C. Holtz-Bacha (Eds.), Handbook on Political Populism (Pp. 255–273). Baden-Baden: Nomos.

Rutz, M.A., 2018. King Leopold's Congo and the" Scramble for Africa": A Short History With Documents. Hackett Publishing.

SADC. 2016. SADC Gender And Development Monitor. Retrieved From Https://Www.Sadc.Int/Issues/Gender/Sadc-Gender-And-Development-Monitor-2016/ On 12th Nov 2021

Salmela, M. And Scheve, C. V. 2017. Emotional Roots of Right-Wing Political Populism. Social Science Information, 56(4), 567-595.

Sande, J. 2020. They Don't Represent Us? Synecdochal Representation and The Politics of Occupy Movements. Constellations, 27(3), 397-411.

Sanmac, D. O. O., Okoth, P. G., & Odhiambo, E. O. S. 2021. Effectiveness Of Multitrack Diplomacy Actors in Critical Assessment of Kenya’s Presidential Election Outcomes, 2007-2017. Journal Of Political Science and International Relations, 4(3), 83.

Saward, M. 2010. The Representative Claim. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Saward, M. 2006. The Representative Claim. Contemporary Political Theory, 5(3), 297–318.

Saward, M. 2014. Shape-Shifting Representation. American Political Science Review, 108(4), 723-736.

Sawer, M. 2000. Parliamentary Representation of Women: From Discourses of Justice to Strategies of Accountability. International Political Science Review, 21(4), 361-380.

Sawer, M. 2013. Misogyny And Misrepresentation: Women In Australian Parliaments. Political Science, 65(1), 105-117

Scantamburlo, M. 2019. Who Represents the Poor? The Corrective Potential of Populism in Spain. Representation, 55(4), 415-434.

Schakel, W. 2021. The Party Road to Representation: Unequal Responsiveness in Party Platforms. European Journal of Political Research, 61(2), 304-325.

Schmuck, D. And Hameleers, M. 2019. Closer to the People: A Comparative Content Analysis of Populist Communication on Social Networking Sites in Pre- and Post-Election Periods. Information Communication & Society, 23(10), 1531-1548.

Schwartz, N. 1988. The Blue Guitar: Political Representation and Community, Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Schwindt-Bayer, L. A. And Mishler, W. 2005. An Integrated Model of Women's Representation. The Journal of Politics, 67(2), 407-428.

Schwindt-Bayer, Leslie. 2011. Political Power and Women's Representation in Latin America. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sevenans, Julie, Soontjens, Karolin, And Walgrave, Stefaan. 2022. "Inequality in The Public Priority Perceptions of Elected Representatives." West European Politics 45 (5): 1057–80

Shah, S. 2015. Free And Fair? Citizens' Assessments of the 2013 General Election in Kenya. Review Of African Political Economy, 42(143).

Shah, S. K., & Corley, K. G. 2006. Building Better Theory by Bridging the Quantitative/Qualitative Divide. Journal Of Management Studies, 43, 1821-1835.

Shane, P. 2018. Democratic Information Communities. https://Doi.Org/10.31228/Osf.Io/H4rs5

Shapiro, M. A., & Hemphill, L. 2017. Politicians And the Policy Agenda: Does Use of Twitter By The US Congress Direct New York Times Content? Policy & Internet, 9(1), 109–132

Sheffer, L. 2019. Political Accountability, Legislator Gender, and Status Quo Bias. Politics & Gender, 17(3), 365-401.

Shilaho, W.K., 2014. 'I Do Not Know Who Won the Elections': How not to Conduct Elections and Kenya's Democratic Reversals. *Politeia*, *33*(3), Pp.44-67.

Shimanoff, S.B. 2009. Gender Role Theory. In: Littlejohn SW, Foss KA (eds)Encyclopedia of Communication Theory. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Pp.434–436

Shmargad, Y., Coe, K., Kenski, K., & Rains, S. A. 2021. Social Norms and the Dynamics of Online Incivility. Social Science Computer Review, 40(3), 717-735

Shorten, A. And Smith, J. 2017. Mixed Methods Research: Expanding the Evidence Base. Evid Based Nurs Vol. 20 No. 3

Shukri, S. F. M. And Smajljaj, A. 2020. Populism And Muslim Democracies. Asian Politics &Amp; Policy, 12(4), 575-591.

Shvedova, N. 2005. Obstacles To Women's Participation in Parliament. In: Ballington, J. And Karam, A. Eds. Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers. Stockholm: IDEA, Pp. 33–50.

Sifry, M. L. 2011. Wikileaks and The Age of Transparency. Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint

Slegten, C. And Heyndels, B. 2019. Within-Party Sex Gaps in Expenditure Preferences among Flemish Local Politicians. Politics & Gender, 16(3), 768-791.

Smets, L. 2019. Supporting Policy Reform from The Outside. The World Bank Research Observer, 35(1), 19-43.

Soo, N., Weinberg, J., & Dommett, K. 2020. One Moment, please: Can the Speed and Quality of Political Contact Affect Democratic Health? The British Journal of Politics and International Relations, 22(3), 460-484.

Starck, K. And Luyt, R. 2018. Political Masculinities, Crisis Tendencies, and Social Transition: Toward an Understanding of Change. Men And Masculinities, 22(3), 431-443.

Steele, J. F. And Miyake, E. 2021. Patriarchal Leadership and Women's Exclusion from Democratic Institutions. Japanese Women in Leadership, 165-192.

Shamdasani, P.M. 2015. Focus Groups: Theory And Practice. Vol 20. Los Angeles, Calif: Sage

Stier, S., Bleier, A., Lietz, H., & Strohmaier, M. 2020. Election Campaigning on Social Media: Politicians, Audiences, And the Mediation of Political Communication on Facebook and Twitter. Studying Politics Across Media, 50-74. Https://Doi.Org/10.4324/9780429202483-4

Stier, S., Bleir, A., Lietz, H., & Strohmaier, M. 2018. Election Campaigning on Social Media: Politicians, Audiences,

Stockemer, D. 2015. Women's Descriptive Representation in Developed and Developing Countries. International Political Science Review. Vol. 36(4) 393–408

Stokke, K., Selboe, E. 2009. Symbolic Representation as Political Practice. In: Törnquist, O., Webster, N., Stokke, K. eds. Rethinking Popular Representation. Palgrave Studies In Governance, Security, And Development. Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

Stromer-Galley, J. 2000. On-Line Interaction and Why Candidates Avoid It. Journal of Communication, 50(4), 111-132.

Sullivan, P. And Dirienzo, C. 2021. A Seat at The Table or a Power Seat: The Impact of Simple Representation Versus Power Representation of Women in Government on Funding For Primary Education. Advances In Social Science and Culture, 3(2), P48.

Sun, Q., Wojcieszak, M., & Davidson, S. 2021. Overtime Trends in Incivility on Social Media: Evidence from Political, Non-political, and Mixed Sub-Reddits Over Eleven Years. Frontiers in Political Science, 3.

Sunstein CR. 2017. #Republic: Divided Democracy in The Age of Social Media. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press

Susila, I., Dean, D., Yusof, R.N.R., Setyawan, A.A. And Wajdi, F., 2020. Symbolic Political Communication, And Trust: A Young Voters' Perspective of The Indonesian Presidential Election. In Political Branding (Pp. 148-170). Routledge.

Nkgowe, T. S. and Chinhema, S. 2022. Female Representation in Corporate Governance and Influence on The Firm's Performance in Botswana. Scandic Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews, 2(1).

Takavarasha, S. 2020. Digital Development for a Progressive Networked Society. The Electronic Journal of Information Systems in Developing Countries, 86(5).

Tamássy, R. And Géring, Z. 2021. Rich Variety Of DA Approaches Applied in Social Media Research: A Systematic Scoping Review. Discourse & Communication 1–17, Sage

Tarrow, S. 1998. Power In Movement. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Tedrow, B. 1999. A Qualitative Study of Women's Experiences in Community College Leadership Positions. Community College Review, 27(3), 19.

Theisen, O. M., Strand, H., & Østby, G. 2020. Ethno-Political Favouritism in Maternal Health Care Service Delivery: Micro-Level Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa, 1981–2014. International Area Studies Review, 23(1), 3-27.

Theocharis, Y., Barberá, P., Fazekas, Z., & Popa, S. A. 2020. The Dynamics of Political Incivility on Twitter. SAGE Open, 10(2), 215824402091944.

Thomassen, J. 2016. "What's Gone Wrong with Democracy, or with Theories Explaining Why It Has?", In Citizenship and Democracy in An Era of Crisis. Editors P. Thomas, R. Sigrid, S. R¨Udiger, And Z. Sonja. (London: Routledge), 34–52.

Tøraasen, M. 2019. Gender Parity and The Symbolic Representation of Women in Senegal. The Journal of Modern African Studies, 57(3), 459-481.

Tremblay, M. 2007. Democracy, Representation, And Women: A Comparative Analysis, Democratization, 14:4, 533-553

Trifiro, B., Paik, S., Fang, Z., & Zhang, L. 2021. Politics and Politeness: analysis of Incivility on Twitter During the 2020 Democratic Presidential Primary. Social Media and Society, 7(3)

Tromble, R. 2016. Thanks For (Actually) Responding! How Citizen Demand Shapes Politicians' Interactive Practices on Twitter. New Media &Amp; Society, 20(2), 676-697.

Tromble, R.2021. Where Have All the Data Gone? A Critical Reflection on Academic Digital Research in The Post-API Age. Social Media and Society. Sage

Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat in the 2016 U.S Election. Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 95(2),

Urbinati, N. 2006. Representative Democracy: Principles & Genealogy. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press

Urbinati,N. 2019. Meet the People. How populism transforms democracy. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Uyheng, J., & Montiel, C. J. 2020. Cognitive Polyphasia in a Global South Populist Democracy: Mapping Social Representations of Duterte's Regime in The Philippines. Journal of Social and Political Psychology, 8(1), 30-52.

Van Der Meer, T. W. G, Hakhverdian, A, & Aaldering, L. 2016. Off The Fence, Onto the Bandwagon? A Large-Scale Survey Experiment on Effect of Real-Life Poll Outcomes on Subsequent Vote Intentions. International Journal of Public Opinion Research, 28(1), 46–72.

Van Der Pas, D.J. And Aaldering, L. 2020. Gender Differences in Political Media Coverage: A Meta-Analysis. Journal Of Communication 70, 114–143 Oxford University Press

Van Noort, G., Vliegenthart, R. and Kruikemeier, S., 2016. Return on interactivity? The characteristics and effectiveness of Web sites during the 2010 Dutch local elections. Journal of Information Technology & Politics, 13(4), pp.352-364.

Vertessen, D. And De Landtsheer, C.L., 2005. A Metaphorical Election Style? Patterns Of Symbolic Language Use in Belgian Politics. Available At: Eis. Bris. Ac. Uk/~ Potfc/Granada/Papers/Vertessen. Pdf.

Vieira, M.B., & Runciman, D. 2008. Representation. Cambridge: Polity.

Vraga, E.K., 2019. What Can I Do? How to Use Social Media to Improve Democratic Society. Political Communication, 36(2), pp.315-323

Vreese, C., Esser, F., Aalberg, T., Reinemann, C., & Stanyer, J. 2018. Populism as an Expression of Political Communication Content and Style: A New Perspective. The International Journal of Press/Politics, 23(4), 423-438.

Wafula, E. And Odula, O. 2018. Considerations for the Shift in Roles of National and County Governance Towards the Realization of Food Security in Kenya. African Journal of Food, Agriculture, Nutrition and Development, 18(03), 13776-13791.

Walsh, D. 2013. A Feminist Approach to Quotas and Comparative Politics. Politics & Gender, 9(03), 322-328.

Walsh,C. K. 2002. Enlarging Representation: Women Bringing Marginalized Perspectives to Floor Debate in The House of Representatives. In: Rosenthal CS. ed. Women Transforming Congress. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, Pp. 370–396.

Wasserman, H. 2010. Freedom's Just Another Word? Perspectives On Media Freedom and Responsibility in South Africa and Namibia. International Communication Gazette, 72(7), 567-588.

Wasserman, H. 2017. Fake News from Africa: Panics, Politics and Paradigms. Journalism, Vol. 21(1) 3–16

Wasswa, H. W. 2013. The Role of Social Media In The 2013 Presidential Election Campaigns In Kenya. Retrieved From Http://Erepository.Uonbi.Ac.Ke/Handle/11295/58685, On Nov 8th, 2021.

Watuka, C.M. 2017. Resistance To Women's Political Leadership: Problems And Advocated Solutions .Retrieved From Https://Www.Iknowpolitics.Org/En/Learn/Knowledge-Resources/Resistance-Women's-Political-Leadership-Problems-And-Advocated-Solutions

Weitz-Shapiro, R. 2012. What Wins Votes: Why Some Politicians Opt Out Of Clientelism. American Journal of Political Science, 56(3), 568-583. Https://Doi.Org/10.1111/J.1540-5907.2011.00578.X

White, M. 2022. Fashioning Feminism: How Leandra Medine and other Man Repeller Authors Blog About Choice and The Gaze. Feminist Theory, 23(3), 351-369.

Whitehead, E. 2021. Focus Group Discussions to Explore Learner Issues When Writing. World Journal of Education and Humanities, 3(3), P10.

Whitney, L. 2010. Average Net User Nnw Ooline 13 Hours Per Week," Cnet News Online. Retrieved From Http://News.Cnet.Com/8301-1023_3-10421016-93.Html, On 10th Nov 2021

Wigginton, M. 2021. Protected Black and Acadian Electoral Districts in Nova Scotia: A Case Study in Institutionalized Surrogate Representation. British Journal of Canadian Studies, 33(1), 77-97.

Willems, W. And Mano, W. 2017. Decolonizing And Provincializing Audience and Internet Studies: Contextual Approaches from African Vantage Points. In Willems, W. And Mano, W. Eds. Everyday Media Culture in Africa: Audiences and Users. Abingdon: Routledge, Pp 1-26

Williams, J. 2018. D.C. Court: Accessing Public Information Is Not a Computer Crime. Electronic Frontier Foundation. Https:// Www.Eff.Org/Deeplinks/2018/04/Dc-Court-Accessing-Publicinformation-Not-Computer-Crime

Wood, R. And Litherland, B. 2017. Critical Feminist Hope: The Encounter of Neoliberalism and Popular Feminism Inwwe 24: Women's Evolution. Feminist Media Studies, 18(5), 905-922.

Wood, T. 2018. The Clientelism Trap in Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, And Its Impact on Aid Policy. Asia &Amp; The Pacific Policy Studies, 5(3), 481-494.

Woodyatt, C., Finneran, C., & Stephenson, R. 2016. In-Person Versus Online Focus Group Discussions. Qualitative Health Research, 26(6), 741-749.

World Bank. 2016. Republic of Kenya: Kenya Urbanization Review. Report No: AUS8099, GSU13 Africa. Retrieved From Https://Documents.Worldbank.Org On 4th March 2022

Yoon, Mi Yung (2008). 'Special Seats for Women in The National Legislature: The Case Of Tanzania', Africa Today, 55(1), Pp. 61-86

Yougov .2019b. Twitter Popularity & Fame, Yougov Ratings. Available At: Https://Yougov.Co.Uk/ Topics/Technology/Explore/Social_Network/Twitter-Social_Network

Yougov. 2019a. Facebook Popularity & Fame, Yougov Ratings. Available At: Https://Yougov. Co. Uk/Topics/Technology/Explore/Social Network/Facebook.

Younas, A., Fàbregues, S., Durante, Á., Escalante, E. L., Inayat, S., & Ali, P. 2023. Proposing The "Miracle" Narrative Framework for Providing Thick Description in Qualitative Research. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 22, 160940692211471.

Young, I.M. 2000. Inclusion And Democracy. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Zamora-Medina, R., 2023. Politainment as Dance: Visual Storytelling on Tiktok Among Spanish Political Parties. In Research Handbook on Visual Politics, Pp. 228-243). Edward Elgar Publishing.

Zhuravskaya, E., Petrova, M And Enikolopov, R. 2020. Political Effects of The Internet and Social Media. Annual Review of Economics Contents Volume 12, Pp 415-438.

Zimbalist, Z. 2017. Breaking Down Rural and Urban Bias and Interrogating Spatial Inequality, Evidence from South Africa. Development Policy Review, 35(S2).

Appendices

Appendix 1: Geopolitical Categorizations of Electoral Areas Included in the Study

	Electoral Area	Classification
1	Malindi	Urban
2	Kandara, Murangá	Rural
3	Nairobi	Urban
4	Wajir	Rural
5	Kiambu	Peri-urban
6	Uasin Gishu (Eldoret)	Peri-urban
7	Naivasha	Rural
8	Meru	Peri-urban
9	Samburu West	Rural
10	Murang'a	Rural
11	Kirinyaga	Rural
12	Machakos	Peri-urban
13	Kasipul-Kabondo	Rural
14	Nairobi	Urban
15	Kirinyaga	Rural
16	Gilgil	Rural
17	Nairobi	Urban
18	Kirinyaga	Rural
19	Ijara	Rural
20	Nakuru	Urban

Appendix 2: A List of Women Politicians who were Included in Study

	Politician	Position	Electoral Area	Classification
Pol 1	Aisha Jumwa	MP	Malindi	Urban
Pol 2	Alice Wahome	MP	Kandara, Murangá	Rural
Pol 3	Esther Passaris	Woman Rep	Nairobi	Urban
Pol 4	Fatuma Gedi	Woman Rep	Wajir	Rural
Pol 5	Gathoni wa Muchomba	Woman Rep	Kiambu	Peri-urban
Pol 6	Gladys Boss Sholei	Woman Rep	Uasin Gishu (Eldoret)	Peri-urban
Pol 7	Jayne Kihara	MP	Naivasha	Rural
Pol 8	Kawira Mwangaza	Woman rep	Meru	Peri-urban
Pol 9	Naisula Lesuuda	MP	Samburu West	Rural
Pol 10	Sabina Chege	Woman Rep	Murang'a	Rural
Pol 11	Anne waiguru	Governor	Kirinyaga	Rural
Pol 12	Charity Ngilu	Governor	Machakos	Peri-urban
Pol 13	Eve Obara	MP	Kasipul-Kabondo	Rural
Pol 14	Karen Nyamu	Senator	Nairobi	Urban
Pol 15	Martha Karua	Presidential candidate	Kirinyaga	Rural
Pol 16	Martha Wangari	MP	Gilgil	Rural
Pol 17	Millicent Omanga	Senator	Nairobi	Urban
Pol 18	Purity Ngirici	Woman Rep	Kirinyaga	Rural
Pol 19	Sophia Abdi	MP	Ijara	Rural
Pol 20	Susan Kihika	Senator	Nakuru	Urban

Appendix 3: A List of Citizens Selected for the FGDs

Date	**Time of interview**	**Total Interview time**	**Name**	**Gender**	**Age**	**Level of Education**	**Area**
12th Aug 2022	1.00 PM	57 Min 10 sec					**Nairobi** (urban)
			Participant 1	M	35	University	
			Participant 2	F	29	High School	
			Participant 3	M	38	University	
			Participant 4	M	22	University	
			Participant 5	F	27	University	
			Participant 6	M	28	University	
			Participant 7	M	24	College	
			Participant 8	F	30	University	
			Participant 9	F	29	College	
			Participant 10	M	26	College	
19th Aug 2022	5.00 PM						**Eldoret** (peri-urban)
			Participant 11	F	31	College	
			Participant 12	F	25	University	
			Participant 13	M	30	High school	
			Participant 14	M	27	College	
			Participant 15	M	29	College	
			Participant 16	M	22	University	
			Participant 17	M	28	College	
26th Aug 2022	5.00 PM						**Murang'a** (rural)
			Participant 18	M	32	High school	
			Participant 19	F	29	College	
			Participant 20	F	24	College	
			Participant 21	M	23	High school	
			Participant 22	F	27	High school	
			Participant 23	M	33	High school	
			Participant 24	M	35	College	
			Participant 25	M	29	College	

Appendix 4: A List of Citizens Selected for the Interviews

Date	Time of interview	Total Interview time	Coded Name	Gender	Age	Level of Education	Area
2nd Sept 2022	12 Noon	42 min 06 sec	Participant 2	F	29	High school	Urban
2nd Sept 2022	5 PM	44 min	Participant 4	M	22	University	
3rd Sept 2022	12 Noon	44 min 36 sec	Participant 6	M	28	University	
3rd Sept 2022	3 PM	40 min 56 sec	Participant 8	F	30	University	
3rd Sept 2022	5 PM	43 min 12 sec	Participant 10	M	26	College	
							Peri-urban
9th Sept 2022	12 Noon	46 min	Participant 12	F	25	University	
9th Sept 2022	3 PM	44 min 28 sec	Participant 14	M	27	College	
9th Sept 2022	5 PM	45 min 11 sec	Participant 16	M	22	University	
							Rural
16th Sept 2022	12 Noon	47 min 34 sec	Participant 18	M	32	High school	
16th Sept 2022	3 PM	48 min	Participant 20	F	24	College	
17th Sept 2022	12 Noon	44 min 56 sec	Participant 22	F	22	High school	
17th Sept 2022	3 PM	46 min	Participant 24	M	24	College	

Appendix 5: Women Politicians' Interview Guide

1. As a political representative, why did you join social media?
2. In which social media platforms are you? Why did you choose these platforms?
3. What kind of messages do you mostly post on social media? Why do you prefer these messages?
4. From your own perspective, what kind of messages do citizens prefer to hear from their political representatives? Why do you think so?
5. Do you recall an instance when citizen's comments on your social media pages influenced your stand on policy? Tell me more about that.
6. I have come across many articles claiming that views by women politicians are sidelined by mainstream media like Newspapers, TV, radio etc. Have you found it easier to articulate your thoughts and views on social media as a woman politician?
7. Are there differences in social media posts between the ones you post on Facebook and the ones you post on Twitter? Please explain.
8. Going through politician's social media pages, I have realized that religious messages by political representatives are so rampant in Kenya's social media space. Why is this so?
9. From your own perspective? What do you think is the reason behind some politicians posting 'personalized' messages on social media?

10. Are there variations between the social media messages that you posted during the period of political campaigns and the ones you normally post in normal periods outside of election periods? Explain?
11. Do you respond to citizens' queries and messages on social media? Do you remember a particular message(s) that you responded to? Please tell me about it
12. Are you the sole operator of your social media platform or do you depend on a personal assistant to run your page(s)? Why?

Appendix 6: FGDs Interview Guide

1. Do you follow women politicians on social media? Explain your choice to follow or not to follow them?
2. On which platforms do you prefer to engage with these politicians? Explain your preference.
3. What kind of messages do you prefer to see on the social media pages of women politicians? Why?
4. Does what you expect to see on their pages align with what you see?
5. Overall, do you feel as if women politicians address your needs as a citizen on their social media platforms?
6. When you comment on the politicians' pages, do they respond?
7. Do you think social media communication has made a difference in the communication of women politicians with the citizens? Please elaborate on that
8. What are your views about women politicians posting personal content on social media platforms?
9. Overall, would you prefer traditional modes of communication or social media communication for your engagement with the politicians?

Appendix 7: Interview Guide for Citizens Interviews

1. What are your reasons/motivation for following women politicians on social media?
2. On which platforms do you follow these leaders? Explain your preference,
3. What kind of content do you seek from the social media pages of women politicians?
4. Is there content that these women leaders post that you find unappealing? Please explain on that
5. Has a politician ever responded to your comment or query on social media?
6. From your own perspective, do you think social media are the best platform for women politicians to communicate with citizens? Why do you think so?
7. If you had a one-on-one meeting with a female politician, what would you like her to know in terms of politician-citizen communication in Kenya?
8. What would you like her to know about your needs as a citizen?

Appendix 8: Interview Guide for Social Media Administrators

1. In your opinion, what qualities and aspects do you think politicians who are seeking a social media administrator look for?
2. In your own opinion, why are social media administrators important for politicians in Kenya, especially the women politicians?
3. Do you normally consult the politician before posting on her page? Please explain.
4. How do you decide on the content to post on these platforms?
5. Please explain what politicians prefer that you post on their pages and explain this preference.
6. Overall, is there a difference in what male politicians would prefer to be posted on their social media pages with what women politicians would prefer? Please give examples and possible reasons if there is a difference.
7. Is there a difference in terms of content about what you post on Facebook and what you post on Twitter? Please elaborate on your answer
8. Going through the social media pages of the politicians, I realized there were very many posts with religious overtones. Why is this so?

9. I also realized that there are so many personal posts, for instance the birthdays of these politicians, their families, and personal lives. Explain why such content is posted.
10. As a social media administrator of a woman politician, do you think social media platforms provide a safe and open space for women politicians to express themselves? Please elaborate.
11. Do you think social media platforms are effective channels for political communication and engagement in Kenya? Why do you think so?

Appendix 9: Consent Form(s)

Informed Consent Form #1 for Women Politicians

Consent to take part in a study titled, 'Online Platforms and Political Voices: An Examination of Political Representation Practices through the Social Media Pages of Women Politicians in Kenya.'	Add your initials next to the statements you agree to
I confirm that I have read and understand the participant information sheet titled "Information Access through Libraries" that explains the above research project. I confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw within two weeks of this data collection without giving any reason and without negative consequences. I understand that I am free to decline to answer any question.	
I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks of the interview, in which case the data will be deleted.	
I understand that I am free to contact the researcher at any time with questions or requests for clarification. The researcher can be contacted via email at menwga@leeds.ac.uk	
I understand that my name and personal information may or may not be revealed and that my responses may or may not be anonymised. I understand that I can seek for anonymity from the researcher. I understand the limits of the anonymity the researcher can offer.	
I understand that my words may be anonymous but not confidential. My anonymized comments and quotations may appear in published findings or be discussed in an academic presentation.	
I consent to the personal data collected from me for research purposes to be anonymised and will be stored securely and used in relevant future research.	
I understand that the data I provide may be archived at the Research Data Leeds Repository so that it can be used for future research and learning. I consent to the secure archiving of this data.	
I understand that audio of the interview will be recorded. I consent to being audio recorded and for the transcripts to be used in the research.	
I understand that the audio recording may be sent through an encrypted channel to a commercial transcription app and that it may be housed in that company's encrypted database.	
I agree to take part in the above research project and will inform the researcher should my contact details change.	

Name of participant	
Participant's signature	
Date	
Name of lead researcher	Nancy Gakahu
Signature	(Signed in the presence of the participant)
Date*	

Informed Consent Form #2 for Social Media Administrators **Consent to take part in a study titled,** 'Online Platforms and Political Voices: An Examination of Political Representation Practices through the Social Media Pages of Women Politicians in Kenya.'	Add your initials next to the statements you agree to
I confirm that I have read and understand the participant information sheet titled "Information Access through Libraries" that explains the above research project. I confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw within two weeks of this data collection without giving any reason and without negative consequences. I understand that I am free to decline to answer any question.	
I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks of the interview, in which case the data will be deleted.	
I understand that I am free to contact the researcher at any time with questions or requests for clarification. The researcher can be contacted via email at menwga@leeds.ac.uk	
I understand that my name and personal information will not be revealed and that my responses may or may not be anonymised. I understand that I can seek for anonymity from the researcher. I understand the limits of the anonymity the researcher can offer.	
I understand that my words may be anonymous but not confidential. My anonymized comments and quotations may appear in published findings or be discussed in an academic presentation.	
I consent to the personal data collected from me for research purposes to be anonymised and will be stored securely and used in relevant future research.	
I understand that the data I provide may be archived at the Research Data Leeds Repository so that it can be used for future research and learning. I consent to the secure archiving of this data.	
I understand that audio of the interview will be recorded. I consent to being audio recorded and for the transcripts to be used in the research.	
I understand that the audio recording may be sent through an encrypted channel to a commercial transcription app and that it may be housed in that company's encrypted database.	
I agree to take part in the above research project and will inform the researcher should my contact details change.	

Name of participant	
Participant's signature	
Date	
Name of lead researcher	Nancy Gakahu
Signature	(Signed in the presence of the participant)
Date*	

Informed Consent Form #3 for the Focus Group Discussions **Consent to take part in a study titled,** 'Online Platforms and Political Voices: An Examination of Political Representation Practices through the Social Media Pages of Women Politicians in Kenya.'	Add your initials next to the statements you agree to
I confirm that I have read and understand the participant information sheet titled "Information Access through Libraries" that explains the above research project. I confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw within two weeks of this data collection without giving any reason and without negative consequences. I understand that I am free to decline to answer any question.	
I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks of the interview, in which case the data will be deleted.	
I understand that I am free to contact the researcher at any time with questions or requests for clarification. The researcher can be contacted via email at menwga@leeds.ac.uk	
I understand that my name and personal information will not be revealed and that my responses may or may not be anonymised. I understand that I can seek for anonymity from the researcher. I understand the limits of the anonymity the researcher can offer.	
I understand that my words may be anonymous but not confidential. My anonymized comments and quotations may appear in published findings or be discussed in an academic presentation.	
I consent to the personal data collected from me for research purposes to be anonymised and will be stored securely and used in relevant future research.	
I understand that the data I provide may be archived at the Research Data Leeds Repository so that it can be used for future research and learning. I consent to the secure archiving of this data.	
I understand that audio of the interview will be recorded. I consent to being audio recorded and for the transcripts to be used in the research.	
I understand that the audio recording may be sent through an encrypted channel to a commercial transcription app and that it may be housed in that company's encrypted database.	
I agree to take part in the above research project and will inform the researcher should my contact details change.	

Name of participant	
Participant's signature	
Date	
Name of lead researcher	Nancy Gakahu
Signature	(Signed in the presence of the participant)
Date*	

Informed Consent Form #4 for one-on-one interviews with the citizens **Consent to take part in a study titled,** 'Online Platforms and Political Voices: An Examination of Political Representation Practices through the Social Media Pages of Women Politicians in Kenya.'	Add your initials next to the statements you agree to
I confirm that I have read and understand the participant information sheet titled "Information Access through Libraries" that explains the above research project. I confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw within two weeks of this data collection without giving any reason and without negative consequences. I understand that I am free to decline to answer any question.	
I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks of the interview, in which case the data will be deleted.	
I understand that I am free to contact the researcher at any time with questions or requests for clarification. The researcher can be contacted via email at menwga@leeds.ac.uk	
I understand that my name and personal information will not be revealed and that my responses may or may not be anonymised. I understand that I can seek for anonymity from the researcher. I understand the limits of the anonymity the researcher can offer.	
I understand that my words may be anonymous but not confidential. My anonymized comments and quotations may appear in published findings or be discussed in an academic presentation.	
I consent to the personal data collected from me for research purposes to be anonymised and will be stored securely and used in relevant future research.	
I understand that the data I provide may be archived at the Research Data Leeds Repository so that it can be used for future research and learning. I consent to the secure archiving of this data.	
I understand that audio of the interview will be recorded. I consent to being audio recorded and for the transcripts to be used in the research.	
I understand that the audio recording may be sent through an encrypted channel to a commercial transcription app and that it may be housed in that company's encrypted database.	
I agree to take part in the above research project and will inform the researcher should my contact details change.	

Name of participant	
Participant's signature	
Date	
Name of lead researcher	Nancy Gakahu
Signature	(Signed in the presence of the participant)
Date*	

Appendix 10: FB Posts and Tweets Selected for this Study.

FB Posts 2020

politician	post	Post
1	1	This afternoon I handed over a community borehole at Muyu wa nyufu, Madunguni, Kakuyuni Ward. The project was sponsored by Coast water service and will go along Sic) way to serve 600 households. Adequate supply will ensure availability of clean drinking water, proper sanitation and a relief especially to women as it will ease the burden of trekking in search of water.
2	2	It's a Sunday. He is Worthy of our Worship and Praise. Be Blessed.
3	3	Our NGAAF Relief Food Drive targeting vulnerable residents is on! Every family in need will receive a hamper consisting of rice, maize & wheat flour, sugar, beans, cooking oil, fortified porridge, sanitary towels and face masks. Our food drive is one of the several interventions to cushion citizens in these uncertain times.
4	4	My attention has been drawn to a purported security meeting taking place in Wajir Town, attended by Wajir County Security Committee, a section of residents, a section of politicians and a community across the Kenya-Somali border. Whereas discussion on border security is a critical subject matter requiring to be addressed, any approach must envisage broad-based participation of all stakeholders, be they communal or political leadership level, so that any outcomes are grounded on and/or supported by all border communities and their respective political leaders through mutually agreed framework for engagement. The organizers of Wajir meeting deliberately excluded key stakeholders; it therefore does not represent the views, concerns, and considerations of all Wajir communities, political & cultural leaders, women & youth groups and is consequently nonbinding and counterproductive. As a matter of fact, the meeting invited communities from Somalia side of the border, thus breached Presidential and Ministry of Health Guidelines towards the containment and mitigation against the spread of Covid-19 pandemic. I call upon the County Security Agencies to be cautious about the kind of events they associate themselves with, in order to protect their image and avoid being drawn into partisan political mechanizations
5	5	I wish to state categorically that as far as I am concerned, Mt Kenya leaders who support the handshake and President Uhuru Kenyatta's political guidance have not yet adopted or groomed any other Mt Kenya Kingpin as earlier reported by the Daily Nation on Monday 20th July. As far as I'm concerned, President Uhuru is in charge and his direction is undoubtedly my direction. Anybody quoting me otherwise is misinformed.
6	6	'108 Water storage tanks of 5000litres capacity have been distributed to selected dispensaries public primary schools, secondary schools and special schools. Many schools do not have water and in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic we realize that it is more necessary.'
7	7	NG-CDF AND KeRRA PROJECTS INSPECTION, BIASHARA WARD. Today I inspected several projects we have undertaken through Naivasha NG-CDF and KeRRA in Biashara ward. My interaction with my bosses (Naivasha people) during the process was great. NG-CDF projects in Biashara ward; 1. Rutere Primary school- Renovation of classrooms and construction of an ablution block.(complete) 2. Rutere Secondary school- Construction of an ablution block(complete) 3. Kirima Chief's office- construction of the Chief's office, ablution block, gate and fencing(complete). 4. Ndoroto Secondary school- Construction of two classrooms, and two ablution blocks(complete). We started the school from scratch in 2018. 5. Kinamba primary school- Construction of two classrooms (ongoing) KeRRA projects in Biashara ward;
8	8	Bado Tunasonga kusonga.!!!!!More than 2000 Meru County residents will get employment! Hallelujah!!!!!
9	9	Transparency is the guiding principle of our work at NGCDF. Today we handed over Cheques worth 18,870,000 as per the money received to the following institutions from the 2019/2020 budget. We also go by school and community priories.
10	10	Thanking God for this far. I want to be like a sunflower so that even on darkest days I will stand tall and find the sunlight. Happy birthday to me.
11	11	Joined Rt. Hon Raila Odinga, family and other leaders in celebrating Mama Ida's Birthday. Mama Ida Odinga you are Strong, Wise, graceful and selfless. Not many know or understand the critical role you play in this nation. God grant you many more fruitful years ahead, full of laughter and love.
12	12	After more than 8 hours of surgery, I am pleased to report that the maxillofacial operation done at Kitui Referral Hospital to correct the growth on Ms. Pendo Masonga's face was a success! We thank God 🙏. Ms Pendo will now recuperate under close monitoring by the doctors. After recovery, the next phase will be to assist assimilate Ms. Pendo back into society, this time round without the painful burden and stigma of the malignant tumor that was on her face. Special thanks to the Kitui Referral Hospital Medical team. We pray for her speedy recovery.

13	13	Today, I joined Prof. Margaret Kobia, CS for Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs at the NYS Headquarters to receive donations from her Ministry consisting of sanitizers, face masks, sanitary towels, buckets etc.In attendance were Hon.Lilian Gogo, Mp Rangwe Constituency, Hon Alice Wahome, Mp Kandara Constituency, Hon.Sarah Lekorere, Mp Laikipia North Constituency, Hon.Martha Wangari, Mp Gilgil Constituency, Hon.Jessica Mbalu, Mp Kibwezi East Constituency, Hon.Edith Nyenze, Mp Kitui West Constituency and Hon. Rachael Nyamai, Mp Kitui South Constituency.
14	14	Huyo dem Aoko amebore madem wengi sana, but a smart woman got the point. Theres nothing better than financial independence! A lot of women assume when they see a fellow woman making it, theres a sponsor behind it, hubby or otherwise. Haha why don't you try it too then utuambie No sponsor will build an ambitious woman to surpass him, outgrow him and leave. They want you to always be within control. Afathali nisote nilale njaa nirudi eastlands before I budget on a man's money
15	15	We urge the Chief Justice to act urgently on the petitions before him and advise the President to dissolve Parliament, and for the President to dissolve Parliament as required by the Constitution. It is time for all Kenyans including and especially law makers to be held to the same standard. Send the MPs home, that is the legal consequence of their refusal to abide by the law and it will also serve as a warning for the next parliament.
16	16	Hallo, 37! (though we aren't counting this year)) so thankful to God, for life, for love, for health and for family. Looking forward to many more. Asante Mola.
17	17	MAN U TUKO NDANI NDAANI NDAAANI YA UEFA. Biggest team in EPL Manchester United inacheza against Leicester City Football Club jioni na utamu wa ball nikuona pamoja. Kama fan wa ball nataka tujibambe pamoja. I will award the top 5 correct prediction posts with most likes. So kama uko sure na end score ya game ambia mabeste wako walike post yako. Voting ends @5pm. #MathaWaMaRieng
18	18	MAN U TUKO NDANI NDAANI NDAAANI YA UEFA. Biggest team in EPL Manchester United inacheza against Leicester City Football Club jioni na utamu wa ball nikuona pamoja. Kama fan wa ball nataka tujibambe pamoja. I will award the top 5 correct prediction posts with most likes. So kama uko sure na end score ya game ambia mabeste wako walike post yako. Voting ends @5pm. #MathaWaMaRieng
19	-	-
20	19	Extremely saddened to have witnessed the very inhumane way the Government has forcefully evicted families in Marioshoni Ward, Molo Sub-County. One wonders what the urgency is in carrying out these displacement excises during a very rainy season and while our people are already suffering due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. We have called on the government to stop any further evictions until an amicable solution is found. Our people must be treated with dignity and proper procedures followed for those with Title deeds for their land and sufficient notice given for those living past the cut line. The government through the ministry of environment must also come clear on the forest boundaries to avoid punishing people living on legally acquired land. As a country, we must learn to respect title deeds issued by the relevant government departments. It beats logic to claim the residents are living on forest land while the same government has constructed schools, hospitals, and offices of the Chief to serve the same residents.

FB Posts 2022

politician	Post	Post
1	20	Service to humanity is also Service to God. I have passionately and diligently served my people in different influences in the political field. I want to take this special opportunity to thank all my supporters who believed in me and voted for me with the overwhelming majority! 🙏. I respect the IEBC verdict however, not in agreement with it. As the law stipulates, I have my constitutional rights to pursue justice to myself and to the people of Kilifi. Let's continue walking together to our destiny and the victory is all ours. Asanteni sana watu wangu. Mimi Niko Imara. Yours faithfully, Hon. Aisha Jumwa The People's Governor.
2	21	DCC Kandara, Ms Caroline & ACC Tango you are busy escorting a candidate to do voter bribery at this hour in Kandara Constituency using Government vehicles. GKB 116T at Githama and GKB 316U at Ngararia. Kindly note I will cite you tomorrow morning during a press conference that I have scheduled. I will name and shame you. I have also made a report to the OCPD Kandara.

3	22	“And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.” - Isaiah 65:24 KJV
4	23	Alhamdulilah, I have fulfilled the promise I made to the students, parents and the great people of Habaswein to deliver a school bus. I wish to sincerely thank the president of the Republic of Kenya, H.E Uhuru Kenyatta. This is the first school bus received in the vast Wajir south constituency through my effort. I make a pledge to the other deserving secondary schools in Wajir if am elected to office.
5	-	-
6	24	The recount of presidential ballots in 15 polling stations as ordered by the SUPREME COURT so far CONFIRMS FORM 34A are a true and faithful reflection of the votes as initially counted announced and recorded.
7	25	Thank you Naivasha. Thank you God for walking with us throughout the journey. To my bosses, the great people of Naivasha I am overwhelmed by your love. I promise to never let you down. As I promised during my campaigns, Kazi Itaendelea. To my worthy competitors, I welcome your ideas on how we can together make Naivasha a better Constituency for us all.
8	26	Good morning . 1 Corinthians 2:9 [9]That is what the Scriptures mean when they say, “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.” Above all God is God.
9	-	-
10	27	Our Captian, Raila Amollo Odinga, has made his position clear. Our budding democracy took steps back yesterday after a great travesty of justice was committed. We reiterate that stand. We urge all our supporters to remain calm and maintain peace. Azimio will explore all legal and constitutional means to address this issue. For now let’s pursue justice for all Kenyans. Keep the peace! The journey continues. God bless Kenya!
11	28	Ngirici goons now surrounding Kianyaga Tallying centre in a bid to intimidate and disrupt voter tallying for Gichugu our strong hold. No one can go in or out. And the police are doing nothing to remove them. This will not change the will of the people! Results of 1/5 - Ngariama Ward - Waiguru 7,995; Ngirici 1,575.#William Samoei Ruto | Hon. Rigathi Gachagua | Hon Musalia W Mudavadi | Hon. Moses M Wetangula | EU Election Observers | @UN Election Mission
12	29	Picky picky picky ponky. Thank you Willis Otieno for giving us the formula that Chebukati used to arrive at the joke he announced as the “presidential result”.
13	30	I owe the victory to God & Kabondo Kasipul Constituents. Thank you all for giving me yet another chance to be your Servant
14	31	EVERYONE WILL KNOW IT WAS GOD! ZA RUTO NI MBWEGZE
15	32	What a warm, wonderful reception in Kakamega today! Despite our national challenges, there is HOPE. We can all turn it around with the right choices next month. The people of Kakamega believe in Azimio and invite you all to join in their march to prosperity.
16	-	-
17	33	It’s done! Final tally Ruto 7,287, 316, Rao 6,593, 886, Hustlers hoiyeeee👏👏👏
18	34	The only back door that we know was at NYS during your tenure. TUPO SITE! ✅
19	35	-
20	36	I take this opportunity to thank the great people of Nakuru County who came out in large numbers to vote on the 9th of August 2022. Thank you for giving me a resounding mandate to be the third Governor of our great County. It is a huge privilege and honor but it’s also not lost on me how great a responsibility it is. My singular duty will now be to devote every effort of body, mind and spirit to lead our great County to economic prosperity and make it work for all! Thank you, Nakuru County for your love and support, I promise to never let you all down. 🙏

Tweets 2020

Politician	**Post**	Post
1	37	Thanks for hosting us Dr.@WilliamsRuto
2	38	The Deep State in Kenya and elsewhere is criminal enterprise that thrives on capture of state power by compromising the State System. Going forward the System in this country shall protect the State in order to preserve the Nation. The people shall Conquer the Deep State. Mutahi Ngunyi, I am member of the Geman Nation. Before you advise that we hang together or die together, who told you we are

		together. The rich and the Dynasties are alone and the Hustlers alone. The Gema vote is for Ruto. Swallow the bitter pill. @MutahiNgunyi @moseskuria_MP
3	-	-
4	40	Today I want to single out H.E President Uhuru Kenyatta, Rt. Hon. Raila Odinga and Hon. Gedion Moi for their exemplary stewardship. Indeed victory is the ally of men who give women better lives. @StateHouseKenya @RailaOdinga
5	-	-
6	41	My office will be distributing 108 water storage tanks of 5000 litre capacity each to identified dispensaries, public, primary and special schools. The ceremony will be today, Tuesday 7th July 2020 at 10am at the NGAAF offices. Kapsoya, Eldoret.
7	-	-
8	-	-
9	-	-
10	42	God is up to something!
11	43	Joined Rt. Hon @RailaOdinga, family & other leaders in celebrating Mama Ida's Birthday. @IdaOdinga you are Strong, Wise, graceful & selfless. Not many know or understand the critical role you play in this nation. God grant you many fruitful years ahead, full of laughter & love
12	-	-
13	-	-
14	44	Nyandarua women are farmers engaged in crop cultivation and dairy farming. With 50% of the hustler's fund going to women, they benefit greatly from agribusiness and establishment of local processing factories to reap maximum returns At the KKA Women's charter Nyandarua Edition
15	-	-
16	-	-
17	-	-
18	45	This morning I have been ousted from the Finance and National planning commitee. Article 97 of the Kenya constitution spells the membership of members of parliament & their committee shedules . I laud myself for having served as a member in the finance and national planning com
19	46	Asalaam aleikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatu! On this auspicious occasion of Eid-ul-Adha, I wish the great people of Ijara and Muslims across the world Eid Mubarak. May the Almighty bless you all and accept your good deeds during the last days of this blessed month. Eid Mubarak!
20	47	Some guy kicked out his wife & kids & moved in another woman & her kids. Now he needs the family's support to accomplish a task. His 'new family' has refused to help. Should the old family A. Hold their noses and help him B. Watch the show unfold C. Show him the middle finger

Tweets 2022

Politician	Post	Tweet
1	-	-
2	48	Im celebrating these Women Governors: Their Excellencies: Anne Waiguru, Susan Kihika, Aisha Jumwa, Fatuma Achani, and Cecily Mbarire.
3	-	-
4	49	The smile of hope and justice. Victory is coming home inshaallah.
5	-	-
6	50	The recount of presidential ballots in 15 polling stations as ordered by the SUPREME COURT so far CONFIRMS FORM 34A are a true and faithful reflection of the votes as initially counted announced and recorded.
7	-	-
8	-	-
9	51	Thank you God and the people of Samburu West. Mbele Pamoja and as always Mungu Mbele.
10	52	Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth. ... Our God says, "Calm down, and learn that I am God!
11	53	Martha's evasive on this debate including on south Ngariama land. She knows we can provide evidence on her family benefitting on it while she was cabinet minister. That is why they will not allow us to complete titling the land
12	54	If you cannot respect women, you cannot respect anybody else- Because it is from women you come.

		@WilliamsRuto, you can INSULT WOMEN all you want. BUT IN THIS ELECTION, WOMEN WILL MAKE A MAJOR STATEMENT.
13	-	-
14	55	EVERYONE WILL KNOW IT WAS GOD! ZA RUTO NI MBWEGZE
15	-	-
16	56	It was a Thursday like today 39 years ago Thank you God for this far. I have seen you fight my wars. All the time. I pray for many more. INSHALLAH
17	57	I want to thank the people of Nairobi who voted for me & those who didn't. I accept the results even though they're not in my favour. @EstherPassaris has won, she deserves our support & prayers as she steers the office of Woman Rep for the next 5 years. May God bless our country
18	58	Congratulations your Excellency President elect @WilliamsRuto PhD.
19	-	-
20	59	Thank You to the great people of Nakuru County for giving me a resounding mandate to be the 3rd Governor of NC. It's a huge privilege & honor with great responsibility. I will give it my all, and together we will get it on the path to economic prosperity and make it work for all!

Appendix 11: Thematic Issues Across the two Representational Periods (2020/2022)

Facebook themes	**Twitter themes**	**Facebook themes**	**Twitter themes**
2020		**2022**	
- Sustainable living - Celebration and gratitude - Health - Infrastructural development - Accountability - Religion and spirituality - Social justice - Inclusive governance - Women and financial security - Sports - Job creation - Constitutional integrity - Political loyalty and leadership	- Gratitude and appreciation - Political commentary - Women recognition and appreciation - Community development and public service - Religion and spirituality - Celebration and gratitude - Service and resilience. - Political alliance	- Religion - Electoral integrity - Political campaigns - Electoral justice - Voting process and results	- Celebration of women leadership - Election results - Electoral integrity - Religion and spirituality - Corruption - Celebration and gratitude